



Sea Harrier Over the Falklands

Commander 'Sharkey' Ward DSC AFC RN

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Sharkey Ward commanded 801 Naval Air Squadron, "HMS Invincible", during the Falkland War of April to June 1982, and was senior Sea Harrier adviser to the command on the tactics, direction and progress of the air war. He flew over 60 war missions, achieved three air-to air kills, and took part in or witnessed a total of ten kills; he was also the leading night pilot, and was decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry. But what, after all, could 20 Sea Harriers, operating from a flight-deck bucketing about in the South Atlantic, do against more than 200 Argentine military aircraft flown by pilots who, as the raids against the British shipping proved, displayed enormous skill and almost suicidal gallantry? The world knows the answer - now. What is puzzling, therefore, is this book's truthful depiction of the attitudes of some senior non-flying naval officers, and of the RAF, towards the men (and indeed the machine) that made possible the victory in the Falklands. This first-hand account charts, in detail, the naval pilots' journey to the South Atlantic, and how they took on and triumphantly conquered the challenges they faced. It is a dramatic story, leavened with accounts of the air-to-air fighting and of life in a squadron at sea and on a war footing. But it is also a tale of inter-Service rivalry, bureaucratic interference, and the less-than-generous attitudes of a number of senior commanders who should certainly have known better; indeed, some of them might even have lost the war through a lack of understanding of air warfare. The author attempts to put the record straight.

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