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**Application of the Core Functions**  
**by the**  
**Tactical Commander**

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The application of the core functions prior to and during the British attack at Goose Green will be reviewed here to illustrate how a tactical commander can apply these core functions to bring success to an operation. The core functions are know; shape; strike; shield; adapt and sustain. When combined within the Battlefield Organisation the core functions provide a framework that ensures structure on the battlefield critical to the manoeuvrist approach to warfare<sup>1</sup>. The commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Regiment (2 Para), Lieutenant Colonel Herbert “H” Jones was ordered to carry out a raid on Goose Green isthmus and to capture the settlements before withdrawing and becoming 3 Commando’s reserve<sup>2</sup>. Within these mission constraints the operation was planned. Firstly, knowledge of the enemy and his dispositions would need to be established both prior and during the battle. At the same time the British forces and their intent was required to be hidden from the Argentineans. The attacks by the battalions companies would strike and overcome the enemy. Each phased attack, of which there were several, would be combined with supporting actions that aimed to ensure success. A reserve would be maintained to allow 2 Para to adapt and exploit situations that developed during the battle. Finally, the battalion attack would need to be supplied.

The core function know describes the gathering of information. This gathering of information occurs before and during the engagement of the main force. Prior to 2 Para’s attack a number of aspects of the Argentinean forces deployed around Goose Green were known, though detail was lacking. This information was gained through several sources and when combined built a picture on which 2 Para’s operation was based. It was known for example that there were anti-aircraft defences and Pucara aircraft located at Goose Green from early May as a result of aerial attack by Harriers<sup>3</sup>. An estimate of ground force densities had been made, though it would be inaccurate, from mid May<sup>4</sup>. Attempts were made to confirm Argentinean positions and

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<sup>1</sup> Headquarters Training Command – Army, *Australian Land Warfare Doctrine LWD 1 The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, 2002, pg 70.

<sup>2</sup> M, Adkin, *Goose Green: A Battle is Fought to be Won*, London: Cassell & Co, 1992, pg 147.

<sup>3</sup> D Aldea, Blood and Mud at Goose Green, *Military History*; April 2002, Vol. 19 Issue 1, pg 45.

<sup>4</sup> L Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign Volume II: War and Diplomacy*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2005, pg 560.

strengths by aerial photographic imagery from aircraft camera pods mounted on Harriers, these were however of poor quality<sup>5</sup>.

A tactical commander's best means of obtaining detailed information are his own patrols and observation of the enemy<sup>6</sup>. However, with deep patrolling tasks allocated to special forces elements, 3 Commando Brigade, and 2 Para in particular, had not undertaken aggressive patrolling of the area prior to the battle<sup>7</sup>. Initial SAS reports indicated a company sized defence. This was later revised and by the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May the Argentinean strength in the vicinity of Goose Green was estimated at three rifle companies plus reconnaissance and support elements. This was then again revised upward to around 1000 defenders<sup>8</sup>. Fourteen Argentine positions had been identified and that the terrain was open with the Argentine positions spread out in depth down the isthmus<sup>9</sup>. Less hard intelligence existed for the quality of the Argentinean troops<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, while much had been learned of the enemy the information was not complete. However, what had been gathered allowed a plan to be developed.

Shaping operations can occur before the main action. The aim of initial shaping operations is to ensure the overall main effort can achieve success. With the isthmus only two kilometres in width there were reduced options for movement against defensive positions. Requests by 2 Para for a landing by part of the battalion by air was denied due to a shortage of helicopters<sup>11</sup>. Consideration was also given to a landing by at least part of the battalion by sea. This was rejected due to the issue of rocks and kelp that would have disrupted such an action<sup>12</sup>. Either, resources permitting, could have been useful shaping actions drawing off enemy reserves or disguising the point of main effort that was to be delivered along the length of the isthmus. With no

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<sup>5</sup> M Adkin, pg 146.

<sup>6</sup> M Adkin, pg 149

<sup>7</sup> M Adkin, pg 149.

<sup>8</sup> L Freedman, pg 561.

<sup>9</sup> L Freedman, pg 562.

<sup>10</sup> M Adkin, pg 153.

