



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

BRYANSTON 2021

info@rafoc.org

www.rafoc.org

President:	David MacKinnon-Little
Vice Presidents:	Basil Hersov, Geoff Quick, David Lake
Chairman:	Bruce Harrison bruce@jbharrison.co.za Tel: 011 673 0291 Cell: 083 325 0025
Vice Chairman:	Jon Adams vice-chairman@rafoc.org Tel: 011 678 7702 Cell: 082 450 0616
Hon. Secretary:	Colin Ackroyd Tel: 012 942 1111 Cell: 082 800 5845
Hon. Treasurer:	Jeff Earle Tel: 011 616 3189 Cell: 083 652 1002
Committee Members:	Russell Swanborough Tel: 011 884 2611 Cell: 083 263 2740
	Karl Jensen Tel: 011 234 0598 Cell: 082 331 4652
	Jean-Michel Girard Tel: 012 667 2759 Cell: 083 660 9697
	Geoff Fish Hanke Fourie Tel: Cell: 082 553 0210
Web Master:	Rob Tannahill Tel: Cell: 082 806 6779
Almoner:	Nedbank - Melrose Arch Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063
Bank Account:	

RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 150

17th February 2023

GREETINGS:

Another wonderful week in SA...State of the Nation more like State of Destruction... Oh, what a circus, Oh, what a show... EFF predictably disrupts SONA and are physically removed – “dictatorship” says Malema-well, well, well... nest of vipers in Parliament – and live lizards in PostNet package to KZN... ANC comrades heads deeply stuck in failed ideological rut... and elsewhere... Admiral Gorshkov “Not welcome in Cape Town”... Another State of Disaster declared – flooding in 7 Provinces... Tembisa Hospital tender tycoon Vusimuzi Matlala’s brazen illegal blue-light cavalcade... West Coast “Red Tide” causes an estimated 5 tons of Rock Lobster to “walk-out”... Road carnage continues: 20 dead in N1 collision between tour bus and Cash in Transit van... KZN: 5 gunned down in Marianhill... Rapper AKA gunned down in Durban restaurant... massive cigarette smuggling from Zimbabwe – 10 vehicle convoy intercepted... Cape Town “mafia” threaten housing projects... SAAF BBJ “Inkwazi” grounded in Cape Town after towing accident damaged tail... 6000 SAPO employees face retrenchment... Kruger evacuates camps due flooding... Crocodile River rampages in Nelspruit and beyond... landslide closes N4 temporarily.

Turkiye/Syria earthquake death toll 40 000 and rising... Norfolk Island threatened by Cyclone Gabrielle... U2 spy planes show Chinese balloon unmistakably equipped for collecting intelligence... sensors recovered from wreckage... China says US flew balloons in its airspace – so there!... Putin launches new Ukraine offensive aimed at power grid... North Korea on brink of famine... UK weakening home defence capacity by Kyiv support... HMS Queen Elizabeth detects Chinese spy vessel... Britain a “no-go area for investment”... Anglo-French row over HMS Prince of Wales... Nicola Sturgeon and her agenda imploding... Amsterdam red light district bans cannabis smoking... 31 Russian tanks destroyed in Ukrainian drone attack – troops flee on foot... “the Ukrainians shot the attackers like in a shooting gallery”... Peers in uproar as few crack the nod to Coronation... Archbishop of Canterbury threatened over same-sex marriages... UEFA’s report on Champions League final chaos...

ARIZONA BALLOON BUSTER:



USA shooting down UFOs [Unidentified Floating Objects] with \$500 000 Sidewinder missiles nogal! [BHP add]. F22s first “kill”. The balloon was ultimately shot down by a Lockheed Martin F-22 Raptor from 1st Fighter Wing at Langley AFB. It was flying at 58,000ft and the balloon was at approximately 65,000ft. The AIM-9 Sidewinder shot is the Raptor’s first ‘kill’. (USAF) The F-22s involved in the shoot-down used the call signs Frank 01 and 02 in tribute to USAAS World War One flying ace and Medal of Honour recipient First Lieutenant Frank Luke Jr - better known as the ‘Arizona Balloon Buster’ by virtue of downing ten balloons in less than eight days. (USAF Museum). [Something odd about that prop? - BHP] (Credit: Royal Aeronautical Society; Sent in by Bruce Prescott.)

