



ROOTS OF TRADITION  
AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE IN THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

by

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## PREFACE

*Roots of Tradition: Amphibious Warfare in Early America* will fill a gap in the historiography of naval and military warfare. As the title implies, this dissertation describes and analyses the early (from the Revolution through the Civil War) landing operations of American history and how they contributed to building a rich tradition in this form of warfare. No such study currently exists. The basic definition of an amphibious operation is “a military operation launched from the sea by an amphibious force, embarked in ships or craft with the primary purpose of introducing a landing force ashore to accomplish an assigned mission.” This is the current definition within the U.S. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms. A timeless definition, it applies to actions of the past as well as in the present.

This dissertation will not attempt to provide a description of every amphibious operation in early America. *Roots of Tradition* will focus on seven major battles or campaigns that loom important in American amphibious history. It will address other amphibious operations and land or naval battles to the extent necessary to comprehend historical context. For example, to understand the New York campaign of 1776, one must also appreciate the earlier battles at Bunker Hill and Boston. Therefore, they are included in abbreviated form in the chapter addressing New York. In the interest of time and space, this study will not depict all amphibious actions. But those which are included will provide the reader with a strong appreciation of the roots of America’s amphibious traditions.

Research for this work includes material from national and military archives, published primary sources material, published secondary sources, and military publications and directives. Many current concepts and terms used in this study have applicability over the long stretch of history even though they may not have existed during the period under examination. For example, the term *joint* refers to an operation involving more than one service of a single nation. Amphibious operations are usually *joint* unless the landing party comes exclusively from the navy. The term *combined* describes an operation involving services from more than one nation. Yorktown is an example of a campaign that was both *joint* and *combined*— *joint* because it included army and navy units, and *combined* because it involved American and French forces.

The distinction between strategic and tactical levels of warfare existed in well-defined terms during the period of early America. In the last decade of the twentieth century, defense thinkers added a new level to the lexicon that fits in between the tactical and strategic. This is the operational level of war and addresses actions oriented on a regional or theater level. Although the classification did not previously exist, the concept did. Military commanders fully realized that an intermediate level of war existed although they had not yet codified it in terminology. By using the term, *operational level of war*, we in no way unfairly evaluate past historical events by current standards. The concept of *operational level of war* existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries even if a formal categorization did not. Appendix A provides a complete description of the three levels of war for review prior to reading this document.

A set of principles entitled *Characteristics of Amphibious Warfare* exists in current Defense Department doctrine. The basic concepts they address apply to

amphibious warfare throughout history. These four basic characteristics—Integration between the Navy and landing force, Rapid Buildup of Combat Power from the Sea to Shore, Task-Organized Forces, and Unity of Effort and Operational Coherence—are available to help evaluate the effectiveness of amphibious operations and to explain success or failure. These characteristics provide one of several tools for use in assessing each of the major amphibious battles studied. Appendix B provides a more complete description of the Characteristics of Amphibious Warfare.

The Principles of War came into the doctrine of most established military services during the first part of the twentieth century. They resulted from an effort to distill the teachings of military thinkers such as Jomini and Clausewitz—along with the hard lessons of war—into a relatively simple tool for students and practitioners of the art. Despite their checklist appearance, the Principles of War serve only as a flexible basis for learning and analyses. Yet they can be helpful in conducting historical analysis of military and naval actions. The naval version (which does not differ greatly from other versions) of the Principles of War is included as Appendix C of this dissertation.

The concept of military planning predominates much of the discussion of operations in this study. Planning is a component of the larger field of command and control involving the process of identifying goals and ensuring that appropriate actions are undertaken. Planning may be formal or informal, but will always include such considerations as the mission, enemy capabilities, the quality and quantity of troops available to the commander, terrain and weather conditions, and time available for both planning and operations. To be of value, plans must be communicated in a manner that is understandable yet sufficiently detailed to ensure efficiency in execution. We will see in

the case of Bladensburg where the American commander developed a sound plan, but failed to communicate it well enough to ensure success on the battlefield. At Veracruz, planning often occurred on very short timelines, yet professional quality and effective distribution ensured an efficient and successful landing operation. The final arbiter of good planning usually results on the battlefield although there are many exceptions. George Washington, for example, consistently developed and communicated good plans, but his inexperienced and unstable army simply could not carry them out during the early phases of the Revolutionary War. Later at Yorktown, his more capable army coupled with professional officers and units of the French army and navy could effectively execute his plans bringing victory in the final major action of the war.

