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14. ABSTRACT The Falkland Islands Campaign is the most recent near pear amphibious operation seen in recent history. The maritime and littoral defenses established by the Argentinian armed forces are the most current form of anti-access area denial capabilities employed against a modern military force to date. After navigating these defenses, the British Landing Force had to land over fifty miles from their objectives without the helicopters they planned on using for the operation. This required the British to execute the age-old method of movement by foot. The art of dismounted mobility is provided by the British Landing Force. This paper analysis the dismounted movement of these units and provide lessons learned.					
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES


**A LOST ART?
Dismounted Operational Mobility and Winning in the Falklands**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Major Patrick J. Skehan, USMC

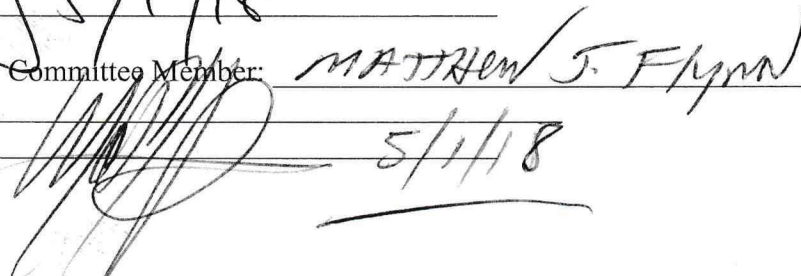
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Executive Summary

Title: A LOST ART? Dismounted Operational Mobility and Winning in the Falklands

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Thesis: As A2AD (Anti-Access Area Denial) capabilities have become more prevalent and dismounted operational mobilities are increasingly seen as a lost art, an analysis of the Falklands case argues that dismounted operations are still an important aspect of combat.

Discussion: The Falkland Islands 1982 Campaign provides a more modern perspective to view dismounted operational mobility against a relatively advanced military adversary. The British Third Commando Brigade provides the reader an example of how important and difficult dismounted mobility is to the overall campaign. The Fifth Infantry Brigade reinforces that argument with its inability to conduct dismounted mission. This failure ultimately results in the death of 45 men and more than 100 casualties during a naval surface movement. The lessons learned will provide the frame work to discuss how the Marine Corps can improve its ability to execute dismounted mobility operations. It starts with understanding how to move with heavy weight in a contested environment. It ends understanding across the force that Marines are too heavy and future technologies need to account for this.

Conclusion: The Falkland Islands Campaign provides a glimpse of what the future operating environment may look like. Future adversaries will strive to take away the technological advantages in mobility that the Marine Corps brings to the fight. Access to an area may only be achieved by Marines moving over long distances through harsh environments. History proves that some successfully apply the art of dismounted mobility, and some do not. The Marine Corps has a chance at success if they approach hiking with a *move, fight, move* concept and lighten the load.

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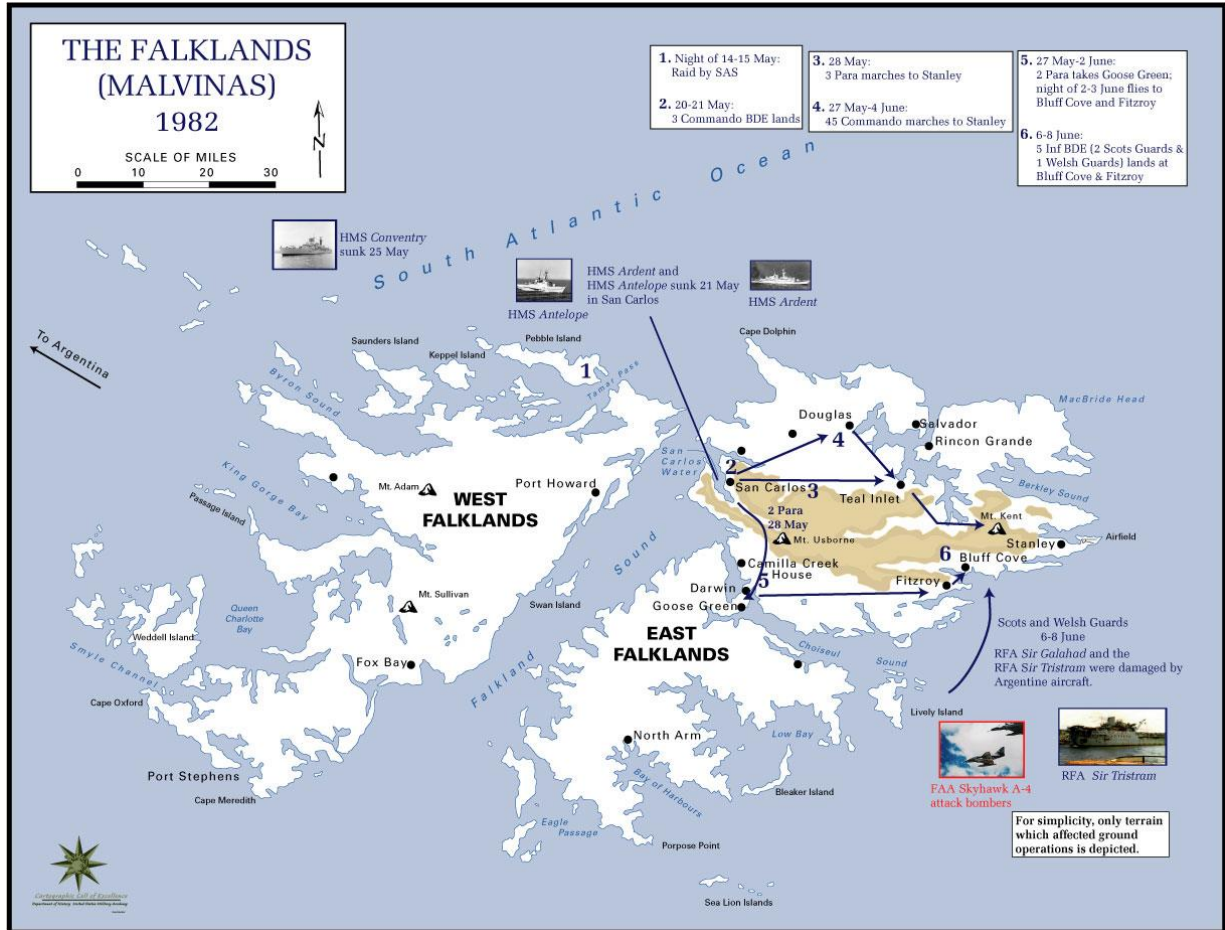
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Preface

The Falkland Islands Campaign is the most recent near peer amphibious operation seen in recent history. The maritime and littoral defenses established by the Argentinian armed forces are the most current form of anti-access area denial capabilities employed against a modern military force to date. After navigating these defenses, the British Landing Force had to land over fifty miles from their objectives without the helicopters they planned on using for the operation. This required the British to execute the age-old method of movement by foot. The trials and tribulations of both the British Third and Fifth Brigades during their movement across the island prove that dismounted operations are an art. As an infantry officer I have seen this first hand and believe the Marine Corps is taking this skill for granted. The future operating environment demands that infantry Battalions keep this a critical task.



