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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

**DESPATCH BY ADMIRAL SIR JOHN FIELDHOUSE, G.C.B., G.B.E.,
COMMANDER OF THE TASK FORCE OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC:
APRIL TO JUNE 1982**

“Operation CORPORATE” was the name given to the operation I describe in my Despatch. With hindsight, it was well chosen, for like a body, the harmony of the various limbs and supporting organs was vital to its soundness and efficiency. I ask the reader constantly to bear this in mind. The very nature of the events I describe focuses attention first on one limb, then on another; the temporary dominance in the narrative of one does not detract from the performance and achievements of another. I list at the end of my Despatch the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Army and Royal Air Force units which took part in the Operation. I also attach a list of those vessels taken up from trade.

The despatch describes briefly the very short period of preparation for sending Task Force 317 to the South Atlantic and, more fully, the operations from 1 April 1982 when units of the Fleet sailed south until 20 June 1982 when the last Argentine forces remaining on British Territory surrendered.

Background

On 19 March 1982 it was reported that a party of Argentinian scrap metal workers had landed illegally at Leith in South Georgia, and on 21 March H.M.S. ENDURANCE was sailed towards the island with a detachment of Royal Marines embarked to investigate.

Intense diplomatic activity followed, Her Majesty's Government insisting that the Argentinians had landed illegally and that they should leave either in one of their own ships or in H.M.S. ENDURANCE. On 26 March it was reported to me that although the Argentinian ship BAHIA PARAISO had left Leith, a shore party remained behind. Diplomatic activity continued.

On 25 March when it had appeared that a diplomatic solution to the incident was still likely I had left for Gibraltar to visit ships taking part in Exercise SPRINGTRAIN. By 29 March the situation had worsened to an extent where it was considered sufficiently serious for me to return to my Headquarters at Northwood, Middlesex. Before leaving Gibraltar I ordered Flag Officer First Flotilla, Rear Admiral Sir John WOODWARD, K.C.B., to prepare to detach a suitable group of ships, to store and ammunition and to be ready to proceed to the South Atlantic if required

Also on 29 March the submarine H.M.S. SPARTAN was detached from Exercise SPRINGTRAIN and ordered to embark stores and weapons at Gibraltar for deployment to the South Atlantic. Subsequently, on 30 March H.M.S. SPLENDID was ordered to deploy from Faslane. A third nuclear powered submarine, H.M.S. CONQUEROR was subsequently sailed a few days later. All were stored for war within 48 hours of order.

On 31 March I was instructed to make covert preparations for a Task Force for operations in the South Atlantic. On 2 April, after the Argentinian invasion, the preparations were allowed to be conducted openly.

Argentinian forces landed in strength on 2 April at Port Stanley and the very heavily outnumbered Royal Marines of the Garrison resisted, sustaining no casualties but inflicting an unknown number on the invaders. After some four hours fighting His Excellency the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Falkland Islands and the Dependencies, Sir Rex HUNT, C.M.G., ordered the Marines and the survey party from H.M.S. ENDURANCE, who had been working on the Islands and who assisted with the defence, to surrender.

The following day Argentinian forces landed at Grytviken in South Georgia. The small Royal Marines detachment on the Island put up a stout resistance in the face of a considerably stronger invading force, damaging the corvette GUERRICO and shooting down a Puma helicopter, before they too surrendered.

Meanwhile, on 2 April the aircraft carriers H.M.S. HERMES, H.M.S. INVINCIBLE with the assault ship H.M.S. FEARLESS, two frigates, two Logistic Landing Ships, 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines and the necessary logistic support were ordered to be brought to immediate readiness in United Kingdom ports. H.M.S. HERMES with 826, part of 846 and 800 Naval Air Squadrons and H.M.S. INVINCIBLE with 820 and 801 Naval Air Squadrons sailed from Portsmouth on Monday 5 April. Admiral WOODWARD, flying his flag in H.M.S. ANTRIM, was ordered to sail from the Gibraltar area for Ascension Island with six other destroyers and frigates, and with R.F.A. support. The flag was transferred to H.M.S. GLAMORGAN on 4 April.

The Aim

I was informed that in the current situation the overall aim of Her Majesty's Government was to bring about the withdrawal of Argentinian forces from the Falkland Islands and the Dependencies and to re-establish the British Administration there as quickly as possible. My mission was to conduct military deployments and order operations in support of this aim.

Command and Control

In my capacity as Commander-in-Chief Fleet I assumed overall command of the operation as Commander Task Force 317 (all surface ships, land and air forces) and Task Force 324 (submarine forces). This tri-service command was exercised from my Headquarters at Northwood and I was responsible direct to the Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Terence LEWIN, G.C.B., M.V.O., D.S.C. The Air Officer Commanding 18 Group RAF, Air Marshal Sir John CURTISS, K.C.B., K.B.E., C.B.I.M., R.A.F. was appointed as my Air Commander, and the Major General Royal Marines Commando Forces, Major General Sir Jeremy MOORE, K.C.B., O.B.E., M.C. and Bar, was initially my Land Forces Deputy. When later General MOORE flew south to become the Commander Land Forces, Falkland Islands, he was replaced by the Commander South East District, Lieutenant General Sir Richard TRANT, K.C.B. Submarines were operated under the control of Flag Officer Submarines, Vice Admiral P. G. M. HERBERT, O.B.E. The command team at Northwood was completed by my Chief of Staff, Vice Admiral Sir David HALLIFAX, K.B.E., who was responsible for the detailed naval planning and the co-ordination of all staff work. Admiral WOODWARD was appointed Commander of the Task Groups in the South Atlantic and he transferred his flag to H.M.S. HERMES on 15 April.

Military and Logistic Considerations

My foremost considerations when planning this operation, were the Argentinian military capabilities and the proximity of their bases and the comparison with our own situation: especially, the difficulties of transporting troops, aircraft and equipment some 8,000 miles from the United Kingdom to a theatre of operations within range of aircraft based in mainland Argentina and more than 3,000 miles from my nearest forward mounting base.

It is always difficult to quantify enemy capabilities. Intelligence and other sources gave the total number of warships at Argentina's disposal as 73. These included one aircraft carrier, one cruiser, 4 submarines, 2 modern "Type 42" destroyers, and other older but well equipped frigates and destroyers. Its aircraft included 65 A-4 Variants, 39 Mirage III/V, 5 Canberra, 60 Pucara, 8 Puma and 2 Lynx helicopters, and 5 Super Etendard equipped with Exocet sea skimming missiles, together with a small but significant air transport force which included 2 C130s (Hercules) with air to air refuelling tanker capability. The number of troops on the Islands was more problematic. Estimates varied from 7,000 to 10,000 well equipped troops. These were supported by more than 30 light attack aircraft (mainly Pucarás) and about 20 helicopters. It was difficult to assess the intended role of Argentina's military and civilian manpower reserve, its Merchant Marine and its civilian air transport. A further factor was the possibility of materiel assistance from other countries.

I did not have within my normal resources the ships necessary for the 7,000 mile transit of the troops, equipment and logistic support for the size of forces which I considered were required to counter the threat and

achieve my mission. It was necessary at an early stage to consider taking up ships from trade. An Order in Council under the Royal Prerogative to requisition ships was given on the evening of 4 April and announced in Parliament the following day.

It must be recorded that this operation could not have been mounted without the wholehearted co-operation of the Department of Trade, the ship owners, the masters and their crews who gave their unstinting support and worked with enormous energy and enthusiasm. The capabilities of these vessels were enhanced by installing additional equipment which included the provision of helicopter flight decks, a refuelling at sea capability, freshwater making plants and communications. These conversions were defined and completed with speed and efficiency that brings great credit to all the agencies involved.

In expectation of a requirement for additional naval air assets, 4 new Naval Air Squadrons were formed. These comprised one squadron of Sea Harriers, 2 squadrons of Wessex 5 helicopters and one squadron of Anti Submarine Sea Kings specially adapted for helicopter support operations. In addition, several new small flights, consisting mainly of Wasp helicopters, were prepared for the ships taken up from trade and warships taken from the Sales/Disposal List. These are noteworthy achievements and reflect well on the Naval Air Command.

The Royal Air Force supported by the British aerospace industry, the Chief Scientist's Department and the Ministry of Defence Procurement Executive was also quickly modifying Vulcan, Nimrod and Hercules aircraft. Air to air refuelling capabilities were developed and installed; anti corrosion measures were adopted for normally land based Chinook helicopters and R.A.F. Harriers. Additional equipment and weaponry were fitted to a number of assigned aircraft.

Early on, we established in my Headquarters a Logistic Support Cell. This was a tri-service organisation headed by the Force Logistic Co-ordinator whose task was to co-ordinate replenishment planning and all logistic requirements for the Task Force. I considered it essential that this organisation should be at Northwood to ensure optimum and economical use of sometimes scarce resources and the priority for supply of the most urgent stores. It was a vital asset and a most successful management tool.

The speed with which the operation was mounted did not allow ships and troops to prepare themselves before departure from the United Kingdom as adequately as I would have wished. All ships proceeding south therefore adopted a vigorous training programme at sea. Weapon systems were thoroughly overhauled, tested and fired: in some cases civilian weapons engineering experts sailed with the ships. Tactical and communications procedures were intensively rehearsed. Damage control exercises were constantly practised. Embarked troops carried out fitness and weapon training often in cramped, difficult and, for many, quite unfamiliar conditions. Ships had to prepare themselves for rapid and sometimes unscheduled replenishment from other ships, tankers and helicopters. Equipments were modified at sea without the usual dockyard support and ships and aircraft were painted to obliterate pennant numbers and identification markings. Later, it proved possible to give ships sailed in support of the operation a limited period of specialised sea training directed at South Atlantic operations, under the auspices of Flag Officer Sea Training at Portland.

