



Health from Blood

Army Blood Supply Depot, emblem.

How the Argentine blood exchange came about.

During the Falklands War we had one main Hospital Ship, SS *Uganda*, this was a P&O, Students Educational Cruise Ship that was requisitioned by the MOD on 10th April 1982, and it docked in Gibraltar and discharged its passengers, and over a period of 60 hours it was converted into a Hospital Ship and began sailing south.

The **Army Blood Supply Depot**; collected 800 units of blood on **26th April 1982**, from two donor sessions. On each occasion the depot was engaged in a beat the clock operation to get blood out to Ascension for a deadline. Civilian and military staff worked overtime for each of the sessions- on one occasion right through until four in the morning. The first mass session was an HMS *Collingwood* at Gosport and the second covered two venues - RAF Halton and the Coldstream Guards at Caterham. The blood was then transported to waiting aircraft at RAF Lyneham and Brize Norton, and then flown to the Ascension Island.

This blood had an expiry date of 31st May 1982.

On **28th April 1982**, SS *Uganda* reached Ascension Island, and took on board **+360** units of blood supplied by the **Army Blood Supply Depot**.

Below is written by **Robert McGrann; Medical Technician 1(L)** Royal Navy.

He worked in the Pathology Laboratory aboard the SS *Uganda* during Operation Corporate.

The area on the Hospital Ship SS Uganda designated as the Pathology Laboratory, was the cocktail bar. The blood units were stored in three locations;

For ready to use stock, was stored in the drinks cabinet's beer fridges in the cocktail bar.

For back up stock, the egg store and a refrigerated unit located on the bow of the ship was utilised.

The temperature in these facilities was monitored twice daily to ensure safe storage of the units.

Prior to the British landings on 21st May 1982, a further **+415** units of blood would be collected from the crew of several ships, including sailors, soldiers, merchant seamen and civilian crew members who would all willingly donate their blood.

Army Blood Supply Depot **+360** units of blood.

HMS Hydra**+175** units of blood.

HMS Hecla.....**+57** units of blood.

SS Canberra.....**+85** units of blood.

SS Uganda.....**+98** units of blood.

Total blood supply for the campaign+ 775 units of blood

Lt Commander (Rtd) **Mark Trasler** MBE Royal Navy, who at the time was in charge of the blood room aboard SS *Uganda* (he was not a haematologist but a **Royal Navy Medical Technician**), he kindly sent me his, Laboratory work load, from 23rd April to 7th July 1982.

The document supplied has all the numbers for blood ins and outs aboard Hospital Ship SS *Uganda* for the entire Falklands Campaign, and it revealed SS *Uganda*'s total blood stock was **+775** blood units.

ANNEX A TO PATHOLOGY REPORT

LABORATORY WORKLOAD 23 APRIL TO 7 JULY 1982

Haematology

Test	Number	Percent
Haemoglobin	411	39
Packed Cell Volume	531	50
White Cell Count	69	6
Differential Count	16	1
Sedimentation Rate	12	
Film of Malarial Parasites	6	
Bleeding Time	1	
TOTAL	1046	

Blood Transfusion

Blood Groups	204
Cross Matches	121 (412 units)
Blood Donors	98

Blood Supplies and Disposal

	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Army Blood Supply Depot	360	
HMS HYDRA	175	
HMS HECLA	57	
SS CANBERRA	85	
SS UGANDA	98	
HMS HERMES		36
Field Hospital Ajax Bay		283
Transfused in UGANDA		298
TOTAL	775	619
NOT USED OUTDATED		158

1. 72% of blood cross matched in UGANDA was used.
2. 38% of total supplies were used in UGANDA.
3. 41% of total supplies sent to other units (utilization not known).
4. 20% of blood supply not used.
5. 300 units of outdated blood were received from SS CANBERRA and were disposed of.

On 30th April 1982, Hospital Ship SS *Uganda* begins sailing south.

04th May 1982, HMS *Sheffield* is sunk, deaths and casualties. (Casualties from HMS *Sheffield* are taken aboard HMS *Hermes*).

