



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 276 10<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2025

### GREETINGS:

The tsunami of "news" and flood of misinformation continues unabated... we are seeing manipulation of mainstream media on an unprecedented scale... US-blacklisted Russian cargo plane lands in Upington, departs empty... SA's defence forces: spending more, delivering less... Mtetwa's body being repatriated to SA... Ramaphosa declares "Economic Emergency"... Julius Malema under siege: Convicted on firearm charges, implicated in serious corruption allegations in a new book... KZN transport blitz uncovers illicit cargo racket... South Africa's biggest cities are in a death spiral... Comrades Marathon launches 2026 Campaign...

Gold price reaches new record amid global jitters... Israel and Hamas both agreed on first phase of Trump's peace plan for Gaza South Africans on Global Sumud Flotilla claim harsh detention by Israel... Russia suffers further reverses in Ukraine... thousands of airline passengers isolated in New Zealand and Australia...

### FALKLANDS HERO'S MEDALS SELL FOR £65,000:



A Falklands War hero's medals have sold for £65,000 at auction, fulfilling his final wish that the proceeds would give his widow financial security.

The Military Medal group belonging to Corporal Barry "Baz" Grayling of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment went under the hammer at Noonans Mayfair in London. The collection, which had been expected to fetch between £50,000 and £70,000, drew fast bids before reaching the final price. Cpl Grayling was just 19 years old when he took part in a night-time assault on Argentine positions at Goose Green in May 1982, the first and longest battle of the conflict. Alongside his best friend

Gaz Bingley, he charged five enemy positions, helping to destroy a machine gun nest. His friend was killed in the attack, and Cpl Grayling was wounded when a bullet struck his water bottle, an impact he later said saved his life.

Their company commander, Major Phil Neame, explained: "He'd [Bingley] gone to ground not really knowing quite where these machine guns were and found himself virtually overlooking the position. He and Grayling just went in and did an immediate assault and the two of them took the five-strong position between them.

"But Bingley was killed in the process and Grayling slightly injured. It was that sort of immediate get up and go and flair that really got us out of a very sticky situation."

Both men were awarded the Military Medal for bravery, and Cpl Grayling received his award at Buckingham Palace later that year.

After the war, he returned to his hometown of Felixstowe in Suffolk, where the mayor hosted a civic reception to mark his investiture.

He later left the Army, settled in the United States and spent two decades working in education and coaching sport at Pasco High School in Florida.

Cpl Grayling died in December 2024, aged 60. His widow Sher, consigned the medals for sale, saying it was her husband's final wish that they should provide her with financial security.

"He tried to talk to me about selling the medals when he was sick, and I wouldn't hear it," she said.

"So he told my daughter to make me do it so that I would have some financial security."

In tribute to his years at Pasco High, staff and students launched the Pasco-Grayling Memorial Invitational, an annual 5K run and scholarship programme created in his memory.

## **PRECIOUS GIFT OF FREEDOM:**

The growth of technology has given the viability to media, which has emerged as 'the third eye' for humans to comprehend the world. People are too dependent on these technologies, where they have forgotten their real nature of life. Because of global surveillance, technology has become a double-edged sword, where individual privacy has been lost. Moreover, people have exchanged their precious gift of freedom for the technology, which has become the manacle that restrains them to the core these days. The media is used as a tool to manipulate the thought process of the people in this digital era. The politicians are using these strings to make the people as the puppets, they induce the thought within people and restrict them from thinking beyond. (*ResearchGate*)

## **THIS CRAVEN GOVERNMENT:**

When *The Telegraph* revealed on Saturday that the prosecution of two alleged Chinese spies collapsed because the Government refused to say that China was an "enemy" of the UK, Labour ministers were furious. There was a series of swift and specific denials from Downing Street, and a refusal to answer questions about the details of the case. Government spin doctors directed all questions to the prosecutors. Now, in a dramatic and unusual twist, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has gone public to confirm the story and criticise Government officials for effectively vetoing the espionage case against Christopher Cash and Christopher Berry.

