

The virtual flag magazine of the Flag Institute

ISSUE 6

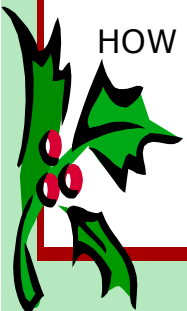
December 2007



The Flag Institute wishes all its members a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and is pleased to welcome you to issue 6 of eFlags.

As always any comments or suggestions would be gratefully received at eflags@flaginstitute.org

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The Flag of Saudi Arabia



Following the recent State Visit of the King of Saudi Arabia (which was marred by the fact that one half of the flags along the ceremonial route to Buckingham Palace were flying upside down!). We thought it may be of some interest to have a closer examination of this most enigmatic and religiously charged of national flags.

Although in its basic form it has been in use since the 1920s, the flag was not

officially adopted and the exact design was not specified until 15th March 1973.

It features a white Arabic inscription and sword on a green background. It is the Holy nature of this inscription, known as the *shahada*¹ which defines the need for special respect beyond that normally accredited to a national flag. Indeed under Saudi Legislation it can not be flown at half mast, nor vertically, and it needs to be made in such a way that the inscription reads correctly on both sides, but the sword must always point away from the staff. To western eyes, this is made more complex by the Arabic tradition of reading right to left, hence the flag's obverse is seen when the flagpole is on the right hand side of the flag rather than the 'expected' left.



This more prescriptive use of the Holy elements of the design means that at times the more 'flamboyant' use of flags in international occasions and celebrations have led to protests from Saudi diplomats, for example when FIFA planned to market a football decorated with all the national flags of all the 2002 World Football Cup nations, or indeed when the flag, along with the other participating nations was discovered to be decorating a Berlin Brothel during the 2006 World Football cup.

eFlags is delighted to reproduce the following article, originally published in Flagmaster 041 in Autumn 1983 but with the illustrations now reproduced in colour:

¹ لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

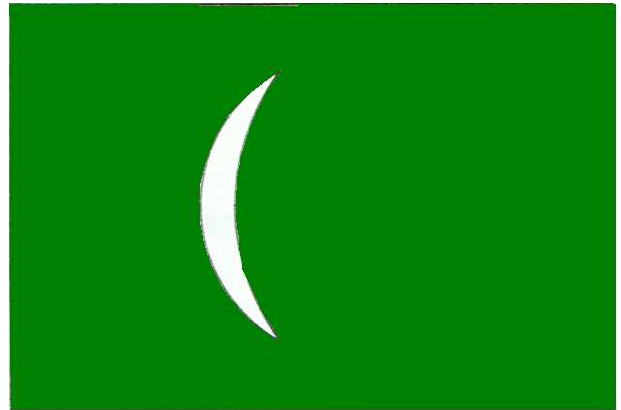
la ilaha illallah muhammadun rasulallah

"There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his Messenger"

The FLAG HISTORY OF SAUDI ARABIA by Oleg Tarnovsky

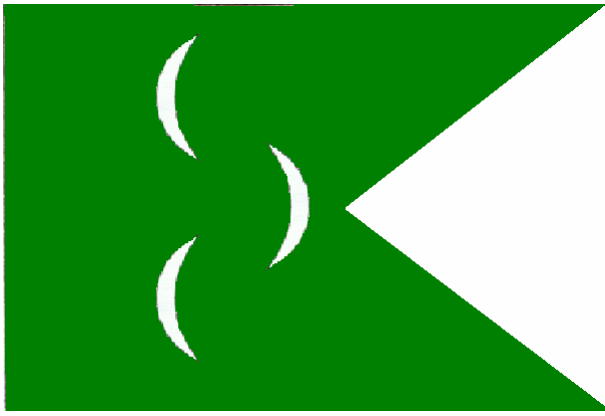
From the sixteenth century, Arabia became a dependency of the Turks, but its central remote part, hidden in semi-desert, was almost independent. The tribes in Nejd, the largest area here, pursued a purist version of Islam. That way they denied the Turkish supremacy. The Arabs of Nejd considered the oppressors as bad Muslims who wallowed in sin and vice. A militant religious leader, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab by name, lived in the desert town of Riyadh in the eighteenth century. Soon he was invited to the Emirate of Dariyah by its ruler, Muhammad ibn Saud, to stand together with him at the head of the "Pure Islam Movement" in Arabia. Around the year 1744 the great alliance between the house of Saud and the faith of Wahhab was concluded. Smoking, dancing, and music were banned, shrines and luxury were all swept away.

