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TUESDAY, 14TH DECEMBER 1982

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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

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

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

#### **Background**

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

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

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