



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 140 9th DECEMBER 2022

GREETINGS:

Week 140... Thunderstorms, hail and floods... beginning of the end of another tumultuous year, 2022... Stage 6 loadshedding – South Africa at a tipping point?... A week of high drama sparked by the leakage of the special Section 89 report on Phala Phala and the subsequent antics of the ANC NEC... skulduggery afoot... Cyril won't go... Phala Phala: "It's all political," says Sudanese businessman - who now wants refund... 82% non-payment of SABC TV Fees – wonder why?... Walus released on parole... combination of failures by the municipal, provincial and national government left a hospital without water, electricity or cellphone signal... Babita Deokaran flagged network of lovers, friends and co-workers 'fleecing' public purse... David Mabuza reported to NPA in R35bn 'land scam'... Bok star Nkosi found after 3 weeks...

Sussexes threaten to derail US Royal visit... Harry and Meghan demoted on Royal Website... all is not what it seems in their Netflix trailer... Christmas travelers face holiday flight strike chaos... Sunak pledges tough new laws to combat strikes... UK's first coal mine in 30 years in Cumbria... Ukraine – massive Russian attack "imminent"... Putin's "Axis of Evil" crumbling fast... Ukraine war exposes Britain's out-of-date artillery... Iranian suicide drones don't work in the cold... US delivers more NASAMS air defence systems... Kyiv's successes due to rapid tech integration... Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov says United States and NATO are direct participants in Ukraine war... War may be a "long-term thing," says Putin... China's zero-Covid policy on brink... "nothing un-Christian" about stopping small boats crossing Channel... England's 500+ stunning first day in Pakistan sets record... Wonders of the World Cup continue to amaze..

ADVANCED TACTICAL LEADERS:



Personnel from the RAF have graduated from the Advanced Tactical Leadership Course (ATLC) held at Al Dhafra Air Base in the UAE.

At a ceremony held in the Armed Forces Officers Club in Abu Dhabi, the three participants from the RAF were presented with their certificates and congratulated by the Commander of the UAE Air Force and Air Defence, Maj Gen Staff Pilot, Ibrahim Nasser Mohamed Al Alawi.

The graduation comes at the end of five weeks of intense mission planning and flying which saw nearly 900 sorties flown and 1200 flying hours completed. During the course the graduating RAF pilot led multi-national Large Force Employment missions, worked alongside Coalition partners and demonstrated their ability to lead and fly with their contemporaries in advanced aerial combat in a contested environment. The course was attended by 10 nationalities, including the UAE, United States, Australian, German, Omani, French, Hellenic and Royal Air Forces, deploying around 45 aircraft and 500 personnel. "Today we are here to reflect not just the achievements of the Air Forces and Air Defence but also the achievements of our graduates. We thank those who have given their support to another successful course, having flown 897 sorties, more sorties than any previous Advanced Tactical Leadership Course. I applaud you all for supporting the course despite ongoing operations and commitments ... many of your personnel will now join these operations. Advanced Tactical Leadership Course 32 has seen modifications to ensure it remains current, critical and challenging. You can be truly proud; this is a very tough course and you have met the challenges". Brigadier Staff Pilot Khalid Al Marzouqi, UAE Air Warfare Centre Commander

COMMAND OF THE AIR:



A U.S. Air Force E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System pulls away from a U.S. Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker after refuelling.

DUBLIN - A senior NATO official has cast a withering judgment on Russia's air power capabilities, claiming that Moscow has vastly inferior ISR-led strike capabilities compared to the alliance, and inadequate targeting processes to exploit intelligence data. Air Marshal Johnny Stringer of the UK's Royal Air Force, who serves as Deputy Commander of NATO's Allied Air Command, offered the assessment during a November 3rd speech on the war in Ukraine, hosted by the Royal United Services Institute, a UK defence and security think tank. Russia's illegal occupation of its neighbour that began in February has moved to an attritional phase with Moscow consistently unable to achieve air dominance and increasing signs that renewed Ukrainian resistance is causing concern for President Vladimir Putin. A new reliance on Iranian loitering munitions, as well as the decision to draft 300,000 reservists and force untrained civilians to join the war, have all been generally seen as examples of desperation and a failing military strategy on Putin's part. Open-source reports and videos widely shared on social media have also consistently documented Russian helicopters being shot down at close range and low altitude, suggesting Soviet era aircraft - often lacking modern defensive aid suites - are unfit for actual combat operations. "The transformation in US and NATO air power over the last five decades has no equivalent in the VKS [Russia's air force], nor do the Russians have anything like the ISR led strike capabilities of NATO Air Forces, nor the targeting processes to exploit them," he said. He added that multi-domain integration of NATO assets will "continue to underpin how we fight," and suggested intelligence sharing by alliance members in support of Ukraine had reached an "unprecedented" level. "Within an hour of Putin's forces crossing the [Ukrainian] border a planned deployment of multiple combat

