



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 72 – 20th AUGUST 2021

GREETINGS:

Day 510: After the cold snap last week, Spring is in the air again.... Nine years since Marikana... Medupi blast rumbles on: Repairs could cost up to R2 billion and take two years, De Ruyter says... Data mapping shows the July unrest was part of tactical plan to shut down SA.... Key witness Johan van der Walt's death will have 'no impact' on case against Zuma, says NPA... Strangely, he was suffering from the same condition as Zuma – “undisclosed health problems” Maybe we all are... On a lighter note, John Page sent in the “Roistering Rhodesian Rhino” piece at the end of these Ramblings...

International news in the last week has been dominated by events in Afghanistan after the Coalition withdrawal –“twenty-year mission collapses in a day”... Shades of Vietnam... what did the Biden administration think would happen? Biden petulantly defiant... Afghanistan skies are closed as aviation authority advises transit aircraft to reroute... foreign nationals evacuated under military protection and unbelievable scenes at the airport as desperate Afghans try to board aircraft... US evacuates Kabul embassy as Taliban walk in... Taliban spokesmen try to con the outside world that the Taliban has changed its spots – but the Afghans aren't buying that line... More than 2000 dead after powerful 7.2 magnitude earthquake in Haiti... massively destructive forest fires in Europe are followed by more in California... Divisive Macron risks becoming the President who shattered French society- millions of French furious over his failure to stem the rise of illegal immigration and the associated crime wave...

HAPPY CHAPPIES...



The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston and the Minister for Defence Procurement, Jeremy Quin MP, have travelled to Finland conducting Defence Engagement, meeting with industry partners and supporting the Typhoon Display Team. The RAF are regular attendees at the Finnish Air shows which are run by the Aeroclub of Finland and change location each year. Last year's show was held in Western Finland and headlined by the Red Arrows. The last show in Helsinki was held in 2017 and marked the 100th anniversary of the event and saw RAF Aerobatics Team and the Typhoon Display Team perform to an estimated 130,000 spectators.

The Chief of the Air Staff met with his Finnish counterpart, Major General Pasi Jokinen during a day of bilateral meetings and industry talks against the backdrop of the show, which included displays by the Patrouille de France, Rafale, and Gripen as well as an F-35B Lightning fly-past. Following the Solo Typhoon display, a 4-ship of both RAF and German Air Force Eurofighters conducted a fly-past of the event.

SPACE COMMAND STANDS UP:



A special ceremony held at UK Space Command Headquarters at RAF High Wycombe on 30 July marked the official stand up of UK Space Command, with the first 'Space Operator' Badges presented to personnel. Space plays a vital role in the UK Armed Forces' ability to undertake the majority of defence tasks, with any disruption to the space domain likely to lead to significant consequences for civilian, commercial, economic and military activity. The stand-up of UK Space Command is a crucial step to ensure we protect UK interests in space and builds on the commitments outlined in the Defence Command Paper, invest an additional £1.4 billion on space over the next 10 years. The ability to operate in Space is further enhanced by an increase in Defence funding of £24 billion over the next four years, as announced by the Prime Minister last year.

POSEIDON PITCHES PROJECTILES:



A RAF Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft has released a torpedo for the first time. In a training flight conducted over the Moray Firth. A Poseidon (P-8A) aircraft operated by 120 Squadron, based at RAF Lossiemouth, dropped a recoverable exercise variant of the Mark 54 Lightweight Torpedo,

simulating an attack on a submarine. The successful release of a torpedo is the latest milestone in the rapid development of the Poseidon in RAF service. At just under 3m long and 32cm in diameter, the Mk 54 torpedo is small and light enough that five can be carried in the Poseidon's internal weapons bay. The high-explosive warheads on the live torpedoes pack a devastating punch sufficient to destroy enemy submarines that the Poseidon crew can locate and track using state-of-the-art equipment.

