

The Falkland's campaign of 1982.



The Landing

**Commodore Michael Clapp CB Royal Navy.
Commander Amphibious Task Group.
CTG 317.0**

And

**Major General Julian Thompson CB OBE
Commander Landing Force Task Group
CTG 317.1**

JULIAN

Before we cover the landing, I want to wind the clock back a little.

Special Forces had been landed on 1st May and their reports were vital, giving Mike and I confidence that our plans were as soundly based as possible. It took them time to send their reports back as the SBS, unlike the SAS, did not have Satcoms and had to use easily D/Fed radios. This meant they could only send their messages once they had got well clear of their objectives and even then it was not safe.

On 13 May, the day after the plan was approved by Northwood, and, I learned later, the MOD, I gave orders for the amphibious landing. My staff had prepared my orders in anticipation that it would be approved. The orders were given at a formal O Group in HMS *Fearless's* wardroom. I actually had the orders issued 24 hours before to all COs, and did not go through them in detail at the O Group, just confined myself to the mission and execution paragraphs, and two points I wanted hammered home. First that the landing was not an end in itself, we would have to fight all the way to Stanley. Second that COs were to ensure that every man was ordered that he was to press on past casualties, the peacetime syndrome of everything stopping while casualties were dealt with was not to be allowed to slow momentum.

The orders were 47 pages long, containing much information such as met, passwords, grouping annexes and of course logistics, that did not need to be covered at the O Group. Subsequent to the O Group I changed the landing order to take account of new intelligence on enemy locations, the system allowed for this, and it caused no problems.

Explain landing plan and go through rationale and changes.



This slide shows the beaches selected, and the lowering position where craft were lowered, and ships docked down and floated out LCUs, all with troops loaded.

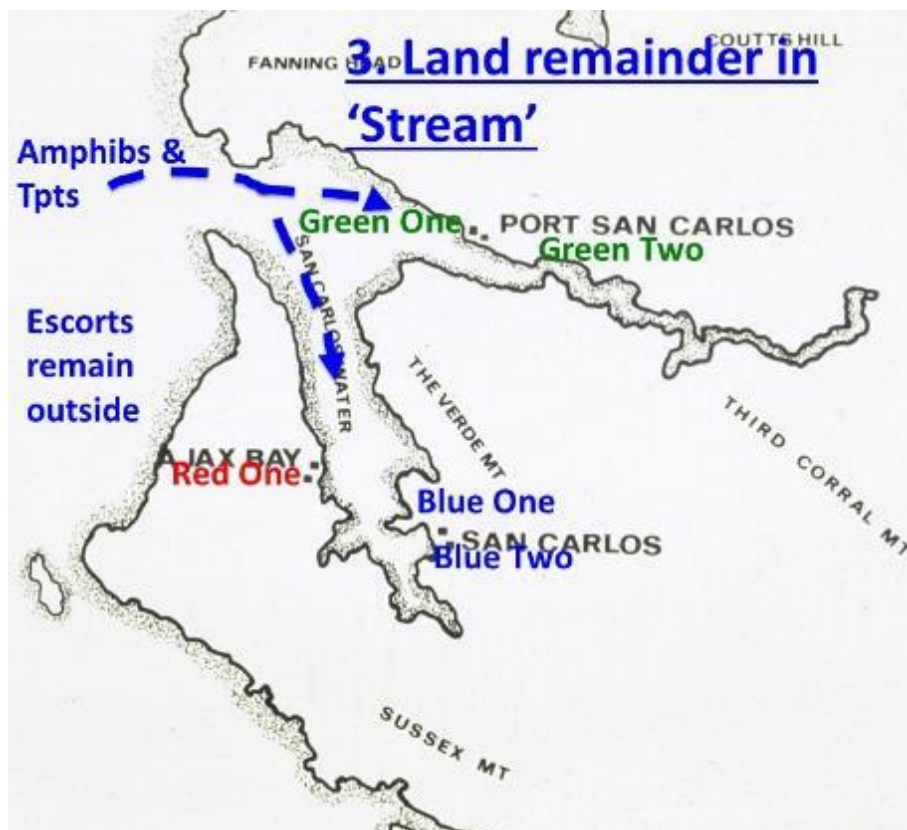
Originally, I was going to land 45 Commando on Red One and 40 Commando on Blue One in the first wave. I then had information that there might be a threat from Goose Green, and I wanted Sussex Mountain secured early. This was already 2 PARA's task, so I changed the landing order to the one shown on the slide.



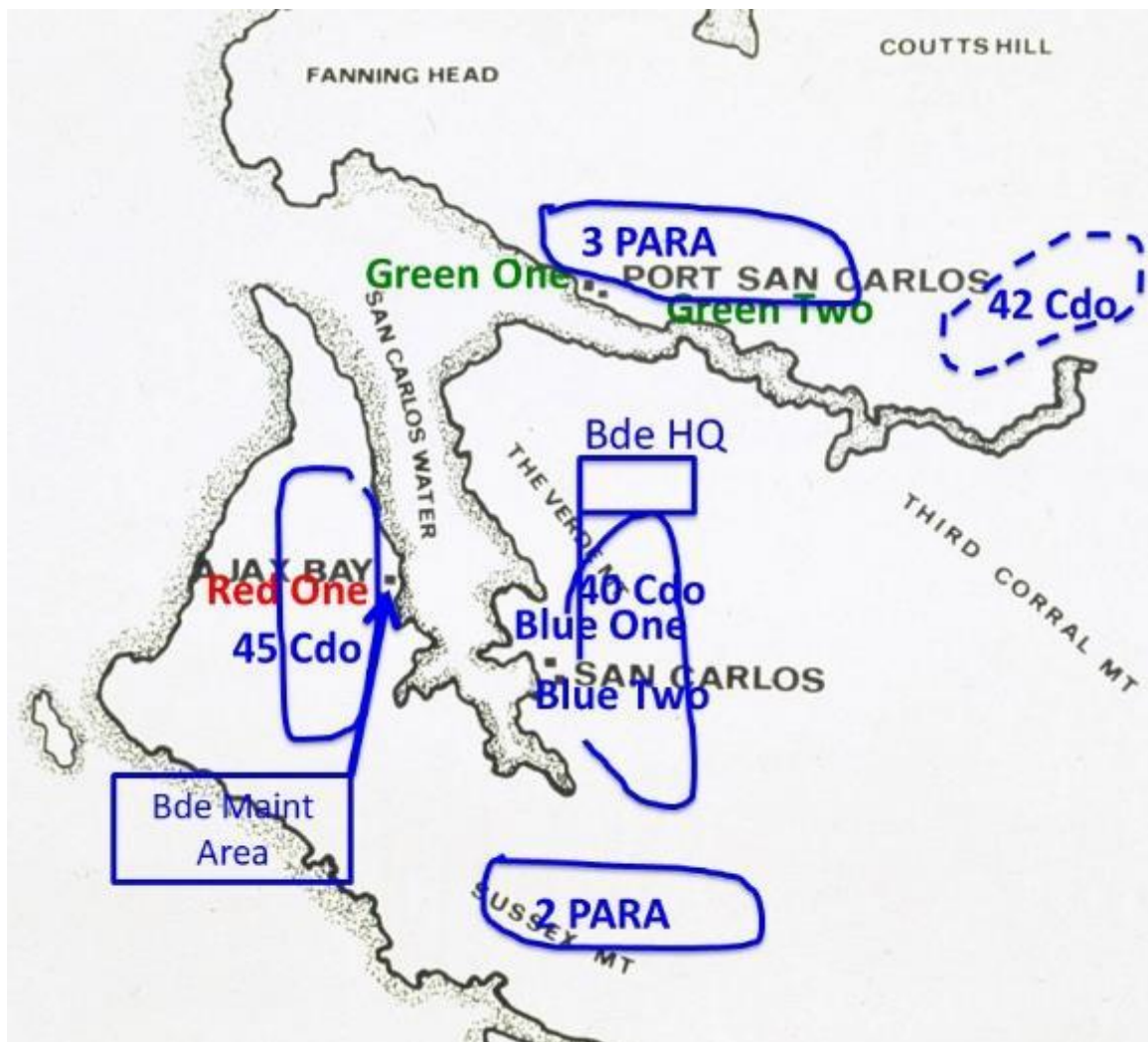
At the same time we had SBS reports of a force on Fanning Head including a 105-mm anti tank RCL. This was to be taken out before H-hour by an SBS hit team with NGS provided by HMS *Antrim*. Escorts and NGS gun lines were in Falkland Sound.



