

Hello Shipmates,

As our U.S. cousins may put it: 'You gotta laff'.

Following all the bluff and bluster of pre-election, the cornucopia of frigate types tumbling out of B. A.'s brand new factory, built at Rosyth, is another example of Westminster's best product delusion and 'jam tomorrow'. I suspect the obesity sweeping the nation is directly attributable to all the sugar in jam that comes from the honourable members in London W.1.

We cannot be very far from our carrier cruise to far eastern waters; aim is 'to maintain freedom of navigation under international law of the seas'. In these strained times the atmosphere in East and South China Seas is not welcoming. Harassment by the peoples' navy of China will be deliberate and pointed. I hope no one gets hurt as a consequence.

Britain's aircraft compliment of F35 B models, 5th generation Jump Jets, is expected to be six; a mix of R.A.F. and F.A.A. You could say 'neither one thing nor the other'. Proper squadrons will come from the United States Marines, on detachment for the cruise duration; same model aircraft. It's going to be interesting for all on board; I hope it to be harmonious and fruitful, their reputation as carrier fliers is legendary, so cross pollination could produce a hybrid jaw dropper. Looking at countries in the F35 programme it takes in nearly all of the western alliance members; all are converting helicopter decks to fixed wing flyable, a formidable collection.

The one to surprise me is Israel who already operates 24 x F35A out of an order for 50, and I really mean 'operate'; they have been hitting Hamas during the latest very nasty flare-up. Israel has named theirs in traditional fashion ADIR's,; I've not learned what that means (***Libby's note it's Hebrew for strong and mighty/strong one***).

They arrive bare of electronics to be fitted with their own systems, precise description of which are classified - to keep it so - all their planes are fully maintained in Israel. All other operators get heavy maintenance done in U.S. controlled centres; both to restrict knowledge of advanced electronics.

Israelis are ultra clever in the field, have been an active user of anti-missile defence for several years to counter stuff fired on a daily basis from Gaza.

On a much larger sophisticated scale, a new bunker buster is on trial, a hypersonic missile approximately 3.5 U.S. tonnes, 22 foot long; it may give Iran and their prodigy a few sleepless nights.

The 'peace agreement' between Israel, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates is a real surprise; be grand if it was a template of things to come. Both those nations got the nod of agreement from 'Israel to U.S.', allowing them to purchase F35s; who would have thought it possible!

It will surprise you not at all that we, U.K. Royal Navy can only afford six aircraft on our fleet flagship.

The cash has been put to vital use protecting the realm from nasty bogie men, a Diversity Chief.

A brand new civil servant at M.O.D. naval; another unsackable at £110,000 per annum, basic. The first Director of Diversity and Inclusion; the lady who hit that jackpot is a Miss De Forges; she will sort out all 'gender biased titles', is committed to 'creating a welcoming and inclusive environment'. I see enough horse shit there to fertilize a tree growing adjustable spanners.

The title of First Sea Lord is in her firing line ... OOOPS!

Isn't it all so lovely as the realm goes down the tubes to know we have 'time and energy' to indulge in such an agenda as 'wokery' ... I bet among the spare Admirals there is one who could do the job on the back of his wine bill during a dull Thursday lunch time.

And we have just splashed another £600 million on payment for the U.S. Light Tank - AJAX. The M.O.D. rejected it as unsafe in 2019... 589 copies on order from General Dynamics; why are we not building such a vehicle? £577 million was paid last year to April.

This £3 billion programme had escalated to £3.2 billion thus far. The ministry's head shed, Sir Stephen Lovegrove, who is mismanaging this exercise, has recently been promoted to National Security Advisor; so shipmates, keep your hand on your ha'penny.

The AJAX contract was published in 2010; it took four years to be signed. Hardware delivered thus far; 14 non-turreted - AJAX. If Vladimir gets to read this he will think we are joking, serving up disinformation

Next trumpet fanfare from a balcony on Whitehall. A new Royal Yacht to be built cost £200 million, by our 'world-renowned' ship building industry'. Forecast to be available in four year's time. Tenders are being sought, I vote that small private yard at Appledore in Devon be given the job. They built the Irish Navy, **ON TIME, ON BUDGET** and of a quality not seen in B.A.'s yard on the Clyde.

The M.O.D. PR Department put out an artist's impression of said vessel. They excel at A.Is. Size looks modest, about upper end of what oligarchs and Saudi princes favour, but minus the chrome and blingery of a bag shanty. Modest and restrained lines as would befit our Monarch. It is of note H.M.Q. vetoed it being named Duke of Edinburgh, a naff name, why not Britannica, like the old



job - it's no longer on Lloyds list and has a bit of gravitas. The grey suit at M.O.D. you can tell is a buttock kisser, trying to curry favour, perhaps the same wonk that named the carriers after

living members of the Royal House. A floating invitation to demean or embarrass them and so us, the great unwashed. The Vessel will come under enough brickbats from our own home-grown republicans; no foreign assistance required. The narrow clichés driving a cultural revolution, swamping universities and government institutions, unopposed by gutless leaders.

I used to think the homo-lesbian faction quite vocal but in a restrained sort of way; now the trans mob have exploded like a whizz-bang whose fall out covers just about every one down to junior school, and they are very nasty, vindictive.

Here endeth the rant, but before filing this in the waste basket, I did wonder if any surplus cash at the A.G.M. to be put in the hands of our ladies to seek out the best bookies odds on the Royal Yacht built in Britain, being on time, on budget and to an acceptable quality. On form, our following reunion could be with personal butlers at the Savoy.

