

# DESERT CATS

*The fourth print in Michael Rondot's Gulf War series.  
Jaguars from RAF Coltishall carrying full warloads, fast and very low.  
A single limited edition, countersigned by 25 pilots who flew on  
Operation Granby, Operation Desert Storm and Operation Warden.*



## DESERT CATS

by Michael Rondot

*500 signed, dated and numbered with 50 Artist's Proofs. 28 x 20 ins*

Fact. – No matter what the type of aircraft, the world record for low-flying can only ever be equalled; it cannot be beaten without hitting the ground. But getting close to it became an everyday routine for RAF Jaguar pilots on operational service in The Gulf after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The barren featureless wastes of the desert offer few opportunities for a low-flying aircraft to hide from enemy defences by terrain screening or ducking below radar cover. The only effective counter over a flat desert is to fly so low that any missile fired at the aircraft hopefully will proximity-fuse on the ground before it reaches its target. Faced with an unprecedented threat from surface-to-air missile systems and fighter aircraft, the Jaguar pilots who deployed to Thumrait, Oman, as the spearhead of Operation Granby in August 1990 trained as they expected to fight, – at ultra low-level.

Within weeks, most were comfortable at a radar altimeter cruise height of 35 feet at 480 knots, maybe climbing to 60 feet over undulating sand dunes or during high-G turns. Some were content to fly lower, cruising at 20-30 feet, and one or two individuals who should remain nameless were rarely seen above 20 feet. The phrase 'Getting down' had taken on a new meaning.

In October 1990 the Jaguars moved to Al-Muharraq, Bahrain, and continued to train at ultra low-level, but as the outbreak of hostilities drew close and it became apparent that US fighters were more than capable of dealing with any Iraqi air threat, they

switched to medium-level tactics, preferring to take their chances with the AAA and SAM threat rather than low-flying through a hail of small-arms and short-range defensive fire around their targets in Kuwait and Iraq. Blessed with the sustained luck and inspired leadership of Wg Cdr Bill Pixton DFC AFC, the gamble paid off. 3 aircraft were hit by Iraqi AAA fire during the 6-week war, but none were lost.

Since September 1991, Jaguars based at Incirlik, Turkey, have been flying low-level missions in Iraq as part of Operation Warden to protect Kurds against further Iraqi attack. Some of the pilots were on the initial Operation Granby deployment, and later flew war missions during Operation Desert Storm. Michael Rondot flew with them, and his painting captures the essence of speed and excitement as a pair of bomb-laden Jaguars break formation and head for the desert floor during a typical low-level sortie.

Each print in this single limited edition is countersigned by 25 pilots from the RAF Coltishall Jaguar wing involved with these Operations from Number 6, 41(F) and 54(F) Squadrons, including all 3 Squadron Commanders. The edition is artist-signed, dated and numbered, stamped with the Collectair seal and issued with a certificate of authentication giving details of the signatories. Remarked copies with an original pencil drawing on the print border, and especially prized by collectors for their extreme rarity, are available at extra cost to further enhance the value of this strictly limited edition.

*Published by:*

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