

I-013 was from the second batch of Mirage IIIEAs, delivered to Argentina in 1979/80, (I-013 to I-019), and was 'wired' to carry a centre-line mounted Matra R-530 AAM and a pair of Matra R-550 *Magic* AAMs (illustrated) on the outer wing hard points on specially designed 'cranked' pylons. A pair of 1700 litre drop tanks are shown on the inboard wing hardpoints. Note the natural metal area under the rear fuselage.



IAI Dagger, C-430 of *Grupo 6 de Caza, VI Brigada Aerea, Fuerza Aerea Argentina*, San Julian, May 1982, flown by *Capitan Raul Diaz*

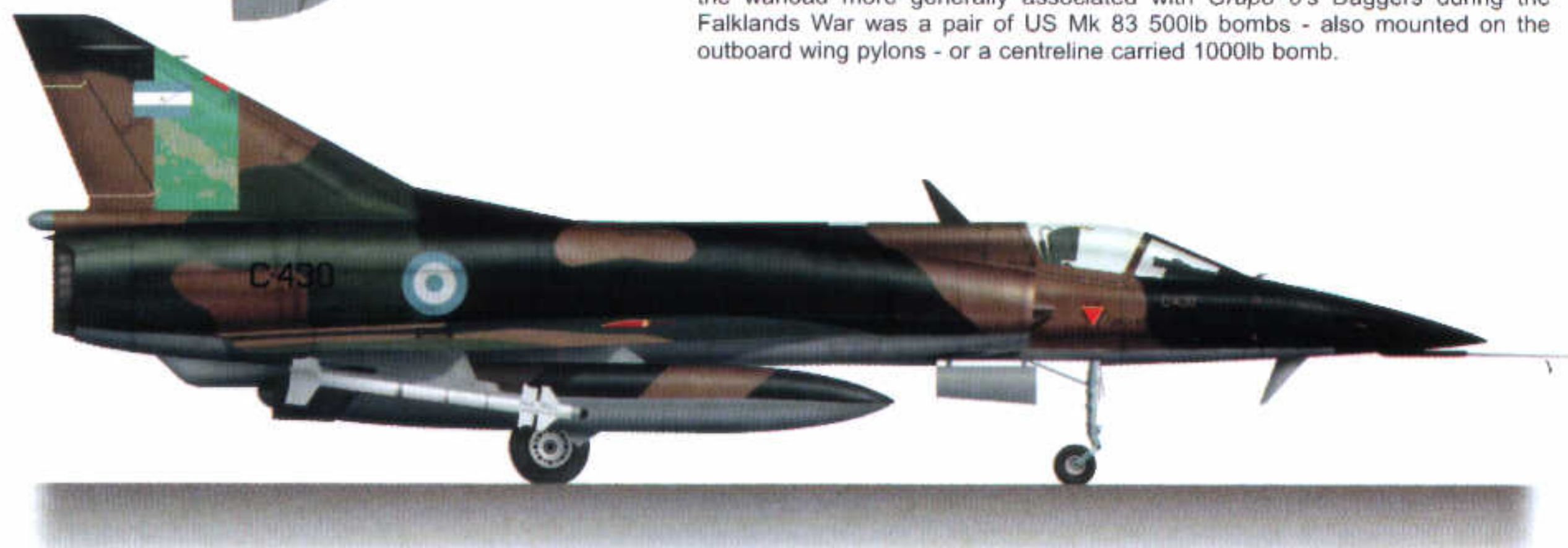
C-430, of 'Oro' Flight, was shot down over San Carlos Water on 24 May by an AIM-9L 'Sidewinder' fired by L/Cdr Andy Auld in Sea Harrier FRS.1 XZ457 of 800 NAS.



Capitan Diaz ejected successfully, and C-430 crashed in to the sea north of Pebble Island. Note the 'green' tactical i/d panel on either side of the fin - created by applying a thin coat of turquoise blue over the original yellow band.



Although illustrated with Matra R-550 *Magic* AAMs on the outboard wing pylons, the warload more generally associated with *Grupo 6*'s Daggers during the Falklands War was a pair of US Mk 83 500lb bombs - also mounted on the outboard wing pylons - or a centreline carried 1000lb bomb.



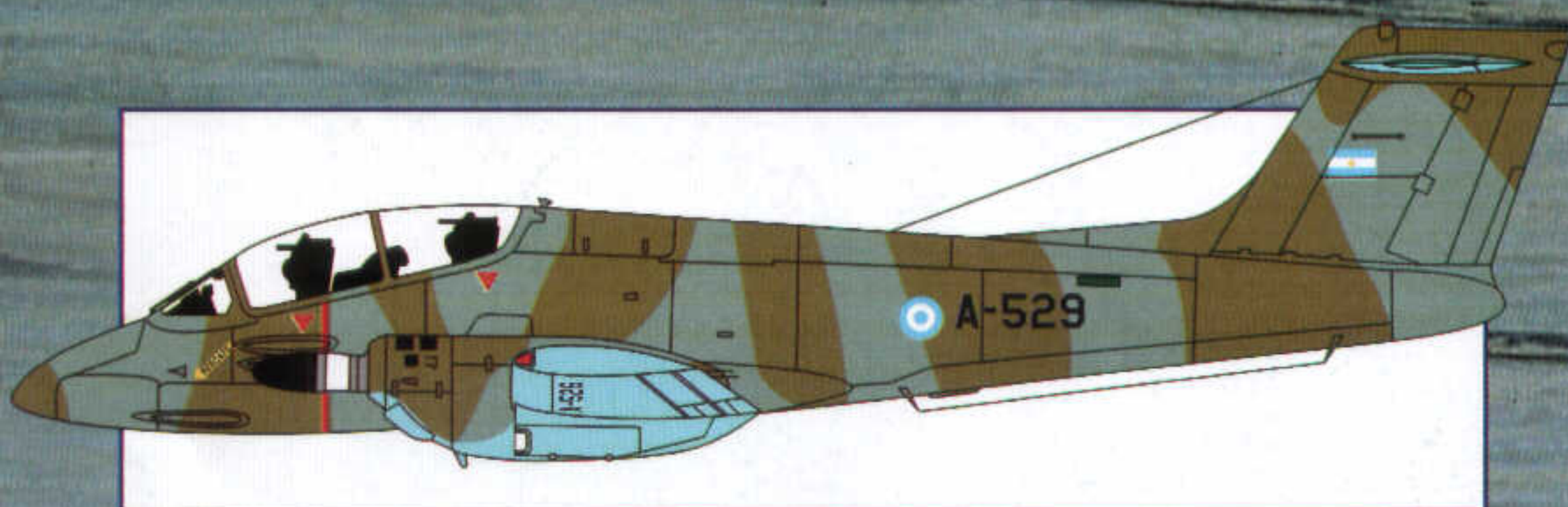
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20th Anniversary of the Falklands War

AIRCRAFT IN DETAIL

FALKLANDS AIR WAR

Glenn Sands commemorates the 20th anniversary of the Falklands War
by describing the air actions of April/May/June 1982

Too small for its own independence and supposedly too remote to warrant protection by the UK, the Falkland Islands had for many years been the topic of repeated threats from Argentina over sovereignty dating back to 1833, when a British sloop evicted Argentinian settlers and formally claimed the islands for themselves. Discussions were held through the years, but despite a resolution at the United Nations in 1965 reminding members of a pledge to end colonialism, little progress was made.

A military government took power in Argentina in 1976, and the following year the British sent a Naval Task Force to the South Atlantic following intelligence reports that an occupation of the South Georgia dependency seemed imminent. The 'invasion' however, was to be five years later, with the landing of demolition workers on the island from the Argentinian fleet transport *Bahia Buen Suceso* on 19 March 1982. The task of

the workers was to dismantle the derelict whaling station. Four days later the polar research vessel *Bahia Paraíso* was diverted from routine tasks to support the South Georgia civilians.

The first tangible British response was to land a small observation post on South Georgia from the ice patrol vessel *HMS Endurance* on 23 March and the landing of a Royal Marine detachment eight days later. From 25 April, nuclear submarines were dispatched to the South Atlantic. However, for the Argentines the decision to invade the Falklands had already been taken on 23 March, in Buenos Aires, and five days later Argentinian Task Group 40 (landing force) and Task Group 20 (covering force) sailed from mainland ports bound for invasion as part of 'Operation Rosario'.

Invasion

At 0430hrs on 2 April 1982, 150 men of the *Buzo Tactico*, (Argentine Special

Forces), landed by helicopter at Mullet Creek, a small inlet some three miles to the south-west of the Falklands' capital Port Stanley. Within hours several thousand troops, including Special Forces and Marines, were ashore at Port Stanley, from the carrier *Venticinco de Mayo*, two British-designed Type 42 destroyers and a submarine, whilst C-130 Hercules transports and a number of helicopters unloaded other units to occupy the small airfield nearby.

After a three-hour battle with the detachment of Royal Marines, who in the process shot down an Argentine helicopter, damaged another and put an anti-tank missile through the hull of one of the corvettes, the town was overrun and a build-up of Argentine forces in the islands began.

By this stage, numerous *Fuerza Aérea Argentina* (FAA) aircraft were being rapidly deployed at airstrips that were dotted throughout the islands. Amongst the first

Heading: The Falklands War can justifiably be claimed as the 'Sea Harrier's War' as it totally vindicated the effectiveness of the type and confounded its critics with its outstanding 28-to-0 'kill' ratio. These two Sea Harrier FRS.1s, XZ493/001 and XZ451/006 of 801 Sqn, pictured shortly after the end of the war, illustrate the rapid re-application of squadron markings, in this case the unit's trident on the fin of XZ451, and the ROYAL NAVY legend. Note the retention of the gloss overall Extra Dark Sea Grey 'wartime' scheme and AIM-9L Sidewinders. (All photographs, unless otherwise credited, Glenn Sands Collection)

Left: At the start of hostilities the *Fuerza Aérea Argentina* had two C-130Es, five C-130Hs and two KC-130Hs on strength, based at El Palomar, all of which were instrumental in consolidating the air bridge and ferrying the continuous supplies for the occupation forces to the Falkland Islands. (IWM)



to arrive amongst the *Comando Aviación Naval Argentina* (Argentine Naval Aviation Command) air elements were Aermacchi MB-339As and MB-326GBs of the 1 *Escuadrilla de Ataque* (1 EdeA), T-34C-1 Mentors of 4 *Escuadrilla de Ataque* (4 EdeA). In addition *Comando Aviación del Ejército's* (Army Aviation Command) CAB 601, arrived with a host of Augusta A109A Hirundos, UH-1H Iroquois, Pumas and two Chinooks. These aircraft were distributed amongst the three airstrips at Port Stanley, Goose Green and Pebble Island.

Unfortunately for the Argentines none of the airfields were able to operate fast-jets such as the Mirage IIIEAs, Super Etendards and Daggers; their missions would involve an arduous flight from mainland bases such as Rio Grande.

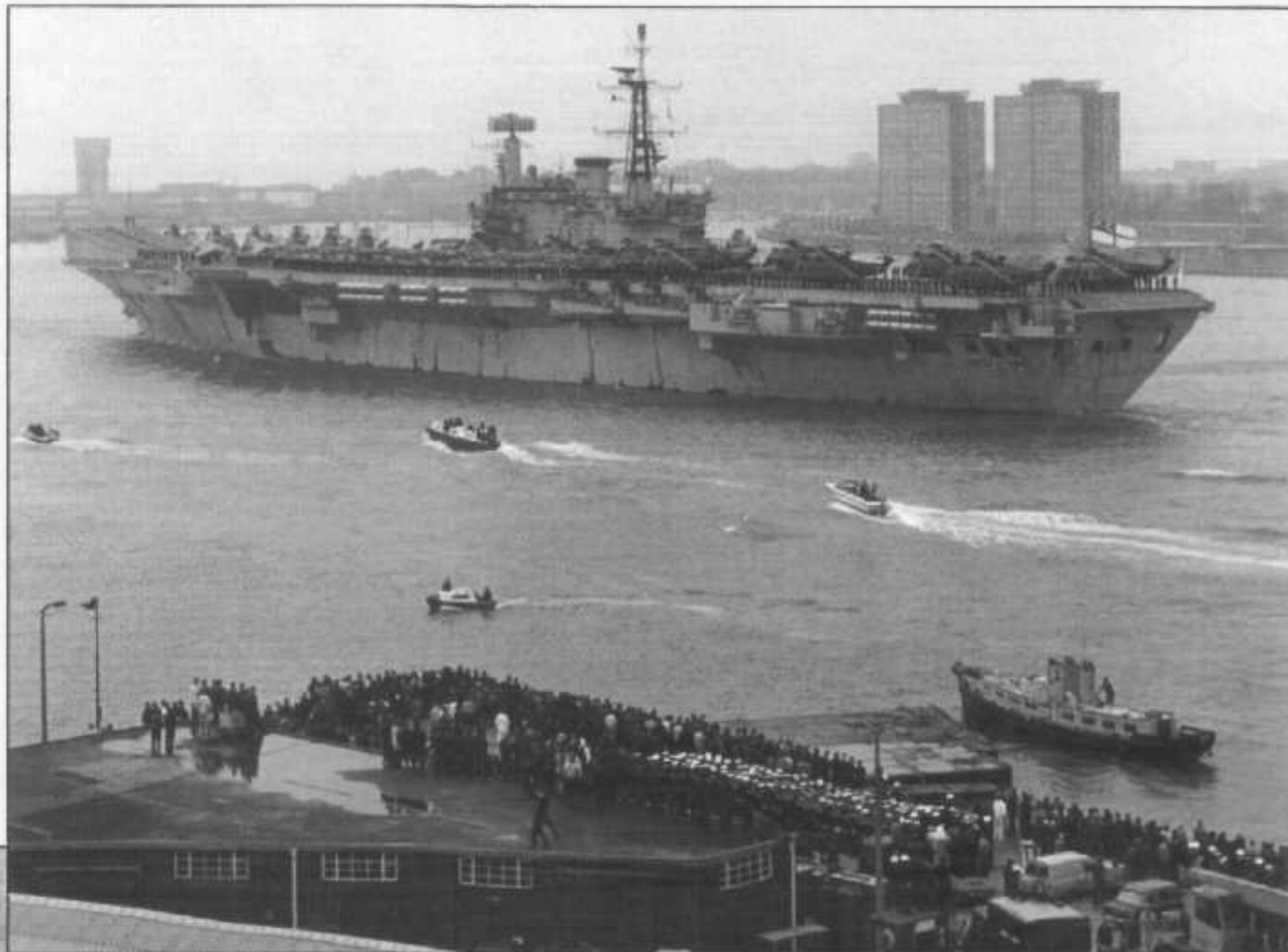
Throughout the early hours of the invasion Argentine Air Force C-130E/H/KC-130Hs of *Grupo 1 De Transporte Aéreo Escudron I* delivered supplies from their bases at Comodoro Rivadavia and Rio Gallegos on the mainland. In addition the C-130s were to serve as long-range reconnaissance assets, and provide in flight refuelling to Super Etendards later in the war.

Despite warnings by her own Intelligence Agency, the British Government under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, was caught by surprise, and immediately ordered the assembly of a naval Task Force the following day - and 'Operation Corporate' was set in motion.

RNAS Culdrose, 820 Naval Air Squadron (NAS), (Sea King HAS.5s) and 826 NAS (Sea King HAS.5s) were rapidly assembled, the former embarking nine helicopters in *HMS Invincible*, the latter a similar number in *HMS Hermes*. Two extra aircraft from 706 Training Squadron would continue ferrying supplies to the task force until it was out of range, (their sonar equipment having been removed in the process to allow for a greater load); the squadron then joined with 771 NAS to re-commission as 825 NAS (Sea King HAS.2/2A), eight of the squadron's aircraft being stowed in the container

ship *Atlantic Causeway* and two aboard the liner/troopship *Queen Elizabeth II* which was to follow the Task Force. The helicopters of 'A' Flight, 824 NAS (Sea King HAS.2As), embarked in Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) *Olmeda*, 'F' Flight in Fort Austin at Gibraltar, and 'C' and 'G' Flights in Fort Grange.

Perhaps the greatest activity within the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) squadrons was at RNAS Yeovilton as twenty BAe Sea Harrier FRS.1s of 801 and 899 NASs, (out of the total Royal Naval inventory of thirty-three aircraft), were made ready for embarkation in *Hermes* and *Invincible*.



Above; *HMS Hermes* leaving Portsmouth harbour on 5 April, waved on by what was dubbed at the time as 'the entire population of Southern England'. Aboard the crammed flight deck can be seen the Sea Harrier FRS.1s of 800 NAS and Sea Kings of 826 NAS.



Left: *HMS Invincible* leaving Portsmouth harbour on 6 April, again crowded with aircraft and stores. Prior to the Falklands crisis, she had been scheduled to sail to Australia for a 'flag waving' exercise.

Below: Still wearing its peacetime colours, Sea Harrier FRS.1, XZ460, 126/H aboard *HMS Hermes* whilst in Portsmouth dockyard. At the time the ship's bridge was still clad in scaffolding, which had to be hurriedly removed as the ship prepared to sail.

Efforts were launched to settle the dispute through diplomatic channels, to persuade the Argentines to withdraw their occupying forces. A peaceful settlement to the outcome was placed in the hands of President Ronald Reagan's Secretary of State, Alexander Haig. Keenly aware to resolve the situation peacefully, Secretary Haig clocked up some 26,000 miles flying between Washington, London and Buenos Aires. But he did make it clear to Argentine President Galtieri, that if a peaceful solution could not be reached, America would support Britain not only politically, but also provide logistical assistance if requested to do so.

Whilst a political solution to the crisis continued to remain a faint hope, preparations of the Task Force reached a feverish pitch throughout the UK. At





Left: An RAF Chinook delivers urgently needed supplies to *HMS Hermes* that arrived too late to be loaded in port. In the background can be seen three of No 826 Squadron's Sea Kings practising air movements around the ship. Note that the Sea Harriers in the foreground, (including XZ492, 123/H), are still in their peacetime colours.

Below: A Sea King from 846 NAS transfers stores from Ascension to the Task Force. Such was the urgency of the fleet departing, that essential stores were still being parachuted to the fleet as it was sailing to South Georgia.



Having never been tested in combat the deployment of the Sea Harrier FRS.1s would be watched with significant interest. Later as the aircraft made their way south aboard *Hermes* and *Invincible*, the brightly coloured peacetime squadron markings were obliterated giving the machines a more warlike appearance.

Soon afterwards, 809 NAS was re-commissioned equipped with most of the remaining Sea Harriers within the Royal Navy, these being planned to embark aboard the new carrier *HMS Illustrious*, which was then being speeded through its final commissioning processes and prepared for service in the South Atlantic.

On the small force of twenty Sea Harrier FRS.1s would be placed the responsibility of air defence of the fleet from possible attack by a land-based air force known to be at least 200-aircraft strong. Such responsibility was not lost on the pilots; in addition many senior commanders amongst the Task Force were still unaware of the capabilities of the Sea Harriers, something that was to be a continual source of frustration early in the war.

The fighting elements of the first Task Force section, (TF.317), sailed from Portsmouth on 5 April. In fact there were to be two Naval components to the Task Force set to leave one day apart; the latter would comprise the submarine element and additional support vessels.

On 5 April, as the first flotilla of ships headed out to sea, intensive flying training started as the Sea Harrier pilots flew practice missions as soon as the ships had entered the English Channel.

The second component of the Task Force, (TF.324) included *HMS Fearless*, which had 846 NAS (Sea King HC.4s) embarked, and departed with *RFA*

Olmeda, and two frigates to provide escort and three support ships and four Landing Ships Logistic (LSLs). The requisitioned cruise liner *Canberra* sailed from Southampton on 9 April, with 2,000 troops of 40 and 42 Commando and 3 Para aboard, which were to support any ground invasion of the islands.

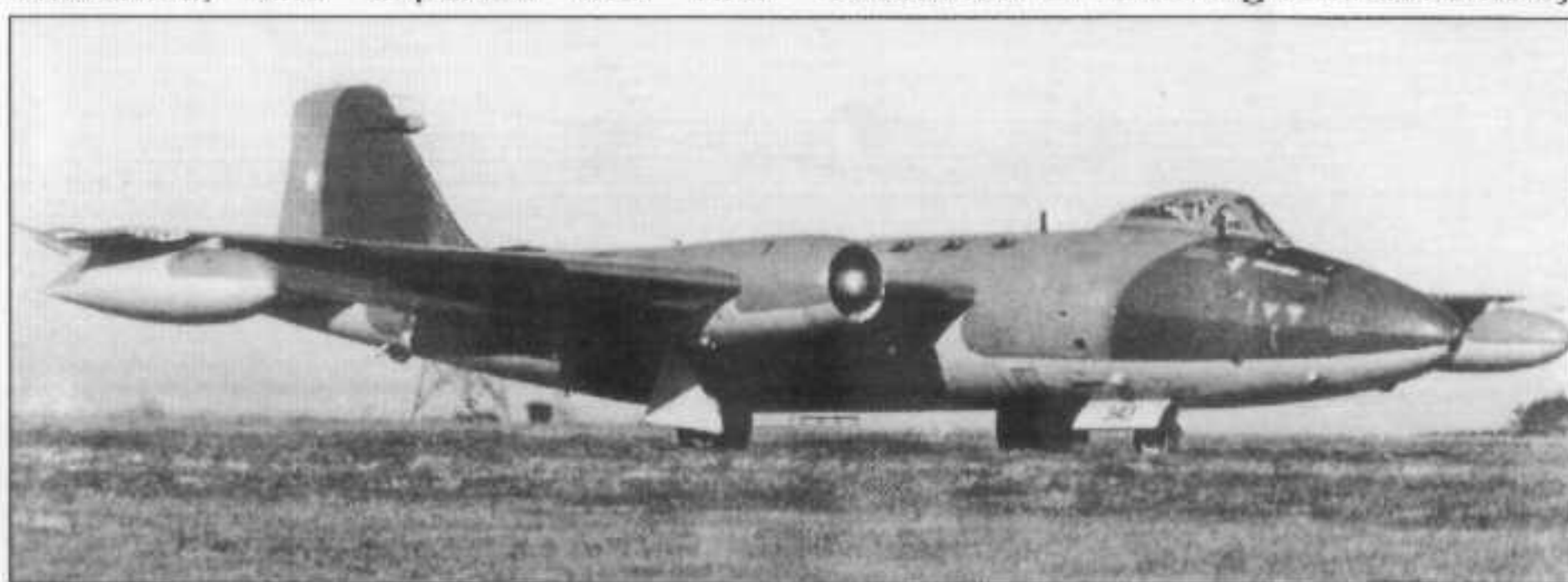
As the fleet prepared itself within British waters, the small British island outpost, Ascension Island, 4,000 miles to the south, at the US-administered Wideawake Air Base, made preparations to create a British staging and supply facility with RAF C-130 Hercules, which had been the first armed service to respond to the crisis, having previously left RAF Lyneham, 'quietly' late on 1 April, for Gibraltar then onwards to Ascension.

With them they had brought urgent supplies for the Royal Navy at Gibraltar, and even more significant, air traffic controllers with the necessary equipment to expand Ascension's Wideawake Air Base in to a round-the-clock staging post. Before the end of the month the first of a number of Victor K.Mk 2s of 50 and 55 Squadrons had arrived at Gibraltar and Wideawake in anticipation of the substantial air refuelling commitments by

aircraft en route for the South Atlantic. A further RAF detachment to Ascension was made on 6 April, when two Nimrod MR.1s of No.42 Sqn arrived to provide maritime reconnaissance cover for the Task Force.

