



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 216

22nd JULY 2024

GREETINGS:

Ramblings has been delayed by a couple of days, due to some vacationers not being in Johannesburg to set the newsletter for circulation. Better a bit late than not at all.

That was (yet another) week, that was... 'Buck Moon' and Perseid meteor shower this week... Alice in Wonderland alive and well in SA and starring at the opening of Parliament... "Calamity" Mbalula wants urgent ANC meeting on bad election results... Dali Mpofu admits EFF received money from VBS, denies fraud and corruption claims (tell us another one, do...) Opposition parties press for withdrawal from DRC as SANDF soldiers die with no air cover... Others die of carbon monoxide in container in Orkney (true story)... Angie gives masterclass in "I am not the one"... massive KZN wildfires claim lives of 6 firefighters... celebrated SA scientist Dorcas "Didi" Lekganyane murdered in Bramley, Gauteng... Minister of Police Mchunu bumbles – could give Poor Old Joe lessons... Boks stumble, Ireland triumph in second Test...

King Charles makes his first "King's Speech" to new Parliament... "Labour cannot conceal the truth about its appalling plan for Britain"... International news swamped by the Trump assassination attempt... Trump with bandaged ear at Republican national convention... "he faked it" claims Democratic Mayor (he would, wouldn't he?)... near tragic bungle a triumph for Trump?... "classified documents" case against Trump thrown out... leads for Republican nomination... Biden diagnosed with Covid... Russia's Lavrov praises Trump-Vance political posture (now that should make us think)... and now our "Tin Man" Elon Musk wants to build himself an 'iron man' protective suit... Will Ukraine turn into Starmer's Iraq?... Putin drafts another 150,000 troops... losing up to 1000 men daily... Ukraine creates "land drones" (see below)... Severe storms in Canada... extreme temperatures as heat dome covers US Midwest and East... Ominous St Swithin's Day: heavy rain and thunderstorms to hit England... Alcaraz disposes of Djoko in straight sets, wins Wimbledon... England stumbles, giving Spain fourth EURO win... Old Joe calls it a day and falls on his sword, about time.

TO BRAVE MEN: DELVILLE WOOD:

The anniversary of the Battle of Delville Wood was commemorated in a number of Parades and Memorial Services in many South African cities and towns on Sunday 14 July 2024. The Johannesburg Service was at the Memorial at The View, Ridge Road in Parktown, Regimental Association HQ of the Transvaal Scottish.

Between 15th and 20th July 1916, the South African Brigade consisting of 3153 men, entered Delville Wood, a tactically important salient protruding into the German second line. They had been given an order to hold the wood at all costs. They were subjected to an onslaught of such unrelenting and unmitigated violence that the wood itself disappeared, shattered by the ferocity and intensity of the artillery fire of friend and foe alike. According to a German account: "The wood was a wasteland of shattered trees, charred and burning stumps, craters thick with mud and blood and corpses everywhere. In places they were piled 4 deep. Worst of all was the moaning of the wounded." Having expended their ammunition, the men resorted to hand to hand combat. Throughout the cold and rainy weather the enemy fire reached a rate of 400 shells a minute. They endured the hellfire of seven shells a second for eight hours on end.



When the Brigade was relieved, only 142 men emerged on their feet from the shambles. Eventually 720 men of the Brigade assembled (18 officers and 702 other ranks); 1709 had been wounded and 763 killed. Delville Wood remained the most costly action the South African Brigade fought on the Western Front. Your Chairman and Treasurer laid wreaths for RAFA and SAAFA respectively.

Full article by Pam MacFadden at: [Delville Wood - The costliest action the South African Brigade fought on the Western Front | The Heritage Portal.](#)

EXERCISE PITCH BLACK:

Royal Air Force Typhoons and a Voyager, together with an Atlas, have arrived in Darwin, Australia, ready to begin Exercise Pitch Black. To get there, the RAF deployed as a joint exercise with the French Air and Space Force (FASF).



