

STATEMENT BY COLONEL DUNPHIE CHIEF OF STAFF TO MILITARY DEPUTY
TO COMMANDER IN CHIEF FLEET 1530 MOD 30.5.82

2 Battalion the Parachute Regiment is normally part of 5th Infantry Brigade stationed at Aldershot. It embarked in MV Norland as part of 3rd Commando Brigade. The operation to liberate Darwin/Goose Green took place on 28 and 29 May.

Under cover of darkness on 26, 27 May, one company of 2 Para moved forward to Camilla Creek House. Its aim was to secure SL for a battalion attack. It had a sharp encounter with an Argentinian patrol and took 4 prisoners. During the day on Thursday 27 May, the rest of the battalion moved up from the beachhead area to join the company at CCH covering the last few miles after dark. An artillery troop of 2 105mm light guns and the battalions mortars were helicoptered forward to support the attack.

At 0200 Friday 28 May, Colonel Jones launched his attack and a fierce battle lasted all day. Darwin fell without too much difficulty but as the Paras pressed on across the open ground they met increasingly heavy resistance. Earlier on, low cloud had prevented the Harriers from providing close air support but the Argentinian Pukaras were able to fly. It is reported that 4 out of the 6 were shot down by Blowpipe and small arms fire in exchange for one Scout shot down by the Pukaras.

As the Paras pressed on South they met an increasingly strong defensive position which was well dug in and sited in depth.

At one stage they came under particularly intense fire from two heavy machine guns and the attack could have faltered. Well up with his leading elements, Colonel Jones personally took command of a small force and led an attack against these machine guns. This attack, which was carried out with the utmost courage and determination, was successful, although sadly it resulted in the death of Colonel Jones, a most gallant Commander at the head of his men. The death of the CO at a time such as this could have a devastating effect on a battalion, particularly losing a CO of the quality of Colonel Jones. But the battalions 2 in command, Major Chris Keeble, immediately took over. Capitalising on the success of the COs assault he quickly rekindled the momentum of the attack. There was no chance of outflanking the main position because of the shape of the isthmus and became a hard infantry slogging match in which the brilliant qualities of the Parachute Regiment were splendidly displayed. By this time the low cloud had lifted and 3 ground attack Harriers attacked the

the Argentine positions with cluster bombs.

By dusk the battalion had reached these positions with the Argentinians bottled up in the small Goose Green settlement.

During the night with the help of Mr Alan Miller, Manager of the Port San Carlos settlement, and Mr Eric Goss, Manager of the Goose Green settlement, using their inter-settlement short wave radio, Major Keeble negotiated a meeting with the Argentinians which was held under white flag conditions on the edge of the airfield at 0900 yesterday morning. Having agreed to the release of 112 civilians who had been bottled up inside the Argentinian perimeter the Argentinian air force commander, Air Commodore Wilson Drozier Podrozo and the military force commander, Lt Col Halo Piaggi, agreed to the surrender of the garrison. A dignified and official surrender ceremony was conducted at which Major Keeble accepted the surrender. A total of approximately 1400 Argentinians gave themselves up and all civilians were released. The latter after almost 30 days held under guard in the recreation centre. Large amounts of arms and equipment including 3 Howitzers and 4 anti-aircraft guns were captured.

Perhaps I could summarise this operation by making 3 points.

1. First of all the Argentinians fought well and yet 1400 men in well prepared positions were out-fought by a magnificent battalion of about 600 men.
2. Second, the lives of Falkland Islanders in the area are safe.
3. Third, in my view this is probably one of the most brilliant and courageous actions conducted by a battalion since World War II. All of us in the Services today salute 2 Para.