air patrols were sent to protect and assure NATO's Eastern Flank," said Stringer. Since then, he confirmed that the air patrols have been "tailored" in order to maintain NATO's deterrence posture. Moving to other "lessons" that should be taken under consideration by the alliance and European air forces, he spoke of a need to defend against a wider "span" of threats from those seen in previous conflicts, ranging from "\$500 weaponized drones" to hypersonic glide vehicles. "Within this [spectrum of threats] sits a raft of highly capable fighter aircraft, surface to air missile systems and surface based radars and electronic warfare capability," explained Stringer. "Throughout two decades of counterinsurgency wars, air and space were seen as uncontested and secure free goods. That was a temporary if welcomed state of affairs, but it is no longer the case." He also spoke of the exceptionally fast pace with which weapons have been transferred, placed in the hands of Ukrainian forces and used to strike Russian targets. On that front, Stringer specifically referenced the "eight-week" time frame that saw US AM88 High Speed Radiation Missiles be successfully integrated on Ukrainian Air Force MiG-29 and Su-27 fighter jets. Stringer also said that a "focused innovation" approach was largely responsible for Kyiv's successes against Russia, including the use of Elon Musk's Starlink satellite service and integration of "small, medium and big tech" to create C2 and ISR capabilities by app. (*Breaking Defence*)

B21 RAIDER:



PALMDALE, Calif. - on Friday 2 December 2022, in a striking illustration of the "big tech" that Air Marshal Stringer was referring to in his talk to RUSI, Northrop Grumman finally pulled the cover off the first B21 Raider aircraft, revealing the Air Force's newest stealth bomber to the world during a once-in-a-generation roll out ceremony. After brief opening remarks by Northrop CEO Kathy Warden, who said the plane "will be the backbone of US air power" and represented a "new era in technology for national defense," the gauzy silver veil was literally withdrawn to swelling orchestral music. Backlit by blue and white lights, the B-21 then was towed halfway out of its hangar, likely to ensure that sensitive design elements in the back of the aircraft remain hidden. A flying wing similar to the B-2 - but perhaps appearing more like a flying saucer out of a 1950s sci-fi movie - the B-21 design exhibited some marked differences from its immediate predecessor, including inlets that are flusher to the body of the jet and smaller windows. The new bomber already boasted Air Force markings, including a "0001" indicating its status as first of a series and the "ED" for its future home - Edwards Air Force Base. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, speaking in front of the plane and somewhat dwarfed by it, touted its capabilities. "The B-21 looks imposing, but what's under the frame and the space-age coatings is even more impressive," he said, highlighting the bomber's range, stealth and durability. "Even the most sophisticated air defense systems will struggle to detect the B-21 in the sky." Speaking of the aircraft's range, Austin hinted that it could be even longer than the B-2s, B-1s and B-52s that make up the Air Force's legacy bomber fleet. "No other long-range bomber can match its efficiency. It won't need to be based in-theater, and it won't need logistical support to

hold any target at risk," he said. Echoing Warden's remarks to *Breaking Defence* before the ceremony, Austin highlighted the technological adaptability of the bomber, designed to be easily upgraded. "The Raider is designed to deliver both conventional and nuclear munitions with formidable precision," he said. "So as the United States continues to innovate, this bomber will be able to defend our country with weapons that haven't even been invented yet." The B-21 seen today is the first test article to roll off the production line, with five other bombers in some stage of production at Northrop's facilities at the USAF's secretive Plant 42. After wrapping up ground testing, which will include powering its systems on and off and conducting taxi tests, the B-21 is scheduled to make its first flight in 2023 before being transferred to Edwards Air Force Base some 20 miles northeast. (*Breaking Defence*)

THE PLATINUM ORCHARD AT ST MAWGAN:



Perched high on the steep Cornish cliffs overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, RAF St Mawgan stands alone, surrounded by rolling hills, babbling brooks, high moors and ancient forests. The miles of golden sands which fringe this empty stretch of the North Cornish coast are quiet for much of the year, free from the hustle and bustle of summer tourists with only the core crew of local surfers and dog walkers braving the elements. This is a wild space; a remote and rocky peninsular that is battered for much of the year by the full force of whatever the North Atlantic can throw at it.

