

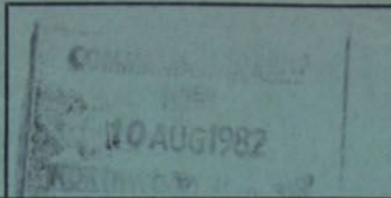
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Cross References:

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SUBJECT:

OPERATION CORBATE

FLIGHT REPORT HMS COVENTRY

SUBJECT:

OPERATION CORBATE - FLIGHT REPORT - HMS COVENTRY

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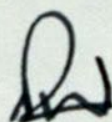


1 From 815 GVENTRY

270/10/COV/1 Dated 13 July 82 CONF - copied to JEG

M1By Lawso.

1. Many interesting points raised and covered there in other reports.
2. The account of the first ever S. Skva attack is of interest at Para 4 and Annex F.
3. This is the first indication I have that Coventry's Lynx went down with the ship.
4. For 3/815 will correlate all Lynx reports.




12/8.

M2.

By RPKO.

1. Annex E para 1B. I share the concern regarding the fact that only 1 HC was borne. The shortage continues. I would be interested to know why (if the HC was not closed up) the HC was co-located with the hub.

2. I share the concern about integration of HC's into the Command Team. A current paper is attempting to address this problem.

18/8. 



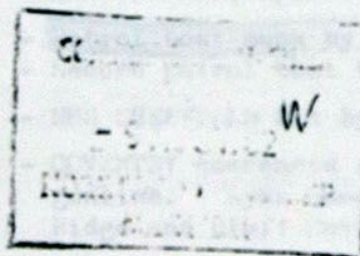
The Flag Officer Third Flotilla  
Fort Southwick  
Fareham  
Hants

13 July 1982

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS - 815 COVENTRY FLIGHT - OPERATION CORPORATE

Reference:

- A. FOF3 19F/IAG/KAG - 281627Z Jun 82 - ROP CORPORATE Flights
1. 815 COVENTRY Flight ROP is forwarded in accordance with the reference.
  2. 815 COVENTRY Lynx Flight, under the command of Lt Cdr A A RICH, Royal Navy, embarked on HMS COVENTRY on 17 March 82 for Exercise SPRINGTRAIN.
  3. After a visit to GIBRAITER and commencement of the second phase of SPRINGTRAIN, HMS COVENTRY was ordered, on 2 April, to sail with all despatch to the Falklands in company with other units.
  4. On 25 April HMS COVENTRY was joined by the Carrier Battle Group and shortly afterwards entered the exclusion zone. Operations were carried out in the TEE until 25 May 82, when the ship was sunk by enemy aircraft.
  5. The following information, contained at the Annexes, is based partly on operational experience in extreme conditions, and partly on memory. All Flight records, diaries of events and detailed information were lost on 25 May 82.
  6. Operational debriefs and recommendations for future Lynx employment have taken place at 815 N.A.S.



A.A. Rich.

A A RICH  
Lieutenant Commander  
Flight Commander

Annexes:

- A. Diary of Events
- B. Narrative
- C. Statistics
- D. Nominal Flight List
- E. Problems encountered during Op CORPORATE
- F. Weapons
- G. Operational Employment
- H. Leacetime rules/operational reality

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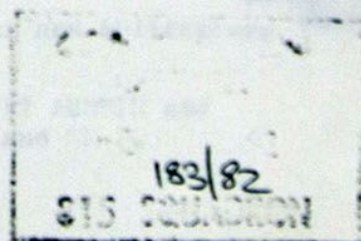
The Captain HMS OSPREY

The Commanding Officer 815 NAS

Captain D5

DNAW (FAO AC(H)3)

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Annex A to  
230/10/COV/1  
dated 13 July 82DIARY OF EVENTS