LIGHTNING FLYPAST MARKS MILESTONE:



A pair of Lightning stealth fighters have undertaken a flypast over Samlesbury, Lancashire.

This marks the delivery of the 1000th rear fuselage for the global F-35 Lightning II programme manufactured at the site. More than 1,500 employees work at BAE Systems’ advanced manufacturing and technology hub which manufactures the rear fuselage for every F-35 built as part of the largest defence programme in the world. In addition, over 100 tier one suppliers and numerous sub-tier suppliers also support the programme across the UK. To date over 3,000 F-35s have been ordered by 17 customers, work on the programme will continue at Samlesbury for many years to come. The RAF Lightning aircraft from 207 Squadron, RAF Marham, included the flypast in a routine training sortie. (RAF News)

EXERCISE RED FLAG:



Royal Air Force aircrew from RAF Waddington based 51 Squadron, are conducting integrated crew training flying on Exercise Red Flag from Nellis Air Base Nevada.

The aircrew have joined with United States Air Force aircrew, to fly a RC135 Rivet Joint intelligence gathering aircraft as part of the exercise. This is the first time that an integrated crew has flown on the exercise for several years and is one element of the newly expanded but long-established exercise. In addition to this integrated crew, other elements that are new for this year's exercise are a vastly increased geographical area to challenge participants to overcome what United States Air Force planners are calling the 'Tyranny of Distance'. This means that large multi engine aircraft are now fully integrated into the missions, in addition to the traditional combat air missions of previous exercises. The RAF 51 SQN detachment is led by Flight Lieutenant Wilkes, a navigator with the squadron. The RAF RC 135 Rivet Joint Aircraft are fully integrated into the United States Air Force Rivet Joint Fleet flown by the United States Air Force 55th Wing based at Offutt Air Force Base Nebraska and are part of single cycle of upgrades to develop the aircraft. In addition to ensuring the aircraft of the RAF and United States Air Force are the same, the aircrew are trained to the same standard and are therefore qualified to operate each nation's aircraft. For Exercise RED FLAG the United States Air Force Rivet Joint detachment commander is Major Marc 'Dirty' Ramos from the 343rd Reconnaissance Squadron, based at Offutt AFB. During the exercise the Rivet Joint aircrew are providing intelligence that can be passed directly to the combat fast jets of the RAF, United States Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force, United States Navy and US Marine Corps that are conducting the simulated combat missions. The intelligence gathered contributes to the understanding of the complex simulated ground-based air defence systems, as well as aggressor aircraft that are simulating a peer adversary, together with cyber and space-based threats that are being faced by the 'Blue' forces. (RAF News)

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE?

South Africa is talking to the Russian carrier Nordwind Airlines about launching direct flights from Moscow to Johannesburg and to Cape Town, according to a Swiss aviation journal.



But the plans are at risk because Nordwind is sanctioned by the US and the European Union, which has raised questions about the safety of its Boeing and Airbus fleets, according to ch-aviation.com. The journal said late last month that South Africa's ambassador to Russia, Mzuvukile Jeff Maqetuka, told the Russian state-owned news agency Sputnik that Pretoria was waiting for Nordwind's decision on whether it intended to fly the SA route. Sputnik said he told them the aim was to launch four non-stop flights a week, including one to Cape Town to boost Russian tourism. "Our transport department discussed Aeroflot flights with the Russian transport ministry, then we were informed that it had been decided that it would be Nordwind," Maqetuka was quoted as telling ch-aviation.com. The South African Department of Transport told Daily Maverick on Wednesday: "The National Department of Transport has not received any application from Nordwind to start a Russia-South Africa route. Should Nordwind submit such an application, normal processes would be followed." However, the department did not respond to the question of whether South Africa was still, or had been, in talks with Nordwind about launching the South African route. The SA Civil Aviation Authority and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation both referred all queries to the Department of Transport, which they said was the correct authority to issue licenses for foreign airlines to fly into South Africa. (*BusinessTech*)