It is this raw diversity of landscapes, the blustery but temperate climate and the fragile ecosystems which ensure that RAF St Mawgan remains one of the most important locations for biodiversity and the fight against climate change in the region. The ecosystems at RAF St Mawgan have proved to be extremely important for several species experiencing significant decline. The camp is now one of the only locations in the South West which has been designated as a hedgehog release site (seeing Station personnel and Airplay children working with Newquay's Prickles and Paws Hedgehog Rescue), in an attempt to halt the dramatic decline of numbers in the wild. The Station is also an important location on the map in creating an uninterrupted band of wild space around the Cornish coast for bees which are suffering a similar decline. The Beelines project, which is driven through the invertebrate conservation trust Buglife, is a crucial step in protecting pollinators, and RAF St Mawgan is a key location in supporting the charity's targets. Plans are afoot to create a special commemorative St Mawgan Honey, to mark the 80th anniversary of the formation of the Station. Following the end of the Cold War the Station's future looked uncertain, and with a diminishing workforce, large swathes of the camp's sprawling estate have been left to be recaptured by nature. Now though, RAF St Mawgan is enjoying a resurgence in the role it plays in protecting the UK, with large scale projects and investment destined to catapult it back into the limelight, protecting the western approaches from threats in the air and at sea – both above and below the surface. It is at the very heart of this transformation though, that the base is quietly experiencing a green revolution on a scale unprecedented in its 80 years of operation, one which has significant importance for the whole of Cornwall and beyond. Fully supported through a network of the Station's green-fingered volunteers, 370 apple, plum, pear, quince and cherry trees are being carefully planted across the estate as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative; a legacy of the late Queen Elizabeth II which has been championed and further extended by King Charles III. It is clear though from the myriad of faces poised expectantly above each sapling being carefully lowered into its new home in the ground, that it's not just the environmentally minded volunteers on the Station who are making this success happen. Dotted amongst the various uniforms are representatives from The Eden Project's

National Wildflower Centre, Cornwall Council's 'Forest for Cornwall', VIVO Defence Services, and other environmental groups. As the sun starts to dip below the adjacent sea cliffs, there is a flurry of activity to corral the volunteers around the last remaining cherry tree which lies next to its neatly dug hole and new Queen's Green Canopy plaque, proudly marking the orchard as a legacy of the Platinum Jubilee. Councillor Martyn Alvey, Cornwall Council's Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Climate Change, unveiled the plaque. *(RAF News)*

THE ECRS MK2 RADAR FOR TYPHOONS:



The ECRS Mk2 is an all-new active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar to provide Typhoons with enhanced electronic warfare capabilities. It shares no overlaps in hardware with the original Typhoon Captor radar, nor with the other AESA-equipped Captor-E variants such as the ECRS Mk0 for Kuwait and Qatar or the ECRS Mk1 for Germany and Spain. However, the new radar will have a common human-machine interface. Apart from the RAF Typhoon, the ECRS Mk2 will also lay the groundwork for the next generation of radar which will be fitted in the nose of the planned fifth-generation Tempest fighter jet. A remarkable feature of this radar is that it uses a 're-positioner' mounted on a single rotating joint, as opposed to the double swashplate arrangement of the Captor-E. Using a re-positioner enables the radar to be tilted on either side, offering a much broader 'look' angle beyond 90 degrees off the centerline of the jet. This can provide significant tactical advantages in specific scenarios, for example, if the fighter has to perform a 'beaming' manoeuvre to evade detection by an enemy fighter. Beaming involves a fighter turning 90 degrees away (perpendicular) to an enemy's pulse doppler radar array, which uses a doppler shift to measure a target's relative velocity. It filters out the low relative velocity objects, like ground clutter and the 'beaming fighter,' which are not moving towards or away from the enemy radar. This is a beneficial tactic when the radar is positioned at a higher altitude than the beaming aircraft and trying to lock up its target in a look-down-shoot-down scenario where ground clutter is prevalent. Whereas, in the case of a typically fixed AESA radar or mechanically scanned array, performing a beaming manoeuvre would mean the fighter jet is losing its radar picture of the enemy it is trying to evade. In the absence of third-party sensors feeding this data to the beaming fighter via data link, its pilot loses sight of the tactical situation when it is most important. Even worse is that any radar-guided missile fired from the now-beaming fighter will not be able to receive mid-course updates. Those missiles' chances of killing will reduce, particularly if fired initially at long range. This is where a re-positioner comes in, which can steer the radar antenna on either side, providing a far greater sensor field of view, and enabling lower detectability due to enhanced situational awareness for the pilot in case of beaming manoeuvres. The flight tests of the ECRS Mk2 aboard a Eurofighter test aircraft are expected to take place in the final quarter of 2023, with the plan to realize the initial operating capability (IOC) by 2030. The selected testbed Typhoon ZK355 is already at BAE Systems' Wharton facility undergoing preparations. The prototype ECRS Mk2 radar is expected to be delivered to Wharton by the end of 2022, and a full system critical design review will be completed for the production radar.