The modifications to Royal Air Force aircraft to fit them for South Atlantic operations produced a need for an intensive programme for both aircrews and support personnel. Additional air to air refuelling instructors had to be trained so that they, in turn, could train the Vulcan, Nimrod and Hercules pilots as these aircraft acquired airborne refuelling capability. Each new weapons system had to be tested and the crews trained in its use. Harrier GR3 pilots were also practised in the use of the ski-jump for carrier operations.

Ascension Island

A key factor in this operation was Ascension Island, situated over 3,700 nautical miles from the United Kingdom and 3,300 miles from the Falkland Islands. Ascension Island was essential as a forward mounting base to replenish the ships of the Task Force and to provide them with stores, equipment and men that could not be embarked before their hurried departure from the United Kingdom. Air transport routes to the Island were activated on 2 April.

The Island airfield, Wideawake, was also vital as an airhead for all land based aircraft operating in support of the Fleet and land forces. However, with only limited facilities and totally inadequate technical and domestic back up, previously manned for and accustomed to dealing with only 3 movements each week, it was developed into a fully operational military establishment capable of supporting the permanent detachments of up to 17 Victors, 3 Vulcans, 4 Hercules, 4 Nimrods, 2 air defence aircraft and 2 support helicopters. Additionally, intensive daily air transport movements were accepted. The necessary engineering, freight handling, weapon loading and administrative support brought the establishment from nothing to over 800 officers and men of all three services within 3 weeks.

The fundamental importance of Ascension Island to the timely success of the operation meant that its vulnerability to a clandestine amphibious or audacious air attack, such as the Argentinians later demonstrated with their bomb carrying Hercules transport aircraft, could not be ignored. Air defence radar was installed to support the fighter aircraft, which were initially missile armed GR3 Harriers and later Phantoms. A detachment of the Royal Air Force Regiment provided ground defence. Seaward defences were provided by an R.N. guardship and daily Nimrod patrols of the sea areas out to 400 miles; a number of Argentinian merchantmen were detected close to the Island and these were shadowed by air and surface units until clear of the area.

By the fall of Stanley, a total of 535 air movements into the Islands from the United Kingdom had taken place. These included R.A.F. Hercules and VC10s and some chartered Belfast and Boeing 707 aircraft. They had brought in 23 helicopters, 5,907 tons of freight and 5,242 passengers. In addition to these freight and passenger aircraft, ground support personnel also handled all aircraft operating to the south in support of the Task Force. Nimrods mounted 111 sorties from the Island; the Hercules made 44 airdrops of essential equipment, weapons, personnel and mail to the Fleet and the Victor Tankers flew 375 sorties in support of 67 missions involving long range operations by probe fitted aircraft.

I would wish to record the unstinting support of the residents of Ascension, particularly that of the Island Administrator Mr. B. E. PAUNCEFORT, the United States Air Force Officer-in-Charge at Wideawake, Lieutenant Colonel W. BRYDEN, and the employees of the operating contractor, Pan American Airways. In the last category, Mr. Donald COFFEY is worthy of special mention.

Medical Support

The S.S. UGANDA was taken up from trade and designated a Hospital Ship in accordance with Article 22 of the Geneva Convention, having been fitted out in Gibraltar Dockyard. Accommodation to allow for the treatment and holding of up to 300 casualties was provided, together with sufficient medical personnel to cover all major specialities. A number of Q.A.R.N.N.S. officers and ratings were embarked in the ship as part of the medical complement. In order to comply fully with the Convention, the ship was declared to the International Committee of the Red Cross (I.C.R.C.) before sailing from Gibraltar, marked as required by the Convention.

Additionally, three survey ships, H.M. Ships HECLA, HERALD and HYDRA, were designated as casualty ferries, fitted out and declared as Hospital Ships under the Geneva Convention.

The Maritime Exclusion Zone

On 4 April I recommended that a maritime exclusion zone be established around the Falkland Islands in order to inhibit the Argentinian ability to reinforce their garrison. Her Majesty's Government announced on 7 April the establishment of an exclusion zone, 200 nautical miles in radius from the centre of the Falkland Islands, to be effective for Argentinian warships and naval auxiliary ships, from 0400 GMT on 12 April. Initially the exclusion zone was enforced by submarines which were deployed to cover the approaches to Port Stanley and the entrances to Falkland Sound.

The Repossession of South Georgia

On 7 April the Chief of Defence Staff ordered me to plan for the repossession of South Georgia and to deploy the necessary forces.

Captain B. G. YOUNG, D.S.O. Royal Navy, the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. ANTRIM, was nominated as the Commander of the Task Group allocated to the task. Other units involved in this phase of the operation included H.M.S. ENDURANCE, H.M.S. PLYMOUTH, later, H.M.S. BRILLIANT, R.F.A. TIDESPRING, M. Company Group of 42 Commando Royal Marines, elements of the Special Air Service Regiment (SAS) and the Special Boat Squadron (S.B.S.). In addition H.M.S. CONQUEROR was ordered to patrol off the island to prevent any Argentinian reinforcement. R.A.F. Victor Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft supported by Victor Tankers and Nimrods swept the sea areas from South Georgia to the Argentinian coast between 20 and 25 April to give early warning of hostile naval movements.

The first phase of the operation was to insert S.A.S. and S.B.S. reconnaissance parties by both helicopter and small boats. This was started and achieved on 21 April despite appalling weather conditions of intense cold and winds gusting to 70 knots. Unfortunately after 24 hours of unrelenting blizzard the S.A.S. detachment had to be withdrawn from Fortuna Glacier. Two Wessex helicopters dispatched to effect the withdrawal crashed in "white out" conditions, the pilots having lost all points of reference and orientation. A third radar fitted Wessex by a remarkable feat of airmanship succeeded in recovering the entire detachment and the crews of the crashed helicopters. The S.A.S. were re-inserted on 23 April during a temporary lull in the blizzard.

By 25 April the weather had improved sufficiently for more reconnaissance parties to be landed and helicopter sorties to be flown. A helicopter search located the Argentinian submarine SANTA FE on the surface five miles from Grytviken. She was attacked by helicopters armed with AS 12 missiles and depth charges which caused her to limp back to Grytviken where she was later beached. The attack not only eliminated a potent threat to the Task Group but also revealed our presence in the area and it was therefore decided to press home the advantage without further delay.

Events then moved quickly. Under cover of naval gunfire support directed from ashore by a Royal Artillery forward observation officer, the assault troops landed at Grytviken by helicopter. Later that afternoon the Argentinian forces surrendered and 170 prisoners were taken. British forces sustained no casualties. Following the fall of Grytviken, H.M. Ships PLYMOUTH and ENDURANCE were detached to recapture Leith where there was a detachment of Argentinian marines. After some initial vacillation, the Argentinian force hoisted the white flag on 26 April.

The surrender document was signed onboard H.M.S. ANTRIM on 26 April and the Union Flag again flew over South Georgia.

Extension of the Exclusion Zone

On 23 April the Argentine Government was warned that any approach on the part of Argentine warships, including submarines, naval auxiliaries or military aircraft, which could amount to a threat to interfere with British forces would encounter the appropriate response. Moreover all Argentine aircraft engaging in surveillance of these forces would be regarded as hostile.

The threat posed by the three nuclear submarines had effectively stopped Argentinian reinforcement of the Islands by sea since 12 April but, with the added aim of stopping resupply by air, a Total Exclusion Zone was declared by the Government on 30 April on the arrival of the carrier force. This Zone applied not only to Argentinian warships and naval auxiliaries but also to all other ships and aircraft attempting to support the illegal occupation of the Islands.

The difficulties of maintaining a total blockade are considerable. It is now known that one Argentinian resupply ship arrived in the Islands and the Argentinian Air Force managed to maintain a limited air bridge until shortly before the final surrender. Nevertheless, politically the establishment of the Total Exclusion Zone was consistent with the Government's efforts to ensure the peaceful withdrawal of the Argentinian forces, while militarily it inhibited the Argentinian ability to reinforce and resupply their forces and limited their movement.

Additional measures were also considered appropriate. Accordingly, on 7 May the Government informed the Argentinian Government that any of their warships or military aircraft found more than 12 miles from their own coast would be treated as hostile and the appropriate action taken. This move was necessary because of the threat posed by their carrier-borne aircraft and the ease with which hostile forces could approach the Task Force, under the cover of bad weather, from mainland bases within 450 miles of the Falkland Islands, a significant factor for a force without the benefit of Airborne Early Warning.

Although not an exclusion zone, on 10 May a 100 nautical mile radius Terminal Control Area around Ascension Island was instituted and formally notified to the appropriate international authorities: this measure called for prior notification of flights to and from the island and of overflights, thus aiding the air defence organisation as well as the control of air traffic.

The Intensification of Operations

Early on 1 May an R.A.F. Vulcan flying from Ascension Island opened the action against the Argentinian forces on the Falklands with a night bombing attack of Port Stanley airfield which cratered the runway. The 16 hour sortie was supported by Victor Tankers and Nimrod aircraft and was the first of five Vulcan missions directed against the airfield and adjacent radar installations.

Later the same morning Sea Harriers attacked the runway at Port Stanley and also the airstrip at Goose Green. That night Port Stanley airfield was subjected to Naval Gunfire bombardment by H.M. Ships GLAMORGAN, ARROW and ALACRITY. This was to be the pattern for the next few weeks, with raids on the airfields at Port Stanley and elsewhere by Harriers and night bombardments by units of the Fleet. These attacks were designed to deny the use of the airfields to the Argentinian forces and to erode their readiness, morale and state of alertness. At the beginning of May, the first of many S.A.S. and S.B.S. reconnaissance patrols landed on the Falklands. These, and those that followed, were variously landed by helicopter, small boats from surface ships and the submarine, H.M.S. ONYX. During the next 3 weeks, these patrols were able to gather vital intelligence in preparation for the main landing. Throughout the period, in extremely harsh conditions, they remained undetected.

