

# THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL AND THE ORGANISATION OF THE THEATRES OF OPERATIONS DURING THE WAR OF MALVINAS

By **ALBERTO OSCAR TREJO Y PATRICIO JUSTO TREJO**

## Keywords:

- > Commando unit
- > Joint warfare
- > Theatre of operations
- > Falkland Islands
- > Sovereignty

The Malvinas War was a traumatic experience for Argentina, but for the rest of the world it was a cause for study and a source of lessons learned at all levels of leadership. This article aims to analyse the operational level, joint military action in the conduct of the war and the organisation of the theatres of operations during the South Atlantic conflict.

One of the principles of joint military action is unity of command. This became particularly evident during the Second World War, when the integration of the different components acquired importance, a paradigm in this sense being the conduct of Operation Overlord, the landing on the beaches of Normandy. President Eisenhower, who was its Supreme Commander, would later say: “The way of waging war in separate groups of land, sea and air is over forever. If we ever meet again in another war, we will

fight it with all the Armed Forces in a concentrated effort”.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note that this operation was planned in the UK. Likewise, Britain continued to operate in this way in the different conflicts in which it participated: the Korean War, colonial disputes in Southeast Asia, intervention in the Suez Canal, intervention in Northern Ireland and its participation as a member of NATO, which gave it a certain gymnastics in the organisation of joint forces with projection capacity, in addition to the specific characteristics of its armed forces with great influence from the Royal Navy, due to its insular position.

Although Argentina set up its Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1948, after the experiences of the Second World War, it had not developed much in this regard, so it did not have a joint doctrine either; at the same time, in some cases the equipment was not compatible and no exercises were conducted



to integrate the armed forces<sup>1</sup>. However, the 1978 border conflict with Chile had allowed it to test aspects related to the mobilisation and organisation of theatres of operations. On that occasion, seven strategic commands had been formed: Southern Operations Theatre (TOS), Northwest Operations Theatre (TONO), Northeast Strategic Security Zone (SENE), Air Defence Command (CDA), Strategic Air Command (CAE), Naval Operations Command (COOP) and the Joint Transport Command (CCT).

The Military Board was the head of all these operational commands, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the coordinating and advisory body<sup>2</sup>. Although seven strategic commands were organised, only the Joint Transport Command provided for full integration; the others were essentially specific in nature.

**British organisations**

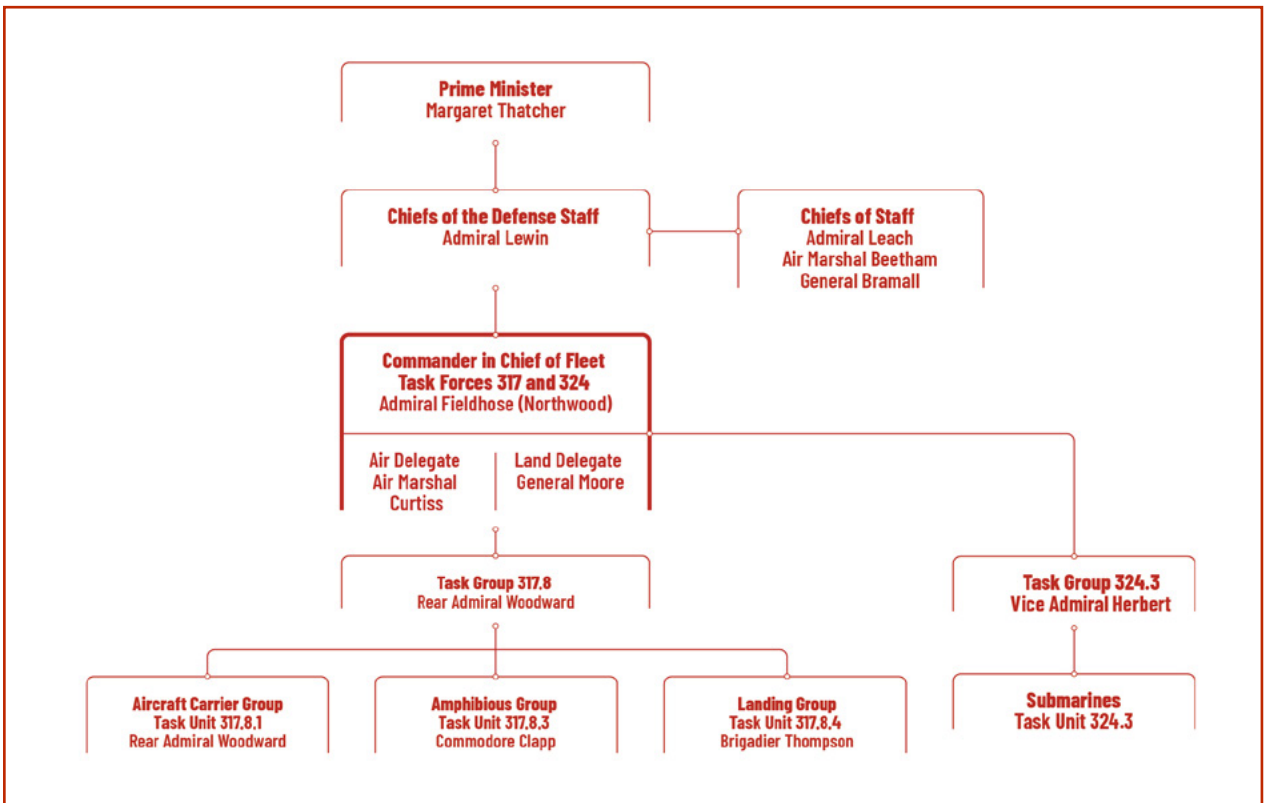
For Britain, once conflict broke out, determining the initial feasibility of military employment fell to the Royal Navy; Admiral John Fieldhouse, then commander-in-chief of the Atlantic fleet, had extensive experience. A 1944 graduate, he had trained as a submariner and served as second-in-command of the aircraft carrier HMS Hermes in 1967, during the evacuation of Aden and later in the Hong Kong crisis. He had also been involved in the Suez Canal crisis (1956). Fieldhouse, aware that a refusal would deepen the budget cuts to which his armed forces were being subjected and seeing an opportunity to reverse this situation, considered it feasible to use military means to recapture the islands and immediately devised a plan. His initial structure was based on his experience and training, for

which he organised two Task Forces (see Figure 1).

Once the conflict had escalated, and based on the intelligence studies carried out, it was clear that they would have to fight a major naval air battle. Likewise, the lack of information would make it necessary to reconnoitre landing beaches and adopt alternative plans for their use<sup>3</sup>. Another decisive aspect for the organisation of the force was the combat power ratio. It was realised that the Argentine force on the islands was about 10,000 men, and that about 7,500

1. Lombardo, Juan José. *Malvinas: Errores, anécdotas y reflexiones*. Inédito, p. 14.
2. Trejo, Alberto O.. *Análisis histórico de la aplicación de los principios de la acción militar conjunta en la organización operacional en la movilización de 1978*. Escuela Superior de Guerra Conjunta de las FFAA, Bs As., p. 16.
3. Fieldhouse, John. "La Guerra de Malvinas Así Vencimos". *Revista Defensa* N° 62. junio 1983.

FIGURE 1. INITIAL ORGANISATION OF THE BRITISH COMMAND STRUCTURE (2 / 9 APRIL 1982)



Source: *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*. Vol II.

## **A decisive aspect of the organisation of the British force was the ratio of combat power. It was appreciated that the Argentine force in the islands was about 10,000 men, and that about 7,500 of them were in Stanley; for this reason they needed at least one additional brigade and a divisional command to take command of both.**

of them were in Port Stanley; for this reason, they needed at least one additional brigade and a divisional command to take command of both<sup>4</sup>.

Considering these aspects and others of a technical nature and reorganisation, especially of the amphibious and landing task force, a war council was held on Ascension Island, chaired by Admiral Fieldhouse and with the participation of the subordinate commanders, at which the new command structure was established in relation to the size of the expeditionary force<sup>5</sup> (See Figure 2).