RUSSIAN WITHDRAWAL:



Russia retreated from towns on the opposite bank of the Dnipro River from Kherson city, the first official Ukrainian report of its forces withdrawing from what is now the main front line in the south, on 1 December. "A decrease in the number of Russian soldiers and military equipment is observed in the settlement of Oleshky," the Ukrainian military said. "Enemy troops were withdrawn from certain settlements of the Kherson oblast and dispersed in forest strips along the section of the Oleshky - Hola Prystan highway." They suggested that Moscow's best-trained professional troops had already left the area. Until now the military has stopped short of saying Russian forces were leaving towns. Although Russian forces have been pushed back, officials added that Russia had intensified shelling across the river, knocking out power again in Kherson.

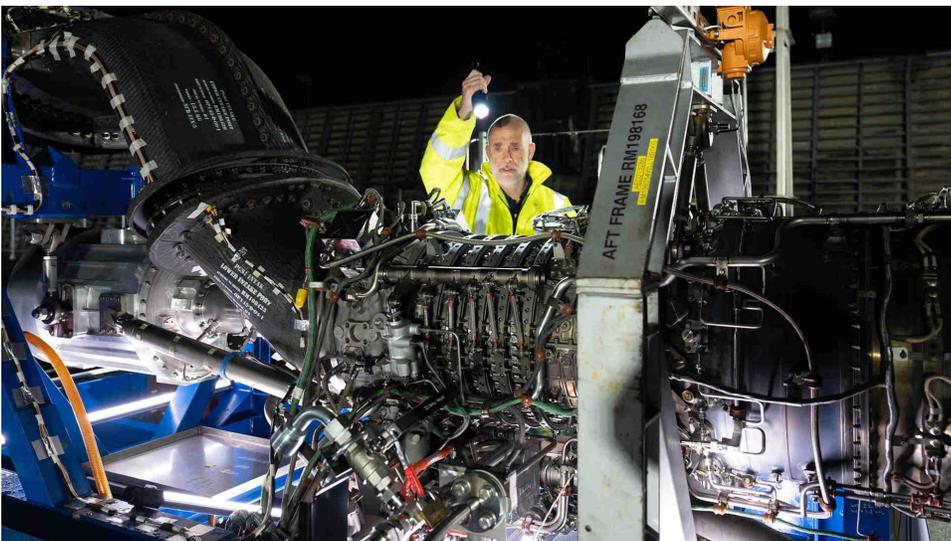
REVISED SA DEFENCE POLICY:



South Africa urgently needs a realistic defence review that steps away from the pretense of conventional operations and external defence and focuses on peacekeeping, border security, public order policing and infrastructure protection. This is according to a respected South African defence and security analyst in response to Defence Minister Thandi Modise's thinking on possible utilisation of soldiers to safeguard national assets such as power and rail. Jakkie Cilliers, the Head of African