On 2 May the Argentinian cruiser, the GENERAL BELGRANO, with two destroyers, was detected south of the Falklands by H.M.S. CONQUEROR. The enemy force was in a position where it posed a serious threat to a number of our ships engaged in operations off the Falklands while other Argentinian surface units were poised to the north. It was a threat that could not be ignored and therefore H.M.S. CONQUEROR was ordered to attack the GENERAL BELGRANO with torpedoes. Two struck the cruiser which sank some hours later. For over two hours Argentinian destroyers carried out several unsuccessful depth charge attacks against H.M.S. CONQUEROR and then retired. Later they returned to rescue survivors. Throughout the campaign, the cost in human lives was my constant concern and in consequence, I ordered H.M.S. CONQUEROR not to attack ships involved in rescue operations. The sinking of GENERAL BELGRANO was a clear demonstration of the capability of a nuclear powered submarine and proved to have a major salutary effect on the conduct of future Argentinian operations. After this attack, Argentinian naval surface forces remained within 12 nautical miles of their coast for the remainder of the campaign. The nuclear powered submarine's effectiveness was not confined to the removal of this threat; for additionally they patrolled off the coast of mainland Argentina and provided invaluable intelligence to our forces in the T.E.Z. of aircraft movement and likely air attacks.

Later on 3 May, a Sea King helicopter was fired on by an Argentinian patrol craft. Lynx helicopters armed with Sea Skua missiles subsequently attacked the craft which was hit, blew up and sank. A second patrol craft was also attacked and damaged by helicopter fired missiles.

These successes were marred on 4 May by the loss of H.M.S. SHEFFIELD. While stationed about 60 miles from the south east coast of the Falkland Islands on Anti Air Picket Duty, she was attacked by 2 Exocet missiles released by 2 Super Etendard aircraft. One missile struck her on the starboard side and entered amidships. After 4½ hours during which her Ship's Company fought fierce fires whilst engulfed in thick black

acid smoke, the Commanding Officer reluctantly gave the order to abandon ship. Twenty of her Ship Company were killed in the attack but 236 were safely recovered by other ships and helicopters of the Task Force; the efforts of H.M.S. ARROW in the rescue operation were particularly praiseworthy. H.M.S. SHEFFIELD finally sank in heavy seas while under tow on 10 May.

In the weeks which preceded the main landing, there was constant activity by ships and aircraft of the Task Force and on 4 May a second Vulcan raid was carried out against Port Stanley airfield. 3 Sea Harriers attacked the air strip at Goose Green, inflicting damage but suffering the loss of one aircraft, the first such loss attributable to enemy action. On 6 May, very regrettably, 2 Sea Harriers from H.M.S. INVINCIBLE were lost and both pilots were killed. Enemy action was not responsible.

Admiral WOODWARD energetically continued to enforce the blockade by attacking enemy surface units: on 9 May the fishing vessel NARWAL, indisputably acting as an intelligence gathering vessel in the vicinity of the main part of the Task Force, was strafed by Sea Harriers. She was subsequently abandoned and sank despite the efforts of a boarding party from H.M.S. INVINCIBLE to save her. Survivors were recovered and subsequently repatriated.

On the night of 11 May H.M.S. ALACRITY, whilst transiting Falkland Sound, discovered the ISLA DE LOS ESTADOS off Port Howard. She was illuminated by star shell and, having refused to heave to, was engaged by 4.5 inch gunfire, blew up and sank. She had been carrying fuel to resupply Argentinian garrisons. Five days later on 16 May, 2 transport ships BAHIA BUEN SUCESO and RIO CARCARANA, were attacked by Sea Harriers, damaged and immobilised. The Argentinian patrol craft ISLAS MALVINAS, and the coaster MONSUNEN, which belonged to the Falkland Islands Company, were also attacked, the latter vessel being subsequently salvaged and put to use by British forces.

In the air, a Puma helicopter was shot down by a Sea Dart missile from H.M.S. COVENTRY on 9 May. On 12 May, the first Argentinian air attack on the ships of the Task Force since the sinking of H.M.S. SHEFFIELD took place. Two waves of A4 (Skyhawk) aircraft attacked H.M. Ships BRILLIANT and GLASGOW. Three aircraft were destroyed, 2 by H.M.S. BRILLIANT's Sea Wolf missiles and the third crashing in an attempt to evade. In the second wave, H.M.S. GLASGOW was hit by a bomb which inflicted damage to her engines but did not explode.

At Pebble Island on the night of 14/15 May an SAS raiding party, supported by diversionary gunfire support from H.M.S. GLAMORGAN accurately directed by a Forward Observation Officer of the Royal Artillery, destroyed an ammunition dump, stores and 11 aircraft including 6 Pucara Ground Attack aircraft. The raiding party was recovered, having suffered only minor casualties.

Throughout the period I have just described, diplomatic activity in London, Buenos Aires, Washington and New York continued in an effort to find a solution satisfactory to both the parties. The fundamental issue, that the people of the Falkland Islands had the right to choose under which government they wished to live, proved increasingly intractable. Hopes of a compromise solution flickered briefly only to be extinguished by Argentina's refusal to accept this principle of self determination. It was only as a last resort, when it was clear that a peaceful solution could not be found, that the decision to retake British sovereign territory by force of arms was made and I received my instructions to repossess the Falkland Islands.

Land Forces

On 2 April, 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines commanded by Brigadier J. H. A. THOMPSON, C.B., O.B.E., A.D.C., was assigned to me for the operation. On 3 April, 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment was added as were 8 light armoured reconnaissance vehicles of the Blues and Royals and T Battery 12 Air Defence Regiment Royal Artillery, equipped with Rapier missiles.

This force of some 5,500 men sailed from the United Kingdom on 6 April in the assault ship H.M.S. FEARLESS, 4 Logistic Landing Ships, S.S. CANBERRA and M.V. ELK. These ships were later joined at Ascension Island by the assault ship H.M.S. INTREPID, R.F.A. SIR TRISTRAM, M.V. NORLAND and M.V. EUROPIC FERRY, with 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment and 29 Field Battery Royal Artillery embarked. The initial landing forces were complete, and all units exercised together for the first time at Ascension Island.

Due to a steady build up of Argentinian occupation troops, after the main force had sailed, it was decided that additional land forces should be deployed from the United Kingdom. The force chosen, 5th Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier M. J. A. WILSON, O.B.E., M.C., which had already deployed two of its organic battalions with 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines but had retained the 1st Battalion 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles, was augmented by 2nd Battalion Scots Guards, 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and numerous supporting arms and services. After a 2 week period of intensive training in South Wales, substantial re-equipping and re-organisation, 3,200 men sailed from Southampton on 12 May in R.M.S. QUEEN ELIZABETH II, the major equipments having sailed on 8 and 9 May in M.V. NORDIC FERRY and M.V. BALTIC FERRY.

Thus, the grand total of land forces assigned to me for the recapture of the Falkland Islands became 10,500 men.

Four Chinook helicopters, to provide vital mobility for troops and equipment in the land battle, were prepared for sea transit and embarked in S.S. ATLANTIC CONVEYOR. 6 R.A.F. Harriers of No. 1 Squadron, for close support of group troops, also joined S.S. ATLANTIC CONVEYOR on 6 May. These Harriers transferred to H.M.S. HERMES on 18 May. 8 Sea Harriers of 809 Naval Air Squadron were also embarked and transferred

H.M. Ships INVINCIBLE and HERMES between 18-20 May. No. 63 Squadron R.A.F. Regiment (Rapier) accompanied 5th Infantry Brigade.

Selection of Beachhead

It was always accepted that because of its vital role as the seat of government and the only centre of communication, Port Stanley held the key to victory; he who held Port Stanley, held the Falklands. The aim, therefore, was to secure the capital as quickly as possible, around which the Argentinians had concentrated most of their forces.

It was important to select a suitable area for an amphibious assault as near to Port Stanley as possible, because cross-country movement is very difficult and weather conditions do not favour helicopter operations. However, the main danger of selecting an assault area too close to the capital was that it might make it too easy for the Argentinians to launch a counter attack against the beachhead before it could be firmly established. I had not the necessary forces to conduct an opposed landing.

Although it was not possible to select a site which would be completely immune from air attack, the troop carriers and their escorts had to be afforded protection at least from Exocet missiles. The missile's effectiveness is greatly reduced if its intended targets are protected by land. The amphibious force also required deep water. After assessing all the factors, including the anti submarine advantage, San Carlos Water was chosen for the amphibious assault. It is surrounded by hills, with a deep, comparatively sheltered anchorage and with the nearest sizeable enemy force being at Drawin/Goose Green more than 15 miles away.

I was very much aware of the risks which a landing in strength involved. Despite the care with which the landing area had been chosen, the loss of a prestigious target such as S.S. CANBERRA and her embarked troops would have jeopardised the entire amphibious assault plan. My commanders therefore had to plan the assault to reduce the element of risk to the minimum acceptable. This was achieved by a variety of means. The most careful consideration was given to the disposition of embarked troops and equipment. Cross decking, the movement of men and material from one ship to another, had already been an essential feature of preparations at sea during the passage south. This procedure was intensified during the week before the landing to ensure that assets were deployed effectively with as little risk as possible. Despite the intensity of these operations, which were often carried out in very poor weather conditions, there was only one major loss. Tragically, on 19 May, a Sea King helicopter, while engaged in cross decking, struck a large sea bird and immediately crashed into the sea. Eighteen S.A.S. and three Royal Marine officers and men were killed.

Further factors essential to the success of the landing were the weather and the stealth of the ships on passage through the Total Exclusion Zone. Radio silence was imposed throughout this period while, as forecast, the seas remained calm allowing cross decking to continue, but visibility was restricted to 2 to 3 miles, protecting the force from Argentinian air attack. Finally, it was important to attempt to deceive the enemy of our true intentions by concentrating activity in areas away from San Carlos Water.

The Landing

Thus, in the early hours of 21 May, H.M. Ships FEARLESS and INTREPID, R.F.A.s STROMNESS, SIR GAI AHAD, SIR GERAIN, SIR TRISTRAM, SIR LANCELOT and SIR PERCIVAL together with S.S. CANBERRA and M.V. EUROPIC FERRY, in whom were embarked 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines, steamed stealthily into Falkland Sound. At 0340 local time, the landings began, the troops being ferried ashore in the 16 landing craft from the two assault ships H.M.S. FEARLESS and H.M.S. INTREPID.

