



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 63 – 18th JUNE 2021

GREETINGS:

Day 449... "My Fellow South Africans".... back to Level 3... Eskom loadshedding and water cuts continue many residential areas... "Youth Day" sees N3 disrupted at Harrismith by "Service Delivery" protests... Makhanda also disrupted.... Death threats against Andre de Ruyter at Eskom... construction giants Stefanutti Stocks and Basil Read "fraudulently contrived" to induce the power utility to pay the two broke firms to keep them financially afloat. Digital Vibes scored a cool R35 million before the national health department approved their work.... And former minister Malusi Gigaba told the Zondo Commission he received a SMS stating his estranged wife, Norma Mngoma, had hired people to kill him.... The mother of the 'Tembisa 10', Gosiamé Thamara Sithole, has been taken to hospital for evaluation... SAA deal smoke and mirrors... SAA's new wings undermined by pending questions about its funding model.... And the EFF's Julius Malema says they will take the vaccination delay fight to the streets.... SANDF deployed in Gauteng to help with the Third Wave... Large methane leak detected over South Africa coal mining region... (No wonder – lots of manure here)

G7 "Tea-Party" attracts widespread criticism: Why not virtual?... Putin and Biden agree at summit to resume arms control talks: "A weak Joe Biden is badly out of his depth"... Botswana says it has found the world's 'third largest' diamond: Lord Frost's warning over PM's spending: 'Trap of statism' Lib Dems take Tory stronghold with historic win: A true blue stronghold has turned yellow: Patel 'deeply ashamed' at low rape prosecution rates... Was Dominic Cummings unfit to lead from the start? "Poor players that strut and fret their hour upon the stage..."

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURED:



The RAF Aerobatic Team has marked Her Majesty the Queen's Official Birthday with a rare flypast of Windsor Castle. Trailing signature red, white and blue colours, the Red Arrows provided the finale of a scaled-back ceremony on the castle's Quadrangle. The event, which is usually held on Horse Guards Parade in London, featured around 270 soldiers from several units of the Foot guards, as well as a massed band and 70 horses and personnel of the Household Cavalry in a more traditional Trooping of the Colour. It is the first time since the Diamond Jubilee in 2012 the Red Arrows have performed over the Castle. The Red Arrows' 57th display season got underway in the UK only last weekend, with a busy return to public events and airshows following a year hit by Covid cancellations in 2020. Traditionally, the Queen's Birthday Flypast occurs over Buckingham Palace where members of the public can see a selection of the RAF's most cutting-edge or well-known aircraft. Previous aerial tributes have included the newest F35 Lightning, currently deployed on the carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, the A400M of the Air Mobility Force and rotary aircraft, such as the Chinook and Puma – celebrating their 40th and 50th years' in RAF service respectively. *(RAF News)*

HMS PRINCE OF WALES:



An F-35B jet has safely landed onboard the Royal Navy's latest aircraft carrier, HMS Prince of Wales. Taking place off the south coast of England, the milestone marks a significant step towards the 65,000-tonne vessel reaching full operational capability. Operating together as part of Sea Acceptance Trials, it is the first time a fixed wing aircraft has landed onboard HMS Prince of Wales. The trials test the ship's capability to receive and launch aircraft whilst maintaining continuous air operations. As announced by the Prime Minister last November, Defence has received an increase in funding of over £24 billion across the next four years, enabling our Armed Forces to adapt to meet future threats. Further enhanced by the commitments outlined in the Defence Command Paper, the F-35B is an integral air capability and HMS Prince of Wales marks a step change in the Royal

Navy fleet as the second of the UK's fifth-generation aircraft carriers. With a flight deck large enough to accommodate three football pitches, HMS Prince of Wales can receive up to 36 F-35B aircraft and carries a crew of around 1,600 personnel when aircraft are onboard. HMS Prince of Wales left her home port of Portsmouth at the end of April to conduct operational training which has seen the ship operating alongside the F-35B aircraft, as well as helicopters from the Royal Navy, British Army and RAF. The F-35B aircraft are primarily based at RAF Marham and are the newest addition to the RAF's fleet, able to travel up to 1,200mph. (RAF News)

TRAILBLAZING:

RAF officers have joined Britain's biggest warship HMS Prince of Wales as it launches sea trials off the UK coast. Flt Lts Hayden Rose and Chris Smith are spending three months on board to help integrate RAF teams with the hundreds of sailors crewing the vessel. And while waking up to a whistle and grappling with Senior Service slang, known as 'Jack speak', proved a challenge, the duo have found common ground with their seagoing comrades. "There are obvious differences between the Royal Navy and RAF, but there is far more that unites us than divides us," said Flt Lt Smith. "Close to the cuff humour, unwavering support for our colleagues and deep pride to serve. "Once I got past the plethora of whistles and pipes and began to understand the routine it was easy to adapt and get used to ship's life," said Flt Lt Rose. He says the food on board is "fantastic," a Saturday night at sea is "an experience I won't forget," and a trip around Torbay in one of the carrier's Pacific 24 RIB vessels gave a full insight into the size and scale of the ship. Both airmen agree that the working day in the RAF is much less structured as the Navy rigidly follows Daily Orders. They say their light blue colleagues should consider time at sea as a deployment because when 4-4.30pm comes around, there's no going home. "You're at work 24/7," said Flt Lt Smith. "Unable to just get in the car at the end of the day for a change of scenery, for down time you're limited by your shipmates, resources to hand and imagination." He's found it challenging navigating the 65,000-tonne carrier leviathan and has been baffled by Naval acronyms like CUMDAFFER – which stands for Clear Up Mess Decks and Flats for Evening Rounds. The airmen say their time at sea has proved more enjoyable than expected as the ship's company have embraced their Air Force comrades – with a bit of light ribbing on both sides. Flt Lt Rose said: "It has been a pleasant surprise to be a part of the wardroom and also to meet the rest of the ship's company. Matelots aren't as weird as I thought they were going to be" Although the carriers fly the White Ensign, both will always sail with an RAF contingent to support F-35 fast jets or Chinook helicopter.

THE AS2 BUSINESS JET, AS ENVISIONED BY AERION



There was a time when airline executives believed supersonic flight would become ubiquitous on long-haul routes. As the original supersonic aircraft were being developed in the 1960s, American Airlines publicly predicted a fleet of 200 supersonic aircraft operated by US airlines alone. A supersonic transport (SST) or a supersonic airliner is a civilian supersonic aircraft designed to transport passengers at speeds greater than the speed of sound. To date, the only SSTs to see regular service have been Concorde and the Tupolev Tu-144. There hasn't been a supersonic

passenger airliner since the days of the Concorde. Now a test aircraft is ready to try again. It's a fairly small aircraft, with a length of just 21 meters (68.8 feet). But after a tough year for the airline industry, it symbolizes a big step forward in aviation history as the first privately built supersonic aircraft.

Every other supersonic aircraft up to this point — the European Concorde flown until 2003 and the Soviet Tu-144 flown until 1999, as well as many fast military aircraft — was funded by billions from state coffers and built with government mandates. Startup Boom Supersonic from Denver in the US is different. It unveiled the first privately manufactured supersonic jet last October. The single-seat XB-1 is nicknamed “Baby Boom”. This year, the demonstrator aircraft is due to begin a lengthy test program above the Mojave Desert in California, initially flying at Mach 1.3 (about 1,600 kilometres per hour, or 1,000 miles per hour).*(DW.com)*

SLOVENIA HONOURS SPITFIRE HERO:

A Memorial to a Spitfire pilot killed hunting down German columns and trains in the final days of World War II has been unveiled at a remote crash site in the Balkans. Sgt Edmund Ramsbotham was on a mission to support Yugoslav partisans when a munitions truck exploded during a low-altitude pass and his fighter came down on the edge of the Brkini Hills near the tiny Slovenian village of Suhorje. The pilot was buried nearby by local people and his body was transferred to the military cemetery in Belgrade at the end of the war. But the memory of the tragedy on April 29, 1945 never faded in Suhorje and last year, on the 75th anniversary of his death, residents decided that a lasting tribute should be erected. They turned to academic sculptor Jurij Smole, who designed and made a monument at the exact location of the crash of local sandstone representing the tail of a Spitfire. Last year's anniversary went unmarked due to the global epidemic, but the structure has now been unveiled by Slovenian Chief of the General Staff Major General Robert Glavas and British Defence Attaché Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Day. Sgt Ramsbotham was born on May 17, 1923 in Backworth, Northumberland, and flew with 249 Squadron – considered one of the top-scoring fighter units of the RAF. Established in August 1918, it became famous in the Battle of Britain and then in battles over Malta, Sicily, Italy, Albania, the Balkans and, right at the end of the war, over Slovenia. Sgt Ramsbotham was the last member of the squadron to die in the war. The ceremony was marked by a special tribute to his memory by airmen of the 15th Regiment of the Slovenian Air Force, who performed a flypast with a group of Pilatus PC-9 aircraft. (RAF NEWS)

SMOKE AND MIRRORS:

At first glance it all looked too good to be true. Under the deal, a private equity firm and an airline entrepreneur will take control of South African Airways, (SAA) from the state. With that, there were promises of no more bailouts, and it all seemed to show a government change of heart on privatisation. It was all too good to be true. The proposed deal leaves so much unanswered that it looks like an underhanded way to further bail out a failing airline, enrich a few, maintain state control, and make the exercise look like a privatisation. The state will have a minority stake of 49 percent in the airline yet has a “golden share” giving it an extra 33 percent in voting rights. And a big question remains over how the private equity firm will source the R3.5 billion it needs to invest in the new entity. Will it be from state-connected institutions?

