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THE LIFE AND
TIMES OF
MARSHAL OF
THE ROYAL
AIR FORCE

SIR
MICHAEL
BEETHAM

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Stay the Distance

The Life and Times of Marshal of the
Royal Air Force Sir Michael Beetham
Peter Jacobs

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Sir Michael Beetham enjoyed a long and distinguished career in the Royal Air Force. He joined the RAF as a pilot in 1941 and was awarded the DFC whilst serving with Bomber Command during 1943/44. Remaining in the RAF post-war, a number of flying and staff appointments followed, notably he drafted the first specification for the ill-fated TSR 2 and later joined the V-Force as commanding officer of 214 Sqn at Marham.

Beetham then served at the heart of Bomber Command's affairs when the V-Force was at the forefront of the nation's defences. The most critical moment came with the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. In 1964 he was given command of Khormaksar in Aden, the RAF's biggest overseas station. His arrival coincided with the start of a terrorist campaign against British forces in Aden.

More senior appointments followed, notably as Commander 2nd Tactical Air Force and Commander-in-Chief RAF Germany, but the big prize came in 1977 when Beetham was appointed Chief of the Air Staff. In 1982 came the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands; as acting Chief of the Defence Staff, he was involved in the decision to send the Task Force to battle. After victory in the Falklands, Sir Michael Beetham handed over as CAS and was appointed Marshal of the Royal Air Force.

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