The chapter on Derna, Tripoli introduces the concept of expeditionary warfare, which has become very prominent among U.S. defense leaders of the twenty-first century. Yet expeditionary warfare—like amphibious warfare—has deep roots in the history of early America. Amphibious warfare is inherently expeditionary in nature, and Derna demonstrates important aspects of both of these subjects. Such considerations as forward deployed forces, temporary advanced bases, sea basing, and forced entry into the objective area are expeditionary principles best achieved through amphibious actions. Since both expeditionary missions and amphibious operations are typically temporary measures, they meld well into a common undertaking. Should a foreign mission require a long-term commitment ashore—such as the entry onto the European continent during World War II—it usually ceases to be expeditionary in nature. The undertaking then requires introduction of more permanent elements, such as large army units under diplomatic or political oversight, which replace the amphibious forces. The Derna

campaign provides rich examples of expeditionary and amphibious warfare. A thorough explanation of expeditionary warfare and its missions is included in Appendix D.

Occasionally this study will introduce other concepts such as *The Interrelationship of Policy, Strategy, and Operations* or *Interactions, Adaptations, and Reassessment* to help analyze the outcome of an amphibious event. For the most part, these concepts are self-explanatory. In cases where they are not, an explanation will accompany the discussion.

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## INTRODUCTION

Although raised to an especially high level of proficiency by the United States during the twentieth century, the art of amphibious warfare has deep roots in early American military and naval tradition. The seven major battles studied in this dissertation will illustrate how this amphibious tradition developed while analyzing its place in the strategic mosaic of each period. Through a case study approach, we will understand the operational and strategic significance of each amphibious action and its impact on the development of our nation. Of course, amphibious warfare does not begin in early America, but goes back as far as recorded history. For example, amphibious operations constituted an important element of the Peloponnesian War and Thucydides provides descriptions of important landings throughout his classical account of that conflict. In fact, one of the most significant triumphs of Athens over Sparta—a victory of sea power over land power—resulted from the amphibious landing on the island of Sphacteria in 425 B.C.

The Spartan defeat at Sphacteria shocked the entire Hellenic world and forced Sparta to seek an end of the war and return of its prisoners, all to no avail.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, Athens's failed amphibious expeditions to Sicily and subsequent attack on Syracuse during 415-413 B.C. rank among her most disastrous defeats. Syracuse's effective resistance to the Athenian invasion introduces the question of defense against landing operations as an important element of amphibious warfare.<sup>2</sup> This aspect is particularly

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<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, in Robert B. Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 242-246.

<sup>2</sup> Thucydides in Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 361-481.

significant in studying early American wars where British forces possessed an offensive amphibious capability and the United States usually found itself on the defensive.

Two of the greatest commanders of ancient warfare—Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar—used amphibious warfare effectively when operational circumstances dictated. In Alexander's case, that great general found himself unable to conquer the Phoenician city of Tyre with only his army in 332 B.C. Assembling a fleet of some 220 vessels at Sidon, he attacked and scattered the naval force defending the city's seaboard flank. He then conducted an amphibious assault that breached Tyre's walls and conquered the city, complete with great destruction and slaughter. This victory caused Alexander's prime adversary, Darius Codomannus, to offer a generous peace to the Macedonian commander which he quickly rejected and continued the conquest of Egypt and the Persian Empire.<sup>3</sup>

Julius Caesar, like Alexander before him, is primarily known for his great land battles. But Caesar also conducted two of the most fascinating amphibious operations of antiquity in his efforts to conquer Britain. During his first invasion in 55 B.C., the Roman general found a determined and hostile enemy awaiting him at the shoreline. With chariots drawn by specially trained horses, and augmented with cavalry and infantry, the Briton defenders attacked the Romans in the surf as they attempted to project their force ashore. With skillful maneuvering and furious assaults, Caesar's forces proved superior and eventually drove the defenders from the coast. Although Caesar established his landing force ashore, the lack of cavalry restricted his mobility, making it difficult to exploit the initial success. Damage to his amphibious ships by a