On 7 April, Britain declared a 200-mile Maritime Exclusion Zone (MEZ) around the Falklands, to become effective from 0400hrs GMT on 12 April. Whilst the world watched the Task Force, clandestine preparations were also taking place within the British forces. Some time shortly after 10 April, it is believed that an RAF Canberra PR.9 belonging to 39 Sqn began operating from Punta Arenas in Chile, having been given *Fuerza Aérea de Chile* (FAC) markings whilst staging through Belize. It is also widely reported that a single Nimrod MR.1 belonging to 51 Sqn operated from the same base. At the time, civilian flights operating from the airport, which is opposite the military installations, were instructed to ensure that all passengers had their window blinds lowered during taxiing and take-off.

To date no firm reports exist on these RAF operations although witnesses confirm that a black-painted 'Comet like aircraft' was located at the airfield throughout April and May. Whether pure speculation or fact, it is widely known that RAF 'assets' were in Chile throughout the crisis, and following the ending of the war a sizeable number of



Left: Mystery Canberra PR.9! Although in RAF service this example is devoid of all squadron markings, and rumours still persist that an RAF detachment flew missions from Chile during the conflict to monitor Argentine air movements on the mainland.

Hawker Hunters, then being withdrawn from RAF service, and spares, were 'sold' to Chile. Something of a coincidence.

The British and Gibraltar-based ships of the Task Force began assembling at Ascension from 10 April, whilst at the same time the cruise liner *Uganda* was requisitioned to serve as a hospital ship.

Preparations for war

Amongst the squadrons all markings were removed or painted over, at the time with little consistency, amongst the fleet. For some ships the stay at Ascension was to be a short one. The destroyer *HMS Antrim*, the frigate *HMS Plymouth* and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) *Tidespring* tanker collected equipment and a small force, comprising M Coy. 42 Commando, D Squadron 22 Special Air Service (SAS) and a Special Boat Squadron (SBS) detachment. Also embarked were a Wessex HAS.3 (XP142) of 737 NAS (*HMS Antrim*), two Wessex HU.5s of 'C' Flight 845 NAS (RFA *Tidespring*) and a Wasp HAS.1 of 829 NAS (*HMS Plymouth*). As TF.317, they were ready to rendezvous with *Endurance*, which fortunately had been in close proximity to the islands at the start of the Argentine invasion, in the South Atlantic, and had already undertaken a number of clandestine missions. She would now support the Task Force on 12 April, for 'Operation Paraquat', the re-taking of South Georgia; the first in an overall staged assault of the islands.

The Opposition

Whilst morale within the Task Force was extremely high, for the aircrews who were all too aware of their limited numbers and the extreme conditions that they would be operating under, the tension was hard to conceal. Amongst the Sea Harrier pilots serving with 801 Sqn aboard *Invincible* was Lieutenant Alan Curtis, who had previously flown A-4 Skyhawks with the RNZAF. His insight into the capabilities of just one of the fast jet types operated by the Argentines was food for thought for many Sea Harrier pilots. Often the intelligence data that the pilots required on the fighting capabilities of the aircraft they would be engaging in combat was hindered by bureaucratic bungling and many aircrews had to rely on editions of Janes 'All the World's Aircraft' for information!

For Britain, the *Fuerza Aérea Argentina* (Argentine Air Force) was an unknown element. Having undergone a limited expansion in the latter half of the 1970s, the nation had proved its critics wrong and introduced its own indigenous close-support aircraft, the FMA IA 58 Pucará, and accomplished a limited success with exporting the type.

By 1981, two squadrons of *Grupo 3 de Ataque*, *III Brigada Aérea*, (3rd Air

Brigade), each with about thirty-five aircraft, were deployed at Reconquista in the north of the country, offering a lethal ground attack capability. During the early hours of the Argentine invasion there was some doubt as to whether these aircraft would be effective in wartime conditions and their deployment to the airstrips at Goose Green, Port Stanley and Pebble Island was delayed for a number of hours. Eventually Pucará from *Grupo 3* were deployed.

The Argentine force's fast jet element comprised some sixty-five McDonnell Douglas A-4B and A-4C Skyhawks of *I Escuadron de Caza Bombardero, Grupo 4 de Caza*, (*IV Brigada Aérea*) based at El Pumerillo, and *IV and V Escuadrones de Caza Bombardero, Grupo 5*, (*V Brigada Aérea*), located at General Pringle Air Base. The *Grupo 4* A-4Cs were equipped with the Ferranti D126R Isis weapon-aiming system, allowing for low level strikes and automatic bomb release. In addition, about eight A-4Q Skyhawks of the *Comando de Aviación Naval Argentina* (CANA), *3 Escuadron de Ataque* were available for embarkation aboard the carrier *Veinticinco de Mayo* from the naval air base at Comandante Espora. At the time, the British Task Force was unaware that the Argentine aircraft carrier had returned to port with mechanical problems and the search for its location was of major concern to the Task Force.

For the interception, (and long-range air combat), role the Argentines possessed a squadron of Dassault Mirage IIIEA supersonic fighters of *I Escuadron de Caza* of *Grupo 8*, *VIII Brigada Aérea* and two of Israeli-built IAI Dagger fighters, with *Grupo 6*, *VI Brigada Aérea*; these latter aircraft also being

deployed for air defence of Buenos Aires.

In addition to the fast jets, eight English Electric Canberra B.Mk 62s and two T.64s constituted the *I Escuadron de Bombardero, Grupo 2*, *II Brigada Aérea*, based normally at General Urquiza, Air Base. Additional ground attack elements comprised Aermacchi MB-339As and MB-326GBs of *1 Escuadrilla de Ataque* and T-34C-1 Mentors of *4 Escuadrilla de Ataque*. There were also fairly substantial transport and helicopter fleets, including nine Lockheed C-130E, C-130H and KC-130H Hercules, around twenty DINFIA IA 50 Guaraní IIs, (some of which had been converted for reconnaissance work), and about 95 helicopters between the three services, comprising Bell 212s, Boeing CH-47C Chinooks, and Aérospatiale Pumas. In addition to these aircraft, requests could be made of the part-commercial/para-military *Lineas Aéreas del Estado* which operated services between remote regions including the Falkland Islands with some twenty-one DHC Twin Otters and Fokker F-27 Friendships and Fellowships.

By the outbreak of hostilities the Argentines had within their inventory some 241 front-line aircraft and 174 on second-line duties of which, on 1981 serviceability figures, 161 and 113 respectively could be regarded as combat or operations-ready in April 1982.

Relatively little was known about their modern weaponry. There had been numerous intelligence reports of aircraft and arms purchases in the USA and within Europe and undisclosed deals with a host of Middle East nations, but many of these had been abandoned as a result of financial problems. It had been disclosed that five, possibly more,



Right: The *Fuerza Aérea Argentina* operated two variants of the ubiquitous Skyhawk - the A-4B (top) which equipped the two *Esuadrones* of *Grupo 5*, and the slightly improved A-4C (bottom) which equipped one *Esuadron* of *Grupo 4*.

Top right: Of the other major aircraft employed by the *Fuerza Aérea Argentina*, the IAI Dagger, ostensibly an air-to-air fighter, was also employed in the attack role with some success although eleven of their number were lost in combat.

Lower right: The IA.58A Pucara was something of an unknown quantity prior to hostilities but in the event didn't prove quite as effective as it had been feared. *Grupo 3 de Ataque* lost all the aircraft it had deployed to the Falklands, either destroyed in combat - in the air or on the ground - or captured after the surrender.

Dassault Super Etendards, had recently been delivered, and were equipped with a similar number of AS.39 Exocet anti-ship missiles (ASM).

Of critical importance to the Task Force Captains was what aircraft were operating from the Islands' airstrips, so that radius of action for each aircraft could be calculated, and the fleet positioned just outside the threat zone of the navy and air force aircraft.

Experience was to prove that although the Argentine Army was largely composed of mediocre, conscripted and/or short-service personnel, the Air Force was a well-trained, courageous and professionally-motivated fighting force.

The major handicap for Argentines however, was that their air bases were situated in the northern half of the country, so for anticipated operations against the Falkland Islands the nearest airfields at Rio Gallegos, normally the base home of 1 *Escuadron Antartico* for operations in Antarctica, was activated for combat purposes, although its limited facilities were to hinder many fast jet sorties. Even this base still lay 400 miles from the disputed islands, and any strikes against the Royal Navy fleet would require air-to-air tanker support and leave little time for strikes against the islands themselves. If battle damaged, their was little prospect for the Argentine pilots of making home to the mainland.

Heading South

At Ascension, hurriedly stored supplies were reorganised on the assembling ships and additional equipment was flown in from Britain and the United States. Vickers VC-10 transports of 10 Sqn joined Lyneham's C-130s alongside a host of chartered civil aircraft in a constant airlift. Anti-submarine Sea King HAS.5s of 820 NAS served with Sea King HC.4s of 846 NAS and Wessex HU.5s of 845 NAS and the Ship's Flights' Wasps and Lynxs of 829 NAS and 815 NAS respectively in an uninterrupted job of VERTICAL-REPlishment (Vert-Rep) and cross-shipping. Equipment that had not arrived aboard the ships before they left Portsmouth or made the re-supply stop at Ascension, was parachuted from C-130s whilst on route.

South Georgia would provide the Royal Navy with a vital forward anchorage as well as to recover a number of English

Right: British Special Forces carrying their equipment to a waiting Wessex HU.5 aboard HMS Antrim prior to their ill-fated clandestine operation on Fortuna Glacier, South Georgia.



civilians stranded near one of its settlements.

The first stage in re-taking South Georgia was the insertion of Special Forces on Fortuna Glacier by a Wessex HAS.3 of 737 NAS and two Wessex HU.5s of 845 NAS on 21 April, but the weather conditions deteriorated to such an extent that the SAS Mountain Troop, under the command of Captain John Hamilton, radioed at 1100hrs the next day requesting an extraction. In quick succession the two Wessex HU.5s dispatched were lost when they crashed in 'white-out' conditions, fortunately without serious injury. It was left to Wessex HAS.3 (XP142) aboard *HMS Antrim*, and flown by L/Cdr Ian Stanley to

recover the stranded helicopter crews, civilians and the reconnaissance party, on a succession of highly dangerous flights. For his courage he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

During this time Victor K.2s of No 57 Sqn had flown at least three long range Maritime radar reconnaissance (MRR) sorties, the first, by a Victor (XL192) on the night of 20-21 April captained by S/Ldr Elliott. Despite their tanker role, a number of aircraft had been rapidly fitted with cameras in their noses. The aircraft flew over 7,000 miles conducting a 150 square mile search in a record breaking 14 hours 15 minutes sortie. The flight was supported by four Victor K.2 tankers in either direction. The flight provided



Right: The *Santa Fe* laying damaged in the water at Grytvyken's Whaling berth at South Georgia, having been subjected to machine-gun and rocket attack by Wasp helicopters from *HMS Endurance*, and *HMS Plymouth*, and the Lynx from *HMS Brilliant*, which had been in the area.

valuable intelligence data on the Argentines positions safe operating areas for the fleet.

On the 23 April, the Argentine submarine *Santa Fé* was detected in the vicinity, and *HMS Brilliant* now part of TF.317, brought with her two Lynx HAS.2s. The submarine *HMS Conqueror* was also known to be operating in the area on intelligence gathering.

A second contact with *Santa Fé* was made by Antrim's Wessex HAS.3, (XP142 of Fortuna Glacier fame), which dropped depth charges near the vessel. Damaged, the submarine returned to Grytvyken but en route was subjected to a torpedo attack by *Brilliant's* Lynx and, followed up with several AS.12 ASM attacks by Wasp HAS.1s from *Plymouth* and *Endurance*. The now disabled submarine was beached alongside the jetty.

In order to retain the element of surprise by the attack, it was decided to launch an invasion of South Georgia at extremely short notice. Although the Royal Marine components were aboard *Tidespring*, some 200 miles away, a Naval Gunfire Support (NGS) officer was flown to a suitable observation post on the island in advance of the bombardment. He was accompanied by a thirty strong SAS unit. A 235-round bombardment, which bracketed the Argentine positions, and with more British troops landing from *Endurance* and *Plymouth*, the Argentine garrison surrendered without a fight at 1715hrs. The Royal Navy now had established its forward anchorage.

Secretary Haig continued with his shuttle diplomacy, although covert US support for the British at the time was threatening to destroy President Reagan administration's political interests in Latin America.

The main Task Force left Ascension Island on 18 April with the following force to meet the leading elements as soon as possible, but by the 16 April, Canberra and her fleet had still not reached Ascension, and was carrying critical supplies. As the main elements headed south a number of 'confrontations' occurred with shadowing Russian aircraft and ships, although exact details have never been officially released or by intelligence sources from either side.

Throughout their journey south, the Task Force had been subjected to close scrutiny by Soviet Navy AGI, (Auxiliary Vessel, Miscellaneous type, Intelligence), spying vessels, although a discrete

Right: A Soviet Tu-95 'Bear D', similar to the variants that shadowed the Task Force and, rumoured to have been supplied targeting information to the Super Etendards of 2 Escuadrilla de Caza y Ataque. This encounter was some months after the war but was a typical scene on the journey south, in April 1982.



distance had been maintained throughout. Such observations for the Russians would provide a windfall of data on the extent of Britain's war emergency availability of merchant-men. In addition the tactics and radio frequencies of the Royal Navy's wartime capability could also be observed and monitored.

However, the Soviet Union's determination to observe the Task Force on some occasions resulted in a number of maritime violations. What has never been officially released is the loss of one of its submarines; the exact cause of the loss has never been confirmed by either the Soviet Navy or Royal Navy.

It was whilst sailing from Ascension that a helicopter aboard *Hermes* reported first sighting a periscope, while at the same time the *Canberra* was being shadowed by AGIs. Prior to the South Georgia attack the location and extent of the Argentine's sub-surface fleet was unknown, although the British were aware that the Argentine Navy had at least two submarines in service. With the Task Force placed on full 'war alert' the 'unknown' submarine, upon its detection, was attacked by helicopters from the *Hermes*, and is regarded to have been sunk.

Post-war records now indicate that rather than an Argentine submarine it was more than likely Russian, which had chosen to ignore international warnings. As can be expected neither side confirms or denies the incident, but it was not to be

the last time that Russia would become covertly involved in the Falklands Conflict!

By this stage a military option seemed the only likely outcome, after a month of diplomatic shuttling and with the captured Argentine garrison from South Georgia now aboard *Tidespring*, the Argentine Government adopted a hardened posture against Britain and rejected Secretary Haig's final solution on 29 April. President Reagan admitted that the American proposals had failed and now openly pledged support for the British one day later. A consequence of this, and with war inevitable, was that the MEZ now became a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ).

Whilst the progress of the Task Force towards the islands and their arrival date could never be disguised to the world, British Task Force Commander, Rear Admiral John 'Sandy' Woodward, was keen to retain the element of tactical surprise, which would include concealing the number of vessels and air assets within his command for as long as possible. However, on 21 April, the Task Force had already been detected by an Argentine Boeing 707 belonging to *Grupo 1 De Transporte Aéreo Escuadrón II*.

A number of reconnaissance flights, (dubbed 'burglar flights' by sailors), were made against the fleet and one 707, TC-91, has the distinction of being the first Argentine aircraft to be intercepted by a Royal Navy Sea Harrier FRS.1 (XZ460) flown by Lt Simon Hargreaves on 21 April.



Right: One of three Boeing 707s which served with *Grupo 1 de Transporte Aereo Escuadron II*, during the war. Intelligence gathering and monitoring of the Task Force's progress south were their key rôles. This Boeing 707, TC-93, flew into Stansted on 24 March 1982, to collect unspecified 'urgent supplies'. One can only guess what the aircraft left with and what the real purpose of its arrival was!

Both pilots were under instructions not to make any aggressive moves that might provoke an already tense situation, and simply photographed each other's aircraft.

One day later, another 707 was intercepted 60 miles from the Task Force. On this occasion *Invincible* launched three Sea Harriers, flown by L/Cdr John Eyton-Jones, L/Cdr Mike Broadwater and F/Lt Paul Barton. The three aircraft 'boxed' the 707 in an exercise designed to impress upon the Argentine crews their vulnerability. Unable to fire upon what was then deemed to the world as a civilian aircraft, despite its provocative action, the frustration of the pilots was released somewhat when through diplomatic channels a warning was issued that any further 707 flights would be fired upon; with immediate effect, (the message was delivered to Swiss intermediaries on the April 23).

With the threat of war now inevitable a third operational Sea Harrier squadron, 809 NAS, was formed at Yeovilton from developmental/test and reserve aircraft, and the first six machines made the long flight to Ascension via Banjul, Gambia, which involved no fewer than 14 air refuellings each. At Ascension they were loaded aboard *Atlantic Conveyor* on 5 May, along with a number of helicopters and spares. The Sea Harriers of 800 NAS and 801 NAS were by this time flying regular Combat Air Patrols (CAPs) over the Task Force, which was now fully prepared and ready for action.

As mentioned earlier, Rear Admiral Woodward, was unable to maintain the cloak of secrecy over the Task Force but was able to recover the element of surprise by a series of classic expedients through the clever use of bad weather, the launching of feint attacks, or a limited dispersal of his forces to deliver minor simultaneous blows so as to scatter and confuse the Argentine defences. In the event, all three tactics were employed although the difficulty of forecasting the weather in the South Atlantic was to render air operations particularly hazardous for either side.

Hostilities begin

The war began in earnest on the morning of 1 May, when a Vulcan B.2 of 101 Sqn made a classic bombing raid from Ascension. However, Vulcans had already been active in the area, with a Vulcan



SR.Mk 2 maritime reconnaissance variant flying to Ascension, and carrying out at least one air-refuelled sortie to survey the approaches to South Georgia.

The first RAF 'Black Buck' raids saw Vulcan B.2 (XM607) flown by F/Lt Withers, after numerous air-to-air refuellings by Victor tankers, arrive over Port Stanley at 0430hrs. The aircraft carried out its bombing run at around 25,000ft, flying obliquely across the axis of the runway at 35 degrees, to have a better chance of striking the target with at least one of its bombs, and with the least likelihood of hitting the town of Port Stanley. To make the task more difficult the attack had to be made without accurate wind information and above the total cloud cover in the dark. No enemy opposition was encountered. Only one bomb hit the runway; the others caused damage to aircraft and installations. The Vulcan returned to Ascension having flown 8,000 miles requiring fifteen Victor sorties and eighteen in-flight refuellings to deliver twenty-one 1000lb bombs!

Whilst many regard the first 'Black Buck' and the following raids as perhaps not worthwhile in terms of the damage caused, it was the strategic implication that proved their worth. The raid was a huge shock to the Argentines; they simply weren't expecting it. It was a clear indication to Buenos Aires that Britain was prepared to put a lot of work into getting the islands back. Of vital importance was that many within the Argentine military believed that the mainland might now become a target

also, and a number of Mirage IIIEAs were held in reserve, reducing the threat to the Task Force somewhat.

To follow up the raid, from 0748hrs twelve Sea Harrier FRS.1s of 800 NAS took off from *Hermes* to attack Port Stanley again and strike the Argentine airfield at Goose Green. Nine aircraft bombed Port Stanley from three different directions, delivering a combination of 1000lb Direct-Action (DA) and Variable-Timed (VT) bombs and BL755 Cluster Bomb Units (CBU) by way of either toss bombing or conventional delivery methods. Little damage was done to the airfield, but the Argentines quickly adopted a ruse to mislead the British, whereby they created large 'mud-rings' on the runway surface to give the impression that the runway had indeed been badly damaged. The *Grupo 1 Transporte Aereo* C-130s were able to continue to use the airfield throughout the conflict, being able to take off and land across the mud ridges.

The attack on Goose Green's airfield, some 50 miles south-west of Port Stanley resulted in three Pucarás being put out of action for the duration of the war, and one pilot was killed as he waited to take off. All the Sea Harrier FRS.1s returned safely, the only damage being to F/Lt David Morgan's, (an RAF exchange pilot), whose aircraft was hit by a 20mm shell in the tail.

A quick evaluation of the attack by the Sea Harrier pilots showed that the practice of operating in pairs, (leader and wingman), was ideal, and although whilst at low level their exposure to intense



Right: Released by the MoD soon after the first 'Black Buck' raid and follow-up attacks by Sea Harriers, was this view showing the runway at Port Stanley with sixteen bomb craters - but only one near the runway itself.



Left: This 800 NAS FRS.1, XZ496/27, seen landing aboard *HMS Hermes* is armed with the improved AIM-9L Sidewinder - which created a deadly partnership with the Sea Harrier and had a profound effect on the tactics of the Argentine Air Force.

Below: Flight deck view of *HMS Hermes* showing a mix of Sea Harriers from 800 NAS, including XZ499/99 and ZA194/94, in the Medium Sea Grey/Barley Grey scheme and ZA193/93 (being manoeuvred for take-off) and XZ460/26 in the overall gloss Extra Dark Sea Grey scheme. The No 1 Sqn Harrier GR.3s interspersed amongst the Sea Harriers, are in the then standard 'wrap-around' Dark Green/Dark Sea Grey scheme. (MoD)

ground fire of all calibres up to 45mm had been considerable, the method of delivering bombs using visual references was considered adequate.

Following the first strike, all the Sea Harrier pilots adopted the practice of flying straight back to their ship from any direction; once back they transitioned to the hover no matter what the wind direction, and with the deck heaving up and down as much as 30ft, landings were made on any suitable deck space. Recovered aircraft would taxi forward and be lashed down immediately and refuelled.

By midday on 1 May, a naval bombardment of Argentine positions in Port Stanley had commenced by *HMS Glamorgan*, *HMS Alacrity* and *HMS Arrow*. In an effort to put the Argentine units off-guard, Task Force helicopters were conducting insertion operations around the island. Many within the Argentine command believed that an invasion was imminent.

After the initial first wave of British attacks, the Argentine Air Force had recovered by 1000hrs and proceeded to launch a number of strikes against British shipping in the area, in the mistaken belief that the British fleet was close inshore supporting the landings. Many attack missions were wasted, searching for the British fleet that simply wasn't there.

During one of these Argentine attacks, four Canberra B.62s of *Grupo 2 de Bombardeo*, escorted by A-4 Skyhawks of *Grupos 4* and *5* were detected. Top cover was provided by Mirages and Daggers of *Grupos 8* and *6*.



Such a large scale attack had not been anticipated by the Royal Navy, and there was some fears that if these were to continue there would be little to stop them due to the over-extended Sea Harrier force.

