

# Commanders Guidance and Campaign Planning – The Falkland Islands War 1982

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

Commanders Guidance and Campaign Planning – The Falkland Islands War 1982, by MAJ Lynn W. Sullivan, US Army, 51 pages.

Since the end of the Second World War, only one conflict has seen the use of aircraft carriers, submarines, anti-ship missiles, an opposed amphibious assault, and large-scale air-to-air combat. Before 1982, no one could have predicted that the only example of a near-peer engagement by modern militaries might occur in the South Atlantic between Argentina and the British over several islands that most could not have found on a map. Although since the guns fell silent in 1982, many learned from a fight that no one thought possible. Most of the lessons learned revolve around technological innovations such as close in ship defense, force projection and air superiority, as well as international relations. Key lessons ignored the impacts of a lack of planning before Argentina invaded on 2 April 1982, driven by several basic planning assumptions. The most impactful was that after they invaded, the British could not respond militarily to eject them from the islands. This was invalidated when the British launched a naval task force seven thousand miles into the south Atlantic, with an aging fleet, to defeat the Argentine military despite its overwhelming local superiority.

Capable military planners received instructions that effectively limited both their options and the preparations necessary to defeat a British response. Exacerbating this was an unanticipated shift in the timeline, which moved up the invasion date by six months. Argentine leadership asked the military to sail within seventy-two hours and conduct an opposed amphibious assault with little training. The fact that they were able to do so is a testament to their general preparedness and hasty planning. However, the expedited timeline had drastic impacts as the British responded and defeated Argentine forces on the islands, due to a lack of defensive preparation and coordination amongst the services.

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## Acronyms

ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
AEW	Airborne Early Warning
AOA	Amphibious Operations Area
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
CAS	Close Air Support
FM	Field Manual
HMS	Her Majesty's Ship
LOC	Line of Communication
LSL	Landing Ship Logistics
MEZ	Maritime Exclusion Zone
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NCO	Non-commissioned Officers
RAF	Royal Air Force
RN	Royal Navy
SAS	Special Air Service
SBS	Special Boat Service
TEZ	Total Exclusion Zone
UN	United Nations

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## Introduction

As snow fell on the trenches around Port Stanley, a young soldier lay shivering as his blood froze upon his uniform. This eighteen year old conscript died just three hundred miles from his homeland, fighting for the Falkland Islands against professional British soldiers over eight thousand miles from theirs. He died just weeks after graduating primary school, in a conflict with aircraft carriers, submarines, jet aircraft, and major implications on the world stage, but as he lay shivering in the snow, he questioned why the young men of Argentina were sent to die in this cold forsaken place. As he passed over that final barrier between one life and the next, he remembered what his mother told him as he reported for duty just three months before, “you fight for Argentina against those that stole what is rightfully ours.” Such is the story told by Argentines both then and now, and is why the Falkland Islands became a focal point for conflict.

In the period of decolonization following World War II, many emerging nations pursued policies that severed ties with previous colonial powers and asserted sovereignty over disputed territories.<sup>1</sup> Massive changes resulted across the globe, whether it was India gaining independence from the British Empire, or South Indo China Burma starting a war with colonial masters.<sup>2</sup> In South America, Argentina had actively protested the British occupation of the Falkland Islands—called the Malvinas by Argentina—for over a century. However, it was not until Argentina raised the issue in the United Nations that Argentina gained a level of international support and chose to pursue widened action against the British.<sup>3</sup> The Argentine

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *The Falklands War* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Military, 2014), 27-31. These included both opposed and unopposed military seizures by local forces.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel J.C. Allard, “The Falkland Islands War an Image of War in the 21st Century” (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1997), 10. The British had recognized the independence of British Honduras as Belize, divested Hong Kong, reduced the garrison on the Falklands, and intended to retire the Antarctic patrol vessel the HMS *Endurance*.

<sup>3</sup> Colonel Eduardo Bernadou, “Was the Invasion of the Malvinas/Falklands Islands a Correct Political Decision by Argentina?” (Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, 1997), 8-10. The UN recognized the sovereignty dispute over the Falklands and designated the Falkland Islands as a colony designated for a return to Argentina sometime in the future.

Junta viewed declining military expenditures and reduced British commitments to the South Atlantic as waning devotion to maintaining a presence there. They then decided to gain a popular victory to bolster their government, intending to invade no earlier than 15 May 1982.<sup>4</sup> They hoped to produce increased scrutiny and incite worldwide debate of the Falkland Island sovereignty question, without which, there was no prospect of resolution in the near future.

The Argentine leadership did not intend to invade before May 1982, to take advantage of South Atlantic storms to forestall a British military response. This might gain time to negotiate and increase international pressure for peace, but the Argentines were forced into precipitate action. The South Georgia incident in March 1982 escalated tensions, and forced the Argentine Junta to invade on 2 April 1982. Although the British had some warning, the invasion caused internal debate about the viability of a military response. Many around the world and within the British administration, including the United States Navy and the British Army, considered the re-capture of the Falkland Islands to be a military impossibility.<sup>5</sup> Despite internal dissension, and ongoing negotiations through several intermediaries, Margaret Thatcher and her cabinet chose to send a message to both the Argentine Junta, and the British people by sailing as quickly as possible.<sup>6</sup> No one imagined that true military action would result from the events of early April, but as the British Task Force advanced south, the reality of combat loomed large.

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *The Falklands War*, 33. British commitment was evaluated with the intended withdrawal of the HMS *Endurance*, a polar vessel scheduled for decommissioning in 1983, the failure of a colonial power to respond militarily to the seizure of Goa in 1961, and a recent declaration by the British of citizenship rights that included Gibraltar, but did not include the citizens of the Falklands.

<sup>5</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), xvii. The Ministry of Defence considered the entire proposition too risky, the Army thought they could not achieve sufficient force ratio in time to decide the outcome, and the Royal Air Force saw the vast distances as an obstacle that could not be overcome.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *The Falklands War*, 64-67. Most sources indicate that PM Thatcher made the decision to respond fairly quickly, but domestic concerns and implications for the British Empire drove the decision, rather than the sovereignty dispute with Argentina. Every source indicates that Margaret Thatcher decided to invade as an opportunity to consolidate British public support against an aggressor, or to avoid appearing weak against aggression. Either way, the British response was dependent on domestic politics and the perception of British prestige.

The Argentine military attempted to adapt their plan but encountered huge difficulties because they had never planned for, or even contemplated, an actual British military response. They therefore had to shift forces and logistics, and conduct training with the increasing threat of British intervention. Whereas the Argentines failed to anticipate the British response, and adapt when the British Task Force sailed, the British planned and prepared effectively. They assembled the largest Task Force seen since World War Two, including the largest amphibious invasion force since the Korean conflict. The British projected force over seven thousand nautical miles into the South Atlantic and decisively defeated Argentine forces who outnumbered them two to one. This highlights the affect that efficient preparation, facilitated by effective commanders guidance can have on campaign planning, and the formulation of necessary branches and sequels.

## Strategic Context:

The Argentine Junta had only approved the plan for Operation Rosario on 16 March 1982, when the South Georgia incident forced precipitous action. A scrap dealer contracted an Argentine navy vessel to transport workers to the South Georgia islands in order to recover metal from old whaling stations. Because of the presence of an Argentine navy vessel, the British believed that Admiral Anaya (chief of the Argentine navy) was using the incident to advance Argentina's claims. This was similar to a 1976 incident on Southern Thule where the Argentine military established a scientific station without notifying the British, and refused to leave once discovered.<sup>7</sup> The British responded by dispatching the HMS *Endurance* with a Royal Marine detachment, and demanded that Argentine workers be withdrawn or the British military would forcibly remove them. Faced with the forcible expulsion of Argentine citizens from land they claimed as sovereign territory, the Junta decided to expedite the invasion of both South Georgia and the Falkland Islands.

Because of security concerns, the Argentine navy developed a plan for invasion, which the Junta did not approve until 16 March 1982. On 26 March, when the timetable for invasion was moved to 1 April, the Argentine military was faced with an under-developed operational plan that had limited input from either the air force or the army. The Junta intentionally excluded the other services from planning, because they thought their involvement was unnecessary based on the strategic assumption that the British would not respond militarily. This led to a general lack of preparation and planning throughout the coming conflict.<sup>8</sup> Several factors demonstrate the Argentine lack of preparation. These

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<sup>7</sup> Don Lippincot and Gregory F. Treverton, *Negotiations Concerning the Falklands/Malvinas Dispute: Breakdown of Negotiations* (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, 1994), 10. The presence of an Argentine naval vessel, and the possibility of participation by Admiral Anaya, a known Argentine nationalist with intentions on the Falklands heightened tensions during the South Georgia incident.

<sup>8</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Csaba B. Hezsely, "Argentine Air Power in the Falklands War" (Research Report, Air War College, 1988), 2. The Argentine air force only anticipated movement of the 25th Regiment by C-130, and the positioning of several Pucara aircraft to the islands themselves.

include failures to delay the invasion for advanced weapons deliveries scheduled for later that year, failure to take advantage of inclement weather and its effects on any Royal Navy vessels sailing into the South Atlantic, and failure to expand the airfield at Port Stanley to accommodate modern fighter aircraft.<sup>9</sup> Finally, though the Argentines did stockpile significant supplies on the islands after they realized the serious intent of the Royal Navy Task Force, they had no system in place for the distribution of those supplies. As a result they were crucially short of supplies at almost every level as they faced attacks by British forces.<sup>10</sup> The failure to conduct detailed planning, driven by faulty commander's guidance to the operational planners, directly contributed to Argentine defeat on the Falklands.

Of critical importance is an understanding of the effect commander's guidance can have on a campaign plan. It can limit options, restrict the consideration of branches and sequels from the very beginning, and therefore reduce the flexibility incorporated into the plan. Planning failures also have huge impacts on tempo. Specific to the Falklands, the operational impacts of the Argentine Juntas' decision to expedite the invasion proved decisive. By trading preparedness and planning in order to gain surprise, the Argentine forces surrendered critical capabilities that reduced their ability to maintain tempo during the most important phases of the operation. Finally, a confused command structure with limited interservice coordination in the weeks before the arrival of British forces proved decisive throughout May and June of

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They did not anticipate engaging British naval assets, extending the runway at Stanley, or providing significant reconnaissance or mid-air refueling capability.

<sup>9</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 46. Had Argentine planning included rapid expansion of the runway to accommodate even a single squadron of Mirage jets, British air superiority might have been in doubt. At a minimum, it could have forced the British Task Force to operate much further from the islands themselves, hampering their invasion efforts. Lieutenant Colonel Csaba B. Hezely, "Argentine Air Power in the Falklands War" (Research Report, Air War College, 1988), 18-21.

<sup>10</sup> Lessons of the Falklands: Department of the Navy Summary Report February 1983 (Washington, DC, 1983), 6. Reports of every single tactical engagement by Argentine forces indicate a lack of ammunition in prepared positions where they knew the British were coming for at least two weeks. Continuous shortages of food, radio equipment, and heavy weapons are apparent across the Argentine formations due to a lack of mobility assets to distribute supplies from the central hub at Port Stanley.

1982 as conscript soldiers from Argentina attempted to stave off assaults by British professionals.

All of these are operational impacts that deserve attention by modern military professionals, especially as tensions arise around the world, with the potential for extreme impacts on future power projection and campaign planning. The specific history of the Falklands sovereignty dispute, ongoing negotiations at the United Nations, and the impacts of the dirty war within Argentina during the 1970s, are fascinating subjects for future study, but lie outside the intended scope of this work.

Although the Falkland Islands conflict held the attention of the world for several months in early 1982, the majority of analysis thus far has focused on the air and naval engagements and technological lessons with applicability to the broader context of the Cold War. War correspondents that accompanied the British Naval Task Force wrote a preponderance of the material covering the conflict. However, many of these initial sources contradict each other and lack citations. Many of the most immediate articles focused on the emotional impact felt by soldiers. Those attempting to address larger operational issues emphasized new methods and technologies of interest in a wider conflict with the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup>

Subsequent efforts, such as those by Martin Middlebrook, focused on personal stories of the participants, even attempting to interview Argentine soldiers to gain a balanced viewpoint. His book, *The Falklands War*, originally published in 1982 and revised five times since, is a comprehensive source giving first person accounts almost entirely from British participants.<sup>12</sup> It devotes attention to tactical actions in and around the islands, without attaining operational and strategic insight for applicability in other conflicts. One of the few

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<sup>11</sup> Colonel J.C. Allard, "The Falkland Islands War an Image of War in the 21st Century," 17. Focus is on the technological stars of the conflict, the Exocet anti-ship missile, Harrier jet, Sidewinder air-to-air missile, Sea Dart and Sea Wolf surface-to-air missiles, and satellite communications.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *The Falklands War* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Military, 2014).

attempts to address the Argentine perspective is Middlebrooks' *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*. However, his book is limited in that many of the senior Argentine leaders refused to grant interviews due to continued tensions over the islands leaving him to rely on secondary sources to complete portions of his work.<sup>13</sup>

Considerable work addresses tactical actions during the conflict, especially those of the air campaign. Theses such as "Offensive Air Operations of the Falklands War" and "Argentina's Tactical Aircraft Employment in the Falkland Islands War," chronologically walk through the engagements but fail to address the operational coordination required to execute these battles. Others such as "Argentine Air Power in the Falklands War," emphasize the technical innovations that the Argentine air force rapidly adopted to have any success against a technologically superior opponent. However, none of these address decisions made at the air force level regarding repositioning of forces, or coordination with other services on the islands themselves. In short, the focus of most publications has been on tactics and technology.