KRUGER PARK FLOODS:



Camps and roads in the southern part of the Kruger National Park remain temporarily closed following heavy rains in the regions this week. Several guests have already been left scrambling to find alternate ways of leaving camps affected. Via a Facebook group, management has been assisting guests by posting regular updates and giving information on the situation. The South African National Parks (SANParks) said the road via Sabi River low bridge is still closed. "Staff and passengers will be escorted across the Shalati bridge on foot and shuttled with a vehicle to or from the airport. The various lodges have been advised. At this stage, we are waiting confirmation on the access to the airport via Toulon Gate and Sand River and will advise," SANParks said via a Facebook post. KNP's Acting GM: Commercial Operations Management, Hein Grobler, said the floods remain fluid, with more heavy rains anticipated on Friday. He said the teams would continue with assessments of all affected camps and roads, and updates would be communicated through social media as well as in person to the affected guests. The Park's management said the Lower Sable, Crocodile Bridge, Biyamiti and Talamati are not accessible and have been badly affected by the floods. "SANParks would like to advise guests not to use any gravel roads and to stay on the tar. Guests are further advised not to open or travel on any roads which have been closed and not to cross any low water bridges as the dangers of being washed away remain high," Grobler said. The National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) is in contact with provincial and local disaster management centers on the ground and are coordinating with all the role players as the heavy downpours continue. (*Various sources*)

LESOTHO HIGHLANDS WATER PROJECT:

Last week's article prompted this response from Tony Wadsworth, who was there:

I am an avid reader of the weekly RAFOC Ramblings and so enjoy the roundup of news sprinkled with satirical comments! I was very interested to see the article recently about the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) as I spent 4 years based in Maseru appointed by the LHDA to be the Project Manager for the Advanced Infrastructure Contracts from 1989 to 1993. I was a little disappointed by the piece as I thought it was a little "dull" and a rather statistically saturated report on what I think is a magnificent engineering marvel, and I quote from the Civil Engineers' Charter, "Directing the Forces of Nature for the Good and Convenience of Mankind" (I suppose this will have to be changed to "person kind" but I am old school!) I have many fond memories of this part of my career and the "pressures" of having to complete these 25 engineering projects financed by 11 internationally negotiated Loan Agreements within a 2½ year construction period. All these contracts (roads, bridges, housing, water treatment works, sewerage plants, construction camps and site access facilities etc.) were required to be completed prior to the start date of the main dam and tunnel contracts and had huge penalties for late completion attached to them! I refer to the LHWP as an engineering marvel due to its history, the foresight of the SA engineers (the concept was put forward in the 1950s), the perseverance from then to when the original Feasibility Study was undertaken in 1978, and then the further Feasibility Study in 1983-5. The Infrastructure Departments of the SA Government at the time (Water Affairs, Public Works, National Roads, Airports, etc.) were run by qualified Engineers and the Finance Minister was advised by qualified financiers / economists who were prepared to invest huge sums of money to prepare for and ensure that SA's scarce resources such as water and hydroelectric electricity would be protected, maintained and developed as required to meet future demands. If we hadn't gone ahead with the LHWP then, no doubt, we would have another State of Disaster this time for water! In 1986 the LHWP Treaty between Lesotho and SA was signed. Lesotho has the potential to deliver 150 m³ per second (yes per second!) yet they only need about 2 m³ per second for their own use! This is the magnitude of the LHWP! It makes good financial and environmental sense to both countries. SA gets the assurance of the availability