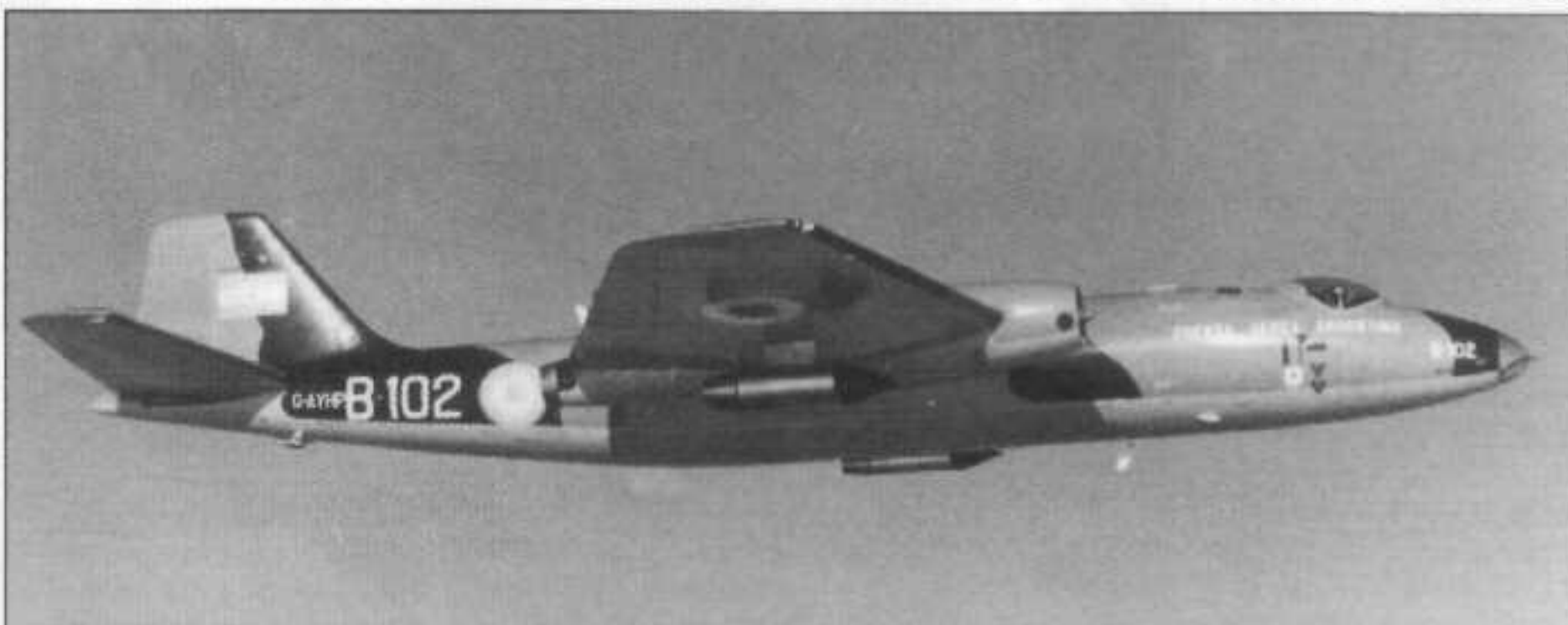
Upon interception of the Argentine raiders, some 50 miles from *Invincible*, Sea Harriers of 801 NAS flown by L/Cdrs Al Curtis (in XZ451) and Mike Broadwater (in ZA175) descended to low level and closed in on the enemy formation which was then flying at 100 feet above sea level. The *Grupo 2* bombers led by *Capitan* Alberto Baigorri were in fact on route to Port Stanley to seek and destroy enemy shipping, having received intelligence data from an orbiting SP-2H Neptune, not the Task Force which they were unaware of its location at the time.

L/Cdr Curtis fired an AIM-9L at the second Canberra, (B-110) flown by *Teniente* Eduardo de Ibanez. The Sidewinder exploded near one of the engines, setting the wing alight. A second missile was fired, but as Curtis did so Ibanez and his navigator ejected,

seconds before their bomber hit the sea. L/Cdr Broadwater fired both his Sidewinders and pieces were seen to fall from the other lead Canberra but it remained in the air, although badly damaged. By this time both Sea Harriers were short on fuel and returned to *Invincible*, the remaining Canberra limped to the naval airfield Trelew, which was to be the temporary home for *Grupo 2* during the conflict.

Later in the day there was intense early aerial jousting high above the islands, during which pilots from either side tested the other. *Grupo 8* was to lose two Mirage IIIEAs in quick succession to AIM-9L Sidewinders fired by 801 NAS, during these early engagements. During the day a flight of Daggers found and attacked the vessels bombarding Port Stanley and caused some damage. Although a Dagger from a separate attack was brought down by a Sea Harrier of 800 NAS, 801 NAS completed 'the triple' for the day, having claimed two Mirage IIIEAs from an engagement, downed by L/Cdrs Paul Barton (in XZ452) and Steve Thomas (in XZ453), and the downing of the *Grupo 2* Canberra. Post-war data shows that at least one of the Mirages was only damaged and was eventually brought down by Argentine ground fire as it tried to land at Port Stanley, possibly

Cont'd on page 300



Left: The Canberra B.62s of *Grupo 2 De Bombardeo* flew countless strikes against British ground installations early in the war, and were to pay heavily for their daring. This aircraft, B-102, deployed to Trelew and later Rio Gallegos, and was fortunate to survive the war.



Above: This A-4Q Skyhawk, 3-A-304, illustrates the typical wartime Light Gull Gray and White colours of 3 Escuadrilla de Caza y Ataque (3ECA). Later, some time after the conflict this particular Skyhawk received a temporary brown and green camouflage.

Below: Another view of 3-A-304 - this time in a hangar, probably at Rio Grande or Espora. Note the high gloss finish to the paintwork and the black 'flash' on the 450 gallon drop tanks.



Below: A survivor of the war, A-4Q, 3-A-305, probably photographed at Rio Grande immediately after hostilities had ceased. Note how the leading edge slats droop when the aircraft is stationary. (via Jorge Felix Nunez Padin)



Above: A pair of A-4Qs seen aboard *Veinticinco de Mayo* a few weeks prior to the invasion. The sole Argentine aircraft carrier was forced to return to port following engine problems and played no real part in the war. Skyhawk 3-A-309 in the foreground was damaged in a landing accident at Rio Grande on 23 May and played no further part in the war, although it was subsequently repaired.

Below: During the war a number of 'one-off' temporary schemes were tested in an effort to conceal the standard Gull Gray and White colours of the CANA Skyhawks over the dark Atlantic ocean. A-4Q Skyhawk, 3-A-302 is seen here wearing a temporary low visibility dark grey upper surface scheme.



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EDITORIAL COMMENT.....

20th Anniversary of the Falklands War

You will no doubt notice as you initially flick through the pages of this issue that all the modelling articles and the longer than usual Aircraft in Detail feature, are devoted to one topic - The Falklands War. It's always a bit of an editorial gamble to devote an entire issue to one particular topic, as it can have an adverse effect of disenfranchising certain sections of the readership, but in this instance I trust that once again you will bear with me, as the anniversary is an important one - at least to we Brits - and the variety and types of aircraft involved do cover quite a wide range of modelling options.

As many long time readers may remember, SAM originally covered the Falklands War in the December 1982 issue (Vol 5/3), 'War in the Falklands' by Paul Jackson, just a few months after the actual conflict, at which time much information was still to be released. Glenn Sands' excellent narrative in this issue will hopefully fill any gaps that there unavoidably were then. The late, and much missed, Mike Keep artwork, still in black and white in those days, concentrated on the British aircraft types used in the conflict, so we asked Jon Freeman if he would illustrate 'the other side of the coin', and concentrate on Argentinian aircraft types for this anniversary issue.

Although there will still be one final modelling instalment of the Falklands War coverage in the next issue, normal service will *almost* be returned, although it will have a *bit* of an American flavour, in an unadulterated attempt to curry some additional favour with our American readers, as we will have the August issue of SAM on sale at the IPMS-USA National Convention at Virginia Beach, 31 July to 3 August.

It will be my first IPMS-USA Nationals, and I am really looking forward to it. I cannot wait to meet American modellers *en masse* and it will offer an interesting comparison of how IPMS-USA run their Nationals to the IPMS(UK) Scale Modelworld show this coming November.



Neil Robinson
Managing Editor

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Right: *HMS Sheffield*, positions herself behind *RFA Tidespring* on the journey south. During the conflict she would be lost to an Exocet ASM fired by a Super Etendard of 2ECA.

Sheffield.

The warhead failed to explode, but in the ensuing fire, a result of catastrophic fuel leaks, twenty-one men died; the second Exocet failed to find its target. The crippled destroyer sank under tow six days later. The loss clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of the Task Force, which was denied early warning of impending air attacks during these initial clashes. It brought home to the British the folly of having prematurely discarded the naval AEW element of the Fleet Air Arm. The fact was that neither the *Hermes* or *Invincible*, an anti-submarine carrier, possessed the long-range radar that had been carried by the old *HMS Ark Royal*, nor were these carriers capable of embarking even a couple of Fairey Gannets, (even if they had been available), without reducing the number of Sea Harrier FRS.1s present. In an effort to provide early warning of inbound aircraft, the Royal Navy was forced to deploy destroyers and frigates as picket vessels without adequate anti-missile defences and it was whilst performing this exceedingly dangerous task that a number of vessels were to be attacked and sunk.

The Royal Navy was to suffer a further blow that day when Lt Nick Taylor in Sea Harrier FRS.1, XZ450, was hit by 35mm fire guided by an Argentine GADA601 Skyguard radar. His aircraft immediately fireballed, exploded, and hit the ground short of the airfield at Goose Green, where it disintegrated, killing Lt. Taylor.

By now winter was setting in over the South Atlantic, and although it was later judged to have been a relatively minor one for the area, the increasingly bad weather restricted air operations for much of the time; those that did occur were to prove hazardous, as on 6 May, when two 801 NAS Sea Harrier FRS.1s (XZ452) flown by L/Cdr J Eaton-Jones



and (XZ453) flown by Lt W Curtis from *Invincible* were lost whilst flying a CAP in bad weather. It was assumed that they collided in cloud. Their loss reduced the total force of Sea Harriers to seventeen aircraft.

Whilst air operations slowed during the bad weather, to the north the *Canberra* had left Ascension on 8 May, and from 11 May, extended Maritime Reconnaissance cover for the Task Force was provided by Nimrod MR.2Ps of 206 Squadron, which had been newly adapted for in-flight refuelling, following an accelerated test programme within the UK. This had been in response to repeated requests by Task Force captains for adequate warning of approaching enemy fighters.

Grupo 4 dispatched several A-4C Skyhawk sorties against warships on 9 May, but suffered its first losses when two aircraft crashed en route in bad weather. A Puma of *Compania de Aviación de Combate 601* was shot down by a Sea Dart fired from *HMS Coventry* over Choiseul Sound, and a UH-1H was seriously damaged at Moody Brook by naval gunfire.

It was not only aircraft that were to be on the receiving end of the Task Force squadrons. The intelligence gathering trawler *Narwal* was detected by Sea Harriers flown by 'Gordy' Batt (in XZ460) and Dave Morgan (in ZA191) who were returning from an aborted attack of Port Stanley's runway. Descending through cloud, permission to attack the vessel was granted and both Sea Harriers fired warning shots across its bow to bring the trawler to a stop. Failing to do so, both pilots dropped their bombs on the vessel although one missed and the other failed to explode upon hitting the trawler, but embedded itself in one of the galley ways. Two additional Sea Harriers arrived on scene and pumped an additional 400 rounds of 30mm cannon fire into the hull, eventually bringing the trawler to a stop! The vessel was boarded by an SBS team, which at the time the Argentine crew thought were a rescue party! The SBS found documents relating to the position of the British Task Force, so confirming its intelligence gathering role. One interesting point of this operation, was that it was to be the first time the SBS had stormed an enemy vessel from the air, and taken command.

On 11 May, *HMS Alacrity* made a daring strike into the confined waters of Falklands Sound and sank an Argentine supply vessel trying to break the TEZ.

The bombardment of Port Stanley continued although the ships were now subjected to almost continuous attacks by Argentine aircraft. On 12 May, *Glasgow* and *Brilliant* were on the receiving end of a ferocious strike by A-4Bs of Grupo 5. During the attacks *Glasgow* was effectively put out of action after being hit by a 500lb bomb which, fortunately failed to explode.

However, Argentine pilots had paid a high price, losing two aircraft to Seawolf

Left: The temporary closure of the forward operating strip at San Carlos caused two CAP Sea Harriers to divert to nearby *Fearless* and *Intrepid*; ZA177/77 of 809 NAS in the Medium Sea Grey/Barley Grey scheme, is seen about to land aboard *Intrepid* after an uneventful patrol (note both Sidewinders still present).



Having won the first round of engagements on 1 May, the Argentinians kept a healthy respect for the Sea Harrier/Sidewinder combination

Right opposite: Ready for another CAP, a Sea Harrier FRS.1 armed with AIM-9L Sidewinders awaits the 'go' signal. During the conflict the Argentinians were to christen the aircraft, the 'Black Death' due to their Extra Dark Sea Grey camouflage scheme and lethal capabilities in air combat.

Right lower: Awaiting their next mission, Sea Harrier FRS.1s and RAF Harrier GR.3s aboard *Hermes*. In the foreground are AIM-9L Sidewinders that were supplied by the United States and were to prove so effective in air combat. Initially there was an extensive customer waiting list for the missiles, but US Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger put the British at the head of the queue, just days before the start of the conflict.

Right bottom: Framed by a Sea Harrier FRS.1, the AIM-9L Sidewinder achieved an 80 percent 'kill' rate during the Falklands War and arrived just in time to replace the Royal Navy's elderly AIM-9G model, many of which had suffered with poor seeker heads. Post-war reports now indicate however, that the AIM-9L was never used in its true 'all aspect' capability, but its exceptional tracking at low level cannot be ignored.

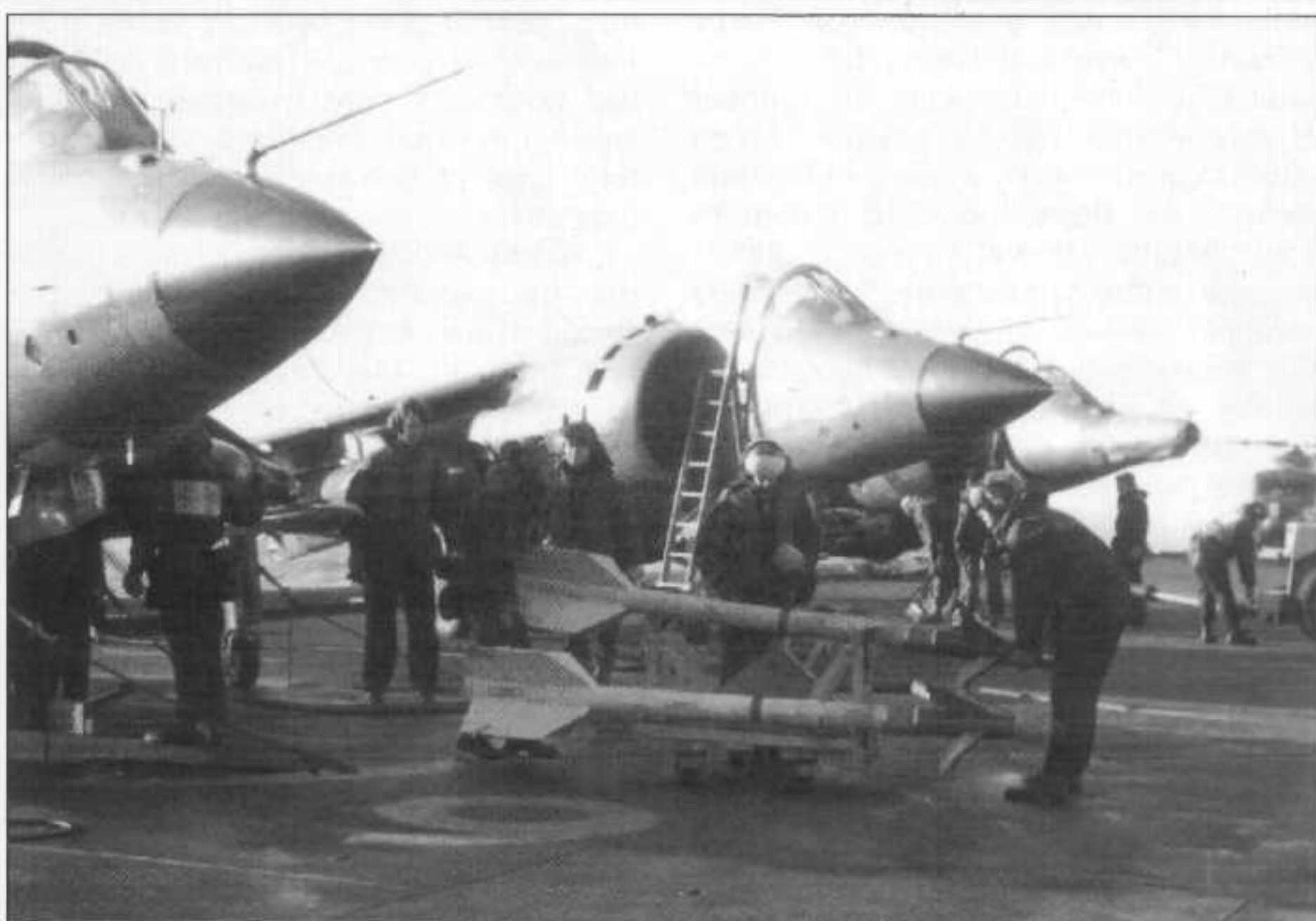
(anti-aircraft missile) AAMs fired from *Brilliant*, while a third Skyhawk was damaged, but was eventually brought down by Argentine 35mm AA fire. During these strikes a Sea King of 826 NAS was lost when it ditched following engine failure, having successfully avoided being fired upon.

It was an extraordinary feature of the Falklands operation that the inefficient dropping of Argentine iron bombs resulted in a number of miraculous escapes by British ships, at least five of which later returned home with similar scars from unexploded bombs; providentially the MoD refrained from emphasising this deficiency in the Argentine weapons. After a further short spell of bad weather air operations, which had seen the cancellation of 'Black Buck 3', due to adverse winds, were resumed on 14 May.

Later that day, SAS troops were inserted into Pebble Island by 846 NAS Sea Kings. Before dawn the following day the troopers attacked the airfield and damaged or destroyed six Pucarás of *Grupo 3*, four T-34C-1 Mentors of 4 *Escuadrilla* and one Skyvan (PA-12) which belonged to the Argentine Coast Guard. The SAS withdrew without loss. By now Argentine aircraft were not only being intercepted on every occasion they flew over the islands, but those on the ground were now subjected to daily naval gunfire and lightning strikes by SAS and SBS units.

Despite their success at Pebble Island the SAS suffered a tragic loss on 19 May, when in the course of transferring about thirty men between *Hermes* and *Intrepid*, Sea King HC.4 (ZA294) of 846 NAS was struck in the tail rotor by an albatross and crashed into the sea with the loss of 21 lives.

A further Sea King HC.4 was lost but in more clandestine role during the same period. ZA890 of 846 NAS was burnt by its





Left: With camouflaged landing craft in the foreground loaded with Royal Marines, *HMS Fearless* looks on over the stormy seas of San Carlos Water.

crew at Agua Fresca near Punta Arenas in Chile after a supposed one-way mission to insert Special Forces, rumoured to be tasked with sabotaging or reporting on enemy aircraft, probably the five Super Etendards at Rio Grande. It is known that some form of dispersal of the Super Etendards took place around 18 May, following the world-wide press reports of the incident. Additional evidence suggests the aircraft carriers of the Task Force, soon after this period, were known to have received around 20 minute warnings of approaching air attacks by means of SAS-manned radio equipment embarked in them. If there was a mainland Argentina-based SAS team, the unit was providing additional data to those SAS units that were now also operating concealed on East Falkland.

As expected, despite numerous SAS books published in recent years on the roles of SAS and SBS units, whether they operated on the Argentine mainland has never been confirmed or denied by either.

Re-taking the Falklands

The invasion was now set for Friday 21 May, at San Carlos. The softening up of Argentine installations was carried out by Harrier GR.3s of No 1 Sqn., which flew their first sorties against Goose Green, in the process destroying a fuel dump, before returning to Hermes without loss.

The main elements of Task Force entered the TEZ on 20 May, and after a re-distribution of troops, the first landings for 'Operation Sutton' were made at San Carlos by 2 Para just before dawn. The invasion force had moved into the protected San Carlos Water under cover of mist but the landings were soon

spotted by a reconnaissance Canberra, although they were not attacked at this stage. A Nimrod of 206 Sqn set off from Ascension in the early hours of 21 May, on yet another record-breaking sortie, covering 8,453 miles in an effort to monitor Argentine naval countermoves to the landings, and SAS and SBS units made diversionary attacks on the nearby Argentine garrisons at Goose Green and Darwin. The landings went smoothly but there was an urgency to establish an effective defensive missile umbrella and AAA positions ashore before the inevitable counter air strikes began.

Whilst the landings took place, Sea Harriers flew their CAPs, in the process surprising and attacking a helicopter concentration on Mount Kent, from where Argentine reinforcements could have been flown to the British beach head. In addition, a Puma and a CH-47C were destroyed by naval gunfire at 0800hrs. Soon after, F/Lt J Glover ejected from his Harrier GR.3 when he was shot down by a Blowpipe SAM whilst on an armed reconnaissance sortie over Port Howard. Unscathed, he was made a POW.

Near the beach-head, 3CBAS (Commando Brigade Air Squadron) lost two Gazelles in quick succession in support of a Sea King supply sortie; both pilots were killed, and the vulnerability of the Gazelle to small arms fire was quickly apparent, in the process causing a change in tactics.

With daylight approaching, the Argentine commander and Air Force units based on the islands as well as the mainland squadrons, were now all too aware that the skirmish phase of the war

was over and that a full land confrontation was soon to take place. From around 0900hrs a series of determined attacks by Argentine A-4 Skyhawks and Pucarás were made as Mirage IIIEAs sought to protect them from interception by Sea Harriers.

As men struggled to deploy their Rapier SAMs on the shoreline, the destroyers, frigates – and indeed any ship with so much as a machine-gun – put up an impressive barrage against the incoming raiders. Over the beach head, SAMs criss-crossed the sky in pursuit of the Skyhawks and Daggers, some of which had broken through the outer screen of Sea Harriers. One Pucará was shot down with a Stinger fired by an SAS NCO, much to his surprise! Shortly afterwards, a sole MB-339A attacked *Argonaut*, causing superficial damage.

Additional attacks from mainland-based squadrons followed at 1025hrs, by A-4Bs of *Grupo 5* and Daggers of *Grupo 6*. The aircraft came in undetected and disabled *Antrim* with a 1000lb bomb which failed to explode and struck *Ardent* which was hit and sunk a short time later. One Dagger crashed into the sea having been hit by a Seawolf from *Brilliant*.

Losses to the fleet were to be expected and could not be helped. One disadvantage that the Sea Harrier pilots faced was that they were only able to spend a short time over the beach head since the aircraft carriers had withdrawn well to the east, out of range of Exocet attack. Around midday, *Ardent* was subjected to attack this time by Pucarás of *Grupo 3*, one of which was destroyed over Lafonia by cannon fire from an 801 NAS Sea Harrier FRS.1.

The next strike came at 1300hrs again by A-4s of *Grupos 4* and *5*. The carriers had increased their CAPs, and although one aircraft caused some damage to *Ardent*, two were brought down at low level by AIM-9Ls fired by 800 NAS Sea Harriers. The third strike by mainland Argentine units was at 1435hrs as Daggers of *Grupo 6* darted in at low level. One was destroyed on its run-in by a Sea Harrier of 800 NAS; another further damaged, but *Ardent* was hit and her Lynx was written-off after losing its nose to a stray bomb. Fifteen minutes later a second Argentine flight was bounced by 801 NAS, and all three aircraft were destroyed by AIM-9Ls.

The Argentine Naval Aviation Command now joined the fray with a raid at 1510hrs with A-4Qs of *3 Escuadrilla*. Using retarded bombs, the Skyhawks again made for *Ardent*, which was fatally damaged and sank the following day. Two

Left: Sea King HAS.2A, XV697/45, was originally on the inventory of 826 NAS, but due to initial unserviceability problems, was later transferred to C Flight of 824 NAS, and is seen here crossing San Carlos water in-between air attacks. The weathered dullness of the overall blue-grey scheme is clearly visible.



