



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

**Johannesburg**  
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BRYANSTON 2021

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS WEEK 203 19<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2024

### GREETINGS:

What a week it's been... portents in the sky and on the earth... no loadshedding!!... wild weather, damaging winds, waves expected along KwaZulu-Natal's coast... 5 die in Margate flooding... more weather warnings... wildfires in Paarl... water crisis in Joburg... first Blaauwklippen, now Lombardini Guest Farm burns down... Bank manager, pastor and 'businessman' sentenced in R1m credit card fraud trafficking scheme... more petrol price pain coming in May... Potential Jet Fuel Crisis Due To SARS/Supplier Dispute... State capture casts pall over Nedbank as ACSA refers it to SIU... Newcastle TVET students pelt Blade Nzimande with stones... Kgosientsho Ramokgopa escapes car crash unscathed... Gerda Steyn breaks own record (again) in fifth straight Two Oceans win... Cat in henhouse over poultry import rebates...

RAF top Guns help foil Iran blitz... World waits for Israel's response... "this is a crisis that threatens us all"... Putin urges Iran to avoid 'catastrophic' Middle East conflict... 6 dead, many injured in mass stabbing at Bondi Centre, Sydney... second knife attack staggers Sidney Church... Pentagon sends aircraft carrier to the Red Sea in warning to Tehran... massive cache of weapons sent to Houthi seized by US, given to Ukraine... Letters written by Hamas boss reveal Iran paid group \$249 million... Drones crowding Ukraine's skies, paralyzing battlefield... Starmer commits to maintaining nuclear deterrent... ("great, pointless human bollard" – BoJo's final swipe at Starmer)... Eid in the Park in Manchester descends into chaos... Premier League "racist twist"... Spain forced UK to cancel Red Arrows display... World's coal power capacity rises despite climate warnings... Dubai

heavy storms flooded some of its malls... Scottie Scheffler storms to Masters victory in ice-cool final round... Liz Truss: "No10 was a prison infested with fleas"... Did we kiss? In public? Heavens, no, we're British!

## **"IKE" USS Dwight Eisenhower:**



*The Pentagon beefs up its presence in the Middle East. USS Dwight Eisenhower has been sent into the Red Sea in a warning to Tehran and to protect American personnel should the violence spill over*

## **RAF IN ACTION:**

British fighter jets shot down "a number of drones" fired at Israel from Iran, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said. The UK was one of several countries, including the US, which helped counter Iran's unprecedented attack - its first ever direct strike on Israeli soil. Additional RAF jets were deployed over Iraq and Syria, not Israel, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said. Mr Sunak, who condemned Iran's "reckless attack", will join G7 leaders on Sunday to discuss next steps.

Speaking to journalists in Downing Street, Mr Sunak said if Iran's attack on Israel been successful "the fallout for regional stability would be hard to overstate."

He did not specify how many drones were shot down by British forces. Attack drones were intercepted by the RAF in Syrian and Iraqi airspace, where it was already operating as part of the Operation Shader mission against the Islamic State group.

The MoD did not say how many RAF Typhoons were airborne but said the RAF would repel "any airborne attacks within range" of its operations in the region.

Iran launched hundreds of aerial drones and cruise missiles at Israel overnight on Saturday and into Sunday, in a widely anticipated retaliatory attack.

The Israeli military said it had intercepted the majority of the attacks - mostly outside of Israel's airspace - with the help of other countries. (BBC)



## **IRAN ATTACK ON ISRAEL:**

Iran's widely anticipated missile and drone attack was defeated with the orchestrated help of the US, UK and Jordan who, alongside the Israeli military, ensured that all but a handful of ballistic missiles were neutralised overnight. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said on Sunday that about 360 missiles and drones were fired from Iran and that "99% of the threats" had been intercepted in a successful defence mission that may have cost Israel £800m – but will have saved many lives and dented Iran's military credibility.

