



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 37 – 18th DECEMBER 2020

GREETINGS:

This week ushered in Day 267 of the Great Disaster – as Alice said, things get curiouser and curiouser, not least with the very curious case of Ace Magashule....The Integrity Committee has, apparently, handed him his marching orders... further restrictions due to the Covid surge scare, and further extension of the State of Disaster due to the ANC scare. “Year of the Black Mamba “ in Ashburton...Man arrested for impersonating a cop and stealing R300 000 worth of cigarettes...a flaming hearse in Paarl – Cremations on the Go?? The Chief Justice Shouts at the Devil...Mkwebane fears perjury charges (She would, wouldn't she?) Another 4 criminals shot dead after another farm attack. Cele gets the wrong kind of publicity in Camps Bay....And Eskom load shedding – this Christmas promises to be a holiday like no other....In the UK, “The Fight Before Christmas” – a bust-up with the Scots and Welsh....Tory Grandees in a fury over a No Brexit deal....bailouts, blame and broken glass. South Korea reports the “Third Wave” is anticipated to be the worst of all in the pandemic... Nigeria sees a wave of mass kidnapping – “Booze Bomb” attacks in Baghdad... - Cheaper wine in 2021? 300m litres of wine still unsold after the 2020 alcohol ban - That's equal to South Africa's entire wine sales in 2019. A bumper harvest is imminent; who will drink all that wine? Any RAFOC Volunteers?

MEMBERS GREETINGS:

Ian Grace writes: “Dear Committee, Thank you for the link. Very interesting magazine and also very close to my heart. (African Wildlife and Environment) Thank you for the RAFOC Ramblings; they really helped maintain my sanity. Thank you for your Friendship, this during a very different year. I appreciated all you have done and continue to do! May I wish you and your loved ones a Peaceful and Blessed Christmas and an incredible 2021. With great appreciation and best wishes, Ian.”

PROJECT ASTRA:

To continue to protect the UK and our allies into the future, the Royal Air Force must be radically forward looking in the face of fast evolving challenges and emerging threats. We must adapt at pace, in depth and across our Service. We need to be ready and able to act faster, with greater precision, lethality, and in more places around the world simultaneously than we do today - and do it sustainably too. It requires substantial changes to our way in warfare, how we command and lead

and how we are structured. It will require a shakeup of the way we do HR, our bases, equipment and training. Our campaign to do this, to build the Next Generation Royal Air Force, is called Astra. Astra isn't just about the big-ticket projects and programmes that will help us to realise our ambitions. Just as importantly, it's about involving the Whole Force of regulars, reserves, civilians and contractors in making the change, by identifying the barriers that hold us back – however big or small – and overcoming them by working collaboratively, working smarter, innovating internally and with Defence partners to create the right environment for ideas to flourish. *(RAF News)*

NIGHT VISION FOR “THE FEW”:

The National Memorial to the Few is now lit by floodlights after dark, thanks to a donation from a local businessman. The lights switch-on marks the end of the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, which took place between July and October. Businessman Alastair Kerr made the donation in memory of three members of his family who served in the RAF during WWII. He has also helped cover the cost of installing new entrance gates, which formerly stood at RAF Biggin Hill, named in honour of former Chief of the Air Staff ACM Sir Michael Graydon, President of the Trust. Mr Kerr said: “I hope I have helped the Trust keep this pivotal period in Britain and Western Europe’s history very much alive, not only for the present but for all the generations to come. “Both sides of my family saw fine men and women serving in both world wars. I felt I should show my respect and appreciation of them, the combatants and the previous generations for their bravery and determination.

SOVEREIGN’S PARADE REHEARSAL, SANDHURST:

Academy Sgt Major to an officer cadet, who is “Being Idle On Parade”: “You, Sir, are a disgrace! March yourself to apologise to Queen Victoria” (her statue is at the end of Sovereign’s Walk in front of the Old College parade ground) “and then double yourself to the Guard Room!” The parade waits as the Cadet marches the 200 metres to the statue, comes to a first class drill halt in front of the statue of Queen Victoria, has a few moments in front of the statue, salutes, about turns and, instead of marching straight on to the guard room, he turns right to Victory College. The Academy Sgt Major’s thought process is vividly apparent from the expressions passing over his face; bewilderment, anger and finally apoplexy. The Academy Sgt Major shouts to the cadet’s Company Sgt Major: “He’s one of yours – see what the f*** he is up to!” The Company Sgt Major follows the laws of gravity and shouts to the Platoon Colour Sgt : “He’s one of yours – see what the f*** he is up to!”. The parade watches (at Attention) the launching of the Platoon Colour Sgt, who knows that unless he can somehow assuage the situation this cadet from his platoon will have got him on Orderly Sgt for at least 2 months. The Platoon Colour Sgt catches up with cadet about turns him and marches him back, at least double time, to present himself in front of the Academy Sgt Major. After a lengthy and expletive filled berating from the Academy Sgt Major, the cadet is told to explain himself: “Well, Academy Sergeant Major, I have had a very hard week, which resulted in my appalling drill. I explained this to Her Majesty and she was very sympathetic and told me that I should probably go and have a few hours’ sleep before I came back on parade...” *(Sent in by Bob Napier – who was there....)*