<https://www.westpoint.edu/history/SitePages/Western%20Conflicts%20Since%201958.aspx>

I: Introduction

“[Stonewall Jackson] was at least predictable: you were going to march fast and far and then you were going to fight, and you were lucky if you got lunch.”

S.C. Gwynne, author *Rebel Yell.*²

Operational mobility is defined as the ability to move combat forces from point of entry to a location where that force can accomplish an advantageous position over an enemy, where it can fight a battle, or exploit a tactical success gained during a battle. Upon arrival, those forces must be physically and mentally ready to fight.³ Many factors make dismounted mobility the only option for gaining access to advantageous positions over an enemy. Because moving overland by foot is one of the oldest method of operational mobility, its complexity tends to be overlooked or assumed to be an intrinsic capability within any infantry unit. The actions of the British landing force during the Falkland Islands Campaign are a perfect example of the complexity of dismounted mobility operations. Third Commando Brigade (3 BDE) models the art of dismounted mobility operations. Under harsh conditions and against a generally unknown enemy threat 3 BDE was able to move via foot over 40 miles to a position of advantage over their adversary. Fifth Infantry Brigade (5 BDE) provides the reader an example of failed dismounted operations. Fifth BDE attempted a similar foot movement to complement 3 BDE's actions, but was unable. This led to an approach by sea and ultimately tragedy.

As A2AD (Anti-Access Area Denial) capabilities have become more prevalent and dismounted operational mobilities are increasingly seen as a lost art, an analysis of the Falklands case argues that dismounted operations are still an important aspect of combat. The paper will set conditions for the analysis by providing a brief understanding of the background. This paper

will then provide a summary of 3 BDE and 5 BDE employment of mobility to reach an advantageous position over their adversary. The analyzes of the Falkland Islands Campaign will focus on the application of operational mobility by 3 BDE along the norther axis of the island and 5 BDE along the southern axis of the island. Following the analysis this paper will discusses lessons learned related to the Marine Corps and the future operating environment. This paper provides recommendations for infantry battalions to better prepare for dismounted operational mobility with the concept of “move, fight, move.” It concludes with an argument and recommendation to decrease the weight an individual Marine must carry during dismounted operations. To increase dismounted mobility, the Marine Corps must lighten the load.

II: Setting Conditions for the Falklands Campaign

This section will provide the reader with a background of events that led to the Falkland Islands Campaign. A description of the Falkland Islands’ geography and weather will help the reader understand the environmental factors working against the British forces. Next, the paper will give a brief summary of the causes of the conflict and the events which led to the seizure of Port Stanley. Finally, a description of the both 3 BDE and 5 BDE will provide an understanding of the capabilities and limitations of each unit before combat operations commence.

Background

The Falkland Islands, known as the Malvinas Island by the Argentinians, are 300 miles east of Argentina and 8,000 miles from England in the South Atlantic. These islands have been governed by the United Kingdom since 1885. However, Argentina has laid claim to these islands based on the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas. The Falklands are made up of two smaller islands, East and West Falklands. East Falkland, the focus of this study, is approximately 50

miles wide and 90 miles long. Elevation rises from sea level to 705 meters. It consists of deep river beds that occupy wide peat covered valleys. The island is chilly with a steady temperature between 37 and 49 degrees Fahrenheit. Consistently high winds rake the island at an average nineteen miles per hour. Rain and snow fall steadily throughout the year. The damp climate prevents complete decomposition of plant matter, resulting in deep peat moss across the island. There are very few trees, but thick knee-high grass covers the entire island. In all, the elements make for harsh conditions for anyone inhabiting the islands. Foot movement across the island is difficult due to the unforgiving weather, rolling terrain and marsh like under footing.⁴ Prior to the start of the campaign, the British knew of no roads crossing the Island (See map figure one for a portrayal of the Island).⁵

On the evening of 2 April 1982 political leaders in London were informed that East Falkland's Port Stanley, location of the Government House, was surrounded by Argentinian forces. There were no casualties; all British military and civilian personnel surrendered. The next day pictures of the Argentine flag flying over the Government house reached the citizens of Great Britain, creating a sense of disgrace and outrage. The British Governor of the Falkland Islands, Sir Rex Hunt, was sent home with a simple message: Argentina has captured what is rightfully theirs and will hold it forever.⁶

The United Kingdom's strong belief in self-determination, the moral and political duty of the government to its citizens in the Falkland Islands, and the unacceptable option of appeasement drove a quick response by the British Government.⁷ The United Nations, through Resolution 502, approved Great Britain to take action under the statute of self-defense. This Resolution attempted to give Argentina a diplomatic escape from hostilities. The British knew

this would not work and concluded that a show of force was required. This came in the form of Task Force 317.⁸

Task Force 317 stood up in short order to act as a show of force and ultimately reclaim the Falkland Islands. Task Force 317 consisted of a Carrier Battle Group, Amphibious Task Force, and a Landing Group. The Landing Group, call sign Fearless, consisted of the 3 BDE and the 5 BDE. By 9 April, nearly half of Task Force 317 had set sail for the South Atlantic to Ascension Island and ultimately the Falkland Islands. Ascension Island served as an intermediate staging base as conditions were set for hostilities. Fifth BDE did not set out from Great Britain until mid-May due to forming issues and amphibious lift limitations.⁹ The actions of 3 BDE and 5 BDE during the campaign will be the focus of this case study. The details of these two organizations are provided to better understand why they performed as they did during the campaign.