Iran's plan appears to have been to try to overwhelm Israel's system of air defences with a complex attack of the type employed by Russia against Ukraine, but on a much vaster scale. It comprised relatively slow-moving drones, faster cruise missiles and high-speed ballistic missiles capable of travelling several times quicker than the speed of sound. Though the attack was well telegraphed, with Iran's foreign minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, saying on Sunday it had given neighbouring countries 72 hours' notice, its size was notable. Roughly three times a large-scale Russian assault in Ukraine and comprising over 100 ballistic missiles, the assault was a serious threat to any air defence system. Iran's chief of general staff, Gen Mohammad Bagheri, said on Sunday that the operation was considered a success and further attacks on its part were not

necessary – but while Tehran will have learned about Israel’s air defences, the apparently low impact rate, particularly from the missiles, is likely to be a disappointment. “Look at the size and scale of this latest attack – this was not a salutary move. It was designed to inflict real damage, but the fact that it didn’t is damaging to Iran’s credibility,” said Sidharth Kaushal of the Royal United Services Institute think-tank.

Overnight, international help was critical in eliminating the slower-moving drones: the US said it had knocked out about 70 drones and three missiles. The UK prime minister, Rishi Sunak, added that the RAF had intercepted an unspecified number. Other reports indicated Jordan, a longstanding US ally, had shot down dozens more drones over its airspace.

Israeli Reservist fighter pilot describes the moment he took to the skies to defend his country from Iran’s missile barrage. “I shot down drones over Israel and was back in my office sending emails by 4pm.” (*Guardian*) (*Israel “keeping its powder dry”- watch this space*)

## RED ARROWS 2024:



2024 marks the 60th display season for the Red Arrows, and it’s their Diamond Season! The Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team is celebrating this milestone with a series of exciting events and manoeuvres, which begin in May. Here’s what you can expect:

1. **New Manoeuvres:** The Red Arrows will showcase maneuvers that haven’t been seen for a generation in their display routine. Squadron Leader Jon Bond promises to bring back moves last seen in the 90s or early 2000s.



2. **Special Artwork:** Each of the team's distinctive Hawk jets will carry special artwork to commemorate the Diamond Season. The artwork includes outlines of two Red Arrows Hawk jets trailing patriotic colors.
3. **Overseas Tour:** Later this summer, the Red Arrows will embark on a five-week overseas tour to mark the centennial of the Royal Canadian Air Force.
4. **Inspiring Generations:** Squadron Leader Bond emphasizes inspiring young minds through teamwork and aviation. The Red Arrows aim to continue their legacy of captivating audiences across the United Kingdom and beyond.

## ICELAND VOLCANO AND NORTHERN LIGHTS & SOLAR ECLIPSE:



*Earth, solar wind and fire: Northern lights and molten lava*



*US military personnel from Little Rock Air Base filmed the total solar eclipse, visible in the US, last Monday during a training flight from the Arkansas base.*

## UKRAINIAN PILOTS GRADUATE:

The Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Richard Knighton, paid tribute to the first Ukrainian pilots to graduate after training with the RAF, evoking the spirit of Churchill's "Few" who overcame the odds to halt the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain.

The first group of 10 pilots received basic flying, ground school and language training in the UK and will one day form the first line of defence in protecting Ukraine's skies from Putin's forces. Speaking at the ceremony at RAF College Cranwell, Sir Richard said: "From our own history we understand perhaps more than most how powerful the few can be against the many." The Ukrainian crew will now move to advanced flying training with the French Air Force before learning to fly the F-16 fighters which will form the cornerstone of Ukrainian air power in the fight against Putin. The UK training programme is part of the Air Capability Coalition – led by the US, Denmark and the Netherlands to boost Ukrainian air combat capability, which currently consists of Soviet era aircraft.