Full article by Jonathan Katzenellenbogen at: https://dailyfriend.co.za/2021/06/16/the-saa-deal-smoke-and-mirrors/?ml_subscriber=1709195942579672748&ml_subscriber_hash=n4l4

GRIPEN OOPS!

A 2 Squadron Gripen “incident” during a routine ground run was kept under wraps for over a month. Yet another sorry saga in the ongoing lack of communication by the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) and its component services and divisions started for Zoutpansberger news editor Andries van Zyl in early April. He wanted to know from AFB Makhado, the South African Air Force (SAAF) fighter jet base, what happened to a Gripen of the lone jet fighter squadron in the air force. The incident saw a Gripen damaged during a routine maintenance ground run on 8 April when an anchor cable broke “resulting in an accident.” Frustrating weeks of electronic correspondence to-ing

and finally eventually saw response from Brigadier General Mafi Mgobozi, number one in the SANDF Directorate: Corporate Communication. He confirmed the “accident/incident” to the Limpopo newspaperman but gave no further information other than to say a board of inquiry was investigating. (This is standard operating procedure (SOP) for any SAAF aircraft accident, crash or incident.) Regarding reparability of the jet fighter to airworthiness, the cost and the number of Gripen’s operational, Van Zyl was told this information cannot be disclosed “as it deals with the operational readiness of the organisation.” (*DefenceWeb*)

MOZAMBIQUE, QUO VADIS?

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa re-affirmed the commitment of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to “a lasting solution to the conflict to ensure Mozambique is stable, peaceful and able to develop its economy.” He was responding to questions asked by National Council of Provinces (NCOP) members in Parliament yesterday (Thursday, 10 June). The question, posed by Shahidabibi Shaikh of the ANC in Limpopo, was one of six Ramaphosa fielded. He told her South Africa “is working in established SADC systems to address destabilisation of Cabo Delgado province and establish political stability in Mozambique.” Ramaphosa did not expand on the SADC Double Troika technical assessment mission to Cabo Delgado in April apart from saying it proposed “deployment of the SADC Standby Force in support of the Mozambican Armed Defence Force (officially Armed Forces for the Defence of Mozambique) to combat the threat of terrorism and acts of violent extremism.” While no official details of the force and its contributing countries for equipment and personnel have yet been made public, it appears the major component will be three light infantry battalions supported by a pair of Special Forces squadrons. Attack and other helicopters, maritime patrol aircraft, a submarine and maritime patrol vessels are also mooted for the SADC force. Watch this space! (*DefenceWeb*)

ONE MORE TIME AROUND RISSIK STREET POST OFFICE:



Johannesburg - The heritage Rissik Street Post Office, which has been under renovation since 2012, has again been invaded by squatters after the city spent millions of rands on its upgrade. The city had completed three phases of the restoration but had no budget to complete the fourth. Security failed and 15 people have now taken “occupation.” DA councilor Neuren Pietersen said the extent of the damage in the historic interior, under restoration by heritage experts, was unknown. “The city has

wasted millions on this project which is probably all money down the drain," he said. The Johannesburg Property Company (JPC), which manages the site, said a court order had been taken against the squatters who had won the right to stay. The building, constructed in 1897, had already then been vandalised, occupied by squatters and been on fire twice. In 2002, the clock hands and bells were stolen from the tower. The brass fittings, switches and wooden balustrades were already stripped. After the last fire in 2010, R16m of temporary work was done to repair the roof and halt the decline and structural decay. The building was designed by Dutch architect Sytze Wierda, who also designed the Palace of Justice in Pretoria. The post office was declared a national monument in 1978. The responsibility for its maintenance belonged to the SA Post Office, in terms of the long-term lease agreement entered into between the post office and the council, at a rental of R49 a year. (*The Star*)

RAF SQUADRON BADGES:



CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Now 449 days since the start of the great pandemic, this is the sixty-third 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 there are many or the NCCC!) that will help us all to keep in contact and entertained through the lockdown, now back to Level 3. We're hanging in there...