Case studies such as the one published in Pradeep P. Baruas' book, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, focus heavily on new and emerging technologies (air/ground/naval) of both the Argentine and British forces. Several operational lessons were identified for the British forces, specifically integration of joint operations at the brigade level, and the requisite force posture to maintain far-flung colonies with declining budgets and a potentially hostile populace. These however are limited to the British perspective, and again largely focus on technical innovation, not operational coordination.<sup>14</sup>

*Negotiations Concerning the Falklands/Malvinas Dispute: Breakdown of Negotiations* by Don Lippincot and Gregory Treverton focuses purely on the strategic breakdown between Argentina and the British government regarding the sovereignty

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen and Sword Military, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*.

question. While helpful in understanding the legal background of the arguments and negotiations subsequent to invasion, the authors make little attempt to address causal factors for the war. Instead it focuses on internal disputes within the Reagan administration and the impact they had on negotiations.

Those publications from the Argentine perspective that have been translated into English, such as *National Identity in Times of Crisis, The Scripts of the Falklands-Malvinas War* by Nora Femenia, focus on the impact of the internal Civil War in the 1970s. They largely attempt to link poor readiness and morale of Argentine forces to their use as internal policing forces before the invasion. Subsequent publications largely ignore operational lessons, instead focusing on internal political concerns driving the decision to invade and the attendant fall of the Junta after British intervention.<sup>15</sup>

The preponderance of literature on the war is devoted to the Argentine decision to invade the Falklands. Works such as “The Falkland Islands War an Image of War in the 21st Century,” and “Risky Invasions: Decisions Made by the Argentine Junta Regarding Disputed Islands, 1979-1982” are devoted solely to this topic. All other publications, articles and theses reviewed devote some portion to either the reasons for the decision to invade or the signals sent by the British which the Argentines misinterpreted. Some attribute the decision to internal politics within the Junta, such as the assertion in “Offensive Air Operations of the Falklands War,” that the failure of the civilian detachment in South Georgia to lower an Argentine flag in March, 1982 was the decisive point which led to conflict. Each argument has merit, however they fail to address the “so what” of hastening invasion plans.

Very little is dedicated to the impetus for expediting the invasion. The few publications addressing this topic do so fleetingly; they briefly mention the South Georgia incident and then rapidly advance to the invasion itself. Due to this frequent rush to address the invasion, most authors fail to address operational considerations and the associated

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<sup>15</sup> Nora Femenia, *National Identity in Times of Crisis, The Scripts of the Falklands-Malvinas War* (Commack, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 1996).



ramifications for the Argentine military as they faced a well-trained professional British army. Ronald Schrepel's thesis, titled "The Falklands/Malvinas 1982: Why Didn't Argentina Win the War" addresses some of the immediate impacts within the Argentine military, focusing on the lack of equipment and training within the 25th Regiment specifically. These fail to draw conclusions about the general level of training and equipment across the Argentine military and the attendant lessons learned.

## Argentina Declares “The Year of the Malvinas”

Prior to invasion, the Argentine military conducted planning for the eventual invasion of the Falkland Islands for several years, including iterations at their Staff College; these were general in nature and failed to anticipate a conflict with the British military.<sup>16</sup> How then did the British, who never conducted similar studies and planning, coordinate action with only weeks to prepare, while the Argentines with years of preparation, fail in the subsequent conflict? The answer lies in the initial guidance provided to each group of military planners that directed their planning and preparations.<sup>17</sup>

While the Argentine Junta did not operate with US Army doctrine, the role commander’s planning guidance plays in the operations process, “broadly describing when, where, and how the commander intends to employ combat power to accomplish the mission,” is useful in comparing the guidance provided to the Argentines vs. that provided to British planners. Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 5-0 describes the role of planning guidance as broad and general, providing subordinate leaders maximum latitude; allowing proficient staffs to develop flexible and effective options.<sup>18</sup> During the operations process, ADRP 5-0 calls for commanders to set achievable objectives, issue clear tasks to subordinate units, establish command and support relationships, and position units to maximize combat

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<sup>16</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States* (Danvers, MA: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013), 25. Argentine military professions had considered invasion plans since the 1960’s, when interestingly enough Major Anaya had headed up an initial planning effort. Over the years, the navy had taken the lead in confrontations with the British over sovereignty of the Falklands, South Georgia, and the Sandwich Islands, including landings of scientific parties, and warning shots from warships. These had taken the aspect of annual exercises for the Argentine navy, and were part of the reason that a military buildup and confrontation in South Georgia was not deemed serious by the British until the invasion loomed.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen and Sword Military, 2003), 1. Various sources allude to the fact that Admiral Anaya, now the head of the Argentine navy conducted a planning exercise while just a major in the 1960s, focusing on an invasion of the Falklands, which became his lifelong obsession. Included is the fact that in December 1981, Admiral Anaya made a promise to invade in the coming year a precondition to his support of General Galtieris seizure of the reigns of power in Argentina.

<sup>18</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-5.

power.<sup>19</sup> The Argentine Junta clearly failed in each of these areas, both before and during the conflict, whereas the British succeeded in each, even with far less time to prepare.

Admiral Jorge Anaya, representing the Argentine Junta, instructed Vice-Admiral Lombardo to initiate planning to seize the Falkland Islands, but not necessarily to hold them. The basic planning assumptions were that Argentina could take the islands within the “Year of the Malvinas,” 1982, and that they could hold them long enough to gain legitimate sovereignty through negotiations. The use of force was merely a contingency. In the actual event of an Argentine military invasion, they expected that at worst the United States might remain neutral.<sup>20</sup> Admiral Lombardo, the lead Argentine planner, responded with several necessary questions: whether the operation should be joint, whether to prepare to defend the islands, and what forces to allocate to the operation. The answers to these questions proved to be the seeds of failure for the entire planning effort. Admiral Anaya instructed the planners to take over the islands, including South Georgia, but not to prepare a defense, and stated that operational security was their primary concern, which meant they were not to include either the army or air force in the planning process.<sup>21</sup> Another vital component affected by the initial guidance was the operational timeline. Initial instructions included a no-earlier-than invasion date of 15 September 1982, which drove several considerations.<sup>22</sup> By that point, the only British naval presence in the South Atlantic, the HMS *Endurance*, was scheduled to be withdrawn, and the Argentine military anticipated delivery of several critical weapons

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<sup>19</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-6.

<sup>20</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 26. General Galtieri was convinced that his support of US efforts in South America, and the Monroe Doctrine of non-intervention in the western hemisphere would maintain US neutrality, despite NATO ties to the British.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 3. The original intent was to use force in the event of a diplomatic failure, and that invasion could cause increased diplomatic pressure to resolve the sovereignty dispute. Following invasion, Argentine forces could withdraw having drawn increased diplomatic pressure and provide the short-term public relations victory that the Junta desired.

<sup>22</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 26. They later changed this to no earlier than 15 May 1982. An invasion on or after that date might necessitate a delay in any British response until after the South Atlantic Winter, achieving the same effect as an invasion after 15 September 1982.

systems, including fourteen French built Super Etendard aircraft, fifteen Exocet anti-ship missiles, and two submarines of German design.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the time could allow for training of raw conscripts drafted at the start of each year, as well as preparations such as amphibious landing training, and joint coordination.

In contrast the 1981 British Defence Review was scheduled to sell or retire both aircraft carriers *Hermes* and *Invincible*, the entire amphibious force, nine destroyers and frigates, and fifteen percent of naval manpower by September 1982.<sup>24</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward put Argentine reasoning succinctly, “No British carriers meant no air cover, no air cover meant no British surface ships, no surface ships meant no British landing force, no landing force meant ‘No Contest’.”<sup>25</sup> This consideration, combined with the expected increase in Argentine military capability, drove the planning timeline for invasion.

Key for subsequent understanding is that the Argentine plan for invasion incorporated just the seizure of the islands and not a subsequent defense, as instructed by the Argentine Junta. Naval planners presented the basic landing plan to the Junta on 9 March 1982; it remained an exclusively naval operation. It was only then forwarded for joint consideration and incorporation into the overall Argentine national plan to secure the islands within the coming year. This national plan incorporated a landing by marines to seize the island and subsequent relief by an army regiment delivered by the air force, at which time the Marines

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<sup>23</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 47. The French Super-Etendard aircraft and associated Exocet missiles were in the fielding process in Argentina; with French technicians instructing Argentine ground crews and pilots. The submarines were German models under construction in Argentina, and were identical to two others already in service with the Argentine navy. Delivery of these would have raised the total available submarines to four for the Argentine navy, posing a significant threat to British naval forces in the region.

<sup>24</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 60. The aircraft carrier *Hermes* was scheduled for sale to India, and the HMS *Invincible* to Australia. The amphibious assault ships *Fearless* and *Intrepid*, as well as the landing ships *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram* were all scheduled for early withdrawal from service. All of these proved indispensable in the Falklands war.

<sup>25</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 68.

could be withdrawn.<sup>26</sup> Planners gave no consideration to defensive preparations, extension of the runway at Stanley, the need for additional forces, or any British military response.

No one in Argentina anticipated that a little known scrap metal dealer might expedite the invasion timeline, or that the British could respond with overwhelming military force, including the support of the United States; yet this is exactly what happened. That scrap metal dealer, Constantino Davidoff, landed a contingent of workers on South Georgia island, a small mountainous island located over eight hundred miles east of the Falklands and included in the sovereignty dispute. The workers became central to the quarrel between the two states when they raised an Argentine flag and failed to report for authorized entry. When the British demanded they be withdrawn and threatened to do so by force, the Argentine Junta decided to expedite the invasion rather than accept the forcible removal of Argentine citizens.<sup>27</sup>

The decision to expedite the invasion by at least six weeks, with little notice to the Argentine military, had drastic effects on subsequent operations. On 23 March 1982, the Junta asked the planners how soon they could be ready, and they responded that the fleet could sail on 28 March, with an invasion date of 1 April.<sup>28</sup> The initial landing plan had only been approved on 9 March, the air force and army were only informed of the operation on 26 March, and had little input to the invasion plan. Finally, with the total emphasis on the invasion itself, military planners failed to plan branches and sequels.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 14. Even these minimal joint activities, the air force delivery of the 25th Regiment, were only included after 16 March. The 25th Regiment was to constitute an occupation force, and was not expected to face any military opposition.

<sup>27</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 7-12. Domestic coverage of the South Georgia incident affected the actions of both sides. Inflammatory British rhetoric in the press forced the British to respond forcefully to what they feared as another test of their resolve, similar to an incursion on the Sandwich Islands in the 1970s, which continued to be a thorn in their side. The Argentine Junta feared that backing down might threaten their already weak regime, still reeling from the effects of the Dirty War.

<sup>28</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 27. Argentine planners took seventy-two hours to formulate their response, meaning that the meeting where they fixed the invasion date occurred on 26 March, and they ordered the navy to sail within forty-eight hours. Air force units that participated learned of the possibility of a fight with the British only after the navy sailed on 28 March.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 13-14. Although aware of, and hastening against the possibility of British submarines in the South Atlantic, the announcement of the

In the rush, the Junta failed to lead according to the 1977 version of FM 100-5, which they had mirrored from the US military, by failing to issue clear tasks to subordinate units, a fundamental task according to ADRP 5-0.<sup>30</sup> Participating ships and units had little more than forty-eight hours to prepare, some of which were unaware of even the possibility of military action until awoken in the early hours of 26 March. In the scramble to call up reserves, load, and sail—all while maintaining operational security—little thought was devoted to anything other than the imminent invasion. Many units left heavy equipment on the mainland and overall, units were chosen based on expediency rather than readiness or mission focus, all of which had drastic impacts.

No one challenged the fundamental assumption that the British could not respond militarily. Instead, the only trepidation expressed by the Junta and military planners concerned the British nuclear submarine force. The Argentines were well aware that should a submarine be pre-positioned in the South Atlantic before their invasion it could threaten their invasion force, which was a key consideration in their operational planning. Notably, the number one concern of the Argentine Junta in their commanders' guidance was the absolute need for secrecy. In order to maintain that secrecy and prevent any British submarine interference, they delayed distribution of the invasion plan to both the army and air force, and delayed training exercises to prevent British discovery.<sup>31</sup> This worked to the extent that the British did not become aware of the threat until late March, too late to affect the invasion itself, but hindered necessary preparations within the Argentine military.

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Maritime Exclusion Zone caught the Argentine military planners completely unprepared. The transition to a Total Exclusion Zone had the same effect. They should have anticipated each of these and mitigated their effects because they were standard practice.

<sup>30</sup> Field Manual 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), 3-8.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 1-4. The 5th Marines conducted landing training on beaches in Argentina, but only conducted a single iteration because of the change in invasion timeline.