Commodore Amphibious Warfare, Commodore M. C. CLAPP, C.B., embarked in H.M.S. FEARLESS, controlled the amphibious operation. Also embarked was Headquarters 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines.

First ashore were 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment and 40 Commando Royal Marines on two beaches in the San Carlos Settlement Area. 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment then turned south and established a defensive position on the Sussex Mountains effectively blocking the route which any counter attack from the Darwin area would have to take. Meanwhile, 40 Commando Royal Marines moved east, up onto the Verde Mountains. Next ashore was 45 Commando Royal Marines, in Ajax Bay, which was to become the main force logistic area throughout the rest of the campaign. The last assault unit, 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, went ashore at Port San Carlos to protect the northern flank, leaving 42 Commando Royal Marines afloat as a reserve. The artillery, 4 light gun batteries and one Rapier missile battery then established themselves ashore.

At the same time as the main landing took place, a subsidiary operation was launched by S.B.S. supported by naval gunfire bombardment on Fanning Head and a raid by S.A.S. at Darwin. The aim of these operations was to convince the enemy that we were following the pattern established by the raid on Pebble Island six days earlier and to mask the scale of the landings at San Carlos Water.

At dawn, helicopters from the Naval Task Group joined the shuttle, as a constant flow of men and equipment went ashore. By the end of the day more than 3,000 men and almost 1,000 tons of stores and equipments had been successfully landed. The Medical Squadron of the Commando Logistic Regiment, supported by Naval surgical teams and elements of 16 Field Ambulance R.A.M.C., set up a main Dressing Station in a disused refrigeration plant at Ajax Bay.

The aim of achieving surprise had been achieved and, although still in its infancy, the beachhead had been established virtually unopposed by land or air. 2 Gazelle helicopters were, however, subsequently shot down by enemy ground fire. During the afternoon of 21 May, the anticipated Argentinian air raids began. The warships in the Falkland Sound fought gallantly and took the brunt of the attack in protecting the landing ships. Around 15 aircraft were shot down by Harriers, and by ships' and ground weapons. One R.A.F. Harrier was lost and three of the supporting warships were hit. H.M.S. ANTRIM was struck aft by a bomb which failed to explode: H.M.S. ARGONAUT was hit by 2 bombs which again did not explode but killed 2 of her Ship's Company and inflicted sufficient damage to deprive her of steaming capability. H.M.S. ARDENT was less fortunate; she was repeatedly hit aft by bombs which exploded. The damage sustained subsequently led to her sinking, 22 of her Ship's Company lost their lives; 177 were saved. The ships in San Carlos Water were largely unscathed and after a hectic day unloading, S.S. CANBERRA was sailed after dark.

Consolidation

The following day, the build up and reinforcement of the beachhead continued. The Argentinian air raids did not. However, on 23 May, the Argentinians again launched heavy air attacks and more ships were hit, including H.M.S. ANTELOPE. One of the bombs entered her forward, killing one of her Ship's Company instantly, although it did not explode. Subsequent efforts to defuse it failed and the resulting explosion killed one of the disposal team and seriously injured the other. The fires generated by the explosion raged out of control and the ship was abandoned. She later sank but the rest of the Ship's Company survived. A Sea Harrier was also lost when it exploded shortly after take off from H.M.S. HERMES, killing the pilot. But, on this day the Argentinians lost at least ten more attacking aircraft.

The build up of men and material continued. The Royal Engineers had worked tirelessly to improve the access over the beaches and by the end of the third day, 24 May, 5,500 men had been put together with 5,000 tons of ammunition and stores. The supporting role of M.V. ELK deserves particular mention. Throughout this period she ferried large amounts of ammunition to the landing areas sometimes at considerable but necessary risk from air attacks. She was quite literally a floating bomb, sometimes carrying as much as 2,500 tons of ammunition onboard.

25 May was Argentina's National Day and a major effort by her Air Force was anticipated. At first, fears appeared to be groundless; only one raid penetrated to the Falkland Sound area where it inflicted no damage but one of the aircraft was shot down by a Sea Dart missile. Seven more aircraft were also shot down by two Sea Dart missiles of H.M.S. COVENTRY, two by Seacat missiles fired by H.M.S. YARMOUTH, and three by Rapier missiles fired from ashore. In mid afternoon, however, the advanced air defence elements of the Task Group were targets for a very determined low level air attack. H.M.S. BROADSWORD suffered superficial damage and H.M.S. COVENTRY was hit by several bombs which exploded in or near the machinery spaces. She capsized shortly after the attack with the loss of 19 of her Ship's Company. On this day, too, S.S. ATLANTIC CONVEYOR with a cargo of helicopters, support equipment and stores which included materiel needed to establish a forward airstrip for helicopters and Harriers, was in company with the main force to the east of the Falklands en route for San Carlos. One hour before sunset the force received a brief warning of an attack by Argentinian aircraft armed with Exocet missiles. Ships took appropriate counter measures, but S.S. ATLANTIC CONVEYOR was hit and set on fire. The fires spread rapidly and one hour after the attack she was abandoned. 3 Naval ratings and 9 Merchant Navy officers and men, including her Master, Captain I. NORTH, D.S.C., were killed.

The Argentine Air Force, despite their losses, persisted with their attacks in the San Carlos area but, by now, the presence of Rapier and Blowpipe missile systems ashore, and effective small arms fire brought to bear from ships and shore, were a potential counter. Similarly, attacks continued against units at sea. On 30 May, the carrier group having moved closer to the Falkland Islands to cover the approach of 5th Infantry Brigade troop ships, was attacked by Super Etendards and Skyhawks. A number of Exocet missiles were launched but were evaded and exploded harmlessly. Three of the Skyhawks were shot down, 2 by Sea Dart missiles, the third by 4.5 inch gunfire.

The Breakout

On 26/27 May, 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines began to break out from the beachhead. The overall plan was to close up to the Port Stanley area as quickly as possible. There was however a significant Argentinian presence at Darwin and Goose Green. Although not on the direct route to Port Stanley, these troops posed a threat to the flank and to the beachhead. It was therefore decided that it was essential to neutralise the Argentinian presence there before the advance on Stanley could be fully developed.

Late on 26 May, 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment started its move south. At dawn on 27 May, 45 Commando Royal Marines and 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment started to advance along the northern route from the beachhead, east towards Douglas Settlement and Teal Inlet respectively. Throughout 27 May, while the other two battalions continued their advances, 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment laid up at Camilla Creek House 5 miles north of the Argentinian position, while an artillery troop of 3 light guns was flown forward to support the attack which began at 0200 on 28 May.

One of the R.A.F. Harriers flying close air support missions assisting the move forward was shot down on 27 May whilst attacking Argentinian positions at Goose Green. The pilot ejected and was later recovered unharmed by advancing land forces.

By mid-afternoon, Darwin had been captured and the battalion pressed on south down the narrow isthmus towards Goose Green, some two miles on. They had to cross open ground in broad daylight, and were opposed by strong defensive positions which were well dug in and sited in depth. Low cloud, strong winds and driving rain made early air operations in support of the advance impossible.

The battle for Goose Green lasted many hours, frequently at very close quarters, and amongst the casualties was the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel H. JONES, V.C., O.B.E., who was killed when charging an enemy post which was holding up the advance on the left flank. Throughout the course of the battle 16 officers and men of 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment were killed, and one Royal Marines officer was also killed when his Scout helicopter was shot down by enemy aircraft.

By last light the battalion, supported by 2 further R.A.F. Harrier raids, had surrounded the remaining garrison in the Goose Green Settlement where 112 civilians were held, having been confined to the Community Hall for 3 weeks.

During the night the Acting Commanding Officer conducted negotiations with the Argentinians and, by mid morning on 29 May, the surrender was accepted. As a result of their gallant action, 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment took over 1,000 prisoners. Subsequently, it was discovered that the original garrison of some 650 had been reinforced on 28 May by an additional regiment. A large quantity of artillery, air defence weapons and ammunition was captured. In addition, all the civilians were released unharmed.

Advance on Port Stanley

After a remarkable cross country march of 50 miles over very difficult terrain in appalling weather conditions 45 Commando Royal Marines had reached Teal Inlet, and 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment had reached Estancia House via Teal Inlet. Meanwhile, D Squadron 22 Special Air Service Regiment had established an operations base in the area of Mount Kent and were carrying out an aggressive patrolling and intelligence gathering programme. After 3 days, and several attempts at reinforcement which were prevented by the atrocious weather at night, they were joined by the first half of 42 Commando Royal Marines and a troop of light guns of 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery, who were flown forward by helicopter on 1 June, the remainder joining on 2 June.

On 30 May, General MOORE assumed command of operations ashore and on 1 June was joined by his Headquarters which was immediately established in H.M.S. FEARLESS at San Carlos Water. Also on 1 June, 5th Infantry Brigade began to disembark at the beachhead. The movements of R.M.S. QUEEN ELIZABETH II in which they had set sail from Southampton were kept strictly secret. I could not risk such a prestigious target and her embarked force to the hazards of the Total Exclusion Zone. She had therefore made her way south well outside the range of Argentinian aircraft to rendezvous with S.S. CANBERRA and M.V. NORLAND in Cumberland Bay, South Georgia. Here 5th Infantry Brigade and accompanying weapons and equipment were disembarked by the small ships of 11 Mine Countermeasures Squadron, H.M. Ships CORDELLA, PICT, NORTHELLA, JUNELLA and FARNELLA. Their transfer to S.S. CANBERRA and M.V. NORLAND was completed with noteworthy speed on 29 May.

