



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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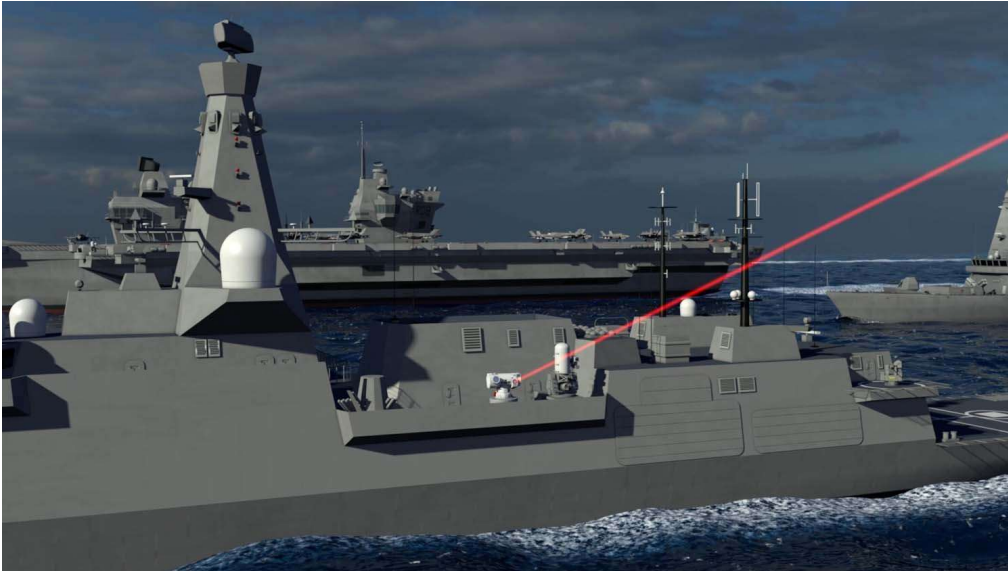
RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 205 3rd MAY 2024

GREETINGS:

Another week in Wonderland - Ramaphosa insists SA economy tripled under ANC government (maybe tripled corruption)... Anglo American rejects BHP purchase bid... BHP's attempt triggers corruption claims against ANC... Zuma's MK Party 'forged' signatures to meet IEC threshold... MK Party expels party founder Jabulani Khumalo... SA pays R42 million for Blue Light Brigade's petrol... SAA resumes flights to Perth... Ethekewini (Durban) Mayor presents State of City address to empty seats... Since 2017, the NSFAS Scheme has suffered losses exceeding R128.5 million due to fraud and mismanagement... Vodacom's R100-million-per-year theft and vandalism bill... SA firms paid ransomware attackers an average of R17.9 million... more fuel price hikes (We now pay R320 in tax every time we fill up)...

Indonesia volcano erupts, spreads ash, closes airports... Kenya faces more floods... Rwanda Bill has caused migrants to pour into Ireland... spectacular UK lightning storms cut power and delays trains... nights of chaos on college campuses rocked America... Pro-Palestinian students gathered in protest at UK universities... Humza Yousaf, resigns – self-inflicted, forgot the rule: leaders who want to look tough look stupid... British armoured vehicles captured in Ukraine on display in Moscow propaganda exhibition... Murder rate by Russian soldiers returning from Ukraine surges... The King returns to duties, visits cancer centre... Sex is biological fact, NHS declares (who would ever have thought so?)... Men on hair-loss drug warned of sexual and psychiatric side effects (You have been warned!)... Nihilistic, ignorant pro-Palestinian protests are harbinger of much worse to come... London has 'opened its doors to jihad'... Basil Fawley would be bewildered by England today –John Cleese...

DRAGONFIRE AT SEA:



What shipborne Dragonfire could look like (Computer Simulation)

A powerful laser weapon will be added to the Royal Navy's arsenal in the next three years as the need for weapons to counter drone and missile threats – like those fired by Houthi rebels – grows. The cutting-edge DragonFire laser will be installed on a warship in 2027, adding to the Royal Navy's potent array of air defense weaponry, which includes the Sea Viper and Sea Ceptor missile systems which have recently shot down Houthi targets in operations in the Red Sea with HMS Diamond and HMS Richmond.

A burst of the high-intensity beam from DragonFire costs no more than £10 – yet can engage targets – drones, missiles, aircraft – at the speed of light by concentrating it on a target.

The laser has been under development for nearly a decade and underwent tests by government scientists on the Ministry of Defense's ranges in the Hebrides at the start of this year. Now, plans have been brought forward five years from 2032 to install DragonFire on a Royal Navy ship under new procurement rules which were introduced this week.

