Call for Papers: RAF Museum Conference 2026

Organiser: Royal Air Force Museum
Conference: Hearts, Minds and Airspace: Air Power, Humanitarianism and Counterinsurgency
Place and Date: Royal Air Force Museum London, Thursday 10 – Friday 11 September 2026.
Application deadline: 1 May 2026.
Submission Type: Abstract, plus a biography and talk title.
Form of Submission: Maximum 300 words in English. Biographies should be no more than 200 words. Talk titles should be no more than 80 characters.
Applications to be sent to: Research News@rafmuseum.org

Overview
The RAF Museum is pleased to announce a call for papers for its conference entitled 'Hearts, Minds and Airspace: Air Power, Humanitarianism and Counterinsurgency.' This event will be held on Thursday 10-Friday 11 September 2026. The keynote for this year's conference will be presented by Dr Edward Burke, whose paper is entitled 'The RAF and Counter-Insurgency in South Arabia and Oman in the 1950s: Venoms, Levies and the Special Air Service.'

Air Power has become a central – yet often underexamined – dimension of contemporary counterinsurgency and humanitarian practice. From airstrikes, drones and surveillance platforms to humanitarian airlifts, medical evacuations, and "hearts and minds" campaigns conducted from above, the sky has emerged as a key site where violence, care, governance and legitimacy intersect.

This conference invites scholars and practitioners to critically examine the entanglements of Air Power, counterinsurgency and humanitarianism. We seek to explore how Air Power shapes counterinsurgency strategies and humanitarian practices across historical and contemporary contexts, and how these dynamics are experienced, justified, contested and resisted. The conference aims to bring together perspectives from political science, anthropology, history, geography, international relations, law, development studies, and military studies as well as insights from practitioners and policy makers.

Possible themes and questions include, but are not limited to:

- Air Power and the evolution of counterinsurgency doctrine.
- Humanitarian air operations: logistics, ethics and politics.
- Drones, surveillance and the verticalization of warfare and aid.
- Historical cases of air control, aerial policing and counterinsurgency.
- Local experiences and perceptions of air-delivered aid.

Please send a paper title, abstract and biography to the Museum's Historian and Academic Access Manager, Dr Megan Wang Research News@rafmuseum.org by **Friday 1 May 2026.**

Proposals for papers of 20 minutes should consist of a title, 300-word abstract, and a short biography (maximum 200 words).

We would particularly welcome papers from Doctoral Researchers, in addition to Early Career Researchers. There are a limited number of bursaries for those requiring financial support to present at the conference; please speak to Dr Megan Wang for more details.