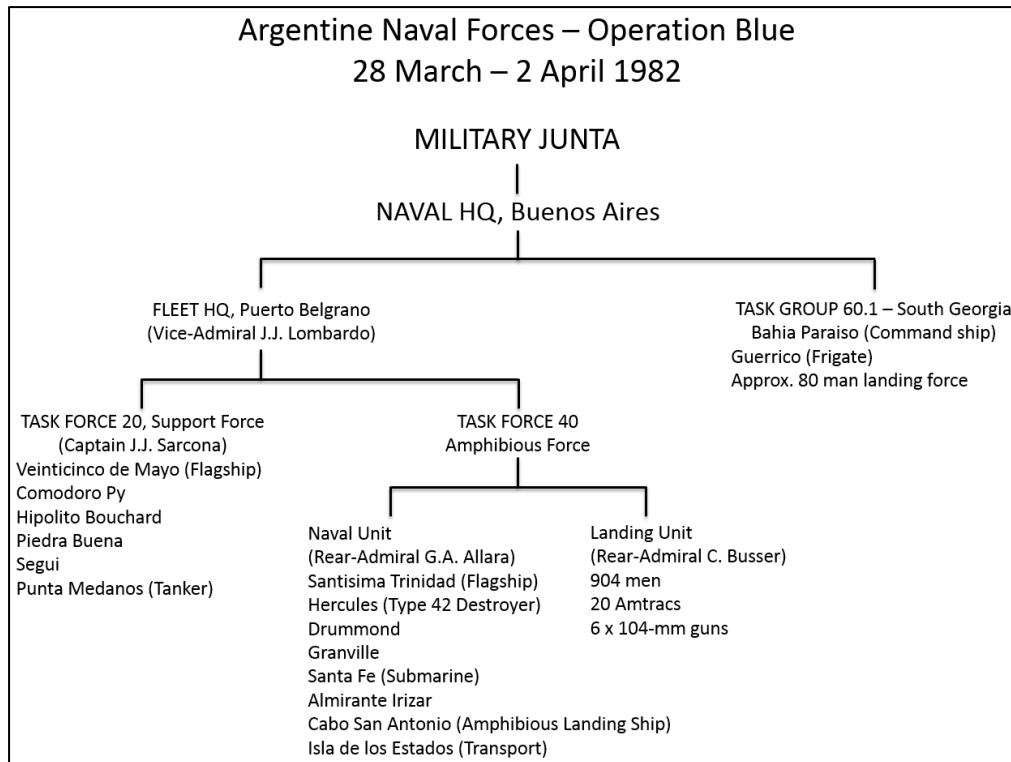


Figure 1. Argentine Naval Forces, Operation Blue. Middlebrook, Martin, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, (South Yorkshire, England: Pen and Sword Military, 2003), 15.

As can be seen from the Operation Blue Task Organization above, the entire operation was subordinate to the Naval Headquarters. Not a single air force asset participated until after the seizure of the islands was complete, and the only army participation was a single platoon that occupied an outlying settlement.<sup>32</sup> In short, the Argentine navy planned and conducted a single service operation for prestige purposes—one that was wholly unnecessary. The eighty British marines on the Falklands hardly warranted the sailing of the entire Argentine navy, or the commitment of nearly a thousand Argentine marines. Had they chosen to, several C-130 aircraft landing an army regiment at Stanley airfield with complete surprise might have been sufficient to seize the islands. This option could have invalidated Argentine submarine fears, and removed a major reason for expediting the invasion.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 19. The initial invasion plan called for a single platoon to occupy Goose Green with the remainder of the Regiment to follow. In fact, the invasion was complete and Argentine marines began withdrawing on the same day of the invasion.

However, Admiral Anaya, who was largely the impetus behind the “Year of the Malvinas,” wanted his navy to seize the islands in a grandiose fashion.<sup>33</sup>

A specific objective of the Argentine landing plan was to reduce casualties, which they accomplished; the Argentines only suffered one killed, and two wounded, while the British detachment took no casualties. The Argentines hoped that by conducting an overwhelming and bloodless invasion, the British might accept the *'fait accompli'* and the Argentine government could then negotiate from a position of strength. Subsequently, the army began deployment of the 25th Regiment and 9th Engineer Company, while the air force dispatched four Pucara aircraft of the 3rd Attack Group as the only garrison forces to remain in the Falklands after the invasion.<sup>34</sup> In fact, responsibility for the islands transferred from the Argentine navy to the army before the end of the 2 April, with Brigadier General Mario Menendez becoming Governor of the Malvinas.<sup>35</sup>

The British could do little more than advise the Royal Marine garrison and dispatch a submarine before the Argentine arrival. They placed the issue before the United Nations Security Council on 2 April, gaining the backing of the United States almost immediately; this was a severe blow to Argentine plans to use international pressure against the British in negotiations.<sup>36</sup> The support of the United States also provided critical sidewinder air-to-air

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<sup>33</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 17. The principal fear of the Argentine Junta was that the British would discover their intent to seize the islands in time for the British to surge nuclear submarines into the South Atlantic. Even the threat of a British submarine in Argentine waters could make any naval invasion impossible.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 40. Several British media sources indicate that the 25th Regiment was largely ceremonial, drawn from across Argentina in a non-standard unit configuration. Neither Argentine nor British military testimonials support this conjecture. 25th Regiment was representative of Regiments across Argentina, in that it was composed of raw conscripts who had just been drafted and due to operational security concerns, did not even know that they were invading the Falklands until already at sea.

<sup>35</sup> Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic*, 1. The Falklands, or Malvinas as the Argentines call them, are composed of East and West Falkland, South Georgia, the South Sandwich Islands and over two hundred smaller islands across the South Atlantic. Crucially, claims of sovereignty have impacts on future natural resource claims in Antarctica.

<sup>36</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 46. The basic assumption of US neutrality or even support for the Argentine cause proved to be nearly as disastrous as the assumption



missiles, and the use of Ascension island, both of which proved to be vital in the conflict that followed.<sup>37</sup> UN Resolution 502 called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, an immediate withdrawal of Argentine forces from the islands, and a diplomatic solution between the United Kingdom and the Argentine government.<sup>38</sup>

The first action taken by the British was the declaration of a Maritime Exclusion Zone (MEZ) extending two hundred nautical miles from the islands. They dispatched the nuclear submarines *Spartan* and *Splendid* on 1 April as the British realized the landings were imminent. They were in place to enforce a naval blockade of the islands by 12 April.<sup>39</sup> This blockade delayed a significant amount of food and all of the heavy equipment of X Brigade. III Brigade never received their heavy equipment languishing in port in Argentina for fear of sinking at the hands of a British submarine enroute to the islands.<sup>40</sup> The Argentine military tried to compensate for this with an impressive air effort, flying more than five hundred transport flights into the islands before the start of significant action on 29 April.

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of British military inaction. US international support enabled UN Resolution 502, and military support made the British intervention in the South Atlantic possible.

<sup>37</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 52. Approximately nine out of ten Argentine aircraft shot down over the course of the conflict were destroyed with sidewinder missiles. Without these, the Royal Navy might have been unable to gain local air superiority. Ascension island was a critical central support location facilitating cross loading, and a staging base for long range bombing attacks on Port Stanley.

<sup>38</sup> Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 41. Subsequent Argentine proposals would focus on the cessation of hostilities clause, viewing the sailing of the British Naval Task Force as a threat and requiring that the Task Force stop or turn around as a precondition for Argentine withdrawal. The British obviously focused on an Argentine withdrawal as a precondition to halting the Task Force. The US focused on the diplomatic solution clause, hoping for international peacekeepers and a negotiated settlement, but unless the British Task Force halted, confrontation became inevitable.

<sup>39</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 67. Argentine planners were unaware of the specific arrival dates of British submarines, and worried about any sailings to the islands after 1 April, delaying the departure of some ships and cancelling the sailings of others.

<sup>40</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 68. Late notification of movement delayed the loading of the III Brigade heavy equipment, and by the time the cargo ship was prepared to sail, the British had sunk the Light Cruiser *General Belgrano*, which caused the Junta to cancel the sailing of the III Brigade equipment. Attempts to transport key systems via C-130 were superseded by more important requirements for the defense of Port Stanley.

The change of the MEZ to a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) on 30 April also proved significant. The wording of the notification to the Argentine government proved key, since it now included any ship or aircraft approaching the exclusion zone that might be a threat to British units.<sup>41</sup> The Argentine Junta feared that this might lead to attacks on Argentine military bases in the homeland, specifically the airbase at Rio Grande, which housed the vital Exocet-equipped Super-Etendard aircraft.<sup>42</sup> This base and others required significant defenses, tying down assets such as marine battalions, anti-aircraft units, and Mirage III squadrons for the duration of the war.

Meanwhile, the British were frantically dispatching their large naval task force, hoping to persuade the Argentines to withdraw as well as confuse them over the exact composition of the Task Force. Initial land forces committed to the operation included the 3rd Commando Brigade Royal Marines, and the 5th Infantry Brigade.<sup>43</sup> However, it was the vast amount of naval power dispatched that made the operation distinctive. The Royal Navy at the time was the world's third largest navy, and the Task Force that sailed for the South Atlantic was composed of a remarkable array of naval power. It included two aircraft carriers, almost two dozen destroyers and frigates, six nuclear submarines and more than seventy five amphibious support and transport vessels.<sup>44</sup> This incredible collection of forces, which

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<sup>41</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 75. Several sources dispute whether this ambiguity was intentional, to provide cover for any engagements outside the TEZ, or because of US diplomatic pressure to contain the conflict to the islands themselves.

<sup>42</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 131. British deception intended to force robust defenses of the Argentine mainland were included in their plans from the outset, including a feint from Ascension island by the leading naval Task Force.

<sup>43</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 30. Initial sailings of the British included the 3rd Commando Brigade. The Argentine response to the British sailing included designation and movement of the III Brigade to the islands. Once the British realized this, the 5th Infantry Brigade was committed, leading to significant logistics challenges as the British attempted to rush this formation to join the action in the South Atlantic.

<sup>44</sup> Henry Leach, "Management and the Assembly of the Task Force" in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On: Lessons for the Future* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 64. Pradeep P. Had the Argentine invasion occurred just one year later, over one third of this awesome force might not have been available.

constituted the largest amphibious operation since World War Two, sailed with less than a weeks' notice on 5 April. The guidance given to the Task Force commander Admiral Sandy Woodward was simply, "to land...with a view to repossessing the Falkland Islands."<sup>45</sup> This allowed Admiral Woodward to formulate three simple objectives: neutralize the enemy navy and air force, put landing forces ashore safely, and support the seizure of Stanley before mid-June with minimum losses to British forces.<sup>46</sup>

The Royal Navy's hurry to provide a hasty and public display of the sailings, meant men and equipment loaded in a haphazard fashion, requiring weeks to sort out and reconfigure as the Task Force assembled off of Ascension island in the middle Atlantic. During this time, combat ships were ordered to proceed to the Falklands to set conditions, and a small element was sent to South Georgia to provide a swift easy victory to play well with the press.<sup>47</sup> The brief action at South Georgia occurred on 26 April, with minimal British casualties; the Argentines however lost 180 prisoners and the disabling of the submarine *Santa Fe*.<sup>48</sup>

This was to be the first of many tactical incidents intentionally distorted by the Argentine Junta to deceive the people of Argentina. The Junta consistently exaggerated the damage inflicted on the British Task Force in order to convince the people that the fight was

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<sup>45</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 185. All planning centered around the enclave theory, that they might establish a lodgement and force a settlement, or carry forward with seizing the islands. A blockade was discarded from the outset because the Royal Navy could not sustain a blockade in the South Atlantic.

<sup>46</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 21. Admiral Woodward also saw the need to obtain and maintain the initiative and force the Argentine commander to take a series of decisions he had not planned for, with insufficient time to think them through properly.

<sup>47</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 71. An easy victory was necessary to thwart increasing international pressure for a settlement, and increasing domestic dissension asking why a military intervention was necessary. Many in the British cabinet assumed that any peaceful settlement became impossible as soon as British forces fired their guns in anger, which was exactly what they wanted.

<sup>48</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 72-73. The British disabled it while tied up to the dock at South Georgia. It subsequently foundered under tow back to the Falklands. The *Santa Fe* was a World War Two Guppy class submarine, more worthy of a museum than combat against advanced naval technology such as the British brought to the theater.

going well. This was a consistent pattern of the Argentine war effort, leading to massive shock when the people learned of the ultimate loss of the islands.<sup>49</sup> These disparities in reporting led the Junta to overestimate the damage they were inflicting on British forces, and cause them to believe in the prospect for success far longer than commanders on the ground.



Figure 2. British Task Force movement to Ascension, and maneuver towards South Georgia and the Falklands.

Source: Department of History, United States Military Academy (2014, July 30), accessed December 28, 2016,

<sup>49</sup> Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 323-331. Official British casualty figures include 255 killed, 777 wounded, and the loss of 35 aircraft (11 fixed-wing and 24 helicopters). Type 21 Frigates Antelope, and Ardent, Type 42 Destroyers Coventry, and Sheffield, Landing Craft Utility Foxtrot Four, the Landing Transports Sir Galahad, and Sir Tristram as well as the Heavy Container Ship Atlantic Conveyor. Add to these various ships damaged by unexploded bombs and other air attacks and just the official figures are significant. In contrast, the Argentine military claimed in excess of 700 killed, 1,500 wounded, over 66 aircraft destroyed, and huge disparities in the ships damaged and destroyed. Argentine pilots even claimed damage to both British aircraft carriers over the course of the conflict.

