

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

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

#### Medical Support

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

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

#### The Maritime Exclusion Zone

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

#### The Repossession of South Georgia

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

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

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

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

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

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