



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 218 2<sup>nd</sup> AUGUST 2024

### GREETINGS:

“Over hill, over dale, through bush, through brier, over park, over pale, through flood, through fire”, Wrote Shakespeare in *Midsummers Night Dream*... The Olympic Dream turned into a sacrilegious nightmare in the Opening Ceremony of the Paris Olympics on Friday night... SA tries to mend fences with USA... Libyans arrested in SA were sent for military training... The ANC has expelled its former leader and president Jacob Zuma – watch this space... Doctors set to exit SA due NHI... Power supply outage at Cape Town International disrupts and diverts flights... grim scholar transport deaths... TotalEnergies exit SA oil exploration... Breaststroke queen Tatjana Smith claims SA’s first Olympic gold medal... South Africa did not give their participants ‘pins’ to swop in a cost cutting exercise – taking one less official also saves money... Blitzboks take Bronze... leopard attacks 2 men at AFB Hoedspruit... How to keep cats out of your garden and yard...

YouTube video of Opening Ceremony deleted after unprecedented backlash over its controversial and “blasphemous” nature... Dirty Seine puts triathlon back in doubt... ‘Cat ladies’ support Kamala Harris... Horses keep cool as humans suffer in France’s 36C Olympics heatwave... massive wildfires devastate North California... Israel launches air strike against Hezbollah in Lebanon - kills senior Hezbollah commander, and Hamas political leader in Iran... Chinese Territorial confrontations in South China Sea threaten trade... Two children die, nine injured in ‘ferocious’ knife attack in Southport... rioters threw bricks at officers, torched vehicles, attacked mosque... RAF 14 Squadron drops ‘offensive’ Crusaders nickname after “woke” protest... Chancellor Rachel Reeves and the £22bn black hole... admits the grotesque truth about her plans for Britain... England ‘blow West Indies away’... Russell’s Belgian GP disqualification hands Hamilton victory... How to avoid being a clueless American abroad...

## GLOBAL AIR AND SPACE CHIEFS' CONFERENCE 2024:



In his keynote speech on day two of the conference, ACM Knighton highlighted Ukraine's experience to illustrate the prohibitive costs of war to a nation in terms of lives lost, equipment destroyed and money spent. He reminded delegates that it took the UK 60 years to repay borrowing from the US and Canada for WW2 and said: "We're building our Armed Forces to stop an all-out war starting and that demands more sophisticated thinking."

Continuing the theme of deterrence, ACM Knighton paid tribute to NATO, calling it 'the greatest military alliance in history' but he acknowledged that ways of warfare have changed and deterring all-out war in Europe will require a very different approach to that taken in conflicts over the past 25 years. At the heart of this will be a combined allied readiness to fly and fight and win control of the air. He emphasised that deterrence cannot be static or passive and that operational agility delivered through agile combat employment will play a key part in deterring potential adversaries. Echoing a point that he has reiterated throughout his first year as Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Knighton told delegates that the Royal Air Force's priority is its people – but acknowledged the challenge that he and his fellow Chiefs face in recruiting and retaining the right personnel. He also said that, despite having enviable capabilities, the Royal Air Force would need to get more out of them to repay the nation's investment. "Air and space power is going to play a critical role in deterring our adversaries. That is why we are the first line of defence and the first responders." ACM Sir Rich Knighton Chief of the Air Staff. *(RAF News)*

## BUFFS OVER EUROPE:



A B-52H Stratofortress from the 20th Bomb Squadron, Barksdale Air Force Base, La., makes its initial landing at Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base, Romania, in support of Bomber Task Force Deployment 24-4, July 21, 2024. *(U.S. Air Force Photo by Senior Airman Seth Watson)*

On Jul. 21, 2024, two B-52H Stratofortress aircraft from the U.S. Air Force's 2nd Bomb Wing, stationed at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, landed at Mihail Kogalniceanu Airbase in Romania as part of Bomber

Task Force 24-4. On their way to Romania, the two strategic bombers were intercepted by Russian MiG-31 and MiG-29 aircraft. During their flight over the Barents Sea, the B-52s, operating in international airspace in compliance with international law, were intercepted by two Russian aircraft around 8 a.m. Central European Time. Despite the interception, the B-52s maintained their flight path and continued their mission as planned, including integration exercises with NATO fighter jets, before landing at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base. The deployment was somehow spoiled by the presence of several KC-135 tankers from the 100th ARW (Air Refueling Wing) out of RAF Mildenhall, tracking online as they supported the BUFFs (Big Ugly Fat Fellows – as the B-52 is nicknamed among the pilots' community) on their way to Romania.