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<sup>3</sup> Lynn Montross, *War Through the Ages* (New York: Harper & Brother Publishers, 1960), 30-34; John Keegan, *The Mask of Command* (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1987), 75; N.G.L. Hammond, *A History of Greece to 322 B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 611-613.

devastating storm complicated Roman logistics so severely that Caesar found it necessary to negotiate an amphibious withdrawal. Dissatisfied with the outcome of his first incursion, Caesar conducted a second invasion in 54 B.C., which met with a substantially different Briton concept of defense. Rather than oppose the invaders at the water's edge as before, the defenders allowed their adversaries to come ashore and attempted a defense in depth, designed to cause attrition of the Roman army through a series of defensive battles. Unfortunately for the British defenders, this proved no more successful than their earlier effort as Caesar's forces consistently proved too strong. Yet despite a hard won series of victories, Roman leaders found no great benefit from their successes and again departed British shores not to return for nearly a century.<sup>4</sup>

For nearly a thousand years after the Roman era, the British Isles remained the focus of hostile amphibious assaults. Its inhabitants dealt with invasions from numerous sources including Vikings, Anglo-Saxons, and ultimately the Norman Conquest by William the Conqueror in 1066. Over many centuries, English society assimilated the people and methods of warfare of their invaders.<sup>5</sup> The nation that resulted eventually grew into a seaborne empire in its own right, highly dependent on naval power and the ability to control the littorals of large parts of the world. Numerous imperial wars fought during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—usually between alliances headed by England and France—had worldwide implications, as their armies and navies engaged in

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<sup>4</sup> Julius Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*. (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 97-115; Thomas More Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions: or Expeditions by the Fleet and Army, with a Commentary on a Littoral War*, Part 1. (London: R. and J. Dodsley in Pall-mall, 1759), 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Vagts, *Landing Operations: Strategy, Psychology, Tactics, Politics, From Antiquity to 1945*. (Washington: Military Service Publishing Company, 1946), 122-149; Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking People: The Birth of Britain*. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1966), viii-xx.

far-flung operations. It is in this context that the inhabitants of North America first became involved in imperial warfare and the amphibious operations so key to its success.

The numerous imperial wars—really worldwide wars—of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries inevitably involved the European colonies in North America. Interestingly, these wars usually had two names: one used in Europe and a second used by Americans.<sup>6</sup> Although British leaders viewed these wars globally, most Americans—and many American historians—tend to see them in a narrower, hemispheric perspective. This is not to suggest they are unaware of the larger picture but rather that they attempted to understand these conflicts primarily from the point of view of their impact on political and military developments in North America. From the perspective of amphibious warfare, the British attempted numerous landings in the Western Hemisphere throughout this era of imperial war. As Thomas More Molyneux laments throughout his 1759 treatise on amphibious warfare, many of these actions failed.<sup>7</sup> Yet toward the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Great Britain began to improve its effectiveness in littoral operations. Among the most interesting examples are the two Louisbourg operations on Cape Breton Island, which constituted the Atlantic flank of French Canada. The first of these occurred in 1745 during King George's War and the second in 1758 during the French and Indian War. These landings involved both British and colonial forces and must be considered early pillars to the amphibious traditions that developed in the history of the United

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the 1689-96 War of the League of Augsburg became King William's War in America; the 1702-13 War of the Spanish Succession became Queen Anne's War; the 1740-48 War of Austrian Succession became King George's War; and Americans knew the Seven Years War fought between 1756 and 1763 as the French and Indian War. See Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), xv, 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas More Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions: or Expeditions That have been carried on jointly by the FLEET and ARMY with a Commentary on the Littoral WAR* (London: R. and J. Dodsley in Pall-mall, 1759).

States.<sup>8</sup> Any invasion into the heartland of Canada had to first destroy or neutralize Louisbourg and take control of the St. Lawrence estuary. Although not the center of gravity for conquest of Canada—that honor belonged to Quebec—strategists recognized Louisbourg’s importance as a gateway into New France. They also realized that it could only be captured by an amphibious attack.