The command structure is organised by function, except for the South Georgia task force, which is organised by task<sup>6</sup>, since it was given all the necessary elements to carry out its mission independently. Among the conclusions that emerged from that meeting, it was established that Admiral Woodward would press with the Carrier Battle Group to try to win the air and naval battles before any amphibious landings took place. He would also be responsible for infiltrating, at the request of Clapp and Thompson, special forces

reconnaissance patrols. Meanwhile, the Amphibious Task Force would remain at Ascension to carry out the much-needed redeployment of men, effects and vehicles<sup>7</sup>.

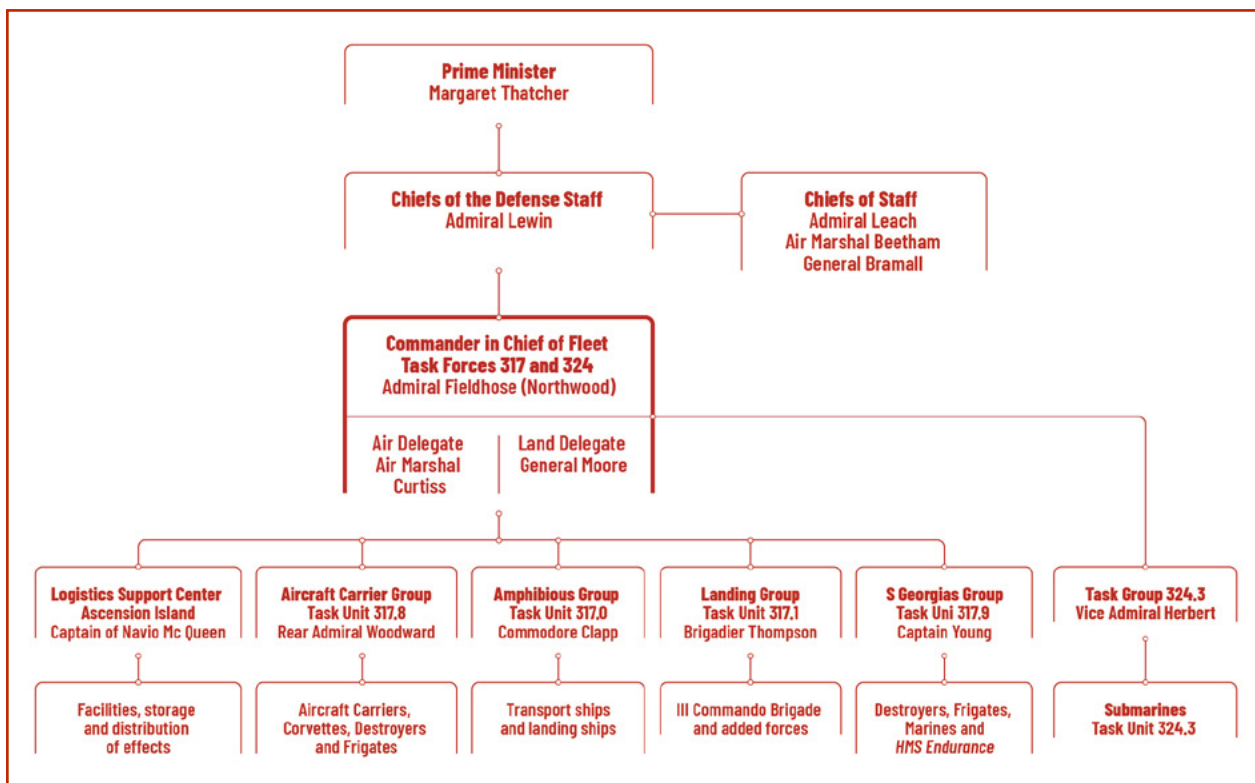
All landings would take place on Soledad Island, with proposals to land on the Greater Falklands rejected. Determining the exact landing site on Soledad Island would depend on several factors, including beaches and enemy deployment. Special forces patrols would be deployed to obtain information on these and other aspects. In the meantime, Clapp and Thompson would prepare several alternative landing beaches<sup>8</sup>.

The Marine Brigade was to be reinforced and measures to that effect were put in place. These reinforcements included an additional parachute battalion, another light gun battery, more medics, additional engineer troops, more Blowpipe missiles, and another light helicopter group. These reinforcements brought the Brigade's strength to about 5,500 men, including five battalions, 24 105mm light guns, eight tracked armoured scout vehicles, a surface-to-air missile battery, 15 light helicopters and a logistics regiment<sup>9</sup>. Air superiority was to be obtained before the amphibious



Operation Corporate Staff. From left to right: Vice Admiral P. Herber, General J. Moore, Admiral J. Fieldhouse, Vice Admiral V. Hallifax, Air Marshal J. Curtiss, Rear Admiral P. Hammerley.

FIGURE 2. ORGANIZATION OF THE BRITISH COMMAND STRUCTURE (9 APRIL / 20 MAY 1982)



Source: The Official History of the Falklands Campaign. Vol II.

operation could take place.

This was categorically emphasised by Task Force Commander Admiral Fieldhouse, and not for the first time.<sup>10</sup> The Amphibious Group needed more air superiority before the amphibious operation could take place. The Amphibious Group needed more ships, some of which were already underway, but others, such as a dock landing ship, had to be sent south immediately<sup>11</sup>. Once the war began, Fieldhouse's confidence in the power of submarines was confirmed after the sinking of the cruiser ARA General Belgrano, which meant that the Argentine

fleet did not undertake any further major operations.

However, it was never able to achieve air superiority, which caused serious disadvantages during the landings. Once the beachhead was established, the last modification to the command structure of Task Force 317 was made. Since two brigades were to operate for the attack on Port Stanley, it was necessary to form a divisional command, and General Jeremy Moore was sent with a small staff to take command and be Fieldhouse's representative in the field. Although this command did not provide extra forces, logistics

or communications, it did serve to coordinate the final effort over Stanley (see Figure 3). In the area of operations there was no unified command, but rather coordination between the commanders, which eventually resulted in General Moore being sent as Fieldhouse's representative.

### Argentine Organisations

Oceanic interests were always an almost exclusive concern of the Argentine Navy, which is why the Malvinas Islands and planning for their recovery was a recurrent issue over time. Since UN General Assembly Resolution 2065 - which recognised a sovereignty dispute over the islands - the military option could be feasible as a back-up to international policy. However, the 1978 conflict with Chile had put this hypothesis on the back burner.

In 1981, Britain's recurrent refusal to discuss sovereignty

4. Idem.

5. Thompson, Julian. *La Savia de la Guerra*. Instituto de Publicaciones Navales. 1991, p. 327

6. According to the classification developed by Mintzberg, the various bases for grouping units within an organisation are reduced to two, by the "function" performed and by the "market" served. Neither is superior to the other, but in their use, the

different factors that make their use advisable must be evaluated. Mintzberg, Henry. *The Structuring of Organisations*. Prentice - Hall. 1979.