Third Commando Brigade

At the time of deployment, 3 BDE was made up of 40, 42 and 45 Commando Battalions, which were not co-located in Great Britain. 40 Commando was in Liverpool conducting training. Forty-Second Commando was in England returning from leave and 45 Commando was in Scotland about to execute leave. Between receipt of warning order, 3 April, and setting sail for the South Atlantic, 9 April, the Brigade took on Second Parachute Battalion (2 Para) and Third Parachute Battalion (3 Para). The 4,350 men of 3 BDE were spread out between multiple cruise ships and naval amphibious ships when they set sail between 7 and 9 April.¹⁰

Third BDE is a light infantry Brigade. The Royal Marines were relatively small at 6,000 men and officers in 1982. Their size made them a tight group, where everyone generally knew

each other. Their difficult training and high standards made their morale and esprit de corps very high. The Royal Marines received their support from outside their ranks. For example, artillery support was provided by the Royal Artillery Corps. At the start of the conflict, 3 BDE was the only well trained and prepared force able to execute immediate amphibious operations in Britain.¹¹

The Parachute Battalions were also considered a light infantry force. They too believed themselves to be the best trained units in Great Britain. Graham Colebeck, a former 3 Para soldier, in his book, *With 3 Para to the Falklands*, speaks of their pride. “Soldiers of the Parachute Battalions in 1982 were well suited to the type of campaign that was to be fought in the Falklands; we were equipped and trained to operate without reliance on our limited integral transport or on a reliable system of re-supply – as long as we could be delivered to the area of operation by parachute, helicopter, or any other means then our feet would do the rest of the work. Most of the other infantry regiments in the British Army were used to travelling to and around the battlefield in tracked or wheeled armored personnel carriers, supported by heavily armored tanks and self-propelled guns, along with a vast logistical ‘tail.’” Additionally, he says “Whereas a [conventional] infantry recruit was indoctrinated and trained to perform the tasks required of him, Paras and Marines were in addition to the survivors of a series of strenuous and demanding tests, and as such felt confirmed in their belief that they were better soldiers than those who had not passed the same initiation rites.”¹²

On 21 May, 3 BDE, reinforced with 2 and 3 Para, assaulted San Carlos at 0330 in the morning. Second Para and 40 Commando secured Port San Carlos. Just prior to dawn 3 Para and 45 Commando landed and secured Ajax Bay. Forty-Second Commando remained the Brigade reserve afloat. All units established defensive positions around San Carlos. 40

Commando eventually came ashore and established rear area security as the rest of 3 BDE set conditions for follow on operations.¹³

Fifth Infantry Brigade

The 5 BDE is considered a conventional infantry Brigade. The unit was formed in January 1982 from 2 Para, 3 Para and the 1st/7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles (Gurkhas). Prior to receiving the warning order for the Falkland Islands campaign, 5 BDE had very little experience working together. Included in the warning order was a directive to transfer both 2 Para and 3 Para to 3 BDE. In their stead, 5 BDE received 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and 2nd Battalion Scots Guards. Unfortunately, both the Welsh and Scots Guards units came directly from ceremonial duty, "public duty," and were afforded less rigorous training compared to the Paras and Marines. Prior to deployment, the majority of their infantry training focused on fighting from armored personnel carriers. The Gurkhas, like the Welsh and Scots Guards, had a storied past. Yet, the Gurkhas were afforded relatively good training prior to the war.¹⁴

On 12 May, 5 BDE sailed from England aboard the *Queen Elizabeth II (QEII)*, a cruise liner.¹⁵ While at sea, as best they could, they established a training routine to better their physical fitness and readiness for war. A plan developed to stop at Ascension Island to reorganize equipment, training, and exercise and also to acclimatize to the South Atlantic weather. However, on 19 May, the *QEII* received orders to proceed directly to South Georgia Island, where she cross decked 5 BDE and its equipment to Royal Navy ships. From 26 to 28 May, outside of Argentine surveillance, the 3,000 men and equipment of 5 BDE was transferred to Naval shipping. By 30 May 5 BDE was ready to offload at San Carlos, which was previously secured by 3 BDE.¹⁶

III: Yomping to Stanley and the Tragedy at Fitzroy

This portion of the paper discusses the actions of 3 BDE and 5 BDE as they broke out of Port San Carlos and cleared east to Stanley. Along 3 BDE's northern axis, 45 Commando conducted a rigorous foot movement, "yomped," to their final objective before beginning close combat operations at Mount Kent. Forty-Fifth Commando executed a 40-mile foot movement with all of their gear over nine grueling days. 3 Commando, also on the northern axis, took a more direct route with less gear. They made the hike in four days. Fifth BDE, along the southern axis, was unable to make their foot movement. After only two hours, they canceled the hike. A complex amphibious approach by sea was their only option. This failure in dismounted mobility resulted in the tragedy at Fitzroy, where 45 British service members died and 115 were wounded.¹⁷ The study of these units and their actions provides the crux of this paper's analysis.

Northern Axis

The actions of 3 BDE's overland movement to Port Stanley were exemplary of a light infantry unit. The Brigades demonstrated their flexibility by transitioning to another plan after the destruction of their helicopters. The new plan required the Brigade to move east on foot to objectives surrounding Stanley. Infantry mobility is exemplified in the entire unit's ability to move via foot relatively quickly over large distances. From a planning and command and control aspect, 3 BDE's forward deployment of forces, logistical adaptation and flexibility of fires was impressive. These themes led to their success.

This period of idleness took its toll on the entire force in the open environment near Port San Carlos. The weather, terrain, extended supply lines, and Argentine air attacks eroded morale and degraded their equipment. The rough environment shortened the military timeline, the Task

Force could no longer sit idle. Politically, opportunities for a negotiated settlement became more untenable with the Argentinians and distasteful amongst British political leaders. Unfortunately, the speed of deployment, heavy focus on Naval planning rather than ground maneuver, and hopes for a settlement, led to little forethought in actions post landing. Additionally, the tyranny of distance amongst ground force leadership also delayed the formulation of a solid plan. The commander of 3 BDE, Brigadier General Thompson, at Port San Carlos, did not effectively communicate with Major General Moore, the overall ground force Task Group (CTG 317.7) commander. Prior to the arrival of all forces arriving at San Carlos, Moore was in London and eventually sailed towards Ascension Island with 5 BDE. However, the plan wasn't finalized until two days prior to D-Day.¹⁸

Original plans assumed that 3 BDE was a large enough force to manage the enemy around Stanley. It was also assumed that 3 BDE would have all its helicopters to use for operational mobility. The destruction of the *Atlantic Conveyor*, holding five Wessex helicopters, three Chinook helicopters, and other ground support assets severely restricted heliborne operations.¹⁹ Only one Chinook helicopter survived the air attack. The original plan tasked 5 BDE as the Task Force's rear area security and reserve element. However, Moor decided all units, including 5 BDE, were required against the fortified forces in Stanley. It was assumed by Moor and other leaders, that the Argentinians expected an attack from the south.²⁰

The orientation of the Argentine defense is a product of Argentina's reliance on American amphibious doctrine, which called for landing as close to the enemy objective as possible. The new plan called for 3 BDE to secure Goose Green via a heliborne raid. Goose Green was assumed to be the Argentine strategic reserve. The remainder of 3 BDE took a northern axis by foot to secure the high ground north and west of Stanley. Fifth BDE landed

near San Carlos and took a southern route via foot to secure advantageous terrain to the south of Stanley. Attempting to land them any closer was too risky due to enemy air attacks. Moore also believed that the southern axis forced the Argentinian forces to hold their defensive positions to the south; believing the British were playing into their original plan. Seizure of the high ground around Stanley set conditions for the final attack into Port Stanley. Goose Green was the first major victory for ground forces.²¹

