



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 46 – 19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021

### GREETINGS:

Day 329....

“Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, Creeps in this petty pace from day to day....”

The President gave his State Of The Nation Address last week. In case you missed it, he basically said that South Africans must burn to death like fynbos, and that the government has a revolutionary idea on how to farm more chickens and build more Ford bakkies. This comes after he banned cooked chicken and driving on the road, because the SARS virus hides in poultry and behind the steering wheel.

Other headlines this week: “Expiring vaccines doomed South Africa’s rollout plans from the start”; “Eskom made property owners instant millionaires in nuclear landgrab”; “20 SA borders fully reopened, 30 remain closed”; “South Africa's Zuma could be jailed after no-show at corruption inquiry”; “Avocado toast has been enjoyed in San Francisco for 135 years”; and “One week until the RSA Budget Speech (try not to panic)”. Pigs might fly – see story at end.

### MOTI'S MIRAGE MONTAGE:



The famous landmark of “Vic’s Viking Garage” on the Golden Highway now has a modern successor in Sandton Drive. If you happened to see a massive Mirage Jet on the N4 on Thursday, the 11th of February 2021, and are puzzled as to why it was on the road instead of the air, then wonder no more. The jet will be a key attraction feature on the soon-to-be completed luxury Lifestyle Emporium in Sandton. Brainchild of business maverick Zunaid Moti, the Chairman of the Moti Group, the FuturExotics Lifestyle Emporium will form part of the Moti Group’s official offices and properties and will be a new luxury destination in Johannesburg.

The FuturExotics Lifestyle Emporium will display an array of luxury vehicles, time pieces, art and other exclusive collectable items. The Mirage jet placed on top of the building, will be the finishing touch – and undoubtedly a spectacular sight! “I’m excited to have the Mirage as the signature piece on top of the FuturExotics Lifestyle Emporium building. It is symbolic of beauty, strength, agility and speed, which is what Sandton represents as the financial capital of Africa”. (*South Africa Today*)

## **ON THE ROAD AGAIN:**

The good news from SANRAL is that the N3 (Johannesburg – Durban) highway is due for a major upgrade, brought to mind this article which appeared in The Heritage Portal: “South Africa’s modern road network has been planned and developed over the last eighty years, or so, with its main trunk routes – the National Roads (i.e. N1, N2 etc.) being well built and maintained (by SANRAL) having good road surfaces and signage with a maximum speed limit of 120 kph (75 mph). The provincial roads (i.e. R45, R62 etc.) are reasonably good roads and in some cases are the previous routes taken by National roads (e.g. R103 & R717), these roads are not as wide or as well maintained and potholes are sometimes encountered to slow one down. Our major roads are in the main tarred, although gravel is encountered where there are low volumes of traffic notably in the “Platteland” (country districts). Should we travel back in time, say by two centuries (to 1817), the road and rail links, that we take for granted and make possible fast and efficient transportation, were not even in the minds of those who lived back then and roads were no more than ruts in the ground made by ox wagons, with very little purposeful road formation except perhaps on the banks of a river at a fording point (drift). Many more passes were to be built at the behest of the British authorities and more was achieved within the first 40 years of British rule (1815-1855) than in the previous 160 years. The name of Bain has a special reverence amongst civil engineers as both Andrew Geddes (father) and Thomas (son) were prolific mountain pass builders. Their passes opened up the interior and many are still in use today and we owe them a great debt of gratitude for what they achieved.” (*Peter Ball in The Heritage Portal*)

## **GET RICH QUICK!**

South Africa has been flooded with get-rich-quick schemes that are using the mystique of Bitcoin to try and hide old scam techniques. These pitches are siren songs to many who are over their heads in debt... The MTI scheme that recently hit the headlines has been labelled “the biggest in the world.” One of these new scams that has been spotted advertising on cars around the Durban area is Smart-BTC. Navigating to the scheme’s webpage ([smart-btc.co.za](http://smart-btc.co.za)) revealed what appeared to be a standard high-yield investment programme (HYIP) scam. The website lists six seemingly arbitrary packages that are categorised into “short term” and “long term”, with each category containing silver, gold, and VIP packages. All of the packages claim to offer a return of 20% interest every week. This is the first red flag that Smart-BTC is a scam. The Consumer Protection Act (CPA) expressly prohibits schemes that promise a return that is more than 20% above the repo rate. It defines these as “multiplication schemes” - which is just a euphemism for Ponzi scheme. Another suspicious element on the Smart-BTC website is the scheme’s address, which is listed as: “Garden Street, Ring Road, Shyamoli, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh”. Join the dots...

