

**“Labyassoun – Ifni Airport”
by Bouizgarne Mokhtar, Sidi Ifni**

‘Labyassoun’ is the name we hear when Ifnaouis talk about their airport. It has a Spanish origin and means aviation. The airport used to be an important facility and significant establishment connecting Ifni with the world. But nowadays a large, vast and uninhabited area of around eight square kilometers remains. The area was used as an airport in Spanish colonization times and contributed to the flourishing of adjacent zones. The first plane - a double-decker - landed in 1934.



The airport’s main purpose was to transfer military forces to north Africa as part of preparatory operations to bring them to other Spanish colonies or as a participation in military operations together with the Spanish air force. Later it was also used for civilian purposes and several airlines operated between several towns in Spain and Sidi Ifni. In addition the airport was used for trade, commercial business to bring cargo and goods to distant places. Tourists (c5,000 visitors every month) also flew in and patients and casualties were transported to other Spanish cities. The airport was also used to bring Muslim people to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia to perform their religious rituals.



Since independence in 1969 to-date, the airport has become an inert space overgrown with plants known as ‘Tasra’. The runway is now full of deep tracks caused by cars wheels, the control building and tower was turned into a weather forecasting station. Lately a serious threat was identified from companies to construct a new slum or district ignoring the history of the airport which would deprive Ifni of a vital transportation hub.

