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Ministry Of Defence
CIO - Record Review

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HM Naval Base
Portsmouth PO1 3NH

OPERATION CORPORATE

HQ 3 COMMANDO BRIGADE
ROYAL MARINES

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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OPERATION CORPORATE - COMMANDER 3 CDO BDE RM
COMMANDER'S REPORT

"Everything is very simple in war, but the simplest thing is very difficult. These difficulties accumulate and produce a friction which no man can imagine exactly who has not seen war".

Clauswitz

INTRODUCTION

1. The after action report of 3 Commando Brigade's participation in Operation CORPORATE is forwarded.
2. Many lessons have been learned or re-learned and all have been rehearsed in this report. However I believe it would be valuable to summarise and comment on the main lessons in this covering report.

AIM

3. To summarise and comment on the main lessons learned.

GENERAL

4. The report is critical of many aspects of the campaign in the hope that errors made can be put right in time for the next war.

AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS

5. While recognising the need to sail the force for political reasons, the haste in which it was done resulted in much of the loads having to be restowed at Ascension. The basic principle of any Amphibious operation that one should start with the Intelligence picture, progress to the Military plan, the landing plan and then last the stow plan to meet the landing plan was not followed.
6. Had a proper intelligence assessment, particularly on the air threat, been made, we would not have left UK under the illusion that, for example, a sea borne BMA could be operated.
7. The amphibious force could have left UK at least 2 weeks later, properly stowed, after rehearsals and still have landed on 21 May 1982.

INTELLIGENCE

8. Planning was bedevilled throughout the pre-landing phase by the paucity of

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Intelligence and throughout the campaign by the lack of air photographs in particular.

9. Air Photographs. The lack of air photographs for the Bde night attack on LONGDON, TWO SISTERS and HARPIFT (ni 11/12 Jun 82) was not critical because we had patrolled these objectives extensively in the 10 days preceeding the attack. The lack of air photography was really felt when it came to plan and give orders for the subsequent Bde attack on STANLEY, SAPPER HILL and STANLEY COMMON (ni 14/15 Jun 82) which in the event never took place because the enemy folded. I had already given the orders for it and the preliminary attack as part of my Bde plan; that of 2 PARA to secure WIRELESS RIDGE, had already taken place under my command the preceeding night. The lack of air photography meant that we had no idea if and where there was wire, the location of minefields, the extent and location of main enemy positions, gun positions and so forth. There was no time for patrolling and it was to be, quite literally, a leap into the dark. In fact for example one of the enemy gun positions containing a complete regiment of 105 pack howitzers was not particularly well camouflaged. Even a mediocre air photograph would have discovered it's position, allowing us to neutralise or even destroy it with our own artillery.

LANDING CRAFT

10. Because there were so few helicopters initially and the air situation so unfavourable, we decided on landing the whole of our infantry in LCU in order to:

- a. Carry out a night landing.
- b. Get the maximum force ashore in the shortest possible time.

11. CVRT were loaded in some LCU to provide:

- a. An over-the lowered ramp direct fire ability in the event of an opposed landing.
- b. Intimate support to infantry in the initial operations ashore.

12. The LCU proved to be an excellent method of getting infantry and armour ashore quickly and in large numbers. The LCVP with its limited range and smaller lift was not so successful.

ADVANCE FORCE OPERATIONS

13. Advance Force operations would have been considerably enhanced had an O class submarine, or better, several O class submarines been available for insertion of SBS patrols. The denial of this secure and clandestine means of insertion threw a greater load on to the four PNG trained helicopter crews and reduced the number of patrols that could be inserted or exfiltrated on any one night. Further there were some nights when, because of bad weather, no insertions or exfiltrations could take place. The effect was to slow down the intelligence gathering efforts.

LAND OPERATIONS

14. One of the most encouraging aspects of land operations was that well tried and practised procedures worked and got better all the time. All the well known battle procedures got slicker and smoother as the campaign progressed.

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Artillery. The five 105mm light gun batteries were perhaps the battle winning factor in this war. The ability to bring down concentrated, accurate fire crushed the enemy's morale and raised ours. Thanks to training on the passage down every marine or private soldier learned how to call for fire and correct it; and many did so. Our gunners often brought down fire within 50 metres of our own troops in the attack. We had the utmost confidence in them. Once again, artillery proved itself to be the principle man killing weapon in the land battle. If properly handled, which ours was, it is undeterred by smoke, darkness, snow or fog; it is accurate, almost instantaneous and devastating. At DARWIN/GOOSE GREEN there was not enough artillery and insufficient ammunition because the helicopter lift was inadequate. The battle was nearly lost as a consequence.

16. Infantry Fire Power. We learned from DARWIN/GOOSE GREEN the need to have more fire power right forward with rifle sections. The old concept of gun group/rifle group is outdated. Bns and Cdos quickly re-organised sections into 2 or 3 fire teams each with an automatic weapon, GPMG or LMG and later captured automatic FALs, and a plentiful supply of 66mm LAW and 84mm MAW. The latter two were used to hit sangers and strong points before the final rush with the bayonet supported by GPMG/LMG. Some riflemen did not fire a complete magazine throughout the campaign. MILAN was also a tremendous asset against longer range targets such as .50 cal HMG fire.