- 17 MARCH 82 - Sailed Portsmouth for Exercise SPRINGTRAIN
- 25-29 MARCH - At Gibraltar
- 29 MAR - 2 APRIL - Ex-SPRINGTRAIN
- 2 APRIL - Detached to Falklands
- 3/4 APRIL - Major KAS and VERTREP - robbing Ships and Flts returning to UK
- 12 APRIL - Ascension Islands holding area. Landed ashore for essential maintenance.
- 12/13 APRIL - Detached to KEV. Aircraft and ships warped.
- 16 APRIL - R/V FORT AUSTIN. Lynx crews briefing on F.A. - Sea Skua.
- 16/17 APRIL - Exchanged Lady 'G' (XZ 700) for 'Wee Geordie' (XZ 242) + 2 Skua missiles.
- 18/19 APRIL - Vertreped for her Skua missiles. Home-made GPG and IMG mountings tested.
- 1-30 APRIL - Operational flying work-up - new tactics/Skua profiles/evasion/NGS spotting/co-operation primarily with GLASGOW, APROX, SHEFFIELD Flts.
- 25-30 APRIL - Surface/ESM patrols regularly flown 100-200 mls ahead of force.
- 25 APRIL - Joined Carrier battle group. CTG to HERMES.
- 30 APRIL - TEZ established. Ship commenced patrols and air defence picket duties.
- 1-25 MAY - HMS COVENTRY operated in TEZ
- 0300 - 3 MAY - Patrol boat sunk by 2 Skua fired by COVENTRY Flight.
- 0330 - 3 MAY - Second patrol boat hit by 2 Skua fired by GLASGOW Flight.
- 4 MAY - HMS SHEFFIELD hit by exocet
- APPROX 6 MAY - COVENTRY commenced regular night excursions to NGS gunline. Lynx used for NGS spotting on the Two Sisters Ridge and Bluff Cove area.
- 6-20 MAY - COVENTRY/BROADBENT combo proceeded west of Falklands and successfully used Seadart. Lynx used for search to the west.
- 25 MAY - 31 - Lynx used to fly over MW Islands to establish airstrip positions and surface search. Ship patrolling north of sound.
- 25 MAY - 1500 - BROADBENT hit by bombs from 2 aircraft
- 25 MAY - 1605 - 2 further aircraft released bombs that hit and subsequently sank HMS COVENTRY
- Abandon ship ordered. List to port of 50° within 5 (not painted known at Act) minutes. Lynx lost.
- Survivors picked up by BROADBENT boats and helicopters from ships in the Sound.
- 26 MAY - Ships Company eventually checked on FORT AUSTIN and subsequently transferred to STRONNESS and ON 2.
- 11 JUNE - Arrived Southampton

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ANNEX B TO  
730/10/COV/1  
dated 13 July 82

NARRATIVE

1. On detaching from Ex-SPRINGTRAIN on 1/2 April, HMS COVENTRY proceeded SW in company with GLAMORGAN, ANTRIM, PLYMOUTH, SHEFFIELD, GLASGOW, ARROW and BRILLIANT. During the transit south a major vertrep and RAS took place with ships returning to UK. HMS AUKORA and HMS BATTLEAXE provided items and aircraft spares for COVENTRY.

An unacceptable fuel tank leak in XX 700 resulted in transfer of BATTLEAXE's fuel tank and immediate fitting to remain operational.

2. During the transit to Ascension Is (operation CORPORATE tactics and procedures were introduced and practised. Co-ordinated LYNX attacks using plan WHIPPET and other new techniques were perfected, primarily operating with GLASGOW, SHEFFIELD and COVENTRY Flights.

3. Aircraft modifications, using locally made GHEG and LNG cabin mountings were completed en route to Ascension.

4. CTG detailed COV FLT as an ECM/SURV aircraft (no SKUA) and many hours were spent practising our primary task in a silent environment.

5. At Ascension Is COVENTRY FLT disembarked for 1 day to calibrate fuel tanks, collect stores and conduct a tail rotor track.

6. Plans to wait for the Carrier Group were changed after 2 days in Ascension area and COVENTRY was detailed to proceed to EEZ asap in company with GLASGOW, ARROW and SHEFFIELD. BRILLIANT, PLYMOUTH and FORT AUSTIN had previously departed for South Georgia.

7. On approx 16 April, COV FLT were ordered to exchange aircraft with FORT AUSTIN in order to receive a Skua capable helicopter. After A/V with F.A., Lynx crews from several ships met on F.A. for a tactical discussion and briefing on Sea Skua. Flight maintainers were also briefed on Skua loading and maintenance procedures. Exchange of aircraft took place the following day, COV FLT receiving XX 242.

8. Skua profiles and tactics were regularly exercised en-route to EEZ, primarily co-ordinating with GLASGOW and ARROW.

9. The opportunity to disembarass was taken during the period with FT AUSTIN.

10. On 25 April, the Carrier group joined and tasking of Lynx aircraft was run by HEMMES. Initial periods in the EEZ were spent at A/L 15 with Skua fitted, while Seakings carried out surface search sorties.