The start of 3 BDE's actions to the east began with the seizure of Mount Kent. Mount Kent, located approximately 10 kilometers west of Stanley, was one of the major dominating terrain features near Stanley. Special Air Service (SAS) reconnaissance confirmed the hill was unoccupied by Argentine forces. SAS occupied the dominate terrain on 24 May and waited for 42 Commando to arrive with artillery.²² On 31 May, 42 Commando arrived with a half battery of artillery guns and relieved the SAS squadron from the hill top. This was done under contact with Argentinian forces who unexpectedly ran into the unit near the hill top. The meeting engagement between the two elements eroded the last of the 42 Commando's tactical surprise. Forty-Second Commando, with limited fire support, was left to control a hill top while they waited for the rest of 3 BDE to cross forty miles of the island on foot. Surprise was lost, time was of the essence.²³

The movement east by 3 Para and 45 Commando was relatively risky. The forces moved through unknown terrain, with an unknow enemy threat. Both ground and air attacks were expected. For the Paras and Commandos this was not a normal conditioning hike. This was more like a very long movement to contact, where security was required at all times. On the morning of 27 May, 45 Commando began its foot movement from San Carlos to Mount Kent. The first stop was Douglas, a 13 miles march. On their backs they carried nearly 120 pounds a

person. The weight consisted of their basic battle kit and packs, known as “bergens.” To manage the heavier equipment, such as crew served weapons and heavy ammunition, tracked Artic warfare vehicles were packed to the brim and followed in trace. The soft peat under footing, thick grass, moisture and cold weather made the movement slow and painful. Many requests for helicopter support were made, but nearly all were turned down. The unit eventually arrived at Douglas on the evening of 28 May, nearly thirty hours after they had stepped off from San Carlos. They spent the 29th resting for the next leg. Forty-Fifth Commando stepped off again for Teal Inlet on 30 May, which was another fifteen miles. They eventually arrived on the evening of 31 May. Helicopters were expected to support the last leg of the movement to Mount Kent, but weather was too severe and resupply became the main effort for the helicopters. So, on 3 June, 45 Commando stepped off again for Mount Kent. They eventually arrived on the evening of 4 June, where they immediately set into defensive positions. It took the Commandos nine days to travel approximately forty miles. The weight of their gear, weather, terrain and expectation of a fight exhausted the Marines of 45 Commando.²⁴

Third Para experienced some luck prior to setting out for Teal Inlet. A civilian manager of Port San Carlos identified a different and more direct route. On 27 May, 3 Para set out, but without their “bergens,” heavy main packs, which contained their sleeping bags, and extra warming layers. This was a daring decision, as it required the Paras to move without cold weather gear in artic like conditions. It also required follow-on resupply of the packs by helicopters at their next objectives. The mortar platoon, with their heavy equipment, attained two tractor and trailers to assist in carrying equipment and gear. This also allowed the mortars to follow close enough to provide indirect fire support. Forty-Five Commando was better supplied than 3 Para, but they were moving drastically slower compared to the Paras.²⁵ Even though

much lighter, exposure injuries were starting to mount. On the early morning of the 28th, 3 Para halted eight kilometers outside of Teal Inlet. Due to limited intel and exhaustion, it was decided that 3 Para would establish a defense and recoup throughout the day. With better intel received on the evening of the 28th, 3 Para seized Teal Inlet before dawn on the 29th with little resistance. They immediately dug in and began establishing a defense. Only fifteen men experienced injuries during the movement after they travelled in excess of forty kilometers.²⁶ It did not go unnoticed that the men of 3 Para beat 45 Commando to Teal Inlet. “Deep in their hearts, they drew great pride knowing no infantry in the world could readily achieve what they were doing.”²⁷

At last light on 30 May, with less than a day of limited rest, 3 Para set out again for Estancia House. Estancia House was expected to hold 200 enemy soldiers and was their final intermediate objective before they took Mount Longdon and Two Sisters above Stanley. By the night of the 31st, 3 Para had secured Estancia, again with limited resistance. In Colbeck’s book, *With 3 Para to the Falklands*, he quotes, “It was Monday, 31 May – four days after we had set out from Port San Carlos – and from the hills above Estancia House the lights of Port Stanley could be seen over twenty kilometers to the east. Mount Kent was four kilometers southwest of Estancia House.” 3 Para’s “bergens” arrived via Sea King helicopters at Estancia House that same day.²⁸ The bold plan to leave their main packs payed off.

With 3 Para at Estancia House and 45 Commando at Mount Kent, 3rd BDE had set conditions to begin seizing their main objectives. Third Para seized Mount Longdon and 45 Commando seized Mount Two Sisters. Both units began their advance towards their objectives on the night of 5 June. Prior to making contact the mission was aborted, due to 5 BDE not being in position. This delay lasted for multiple days and caused problems for 3 BDE. Argentinian

leadership were aware of the British locations by this point and conducted air raids on their positions. The imbedded British Press did not help the situation as they were broadcasting the location of 3 BDE to the world and Argentinian adversaries on Falkland Islands. It also put the Naval Gun Ships at risk as they had to expose themselves to get close to the shore to support the aborted attack.²⁹ What caused the delay?

Southern Axis

This portion of the paper will discuss the events that took place with the 5th Infantry Brigade as they took the southern axis on Falkland Islands to establish their final assault positions along key terrain south and west of Port Stanley. Their performance is in contrast to that of 3 BDE. Fifth BDE failed to provide dismounted operational mobility to the Task Force, which forced the use of a bad plan to approach from sea. To set conditions for the southern movement it is necessary to discuss the problems and decisions facing the Task Group and 5 BDE once they landed at San Carlos.

Major General Moor (Task Group Commanding officer) found himself in a mobility and logistical dilemma once 5 BDE began landing at San Carlos. Third BDE's lines of communication (LOC) were strung out between San Carlos and the terrain surrounding Mount Kent, nearly 50 miles. For the 3 BDE to exploit its success at Mount Kent, Brigadier General Thomas (3 Brigade Commander) believed he needed all the heavy lift helicopters. He argued that all helicopters were required to conduct resupply, maintain gear and equipment and build combat power at the long end of the LOC. There were no helicopters to support 5 BDE. To relieve the pressure on the limited helicopters and to shorten 3 BDE's LOC, Moore ordered the shift of all of 3 BDE's stores, via landing craft, from San Carlos to Teal Inlet. The British domination of key terrain and the previous buildup of Rapier anti-air missiles at the Inlet made it

relatively safe for landing craft. This took time, which the Task Force did not have. Wilson understood his options; go by foot or sea. Sea was too risky because of the air threat and orientation of the Argentinian defense.³⁰ This left one option; 5 BDE must hike.