17. Night Attacks. We used night attacks after DARWIN/GOOSE GREEN because the open nature of the terrain would have enabled the enemy to see us approaching from several miles away in daylight. His artillery and in particular, well sited MG posts, would have brought heavy casualties on us. Despite the Argentinians being equipped with more and better night visual aids, our superior training was decisive. Our stock of night viewing aids increased as we captured theirs. The lesson is that the night is still the infantrymen's friend however sophisticated the night viewing aids possessed by the opposition.

18. Battle Skills. Battle skills improved as the campaign progressed and once units were blooded, one felt an increasing confidence and determination to do even better next time.

19. Engineers. The engineers in this Bde were used mainly in the Assault Engineer role. All Cdos/Bns had sapper recce teams and sapper troops attached. They provided mine clearance parties on patrols and accompanied the leading infantry at all times. They took satchel charges and bangalore torpedoes to deal with wire. In the event there was none, fortunately. The use of engineers well forward was a critical factor in the land battle and brought home the old lesson that sappers must be well forward to enable the infantry to get on.

SUPPORT HELICOPTERS

20. The support helicopters were flown superbly and with great determination and courage, and better than I have ever seen. Conversely the command and control of support helicopters was the worst I have seen in any operation or exercise in 29 years of soldiering. This was caused by the following:

- a. Helicopters were not placed under OPCON of this Bde.
- b. MAOTs were running CPs and not forward.
- c. Unlike the COs and OCs of all other supporting arms, the NACS COs are

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not located in the Bde CP or with the Bde Comd's R Gp. They are therefore always out of the battle picture. It is not sufficient to have a single TS Tasker. NACS should follow the same procedure as the Bde Air Sqn: a pilot is used as the tasker and the OC is located with the Bde Comd.

LIGHT HELICOPTERS

21. The light helicopters were flown superbly and with great courage both by day and night and in all weather. Their casevac operations saved many lives. They flew ammunition forward and took wounded out many times under fire. In a hostile air environment their use for reconnaissance is limited and they should not be flown forward of the FEBA in daylight if there is any doubt about enemy locations.

AIR DEFENCE

22. The war demonstrated very clearly the need for adequate air defence of the BMA, gun areas and HQs. There were not enough air defence assets with only one Rapier Battery and one Troop of 12 x Blowpipe. The situation was exacerbated when the Bde moved out of the SAN CARLOS Bridgehead and out of Rapier cover. Although 4 x Rapier were provided for the Forward BMA at TEAL there was no air defence, except Blowpipe, for the Bde during the reconnaissance phase and battle for STANLEY. Bde HQ was particularly vulnerable and although well concealed was attacked by 4 x A4 with Snakeye 1000 lb retard bombs 24 hours before the ceasefire.

23. In our NATO role there is a need for at least one air defence battery and more very low level air defence weapons.

COMMUNICATIONS

24. There is an urgent requirement for secure communications down to and including troop level. There is no doubt that information of use to the enemy was gleaned from our insecure radio nets. This is unacceptable and should be put right before the next war.

CONTROL OF AIRSPACE

25. Much is made in NATO publications and on NATO exercises about air-space control in the context of fire support by guns and mortars. In this war it was a non-problem. Helicopters in particular continued to fly and guns and mortars to fire at the same time. Because of the adverse air situation most helicopters flew so low that they were well below the trajectory of shells and mortar bombs.

26. Because of the British system of control of fire and OAS being mainly eyeball and calls for fire being demands and not requests, there is little chance of conflict between aircraft and guns/mortars.

INFORMATION POLICY AND PRESS

27. There was no Information (or Press) Policy. If there was it was not promulgated to me. Clearly the lessons learned by the Army and the Royal Marines in 12 years in Northern Ireland had not been hoisted in by those responsible for laying down the arrangements for the handling of the press in this campaign.

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28. The system of providing PROs as "minders" to look after the press failed. These "minders" who were MOD civil servants and in many cases "failed" journalists, were unable to give the press sensible comments because, being civilians, they knew nothing about the equipment or men. They were despised by the press and in the end lost control of them. The Landing Force used a high grade Royal Marines Officer as the PRO. Because he clearly knew what he was talking about, was intelligent, a first class soldier, and transparently enjoyed my confidence, he was able to build up an excellent relationship with the press.

29. The press assigned to the Carrier Battle Group and ships got frustrated and as soon as possible streamed ashore to join the Landing Force which was extremely irritating because we already had our own press. The sad consequence was that the ships were largely denied the publicity they so richly deserved for the actions at sea after 21 May 1982.

30. The lessons that we in the Royal Marines and the Army learned so painfully in Northern Ireland: that PROs should be first class, serving officers, should be applied in future.

PSYOPS

31. There was no Psyops campaign in this war. There was a rich potential field for Psyops and many opportunities for destroying the morale of the Argentine forces much earlier and influencing the public both in Argentina and in the world at large were lost.

32. It is a little known subject as proved when two staff officers from Northwood came out just before the Amphib Group sailed. When asked about the Psyops campaign they thought we were referring to the deception plans for the landing. I am not convinced they knew the difference right up to the time they left 48 hours later.

33. Psyops has to be linked to Information Policy and it is recommended that in future wars both are implemented.

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