This is a translation of the statement released by the Russian MOD: “To identify an air target and prevent violation of the State Border of the Russian Federation, MiG-29 and MiG-31 fighters from the air defense forces on duty were scrambled into the air. Russian fighter crews identified the aerial target as a pair of US Air Force B-52H strategic bombers.

As Russian fighters approached, American strategic bombers made a turn from the State Border of the Russian Federation. Russian aircraft returned safely to their home airfields, and no violations of the State Border of the Russian Federation were allowed. The flight of Russian fighters was carried out in strict accordance with international rules for the use of airspace over neutral waters and in compliance with safety measures.” *(The Aviationist)*

## TU 160 BLACKJACKS FOR AAD 2024:



It's official - a team of Russian military specialists have been in Pretoria this week, assessing the facilities at AFB Waterkloof for the return of TU-160 Blackjack nuclear-capable bombers, ostensibly for inclusion at AAD '24. Here's the official splurb – “Russia and South Africa Strengthen Military Ties in Backing of Africa Aerospace and Defence. Russia and South Africa have enjoyed diplomatic relations since time immemorial, as BRICS members, together with China, India, and

Brazil. They all enjoy economic ties, political relations, and military cooperation agreements, they have both enjoyed training and joint exercises.

It is no wonder that a group of seven (7) personnel from the Russian Federation landed at Air Force Base Waterkloof, for reconnaissance and the possible deployment of TU-160 Bombers at the upcoming African Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2024. They landed on 22 and will conclude their tour on 26 July 2024. The Russian entourage was warmly welcomed on African soil by welcomed by Brigadier General Alec Kitley on behalf of the Chief of the South African Air Force, Lieutenant General Simo Wiseman Mbambo.

Preparations are in full swing for the Africa Aerospace and Defence 2024, a leading exhibition for aerospace, defence, and security in Africa.

*(Article by Captain Tebogo August, Editor, Ad Astra Magazine and Photographs provided by Sergeant Ayanda Sedibe, SA Air Force).*

## BOOM FIRST FLIGHT:



*XB-1 takes off for the first flight. (Photo: Boom Supersonic)*

The XB-1 supersonic aircraft demonstrator of Boom Supersonic flew for the first time on March 22, 2024, from the Mojave Air & Space Port in Mojave, California. XB-1, according to the company, is the world's first independently developed supersonic jet and leverages state-of-the-art technologies to enable efficient supersonic flight including carbon fiber composites, advanced avionics, digitally-optimized aerodynamics, and an advanced supersonic propulsion system.

"Today, XB-1 took flight in the same hallowed airspace where the Bell X-1 first broke the sound barrier in 1947," said Blake Scholl, founder and CEO of Boom Supersonic. "I've been looking forward to this flight since founding Boom in 2014, and it marks the most significant milestone yet on our path to bring supersonic travel to passengers worldwide."

The aircraft was flown by Chief Test Pilot Bill "Doc" Shoemaker, while Test Pilot Tristan "Geppetto" Brandenburg flew the T-38 chase aircraft which monitored XB-1 in the air, observing how the aircraft was handling and verifying its flight data and airworthiness. Both pilots maintain flight proficiency in T-38 and F-5 aircraft, which they use to develop chase procedures and practice flight test techniques that will be used in XB-1, but they have also flown the F-104 as both share many flight characteristics. "Everyone on the XB-1 team should be incredibly proud of this achievement," said Shoemaker. "It has been a privilege to share this journey with so many dedicated and talented professionals. The experience we have gained in reaching this milestone will be invaluable to Boom's revival of supersonic travel." (*Aviationist*)

## ILLEGAL LIBYAN TRAINING BASE:

The South African Police Service (SAPS) has uncovered what it believes to be a military training camp in White River, and has apprehended 95 foreign nationals in a raid on the facility. In a statement on Friday, the SAPS said the operation was carried out in conjunction with the ProvJOINT structure, including the Department of Home Affairs and other role players like Police Intelligence. Acting Provincial Commissioner of the SAPS in Mpumalanga, Major General (Dr) Zeph Mkhwanazi, convened the Provincial Joint Structures (ProvJOINTS) two days ago after receiving intelligence information about the suspected camp, which led to the raid on Friday 26 July and subsequent arrests.