The deployment phase of this series of exercises was known as Exercise Griffin Strike 24. Six Typhoons from RAF Coningsby based 11 (Fighter) Squadron with the Voyager, and A400M aircraft from the RAF Brize Norton based Air Mobility Force, first joined up with FASF's Rafale and Phenix aircraft at Istres Airbase in southern France. The deployment exercise began on the 4th July 2024 and is intended as a demonstration of the UK's commitment to deploy a persistent, credible, and reliable presence in the Indo-Pacific region when needed. "This is not the first time that 11(F) Squadron have conducted an exercise in the Indo-Pacific region. Last year, the Squadron exercised in Malaysia on Exercise Bersama Lima. Exercise Griffin Strike however, provides a new and challenging opportunity to plan and execute air power projection to the Indo-Pacific region, in partnership with our long-term allies in the French Air & Space Force." Wing Commander Robertson, Officer Commanding 11(F) Squadron. (RAF News)

TRIBUTE TO RAuxF:

There was a special tribute to the 100th anniversary of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force at the Wales National Airshow in Swansea this weekend, alongside stunning displays from the Red Arrows and the RAF Typhoon display Team.



The Vampire jet of the Norwegian Air Force Historical Squadron, which appeared twice over the weekend, displayed in the colours worn by Vampires of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) in the 1950s. The jet also carries the markings of Number 502 (Ulster) Squadron, RAuxAF applied in a tribute to the very first squadron on the force to be formed, just months after its founding in 1924. The jet fighters of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force formed a major part of the UK's air defences against attack by Soviet bombers during the Cold War.

Vampires of another RAuxAF unit - the only one in Wales, Number 614 (County of Glamorgan) Squadron appeared frequently in the 1950s at the Swansea Air Pageant - the forerunner of the Wales National Airshow.



In another tribute to the RAuxAF centenary, a Vampire at the South Wales Aviation Museum - housed at the former RAF St Athan in South Wales - was recently painted in the colours of 614 Squadron. The display is Wales' largest free public event and attracts over 200,000 people. It took place on Saturday 6th July and Sunday 7th July and also hosted the Wales National Event for Armed Forces Day. "As Officer Commanding No. 502 (Ulster) Squadron, I am honoured

that the Norwegian Air Force Historical Squadron has chosen to paint their Vampire in our squadron's colours to mark the centenary of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force this year." Wing Commander McCleery OBE, Officer Commanding No. 502 (Ulster) Squadron

UKRAINE WAR INNOVATION:



Struggling with manpower, overwhelming odds and uneven international assistance, Ukraine hopes to find a strategic edge against Russia in an abandoned warehouse. An ecosystem of laboratories in hundreds of secret workshops is leveraging innovation to create a robot army that Ukraine hopes will kill Russian troops and save its own wounded soldiers and civilians.

Defense startups across Ukraine — about 250 according to industry estimates — are creating the

killing machines at secret locations that typically look like rural car repair shops.

Ukraine currently has semi-autonomous attack drones and counter-drone weapons endowed with AI and the combination of low-cost weapons and artificial intelligence tools is worrying many experts who say low-cost drones will enable their proliferation.

Technology leaders to the United Nations and the Vatican worry that the use of drones and AI in weapons could reduce the barrier to killing and dramatically escalate conflicts.

Human Rights Watch and other international rights groups are calling for a ban on weapons that exclude human decision making, a concern echoed by the U.N. General Assembly, Elon Musk and the founders of the Google-owned, London-based startup DeepMind. (Tell that to Putin - Will Woke never cease?!!)

"Squads of robots... will become logistics devices, tow trucks, minelayers and deminers, as well as self-destructive robots," a government fundraising page said after the launch of Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces. "The first robots are already proving their effectiveness on the battlefield."