Captain Matt Ryder, responsible for new capabilities as Head of Above Water Battlespace in the Royal Navy's Develop Directorate, said: "The Royal Navy has always been on the front foot to embrace new technologies to enhance our capability.

"We recognize this cutting-edge UK laser weapons technology as highly relevant and the need to accelerate it into service on board our ships at the earliest opportunity."

Clearly a current operational focus is on protecting Freedom of Navigation in the Southern Red Sea as part of Operation Prosperity Guardian, where in recent months HMS Diamond and HMS Richmond have each successfully deployed Air Defence capabilities to defend legitimate shipping in the area against drone and missile threats.

"Noting the quantity and varied sophistication of air and missile threats seen in the Southern Red Sea, we see a very relevant and current example of where laser weapons could provide an additional layer of defense to protect shipping, at a potentially much lower cost per shot and without the inherent onboard magazine and silo capacity constraints associated with interceptor missiles."

(Seawaves)

ARGENTINA BUYS DANISH F16 FALCONS:

Argentina has finalised a \$300m deal to purchase 24 F-16 Fighting Falcon jets from Denmark. The agreement will also see Argentina acquire four flight simulators, eight engines and spare aircraft parts to support its new fleet for five years.

Argentinian defence minister Luis Petri said purchasing the used Lockheed Martin aircraft was the "most important military aeronautical acquisition since 1983", referring to Argentina's 1982 military defeat.

The Argentine ministry of defence posted images of Mr Petri seated in an F-16 jet with the caption: "These aircraft, equipped with cutting-edge technology, represent a milestone in the modernisation of our air force and underscore our unwavering commitment to protecting our sovereignty." Argentina's other combat aircraft include the IA 63 Pampa, an advanced jet trainer that is combat-capable, and the A-4AR Fightinghawk, an upgraded version of the A-4 Skyhawk that saw action against British forces during the Falklands War. (What price sovereignty? Watch the Falklands space) (*ForcesNet*)



Senior officials from Argentina and Denmark in Copenhagen to sign the deal. (Picture: Argentine ministry of defence)

LOYAL WINGMAN TESTED:

"Loyal wingman" fighter drones that will fly alongside British aircraft are a step closer to reality after the technology was successfully tested for the first time.

In the trial, carried out by the Armed Forces and defence company Qinetiq, a crewed plane took remote control of a drone aircraft before sending it on a mission and receiving data back afterwards. The aircraft also simulated similar actions with a "swarm" of virtual drones.

Qinetiq's airborne technology demonstrator (ATD) – dubbed a "flying laboratory" because it is packed with sensors – took off from a Ministry of Defence site in Boscombe Down, Salisbury, while the Banshee Jet 80 drone was separately launched about 500 miles away from a missile range in the Outer Hebrides.

The ATD plane flew to the Hebrides and took control of the Banshee, before giving it orders to carry out a mission. This involved flying at 350 knots, or about 400 miles per hour, with the aircraft remaining roughly 20 miles apart.

At the same time, the ATD simulated carrying out the same exercise with a swarm of virtual drones which coordinated with each other.

All the aircraft communicated using a standard NATO data system. The drones were equipped with built-in overrides to ensure they remained at a safe distance at all times. It is the first demonstration of its kind to be carried out in the UK and comes as the MoD is preparing to deploy so-called uncrewed “loyal wingman” drones alongside conventional forces. The drones used did not carry any weapons, but armed versions could one day be deployed in combat situations.



These would fly in formation with manned aircraft such as Typhoons or F-35 stealth jets, with human pilots able to assign them tasks such as electronic warfare, reconnaissance or bombing runs, reducing the risk to military personnel.

The wingman aircraft could also protect their human controllers in combat situations.

(See Infographic at end of Ramblings)

STORM IN THE CHANNEL:

The RNLI celebrates its 200th Anniversary this year. There has been a “storm in the Channel” recently over allegations that the RNLI, in responding to calls involving migrant boats, has been “providing a taxi service for illegal immigrants.”

Royal National Lifeboat Institute crews saved the lives of 108 migrants crossing the English Channel last year, the British charity has announced, publishing figures for the first time. The RNLI said it “tasked and launched” 290 times in response to incidents involving men, women and children to rescue people attempting to make the “perilous” journey in 2022. That accounted for 3 per cent of the 9,312 lifeboat launches throughout the year, which saved 506 people nationwide, including beach lifeguard rescues.

“This crossing and this rescue demand is very, very dangerous and the fact we have saved 108 lives just shows how perilous this journey is,” head of lifeboats Simon Ling said. “Men, women and children getting into overcrowded dinghies crossing one of the most treacherous shipping channels anywhere in the world. This type of rescue is very challenging for a number of reasons, be that the number of casualties, the level of trauma that these casualties present.



