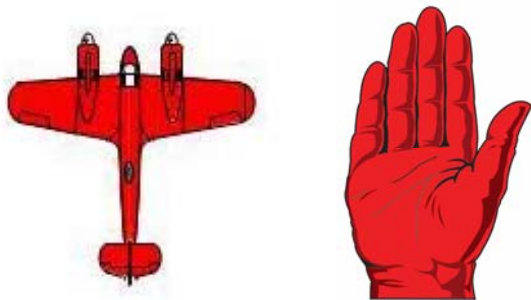




HISTORY OF SIGNALLING IN 100 OBJECTS AIR SUPPORT COMMUNICATIONS - RED HAND OR THE BEAUFIGHTER ?



The Red Beaufighter superimposed on an Air Formation Signal Unit Flash dates back to June 1940, when the Indian Air Formation Signal Regiments were presented with a Unit Insignia consisting of a diamond shaped badge with a Red Beaufighter and an Indian Star, mounted on a split light blue and white background. It is still today the emblem of 21 Signal Regiment. The Red Hand is now less well known as an emblem for Air Support Communications.

It was last seen being used by COC Troop of 16 Signal Regiment then stationed in Krefeld in the 1970s. This troop was all that remained from the Squadron that had been based at RAF Larbruch in Germany. This troop provided In-Flight reporting and secure telegraph communications from the Combined Operations Centre of 2ATAF, which was then based in the caves near Maastricht in the Netherlands during the Cold War. The Red Hand sign was carried on Air Support Signals vehicles throughout North Africa, Sicily and Italy. As a result all ASSU's (Air Support Signals Unit) adopted the tradition of the Red Hand sign. An unofficial shoulder title, McNeill's OWN, in red on khaki was worn by officers for a short period. Underneath this title was a patch depicting the Red Hand of Ulster on a white background. An emblem that by the early 1970's had become politically contentious, given the Army's role in N Ireland. The Beaufighter therefore won the race and still exists to this day as the ASU emblem!

In 1959, 11 and 12 AFS Regiments merged into 21st and 22nd Signal Regiment and were deployed in the Far East but in 1971 they were disbanded, leaving 21st as the only remaining air formation signal unit. Following this the Regiment was renamed 21st Signal Regiment (Air Support). In 1992 after the Cold War draw-down, the Regiment was moved to its current location in Colerne, Wiltshire. 21st Signal Regiment now consists of RHQ and 5 Squadrons: Support Sqn, 220 Sig Sqn, 244 Sig Sqn, 214 Sig Sqn and 43 (Wx) Sig Sqn (V). More recently the role of 21 (RSS) Sig Regt has changed yet again, but R SIGNALS still supports RAF communications.