

Press

Friday

STATEMENT-BY SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE ON 21ST MAY

Following the raids which we announced earlier today British forces have now established a firm bridgehead on the Falkland Islands. Royal Marine commandos and the Parachute Regiment are now ashore in substantial numbers, with artillery, air defence weapons and other heavy equipment already disembarked from our ships. These landings were unopposed. A secure land base is being consolidated.

During the night several landings and raids were made by our forces in different parts of the Falkland Islands. Some of these forces have remained ashore. Argentinian forces have suffered casualties and some prisoners have been taken. These operations continue.

As we expected our ships have come under heavy air attack - 5 have been damaged, 2 seriously. There will have been British casualties but we have no details. Our Harriers and missiles have destroyed 7 Mirage, 5 Sky Hawks and 2 Puccaras. 2 Argentine helicopters - a Chinook and a Puma have been destroyed on the ground. We have lost 2 of our small helicopters.

7 weeks after the Argentine aggression, British forces are tonight firmly established back on the Falkland Islands.

I will make a fuller statement tomorrow - and take questions at that time.