“So, for us, it has been really important to understand what the risk is and work with our teams who face this unprecedented demand and come up with training, support and equipment that they feel suitably equipped to deal with this challenge.”

A record 45,755 people made the crossing in 2022, prompting Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to make tackling small boat crossings a priority for his government this year.

RNLI crews are tasked in the UK by HM Coastguard, who are responsible for all seaward SAR (Search and Rescue) to assist anyone who is in trouble on or in the water and will go to the aid of those crossing one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes in small, overcrowded and unseaworthy boats, when tasked to do so. Our crews then pass over responsibility for those rescued to the most appropriate agency – this might be the ambulance service, police or Border Force.

RIP “ROSE OF SOWETO”

Former boxing world champion and darling of South African sports Dingaana "Rose of Soweto" Thobela has died after battling illness. The celebrated boxer from Chiawelo, Soweto, was found dead in his flat in Mayfair, Johannesburg, last Monday evening. Born Dingaana Bongane Thobela 57 years ago, Thobela had been unwell. Childhood friend Eddie Mutungutungu confirmed the former world champion was found dead after several attempts to contact him drew a blank. His poor health prevented him from attending Boxing SA's symposium at the Arena Holdings offices in Parktown last Friday.

Dingaana Thobela won his first world title by beating Mexico’s Mauricio Aceves to lift the WBO lightweight crown in Brownsville, Texas. Thobela held three world titles in two-weight divisions — the first two being the WBO and WBA lightweight belts in the lightweight divisions early in his blossoming career under veteran trainer Norman Hlabane.

THE DAY THE ROSE BLOSSOMED AND WON THE WBO TITLE:



In September 2000, the "Rose" finally bloomed as Thobela won the most prestigious WBC super middleweight belt via a 12th-round stoppage victory over defending champion Glen Catley at Carnival City in Brakpan. Trainer Elias Tshabalala was in his corner. When he hung up his gloves, the legendary Thobela retired with a record of 40 wins from 56 professional fights. Out of those wins, 26 were by TKO. He was beaten 14 times and had two draws. Thobela enjoyed SA support beyond colour lines as his victories outside SA brought traffic to a standstill, with wild celebrations in townships.

BEHIND ESKOM'S SEVEN VEILS:

Return to Service of 3 Kusile units in late 2023, and the massive increase in PV solar adoption among South African households and businesses is the primary reason the country is experiencing its longest load-shedding break in over two years. That is not only according to feedback from a respected energy expert (Chris Yelland) but also the Eskom official (Isabel Fick) in charge of ensuring the stability of the grid.

In Eskom's State of the System press briefing, Fick said that the utility estimated there was around 5,440MW of "behind the meter" solar PV installed by households and businesses by the end of March 2024. That is around 1,200MW more than the capacity installed by the end of March 2023. There is also about 2,800MW of solar connected to Eskom's grid, primarily provided through large solar farms run by independent power producers (IPPs) with power purchasing agreements in place with Eskom. (*My Broadband*)

MASSIVE CABLE FIRE UNDER M1 MOTORWAY:



The Johannesburg Emergency Management Services (EMS) is expected to assess the scene of a fire on the M1 highway before handing it over to the city to begin repairs and restore power to affected areas. The M1 highway was closed following the massive fire on Wednesday, which severely affected traffic flow and leading to the route closure, while plunging several parts of the city into darkness. City Power said it suspected that the fire, which has since been extinguished, may have been sparked by vandals or cable thieves. *(Citizen)*

CHEERS FOR NOW:

There has been a good response for lunch this Friday 3 May, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers. Our guest speaker is our member Colonel Bill de Pinho, who will be speaking about the Ops Capability of the MWARI aircraft. He will give a brief Overview of the MWARI development and its Operational Systems, Training, and Ops Capability Example/s while he was in Mozambique, a country that has purchased these aircraft to help counter the ISIL insurgents in the Northern parts of the Country. Derrick Page writes from the Cape: "Apologies are presented for the coming Club Lunch on Friday. I forward warm greetings to attendees and trust the camaraderie will be at its best, with delicious food and flowing refreshments suitable for all palates. Cheers to all!!"

STOP PRESS:

The famed black eagle pair of the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden will soon welcome the next generation into the world, having laid an egg somewhere between April 10 and 12. The eagles, dubbed Makatsa (female) and Mahlori (male) have made good use of their time since December, when their last juvenile left the area in search of its own territory.