11. ECM/surv sorties with no Skua fit were regularly flown from 1 May in the EEZ. During one of these sorties, COV FLT detected a radar contact approx 50 miles east of Stanley, and closed to investigate. The contact acted suspiciously by shining a searchlight at the helo and turning on radar. COV FLT reported the contact and returned to refuel. During the refuel, a Seaking was detached to I.D. the contact and was subsequently engaged by gunfire. COV FLT was ordered to arm with Skua and join the Seaking.

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After establishing the enemy position from the Beakings reports, COV LYNX closed to 7 miles and released 2 missiles. Both missiles hit the target and no contact was held on Beaking or Lynx radar. COV LYNX closed the last known posn but no survivors were found. Due to limited endurance, COV LYNX and S/King were forced to return to parent units.

12. GLASGOW Lynx also fired 2 Skuas shortly after COVENTRY Lynx attack on a second enemy surface contact, causing major damage to the superstructure.

13. Employment of HMS COVENTRY between 5-25 May varied considerably. NGS operations on the gunline South of Pt Stanley involved air spotting close to shore by COV LYNX. Poor visibility and a gun malfunction cut short COVENTRY's excursions to the gunline.

14. By positioning the "42/22 Comb" (COV and B'WORD) to the west of the Falklands, COV was able to use her missile capability to the full, and COV LYNX was able to carry out SEARCH SORTIES well to the W and NW of the Islands. Searches over the northern islands was also flown, checking the various inlets and airstrips on the obscure islands.

15. A similar 42/22 Combo task was assigned to COV/B'WORD on 24 and 25 May due north of the Falkland Sound. After successfully repelling the forenoon enemy aircraft attacks, COVENTRY was sunk by enemy bombs during the evening of 25 May 82.

16. On 25 May, COV LYNX has flown one 3 hour search 1000-1300 and remained at Alert 15 during the afternoon. When the ship went to Action Stations, the aircraft guns were positioned around the Flight and used continually during the enemy raids (1 GFMG, 1 ING, 4 SLR's). The aircraft remained on deck during Action Stations to eliminate the problems it might cause if airborne i.e. missile acquisition/friend or foe/I.D.

17. The ship listed to port within 5 minutes. Attempts to launch were abandoned due to max AUV, deck angle, FLD and smoke debris, casualties on the F/D and hangar.

18. The ship was abandoned, aircrew using single seat dinghies and Flight personnel manning the ships' lifeboats. The ships company were picked up by BROADSWARD boats and Ft AUSTIN helos and eventually mustered on Ft AUSTIN.

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Annex C to  
370/10/CCV/1  
dated 13 July 82STATISTICS1. CREW FLYING HOURS

A. APRIL - PILOT - 45 Hours 20 (day); 23 Hours 10 (night)  
 OBSERVER - " " " " " " " " " "  
 WINCHMAN - 25 Hours (day) 8 Hours (night)

B. MAY - PILOT - 54 Hours 50 (day); 31 Hours 10 (night)  
 OBSERVER - " " " " " " " " " "  
 WINCHMAN - 23 Hours 20 (day) 10 Hours 05 (night)

2. WEAPON FLYING HOURS

APRIL/MAY - Mk 46 Torpedo - 12.00 (day)/4.00 (night)  
 APRIL/MAY - 2 x Sea Skua - 50.00 (day)/25.00 (night)  
 APRIL/MAY - 4 x 4.5" flare - 40.00 (day)/25.00 (night)  
 APRIL/MAY - 1 x NDB - 1.00 day (to Port Austin)

3. WEAPON LOADING

APRIL/MAY - 2 x Sea Skua - (approx) 80 loads/unloads  
 2 x Mk 46 - 2 " / "

4. WEAPON RELEASE

3 MAY - 2 x Sea Skua  
 - Settings L2/H1  
 - Range 7.8 mls/7.6 mls  
 - Ht 200 ft sp 120 kts

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2. Flight personnel and duties were as follows:-