7. Thompson, op.cit., p. 327.

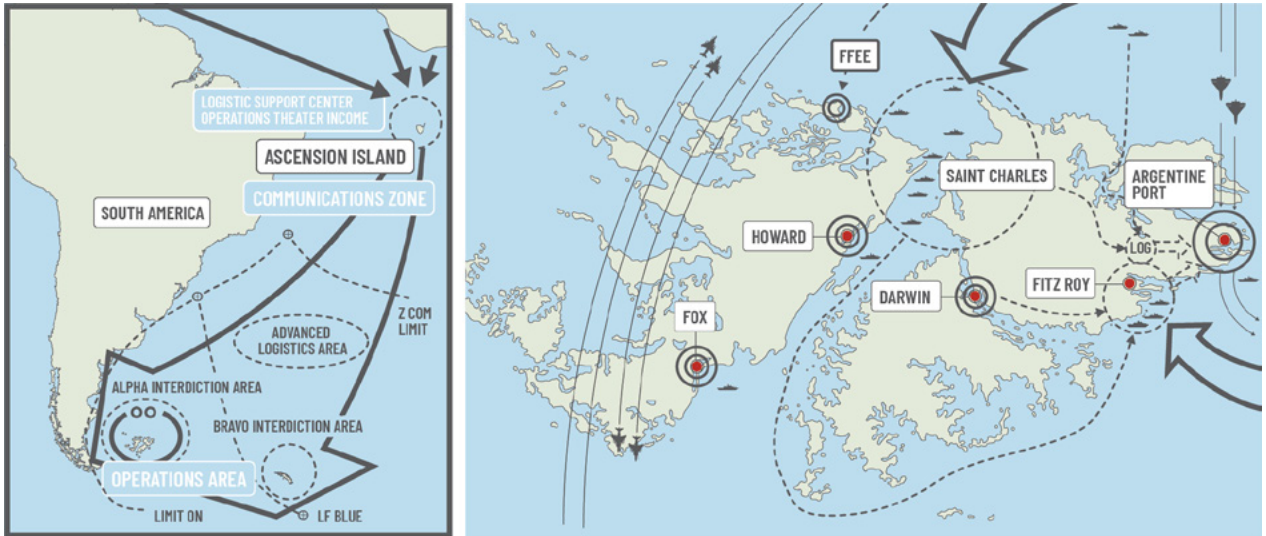
8. Ibidem.

9. Idem.

10. Idem.

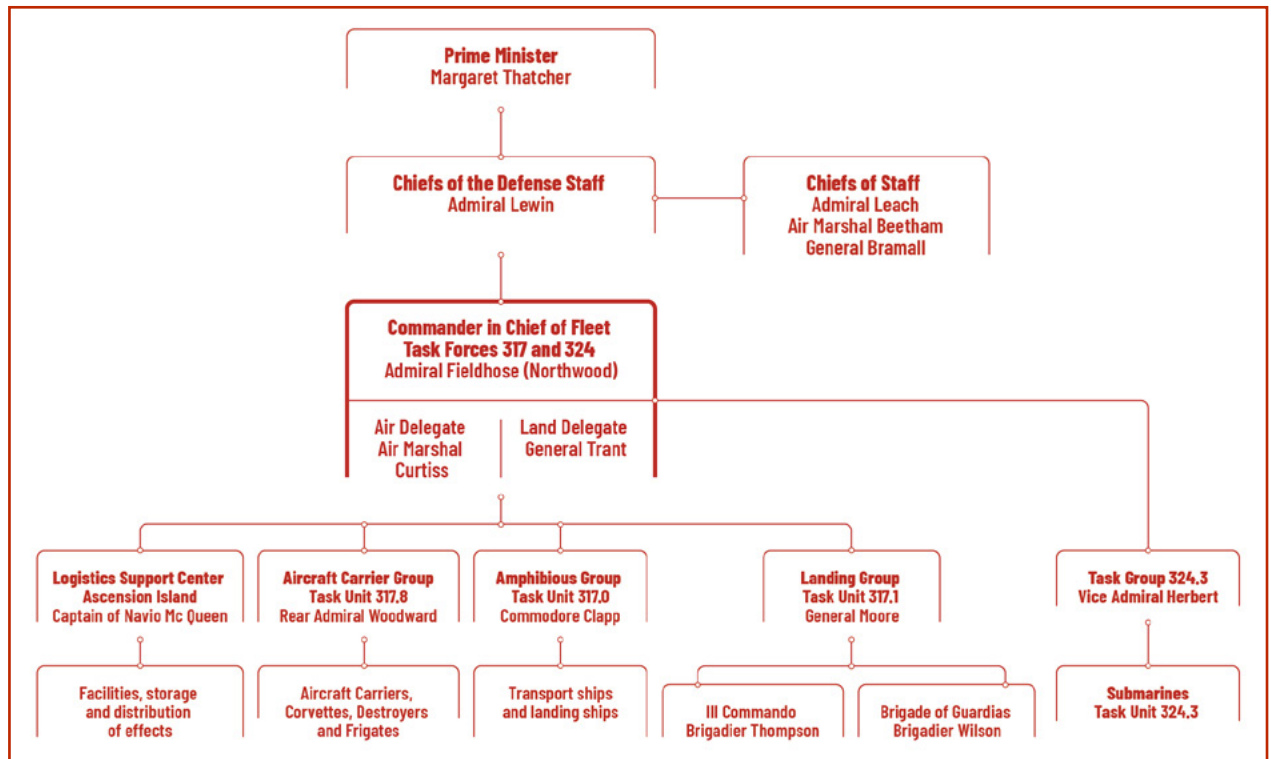
11. Idem.

**GENERAL CONCEPT OF THE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONAL MANEUVER OF THE BRITISH FORCES**



Source: own elaboration

**FIGURE 3 . ORGANIZATION OF THE BRITISH COMMAND STRUCTURE (21 APRIL/14 JUNE 1982)**



Source: *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign, Vol II.*

over the Malvinas in the round of negotiations held in New York gave the first signs of a re-evaluation of the military option. In December 1981, Admiral Jorge Isaac Anaya, a member of the Military Junta,

ordered Vice Admiral Lombardo, who had just taken over as Commander of Naval Operations, to carry out preventive planning for the recovery of the Malvinas Islands, with the utmost secrecy.

Once completed, the plan was presented, and the initial feasibility was accepted with the naval means available, also pointing out that the defence of the Islands would require more



British ground commanders, planning the attack on Port Stanley. From left to right: Brigadier General J. Thompson, Major General J. Moore and Brigadier General A. Wilson. Wilson

in-depth studies. At that point the Joint Chiefs of Staff had not been informed<sup>12</sup>. The power disputes in the Military Junta made it necessary to reach an agreement to develop the plan and in the following months members of the Army and the Air Force joined the Working Commission set up for that purpose, but the contribution of means and troops to the operation was symbolic and would only be necessary once the

archipelago had been recovered when the amphibious incursion force withdrew. It was therefore decided that the operation to be carried out would be concurrent rather than joint.

This meant that the three forces would contribute resources and carry out successive and complementary but independent actions. This would make the whole appear as a single action, carried out jointly by the three forces, but

would avoid having to use common regulations, procedures, means and codes that did not exist<sup>13</sup>.

In mid-March 1982, once times had accelerated due to the scrap metal crisis in South Georgia,<sup>14</sup> the Malvinas Theatre of Operations<sup>15</sup> was created and, despite being an eminently naval area of operations, General Osvaldo García was appointed as commander, to give it greater institutional backing and a joint appearance. He was the commander of the 5th Army Corps, with responsibility for Patagonia.