This slide shows the plan for the second wave, with 45 Commando landing on Red One and 3 PARA landing on Green One, 42 Cdo in Reserve in *Canberra*.



This shows the third phase which is for the Amphibs and transports to up anchor and steam into San Carlos and start landing guns, AD, ammo etc in 'stream' not in waves. 42 Cdo in reserve in *Canberra*.

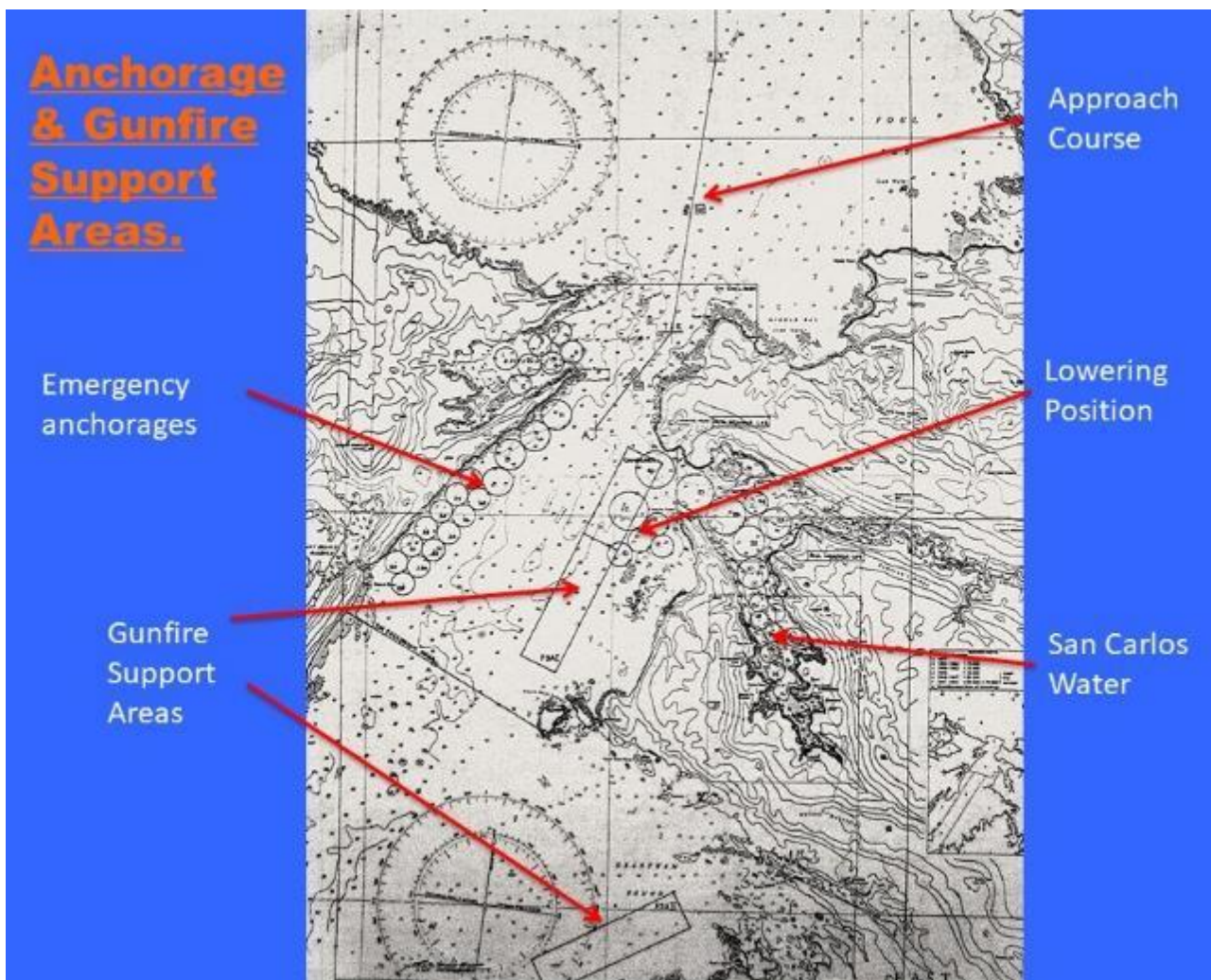


This slide also shows the final planned deployment, with 42 Commando's planned location if not deployed elsewhere. In fact that is where the Commando ended up on D-Day.

An example of compromise was the time of H-hour for the landing. I wanted to land at last light, and have all night to get sorted out without the attentions of the Argentine Air Force, Mike wanted to land me at first light, so he had all night to approach, achieve total surprise and again without the attentions of the enemy air. We came to a good old British compromise, and settled for arriving at the lowering position for launching landing craft at midnight, with an 0200 H-Hour.

MIKE.

Having agreed Julian's plans, I held my captains' brief in Fearless on 15 May, two days after Julian. I had spent a lot of time in Ascension trying to gain their confidence and support, especially those who were Merchant Navy. This briefing went well with all but one keen to do their best to support the landings. The odd one out was a Royal Naval Captain who tried to convince me that the plan was unsound and would fail as the Falkland Sound and San Carlos Water would undoubtedly be mined. Special Forces had seen no mining activity. I believed we had no alternative but to find out. When I asked what evidence he had he finally shut up.



This is a copy of the chart I then sent around the 21 ships in my task group. 19 would come with me on D-Day. It basically covers the AOA. It shows our approach from the north, Point Alpha where ships could act independantly, planned anchorages, start lines for landing craft and the landing beaches and, if we found San Carlos Water mined, emergency anchorages under the cliff on West Falklands, Gunfire Support areas, anti-submarine search areas and so on.