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/b/b6/Falklands,\\_Campaign,\\_\(Distances\\_to\\_bases\)\\_1982.jpg/301px-Falklands,\\_Campaign,\\_\(Distances\\_to\\_bases\)\\_1982.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/b/b6/Falklands,_Campaign,_(Distances_to_bases)_1982.jpg/301px-Falklands,_Campaign,_(Distances_to_bases)_1982.jpg).

Despite this, the possibility of withdrawal in the face of British military intervention was now impossible for the Junta. Since the Argentine people had come out overwhelmingly in support of the invasion, a precipitous withdrawal could lead to a fall of the military government.<sup>50</sup> They now had to stay and defend the islands regardless of the original intent because a back-down would entail political oblivion. Faced with an oncoming threat, the army began pouring reinforcements onto the islands.

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<sup>50</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 47. Ironically, the Junta had decided to expedite the invasion in order to avoid a fall of the government. They were now forced to defend the islands to avoid a fall of the government, and should they fail to defend the islands successfully, might face a violent overthrow of the government by those same crowds that now chanted their support of the foray to the Falklands.

## Fight for the Falklands

The fight for the Falklands began on 30 April, and was essentially conducted in three phases. These three phases started with a naval engagement, followed by condition setting and invasion, and finally an overland attack to Port Stanley. Due to a lack of coordination, the Argentine services ended up fighting as main efforts by phase. With only a brief period of Argentine naval participation in the first phase, the second phase became an air force fight as they attempted to contest air superiority and then interdict the British task force. Once the British got ashore in force, only the Argentine Army could slow their advance, since attrition and operational reach from the mainland had marginalized the air force.

### Phase 1 – Draw out the Argentine Navy and Air Force

Action began on 30 April with the arrival of the lead British task force composed of fifteen ships: the two aircraft carriers *Hermes* and *Invincible*, ten destroyers, and three supply ships. The British intended to capitalize on Argentine doctrine which mirrored US doctrine, calling for a straightforward assault in the face of enemy defenses. Knowing this tendency in Argentine doctrine, the British incorporated deception to convince the Argentines that a major landing directly against Port Stanley was imminent.<sup>51</sup> This might draw out the Argentine air force and navy for a general engagement before the vulnerable landing ships arrived in the latter half of May.<sup>52</sup>

Inconceivable to the Argentine military was an engagement that opened the shooting on 1 May, as the Royal Air Force (RAF) flew a Vulcan Bomber over four thousand miles from Ascension Island with multiple aerial refueling, to hit the Port Stanley Airfield and

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<sup>51</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 132-133.

<sup>52</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 76. Argentine sources dispute this, arguing that initial success in downing British aircraft attacking Stanley, and engaging Royal Navy (RN) ships that approached Port Stanley forced the British to delay their invasion plans. This assertion is unsupported by the memoirs of British commanders, or testimonials of British soldiers on the ground.

render the runway unserviceable.<sup>53</sup> The British thought the bombing was successful and repeated it several times during the conflict. The persistent threat of air attack proved a minor distraction to the Argentines since the airfield was essentially their only lifeline. They were able to mitigate this threat with extensive air defense units, and deception aimed at convincing the British that the runway was unserviceable. These efforts were so successful that British observers were shocked at the end of the conflict when they realized that they had never actually severed the Argentine air bridge to the mainland.

1 May saw the first major aerial engagements as the Argentine air force dispatched dozens of aircraft against several British destroyers bombarding Port Stanley, with additional fighters to engage the Harriers over the Falklands.<sup>54</sup> These engagements resulted in damage to the British destroyer *Alacrity*, and when the British realized how vulnerable they were, they withdrew to the east. However, the truly pivotal realization came when the British Sea Harriers were able to shoot down three Argentine aircraft and emerge unscathed.<sup>55</sup> The Argentine air force realized the dominance of the Sea Harrier, with its Sidewinder missile, and conceded air superiority over the islands for the remainder of the conflict.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Walter F. DeHoust, "Offensive Air Operations of the Falklands War," 12-13. Repeated Vulcan bomber and Harrier strikes against the runway at Stanley saw some success, but Argentine engineers were able to repair the landing strip within hours. Argentine military personnel concealed the operational airstrip with piles of dirt during the day which they cleared for nightly arrivals of C-130 Hercules from the mainland. In fact, over the course of the conflict the runway at Stanley was never out of action for more than a few hours at a time.

<sup>54</sup> Walter F. DeHoust, "Offensive Air Operations of the Falklands War," 19-20. Initial success by Argentine aircraft forced the British to pair destroyers with both a Type 42 and Type 22 destroyer. The Type 42 provided long range, high altitude air defense, while the Type 22 provided short range, low altitude air defense. However, the British saw at San Carlos that the Type 22 destroyer target acquisition system became overloaded when presented with four or more targets and refused to fire, leading to the success of Argentine mass tactics.

<sup>55</sup> Horacio M. Gonzalez, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On: Lessons for the Future*, 79. This was the only time the Argentines challenged the Harriers with their Mirage Vs. Realizing the superiority of the Harrier Sidewinder missile over their first generation Shafrir.

<sup>56</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 90-91. The Argentine air force retained their Mirage IIIs for the defense of Argentina. Future attempts to mitigate the Harriers consisted of decoying away from incoming strikes and massing to overwhelm the limited British aircraft available.

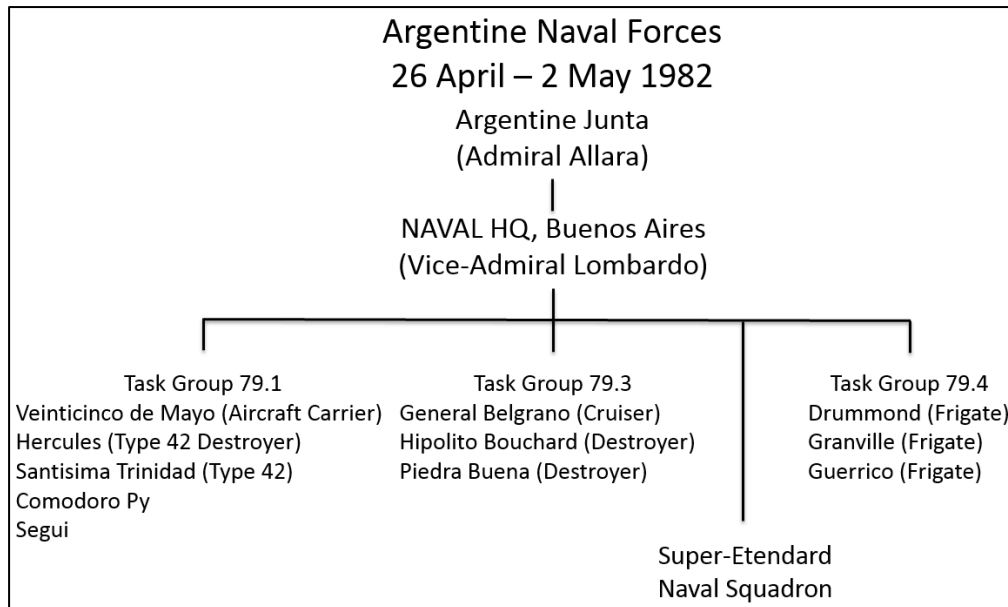


Figure 3. Argentine Naval Forces 26 April – 2 May 1982. Middlebrook, Martin, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen and Sword Military, 2003), 96-97.

The Argentine navy organized itself into three separate strike groups and a squadron of Exocet-equipped Super-Etendard aircraft at Rio Grande. Each of the task groups had an Exocet strike capability and could prove difficult for the British to deal with, if their actions were coordinated. On 1 May, each side searched for the other, but only established their respective locations at dusk. Admiral Allara ordered the carrier task group to proceed with an attack early on 2 May. The Argentine navy planned a coordinated air strike from the carrier's Super-Etendard squadron and subsequent attacks by all three surface action groups. However, poor wind conditions and a realization that the British were not conducting immediate landings on the islands convinced Vice Admiral Lombardo to call off the risky endeavor. With the subsequent sinking of the Light Cruiser *General Belgrano* on 2 May by HMS *Conqueror*, the Argentine navy withdrew to home waters and did not take any further part in the conflict.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 116. Even though the navy was the primary motivator behind seizing the islands, they found themselves on the sidelines as the fight evolved in the islands. However, the casualties suffered with the sinking of the *General Belgrano* left the navy with the preponderance of losses at the end of the war. Since the sinking of the *General Belgrano* caused the single largest loss of life for either side, the decision to sink the ship outside of the MEZ has drawn criticism from both Argentina and Britain. Argentines question whether the sinking



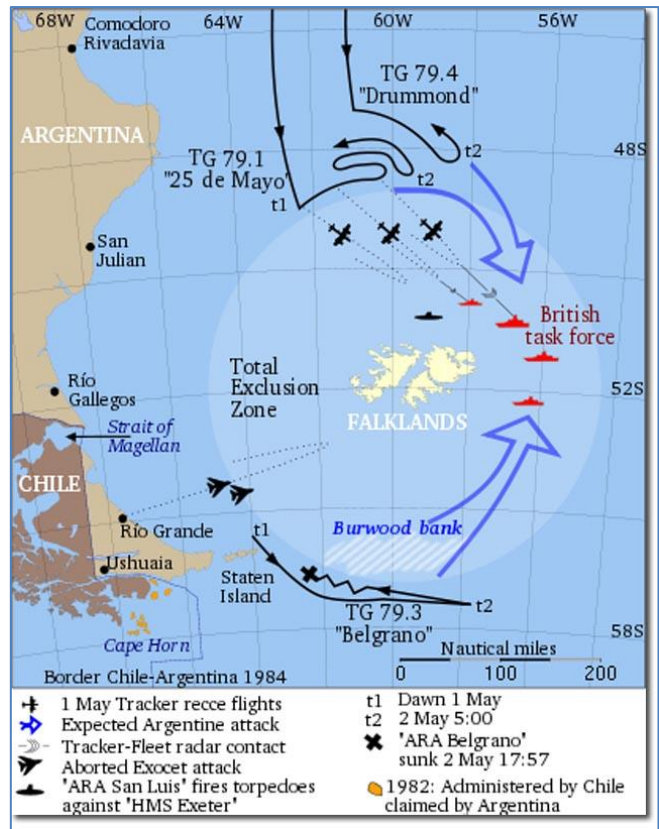


Figure 4. British lure out the Argentine fleet.

Source: The Falklands War, 1982 (n.d.), accessed December 30, 2016, <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/images4/falklandswarmapbelgrano.jpg>.

The only contribution the navy made was with its Super-Etendard squadron and the Skyhawk A-4B aircraft transferred from the *Veinticinco de Mayo* aircraft carrier, which conducted attacks on British ships. The first such attack occurred on 4 May as two Super-Etendards engaged the HMS *Sheffield*, which sank several days later.

## Phase 2 – Condition Setting and Invasion

The British proceeded with landings of the Special Air Service (SAS) and Special Boat Service (SBS) to conduct reconnaissance of Argentine positions on the islands, and provide targeting data for naval shelling and aerial attacks. They also increased the isolation of the islands by repeated strikes on the airfields at Stanley and Goose Green, as well as the

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was a deliberate attempt to torpedo peace negotiations, which were showing prospects for success at that point.

destruction of the few Argentine mobility assets available to BG Menendez. The most significant of these assets were five logistics vessels retained within the Falkland Sound, and various aircraft at Pebble Island.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, the SAS conducted a raid on Pebble Island on 14 May, destroying all eleven aircraft and reducing the flexibility afforded BG Menendez in the coming fight.<sup>59</sup> The few available logistics ships within the Falkland Sound were all targeted from 10–16 May, whether by the HMS *Alacrity* or various air strikes, as the British systematically effected the isolation of Argentine forces.<sup>60</sup>

British attempts to bombard shore defenses proved costly as the HMS *Glasgow* and HMS *Brilliant* were engaged on 12 May by multiple Skyhawk aircraft. This attack was indicative of future engagements; British missile defense systems proved inadequate as the Skyhawks were able to hit the *Glasgow*, although the bomb failed to explode. The HMS *Glasgow* was withdrawn and did not participate further in the war, and it along with the sinking of the HMS *Sheffield*, meant two British destroyers were out of action within the first two weeks of the war.<sup>61</sup> The British decided that daylight operations close to Stanley were too

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<sup>58</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 127-131. The Falkland Sound is the sea-lane running between east and west Falkland, from which these five ships could conduct limited movement of forces and supplies critical to the Argentine defense. MG Menendez and the Argentine military forces on the islands faced significant logistical challenges, the most crucial of which was mobility. While able to continue the logistical flow from the mainland with a continuous C-130 airlift, these supplies stacked up at Stanley, and they were unable to deliver them to isolated garrisons. Thus, isolated positions faced shortages of food, ammunition, and fuel that had operational impacts in subsequent engagements.

<sup>59</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 136. These eleven aircraft included Pucara propeller driven ground attack aircraft, several Aeromacchi jet trainers and most importantly a coast guard Skyvan used to shuttle supplies to and from Stanley. Although the raid and repeated air attacks on Pebble Island did little damage to the facilities, continued attrition made further operations from the airstrip impossible.

