



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 282 21st NOVEMBER 2025

GREETINGS:

Winter arrived back on the Reef with a bang last weekend, with plummeting temperatures, heavy downpours and flooding... Vaal Dam sluices opened as precaution... Two men die during swimming leg of Mossel Bay Ironman... Astonishing claims and accusations by Mogotsi at the Commission... throws Mchunu a conspiracy claims lifeboat, but questionable... Norton Rose Fulbright - Another international giant quits South Africa... 'mystery' planeload of Palestinians – whodunnit?... Zuma's MK empire falls apart as warfare rages within... Malusi Gigaba charged in Transnet corruption case... sacked minister Dion George facing a litany of allegations from his time in office... Joburg mayor's "putting lipstick on potholes"... South Africa's economy declined from 28% to 15% of that of Africa between 1994 and 2024...

"Yellow Peril" - High drama as UK accuses China of espionage and issues MI5 warning... German spy chief flags risk of Russia-NATO showdown... All the ways Putin is pushing NATO to a cliff edge... Trump backs vote to release Epstein files in U-turn, but when will they be released – only he knows... Trump's campaign in Venezuela – real target is Cuba... Satellite images expose Russian losses after devastating Ukrainian attack... Islamic State is back and using AI to recruit UK jihadists... Labour net zero levies now main driver of rising energy bills... conclusion of UK 1,531 page report on Covid: we could have avoided lockdowns entirely had ministers reacted more quickly to the emerging threat of the virus... Once again, the nanny state is trying to suck all the fun out of life...

THE KING LEADS NATION IN SILENCE ON REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY:



The Defence Service Chiefs lay their wreaths: Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, Chief of the Naval Staff, General Sir Gwyn Jenkins, Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Roly Walker, Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Harv Smyth

RAF AND ALLIES TEST FIFTH-GENERATION FIGHTERS:



The Royal Air Force has joined allied Air Forces in Italy for Exercise Falcon Strike 25, a major multinational live-fly exercise designed to test and enhance fifth-generation fighter capabilities in complex, contested environments. This exercise forms part of the UK's wider contribution to Operation Highmast, an eight-month global deployment spanning Europe, the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific.

Hosted by the Italian Air Force, Falcon Strike brings together participants from France, Greece, the United States and the United Kingdom, with a focus on:

- Integrating fourth and fifth-generation aircraft
- Refining coalition tactics
- Strengthening logistics cooperation among F-35 users

Falcon Strike is the latest chapter in Operation Highmast, the UK's strategic deployment that has seen British air and space assets operate across multiple theatres since early 2025. The operation has been led by the Royal Navy's Carrier Strike Group, centred on HMS Prince of Wales, with the RAF working in close collaboration to deliver integrated air power across regions. "Exercise Falcon Strike is another outstanding demonstration of how far our collaboration with the Italian Air Force has come. Training side-by-side with our Italian colleagues strengthens interoperability, deepens mutual understanding and ensures that both nations remain ready to deliver decisive air power whenever and wherever it's needed. This exercise showcased not only fifth-generation capability, but the trust and professionalism that underpin every mission we fly together." Air Marshal Marshall, Air and Space Commander. *(RAF News)*

RAFALES INBOUND...



Ukraine's air force is to receive a massive boost in its fight against Russia with the purchase of 100 Rafale fighters from France. "One hundred Rafale jets mark a new step for our industry, for our people," Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky told French media network TF1, declaring it an "historic agreement." However, president Emmanuel Macron's office did not confirm whether these would be transfers from French stocks or new airframes. The deal also includes the next-generation SAMP/T medium-range surface-to-air missile system, which is currently in development, and radar systems. The Ukrainian leader was speaking at Vélizy-Villacoublay Air Base, where he and Mr Macron met defence industry representatives. "You [France] have a new version of the SAMP/T. We will have the best air defence system, one of the best in the world," Mr Zelensky declared.

(Forces News)

OH YES, I'M THE GREAT PRETENDER...



Fake admiral' takes centre stage at Remembrance event in Welsh town. The 'Insulting' suspected impostor arrived unannounced, took part in Parade

Military veterans were left fuming when a suspected imposter dressed as a Rear Admiral turned up at this year's Remembrance Sunday ceremony in Llandudno, Conwy. Wearing a Royal Navy uniform adorned with medals, he inveigled his way into the solemn event by claiming to represent the Lord Lieutenant's Office. The man, dubbed a supreme "Walter Mitty figure", even saluted at the war memorial during the wreath-laying event. Subsequent investigations by North Wales Live have revealed the man previously appeared in a Rear Admiral's uniform at Remembrance Sunday ceremonies in Caernarfon, Gwynedd.