General García, although he formed a General Staff, had a capacity of supervision and control over the deployed forces, limited and restricted to the Amphibious Task Force FT 40, because the overall plan was conceived,

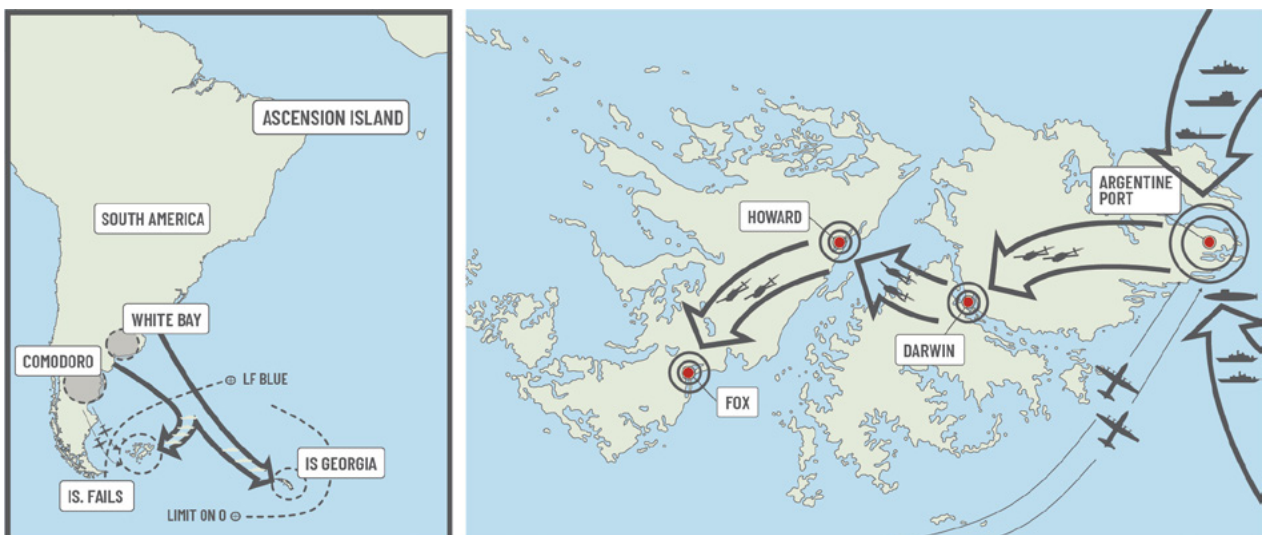
12. Lombardo, J.J., *Malvinas: Errores, anécdotas...*, op.cit, p. 19.

13. *Ibidem*, p. 20.

14. Rattenbach Report (IR). Paragraph 150.

15. National Executive Decree 674/82 "S".

#### GENERAL CONCEPT OF THE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONAL MANOEUVRE OF THE ARGENTINE FORCES



Source: own elaboration

## All British landings were to take place on Soledad Island, proposals to land on the Greater Falklands being rejected. The determination of the exact landing site on Solitude Island would depend on a number of factors, including the beaches and enemy deployment.

developed and executed mainly by the Naval Operations Command. Even Naval Task Force FT 60.1, which recovered the South Georgia Islands and was placed under his orders at the last minute to unify the operational command,<sup>16</sup> escaped his real control, as did Naval Air Task Force FT 20, composed of the aircraft carrier 25 de Mayo, which had a covering mission and was not subordinate, but in support (see figure 4).

Once the Malvinas and South Georgia Islands were recovered, the initial objective of “Occupy in order to negotiate” was achieved. Popular support for the Military Junta's decision, United Nations Security

Council Resolution 502, passed on 3 April, and British intransigence to negotiate limited Ambassador Nicanor Costa Méndez's capacity for diplomatic manoeuvre and accelerated the timetable.<sup>17</sup>

On 4 April, General Mario Benjamín Menéndez was sworn in as military governor of the islands. For this task he set up a joint governing body, made up of secretaries from the different areas. General Daher, in charge of the land forces on the islands, drew up a plan and distributed the forces, as set out in Operations Order 1/82 Defence.<sup>18</sup> (See Figure 5).

The British offensive reaction was immediate, and the lack of a

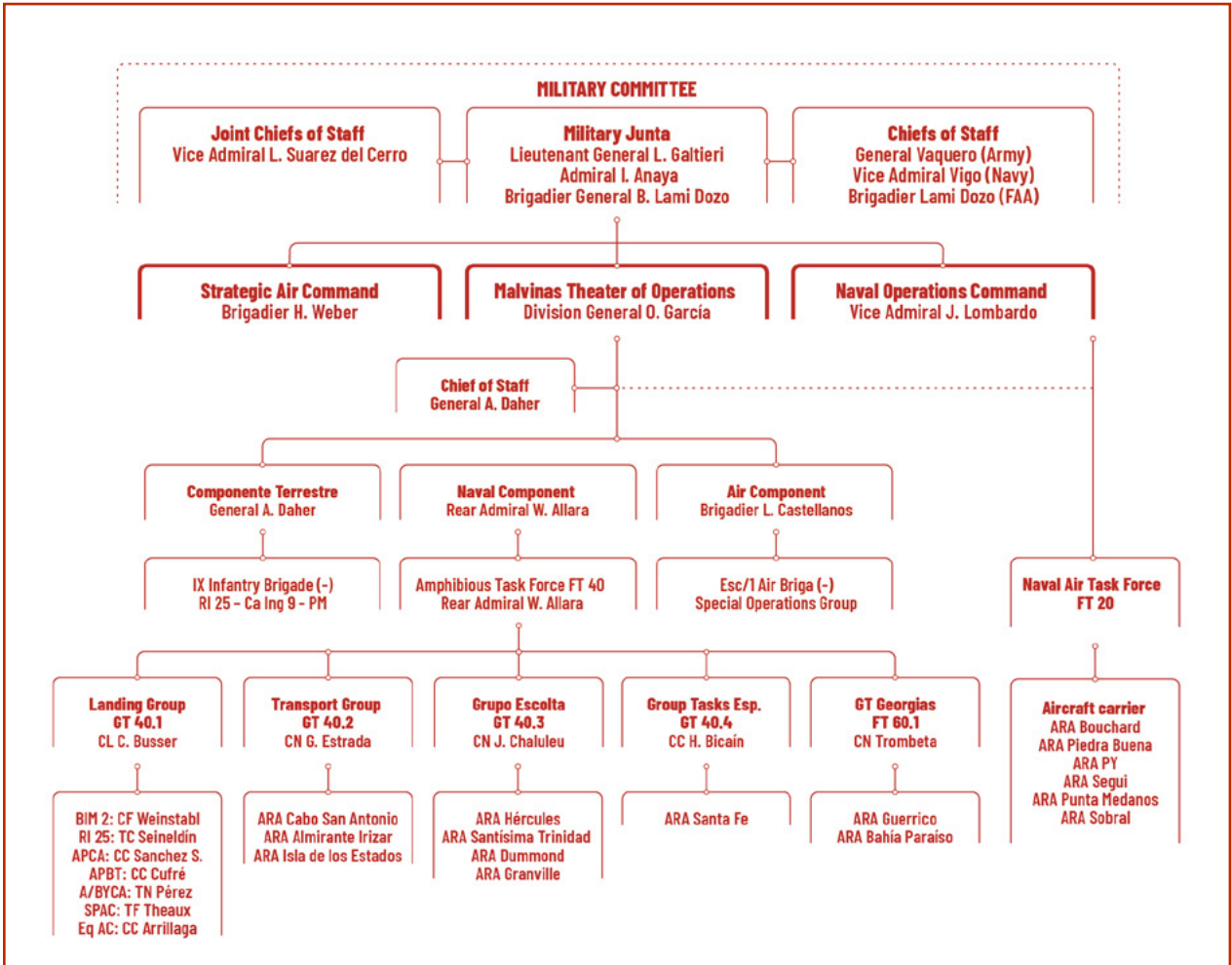
defence plan forced a review and reorganisation of the forces, leading to the creation of the South Atlantic Theatre of Operations<sup>19</sup> which expanded the area of operations, for which Vice-Admiral Juan José Lombardo, who until then had been Commander of Naval Operations, was appointed commander. He had been mainly responsible for the initial planning, which is why he was aware of the development of the operations and to a certain extent the mass of the resources committed were naturally subordinate to him. General Ruiz and Brigadier Arnau were appointed as deputies.

Vice Admiral Lombardo, faced with the British offensive manoeuvre in progress and the absence of pre-established plans, had to draw up a new campaign plan, which was issued on 12 April<sup>20</sup>. The plan assigned missions and tasks mainly to naval, naval air and search and rescue assets. Likewise, two naval commands were organised, one in South Georgia and the other in the South Sandwich Islands, and finally a joint command was set up in the Falkland Islands<sup>21</sup>.



Commanders of the Malvinas Theatre of Operations, after the recovery of the Malvinas Islands, from left to right: Brigadier L. Castellanos, Major General O. García, Rear Admiral C. Busser, Rear Admiral W. Allara and at the back General Daher. Allara and behind General Daher.

