



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 213 28th JUNE 2024

GREETINGS:

Winter solstice now behind us... GNU tension, disagreement, delays Gauteng Provincial Government... EC Commissioner Dr Nomsa Masuku in court on R1,2million fraud charges... Best way to provide health care is to avoid NHI... Wikileaks Assange released on plea bargain... DSTV owner in serious trouble... M-pox outbreak: Medication arrives, but not yet registered... Margate businesses face ruin after floods... Bikeshop Boksburg store burnt down on Sunday... Mpumalanga man arrested for inciting public violence on TikTok... Kruger National Park rangers kill four rhino poachers in four days... Springboks beat Wales: Rassie has a plan for 2027!... Proteas through to T20 Final in nail-biting West Indies game... against Afghanistan as Aussies drop out... Joburg runs out of fire engines – true story... Escaped baboon run down and killed on N1 near Fourways... Chaos in Kenya over Tax Bill... New Mexico's brutal week: 'Multiple disasters all in one day'... Princess Anne takes a fall from horse... shocking absence in UK election: politicians won't mention the Israel-Gaza war... scandal as flood of bets placed on UK July election date... Raging Rishi – or maybe his avatar – on how not to win friends... "Farage is playing into our enemies' hands"... MoD releases video to dispel 'myth that NATO provoked Putin'... Post Office leadership crisis amid Horizon investigation... Putin and Kim IL Sung have joined forces as global delinquents... Climate crisis: 'What if there just is no solution?'... Manchester Airport chaos due power cuts... Actor Donald Sutherland dead at age 88... (UNHCR) estimates 117.3 million people living in "forced displacement"... 1 300 plus died during this year's hot hajj heatwave... Euro 24 "England look terrified and have no functioning midfield"... Woman sues boyfriend for not driving her to the airport...

DISCLAIMER:

RAMBLINGS was initiated during the COVID time and was intended to keep our Members in contact during those dark times. It has now become an institution and preparing it takes a lot of effort from the team. The views, if not attributed to other sources, are not necessarily the views of RAFOC or the editorial team. Please be prepared for RAMBLINGS to become a two weekly news letter.

USMC HARRIERS ON BALTOPS:



Four US Marine Corps AV-8B Harrier IIs and the same number of MV-22B Ospreys stopped for fuel at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk on Sunday, June 9, 2024 en-route from the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1) to Sweden for Exercise Baltic Operations (BALTOPS) 24. Good to see 'Harriers' still serving!

RAF RADAR NORMANDY MEMORIAL:



RAF personnel came together to pay tribute at the only Royal Air Force memorial on the assault sectors of the Normandy beaches. Members of Air C2 Force from Boulmer attended the ceremony at Vierville-sur-Mer to lay wreaths to commemorate RAF radar specialists with 21 Base Defence Sector who supported the US landings on Omaha Beach. Forty-seven of the 120-strong contingent of airmen were killed or injured, six are buried at the nearby Bayeux cemetery. The event was attended by the town's Mayor, local residents,

the French Escadron de Détection et de Contrôle Mobiles 90.550 'Augny', Army personnel and US soldiers. The unit came ashore under heavy shellfire – of 27 vehicles unloaded by four landing craft tanks (LCTs) only eight made it to the beach. Air Cdre Jamie Thompson said: "These units came ashore and fought in a bloody and relentless battle. "The unit was awarded four Military Crosses, two Military Medals and a Croix de Guerre; the highest number of gallantry awards won by the RAF in a single operation outside the Dambusters Raid." UK and French military personnel also took part in a wreath-laying ceremony and service at the cemetery at Bayeux.