<sup>60</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 205. The sinking of the *Isla de los Estados*, by the HMS *Alacrity* as it transited the Falkland Sound was the only surface action between British and Argentine ships during the conflict. It was actually a secondary benefit. The *Alacrity* was tasked to transit the Sound to determine the presence of mines, and Argentine shipping was simply a target of opportunity.

<sup>61</sup> Walter F. DeHoust, "Offensive Air Operations of the Falklands War" (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1984), 2. Advanced British surface to air missiles, designed to engage Cold War opponents such as the Russian Backfire and Badger bombers were unable to combat outdated aircraft using World War Two bombing tactics.

hazardous and withdrew for the time being. However, the failure of the Argentine bomb to detonate on the *Glasgow* was a consistent problem that plagued Argentine pilots until the closing weeks of the war. They repeatedly pressed home their attacks at such low altitudes that the bomb fuses did not have sufficient time to arm and passed straight through British warships.<sup>62</sup> Over the course of the conflict, twelve separate ships were hit by bombs that failed to explode, with several of those ships taking several hits.<sup>63</sup> The Argentine air force was aware of the possibility, though not the extent of the problem until the British press published accounts of unexploded ordinance after the initial engagements in San Carlos Bay. At that point, it became a national priority and they were able to modify the fuses, although it proved too late to have any large impact on the outcome of the war.

By 18 May, the British had forced the Argentine fleet to retreat into home waters, and completed initial reconnaissance of both the landing areas and Argentine locations. This initial reconnaissance included navigating the Falkland Sound with combat ships to confirm the absence of Argentine mines. Without any minesweepers in the Task Force, the British could only locate mines if a ship physically hit them as it maneuvered through the Sound.<sup>64</sup>

The British landing force joined the warships off the Falklands on 18 May, although poor weather forced a delay of the invasion until 20 May.<sup>65</sup> Attempts to soften up the

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<sup>62</sup> Horacio M. Gonzalez, *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On: Lessons for the Future*, 78-79. The primary problem was fusing. Having never tested their British built Mk-17 1,000 lb. bombs against naval targets; they were unaware of the arming issue and bombs meant for ground targets passed straight through ships without exploding. Their US built Mk-82 500 lb. bombs had a better record of exploding, but the smaller size reduced their impact.

<sup>63</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 48. Two bombs that failed to explode struck the HMS *Antelope*. However, while attempting to disarm one of them, it exploded resulting in the sinking of the HMS *Antelope* in San Carlos Bay.

<sup>64</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 201-202. Admiral Woodward tasked the HMS *Alacrity*, a Type 21 frigate, to sail up and down the straight knowing that if there were mines the frigate faced a huge risk of sinking in an isolated position.

<sup>65</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 140. The British military planners needed calm seas for the landing forces, and cloud cover to reduce the effectiveness of Argentine air strikes. A south Atlantic storm on 18 May necessitated a delay to the 20th, with a forecast of cloud cover for the next two days.

Argentine land forces and to draw the Argentine air force into a significant engagement had seen only limited success. However, with the south Atlantic winter fast approaching, the British had no choice but to invade.<sup>66</sup> As British ships approached the landing beaches, the most significant threat was the Argentine garrison at Goose Green and a small contingent forward staged to Fanning Head that could directly observe the landing beaches. British planners were aware of Argentine capabilities, due to the significant reconnaissance effort, and now used special operations forces, naval bombardment, and multiple deception operations to fix the Argentine garrison. Although Argentine forces at Fanning Head reported British forces in the area, they did not detect the actual landings until the following morning. It was the opportunity the Argentine air force had been waiting for.

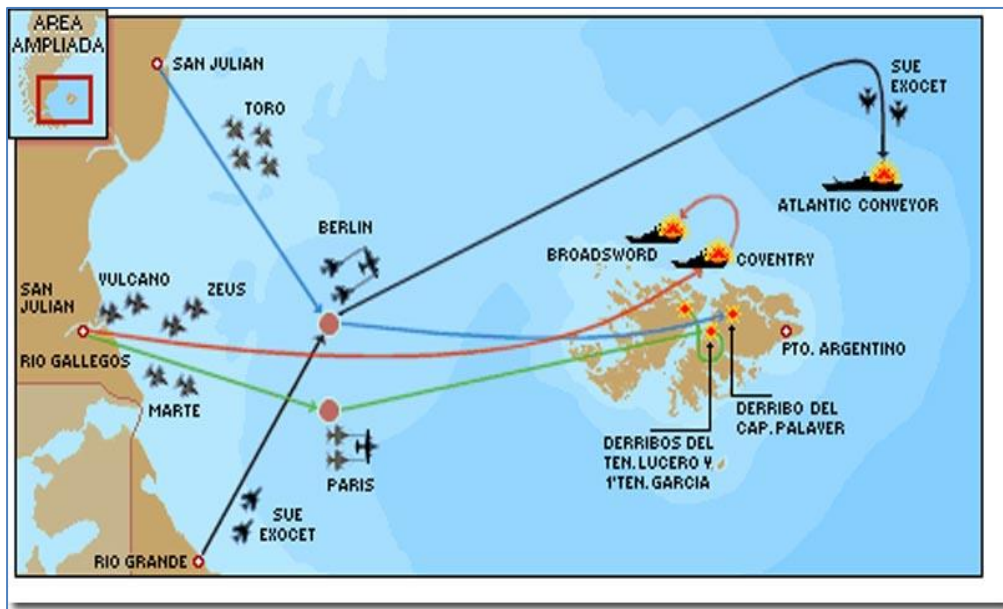


Figure 5. Significant Argentine Air Strikes against British Naval Forces.

Source: The Falklands War, 1982 (n.d.), accessed December 30, 2016, <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/images4/falklandswarairbattle.jpg>.

Having conserved their forces in the opening weeks, the Argentine air force had sixty-two strike aircraft, but these had to operate at extreme ranges, without fighter escort, and

<sup>66</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 141. The South Atlantic winter was part of the original Argentine planning considerations. The no earlier than invasion date of 15 May might have ensured that the South Atlantic winter could have hampered any British response and allowed the Argentine military to prepare while international negotiations proceeded.

against the significant anti-aircraft defenses of the British landing forces. The first flights took off by 1030 local and continued throughout the day. They were able to sink the destroyer *Ardent*, hit the destroyers *Argonaut*, and *Antrim* with bombs, which again did not explode, and damage the destroyers *Brilliant* and *Broadsword* with cannon fire; but the Argentines also lost ten aircraft in the attacks.<sup>67</sup>

During the first day's engagements, significant problems arose for the Argentine pilots, one involving preparation, and one involving objective. In preparation, the air force had not used the time from 2 April to 1 May to familiarize themselves with the Falklands, with extended flights over the open ocean, or with air to ship engagements.<sup>68</sup> Many pilots were seeing the islands for the first time, and conducting the first ship attacks of their career, having never trained for the task. As they pressed home their attacks, they did so at extremely low altitudes, with aircraft even hitting towers and antennas in several instances. Their designated objective on 21 May was to engage the British ships in San Carlos Bay. The pilots were not directed to target the landing ships, and instead engaged the warships which proved difficult to approach, and resilient after taking damage.<sup>69</sup> By haphazardly choosing the first targets identified, they engaged the warships at the head of the bay and missed their only opportunity to engage the far more vulnerable landing ships before the anti-aircraft defenses were established on the high ground around the bay.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the Argentine air force

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<sup>67</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Csaba B. Hezsely, "Argentine Air Power in the Falklands War," 13. Attacks occurred in waves, with the largest losses to Argentine aircraft occurring later in the day as British Harriers discovered their approach path and staged ambushes on incoming Skyhawk raids.

<sup>68</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 159. The Argentine air force only conducted a single air to ship practice engagement due to interservice coordination problems with the Argentine navy. In the lead up to British arrival, the navy was more focused on refitting their aging fleet and conducting their own training to attack British vessels.

<sup>69</sup> Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 226-229. Some Argentine sources claim that they intended to attack landing and logistics ships, but that in the chaos of San Carlos Bay aircraft simply attacked the first target they identified. None of the first accounts from Argentine pilots support these claims.

<sup>70</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 165. Within twenty-four hours Rapier missile batteries, blowpipe missiles and other air defenses were able to target further Argentine air strikes, reducing their effectiveness.

failed to contest the British Combat Air Patrol (CAP), contributing to the destruction of nine Argentine aircraft by British Harriers. Had they contested air superiority, with even minimal Mirage III presence, at a minimum the Argentine losses may have been reduced, and the effectiveness of the bombing runs might have been significantly improved.<sup>71</sup> By the following day, the British had landed all of their fighting units, including over 3,000 infantry, twenty-four 105mm field guns, eight light tanks, and most importantly, one battery of Rapier air-defense missiles.<sup>72</sup> This allowed several landing ships to depart, reducing the threat posed by subsequent air attacks.

Sequencing their tactical actions, the British engaged the Argentine rotary-wing reserve early on 21 May, knowing that it posed the most significant threat to their lodgment. Having identified an operational pattern of the Argentine helicopters, they struck the aviation assembly area that was outside the anti-aircraft defenses of Stanley. In this and another attack two days later, the British destroyed nine of nineteen Argentine helicopters, reducing Argentine mobility and logistics capabilities.<sup>73</sup> Simultaneously, British attacks destroyed five of seven ships that BG Menendez was reliant upon for local supply work. This, and a lack of visibility on the landings themselves, led BG Menendez to conclude that the landings at San Carlos Bay were too far away to pose a significant threat to Stanley, and he did not employ his helicopter reserve. Instead, he reinforced the garrison at Goose Green with several artillery pieces.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 262. British Harriers were free to descend on Argentine strike aircraft as they entered the Amphibious Operations Area (AOA), without having to allocate any of their limited aircraft to counter a high altitude air threat.

<sup>72</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 37. Delays and confusion hindered the offloading on day one and had continued effects, forcing the British to cancel daylight offloading due to the Argentine air threat. The extremely slow nightly offloads delayed the British advance on Port Stanley and forced a search for an alternate landing site for the 5th Infantry Brigade.

<sup>73</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 149-150. These strikes occurred in the morning, before Argentine helicopters repositioned to Stanley inside the air defense umbrella.

<sup>74</sup> Pradeep P. Barua *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 47. British 105mm artillery significantly outranged the Argentine Oto Melara 105mm pack howitzers sent to the

The Argentine air force was the only service that could impact the landings at San Carlos Bay, with repeated airstrikes hitting four more British ships, though not a single bomb exploded. The destroyer *Antelope* was the only significant British loss, when an unexploded bomb detonated during attempts to disarm it, sinking the ship on 23 May. For this the Argentine air force lost a further six aircraft. More importantly, the 3rd Naval Fighter and Attack Squadron was pulled out of action due to attrition, which was significant because they were the most qualified and most successful in ship engagements to that point.<sup>75</sup> Engagements out at sea resulted in the sinking of the HMS *Coventry*, and damage to the HMS *Broadsword*. Employment of the Super-Etendard squadron on 25 May resulted in the destruction of the container ship *Atlantic Conveyor* with significant operational impacts.<sup>76</sup>

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Falklands. The Argentine Army did have vastly more powerful 155mm artillery, but only sent three to the islands. The Argentine command only repositioned one of these to Goose Green to counter the British landings.

<sup>75</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 168. They were the only Skyhawk squadron with air to ship engagement training, since they were a naval squadron that originally operated from the Argentine aircraft carrier, *Veinticinco de Mayo*.

<sup>76</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 37. Onboard the *Atlantic Conveyor* were three Chinook heavy lift helicopters and ten Wessex helicopters, desperately needed to speed the movement of British forces across the Falklands for the assault on Stanley. Also onboard was all of the equipment needed to construct an airstrip for Harriers in the beach-head area in Carlos Bay.

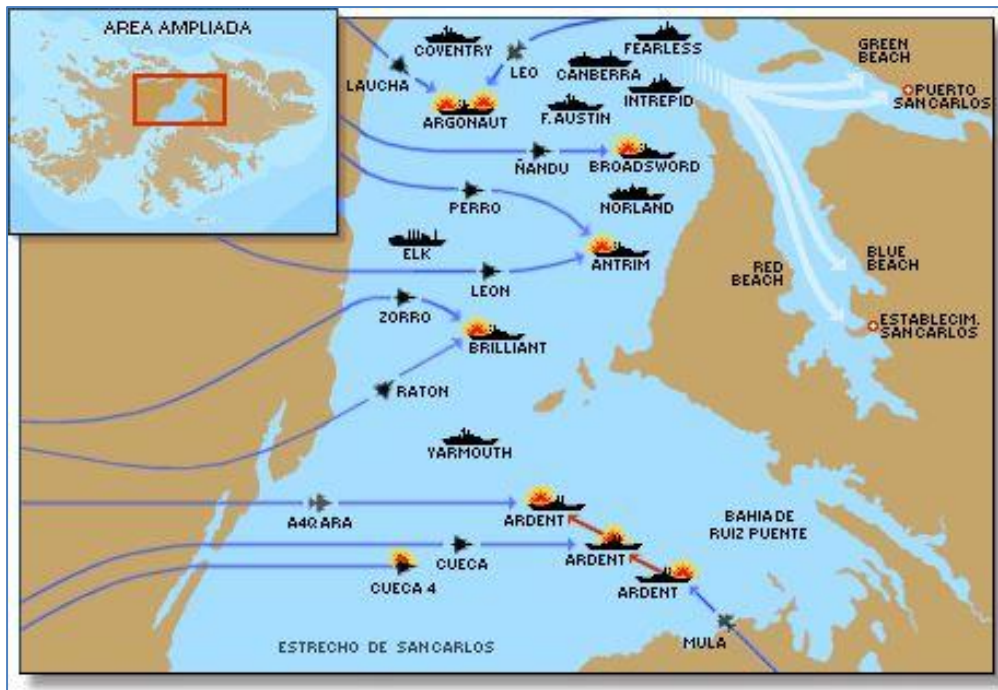


Figure 6. Argentine engagements in “Bomb Alley”.

