

Navy sails to aid Falklands

By Our Foreign Staff

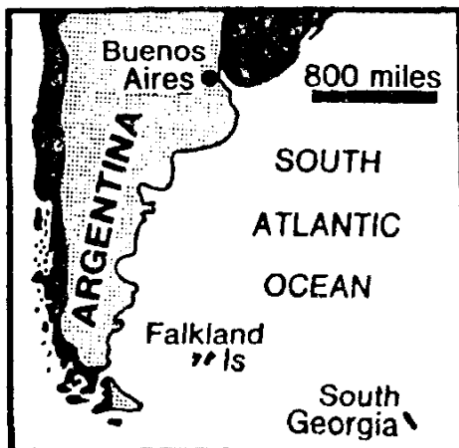
The Argentines who landed illegally on South Georgia cannot be allowed to remain, Mr Rex Hunt, the Governor of the Falkland Islands, said last night.

"If Argentina won't take them away, we will", he said. The eight to 10 Argentine scrap merchants still on the island had not completed immigration formalities, and that was why they had to be removed, the Governor said.

Most of the original party left, however, after protests from Britain, whose sovereignty over the Falkland Islands has long been the subject of negotiations with Argentina.

The Royal Navy's patrol ship, HMS Endurance, was expected in South Georgia last night.

All that the Ministry of Defence would confirm yesterday was that HMS Endurance was in Falklands waters, and that she was ready to give assistance if required.



Her armaments are light but effective — two 20mm Oerlikon guns and two Westland helicopters. Her 119-man complement includes provisions for a small detachment of marines.

Part of the ship's duties while on station in the south is to ferry marines between Port Stanley in the Falklands and Montevideo in Uruguay, which is the terminal for air transport to and from Britain.

About 40 marines are stationed on the Falklands at any one time. HMS Endurance was at Port Stanley when she was diverted to South Georgia, 800 miles to the south-east.

The Foreign Office said yesterday that shots had been fired at animals by the Argentines who landed on the island.

A spokesman said that an Argentine company, Davidoff, had a contract to remove scrap metal

Christian Salvesen, an industrial holding company based in Edinburgh, said yesterday that it had made an agreement with an Argentine scrap merchant to remove scrap from an old whaling station it owned at Leith Harbour.

A spokesman for the company said the contract was scrutinized by the Falkland Island authorities.

A number of senior Conservative backbenchers tabled a Commons motion yesterday, saying they were "disturbed" at the implications of the incident. More than 100 MPs were expected to sign the motion, which demanded the retention in the Falklands of a Royal Navy force big enough to repel any annexation attempt by Argentina.

Letters, page 13