Please continue to take care – we've made it so far – continue to keep safe in these very unsettling times: wash your hands, cover your face, make space, avoid gatherings (do not give the ungodly reason to persecute you further) Don't spread alarm and despondency...remember that all this, too,

shall pass.... Only 3 members pitched for the first lunch at Wanderers, so we'll put informal lunches on hold for now, and monitor further developments at Wanderers as they progress....

TAILPIECE:

The Demonrats in America with vengeance,
 Want all the aliens to pay voting attendance,
 For them to keep,
 Control of their sheep,
 And blatantly claim they have precedence.
(The Sherriff of Nottingham Road)

Man fakes being deaf and dumb for 52 years to avoid listening to his wife. (weirdworld.com)

Do alcoholics run in your family? No. But they stumble around and break sh*t...

IRISH FISHERMAN

The rain was pouring down.

There, standing in front of a big puddle outside the pub was an old Irishman, drenched, holding a stick, with a piece of string dangling in the water.

A passer-by stopped and asked, "What are you doing?"

"Fishin'" replied the old man.

Feeling sorry for the old man, the gent says, "Come in out of the rain and have a drink with me."

In the warmth of the pub, as they sip their whiskies, the gentleman, being a bit of a smart ass, cannot resist asking:

"So how many have you caught today?"

"You're the eighth", says the old man.

CEL PHONE IN THE GYM

I was standing next to this bloke in the changing room at the gym the other day when a mobile phone rings. He was towelling off so he puts it on loudspeaker. I thought straightaway that he was a hell of a smug bastard....

MAN: "Hello"

WOMAN: "Honey, it's me. Are you at the gym?"

MAN: "Yes"

WOMAN: "I am at the trinity centre now and found this beautiful leather coat. It's only R1,500. Is it OK if I buy it?"

MAN: "Sure, go ahead if you like it that much."

WOMAN: "I also stopped by the Mercedes dealership and saw the new 2018 models. I saw one I really liked."

MAN: "How much?"

WOMAN: "R590,000"

MAN: "OK, but for that price I want it with all the options."

WOMAN: "Great! Oh, and one more thing The house I wanted last year is back on the market. They're asking R2,950,000".

MAN: "Well, then go ahead and give them an offer of R 2,500,000. They will probably take it. If not, we can go the extra 450 thousand."

WOMAN: "OK. I'll see you later! I love you so much!!"

MAN: "Bye! I love you, too."

The man hung up. The other men in the changing room are staring at him in astonishment, mouths agape....

He smiles and asks: "Anyone know who this bloody phone belongs to?"

MATT



*"Boris sent Mr Cummings
a text describing Matt
Hancock as 'really excellent'.
Unfortunately, the PM's
phone autocorrected
that to..."*

MATT



*'The new trade deal means
that Australian sheep can
come to the UK and
beat us at cricket'*



**I'M HERE TO COLLECT OUR
FRIENDS' PAYCHECKS!**



THE LAINGSBURG BLOCKHOUSE: REMINDER OF A BITTER TIME:



During the South African War of 1899-1902 blockhouses formed an essential part of British military strategy against the Boer forces. Initially these were fairly substantial, and were used to guard key military points, but once the war moved into its final stages, they were used, together with barbed wire, as a means of limiting the movement of Republican commandos. All in all, some 8000 blockhouses were built over a period of two years, and although most were eventually dismantled, a number still remain, like this fine example near Laingsburg in the Western Cape. The Geelbek River Blockhouse 12 Km East of Laingsburg was built by the British in 1901, to guard the railway bridge over the Geelbek River. Its lookout platforms provided an excellent view over the plains and Boer commandos were often spotted in the hills and further south in the Matjiesfontein area. The blockhouse was declared a National Monument in 1965. Like this one, the first blockhouses were substantial square-plan structures, three-storeys high, built in dressed stone and finished with a low-pitch corrugated iron roof. Steel-protected embrasures were located on each floor, while two steel boxes projected at diagonally opposite corners of the top floor to provide covering cross-fire to the walls below. Access to the first floor was by means of a two-piece, bullet-proof steel door located high above the ground floor. This could only be reached by means of a retractable ladder which was hoisted upwards by means of steel tackle. Floors consisted of timber planks carried by a framework of steel joists built into the stonework. The sleeping quarters were located on the first floor, while most of the ground floor was taken up by a large water tank. The design was developed by the army's chief engineer in South Africa, General Sir Elliot Wood, who based it upon a similar pattern he had used in the Sudan during the 1880's. Around 440 of these blockhouses were built in South Africa and many, like this one near Laingsburg, still stand to remind us of one of the country's most bitter conflicts...

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