After arrival at San Carlos Water on 31 May, M.V. NORLAND disembarked 1st Battalion 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles during the morning of 1 June. Later that day, 2nd Battalion Scots Guards and 1st Battalion Welsh Guards disembarked from S.S. CANBERRA. The 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment was put under the command of 5th Infantry Brigade and moved forward to the Fitzroy and Bluff Cove areas, and was replaced at Darwin and Goose Green by 1st Battalion 7th Gurkha Rifles.

Whilst 5th Infantry Brigade moved forward in the south, other elements of the Task Force were fully employed. On land a build up of stores and ammunition in preparation for the final battles took place. This included the construction of a Harrier Forward Operating Base at Port San Carlos by 11 and 59 Squadrons of the Royal Engineers. This task was completed in difficult conditions and despite the loss of much of their equipment in S.S. ATLANTIC CONVEYOR. Helicopters operating in very poor weather conditions ferried vast amounts of stores and ammunition to forward positions; this included 18,000 rounds of artillery ammunition. Other stores were moved by Logistic Landing Ships to Teal Inlet. At sea, ships moved close inshore nightly to conduct bombardments of selected targets on the approaches to and around Port Stanley. 1,300 4.5 inch rounds were fired by H.M. Ships CARDIFF, ARROW, YARMOUTH, ACTIVE and AMBUSCADE during the period 5 to 10 June. Argentinian aircraft were also successfully engaged by units of the Fleet. One Canberra was shot down by a Sea Dart missile fired by H.M.S. EXETER. H.M.S. PLYMOUTH shot down 2 attack aircraft with Sea Cat missiles. Sea Harriers from H.M.S. INVINCIBLE attacked and brought down an Argentinian Hercules.

Vulcan attacks against enemy radar installations in the vicinity of Port Stanley were carried out on 31 May and 3 June. These, and the intensified bombing raids by Harriers, complemented the heavy night bombardment by Task Force ships. A forward air base was established at Port San Carlos on 5 June, from which combat air patrols and offensive air support missions, as well as helicopter operations were mounted.

By this time too, the air to air refuelled Hercules were conducting regular air drops of important supplies to ships in the Total Exclusion Zone.

There were losses. A Gazelle helicopter in transit from Darwin to Fitzroy was lost on 6 June with the 2 passengers and the 2 crew. An R.A.F. Harrier crashed into the sea on 30 May after being struck by enemy ground fire over Port Stanley. A Sea Harrier crashed into the sea on 1 June whilst returning from a combat air patrol. An accident at Port San Carlos severely damaged an R.A.F. Harrier on 8 June, bringing the total losses of ground support Harriers to 4. The direct transit of 2 pairs of replacement R.A.F. Harriers from Ascension Island to H.M.S. HERMES using in flight refuelling on 1 and 8 June was a noteworthy achievement and a most welcome reinforcement.

Further reinforcement and resupply forward was severely hampered by bad weather which precluded the use of helicopters for troop movement. It was therefore decided to move 2nd Battalion Scots Guards, 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and some supporting units and equipment by ship to Fitzroy. This move was conducted as follows: on 6 June 2nd Battalion Scots Guards disembarked from landing craft having transferred from H.M.S. INTREPID off Lively Island by night. Due to very bad weather only half the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards landed on a similar operation on 7 June. They had sailed to Lively Island in H.M.S. FEARLESS. During the night 7/8 June the remainder of the Battalion and some other units were embarked in SIR GALAHAD and sailed directly to Fitzroy. The weather on 8 June unexpectedly and unfortunately cleared and whilst SIR GALAHAD and SIR TRISTRAM, the latter having arrived on 7 June, were unloading they were attacked by Argentinian aircraft before the Rapier battery, which had been landed as soon as possible after arrival, was fully operational. Both were hit, caught fire and abandoned. This attack led to the heaviest casualties of the campaign. Forty two Welsh Guardsmen, 3 members of 16 Field Ambulance R.A.M.C. and 5 Royal Fleet Auxiliary crewmen were killed. In a further air raid, a landing craft was bombed and sank in Choiseul Sound. 6 Royal Marines and 1 Naval Rating were killed.

Weather conditions again deteriorated. It was almost mid-winter, with frequent rain and snow storms driven horizontal by high winds, and sub-zero temperatures. The battalions who occupied the most exposed positions were suffering with cases of exposure and trench-foot. General MOORE was thus determined to launch his bid for Port Stanley with the minimum of delay.

The Final Battle

The Argentinians had about 7 battalions together with supporting troops in the Port Stanley area. Approximately 3 of these battalions were forward on the important features of Mount Longdon, Two Sisters and Mount Harriet. In addition, there were about 1,000 troops on West Falkland.

General MOORE planned that the attack on Port Stanley should be conducted in 3 phases. The first phase was scheduled for the night of 11/12 June when 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines was to capture the three features of Mount Longdon, Two Sisters and Mount Harriet. The second phase, planned to take place 24 hours later, required both brigades to capture the next features to the east; these were Wireless Ridge, Tumbledown Mountain and Mount William. Finally, the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards, with 2 companies of 40 Commando Royal Marines under command, were to capture Sapper Hill.

As scheduled, on 11 June a silent night attack was launched. The enemy was outfought and soon after dawn all the brigade objectives were firmly held. In the centre, after a hard fight in very difficult mountain terrain, 45 Commando Royal Marines captured Two Sisters. Further south 42 Commando Royal Marines made an indirect approach, exploiting a gap in the enemy minefields which had been established as a result of extremely detailed, skilled and aggressive patrolling, and captured Mount Harriet from behind, taking over 200 prisoners. Meanwhile in the north 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment had an extremely tough fight against one of the enemy's best battalions to capture Mount Longdon. In this action Staff Sgt. I. J. McKAY, V.C. was killed while leading an advance against a strongly defended and well sited Argentinian position. During the day of 12 June all these positions came under heavy artillery fire, and further casualties were sustained.

For this and subsequent attacks, troop movements and assaults ashore were covered by Harrier attacks, naval gunfire and the support of five field batteries who fired 15,000 rounds. 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery were in continuous action for 12 hours during the first phase, at one point giving supporting fire only 50 metres in front of the advancing infantry. In the second phase 57 missions were fired. The Royal Engineers who had completed the hazardous task of clearing routes through the minefields provided men with each of the assaulting units. In addition they carried out many tasks to improve the mobility of the land forces, including reconstruction of the bridge at Fitzroy.

On 12 June, H.M.S. GLAMORGAN, while leaving her gun support position, was struck aft by a land launched Exocet missile. Despite the resulting fires, she remained able to steam with gun armament intact. The fires were eventually brought under control, but 13 of her Ship's Company had been killed in this attack.

Also on 12 June the final Vulcan raid was made on Port Stanley airfield in an attempt to prevent any further use of the airfield by the Argentinians prior to the final assault.

To allow further time for preparation, Phase 2 was delayed by 24 hours and eventually launched on the night of 13/14 June. 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, once more under command of 3 Commando

Brigade Royal Marines, in a beautifully managed and very skilful attack took Wireless Ridge, whilst on Tumbledown Mountain, 2nd Battalion Scots Guards had a particularly difficult battle before they overcame the regular Argentinian marine battalion. Thereafter 1st Battalion 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles passed through 2nd Battalion Scots Guards to secure Mount William.

At this stage it became clear that enemy resistance was collapsing. They could be seen retreating towards Port Stanley from many directions, including Moody Brook and Sapper Hill, neither of which had yet been attacked. Some, ejected from Tumbledown by 2nd Battalion Scots Guards, realised that they must pass Mount William, now firmly in Gurkha hands. They chose instead to retrace their steps and surrender to the Guardsmen.

Phase 3 was never launched. Realising that the Argentinian forces were beaten, General MOORE launched two battalions in pursuit, to close up to the outskirts of Port Stanley as quickly as possible. This was in line with General MOORE's policy throughout the land battle of moving forward energetically and as expeditiously as possible.

During the afternoon of 14 June, with large numbers of enemy standing about, abandoning their arms and surrendering, British troops were ordered to fire only in self-defence, and white flags began to appear over Port Stanley.

That night, after some hours of negotiations, General MOORE flew by helicopter into Port Stanley and took the formal surrender of all Argentinian forces on the Falkland Islands from General MENENDEZ.

Recapture of South Thule

The final step in the eviction of the illegal presence from the South Atlantic Dependencies was the removal of a small party which the Argentinian Navy had maintained on South Thule in the South Sandwich Islands since 1976.

H.M.S. ENDURANCE, commanded by Captain N. J. BARKER, C.B.E., Royal Navy, which had played a vital supporting role in the South Georgia area throughout, led a Task Group which included the frigate H.M.S. YARMOUTH, R.F.A. OLWEN, and the tug SALVAGEMAN. M Company 42 Commando Royal Marines formed the bulk of the landing force. The Argentinian party surrendered without resistance on 20 June. Although it had been claimed that this was a scientific station, ample proof was obtained that it was part of an Argentinian military meteorological network.

General Comments

The preceding paragraphs have recorded the major actions and significant phases of operations in the South Atlantic. The chronological record has not allowed proper emphasis of those activities whose importance is characterised by their continuous nature.

Attacks on the Task Force by enemy submarines were a significant and ever present threat, which was recognised by the inclusion of anti-submarine Sea King helicopters in the air order of battle. A number of torpedo attacks were carried out by these aircraft against underwater contacts classified as possible submarines. Results of the actions are not known, but the high intensity flying rates of this helicopter force throughout the operations were an essential part of Fleet anti-submarine warfare defences.

Some of the Harrier operations involving enemy action have already been recorded. However, defence of the Fleet and, later, close air support of the land forces, required these aircraft to spend many hours at high alert states or flying defensive combat air patrols. These protective measures were continuously necessary from the moment the ships entered the Total Exclusion Zone. A total of 23 enemy aircraft were destroyed in air to air combat, with the Sidewinder missile success rate being particularly noteworthy. It became apparent in the last few days of the open action that Admiral WOODWARD's courageously aggressive stance to wreak attrition on the Argentinian Air Force had accomplished the aim, and to all intents and purposes they were beaten.