(The Independent)

SATCOM LEOPARD MULTIBAND SDR RADIO:



Windhoek, Namibia – 16 July 2024: Satcom (PTY) Ltd, a pioneer in tactical communication solutions, proudly highlights the Leopard1, an advanced multiband multirole military SDR radio that has proven itself by meeting the stringent requirements of modern tactical operations. Multiband radios offer real advantages to militaries, dramatically reducing operator training while using the same radio for all types of deployment, from Manpack to Mobile and Base. This standardisation extends to repair requirements, spare parts, and accessories, significantly lowering logistical challenges and simplifying inventory management. The Leopard1 sets a new benchmark for

versatility and reliability, providing seamless communication across HF, VHF, and UHF bands in one single package covering 1.6-512MHz. With a built-in tuner, modem, and GPS receiver, this compact yet durable radio ensures flexible operation in diverse environments. Advanced features, including Automatic Link Establishment (ALE), Frequency Hopping, One-Time-Pad (OTP) encryption and digital voice, guarantee secure and resilient communication channels. Weighing just 3.2 kg and machined from a solid aluminium block, the Leopard1's enclosure is polyester powder-coated to meet MIL-STD-810G specifications for durability and reliability. Its intuitive interface and user-friendly controls ensure ease of use for operators in the field. *(DefenceWeb)*

ULTRA GALAXY:

Salvage operations are currently underway for the stricken MV Ultra Galaxy vessel off the West Coast, the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) said in a statement last Tuesday night. The ship's 18-member Filipino crew was rescued from a life raft early on Monday morning after the vessel encountered trouble. After the rescue operation, one tug was dispatched and arrived at the vessel's location at around 2pm on Tuesday, SAMSA says. "Another tug with more personnel and extra equipment is set to depart from Cape Town this evening to assist in the salvage efforts. The Ultra Galaxy ran aground off the South African West Coast and efforts to prevent a fuel and oil spill are now underway. SAMSA said on Wednesday that a team is also at work attempting to salvage the Panama registered vessel's fertiliser cargo.

The vessel, which its 18 Filipino crew abandoned last Monday, when it started severely listing, eventually ran aground off the coast of Brand se Baai on the West Coast, 385km north of Cape Town, at around 10pm last Tuesday.



The salvage operations are currently focused on offloading the vessel's full load of fertiliser in bags as well as low-sulphur bunkering fuel and hydraulic oils. Environmental measures are also being put in place to contain any possible spills of the cargo. The Panama-registered MV Ultra Galaxy is a 124.56-metre-long general cargo vessel built in 2008, according to a report published on the SAMSA website. At the time of its distress call, it was reportedly on its way to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. *Salvage operations continue. (SAMSA)*

DOWN THE PUB WITH CLARKSON:



Jeremy Clarkson has shared a first glimpse inside his new Cotswolds pub after opening the 'unfinished' venue for the Euros final amid renovation works on Sunday. The Grand Tour host, 64, who offered the previous owner a whopping £1M for the boozier within minutes of meeting her, was every inch the landlord as he served customers his own Hawkstone beer.

The Windmill is set in five acres of Cotswold countryside with stunning views across the Windrush Valley - and just ten miles from his Diddy Squad Farm, where he brews his beer and cider. The licence to serve alcohol was transferred to a company called Baobab Operations Ltd last month. The firm is run by Johnny Hornby, the advertising king who was chairman of Prince Harry's African charity Sentebale. Hornby's business partner, Mark Devereux, also has his name on the application. They have already got the go-ahead to serve booze at what was the failing Windmill ale house, which Clarkson bought for £1 million. His team

of builders is currently at work in the premises, but he has admitted it might not be ready to open until next year. *(MailOnline)*

BUCK MOON AND PERSEID SHOWER:

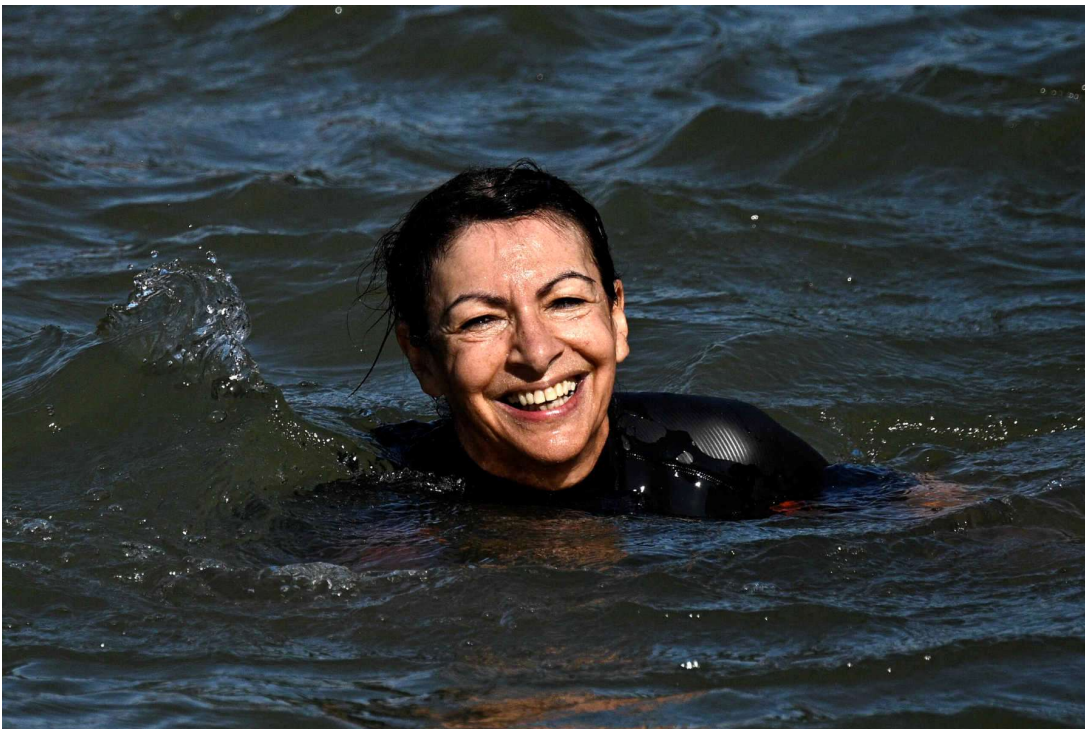


July's full moon is known as the "Buck moon," so named because male deer antlers are in full-growth mode at this time after their annual shedding process, according to the Old Farmer's Almanac. Other less common names given to a July full moon include "Feather-moulting moon," "Salmon moon," "Berry moon" and "Month of the Ripe Corn moon." The Buck moon will reach peak illumination by 6:17 a.m. ET on Sunday, July 21, according to the Old Farmer's Almanac. The next full moon, in August, will be a supermoon known as the "Sturgeon moon."

This week also marks the start of the Perseid meteor shower, which is active every year from mid-July to late August. According to Space.com, the meteor shower will peak on the night of Aug. 12. During its peak, the Perseids can deliver anywhere between 150 to 200 meteors, or shooting stars, per hour. (*ScrippsNews*)

DAAR'S 'N DROL IN DIE DRINKWATER...

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo swims in the Seine, in Paris on July 17, 2024, to demonstrate that the river is clean enough to host the outdoor swimming events at the Paris Olympics later this month. – Despite an investment of 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) to prevent sewage leaks into the waterway, the Seine has been causing suspense in the run-up to the opening of the Paris Games on July 26 after repeatedly failing water quality tests. But since the beginning of July, with heavy rains finally giving way to sunnier weather, samples have shown the river to be ready for the open-water swimming and triathlon — and for 65-year-old Hidalgo.



(Photo by JULIEN DE ROSA / AFP)

The Paris Mayor Anne took the plunge Wednesday when she jumped into the River Seine in Paris to show the water was clean enough to host Olympic swimming events starting later this month. Hidalgo is the latest VIP to cleave through the river's murky waters, after Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera on Saturday. Despite a major clean-up, many Parisians still recoil at the idea of swimming in a river that regularly tests for high levels of bacteria caused by faecal matter. But up until 1923, when it was banned due to pollution and the danger from passing river barges, it was a popular pastime. As Bongani Bingwa summed up on his 702 chat show this morning: "Even if the Pope had swum in it, I wouldn't!"

CHEERS FOR NOW:

Our next ordinary Lunch will be on Friday 2nd August 2024 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers. If his flight roster permits, we hope to have Lionel Reed (now with SAA), author of the MiG Diaries, to speak to us on that topic, and its part in the Angolan war. Not to be missed. Then in September we

will have the Battle of Britain Ladies Lunch at Wanderers on the Second Friday, 13 September (Closest to Battle of Britain Day on Sunday 15 September) We hope to have Colonel Conor O'Hara OBE, the British Defence Attache at the British High Commission as our Guest and Speaker, subject as always to the Exigences of the Service. Please reserve the date in your diaries now.