FIRST SAME-DAY CONTRACTS:

Defence Chiefs have awarded contracts to technology start-ups following Dragons’ Den style pitches from developers. The move comes as the government steps up investment in space and data-driven kit to counter the growing threat to military and commercial satellites and space vehicles. Ten tech developers secured same-day contracts worth up to £53,000 to fast-track their designs after pitching direct to UK, US and NATO military leaders. UK Forces’ first Space Director Air Vice - Marshal Harvey Smyth unveiled the winners in front of a global audience during the first Defence Space Conference, hosted from London. It is the first time same-day contracts have been awarded in this way to industry by the UK Ministry of Defence. Fifteen proposals from tech start-ups and innovators battled it out to win funding. Three of the 10 successful bidders are UK-based, along with five from the US and single winners from Australia and India. Air Vice-Marshal Smyth said: “The first International Space Pitch Day has captured the imagination of innovators and militaries, not just

across the UK and US, but all over the world. “We look forward to building on its success as we seek to fast-track innovation and cutting-edge technology to the frontline quicker than ever before with fresh ways of working with industry to make sure we stay ahead of our shared adversaries and the threats they pose.” (*RAF News*)

OBITUARY:

John le Carré, who has died aged 89 of pneumonia on 12 December, raised the spy novel to a new level of seriousness and respect. He was in his late 20s when he began to write fiction – in longhand, in small red pocket notebooks, on his daily train journey between his home in Buckinghamshire and his day job with MI5, the counter-intelligence service, in London. After the publication of two neatly crafted novels, *Call for the Dead* (1961) and *A Murder of Quality* (1962), which received measured reviews and modest sales, he hit the big time with *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963). Le Carré’s subject was the human and political ambiguities of the cold war. His book was gritty, stripped of glamour. Reviewers talked of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* as a grown-up answer to Ian Fleming’s James Bond novels. It was more than that. His taut, complex plot, strong storytelling gifts, and distinctive characterisation made his book a memorable literary achievement. Other novels (30-odd) followed, but this was his masterpiece. Since the 1970s Le Carré had lived near St Buryan, Cornwall, a tiny, desolate part of England, where the real effects of what I see as terrible misgovernment – central misgovernment – can be felt in detail upon agriculture, fishing, communication, and transport, all of those things. His sense of the indifference of the rich and the pervasive philosophy of greed in Britain aligned him with the great tradition of Victorian radicals and moralists. Like Dickens, he was a serious novelist, and a profoundly entertaining one. (*The full Obit in the Guardian is well worth the read*)

MOZAMBIQUE VNA MAYHEM:

When Mozambican insurgents known as Al-Sunna captured the port of Mocimboa da Praia in early September this year it meant the ISIS-inspired group added a maritime dimension to the conflict in northern Mozambique. By controlling the port and making the coastline insecure, the group that has killed over 1,000 people and displaced over 250,000 can now prevent and counter maritime operations against it. The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) Africa recently hosted a webinar to determine just how important seaborne operations are to the insurgency and what implications the Mozambican government losing control over the Cabo Delgado coastal area could have. The first of two speakers, Kelly Moss, African maritime security researcher at Stable Seas, opened the webinar to explain how violent non-state actors (VNA) exploit the sea to cause violence on land, in what she calls “The land-sea nexus.” Moss says that VNAs use the sea in two operational ways and three ways for financial gain. The first is tactical support, which is using the sea to transport fighters, weapons and other operational assets. The second operation is targeting ships or ports. VNAs get financial revenue through trafficking, trade, taxes and extortion. VNAs take assets for their gain through piracy and armed robbery at sea. They traffic and trade illicit goods and services, typically liaising with organized criminal networks in their region. Taxation and extortion are also known streams of revenue for VNAs, obtaining payments from local communities or businesses. Al-Sunna has evolved to use all five modes. Tactically, Al-Sunna uses small boats to transport fighters and supplies as well as carry out attacks on not only Cabo Delgado but the islands in that area as well. The group is using the sea for targeting, seen when fighters sunk a Mozambican Armed Forces patrol boat, or when they attacked and captured Mocimboa da Praia, with some fighters entering through land and sea. The second speaker, Jasmine Opperman said “We can come up with as many solutions and recommendations as we want. It is a regional risk, there is no denial, but this is a Mozambican problem that needs a Mozambican solution,” Convinced that the immediate solution lies in a response from the Mozambican government, recommendations by conflict experts, analysts,