We planned to approach in three waves. First, the main warships including Fearless and Intrepid who needed to have time to dock down and launch their landing craft. Next came the troop ships who, with the exception of Canberra, immediately off-loaded their troops and, finally, the logistic ships. All were escorted.

I had already arranged for Intrepid to duplicate our Ops Rooms and be able to take over command should we be sunk or badly damaged.

Julian and I had begun to hold daily briefs onboard, morning and evening. These continued throughout the campaign but Julian was replaced by Moore. In the morning a ship's Ops Officer would come and debrief me on their activities the night before. The captain was invariably getting his head down before the air attacks began. They would ask what exciting task we had for them the following night. It was hugely encouraging and a good opportunity to assess their ship's morale and state of readiness.



You saw this slide at the end of our first talk, you should just see an LSL. The fog on our approach was wonderful. It made it difficult for conventional aircraft or submarine to

attack us but could not reduce the threat of Exocat. It lifted about an hour before nightfall. This added to the need to keep well out of sight of land as one ship seen making smoke could have given the whole game away. We turned south with all ships darkened, radio silence and radars barely working.

Fearless' Navigating officer had been unable to check his position by the sun or stars but had been lent a yachty satnav. It must have been one of the first ever and he was misled by the information it gave. Hence there was a delay of about an hour in the assault. Enough, however, to screw up several of our plans.

Two days before the landing we heard that some Argentine troops were on Fanning Head just at the northern side of the entrance to San Carlos Water. They were reported to have an anti-tank weapon with them which could be nasty to ships or landing craft. HMS Antrim was sent ahead with some SBS . They successfully captured them.

JULIAN.

In an amphibious landing, like all other operations, the moment arrives when you are committed and things start going wrong. This is when my staff looked at me for guidance. A series of small incidents caused delays, and the question arose, shall we delay H-hour. The answer was no, we were in radio silence, and trying to get the message to sixteen landing craft containing the equivalent of two bn groups in the dark, would have caused more chaos than just letting it roll, which is what I said we would do.

However, put yourself in the position of the marines and soldiers in the follow-up waves, you have been told that you will land in darkness, before the enemy air force appears, and you find yourself landing in broad daylight with the beachhead under air attack.

This when the 'friction' starts to take effect. Everything slowed down, as helicopters and landing craft took cover during air attacks. The landing force comms circuits worked atrociously, this was because the land force and maritime circuits shared the same antennae, and the more powerful naval sets blanked out the weak man pack sets with units ashore.

News came in via my light aircraft landing on the LPD that two of my helicopters had been shot down off one of the beaches. I was getting no information from my commandos and battalions, very frustrating indeed. There was no point in staying in the LPD ops room, the solution was to get forward and see for myself.

The routine we adopted for the HQ was as we had done on numerous exercises. I would rove by helicopter, while Tac HQ landed as soon as possible to provide a foot on the ground should the helicopter comms go down, and Main HQ would land the first night to be set up by first light. There were some glitches getting ashore, as tripper-happy sailors started firing at my helicopter when it came for me, but soon I was ashore, and much happier.

I am probably expressing an old-fashioned view but in my opinion there is no substitute for face-to-face contact, and seeing for yourself. The situation in the ops room, almost invariably looks worse than on the ground. A few minutes chat with Commanding officers, and a laugh with a marine or soldier whose cheerful faces never failed to give me a lift, and I felt like a million dollars. I was able to dart back to the LPD and sort things out, before setting off again.

MIKE.

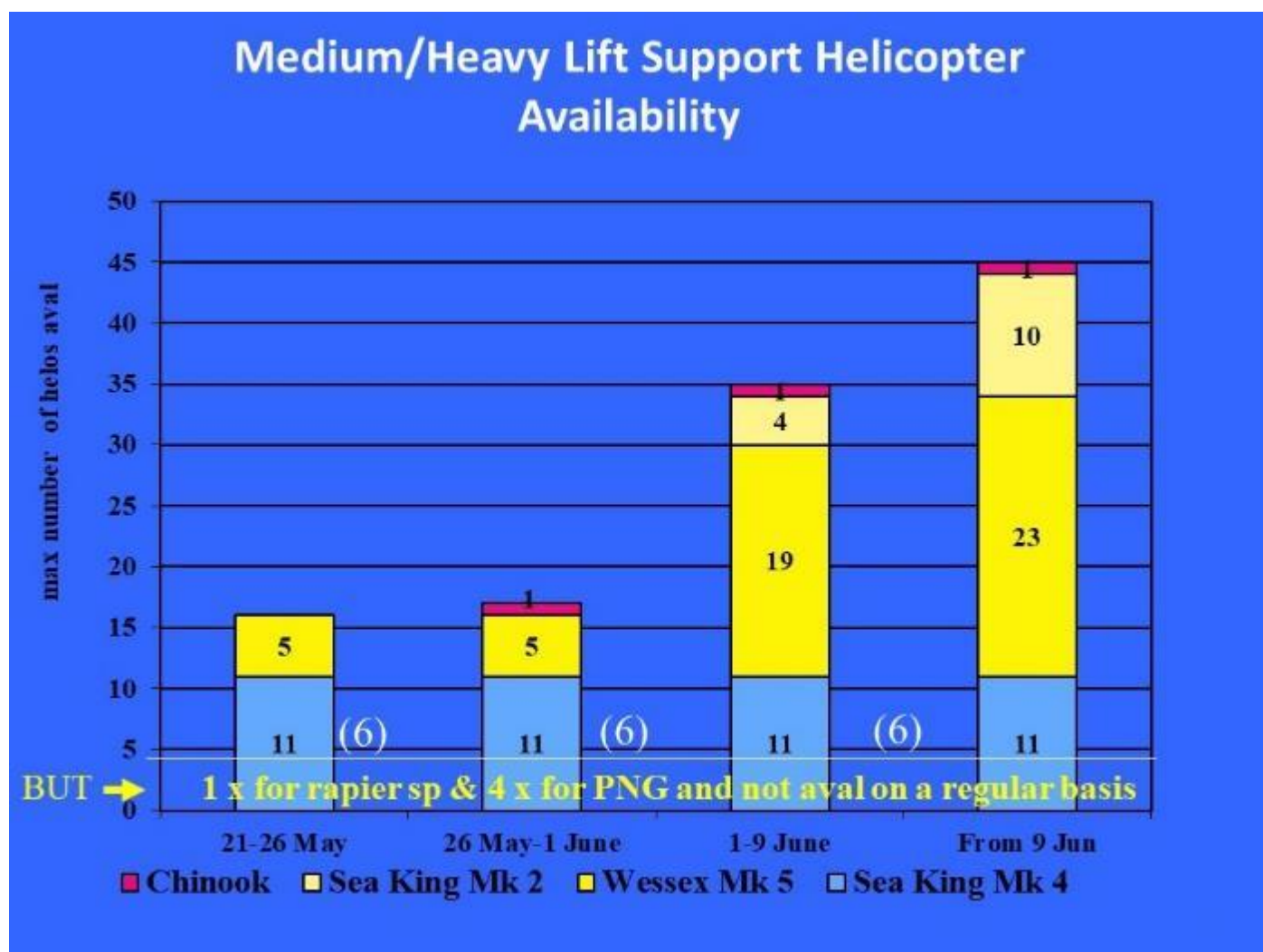
In general, I felt we had been lucky in achieving surprise and not finding strong opposition. All the troops landed safely and over the following days most of their equipment was landed. The anchorage was well protected on all sides against any counter-attack, but problems were already arising through lack of any opportunity to rehearse. Many might have been prevented if our two staffs had ever been allowed to exercise together before.