In a letter to MPs, also revealed exclusively by *The Telegraph*, Stephen Parkinson said his team had spent "many months" requesting evidence from the Government, but it was "not forthcoming." His spiky language suggests there is serious tension between Sir Keir Starmer's officials and the Crown Prosecution Service, which is tired of being blamed for the collapse of the case last month. The issue looks set to dominate the Prime Minister's trip to India this week, which was designed to showcase his diplomatic credentials. Instead, he is facing serious criticism from MPs and

campaigners for allowing two men to walk away without facing trial for allegedly harvesting parliamentary secrets and passing them to Beijing. There is also pressure on one of his closest aides, Jonathan Powell, who is accused of overseeing the issue from inside No 10. In his first direct comments on the China spy fiasco, Sir Keir highlighted his former role as DPP, but he appeared to blame prosecutors and the previous Conservative government for the collapse of the trial. "Labour has crippled our prosecutors in a desperate effort to appease Beijing and the UK is less safe for it," Alicia Kearns, the Tory MP and China hawk, told me last night. "The biggest threat to our national security is this craven Government's refusal to do what's necessary to protect our country."  
(*Telegraph*)

### **CAPTAIN ROSAMUND EVERARD-STEENKAMP (NEE EVERARD) ATA:**

In Maidenhead All Saints Cemetery, The Plot is mainly made up from pilots from the Air Transport Auxiliary including South African Air Force pilot and ATA volunteer Rosamund King Everard-Steenkamp, who was the first female pilot to fly a Jet Aircraft. She died in an aircraft accident in the UK. Rosamund Everard-Steenkamp is believed to have been the first woman in the world to pilot a jet aircraft, whilst a member of the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) (and whilst still holding the rank of Captain in the South African Women's Auxiliary Air Force). In August 1945 she flew a Meteor Mark III, the type which regained the world's air speed record for Britain with a speed of 606mph (975 kph). She was killed in a flying accident at Littlewick Green, 5 km west of Maidenhead, in Berkshire, England. There was low cloud at the time, and the Spitfire that she was piloting crashed into a hill. She was at that time 33 years old and had over 4 000 flying hours to her credit. She was ATA attached to the Communications Squadron of the RAF, which ferried important officials and aircraft to various military centres. Membership of this particular unit was one of the most envied and coveted jobs. She was delivering a Spitfire XIV from Hamble to Ercall when, for no apparent reason, she dived, levelled out at about 10 metres and crashed at high speed. She was killed instantly. As with her American counterpart, Amelia Earhart, there was no accounting for the tragedy. She met her end as a Spitfire pilot and thus emulated some of the immortals of the Battle of Britain in her own, 'finest hour'. Of Rosamund Everard-Steenkamp, talented musician, artist, agriculturist and flyer, it may be said, 'Whom the gods love, die young. (*Via South African Military Journal*)

### **WG CDR ROBERT FRANCIS THOMAS "BOB" DOE, DSO, DFC & BAR RAF:**



Third highest scoring RAF pilot in the Battle of Britain, Doe achieved "ace in four days." Yet Doe had struggled to become a pilot, barely passing the necessary exams to gain his wings. He lacked confidence, was poor at aerobatics and disliked flying upside down - not an auspicious beginning for a fighter pilot.

On August 15 1940 - dubbed Adler Tag (Eagle Day) by Hermann Goering, the day he claimed he would destroy Fighter Command - the 20-year-old Doe was on standby with his Spitfire as part of No 234 Squadron at Middle Wallop, Hampshire, waiting for his first scramble. Years later he recalled: "I knew I was going to be killed. I was the worst pilot on the squadron." When the scramble bell rang, Doe was filled with dread but he took off; the fear of being thought a coward was more powerful than the fear of death.

