Like most militaries, Argentine Armed Force prepared military plans for those scenarios that they felt were the most compelling for their country. National-level war planning, however, was not a joint activity before the Malvinas/Falkland War—except in time of internal crisis, and even then joint cooperation tended to be accomplished by ad hoc committees. For routine planning, each service prepared its own plans, with the Argentine Navy naturally focused on the South Atlantic, constantly updating theoretical plans for the repossession of the islands.

In January 1982, the Argentine Navy Chief of Naval Operations was ordered to prepare a plan to take back the Malvinas without necessarily defending them. Each service appointed a representative to work in a small and secret group. With negotiations between Argentina and Britain scheduled to resume in February 1982, the joint planning group believe it had a few months to finalize planning should negotiations fail. A military operation, if it were to occur, was likely to happen between July and October 1982.

However, events were to escalate during the second-half of March 1982, and finally, an Argentine Task Force repossessed the islands on April 2nd, 1982, by means of a joint military operation.

Until April 2 all had gone according to plan for the Argentine junta. Both the Malvinas and South Georgia were repossessed with a minimal loss of life to themselves, and what was believed to be politically more important, no loss of life to the British. Here, the military clock was supposed to have stopped running.

But, plans had to be changed, as the British government dispatched a Naval Task Force on April 5th, to recapture the islands.
On April 7th, General Galtieri signed Decree Nbr 700 establishing the South Atlantic Theater of Operations and designating Vice-admiral Lombardo as its commander, with authority to exercise all functions except military governorship. Thus, he had now to prepare the military defense for the Malvinas.

As Clausewitz says in his *Principles of War*, *The conduct of war resembles the workings of an intricate machine with tremendous friction, so that combination which are easily planned on paper can be executed only with great effort*.¹

A Military Committee was created that included all of the members of the Junta, the South Atlantic Theatre of Operations commander, the Strategic Air Commander, and the Joint Staff Commander, as well as the Foreign Minister.

On April 12th, Lombardo’s headquarters issued Plan Esquemático Nbr 1/82 a South Atlantic Theater of Operations Schematic (Operations) Plan with annexes that outlined a general scheme for defense and provided tasks for component commanders.

Nevertheless, as the political level differences between the services tended to be unresolved, communications further down to the chain of command reflected independent operations that spawned miscommunication, arguments, and confusion at the Operational Level.

These circumstances also had to be solved in anticipation of the British invasion, which seemed imminent by mid-May. Guidance had been given to brigadier-general Menendez to maintain personal contact with the operational commanders to ensure more fluid cooperation among the services in defending the islands. Additionally, the South Atlantic Theater of Operations Command was moved from Puerto Belgrano to Comodoro Rivadavia to preclude delays executing a defensive strategy. Additionally, it was determined that General García, the most senior among the operational commanders, would have the decisive voice in making operational-level decisions.

While the Argentine media in Buenos Aires trumpeted the successes that had occurred on their National Day,² the Junta met to assess the on-going military situation and the need for better operational-level decision making. Building upon its decisions a week prior, the Military Committee decided to place General Osvaldo García, who had commanded the initial invasion forces, back in charge on May 23rd, with unified command below him (at first), both for combat operations and logistics. Information and requests from subordinate commands would come through the Centro de Operaciones Conjuntas [Joint Operations Center] (CEOPECON) to General García, ensuring that the Military Committee was kept informed. Military Committee approval of decisions wasn’t required, but they would become involved in requests for additional resources and resolution of major issues.

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² Container ship Atlantic Conveyor and destroyer Type 42 HMS Coventry were sunk on May 25th, 1982.
Despite these efforts to work together, throughout the fighting, the Argentine armed forces rarely had a jointness vision of the conflict. In truth, the Argentine lack of "jointness" was the rule among world militaries and not the exception. "Jointness" was especially difficult for the Argentina armed forces, for they had found themselves in opposite sides in the occasional inter-services feuds that arose following World War II. Therefore, each Argentine armed force fought its own war against a more unified British military machine, which also experimented similar problems, but had the convenient speed to react.

In Beaumont’s words: "Trying to reduce jointness and opposition to it to rational, measurable terms matches the dilemma of the biologist who must kill to dissect, since the separate roots of this conflict rise from the common ground of intense human emotions." 3

The documentary research for this paper will also refer to the recently opened archives by the Argentine Government, known as the "Rattenbach Report", which includes as annexes, the Operations Plans, and the written testimonies of the leading officers at the Strategic Operational Level on the Argentine side.

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