The Royal Navy said impersonating a Naval officer was "insulting to veterans". Suspicions were aroused at the sombre Llandudno event when he appeared in what appeared to be an ill-fitting uniform and non-regulation shirt while sporting a chest full of medals that couldn't have been achieved in combination. The matter has been reported to military organisations but investigations are not usually carried out in these sorts of cases. His appearance meant one local naval representative was unable to fully take part in the occasion. Chief Petty Officer Terry Stewart, from Llandudno, said: "This Walter Mitty owes me my place on the parade as I dropped out to specifically chat. The man was reported to the Walter Mitty Hunters Club, an online community that investigates false military claims. After examining his medals, they suggested it might be the "highest ranking Walter Mitty attempt ever".

MORE FOUL PLAY AFOOT:

In the same week that member of Parliament Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla faced charges of terrorism and incitement to commit violence in the high court, the continuing factional battles in Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto Wesizwe (MK) party spilled over as a potential international incident with Russia could be brewing. President Cyril Ramaphosa's office said on 6 November that it had received "distress" calls from 17 South African citizens who had been lured into fighting in the Russia-Ukraine war "under the pretext of lucrative employment contracts. President Cyril Ramaphosa has ordered an

investigation into the circumstances that led to the recruitment of these young men into these seemingly mercenary activities,” the statement said.

It referred to the country’s Foreign Military Assistance Act of 1998, which prohibits South African citizens and entities from offering or providing “military assistance to foreign governments or participate in armies of foreign governments unless authorised by the South African government.”
(*Daily Maverick*)

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES:

South African aviation operators have reportedly been inundated for several months with dozens of requests for chartered planes carrying Palestinians to fly into the country. More than 150 Palestinians arrived at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg on Thursday on a chartered flight from Kenya. They were detained for several hours because they did not have the required immigration documentation and approvals needed, but were later released into the care of the NGO Gift of the Givers. The arrival sparked fierce debate, but Rapport noted on Sunday that another similar plane had already quietly arrived in the country last month. This flight was also arranged through the same controversial intermediaries, Al-Majd Europe, as the one that arrived last week. The publication further claimed the flight was originally planned to arrive during the G20 Leaders’ Summit next week, potentially creating a spectacle while the world’s eyes were on the country.

(*Citizen*)

NOW YOU TELL US:

Lockdowns could have been “avoided entirely” during the pandemic had ministers reacted more quickly to the emerging threat of the virus, the Covid-19 Inquiry has concluded. Baroness Hallett, the inquiry chairman, said that if “stringent restrictions” had been put in place before March 16th 2020, there might have been no need for a lockdown. However, a “toxic and chaotic culture” at the centre of government meant the pandemic response was often “too little, too late”, meaning a lockdown became inevitable. Once that point had been reached, she says, up to 23,000 lives could have been saved if the first lockdown had been imposed a week earlier. Baroness Hallett repeatedly criticises Matt Hancock, the former health secretary, and Sir Chris Wormald, the current Cabinet Secretary, who was at the time Mr Hancock’s permanent secretary at the Department of Health. Speculation that Wormald could be ousted will mount after Baroness Hallett said his failure to rein in Hancock led to concerns at the centre of government about the “effectiveness of [his] leadership.” There is also criticism of the failure by Boris Johnson’s government to assess the economic impact of lockdowns, the effect of school closures on children’s education and well-being and the increase in domestic abuse that occurred as a result of women being unable to escape their abusers.

(*Telegraph*)

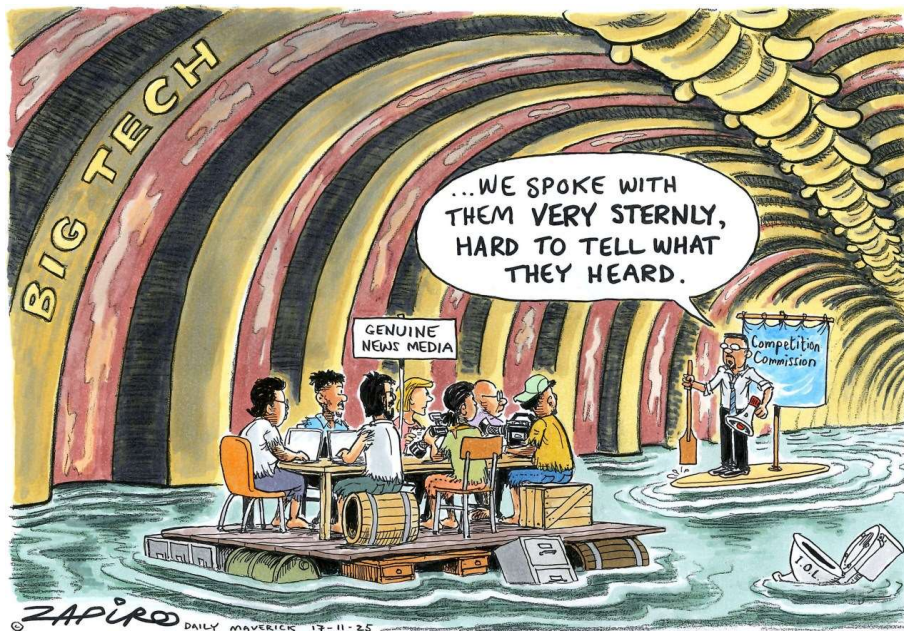
CHEERS FOR NOW:

The many Remembrance Day Parades and Services throughout early November are already receding into memory as Christmas approaches. This year has gone by at a breath-taking rate. Black Friday “sales” have already started to extricate as much money as possible from citizens’ pockets and purses... the torrent of (mis)information and propaganda continues unabated (*See Fake New piece at end of these Ramblings*)

Our next function, and last for the year, is the **Ladies Christmas Lunch on Friday 5 December 2025, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers**. Let’s make this a good one... Please book as early as possible with bookings@rafoc.org

The following week sees the onset of 'Builders Holidays' with the Public Holiday on Wednesday 16 December when half of Johannesburg goes away for Christmas Holidays, the traffic becomes relatively calm and pleasant for a few short weeks, and the place more livable than usual for those who don't travel...

TAILPIECE:





*"Last Checks" The Evening Hymn.
Second Place in RAF Photo Competition: Cpl Sian of RAF Lossiemouth.*

BBC: THE FAKE NEWS FACTORY: EXPOSING THE MACHINERY OF ONLINE DECEPTION:

In today's digital age, we are constantly bombarded with information from countless sources. Distinguishing fact from fiction has become a crucial skill, as the proliferation of "fake news" poses a significant threat to informed decision-making and societal trust. Understanding the mechanics behind this deceptive machinery is the first step towards combating its influence. This "fake news factory" operates through a complex web of actors, motives, and technologies, churning out misleading narratives that can quickly go viral and shape public opinion. Let's delve into the inner workings of this deceptive ecosystem and examine how it impacts our world.

The Cogs in the Machine: Understanding the Actors and motives:

The fake news factory isn't a single entity but a network of interconnected players, each with their own motivations. At the core, you often find content creators, ranging from individual bloggers seeking attention to sophisticated organizations with political or financial agendas. Driven by profit, ideology, or a combination of both, they craft narratives designed to resonate with specific audiences, often exploiting existing biases and fears. Amplifying these narratives are distribution

networks, including social media bots, troll farms, and even unsuspecting individuals who share content without verifying its authenticity. Another key component is the lack of media literacy among consumers. Many struggle to discern credible sources from unreliable ones, making them vulnerable to manipulated information. Finally, the speed and virality of online platforms contribute to the rapid spread of misinformation, making it difficult to contain or debunk effectively before it causes significant damage. Understanding the complex interplay between these actors is crucial to dismantling the fake news factory.

Deconstructing the Deception: Tools and Techniques of Manipulation:

The fake news factory employs a variety of sophisticated tactics to create and disseminate deceptive content. These range from simple manipulations like misleading headlines and doctored images to more complex techniques involving AI-generated deepfakes and coordinated disinformation campaigns. One common tactic is "context stripping," where authentic content is taken out of context and presented in a way that distorts its original meaning. Another is the use of "sock puppet" accounts, fake online profiles created to spread disinformation and manipulate public opinion. Furthermore, emotionally charged language and clickbait headlines are frequently used to hook readers and encourage sharing, regardless of the content's veracity. By understanding the tools and techniques employed by the fake news factory, we can become more discerning consumers of information and less susceptible to its manipulative tactics. Learning to critically evaluate sources, cross-reference information, and identify emotional manipulation are essential skills in the fight against online deception.

Like countless others, David Chadoir watched The Telegraph's exposé on the BBC doctoring Donald Trump's January 6 speech for a Panorama documentary with a mixture of confusion and concern. But unlike some, he was not surprised that our supposedly impartial national broadcaster could mangle the words of the US president in such a partisan way.

For the award-nominated graphic designer, who worked on Newsnight from 2022 to 2024, was convinced there was something eerily familiar about the spliced clip of Mr Trump's speech before the Capitol riots. Realising an almost identical edit had been called out – live on air – during an episode of the BBC2 programme more than two years earlier, he contacted The Daily T podcast to tell his story.

Following a comprehensive search of the BBC archives, we found the episode and watched, in astonishment, as Mick Mulvaney, a former White House chief of staff, criticised the broadcaster for "splicing" the footage, only to be ignored by Kirsty Wark, then a presenter of Newsnight.

According to our whistleblower, the controversial footage was brought up by a producer at an editorial meeting the following morning but "brushed off".

The revelation risks plunging the corporation further into crisis, undermining claims that Panorama's edits were an innocent mistake.

It is also likely to raise fresh questions about the future of Jonathan Munro, who has been put in charge of the BBC's overall news operation since the departure of Deborah Turness alongside Tim Davie, the director-general. At the time of the broadcast, Mr Munro was interim director of news and current affairs with ultimate responsibility for Newsnight.

(Cammilla Tominey - Telegraph Associate Editor)

[Read more and listen to the BBC Newsnight whistleblower in full on The Daily T ►](#)