One hour later Doe landed to find that four of his colleagues had failed to return; but he had shot down two Messerschmitt Bf 110

fighters south of Swanage. The next day he destroyed a Bf 109 fighter and damaged a bomber; and two days after that he accounted for another Bf 109.

The Battle intensified, and Doe's outstanding memory was to be of continued tiredness, which produced the ability to sleep anytime and anywhere.

By the end of August he had destroyed five aircraft. On September 4 his squadron intercepted a large force of Bf 110s over the south coast near Chichester.

Doe shot down three and the following day accounted for a Bf 109 over Kent. More successes followed, including shooting down a Heinkel bomber. But by September 7, just three weeks after it had arrived at Middle Wallop, the squadron's 15 pilots had been reduced to just three.

Doe was rested for a short period before joining No 238 Squadron as a flight commander, this time flying the Hurricane. On September 30 he claimed another Heinkel bomber after a head-on attack, but by this time the Luftwaffe was sending most bombers over at night and the intensity of the day fighting reduced.

He shot down a Bf 110 on October 1 and seven days later claimed his final victory on what turned out to be the last major daylight bombing raid of the Battle, when he shot down a Junkers 88 bomber near Portland.

At the beginning of October Doe learnt that he had been awarded a DFC "for his outstanding dash and an eagerness to engage the enemy at close quarters." This "dash" almost proved his undoing a few days later. As he cleared some cloud his aircraft was hit repeatedly and he was badly wounded in the leg, lower back and arm. He bailed out and landed in a sewage drainage pit on Brownsea Island. It was his last action during the Battle.

In just eight weeks he had risen from being his squadron's junior pilot to a flight commander with at least 14 victories. A few weeks later he was awarded a Bar to his DFC.

"We do not want to be remembered as heroes, we ask only to be remembered for what we did ... that's all."

## SANCTIONS BUSTER:



A Russian cargo aircraft, blacklisted by the United States, landed in Upington in the Northern Cape, sparking fresh concerns about Pretoria's foreign policy direction and its increasingly strained relationship with Washington.

The aircraft – an Ilyushin IL-76 operated by Abakan Air – was reportedly offloading general cargo, civilian helicopters, and acrobatic aircraft, according to the Department of Transport, which

confirmed the landing over the weekend.

Abakan Air was sanctioned by the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) in June 2024 for allegedly supporting Russia's military operations in Ukraine.

The airline was accused of transporting military equipment and aiding Russia's defence industrial base. Despite these sanctions, South Africa approved Abakan Air's application for a foreign operator permit, which was submitted on September 9 and granted on September 23.

"The South African government has not blacklisted the operator. Furthermore, we have no knowledge or receipt of any information from any other government that this operator has been blacklisted," said Transport Department spokesperson Collen Msibi. According to Flightradar24, the

IL-76's last known route included a lengthy stop in Iran, before travelling to South Africa via Dar es Salaam. The aircraft was later seen at Lanseria Airport, where it appeared empty, having refueled before departing.

## **CLUB SA – GOLD WINGS – KASSIE KASSELMAN:**



Kassie Kasselmann started flying in 1976 and since then has been actively involved in all aspects of general aviation. He has also left behind tangible evidence of his involvement.

He has organised six air shows in Bloemfontein over the years and has acted as Safety Officer at another five events. The most recent event where he acted as Air Show Director was the very successful air show held at Bloemfontein Airport during August 2006.

In the 1980's he was involved in a significant way in the compilation of the first Aero Club Air Show Manual. Kassie has also acted as Testing Officer for display pilots.

Kassie served as a member of 106 squadron in the South African Air Force for approximately twenty years and for most of his career in the SAAF he acted as Safety Officer.

He started his active involvement in competition flying in the late 1970's and earned his Free State colours in Precision Flying in the 1990's. He also organised a number of club and provincial events. He has also served as an International Judge for Rally and Precision Flying.

When the new Tempe Airport was established, Kassie was one of the key role players in the construction of the Club House for the Bloemfontein Flying Club. He has also been involved in its development on an ongoing basis.