Futures and Innovation at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in Pretoria, said a possible infrastructure protection tasking reflects the deterioration of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) to the point where this is all it is still capable of. While not completely writing off what Modise said at the SA Army Combat Training Centre (CTC) during Exercise Vuk'uhlome last week, Cilliers points out "it's common knowledge the SANDF is in a dire state of disrepair and unable of performing many of its stated core functions." The more cynical interpretation of that specific remark by Cilliers is offset by what he terms "a more gracious" one. He views soldiers deployed to protect Eskom and Transnet assets as *"optimal use of an available asset to meet a particular challenge, leaving the lack of appropriate doctrine, training, and equipment aside"*. Modise raised the possibility of soldiers guarding assets in response to a defenceWeb question, saying the SANDF was asked to examine protection of power and rail infrastructure. "South Africa," Cilliers told defenceWeb, *"has no clear security architecture, national security doctrine or frame of reference that informs choices and trade-offs."* For example, apparently based on a classified needs assessment done by the intelligence services, the country embarked on a spanking new Border Management Agency (BMA) at great cost. And there are reports to - again - build fences along some borders. "Confusion reigns in the allocation and funding of South Africa's security establishment, never mind effective use of available funds when considering reports by the Auditor General and the Zondo Commission of Inquiry. "South Africa urgently needs a realistic defence review that steps away from the pretense of conventional operations and external defence. We need to cut our coats according to our available cloth – and formally adopt emergency security prevention and reaction, internally and regionally, as the primary function of the SANDF. "These are regional counter terrorism operations, participation in regional peacekeeping, border security, area security, public order policing, provision of a surge capacity to police, patrol and protection of maritime assets and suchlike. And then train, equip and legislate accordingly," he said adding: "police support, including emergency protection of key infrastructure should be a core, not secondary function of the SANDF, for which it is equipped and trained".
(DefenceWeb)

HYDROGEN TO THE SKIES:



In what can be considered a promising first step towards transforming the aviation industry to become carbon-neutral, a project led by Rolls-Royce and easyJet has successfully tested a modern-day jet engine that runs solely on hydrogen. The prototype for the experiment, which was conducted at a test facility at the Ministry of Defence Boscombe Down, U.K., was a commonly used Rolls-Royce AE-2100A regional aircraft engine. The turbine was supplied with Green Hydrogen, which was made by splitting water into its constituent components at European Marine Energy Centre in the Orkney Islands, U.K.. "We are pushing the boundaries to discover the zero carbon possibilities of hydrogen, which could help reshape the future of flight," Grazia Vittadini, chief technology officer of Rolls-Royce, in a statement. "We are delighted to announce that we have set a new aviation milestone with the world's first run of a modern aero engine on hydrogen. The ground test used

green hydrogen created by wind and tidal power and marks a major step towards proving that hydrogen could be a zero-carbon aviation fuel of the future.” The project was inspired by the UN-backed 'Race to Zero' campaign, which aims to make the world carbon-neutral by the year 2050. “We are committed to continuing to support this ground-breaking research because hydrogen offers great possibilities for a range of aircraft, including easyJet-sized aircraft. That will be a huge step forward in meeting the challenge of net zero by 2050,” said Johan Lundgren, CEO of easyJet. Options like Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), which are derived from “renewable biomass and waste resources, have the potential to deliver the performance of petroleum-based jet fuel but with a fraction of its carbon footprint,” according to the U.S. Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

ELECTRIC VEHICLE TAX:



Following the South African launch of the Audi e-Tron range, local buyers now have over 20 electric cars to choose from, ranging from the Eleksa Citi Bug at R230 000 to the top of the range Porsche Taycan at R4 061 000. Electric cars will cost as much to run as petrol vehicles once green motorists are hit by a fresh wave of government tax rises. New figures have shown that plans to force electric vehicle drivers to pay road tax from 2025 will make them as expensive to run as petrol cars. Electric vehicles currently face import tariffs of 25% compared to the 18% paid on traditional internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles. “It makes no sense whatsoever that import duty exists on electric vehicles, except to protect big manufacturers in South Africa who refuse to transition to EVs and hybrids and keep South Africans on petrol and diesel to keep raking in fuel taxes,” said the DA’s Dean Macpherson. “While many countries offer cash incentives against the purchase of EVs, the least we could do in South Africa is reduce the cost of EVs to consumers by a massive 25%. This would be a non-cash incentive which would be manageable by government. It is vital that the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition comes clean on its failed Auto Green Paper which was released on 21 May 2021. This important policy paper – which seems mostly reasonable and focused – has been pushed around for the last 18 months when it was supposed to be finalised from August 2021 and then presented to Cabinet for adoption.” Over last year 387,125 vehicles, worth R148 billion, along with R53.7 billion worth of automotive components, were exported from South Africa to 151 countries. The automotive industry had a record year producing 631,983 units domestically. Mike Mabasa, the chief executive officer of NAAMSA said, South Africa’s manufacturing sector needs to start producing and selling more electric vehicles (EVs), or risk losing out on billions of rands in exports. He said that the European Union, with exports of R129.7 billion, or 64.3% of the total export value of R201.7 billion, was South Africa’s main export region for cars. By 2030, Naamsa expects 40% of all vehicle sales in Europe to be EVs. This could increase to 80% by 2040. “It is clear that we cannot ignore EVs if we want to continue doing business with Europe. It will have a huge impact on the country if we lose R201 billion in export earnings a year.”

