

RUSSELL PEART was born and grew up in the small village of Holmes Chapel in Cheshire. He joined the local Air Training Corps before applying for entry to the RAF. After pilot training he flew Lightnings in the Far East, Strikemasters with the Sultan of Oman's Air Force and Jaguars back with the RAF before attending the Empire Test Pilot School at Boscombe Down in Wiltshire. Following a tour as a test pilot, flying mainly the Tornado, and a short period with the Bangladesh Air Force, he returned to Oman for two years flying Jaguars again. He then flew with Royal Brunei Airlines before finally joining Cathay Pacific Airways for the remainder of his flying career, becoming a captain and carrying out test pilot duties on Boeing 747 and Airbus aircraft. He retired initially to Cyprus before returning to the UK to live in Hampshire.

His son Ryan is now a Boeing 777 captain with Cathay Pacific Airways.



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'From danger-close combat missions in support of the SAS and breaking an air speed record, to test-flying captured enemy aircraft or piloting MiGs at the height of the Cold War, Russ has enjoyed a flying career of extraordinary variety and distinction. There's some pretty jaw-dropping stuff in here.'

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'It went without saying that if an SAS patrol was in trouble, SOAF would come and get them out of it if it was humanly possible, and quite often when it appeared not to be.'

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It was supposed to be just a training flight. The two Soviet-manufactured MiG 21s, each with two practice bombs and four air-to-ground rockets, were lined up on the runway in Bangladesh at the height of the Cold War, when air traffic control suddenly reported an incursion by Indian Air Force Jaguars. Though ill-equipped for combat, the two MiGs were scrambled.

One of the MiGs' pilots was an RAF officer – Squadron Leader Russell Peart. On a seven-month loan to the Bangladesh Air Force, Peart suddenly found himself at the centre of the simmering hostility between two neighbouring nations.

By the time they reached the area that had been threatened by the Indian pilots, the Jaguars had gone. Later, when Squadron Leader Russell Peart spoke of the incident to the British High Commissioner, he was told not to shoot down any Jaguars as the Indians had still not paid for them!

Russell Peart flew many other aircraft in his varied career, including the MiG 19, and while a test pilot at Boscombe Down trialled such designs as the Tornado GR1. But it was whilst he was seconded to the Sultan of Oman's Air Force, particularly during the so-called 'Secret War' in Dhofar, that he saw the most action. In that theatre the author flew some 200 operational sorties, 180 of which involved live fire, during which he was hit many times. He was also hit and wounded by a 75mm shell when his base was attacked, and he had to be evacuated by air back to the UK.

Russ Peart has written in detail of his exciting RAF career, from flying Lightnings in the Far East to winning the top prize in the International Tactical Bombing Competition against a handpicked team of United States Air Force fighter pilots and being awarded the Sultan Of Oman's Distinguished Service Medal. Supplemented by a selection of previously unseen photographs, this uniquely original memoir throws new light on the operational flying undertaken by some RAF pilots during the tense years of the Cold War.

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