## **SANDF VACCINE COUP:**

The amount of R260,59 million quoted for acquisition of Heberon (the unregistered medical drug Heberon Alfa R, containing the active ingredient Interferon Alpha 2b) by the Auditor-General is converted from the US price of \$15 048 872,50. This is set out in the Second Special Report on the financial management of government’s COVID-19 initiatives provided by Auditor-General Tsakani Maluleke. The investigation follows a decision taken this week by the Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans (PCDMV). As background to his call for an investigation, Marais said: “The Military Command Council (MCC) of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) procured the Cuban drug Hebron Interferon Alpha-2B without prior approval by and registration with the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA). The MCC did not comply with statutory import

regulations and protocols for importing any medicine into South Africa. The medicine is not approved in South Africa for human application and use. “Not only is Interferon, intended for use during the COVID-19 pandemic by the military, not peer-reviewed in a respected medical journal, the SANDF also failed to maintain the cold-chain supply and ruined 40% of the procurement. This incompetence should have seen Minister of Defence Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula and SANDF Chief General Solly Shoke fired.” The Auditor-General’s second report into COVID-19 financial management indicates Minister Mapisa-Nqakula “has since decided” to appoint an external task force for the Heberon acquisition. “It will investigate, among others, findings in the report to ensure any wrongdoing uncovered, whether of a criminal or disciplinary nature, will be addressed. According to the draft terms of reference for the establishment and functioning of the task team, the investigation will run from 4 January to 6 April 2021.”

## **SAAF TO THE RESCUE:**

Two “Good news” stories this last week: Heavy and persistent rain over much of South Africa isolated some communities, necessitating outside assistance with food and other essentials, with the SA Air Force (SAAF) in the vanguard of at least one mercy mission. At the weekend, a CASA 212 transport operated by AFB Waterkloof-based 44 Squadron joined an Oryx medium transport helicopter from 17 Squadron (AFB Swartkop) delivering eight tons of food to Taolo Gaetsewe District Municipality in the Northern Cape. The local authority borders Botswana in the west and comprises the three local municipalities Gamagara, Ga-Segonyana and Joe Morolong as well as 186 towns and settlements, with the majority (80%) villages. The sortie was flown in support of the Department of Social Development and the SA Police Service, according to the SA National Defence Force’s (SANDF’s) Major Mpho Mathebula. Aircrew for the twin-engined light transport was Lieutenant Colonel Sammy Tshepo Mabidikama (commander), Captain Bongani Ndimande (co-pilot) and Sergeant Lucas Moalusi (loadmaster). Oryx aircrew was Lieutenant Colonel Maluleke (commander), Major Nicolene Greeff (co-Pilot) and Flight Sergeant Moeketsi Ntuli (flight engineer). For those of us who may find it a challenge to identify or locate the Taolo Gaetsewe District Municipality, it is (or was) The Kalahari District Council, headquartered at Kuruman...Ah yes, of course!) (*Defence Web*)

## **MAGALIESBERG RESCUE:**



AFB Swartkop-based 17 Squadron dispatched one of its Oryx medium transport helicopters to the Magaliesberg in the North West on receipt of an emergency call from Netcare 911 to SAAF Operations on Saturday. According to Netcare, an adult woman slipped while climbing, fracturing an ankle. First on the scene, in inclement weather, were the Mountain Club of SA, Off-Road Rescue Unit, Mogale City Fire and Rescue and Oostermoed Protection Services.

At the fall scene rescuers found the patient in severe pain and suffering hypothermia. The extreme nature of the terrain and safety considerations saw a decision taken to call on the SAAF. The patient was stabilised while waiting for the Oryx to arrive. She was safely hoisted into the workhorse aircraft and flown, with an advanced life support paramedic on board, to a hospital for treatment and further care.