The location, which was initially designated as a training site, appears to have been converted into an illegal military training base. The 95 individuals taken into custody are all Libyan nationals and are currently being questioned by the relevant authorities, the SAPS said. At this stage it is not clear if the Libyan nationals are in South Africa for security training, as mercenaries, or if they are supporting either of the North African nation's rival governments. Libya descended into chaos after the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in a NATO-backed uprising in 2011 and is split between rival administrations in the east and west, with Khalifa Haftar controlling the east and the Government of National Accord (GNA) controlling the west.



Both Haftar's Libyan National Army and the GNA have recruited mercenaries from sub-Saharan Africa, including Chad and Sudan, while Russia's Wagner Group (now Africa Corps) has also supplied mercenaries. The United Arab Emirates and Turkey have supplied weapons and equipment while Turkey has sent thousands of Syrians to fight for Tripoli-based forces in Libya. As far back as June 2020, a UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries warned that

reliance on mercenaries and related actors since 2019 had contributed to escalation of the conflict in Libya and undermined the peace process, which was a breach of the existing arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council. (*DefenceWeb*)

## **FRENCH TRAINS DISRUPTED:**

Several attacks were carried out on train stations in France during the night of Thursday/ Friday last week. These included deliberate arson with the clear aim of crippling high-speed train traffic. French railway company SNCF brings this information to French news agency AFP. Consequently, high-speed train services on several lines will be very disrupted in France, and this just a few hours before the opening ceremony.



French high-speed train (TGV) services will be "very disrupted" over the coming weekend, following "a large-scale attack" to cripple the high-speed network. And the timing could not be worse as the Olympics kick off in Paris this weekend.

"We are diverting certain trains to the classic line, but we will have to cancel a large number," the SNCF said. "This situation will last at least all weekend, the time to carry out repairs." The French sports minister stressed that it was "a kind of coordinated sabotage." It is unclear for now who is behind the sabotage. *(AFP and Others)*

## SEA FURY:



Those whose memories are still working may remember that earlier this year we reported that Reno racer "Sawbones" had been purchased by warbird and aerobatic pilot Paul Bennet and had arrived "Down Under" for a March airshow debut. One of the batch of Hawker Fury airframes secured by Ed Jurist and David Tallichet from Iraq in 1970, FB.11 325 was restored to flight by George H Baker's American Aero Services with a Wright R-3350 in place of the original 5 Bristol Centaurus,

folding wings and a second seat for a passenger. Registered N71GB and wearing Royal Australian Navy markings the aircraft first flew in 1990. And thus in early 2024, a significant part of naval aviation history returned to the skies of Australia in the form of a British classic, the Hawker Sea Fury.

The Australian Defence Force ordered 101 of these characterful aircraft in the late 1940s to be allocated to several different squadrons. Some of these machines would operate from the HMAS Sydney (formerly HMS Terrible), the newly acquired aircraft carrier brought into Australian service in 1948. A year later, 25 Sea Furies operated by 805 Squadron set sail on Sydney from the UK where the carrier had been built. The remaining 76 Sea Furies were delivered to the Royal Australian Navy in December 1950, October 1951, March 1952, January 1953 and January 1954.

It was not long before the Sea Fury began to see combat. In 1951 the decision was made to send two squadrons of aircraft to Korea to support the operations undertaken by the United Nations. Nos 805 and 808 Squadrons set sail for Korea in August 1951 and flew their first operational sorties on October 4 that year. This was called to mind on Friday when, at the Korean War Commemoration Parade, this Australian contribution was mentioned along with those of 60 other countries which came to the assistance of South Korea under the UN banner in 1950