Right: Members of 3 Commando Brigade, overflown by a Royal Navy Sea King HAS.5, prepare to leave San Carlos Bay in support of 45 Commando on route to Port Douglas.

A-4Q Skyhawks were shot down by 801 NAS, who also damaged the third which was later abandoned by the pilot after an abortive attempt to land at Port Stanley.

By day's end, the landings had placed some 2,500 Royal Marines and paratroopers ashore with scarcely a casualty, and the small garrison of Argentine troops abandoned their positions around San Carlos. For their efforts the Argentine Air Force and CANA had lost twelve combat aircraft and two helicopters, with four pilots killed, whilst British losses were one Harrier, three helicopters destroyed and two damaged.

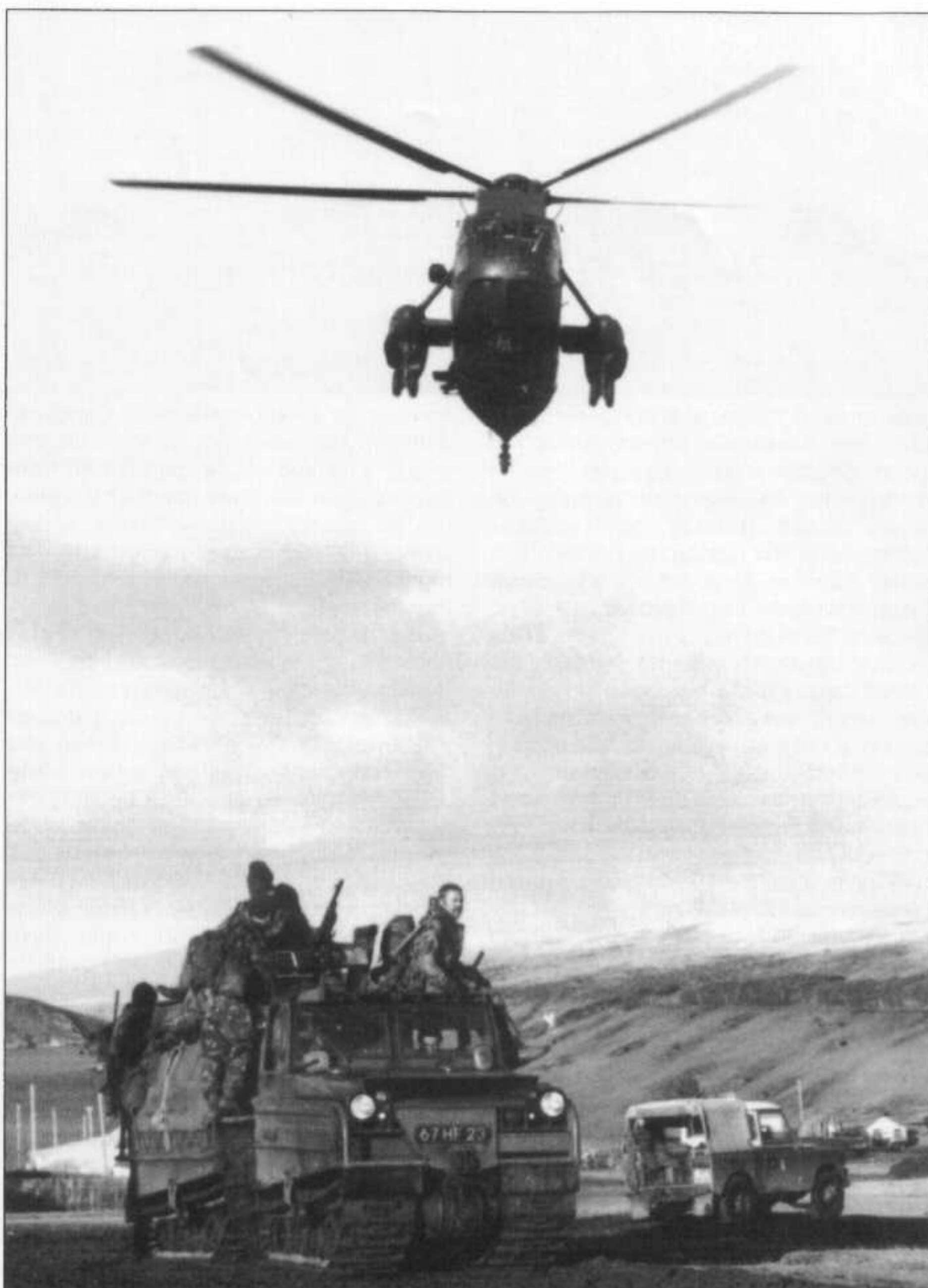
The following night, *Canberra* dropped anchor in San Carlos and started disembarking the remaining assault forces; at daybreak presenting an amazing spectacle in her glaring white paint and utterly dwarfing the naval vessels scattered about the confined anchorage. Miraculously, and for reasons still not determined, the Argentines made no attempt to attack that day - the one real opportunity to deal the Task Force a decisive blow. By evening the remaining units were ashore with shore-based missiles and light armour and artillery.

Sunday 23 May opened with a Sea Harrier on CAP spotting helicopters delivering supplies on West Falkland. In several passes, two Pumas and an A.109A were shot up by 801 NAS pilots. The first strikes on shipping in Falklands Sound came just before 1400hrs. A-4s of *Grupo 5* hit *HMS Antelope*, which was subsequently destroyed when an unexploded bomb blew up while being defused. One A-4B was destroyed by a SAM, while in a later attack a Dagger was shot down by an 800 NAS Sea Harrier. Early in the evening, Sea Harrier ZA142 of 800 NAS was lost when it hit the sea and exploded shortly after taking off for a toss-bombing sortie. Reasons for the loss still remain unclear.

Whilst British troops prepared to breakout of the beach-head the Skyhawks and Mirages returned to attack the ships on 24 May, often delivering their bombs from a height of less than 50 feet above the sea level before sweeping inland, delivering snap bursts of gunfire against the scattered British troops as they strove to escape whilst being chased by Rapiers and Sea Dart SAMs.

As was perhaps to be expected, 25 May - Argentina's National Day - brought one of the heaviest air attacks, sinking two more ships. Several formations of Skyhawks concentrated upon the destroyer *HMS Coventry* at sea on radar picket duty. She succeeded in shooting down an A-4B and an A-4C with Sea Darts before being hit and sinking shortly afterwards. A third A-4 was destroyed by naval gunfire in San Carlos Water.

The British suffered another serious loss with the destruction of *Atlantic Conveyor* loaded with RAF Chinooks and Wessex helicopters, major stores items



and spare engines for the Harriers. She was attacked by two Super Etendards, again armed with Exocet missiles. One of the missiles missed but the other struck home killing twelve men and setting the ship on fire. Although she remained afloat for several days she eventually sank with the loss of almost all her cargo. Fortunately the batch of Harrier GR.3 and Sea Harrier FRS.1 reinforcements had previously flown off, as had one of the Chinooks.

It has been suggested that the missile that struck *Atlantic Conveyor* had been launched against one of the carriers in the Task Force but then veered towards the nearest vessel, striking home with deadly effect. The other missile may have been decoyed away by the discharge of chaff either by a screening ship or helicopter.

Post-war analysis does indicate that the AM.39 Exocet was the most feared weapon within the Task Force, and it was fortunate that at the outbreak of the war Argentina had fewer than six of the missiles within its inventory. Throughout the conflict Argentina made covert diplomatic enquiries on the world's arms

market to buy further examples, but with France reluctant to offer assistance, Argentina was seeking help from various Middle East and South American nations who were willing to meet the demand - for a price. Through good intelligence both by MI5 within the UK, and MI6 abroad, no additional Exocets reached Argentina during the conflict. Once the first batch had been fired there were to be no more for the Super Etendards.

In addition to the missile threat, strong indications, many years later, support that Russian Tu-95D 'Bears' were operating in the region, having stalked the Task Force on its way south, and supplying targeting information during at least one of the Exocet attacks on the fleet, albeit from a discrete distance. Whilst no firm evidence has been forthcoming, reports indicate that Tu-95s were never far from the Task Force and were a constant source of annoyance to Royal Naval air operations.

Despite the significant losses of shipping, the consolidation of ground forces ashore on East Falkland went ahead, albeit handicapped by the loss of the Chinooks, the one remaining,

Over the next few days, Sea King and Wessex helicopters supported 3 Commando and 5 Brigade in reaching their positions for the final assault on Port Stanley. On 12 June, 3 Para fought a vicious battle for Mount Longdon, losing twenty-three dead and forty-seven wounded, while 2 Para moved to Wireless Ridge. The Welsh Guards and 42 Commando were now positioned on Two Sisters and the 22 SAS had successfully taken Murrel Heights.

In addition, Task Force Harriers were now able to fly more sorties of longer duration over the islands, although there had been a set back on 8 June when one Harrier GR.3 made a heavy landing, at the newly established Forward Operating Base (FOB) at Port San Carlos, putting it out of action for several hours. The FOB had been fully established by 2 June and was to prove a lifeline for Harrier pilots unable to return to their carriers due to lack of fuel.

Eight days later, the first attempt by RAF Harrier GR.3s was made at using Laser-Guided Bombs (LGBs) against strong-points, it failed through target marking problems. Early on 12 June, *HMS Glamorgan*, providing Naval Gunfire Support (NGS) was hit and seriously damaged by an Exocet launched from a modified trailer, in the process the ship lost its Wessex HAS.3. and thirteen crew.

A few hours later Port Stanley shook as Vulcan XM607 made the final 'Black Buck' raid, (number 7), on the airfield, using conventional airburst bombs.

By the afternoon of 10 June a Wessex HU.5 of 845 NAS made a risky attack on the Town Hall at Port Stanley, where it was believed a major enemy conference was taking place. One AS.12 missile hit the neighbouring police station, while a second missed the target completely. In an act of defiance A-4B Skyhawks of *Grupo 5* struck at 3 Commando Brigade's

HQ on Mount Kent. No significant damage was done and all the Skyhawks returned to base although each had sustained heavy small-arms fire.

In the last Argentine raid of the war, at 2255hrs, Canberra B.62, B-108, of *Grupo 2* was shot down over Mount Kent by a Sea Dart fired by *HMS Exeter*. The two days of 12/13 June, saw some of the bitterest fighting on the ground as 2 Para, supported by Army Air Corps Scouts firing SS.11 missiles, fought for Wireless Ridge.

Further South the Scots Guards, Welsh Guards and Gurkhas were airlifted to Mount Harriet, from where they were to attack Tumbledown Mountain at midday. RAF Harriers made their first successful Laser Guided Bomb (LGB) attack on a company HQ on Tumbledown, marked by a forward air controller. Later, in a second attack, a 105mm gun was taken out at Moody Brook.

Fighting around Tumbledown lasted into 14 June. With Port Stanley surrounded, two Harrier GR.3s left *Hermes* at midday for another LGB strike, this time on Sapper Hill. At the last minute they were advised to return; white flags were appearing in Port Stanley. By the afternoon the war was over, the surrender being signed at 2359hrs.

Analysis of the conflict

In the years following the conflict many military analysts have been quick to point out that if the Royal Navy had maintained its conventional aircraft carriers, with Phantoms and Buccaneers, or been equipped with a newer 'tail hook' aircraft, the conflict would not even have happened. Some believe that the air war would not have lasted so long with such aircraft, as the option would have been present for the Fleet Air Arm to strike at the Argentine mainland itself, although the political implications of this action

would have been immense, and whether America would have carried on providing its military assistance would have been called into question. However, such ideas are not realistic.

At the time critics believed that Britain would not be able to send a Task Force 8,000 miles, equipped with subsonic fighters, limited in numbers, to engage supersonic interceptors and fighter-bombers *and win*. However, the results speak for themselves and what is not taken into account is the atrocious South Atlantic weather conditions. Had the Royal Navy been equipped with conventional aircraft carriers, a vast majority of sorties would have been cancelled due to it, particularly at night.

Of all the aspects of the air warfare that were examined following the conflict, be it the rapid adaptation of the in flight refuelling probes for the C-130s, AIM-9 Sidewinders for the Nimrods or the hastily converted Vulcans for tankers and SEAD roles, one key element emerges above all else – the lack of adequate AEW capability for the fleet. This was to be resolved within a few short years with a host of Sea King variants, each one ever more capable, and the speed with which the helicopters were introduced into service can only serve to remind the Royal Navy of the shock of losing so many ships to the Anti Ship Missile.

For the Sea Harriers, some 1,335 sorties were flown of which 1,135 were CAPs and twenty-seven AIM-9L Sidewinders were fired - scoring twenty-four hits and destroying nineteen aircraft,

Below: A *Grupo 6* Dagger under AAA fire during a strike over San Carlos Bay. Note the yellow bands across the wings which show up very clearly. Argentinian pilots were to earn great respect from those within the Task Force as they pressed home their attacks in all weathers, at low level against ever increasing threats from SAM, AAA and Sea Harriers



including eleven Daggers and Mirage IIIEAs. 30mm gunfire accounted for six more enemy aircraft. It silenced its critics once and for all and would bring a whole new way of thinking, fighting and operating within Fleet Air Arm squadrons that would not only involve helicopter units but those Harrier and helicopter

squadrons of the Royal Air Force that would now embark aboard the carriers on a regular basis. The Royal Navy and its Fleet Air Arm was now on the way to become one of the most respected Naval Air Arms in the world with a long and proud history upheld.

Glenn Sands

NEXT MONTH

Aircraft in Detail

The Sea Harrier

FRS.1 and FA.2

(including Falklands War
FRS.1 schemes and markings)

FALKLANDS AIR WAR Aircraft in Detail

Kit and Accessory List compiled by Frank Campey

Kits Argentina

Super Etendard ...1:48 Heller/Airfix
Super Etendard ...1:72 Academy
Super Etendard ...1:72 Italeri (out of prod)
Super Etendard ...1:72 Heller (out of prod)
Skyhawk A-4C ...1:48 Hasegawa
Skyhawk A-4C ...1:48 Hobbycraft
Skyhawk A-4B ...1:48 Hobbycraft
Skyhawk A-4B ...1:72 Fujimi (out of prod)
Skyhawk A-4B ...1:72 Esci (out of prod)
Macchi MB-339 ...1:48 Esci (out of prod)
Macchi MB-339 ...1:48 Fremis
Macchi MB-339 ...1:72 Supermodel
Mentor T.34C ...1:48 SkyModel (resin)
Mentor T.34C ...1:72 Sword
Mentor T.34C ...1:72 Esoteric (out of prod)
Neptune SP-2H ...1:72 Hasegawa
Neptune SP-2H ...1:72 Revell (Hasegawa mould)
Neptune SP-2H ...1:144 Aeroclub
Tracker S-2E ...1:72 Hasegawa
Tracker S-2E ...1:72 Revell
(Hasegawa mould)
Tracker S-2E ...1:72 Hobbycraft Lynx
(see RAF/RN list)
Alouette III ...1:48 Fujimi (out of prod)
Alouette III ...1:72 Heller (out of prod)
Sea King ... (see RAF/RN list)
Puma ...1:50 Heller (out of prod)
Puma ...1:72 Airfix
Puma ...1:72 Italeri
Skyvan ...1:72 Airfix (for 2002)
Hercules ... (see RAF/RN list)
Boeing 707 ...1:72 Heller
Boeing 707 ...1:144 Airfix (out of prod)
Boeing 707 ...1:144 Revell (out of prod)
Boeing 707 ...1:144 Minicraft
Learjet ...1:48 Hasegawa (out of prod)
Learjet ...1:48 Testors
Learjet ...1:72 Rareplanes vacform
(out of prod)
Canberra B.2/6 ...1:48 Aeroclub
Canberra B.6 ...1:72 Airfix (out of prod)
Canberra B.6 ...1:144 Welsh Models
Pucara ...1:72 Puky (out of prod)
Pucara ...1:72 Rareplanes vacform
(out of prod)
Chinook ... (see RAF/RN list)
Mirage IIIE ...1:32 Revell (out of prod)
Mirage IIIEA ...1:48 Esci (out of prod)
Mirage 5 ...1:48 Esci (out of prod)
Mirage IIIC/D ...1:48 Heller
Mirage IIIE/R ...1:48 Fujimi (out of prod)
Mirage IIIC ...1:48 Academy
Mirage IIIE ...1:72 Heller
Mirage IIIE/R ...1:72 Revell (out of prod)
Mirage IIIC ...1:72 Airfix (out of prod)
Mirage IIIC ...1:72 Matchbox (out of prod)
Mirage IIIEA ...1:72 PM Models
Mirage IIIE/O ...1:72 Frog (out of prod)

Mirage IIIE ...1:72 Eastern Express (ex Frog)
Dagger ...1:72 PM Models
Twin Otter ...1:72 Matchbox (out of prod)
Friendship F-27 ...1:72 Esci (out of prod)
Friendship F-27 ...1:72 Airfix (out of prod)

Kits (RAF/RN)

Sea Harrier FRS.1 ...1:24 Airfix (for 2002)
Harrier GR.3 ...1:24 Airfix
Sea Harrier FRS.1 ...1:48 Airfix (for 2002)
Sea Harrier FRS.1 ...1:48 Tamiya
Sea Harrier FRS.1 ...1:48 Hobbycraft (copy of
Tamiya mould out of prod)
Harrier GR.3 ...1:48 Airfix (for 2002)
Harrier GR.3 ...1:72 Hasegawa
Harrier GR.3 ...1:72 Fujimi (out of prod)
Harrier GR.3 ...1:72 Airfix
Harrier GR.3 ...1:72 Esci (out of prod)
Sea Harrier FRS.1 ...1:72 Hasegawa
Sea Harrier FRS.1 ...1:72 Fujimi (out of prod)
Sea Harrier FRS.1 ...1:72 Matchbox (out of prod)
Sea Harrier FRS.1 ...1:72 Esci (out of prod)
Sea Harrier FRS.1 ...1:144 Minicraft
Harrier GR.3 ...1:144 Dragon
Vulcan B.2 ...1:48 Aeroclub (out of prod)
Vulcan B.2 ...1:72 Airfix
Vulcan B.2 ...1:72 Rareplanes
(vacform - out of prod)
Vulcan B.2 ...1:72 Formaplane
(vacform - out of prod)
Vulcan B.1A ...1:96 Lindberg (out of prod)
Vulcan B.2 ...1:144 Welsh Models
(vacform)
Victor ...1:72 - Matchbox (out of prod)
Victor ...1:72 Rareplanes (out of prod)
Victor ...1:96 Lindberg (out of prod)
Victor ...1:144 Welsh Models (vacform)
Hercules ...1:48 Italeri
Hercules ...1:72 Airfix
Hercules ...1:72 Esci (out of prod)
Hercules ...1:72 Italeri
Hercules ...1:144 Revell (out of prod)
Hercules ...1:144 Welsh Models
Vickers VC-10 ...1:144 Airfix (out of prod)
Vickers VC-10 ...1:144 Welsh Models
Chinook ...1:72 Airfix (ex Italeri)
Chinook ...1:72 Matchbox (out of prod)
Chinook ...1:72 Revell
Chinook ...1:72 Italeri
Chinook ...1:144 Revell
Chinook ...1:144 Welsh Models (vacform)
Sea King ...1:48 Hasegawa
Sea King ...1:48 Revell (ex Hasegawa)
Sea King ...1:72 Revell
Sea King ...1:72 Airfix
Sea King ...1:72 Fujimi (out of prod)
Wessex ...1:48 Revell (out of prod)
Wessex ...1:72 Revell
Wessex ...1:72 Italeri

Wessex ...1:72 Matchbox (out of prod)
Lynx ...1:72 Airfix
Lynx ...1:72 Fujimi (out of prod)
Lynx ...1:72 Revell
Lynx ...1:72 Matchbox (out of prod)
Scout ...1:48 Fujimi (out of prod)
Scout ...1:72 Airfix
Wasp ...1:48 Fujimi (out of prod)
Gazelle ...1:48 Fujimi (out of prod)
Gazelle ...1:72 Airfix

Conversion Sets

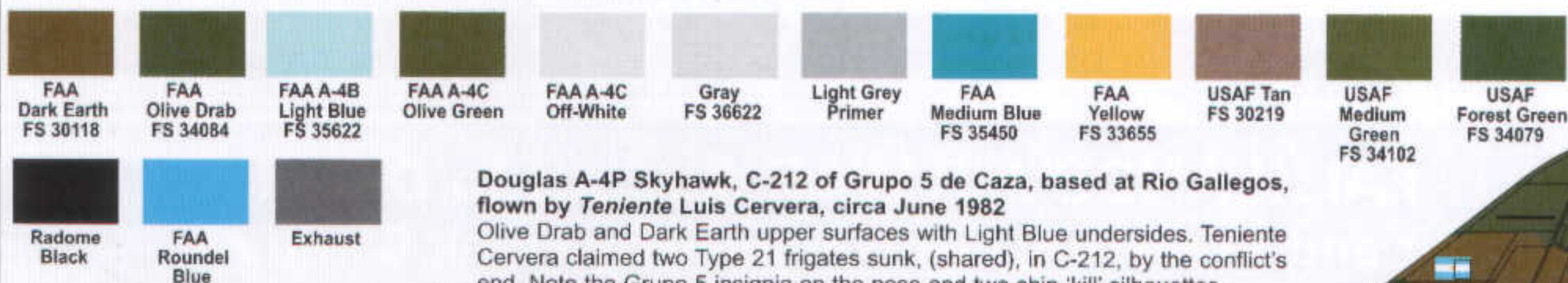
Aardvark ...1:24 Sea Harrier FRS I
for Airfix kit
Airwaves ...1:72 Wasp HAS I for Airfix kit
Airwaves ...1:72 Scout Falklands
update for Airfix kit
Airwaves ...1:72 Vulcan 'Black Buck'
for Airfix kit

Decals

Modeldecal Sheet 67 Falklands Sea Harriers
Modeldecal Sheet 71 Vulcan 'Black Buck' and
Sea Harriers
Superscale/(nee Microscale) 72-352 Argentine
A-4B/C, Mirage IIIEA and Canberra
Superscale/(nee Microscale) 72-459 Argentine
A-4B/C, Dagger and Super Etendard
FCM Decal Company (Brazil) Sheet 48MF
'Malvinas/Falklands Special' - for two Grupo
5 A-4Bs and an Armada A-4Q
Aztec sheet 4801LA 'Latin American Air Forces' -
for a Grupo 4 A-4C
Aztec sheet 'Latin Eagles I - McDD Skyhawk' with
markings for two Grupo 5 A-4Bs and a Grupo 4 A-4C

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Wings of Fame: Volume 12 - 'A-4 Skyhawk in the
Falklands' by Salvador Mafé Huertas and David
Donald
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Falklands 1982' by Christopher Chant
Osprey Special: 'Battle for the Falklands (3) Air
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Campaign' A/c in Detail special
SAM Vol 13/No 3 December 1990, 'Argentine Air
Power' A/c in Detail



Douglas A-4P Skyhawk, C-212 of Grupo 5 de Caza, based at Rio Gallegos, flown by Teniente Luis Cervera, circa June 1982

Olive Drab and Dark Earth upper surfaces with Light Blue undersides. Teniente Cervera claimed two Type 21 frigates sunk, (shared), in C-212, by the conflict's end. Note the Grupo 5 insignia on the nose and two ship 'kill' silhouettes.