MEMBERS NEWS:

DR JOHN LEDGER sends his latest update: “Dear family and friends, Well, who would have believed it! All those false hopes of going home turned into a litany of hopelessness as the battle with the hospital-acquired bacterial infection swung forwards and back. The routine misery of being woken at 4 am every morning for a blood sample was followed by the 6 am ritual to measure temperature, blood pressure and oxygen levels. The infection markers from the blood samples indicated a change of antibiotic, of a type so strong that it must be given intravenously over seven days, meaning you are not going anywhere, never mind sneaking out of the side door to catch an Uber and just going home. My physical condition also varied wildly at this time. There were days when I could skip up the fire escapes to show my physio the intricacies of the solar hot water system and the solar PV system (expensive Fronius inverters) installed by the hospital. These were followed by days when I could not get out of bed, wracked with pain from various long needles thrust into the soles of my feet, my knees and my hips, by the innumerable enemies that I have made during my frenzied life. Dr Tilley said it was acute gout and treated me accordingly. He also said he would send me to a rheumatologist. I felt like a very old car that was being repaired bit by bit, as and when the mechanics could get around to it, in between drinking lots of cold Castle quarts. I was wheeled in my bed to the radiologists for more scans. I was wheelchaired into the ancient passages and chambers of the old Kenridge Hospital. to see a very nice eye specialist. I was worried that I could not see clearly, but she assured me after two lots of tests on space-age instruments that at worst I was showing symptoms of AMD, or Age-related Macular Degeneration, which eventually affects all of us. Another box ticked... I was wheelchaired three times into the Kenridge rooms of Dr Manga, the heart specialist, a man with a nice sense of humour, but of few words. Indeed he never told me if there was anything wrong with my heart, so I shall assume it must be working OK, otherwise he would have said something? Ja Nee, BOET? And then there was a Monty Python-like ride in the dark and the drizzle to see the rheumatologist, by wheelchair and electric golf cart. First stop: wrong address. Second stop: Dr Thompson not a rheumatologist. Back to the ward. Johnson, not Thomson! Back into the parking lot in the dark and drizzle, with my wheelchair jockey muttering “Thomson... Thomson... Thomson...” Eventually, at last, delivered to the rheumatologist who is not Dr Thomson, not Dr Johnson but Dr Zitha. She suspects some kind of arthritis that is torturing my bones, and next morning I take a tiny red pill that seems to make a difference. Anyway, the good news starts swinging my way, the infection marker starts dropping and on Friday 2 December I am on my way home. Words cannot describe that feeling! I have a sack full of tablets to take, morning and night, and I am going to need a while to recover my strength. The sheer sense of being at home and looking into the lush green garden is joyous in its simplicity. I am extremely grateful to all those that cared for me during the dark days. And to my dear wife Amy for the trekking to the hospital and back and for keeping the lights burning at home. To all of you that have sent messages and held me in your thoughts, thank you. With love and best wishes, John.”

BRUCE PRESCOTT writes: **Boeing** announced the last B747 has left the widebody factory for test flights before being delivered to **Atlas Air** (US) in early 2023. The aircraft is a B747-8F. The end of a great era for which I am so grateful, having shared a part in the 747’s life and known its late Chief Designer as a personal friend.

CHEERS FOR NOW:

No advanced tactical leaders in SA, apparently... country teeters on brink over Phala Phala...

Ladies Christmas Lunch was well attended but service was a bit chaotic, and the background noise was high due to many other functions. Anne Samson gave a good talk on the origins of the Comrades Marathon.

Big storms in Joburg this week caused further chaos and localised flooding. The annual exodus of the “builders holiday” is due to start next week, although Durban is no longer a desirable destination due to the state of its beaches and public amenities.

Fuel prices up again although diesel price dropped. Our next function will be the Ordinary Lunch on the second Friday, 13 January 2023, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers. We look forward to the return of the Aviation Quiz!

If you are travelling over Christmas, please travel safely. The Committee wishes all RAFOC members a safe and Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

STOP PRESS:

Extract from Ramblings # 139

Squadron Leader George Leonard "Johnny" Johnson, DFM MBE, (born 25 November 1921) is a retired RAF officer who is the last surviving original member of No 617 Sqn RAF and of Operation Chastise, the "Dambusters" raid of 1943. We have just had information that he has died in-between these Ramblings. An Obituary will be included in the next issue.