researchers and governing bodies are not being taken seriously by the Mozambican government. Hard power by the government with the assistance of private military contractors (PMCs) like Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), whose involvement in Mozambique started with combating poaching in 2013, should be the focus of the government's response. One of the more significant thresholds crossed, according to Opperman, is the involvement of Russia through private mercenaries. "Not in terms of their successes but how the insurgents have gained capacity, weapons and sophistication following their [Russian private mercenaries] intervention," and went onto say that DAG, while better than nothing, is not making a substantial difference. (*Defence Web*)

A BRAVE JOCK RECOGNISED:

On 9 December 1941 the ship MS Sebastiano Venier was carrying about 2,000 UK and Dominion PoWs from North Africa to occupied Europe when the Royal Navy Grampus-class submarine HMS Porpoise torpedoed her off the south coast of the Peloponnese about 5 nautical miles (9 km) south of Pylos. Many of the PoWs were in her cargo holds, two of which were quickly flooded by the torpedo explosion. One source gives different figures for the total number of prisoners killed: either 300 or 450–500. The holds were opened to release trapped PoWs and the damaged ship was beached close to Methoni Castle on Cape Methoni. Many PoWs jumped into the sea and took their chance to swim to the rocky shore. A South African lance corporal, Bernard Friedlander of the 3rd Battalion, Transvaal Scottish Regiment, swam ashore with a rope, which took him 90 minutes. The rope was then used to haul a cable ashore, which was made fast on land. Nearly 1,600 survivors then used the cable to reach safety. Sebastiano Veniero remained stranded at Methoni, and on 15 December the British T-class submarine HMS Torbay hit her with another torpedo. A German officer saw Friedlander's heroism on 9 December and recommended the lance corporal for a UK bravery award. In July 1945 Friedlander was awarded the George Medal. In 1947 King George VI toured South Africa, and at a ceremony in Johannesburg on 31 March personally decorated Friedlander with the medal. (*Friends of Transvaal Scottish*)

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE – So Mr Bond:

The Il-80 showing the large "canoe" that houses satellite communications gear



A Russian military aircraft designed to allow the country's leadership to survive and fight a nuclear war has been crippled, the victim of a particularly brazen burglary. Thieves stole 39 pieces of communications equipment from the Ilyushin Il-80 aircraft, nicknamed "Maxdome" by NATO. The incident took place at the Beriev Taganrog Aviation Scientific and Technical Complex, outside the Russian city of Rostov. Inspectors noticed an open hatch leading inside the plane and soon discovered the equipment was missing. The Ilyushin Il-80 strategic airborne command post is a modified Il-86 widebody passenger jet converted for military use. Four airplanes were converted, with one reserved for use by the Russian president. The remaining three planes belong to Special Air Group Rossiya and are meant to carry members of the Russian General Staff. In a national crisis, the Russian president and military officials would board the aircraft, which would then fly to remote areas of Russia far from any potential nuclear impact zones or encroaching enemy aircraft.

WHAT A CATCH:



German divers who fished an Enigma encryption machine out of the Baltic Sea have handed their rare find over to a museum for restoration. The code machine – which was used by the German Forces to send coded messages during the Second World War – was discovered last month by divers on assignment for the environmental group WWF. The group was searching for abandoned fishing nets in the Bay of Gelding off the north-east coast of Germany.

“A colleague swam up and said: there’s a net there with an old typewriter in it,” Florian Huber, the lead diver, told the DPA news agency. The team quickly realised they had stumbled across an historic artefact and alerted the authorities. Dr Ulf Ickerodt, the head of the state archaeological office in Schleswig-Holstein, said the machine would be restored by experts at the state’s archaeology museum. The delicate process, including a thorough desalination process after seven decades in the Baltic seabed, “will take about a year”, he said. After that, the machine will go on display at the museum. Dr Jann Witt, a historian from the German Naval Association, told DPA he believed the machine, which has three rotors, was thrown overboard from a German warship in the final days of the war. It is less likely to have come from a scuttled submarine, he said, because Adolf Hitler’s U-boats used the more complex four-rotor Enigma machines. The allied forces worked tirelessly to decrypt the codes produced by the Enigma machine, which were changed every 24 hours. The British mathematician Alan Turing, who is seen as the father of modern computing, spearheaded a team at Britain’s Bletchley Park that cracked the code in 1941. The breakthrough helped the allies decipher crucial radio messages about German military movements. Historians believe it shortened the war by about two years.