Some of the equipment unfortunately has been stowed out of reach and had to go back out to sea. We hoped that it could be sorted out and brought in later. Loading ships before a logistic plan had been agreed, as had been forced on us, differed hugely from the NATO concept of a very carefully planned operation. It slowed the off-load of both 3 Cdo and 5 Bde down drastically.

Other delays occurred largely through lack of practice. For instance, the time needed to unlash cargoes before a forklift truck can do its work and then bring the required store to the ramp ready for offload and then lash it all down again before going back to sea took much longer than we expected.

Losing contact with Julian was unfortunate but totally understandable. It was a subject we had not discussed through pressure of other problems. The USN practice was very firmly that CLF should remain onboard the command ship. That may be fine with good communications but ours were lousy and I supported Julian's need for face to face contact.

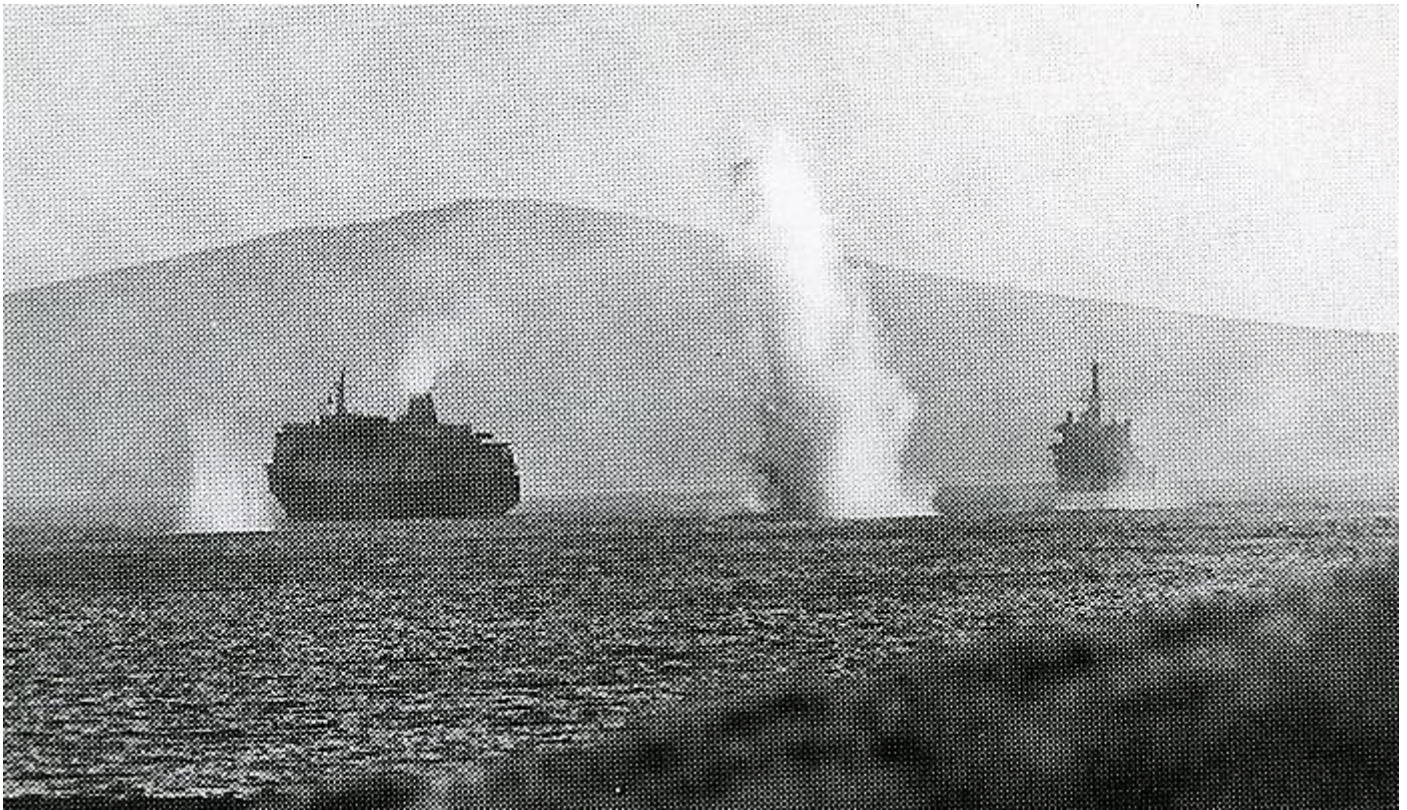
After the landings we found the one Secure Voice VHF set we had between the ship and his HQ was being hogged by the loggies and it became impossible for my staff to know what the Landing Force was up to. We missed our staff taxi badly. It was, for my team, perhaps the most irritating part of the operation but not one with an easy solution.



This shows how the number of support helicopters grew as the campaign progressed.

Four of the new Sea King 4 Squadron, 846, were fitted with night sights for SF insertions and had been sent ahead with Sandy. 16 Choppers for 5,500 men, guns, ammo, food etc. was clearly not enough.

From 30th May, when Div HQ and 5 Bde started to arrive, the Wessex 5s thankfully increased markedly and were boosted by some Anti-Submarine Sea King Mk 2s and the surviving Chinook.



Our survival from air attack must be something of a record. They flew over 60 strikes on that first day but the Argentine pilots tended to go for the first ship they saw, usually a warship, and not, as ordered, the logistic ships until days later when it was almost too late. Another reason was the choice of a fairly narrow creek, which must have worried the pilots as they flew across the ships. They bombed from low-level without a delay fuze or high-drag fins so many bombs did not explode. Nevertheless, 1,000 lbs of steel smashing into a ship can do a great deal of damage.

The first ship reporting an unexploded bomb or UXB was HMS Antrim on the day we first landed. FCPO Mick Fellows was the oldest and most experienced Mine Clearance Diver I had. He came onboard Fearless and asked me to get him to Antrim where he found a 1,000 lb UXB rolling in the Senior Rates Heads, He suggested to a paralysed CPO that he

should get off the seat and go. The ship was under air attack, so he lay down and stopped the bomb rolling about.

Note what is written on the side!