The defining photograph of this mission shows casualties on the beach, a bogged-down Sherman tank, wrecked trucks, and German anti-landing obstructions. Among the trucks in the center are two burnt-out Crossley 409 receiver or 405 transmitter trucks used by 21 BDS1. These radar vehicles were destroyed by mortar and gunfire as the RAF men arrived. It's a poignant memorial to the eleven men who died and the thirty-seven who were injured during this critical operation. (*ForcesNet and*

others)

Read the story by one of the RAF Engineers: [Ned Hitchcock's account of RAF Radar on Omaha Beach - The RAF at Omaha Beach](#)

THE FLYING NIGHTINGALES:

An event commemorating the 80th anniversary of the first British women on active service to be officially flown by His Majesty's Government into a war zone has taken place in a quiet nature reserve in Wiltshire.



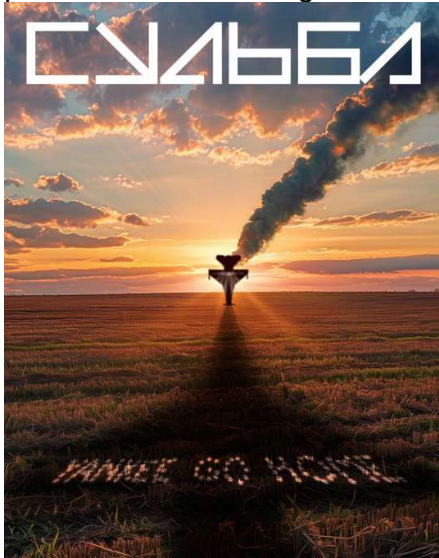
On 13th June 1944, one week after D-Day, three Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) nursing orderlies flew from what was then RAF Blakehill Farm to an airstrip in Normandy to undertake the first casualty evacuation flights. Corporal Lydia Alford, Leading Aircraft Women Myra Roberts and LACW Edna Birkbeck treated the wounded as they were being flown back to Britain. The moment of their return was recorded by the waiting press who dubbed these pioneering nurses 'The Flying Nightingales.'

Gathering 80 years later at the former airfield where those first flights departed, were family members of The Flying Nightingales, serving members of the RAF Medical Services who fulfil the same role today, senior representatives from the NHS and RAF and local dignitaries. The event was a commemoration and celebration of the life-saving contribution made by RAF Medical Reserves, past and present, in what is also the Centenary year of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Those in attendance heard more about the stories of these extraordinary women and were treated to a demonstration of modern aeromedical evacuation capability to highlight the ongoing critical contribution of RAF Medical Reservists, most of whom also have full-time jobs within the NHS. A commemoration ceremony was held at the end of the runway with the last post sounded by a Trumpeter of the Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment in honour of The Flying Nightingales and all RAF Medical Services personnel. *(RAF News)*

“YANKEE GO HOME”

Ahead of the arrival of Dutch F-16 Fighting Falcons in Ukraine, Russia (predictably) has raised the stakes by launching a propaganda campaign against the incoming US-origin fighters that are expected to add more teeth to Ukrainian combat capability. A Russian online propaganda poster surfaced on social media on June 17. The poster (below) shows an F-16 combat aircraft going down in flames with the phrase: “Yankee Go Home” written at the bottom. The term Yankee is a slang often used for American people and things. The propaganda poster was published by several military bloggers and war tracking handles on social media site X (previously Twitter) and was presented without comment. Though EurAsian Times could not track the source of the poster, it points to a dire warning: the F-16’s destruction by the Russian forces.



After almost two years of fighting, Ukraine is finally set to receive F-16 Fighting Falcons, a move that the Ukrainian Air Force believes could help establish air superiority over the embattled country. NATO countries, including Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Belgium, have pledged their F-16s to Ukraine. The Danish F-16s are expected to land in Kyiv in the next few weeks. Last month, an unknown Ukrainian military source told the media that Ukraine would receive its first F-16s sometime in June or July. Ukrainian fighter pilots are presently undergoing training on the aircraft, and while there has been some upset with the training, the writing on the wall is that the Fighting Falcons will soar over Ukraine soon.