Speaking after receiving his wings, one Ukrainian pilot said: "I have enjoyed being in the United Kingdom and being part of this training programme. The course has been challenging and enjoyable, it has made me a better pilot. I am grateful to the UK for its support to Ukraine and I am personally grateful to the Royal Air Force instructors for preparing me for the future" (*RAF News*)

## **RUSSIA'S AIR LOSSES:**

Last week we looked at the Ukrainian Air Force, after 2 years of war against Russia. Some idea of its effectiveness can be gleaned from the following piece about Russia's losses of aircraft: Vladimir Putin was left furious with his military leaders after Russian air defences reportedly shot down their own helicopter in a friendly fire fiasco. Putin's army has lost a staggering 325 helicopters since the start of the invasion in February 2022. And the losses continue to mount for Russia's beleaguered army bosses after a KA-27 was downed in the Crimea. Dmytro Pletenchuk, a spokesperson for Ukraine's navy, confirmed the destruction of the helicopter in a Facebook post. He wrote: "Minus one Russian Ka-27 in Crimea. It was on a search mission. And it found something."

These helicopters are stationed at the Kacha airbase in the Bakhchysarai district of Crimea. They are mainly deployed to track Ukrainian naval drones and landing craft. According to the website [helistart.com](http://helistart.com), the Ka-27 costs around £6m.

Witnesses reported hearing a rocket launch in Sevastopol around 8.30m on Wednesday April 10. This was followed by a muffled explosion, similar to those heard during air defence operations.

The "Helicopterpilot" Telegram channel claimed that friendly fire had downed the KA-27. The helicopter is armed with two torpedoes and a 7.62 mm machine gun mounted externally. It is able to reach a cruising speed of 220 km/h and a maximum speed of 250 km/h. The Kremlin has also seen its Air Force decimated, having lost 342 fighter jets. In total, Russia is believed to have around 1,500 planes and helicopters at its disposal in Ukraine, meaning it has lost over 40 percent of its strategic aviation in just over two years. (BBC)

## **SANDF UNENDING "RUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE"**

Respected South African defence analyst Helmoed Heitman maintains that early setbacks aside for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC), there's no turning back because "if we retreat we will look stupid and we will have showed how toothless we have become".

His comments formed part of a report in Johannesburg-based daily, *The Citizen*, in the wake of four more deaths in the mission now approaching its fourth month of deployment in the eastern DRC.

The first SAMIDRC casualties of the deployment came in March, again from a mortar attack, which killed two South African soldiers and wounded three.

Heitman is reported as saying the task set for SAMIDRC is "too great for any one African country to handle. The area is too large and the number of armed groups too many, with diverse aims. Strategically and economically, the mission would be justified if the force was adequate."



The mission, according to him, has no chance of a lasting effect. “The force is too small – lacking air support in a region of difficult terrain, as well as few and poor roads. A total of 5 000 troops are not going to achieve what 15 000 could not. I would fully support a deployment in the DRC if we and the SADC were serious about it – and if South Africa still had the military capability to do the job properly.

But we cannot even patrol our borders and waters or police our air space. SANDF soldiers who are part of SADC mission could not muster an effective force for Cabo Delgado in Mozambique – something showing more direct problems and risks.”

A withdrawal from Cabo Delgado and neglecting South African border security “to deploy into the DRC with an entirely inadequate force is reckless,” the man who was part of Roelf Meyer’s Defence Review 2012 team said.

“Without adequate air power to support, reinforce or, if needs be, withdraw the force under pressure – we are placing troops at risk and doing so to no purpose.

“The sad part is that it is the soldiers who will be blamed when, in fact, they will have done the best they could with what they had.” (*DefenceWeb*)

## **CABMEN’S CAFÉ:**



*The final unlisted cabmen's shelter in London has now been awarded Grade II status, Historic England has announced.*

The green wooden hut in Wellington Place, St John's Wood is one of only 13 shelters still standing in the capital. First introduced to the city in 1875, the buildings were created to give cabmen a place to rest and get hot food and are still in use today.



