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The first part of
L78
Lommon's presentation

ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES CAPABILITIES - PRESENTATION TO ODSA - 15 APR

INTRODUCTION

(L78 DUSA(I))

1. The Argentine's military capability owes its origins and its equipment to three countries - primarily the United States and France and also to the United Kingdom.

Vufoil 1
(map of Argentine showing air bases, naval port Falkland Islands, South Georgia)

2. Superficially, both in quantity and quality, their forces are impressive. But they are not all they seem. Professionalism is patchy, serviceability is low, spares are short and training is limited. They have not seen active service for 60 years. On the other hand, they are elated ^{by} ~~with~~ victory. Morale stands high - but it could crumble. General Menendez may already be starting to feel the first pangs of being isolated.

Vufoil 2

→ Braun.

- 3. I will, if I may:
 - a. assess the capability of each service in turn - against the Forces we pose against them;
 - b. discuss the overall strengths and weaknesses of the Argentine's military position;
 - c. finally, draw some conclusions.

Vufoil 3

NAVY

4. The majority of the Navy is in port. The principal units are:

Vufoil 2

Vufoits?

Ex-British

the Carrier 25 de Mayo - 37 years old but still the pride of their fleet. She has been reported as temporarily unserviceable but could be repaired and ready soon;

Ex US

a cruiser - 44 years old - of doubtful reliability but could be made ready for sea;

8 destroyers - a mix of 2 modern UK type 42s and 6 old US ships of which 3 are unserviceable;

Total 5.

3 modern French built corvettes - one was slightly damaged in the South Georgia action, but by now may have been repaired;

Total of

3 submarines - 1 old American (WW II vintage), 2 modern German - all diesel driven.

(Note: the other US Guppy has been cannibalised)

5. This leaves only 3 naval units, apart from coastal craft, at sea.

One type 42 - possibly off Puerto Belgrano.

One A69 corvette which may still be on patrol outside the Maritime Exclusion Zone.

One Guppy (US) submarine.

6. The fleet is reported to be ready to sail now. If it does, it will probably remain well clear of the Maritime Exclusion Zone and avoid the SSN threat, in shallow waters and under shore air cover. The

Argentines will wait to maintain a "force in being".

~~But~~ ^{So} it will be more a propaganda than a military exercise.

7. A word on capabilities:

a. Against our SSNs. The German built submarines are well handled and have good sonar, but only a short range (4 miles) ^{anti sub} torpedo. Surface ships are not skilled at ASW and their tactics are poor against SSNs. The few naval ^{ASW} aircraft would be needed to protect the carrier and so only a handful would be available for search. We therefore assess the threat to our SSNs as low.

b. Against our Task Force - at sea. The German built submarines are likely to be more effective against ships and have modern, long range (13 miles) ^{anti ship} torpedoes. These small submarines are difficult to detect but are agile. The EXOCET missiles in 8 of their ships would pose a nasty threat. They also have the air launched version of EXOCET in the five new Super ETENDARD which could operate from the aircraft carrier - although they have not done so yet. Gunnery capability of the old US destroyers is good. In summary, at great risks to themselves the Argentines could inflict some damage on the Task Force.

Traders
in
FI's

Anti defense.

Land →
c. Against the Task Force - in an assault. The same applies, but the risks are if anything marginally higher to the Argentines. And we cannot totally discount Argentinian claims that mines have been laid off the Falkland Islands. But we judge it unlikely.

THE AIR FORCE

8. The Argentine air order of battle is significant - some 175 combat aircraft. But there is a wide mix ranging from the elderly (25 years old) US Sky Hawk to ~~the more modern French Super Etendard~~, delivered in 1981. Logistic difficulties will be exacerbated by having to re-deploy aircraft from their main operating bases to those in the South. Our judgement is that only 60% of the aircraft will be available and that the Argentines could only achieve a sortie rate of 2 a day.

2 x Vufoil

Navy or Air?

do they deploy S. after?

9. The airfield at Port Stanley is crucial. The runway is 4,100 feet and we expect the Argentines to improve it within the next 2 weeks. But fuel will have to be stockpiled in drums, spares and munitions will have to be brought in and any ^{parked} aircraft will be exposed and vulnerable. Some Pucara are there now and a handful of tactical aircraft will probably be deployed when the airfield is ready.

Vufoil

explain

10. Again a brief assessment of capabilities.

a. Against SSN - none.

b. Against the Task Force at Sea There are two problems:

Firstly detection, for which they only have 2 aged Neptunes (1800nm) and the carrier born Trackers. They will not obtain the accurate strike data they need, even with Soviet help.