FIGURE 4 . INITIAL ORGANISATION OF THE ARGENTINE COMMAND STRUCTURE (2 / 7 APRIL 1982)



Source: Rattenbach Report. Commission for the Analysis and Evaluation of Responsibilities in the South Atlantic Conflict.

In view of the tasks assigned to the land forces of the Malvinas Joint Command, it was decided to reinforce the troops already deployed with the X Mechanised Infantry Brigade, without taking their vehicles, but taking into account their characteristics as a main combat force. Also, its commander, General Oscar Jofre, was familiar with airmobile

operations as he had previously served as commander of Army aviation. The new operational plan also envisaged such a force.

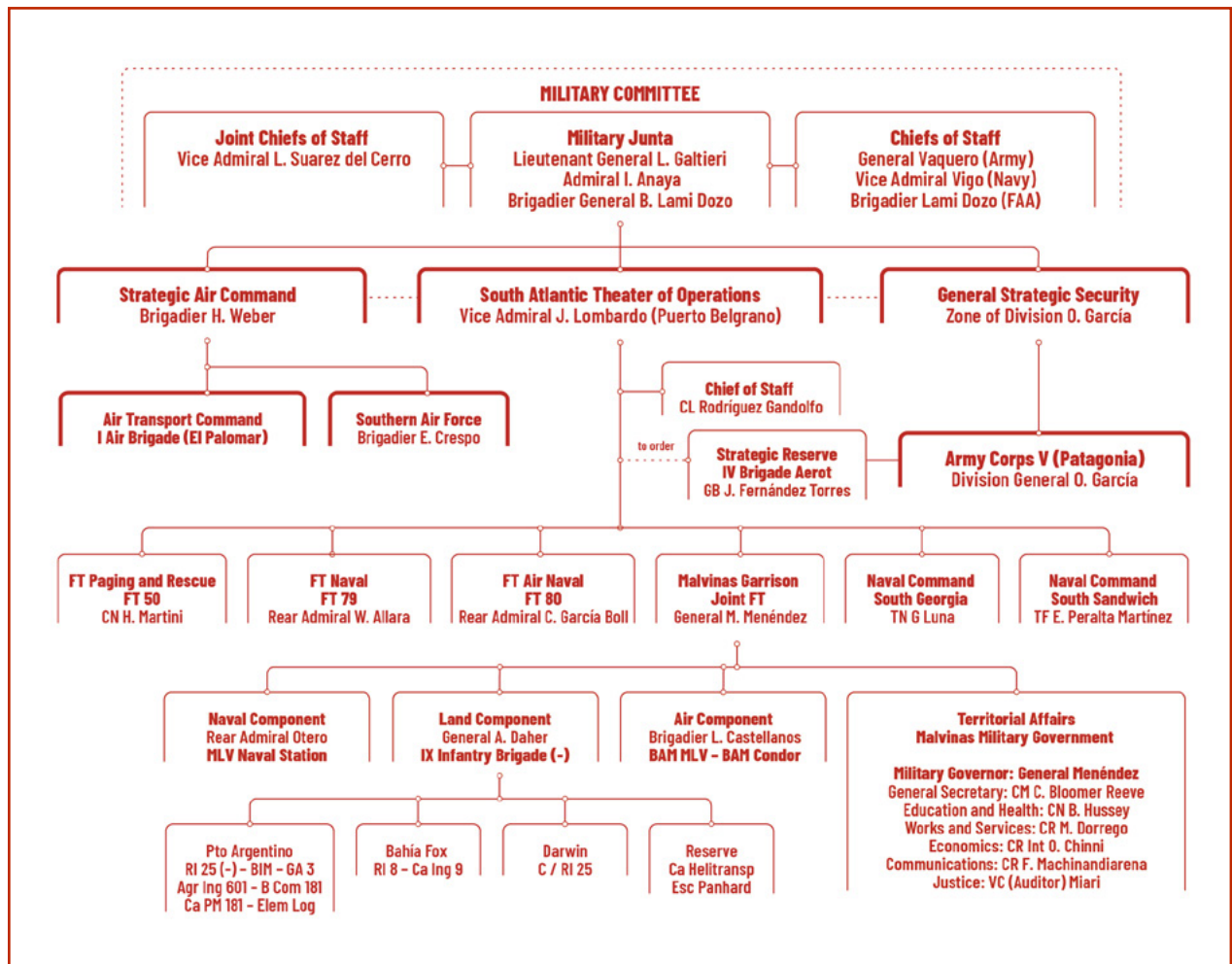
The crisis generated by the recovery of the islands escalated with the British decision to send a powerful fleet to the South Atlantic, which forced the reorganisation of other operational commands, assigning forces from the rest of the country to be deployed in Patagonia, a region that became a strategic security zone, not only because of its proximity to the Malvinas Islands, but also because of its extensive border with Chile, with which there was still an unresolved conflict, creating a

situation that could favour British operations<sup>22</sup>.

In this sense, the 5th Army Corps assumed responsibility for the strategic security zone between the sea coast and the mountainous area bordering Chile. The III Infantry Brigade, based in Corrientes, was initially mobilised to this sector to reinforce it. Likewise, the IV Airborne Brigade was mobilised to Comodoro Rivadavia as a strategic military reserve.

The Strategic Air Command was assigned specific missions, which is why on 7 April it issued Operations Plan 2/82 "Maintenance of Sovereignty", which created the Air Transport Command and the

16. IR. Paragraph 259.  
 17. IR. Paragraphs 152 and 153.  
 18. Argentine Army (EA). Official Report of the Malvinas Conflict. 1983. Volume II.  
 19. Decree of the National Executive Power 700/82 "S".  
 20. EA. Informe Oficial del Conflicto Malvinas. 1983. Tomo II.  
 21. Ibidem.  
 22. Lombardo, *Malvinas: Errores,...* op.cit., p. 55.

**FIGURE 5.** ORGANISATION OF THE ARGENTINE COMMAND STRUCTURE (7 / 12 APRIL 1982)

Source: Rattenbach Report. Commission for the Analysis and Evaluation of Responsibilities in the South Atlantic Conflict.

Southern Air Force, assigning it the mass of air assets available in the country, distributing them to take-off air bases along the Patagonian coast<sup>23</sup>.

Brigadier Ernesto Crespo was appointed commander of the Southern Air Force, formed his General Staff and issued an operations order clearly setting out the main tactical objectives (see Figure 6). Faced with the increase of forces in the Malvinas Islands, General Menéndez's initial government cabinet had to assume staff responsibilities. General Daher, who was with part of his units on the mainland, now a strategic security zone, was replaced by General Jofre

as commander of the land forces, who issued a full operations order on 15 April<sup>24</sup>.

