

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Land Forces

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

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

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

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

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