Twelve of them had previously been given protection, with the Wellington Place hut now also listed. Sixty-one shelters are known to have been built across London between 1875 and 1950. They were conceived by Capt George C Armstrong, who was editor of The Globe newspaper, after he struggled to find a cab during a storm because all the drivers had sought shelter from the elements in local pubs. Working with a group of wealthy philanthropists, he helped establish the Cabmen's Shelter Fund which built the huts along many major thoroughfares to provide warm and dry rest stops at ranks.

The first was then erected in February 1875 on Acacia Road in St John's Wood - conveniently outside Armstrong's home.

All the shelters had the same proportions, with none bigger than a horse and cart as they were built on public highways at a time when cabs were all horse-drawn.

They featured a small kitchen and space for about 10 drivers to sit, with gambling, drinking and swearing being strictly forbidden while inside them.

The shelters are still in use today and while only drivers with "The Knowledge" (of London's streets and lanes, shortcuts, etc) are able to take a seat inside, many of the huts do offer takeaway refreshments to the public too. (BBC)

## **ROLLS ROYCE QUALITY:**



Mr. Allen Swift: Born: 1908 - Died 2010. This man owned and drove the same car for 82 years. Can you imagine even HAVING the same car for 82 years? Mr. Swift (Springfield, MA) received this 1928 Rolls-Royce Piccadilly-P 1 Roadster from his father, brand new - as a graduation gift in 1928. He drove it, up until his death in 2010 at

the age of 102. He was the oldest, living owner of a car that was purchased new. It was donated to a Springfield Museum after his death. It has 1,070,000 miles on it, still runs like a Swiss watch, dead silent at any speed and is in perfect, cosmetic condition at 82 years of age. That's Approximately 13,048 miles per year, 1,087 miles per month!

That's miles, not kilometres! That's British engineering from a bygone era. (*Financial Times*)

Like its Silver Ghost predecessor, the New Phantom was also produced by Rolls-Royce of America Incorporated, a subsidiary set up in December 1919 when the parent company purchased the American Wire Wheel Company's plant in Springfield, Massachusetts. Springfield commenced manufacture of the New Phantom in 1926, and by the second half of 1929 production had risen to 12 cars per week.

Springfield offered a line of factory bodies designed by Ray Dietrich, then of LeBaron coachworks in New York City, and they were distinguished by their British geographic names - the roadster being dubbed the Piccadilly after the London traffic circle that surrounds the statue of Eros. (*Bonhams/Classic Cars*)

## CHEERS FOR NOW:

Overshadowing all other news this week has been Iran's aerial attack on Israel. News channels have been full of visuals and analyses. Meantime, another, much less visible, "disinformation" war has been raging – see report at end of these Ramblings.

Our next lunch will be on **Friday 3 May 2024 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers**. COLONEL Bill de Pinho will tell us about his recent time in Northern Mozambique. You've read about it in the media – now come along and hear a first-hand account about what's happening, with a Q&A session.

## TAILPIECE:

Snake on a Japanese bullet train delays service... daar's ievers 'n slang op die spoor....

Izzy decides to go out for the evening. He might be nearly 90 years of age, but he still thinks of himself as one of God's gifts to the ladies. He gets himself ready in the usual manner and then looks at himself in the mirror. What does he see? He sees a handsome, mature, smartly dressed gentleman in a great looking modern suit, a carnation in his lapel, well-groomed hair and sparkling eyes. He is pleased with what he sees. He finishes by spraying on his favourite Eau Savage cologne and then makes his way to the Park Lane Hilton. Seated at the Hilton bar is Rivka, a beauty in her mid-eighties. Izzy walks over, sits beside her, and orders a drink. When it arrives, he takes a sip, turns to Rivka and says, "So, nu ... tell me, do I come here often?"