SENTRY STAND DOWN:

The UK'S last Sentry surveillance aircraft has returned to Waddington after a mission ending 30 years of service. 8 Sqn crews were met by families and friends as they touched down at the Lincolnshire station, bringing the RAF's E3-D era to an end. Operating from Akrotiri, the Sentry flew its final operational sortie over Iraq tracking Daesh fighters and supporting Royal Navy flagship the Queen Elizabeth Carrier in the Gulf. The aircraft, with its distinctive radar domes, has formed part of NATO's Airborne Early Warning and Control (AWACS) Force since 1991 and supported UK combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The existing fleet will be replaced by three Boeing E-7 Wedgetail aircraft based at Lossiemouth, from 2023. ISTAR Force Commander Air Cdre Nicholas Hay said: "Sentry's return from a hugely successful overseas deployment heralds a fitting end to over 30 years of continuous service in support of NATO, other coalition and national operations. "Whether operating from their home base at Waddington or airfields from across Europe and the broader Middle East, Sentry has contributed by providing an air and maritime picture that has enabled others to operate with significant freedom of action against the most hostile of threats." 8 Sqn Commander Wg Cdr Victoria Williams said: "This was the first operational detachment of the E3-D fleet since 2016 and delivered 30 missions in nine weeks. "The Sentry was able to provide the recognised air and surface picture to the Carrier Strike Group to facilitate its safe transit from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Suez." ISTAR Force Deputy Head Capability Group Capt Rob O'Dell said: "Sentry has defined my career and it is inevitably with mixed feelings I now find myself involved with its retirement. "All E-3D aircrew, groundcrew and supporting civilians should feel proud of the enormous contribution it has made to NATO and UK Air Policing, combat and humanitarian operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, as well as countering drug-smuggling in the Caribbean." Two 8 Sqn Sentries completed the last mission with one returning home to be greeted by a traditional water arch while the final aircraft was met by AOC 1 Group Air Vice Marshal Al Marshall and NATO AWACS Force Commander Maj Gen Thomas Kunkel USAF.

NEW HAIR DAY:

Women in the Royal Air Force and Army will be able to wear their hair in a variety of styles as Defence chiefs continue their drive to make the military more representative of British culture. Under new rules announced this month women on duty wearing working dress will be able to opt for ponytails, plaits or cornrows, as well as the traditional military 'bun'. The move follows landmark changes to hardline rules on the wearing of jewellery, easing restrictions on body art, and scrapping the century-old policy banning beards to reflect changes in society and make the Forces more attractive to new recruits, a RAF spokesman said. The joint dress code announcement follows a change in policy by the Royal Navy in May this year allowing women to opt for a variety of styles while in 'working rig'. The RAF is updating the dress code under the Astra programme launched to develop a 'Next Generation Air Force.' Air Chiefs have also pledged more reforms to personnel policy. Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, said: "We are modernising our appearance policies through Astra to better reflect the society we serve, empowering people with choice, but maintaining the values and high standards we expect from anyone in Royal Air Force uniform. "There will be more announcements on uniform and appearance in due course but, with this change to appearance policies for women, we have made a symbolic and widely welcomed step towards the Next Generation Royal Air Force." There will be restrictions on hair styles where there are safety concerns and the new policy applies only to

women in the Royal Air Force. Male Army personnel will be permitted to sport 'well groomed' hair including twists, cornrows and locks, provided it does not cover the face or touch their collar or ears. However RAF personnel will not be allowed to opt for more extreme high street styles which include shaved sections or 'unnatural' dyes. Existing exemptions on the grounds of religious belief and medical conditions will still apply

OBITUARY

WARRANT OFFICER ERIC CARTER RAF:



TRIBUTES have been paid to World War II hero WO Eric Carter who has died aged 101. He was thought to be the last surviving Hurricane pilot who was a member of a top-secret task force sent to the Arctic port of Murmansk in 1941 to protect supply routes after Russia was invaded by Germany. In 2014, Eric published a book, *Force Benedict* – about his part in the mission sanctioned by Winston Churchill – that became a bestseller. Eric was among two Hurricane squadrons which together comprised 151 Wing, shipped to northern Russia in complete secrecy on the first-ever Arctic Convoy and told to defend Murmansk against the Germans 'at all costs.' The task force's work was kept secret for decades because Stalin didn't want to admit he needed help from Britain. Eric said: "We were threatened with Court Martial if we said anything." He also helped to train Soviet pilots to fly Hurricanes and, towards the end of the war, saw action in India and Burma, fighting against the Japanese. After the war Eric became an electrical engineer and flew as a private pilot. He received the Arctic Star from Prime Minister David Cameron in 2013, became a VIP in Russia and was awarded the Order of Lenin and Medal of Ushakov after the intervention of the Queen which obtained Russian recognition of the British wartime aid, and went back to that country several times, including to unveil a memorial to his wartime comrades in Murmansk.