Wilson arrived at Goose Green on 1 June, where he briefed the overall plan he had to the leadership of 2 Para. Simultaneously, the Gurkha Battalion came ashore at San Carlos, worn out from sea sickness. All but one company was flown to Goose Green via the Task Force's only Chinook helicopter. They were tasked to relieve 2 Para and establish rear area security. Second Para, originally under 3 BDE, detached and fell under 5 BDE to support the southern axis. The Gurkhas arrived that afternoon and began their relief in place with 2 Para. The plan required 2 Para to screen along the high ground that paralleled the coast to the east. The newly arrived infantry battalions marched along the coast to Bluff Cove. By leap frogging the battalions, Wilson believed this plan would work. The Paras on the other hand believed this plan grossly underestimated the difficult Falklands terrain. However, 2 Para preemptively acted on intelligence and seized terrain near Fitzroy, which forced Wilson and Moor's hand in another direction.³¹

That same afternoon, through intelligence sources, Wilson and 2 Para leadership received word that Bluff Cove was unopposed. The intelligence was confirmed accurate after sending a reconnaissance party via small helicopter to Bluff Cove. Without coordinating with higher headquarters Wilson commandeered the only remaining Chinook Helicopter. By multiple waves 2 Para flew to secure Bluff Cove and Fitzroy, without support. Moore at the Task Group HQ, did not find about 2 Para's movement until after the fact, which he considered irresponsible. Second Para's new location exposed them to the enemy without fire support and reinforcements.

This put them at risk from enemy counter attacks, artillery and air attacks. With 3 BDE in position for the attack and 2 Para exposed, time was running out.³²

With the new plan, on the night of 3 June, D company from the Gurkhas, made the march from San Carlos to Goose Green to link up with the remainder of the Battalion. The Chinook was too busy to lift the company of Gurkhas. D company was loaded down with their full “bergens”, carrying between 100 and 145 pounds a man, depending on who had the extra machine gun and mortar ammo. Maj Seear, Gurkha Battalion operations officer, in his book “With the Gurkhas in the Falkland Islands” quotes; “The twenty kilometers from [San Carlos] as the crow flies had taken the fully-loaded Gurkhas only thirty hours including a night halt. It was an achievement demonstrating again the Gurkhas’ collective strength and endurance, for an Army unit is as fit as its weakest man.”³³

On 2 June, the Welsh and Scots Guards Battalions landed at San Carlos. On the afternoon of 3 June, the Welsh Guards began their march to Goose Green. From there they were tasked to move via foot to Bluff Cove. The Battalion was able to commandeer a light tractor and trailer, which they loaded with the 81mm mortars and ammo. After two hours, the foot movement was halted. The tractor kept bogging down in the already worn out track and the troops were too heavy with kit to make the movement. The Battalion Commander later considered “the march not to be such a ‘tall order,’ but had not appreciated the difficulties such a march would impose on a heavily laden battalion expected to take everything it possessed.”³⁴ The Battalion had to return to their positions around San Carlos. After two hours the whole endeavor to move 5 BDE by foot was aborted. Conducting an amphibious landing of the entire Brigade became the only option.³⁵

Maneuver by sea to Bluff Cove presented significant risk to the Navy. The sea approaches were in range of and vulnerable to land based Exocet anti-ship missiles. The lack of British air superiority left the amphibious shipping vulnerable to attack. Unlike at Teal Inlet, the Argentinian ground forces owned the high ground and could see into Fitzroy from their position. So, to avoid air attacks and Exocet missiles, it was decided to put the amphibious shipping at a standoff distance to Land Craft Units (LCUs) at night.³⁶

On the night of 5 June, the Scots Guards embarked aboard the *Intrepid*, an amphibious assault ship. The ship sailed in horrible weather to just off the coast of Lively Island where it launched four LCUs. It was dawn by the time they reached the beaches at Bluff Cove. Upon arrival they found 2 Para in bad shape. Second Para only packed two days of rations and had multiple exposure cases. Scots Guards immediately relieved them of defensive duties, so that they could recover in whatever shelter existed.³⁷

The Navy was no longer willing to risk the precious amphibious assault ships and transitioned to Landing Ship Logistics (LSLs) as the main troop and logistical transport to Bluff Cove. The same scheme of offload was used over the next few nights. Unfortunately, the complexities of amphibious offloads and poor communication led to disaster.³⁸

During daylight hours on the 8th of June LSLs, *Sir Tristram* and *Sir Galahad*, unloaded the remainder of the Welsh Guards, other supporting units, supplies and ammo at Fitzroy. At approximately 1400, multiple Argentine Daggers and A4Bs fighter aircraft snuck by British air defenses and dropped multiple bombs on both the *Tristram* and *Galahad*. Argentinian ground forces around Fitzroy spotted the location of the LSLs and communicated this information in time, which drove the air attacks. As a result, forty-nine British, soldiers, sailors and Marines died. An additional 115 were wounded. Operationally, *Sir Tristram* and *Galahad*, two Welsh

Guards companies, a mortar platoon, a sapper platoon, and a field ambulance were lost.

However, all of the 5 BDE was constituted in vicinity of Bluff Cove and Fitzroy. The attack into Stanley could begin.³⁹

The operations regarding the seizure of Port Stanley will not be discussed in further detail. The actions taken by the Task Force to set conditions for actions at Stanley are the main focus. Unfortunately, more lives were lost getting the Task Force into position to seize the high ground around Stanley, than were actually lost in close combat. Against a modern enemy, getting to the fight is very difficult, as seen in the Falklands.

IV: Analyzing British Mobility Operations in the Falklands

It is important to note that the movement from San Carlos to the east was not a hike, it was a movement to contact. The enemy threat from the ground and air was equal in weight on their minds as to what was on their backs. Based on the information provided above, 3 and 5 BDEs did not have a clear picture of the enemy situation between San Carlos and their follow-on objectives at Mount Kent and Bluff Cove/Fitzroy. This required the unit to move with caution in tactical sound formation, similar to a movement to contact. Night proved to be their friend against attacks from enemy aircraft. Patrols, forward and to their flanks, provided early warning and protection for the main body. Stopping for rest still required security and attentiveness. Stopping for more than a few minutes required defensive measures and security. This required patrolling, fighting holes, and a preparation for the next movement. Upon arrival at their destination, the location had to be secured and defensive measures again established. In reality, the foot movement was more than just carrying a heavy pack.⁴⁰ This portion of the paper will analyze 5 BDE's failure to provide operational mobility to the land force. It will also analyze 3 BDE's relative success in dismounted mobility operations.