MATT



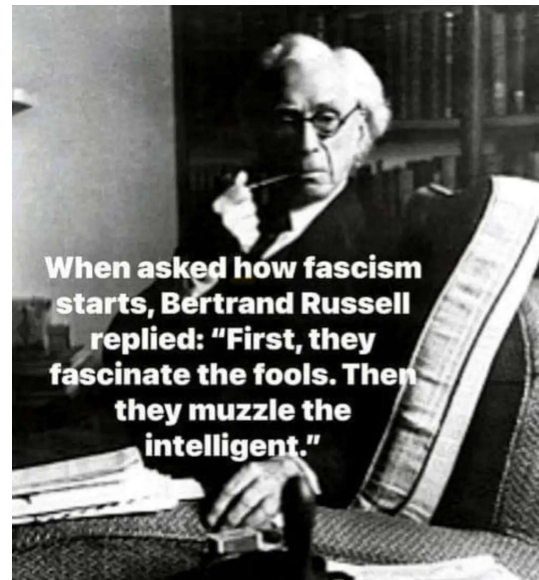
*'It was owned by an old man who couldn't find the way out of his local Low-Traffic Neighbourhood'*

MATT



*'We had a sweepstake on the next Tory leader. Unfortunately I got Rishi Sunak'*

## Vegan Logic!





I'm no wildlife expert, but I think this monkey might be drunk.



ABOUT TIME TO BREAK OUT THE 25 PIECE PATIO SET...



1 CHAIR AND 24 BEERS.



TDF/DAILYFRIEND.G-ZA



@DAVIDTTONS





## **“Mapping a Surge of Disinformation in Africa”**

*Report by Africa Center for Strategic Studies.*

The number of disinformation campaigns – most of them launched by Russia – has almost quadrupled in Africa since 2022, destabilizing democracies and bolstering pro-Moscow military juntas.

In South Africa, some of the 11 documented campaigns now under way have been designed by Russia to boost the ANC.

The Kremlin has concentrated most of its fake news efforts in Africa on sabotaging Western-backed democracies in the Sahel, according to a new report by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, a think-tank within the US Defense Department established and funded by Congress.

The in-depth report cites evidence that former president Jacob Zuma’s daughter, Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla, was among South African influencers who played a key role in the #IStandWithPutin and #IStandWithRussia campaigns launched shortly after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Zuma-Sambudla visited Russia at the time.

The disinformation surge has been facilitated by an explosion in the use of social media, with 400 million active social media users and 600 million internet users now in Africa, say the authors of the report, titled “Mapping a Surge of Disinformation in Africa.”

They found that African countries experiencing conflict were subject to much greater levels of disinformation than the average – highlighting the connection between instability and disinformation.

“Disinformation campaigns have directly driven deadly violence, promoted and validated military coups, cowed civil society members into silence, and served as smokescreens for corruption and exploitation. This has had real-world consequences for diminishing Africans’ rights, freedoms and security.”

### **Foreign and domestic campaigns:**

Of the 189 known campaigns – targeting at least 39 African countries specifically – 72 are in west Africa, 33 in east Africa, 25 in southern Africa, 21 in central Africa, 15 in north Africa and 23 are trans-African. The authors suspect there are more undetected campaigns.

Eleven of the 25 southern African campaigns are in South Africa. Of these, six campaigns are conducted by “Kremlin-linked actors”, two by “CCP [*Chinese Communist Party*] - linked actors” and three by “domestic political actors”, the report says.

“Russia has been the primary disinformation actor in South Africa. In addition to pushing narratives intended to polarize communities, fan distrust and bolster the African National Congress, Russia has used influential South Africans to promote pro-Russian narratives within South Africa and abroad,” the report says.

It adds that China has been the primary external purveyor of disinformation in Zimbabwe, enacting campaigns to support Zanu-PF by suppressing opposition and civil society

voices, promoting Chinese political and business propaganda, and pushing anti-Western narratives.

The report found that nearly 60% of disinformation campaigns on the continent are foreign state-sponsored – with Russia, China, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar as the primary sponsors.

*(DM – Peter Fabricius commenting on Strategic Studies Report)*