

History shock

To those nieces and nephews who are under the impression that 2003 marks the centenary of powered, controlled flight, I have some sobering news. Nephew Ibrahim Dashti has unearthed evidence (via Yahoo) that air travel was popular as far back as the 1600s.

According to a recent report: "In Catania, almost destroyed in an eruption in 1669, schools and the airport were closed due to thick ash and residents donned surgical masks and umbrellas before heading into the streets."



RAF Canberra, 1950s.

RFP for what!?

As it moves into 2003, the US Air Force is obviously gearing up for a pretty strenuous year. My faithful Pentagon watcher Gas Giant tells me Air Mobility Command has advertised for a job-lot of "SnugPak Softie" sleeping bags and Stenier Navigation binoculars. What better than to snuggle down into a warm sleeping bag and scan the horizon for rare birds perhaps, or other events of interest? Yes...it's a man's life in today's forces!

Or, should you have the misfortune to suffer from having your backside catch fire, you may be interested in Air Force Material Command's requirement for a "subass extinguisher" – whatever that might be. As it is apparently charged with nitrogen at a pressure of 620lb/in², it ought to be able to deal with the most violent anal conflagration.

Having hopefully recovered from this setback, what better than to enjoy the Combat Air Forces Weapons and Tactics conference, industry exhibit and social being organised by Air Combat Command (ACC). According to ACC, "this event will consist of defence contractor exhibits, display booths, briefings, food and drink". But not necessarily in that order.

Budgie blues

Apparently, a month or so ago, Monty Orangeball mentioned that some shiny new hangars for the B-2 will be, "climatically controlled".

Nephew Malcolm Taylor suggests that controlling a climax should certainly avoid any sudden, unintentional twangs from these aluminium-trussed structures.

Regional Nimrods

Scruggs Aerocrapae may not have abandoned the new-build regional jet market after all. Tucked away in its *Regional Skies* magazine among interesting articles about Avro RJs, new Sodastream operators and dramatic expansion of the Swedish ATP fleet (some mistake surely, ed), punters might be surprised to see "Nimrod MRA4 viewing at Woodford". Is this a sign of things to come?

Perhaps MRA4 now stands for "Mega Regional Aircraft – 4th attempt." After all, virtually all maritime threats will be well beneath the waves by the time the current project gets off the deck, and besides, the original Comet (aaaahhh...de Havilland!) had roughly the same passenger load as the average regional jet. Perfect!

FLIGHT

and
AIRCRAFT ENGINEER

FLIGHT 16.1.1953

NATO Power Lacking

Speaking at Fontainebleau on December 7th, General Norstad, American Commander-in-Chief, Allied Air Forces, Central Europe, said that air power available at the present time was "far short of the military requirements." The General went on: "I believe, however, that the forces we now have in process of organization and equipment represent a significant factor in the overall balance. We are reaching about this time a level where in the sad event of war we could take a toll and exact a price. We cannot, of course, achieve our full military mission by any means. But I think we have become at least a small deterrent factor."

50
YEARS
AGO

U.S.A.F. Accidents

The disturbing total of 288 lives was lost in accidents involving American military aircraft during November and December. Great concern is felt in Washington at these figures, and Mr. Finletter, Secretary for Air, said last week that "nothing less than the complete absence of accidents" would be regarded as satisfactory.

Both Mr. Finletter and Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg (Air Force Chief of Staff) produced statistics showing that major accidents had, during 1952, dropped to an all-time low of 29 per 100,000 flying hours: this was calculated on a total of 8,000,000 flying hours during the first 11 months of the year.

Tarmac Obstruction

A car driver who, having business at London Airport, drove his vehicle onto the apron without the required authority, was fined a total of £15 at Uxbridge recently on two summonses for contravening the Air Navigation Order (1949). He was also ordered to pay 12 guineas cost. It was stated that the car came into collision with a taxiing T.C.A. aircraft, as a result of which the vehicle was struck and damaged by one of the airscrews. The service was delayed for two hours.

Boeing helps cut mistakes

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The Boeing Safety...

Skyport,
13 December 2002