Falklands Air War

Drawings by Jon Freeman

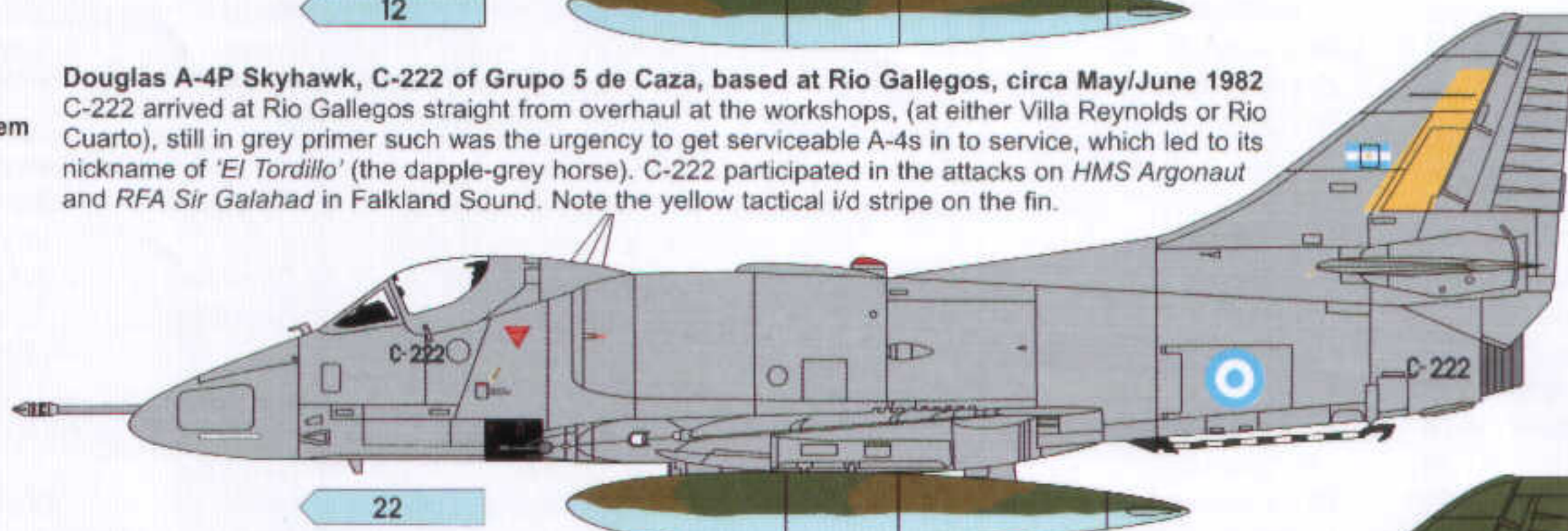


Grupo V de Caza emblem



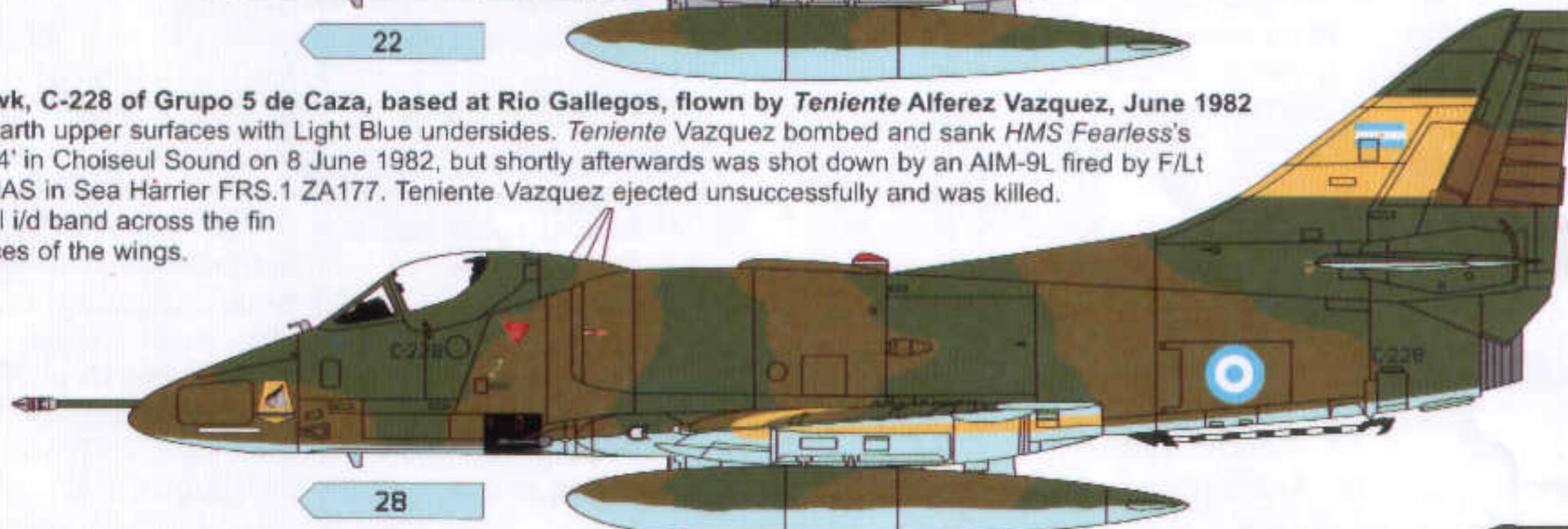
Douglas A-4P Skyhawk, C-222 of Grupo 5 de Caza, based at Rio Gallegos, circa May/June 1982

C-222 arrived at Rio Gallegos straight from overhaul at the workshops, (at either Villa Reynolds or Rio Cuarto), still in grey primer such was the urgency to get serviceable A-4s in to service, which led to its nickname of 'El Tordillo' (the dapple-grey horse). C-222 participated in the attacks on HMS Argonaut and RFA Sir Galahad in Falkland Sound. Note the yellow tactical i/d stripe on the fin.



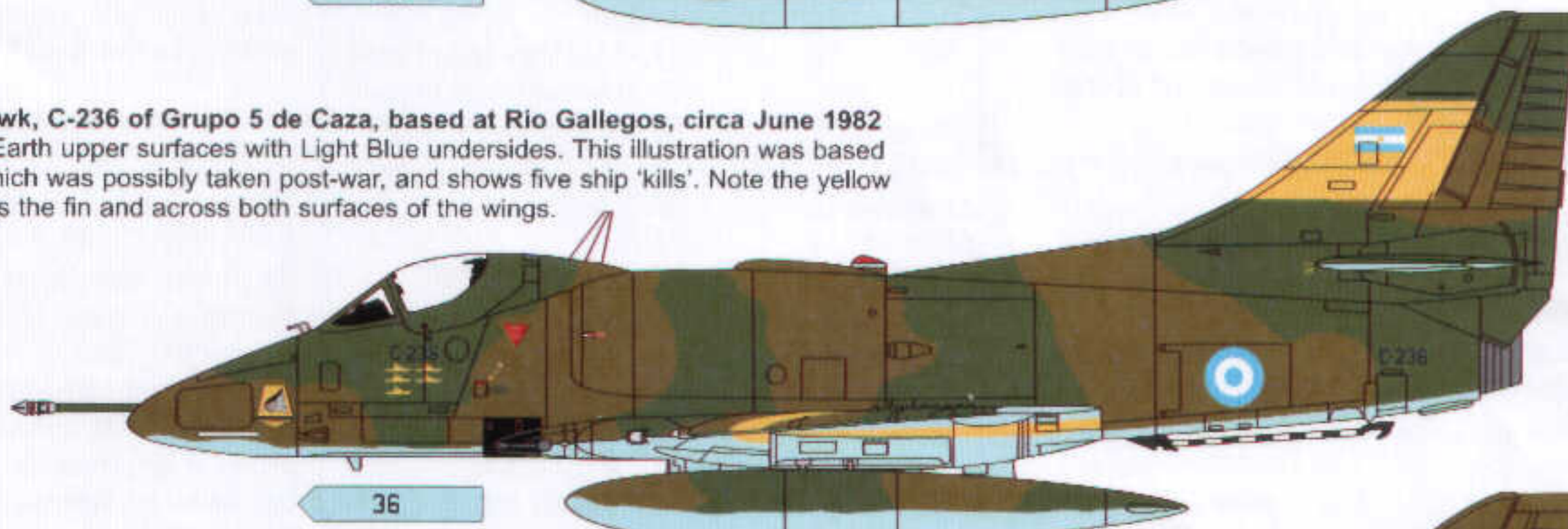
Douglas A-4P Skyhawk, C-228 of Grupo 5 de Caza, based at Rio Gallegos, flown by Teniente Alférez Vazquez, June 1982

Olive Drab and Dark Earth upper surfaces with Light Blue undersides. Teniente Vazquez bombed and sank HMS Fearless's Landing Craft 'Foxtrot 4' in Choiseul Sound on 8 June 1982, but shortly afterwards was shot down by an AIM-9L fired by F/Lt Dave Morgan of 800 NAS in Sea Harrier FRS.1 ZA177. Teniente Vazquez ejected unsuccessfully and was killed. Note the yellow tactical i/d band across the fin and across both surfaces of the wings.



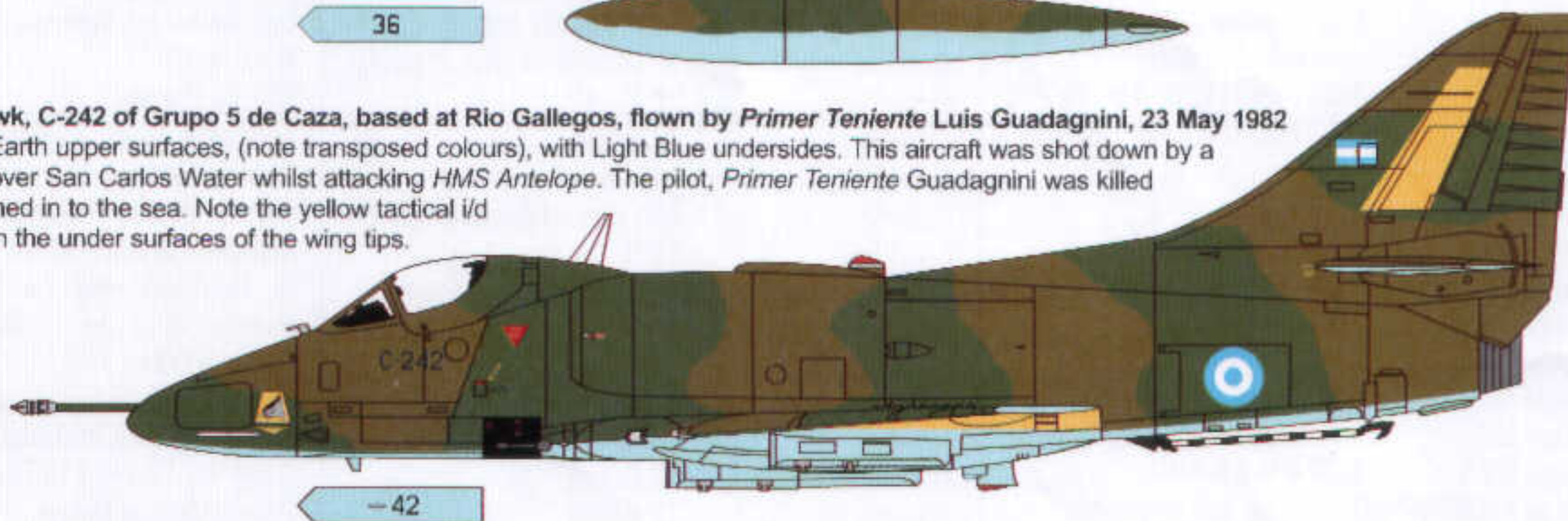
Douglas A-4P Skyhawk, C-236 of Grupo 5 de Caza, based at Rio Gallegos, circa June 1982

Olive Drab and Dark Earth upper surfaces with Light Blue undersides. This illustration was based upon a photograph which was possibly taken post-war, and shows five ship 'kills'. Note the yellow tactical i/d band across the fin and across both surfaces of the wings.



Douglas A-4P Skyhawk, C-242 of Grupo 5 de Caza, based at Rio Gallegos, flown by Primer Teniente Luis Guadagnini, 23 May 1982

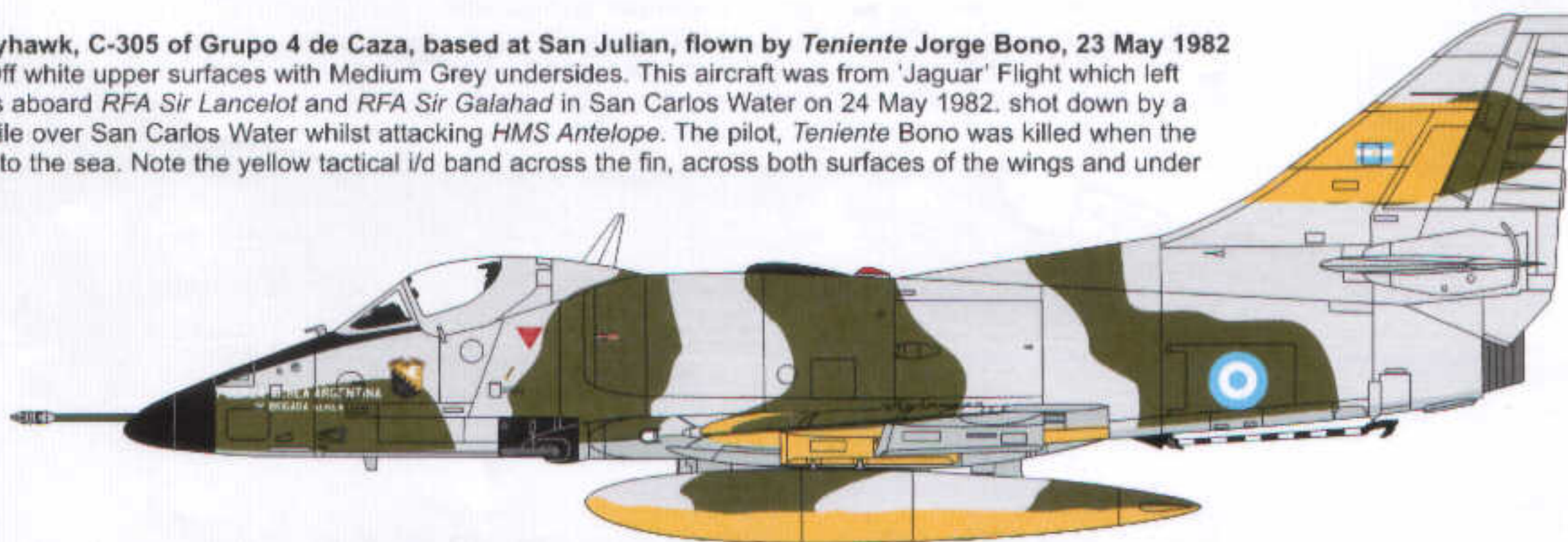
Olive Drab and Dark Earth upper surfaces, (note transposed colours), with Light Blue undersides. This aircraft was shot down by a surface-to-air missile over San Carlos Water whilst attacking HMS Antelope. The pilot, Primer Teniente Guadagnini was killed when the aircraft crashed in to the sea. Note the yellow tactical i/d stripe on the fin and on the under surfaces of the wing tips.



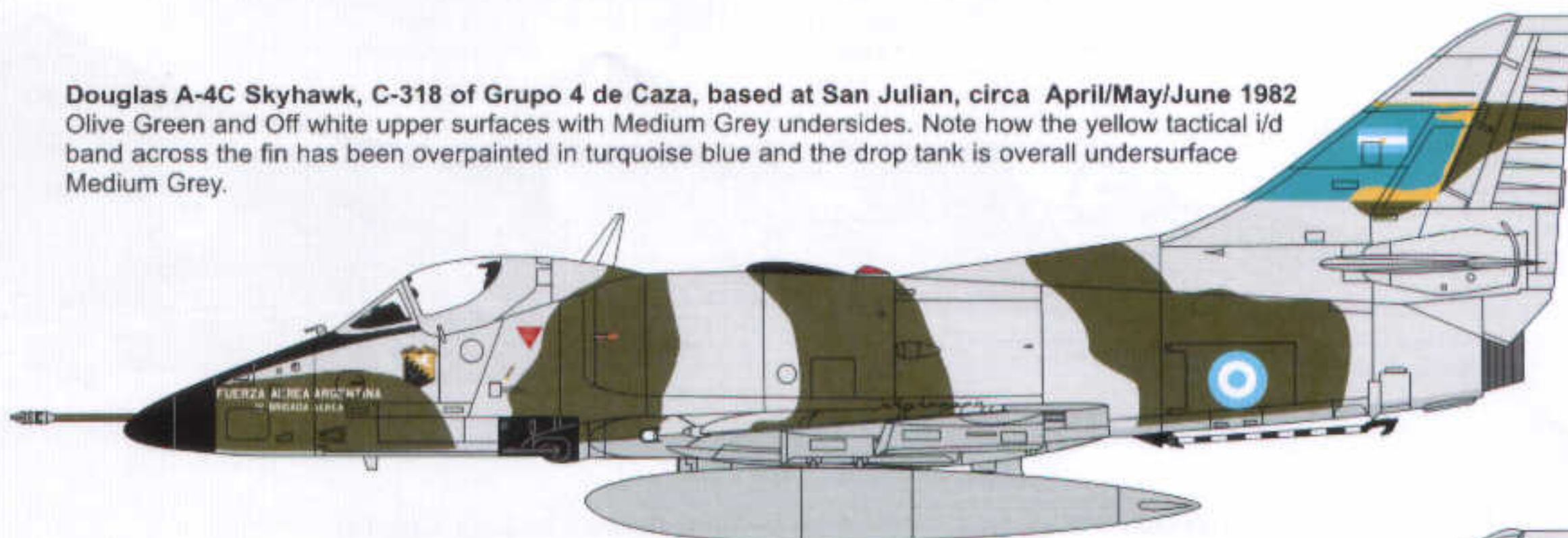
Douglas A-4C Skyhawk, C-305 of Grupo 4 de Caza, based at San Julian, flown by *Teniente Jorge Bono*, 23 May 1982
Olive Green and Off white upper surfaces with Medium Grey undersides. This aircraft was from 'Jaguar' Flight which left unexploded bombs aboard *RFA Sir Lancelot* and *RFA Sir Galahad* in San Carlos Water on 24 May 1982, shot down by a surface-to-air missile over San Carlos Water whilst attacking *HMS Antelope*. The pilot, *Teniente Bono* was killed when the aircraft crashed in to the sea. Note the yellow tactical i/d band across the fin, across both surfaces of the wings and under the drop tanks.



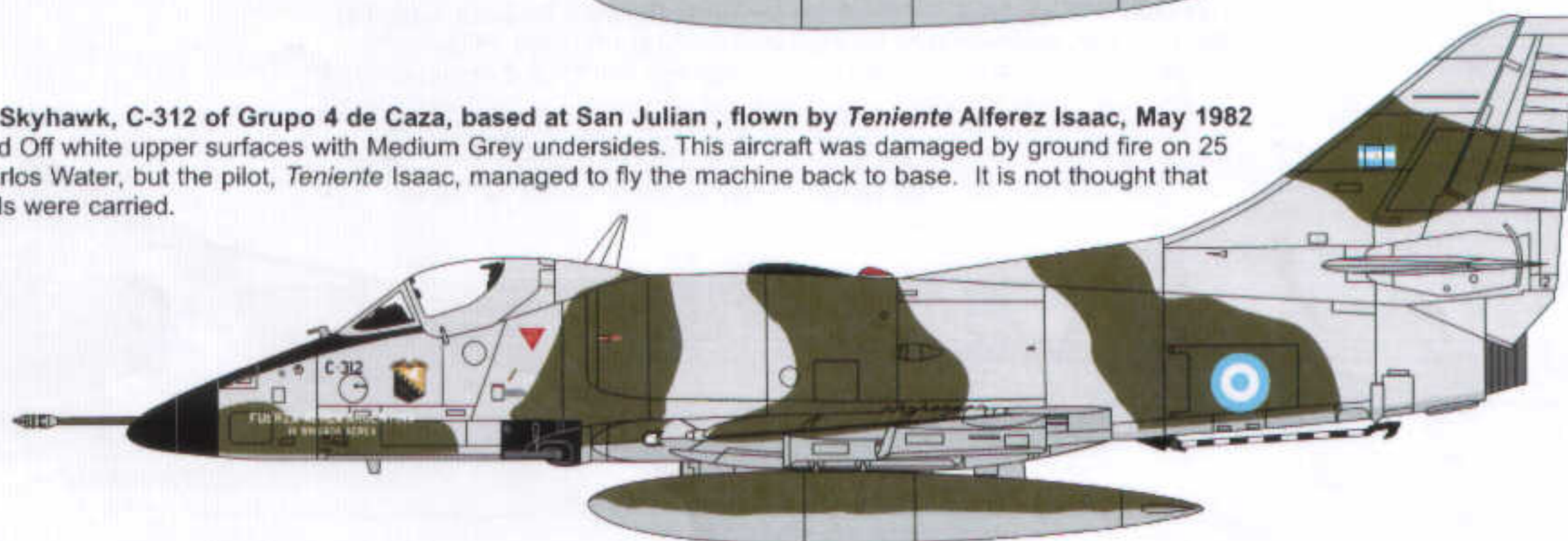
Grupo IV de Caza emblem



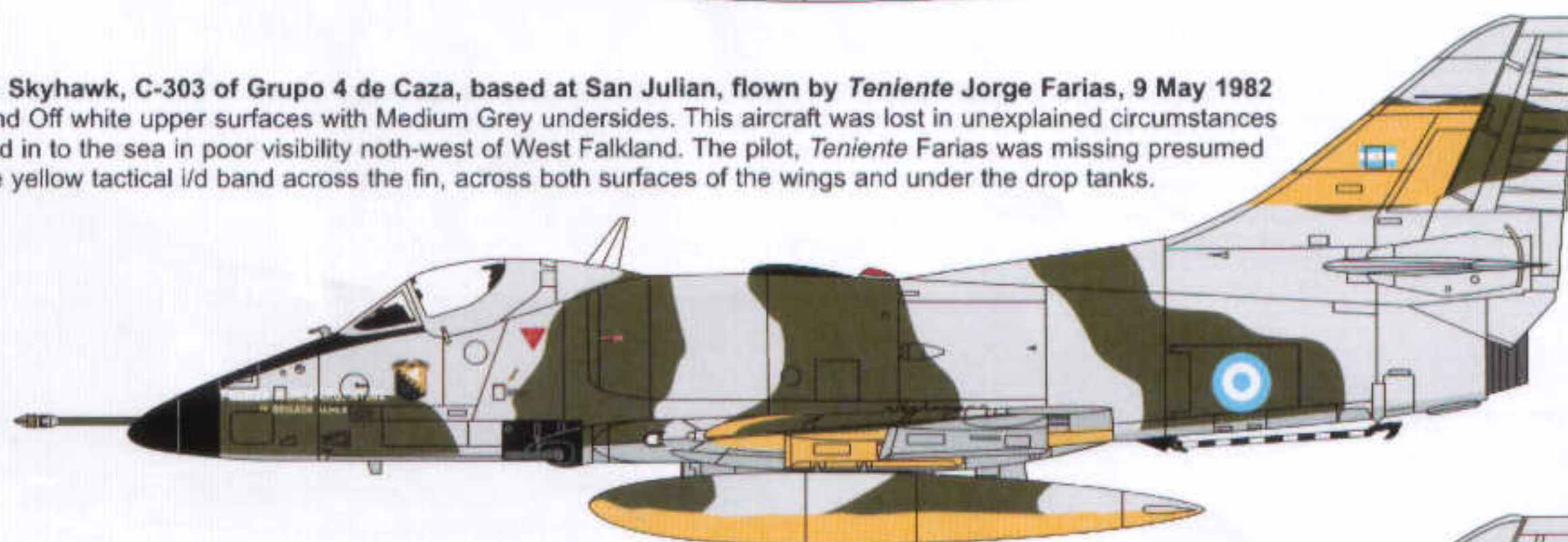
Douglas A-4C Skyhawk, C-318 of Grupo 4 de Caza, based at San Julian, circa April/May/June 1982
Olive Green and Off white upper surfaces with Medium Grey undersides. Note how the yellow tactical i/d band across the fin has been overpainted in turquoise blue and the drop tank is overall undersurface Medium Grey.