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Nine months later, this is the thirty-seventh weekly Newssheet - “Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings” - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (preferably not on the antics of Ministers (various) or NCCC!) that will help us all to keep in contact through the lockdown. Thanks again to all those who have contributed and continue to do so! We will use contributions progressively as we move upwards and onwards....

RPE and Scully Levin’s books still available – Christmas presents?

The Committee again wishes all members and their families everything of the best for Christmas!

Take care – we’ve made it so far - keep safe in these troubled times, use your PPE, and remember that all this, too, shall pass....We’ll keep you posted on further developments at Wanderers as negotiations progress. So, let’s hear from you...

Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

Tim decided to tie the knot with his long-time girlfriend. One evening, after the honeymoon, he was organizing his golfing equipment. His wife was standing nearby watching him. After a long period of silence, she finally speaks: "Tim, I've been thinking, now that we're married maybe it's time you quit golfing. You spend so much time on the course. You could probably get a good price for your clubs." Tim gets this horrified look on his face. She says, "Darling, what's wrong?" "For a minute there you were beginning to sound like my ex-wife." "Ex-wife!" she screams, "I didn't know you were married before!" "I wasn't," he replied.

Eating your own dog food:

Yesterday I was at my local Checkers store buying a large bag of Epol dog food for my loyal pet and was in the checkout queue when a woman behind me asked if I had a dog. What did she think I had an elephant? So, since I'm retired and have little to do, on impulse I told her that no, I didn't have a dog, I was starting the Epol Diet again. I added that I probably shouldn't, because I ended up in hospital last time, but I'd lost 20 kilos before I woke up in intensive care with tubes coming out of most of my orifices and IVs in both arms. I told her that it was essentially a perfect diet and that the way that it works is to load your pockets with Epol nuggets and simply eat one or two every time you feel hungry. The food is nutritionally complete so it works well, and I was going to try it again. (I have to mention here that practically everyone in queue was now enthralled with my story.) Horrified, she asked me if I ended up in intensive care because the dog food poisoned me. I told her no, I stepped off the pavement to sniff a Bull Terrier's arse and a car hit me. I thought the guy behind her was going to have a heart attack he was laughing so hard. I'm now banned from Checkers. Better watch what you ask retired people. They have all the time in the world to think of daft things to say.

So glad I didn't work on my beach body this year....would have been a complete waste of time...

The worst type of bitches are apparently KwaZulu-Natal bitches...

Bungle In the jungle:

UK Racing's ruling body is to review the process by which it approves racehorse names after a runner was allowed to compete under the name of a racial slur. The horse, named Jungle Bunny, raced in a low-profile contest at Wolverhampton on Saturday, having been missed by officials at the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) who are supposed to prevent offensive and inappropriate names being used. The BHA confirmed on Sunday that the horse had been renamed at their insistence and is now called Jungle Bells. Online form records of Saturday's race are to be amended to show that name. There was no word as to whether disciplinary action would be taken against whoever submitted the name. Emma Evans, the wife of the horse's owner-trainer David Evans, said the naming had been an innocent mistake deriving from the name of the filly's sire, Bungle In the Jungle. *(The Guardian)*

Just for Laughs:

Why do supermarkets make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front?

Why do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and a diet coke?

Why do banks leave vault doors open and then chain the pens to the counters?

Why do we leave cars worth thousands of ZAR in our driveways and put our useless junk in the garage?

EVER WONDER...

Why the sun lightens our hair, but darkens our skin?

Why don't you ever see the headline 'Psychic Wins Lottery'?

Why is 'abbreviated' such a long word?

Why is it that doctors and lawyers call what they do 'practice'?

Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavouring, and dishwashing liquid made with real lemons?

Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?

Why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called rush hour?

Why isn't there mouse-flavoured cat food?

Why didn't Noah swat those two mosquitoes?

Why do they sterilize the needle for lethal injections?

You know that indestructible black box that is used on airplanes? Why don't they make the whole plane out of that stuff??

Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?

Why are they called apartments when they are all stuck together?
If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport the terminal?

GREAT day to y'all. 😊

MATT



'It's too dangerous for my family to come and see me for Christmas. We'd kill each other over Brexit'

MATT



'We're from Downing Street. Did you happen to see a copy of Theresa May's Brexit deal lying around here?'