<sup>11</sup> M Hastings, *The Battle for the Falklands*, London: Book Club Associates, 1983, pg 236-237.

<sup>12</sup> M Middlebrook, *Task Force: The Falklands War 1982*, London: Penguin, 1987, pg 254.

choice but an attack along the isthmus Jones selected to conduct a night/day silent/noisy attack<sup>13</sup>. That is, the attack would start at night without preparatory bombardment and go noisy when the enemy was encountered. Later phases would be conducted in daylight hours. By so doing Jones hoped to retain as much surprise as was possible<sup>14</sup>. This in itself was a shaping operation. It ensured the enemy was not sure of where the main effort would come or its strength.

The Argentinean defences were deep and 2 Para's resources were limited. Therefore the plan called for the use of the individual companies with each achieving subsidiary objectives with a battalion reserve being maintained at each stage. For example, C Company would clear the initial route of advance to the battalion start line. The A and D Companies would then move to the next objectives. Once secured B Company would pass through D Company with D Company providing a reserve<sup>15</sup>. The advance down the isthmus was eventually to culminate in the final phase when Darwin and Goose Green would be taken in daylight<sup>16</sup>. The maintenance of a reserve illustrates two core functions. Firstly, that of adapt, as a reserve provides an ability to adapt to a changing situation. Secondly, that of sustain, fresh troops ensuring the momentum can be maintained.

Each phase would have its own shaping operations. For example, during phase two B Company would have the fire support of HMS Arrow<sup>17</sup>. Further, it would be supported by a fire base established by Support Company on the west of Camilla Creek<sup>18</sup>. This fire base was designed to place flanking fire on known Argentine positions near Low Pass. This fire, even when combined with the indirect artillery fire from HMS Arrow, was insufficient to neutralise the enemy. Instead, it was designed to fix and suppress the enemy while B company cleared the position. The result was an enemy weakened by fire that

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<sup>13</sup> M Adkin, pg 159.

<sup>14</sup> M Adkin, pg 159.

<sup>15</sup> L Freedman, pg 567.

<sup>16</sup> M Adkin, pg 161.

<sup>17</sup> M Adkin, pg 160.

<sup>18</sup> M Adkin, pg 160.

was overwhelmed by B Company<sup>19</sup>. Subsequent shaping operations were to continue the use of complimentary weapons systems to assist 2 Para's fighting companies. This could be further fire support from HMS Arrow, the 105mm guns deployed in support of the battalion or even the battalion's own mortars and Milan ATGWs of Support Company<sup>20</sup>. During daylight hours additional support would be provided by helicopters and Harriers<sup>21</sup>.

The core function of strike can also be identified within each phase of the battle. One important phase, which will be examined, was the attack on Darwin Hill. Darwin Hill formed the primary defensive line for Argentinean defence of the isthmus. By the time 2 Para reached the Darwin Hill their attack was progressing more slowly than planned. Daylight had arrived and HMS Arrow was forced to retire due to the risk of aerial attack<sup>22</sup>. Several options were now available. Jones, concerned with the loss of time wanted a quick result<sup>23</sup>. His strike became elements of A Company which he personally led. In the resulting action Jones was killed and command moved to Major Chris Keeble. Keeble now switched his strike to the right flank. Here he first reinforced B Company with Support Company and would provide fire support as a shaping operation<sup>24</sup>. While B Company was supported by the fire of Support Company we see another core function in operation, that of adapt.

The ability of a force to adapt ensures a force is able to respond to a changing situation<sup>25</sup>. The term adapt covers, as with all core functions, many aspects, but includes that of a reserve. As noted previously Jones had allocated a reserve at each stage of his phased attack<sup>26</sup>. Keeble's reserve was now D Company that had now recovered from the night attack it had made earlier. Now D Company moved around the extreme right flank using the shelving of the beach to outflank the Argentinean defences that were suppressed by

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<sup>19</sup> L Freedman, pg 568.

<sup>20</sup> M Adkin, pg 160-161.

<sup>21</sup> M Adkin, pg 161- 165.

<sup>22</sup> L Freedman, pg 568.

<sup>23</sup> L Freedman, pg 569.

<sup>24</sup> L Freedman, pg 571.