TRANSNET FREIGHT RAIL:

A power outage which occurred in the City of amplitude (Richards Bay) between Thursday afternoon, 12 August 2021, and the early hours of Friday morning, 13 August, impacted Transnet's service in that area. The outage meant that the Richards Bay Coal Terminal (RBCT) was unable to offload trains for approximately 10 hours, resulting in a 50% wagon capacity for Friday's production plan. A catch-up will be done over a few days, and a revised plan has been communicated to impacted customers. One of SA's major Forex earners is the export of base minerals, including

coal and iron ore, which depend almost entirely on rail transport to ports. The knock-on of Eskom failures and disruption of a 24x7 process as in this case are severe. Richards Bay Coal Terminal has been targeting a throughput of 77 million tons for the last 2 years, and achieved 70.2 million tons in 2020

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Now 510 days since the start of the great panicdemic, this is the seventy-second 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 and entertained through the lockdown, until we are relieved! Thanks for the contributions! We'll use them in successive editions...We're all still hanging in there...

Please continue to take care (and keep warm!) – Support where you can. Don't spread alarm and despondency on social media – you may become the target of a showcase trial... Remember that all this, too, shall pass. Given the "brighter" Covid outlook we'll be restarting informal lunches, Wanderers and other venues are open....And we have the Currie Cup games and the second SA vs Argentina Test to look forward to this weekend!

DIARY DATE:

We are trying to arrange the Battle of Britain lunch (Covid permitting) with the Flying Lions fly-past planned for the 17th September. More news will be coming soon but keep the date free.

TAILPIECE:

The breasts of the barmaid of Vale,
Were tattooed with the price of Brown Ale,
While on her behind,
For the sake of the blind,
Was the same information in Braille?
(The Sherriff of Nottingham Road)

I drink when I'm happy and when I'm sad. Sometimes I drink when I'm alone. When I have company I consider it obligatory. I trifle with it if I'm not hungry and I drink it when I am. Otherwise I never touch it unless I'm thirsty.
(Lily Bollinger)

Get some roosters for eggs.... and raise some bulls for milk.... then you'll see that gender matters – especially at milking time...

Placard at Intersection: "Best friend stole wife. Need R20 for Thank You card".

It is important that a man helps you around the house and has a job...

It is important that a man makes you laugh...

It is important to find a man you can count on and who doesn't lie to you...

It is important that a man loves you and spoils you...

It is important that these four men never meet...

During his physical, the doctor asked the RAFOC patient about his daily activity level. He described a typical day this way: "Well, yesterday afternoon, I waded along the edge of a lake, drank eight beers, escaped from wild dogs in the heavy brush, jumped away from an aggressive rattlesnake, marched up and down several rocky hills, stood in a patch of poison ivy, crawled out of quicksand and took four leaks behind big trees." Inspired by the story, the doctor said, "You must be one hell of an outdoors man!" "NAH" he replied, "I'm just a crap golfer."

“EK MIS SUID-AFRIKA”: On one of his last trips to England, one of our members saw a car in London with this bumper sticker on it. He said “So I broke the window, stole the radio and laptop and left a note that said: “Voel jy nou beter?”

Three men were hiking through a forest when they came upon a large, raging violent river. Needing to get on the other side, the first man prayed, "God, please give me the strength to cross the river." Poof! God gave him big arms and strong legs and he was able to swim across in about 2 hours, having almost drowned twice. After witnessing that, the second man prayed, "God, please give me strength and the tools to cross the river." Poof! God gave him a rowboat and strong arms and strong legs and he was able to row across in about an hour after almost capsizing once. Seeing what happened to the first two men, the third man prayed, "God, please give me the strength, the tools and the intelligence to cross river." Poof! He was turned into a woman. She checked the map, hiked one hundred yards up stream and walked across the bridge there...

MATT



Future generations will not forgive us if they have to study this in history lessons'

MATT



'We seem to be in a football final every 55 years. It's getting to be monotonous'

South Africa's R122billion Medupi Power Station

Officially handed over August 1 2021
Blown to pieces August 9 2021

PROUDLY BROUGHT TO YOU BY CADRE DEPLOYMENT

I've just returned from 2045 Marty...