FLIGHT CDR	-	Lt Cdr A A RICH RN	-	Joined Aug 81
FLIGHT PILOT	-	Lt H J LEDINGHAM RN	-	" Nov 81
SKR	-	AEA(M) 1 B DURRANT	-	" Sep 80
R1	-	AEMN(R) 1 P L JONES	-	" Mar 81
L1/W1	-	AEMN(L) 2 M DILUCIA	-	" Mar 81
M2	-	POALM(N) N EDWARDS	-	" Jan 82
M3	-	LARN(M) P ROBSON	-	" Mar 79
M4	-	ARM(M) 1 H DAVIES	-	" Oct 81
L2/R2/W2	-	ARM(WL) 1 G BELL	-	" Feb 82



PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED DURING OPERATION CORPORATE1. COMPLEMENT, QUALIFICATION AND TRAINING

A. FLIGHT MAINTAINERS - numbers and level of expertise of flight personnel were satisfactory throughout. An increase in the number of maintainers would have eased the problems of long alert periods and HDS irregularities but a Type 42 cannot cope with the additional accommodation problems.

Locally made hammocks and "stretcher beds" were used by flight personnel in the hangar, especially during alert periods.

B. HC - The major problem with regard to complement during wartime operations involves the H.C. Only one H.C. is carried and, at times, the number of hours he was required to close up was unacceptable. His performance deteriorated during the operation. Another contributory factor concerns the positioning of the HC in the ops room of type 42. By sharing a display with the PWO sitting on the corner of the table with very limited comms, his task is made considerably more difficult.

HMS COVENTRY's HC was an A/L/S and gain problems were encountered with PWO/HC relations due to rank difference.

C. PWO's/AWO's - The employment and capabilities of the Lynx still appears to be in part not understood by Warfare Officers. This could stem from the initial training on PWO course.

2. OWN SHIP SUPPORT

During all phases of Op CORPORATE the Ship Support was good, and all Flight requirements were dealt with as quickly as possible. The confusion over the LYNX CRITICAL LIST is still apparent with Ships Stores Departments. Fortunately it did not affect Op COM-OBTAIN but on several occasions prior to heading south, items of air stores contained on a pencil amended crit list were deficient or returned in error. An updated CRIT LIST is recommended.

3. UK SUPPORT

Taking into account the size of the task, the stores support received from the UK was excellent. Only on a few occasions did urgently required stores not arrive. The major problem concerned HDS and helo vertrep from supply ships to COVENTRY. Our role as Anti Air Picket involved being positioned at least 15 miles up threat and often stores and HDS items took many days to arrive from the Flag Ship organisation.

Important stores, especially ship weapon spares and machinery spares, were collected by unscheduled CCV LYNX flights in order to avoid the long delay in HDS.

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4. CLEARANCES, MODIFICATIONS AND NEW EQUIPMENT

A. GPWG - no instruction or information was received concerning GPWG modification during the initial periods of Op COMBOPATE. Locally designed mountings were therefore produced for stbd door GPWG and port door LEG armament. In due course both mountings were successfully used.

A Lynx GPWG mounting was eventually delivered to the Ship. The supply tray could not be fitted due to the Skua equipment behind the pilot's seat. The mounting was used strapped to a F/D bollard. This permitted easy movement of the GPWG from aircraft to F/D dependent on threat and position required.

B. SEA SKUA - instructions and signals relating to Skua operations were plentiful and at all times the modification programme and testing of the Skua was well organised and executed.

Initially warnings that the S.S. missiles were not weather proofed caused problems with tasking. Alert 15 periods with Skuas loaded involved the possibility of rain and salt water contamination to the missiles while on deck. We therefore requested a relaxation in tasking to allow the aircraft to remain in the hangar at A/L 15 to protect the S.S. This was granted by CTG. In due course, further signals allowed for the normal A/L 15 configuration to be used.

Skua functional checks caused concern to maintenance personnel during the initial testing. However, it was discovered that careful study and meticulous use of the schedule sheets produced the correct response regularly.

Until COV's successful Skua firing, much worry and concern was felt over the efficiency of the system. The general feeling on F.A., together with a morale-shattering signal from COMBOP did little to inspire confidence.

C. AUW - the increased AUW allowance produced major problems with XZ 242. Flight at 4700 kg was unstable, uncomfortable and produced excess vibration. Investigation into the problem was inconclusive. All flying was therefore restricted to AUW 4600 kg which was acceptable.

D. GENERAL - throughout the operation, COV FLT were well informed by signal and visits by staff personnel (PARTSU) of all notification action, damage repair procedures and weapon clearances.