In 1990 he was awarded the Paul Tissandier Diploma for his service to general aviation by the Federation Aviation Internationale. This award was presented to him by the FAI during the 1991 World Rally Championships in Stellenbosch.

Kassie has also been involved with the President's Trophy Air Race as organiser and competitor. He was also instrumental in the drafting of the official rules for the air race. Kassie has acted as Race Director and chief organiser of six races, the first in 1998 and the last in 2005. He has also served on the race jury for a number of years.

He has also contributed to the administrations of general aviation bodies. He has served on the committee of the Bloemfontein Flying Club for a number of years. He also served on the committee of the power flying section of Aero Club and its successor, the South African Power Flying Association for a period of 14 years. He has acted as chairman of both the Bloemfontein Flying Club and SAPFA.

Kassie is well known in the flying fraternity not only as organiser of flying events, but also as a very competent businessman. (*Aero Club*)

## **DEAFENING SILENCE:**

Former Eskom CEO Andre de Ruyter said the government's attack on business leaders who criticised policies like BEE has been effective in silencing others who share the same views. De Ruyter shared his views during a discussion with renowned economist Dawie Roodt on the popular Ontbytsake show.

Many South Africans would like top business leaders to publicly criticise destructive policies, like Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and affirmative action. However, for a business leader to criticise the government comes with tremendous risk, both personally and for the business.

De Ruyter cited the case of former Sasol chief executive and chairman, Pieter Cox, who highlighted the risks associated with BEE. Cox was a brilliant chief executive. During his nine-year tenure as Sasol CEO, the company's market capitalisation increased four-fold from R30 billion to over R120 billion. He placed a high emphasis on advancing Sasol's world-leading proprietary technology and established relationships with universities worldwide to support their research. This foresight enabled Sasol to position itself to commercialise its technology offshore, making it a global energy giant. However, he faced severe criticism from former South African President Thabo Mbeki for highlighting the risks associated with BEE.

In late 2003, Cox cited BEE as a risk factor in a document that Sasol was required to compile in accordance with New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) regulations.

"There could be risks to shareholders that value may not be achieved in the case of black economic empowerment equity transactions," the document stated.

Mbeki struck back, saying it is difficult to understand why any thinking person would categorise the achievement of these goals as constituting a business risk.

"Sasol will have to outgrow an outdated mindset that has become entrenched as their own particular and peculiar corporate culture," Mbeki said.

Cox stepped down as Sasol chief executive on 30 June 2005 after nine very successful years at the helm of the company.

Andre de Ruyter explains the government's power. Most South African business leaders are scared to speak out against the government and its destructive policies. This is not surprising. Although De Ruyter thinks it is time for business leaders to become more outspoken, he understands the risks associated with it.

He stated that the government wields significant power through regulatory discretion. It can make the life of any business difficult.

"Incidents like the Cox case, where the government acted extremely harshly towards business leaders who differed from its policies, scared other leaders," he said.

The fact that the government hold power of licensing in many regulated sectors puts further risk on those who criticise policies like BEE.

"If you want a mining or water license or a contract from the government, you'd better watch out or there will be trouble," De Ruyter said.

He said the fear factor associated with criticising the government and its anti-business policies have played a role in silencing business leaders.

*Daily Investor 01/10/25 <https://dailyinvestor.com/.../andre-de-ruyter-reveals.../>*

## **SWALLOWING THE EVIDENCE:**

A police officer from Karoi, Zimbabwe, has been sentenced to jail for extortion after a dramatic sting operation caught him red-handed. The officer's desperate attempt to destroy the evidence by swallowing the marked banknotes failed to save him from a prison cell. The case centred on Sergeant Paul Mutingoringo Dzimbanhete, a 32-year-old officer stationed at Karoi Urban Police Station. According to the National Prosecuting Authority of Zimbabwe, the crime unfolded over ten days in June 2025. The court heard how Dzimbanhete targeted a driver named Olly Mcupi.