## LOCAL IS LEKKER...



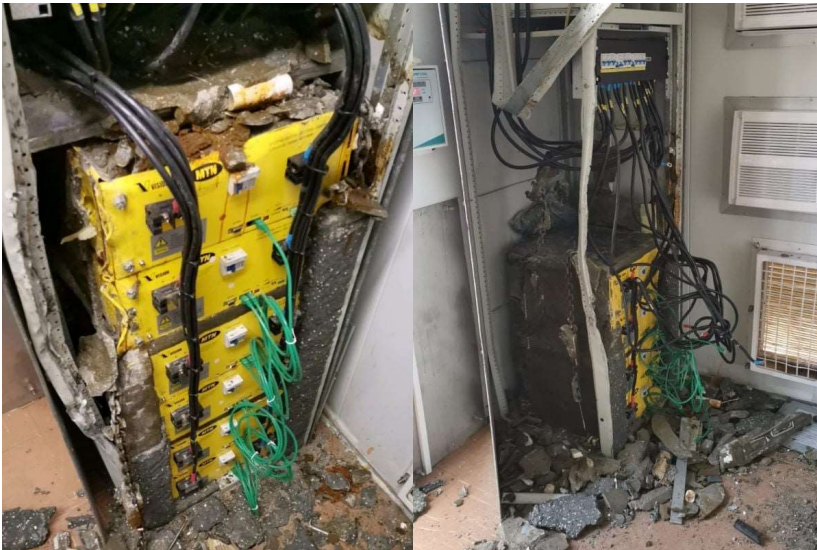
*The men behind Nando's – South Africa's global peri-peri chicken empire.*

Few brand names resonate as vibrantly in South Africa as Nando's. The peri-peri chicken chain's origins trace back to a meal between two friends at a restaurant in Johannesburg in 1987.

Co-founded by Fernando "Nando" Duarte and Robert Brozin, Nando's is renowned for bringing peri-peri sauce into the mainstream - a zesty and spicy sauce central to Portuguese and Mozambican dishes. Nando's has gone from a few restaurants in the late 1980s, to become one of the country's most successful brands, spanning over 23 countries with more than 1,250 outlets and sporting an estimated global revenue of R30.06 billion for the year ending February 26, 2023.

One afternoon back in 1987, Duarte invited his friend Brozin for lunch at a Portuguese-Mozambican takeaway named Chickenland in Rosettenville, Johannesburg. Duarte and Brozin met while working at Brozin's father's electronics business, where they worked as a technical and marketing manager, respectively. Duarte was born in Porto, Portugal, and had immigrated to South Africa with his family after having spent formative years in Mozambique. Brozin was born in Middelburg, South Africa, and largely grew up in Johannesburg - keen to try Portuguese-Mozambican cuisine. Peri-peri chicken was only really on the menu in South Africa at small Portuguese family-owned businesses and in Mozambique and Angola. However, the two wanted to make it a household staple. Together they purchased a 67% stake in Chickenland. The restaurant was rebranded and then named after Fernando and his son, "Nando". (*BusinessTech*)

## ECONOMIC SABOTAGE:



Vandalism of backup batteries at an MTN tower station. Mobile operators in South Africa continue to experience the persistent threat of infrastructure vandalism and theft. Stealing batteries, generators, and wires from base stations destroys the surrounding infrastructure, costing mobile operators millions in capital expenditures. This results in enormous costs for these telcos, amounting to billions every year. However, the country's telcos are experiencing this criminal phenomenon differently.

The infrastructure subject to this type of crime usually consists of backup batteries, generators, and copper cables found at cellphone tower stations or base stations.

Backup batteries and generators are essential to the towers' functioning during load-shedding, as networks try to ensure as much uptime as possible.

Copper found in power cables is highly vulnerable to theft due to how easily it can be sold in South Africa. As a result, mobile networks are losing and spending millions.

South Africa's biggest mobile network operator, Vodacom, told *MyBroadband* that it annually loses roughly R100 million to mobile tower battery theft and infrastructure vandalism.

Telkom, on the other hand, said that its estimated losses caused by vandalism and theft are R7 billion per year, and the total economic loss caused by the crime is over R108 billion.

MTN has also experienced its fair share, spending R33 million in 2023 to account for damages and theft. Fortunately for MTN, this situation seems to be improving, unlike Vodacom. “Although the incidents of battery theft and network infrastructure vandalism is still a reality, MTN has seen a decline of incidents relating to this type of crime,” MTN SA told *MyBroadband*.

MTN attributes this decline to security measures that the network has introduced over the past few years. This includes installing CCTV and building concrete and heavy steel safehouse carriages to safeguard the batteries.

Vodacom sees this situation differently, noting that base stations are increasingly targeted and organised syndicates create unique approaches every time. “On a daily basis local network providers experience multiple incidents of break-ins in our base station sites,” a Vodacom spokesperson said. “For many communities, especially those in remote areas, cellular base stations serve as the primary form of connectivity.”

Vodacom notes how each incident can cause outages lasting days, severely affecting businesses and people who rely on mobile networks for communication.

## **CHEERS FOR NOW:**

Another Obit for a remarkable Naval Aviator, Commander Sharkey Ward, at end of Ramblings.