The time had come to adopt a flag of the true Muslims. Green was chosen for its field in order to remind them of the famous green cloak given by Allah with the help of Archangel Gabriel to Muhammad, the founder of Islam. That cloak was said to have been used by the prophet as a curtain, and was the first banner of Islam. On the green field, near the staff, Ibn Saud and Wahhab put a large white crescent symbolizing the growth of true Islam.²



In 1802 under that flag the Saudi camel cavalry attacked Mecca and Medina, holy cities of Islam, and many other areas of the Arabian Peninsula. For the first time since Islam's early days most of Arabia was united under a single Wahhabi authority. Even then they disliked the name usually given to them. Al-Saud preferred the name "Unitarians" (Muwahhidun), for to call themselves Wahhabi would be glorification of men, saints or prophets and dilution of the worship of the one supreme Allah. They were called Wahhabi only by the Turks who were anxious about Ibn Saud's reinforcement. The Turks ordered their vassal, the Egyptian ruler Mohammad Ali, to invade the Arabian Peninsula and to smash Saudi rule. In 1813 the Egyptians recaptured Mecca and Medina, and five years later they seized Emir Abdulla ibn Saud and sent him to the Sultan Caliph at Istanbul where he was executed. In 1819 the Egyptian soldiers, having destroyed Dariyah and killed many people, returned home. The new ruler, Emir Abdul Rahman ibn Saud, never attempted to rebuild Dariyah, and made Riyadh his new capital. Soon the Emir began new military actions in order to build another Saudi state under the same green flag. The task was not very easy because as a result of the Egyptian invasion several Arab tribes became his strong rivals. The Kureish tribe, to which the Prophet Muhammad ibn Hashim belonged, was one of them. From 1073 one Hashemite or another as descendants (Shareefs) of the Prophet had ruled as Emir of Mecca. He had traditionally controlled not only the cities of Mecca, the capital, and Medina, but often the entire Red Sea coastal area of the Hijaz as well. In 1517 the shareefs acknowledged Turkish suzerainty and in

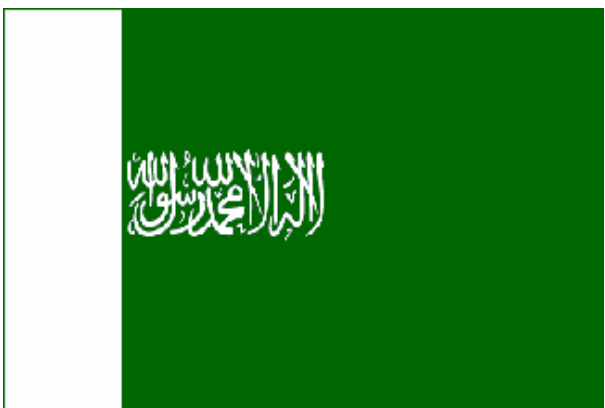
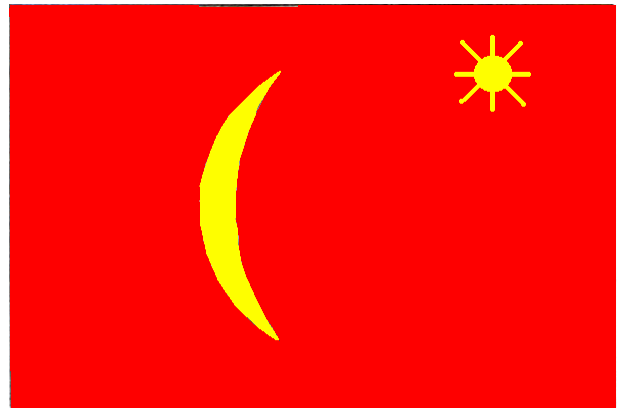
² flag is shown under the legend "Arabia: Nejd" by A. Figsbee in his book *The Maritime Flags and Standards of All Nations*, New York, 1856



exchange received the right to be partially independent. In order to emphasize their independence (especially to the Saudis) the Meccan shareef adopted a flag of his own. This was in 1819, after the departure of the Egyptian troops from Arabia. The flag was green with two tongues and three white crescents: two near the hoist and one in the centre, horns towards them³. Green was considered as the main Muslim colour, and the three crescents symbolized the growth of Islam. In

1840 the Ottoman Turks incorporated Hijaz into their empire as a province (vilayet), and the flag failed to be used.