The Sting Operation - The situation began when Dzimbanhete, while manning a roadblock on the Karoi-Nyamambisi Road between 3 and 13 June 2025, unlawfully confiscated Mcupi's certificate of competency. He then allegedly demanded a payment of US\$50 for its return. Mcupi's father, Sebastian Kumbirai Chinyemba, decided to take action and reported the officer.

An Internal Investigations team from the Police General Headquarters was immediately deployed. They orchestrated a trap. Mcupi arranged to meet the sergeant at the TM Supermarket in Karoi to make the payment. The officer arrived in a Toyota Gaia vehicle with the registration ADX 8251.

The National Prosecuting Authority of Zimbabwe stated, "Mcupi arranged to meet the offender at TM Supermarket, Karoi, where the officer handed back the confiscated certificate in exchange for cash while seated in a Toyota Gaia (ADX 8251). The internal investigations team moved in immediately — capturing the transaction on video."

What happened next was a scene straight out of a crime thriller. As the officers moved in to arrest him, Sergeant Dzimbanhete made a desperate bid to destroy the proof. He swallowed the marked US\$50 note he had just received.

This shocking act was not enough to evade justice. The arresting officers proceeded to search him. During the search, they recovered other items that further implicated him. The authority's bulletin detailed the findings, noting officers recovered "US\$3, ZIG10 cash, and a notebook (ZRP Book 6) showing that he had improperly recorded Mcupi's arrest as 'dangerous parking'."

This false entry in the official police notebook suggested an attempt to create a legitimate reason for his interaction with Mcupi, a claim the court later dismissed.

The Court's Verdict - The Karoi court found Sergeant Dzimbanhete guilty of extortion. He was also charged with criminal abuse of duty as a public officer. On 7 October 2025, the magistrate handed down the sentence.

The officer was sentenced to 36 months in prison. However, 6 months of that sentence were suspended for a period of five years on condition of good behaviour. This leaves him with an effective prison term of 30 months.

The National Prosecuting Authority of Zimbabwe used the case to send a strong message about conduct within the police force. Their official bulletin concluded with a firm statement on the standards expected from those in uniform. "Law enforcement officers must uphold the highest standards of integrity," the authority stated. "Every officer is expected to serve with honour, professionalism, and respect for the law."

## **CHEERS FOR NOW:**

Your Editor and his new bride are still enjoying this Oktober maand in some beautiful parts of SA, namely the Southern Drakensberg, Griqualand and the North and South KZN coasts. Currently near Howick in the KZN Midlands. Readers will understand if this edition of Ramblings is somewhat shorter or less focussed than usual.

Thanks to a generous invitation from Lee Connolly, CEO of Paramount Aerospace Industries, a number of RAFOC members attended a tour of their premises at Wonderboom Airport last Friday. This is where the both AHRLAC and MWARI aircraft are built. See separate report on the visit. Our next lunch will accordingly be on Friday 7 November 12h30 for 13h00, (nearest to Armistice Day 11 November) and will be preceded by a wreath laying at the Wall of Remembrance facing the carpark.

## **TAILPIECE:**

"If having a soul means being able to feel love and loyalty and gratitude, then animals are better off than a lot of humans." (James Herriot)

"World War 3? Aggh k\*k man, it'll never happen! Well, some folk think it's already started. You don't declare war any more; that went out of fashion decades ago. You just start to prosecute the enemy.

