

# CILIBERTI'S AVIATION TALES



This tale has nothing to do with the airshow, however I thought I'll share this with you. I was a very late comer to Facebook. Didn't trust it much and still not sure I do today, however, when I finally joined, I set up an aviation page and started sharing some of my photos.



**T**he second or third photo I shared was of a US Air Force F-100 Super Sabre that had crashed in 1968 after suffering an engine failure and a catastrophic hydraulic leak. It came in unannounced on RW 06, overshot the whole of it and ended up in a field pretty much where Lidl Luqa is situated.

At that time I was told that photos could be easily copied and there were no copyright laws, which I think is still the case nowadays, so I was sometimes publishing military aviation pictures related to Malta which were not necessarily mine. However, this photo of the Super Sabre attracted the attention of an old guy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. The comment read 'you have very good ice creams there'. At that time I thought 'here we go, Facebook creeps are coming for me!' After some hesitation, I replied to this guy and asked him what do ice creams have to do with a crashed jet in Malta.

I will not forget in a hurry his next comment. He went on to tell me that he was a ground crew guy assigned to the USAF 48th Tactical Fighter Wing out of RAF Lakenheath, in Suffolk, UK, and his squadron was at that time deployed to Wheelus Air Force Base in Libya for gunnery training. This was before Gaddafi took over in Libya and while the RAF used to send its fighter

squadrons to Malta for gunnery training due to our good weather, the US used to send its England and Germany-based squadrons to Libya for the same reason. Anyway, this guy told me that his boss told him that one of the squadron's jets had just crashed in Malta and that they had to get on a cargo plane immediately to secure the aircraft and its surroundings for an investigation that follows every crash. He went on to add that him and his team spent a week in Malta until every part of the jet was recovered, loaded onto a plane and sent to the UK for further investigation by the USAF in Britain. He said they quickly set up two tents to be able to live in them 24/7 to ensure the security of the area, and that other than that they had nothing else to do.

Fair enough, but ice creams? Ah, he said, with nothing else to do and the Brits not interested in what they were doing, they used to wait for this ice cream van which passed through the road twice a day, mid-morning and mid-afternoon. They would be so hungry and thirsty that they would look forward to see this old van and made sure they stopped him each time it passed by that road to buy their ice creams. He said he couldn't remember the brand name so I helped him by asking if the van happened to be light blue in colour, to which he immediately replied 'Yes!' It was Wembley's Ice Cream, for those old enough to remember!

Must admit that from then on I found Facebook fascinating because as they say 'a photo says a thousand words' and in this case it sure did. I went on to publish hundreds of others of my photos and sometimes I get strange comments like 'how can I forget?' and it turns out that somebody has a very interesting story about a photo I upload on Facebook.

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