During King George’s War (the American theatre of the 1740-1748 War of the Austrian Succession), leaders in both England and America eventually perceived the need to capture Louisbourg and threaten French possessions along the St. Lawrence River. To colonial Americans, Louisbourg represented a French menace to New England. British leaders also recognized this concern of their colonial subjects, but tended to focus more on the strategic advantage of possessing Louisbourg as a stepping-stone into Canada, and as an instrument for use in the peace negotiations that would eventually end the war. In short, New Englanders viewed this issue with great passion whereas British leaders thought of it primarily in terms of strategy and policy. New England support can be observed in the blessing the expedition received from George Whitefield, the most dynamic religious leader of The First Great Awakening, in which he called on God’s assistance in achieving a victory over the Catholic French defenders of Louisbourg.<sup>9</sup>

The invasion force consisted almost exclusively of colonial militia and, initially, naval forces created from fishing and merchant ships. The British Navy belatedly dispatched a squadron from the West Indies, and eventually a few ships from England, to

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<sup>8</sup> Historians and geographers cannot agree on how to spell Louisbourg as it is often spelled Louisburg. It is possible to find either spelling in both official and unofficial publications and one can even find it occasionally spelled Louisburgh.

<sup>9</sup> Vagts, *Landing Operations*, 284-285.

support the operation, but it remained primarily a colonial affair. A wealthy Maine merchant and militia colonel, William Pepperell, commanded the expedition, which consisted almost entirely of soldiers and sailors from New England—all of whom were as green as Pepperell himself. In route to Louisbourg, Pepperell's force recaptured the English outpost of Canso on the northeast shore of Nova Scotia, which they utilized as an intermediate support base for the amphibious attack.<sup>10</sup>

The expedition to capture Louisbourg proved remarkably efficient and successful, especially considering the inexperience of the New England troops. Immediately upon arriving at Louisbourg on 30 April 1745, the Americans landed on an undefended beach a little more than a mile from the main French defenses. After rapidly establishing themselves ashore, the invaders quickly defeated a French force sent to interdict them and then captured a major artillery position turning its canon against the defenders. There followed a siege and blockade which forced French capitulation in just under two months.<sup>11</sup>

The success at Louisbourg represents the greatest British victory of King George's War. The primary reason for this great success is the detailed and precise planning that occurred in New England prior to departure of the expedition. Planning had been so thorough that the commanders even brought special ammunition that fit only the French artillery for use in case they captured enemy field pieces, which proved to be the case.<sup>12</sup> The close cooperation between army and navy commanders also proved extraordinary for this period and provided another key to success of the mission. This is

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<sup>10</sup> Vagts, *Landing Operations*, 285-286.

<sup>11</sup> Vagts, *Landing Operations*, 286-287.

<sup>12</sup> Vagts, *Landing Operations*, 286.

particularly significant since the army commander came from the colonial militia and the naval commander, once the British squadron arrived on station, served as a regular officer of the British Navy. Yet William Pepperell—who received the temporary rank of Lieutenant General for the mission—and Commodore Peter Warren worked together effectively and successfully.<sup>13</sup> The third reason for the victory at Louisbourg involved the element of surprise. Pepperell did not achieve surprise in the literal sense of the term, but he did achieve it in the military sense. Although the French became aware of his intentions when he attacked and recaptured the English city of Canso on the coast of Nova Scotia, they did not have time to reinforce or improve their defenses before the British American force descended upon them. Pepperell then followed-up his advantage by rapidly landing his force and moving against French defenses with such speed and flexibility that the defenders could only retreat into their prepared positions and submit to siege and blockade. Once this occurred, the only possibility of continued French resistance rested in the hope for reinforcements, which the British Navy would not permit. The subsequent bombardment from artillery—including the captured French canons—and naval guns forced French capitulation within two months.<sup>14</sup>

By any measure, the 1745 Louisbourg amphibious operation represented a significant achievement of British arms—all the more remarkable by the fact that colonial officers planned and led the expedition, and that militia troops executed the plan ashore. The New Englanders took great pride in the victory while believing passionately that they

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Leckie, *"A Few Acres of Snow": The Saga of the French and Indian Wars*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1999), 253.