There are, for example, as part of Operation Eastern Sentry, military warplanes from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Denmark, Italy, the Czech Republic (Czechia) and the United States currently based in Eastern Poland, postured against increasingly aggressive moves, mainly by Russian drones, towards Poland. Earlier today an Australian E-7 Wedgetail AEW aircraft lifted off from the large Polish military airbase at Łęczyca, (specifically blurred on Google Earth) west of Warsaw, to coordinate NATO's response to last night's massive drone and missile attack by Russia on the Ukraine. That's a sizeable chunk of world military assets. Hold on to your hats." (Daily Maverick)

Chinese Hitmen - In what sounds like the setup to a very dark comedy, a group of Chinese hitmen has been jailed for subcontracting a murder... five times. It all began when businessman Tan Youhui decided to eliminate his rival, simply known as Mr Wei, rather than face him in court. Tan offered a hitman two million yuan to get the job done. A straightforward enough plan - except for the part where the hitman decided to outsource. He passed the job (and half the fee) to another hitman. That hitman did the same. So did the next one, and the one after that. By the time the contract reached hitman number five, the payout had dwindled to 100,000 yuan and the enthusiasm levels were understandably low, even among those with no moral compass.

Hitman number five decided that murder wasn't worth the money, so he met the intended victim in a café and offered him a deal: half of the 100,000 yuan payout if he faked his own death. Mr Wei agreed to pose, gagged and bound, for a photo that could be taken back to his rival, but (wisely) reported the case to the police as soon as his meeting with the hitman was over.

The plan fell apart and all six men (including Tan) finally ended up in court. After a three-year trial in Guangxi, they were all convicted of attempted murder.

It just goes to show: delegation has its drawbacks. (Via Ghost Mail)



*"I think our Chinese air fryer is spying on us. I won't call it the 'enemy' because it might burn our chips"*



*"If the UK leaves the European Court of Human Rights, can we force people to come to the Tory party conference?"*



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## VISIT TO PARAMOUNT AEROSPACE INDUSTRIES:

The Paramount MWARI, formerly known as AHRLAC, is a South African light reconnaissance and counter-insurgency aircraft developed by Paramount Aerospace Industries, which started out as a joint venture between the Paramount Group and Aerosud.



It is designed to perform as an inexpensive, more versatile substitute for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and modern light attack aircraft.

Members of RAFOC had expressed an interest in this project after having an operational presentation of the aircraft's abilities in Mozambique, where it is proving its worth in the northern part of the country. Mr Lee Connelly, Chief Executive Officer of Paramount Aerospace industries, extended an invitation to RAFOC to visit and learn more about the aircraft, which we gladly accepted. Some twenty plus members indicated a willingness to attend a briefing on the project on 3 October, Paramount kindly provided transport for those JHB-based members to visit the Paramount Aerospace Facility at Wonderboom Airport, Pretoria. The transportation was two vehicles, a Lexus 600 and a Vito kombi, both black, so as we progressed up the Highway to Pretoria we must have looked like the 'blue light brigade' driving in convoy (but not speeding as they do) There the JHB contingent joined several members who made their own way to Wonderboom.

On arrival we were welcomed by the CEO, Lee Connolly, and The Program Manager, Johan Vester. After refreshments, Mr Victor Zazeraj, Paramount's Group Executive, formally welcomed the group prior to a presentation on the history of the MWARI aircraft, its design, its proven capabilities and Paramount's view of its future. In summary, versatile design, STOL capabilities, pusher propeller, cost-effective operation and tactical role. We were then joined by Mark Berg, the aircraft's test pilot who provided some insights into its performance and answered all the questions within the bounds of sensitivity.



*PRODUCTION LINE (PICTURE FROM PRAMOUNT)*

The only items of the air frame not manufactured on site is the engine and propeller, which for certification purposes needs to have an established performance.

A tour of the manufacturing facility started at the receiving bay of the raw materials, aluminium billets, and their progress through the factories very impressive machining shop where the various processes to make components, transformed into sub-assemblies, such as wings, fuselage, system bay fitments and finally, assembly of the complete aircraft.

The aircraft has various roles which are easily interchangeable because of the 'pod mission' design. Changing from one to another takes less than 4 hours to complete. The aircraft is also designed for 'in field maintenance' with most systems being serviceable from ground position. After a walkabout of the aircraft and more discussions, a light and informal lunch rounded off the visit prior to our departure.



This is a truly ***PROUDLY SOUTH AFRICAN*** development.