A number of our members were privileged to attend the Korean War Commemoration Ceremony held at Bays Hill of Friday 26 July, hosted by the South Korean Embassy of SA. No 2 Squadron SAAF, The Flying Cheetahs arrived in Busan on 16 November 1950 and were already in action on 19 November. SA was the only country on Africa to contribute air assets, the only other African contributor, Ethiopia, sent an infantry Battalion. Of the 826 SAAF personnel who served, there were 37 Casualties.

Our next ordinary Lunch will be this Friday 2nd August 2024 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers. Flight rosters permitting, we hope to have Lionel Reid (*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. Those of you who were at the Paramount presentation will remember that the “MiG Diaries” got a resounding recommendation from the team.

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:**

“Motsoaledi was Minister of Health from 2009 to 2019 – during which the Public Health system in all provinces, except the WC, collapsed. Infant mortalities soared, oncology facilities availability plummeted and procurement corruption accelerated. Motsoaledi is categorically not the solution.”



MATT

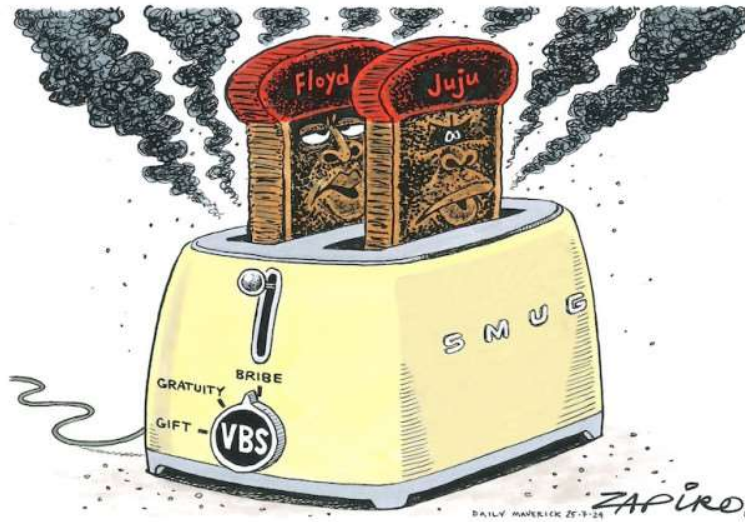


'Ruining any nice holidays this summer?'

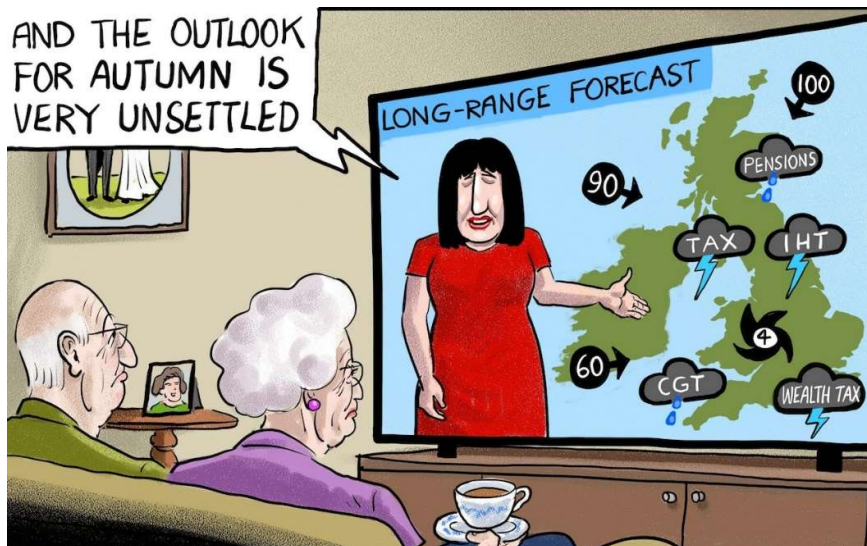
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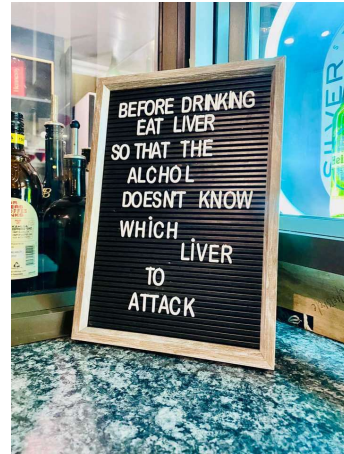
'The junior doctors got a pay rise. It's OK to have an accident again'