Southern Axis

The failure of the two Guards Battalions to make the foot movement east led to the unfortunate tragedy at Fitzroy. This breakdown in dismounted mobility has garnered some debate. Some believe it inconceivable that in the age of advanced mobility through helicopters, armored personnel carriers and aircraft, that an infantry unit's inability to march into battle has become a strategic problem. The Guards inability to perform the most basic of infantry tasks; marching, forced the Brigade to execute a risky amphibious landing.⁴¹ Other literature argues that the failure of 5 BDE to make the foot movement is a result of carrying too much weight. This paper argues that three elements prevented 5 BDE from making their foot movement; planning, pre-deployment training, and logistics.

The deployment of 5 BDE did not go as planned. They were slow to set sail because of manning and amphibious lift options. This forced the BDE to bypass Ascension Island on their way to the Falklands. Ascension Island would have served as a location to prepare their equipment for dismounted operational mobility, train, and acclimatize to the environment. Ascension Island likely replicated the terrain and weather that was seen in the Falkland Islands. Instead, the Brigade attempted to make a significant foot movement over rugged terrain shortly after landing with more gear than they had ever carried in peace time training.⁴² Dismounted mobility may have been an afterthought as well.

Fifth BDE's state of mind going into the Falkland Islands was not focused on dismounted mobility for two reasons: they only trained to mounted operations and the original plan didn't call for dismounted mobility. As stated earlier, the BDE had just come off "public duty" and had spent most of its time training from armored personnel carriers. The many details of moving a very large unit, with a lot of weight over hostile terrain and with limited support was not

something the BDE collectively understood. Also, the original plan for 5 BDE was to act as rear security for 3 BDE as they attacked in Port Stanley. The plan quickly changed as Moor realized he would need the entire landing force to fight the entrenched Argentinian forces.⁴³ Mobile versatility and adaptation were not part of their lexicon.

A byproduct of poor pre-deployment training is the amount of gear 5 BDE decided to carry. The harsh weather and limited logistical options contributed to this decision. Concerns that the soldiers would not survive without all of their cold weather gear, food and water drastically increased the load they carried.⁴⁴ Additionally, the lack of pre-deployment training prevented commanders within 5 BDE to understand the capabilities and limitations of their troops. They expected their troops to carry more than half their body weight, 120 pounds rucks in most cases, over a long distance, and on rough terrain. This is arguably the most critical issue in their failure to accomplish the mission. The depth of their failed expectations is exemplified by the Battalion Commander's cancellation of the movement after only two hours of marching.⁴⁵ Had the battalion had time to prepare, the decision to move on foot would have never been made, or they would have adapted the weight to accomplish the mission. Logistical issues played a big role as well.

Logistical support at the operational and tactical level proved to be a major issue for 5 BDE. The heavy load carried by each soldier can also be attributed to 5 BDE's limited trust in resupply. At the time of their departure from San Carlos, all helicopter support was dedicated to moving supplies to Teal Inlet in support of 3 BDE. Therefore, the soldiers were burdened with a significant amount of ammo, batteries, and other finite resources as a result of limited resupply support. Planners and leaders within 5 BDE might have chosen to lighten their soldiers load had they known they could get resupplied at their follow-on objectives. At the tactical level the

Snowcats⁴⁶ and tractors, which carried some of their crew served weapons and ammo, continuously broke down and got stuck in the mud. Unknowingly, the tractors the Welsh Guards commandeered had small wheels, which bogged down in the soft dirt. They also did not have the Volvo tracked vehicles that 3 BDE had. Thus, unwilling to separate from their heavy weapons and unable to move them in vehicles, the soldiers were required to carry them on their backs. Adding more weight to already overburdened men.⁴⁷ Combined, these factors led to aborting the dismounted mobility option for the Brigade.

Dismounted mobility has been a task for infantry units for thousands of years, but it is no basic task. As seen with 5 BDE, to move a battalion or brigade over long distances on foot requires detailed planning. Planning that accounts for acclimatization, logistics and individual load out of troops. Leaders, through proper training, must understand how far their unit can travel and under what load. Additionally, operational logistics are still a huge factor within dismounted mobility. Tactical logistics in the form of mobility support is critical for carrying heavy equipment and ammo for conventional forces.

Northern Axis

Third Commando Brigade's ability to march forty or more miles through unknown territory, against an unknown enemy threat, to gain an advantageous position over their enemy at Port Stanley is the definition of dismounted operational mobility. Third BDE was successful for the opposite reasons that 5 BDE was not. Third BDE as a whole was able to accomplish the movement, but the Para's better exemplified dismounted mobility than that of the Commandos.

Third BDE had more success than 5 BDE for a few of reasons; a "yomping" mindset, good planning and access to logistical support. A pillar of Esprit to units like the Paras and

Commandos is their ability to “Yomp.” A significant measurement of a unit’s worth is determined by their prowess at “yomping.” For the Paras and Commandos of 3 BDE, it was never a question of accomplishing the hike, but more a question of at what cost.⁴⁸ This is arguably the most decisive factor in their ability to accomplish the mission.

Additionally, the lengthening LOCs and exposed units made 3 BDE the priority for helicopter resupply support. The operational plan called for the Brigade to fight for resupply points along their route. Douglas, Teal Inlet, and Estancia House provided amphibious and helicopter resupply points. This is a critical planning factor when moving a unit on foot over a significant distance. Finally, tactical mobility support in the form of big wheeled tractors and artic Volvos eased some of the burden for 3 BDE. Both units accomplished the mission, but some better than others.⁴⁹

Forty-Fifth Commando made the same mistake as 5 BDE by attempting to carry nearly all of their equipment. It showed in their slow rate of march and overall time it took for them to reach their objectives relative to 3 Para. They were able to accomplish this feat because of their collectively high standard in physical and mental toughness. Yet they were fortunate they didn’t have to go into the attack upon arrival at Mount Kent. It is likely the weight of fear would have been too much for their backs and minds. The weight of fear and packs is described best by Major Andrew Pullman in his essay on light infantry in the Falkland Islands, “The results of overburdening the infantryman in the Falklands was the unnecessary expenditure of human resources, the very antithesis of good leadership. Couple this overburdening with periods of acute stress and fear and the morale of a unit starts to be sabotaged.” He goes on to say, “psychologically, one hundred pounds carried on operations weighs more than one hundred

pounds carried in training.” In essence, the morale of a unit can be pinned down by the burden it carries.”⁵⁰ Third Para executed a more ideal plan.

