

Staring down death through a lens: Incredible picture shows moment two Argentine fighter jets swooped down on Falklands War photographer

- Unknown snapper captured the surprise assault that sank the destroyer HMS Coventry and claimed 19 lives

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This is the moment a daredevil photographer stared down death through his lens - as two Argentine fighter jets swooped on the ship he was standing on.

The snapper, who has never been named, somehow survived the Falklands War attack by two A4 Skyhawks on May 25, 1982.

The Argentine Air Force had tasked its pair of prized pilots to take out HMS Coventry and HMS Broadsword - the two British ships on duty to the northwest of the disputed archipelago.



Bravery: The snapper, who has never been named, somehow survived the Falklands War attack by two A4 Skyhawks on May 25, 1982

Captain Pablo Carballo, in the left plane, and Lieutenant Carlos Rinke, right, skimmed just a few feet above the water to avoid radar detection. Both pilots survived because the Sea Wolf missile system on HMS Broadsword was unable to choose between their A-4s when they became visible on the radar.

The aircrafts released one bomb each. One missed the target, while the other one hit the Broadsword, in spite of the intense anti-aircraft fire.

Zeus flight, two A-4s piloted by Lt. Mariano A. Velasco and Alfrez Leonardo Barrionuevo, armed with three lighter bombs, soon followed on.

Lt. Velasco fired his cannons and then released his three bombs that hit and heavily damaged HMS Coventry, which sank within 20 minutes.

Nineteen lives were lost on board HMS Coventry when two of the three bombs exploded, but the other 280 crew members were saved.

The air raid came during what was known to be a highly risky operation, with the two ships deployed to draw Argentine bombers away from where British troops were landing at San Carlos Bay.



Sinking: HMS Coventry went down shortly after the first picture was taken

Among the survivors was the ship's captain, David Hart Dyke - father of the TV comedienne Miranda Hart - who managed to swim to a life raft.

Now 72, he once described in the Daily Mail the dread he felt when four Argentine planes showed up on the radar - and the chaos that ensued after the 1,000lb bombs went off.

He wrote: 'My world exploded. I was aware of a flash, of heat and the crackling of the radar set as it literally disintegrated in front of my face. When I came to my senses, I could see nothing through the dense black smoke, only people on fire, but I could sense that the compartment had been totally devastated.'

Mr Hart Dyke, who sustained facial injuries as flames ripped through the ship, has since released his account in a book entitled *Four Weeks In May*. Last week he attended a memorial dinner to mark 30 years since the attack.



Surprise attack: An A-4 Skyhawk (left) similar to the ones used in the Argentine assault on HMS Coventry and HMS Broadsword (right), the Royal Navy type 22 frigate that was patrolling alongside the doomed destroyer at the time of the attack on May 25, 1982



'I was prepared to die': Left, David Hart Dyke, captain of HMS Coventry, displays the facial scars sustained during the air raid. Right, pictured shortly after the attack with