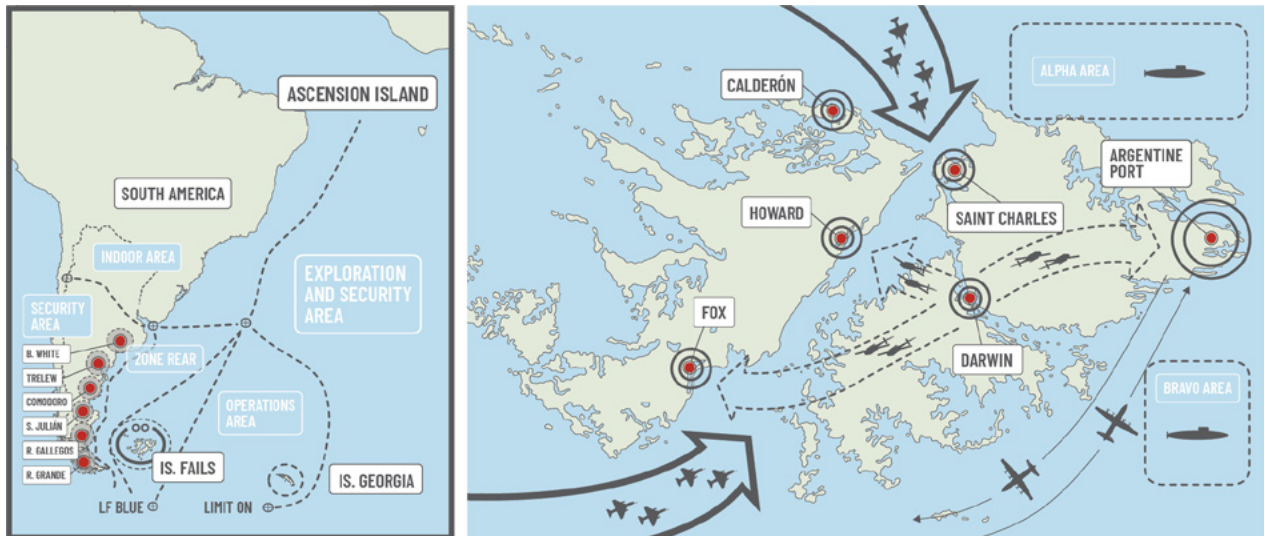
General Jofre did not change the initial defence concept, but deployed the entire brigade around Puerto Argentino as the most significant operational objective. Despite the concentration of resources, the 45-kilometre defensive perimeter was excessive, so he adopted a strongpoint defence on the surrounding key terrain and maintained the heliborne reserve. This, together with the mined obstacles, would channel British offensive attempts<sup>25</sup>.

Despite the escalation of the conflict, negotiations continued,

but by 20 April Britain's refusal to talk was evident; this was compounded by the fighting in South Georgia, which made it necessary to review the Malvinas defensive position in view of the imminence of the fighting. General Galtieri visited the islands on 22 April and was informed of the need to increase the forces, since there was no adequate reserve to deal with a landing; he was also told of the need for commando troops.

In view of the urgency of the situation, the complete movement of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, which was deployed in Patagonia, was ordered and between 24 and 28 April, in a significant airlift effort,

**GENERAL CONCEPT OF DEFENSIVE OPERATIONAL MANOEUVRE BY ARGENTINE FORCES**



Source: own elaboration

it was possible to complete its transfer, but without the heavy material. The newly created 601<sup>26</sup> Commando Company also crossed over. General Omar Parada, who served as commander of the III Infantry Brigade, was a commando and had combat experience having led the 28th Infantry Regiment during Operation Independence in the Tucuman mountains.

With the arrival of a second brigade, the organisation of the Malvinas Joint Command was reformulated and a full staff was assigned to it, given that it would now coordinate two brigades and other formations, and General Daher<sup>27</sup>, who had returned to the Islands, was appointed Chief of Staff. The restructuring of

the Malvinas Joint Command was issued on 25 April, forming two ad hoc organisations, the Agrupamiento Puerto Argentino on the basis of the X Mechanised Infantry Brigade, suitably reinforced, and the Agrupamiento Litoral on the basis of the III Infantry Brigade, reduced and disseminated into three task forces. The Malvinas Joint Command assumed direct control of other formations, but did not determine a reserve at its level, beyond what each grouping had at its disposal.

The III Brigade, now the Littoral Group, had already predetermined the places it was to occupy, assigning one regiment to Port Howard on Great Falklands Island, another to Darwin and the rest joined the main effort in Port Stanley<sup>28</sup>; it also added the 8th Infantry Regiment, positioned in Fox Bay. Despite being ordered to set up its command post in Darwin, it decided to locate it in Port Stanley, in order to be able to influence its dispersed elements in some way, using the airmobile reserve located there or with the close air support of the Air Force operating from the airport up to that time<sup>29</sup> (See Figure 7).

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**ALBERTO OSCAR TREJO**

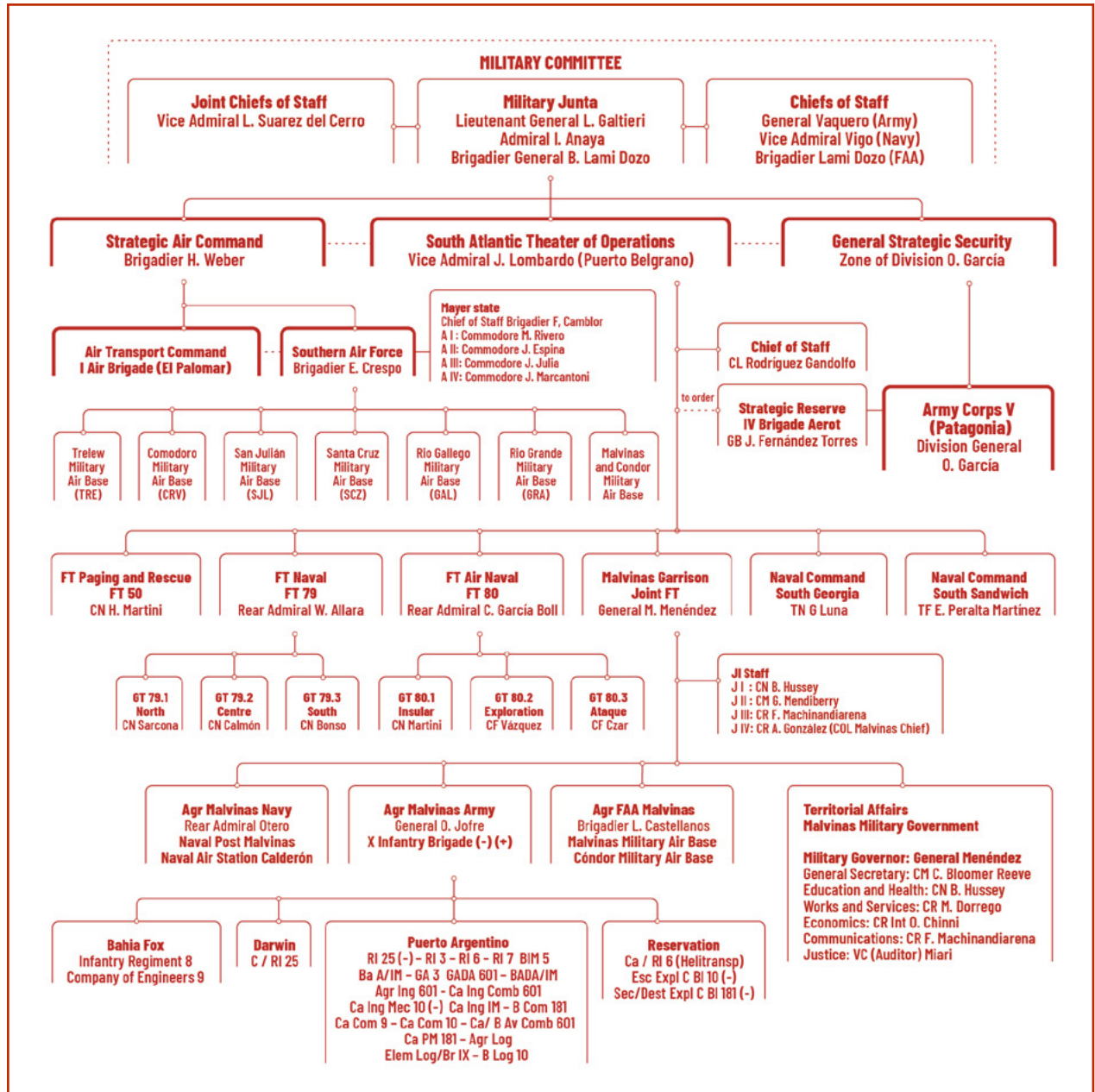
**Lieutenant Colonel of Infantry. Staff officer, university bachelor's degree in international relations, degree in strategy and organisation, with a specialisation in joint planning and another in pedagogy and didactics, he was a professor of organisation at the Argentine Army War College. He was head of the 28th Infantry Regiment of Monte 28.**

**PATRICIO JUSTO TREJO**

**Lieutenant Colonel of Infantry. General Staff Officer, university bachelor's degree in international relations, degree in strategy and organisation, master's degree in the history of warfare and specialisation in joint planning, author of books and numerous articles on military issues. He served as commander of the 602nd Commando Company and the 30th Mountain Infantry Regiment.**

23. Ministry of Defence. Malvinas Report. 2012, pp. 34 and 38.  
 24. EA. Official Falklands Conflict Report. 1983. Volume II.  
 25. Jofre, Oscar and Aguiar Felix. Malvinas, La Defensa of Puerto Argentino. Circulo Militar. Bs As. 1990, pp. 94 and 95.  
 26. EA. Informe Oficial del Conflicto Malvinas. Tomo I. 1983, pp. 34 y 35.  
 27. EA. Official Report of the Falklands Conflict. Volume I. 1983, p. 34.  
 28. Argentine Army. Official Report on the Malvinas. Volume I. 1983. Page 35.  
 29. Parada, Omar E. Malvinas Llagas de una Guerra. Ed 1884. Bs As. 2012. Pag 255.