## **DID ALL THESE MEN DIE FOR NOTHING?**

At the War Memorial in Kimberley, bronze metal plates are being carried away and sold for scrap on a daily basis. Vagrants are sleeping at the monument and leaving a mess. Dr David Morris of the McGregor museum is fighting a losing battle to stop the destruction of the monument. Last Friday

somebody saw that a few people are pushing a trolley with a heavy bronze plate containing the names of soldiers who died in the First and Second World War. He informed the Police who recovered the plate. But Dr Morris says he is fighting a losing battle. Everyday something else is missing from the memorial.



The memorial was erected in 1928 and contains the names of 400 men hailing from Kimberley who died in the First World War. It was unveiled by 4 women who either lost 2 sons in the war or a son and a husband – 28000 people attended the unveiling. More names of men who died in the Second World War were added at a later stage. Remember the memorial is in honour of men who gave their life to basically defend England and allies. All of whom founded the liberal western political system, the same system which has forsaken the white minority in South Africa as if we never existed.

Did all these men die for nothing? That is the question.

## SAAMS IN NEED:

SATURDAY CITIZEN “Flights of fantasy take wing - Quell your wanderlust at the SAA Museum.” Many of our members are or have been members of the SAA Museum Society. The Chairman of that Society, John (Jaws” Austin-Williams, writes: “Many thanks for the chat, much appreciated. As mentioned, it was brought to my attention this past Saturday that attendance by our “workforce” (retired technically oriented folk – read our aircraft repair and maintenance team) is dwindling simply because they cannot afford the fuel to travel to and from the museum on a regular basis - our “Workdays” have traditionally been Wednesdays and Saturdays.

For a number of years now the museum has sponsored one tank of fuel per volunteer worker per month. With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant fall off in “feet” through the museum we have had to severely curtail expenses and ensure we have money for the absolute essential bills each month. I’m hoping that, as per our chat, you would be able to find a sponsor or two in order to be able to assist with petrol money. As promised below is the link to the article in the Saturday Citizen, 6 February.

<https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/the-citizen-gauteng/20210206/282664690074654>

## MEMBERS WRITE:

Good morning Gentlemen. Ramblings is most certainly appreciated, and a bright diversion from what is now becoming a long and very tedious lockdown. I trust you are all well and enjoying the odd dram or two. Kind regards Ken de Goede.

Good morning, Once again my sincere thanks for the latest “Ramblings”. It is already in my “best read” category and a valuable source of the truth when it comes to Current Affairs. Not long after Ramblings started, I submitted an article regarding a missing plane (Shackleton) in the same area and your current item regarding the Malaysian plane has triggered the attached item that you may or may not feel is worth repeating. Thank you all once again for Ramblings and all the hard work that goes into it. Very best regards, John Page

THE SPACE THREAT- Prompted by the “Space Command” piece in the last Ramblings, Dave Evans writes: Your item on Air Commodore Godfrey’s appointment to head the RAF’s ‘Space Command’ prompted some ramblings from me which you may wish to use. They are 'solid' whatever you may

feel of the 'scaremonger' aspect. Humanity is a lot more vulnerable at the moment than the very large majority of us realise. Most of us are totally dependent on electricity – as South Africans have become increasingly aware with the Eskom problems, and on top of that, dependent on the electricity powered IT environment – particularly the internet. One thing we get exposed to are solar flares known as Carrington events, as a guy called Carrington happened to be watching the sun with a telescope and saw the last really serious one to hit us in 1859. There was very little in the way of electric infrastructure back then, but it hit the American telegraph network spectacularly – several stations burst into flame and I think one operator who happened to be touching the wrong bit at the wrong time was killed. The Northern Lights – which you normally have to go to Alaska to see, were visible in Texas for three days! If we got one now and the wrong 'first world' parts of the planet happened to be facing the sun when it hit, it is thought by some scientists that the high voltage electric transmission networks would act as perfect aerials for it, and every connected step-down transformer would burn out totally, just for a start! Do I need to say that there is not a full 'America's' worth of backup spares - they think maybe 10% if they're lucky, and to manufacture more, guess what - you need electricity! Everything else electric powered with no generators would also stop, like all the petrol pumps... Quite close to a real 'end of the world' scenario! And we missed another one by a week or two a couple of years ago – the flare went through where the planet had been recently... The astronomers think there's about one a century which comes more or less our way, but they are impossible to predict, and we apparently get a few minutes warning only: the light doesn't arrive that long before the 'flare' itself.... And then on top of that, we have the dependency on our high-tech world – that giant, probably Russian, 'hack' that seems to have got into most of the western world's large corporate computers, including all over the US defence system, a few weeks ago, is a small example. And in situations such as that one, which epitomised the view, the hackers are normally streets ahead of the defenders. Watch this space! What Air Commodore Godfrey's gang are supposed to be doing is equipping the UK military to both attack and defend that kind of war. There is no doubt whatsoever that the first steps in any major war now will be 'cyber' and will probably wipe out the entire internet practically immediately. How much of it will be backed up with generators? Who knows? I fear nowhere near enough. The up side to all this is that living in Africa, with infrastructure as (un)sophisticated as ours, the consequences would possibly be a lot smaller...!!

