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# Defense Report

AUSA



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## Aircraft, Ships and Missiles Helped —but Foot Soldiers Won the Battle of the Falklands

The recent British victory in the Falkland Islands serves to reemphasize a military fact of life sometimes overlooked in this age of advanced technology: that no military victory is truly won until your soldiers hold the ground in dispute.

Reporting on the fighting in the far South Atlantic tended to focus most heavily on the weaponry being used.

Ships, missiles and aircraft were closely rated on their effectiveness. This sort of materiel-related news coverage continued long after the British forces were ashore.

In some measure, this may have been due to the fact that most observers simply expected a good, solid performance by the professional soldiers of the British Army and Royal Marines, whether they were from one of the proud historic regiments or belonged to the just-as-proud and exceptionally competent Gurkha regiment. The news coverage of the fighting ashore was mostly of the "bare bones" variety but reflected steady progress by the British forces against numerically superior Argentine defenders.

To the professional soldiers of other armies throughout the world, however, the performance of the British landing force exemplified how much can be achieved through solid, tough training of individuals and units. It exemplified, as well, the dramatic impact of imaginative, aggressive leadership and, as far as the Argentine soldiers were concerned, the disadvantage of letting your opponent bring the fighting to you.

This was an unfortunate little war that should never have happened. Hundreds of men died and other hundreds were wounded because the leaders of one nation miscalculated the determination of another nation to defend its interests. But, for all the technological lessons to be studied by the people who design, produce and buy weapons of war, there are two other major teaching points: first, no nation can afford to create uncertainty about its ability—and will—to defend itself. Second, and equally important, to matter what kind of war is fought, there is no true victor until the soldiers of one nation gain control of the disputed territory.