<sup>14</sup> John Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent: The Wars of Early America* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1993), 139; Leckie, *"A Few Acres of Snow,"* 248-254; Vagts, *Landing Operations*, 487.

had removed the clear and present danger of French attack. These factors caused particular resentment among the colonists when in 1748, British leaders unceremoniously returned Louisbourg to France in the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which ended the war.<sup>15</sup> In a decision based strictly on strategic and political considerations, the British government essentially traded Louisbourg for Madras, India, during the peace negotiations. Unlike most operations involving both regular and colonial forces during this period, the two elements worked together very well during the Louisbourg campaign and created a certain level of good will among the parties. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle completely destroyed that feeling and caused long-term resentments among colonial Americans, which would fester under the surface long into the future.<sup>16</sup> This diplomatic action negated the sense of pride that colonials felt in winning a great victory and also restored the threat of French aggression, or equally fearsome, the likelihood of French instigated Indian attacks.

Less than a decade after the end of King George's War, the British and French again fought a major conflict known in America as the French and Indian War and elsewhere at the Seven Years War. Even more than the preceding imperial conflicts between the superpowers of that age, this truly qualified as a worldwide war.<sup>17</sup> Although officially fought between 1756 and 1763, the maneuvering that brought it about started on the American frontier as early as 1753, with actual hostilities beginning in 1754. This early skirmishing grew into major combat, exemplified by General Edward Braddock's

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<sup>15</sup> Leckie, "A Few Acres of Snow," 248-254.

<sup>16</sup> Leckie, "A Few Acres of Snow," 248-254; J.F.C. Fuller, *Decisive Battles: Their Influence upon History and Civilization* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 485.

<sup>17</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking People: The Age of Revolution* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1967), 148.

expedition to Fort Duquesne in 1755 and then spread into full-scale warfare throughout the imperial system. Although the causes of this conflict ran very deep, the actual spark that ignited fighting occurred in the Ohio Valley—then coveted by both Virginia and France—in 1754 with an ambush triggered by a young militia officer named George Washington.<sup>18</sup> This incident received attention at the highest levels of government in both Paris and London since Jumonville de Villiers, a French officer of some importance, lost his life in the action. The French and Indian War would ultimately result in the expulsion of French colonial rule east of the Mississippi, and initiate the dominance of the North American continent by English speaking people.<sup>19</sup>

Initially, the French and Indian War did not go well for Great Britain and its American colonists. Even before the official declaration of hostilities, Braddock's expedition against Fort Duquesne in the Ohio Valley suffered a crushing rout at the hands of the French garrison and its Indian allies. Following Braddock's defeat, French general, Jean-Armand, Baron de Dieskau suffered a reverse by British forces under William Johnson in the September 1755 battle—actually a series of battles—of Lake George. This constituted the last major fighting before the formal declaration of War in the spring of 1756.<sup>20</sup> Once the war became official, a brilliant and forceful commander, Louis Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm, acceded to the command of French forces and scored key victories at Fort Oswego in August 1756 and at Fort William Henry in August 1757.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately for the Marquis's reputation, the massacre of numerous British-

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<sup>18</sup> Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 143-145.

<sup>19</sup> Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 146; Leckie, "A Few Acres of Snow," 271-378.

<sup>20</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 116-122; Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 56-60.

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 150-157.

American survivors by Montcalm's Indian allies, after he had given assurances for their protection, marred both of these triumphs.<sup>22</sup> These victories of 1757 marked the high point of French success in their effort to remain a colonial power on the North America continent. After the fall of Fort William Henry, the string of French victories began to end as the policies of William Pitt—the Great Commoner who acceded to the position of Secretary of State and virtual Prime Minister in 1756—began to have an impact on British strategy. Pitt intended to destroy French power throughout North America as the strategic mainstay of his worldwide policy.<sup>23</sup> His new approach to defeating Britain's arch enemy started with a blockade of Toulon, France, to prevent reinforcements from sailing to America, followed by attacks against Ticonderoga in New York, Fort Duquesne in the Ohio Valley, and a second assault against Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island.<sup>24</sup>