TAILPIECE:

“Never argue with someone whose TV is bigger than their bookcase...” Emilia Clarke.



'I feel like I age ten years every time England play football. I hope President Biden isn't watching'



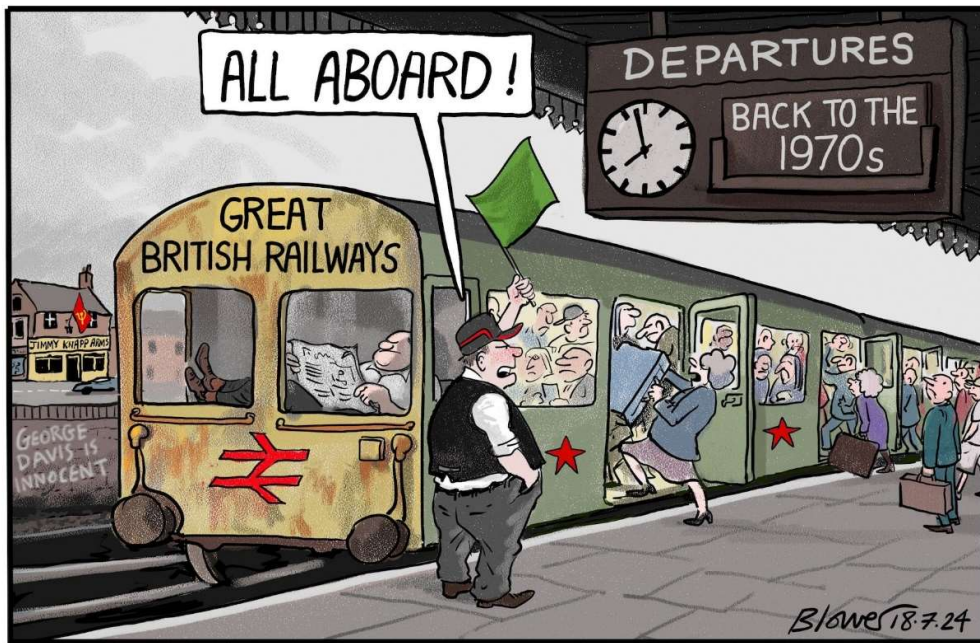
'Overcrowding forced Gareth Southgate out. There are nearly 55 million football experts in England'

**Football didn't come home,
Summer never arrived,
Might as well put the Christmas tree up...**

The gender neutral term for sugar daddy is glucose guardian

**GRANDPA TO GRANDKID: Go hide, your teacher is here because you bunked school today!
GRAND KID: YOU go hide... I told her YOU PASSED AWAY!!!**





SA'S SLING LSA RECEIVES ANOTHER AWARD:

Good day Slingers,
We are thrilled to announce that Sling Aircraft has been selected as the 2024 recipient of the esteemed August Raspert Memorial Award! The award constitutes a very satisfying recognition of Sling's development work over the past 18 years and is a significant milestone in our ongoing journey to become the world's most loved and respected developer and manufacturer of light aircraft.

About the August Raspert Award:

The annual August Raspert Memorial Award recognises the person or business who has made the most outstanding contribution to light aircraft design each year. The award was created in the memory of and named for the American, Dr. August Raspert, a pioneer in aeronautical research. An aerodynamicist and researcher, Raspert was one of the most influential contributors to the science of aeronautics, dealing primarily with efficiency in flight, aerodynamics and wing design structures. Established to recognise outstanding contributions to the advancement of light aircraft design, this award celebrates visionary work that pushes the boundaries of aviation technology and safety. Being chosen for the August Raspert Award is a testament to the relentless efforts and groundbreaking contributions of the entire Sling Aircraft team and serves as our inspiration to become the world's most loved and respected aircraft developer and manufacturer as a consequence of the outstanding qualities of our people, products and ideas.