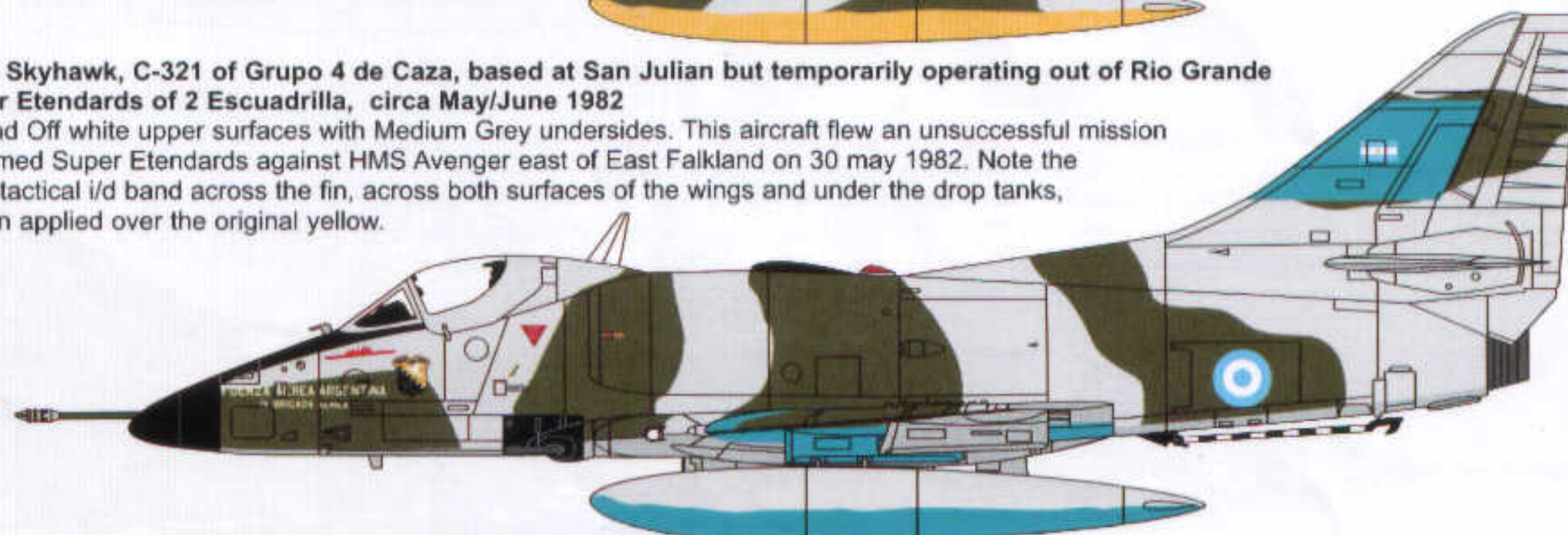
Douglas A-4C Skyhawk, C-312 of Grupo 4 de Caza, based at San Julian, flown by *Teniente Alferez Isaac*, May 1982
Olive Green and Off white upper surfaces with Medium Grey undersides. This aircraft was damaged by ground fire on 25 May, at San Carlos Water, but the pilot, *Teniente Isaac*, managed to fly the machine back to base. It is not thought that tactical i/d bands were carried.



Douglas A-4C Skyhawk, C-303 of Grupo 4 de Caza, based at San Julian, flown by *Teniente Jorge Farias*, 9 May 1982
Olive Green and Off white upper surfaces with Medium Grey undersides. This aircraft was lost in unexplained circumstances when it crashed in to the sea in poor visibility north-west of West Falkland. The pilot, *Teniente Farias* was missing presumed killed. Note the yellow tactical i/d band across the fin, across both surfaces of the wings and under the drop tanks.



Douglas A-4C Skyhawk, C-321 of Grupo 4 de Caza, based at San Julian but temporarily operating out of Rio Grande with the Super Etendards of 2 Escuadrilla, circa May/June 1982
Olive Green and Off white upper surfaces with Medium Grey undersides. This aircraft flew an unsuccessful mission with Exocet-armed Super Etendards against *HMS Avenger* east of East Falkland on 30 May 1982. Note the turquoise blue tactical i/d band across the fin, across both surfaces of the wings and under the drop tanks, which had been applied over the original yellow.





1 Escuadron de Caza emblem

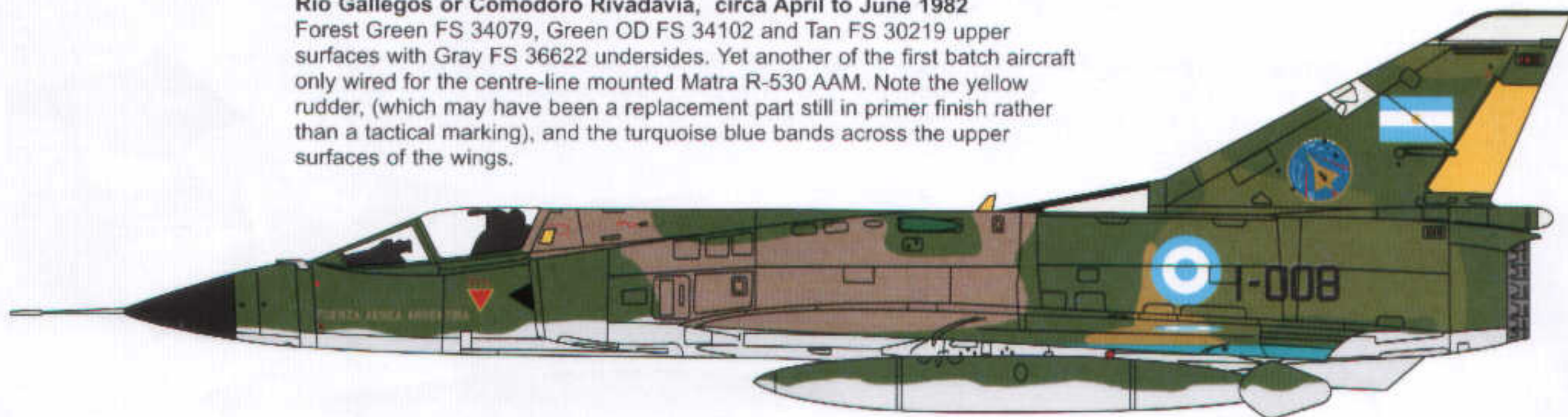
Dassault Mirage IIIEA, I-003 of 1 Escuadron, Grupo 8 de Caza, based at Rio Gallegos or Comodoro Rivadavia, circa April to June 1982
Forest Green FS 34079, Green OD FS 34102 and Tan FS 30219 upper surfaces with Gray FS 36622 undersides. This was one of the first batch aircraft which was only wired for the centre-line mounted Matra R-530 AAM.



Dassault Mirage IIIEA, I-007 of 1 Escuadron, Grupo 8 de Caza, based at Rio Gallegos or Comodoro Rivadavia, circa April to June 1982
Forest Green FS 34079, Green OD FS 34102 and Tan FS 30219 upper surfaces with Gray FS 36622 undersides. Another of the first batch aircraft which was only wired for the centre-line mounted Matra R-530 AAM.



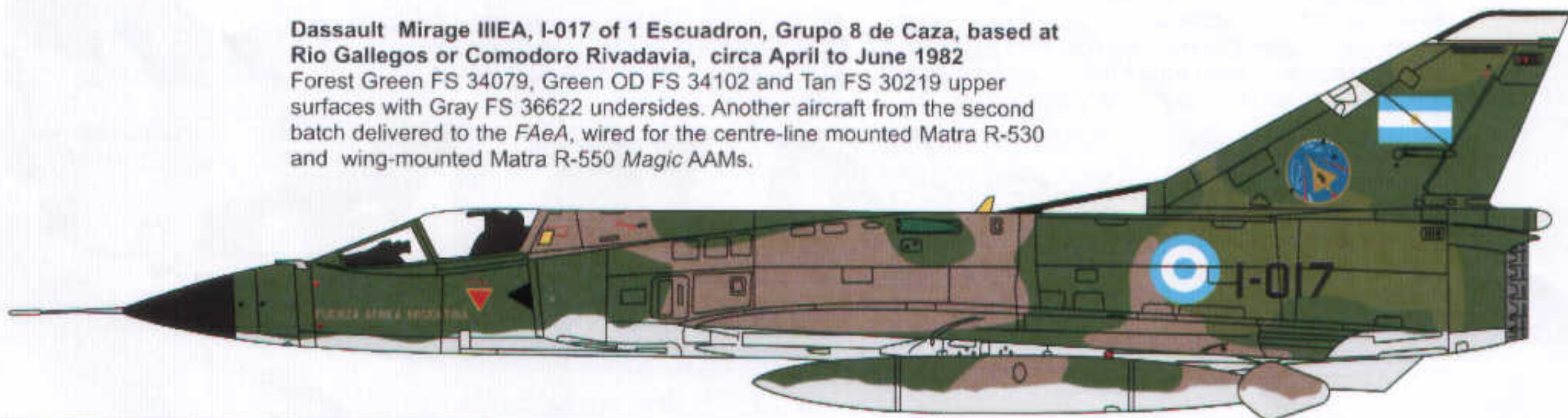
Dassault Mirage IIIEA, I-007 of 1 Escuadron, Grupo 8 de Caza, based at Rio Gallegos or Comodoro Rivadavia, circa April to June 1982
Forest Green FS 34079, Green OD FS 34102 and Tan FS 30219 upper surfaces with Gray FS 36622 undersides. Yet another of the first batch aircraft only wired for the centre-line mounted Matra R-530 AAM. Note the yellow rudder, (which may have been a replacement part still in primer finish rather than a tactical marking), and the turquoise blue bands across the upper surfaces of the wings.



Dassault Mirage IIIEA, I-014 of 1 Escuadron, Grupo 8 de Caza, based at Rio Gallegos or Comodoro Rivadavia, circa April to June 1982
Forest Green FS 34079, Green OD FS 34102 and Tan FS 30219 upper surfaces with Gray FS 36622 undersides. This aircraft was from the second batch delivered to the FAeA and was wired for the centre-line mounted Matra R-530 AAM and the outboard wing hardpoint Matra R-550 Magic IFR AAMs.



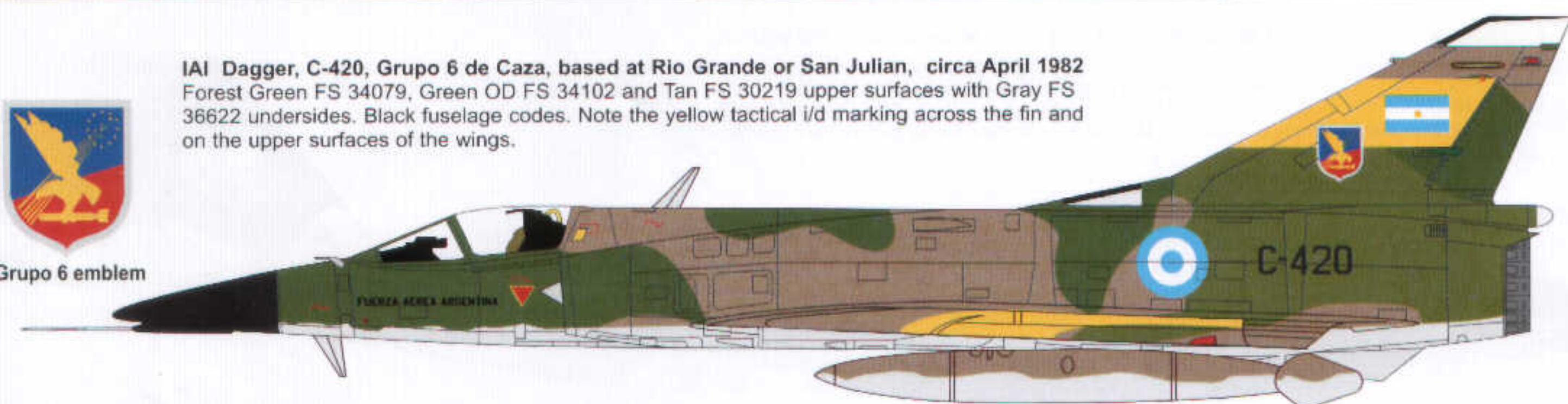
Dassault Mirage IIIEA, I-017 of 1 Escuadron, Grupo 8 de Caza, based at Rio Gallegos or Comodoro Rivadavia, circa April to June 1982
Forest Green FS 34079, Green OD FS 34102 and Tan FS 30219 upper surfaces with Gray FS 36622 undersides. Another aircraft from the second batch delivered to the FAeA, wired for the centre-line mounted Matra R-530 and wing-mounted Matra R-550 Magic AAMs.



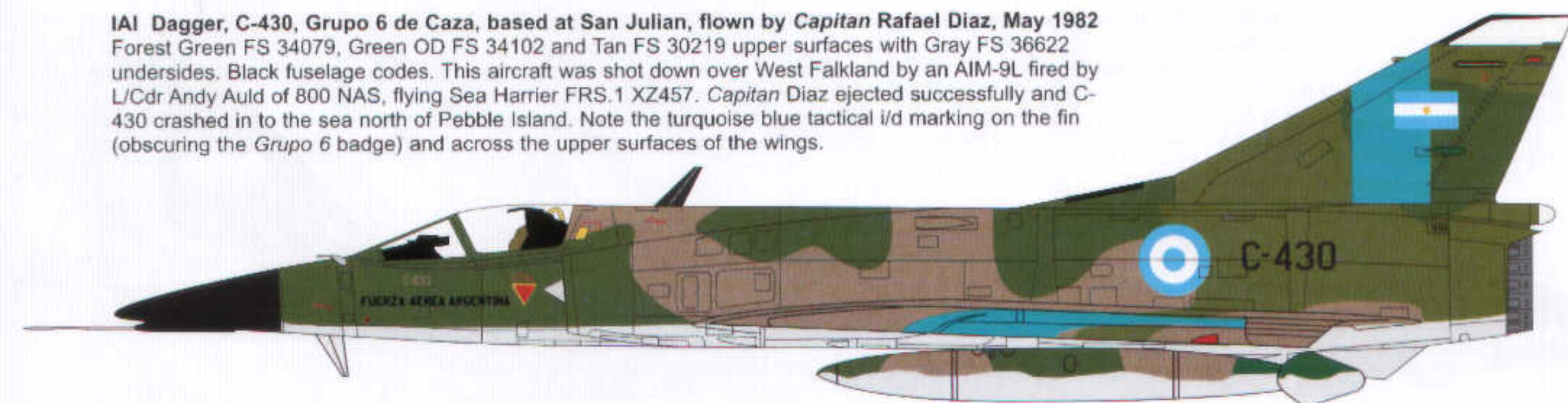
IAI Dagger, C-420, Grupo 6 de Caza, based at Rio Grande or San Julian, circa April 1982
 Forest Green FS 34079, Green OD FS 34102 and Tan FS 30219 upper surfaces with Gray FS 36622 undersides. Black fuselage codes. Note the yellow tactical i/d marking across the fin and on the upper surfaces of the wings.



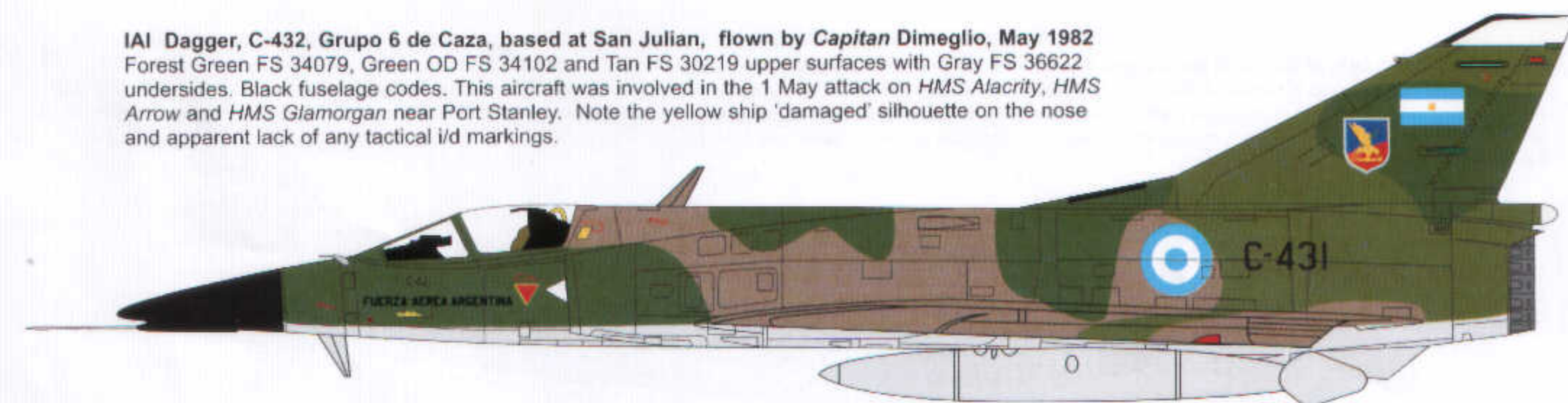
Grupo 6 emblem



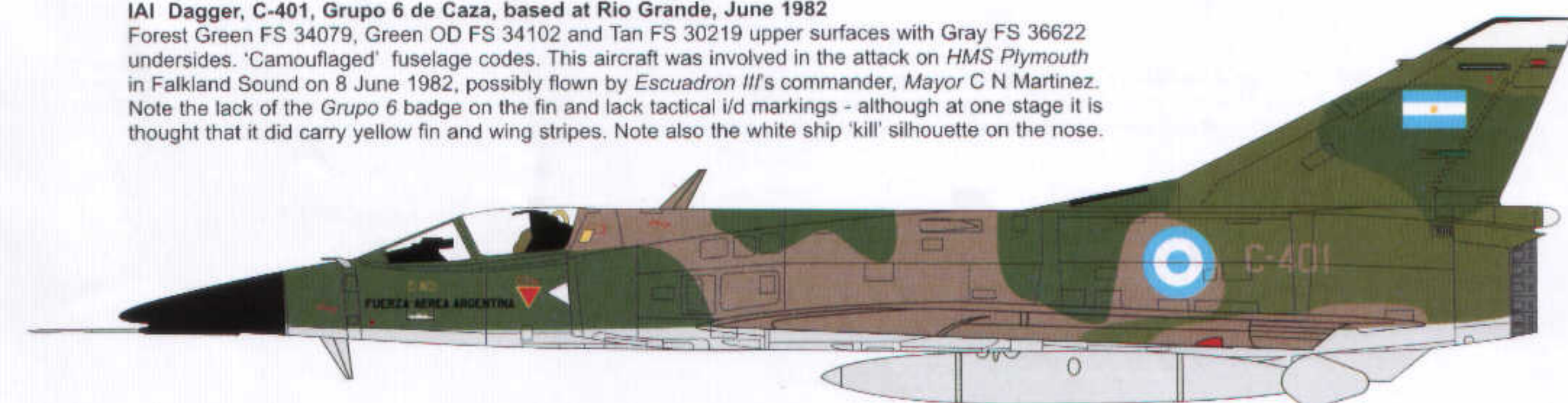
IAI Dagger, C-430, Grupo 6 de Caza, based at San Julian, flown by *Capitan Rafael Diaz*, May 1982
 Forest Green FS 34079, Green OD FS 34102 and Tan FS 30219 upper surfaces with Gray FS 36622 undersides. Black fuselage codes. This aircraft was shot down over West Falkland by an AIM-9L fired by L/Cdr Andy Auld of 800 NAS, flying Sea Harrier FRS.1 XZ457. *Capitan Diaz* ejected successfully and C-430 crashed in to the sea north of Pebble Island. Note the turquoise blue tactical i/d marking on the fin (obscuring the *Grupo 6* badge) and across the upper surfaces of the wings.



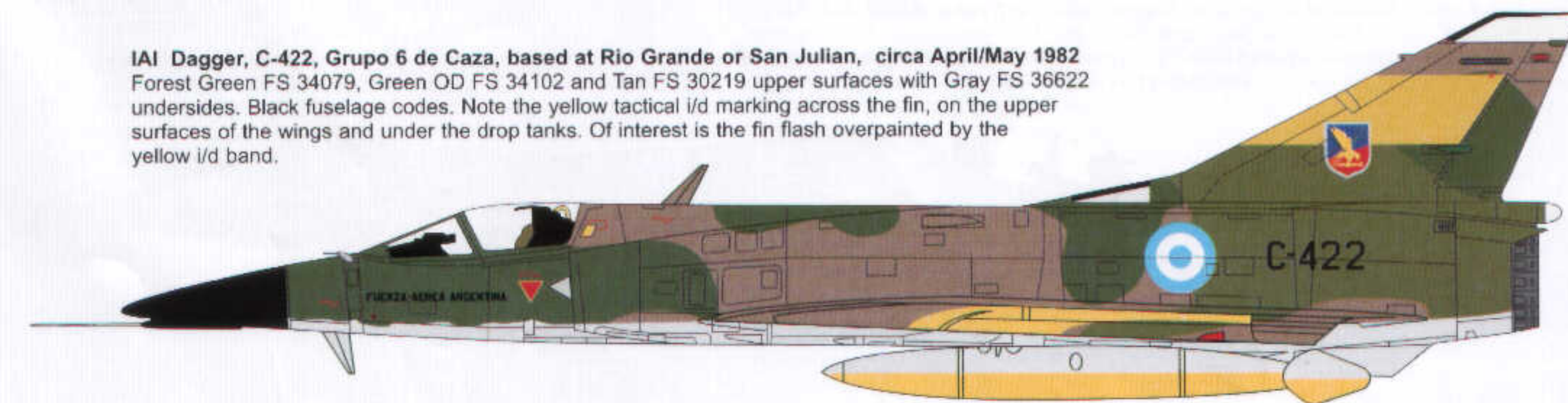
IAI Dagger, C-432, Grupo 6 de Caza, based at San Julian, flown by *Capitan Dimeglio*, May 1982
 Forest Green FS 34079, Green OD FS 34102 and Tan FS 30219 upper surfaces with Gray FS 36622 undersides. Black fuselage codes. This aircraft was involved in the 1 May attack on *HMS Alacrity*, *HMS Arrow* and *HMS Glamorgan* near Port Stanley. Note the yellow ship 'damaged' silhouette on the nose and apparent lack of any tactical i/d markings.



IAI Dagger, C-401, Grupo 6 de Caza, based at Rio Grande, June 1982
 Forest Green FS 34079, Green OD FS 34102 and Tan FS 30219 upper surfaces with Gray FS 36622 undersides. 'Camouflaged' fuselage codes. This aircraft was involved in the attack on *HMS Plymouth* in Falkland Sound on 8 June 1982, possibly flown by *Escuadron III's* commander, *Mayor C N Martinez*. Note the lack of the *Grupo 6* badge on the fin and lack tactical i/d markings - although at one stage it is thought that it did carry yellow fin and wing stripes. Note also the white ship 'kill' silhouette on the nose.