However, as the arrival of F-16s inches closer, Russia has upped the ante with frequent warnings against the American-origin aircraft. Russian President Vladimir Putin, for instance, has said that the F-16s would not drastically alter the battlefield situation, and the Russian forces would destroy the planes as they

destroyed tanks, armored vehicles, and other equipment, including multiple rocket launchers. Ukraine alleges that Russia is applying significant pressure on its defenses to exhaust Ukrainian forces before the gradual arrival of Western supplies, which also includes the F-16 Fighting Falcons. *(Eurasian Times)*

US NAVY SEEK ‘KINETIC DEFEAT’ MISSILE SOLUTION:

Directly citing the ongoing engagements between the US Navy and Houthi rebels in the Red Sea, the Defense Innovation Unit is seeking industry’s help for a “kinetic defeat solution” for medium-sized unmanned aerial vehicles, according to a new solicitation.

“Kinetic defeat” in Pentagon lingo is essentially short for a weapon that physically destroys an enemy’s asset, as opposed to electronic warfare technology which can temporarily disable a drone without causing permanent damage.



The aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) and its associated strike group have defeated hundreds of incoming Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Julie Matyascik)

For DIU, medium sized refers to drones in “group three,” which are UAS as large as roughly 330 pounds. The sea service has been busy over the past eight months taking out unmanned aerial systems and missiles launched by the Houthis at vessels in the Red Sea, a major global shipping route. While the Navy has been highly successful in its recent air defense missions, Pentagon officials are concerned about the so-called “cost exchange ratio” where in some cases, multimillion-dollar missiles have been used to take out UAS that only cost a few thousand dollars to make. To help meet the increasing demand for counter-drone tools at a lower price point, the department is looking for new shipborne solutions. (*Breaking Defence*)

DAY OF THE SEAFARER PROTEST:

The shipping community, speaking on behalf of 14 of the leading global shipping associations, says it is appalled and deeply saddened with the tragic news that yet another seafarer seems certain to have been killed in a drone boat strike on Wednesday 12 June while on board the MV Tutor in the Red Sea.



“We utterly condemn these assaults which directly contravene the fundamental principle of freedom of navigation. Our thoughts and condolences go to the family and loved ones of the seafarer who tragically lost their life. It is deplorable that innocent seafarers are being attacked while simply performing their jobs, vital jobs which keep the world warm, fed, and clothed This is the second fatal attack in which our seafarers have been caught in

the crosshairs of geopolitical conflicts. Three seafarers tragically lost their lives when the True Confidence was attacked earlier this year. And we must not forget the crew members from the Galaxy Leader and MSC Aries who are still being held captive. Furthermore, we strongly condemn

the attack on the cargo ship *Verbena* on Thursday 13 June which left a seafarer severely injured by anti-ship cruise missiles. This is an unacceptable situation, and these attacks must stop now. We call for States with influence in the region to safeguard our innocent seafarers and for the swift de-escalation of the situation in the Red Sea. We have heard the condemnation and appreciate the words of support, but we urgently seek action to stop the unlawful attacks on these vital workers and this vital industry.

We hope that on this year's '*Day of the Seafarer on Tuesday 25 June*' the world takes a moment to recognise the immense contribution that seafarers make to the global economy and the unjust circumstances they are facing in the Red Sea and across the world." The letter is co-signed by 14 major shipping organisations.

TIME FOR TEA:

Personnel at 11 Squadron Qatari Emiri Air Force – a joint Qatar-UK training squadron based at RAF Leeming – are wearing what could possibly be the coolest military badge in the world. Spending the summer flying Hawk T2s out of the North Yorkshire base, trainee fighter pilots wear the badge on their right sleeves of their flying suits.