5. TASKING/FATIGUE/MORALE

A. Lynx tasking during the initial periods of the Operation unfortunately suffered from the lack of Lynx expertise in the Flagship. Long periods of alert 5 and alert 15 existed with no continuation flying or co-ordination with HNS timings. Seakings were used extensively for surface search - a role better suited to the many Lynx's available.

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Signals from CCM and ST-600 prompted changes to Oxygen Foxtrots. As operations in the TAC increased, Lynx tasking related more to the equipment carried i.e. HX/INW or MAD or ATTACK. However, flypros were often amended or re-written at short notice as ships were detached by CCM for 'special tasks'.

b. Fatigue levels were high during the period of rising tension. The Flight remained in 1 watch throughout due to the need for at least 6 people to be closed up during any deck operation to cope with any emergency. Members of the Ship's F/D team (SNAC 322) were not available (closed up at defence watches). The number of unscheduled HX/vertrep/ROVEX sorties frequently involved the Flight closing up at short notice during non-alert periods.

After 2 weeks of the above problems, the maintainers were showing signs of high fatigue. Fortunately our passage south prevented a week of normal ops in which all members of the Flight adjusted to the new routine and situation.

Operations in the TAC involved long hours and much tension for all concerned. Fatigue did not prove a problem - everyone appeared to adjust remarkably to a wartime situation involving little sleep.

Aircrew fatigue was most noticeable during long periods of A/L 5 and 15. (21 hours of A/L 15 in 1 day). Flying did not produce any fatigue problems except on 2 occasions when COV Lynx was tasked for 2 x 3 hour ESM SUBV sorties with 10 minutes refuel in between.

c. MORALE - levels of morale changed with each World Service news bulletin. Flight morale remained high at most times, with frequent Flight meetings to "let off steam" and discuss problems. Individual reactions varied considerably and special attention was given to those who were suffering most.

The successful Skua firing boosted morale considerably; as did the Seadart engagements.

Efficiency of the Flight did not reduce during periods of low morale or fatigue - the necessity to provide a fighting aircraft produced a remarkable work-rate from the maintainers.

The most difficult periods during the Operation occurred when the Ship was sent close inshore for "special missions". The uncertainty of the task produced a low morale situation with many Flight members residing in the hangar.

D. GENERAL - one of the major problems faced by the Flight concerned conditions in the hangar. Heating in a type 42 hangar is totally inadequate and caused many uncomfortable periods in freezing conditions for maintenance work and alert operations. Similarly, in tropical areas conditions for efficient work in the hangar are very poor.

The problems in the Antarctic conditions made worse by the need for total darkened ship and the regular equipment for hangar doors to remain open.

6. WELFARE

A. No welfare problems were encountered on COV FLT.

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Annex F to  
230/10/CCV/1  
dated 13 Jul 82

## WEAPONS

1. During Operation CORPORATE, COV FLT released 2 Sea Skua missiles, destroying an Argentinian patrol vessel east of Port Stanley on 3 May. Details of the missile release were contained in COVENTRY's signal sent on 4 May (to CTF 317 info FOF3) COV 19F/HNI/KKK/LBK 031634Z May 82.

## 2. Summary of Circumstances

2 May - full Sea Skua functional systems check carried out - fully serviceable.

3 May - as previously stated at Annex B, COVENTRY Lynx approached enemy surface vessel at night. Radar lock was achieved at approx 9 miles and FRC's procedures carried out. Switches were armed and ready light quickly illuminated. At 7.9 miles the 1st missile (port) was released - fell clearly from the A/C and proceeded towards the contact. The pilot turned his head away to avoid the immense glare after ignition.

The skim ht of L2 was set (initial batch of Skua) and the count down on the weapon panel began.

At approx 7.7 miles, missile 2 (stbd) was released (H1) and the count down correctly recommenced.

Both missiles were seen to explode and each was accompanied by a secondary explosion (seen by escorts and helos 30 miles away).

During missile flights, the Lynx was flown directly towards the enemy to assist holding radar lock throughout.

Conditions - W/V	- approx 350/30
Attack Hdg	- 330 Target hdg 045-15
Sp	- 120
Ht	- 300
Seastate	- 4-5

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OPERATIONAL EMPLOYMENT

1. TRANSIT SOUTH

A major work-up was devised and implemented during the spearhead group's transit south. Employment during this period was well organised to allow flights to practise new airplans and tactics e.g. PLAN WHIPPET.