#### ASTONISHINGLY BEAUTIFUL MORNINGS WITH ALL THE RAIN IN CLARENS



## CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Ten months, 329 days later, this is the forty- sixth weekly Newsheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (preferably not on the antics of Ministers (various) or NCCC!) that will help us all to keep in contact and entertained through the lockdown. Thanks again to all those who have contributed and continue to do so! We will use contributions progressively as we move upwards and onwards....

Please continue to take care – we've made it so far – enjoy the relaxation of prohibition and restaurants re-opening – but continue to keep safe in these incredibly troubled times: wash your hands, cover your face, make space, avoid gatherings and remember that all this, too, shall pass..... We'll keep you posted on resuming lunches when we can, and further developments at Wanderers as they resume services.

So, let's hear from you...Please continue to send your suggestions or contributions to: [bookings@rafoc.org](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org)

## TAILPIECE:

For those who may be hurting their minds in trying to remember where the opening quotation comes from - it's Shakespeare, Macbeth declaims:

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
 To the last syllable of recorded time;  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing."

Fun Fact: Valentine's Day was created by a woman who didn't get what she wanted for Christmas....

Drinking wine at home is much better than a bar because you can wear your pyjamas and there is no last call....

Join the two-day challenge! No alcohol on February 30 and 31!

If there's one thing that this year has taught me, it's that I have an average temperature of 36 degrees.

Nice quote from Simon Brown on Business Day TV - - worth remembering. He got it from his compliance officer when talking about people crossing-the-line in business :-  
 'If you can see the line - - - you are too close'.

## A SCOTTISH GOLF STORY

John, who lived in the north of England, decided to go golfing in Scotland with his buddy, Sean. They loaded up John's minivan and headed north. After driving for a few hours, they got caught in a terrible blizzard. So, they pulled into a nearby farm and asked the attractive lady who answered the door if they could spend the night. 'I realize it's terrible weather out there and I have this huge house all to myself, but I'm recently widowed,' she explained, 'and I'm afraid the neighbours will talk if I let you stay in my house.' 'Please don't worry,' John said. 'We'll be happy to sleep in the barn and if the weather breaks, we'll be gone at first light.' The lady agreed, and the two men found their way to the barn and settled in for the night. Come morning, the weather had cleared, and they got on their way.

They enjoyed a great weekend of golf. About nine months later, John got an unexpected letter from an attorney. It took him a few minutes to figure it out, but he finally determined that it was from the attorney of that attractive widow he had met on the golf weekend. He dropped in on his friend Sean and asked, "Sean, do you remember that good-looking widow from the farm we stayed at on our golf holiday in Scotland about 9 months ago?" 'Yes, I do,' said Sean. 'Did you, er, happen to get up in the middle of the night, go up to the house and pay her a visit?' 'Well, um, yes!' Sean said, a little embarrassed about being found out, 'Yes I have to admit that I did.' 'And did you happen to give her my name instead of telling her your name?' Sean's face turned beet red and he said, 'Yeah look, I'm sorry, I'm afraid I did. Why do you ask?' 'She just died and left me everything.'