Shammar was then the second strongest Arab tribe, with a capital at Hail. Its people inhabited the Shammar Mountains (Die bel Sharnmar), situated to the northwest of Nejd. At first the ruler Al Rasheed tried to be good neighbours to Al Saud, but there was no deep confidence between them. The house of the Rasheeds desired to demonstrate its independence by adopting around 1819 a flag of its own. The flag had a large yellow crescent near the staff and a yellow sun with eight beams in the upper fly corner, on a red field⁴. The red symbolized courage, the crescent meant Islam, the sun was a symbol of the Nusairite Muslims. In 1891 the Rasheeds attacked Riyadh, and the Al Saudi under Abdul Rahman were chased towards the Rub al Khali desert - the Empty Quarter. Among them there was a boy of fifteen, young Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, the future founder of the



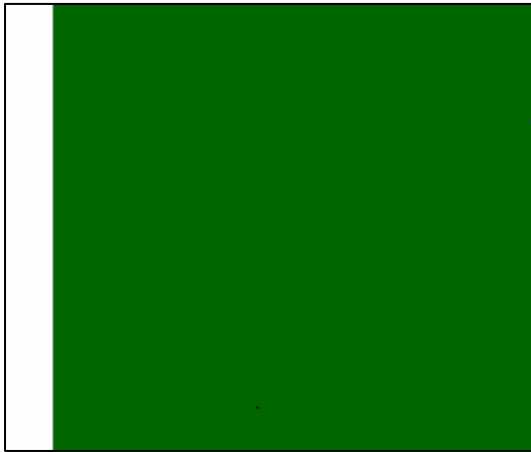
Saudi kingdom. The Al Saudi had friendly ties with the Murrah tribe, living near Rub al Khali. The tribal territory was vast and stretched across an area the size of France and West Germany with much oil hidden in the soil. For several years the refugees lived by the Murrachs, and in 1895 they removed to Kuwait whose ruler Sheikh Mubarak as Sabah wanted central Arabia to be divided against itself. Therefore he supported Abdul Aziz's plan to recapture Riyadh and supplied him with arms and ammunition. The new Saudi banner adopted in

Kuwait around 1901 was green with the white Arabic inscription, 'لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ' (There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah'), in the centre near a white vertical stripe by the staff. The ratio was 1:5, the length of the white inscription was

³ See *The Chart of Flags* by S. A. Mitchell, Philadelphia, 1837

⁴ See, for example, *The Standard American Encyclopaedia*, volume III, New York, 1897, where the flag was erroneously named as Flag of Arabia: Nejd. At the end of the 18th century, Nejd as a political unit did not exist. Central Arabia then was represented first of all by Djebel Shammar, supported by the Ottoman Empire

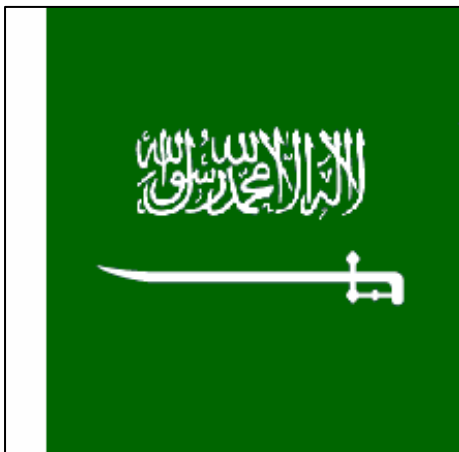
equal to one third of the length of the field as a whole. The proportion between the width and the length of the field was 2:3⁵.