TAILPIECE:

Free Piano:

You may have heard there's been an increase in the volume of free piano scams circulating, especially by email. What to look for: You'll get an email from a stranger, usually someone with a common name, like "Sarah" or "Mary". The email states someone died and that they would like to find a good home for the deceased piano, a used Yamaha baby grand, specifically a G2. The scam has been around since at least 2010. "Hi, Trust you are well? I want to give away my late husband's Yamaha baby grand piano to a passionate instrument lover, so please let me know if you will take it or have someone who will care for it. Regards, Sarah Colton"

The catch.....You pay the shipping cost. Sounds almost too good to be true, right? The thing is, you will never receive a piano. The goal is to get you to send the scammers a payment using non-refundable money orders, or gift cards. After that, you will never hear from them again.

Need more convincing? Here's the full story of what happened to one poor lady at this link:

www.reddit.com/r/piano/comments/l5najh/how_i_was_almost_scammed_by_a_free_yamaha_g2_baby/

New Lingerie:

A man walks into Victoria's Secret to purchase some see-through lingerie for his wife as a 20th Anniversary present. He is shown several possibilities that range from \$50 to \$150 in price, the more see-through, the higher the price. He opts for the sheerest item, pays the \$150 and takes the lingerie home. He presents it to his wife and asks her to go upstairs, put it on and model it for him. Upstairs the wife sees the price tag he forgot to remove and thinks "I have an idea. It's so see-through that it might as well be nothing. I won't put it on. I'll do the modeling naked, return it tomorrow, get a \$150 refund and get myself something I really want." So, she appears naked at the top of the stairs and strikes a pose. Seeing her, the husband exclaims, "that's weird, it wasn't that wrinkled in the store..."

MATT



*In the Netflix documentary
you're accused of scheming
and you're called a
racist and a bully'*

MATT



*'If you advance up the pitch
in small rubber boats the
French won't try to stop you'*

Get your relatives speaking to one another again by sending a heartfelt Christmas card with a picture of your family with an extra child nobody knows.

My kids and grandkids keep laughing about me losing my memory.

They won't be laughing at Christmas when there's no eggs under the tree!



A Woman Sends a Text to Her Husband:

Truth Inside Of You

Wife: "Honey, don't forget to buy BREAD when you come home from work and your girlfriend Valerie greets you."

Husband: Who is Valerie?

Wife: Nobody, I just wanted you to answer, to have confirmation that you saw my text.

Husband: But I'm with Valerie right now, I thought you saw me?

Wife: What??! Where are you?

Husband: Near the bakery.

Wife: Wait, I'm coming right now!

After 5 minutes, his wife sends a message:

Wife: I'm at the bakery, where are you?

Husband: I'm at work. Now that you're at the bakery, buy the bread!



BEWARE THE IDES OF WOKE...

There is possibly no more graphic illustration of the insidious dangers posed by the Woke brigade, than the recent crises in the RAF...

The UK has more state-of-the-art F-35 fast jets than pilots because of problems with flying training, the defence secretary has revealed.

The Ministry of Defence only has just over 20 of the next generation £100m warplanes but cannot even man all of them, Ben Wallace confirmed.

"It's a shambles," a former Royal Air Force officer said.

Speaking to a committee of Peers, the defence secretary described the situation as "quite a challenge", claiming that the deficit in pilots was also because the F-35 Lightning aircraft is new.

However, the Ministry of Defence formally announced its intention to buy the jets - a programme led by the United States and the US defence giant Lockheed Martin - back in 2006, and the first British pilot flew one in 2010.

The defence secretary conceded that the military's flying training - beset by delays, with pilots waiting up to eight years to qualify instead of the target time of between two-to-three years - was a key factor.

"Our pilot pipeline is not in a place I would want it to be," Mr Wallace said.

He had instructed Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, the head of the Royal Air Force, to make fixing the chronic problems with pilot training his only priority more than three years ago. Yet - as revealed by Sky News over the summer - it is still in crisis.

The F-35 is one of the UK's most expensive and coveted equipment programmes, with the jets seen as bringing a new level of capability to the armed forces because of their sophisticated radars, sensors and other pieces of covert equipment. Britain originally intended to buy 138 of the F-35 jets over time. However, at present it has only bought 27 of the aircraft.

One of them is out of use after crashing into the Mediterranean when operating from the carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, three more are in the US, leaving just 23 in the UK to be used by Royal Air Force and Fleet Air Arm pilots.

Three simultaneous crises have engulfed the Royal Air Force in as many weeks in a huge challenge for its leader, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, who has yet to break cover.