When the raid passed and it all calmed down, he got permission to call the UK on their Satcom, one of five fitted to the 112 ships in the whole Task Force. An interesting conversation followed which is better kept to question time but as we had no bomb disposal gear all he could do was cut a hole in the deck above and gingerly lift the bomb out and drop it overboard. It worked. They did that again for ten more bombs and saved several ships and a heap of cargo. Better nerves than mine!



This slide is of one in a SeaCat magazine under the Captain of HMS Argonaut's sleeping cabin but it gives you an idea of the problem.

Mick was also the only Clearance Diver who had been trained in beach mine disposal, an essential skill for an amphibious assault. Soon both teams of some 18 men each were ready.

It could all have been so much worse against a well-trained and disciplined air force. After a short break on the second day when they must have been considering their chances, they continued almost daily until the weather clamped, just before General Moore and 5 Bde arrived. They were not short of courage, however, and they kept up their fight far longer than the Argentine Navy.



The Sea Harriers were heavily outnumbered despite their success and were unable to achieve full Air Superiority. Normally, that is considered essential for an amphibious assault. In consequence, Sandy had to keep his carriers and the ships in the TRALA, the Tug Repair and Logistic Area, well to the east. This meant that the normal demand for stores from the Land Forces met a long delay. It would take an LSL about 24 hrs to steam in and the last part of its passage would have to be in the dark to reduce the risk of attack. Add to that some ships carried both naval and land force stores and, unknown to us when sent for, were often committed to resupplying Sandy's ships. It all added to confusion, delays and frustration.

When the amphibious landings were nearly over, I heard that CinC had, for political reasons, ordered Julian to break out. An attack on Goose Green was suggested. We had both considered it premature and 'off the line of march'.

Clearly, no one at home really understood what our logistic problems were with very limited helicopters, few vehicles, no roads and the awful terrain. This was especially

important when we knew so little about the Argentine garrison there but we believed we could contain it and prevent any counter-attack.

Major-General Moore's Directive

“You are to secure a bridgehead on East Falkland, into which reinforcements can be landed, in which an airstrip can be established and from which operations to repossess the Falkland Islands can be achieved.

You are to push forward from the bridgehead area so far as the maintenance of its security allows, to gain information, to establish moral and physical domination over the enemy, and to forward the ultimate aim of repossession....

Furthermore, the idea of an early break out was clearly against Moore's wishes. This signal was sent to Julian before Moore departed Northwood to join the QE2 and come south and must have been known to someone on CinC's staff.

Major-General Moore's Directive (Continued)

“You will retain operational control of all forces landed on the Falklands until I establish my headquarters in the area. It is my intention to do this aboard Fearless, as early as possible after the landing. I expect this to be approximately on D+7. It is then my intention to land 5 Infantry Brigade into the beachhead and to develop operations for the complete repossession of the Falkland Islands.”

I was told Julian was furious and very concerned. I went ashore to find him and asked him to agree to wrap up the amphibious phase and allow me to go to sea and collect General Moore and his staff. We were both too junior to fight Northwood and I hoped that Moore would sort it all out.

We had some twenty-four hours to collect and brief Moore who clearly had little idea of what was going on. The SATCOMs in QE2 had broken down on her first day out of Ascension and Moore only had the BBC World Service to tell him what was happening - or a one-time pad for secure communications.

On the way back, we met Sandy and had a helpful chat.

At this meeting I should have argued more strongly that I should have been appointed Chief Naval Staff Officer on Moore's staff and not remain an independent naval task group commander. If that had been the case, I hoped I would have been part of his planning team. I should have then been able to follow his thoughts and influence his movements and logistics in a way that made greater sense and with more safety to my ships and helicopters and his troops and equipment.

Moore agreed that, as I had the staff and an Air Engineer, it made sense that all Support helicopters remained under my OPCON while Tactical Control or TACCON of part of them was handed to Div. HQ and thence down to 3 Cdo Bde and 5 Bde, depending on the logistic situation. I, of course, still needed some choppers to clear equipment from ships that had been stowed by crane and where the stores were too difficult to manhandle down to the waiting Landing Craft or Mexeflotes.

What happened was that, after Moore went forward, not even his Colonel AQ, Colonel Ian Baxter RCT, who remained onboard Fearless and so became my main contact, seemed to be in the tactical planning process. He appeared not to be fully consulted in the planning of a new southern flank assault. Moore was probably far more preoccupied with his attack on Stanley and took the logistics for granted.



JULIAN

Before we get started on the land campaign there are some things that might be useful to cover.

The Falklands War was a long time ago; in terms of the passage of time, if it had been the First World War, we would now be well into the Korean War. Much of the technology, especially in communications has changed comprehensively since 1982. I mention this because some of what I have to say may have outlived its shelf life. A Second World War infantry company commander would, in my opinion, have felt entirely at home in the Falklands War, we even used a cumbersome Second World War vintage code called Slidex. He might have found the helicopters a bit strange, but would have wondered why we lacked some of the kit he would have used to assault beaches and cross major rivers. But he would have found our lack of mobile phones, i-pods, computers, the Internet, TV, perfectly normal. He would not know when the operations would end, or when his R&R was due. He would have found living without a roof or even a tent unexceptional. That was how it was in the land campaign in the Falklands in 1982. It was not so bloody as say Normandy or Italy or the Western Desert; but bloody enough. In just under four weeks, my Brigade alone had 90 killed, and 186 WIA, with another 132 non-battle casualties, mainly trench foot and cold injuries caused by lack of cover in the South Atlantic winter, and broken bones mainly the result of moving over rough terrain at night when heavily laden.

In 1982 there were no roads in the Falklands; everything had to be lifted in helicopters, landing craft, or on peoples' backs. These two slides give some idea of the terrain.



The Falklands weather is changeable and characterized by high winds – the average wind speed is 17 knots (UK 4). Midwinter was approaching. Top priority for helicopter lift was guns, ammunition, people. Rations, packs came a long way down the list. Wheeled vehicles could not cross the peat bog. We took some of our oversnow vehicles with us in the hope that they could; they did.



We took eight CVRT which were invaluable.



The total lack of cover and warmth away from the settlements, other than a few CP tents, meant that once a man was wet, he usually stayed wet. Most men's feet never dried, and many suffered from trench foot.



Ammunition took absolute priority over everything in the competition for helicopters flying forward, as did casualties on return trips. Units were often short of food in cold wet conditions, which saps energy very quickly. On a number of occasions battalions and commandos went without rations for over 36 hours. Perversely in this soaking land, water was difficult to find, except in the valley bottoms. By digging a shallow pit in the peat you could scoop up a brackish brew. Tablets sterilised, but did not remove the sediment, which inflamed the gut. As the war progressed, many suffered 'Galtieri's Revenge'. To avoid unnecessary delay disrobing, some men dispensed with underpants and cut a slit in the seat of their trousers. On the march and in battle, troops of all arms carried heavy loads. For the marines and soldiers, it was a low-tech war; marching, patrolling, freezing days and

nights, savage gutter fighting, the age-old story of foot soldiers closing with the enemy, primitive; unforgiving.