Source: Ships Diary (n.d.), accessed January 2, 2017, <http://www.hmsbrilliant.com/images/Bomb%20Alley%20map.jpg>.

However, by 25 May the landing was largely complete. In nine days, Argentine air force units launched one hundred and twenty sorties, sunk three destroyers (*Ardent*, *Antelope*, and *Coventry*), destroyed the *Atlantic Conveyor*, hit six more ships with bombs which failed to explode, and damaged several others with cannon fire.<sup>77</sup> In doing so, they lost twenty-one aircraft, and the British air defenses were so well established by 25 May that the prospect of decisive results was now gone. The air phase of the Argentine campaign to retain the Falklands had closed.

### Phase 3 – Attack to Port Stanley

During the British landings, the Argentine Army garrison did not interfere in any way, not even with artillery or commando operations. As the Army realized that the landing was no diversion, they considered several options. These included use of the helicopter

<sup>77</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 175. Argentine sources claim significantly more, mostly due to cannon fire, and expand the casualties caused both at sea and on the landing forces.



reserve, an advance by the Goose Green garrison just seventeen miles away, a concentration of forces from west Falkland since they were now being made irrelevant, and finally use of the IV Air Mobile Brigade from the mainland to menace the landing areas. They discarded each of these because of the attendant transportation difficulties, and a firm belief that Stanley was the key to the Falklands. BG Menendez had identified the center of gravity as Stanley, believing that by retaining this strategic point, any British attack could be defeated.

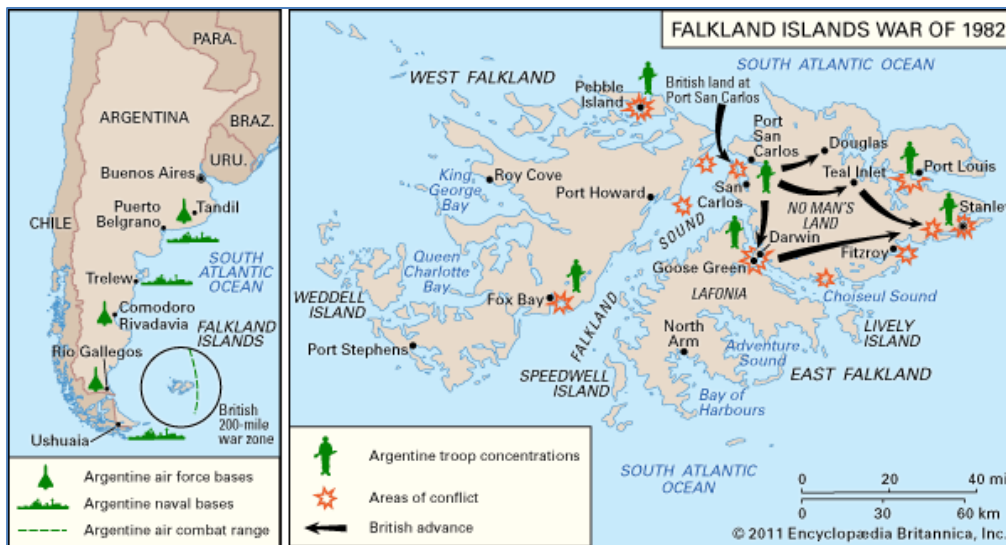


Figure 7. Falklands land campaign.

Source: Falkland Islands War: Falkland Islands War zone and route of British landing forces (Map/Still), Britannica Online, accessed January 22, 2017, <http://media.web.britannica.com/eb-media/25/149025-004-2501D854.gif>.

Although not militarily necessary, British forces first advanced on the garrison at Goose Green to obtain a quick victory. The British cabinet wanted to offset the negative press generated by significant naval losses during the landing. It was here that Argentine command confusion became readily apparent as the garrison consisted of a hodgepodge of elements from C Company 25th Regiment, the 12th Regiment (minus B Company – retained as helicopter reserve), and an isolated platoon from the 8th Regiment. Thus, the commander at Goose Green had fifteen hundred men facing five hundred British paratroopers, though they were from three separate regiments. The lack of heavy equipment meant the Argentine forces had no vehicles, half their normal heavy machine guns, practically no mortars, and only two

radios in the entire garrison.<sup>78</sup> Adding to this, most of the garrison was from the now infamous ‘class of 63.’<sup>79</sup> Their lack of training caused significant problems as the British took advantage with their professional force conducting repeated night attacks.<sup>80</sup>

During the attacks starting on 28 May, the British took substantial casualties, and the Argentine defenders did well despite their difficulties.<sup>81</sup> The only assistance coming from outside was a company delivered by helicopter consisting of elements of the 12th and 25th Regiment from Stanley.<sup>82</sup> Although only eighty-four men, even this contingent was a scratch force, comprised of three different units, despite over a week since the British landing to prepare contingencies for a British attack. Additionally, on the evening of 28 May, BG Parada dispatched the helicopter reserve with B Company 12th Regiment, in an attempt to bolster the defenses at Goose Green and stave off a looming disaster. However, he failed to inform the commander at Goose Green, and the landing of 140 men south of their positions came as a

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<sup>78</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 38, 50. The unit only had 11 instead of 25 7.62mm machine guns, 2 of 10 81mm mortars, 1 of 4 120mm mortars, and 1 of 13 106mm recoilless rifles. In contrast, the 2nd Parachute Battalion that making the assault had doubled their allocation of machine guns and acquired a number of M79 grenade launchers not originally authorized to the unit. In fact, British units had Milan anti-tank missiles, 84mm Carl Gustav rocket launchers, and 66mm disposable rocket launchers allocated to them. At the end of the day, Argentine untrained light infantry could not cope with well-trained British Heavy Infantry.

<sup>79</sup> Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 76. The class of 1963 was significant since the Argentine military practice of a yearly call of conscripts led to the deployment of untrained recruits just weeks away from being civilians. Each year the Argentine military called up every able bodied eighteen year old, who reported in January for an 8-12 month term of enlistment. This meant that the ‘class of 63’ reported in January-February, and by the time many units shipped out for the Falklands, many had no training whatsoever.

<sup>80</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 51. British night attacks took advantage of their superior training, but not necessarily better equipment. Neither side fielded night vision devices at the individual level during the Falkland war. Whenever British soldiers attacked in daylight, they incurred significantly higher casualties against prepared Argentine defenders.

<sup>81</sup> Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 266. Accounts differ with the official British casualty figures listing 17 British and 50 Argentine killed in action. Argentine forces claim many more. The British casualties included LTC Jones, the most senior British casualty of the conflict.

<sup>82</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 40. This ad-hoc formation was assembled with little notice by BG Jofre, rather than BG Parada who was the actual commander of the garrison at Goose Green.

complete surprise to the Argentine garrison.<sup>83</sup> Unfortunately, for the Argentine forces, they arrived just in time to surrender the following morning without firing a shot.

The remainder of British ground forces landed at San Carlos Bay and began their overland march to Stanley on 27 May, with 42nd Commando and several artillery pieces moving by helicopter. Optimally, helicopters could have transported the entire force, but the majority of British helicopter assets went down with the *Atlantic Conveyor*. This lack of helicopters also affected the arrival of the British 5th Infantry Brigade. Without adequate transportation, rather than land at San Carlos and march fifty miles overland, the British decided to land the 5th Infantry Brigade at Port Pleasant, to participate in the attack on Stanley. Argentine observers reported the landing, and the air force hastily launched an attack on 7 June, hoping to strike any landing ships. Several aircraft diverted and hit the frigate HMS *Plymouth* with four bombs, none of which exploded. The remainder continued and hit the landing ships *Sir Galahad* with three bombs and the *Sir Tristram* with two more, with four of the five bombs exploding.<sup>84</sup> This last gasp of the Argentine air force caused the most British casualties of any attack in the war, and was a result of previous success against the *Atlantic Conveyor*.<sup>85</sup> It successfully delayed the attack on Stanley until 11 June.

The Argentine garrison at Stanley had approximately 9,000 troops from five army regiments and a marine infantry battalion, as well as two field artillery battalions.<sup>86</sup> However, the Junta had withdrawn the army's last mobility assets, two undamaged helicopters, to the

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<sup>83</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 192-194. Communication issues resulting from having to report to BG Parada at Stanley led him to commit the helicopter reserve, without an understanding of the situation on the ground.

<sup>84</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 41.

<sup>85</sup> Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 299. The British acknowledged 57 killed and 48 wounded in this attack, but again the Argentines dispute these numbers. They cite arrival at the British hospital ship of over 300 casualties on 7 June and inconsistent reports from the British Defense Ministry.

<sup>86</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 41. The Argentine command spread available units along the high ground west of Stanley, and on the beaches to oppose any British amphibious assault.

mainland on 9 June. This left the Argentine troops in static positions with zero prospect of reinforcement. Although they had been in place for two months working on defensive positions, without heavy equipment these largely consisted of individual fighting positions with inadequate supporting minefields. In fact, the Argentine positions lacked barbed wire, picket posts, trip wire flares, and in some cases even lacked adequate ammunition and did not post night watches.<sup>87</sup> Recent defensive realignments had also forced the abandonment of several defensive works, and led to several British assaults against totally unprepared positions.

The air situation was even worse since the Argentine air force had lost thirty-six of sixty-two strike aircraft, and the Super-Etendard used its last Exocet missile on 30 May. The French had informed the British of the number of Exocets delivered prior to the invasion, so when the Argentine navy fired its last missile, it allowed the British to operate much closer to the islands. The shortened distances allowed the British naval task force to support the British advance with both naval gunfire and repeated Close Air Support (CAS) sorties.<sup>88</sup>

The Junta briefly considered proposals by BG Daher, BG Menendez's chief of staff, to gamble it all by expanding the conflict. The proposal included attacking British sea Lines of Communication (LOC) north of the Falklands, dropping the IV Parachute Brigade in the rear of British forces, and moving forces from West Falklands to attack the lodgment at San Carlos Bay.<sup>89</sup> The Junta decided not to risk the fleet, maintaining that BG Mendendez had

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<sup>87</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 52. Conscripts failed to remain vigilant and officers frequently did not circulate to ascertain the condition of the men in the trenches.

<sup>88</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 216-217. Starting on 30 May the British continually harassed the garrison at Stanley and the surrounding hills with naval gunfire, including the first daylight bombardments since the first days of the campaign.

<sup>89</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 219. Argentine sources differ on whether the Junta seriously considered these options, or immediately dismissed them. Sensationalist Argentine sources argue that they decided against expanding the conflict to preserve life, and that they feared British nuclear intervention if they threatened the British carriers.

sufficient forces to defend Stanley, which demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of the situation on the ground.

Meanwhile, the British assembled seven infantry regiments and an artillery battalion for the push on Stanley. Based on intelligence, British attack helicopters attacked what they thought was BG Menendez's conference room with several wire guided missiles, hoping to disrupt Argentine command and control in the coming engagement. Although good in concept, it was unsuccessful due to faulty intelligence, since the building engaged was not actually BG Menendez's conference room, simply a meeting hall not then in use.<sup>90</sup>

Again, as the British attacked on the evening of 11 June, the defenders could not overcome Argentine planning failures and command confusion. In just the first night's engagements, elements from four different regiments participated, some under the direction of a regimental commander, while others acted as a brigade reserve and received orders only from BG Jofre, the brigade commander. These forces were intermingled in their defensive positions further complicating an already intricate defensive problem for the raw conscripts asked to defend against a British night assault.<sup>91</sup> The initial attack began at 2115. However, the Argentine forces had assumed the British would only attack in daylight, and so had switched off their Rasit radar that had detected British movements on previous nights. Failing to understand British tactical doctrine or incorporate lessons learned from the British assault on Goose Green, the Argentine defenders failed to detect the British as they advanced right up to the forward fighting positions.<sup>92</sup> It was only when a British soldier stepped on a mine that

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<sup>90</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 231. They actually attacked based on intelligence that BG Menendez used a specific building for a daily briefing, which he only occasionally used to meet local leadership.

<sup>91</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 233. Still anticipating a possible British amphibious assault, the majority of forces remained in vicinity of Port Stanley, arrayed along the coast. Those in the mountains west of Stanley included marines, and army regiments completely intermixed.

<sup>92</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 51. The British were unaware of the specific locations of Argentine fighting positions, but were able to identify them based on smell. A lack of discipline led the cold conscripts to defecate within or right next to their positions, so the British could tell they were close when they smelled the positions.

the defenders became aware of the attack. Although individual Argentines fought bravely, delays in movement of reinforcements, shortages of heavy weapons, a lack of prepared defensive positions, and inaccurate artillery all contributed to the loss of critical elevated terrain by dawn the next day.<sup>93</sup> From these captured positions, the British could now observe and call for fire onto all Argentine positions in vicinity of Stanley.