The squadron is made up of personnel from both the Qatari Emiri Air Force (QEAF) and Royal Air Force, who having already learnt to fly are converting their skills to operate as fighter pilots. The design of the badge takes inspiration from the famous Yorkshire Tea brand, in homage to Leeming's location in England's largest county. It was designed by the trainee pilots themselves, a tradition linked to the RAF which sees would-be pilots on flying courses come up with a unique badge marking their time as a student. Talking to Forces News, Wing Commander Mark Lawson, Officer Commanding 11 Sqn, QEAF, explained that his unit "trains the next generation of Qatar and UK frontline fighter pilots". He added: "The students follow a syllabus and that will take them all the way through from converting from the Hawk 167 [the export version for the QEAF] on to then training to use an aeroplane as a weapon system."



Discussing the badge, Wg Cdr Lawson added: "It's a tradition right back to when I was a student, which is a long time ago now. But each course designs their own course badge to give their stamp on their course because they will make friends for the rest of their career from it."

One of the students, Flight Lieutenant Jordan Capehorn, said: "Course badges are a really important element of providing each course with its own identity. "We wanted to draw on Leeming's fantastic location to highlight our time in Yorkshire."

ROADRUNNER-M:

A new autonomous high-explosive interceptor drone system is being developed, to hunt down and destroy other uncrewed aerial vehicles. Known as the **Roadrunner-M**,



the vertical take-off and landing (VTOL), operator-supervised autonomous air vehicle (AAV) is an advanced high-explosive interceptor that can destroy kamikaze drones and large aircraft.

The Roadrunner is an AI-guided craft designed to tackle the "mission sets of tomorrow", according to its developer, Anduril, US Defence Technologies.

Anduril says the Roadrunner has twin turbojet engines and modular payload configurations that can support a variety of missions.

It is also said to be reusable at a net-zero cost and can return to any location quickly for recovery.

Using AI, this technology allows a single operator to supervise many Roadrunners simultaneously.

(ForcesNet) Read more at: Anduril - Anduril unveils Roadrunner & Roadrunner-M

TERRORISM INCREASES IN AFRICA:



The United States is gravely concerned about the increase of terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel, as well as democratic backsliding, and urges the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) to continue to promote inclusive democratic processes in the region, which will also strengthen counterterrorism efforts. This is according to US Ambassador Robert Wood, Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs, who on 19 June delivered remarks to a UN Security Council Arria-formula

Meeting on Combatting the Rise of Terrorism and Violent Extremism in West Africa and the Sahel. "The Sahel is the global epicentre of terrorism deaths, and this threat cannot be addressed without partnerships. These partnerships need to include civil society, in order to sustainably address the conditions conducive to terrorism and violent extremism," Woods said. Burkina Faso accounted for a quarter of global terrorism deaths in 2023.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law is a cross-cutting pillar of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, he emphasised, and when counterterrorism efforts and laws are overly broad or vague, they can shrink civic space and can lead to radicalisation and to violence. *(DefenceWeb)*

STONEHENGE SOLSTICE SUNRISE:



About 15,000 people gathered at Stonehenge to watch the summer solstice sunrise. It is one of the rare occasions people can get close to the stones at the historic site near Salisbury in Wiltshire. It went ahead as normal after 'Just Stop Oil' protestors sprayed orange powder paint on the stones on Wednesday. English Heritage has removed the paint with a specialist air blower, but if rain had come into contact with it, there could have been significant damage.

People come from all over the world to see the summer solstice at the 5,000-year-old site. Tammy McCollam said she had travelled about 5,000 miles from Washington in the US specifically for the event. "It's amazing. When I was able to touch the stones, it just felt so emotional, incredible. I just felt called to come, this is a bucket list trip." (*BBC*)