<sup>25</sup> Headquarters Training Command – Army, pg 72.

<sup>26</sup> M Adkin, pg 165.

fire<sup>27</sup>. This changing main effort, as a result of developing intelligence and a further example of the know core function in operation, overcame the Argentinean defence at Bocha House and allowed the Darwin Hill position to be turned.

The core function sustain is defined as the provision of appropriate and timely support through the completion of the assigned mission<sup>28</sup>. During the operation 2 Para was often short of resources. Artillery support was limited to three 105mm guns that were continually short of ammunition<sup>29</sup>. In fact ammunition was so short that some fire missions were turned down simply due to insufficient rounds<sup>30</sup>. The battalions own integral fire support was also limited. What ammunition existed had initially been carried by the troops themselves<sup>31</sup>. Even small arms ammunition was in short supply. As the battle progressed additional ammunition brought forward by helicopter was described as being a trickle<sup>32</sup>. The use of BV Volvo tracked vehicles<sup>33</sup> or additional helicopters would have greatly assisted in the sustaining operations.

The final core function to consider is that of shield. This function covers a range of tasks designed to protect friendly forces from enemy action<sup>34</sup>. 2 Para used a number of shielding operations before and during the Battle of Goose Green. When 2 Para had moved to Camilla Creek House patrols were dispatched to gain additional intelligence on the enemy. As well as providing intelligence on enemy positions they also ensured that Argentinean patrols, such as the one that was dispatched and intercepted, were less likely to detect 2 Para's position prior to the battle<sup>35</sup>. While always important it became critical due to the BBC broadcast identifying that British forces were to attack Goose Green<sup>36</sup>. Had the Argentinean patrol uncovered 2 Para's positions the

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<sup>27</sup> L Freedman, pg 571.

<sup>28</sup> Headquarters Training Command, pg 72.

<sup>29</sup> L Freedman, pg 562-563.

<sup>30</sup> M Hastings, pg 244.

<sup>31</sup> M Hastings, pg 238.

<sup>32</sup> M Hastings, pg 248.

<sup>33</sup> M Hastings, pg 238.

<sup>34</sup> Headquarters Training Command, pg 72.

<sup>35</sup> L Freedman, pg 565.

<sup>36</sup> L Freedman, pg 563-565.

Argentinean commander could have repositioned additional troops into blocking positions in front of 2 Para<sup>37</sup>.

Further shielding functions included the establishment of air defences around key components of 2 Para's attack using Blowpipe missile detachments. Of the two detachments available one was deployed with the 105mm guns that were to provide critical indirect fire support while the second detachment would accompany the battalion in the attack<sup>38</sup>. On the afternoon of the 28<sup>th</sup> May, as 2 Para pushed on past Darwin Hill, it came under attack by Argentinean attack aircraft including some that dropped napalm<sup>39</sup>. While no British casualties occurred as a result of these attacks they could have been devastating.

The core functions allow a tactical commander to structure his operation by classification of roles. The core function of know builds an intelligence picture of the enemy forces. This function was completed reasonably successfully at Goose Green both prior to and during the operation allowing the flanking position at Bocha house to be used. At Goose Green shielding operations protected British forces from Argentinean patrolling and assisted in protecting elements from attack from Argentinean aircraft. The shaping operations undertaken by 2 Para's support formations included the fires conducted by HMS Arrow, 105mm artillery and Harrier strikes. Other shaping operations included the direct support by GPMG's, Milan and mortars integral to the battalion. Resources permitting they could have included aerial envelopment. The sustaining operations undertaken at Goose Green were limited by transportation resources both prior and during the action. As such significant strain was placed on 2 Para, which was both short of ammunition and support elements. Likewise the ability of the battalion to adapt was limited. 2 Para was forced to rely on creating and maintaining a reserve from it's own fighting elements rather than the use of additional brigade assets. However, even a small battalion reserve was found critical to overcoming the Argentinean

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<sup>37</sup> L Freedman, pg 558.

<sup>38</sup> L Freedman, pg 563.

<sup>39</sup> L Freedman, pg 573.

defences around Darwin Hill. The final core function of strike fell to the infantry companies that made up 2 Para that fought progressively down the isthmus to their final objective of Goose Green and victory.

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