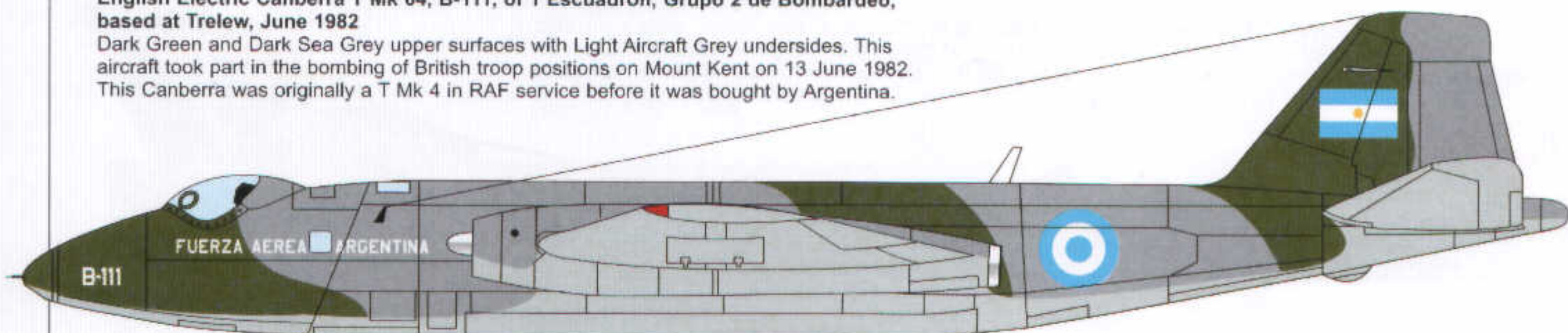


IAI Dagger, C-422, Grupo 6 de Caza, based at Rio Grande or San Julian, circa April/May 1982
 Forest Green FS 34079, Green OD FS 34102 and Tan FS 30219 upper surfaces with Gray FS 36622 undersides. Black fuselage codes. Note the yellow tactical i/d marking across the fin, on the upper surfaces of the wings and under the drop tanks. Of interest is the fin flash overpainted by the yellow i/d band.



English Electric Canberra T Mk 64, B-111, of 1 Escuadron, Grupo 2 de Bombardeo, based at Trelew, June 1982

Dark Green and Dark Sea Grey upper surfaces with Light Aircraft Grey undersides. This aircraft took part in the bombing of British troop positions on Mount Kent on 13 June 1982. This Canberra was originally a T Mk 4 in RAF service before it was bought by Argentina.



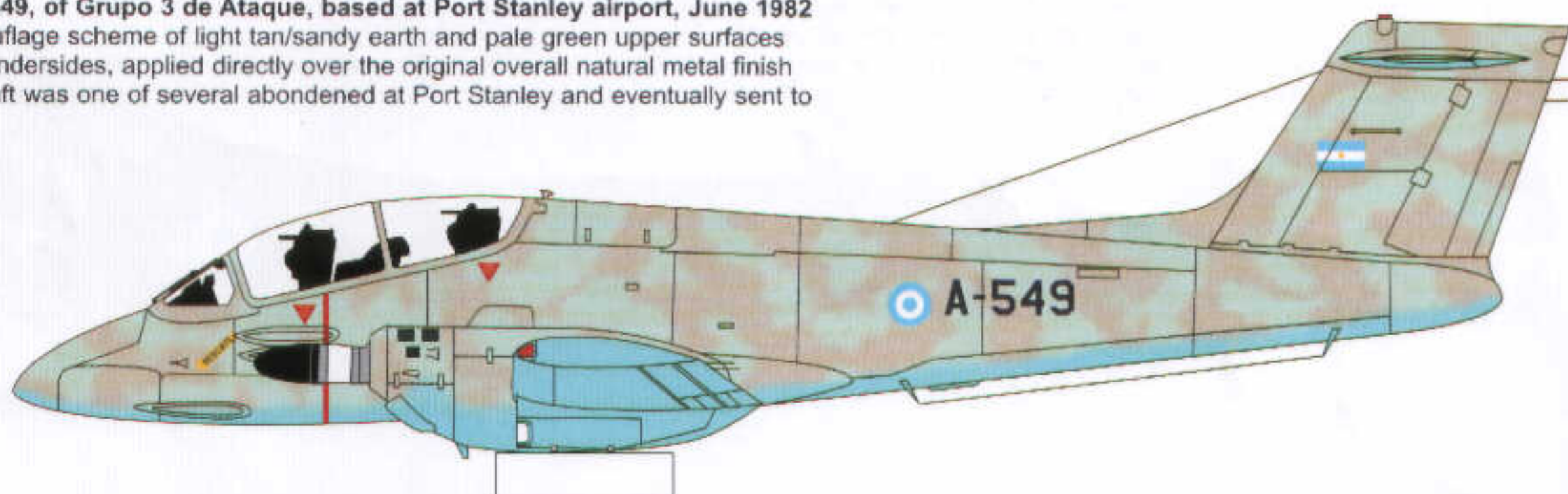
English Electric Canberra B Mk 62, B-110, of 1 Escuadron, Grupo 2 de Bombardeo, based at Trelew, April/May 1982

Dark Green and Dark Sea Grey upper surfaces with Light Aircraft Grey undersides. Crewed by *Teniente* Eduardo de Ibanez and *Primer Teniente* Mario Gonzalez, this aircraft was shot down by an AIM-9L fired by Lt Alan Curtis of 801 NAS in Sea Harrier XZ451, approximately 150 miles north-west of Port Stanley. Although both men were seen to eject successfully, neither was found.



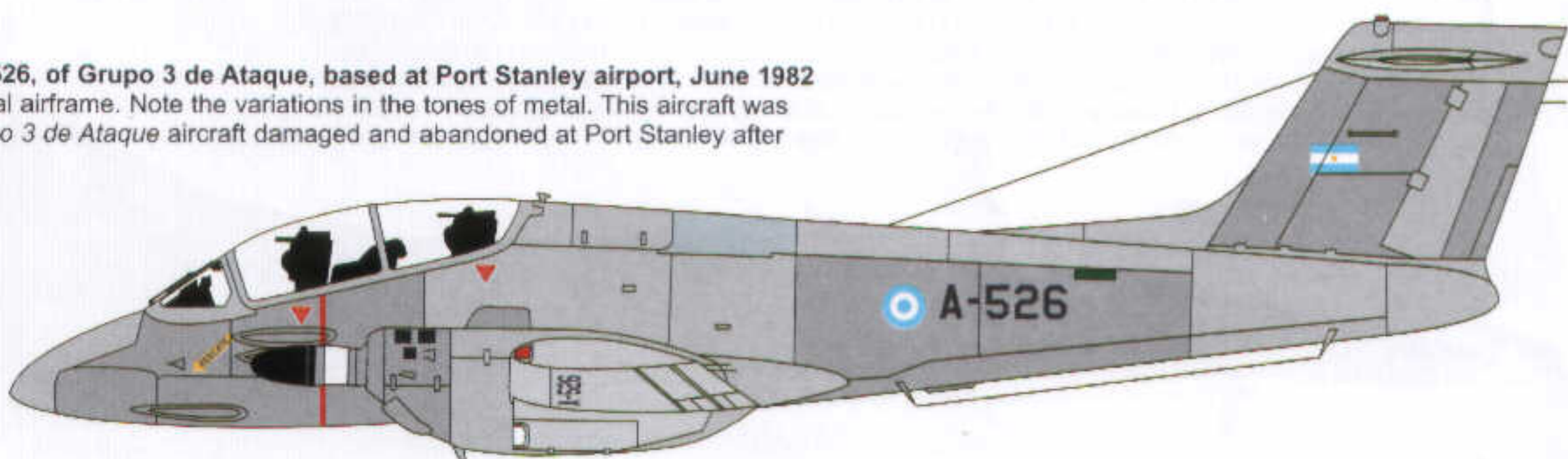
IA.58A Pucara, A-549, of Grupo 3 de Ataque, based at Port Stanley airport, June 1982

Field-applied camouflage scheme of light tan/sandy earth and pale green upper surfaces with medium blue undersides, applied directly over the original overall natural metal finish airframe. This aircraft was one of several abandoned at Port Stanley and eventually sent to the UK for display.



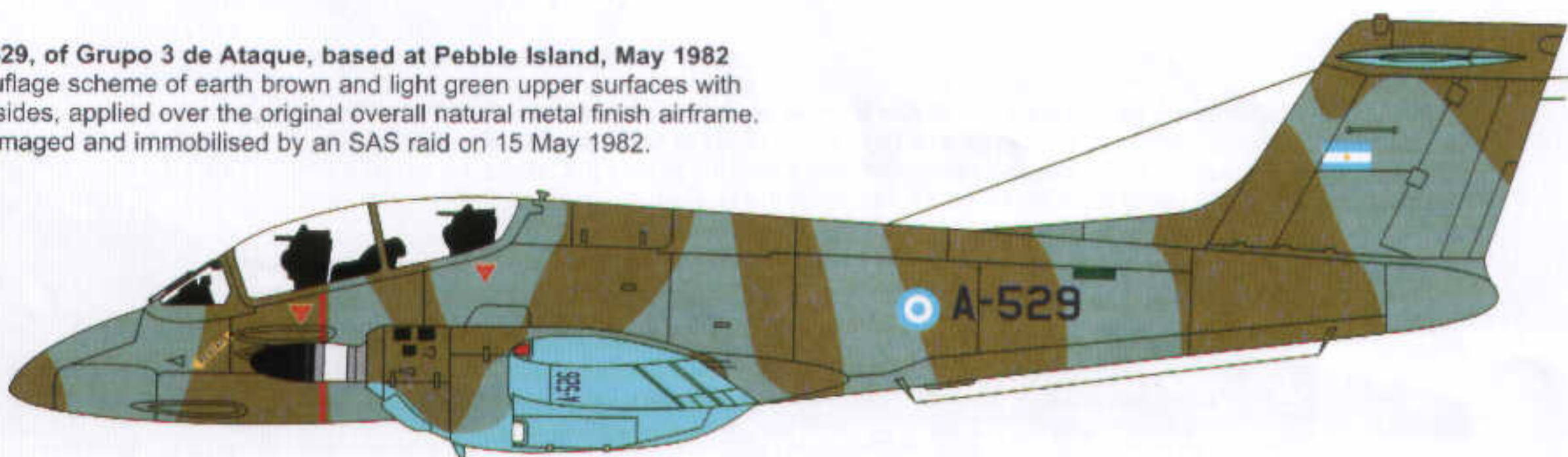
IA.58A Pucara, A-526, of Grupo 3 de Ataque, based at Port Stanley airport, June 1982

Overall natural metal airframe. Note the variations in the tones of metal. This aircraft was another of the *Grupo 3 de Ataque* aircraft damaged and abandoned at Port Stanley after the conflict.



IA.58A Pucara, A-529, of Grupo 3 de Ataque, based at Pebble Island, May 1982

Field-applied camouflage scheme of earth brown and light green upper surfaces with medium blue undersides, applied over the original overall natural metal finish airframe. This aircraft was damaged and immobilised by an SAS raid on 15 May 1982.

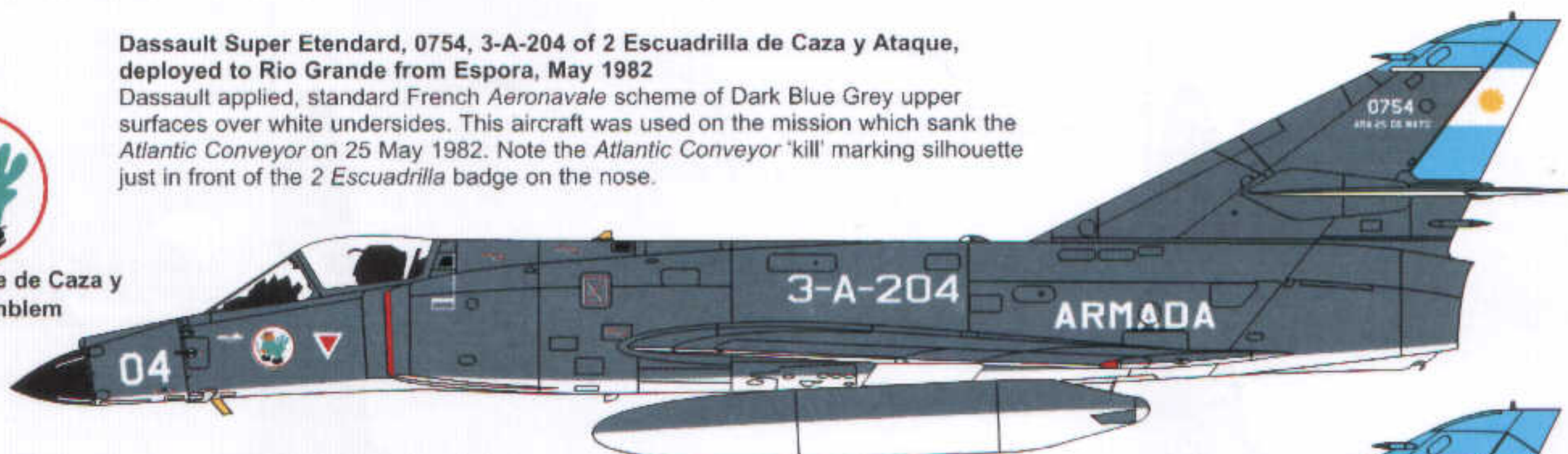




2a Escuadrilla de Caza y Ataque emblem

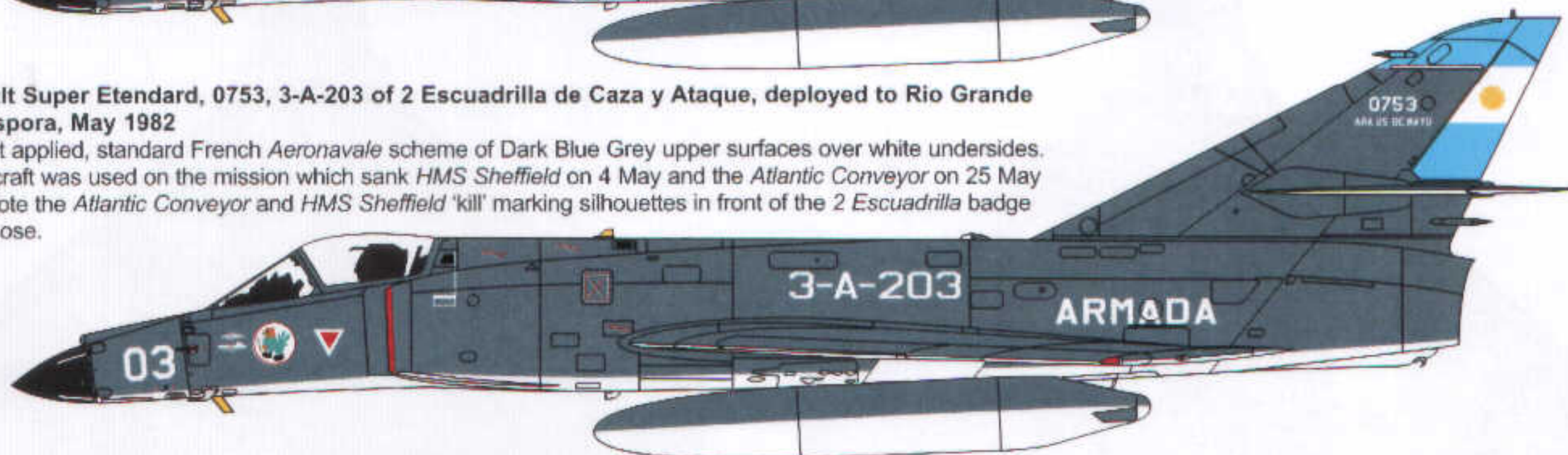
Dassault Super Etendard, 0754, 3-A-204 of 2 Escuadrilla de Caza y Ataque, deployed to Rio Grande from Espora, May 1982

Dassault applied, standard French *Aeronavale* scheme of Dark Blue Grey upper surfaces over white undersides. This aircraft was used on the mission which sank the *Atlantic Conveyor* on 25 May 1982. Note the *Atlantic Conveyor* 'kill' marking silhouette just in front of the 2 *Escuadrilla* badge on the nose.



Dassault Super Etendard, 0753, 3-A-203 of 2 Escuadrilla de Caza y Ataque, deployed to Rio Grande from Espora, May 1982

Dassault applied, standard French *Aeronavale* scheme of Dark Blue Grey upper surfaces over white undersides. This aircraft was used on the mission which sank *HMS Sheffield* on 4 May and the *Atlantic Conveyor* on 25 May 1982. Note the *Atlantic Conveyor* and *HMS Sheffield* 'kill' marking silhouettes in front of the 2 *Escuadrilla* badge on the nose.

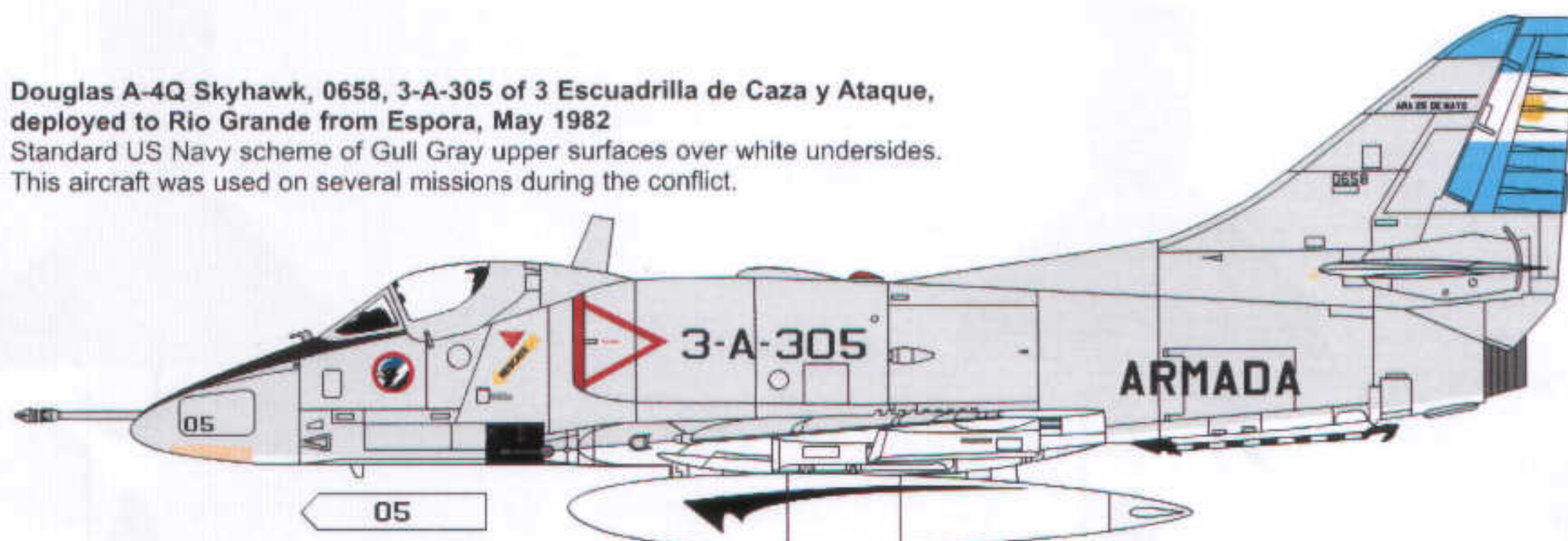


Douglas A-4Q Skyhawk, 0658, 3-A-305 of 3 Escuadrilla de Caza y Ataque, deployed to Rio Grande from Espora, May 1982

Standard US Navy scheme of Gull Gray upper surfaces over white undersides. This aircraft was used on several missions during the conflict.



3 Escuadrilla emblem

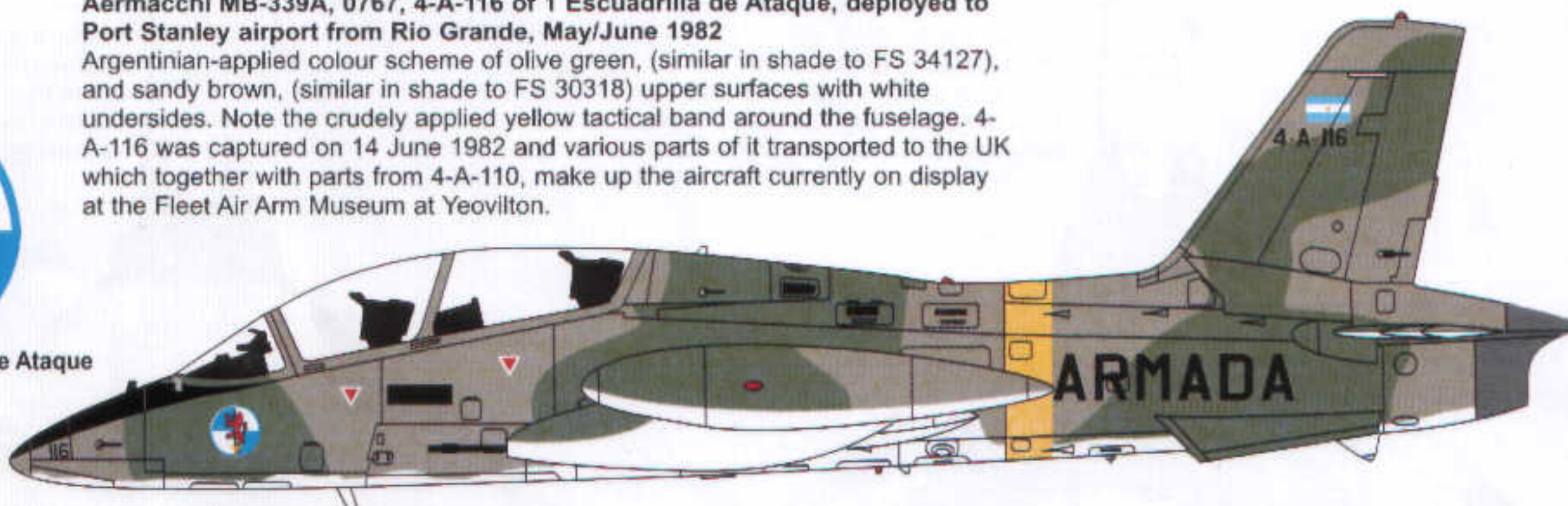


Aermacchi MB-339A, 0767, 4-A-116 of 1 Escuadrilla de Ataque, deployed to Port Stanley airport from Rio Grande, May/June 1982

Argentinian-applied colour scheme of olive green, (similar in shade to FS 34127), and sandy brown, (similar in shade to FS 30318) upper surfaces with white undersides. Note the crudely applied yellow tactical band around the fuselage. 4-A-116 was captured on 14 June 1982 and various parts of it transported to the UK which together with parts from 4-A-110, make up the aircraft currently on display at the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton.