of 2,000 million m³ of water and Lesotho gets paid R 25 million per month (yes, every month regardless of whether SA needs to draw down on this water or not depending on El Nino or El Nina! Lesotho also gets the 75 MW of hydroelectricity most of which SA buys back! Phases 1A and 1B were completed in 2004 and Phase 2 should have started then but the present government (without the planning foresight) delayed the start until recently in October 2022! Phase 2 will provide a further 3 000 mill m³ of stored water as well as a huge 1 000 MW pumped storage electricity generation scheme! (Pity we don't have this now!!) The benefits of this LHWP, Phase 1 and later Phase 2 are enormous and will continue to protect both countries from the ravages of drought, climate change, and the environmental damage from total reliance on coal fired power generation plants. Much has been written about the "negative" aspects of the LHWP but the benefits to the Southern Africa Region far outweigh the allegations of corruption (apparently collusion between international contractors and Lesotho officials), the community compensation for relocation, displacement of graves, and the loss of accessibility between either side of the Katse reservoir. Lesotho now has improved road access from Maseru to the Katse Dam and beyond, regular and secured monthly income, job creation throughout the construction periods and continuing maintenance work, and the ever-increasing value of world class engineering. If you have the chance treat yourself to a visit to the Katse Dam and reservoir, in winter you will wonder at the icicles formed from the seeping water from the rocks, the snow and the icy cold weather... in the spring the natural flora that abounds is a wonder to behold!

Tony Wadsworth – Port Elizabeth. (Tony is Jon Adams's cousin)

ONE PLUCKY CAT:

In 1949, a British ship set sail with a black and white cat on board named Simon.



HMS Amethyst was stationed in Hong Kong. The ship had been sent to the Far East to maintain order while a civil war was taking place in mainland China. Simon had been found wandering the docks by one of the crew, who decided to smuggle him onboard. Rodents were a serious problem on ships. They spread disease and nibbled at food supplies. The hungry cat wasted no time hunting down the rats hiding onboard the Amethyst. He soon became popular with the men, who named him and taught him tricks. In April, while on patrol along the Yangtze River, the ship came under attack from the Chinese rebel army and ran aground. After a barrage of gunfire, 17 members of the crew were killed and a further 10 wounded. Simon was missing. When the little cat reappeared two days after the attack, he was badly injured. For the next 100 days, the Amethyst sat trapped on the riverbank. As the days wore on, it became infested with rats. The ship's crew needed Simon more than ever. Despite his injuries, the plucky cat set to work, hunting down rodents in every corner of the ship. He soon began catching at least one a day, bringing them proudly to the captain's feet.

Sometimes, he would even leave a gruesome gift in the captain's bed. On top of his rat-catching duties, Simon's friendly purr also boosted the morale of the wounded men he visited in the sick bay. Soon, thanks to his heroic efforts, the rats were all but banished from the ship. The Amethyst's food supplies were safe. Later, when the men of the Amethyst were given awards at a special ceremony, they held Simon proudly among them. By the time the ship returned to the UK, Simon's story had spread far and wide. People sent letters and gifts from all over the country. In August, Simon was awarded the PDSA Decking Medal for animal gallantry, the only one ever awarded to a cat. Sadly, Simon never received his medal. Like all animals returning to the UK, he had to stay in quarantine for six months to avoid spreading disease. During this time, he developed an infection, most likely from his injuries on the ship. On 28 November 1949, Simon died. Hundreds of people attended his burial at Ilford Animal Cemetery in London, where there is a special monument in his memory.

(Sent in by Gordon Dyne – from IWM)

"Yangtze Incident: The Story of H.M.S. Amethyst" (1957) is a British war film starring Richard Todd that tells the story of the British sloop HMS Amethyst caught up in the Chinese civil war.

CHEERS FOR NOW:

The next Members Lunch Friday, 3 March 2023, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers. It is the AGM of the Club, so please do come along and participate in the proceedings. Traditionally we do not invite guests to this lunch.

The last lunch was the first of the 'new beginnings' and was an experiment for both the Wanderers Banqueting and ourselves. It was not without a few glitches, which was to be anticipated. As expected, when we discussed it after the lunch there were a few negatives, but generally the lunch was better received than those we had before. If you have any more suggestions, please feel free to send them to us so the Committee can investigate at their meeting on the 21st February.

The Committee continues to look at other locations and we will report back at the AGM.

Please book with bookings@rafoc.org – it helps greatly to make the necessary organisation with the caterers.