Jack J. Pelton, CEO and Chairman of the EAA AirVenture Oshkosh board, shared the following message:

"I am pleased to announce that Sling Aircraft have been selected as the recipient of the 2024 August Raspert Award for their achievements and contributions to the advancement of light aircraft design. EAA recognises the innovation and vision that Sling Aircraft brings to the aviation community with their kit and Ready-to-Fly designs. Long range capabilities as demonstrated by their flights from South Africa to various countries across the globe throughout the years, incorporating BRS parachutes for added safety, designing airframes that maximise the use of the efficient Rotax engine series, unique seating adjustments for added comfort, pulled rivets for ease of construction and the overriding objectives of quality and reliability speak to the special place that Sling Aircraft has earned in the aviation community."

Overall, the August Raspert Award is more than just a trophy. It is a symbol of our relentless pursuit of excellence and our significant contributions to the future of aviation as acknowledged by leading experts and peers. Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

(The Airplane Factory, Tedderfield, Via Willi Bodenstein, Pilots' Post)

THE STORY OF THE HANDLEY PAGE MARATHON:

The first-ever aeroplane post World War 2 to comply with the stringent International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards.



Capable of seating up to 20 passengers, the Handley Page Marathon was a British-built four-engine civil transport aircraft. The plane was designed by Reading-headquartered Miles Aircraft but built by Handley Page at Woodley Aerodrome in Reading, England. The concept was well-received when the plane was initially submitted to the British War Ministry as a 16,500 lb four-engine monoplane. After being approved for manufacture, various agencies argued about its specifications leading to multiple attempts to change the plane's design midway through the building process. These interferences delayed the manufacture of the aircraft and increased its cost to make. Delays over a firm order from the government for the aircraft eventually led to Miles Aircraft Limit declaring bankruptcy. Already involved in the project, Handley Page acquired all of Miles's assets and formed a company called "Handley Page (Reading) Limited" to continue work on the Marathon.

Despite being revolutionary and bringing forward many firsts, such as the aircraft's all-metal design and the fact that it was the first-ever plane to comply with the stringent International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards, it received a lukewarm reception from the airlines. British European Airways (BEA) bought seven Marathons but opted not to introduce them into its fleet. In late 1952 the West African Airways Corporation took delivery of six Marathons but replaced them in 1954 with de Havilland Herons. The last three Marathons built were given enlarged fuel tanks and sold to Union of Burma Airways, who operated them in Southeast Asia for several years.

The Royal Air Force (RAF) turned out to be the plane's savior, using it as a navigation trainer. From early 1953, 28 Marathons were assigned to the No.2 Air Navigation School at RAF Thorney Island near Chichester, West Sussex. 16 other Marathons went to RAF Topcliffe in North Yorkshire when No.1 Air Navigation School relocated there in June 1958. By the spring of the following year, only eight aircraft were deemed airworthy. Besides being mechanically unreliable, the aircraft has a maximum ceiling of 9,500 feet and a poor climb rate of 300 feet a minute. The last of the Marathon navigational trainers were retired by the RAF in April 1959 and ended up being scrapped.

The predecessor of British Midland Airways, Derby Aviation, acquired three Marathons in 1955 for UK domestic flights, including the Channel Islands. The planes were based at Burnaston Airport near Derby and were operational until being withdrawn from service in December 1960. Two of the former RAF planes were returned to Handley Page at Shoreham-by-Sea, where they were supposed to be used to fly between the south coast of England and the Channel Islands. However, this failed to materialize, and the planes were scrapped in 1962.

In September 1964, Handley Page sold one Marathon to King Hussein of Jordan, who planned to use the aircraft for his transport around Jordan and the neighboring countries. (SimpleFlyng – Thanks to Hanke Fourie and Colin Ackroyd)

General characteristics

- Crew: 2
- Capacity: 20 passengers
- Length: 52 ft 1.5 in
- Wingspan: 65 ft
- Height: 14 ft 1 in
- Wing area: 498 sq ft
- Empty weight: 11,688 lb
- Max takeoff weight: 18,250 lb

- Fuel capacity: 240 imp gal
- Powerplant: 4 × de Havilland Gipsy Queen 70-3 six-cylinder air-cooled inline piston engine, 340 hp

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 newsletter in the future, but not this week.