TAILPIECE:

MATT





I haven't checked today's speed limit, but you were either driving too slowly, or too quickly'

MATT



'The political chaos in Holyrood has convinced me that Scotland is ready to be an independent country'

 HM Government
Cross Channel Dinghy For Sale



Comes with free council house, weekly benefits, cash lump sum & free British Passports for you and your hundreds of cousins! 😊

Or a bonus of 4 star hotel in great locations, with free Sky, Bus & Gym pass

We will even pick you up half way in the Channel

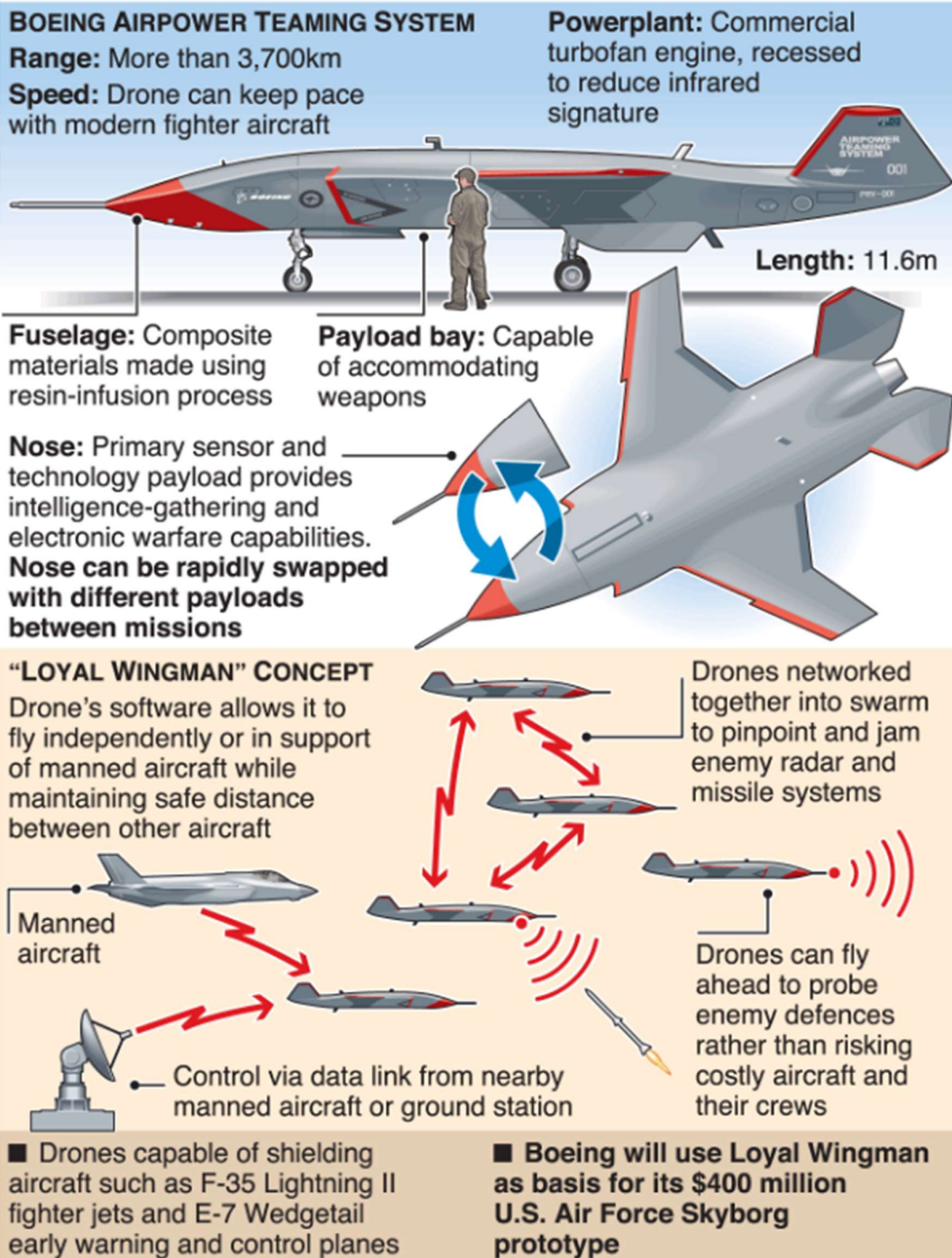
No Other Country offers this





Australian pilotless combat jet

“Loyal Wingman”, a joint project between Boeing and Australia’s military, is a combat drone capable of flying alongside manned aircraft, offering fighter jet-like performance at a much lower cost



Sources: Boeing, IHS Jane's, Aviation Week, Flight Global, Popular Mechanics

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