Nimrod aircraft were the first to be based on Ascension Island, on 6 April. They were immediately involved as communications links for the transiting nuclear submarines and thereafter they continuously provided direct support and area surveillance to every major element of the Task Force to the limit of the aircraft's range. All deployments of small aircraft were provided with airborne search and rescue cover and, after the fitting of refuelling probes, Nimrods converted for air to air refuelling provided long range surveillance of the sea areas between the Falkland Islands and the Argentinian mainland prior to and during the main amphibious landing.

Air support of the Task Force from Ascension Island was completely dependent on air to air refuelling. In performing all refuelling tasks between the United Kingdom and the Total Exclusion Zone, the Victor Tankers provided continuous and timely support.

With the ships of the Task Force operating so far from Dockyard assistance, much major maintenance and repair work had to be carried out afloat in very rough seas. The achievements of the maintenance and repair ship M.V. STENA SEASPREAD were outstanding.

Over the distances involved and in areas so notoriously bad for radio propagation the value of satellite communications cannot be overstated. The Command and Control of Operation CORPORATE would have been immeasurably more difficult without this facility.

Logistics were always to the forefront of my mind. Throughout the events I have described, no ship ran out of fuel, no weapon system of ammunition, despite a supply line of over 7,000 miles and the extreme weather conditions encountered. This is ample testimony to the excellent work of all members of the logistic support ships and units of the Task Force.

Major contributory factors to the survival of the wounded were the supreme physical fitness of our troops and the exemplary medical attention given to casualties of both sides, often under fire and in the most squalid conditions. First aid matched the professional expertise of the field and afloat medical teams. Equally vital was the skill of the helicopter pilots in speedily evacuating casualties. Casualties were transferred to the Hospital Ship S.S. UGANDA. Once fit for further travel, they were transferred to the 3 casualty ferries H.M. Ships HYDRA, HECLA and HECATE and conveyed to Montevideo for onward aeromedical evacuation to the United Kingdom by R.A.F. VC10. These operations were all conducted with great efficiency and great concern for the comfort of the wounded.

Concluding Remarks

Operation CORPORATE became necessary because deterrence failed, but in its execution it represented a triumph of military capability backed by resolute political will. The difficulties of short notice, extreme range and appalling weather under which this operation was mounted were all overcome by a single factor, the quality of our people. The fighting men were magnificent when put to the test and the support they received at every level, at sea from the Merchant Navy, at Ascension Island and in the United Kingdom was superb. I could not have been better served.

J. D. E. FIELDHOUSE, Admiral, Commander Task Force 317

Commander Task Force 317 and 324

Admiral Sir John FIELDHOUSE, G.C.B., G.B.E.

Air Commander

Air Marshal Sir John CURTISS, K.C.B., K.B.E., C.B.I.M., R.A.F.

Land Forces Deputy

Major General Sir Jeremy MOORE, K.C.B., O.B.E., M.C. and Bar.

From 21 May: Lieutenant General Sir Richard TRANT, K.C.B.

Flag Officer Submarines

Vice Admiral P. G. M. HERBERT, O.B.E.

Commander Task Group 317.8

Rear Admiral Sir John WOODWARD, K.C.B.

3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines

Brigadier J. H. A. THOMPSON, C.B., O.B.E., A.D.C.

5th Infantry Brigade

Brigadier M. J. A. WILSON, O.B.E., M.C.

Commodore Amphibious Warfare

Commodore M. C. CLAPP, C.B.

H.M. Ships Which Sailed For "Operation Corporate" Before 20 June 1982

Ship	Commanding Officer	Date Passed 35°S (see note)
H.M.S. ACTIVE	Commander P. C. B. CANTER, R.N.	23 May
H.M.S. ALACRITY	Commander C. J. S. CRAIG, D.S.C., R.N.	25 April
H.M.S. AMBUSCADE	Commander P. J. MOSSE, R.N.	18 May
H.M.S. ANDROMEDA	Captain J. L. WEATHERALL, R.N.	23 May
H.M.S. ANTELOPE	Commander N. J. TOBIN, D.S.C., R.N.	18 May
H.M.S. ANTRIM	Captain B. G. YOUNG, D.S.O., R.N.	18 April
H.M.S. ARDENT	Commander A. W. J. WEST, D.S.C. R.N.	13 May
H.M.S. ARGONAUT	Captain C. H. LAYMAN, D.S.O., M.V.O., R.N.	13 May
H.M.S. ARROW	Commander P. J. BOOTHERSTONE, D.S.C., R.N.	20 April
H.M.S. AVENGER	Captain H. M. WHITE, R.N.	23 May
H.M.S. BRILLIANT	Captain J. F. COWARD, D.S.O., R.N.	20 April
H.M.S. BRISTOL	Captain A. GROSE, R.N.	23 May
H.M.S. BROADSWORD	Captain W. R. CANNING, D.S.O., A.D.C., R.N.	25 April
H.M.S. CARDIFF	Captain M. G. T. HARRIS, R.N.	23 May
H.M.S. COVENTRY	Captain D. HART-DYKE, M.V.O., R.N.	20 April
H.M.S. DUMBARTON CASTLE	Lieutenant Commander N. D. WOOD, R.N.	13 June
H.M.S. ENDURANCE	Captain N. J. BARKER, C.B.E., R.N.	Not applicable
H.M.S. EXETER	Captain H. M. BALFOUR, M.V.O., R.N.	19 May
H.M.S. FEARLESS	Captain E. J. S. LARKEN, D.S.O., R.N.	13 May

Ship	Commanding Officer	Date Passed 35°S (see note)
H.M.S. GLAMORGAN	Captain M. E. BARROW, D.S.O., A.D.C., R.N.	25 April
H.M.S. GLASGOW	Captain A. P. HODDINOTT, O.B.E., R.N.	20 April
H.M.S. HECLA	Captain G. L. HOPE, R.N.	10 May
H.M.S. HERALD	Captain R. I. C. HALLIDAY, R.N.	15 May
H.M.S. HERMES	Captain L. E. MIDDLETON, D.S.O., R.N.	25 April
—800 Naval Air Squadron	Lieutenant Commander A. D. AULD, D.S.C., R.N.	—
—826 Naval Air Squadron	Lieutenant Commander D. J. S. SQUIER, A.F.C., R.N.	—
H.M.S. HYDRA	Commander R. J. CAMPBELL, R.N.	15 May
H.M.S. INTREPID	Captain P. G. V. DINGEMANS, D.S.O., R.N.	13 May
H.M.S. INVINCIBLE	Captain J. J. BLACK., D.S.O., M.B.E., R.N.	25 April
—801 Naval Air Squadron	Lieutenant Commander N. D. WARD, D.S.C., A.F.C., R.N.	—
—820 Naval Air Squadron	Lieutenant Commander R. J. S. WYKES-SNEYD, A.F.C., R.N.	—
H.M.S. LEEDS CASTLE	Lieutenant Commander C. F. B. HAMILTON, R.N.	17 May
H.M.S. MINERVA	Commander S. H. G. JOHNSON, R.N.	23 May
H.M.S. PENELOPE	Commander P. V. RICKARD, R.N.	23 May
H.M.S. PLYMOUTH	Captain D. PENTREATH, D.S.O., R.N.	18 April
H.M.S. SHEFFIELD	Captain J. F. T. G. SALT, R.N.	25 April
H.M.S. YARMOUTH	Commander A. MORTON, D.S.C., R.N.	25 April
H.M. Submarines		
H.M.S. CONQUEROR	Commander C. L. WREFORD-BROWN, D.S.O., R.N.	
H.M.S. COURAGEOUS	Commander R. T. N. BEST, R.N.	
H.M.S. ONYX	Lieutenant Commander A. P. JOHNSON, R.N.	
H.M.S. SPARTAN	Commander J. B. TAYLOR, R.N.	
H.M.S. SPLENDID	Commander R. C. LANE-NOTT, R.N.	
H.M.S. VALIANT	Commander T. M. le MARCHAND, R.N.	
Minesweeping Trawlers (taken up from Trade and Commissioned)		
H.M.S. CORDELLA	Lieutenant Commander M. C. G. HOLLOWAY, R.N.	18 May
H.M.S. FARNELLA	Lieutenant R. J. BISHOP, R.N.	18 May
H.M.S. JUNELLA	Lieutenant M. ROWLEDGE, R.N.	18 May
H.M.S. NORTHELLA	Lieutenant J. P. S. GREENOP, R.N.	18 May
H.M.S. PICT	Lieutenant Commander D. G. GARWOOD, R.N.	18 May

Note: Latitude 35° South delineates the start of the Argentinian coastline.

Commander British Forces Support Unit, Ascension Island, until 17 June 1982

Captain R. McQUEEN, C.B.E., R.N.

Royal Marine Units

3 Commando Brigade Headquarters and Signal Squadron Royal Marines
40 Commando Royal Marines
42 Commando Royal Marines
45 Commando Royal Marines
Commando Logistic Regiment Royal Marines
3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron Royal Marines
1st Raiding Squadron Royal Marines
Special Boat Squadron Royal Marines
3 Commando Brigade Air Defence Troop Royal Marines
Y Troop Royal Marines
Field Records Office Drafting and Records Office Royal Marines
The Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines Commando Forces
The Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines Flag Officer 3rd Flotilla

Officers Commanding

Major R. C. DIXON, R.M.
Lieutenant Colonel M. P. J. HUNT, R.M.
Lieutenant Colonel N. F. VAUX, D.S.O., R.M.
Lieutenant Colonel A. F. WHITEHEAD, D.S.O., R.M.
Lieutenant Colonel I. J. HELLBERG, O.B.E., R.C.T.
Major C. P. CAMERON, M.C., R.M.
Captain F. I. J. BAXTER, R.M.
Major J. J. THOMSON, O.B.E., R.M.
Lieutenant I. L. DUNN, R.M.
Captain G. D. CORBETT, R. SIGS.
Captain J. R. HANCOCK, R.M.
Captain J. M. WARE, L.R.A.M., R.M.
W.O. 2(B) T. ATTWOOD, L.R.A.M., A.R.C.M., R.M.

