

# SAFE Symposium 2024

## Keynote Speaker – Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> March

**Air Vice-Marshal (Retd) Sean Bell FRAeS FloD CDir BSc,**



Sean Bell enjoyed a first career in the RAF where he flew Harrier fighter jets from land and sea, and served on numerous staff appointments in the Ministry of Defence and overseas. Sean left the RAF in late 2012 in the rank of Air Vice-Marshal.

Since leaving the RAF Sean has a portfolio career which includes providing defence consultancy services to national and international clients. Since 2022 Sean has been providing military analysis for SKY News (and other media outlets) in their coverage of the Ukraine and Israel war. Sean is also the co-host and founder of the RedMatrix Podcast.

Sean is also a Fellow of the IoD and the Royal Aeronautical Society, an Ambassador for Officers OnBoarding and RAFA, the Chairman of the Aviation Focus Group, and is President or Chairman of a variety of charitable causes.

### **SAFETY FIRST – SOMETIMES.....!**

Society's increasing aversion to risk and focus on safety is perhaps understandable, but in the military domain, that creates a challenge. Peacetime military training is conducted in an environment with a very limited appetite for risk, yet we want – indeed need – our warfighters to be able to operate at the very limits of the safety envelope in times of war.

Safety is always a compromise. In 1991 I ejected from a Harrier jet – it was a rough ride but I was very happy that I was on a modern ejection seat that had continued to evolve and benefited from rocket-pack technology. Now, my son flies fighter jets and I continue to be motivated to monitor advances in aircrew safety!

Wars in Ukraine, and more recently in Gaza, have shown that military forces need to be ready for the unexpected. Although that involves taking extreme risks – often resulting in the ultimate sacrifice – the warfighter needs the reassurance that they have the best possible kit and equipment available if/when everything goes wrong.

This presentation will explore the dichotomy that despite our warfighters being expected to operate in a very high-risk environment, they are critically reliant on effective, capable, reliable and robust safety equipment as a fundamental foundation of their operational capability.