Last month's anxiety in N.A.T.O when Putin's Russia had a massive military build-up on the Ukraine border, fortunately, came to a soft conclusion. Everyone went home when Vladimir said: "It was only an extra large exercise". Politicians do get carried away like that at times; recall Anthony Blair and W. Bush thinking Afghanistan could be subdued, another two university graduates who did not take history. It's obvious testosterone floods their brain, an erection follows, then they cast around for a place to put it and a depletion of respective nations' youth results.

Ukraine has had a desire to become a N.A.T.O. member since the Soviet socialist break up; obviously that exercise was to put the frighteners on them with the prospect of another caper like the annexation of Crimea in 2014; enough to put the chill winds of Siberia up any staunch opponent.

U.S. President Biden went east as his first visit following the jolly in Cornwall. He met Putin on neutral ground. One assumes the purpose was to plead: "Please don't do that sort of thing, it makes the rest of us exceedingly jumpy".

I reckon the main item equally pressing to both parties is the N.A.T.O. question. Ukraine's main industry generator of a large slice of her G.D.P., high tech, innovative and talented is as an aircraft producer; at one time she made a major part of U.S.S.R.'s air fleets, was a major collaborator with Soviet design bureaus of every type, passenger, freighter, bomber, fighter. If it flew, Ukraine expertise was in there somewhere. They are also a very smart engine builder/developer. There lies the rub between the U.S.A. and Ukraine; NOT, mark you that they still produce for Russia, they don't, but, focus is on the other side of the world, China. Very close cooperation Sino-Ukraine has been the vital key to China's really, really rapid development in the aeronautical field. A condition that flies in the face of U.S. foreign policy as she tries to contain 'adventures' in the Pacific.

Common knowledge in China's aircraft carrier programme started with stealthy back door purchase from Ukraine of Liaoning, a stalled Russian order from Ukraine shipyard via a Hong Kong breaker. How aircraft carriers worked came from another strange source. You may recall Australia's last carrier named *Melbourne*. When scrapped for sale it was purchased by another 'no account front company' in Hong Kong for cutting. It appeared in a Chinese yard being dismantled 'nut and bolt', a speciality of theirs, called 'reverse engineering'; the minutia of 'arresting', 'catapulting', how and how much, power was required. Mirror landing sight and angled deck operation was created ashore, to prove and modify - all come at scrap price. Chosen strike aircraft, a Soviet era Flanker, hooked and deck capable, modified by Ukraine before test flying and handover, aircraft then became Chinese JIS (Japanese Industrial Standard) with modern glass cockpit.

Advanced missile technology leapt along with Ukraine expertise. Their boast of carrier busters may be no idle threat.

My bet is, it would be safe to assume Putin backed off Ukraine when told by China to cool his heels..... In Mandarin I think it would sound pretty acidic to say 'cease threatening our major massive tech supplier'; especially as a current campaign involving billions and a shedload of shadow companies are attempting to get the financial whip hand over all those suppliers, then transfer the factories and knowhow to mainland China..

Here I digress a bit! I recall in the past commenting on surprises had by having the small rectangular 'white ensign badge' in my lapel. Was at R.A.F. Coltishall and taken aback to see an Ilyshin 76 on the perimeter track. Trying not to look too eager, I sauntered over for a closer look at this Russian maid of all work; I would say the equivalent of our Hercules.

A uniformed peak cap hopped off the end of its tail ramp and bid me, what sounded like, "Good Morning", shook hands as a slow walk round the outside was taken. As ever my camera was under my coat: "Take pictures" he said. He told me he had brought a contingent over from Ukraine on



an exchange visit of 'special forces' with the Royal Marines. Eyes seemed fixed on my lapel badge, a what is 'special badge' question was asked - he beamed when I said Queen Elizabeth's Navy and I felt he may like a memento of his visit so I unclipped it and put it on his collar. That gave great joy, considering its tiny size, as if I had given him a crown jewel. He took my elbow, helped me up the ramp for a

thorough descriptive tour of the load area, then up a ladder to the cockpit for a sit in the pilot's chair (his). From a locker he took an equally small badge of Ukraine Air Force and stuck it

in my lapel. We laughed and bantered for about an hour 'till I had to do a hasty retreat. My one regret is not getting his address; I could have loaded his kids with English books to aid their quest to learn it, they being rare, sought after at that time, evidently, in his country.

Whilst searching for the badge for a picture I came across another exchange....



Sat in a hotel lounge with Jo, sippin' a mint julep, a jolly gathering was going on in the next room. A passing chap, on his way to the loo, looked and seemed to recognise my little enamel white ensign; it got us a 'hello and smile' and on his way back he stopped to ask is that a British Navy flag. I always have a spare in my pocket so I took it off and offered 'did he want it'; response was immediate: "I will be back in one minute!, that he was and stuck in my lapel the tiny U.S. Navy and Stars and bars in the photo. If I had a pocket full I could have swapped the lot. It was a submarine reunion, celebrating 100 years of the U.S. Service; have the sub's name written somewhere but failed to locate it to meet this post.

I understand take-up for our reunion is slow, erratic maybe.

That's a shame if it means we lose that bit of intimacy we enjoy in our own room; like the singer and raffle. When the Grim Reaper calls it is too late to wish you had come along for your tot of Pussers.

If your arm hurts about now it's not because I'm twisting it - honest! Anyway, I've got the cutest little black dress for the occasion; do you want to miss that?!?!



God bless all y'all