At the same time something like a national flag which might be used by the common people, was adopted. It was green with a thin white stripe near the staff, the portion was 7:8. The white stripe was equal to one eighth of the flag length⁶.

In 1901 Abdul Aziz by order of his father led his troops towards the Empty Quarter in order to get help from the Murrah tribe. Soon their Emir was ready to take part in the liberation of Riyadh from Rasheed. A flag of the Murrah Emirate was adopted@: black field with white Arabic

inscription 'هللا لوسر دمحم هللا ال هللا' the centre of the green square insertion which touched the lower edge of the flag⁷. The remaining black part represented a tent. The idea was good because the Murrahs had a strong tradition of making their tents from thick black goat hair felt and of living in them in the desert.



Riyadh was taken by Abdul Aziz's troops with the Murrahs' help in January 1902. In the summer of that year his father Abdul Rahman arrived in Riyadh from Kuwait, but refused to govern the country. The father handed over authority to his son and gave him an ancient engraved sword, the symbol of day-to-day rule and command of the family forces. From that day forward Abdul Aziz became the true ruler of Nejd. He thought the image of the sword would be placed someday on his green banner⁸.

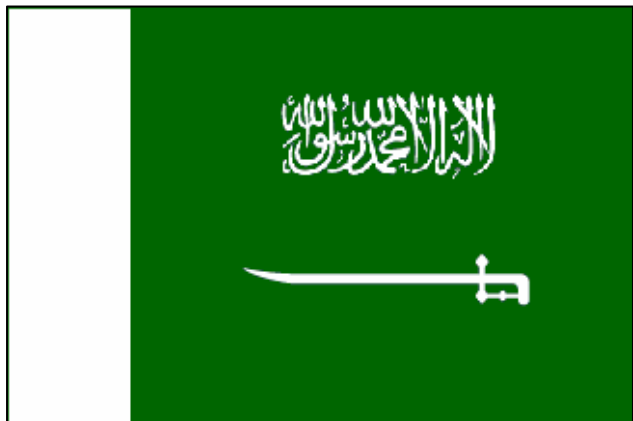
⁵ See *The Kingdom* by Robert Lacey, Hutchinson, 1981. A photograph taken in Arabia in 1911 is shown in the plate between pages 190 & 191; the green colour is indicated on page 40.

⁶ Ibidem

⁷ Ibidem

⁸ Robert Lacey page 66

Strong enough in 1921, Abdul Aziz's armies invaded Djebel Shammar and took it over. Its red flag was abolished. Abdul Aziz had doubled his empire at a stroke, and he gave himself a new title: Sultan of Nejd. The new Sultan adopted a special banner for himself. It was like the old one (2:3), but with the addition of a white sword under the inscription. The sword's point was directed along the inscription's direction (from the right to the left), so the flag had to be made of two separate pieces of cloth. At the same time a new military ("national") flag for the common people of the Sultanate was adopted. It was a replica of the old military flag but with the white inscription and the sword on the green field.⁹ Under these flags many tribal territories on the Arabian peninsula were conquered. The Murrah emirate was fully subjected to Nejd in 1917.



Flag Institute News

We are delighted to announce the launch of the **Flag Institute Members Only** part of our website containing numerous members only benefits and previously unpublished flag information:

<http://www.flaginstitute.org/index.php?location=99>

To obtain log in details please contact our webmaster:

webmaster@flaginstitute.org

Dates for your diary

18th May 2008: Summer Meeting
Planned to be held in the City of Durham

Full Details TBA

Contact membership@flaginstitute.org to be put on our mailing list to receive information

23rd November 2008: AGM, and President's Dinner

The Banbury Museum, Banbury, Oxfordshire.

Full Details TBA

Contact membership@flaginstitute.org to be put on our mailing list to receive information

⁹ See *National Flags* by EH Baxter, London & New York, 1934; *A Manual of Flags* by H Bay, Chicago, 1942. The alternations of the Nejd flags came to be known late in the day.

Flags in the News

A round up of amusing, informative or interesting flag related news stories that have hit the headlines from around the world over the last quarter. Hit the links to read the report:

Austalia: [Push is on to recognise the 'our' flag](#)

The new Federal Government has been urged to recognise the Eureka flag as an official flag of Australia.