The litany of woes involves the resignation of the head of RAF recruitment over an order to offer jobs to women and ethnic minorities over white men; claims of bullying misogyny and sexual harassment in the Red Arrows; and the revelation over the state of military flying training.

Each scandal alone would have been bad enough. But together they sound serious alarm bells about the state of the service - the oldest independent air force in the world and one of the most highly regarded - under his leadership, multiple defence sources have said.

Air Chief Marshal Wigston, whose three-year stint has been extended by a year out to next summer, is alleged to believe there is a "concerted strategy" against him, sources said.

They noted that he would do better to consider the substance of the claims along with signs of poor morale among his people and waning confidence in him.

In a particularly devastating intervention, Howard Wheeldon, a defence expert and long-time, loyal supporter of the RAF, wrote in a recent article: "When it comes to morale, the Royal Air Force today is in a very bad place and that this is reasoned by the policies of one man and one man alone - Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston."

Defence sources said senior staff at RAF headquarters in High Wycombe were in a "tailspin" as they struggled to respond to multiple media revelations and follow-up queries this month.

As many as five leak inquiries have been launched and reminders issued throughout the Royal Air Force about how speaking to journalists is forbidden in a bid to clamp down on more bad news getting out.

James Heapey, the armed forces minister, did come to Air Chief Marshal Wigston's defence, saying he still had confidence in the head of the RAF.

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The top airman (aviator) himself also felt the need to issue an internal statement in response to the recruitment and diversity allegations, though he has yet to make any public remarks.

The CAS, 54, described media reports on the topic as "inflammatory" and defended the RAF's diversity goals, which include aiming to have 40% female and 20% ethnic minority recruits by 2030 - far more ambitious targets than the army and the Royal Navy.

"There is no escaping the fact that women and ethnic minorities are woefully underrepresented in the Royal Air Force," he wrote, according to a copy of the internal note, released on Friday, which has been seen by Sky News.

"That's why I make no apology for our recruitment policy doing everything possible to attract recruits from under-represented groups. As a leadership team, we are unanimous in our support for our recruiters taking positive action to recruit from the widest pool of talent across the UK and we will continue to do so within the law."

The first hint at fundamental problems within the RAF came with a piece by Sky News on 5 August, exposing the fragile state of pilot training - a core part of any air force. Leaked documents revealed an "emerging" issue with fast jet training aircraft and a "damaging drain" of flying instructors quitting for jobs in industry.

Some 347 trainees - more than half of the 596 personnel being trained, including army and navy aviators - are waiting for a slot on a flying course or are on a "refresher" course. The backlog is so grave, the RAF is considering asking up to 30 of its recruits to quit voluntarily.

It then emerged that Ben Wallace, the defence secretary, had given Air Chief Marshal Wigston the task of fixing chronic issues with the military's flying training system as his "only priority" more than two and a half years ago. He has now ordered an "internal inspection" into what is going on in an embarrassing blow for the RAF chief.

A week later, a story broke in The Sun newspaper, followed on Wednesday of this week with more detailed allegations in The Times, about a "toxic culture" within the Red Arrows. Both newspapers reported the departure of two of the RAF Aerobatic Team's nine pilots.

It was revealed that Air Chief Marshal Wigston had launched an inquiry in December into "toxic pockets" of the Red Arrows, which has documented allegations of bullying, misogyny and sexual harassment. More than 40 personnel have given evidence, including young, female recruits.

The third crisis, which triggered a much wider discussion across the country about diversity and inclusion, came with the resignation of the head of RAF recruitment over what Sky News reported

on 15 August as an “effective pause” in offering jobs to white men in favour of women and ethnic minorities, as the service struggled to hit "impossible" diversity targets.

Defence sources at the time accused Air Chief Marshal Wigston of appearing willing to compromise UK security at a time of growing threats from Russia and China in pursuit of albeit important diversity goals. The RAF has denied this is the case.

The former fighter pilot was elevated into the top air force job in July 2019 by then-defence secretary Gavin Williamson as part of a team of what were described as "transformational leaders" to head key parts of the armed services. The move was meant to be a bid effectively to skip a generation of candidates who would ordinarily have expected promotion into the various four-star posts up for grabs.

Yet, within the RAF, there appears to be a growing sense of frustration at what some personnel privately - and on occasion publicly - allege is an overly "woke" agenda being pursued by Air Chief Marshal Wigston at the expense of other priorities.

(Breaking Defence, Sky, Times and other websites)