Major General Jeffrey Amherst commanded the 1758 amphibious attack on Louisbourg with the able assistance of Brigadier General James Wolfe, who had already distinguished himself as an energetic and thoughtful young field commander. Wolfe served as the landing force commander in this operation, and like Amherst, represented part of the new look that Pitt had injected into the war effort.<sup>25</sup> In a sense, this engagement constituted the third attempt to conquer Louisbourg. In addition to the successful effort of 1745, the British commander in North America during the early years of the French and Indian War, Lord Loudon, had organized an invasion force in the summer and autumn of 1757. That expedition actually got as far as Halifax, Nova Scotia,

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<sup>22</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 185-198; Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 156-169.

<sup>23</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 215-217; Churchill, *The Age of Revolution*, 148-150; Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 170-172.

<sup>24</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles*, 487; Churchill, *The Age of Revolution*, 152-154.

<sup>25</sup> Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 173-174.

before bad weather, poor intelligence, and faint heartedness caused Loudon to abort the operation and return his invasion force to New York.<sup>26</sup> By the time of Amherst's attack on Louisbourg, Major General James Abercromby had replaced Loudon as British Commander in Chief for North America. Although Abercromby appeared somewhat superannuated, the new breed of younger and more energetic officer—as typified by Amherst and Wolfe—had acceded to most of the responsible command positions as the result of Pitt's incisive and forceful leadership.<sup>27</sup>

In June 1758, the British expeditionary force sailed for Louisbourg with 157 ships and approximately 12,000 men including 500 colonial rangers.<sup>28</sup> In executing the amphibious assault, Amherst's landing force faced serious difficulties including heavy seas and strong defensive fires. The French commanders had made substantial improvements in the Louisbourg defenses since its return at Aix-la-Chapelle.<sup>29</sup> This made it difficult to replicate the rapid deployments of William Pepperell's assault thirteen years earlier. But the fortitude and aggressiveness of the troops and officers under Wolfe's direct command ensured a successful landing despite some initial confusion in the mind of the landing force commander.<sup>30</sup> Once ashore with his entire force, Wolfe suffered no further confusion, nor did Amherst or the other officers under his command. After consolidating his forces ashore, Amherst then conducted a campaign somewhat

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<sup>26</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 200-209.

<sup>27</sup> Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (New York: Atheneum, 1984), 326-333; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 232-233; Vagts, *Landing Operations*, 288-289.

<sup>28</sup> Vagts, *Landing Operations*, 288-289; Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, 336.

<sup>29</sup> Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 174.

<sup>30</sup> Corbett, *England and the Seven Years' War*, I, 321-322; Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 174.

reminiscent of Pepperell's earlier effort, defeating all French efforts to dislodge him and driving the defenders into the protection of Louisbourg's ramparts.<sup>31</sup>

Once Amherst controlled the land and sea accesses to Louisbourg, he moved rapidly to establish a classical eighteenth century siege against the Vauban style fortress, forcing French capitulation in just six weeks time.<sup>32</sup> As Amherst tightened the siege on Louisbourg's fortifications, Admiral Edward Boscawen blockaded the French ships within the harbor, rendering them ineffective during the battle. At one point, the French commander sank four frigates at the harbor's entrance with the hope of keeping Boscawen's fleet at bay.<sup>33</sup> But on the night of 25 July, Boscawen sent 600 sailors in small boats into the harbor to burn one of the remaining French warships and capture the other.<sup>34</sup>

With Amherst's shells and mortars raining destruction into the city and Boscawen's fleet dominating the coastal approaches and preparing to enter the harbor,

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<sup>31</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 250-253; Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 175.