I kid you not, they're still building Medupi



ROISTERING RHODESIAN RHINO:

The plight of the Black Rhinoceros is, of course, due mostly to the value of its horn and the ferocious poaching that this engenders. However, a contributory factor to the declining rhino population is the animal's disorganized mating habits. It seems that the female rhino only becomes receptive to the male's attentions every three years or so, while the male only becomes interested in her at the same intervals. This is a condition which is known quite appropriately as 'Must'. The problem is one of synchronization, for their amorous inclinations do not always coincide.

In the early Sixties, I was invited, along with a host of journalists and other luminaries, to be present at an attempt by the Rhodesian Game and Tsetse Department to solve this problem of poor timing. The idea was to capture a male rhino and induce him to deliver up that which could be stored until that day in the distant future when his mate's fancy turned lightly to thoughts of love.

We departed from the Zambezi Valley in an impressive convoy of trucks and land rovers, counting in our midst non-other than the Director of the game department in person, together with his minions, a veterinary surgeon, an electrician and sundry other technicians, all deemed necessary to make the harvest. The local game scouts had been sent out to search the bush for the largest, most virile rhino they could find. They had done their job to perfection and led us to a beast at least the size of a small granite kopje with a horn on his nose considerably longer than my arm. The trick was to get this monster into a robust mobile pen which had been constructed to accommodate him.

With the Director of the Game Department shouting frantic orders from the safety of the largest truck, the pursuit was on. The tumult and the shouting were apocalyptic. Clouds of dust flew in all directions, trees, and vegetation were destroyed, game scouts scattered like chaff, but finally the Rhino had about a litre of narcotics shot into his rump and his mood became dreamy and benign. With forty game guards heaving and shoving, and the Director still shouting orders from the truck, the rhino was wedged into his cage, and stood there with a happy grin on his face. At this stage, the Director deemed it safe to emerge from the cab of his truck and he came amongst us resplendent in starched and immaculately ironed bush jacket with a colourful silk scarf at his throat. With an imperial gesture, he ordered the portable electric generator to be brought forward and positioned behind the captured animal.

This was a machine which was capable of lighting up a small city, and it was equipped with two wheels that made it resemble a roman chariot.

The Director climbed up on the generator to better address us.

We gathered around attentively while he explained what was to happen next. It seemed that the only way to get what we had come for was to introduce an electrode into the rhino's rear end, and to deliver a mild electric shock, no more than a few volts, which would be enough to pull his trigger for him. The Director gave another order and the veterinary surgeon greased something that looked like an acoustic torpedo and which was attached to the generator with sturdy insulated wires. He then went up behind the somnolent beast and thrust it up him to a full arms length, at which the Rhino opened his eyes very wide indeed. The veterinary and his two assistants now moved into position with a large bucket and assumed expectant expressions. We, the audience, crowded closer so as not to miss a single detail of the drama. The Director still mounted on the generator trailer, nodded to the electrician who threw the switch and chaos reigned. In the subsequent departmental enquiry the blame was placed squarely on the shoulders of the electrician. It seems that in the heat of the moment his wits had deserted him and instead of connecting up his apparatus to deliver a gentle 5 volts, he had crossed his wires and the Rhino received a full 500 volts up his rear end.

His reaction was spectacular. Four tons of Rhodesian Rhinoceros shot six feet straight up in the air.

The cage, made of great timber baulks, exploded into its separate pieces and the Rhinoceros now very much awake, took off at a gallop. We, the audience, were no less sprightly. We took to the trees with alacrity.

This was the only occasion on which I have ever been passed by two journalists halfway up a Mopani tree. From the top branches we beheld an amazing sight, for the chariot was still connected to the Rhinoceros per rectum, and the director of the game department was still mounted upon it, very much like Ben Hurt, the charioteer.

As they disappeared from view, the Rhinoceros was snorting and blowing like a steam locomotive and the Director was clinging to the front rail of his chariot and howling like the north wind which only encouraged the beast to greater speed.

The story has a happy ending for the following day after the director had returned hurriedly to his office in Salisbury, another male Rhinoceros was captured and caged and this time the electrician got his wiring right. I can still see the Rhinoceros's expression of surprised gratification as the switch was thrown.

You could almost hear him think to himself, "Oh Boy! I didn't think this was going to happen to me for at least another three years."

Wilbur Smith - A factual account. This circulated widely when first published. Sent in by John Page