TAILPIECE:

MATT

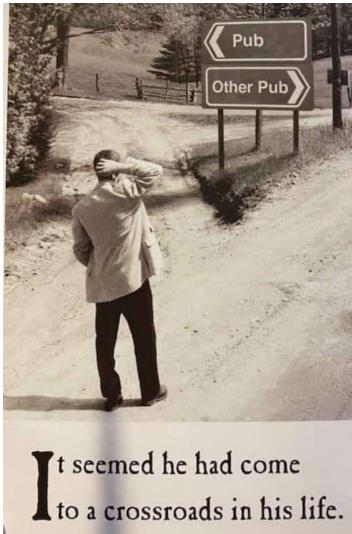


'And this is where we develop the latest top secret spy balloons'

MATT



'Later in the day President Zelensky met the brave heroes working in Dominic Raab's office'



MADAM & EVE

by Stephen Francis & Rico



Valentines Day Escape package 2023

1. We arrest you in front of your girl on Monday the 13th.
2. We release you late Wednesday the 15th.
3. Package includes
 - 2 nights accommodation
 - 3 rounds of golf
 - free unlimited drinks
 - 2 sleeves Titleist Pro V1's

(We come in full force, uniform and blue lights)





AROUND THE WORLD EPIC 1942... PART 2



Auckland, 14th December 1941

Since arriving at Auckland, a week earlier, Bob Ford had settled into a regular morning routine. Every day he would wake early and eat breakfast. He would then stroll over to the American Consulate message centre to see if orders for the California Clipper and her crew had finally arrived. The Consulate was a scene of organised chaos, the only route for messages in and out of Auckland for the Americans - military and civilian alike. Ford had just begun to make himself comfy in his normal spot in the waiting room when a clerk recognised him and thrust a piece of paper into his hand. Ford read it, and then immediately wished that he hadn't.

Security: Top Secret

To: Captain Robert Ford

From: Chief, Flight Operations Pan American Airways System Chrysler Building New York City, NY
Subject: Diversion plans for NC18602

Normal return route cancelled. Proceed as follows:

Strip all company markings, registration numbers, and identifiable insignia from exterior surfaces. Proceed westbound soonest your discretion to avoid hostilities and deliver NC18602 to Marine Terminal LaGuardia Field New York.

Good Luck

Back at the Pan American offices in Auckland, Ford showed the message to station manager Bill Mullahey and to the crew of the California Clipper. "They don't ask much do they?" said Mullahey, with more than a hint of sarcasm in his voice. He was right. In one short message Ford and his crew had been asked to do something that no commercial flying boat had ever done before - fly west from Auckland back to the USA. Rod Brown summed up the thoughts of the crew. "Hell, Skipper," he said, "that's a helluvah route. Where the hell are we supposed to get gas and service?! And we don't have nav charts beyond Auckland!" Brown was right. To get back the California Clipper would have to carve out an all-new route for flying boats from Australia to the East Coast of America. Years before, when the Pacific route had first been charted, it had been done in careful stages, with fuelling ships and stations carefully planned and placed months in advance, using a flying boat specially prepared for the purpose and with a bountiful supply of maps and charts. The crew of the California Clipper had none of that - all they had was whatever they could scrounge up at Auckland and a commercial flying boat which, by the end of the trip, would have had to fly longer and further in a single trip than any Boeing 314 had ever managed before. They would be flying blind, and they would have to push themselves and - more crucially - their plane well beyond the limits of knowledge and safety. Nonetheless, they realised that they had to try.

Auckland Library. 20,869 miles to go.

