

The mounting costs of military exploits: Duncan Campbell

FOUR WEEKS ago, we reported on the estimated £1.7 billion cost of the war, and of operating a garrison for Port Stanley and the Islands for three years. The costs have since mounted considerably, primarily because of the major naval losses, and the duration of the engagement. They now amount to over £2.1 billion.

Various assessments made in the article (NS 21.5.82) have since been confirmed. The carrier *Invincible*, it appears (from Mrs Thatcher's pleasure at the Australian government's announcement that it would not enforce the contract of sale) will remain; net cost £175 million.

The Argentines have been spared no face-saving quarter, either in their military defeat or in the subsequent administrative arrangements for the Islands. Mrs Thatcher and Defence Secretary John Nott have also made a variety of off-the-cuff remarks about the extent of forces required on the Falklands in the way of a (semi-) permanent garrison. They have confirmed the need for each of the elements described — a bri-

gade or larger sized garrison, RAF air defence and missile squadrons, nuclear submarines, naval pickets, RAF transport and maritime reconnaissance forces.

In addition to the present — in many areas almost total-withdrawal of British forces from NATO (see table 2), Mrs Thatcher and other ministers have now implied that the defence costs of the garrison may be met by making some

NATO withdrawals permanent. This will be in addition to reductions in the strength of the Rhine Army in the 1981 Defence Review.

The new units which will go to the Falklands to provide air defence will have to be directly withdrawn from Britain's own defences; a squadron of Phantoms, and a major long-range radar, similar to that operated by the Ar-

gentines near Stanley. Unless the Argentine unit is both undamaged and confiscated as a spoil of war (which is unlikely), then the only available replacement is one of the mobile radar columns which had been intended to augment the vulnerable static radar stations along Britain's east coast.

The ditching of part of this long-overdue improvement will be only one of the extraordinary — and wholly predictable — impacts of the Falklands on defence policy. □

Cost of war: update

1. Major equipment losses

(at 15 June)	£ms
2 Type 42 destroyers	250
2 Type 21 frigates	160
6 Harriers (RAF and Navy)	30
5 Sea King, 2 Wessex,	
1 Gazelle, 1 Scout, 2 Chinook	25
1 Container ship	25
1 landing ship, 1 landing craft	20
Major repairs (2 Type 42	
destroyers, 3 frigates)	25

2. Task Force

(for 3½ months service) 306

3. New Facilities

45

4. Garrison and protection

(for 3 years) 714

5. New naval spending

535

TOTAL £2.1bn.

The weakening of NATO

1. Units withdrawn for the task force

British Army on the Rhine and 2nd Allied Tactical Air Force

- RAF Missile Regiment
- Blowpipe detachments of infantry brigades
- 2 Harrier ground support squadrons
- 2 Engineer regiments
- Helicopter support squadron

UK/Netherlands amphibious force (for north Norway)

- all UK elements except 1 Marine Commando Regiment
- Anti Submarine Group 2 (Carriers, Nimrod, submarines and support ships)*

— all withdrawn except some hunter-killer submarines

Baltic and Eastern Atlantic Task Groups

- all withdrawn

Allied Mobile Force and UK Mobile Force

- 1 brigade plus support units

UK Air Defence Region

- 2 Squadrons Victor tankers

2. Units required for static Falklands garrison

(Infantry brigade, RAF missile regiment and part of anti submarine group as above)

UK Air Defence Region

- 1 squadron Phantom interceptors
- Mobile radar system redeployed