12th May 1982, SS *Uganda* embarked 4 casualties from HMS *Hermes* – 1 stretcher case and 3 walking wounded. SS *Uganda* gives HMS *Hermes* **+36** units of blood from its blood stock.

On 20th May 1982, SS *Uganda* would for the first time, meet up with all three ambulance (transport) ships, HMS *Hydra*, *Hecla* and *Herald*.

20th May 1982, SS *Uganda*, received 7 British casualties, and 24 Argentine casualties (crew of *FV Narwal*).

21st May 1982, HMS *Ardent* is sunk, deaths and casualties.

23rd May 1982, HMS *Antelope* is sunk, deaths and casualties.

23rd May 1982, clash of blue on blue, 3 Para, 8 VSI wounded.

25th May 1982, HMS *Coventry* is sunk, deaths and casualties.

25th May 1982, *Atlantic Conveyor* is sunk, deaths and casualties.

25th May 1982, SS *Uganda*. 10:00 (LT) (local time) received **9** casualties, 10:30 received **11** casualties, more casualties continue to arrive – too many to count, night flying to receive more casualties' busiest day so far.

26th May 1982, SS *Uganda*. **74** casualties aboard.

28th June 1982, battle for Goose Green begins.

29th May 1982, SS *Uganda*, received three Sea Kings with about **30** casualties from 2 Para, injured at Goose Green.

30th May 1982, SS *Uganda*, received three Sea Kings with casualties, plus No1 Surgical Support Team (SST1) from HMS *HERMES*—welcome extra medical staff.

31st May 1982, of the **+360** units of blood taken aboard at Ascension Island on **28th April 1982**, this blood has now expired leaving SS *Uganda* with approximately **+415** units of blood or less.

31st May, 1982, SS *Uganda*, 09:30 Back to Grantham Sound continued to receive casualties by eight helicopters, mainly Argentine.

03rd June 1982, SS *Uganda*, received **12** casualties.

04th June 1982, Hospital Ship SS *Uganda* rendezvoused with **Hospital Ship ARA *Bahia Paraiso* (B-1)**, British Medical Officer In Charge (MOIC) Andrew Rintoul and two senior surgeons are transported by the Argentine Puma helicopter AE-506, to the ARA *Bahia Paraiso*, during this meeting with the Argentine Captain, Ismael Jorge García, British Officer Andrew Rintoul is told that **the Argentine medical team are happy to supply blood and other medical supplies if his ship needs them**, Andrew Rintoul agrees but says, only if urgently needed.

06th June 1982, SS *Uganda*, four Wessex helicopter landings, SS *Uganda* receives **20** British casualties.

08th June 1982, RFAs *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram* bombed at Fitzroy, resulting in **50 dead and 160** casualties.

08th June 1982, SS Uganda sends +283 units of blood to Ajax Bay.

09th June 1982, with limited supplies of blood, **SS Uganda**, receives **160** wounded mainly from the *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram* bombing, of these **78** were burned severely ranging from 1-45% of total Body Surface Area.

10th June 1982, Royal Marine Paul Callan, who was severely injured on 27th May 1982, has fought a valiant battle, sadly succumbs to his wounds, his battle has included **+50** units of blood.

SS Uganda has possibly **+82** units of blood, but more than likely much less.

10th June 1982, the Hospital Ship ARA *Bahia Paraiso* meets Hospital Ship SS *Uganda* in the Red Box (Safety Zone), 47 Argentine casualties would be repatriated from SS *Uganda* to ARA *Bahia Paraiso*. (These 47 wounded are being repatriated to make room for the expected British casualties from forthcoming night battles.)

10th June 1982, (ARA Bahia Paraiso supplies blood and medicines)

10/11th June 1982, clash of blue on blue, 45 Commando, four dead, three very seriously wounded.

11th June 1982, both ships *Uganda* and *Bahia Paraiso* meet again, and three more Argentine casualties are exchanged.

11th / 12th June 1982, the night battles to capture, Mount Longdon, Mount Harriet and Two Sisters will take place.

12th June 1982, SS Uganda, received over **80** casualties, many seriously wounded.

13th June 1982, SS Uganda, received **30** casualties.