Azerbaijan [Majority of Azerbaijani flags hung along roads in Baku are old](#)

Azeri Press Agency - Azerbaijan <http://en.apa.az/news.php?id=36469>

The majority of Azerbaijani **flags** hung along the roads in Baku in national and state holidays, as well as during the visits of foreign leaders to the ...

Belarus: [Day of flag and emblem](#)

Charter 97 - Belarus <http://www.charter97.org/eng/news/2007/09/19/day>

16 years ago 19 September white-red-white **flag** and emblem "Pagonya" (Pursuit) was officially declared the state symbol of Belarus. The white-red-white **flag** ...

[Belarus President institutes emblems and flags of Minsk oblast ...](#)

National Legal Internet Portal – Minsk,Belarus

<http://law.by/work/EnglPortal.nsf/0/FC51C2EF29EE39B3C225739C0047F4D9?OpenDocument>

... the official heraldic symbols of several administrative and territorial units – emblems and **flags** of the Minsk oblast, Berezino and the Berezino region. ...

Belgium: [Pro-unity Belgians rally around the flag](#)

Euronews.net - Lyon,France <http://www.euronews.net/index.php?page=info&article=454467&lng=1>

In a country divided by language thousands of Belgians are expected to raise their voices in the cause of unity in Brussels today. ...

Bulgaria: [Parvanov Bestows the National Flag on Every Bulgarian Town-Hall](#)

international.news.bg - Sofia,Bulgaria http://international.ibox.bg/news/id_1986479847

On the eve of 1 November, the Day of the national enlighteners, president Georgi Parvanov bestowed on every Bulgarian town-hall the national **flag**, ...

Canada: [Ontario needs a New Provincial Flag](#)

Canadian National Newspaper - Toronto,Ontario,Canada

<http://www.agoracosmopolitan.com/home/Frontpage/2007/10/09/01881.html>

The top three results ranked New Mexico's, Texas' and Quebec's respective **flags** first, second and third. Unsurprisingly, the results ranked Ontario's **flag** ...

Gibraltar: [new flag - why?](#)

gibfocus.gi - Gibraltar http://www.gibfocus.gi/details_comments.php?id=362

by Alfred Vasquez Edgar proposes that Gibraltar should have a new **flag** - why? The current one does not represent or portray any colonial allegiances, ...

Indonesia: [25 Papuans questioned over independence flag](#)

Jakarta Post - Jakarta,Indonesia

TIMIKA, Papua (Antara): The Mimika Police has questioned at least 25 people for their alleged involvement in hoisting the independence "Morning Star" **flag** ...

Ireland: [MEP has church flags removed](#)

Wexford Echo - Wexford, Ireland <http://www.wexfordecho.ie/news/story/?trs=cwqleyhmhmh>

"It was my personal call as I believe there is no place in church for **flags** of any kind. Having got permission, we removed both the tricolour and the ...

Kuwait: [A symbol of a nation: The Kuwaiti Flag](#)

Kuwait Times - Kuwait http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=Njk4MjY0Mzc0

'The national **flag** represents the people of a nation, and ours came to mean so much more to us after the invasion and occupation that we survived. ...

Malaysia: [MPs flag polls for debate](#)

Malaysia Star - Malaysia

<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2007/9/16/parliament/18886305&sec=parliament>

MPs were in agreement that it was wrong for those concerned to burn the national **flag**, stressing that it was an insult to the country's sovereignty. ...

Korea: [Chosun Dynasty Flag Returns After 136 Years](#)

Chosun Ilbo - Seoul, South Korea

<http://english.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200710/200710230020.html>

The **flag** of General Eo Jae-yeon (1823-1871), the garrison commander of Ganghwa Island during the latter years of the Chosun Dynasty, has returned home 136 ...

New Zealand: [Should the Union Jack be taken out of the New Zealand flag?](#)

New Zealand Herald - New Zealand

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/1/story.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10466186

The Prime Minister has suggested taking the Union Jack out of the **flag** as pictured here. Asked whether New Zealand should become a republic or consider ...