Speed was of the essence for 3 BDE, as Mount Kent was occupied by a small element of 42 Commando with limited fire support. Forty-Second Commando lost surprise after a chance encounter with an Argentinian patrol. Third Para accomplished a slightly shorter, yet just as rigorous movement to Mount Kent in less than half the time of 45 Commando. This was a result of a lucky encounter and a bold decision. The decision to enlist the help of a local Falklander to assist in identifying the best route was a perfect example of adaptability and resourcefulness. This was unique, as it would have been easy to take 45 Commando’s heavy burden as a challenge to the Para’s toughness. This saved them a lot of pain. Lastly, the bold plan to abandon “bergens” and set out with a lighter load was likely pivotal to their success relative to 45 Commando. The risk of exposure to the weather and running out of sustainment was mitigated by the enhanced speed as a result of being lighter with a solid resupply plan, as long as they could seize their resupply points at Teal Inlet and Estancia House.⁵¹

V: Lessons Learned

The Marine Operating Concept argues that the need for dismounted mobility will be an important requirement in the future operating environment. A major task within the directive is to “set the mental and physical standards for Marine infantry through a mission-driven perspective that fully recognizes the demands on foot-mobile forces conducting operations in austere environments – *because superior infantry is a Marine Corps asymmetric advantage.*” In the future contested environment where signals emissions and Anti-Access Area Denial (A2AD) capabilities are vast, large platforms like helicopters, tracked vehicles and trucks will be easy targets.⁵² Distributed dismounted foot movement will be the most reliable form of operational

mobility. This proved true in the Falkland Islands Campaign where both the maritime and littoral environments were contested. This required the British to land nearly 50 miles away from the objectives. Additionally, Argentine A2AD capabilities destroyed British helicopter lift options for the assaulting force. Amphibious mobility proved disastrous as seen with the tragedy at Fitzroy. Dismounted mobility became the option that provided the least amount of risk to the mission and forces.

The Falkland Islands Campaign provides two important lessons for Marines to be successful in the future operating environment. First, the Marine Corps must be prepared to conduct dismounted operations in a contested environment, over long distances, where they have to fight for resupply points. As seen in the Falklands, the British lost their helicopter lift capabilities and had to rely on dismounted mobility. The Marine Corps may find itself in a similar position when conducting amphibious operations in the future. Second, the Marine Corps needs to lighten the load carried by a Marine. As seen with 5 BDE, the weight each soldier had to carry led to their failure. The Marine Corps is arguably too heavy and will have an effect on its ability to execute operational mobility.

More Than a Hike

John A. English, in his book, *On Infantry*, argues that the infantry is an all-weather force. That no matter the technological advancements in weaponry and mobility, foot soldiers will always be the decisive force. He states “masters of difficult and close terrain, infantrymen are essentially foul weather warriors; horses may flounder, tanks may grind to a halt, and aircraft may fail to fly, but the foot soldier plods ever on...in fog or at night in howling storm, the infantryman is monarch of the field.”⁵³ As observed during the Falkland Islands campaign, this isn't always true. Third BDE was able to accomplish their foot movement, and 5 BDE was not.

Many Marine Infantry units are just as guilty at underpreparing for dismounted mobility as 5 BDE. The boot camp like hike mentality is boring and unsustainable. The over use of motorized, mechanized, and helicopter lift as reliable transport platforms is lulling the infantry into a dangerous position. It is hard to move on foot, but easy to ride in a truck or helicopter. This portion of the paper argues that leaders at all levels must not forget that Infantry is the “monarch of the field” and must plan as such. Approaching dismounted mobility from the concept of “move, fight, move” is an example of applying the art of dismounted mobility in training.

Leaders must understand that the days of putting on a pack, walking in a tight column formation, boot camp style, and without weapons are teaching the wrong lessons. As seen in the Falklands, 3 BDE, marched in open column, with advanced guards forward, and security patrols to the flanks. During halts security was established, rather than every Marine and Soldier immediately throwing their pack off and sitting down. When they arrived at their objective, they were to be prepared to fight. Once their objective was secure they would set into the defense. Then they moved again in order to open up more lines of communication and bring the fight to the enemy. This is the real-world example of *move, fight, move*, so how does it apply in training?

The first *move* is tactical in nature. It encourages leaders to conduct a quick verbal order that, at a minimum, provides a notionally enemy situation, scheme of maneuver (route, security, formation, actions at the objective, etc.), important coordinating instructions (speed, check points, security halts, etc.) and a basic communication and logistics plan. The movement itself, whether conducting an out and back hike or movement to a life fire range, for example, should force Marines to move with security in mind. When halting, Marines should set security, vice

sitting on their pack. Security elements, in the form of advanced and flank guards, should be pushed out along different routes to forces coordination, communication and small unit leader buy in. In a Battalion sized hike each company should be tasked with a different route, rather than marching in a long column. This breaks bad habits that develop with the typical boot camp hike. This method encourages leaders and Marines to look at hikes as a means to get to the fight, which can be won or lost before they even arrive.

The *fight* concept encourages leaders to develop an event at the end of the hike that drives towards the physical demands of combat. A physical fitness event or a preplanned notional attack are examples. An illustration of this is provided for context. Upon arriving at the live fire range, the company commander assigns four physical fitness stations that each platoon falls in on. A ground fighting station, a buddy carry station, an inert fragmentation grenade throwing station and a sprint station are a few examples. A designated time is assigned and each unit rotates through the stations. Once the physical event is complete, the hike to that point is debriefed and the live fire range is executed as planned. Marines must understand that if they are too tired to do anything when they get to their objective, then they have already failed.

The last *move* argues that the future operating environment will require commanders to fight for logistical resupply. As seen in the Falklands, 3 BDE could not be resupplied until they secured their objective. The future of anti-air defense and A2AD capabilities will limit the freedom of maneuver that helicopters and other transport platforms have experienced to date. Therefore, dismounted maneuver elements must gain and maintain access by securing locations for resupply and support assets to flow into. After securing Teal Inlet, which opened up an air and sea line of communication, 3 BDE had to move to secure Estancia House for follow on resupply and support, further opening their lines of communication.⁵⁴ In training this is simple

to replicate. However, finding the will to do it is tough. Continuing with the example provided early, the company commander, following the training at the live fire range, should choose to hike his company back home in the same manor they came out. If the company is not ready for that long of a move, a motor transport unit can meet the company part of the way. Moving again after an exhausting fight sends an important mental and physical message.