<sup>32</sup> The Marquis de Vauban was the most important military engineer of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Using geometry and sophisticated engineering techniques, he created specifications for the best defensive structures of that age. His cleverly designed fortresses were virtually impregnable to direct attack, and were only susceptible to gradual strangulation from the destructive fire of artillery, mortars, and naval guns. These siege techniques involved isolating a targeted fortress, maintaining superiority of soldiery and fire power, having sufficient logistical support to sustain the siege force, and entrenching ever closer to the structure while raining down artillery and mortar fire. Given the state of weaponry, construction, and logistics during this era, an assaulting force that satisfies these conditions could conquer any defensive fortress, even those designed by Vauban. Commanders under siege would hold out long enough to be convinced that the assault force could persist in its efforts—and to meet the demands of honor—and then surrendered rather than face the inevitable destruction of their force. See Sebastian le Prestre de Vauban, *The New Method of Fortification, As practiced by Monsieur de VAUBAN, Engineer-General of FRANCE*. (London: S. and E. Ballard in *Little Britain*; C. Hitch in *Pater-noster Row*; and J. Wood under the *Royal-Exchange*, 1748); Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 251-253.

<sup>33</sup> Corbett, *England and the Seven Years' War*, I, 326.

<sup>34</sup> Corbett, *England and the Seven Years' War*, I, 329-328; Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, 334-354.

the French commander, Augustin, Chevalier de Drucour, asked for surrender terms.<sup>35</sup> To his astonishment, Amherst offered harsh conditions with no honors of war for the French defenders. At first, Drucour refused to surrender under such terms, but relented when he realized that Amherst and Boscawen were adamant and willing to destroy his force.<sup>36</sup> Under the conditions forced upon Drucour, the French soldiers became prisoners of war, and the civilian population deported to France. These terms, that seemed so ungentlemanly to Drucour, resulted from the massacre visited on British and American defenders of Fort William Henry after its honorable surrender in 1757. Micmacs and Abenakis Indians under the command—but apparently not under the control—of the Marquis de Montcalm attacked and slaughtered numerous British and Americans in an infamous breach of the European rules of civilized warfare. This grated on British and Colonial officers, and despite certain politeness of language associated with the interaction between the two adversaries at Louisbourg, the anger engendered by Fort William Henry had an impact on the thinking of British and American leaders in general, and Jeffrey Amherst in particular.<sup>37</sup>

The amphibious victory at Louisbourg in 1758 opened the St. Lawrence River—the avenue into French Canada—to British control. Authorities in London recognized Amherst's leadership role in the Louisbourg success and promoted him to replace Abercrombie—who failed in his attack on Fort Ticonderoga—as the supreme British commander in North America.<sup>38</sup> Amherst went on to distinguish himself by capturing

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<sup>35</sup> Corbett, *England and the Seven Years' War*, I, 328; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 254-256.

<sup>36</sup> Boscawen and Amherst to Drucour, letter of 26 July 1758 in Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, 345; Corbett, *England and the Seven Years' War*, I, 328.

<sup>37</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 254-257; Leckie, "A Few Acres of Snow," 300-301, 308.

Ticonderoga in 1759, and in the final campaign for control of Canada, he conquered Montreal the following year.<sup>39</sup> Amherst's most important lieutenant at Louisbourg, James Wolfe, received promotion to Major General and went on to immortal fame in his defeat of Montcalm and capture of Quebec during the summer and autumn of 1759. At Quebec, Wolfe and Admiral Charles Saunders used maneuver and deception to overcome a superior force entrenched in a defensive fortress that most observers considered impregnable.<sup>40</sup>

The battle for Quebec proved to be the critical victory of the French and Indian War, although important fighting remained. In the spring of 1760, the governor of French Canada, Philippe de Rigand, Chevalier de Vandreuil, failed in an attempt to recapture Quebec and in September suffered defeat in the battle for Montreal.<sup>41</sup> But the ability of Great Britain to capture and hold Quebec, not the fall of Montreal, guaranteed the demise of French power in North America.<sup>42</sup> The conquest of Quebec, like Louisbourg, resulted from an amphibious attack characterized by exemplary cooperation between the naval and landing force commanders.<sup>43</sup> Pitt's concept for conquering Canada in 1759 envisioned a three-pronged approach including the conquest of Fort Niagara in the west, an offensive against Montreal in the center of the colony, and an

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<sup>38</sup> Vagts, *Landing Operations*, 290.

<sup>39</sup> Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, 523-524.

