

RHAG deployments were a very common occurrence at RAF Stanley nine or ten in the course of a 24 hour shift was about normal. Imagine operating in the dark with a face numbing Antarctic wind chill recovering fully armed Phantom aircraft with engines running from ice clad runway arresting cables. Speed and accuracy are imperative if the aircraft is to be removed and the cable prepared for the imminent landing of another Phantom or transport aircraft both at the limit of their endurance with no diversionary airfield .There really was no margin for error but the RAF fire crews of RAF Stanley .excelled in this difficult and potentially very dangerous task

The following citation dated the 22 November 1984 was given to all members of my crew but the scenario and prevailing situation could apply to any RAF Stanley Fire crew Rhag deployment

On the afternoon of Thursday the 20th November 1984 the Crash Combine were deployed for an East Alpha RHAG engagement a regular occurrence for the fire crews at RAF Stanley. However the weather gave some cause for concern. Suddenly Mount Tumbledown disappeared in a gathering storm strong northerly crosswinds gusting at 50 knots were in evidence. The combine were deployed to rig the centre Alpha and stand by for two Geese (F4) and a Fat Albert (extended C130) recovering. The first goose landed safely and the cable was rewound. The second Goose also landed safely and the cable was rewound to allow the Fat Albert to land. The combine returned to normal readiness. Shortly after Wing Commander Manning (OC ops) called at the section and thanked the crew for their prompt and efficient actions. In the words of the Wing Commander I have never seen a fire crew move so quickly and professionally and that includes my days at RAF Coningsby. I was urging you lads on from up in the tower and I was so relieved when you completed all your tasks in what must have been record time. I would like to show my appreciation for a job very well done by sharing a drink with you all. The Wing Commander then produced a bottle of Scotch whisky and asked us to join in a toast to the wonderful men of the RAF Fire service. As the crew chief I would like to pass on my appreciation to all members of the crew; Cpl Bowerbanks Cpl Tortice Cpl Yapp SAC Haughton SAC Hawes SAC Hollis SAC Lenegan SAC Wade SAC Walton SAC Young and our two rhaggies Cpl Thomas and Jnr tech Palmer. I hope that you can look on this incident in years to come as a task very professionally undertaken at Royal Air Force Stanley

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As a matter of interest, I declined the Wing Commanders offer of a toast. Its not very often you get the chance to disagree with a Wing Commander but we still had a long night ahead of us and there was no way any of my crew were consuming alcohol on duty, however small the quantity. We did however have our toast at a more appropriate time.