Serbia: [EU flag finally flying in Belgrade](#)

B92 - Serbia <http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics->

[article.php?yyyy=2007&mm=09&dd=21&nav_category=90&nav_id=43947](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2007&mm=09&dd=21&nav_category=90&nav_id=43947)

BELGRADE -- To the tune of the European anthem, the EU **flag** was raised for the first time above the National Parliament in Belgrade. ...

Taiwan: [Taiwan and China squabble over Olympic torch](#)

International Herald Tribune - France <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2007/09/17/asia/taiwan.php>

At the last moment, Taiwanese officials say, Beijing had added a stipulation that only the Olympic **flag** of Chinese Taipei - the name under which the island ...

Thailand: [Yellow Flags at Thai King's 80th Birthday](#)

eFluxMedia - USA

http://www.efluxmedia.com/news_Yellow_Flags_at_Thai_Kings_80th_Birthday_11384.html

The streets of Bangkok were packed with people wearing yellow shirts and carrying yellow **flags**. Ten of thousands of people gathered outside the Grand Palace ...

UK: [Council flag plan causes flutter](#)

BBC News - UK http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/tayside_and_central/7012734.stm

The local authority has approved proposals to create a new **flag** based on the council's coat of arms, at a cost of more than £4000. ...

[Tricolour and Union Flag fly at Cenotaph](#)

Belfast Telegraph - United Kingdom [http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/northwest-](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/northwest-edition/daily/article3130420.ece)

[edition/daily/article3130420.ece](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/northwest-edition/daily/article3130420.ece)

By Will Ellison The Tricolour and the Union **flag** have flown side by side at a special First World War remembrance ceremony at Londonderry's Cenotaph. ...

USA: [The Pennsylvanian Flag Could Get a Name Change](http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,312615,00.html)

FOX News - USA <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,312615,00.html>

By Melissa Underwood Pennsylvanians are having an identity crisis when it comes to their state **flag**: Hardly anyone in the state can identify it. ...

And finally...a challenge to all who enter the Flag Quiz at meetings:

[3-year-old can identify flags and names of 167 countries](http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/07/09/23/10155595.html)

Gulf News - Dubai, United Arab Emirates <http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/07/09/23/10155595.html>

By Bassam Za'za', Staff Reporter Dubai: A three-year-old Indian whiz kid has successfully memorised the names of more than 167 countries' **flags** in 11 days ...

Sites of Special Vexillilological Interest

From Srpska: In September the parliamentary commission decided on five proposals for the new coat of arms of Srpska that are supposed to be discussed in the Parliament and presumably, one of those would be decided upon. The proposed designs could be seen (although quite small) here:

<http://www.kozarskadubica.net/vijesti/cutenews/data/upimages/21092007.jpg>

From the Federation: the competition for the design of the COA and the flag of the Federation was issued as well, as mentioned on :

<http://www.parlamentfbih.gov.ba/bos/parlament/info/saopcenja.html>

MEMBERS CHALLENGES

i, Obscure 'Rank' Standard of the Season....



Brunei: Standard of the Honourable Religious Advisor

Almost every conceivable relation of the Sultan of Brunei is entitled to a standard. The suit of flags covers their relationship to the Sultan, and gives a clue as to whether this relationship is through the primary or secondary consort. Likewise the Sultan's viziers and their families

have a similar display of flags.

In addition to their princely rank, some members of the Royal Family hold additional honorary ranks and positions. So if you are in Brunei and you happen to have your laptop to hand, it will now be easy to track down the prince who just ran past you flying this flag!

Source for the complete suite of over thirty flags can be found on the Flags of the World Website or in *Gaceta de Banderas* no. 69, (May 2001) by FIAV President Michel Lupant.

Deputy Defence Minister of the German Democratic Republic – a follow on

Following our last issue of eFlags, member Hans Ulrich Hertzog has written to clarify and supply a picture of a 'real live example':



As with all other countries with naval forces, during its existence prior to 1990 the GDR had a suite of command flags and ensigns. The flags were introduced from 1957 onwards and covered personal of the armed forces rather than government officials. In the structure of the Volksmarine, there were in fact a number of Deputy Ministers of Defence. The flag shown in eFlags 5 was introduced in 1973 as the flag for the Deputy Minister of Defence holding the appoint of Chief of Staff, and for the Deputy Ministers of Defence, who happen to hold

the naval rank of an Admiral. After 1979 it was restricted in use to the Deputy Minister who was also Chief of Staff.