Solstice - the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and the shortest in the Southern Hemisphere - occurred on Thursday, June 20, at 20:50 Universal Time (4:50 p.m. EDT, 22:50 SAST). It signalled the beginning of astronomical summer north of the equator and winter in the Southern Hemisphere. The sun will not set at the North Pole, and at the South Pole, it will not rise. The dates of solstice occur within a range. June's solstice always happens on June 20 or 21, and December's solstice on December 21 or 22. However, according to Ethan Siegel on Big Think, 2024's summer solstice will be Earth's earliest since 1796, when George Washington was President of the United States And Edward Jenner was testing his revolutionary vaccine for smallpox in England. The reason is that 2024 is a leap year in a century that doesn't end with one. While most years have 365 days, every four years, there's a leap year of 366 days to account for the fact that Earth completes one orbit of the sun in precisely 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 45 seconds. The Gregorian calendar skips three leap days every four centuries to prevent a drift over the years. In 2100, a leap year will be skipped, making this a "non-leap century." (*Forbes*)

KOEBERG 20 YEAR EXTENSION:

On 10 May 2021, the NNR received an application from Eskom to operate Koeberg beyond its current licence term of 21 July 2024, for an additional 20 years, to 21 July 2044 for Unit 1 and to 9 November 2045 for Unit 2. In Eskom's presentation, Featherstone said the advantages of granting the LTO application included:

- Koeberg's strategic location, which supported the Western Cape grid;

- Its reliable operations and high energy availability;
- It had the lowest primary energy costs of Eskom thermal plants;
- Koeberg's low water consumption due to its design and use of seawater for cooling;
- Globally, nuclear is recognised as essential to meet emission reduction targets; and
- Koeberg is a national asset that can safely be operated for longer.

Featherstone said the plant safety, ageing, operating and maintenance practices and environmental impacts of LTO had been assessed and posed "no undue risk" to public health and safety and the environment.

Full article at: *Civil society, Eskom at odds over Koeberg life extension (dailymaverick.co.za)*



CHEERS FOR NOW:

Well, we've passed the Winter Solstice, but there's no doubt plenty of cold weather yet to come in July and August. It's instructive to follow how various NATO weapons are being tested in real battlefield conditions in the Ukraine, how they shape up to Soviet equivalents, and are often found to have unexpected limitations. On the other hand, the widespread use of drones has come into its own both for intelligence gathering and as low cost airborne weapons.

Our next function is the **July Ladies Lunch, Friday 5 July 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers**. Colonel Thornton "TC" Schultz, retired USAF F111 pilot and former US Defense Attaché to SA, will talk to us on the topic of Ladies in the USAF. Be sure it again will be a 'not to be missed' lunch. Look forward to seeing you and your ladies! You can book and pay at any time before the lunch, R300pp. booking@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

Police abandon station due goblin attacks:

Reports of goblins in Zimbabwe started appearing in the media in October 2013. Recently, further reports have gone viral on FaceBook and YouTube. One of the latest reports is that Police in Bulalima District, Zimbabwe (North of Plumtree) have reportedly abandoned one of their primary headquarters following attacks by goblins. According to city official Mabe Ngulani, Ward 2 Councillor, the officers at the Gwambe station "described being harassed – bodies being violated, doors opening on their own, and things climbing on the roof – making it impossible to sleep. "Police

officials for the region "withdrew the officers from Gwambe, stating they wouldn't endanger them further," he told CITEZW news.



'Do you want to shout at politicians or footballers?'



'Stalls? First slip, or second slip? Your job is to catch Sir Ian McKellen'

It was only a matter of time, first hybrids then electric and now vegan.



My wife's face when she's ready to leave the party and I open another beer.



I JUST POSTED A SELFIE AND PEOPLE TOLD ME TO GET WELL SOON!



WAY BACK WHEN: PORT SHEPSTONE:

Your scribe came across the picture of the Mzimkhulu river mouth at Port Shepstone as it was some time after the lighthouse was erected in 1905, and before the railway reached Port Shepstone in 1917, and added a recent photograph of what the scene looks like now.



Early 1900s: Mzimkhulu River mouth showing old sea wall and lighthouse erected in 1905



Today, showing old main road (R102) and the modern road and rail bridge across the river.