**MATT**



**MATT**



*The bride may now place the swab in the groom's nose...'*



## SOME PIGS CAN FLY:

Captain Karl Jensen sent in this true story:

Once again Ramblings was a great read and the effort that is expended for its production is obviously appreciated by so many of us RAFOC members. Thank you. Apropos your comment in the RAFOC Ramblings # 45...' There were 2186 sheep on board a Singapore Airlines plane that was forced to make an emergency landing due to the amount of uncontrolled farts issued....'

We had a similar and real incident in SAA when a Boeing 747-400 departed Heathrow for Johannesburg fully loaded with passengers, freight and fuel for the 11-hour non-stop flight. Among the freight, were costly 64 stud pigs destined for a South African pork producer properly contained for the flight. By my reckoning, the mass of the aircraft and its cargo would have been about 220-240,000Kgs. The fuel load would have been about 120,000Kgs making a total of 340-360,000Kgs. The maximum landing weight of our 747s was 287,000Kgs. (The editor will probably require a short exam to ensure that you have absorbed these statistics.)

The 747-400, under the command of Captain Roy Boucher, set sail uneventfully and dead-on time as was the modus operandi of the airline at the time. During the climb to cruise altitude and nearing the coastline of France, the smell of pig manure - I take all readers are familiar with this stench - permeated the flight deck. The normal calm on the flight deck was suddenly interrupted by a cargo fire alarm bell and red warning light. The procedure for dealing with this event was to silence the alarm, determine the cargo hold where the alarm was activated, isolate the hold by shutting off air conditioning to that hold and then pressing the fire extinguisher button. This action discharges a large bottle of freon gas into that hold. The freon prevents further combustion by replacing the oxygen containing air in the hold and instantly cooling the fire. Freon was widely used as the refrigerant gas in domestic refrigerators until the world became conscious of the hole forming in the atmospheric ozone layer at the North and South Poles. If you have ever had a whiff of freon from a defective refrigerator, you would understand that it constricts your breathing instantly and painfully.

As the extinguisher discharged into the hold, there was a cacophony of noise from the panic stricken and suffocating pigs. Obviously, an emergency was declared to ATC and the aircraft had to turn back to London where emergency services would be prepared for assistance. After a short while, fortunately the fire alarm light went out. The total mass of the aircraft was approximately 60 tons higher than the structural limit for landing. This required jettisoning excess fuel to reach that weight. At a discharge rate of 2,600 kgs/minute, this took another 23 minutes. On touchdown back at Heathrow, with all emergency service vehicle lights flashing like the Christmas decorations in Oxford Street, there was another half-hearted stampede in the cargo hold as the surviving pigs were subjected to another blast of freon. The 747-400 is a two-pilot operation. The first extinguishant discharge provides 3 hours of fire protection and then the 2nd bottle is discharged or automatically on touch-down.

The cargo was off-loaded, and passengers disembarked normally at the terminal. There was no actual fire. All livestock, pets etc are supposed to be loaded in the rear cargo-hold which is pressurised and air-conditioned. Livestock may not be loaded into the forward cargo-hold which is non-life supporting although airconditioned. The airflow through the forward hold on the 747-400 is used for cooling the large array of computers and instruments on the flight deck. Now our late pigs also rid themselves of used food and the fumes from this discharge give off flammable methane gas. The fire detection system provides nucleic particle detection including hydro-carbons and methane is a hydrocarbon. The alarm and procedure followed by the crew was correct in all respects.

The time of the original take-off time precluded an en route stop or a 2nd segment to comply with the operating crew flight and duty time regulations. 260 passengers had to be transported and accommodated with full board overnight at hotels while a 10-hour stop was required. 60 tons of fuel had been jettisoned and the extinguishant had to be recharged. Parking fees at Heathrow I am told, were £400 per hour. There was also the cost of replacing the stud pigs at enormous expense.

The person/s responsible for loading the unfortunate animals in the wrong hold was held to account. After this very costly incident, it became incumbent on the Captain, when checking the pre-departure load sheet, that the nature of the cargo was checked and that is was loaded not only to ensure the correct balance of the aircraft, but in the correct compartment. I imagine the claim against the



insurers was not insignificant. Hopefully, this saga also helps one understand that there is more to flying an airliner than meets the eye.

A comment made by John Berks at Radio 702 after the incident was 'if they had continued to Johannesburg, they would have had a tail wind so to speak'.