

UNITED KINGDOM

Never say 'Crusaders'. RAF surrenders to cancel culture

CULTURE

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What the Nazis failed to achieve in 1940, the 'dictatorship of political correctness' has achieved with one simple denunciation. It confirms how unstoppable the suicidal fury of cancel culture is. With its application, the West is going full throttle to being detached

from its history, values and traditions, including in the military field.

The latest victim of the devastating epidemic, that seems to strike principally the political and institutional leaderships and has among its most evident symptoms the wiping out of the mental capacities and critical spirit of the infected individuals, is the **14th Squadron of the Royal Air Force, the British Air Force**, founded in 1915 and deployed in the Middle East (Gaza, Palestine, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula) during the First World War. A theatre of operations that earned it the nickname Crusaders, which today has become untenable for the politically correct and by some deemed offensive to Islamists.

The affair, which emerged shortly before the widespread ethnic clashes that have rocked several British cities in recent days, came to light thanks to the **Daily Mail**, which reported the RAF's decision to remove the nickname Crusaders following a complaint that a name that evokes Christian warriors in the Holy Land is offensive to Islamic culture.

A RAF spokesman added that 'we must focus on not emphasising any offensive terms that go against the values of the Royal Air Force. The traditions and informal nicknames used by the RAF in the early days of the service have a place in our history, however, some are no longer appropriate in the 21st century'. It would be easy to reply that the nickname Crusaders is justified by the **history of operations carried out** over a hundred years ago by the 14th Squadron and by the fact that the term contains nothing offensive to anyone, but simply identifies Christian soldiers who took part in the Crusades, without judgement or discrimination against anyone.

The BBC recalled that recently several organisations have questioned the use of the term 'Crusades' and similar or the use of images depicting medieval knights: in 2022, the anti-discrimination group *Kick it Out* advised England fans **not to wear crusader and knights costumes** inside stadiums during the World Cup in Qatar. In 2019, the New Zealand rugby team Crusaders removed some elements of its logo following the Christchurch mosque attacks while **retaining the team name**.

Lewis Page, military editor of The Telegraph newspaper, remarked in a commentary that only one complaint has been filed against the Crusaders and wonders, with a hint of irony, if this is not just the beginning of a much wider phenomenon. "Presumably, the Irish Guards can no longer be called 'Micks' (slang term for Irish people - Ed), traditionally they don't consider the name offensive, but someone might. Similarly, the Third Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Scotland will have to stop calling itself 'Black

Watch'. Obviously, the 809th Naval Air Squadron can no longer call itself 'Immortals' because it is offensive to all of Western civilisation. The elite corps of the Persian Empire was known by the same name. Now that the RAF has set the standard, one can expect other institutions to receive complaints,' writes Page.

'There is a Northern Irish football team called Crusaders FC and a Crusaders rugby team in New Zealand. And in all fairness, if no organisation can now be known as 'Crusaders', even the well-known rugby club Saracens will have to find another name. Obviously, I hope those final changes don't happen, because the sport has not surrendered to the madness of wokery to the extent that the RAF clearly has,' Page points out.

"The officer who upheld the complaint and cancelled the 14th Squadron's nickname should have considered that, yes, the Armed Forces should reflect the society from which they come. But in that society, ours, it is perfectly normal for respectable institutions to be called 'Crusaders' without anyone thinking that this is some sort of attempt to insult Muslims. Likewise, the name Saracens is not offensive to any reasonable Christian,' Page continued.

"The 14th Squadron is unusual for the RAF in that the motto is in Arabic and translates to "I open my wings and keep my promise". Squadron lore claims that this is a verse from the Koran suggested by the Emir of Transjordan, although this may not be accurate. The point is that this is clearly a unit with a rich history and mythology of its own, and none of this is intended to be antagonistic towards any particular group in British society. We are told that the cancellation that began with the RAF Crusaders is not over, and with the bar set so low it is difficult to see where it will stop. I know the current RAF commander, Dicky Knighton. If you're reading this, Dicky, it's time to take your senior officers for a collective health check,' Page concludes.

The deletion of 'Crusaders' has led to numerous protests, including Nigel Farage, leader of the Reform UK party, while on 29 July a petition was launched to reinstate the name 'The Crusaders' for the 14th Squadron, pointing out that 'the removal of a nickname for fear of potentially offending others can be seen as dishonouring the squadron's legacy and the memory of those who lost their lives for our freedom'.

It may be a coincidence but the controversy over the Crusaders, like in the US the pulling down of statues of Confederate soldiers and the naming of bases and barracks after their generals (offensive to African-Americans), coincides with the historic low in enlistments in the British and US armed forces, which for years have failed to meet minimum recruitment standards. It may also be a coincidence that throughout the West,

and especially in the US and UK, the resignation of serving personnel is increasing year by year to the point that Her Majesty's armed forces have never been so understaffed since the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

The progressive collapse of military vocations in all Western societies will certainly have different reasons, but certainly sacrificing history, symbols and traditions on the altar of political correctness does not help cement either patriotism or national cohesion. These elements are all the more relevant at a time when wars and unrest abound.