A second design was also introduced in 1973 for the Deputy Minister of Defence, holding the appointment of Chief of the Volksmarine. It was of the same design but showing in the upper fly only an anchor (but a bigger one), without the crossed gun-barrels and without any ball beneath. And the lack of gun-barrels on the flag did not mean, that the ships flying this flag were unarmed or the anchor alone that the ship was anchoring.

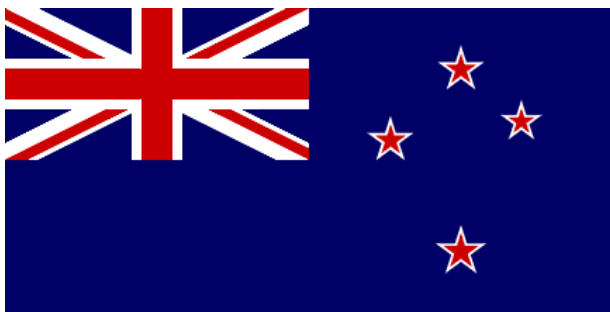
As always thank you so much for this input, it just goes to prove that no matter what subject there is, no matter how 'obscure' there is always somebody who knows the full facts.

Please keep sending your obscure flags or your comments to eFlags@flaginstitute.org

ii, A New Flag for New Zealand

After prolonged and careful consideration – and a glass or three of New Zealand wine – the judges (a group of New Zealand ex-pat friends of our General Secretary, New Zealander and general good egg Mike Kearsley) have made their decision.....

It was – that they prefer to keep the present design! – even, and because, of its similarity with the Australian flag – more than any of the designs submitted. The Southern Cross motif was considered a clear representation of the Pacific, and especially Antipodean, region and they were quite happy that the Union flag should still remain a part of the national emblem. Despite the demands of some in New Zealand for a change, the decision of our Kiwi panel in London reflects a clear desire to retain the present flag. Thus the winner is – the present flag..



However when confronted with the question that if a change of flag was mandatory, which flag of those submitted would they choose, they decided, by a clear majority, on the flag Aotearoa 4 as shown above.

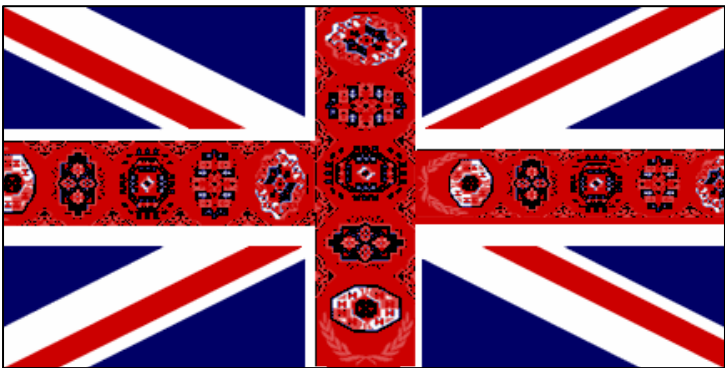
iii, A flag for a new union

[Welsh dragon call for Union flag](#) BBC News - UK

*The Union Jack should be combined with the Welsh **flag**, according to an MP who wants the change to be made to reflect Wales's status within the UK. ...*

Following the challenge to include Wales into the Union Flag which seems to have inadvertently been set off. A number of amazing designs have been created, one of the

most spectacular being found at:
http://youtube.com/watch?v=U_OCTf_eFE8



The chairman invites members to let their fancy fly free, why stop at Wales? when there are hundreds of other countries and regions of the world, that would surely be desperate to join the United Kingdom and be included in the Union Jack! The challenge is set therefore for members to

design a flag for the new union, of whatever they imagine. The chairman sets it off with the flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Turkmenistan.... We await your suggestions with bated breath!

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE FLAG INSTITUTE

The Flag Institute's postal address is:
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The William Crampton Library's postal address is:
The Flag Institute, Room 16, Hull Business Centre, Guildhall Road, Hull HU1 1HJ

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