The British delayed their final attacks until the night of 13 June when three British regiments attacked several positions, and although confusion was present again, the fighting of the Argentine 5th Marines highlights what was possible with better-prepared troops. In contrast to the army, marine conscripts came in throughout the year and so had a far higher level of training. They also had better cold-weather clothing and organic artillery.<sup>94</sup> Their stubborn defense of Mount Tumbledown caused significant casualties from the 2nd Scots Guards, and delayed the attack on Mount William to the following day, which ultimately proved to be unnecessary.<sup>95</sup>

Realizing the seriousness of the loss of Mount Tumbledown, BG Jofre ordered the fiercest counterattacks of the war, which the British in turn defeated with superior firepower. The British now dominated all of the approaches to Stanley. On the morning of 14 June the British opened fire with everything they had, able to target every Argentine unit to include those within the town of Stanley itself. BG Menendez realized his position was untenable and spoke with President Galtieri who insisted that Argentine units should be attacking, not

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<sup>93</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 235. Although individuals displayed great bravery defending the high ground around Stanley, many of the conscripts refused to fight and remained in their sleeping bags right through the fighting.

<sup>94</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 43. Identifying a lack of heavy weapons among the Argentine defenses as a whole, Marine commanders on the mainland assembled marine heavy weapons teams around 12.7mm machine guns and distributed them around Stanley. These elements were also particularly troublesome for the British, despite command confusion, since they operated with army regiments in most positions.

<sup>95</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 247. An important tactical adaptation of the Argentine forces involved two Exocet MM38 anti-ship missiles normally fitted to ships that they modified to fit a trailer at Stanley. Following an unsuccessful engagement on 27 May, they engaged the HMS *Glamorgan* on 12 June, putting her out of action for the remainder of the war.

falling back. BG Menendez urged Galtieri to accept UN Resolution 502 and announce a voluntary withdrawal from the islands to avoid a total loss. Galtieri feared this may lead to his downfall as President and refused, believing in the continued possibility of victory.<sup>96</sup> BG Menendez realized that nothing was forthcoming from the mainland and opened direct negotiations with the British command, which resulted in his surrender later that day. President Galtieris' fears proved correct as the public outcry forced him to resign on 17 June.

Unlike the confusion that reigned within the Argentine defensive forces, or between the military and national leadership, the British government rapidly projected combat power into the south Atlantic, facilitated by broad commanders guidance that allowed the development of multiple options. Clear tasks were given to subordinate units, including submarines on site, the naval task force enroute, and brigades in the process of loading within days of the Argentine invasion. Rather than race directly for Port Stanley, the center of gravity of the Falklands, the British instead chose to set conditions by enforcing the MEZ and extending air operations while deliberately delaying an amphibious assault. This allowed them to effectively neutralize the Argentine navy with the sinking of the Cruiser *General Belgrano*, and lure out and attrit the Argentine air force.

Without Airborne Early Warning (AEW), and only thirty four Sea Harriers, the Royal Navy was forced to rely on various tactics and techniques to mitigate the effectiveness of the Argentine air force.<sup>97</sup> These included forward staged Type 42/22 destroyer screens, a forward directed CAP, and aggressive chaff procedures to counter attacks on the amphibious forces and the fleet at sea.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 274. Faced with the fall of the Argentine Junta, Galtieri insisted that the men on the islands fight to the last rather than surrender to the British.

<sup>97</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 18. The Royal Navy only had thirty four Sea Harriers, and had to call on the RAF to provide Harrier GR3s to operate from the decks of the HMS *Hermes* and *Invincible*.

<sup>98</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 264. The Falklands War exposed faults in the air defense capabilities of the Royal Navy. The Sea Dart system had an abysmal hit rate, and utterly failed against low level aircraft. The

The British invasion timeline was dictated by operational considerations including the arrival of the amphibious Task Force no earlier than 16 May, and the need to conclude combat operations prior to the arrival of the South Atlantic winter in mid-June. Planners worked backwards from mid-June and provided a landing window from 16-25 May, around which all other operations revolved.<sup>99</sup>

Meanwhile they ironed out several problems with their command and support relationships, and positioned units to maximize combat power before finally conducting a successful invasion and overland advance to seize Port Stanley. Had the Argentine military conducted effective operational planning, facilitated by less restrictive commanders guidance, the result might have been entirely different.

## The Aftermath

The Argentine navy lost one cruiser, one submarine, three transport ships, and one trawler. They left three smaller ships in the Falklands at the close of the conflict. The navy suffered these losses despite having a negligible impact on the campaign itself. The Argentine air force lost seventy-five fixed wing aircraft, and twenty-five helicopters, roughly half of their pre-war air force, and proved to be the most effective arm of the Argentine military. They launched more than one hundred and fifty sorties; sixteen aircraft dropped twenty-five bombs, which hit fourteen British ships. However, only eleven of those twenty-five bombs exploded on contact, and only three of the fourteen British ships sank.<sup>100</sup> Still, it might have been the operations of the 1st Air Transport Group that saw the most success; their delivery of

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Sea Wolf system had maintenance failures right at the critical moment of several engagements, and failed to lock onto any aircraft not directly attacking the ship with the system.

<sup>99</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 92-93. This drove the phasing of British operations, with phase one intended to draw out and attrit both the Argentine navy and air force, phase two being the invasion itself, and phase three being the seizure of Stanley.

<sup>100</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 286. Argentine claims include two more ships sunk as a result of air strikes.



multiple brigades, heavy equipment, and utilization in nonstandard roles facilitated many of the tactical actions.<sup>101</sup> They performed reconnaissance, aerial vectoring for attack missions, mid-air refueling, and even dropped bombs from C-130 aircraft, with little to no preparation, all while flying outdated aircraft against modern British Sea Harriers.

The Army lost three brigades worth of equipment, and most significantly, Argentina lost six hundred fifty-five men, roughly half of which were conscripts. Although the Argentines continued to fight after the British invasion, once the British task force established a lodgment on the islands themselves, the Argentine army had little prospect of victory—it just took several weeks for BG Menendez to realize that fact.

Despite the effectiveness of the British response, they still had two destroyers sunk, three seriously damaged; two frigates sunk, two seriously damaged; one container ship sunk; two Landing Ship Logistics (LSL) sunk, one seriously damaged; twenty-four assorted helicopters and ten Harriers shot down.<sup>102</sup> This attrition, when added to the impact of extended operations in the South Atlantic, which wracked the Task Force with maintenance issues, meant that by June, the fleet was simply falling apart. All but three of the ships had major operational defects such as sheared propellers, drive shafts, turbine wear and tear, and systemic weapon system failures.<sup>103</sup> Only a few within the British military high command really understood how near they came to losing the conflict outright due to naval attrition. Finally, the British forces missed losing the war to the South Atlantic winter by mere hours.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 48. In fact only seven C-130 Hercules aircraft airlifted over 8,000 soldiers and more than 5,000 tons of supplies to the island over the course of the conflict, despite repeated airfield closures due to air attacks and naval shelling, a herculean effort.

<sup>102</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 346.

<sup>103</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 330-331.

<sup>104</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, xviii. Only seven hours after the surrender of Argentine forces on the Falklands, the full fury of the South Atlantic winter struck the fleet. This included 120 mile per hour winds, driving snow, hail, and sea states that made operations impossible.

## What Happens Without Effective Planning?

With the departure of a Royal Navy Task Force from Britain on 5 April, the British invalidated the basic strategic assumption of non-intervention. The Argentine joint forces had to scramble and prepare a defense of the islands with whatever was readily available. The air force had never conceived of contesting air superiority over the Falkland Islands, or of conducting attacks on ships in the South Atlantic, both of which were now their primary missions during the Falklands war. The army, largely built to guard the frontiers of Argentina, and focused on continuing tensions with Chile, faced the monumental task of projecting combat power nearly eight hundred miles away. They had to face a modern, professional force with recalled reservists and conscripts who had less than two months in uniform.

The British sailing invalidated several of their planning assumptions; nevertheless, the Argentine Junta refused to believe it, and clung desperately to the perception that it was all just a bluff. At the time, Argentina had only three battalion sized units on the Falklands. Realizing the enormity of their mistake, they decided to immediately double the forces on the islands with more units to follow.<sup>105</sup> The Argentine military planners faced the question of who to send, since most of their military was underprepared and spread across Argentina with little notice to move to the islands.

### Argentine Navy

The Argentine navy and Admiral Anaya, who were the impetus behind the decision to invade, accelerated the timeline, but despite being the leading actors in the initial invasion, participated minimally in the actual conflict. After the invasion on 2 April, the navy could do little and so pulled back into Argentine waters and replenished their ships. With the implementation of the MEZ by the British on 12 April, they could no longer support the

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<sup>105</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 48. Joining the 25th Regiment on the Falklands was the X Brigade, followed by III Brigade and the 5th Marines throughout April and early May.

islands with combat ships or resupply. Admiral Anaya's priority became the retention of South Georgia, where he assumed personal control. The loss of South Georgia on 26 April, including one hundred and eighty marines, and the submarine *Santa Fe*—one of only four operational submarines in the Argentine navy—led to much humiliation for Admiral Anaya. This embarrassment contributed to the distortion of the event to the Argentine people.

The Argentine fleet remained outside the MEZ—all except the submarine *San Luis*, which actually engaged the British Task Force on multiple occasions with several torpedoes. Due to a faulty fire control board, the Argentines fired these torpedoes unguided and had no success.<sup>106</sup> The Argentine navy was aware of the faulty fire control board, as well as maintenance problems with two other Argentine submarines (the *Salta* and *Santiago del Estero*) and repairs were underway at the start of the conflict. Argentine naval planners anticipated resolution before the original invasion date of 15 September, but like all other forces, the expedited invasion caught them unprepared.<sup>107</sup> In addition, the Argentine submarine forces anticipated completion of two more advanced electric submarines before September 1982. Resolving maintenance problems and further deliveries could have provided six submarines, versus the two that participated in the conflict in April and May. These could have had a significant operational impact on any engagement with the Royal Navy. Additional submarines are only one capability they projected to be available in September that was unavailable in April–May. The Argentine military also anticipated further deliveries

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<sup>106</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 81. The British were aware of an Argentine submarine amongst their vessels and devoted significant assets to hunting down the *San Luis*. The fact that the *San Luis* was able to operate for several days, fire repeatedly on British ships, and escape unscathed posed an ominous threat to modern navies around the world. If the inexperienced Argentine navy could accomplish this against the modern British fleet, with diesel electric submarines in waters not dissimilar to the turbulent north Atlantic, what would Soviet submarines be capable of in the event of a confrontation with NATO?

<sup>107</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 74. The *Salta*, the same type as the *San Luis*, had a propeller issue which made any sailing impossible, the *Santiago del Estero*, which was another Guppy class World War Two submarine, could not pressurize and therefore could not submerge. It sailed to act as a decoy, in the hope that its absence from Argentina would be noted and affect British operations.

of Super-Etendard aircraft with Exocet missiles, and extensive training for participating land forces.

The impact of an early invasion also extended to the most valuable asset in the Argentine military, the naval Super-Etendard squadron at Rio Grande.<sup>108</sup> At the start of the conflict, they only had five aircraft with five missiles on hand, and the ground support technicians had not completed their training. UN Resolution 502 cancelled the arrival of French technicians to complete their training, so the ground technicians had to finish system preparations using only technical manuals written in French. Due to only having five missiles on hand, they could not afford to conduct a live fire validation of system installment, leading to some doubts about the reliability of the systems.

While naval staff briefly considered their use from the runway at Stanley, they quickly discarded this option since the runway was not of sufficient length.<sup>109</sup> Had a plan been in place to extend the runway immediately after the invasion, these aircraft could have posed a significant threat to the British Task Force and either forced them to operate outside the effective range of the Sea Harriers, or caused considerable destruction to any Royal Navy ships that approached the islands. Another impact was the anticipated delivery from the French of five more aircraft and Exocet missiles before the September deadline. These systems, and the months to train with them, might have raised the squadron's capability to such an extent that the result of the conflict could have been entirely different.

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<sup>108</sup> Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict: The War for the Malvinas* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 148-150. The Argentine Naval Super-Etendard Squadron flew from Rio Grande Naval Air Station and employed only five Super-Etendard aircraft, firing five Exocet anti-ship missiles over the course of the conflict. These five missiles had an inordinate effect on the conflict, sinking several British ships and posing a persistent threat to the British carriers that forced them to operate well east of the Falkland Islands. These five systems were only half of the intended delivery from France that the conflict halted.

<sup>109</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 121. The problem of runway extension at Stanley was significant. To accommodate modern fighter aircraft it required a runway surface capable of handling high impact landings of far heavier aircraft than had ever landed at Stanley before. Due to the nature of the ground there, a significant amount of engineering and construction was required. Without immediate preparations upon seizure of the islands, by the time the British Task Force sailed it was far too late to affect the necessary construction.