The librarian raised her eyebrows. "Let me get this straight." She said, slowly, her eyes passing across the four slightly sheepish men in Pan Am uniforms standing before her. "You want to see every single map, marine chart and atlas we have in the library?" "Yes please." replied Bob Ford, glancing uncertainly at Mullahey, the Pan Am station chief at Auckland. This had been his idea. "Also, any geography textbooks. Stuff that might have information about winds or currents." added Rod Brown, helpfully. "We need to work out how to get back to America." explained Johnny Mack with a smile. Ford had a growing suspicion that Mack might be enjoying this. The librarian raised her eyebrows again. "I'll see what I can do." Soon the four men were busy at a table, poring over the entire geographic contents of Auckland public library. After several hours of plotting, calculations, and guesswork a possible route began to emerge. The first stage of the journey was relatively straightforward - head right across to the west coast of Australia. This was not without risk as it involved taking the California Clipper across an awful lot of land (never a nice thing to do if your plane has no landing gear). It was the second stage of the journey that was the tricky one though, because the crew were faced with a difficult decision - to make a straight run for Africa or cut north-west towards Java and India and then head to Africa from there. It was a difficult choice. The first option was obviously more direct, but it meant pushing their Boeing 314 to the very edge of her fuel limit. Just one bad piece of navigation, storm or headwind and they would be lost at sea. The second route would increase the chances of finding somewhere to fuel and rest up with friendly Dutch or British forces, but it also meant cutting through an area that was now a war zone. Either way, reaching Africa wouldn't be the end of their problems. From the east coast of Africa, they would have to fly across land again to Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) in the Congo. The good news was that Ford had heard there was a Pan American facility on the river there, which would hopefully be able to provide them with fuel. The bad news was that they would absolutely need it. Because from there, they would have to attempt a mammoth (but unavoidable) 3,550 mile cross-Atlantic flight to the Pan American base in Natal, Brazil. It wasn't as far as the proposed hop from Australia to Africa, but it was still over the stated range of a Boeing 314. If they survived that trip, from there they could hop up the coast to New York itself. Ford and his crew evaluated their options. In the end they decided that the need for fuel meant they'd have to risk the north-westerly option. They would attempt to go via British and Dutch territory and pray that they beat the Japanese to it. "Okay, if we're all agreed

let's get on with it." said Ford. "Now let's get back to the dock and see how that paint stripping job is coming along."

Getting anonymous.

Whilst Ford, Mullahey, Brown and Mack had been busy at the library, the rest of the crew had been stripping paint - an effort to remove all obvious signs that they were an American plane. It was hard, slow work, they explained to Ford upon his return, but they'd been making good progress. As they were talking, however, another message arrived from Pan American - this one marked urgent. The Japanese threat in the Pacific was increasing and the company were worried about their station staff in New Caledonia. California Clipper's departure was now a matter of urgency - they must depart tomorrow, and they must stop off and evacuate all Pan American staff and their families from Noumea on their way to Australia. This caused problems for Ford. There were a number of spare engines at Auckland which he had been determined to dismantle and take with them for parts - without them any kind of failure en-route would almost certainly mean the end of their trip (or worse). There simply wasn't time to both dismantle those engines and finish stripping all markings from the plane though. Ford now faced a choice - rescue the staff of New Caledonia or increase his own crew's chances of survival and of remaining anonymous in the face of the enemy. Ford looked his flying boat up and down and made a decision. The next morning, laden with spare parts but still sporting the remains of a large American flag on the top of her wing, the California Clipper left Auckland and began her long journey home.

Gladstone, Australia. 18,784 miles to go.

Although the evacuation from Noumea had gone to plan and they had reached Gladstone without a hitch, Ford was worried. "Nothing?" He said, looking at Johnny Mack and Flight Engineer Homans "Swede" Rothe. "There's not a drop of 100 octane to be had." said Rothe, with a sigh. "It's either take a chance on using auto gas or try and make it to Darwin on what we have left in the tanks right now." The Boeing 314 was a magnificent aircraft, but its size and range came at a cost. It was the first commercial aircraft that required 100 octane fuel to run - something that previously only high-performance racers and military aircraft had needed. In peacetime this hadn't been an issue - Pan American kept plenty of 100 octane at all its bases and stations for the flying boats to use - but the California Clipper was now flying into the unknown. And as Mack and Rothe had discovered, there was no guarantee they'd be able to get the stuff at the places they were now passing through. Ford performed some mental calculations and made some decisions.

"Darwin it is."

Third part to follow – the flight to Darwin and Trincomalee