AND THE OUTLOOK FOR AUTUMN IS VERY UNSETTLED

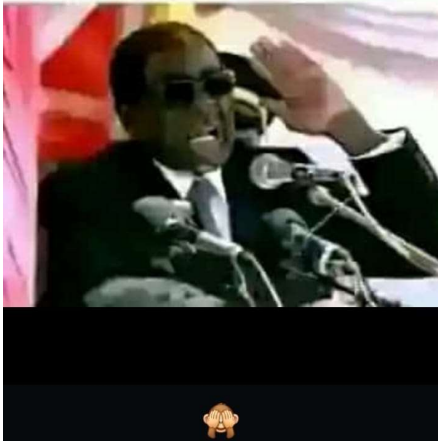


A single ant can live to be 29 years old

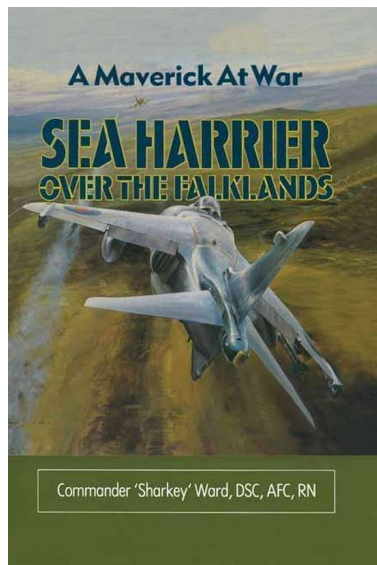


They've had to cancel the panto 'Jack & the Beanstalk' this Christmas in Birmingham, Bristol, Oldham, Bradford, Burnley, Leicester, Luton and London. Apparently the giant couldn't smell any Englishmen. @petermike389

Even if you give African police helicopters to work in the sky, they will still collect bribes from birds for flying without helmets. It is inborn 🙄🙄🙄



## OBITUARY: Commander Nigel David ‘Sharkey’ WARD DSC AFC RN



By naval custom, Wards are nicknamed ‘Sharkey’ and Nigel David Ward was no exception. He was the premier Sea Harrier fighter pilot of the 1982 campaign to liberate the Falkland islanders from Argentine occupation. Admiral Sir Henry Leach, First Sea Lord, said, “Without the Sea Harrier, there could have been no Task Force”.

His command of 801 Sea Harrier Squadron, embarked in the carrier *Invincible*, was the culmination of a career that included five years of flying the high-performance F4 Phantom jet off the large carrier *Ark Royal*, a tour in the MoD as the Sea Harrier ‘desk officer’ and command of the Sea Harrier Intensive Flying Trials Unit. With its recently introduced Blue Fox radar and carrying the highly effective American AIM9L Sidewinder air-to-air missile, the Sea Harrier’s noted manoeuvrability, flown by the well-trained and aggressive pilots of the Fleet Air Arm, made it a match for the faster fighters and fighter-bombers of the Argentine air force.

Ward’s gripping autobiographical account of the Falklands crisis, *Sea Harrier Over The Falklands*, tells of his important contributions while CO of the trials unit. The operating envelope of the Sea Harrier was largely unexplored and Ward was adamant that it should be the all-weather day and night fighter so badly needed by the Fleet Air Arm after the 1966 decision to run down fixed-wing aviation from the Royal Navy on cost grounds, irrespective of strategic necessity. Accordingly, and with the support of the Captain and Commander (Air) of the carrier *Invincible* but opposed by the conventional test pilot community who believed that pilots would be overloaded, Ward initiated a successful programme of night flying without ‘paper authorisation’. He also arranged a series of ‘Top Gun’ aerial contests against the best of the US air force’s jets and pilots, Ward and his team demonstrating by winning most of the engagements the fighting capability of the Sea Harrier under modern combat conditions. He was awarded the AFC for this work.

Brim-full of confidence in their abilities, 801 Squadron pilots set off south but with considerable worries about Argentine numerical superiority of possibly ten to one over the 20 Sea Harriers and 29 pilots embarked in the carriers *Hermes* and *Invincible*. Intelligence was thin, but some of Ward’s pilots had flown in or against the aircraft types in the Argentine air force and were familiar with their strengths and weaknesses. The first air combat engagement would be decisive and critical to the success of the whole campaign.