A significant failure of the Argentine navy was the lack of any intent to mine likely approaches and landing beaches. Assuming that the British could not send a naval force to the South Atlantic, the initial naval plans did not incorporate sending any mining capability to the Falkland islands. Once the MEZ was established by the British, the Argentine military was unwilling to risk any significant assets due to the submarine threat and so had no mines to counter the Royal Navy Task Force. Had they mined approaches to Port Stanley, or the entrances to the Falkland Sound, they likely would have significantly damaged several British combat ships and might have turned the tide of the conflict.<sup>110</sup>

## Argentine Air Force

Although practically no consultation or planning occurred with the Argentine air force before the invasion of the Falklands, the air force became primary actors as the war progressed. As events displayed, only the air force had the combat power capable of interdicting the British naval task force and interfering with the amphibious landings at San Carlos Bay.

Upon the sailing of the British task force, the air force learned of the requirement to engage the surface fleet of the Royal Navy. This was a task for which they had never trained, equipped, or even addressed in war games.<sup>111</sup> Despite the looming threat, the Junta never tasked the Argentine air force to engage the British surface fleet, a failure to issue clear tasks to subordinate units according to ADRP 5-0. It was actually the personal initiative of the Argentine Air Force South commander that, seeing the need, he initiated air to ship engagement training in assigned squadrons, with only twenty days to prepare for the largest

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<sup>110</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, 202-203. Without minesweepers, the British Task Force was forced to conduct minesweeping missions with combat ships that could only locate mines through contact with their hull.

<sup>111</sup> Horacio M. Gonzalez, "An Argentine Airman in the South Atlantic" in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On: Lessons for the Future* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 75. In fact, the Junta never tasked the Argentine air force with attacking the British navy. MG Crespo, the commander of Air Force South saw the requirement in mid-April and initiated training and preparations unilaterally.

naval engagement since World War Two.<sup>112</sup> Although the Argentine air force had numerical superiority, the British were confident in their modern air-defense radar systems and surface-to-air missiles. Experts on both sides expected that the outdated Argentine aircraft would suffer enormous losses in any attack.<sup>113</sup> This proved not to be the case, since the British systems had never been tested against multiple inbound targets in a combat environment, and critically failed at crucial moments during the conflict. Instead of effective British defensive systems, operational restrictions such as a lack of refueling capability, the range to the Falklands, and the need to maintain a defense of the homeland emerged as critical factors in the air force's performance.<sup>114</sup> Squadrons spent the month of April conducting preparations to overcome the many problems; nevertheless, they discovered that three weeks training was woefully inadequate to practice for an unfamiliar near-peer opponent.

## Argentine Army

Hoping to deter any British military response before the arrival of the task force, the Argentine Junta dispatched the 8th Regiment and the 5th Marine Infantry Battalion between 6–8 April, to augment the already assigned 25th Regiment. However, the British were already on the move south with ships sailing from ongoing exercises occurring close to Gibraltar.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Walter F. DeHoust, "Offensive Air Operations of the Falklands War," 11. The Argentine air force also formed the Air Exploration and Reconnaissance Group 1 including C-130s, B-707s, Lear Jets, Fokker F-27s, and P-2 Neptunes. They used Lear Jets and B-707 aircraft to perform non-standard missions such as deep recon across the South Atlantic, and decoy missions to lure the British Combat Air Patrol away from incoming strikes.

<sup>113</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 32. Argentine air force was composed of 11 Mirage IIIE interceptors, 22 Daggers (Israeli built Mirage V), and more than 30 A-4 Skyhawks, as well as 24 Pucara turbo-prop ground attack aircraft and six Aeromacchi armed jet trainers.

<sup>114</sup> Ruben O. Moros, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 215. With only two KC-130 tankers, the Argentine naval and air force aircraft faced significant operational restrictions throughout the conflict. These had an impact on operational reach of their most capable aircraft the Mirage III, and limited the ability of their strike aircraft to contest the sea-lanes east of the Falkland Islands.

<sup>115</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 47. The presence of various ships participating in exercises in vicinity of Gibraltar proved fortuitous for the British. Sailings from there cut the transit time to the South Atlantic significantly, most importantly for the first submarines that were able to establish the MEZ over a week earlier than might otherwise have been possible.

The British intent was abundantly apparent when the aircraft carriers HMS *Hermes* and HMS *Invincible* sailed from Portsmouth on 5 April; this was a signal that the Junta could not afford to ignore, adding impetus to the scramble to defend the islands.

Already allocated were the 8th and 25th Regiments, both from the IX Brigade. The Junta then decided to send the X Brigade with the 3rd, 6th, and 7th Regiments. Although they were well equipped, they had no experience with cold weather conditions such as they might experience in the coming weeks. These formations were principally composed of that year's conscripts, which was similar to all Argentine military formations.<sup>116</sup> With some notification, these units were able to recall reservists to replace brand new conscripts prior to deployment, though many of the "class of 63," those men turning nineteen years old during 1982 and therefore conscripted that year, remained in these formations. In the 25th and 8th Regiment, the "class of 63" formed the bulk of those assigned. Non-commissioned Officers (NCOs) and commissioned officers had to teach many of these raw conscripts how to fire and clean their weapons *after* arrival in the Falklands. Many learned how to dig a fighting position, as the possibility of fighting British regulars loomed.<sup>117</sup>

This conscript system complicated the problem for all services. Similar to the army, each service received all of their conscripts for the year in January–February, meaning that a large portion of the men who were to take part both on land and at sea were eighteen to nineteen year old recruits with only a couple of months of service. In the air force, the pilots were obviously professionals, however in anti-aircraft units the lack of training for those

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<sup>116</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 51. Accusations that the Argentine military committed a disproportionate number of conscripts to the islands to save their regular officers and NCOs are unfounded. In fact, they graduated the military academy early, with many of those recent graduates actively seeking assignment to the coming war.

<sup>117</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 50. The Argentine conscript system drafted all men according to the year they would turn nineteen, who would then constitute a class. The Argentine Army typically assigned these young men to local units; they allowed many to return home at night for the entirety of their term of service. Many of these young men had never traveled away from home, fired a weapon, or conceived of fighting the British. They found it disconcerting when they found themselves occupying fighting positions in the Falklands, as the rain and snow of a South Atlantic winter lashed them and the British advanced under the cover of supporting artillery and close air support sorties.

assigned to the Falklands led to several ground to air friendly fire incidents destroying several Argentine aircraft trying to land at Port Stanley.

Starting on 11 April, reinforcements began arriving by air, and now the problem of equipment became critical. Units had to await the arrival of heavy equipment by sea, which did not occur until 22 April. The result was that units could not reposition across the Falkland Islands to counter potential British landing sites. Instead, they concentrated in vicinity of Port Stanley. Connected to the arrival of new units, the command and control situation became confused as each arriving brigade brought yet another Brigadier General, eager to play his part.

Another failure in the fundamentals of planning included in the Argentine doctrine of FM 100-5 (1977) and the current version of ADRP 5-0 was a failure to establish command and support relationships.<sup>118</sup> Nowhere was this more clear than in the confused command structure established on the Falkland Islands. Without clarification from the Argentine military command, the generals on sight simply came to an agreement amongst themselves. BG Menendez (previously the Governor of the Falklands) assumed the role of Commander-in-Chief, BG Jofre (previously the X Brigade Commander) became the Land Forces Commander gaining control of the 8th and 25th Regiments already on the islands, and BG Daher (previously the IX Brigade Commander) became the Chief of Staff for Menendez.<sup>119</sup> Even this confusing arrangement became worse in the days that followed as the Junta dispatched more forces to the islands without explaining any joint or army level command and control relationship.

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<sup>118</sup> Field Manual 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), 3-5.

<sup>119</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 53. Every level also assumed joint command of air and naval assets in the area, but there was no coordination or joint planning effort conducted with Air Force South or Argentine naval task forces that approached the Royal Navy as it advanced on the islands.



Planning failures also led to a lack of mobility assets to address logistics problems and reposition units. The majority of Argentine forces were restricted to Port Stanley, leaving only special forces to harass any landings further away. With only a few helicopters available, they were unable to solve the logistics problem of large outlying detachments. Accordingly, BG Menendez requested a further infantry regiment and significant helicopter augmentation from the mainland. President Galtieri, the head of the Argentine Junta, responded with the dispatch of the requested helicopters and an entirely new brigade, the III Brigade, which was on its way by 16 April.<sup>120</sup> Unfortunately, the III Brigade was from the subtropical north of Argentina and suffered significantly from the harsh climate of the Falklands in the coming months. The existing tensions with Chile kept the excellently equipped and acclimatized VI and VIII Mountain Brigades and the XI Cold Weather Brigade along the western frontiers.<sup>121</sup> Making matters worse was that the brigade's heavy equipment never arrived in the Falklands. Due to initial delays in loading, and the introduction of the TEZ as the British approached the islands at the end of April.

BG Jofre split up the arriving III Brigade, 4th Regiment remained at Port Stanley, 12th Regiment departed for Goose Green, and the 5th Regiment went to Port Howard on West Falkland. The arrival of yet another Brigadier General with his brigade staff exacerbated an already convoluted command situation. The four Brigadiers and two full Brigade staffs decided that BG Menendez could be the Governor, Commander-in-Chief, and Land Forces Commander. BG Daher remained as his Chief of Staff, while BG Jofre (previously the Land Forces Commander) assumed command of all forces in vicinity of Stanley (which now

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<sup>120</sup> Pradeep P. Barua, *The Military Effectiveness of Post-Colonial States*, 29. With little notice to move, the deployment challenges this unit faced were significant. They initiated movement believing they were repositioning within Argentina, only to be told enroute to deploy to the Falklands. Marching to their port of embarkation, the Argentine high command advised that they would be transported by air, forcing them to countermarch and separate from their heavy equipment with promises of delivery. Instead, their heavy equipment never arrived.

<sup>121</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 56. Faced with the persistent conflict with Chile, and what they thought was a bluff by the British, military leadership chose to retain their best brigades along the frontier. By the time conflict appeared inevitable on the islands, it was too late to shift significant assets to reinforce the islands.

encompassed elements of three separate brigades, all of whose commanders were present on the islands as well as marine and air force units that were not subordinated to him). BG Parada (previously the III Brigade commander) commanded all forces outside of the Port Stanley area (also had elements of all three brigades, a naval air station and an air force base) although he and his staff never left Port Stanley.<sup>122</sup> In the coming fight, there were hilltops around Port Stanley occupied by elements of five separate combat elements, answering to three different senior commanders, calling artillery from two separate commands. Adding to this was the fact that nowhere in the army planning was the air or sea effort mentioned. Each service was supposed to do the best they could with almost no coordination effort.

The Argentine situation was partly due to the haphazard deployment, and a chronic lack of mobility that made it impossible to correct the situation. There were no roads connecting the various garrisons around the islands, and movement by sea was hazardous due to the persistent British submarine threat. BG Jofre kept the small contingent of helicopters with the two-company reserve to counter British actions. While some inter-island movement was possible using coast guard Skyvans, commandeered civil aviation, and small coastal patrol shipping, BG Menendez could not iron out the command difficulties or shift significant supplies in the days leading up to invasion.<sup>123</sup>

By the end of April, there were nearly 13,000 troops on the islands, with almost 10,000 concentrated in the Port Stanley area. The ad hoc nature of the deployment meant they had marine heavy weapons companies supporting conscript regiments. The 8th Regiment now

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<sup>122</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 57. This extreme command confusion was made even worse by the tendency to form task forces from whatever elements found themselves in isolated positions, such as Task Force Menendez at Goose Green which encompassed whole regiments, separated companies, and even single platoons from regiments located at Stanley. Finally, Jofre tended to grab reserves from the confines of Stanley and dispatch them to reinforce garrisons across the islands, but did not have the mobility necessary to withdraw committed elements. Instead, committed reserves were essentially lost, forcing Jofre to pull further reserves from the units in vicinity of Stanley.

<sup>123</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 64. Able to stockpile a huge amount of logistics at Stanley, outlying garrisons and even those in fighting positions only a couple of miles west of Stanley were chronically short of food, ammunition and other vital necessities.

had its third commander in less than a month.<sup>124</sup> Engineers waiting on their equipment were pressed into service as infantrymen and the unfortunate III Brigade, without its heavy equipment, was seeing snow for the first time as they huddled in half dug defensive positions in their sub-tropical uniforms. Steaming towards them were over 10,000 professional soldiers in a British task force that BG Menendez hoped might land near Port Stanley because he could do little other than wait. These critical shortfalls were on full display during the conflict.

Military operations failed because of several faulty strategic assumptions and poor planning efforts before the invasion. Failure to plan branches and sequels meant that Argentine forces faced an impossible situation as strategic assumptions proved false. The basic problem was how to defend a series of islands at the limits of their operational reach, against the world's third largest naval power with no logistical preparation, and no prior training. Adequate joint preparations could have included expansion of the airfield at Stanley to accommodate fighter aircraft, allocation of properly equipped and trained Argentine Army brigades, and preparation of naval and air forces for engagements with British naval forces. This was simply a failure of commanders' guidance, restricting the Argentine planners from positioning units to maximize combat power in the event of a British response.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *Argentine Fight for the Falklands*, 61-63. At first the III Brigade was under their organic brigade commander, then under BG Jofre and finally under BG Parada as command arrangements evolved.

<sup>125</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-6.

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