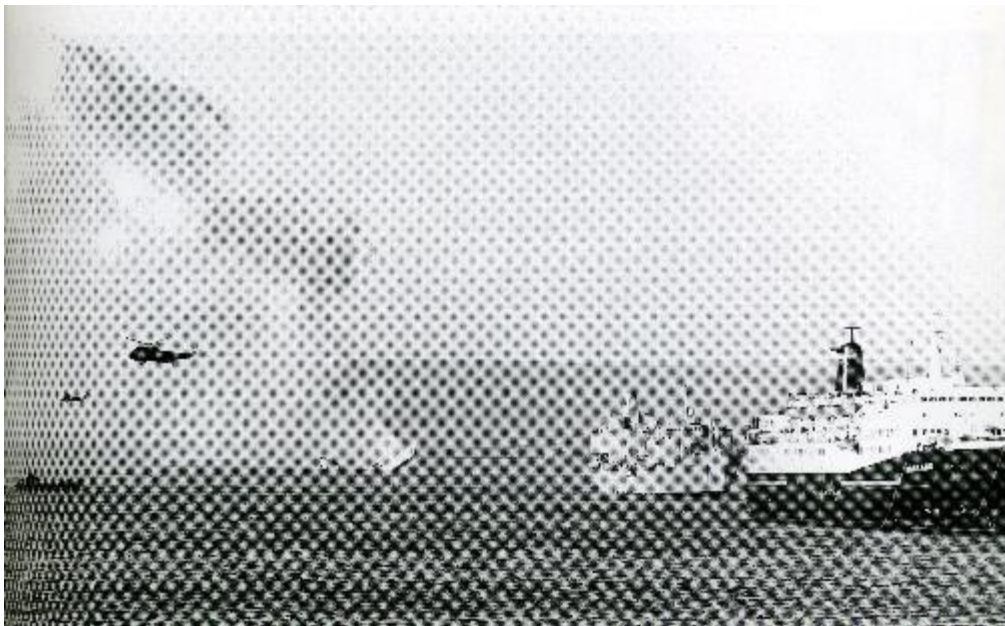
We found that it was difficult for anyone who had not seen the Falklands to imagine what it was like. When we told people that the rate of advance of a battalion on foot carrying ammunition, weapons and equipment was about 1 km per hour, without any interference from the enemy, it was received with ill-concealed disbelief; bordering on contempt.

Towards the end of the war, the International Red Cross sent a representative by sea to supervise the Prisoners of War. From his ship he sent a message to Divisional HQ, which read, 'Please book me into the best hotel in Port San Carlos, and rent a car for me so I can drive to Stanley'.



As this was a joint operation I had to take account of the Navy's requirements in so far as it was in my power to do so. In order to help protect the beachhead against enemy air, my rapier battery was landed as early as I could manage. It took a very long time for reasons which I do not have time to expand on, but the main problem was a misperception in the carrier battle group, that Rapier was on a par with a naval medium-range SAM system, which of course it was not. This led to an angry signal the first evening from Sandy Woodward, saying to me 'put a bomb under Rapier', or words to that effect. Stupidly I reacted with an equally intemperate signal. The lack of an in-theatre commander who could come and see for himself was being felt, not for the first or last time.

Those first few days when the Navy was fighting it out with the enemy air force on my doorstep, it was important not to be distracted by the sights and sounds so close at hand. I could do nothing about the battle, and at times had to force myself to ignore it, such as when HMS *Antelope* blew up and sank about 1,500 metres from my CP.

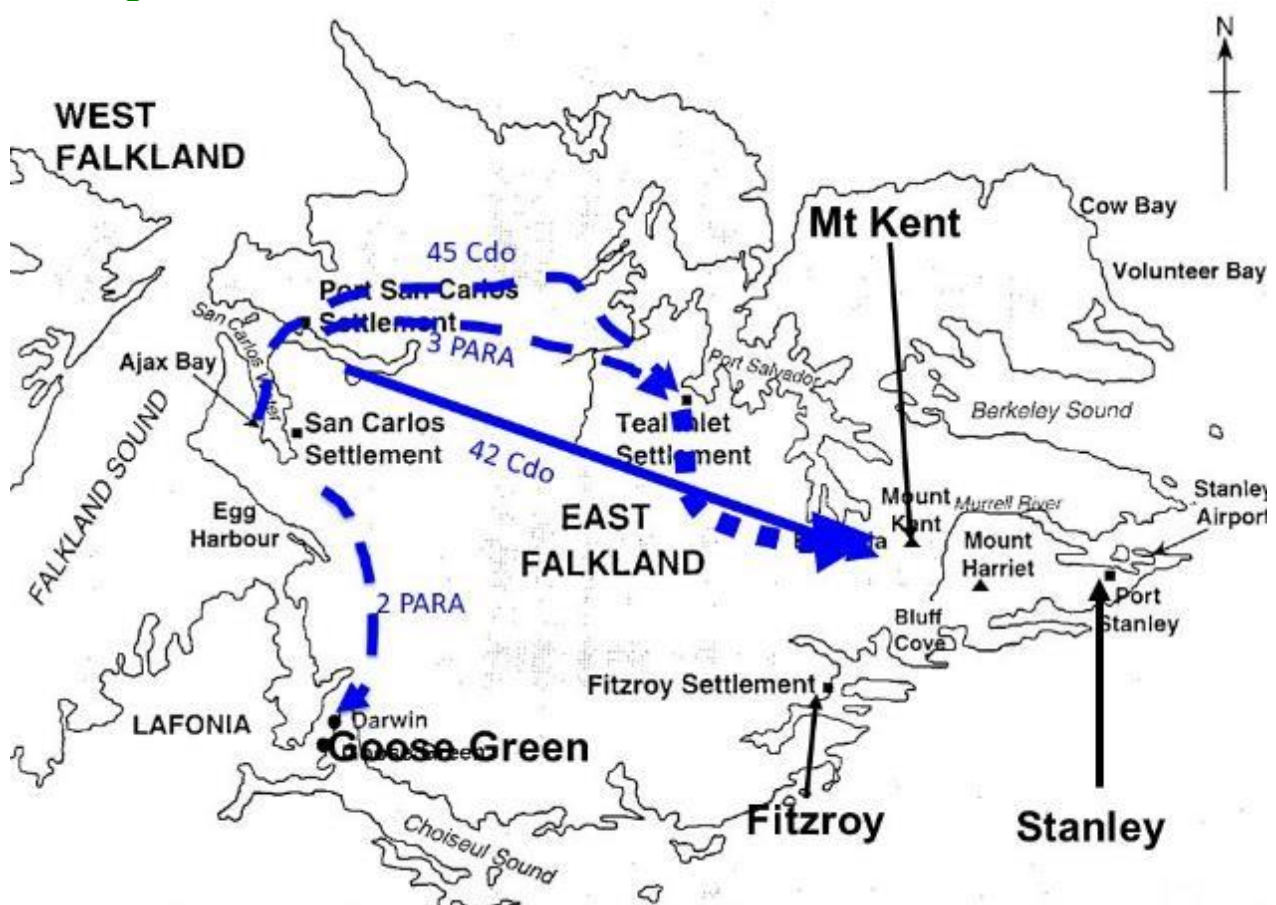


There was, as we told you, increasing pressure to move out early from the beachhead from Northwood, which I was not able to discuss it with my divisional commander because he was incommunicado on QEII still coming south. My plan therefore was to fly the bulk of my brigade forward relying on the four Chinooks coming south in the container ship, the *Atlantic Conveyor*. I was discussing the plan with my staff, when a man stuck his head round the door of my CP and said '*Atlantic Conveyor* has been sunk and all the Chinooks with her'.