Army Units

1 Two troops The Blues and Royals
2 4th Field Regiment Royal Artillery (Less one battery)
3. 12th Air Defence Regiment Royal Artillery (Less one battery)
4 29th Commando Regiment Royal Artillery
5 Elements 43 Air Defence Battery, 32nd Guided Weapons Regiment Royal Artillery
6 Elements 49th Field Regiment Royal Artillery
7 Elements Royal School of Artillery Support Regiment
8 Elements 33 Engineer Regiment
9 36 Engineer Regiment (Less one squadron)
10 Elements of 38 Engineer Regiment
11 59 Independent Commando Squadron Royal Engineers
12 Elements Military Works Force
13 Elements 2 Postal and Courier Regiment Royal Engineers
14 Elements 14th Signal Regiment
15 Elements 30th Signal Regiment
16 5th Infantry Brigade Headquarters and Signals Squadron
17 Elements 602 Signal Troop
18 2nd Battalion Scots Guards
19 1st Battalion Welsh Guards
20 1st Battalion 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles

Captain R. A. K. FIELD, R.H.G/D.
Lieutenant Colonel G. A. HOLT, R.A.
Lieutenant Colonel M. C. BOWDEN, R.A.
Lieutenant Colonel M. J. HOLROYD-SMITH, O.B.E., R.A.
Captain R. C. DICKEY, R.A.
Major R. T. GWYN, R.A.
Major M. H. FALLON, R.A.
Captain B. LLOYD, R.E.
Lieutenant Colonel G. W. FIELD, M.B.E. R.E.
Major R. B. HAWKEN, R.E.
Major R. MACDONALD, R.E.
Lieutenant Colonel L. J. KENNEDY, M.B.E., R.E.
Major I. WINFIELD, R.E.
Captain G. D. CORBET, R. Signals.
Major W. K. BUTLER, R. Signals.
Major M. L. FORGE, R. Signals.
Warrant Officer II (Yeoman of Signals)
J. F. CALVERT, R. Signals.
Lieutenant Colonel M. I. E. SCOTT, D.S.O., S.G.
Lieutenant Colonel J. F. RICKETT, O.B.E., W.G.
Lieutenant Colonel D. P. de C. MORGAN, O.B.E., 7G.R.

<i>Army Units</i>	<i>Officers Commanding</i>
21 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment. Commanded in turn by	(a) Lieutenant Colonel H. JONES, V.C. O.B.E., Para. (b) Major C. P. B. KEEBLE, D.S.O., Para. (c) Lieutenant Colonel D. R. CHAUNDLER, Para.
22 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment	Lieutenant Colonel H. W. R. PIKE, D.S.O., M.B.E., Para.
23 Elements 22nd Special Air Service Regiment	Lieutenant Colonel H. M. ROSE, O.B.E., Coldm. Gds.
24 656 Squadron Army Air Corps	Major C. S. SIBUN, A.A.C.
25 Elements 17 Port Regiment Royal Corps of Transport	Lieutenant J. G. D. LOWE, R.C.T.
26 Elements 29 Transport and Movements Regiment Royal Corps of Transport	Lieutenant D. R. BYRNE, R.C.T.
27 Elements 47 Air Despatch Squadron Royal Corps of Transport	Major R. C. GARDNER, R.C.T.
28 407 Troop Royal Corps of Transport	Lieutenant J. P. ASH, R.C.T.
29 Elements of The Joint Helicopter Support Unit	Corporal J. ELLIOT, R.C.T.
30 16 Field Ambulance Royal Army Medical Corps	Lieutenant Colonel J. D. A. ROBERTS, R.A.M.C.
31 Elements 19 Field Ambulance Royal Army Medical Corps	Captain J. T. GRAHAM, R.A.M.C.
32 Elements 9 Ordnance Battalion Royal Army Ordnance Corps	Major R. B. P. SMITH, R.A.O.C.
33 81 Ordnance Company Royal Army Ordnance Corps	Major G. M. A. THOMAS, R.A.O.C.
34 10 Field Workshop Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers	Major A. D. BALL, R.E.M.E.
35 Elements 70 Aircraft Workshops Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers	Staff Sergeant M. J. EMERY, R.E.M.E.
36 Elements 160 Provost Company Royal Military Police	Captain A. K. BARLEY, R.M.P.
37 6 Field Cash Office Royal Army Pay Corps	Major R. F. CLARK, R.A.P.C.
38 601 Tactical Air Control Party (Forward Air Controller)	Major M. M. HOWES, R.R.W.
39 602 Tactical Air Control Party (Forward Air Controller)	Major A. S. HUGHES, R.W.F.
40 603 Tactical Air Control Party (Forward Air Controller)	Flight Lieutenant G. HAWKINS, R.A.F.

Royal Air Force

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Detachment Commander/Commanding Officer</i>
Senior Royal Air Force Officer, Ascension Island, and Commander British Forces Support Unit Ascension Island from 17 June	Group Captain J. S. B. PRICE, C.B.E., A.D.C., R.A.F.

Flying Squadrons

1 (F) Squadron Harrier GR3 Wing Commander P. T. SQUIRE, D.F.C., A.F.C., R.A.F.

Detachments of:

10 Squadron VC 10	Wing Commander O. G. BUNN, M.B.E., R.A.F.
18 Squadron Chinook HC1	Squadron Leader R. U. LANGWORTHY, D.F.C., A.F.C., R.A.F.
24 Squadron Hercules C1	} Squadron Leader M. J. KEMPSTER, R.A.F. (4-17 Apr 82). Squadron Leader J. R. D. MORLEY, R.A.F. (18 Apr-11 May 82). Squadron Leader N. C. L. HUDSON, B.A., R.A.F. (12 May-23 Jul 82).
30 Squadron Hercules C1	
47 Squadron Hercules C1	
70 Squadron Hercules C1	} Squadron Leader R. W. D. TROTTER, R.A.F.
29 Squadron Phantom FGR2	
42 Squadron Nimrod Mk. 1	Wing Commander D. L. BAUGH, O.B.E., R.A.F.
44 Squadron Vulcan B2	} Squadron Leader A. C. MONTGOMERY, R.A.F.
50 Squadron Vulcan B2	
101 Squadron Vulcan B2	

Detachments of:

Detachment Commander / Commanding Officer

55 Squadron Victor K2	}	Wing Commander D. W. MAURICE-JONES, R.A.F. (18-21 Apr. 82).
57 Squadron Victor K2		Wing Commander A. W. BOWMAN, M.B.E., R.A.F. (22 Apr. 82).
120 Squadron Nimrod Mk. 2	}	Wing Commander D. EMMERSON, A.F.C., R.A.F.
201 Squadron Nimrod Mk. 2		
206 Squadron Nimrod Mk. 2		
202 Squadron SAR Sea King		Flight Lieutenant M. J. CARYLE, R.A.F.

Royal Air Force Regiment

3 (Regiment) Wing Headquarters Unit	}	Wing Commander T. T. WALLIS, R.A.F.
15 (Regiment) Squadron Detachment Field Squadron		Squadron Leader I. P. G. LOUGHBOROUGH, R.A.F.
63 (Regiment) Squadron (Rapier)		

Support Units

Tactical Communications Wing
 Tactical Supply Wing
 No. 1 E.O.D. Unit

Royal Fleet Auxiliaries

Masters

R.F.A. APPLELEAF	Captain G. P. A. MacDOUGALL, R.F.A.
R.F.A. BAYLEAF	Captain A. E. T. HUNTER, R.F.A.
R.F.A. BLUE ROVER	Captain J. D. RODDIS, R.F.A.
R.F.A. BRAMBLELEAF	Captain M. S. J. FARLEY, R.F.A.
R.F.A. ENGADINE	Captain D. F. FREEMAN, R.F.A.
R.F.A. FORT AUSTIN	Commodore S. C. DUNLOP, C.B.E., D.S.O., R.F.A.
R.F.A. FORT GRANGE	Captain D. G. M. AVERILL, C.B.E. R.F.A.
R.F.A. RESOURCE	Captain B. A. SEYMOUR, R.F.A.
R.F.A. OLMEDA	Captain A. P. OVERBURY, O.B.E., R.F.A.
R.F.A. OLNÄ	Captain J. A. BAILEY, R.F.A.
R.F.A. PEARLEAF	Captain J. McCULLOCH, R.F.A.
R.F.A. PLUMLEAF	Captain R. W. M. WALLACE, R.F.A.
R.F.A. REGENT	Captain J. LOGAN, R.F.A.
R.F.A. STROMNESS	Captain J. B. DICKINSON, O.B.E., R.F.A.
R.F.A. TIDEPPOOL	Captain J. W. GAFFREY, R.F.A.
R.F.A. TIDESPRING	Captain S. REDMOND, O.B.E., R.F.A.
SIR BEDIVERE	Captain P. J. McCARTHY, O.B.E., R.F.A.
SIR GALAHAD	Captain P. J. G. ROBERTS, D.S.O., R.F.A.
SIR GERAINT	Captain D. E. LAWRENCE, D.S.C. R.F.A.
SIR LANCELOT	Captain C. A. PURTCHER-WYDENBRUCK, O.B.E., R.F.A.
SIR PERCIVALE	Captain A. F. PITT, D.S.C., R.F.A.
SIR TRISTRAM	Captain G. R. GREEN, D.S.C., R.F.A.

Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service

Ship

R.M.A.S. GOOSANDER
 R.M.A.S. TYPHOON

Master

Captain A. MacGREGOR
 Captain J. N. MORRIS

Ships Taken up from Trade

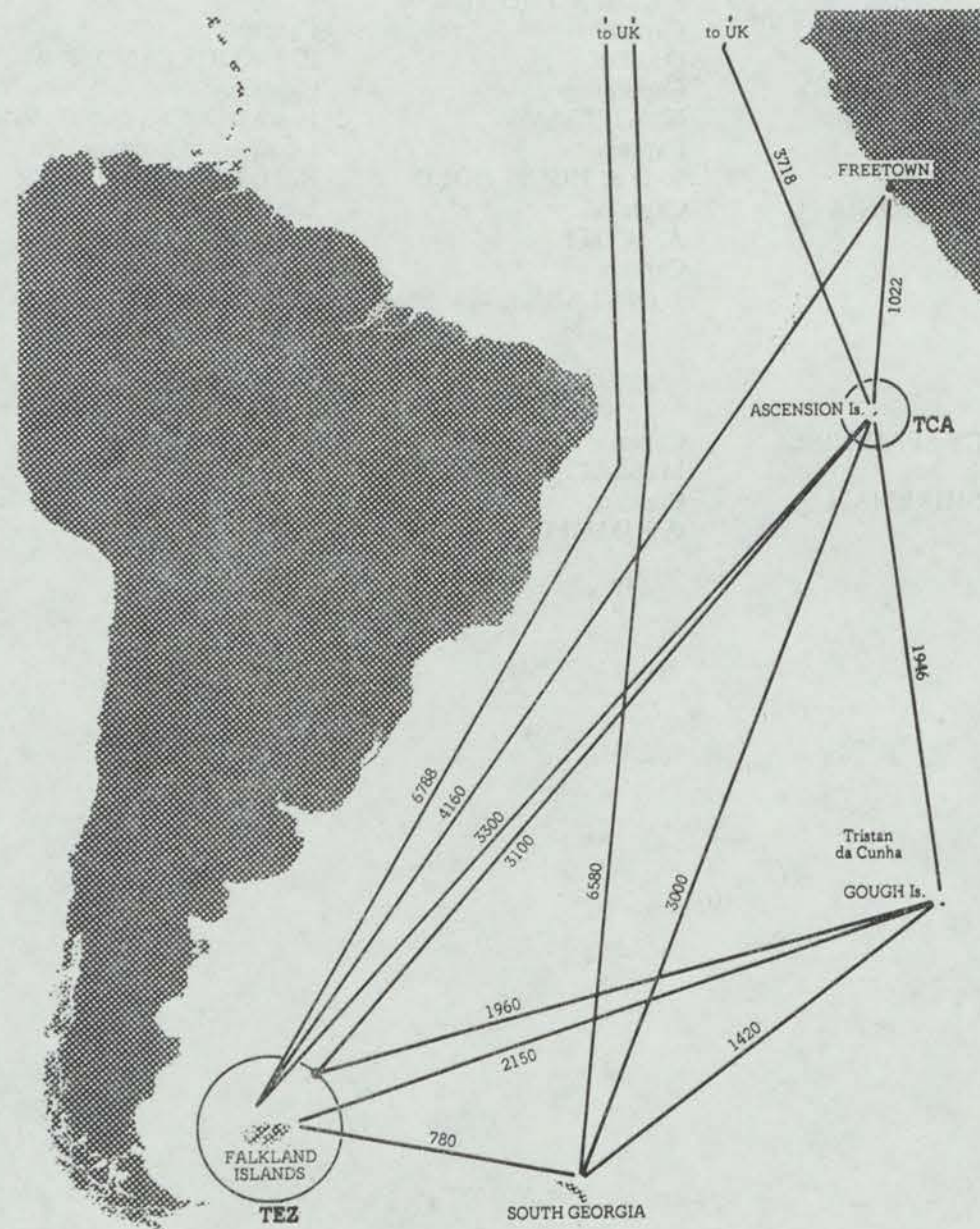
Masters

Senior Naval Officers

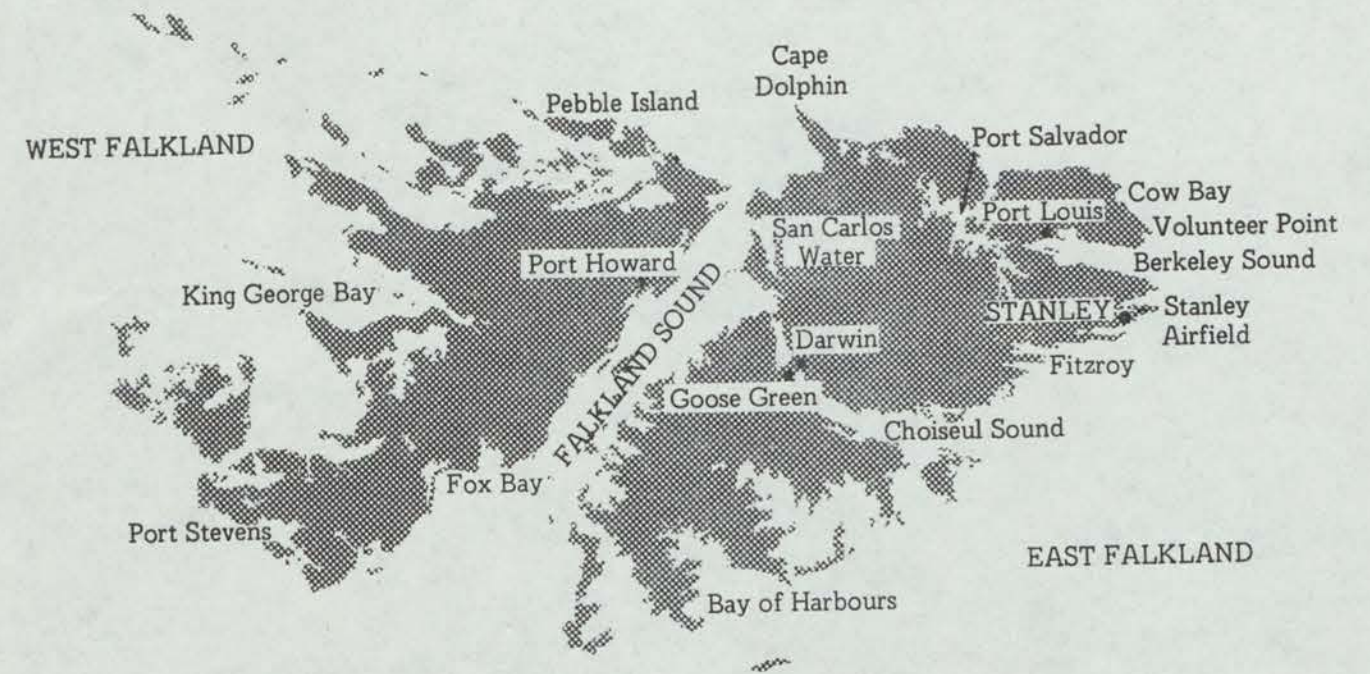
M.V. ALVEGA	Captain A. LAZENBY	
M.V. ANCO CHARGER	Captain B. HATTON	
M.V. ASTRONOMER	Captain H. S. BRADEN	Lieutenant Commander R. GAINSFORD, R.N.
S.S. ATLANTIC CAUSEWAY	Captain M. H. C. TWOMEY	Commander R. P. SEYMOUR, R.N.
S.S. ATLANTIC CONVEYOR	Captain I. NORTH, D.S.C.	Captain M. G. LAYARD, C.B.E., R.N.

	<i>Masters</i>	<i>Senior Naval Officers</i>
M.V. AVELONA STAR	Captain H. DYER	
M.V. BALDER LONDON	Captain K. J. WALLACE	
M.V. BALTIC FERRY	Captain E. HARRISON	Lieutenant Commander G. B. WEBB, R.N.
M.V. BRITISH ENTERPRISE III	Captain D. GRANT	Lieutenant Commander B. E. M. REYNELL, R.N.
M.V. BRITISH AVON	Captain J. W. M. GUY	
M.V. BRITISH DART	Captain J. A. N. TAYLOR	
M.V. BRITISH ESK	Captain G. BARBER	
M.V. BRITISH TAMAR	Captain W. H. HARE	
M.V. BRITISH TAY	Captain P. T. MORRIS	
M.V. BRITISH TEST	Captain T. A. OLIPHANT	
M.V. BRITISH TRENT	Captain P. R. WALKER	
M.V. BRITISH WYE	Captain D. M. RUNDELL, O.B.E.	
S.S. CANBERRA	Captain W. SCOTT-MASSON, C.B.E.	Captain C. P. O. BURNE, C.B.E., R.N.
M.V. CONTENDER BEZANT	Captain A. MACKINNON	Lieutenant Commander D. H. N. YATES, R.N.
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T.E.V. RANGATIRA	Captain P. LIDDELL	Commander D. H. LINES, R.N.
M.V. SAINT EDMUND	Captain M. J. STOCKMAN	Lieutenant Commander A. M. SCOTT, R.N.
R.M.S. SAINT HELENA	Captain M. L. M. SMITH	
M.T. SALVAGEMAN	Captain A. J. STOCKWELL	
M.V. SAXONIA	Captain H. EVANS	

	<i>Masters</i>	<i>Senior Naval Officers</i>
M.V. SCOTTISH EAGLE	Captain A. TERRAS	
M.V. SHELL EBURNA	Captain J. C. BEAUMONT	
M.V. STENA INSPECTOR	Captain D. EDE	Captain P. J. STICKLAND, R.N.
M.V. STENA SEASPREAD	Captain N. WILLIAMS	Captain P. BADCOCK, C.B.E., R.N.
M.V. STRATHEWE	Captain S. T. S. HOUSEHOLD	Lieutenant Commander R. H. HEWLAND, R.N.
M.V. TOR CALEDONIA	Captain A. SCOTT	Lieutenant Commander J. G. DEVINE, R.N.
S.S. UGANDA	Captain J. G. CLARK	Commander A. B. GOUGH, R.N.
		<i>Senior Medical Officer:</i> Surgeon Captain A. J. RINTOUL, R.N.
M.V. WIMPEY SEAHORSE	Captain M. SLACK, O.B.E.	
M.T. YORKSHIREMAN	Captain P. RIMMER	



DISTANCES IN NAUTICAL MILES



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