13th/14th June 1982, the night battles for Wireless Ridge and Mount Tumbledown.

14th June 1982, SS Uganda, received **60** more casualties.

15th June 1982, SS Uganda, received **43** casualties from ashore— Ajax, Teal and Fitzroy Shore hospital One body received from ashore, a WO2 Scots Guardsman, who died in suspicious circumstances.

(Warrant Officer II, Daniel Wight, 2nd Battalion Scots Guards)

Written by Andrew Rintoul MOIC SS *Uganda*.

“A curious incident took place on the flight deck at 17.15. An unidentified body, wrapped in a body bag with a gunshot wound to the head arrived on board by helicopter. The body accompanied by a request for a forensic post mortem examination. I discussed the request with John Buchanan, our consultant pathologist. I decided not to allow the body into the hospital and returned it ashore by the same helicopter. My view was that *Uganda* was not equipped for forensic examination and I had no wish for my staff to be involved in a procedure that might have ended up in an international court. By the end of the day we had received a further 43 wounded.”

A total of 373 battlefield casualties were received aboard SS Uganda between 8th June 1982 and 15th June 1982.

The Army Blood Supply Depot, blood expired on 31st May 1982, leaving +415 donated by several ships.

On 8th June 1982, SS Uganda sent **-283** units of blood to Ajax Bay, it left *Uganda* with **+132** units of blood, from this number we deduct **-50** units for RM Paul Callan, and this leaves *Uganda* with **+82 units of blood or less.**

On 9th June 1982, SS Uganda, received **160** casualties on board, **78** were burned severely ranging from 1-45% of total Body Surface Area.

On 12th June 1982, SS Uganda, received over **80** casualties, many seriously wounded

On 13th June 1982, SS Uganda, received **30** casualties.

On 14th June 1982, SS Uganda, received **60** more casualties.

On 15th June 1982, SS Uganda, received **43** casualties from ashore— Ajax, Teal and Fitzroy Shore hospital.

A grand total of 373 battlefield casualties with only +82 units of blood or less, this is not counting injuries to troops after ceasefire, including booby traps, RE sapper mine strikes and accidental firing of sidewinder missile.

On 16th June 1982, SS Uganda, yesterday's body (*Scots Guardsman*) was flown ashore on the first helicopter, rendezvoused with ARA Bahia Paraiso to transfer 30 plus Argentine casualties.

Some statistics to date: 537 daytime landings; 14 night landings 1280 personnel landed by helicopter 644 casualties received; 299 patients on board as of yesterday.

On 17th June 1982, SS Uganda, received two HMS *Glamorgan* casualties by Sea King from HMS *Invincible*, lots of surgical operations carried out— band stretcher teams kept busy.

On 18th June 1982, SS Uganda, received three Argentinean casualties; band provided stretcher teams again for operating theatre.

On 19th June 1982, SS Uganda, received five casualties.

On 23rd June 1982, SS Uganda, one casualty received from ashore— RM Corporal Lea who had lost a foot in a mine explosion.

On 13th July 1982, SS Uganda, 09:30 Emergency— received 11 casualties from Stanley airport who were injured by a misfire of a sidewinder missiles, which included two amputations of one leg, and one amputation of two legs.

The Sidewinder from a Harrier GR3 was accidentally fired into the Mortar Platoon of the Welsh Guards who were clearing snow from the runway.

We understand not everyone will require a blood transfusion, however some may require several to stabilise the casualty, and how did SS Uganda cope without taking the blood from ARA Bahia Paraiso. Especially when two of the nursing staff have admitted using Argentine blood, one even travelled in recent years to Argentina to thank the crew of ARA Bahia Paraiso publicly, which was reported in the media.

Total number of casualties landed as 'in patients' **730**.
(Of which 159 were Argentinians)

Total number of surgical operations performed 503.

Total blood stock +775

+360 units of blood used or expired on 31st May 1982.

-283 units of blood given to Ajax Bay on 8th June 1982.

-50 units given to RM.

+82 units of blood or less remaining on 8th June 1982.

373 battlefield casualties incoming to SS Uganda after 8th June 1982.