He was wrong, in that one Chinook on a trip survived but without spares, tools, or manuals. It was tear it up and start again time.

The pressure was on to move out and, as Mike told you earlier, also capture Goose Green as a tangible sign that we were going to win. I disagreed with the latter, but was ordered to get on with it. It was one of those moments when you either do what you are told, or go.



I ordered 45 Cdo and 3 PARA to march out of the beachhead, 42 Cdo to move by helicopter to Mt Kent, and gave the Darwin/Goose Green task to 2 PARA, whom I had earlier ordered to mount a raid on Darwin, and subsequently cancelled it because it was becoming a diversion from the effort to get recce forward on to Mount Kent overlooking Stanley.

I won't go in to the details of the Darwin/Goose Green battle except to say that I made three mistakes:

1. I should have sent two manoeuvre units
2. I should have taken my tac HQ down to command those two units
3. I should have supported the attack with at least a troop of CVRT

The battalion won the battle with very little assistance from anyone else, save at the end of fourteen hours fighting when pinned down on a forward slope by anti-aircraft guns firing in the ground role, with nothing to shoot back with, three GR3s appeared like magic. We had been asking for them all day, but the carriers were socked in by bad weather. The GR3s did the trick, malleting the gun positions with cluster bombs.

By now the CO, 'H' Jones was dead. I had a battle-experienced officer with the battalion on a one-to-one radio to me, and he said 'Sunray is down'. 'H' was dead, I had sent him there, but there was no time to mourn, I had to don my carapace and get on with commanding my brigade, with two units heading off to the east, and 2 PARA fighting to the south. One of my light helicopters sent to casevac 2 PARA wounded was shot down killing the pilot and gravely wounding the air gunner. I knew the pilot well, his brother and his brother in law were also fighting down south, the latter as an LO with 2 PARA. Such was the nature of my brigade, we were a family; and we had many friends in red berets too.

However, I then found myself with a separate garrison to man and 900 POWs to house, feed and guard. In retrospect, not a sensible idea of CinC's before the land forces were properly established and ready to assault Stanley, but he was probably under huge pressure from Cabinet to show a land victory to counter our ship losses.

A day later Jeremy Moore arrived in the beachhead, a couple of days after the battle of Goose Green and my brigade had started the break out. I briefed him on what we were up to, and moved my HQ forward to Teal Inlet. I was glad to see him, and be relieved of the task of daily conversations with the Task Force HQ at Northwood, and to be able to give my attention to my brigade 100%.

There is a point here about communication in two senses. The Task Force HQ asked that I speak to them on the SATCOM twice daily, an hour before their morning and evening conferences, at 0800 and 1600 their time, BST, which was 0300 and 1100 my

time. To get to a SATCOM out on a ship in the anchorage could take an hour round trip. I refused on the grounds that at 0300 I was normally asleep, and that a commander with broken sleep was an inefficient commander, and that at 1100 I was normally forward with units. I am not sure that this refusal endeared me to the Task Force HQ.

Which raises my second communication point, the need to bear in mind that one's superior HQ may be under enormous pressure and may need support, for example by being positive. This will pay dividends in terms of 'them' being more prepared to listen to what you have to say — particularly if it is unpalatable news about delays, difficulties in meeting deadlines etc. Jeremy Moore was better at it, and used to send a daily signal to Task Force HQ full of cheerful information. Later he confided to me that he privately called it the daily rubbish. But they felt comfortable with him in a way that they did not with me, and the fault was mine.

As an aside, I am glad that the technology of the time did not permit tele-conferences.

MIKE

Before Julian's troops reached Teal Inlet I had sent in a Heath Robinson Mine detection system that had been hurriedly made back in the UK. It was towed by an LCVF and fortunately found no mines. At least we had confidence that the northern flank plan would work.

I share with Julian his dislike of having to talk to Northwood. I spoke with them only occasionally, usually only when CinC called me. The COS was an old friend who seemed to fully understand the pressure we were both under and mainly asked me questions on morale. It would have been helpful if they had tasked one man of similar rank to me to be my contact but they had already kicked out my staff officer, sent there to do just that, and, worse, would not allow admiral Reffell to take part.

Every evening, bar one when I was simply too busy, I spoke with Sandy, mainly to discuss the overall situation and ensure we had CAP and the right ships and escorts sent in. Sometimes there were surprises. For instance I asked him to task the SHARs against enemy helicopters in particular. It took a while before he understood that this

would hugely hinder their logistics, reduce their morale and hinder any attempt at counter-attacking.

However, he seemed to find time to talk to CinC who was another submariner. I strongly suspect my briefings became distorted by the time they reached Northwood. A direct route would have been so much better.

Julian mentioned the Rapiers. We had to spend a lot of time teaching them naval procedures so that they were linked into our Air Raid control system. They were visually aimed only and needed an astonishing amount of maintenance which tied up one helicopter full time. They were sited on hill-tops by boffins back in UK who did not appear to realise they could not depress more than 5 degrees and, in the Falklands, would normally be in cloud. The Argentine aircraft flew very low but the Rapiers claimed 11 kills. Later analysis only approved one. Their main handicap was that their missiles did not have a proximity fuze.



Shortly after General Moore and 5 Bde arrived the weather clamped and all air attacks stopped. This slide shows what it was like at San Carlos. The very low cloud continued until the night of 7/8 June.

Not too surprisingly, the landing of 5 Bde at San Carlos was an Administrative one and went without major incident. As a result, I suspect they and some in the Divisional Staff thought it was all too easy and safe.

As I have said, the move of 5 Bde HQ to Darwin and Goose Green and then forward on the southern flank was not part of the original plan that Julian and I had agreed. We expected 5 Bde to follow 3 Cdo Bde and use their FBMA on the way.

Operational and Tactical Risk Taking

I am sure that Operational and Tactical risk taking is a subject you either have or will encounter.