1 Escuadrilla Aeronavale de Ataque Emblem

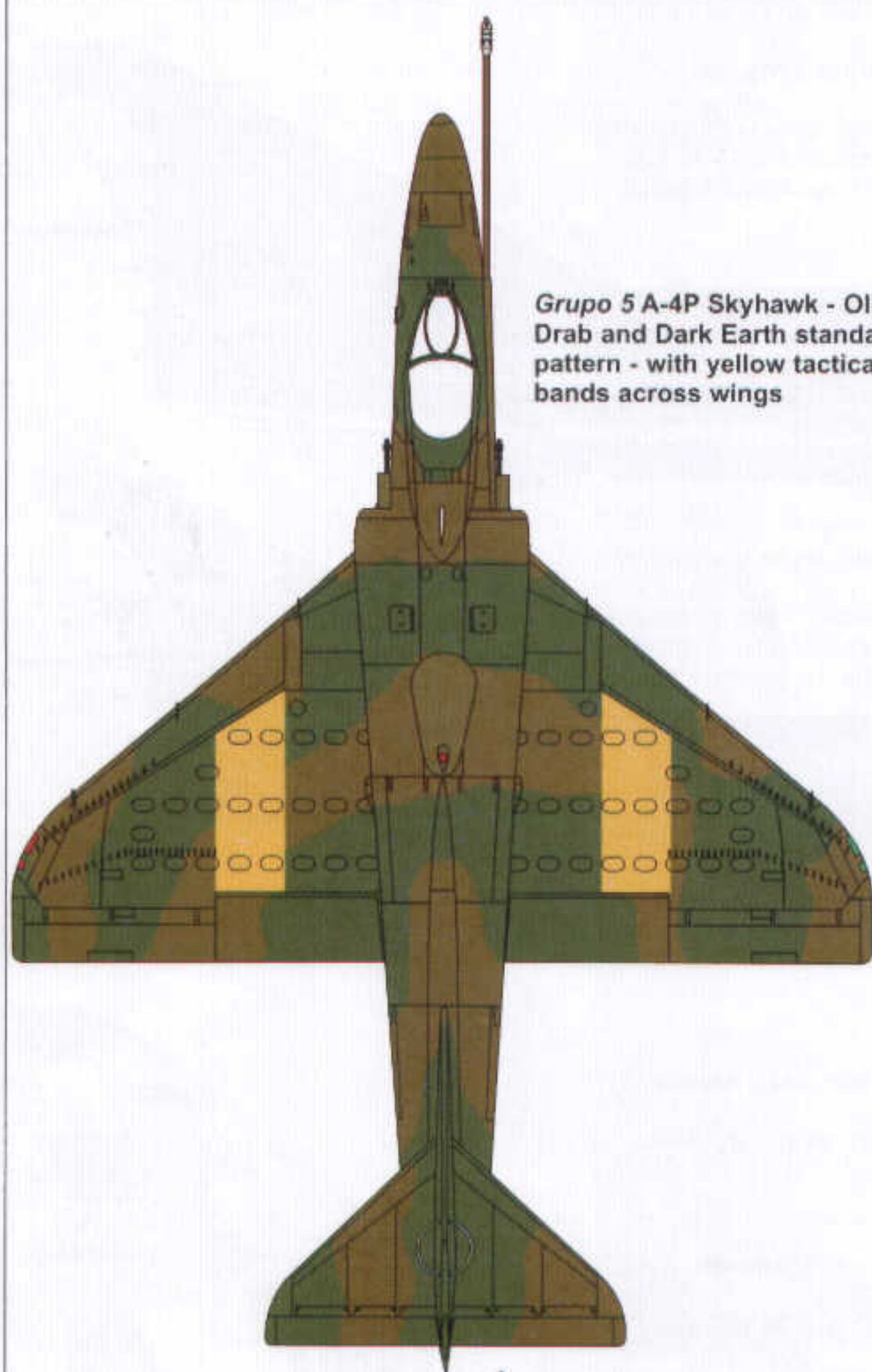


Beechcraft T-34C Turbo Mentor, 0729, 411 of 4 Escuadrilla de Ataque, Pebble Island, May 1982

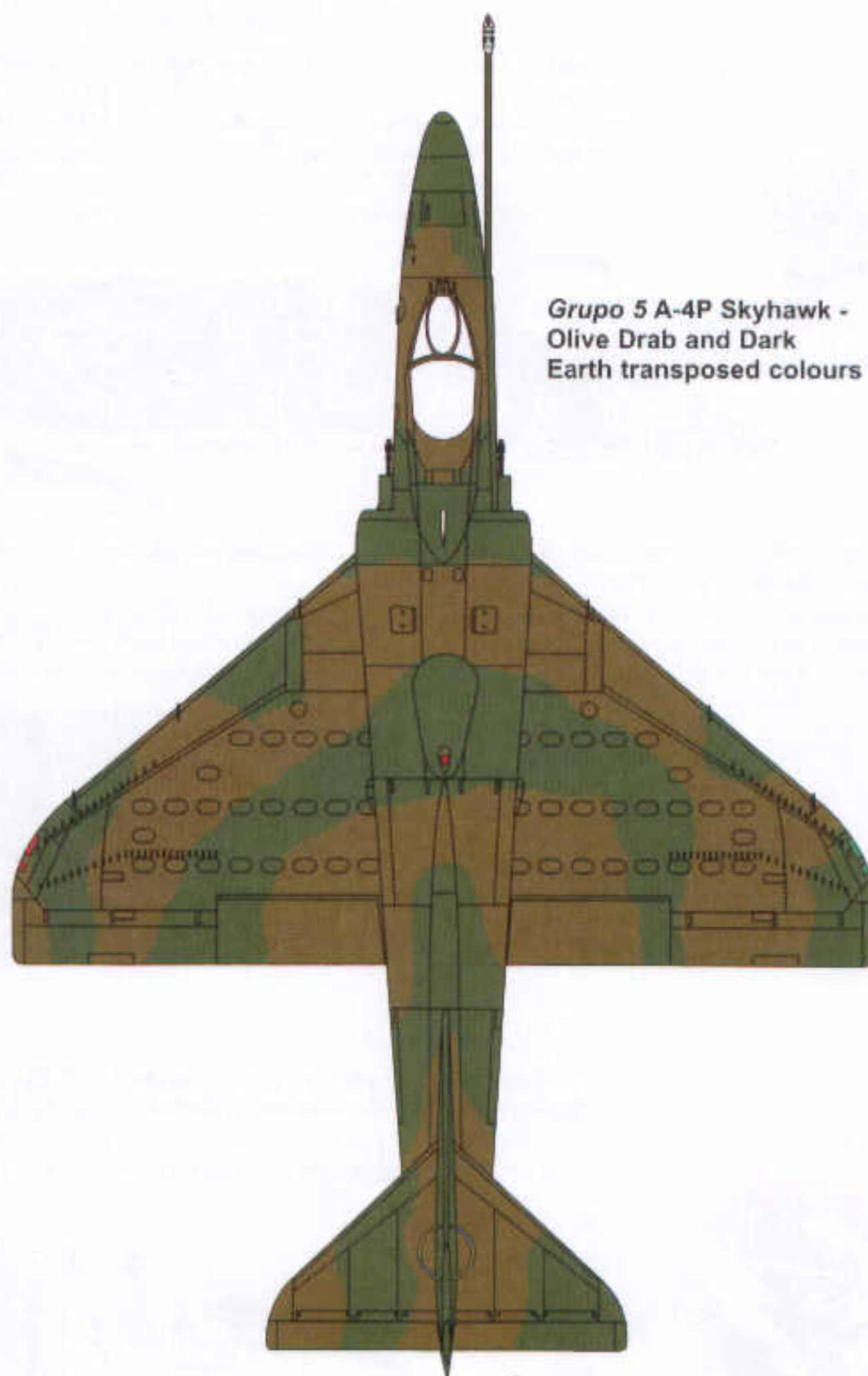
Argentinian-applied colour scheme of medium green, (similar in shade to FS 34272), and sandy brown, (similar in shade to FS 30318) upper surfaces with white undersides. Note the crudely applied red tactical band around the rear fuselage. 411 was disabled by rifle fire during the 15 May SAS raid on Pebble island, but subsequently captured relatively intact and transported to the UK.

It is also currently on display at the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton.

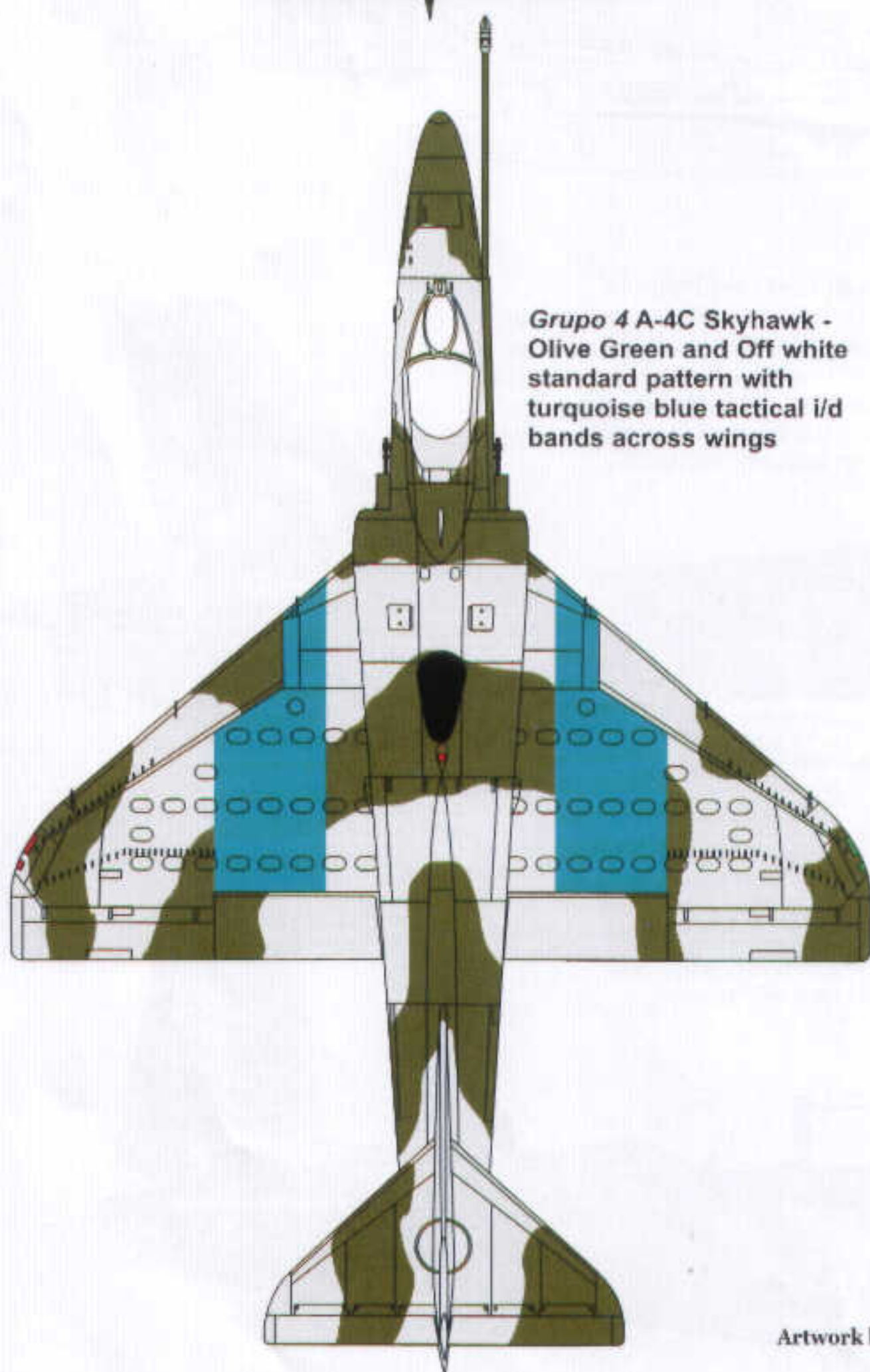




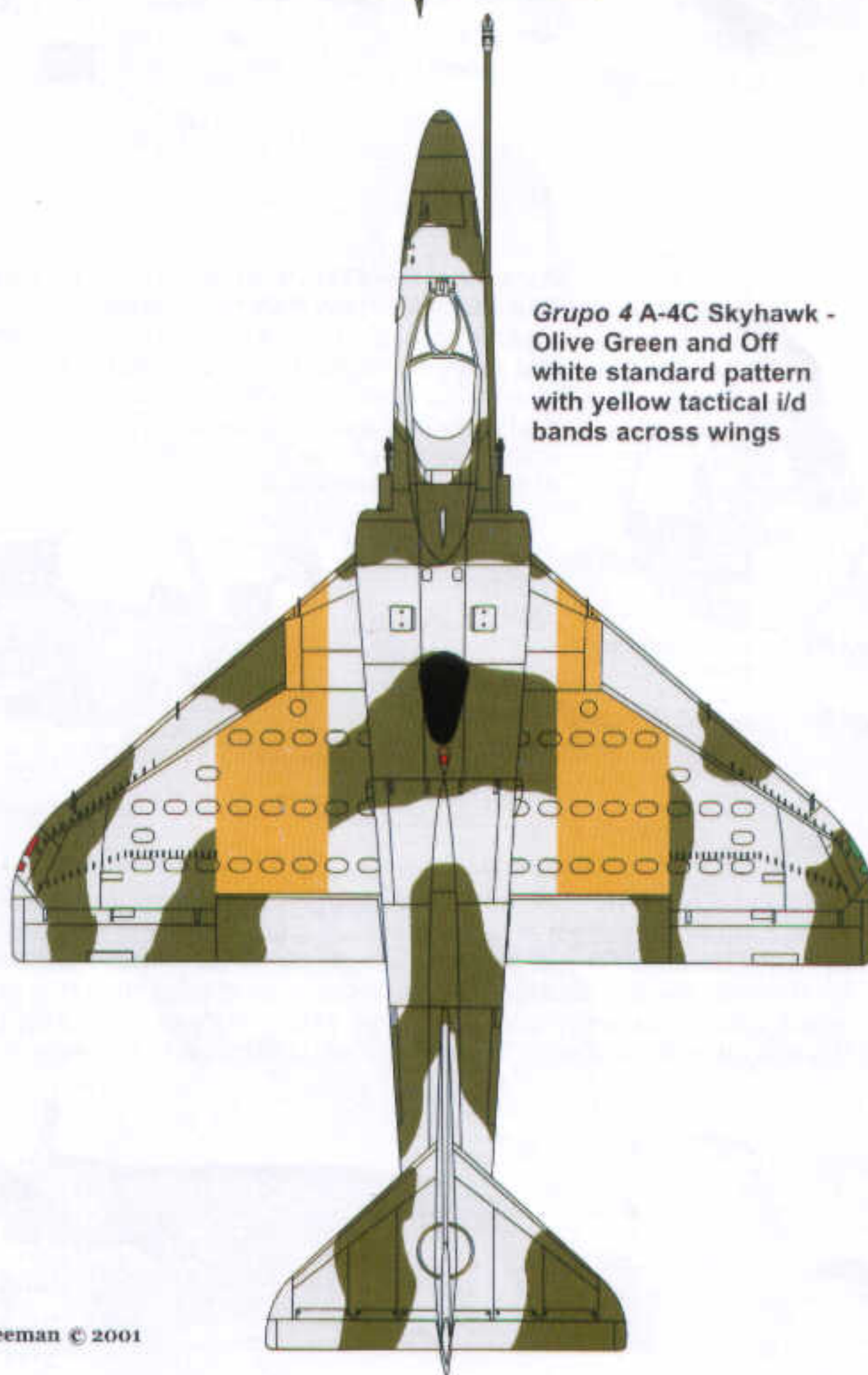
Grupo 5 A-4P Skyhawk - Olive Drab and Dark Earth standard pattern - with yellow tactical i/d bands across wings



Grupo 5 A-4P Skyhawk - Olive Drab and Dark Earth transposed colours



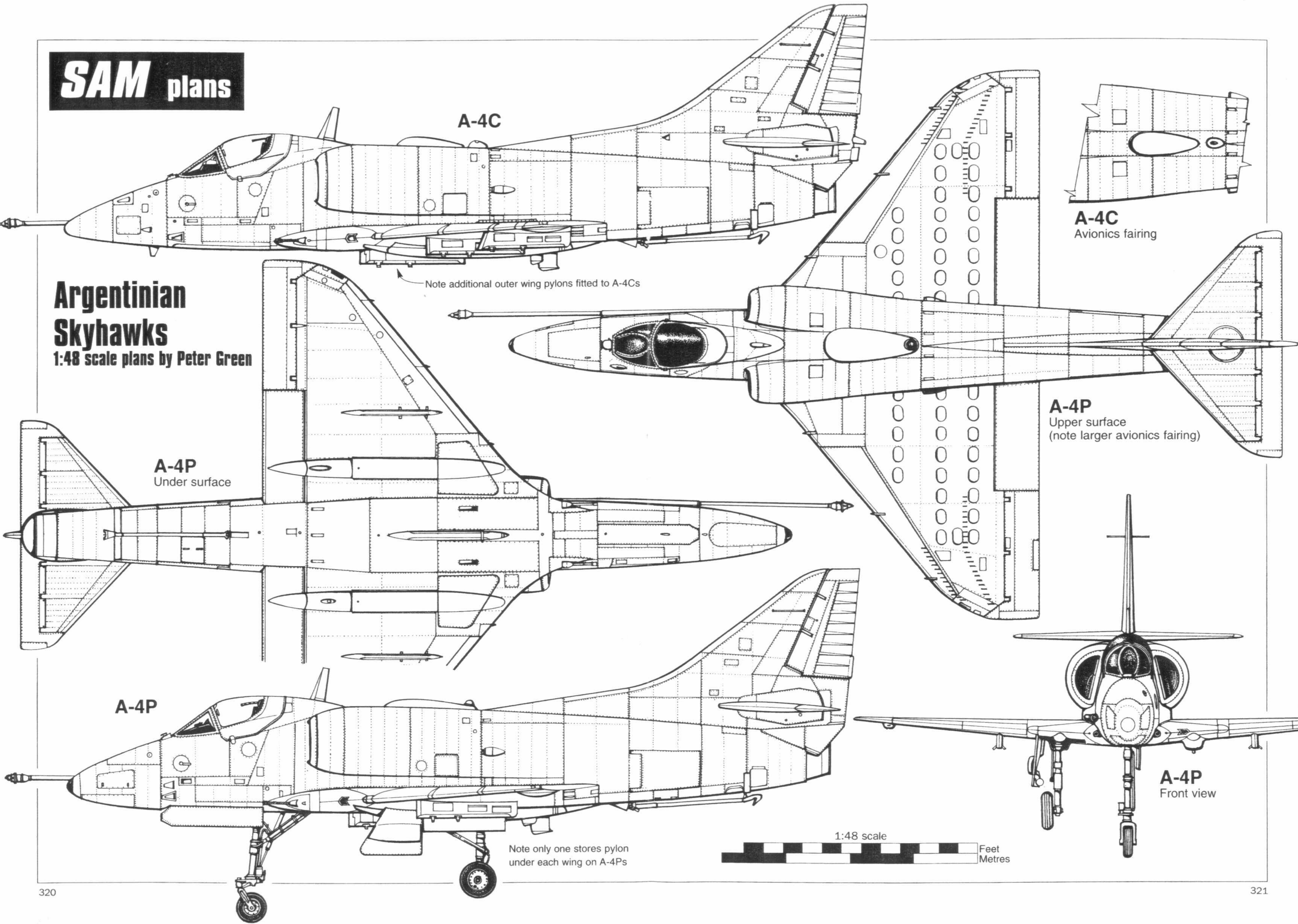
Grupo 4 A-4C Skyhawk - Olive Green and Off white standard pattern with turquoise blue tactical i/d bands across wings



Grupo 4 A-4C Skyhawk - Olive Green and Off white standard pattern with yellow tactical i/d bands across wings

Artwork by Jon Freeman © 2001

**Argentinian
Skyhawks**
1:48 scale plans by Peter Green



A-4C

A-4C
Avionics fairing

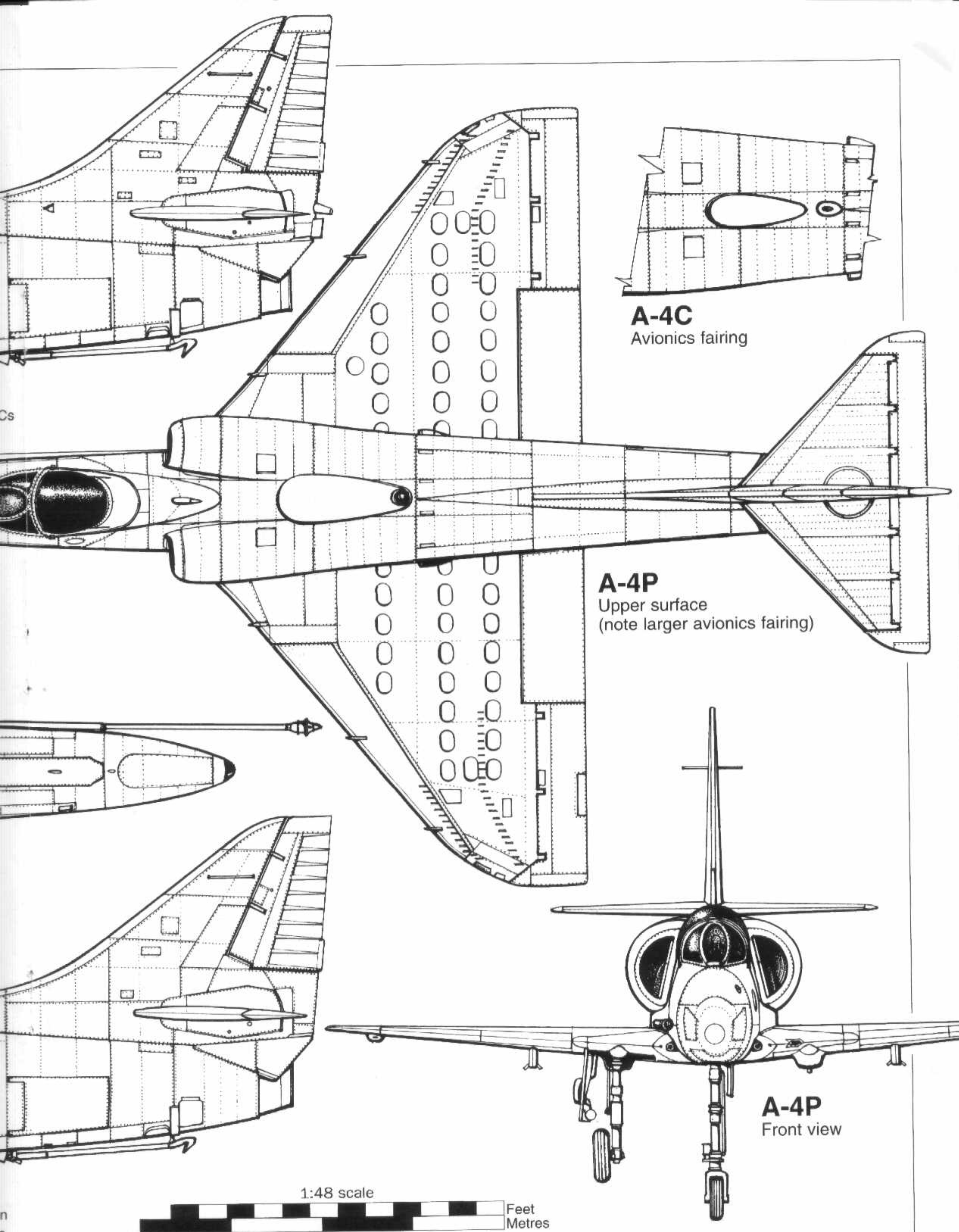
A-4P
Upper surface
(note larger avionics fairing)

A-4P
Under surface

A-4P

A-4P
Front view

1:48 scale
Feet
Metres



A-4C

Argentinian Skyhawks

1:48 scale plans by Peter Green

Note additional outer wing pylons fitted to A-4Cs

A-4P

Under surface

A-4P

Note only one stores pylon
under each wing on A-4Ps