Secondly, they can really only operate in daylight and in good weather. Even then their weapons are only marginally effective.

not trained in a/s strikes

Overall we judge the threat to be only moderate. They will need luck to be on their side to inflict substantial damage on the Task Force.

leading
c. Against the Task Force - in an assault The problems are much the same. They could mount some offensive air support from the mainland by day, none by night and little in poor weather. They cannot provide effective air defence cover from the mainland. Aircraft at Stanley could *in part* make good these failings. But there is a difficult balance to be struck between attack and air defence - neither

could be met in full. However, the Pucara which can operate off grass strips, would be effective in both the anti-helicopter and close support roles.

THE ARMY

11. Argentine Army is large - 85,000 which selective mobilisation has built up further - numbers are not a problem. It too has heterogenous mix of equipment. It is a one year conscript Army with all the limitations this implies. And it lacks any experience of joint operations.

*Marines -
are they
an elite.*

12. Although the build up of the Falkland Islands garrison has been given over-riding priority, the Argentine will all the while be looking over her shoulder towards Chile. Nevertheless the garrison will probably receive, or has received, the equipment it wants given the obvious constraints of its sea and air lines of communication - the former having been cut.

have they?

13. The force is now probably some 7,000 strong, built up around:

Vufoil

- 3 infantry, 1 airborne and 2 marine battalions equipped with mortars and 120mm RCL *explain*
- an artillery regiment with 105mm guns
- some armour, APCs and possibly a few tanks
- air defence weapons: Tiger Cat, Blowpipe and 40mm Bofors

14. In his battle appreciation, General Menendez will no doubt be taking account of the following factors:

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a. The weather The winter is closing in. It is wet, windy and very cold. Troops need shelter.

b. The ground Outside Stanley the going is appalling. Helicopters are critical to any deployment, and, especially rapid, re-deployment.

c. Vital objectives Stanley is the prize:

- above all its airport
- the port itself
- the pumping station which provides all the water
- the electricity generating station
- the radio station

But he cannot neglect the outlying settlements.

d. The civilian population Menendez may well unscrupulously exploit the civilian, mainly British, population. He will site his positions among them. He may even move some families out onto the airfield, thereby hoping to dissuade us from directly bombarding or assaulting the town. *and air field*

Vufoil?

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Laifre

e. Finally, morale The garrison will feel increasingly isolated the longer the sea, and later perhaps the air, L of C is cut. Ships sunk or the loss of South Georgia would be further nasty blows. Morale will become brittle.

15. Menendez would probably prefer us to seize a lodgement area distant from Stanley where, because ground movement is almost impossible, we could not directly threaten the town itself. And where we would have to deploy in the open and fight the battle for survival. Meanwhile he could sit tight. A stalemate would have been created.

16. Thus he will probably try to persuade us, both in the reality and in the fiction by disinformation, that Stanley is too hard a nut to crack. And he may therefore deploy his force roughly as follows:

- the bulk (a 3 battalion brigade) covering Stanley
- the remainder (2-3 battalions) covering the outlying areas

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

17. Overall, I judge the military strengths and weaknesses of the Argentine stance to be:

Vufoil?

a. Firstly - Their strengths

(1) They now hold the Islands. The nation has (apparently) rallied behind the military Junta. Morale is high - but it could crumble.

(2) Time is their ally. They have time to redeploy their air force, time to position their fleet, time to prepare the defences on the Islands and to build up its stocks.

(3) They suspect the British will be loathe to inflict casualties on the mainly British civil population - let alone the military operational casualties we may suffer.

(4) They must hope that their air force will impose some damage on the Task Force, if it closes the Falkland Islands.

b. Secondly - Weaknesses

(1) At sea, their Navy is no match for the RN Units. They cannot maintain ships on station for any length of time. They are especially vulnerable to SSN attack.

In the face of CVS a/c - when they arrive

(2) They cannot guarantee to achieve local air superiority over the Islands by day let alone by night.

(3) Lastly, the Falkland Islands Garrison is wholly dependent on its L of C with the mainland. The sea link has virtually been cut. The air link, of which Stanley airport is the jugular vein, is highly vulnerable.

CONCLUSION

18. On balance, we stand by our earlier assessment that the Task Force holds the balance of military power at sea, particularly if it holds off to the East of the Falklands.

19. It has the capability to re-possess South Georgia at small risk and to secure a bridge head on the Falklands at little cost. But the Stanley Garrison will be difficult to dislodge. The Argentines will probably mount, indeed are mounting, a carefully orchestrated disinformation campaign to heighten these difficulties. Finally, provided the air L of C is cut, the longer the assault on Stanley itself is delayed the more vulnerable will the Garrison become - both physically and mentally.