Plans like this take the monotony out of hiking. It challenges unit leaders, provides additional opportunities to test basic infantry skills and develops both the physical and mental aspects of dismounted mobility. It allows a commander to accurately evaluate his unit's ability to *move, fight, move*. He is able to evaluate how far, with how much weight and under what conditions his unit can conduct dismounted operations. It is the goal of the leader to create the Esprit towards "yomping" that 3 BDE had.⁵⁵

For infantry units to continue to be the "monarch of the field," leaders must get out of the boot camp hike mentality. Leaders must stop relying on the motor transport units and helicopter squadrons as their primary transport platforms. Leaders at all level should embrace a concept similar to *move, fight, move*. *Move...* to the fight tactically. When the unit arrives, replicate the physical demands of combat, create the *fight...* Finally, *move* again. The future operating environment will likely rely on the infantry to open lines of communications more than ever before. The infantry must be able to move again after an exhausting fight.

Lighten the Load

As seen in the Falkland Islands, the speed and distance a unit can hike is relative to the weight they have on their bodies. Andrew Pullan, in his essay on British Infantry in the Falklands, argues; "the real lesson from the Falklands is that the load of the infantry has not

improved since the days of the Roman Legion: indeed, the situation is probably worse.” The current weight requirements on the individual Marine limit the infantry’s ability to maximize mobility. Primarily, the assault load, the typical weight Marines will carry past the line of departure, is too heavy. It weighs 94.34 lbs. and is “the necessary load for the prosecution of combat operations for extended periods with access to daily re-supply.”⁵⁶ This load does not include food, ammunition, weapons, and communications equipment. All variables included, an infantry Marine’s assault load is over 128 lbs. S.L.A Marshall’s book, *The Soldier’s Load*, uses a study from 1950 to argue that a soldier should carry no more than 1/3 of his body weight.⁵⁷ A 2008 article on “Combat Overloading” combines eight different studies on this concept. The studies unanimously agree that the assault load should not exceed 45 percent of the soldier’s body weight. The study states the average weight of a Marine in 2004 as 169 lbs.⁵⁸ With the average individual’s weight likely not changing much since 2004, the Marine Corps standard for the assault load is 56 percent of the individuals weight, 9 percent above the recommendation. Factor in ammunition, an M4, and 2 MREs and it becomes 76 percent of individual’s body weight, 31 percent above the recommended amount. As a result, the likelihood of heat and weight-baring injuries increases over time.⁵⁹ In a separate study conducted by the Center for Naval Analysis, the max weight of a Marine’s equipment has risen from 82.23 pounds in 1960 to a present-day weight of 129.63.⁶⁰ Will it continue to rise?

The changing operational environment and the increasing requirement to operate from the sea “places a premium on the GEC’s ability to conduct sustained, foot mobile operations while bearing mission-essential equipment and personal protective gear.”⁶¹ The MOC attempts to provide mobility by increasing combat power through unmanned vehicles and man-machine interface technology. In every technological initiative proposed, Marines will need to carry more

equipment to enable and interface with these new technologies. The Robotic Vehicle Module (RVM) initiative incorporates an unmanned ground vehicle controlled at the squad level. It is highly mobile and V-22 transportable. RVMs and unmanned aerial vehicles are controlled at the squad level by the Tactical Robotic Controller (TRC).⁶² The TRC, worn as a shoulder pack, is another component an individual must carry. The squad will likely carry extra batteries and repair parts that will complement both the controller and the vehicle. Likewise, the Squad X program will add weight to the individual Marine. This initiative allows individual Marines to sense and engage enemy targets at greater ranges, increase non-kinetic engagement capabilities, and enhance squad autonomy. This program utilizes a heads-up display, warfighter worn sensor systems, radar devices, and electronic warfare components.⁶³ Despite the positive effects these technologies can provide, the individual Marine is further burdened. The MOC's squad level initiatives contradict its desire for Marines to conduct sustain foot mobile operations.

A vignette from S.L.A Marshall in *The Soldier's Load* discusses the physical and psychological issues E Company from the 16th Infantry encounter while crossing the Omaha beach on D-Day. Due to the exhaustion from a heavy load and the shock from encountering enemy forces, it took E company one hour to cross a beach head of 250 meters. Marshall argues that the extra weight they carried only added to their dire situation.⁶⁴ The Marine Corps must lighten the individuals load if the objective is to allow infantry Marines to insert multiple kilometers from the objective, move to the objective on foot, destroy the enemy, and move again. Primarily, the Marine Corps will need to find a way to reduce the weight of personal protective equipment (PPE). A 21st century Marine carries close to 32 lbs of PPE on his body. Lighter small arms protective equipment, that is breathable or provides cooling effects will increase Marine effectiveness in a broader number of operating environments. Reducing the weight of

ammunition through plastic casings and other polymers, will further reduce the load on the individual. Reduce the weight of equipment and ammunition that a Marine cannot depart friendly lines without. From there, create technology that accounts for the physical and psychological effects overloading can have on an individual Marine.

VI: Conclusion

The art of moving combat forces from point of entry to a location where the force can accomplish an advantageous position over an enemy, fight a battle, or exploit a tactical success gained during battle is no easy task. The difficulty of this task is exemplified by the actions of 3 BDE and 5 BDE during the Falkland Islands campaign. The movement to contact by 3 BDE on the northern axis was accomplished, but with great difficulty. However, their ability to accomplish the mission provided significant operational flexibility for the entire Task Force. While, the movement of 5 BDE on the southern axis failed. This failure forced the Task Force hampered flexibility and forced a risky approach by sea. This sea approach led to disaster.⁶⁵

The actions of 3 BDE and 5 BDE provide warfighter with lessons learned that will likely withstand the test of time. Fifth BDE's failure to make the foot movement along the southern axis is arguably a result of poor planning, pre-deployment training and a lack of logistical support. Third BDE's success is a result of their "yomping" mindset, solid planning and access to logistical support.

These lessons are applicable to today's future operating environment and easily applied. This paper argues and recommends that leaders who embrace a concept similar to "move, fight, move" will have similar success to that of 3 BDE. The future operating environment demands that dismounted units must move over long distances to open lines of communication for

resupply. These units will have to fight for resupply. They must be able to move again, as they are the only element that can gain and maintain access. Yet, to do this, the Marine Corps must lighten the load of the individual Marine. From 1960 to present day, the weight a Marine must carry has risen to more than 30 pounds more than the recommended weight. As the Marine Corps invests in technology, the weight will continue to rise.⁶⁶ Something must give; lighter ammo and PPE may be the answer.

The Falkland Islands Campaign provides a glimpse of what the future operating environment may look like. Future adversaries will strive to take away the technological advantages in mobility that the Marine Corps brings to the fight. Access to an area may only be achieved by Marines moving over long distances through harsh environments. History proves that some successfully apply the art of dismounted mobility, and some do not. The Marine Corps has a chance at success if it approaches hiking with a *move, fight, move* concept, and it lightens the load.

End Notes:

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