The need for new tactics at such a late stage was debatable. Flights operating together frequently were able to use WHIPPET with much success. Also ships and own helos used WHIPPET grid techniques quickly and efficiently. However, new ships joining the force appeared to have many problems with WHIMLET, GROPE, etc.

2. INITIAL MEZ/TEZ OPERATIONS

Employment of Lynx aircraft immediately after the Task Force was fully integrated appeared irregular and incorrect. The main problems involved:-

- a. Alert Periods - too long and often incorrect i.e. A/L 30 (7). COV LYNX was held at A/L 15 for 21 hours in one 24 hour period, on 2 separate occasions.
- b. Continuation Flying - initially one could not fly during alert period, and no allowance was made for continuation flying.
- c. Surface Search - Seakings were tasked to carry out surface search sorties continuously. The Lynx could have carried out this role more efficiently without detriment to the Skua role.
- d. Flypro's - Opgen F's were often received late due to signal traffic congestion. The problems faced by the Flag Ship were appreciated, and in answer to a HEMMES request for advice on employment, several factors were corrected. It is considered that a Lynx qualified aircrew on the Flagship to advise on Lynx employment would have prevented many problems.

3. GENERAL OPERATIONAL EMPLOYMENT

After the initial problems, tasking of Lynx aircraft was good and each helo's assets appeared to be used to the full. Opgen F's still arrived onboard very late and often were meaningless because ships had been detached to "special missions" at short notice.

A degree of individual ship initiative was frequently required to "fill in" the flypro gaps and thus appeared to work well.

The uncertainty of the Sea Skua programme and the ability of the MSM equipment made operational employment difficult and many lessons were learnt during the operation. The main areas of concern and interest for COV Flight involved:-

- a. Long periods of Alert - more tiring than flying.
- b. Long sorties - 1 crew ships tasked for 2 x 3 hr sorties continuous is unwise; 2 crew ships can complete this task efficiently.
- c. Co-ordinated Lynx Operations - due to the problems of encon, grid differences and ships positions, coordinating 2 Lynx's to join and attack or search as a pair is often a lengthy difficult process. Lynx operational results were best achieved individually using only own ship Lynx procedures.

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- d. Ability of ECM equipment - many hours were spent unsuccessfully searching for F/W aircraft radar on Orange Crop. The equipment's ability has still to be fully assessed. Op COMORATE produced doubts as to the extent of its ability.
- e. Lynx role as Exocet Dodger - Prior to jammer introduction, using the helo proved interesting and worrying (!)

#### 4. SUMMARY

Overall, the operational employment of COV LYNX was well controlled, efficient and effective. The initial problems were inevitable but could possibly have been avoided by the addition of a Lynx observer on the Flag Ship.

Many lessons were learnt with un-tried equipment such as Sea Skua and ECM and employment was adjusted well during the Operation as experience grew.

With ships regularly detaching on "special tasks", it became important for individual units to determine their own employment. The necessity to remain flexible and use one's own initiative were vital in all tasking.

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Annex II to  
23C/10/CCV/1  
dated 13 July 82

PEACETIME RULES/OPERATIONAL REALITY

1. It is considered that urgent revision of training programmes and techniques in the following areas is required:-
  - a. Operational heights and flight profiles
  - b. Operations with realistic silent comms policies
  - c. Length of sorties to prepare crews for operational flying
  - d. More emphasis must be placed on 'gunship role' - efficiency in GPMG/LMG firing must be maintained
2. The recommended alert states, alert times and sortie lengths of Lynx for peacetime conditions are not suitable for operational situations and thus require revising.
3. Lynx colour schemes and flight deck markings are not conducive to wartime situations.
4. Errors in Lynx tasking and a general lack of knowledge of Lynx limitations and capabilities in EX BRINGTRAIN and Operation COMBATW were occasionally apparent. This situation can be avoided if all major exercises and operations obtain the services of a Lynx observer for that period. It is suggested that Lynx squadrons be tasked to provide from HQ an observer/or pilot to supplement Flag Staff for the duration of all exercises.
5. The major difference between peacetime and op reality concerns the immense difference in personal attitudes and stamina.

CCV FLT's ability to work far beyond peacetime limits in a wartime situation was remarkable. This frame of mind can obviously never be simulated in peacetime.

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