

Two Falkland VCs to be awarded

By Rupert Morris

The Victoria Cross, Britain's highest award for gallantry, is to be awarded to a Royal Marine and a colonel in the Parachute Regiment, both of whom died in action in the Falklands.

The medals, inscribed "For Valour", will be awarded to Lieutenant-Colonel H Jones, Commander of the Second Battalion of The Parachute Regiment, and a non-commissioned officer in the Royal Marines.

Colonel Jones was killed in the battle for Goose Green, and was one of three members of The Parachute Regiment to be recommended for VCs. The regiment, known as the Red Berets, suffered more casualties than any other in the Falklands, with 41 men killed.

The Royal Marines, or Green Berets, were involved in more or less every stage of the campaign, having resisted the

initial Argentine invasion and subsequently taken part in major battles and in covert operations with the Special Air Service.

The awards require a recommendation from the commanding officer and endorsement from Downing Street and the Ministry of Defence before receiving the Queen's approval. They will be announced on Monday.

The last VC was won by an Australian in Vietnam, and the last member of the British forces to be similarly honoured was a Gurkha serving in Indonesia in the 1960s.

Although there was no formal declaration of war, the Ministry of Defence has officially confirmed that those serving in the Falklands are eligible for the VC - unlike British servicemen dealing with civil disorder in Northern Ireland.