FIGURE 6 . ORGANISATION OF THE ARGENTINE COMMAND STRUCTURE (13 / 24 APRIL 1982)



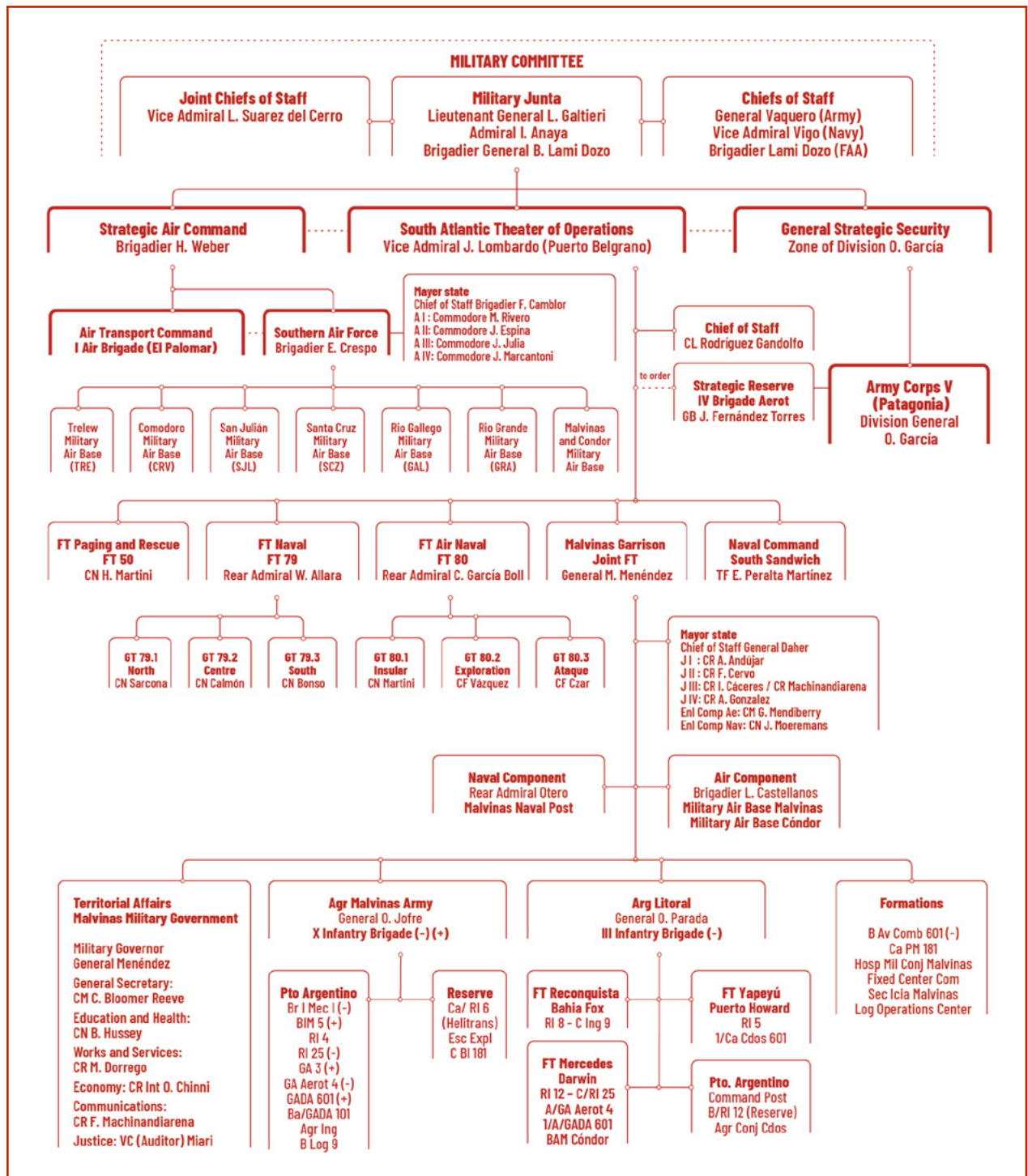
Source: Rattenbach Report. Commission for the Analysis and Evaluation of Responsibilities in the South Atlantic Conflict.

On 1 May, when the first bombing of Puerto Argentino took place, the organic development of the theatre of operations made it possible to respond to the initial attack, although it showed certain shortcomings due to the lack of coordination between the forces, as a result of the lack of joint integration<sup>30</sup>. This led

to the downing of one of its own aircraft<sup>31</sup>. On 2 May, the sinking of the cruiser ARA General Belgrano, and the lack of adequate anti-submarine capability, forced a rethink of the naval manoeuvre, effectively isolating the islands; from then on, only the air bridge kept them linked to the mainland.

However, the attack on HMS Sheffield on 4 May put some limits to the British advance; from then on there was a period of relative stability, with night bombing raids on the Port Stanley positions and raids by special forces reconnoitring landing beaches. On 15 May, the Calderón naval aerostation on Borbón Island was

FIGURE 7 . ORGANISATION OF THE ARGENTINE COMMAND STRUCTURE (25 APRIL / 22 MAY 1982)



Source: Rattenbach Report. Commission for the Analysis and Evaluation of Responsibilities in the South Atlantic Conflict.

hit, which was the prelude to the amphibious operation, and on 21 May the expected landing at San Carlos took place.

With the objective fixed, efforts now had to converge. However, the operational structure prevented the flow of information. It was

30. Lombardo, *Malvinas: Errores*, op.cit., p. 20.  
 31. Captain Gustavo García Cuerva, shot down by own fire when attempting to land in the Malvinas.

## **The British offensive reaction was immediate, and the lack of a defence plan forced a review and reorganisation of the forces, leading to the creation of the South Atlantic Theatre of Operations, which expanded the area of operations, for which Vice Admiral Juan José Lombardo was appointed commander. Juan José Lombardo, who until then had served as Commander of Naval as Commander of Naval Operations.**

then that the need arose to set up a coordinating body at the highest level, which led to the creation on 23 May of the Joint Operations Centre -CEOPECON-, which began to operate physically in the city of Comodoro Rivadavia<sup>32</sup>.

Also, indications of British operations on the continent, such as the helicopter destroyed near Punta Arenas, led to the creation of this higher coordination body whose function was to integrate land, naval and air operations in the South Atlantic theatre of operations, including air, naval and naval air bases, military installations and logistical support points and any other place on the continent that could be the target of an enemy attack, as stated in its creation act.

CEOPECON was made up of Vice Admiral Lombardo - commander of the South Atlantic Theater of Operations and highest representative of the Navy -, Major Brigadier Weber - strategic air commander and highest representative of the Air Force; and Major General García, commander of the 5th Army Corps in charge of the Strategic Security Zone and highest representative of the Army, who in turn had the final decision in case of dissent. It is remarkable to note how final authority shifted from the Navy to the Army after the withdrawal of naval surface assets and the preponderance of land operations

after the landing, transforming the land forces on the islands into the main instrument capable of preventing British success.