Ward's first mission was to defend against fighter attack the RAF Vulcan bomber that made the first of several ineffective attacks on Port Stanley airfield, a feat of airmanship, however, given the distance from Ascension Island and the need for multiple air refuellings.

The first air combat successes by 801 Squadron on May 1 vindicated Ward's tactical training and his faith in the Blue Fox radar – downing two Mirage fighters and two Canberra bombers, another Mirage falling to 800 Squadron from Hermes. There were no Harrier losses. Meanwhile 800 Squadron executed their famous daylight attack on Port Stanley airfield, after which the BBC's Brian Hanrahan, responsible for one of the most memorable journalistic moments of the campaign when he commented "I'm not allowed to say how many planes joined the raid, but I counted them all out and I counted them all back".

The war continued under the most difficult conditions of weather, with Sea Harriers forming the first line of defence against Argentine attacks. After the amphibious landings in San Carlos bay an arduous period of flying combat air patrols ('CAP') required careful attention to fuel states, the two carriers having to remain outside the range of the Exocet missile carried by the Super Etendard fighter bomber, this combination having sunk the destroyer Sheffield. Reinforcements by sea increased the Sea Harrier force to a total of 28 deployed, but Ward's squadron suffered a tragic loss when two aircraft in poor visibility at night collided. Altogether four were lost in accidents and two to ground fire. There were no losses of Harriers in the air-to-air combats which downed over 20 attackers.

It became a routine practice for CAP aircraft to drop a high-level 1000lb bomb on Argentine facilities at Port Stanley on the way out. Ward himself had three air-to-air kills including a C130 Hercules transport, persistently used to infiltrate stores and ammunition into Port Stanley at night.

His book is sub-titled 'A Maverick at War' and this self-judgement is certainly supported by his critical comments on the conduct of the air war by the Task Force commander, Rear-Admiral 'Sandy' Woodward. It was unfortunate that Ward, the navy's supreme expert on the Sea Harrier, was in the Invincible while the flagship was Hermes where 800 Squadron lacked Ward's guidance and lacked confidence in the Harrier's navigation system and the Blue Fox radar. He points to numerous failures of judgement by the management, among which was his belief that the Sheffield need not have been lost if the two local CAP pairs had not been grossly misemployed and the frigate Ardent might have survived if the 800 Squadron CAP had patrolled at the low level used by 801 Squadron. He was particularly mad at the loss of Lieutenant Nick Taylor in a low-level attack over Goose Green in good visibility – why waste invaluable air defence assets on a ground attack of little purpose?. His gloss to his pilots on the compendious and unrealistic Rules of Engagement was acerbic – "you will shoot down anything that moves provided it isn't one of ours or a Red Cross airliner carrying nuns and school kids....".

He was awarded the DSC for his gallantry and devotion to duty. After the Falklands affair, Ward was again employed in the MoD where he did his best to influence the choice of weapon-delivery system for the Royal Navy. As an aside, he poured scorn on the major new airfield built at huge expense in the Falklands; "a surprise offensive would secure the air base within hours, providing a superb platform for the Argentine air force to prevent any naval approach".

Born in Medicine Hat, Alberta where his father was working on Merlin aero engines, he travelled as a child with his parents around the Far East, contracting in 1950 a near-fatal lung disease at RAF Mauripur near Karachi.

Having become 'tired of fighting donkeys' in the MoD, he left the Royal Navy in 1985 to set up his own company, Defence Analysts Ltd, which employed Special Forces expertise to defend oil tankers in the Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war, saving many lives and several ships from destruction. But this did not bring in enough money, so Ward started to build a three-star hotel at Marmaris in Turkey.

His bank foreclosed during the 1989 depression and he was left with a half-built hotel, large debts and a broken marriage.

He moved to St George's in Grenada in 1994, having rescued an Englishwoman and her son from an unhappy marriage to a Turk, 'employing the services of one of the most famous bandits in Turkey to protect our getaway. It was cloak and dagger stuff almost meriting a James Bond movie'. He subsequently made a living from graphic and architectural design, remaining a dedicated and often furious protagonist of naval air power.

He was four times married. He is survived by two sons.

Commander Nigel Ward DSC AFC, Fleet Air Arm fighter pilot and businessmen, was born on 23 September 1943. He died on 17 May 2024 aged 80.

*(Rear Admiral Guy Liardet in The Naval Review)*