You could argue that embarking on the campaign at all was a strategic and operational risk, especially bearing in mind that we carried out an amphibious operation without achieving one of the prerequisites for such an operation: air superiority. I quote from the minutes of a War Cabinet meeting held on 18 May 1982 (D minus two for us):

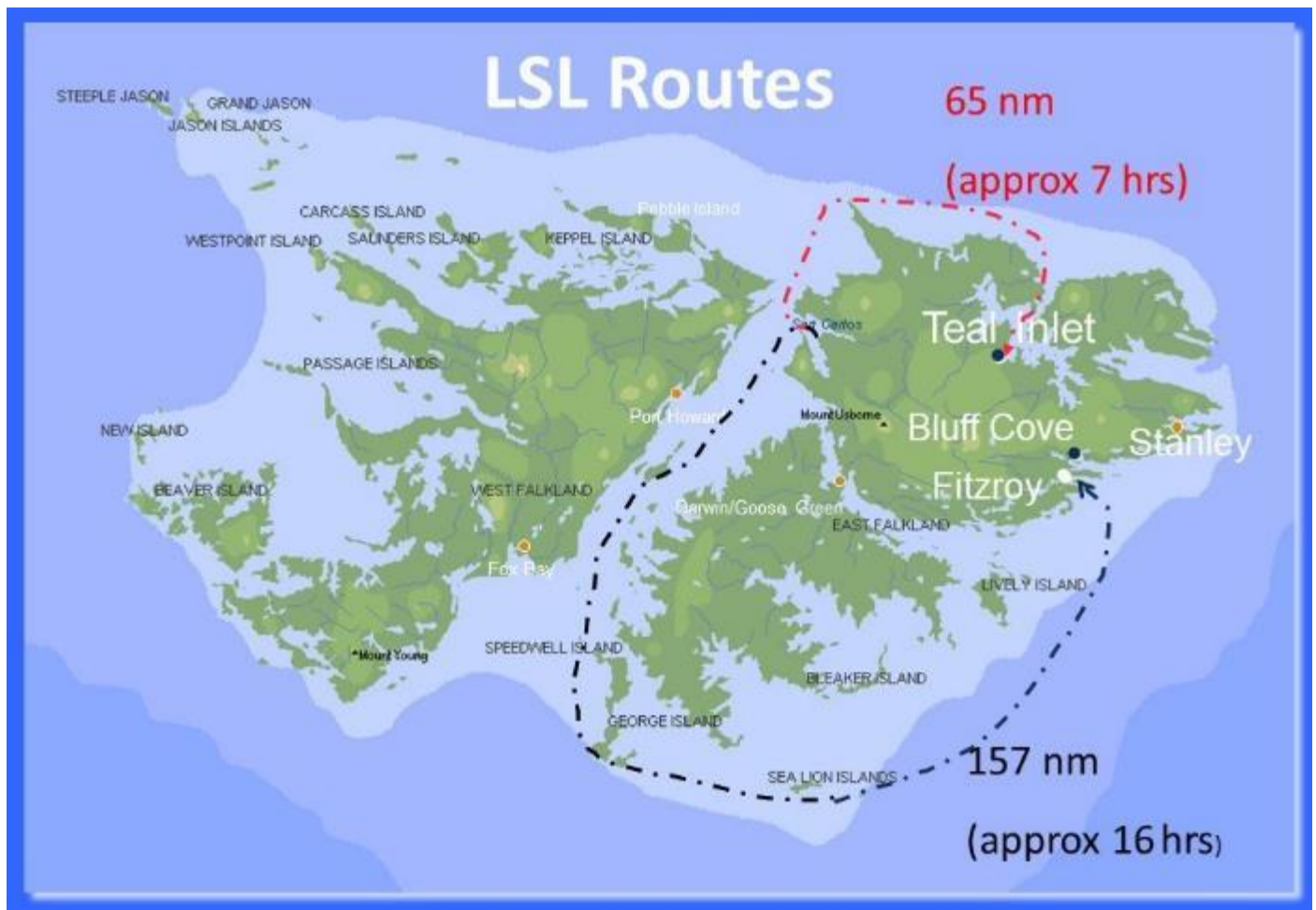
The CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF said his major concern about a landing arose from the Argentine Air Force not having so far committed themselves in any strength. They had suffered losses, but had certainly not been neutralised. Once the landing began their task would be easier; British ships would be within range and in known positions. If they launched an all-out air effort, as their commander had publicly threatened to do, full air defence of British forces could not be guaranteed; some aircraft were likely to get through and more British ships could be lost.

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF agreed and added that the threat was an acceptable war risk.

In discussion the following points were made:

- *The air threat was a more dangerous factor than was generally realised. This would have to be made clear to the Cabinet.*
- *Casualties were impossible to predict.*

As far as operational and tactical level risk taking was concerned, I believe that opening a southern route to Stanley was an operational level risk.



We were not privy to the discussions between Commander 5 Inf Bde and Gen Moore before they arrived in-theatre. We have seen no record of them anyway. I believe that opening that additional route was logistically unsound. It had one beneficial effect; but one that I do not believe was intended by those who ordered the rush forward to Fitzroy; whoever 'they' were. It fed the perception of the Argentines that this was the main thrust and the main amphibious operation they all expected. Before the landings we had placed a decoy on a nearby beach and this may have helped – to them San Carlos was a subsidiary.

We now know that was what the Argentines believed. What they said later confirmed what we thought at the time: their deployment indicated that they thought the main attack would come from the south and south-west. Whereas in fact the main thrust was coming from the North West by 3 Cdo Bde. We can elaborate in questions if you wish.

Tactical and operational risk taking can of course result in surprising the enemy. As General Al Gray USMC wrote;

‘it means doing the unexpected thing, which in turn normally means doing the difficult thing in hopes that the enemy will not expect it. In fact this is the genesis of manoeuvre – to circumvent the enemy’s strength to strike him where he is not prepared’.

The selection of San Carlos for the landing was a good example of what General Gray is talking about.

Surprise is seldom achieved by a flash of inspiration, more often by deep thought, excellent recce, a good plan, and good training, which allows the commander to do the ‘difficult thing’, and therefore the unexpected thing. This did **not** apply to the decision to open up the southern route. Because, the southern route was what the enemy expected, had prepared for and so taking it was **not** a surprise – except perhaps to Julian and me. The Chindit commander Wingate used to say, ‘don’t be predictable’. He meant be unpredictable to the **enemy** not to ones own side.

The trick is to be able to distinguish between a calculated risk and foolhardiness or ‘we might get away with it’. You could argue that opening up the southern route, forced by the ill-considered rush forward by 5 Bde, bordered on foolhardiness. Before the move was made there was no consultation with the Navy who would have to support this move: we were just landed with the problem.

I have to say that not all the failure to consult was one-sided. Admiral Woodward’s staff tasked a type 42 Destroyer to shoot down the Argentine C-130s that come into Stanley every night of the war right up to the last. The destroyer was positioned off the south coast about here.

The message was not passed to Div HQ nor to me, indeed I had been told by Woodward that there would be no ship in that area, so that is what I briefed Intrepid and her escorts, nor was it was passed down to Brigades. The destroyer Cardiff was ordered to shoot down all aircraft that approached its area of operations. The only aircraft it succeeded in downing was a helicopter taking the OC HQ and Sig Sqn of 5 Bde to visit a radio rebroadcast site; the pilot and all passengers were killed. Unfortunately

he had been flying above 100 Ft AGL, and to the destroyer's radar apparently looked like an Argentine C-130 on finals into Stanley.



We will take a break there for Q&A, and the next talk will be about the breakout and Battle for Stanley.