Likewise, this organisation contributed significantly in the last period of the conflict to coordinating logistical support and jointly integrating tactical operations, such as the attack on HMS Atlantic Conveyor, the auxiliary aircraft carrier and main logistical ship, whose sinking significantly affected the British plan. This operation, carried out on 25 May by the Super Etendards of the 2nd Naval Fighter and Attack Squadron, involved the participation of Air Force gunners, which enabled it to extend its range and attack from the north, an unexpected direction.

On May 30th, another joint operation was also conducted on the Invincible aircraft carrier, a target of operational magnitude. This time, the two Super Etendards of the 2nd Naval Fighter and Attack Squadron were joined by a squadron of A4C Skyhawks from Fighter Group 4, which now had to make a long indirect approach from the south, involving two in-flight refuelling, to reach the target from another unexpected direction. The operation was a success despite the downing of two aircraft<sup>33</sup>. In less than two weeks, CEOPECON's performance yielded

positive results by effectively acting on important operational targets, as well as contributing to the determination of priorities for air transport, such as the transfer of the 602nd Commando Company, the Gendarmerie Special Forces Squadron, 155mm guns and the Exocet surface-to-sea missile launch system for coastal defence (see figure 8).

### **Conclusions**

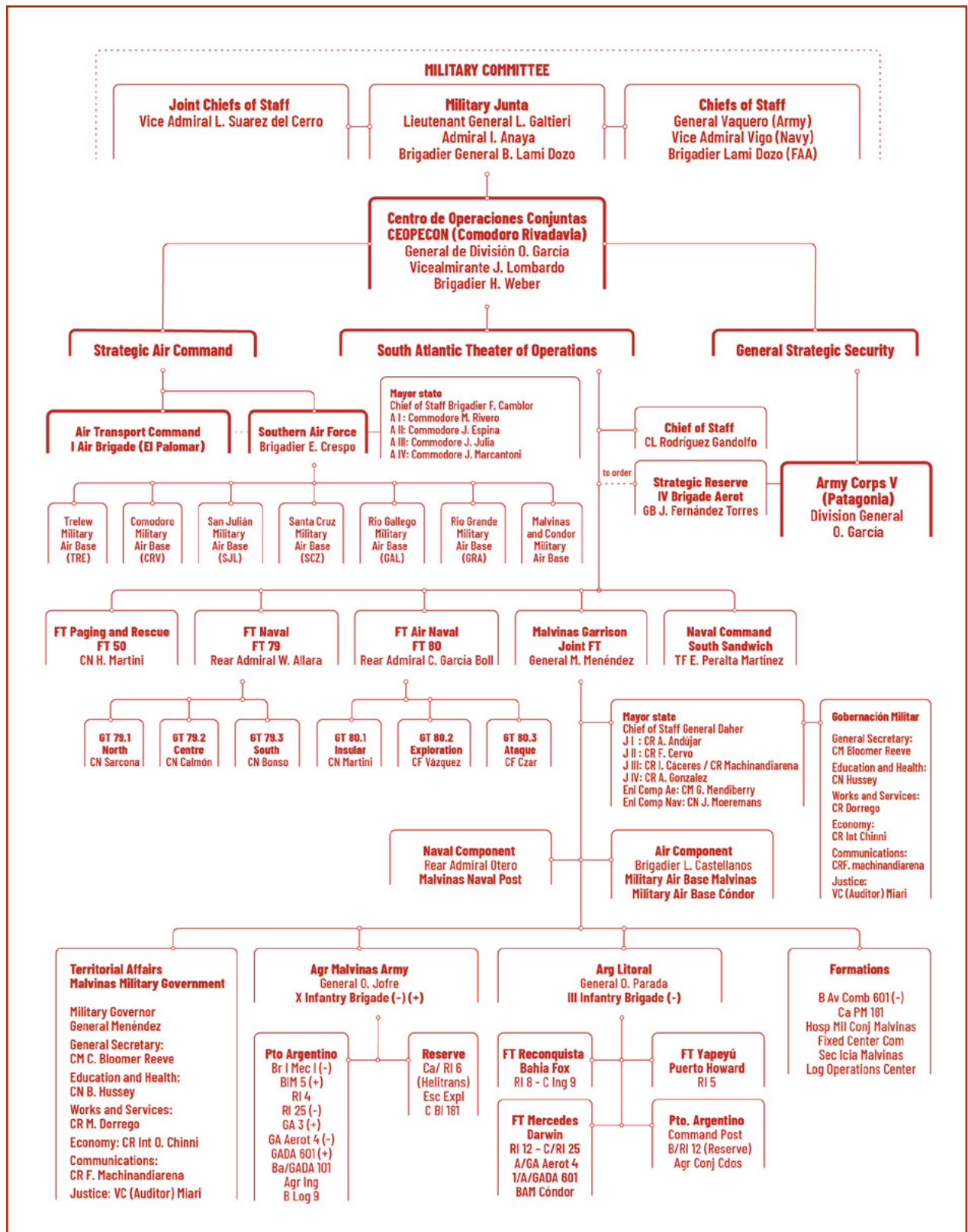
From the analysis carried out, we can highlight that, on the British side, the experience of the senior commanders, added to the gymnastics in forming organisations with the capacity to project to any part of the world, were decisive in achieving coherence and flexibility in the organisations. Despite the fact that initially there was no head close to the place where the operations were taking place, they were able to achieve an adequate integration that allowed them to achieve the objectives of the plan they had drawn up.

Likewise, although the general command of the fleet was the responsibility of Fieldhouse, the

<sup>32</sup>. Ministry of Defence. Malvinas Report. 2012, p. 27.

<sup>33</sup>. History of the Argentine Air Force. Volume VI. Vol II "The Air Force in Malvinas", p. 450.

FIGURE 8 . ORGANISATION OF THE ARGENTINE COMMAND STRUCTURE (23 MAY / 14 JUNE 1982)



Source: Rattenbach Report. Commission for the Analysis and Evaluation of Responsibilities in the South Atlantic Conflict.

senior leadership was made up of a representative of the air force and another of the ground forces, which favoured maximum joint integration. On the Argentine side, the power disputes inherent to a collegiate body such as the Military Government Junta introduced this tension in the formation of the operational organisations, which were not established on the basis of the mission, but on the basis of the distribution of power. In this sense, the apparent integration was ineffective, superficial and lacked the trust necessary to interact. In fact, the Joint Chiefs of Staff was transformed into a body that only reported the war through press releases.

Through this work, we can see that operational organisations are unique, they cannot be replicated, and three aspects must be taken into account in their formation: firstly, the organisational culture

of the forces that comprise them; secondly, the proposed purpose; and finally, they must be flexible to adapt to the evolution of the operations underway, which will shape their most appropriate form in order to achieve ultimate success. Lastly, in the constitution of these organisations, the theoretical and conceptual considerations must not be overlooked, regardless of the level of leadership, since a failure to determine a function, task or command relationship has serious consequences due to its influence on operations.

As an example, at the tactical level, the Condor Air Base created in Darwin by the Air Force had security elements, and until the end of April, Company C of the 25th Infantry Regiment was assigned to it as the airmobile reserve of the army component. However, when the 12th Infantry Regiment

was detached and the Mercedes Task Force was created, the Air Base continued to depend on the air component of the joint command in the Malvinas, an aspect that was negative during the fighting in Darwin and Goose Green, from 27 to 29 May; In the absence of a command unit, the military garrison did not achieve the necessary coordination of the available resources to successfully confront the British attack.

At the operational level, the configuration of the theatre of operations and its dependent organisations has direct consequences on the development of combat; the experience of the Malvinas War obliges us to be detailed in this sense and to maintain control and supervision over these organisations, permanently evaluating their performance and effectiveness in pursuit of the objective set. ■

