

The Falkland Islands Defence Force

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Introduction

This article is intended to be an introduction to the Falkland Islands Defence Force (FIDF).

In June 1982 a Chilean steamer, with 200 armed men aboard, called at Port William for repairs. The presence of so many armed men was considered to be a threat to the islands, and so the governor formed the Falkland Islands Volunteers, with an initial strength of 37 men, to provide the islands with an indigenous defence force.



FIDF Cap Badge

The World Wars

During the First World War, the islands were placed on a war footing, and the Volunteers were stationed in outposts around Stanley, the capital. It was one of these outposts that first spotted the smoke of the German East Asia Squadron as it headed for the Falklands. The outpost provided information on the movement of the German ships before and after the subsequent Battle of the Falkland Islands. The Volunteers were stood down in 1919, and later the same year, the name of the force was changed to the Falkland Islands Defence Force.

During the Second World War, the FIDF was stationed in outposts throughout the islands. In 1942, they were joined by a battalion of the 11th West Yorkshire Regiment, stationed in Stanley. The islands saw no action during the war, although Port Stanley was an important staging post for the Royal Navy (A badly damaged HMS Exeter repaired to Port Stanley after the Battle of the River Plate).

Post War

A Royal Marine presence was established in the islands in 1952. Following this, the FIDF adopted Royal Marine drill, trained with the Marines, and adopted a dress uniform similar to that of the Marines.

In 1966, 20 armed El Condor nationalists (Argentinian revolutionaries) hijacked a DC-4 aircraft and forced the pilot to land on Stanley Racecourse. After landing, four islanders were taken hostage and the Argentine flag was

run up, before the FIDF and Royal Marines contained the aircraft and hijackers. After being deprived of food, water, sleep and food, the hijackers surrendered, with no loss of life. The British authorities returned the hijackers to Argentina. The FIDF was kept on heightened alert, with a section on permanent standby, until February 1967. In November 1968 a light aircraft from Argentina landed on Eliza Cove Road, and the FIDF was deployed once again to contain the aircraft. In this case, however, the passengers were unarmed Argentine journalists.

When Argentina invaded the islands on 1st April 1982, the FIDF was mobilised along with the Royal Marine detachment on the islands. On the following morning, the governor of the islands ordered the surrender of the FIDF and Royal Marines. The Argentines declared the FIDF an illegal organisation and arrested several members, holding them under house arrest in Fox Bay until the Argentine surrender. The FIDF was reformed in 1983.

The FIDF currently has sniper/recce, machine gun, close combat, amphibious and logistic support units. In peacetime, it provides mountain rescue and search-and-rescue teams to the civilian government. Equipment includes Steyr AUG assault rifles, GPMGs, 0.50" HMGs, Land Rovers, quad bikes and rigid raiders. In addition, it has excellent support and night-vision equipment and a communications system that includes GPS navigation and in-field e-mail. The FIDF employs a Royal Marine Warrant Officer Class 2 as a permanent staff instructor.

Sources

The article was inspired by a BBC new article:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/629/629/6661481.stm

General information on the FIDF and Falkland Islands history:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falkland_Islands_Defence_Force

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_of_the_Falkland_Islands

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falkland_Islands

<http://www.falklands.info>

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<http://www.sotcw.net>