<sup>40</sup> Corbett, *England and the Seven Years' War*, I, 418-419; Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 289, 301-302.

<sup>41</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 391-196, 400-409.

<sup>42</sup> Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*, I, 474-475; Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1890), 294-295; E.B. Potter and Chester Nimitz, *Sea Power: A Naval History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), 64; Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 195-197, 200-201.

<sup>43</sup> Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*, I, 472, 476.

amphibious attack on Quebec up the St. Lawrence River in the east.<sup>44</sup> The main French bastion of Quebec presented the most difficult objective of the war, but also offered the greatest benefits if conquered. But in prosecuting this operation, Wolfe and Saunders would face many challenges. Navigating the St. Lawrence River, facing the formidable French fortress and defensive lines at Quebec, and fighting against the highly professional Montcalm constituted some of the greatest obstacles any commander would deal with in this war.<sup>45</sup>

Quebec rests along the St. Lawrence River near the point where it begins to broaden into a large estuary approximately a thousand miles from the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Saunders's ships not only served to transport Wolfe's army to the vicinity of Quebec, but also continued to assist him as he maneuvered to gain advantage after arriving in the objective area. Saunders also used the awesome fire from his ship's guns to support Wolfe and deceive Montcalm throughout the operation. Unfortunately for Wolfe and Saunders, Montcalm's defenses offered no real openings to the amphibious taskforce, as they discovered in a failed assault on the French left flank.<sup>46</sup>

For several months, Wolfe and his commanders searched for openings along the river defenses while teasing Montcalm with deceptive moves toward his right flank. In September 1759, Wolfe and Saunders undertook a cunning maneuver in which they threatened both of Montcalm's flanks, thereby pulling troops and attention away from the center. They then disembarked about 4,500 men at a relatively small cove named L'Anse

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<sup>44</sup> J.F.C. Fuller, *A Military History of the Western World*, 2 (London: Minerva Press, 1955), 247.

<sup>45</sup> Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*, I, 474-475; Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, 442-456; Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power*, 296.

<sup>46</sup> Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 56-57.

du Foulon about one mile from the main Quebec defenses. Through a combination of deceit and stealth, Wolfe landed his troops, negotiated the steep cliffs, and deployed his force into battle array on the Plains of Abraham just west of the French defenses, catching Montcalm by complete surprise.<sup>47</sup> At this point, Montcalm deployed the units under his immediate command and assaulted Wolfe's soldiers who now threatened his line of defense. What followed, of course, constituted a famous British victory that resulted in the deaths of both commanders.<sup>48</sup>

In retrospect, it is easy to claim that Montcalm erred in leaving his defensive positions to attack Wolfe. Critics point out that Montcalm's forces on the extreme right flank, under the command of Louis Antoine, Comte de Bougainville, were in position to threaten the British rear on the Plains of Abraham. Had Montcalm waited, the thinking goes, Wolfe might have found himself between two French forces and at great risk.<sup>49</sup> There is probably some wisdom in this point of view, but it does not give due consideration to Montcalm's problems. The strength of the French defense came from the tight linear positions running along the high cliffs on the north side of the St. Lawrence River. The fortress protecting Quebec set in the middle of this line with both flanks anchored on streambeds not open to attack. Once Wolfe had penetrated this system, the entire dynamics changed. Not only had Montcalm's line been broken, but also reaction to the penetration, such as bringing Bougainville to his rescue, would weaken it elsewhere. Further, having reached the Plains of Abraham, Wolfe now had

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<sup>47</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 344-359; Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*, I., 455-462; Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 192-193.

<sup>48</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 359-362; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 58-59; Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*, I., 470-472.

<sup>49</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 359; Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 193, 200.

maneuver room to threaten French defenses all along the line, or to range out and destroy crops and facilities north of the river, just as he had previously done on the southern side. Montcalm had only two days supply remaining within Quebec and Saunders's ships had effectively interdicted his only supply line. The British force now located on the Plains of Abraham could only get stronger over time because Wolfe could now reinforce his position, entrench, and bring-up cannon.<sup>50</sup> With artillery ashore and Saunders's naval gunfire ships available, the British commanders could easily demolish the already battered walls of Quebec. No guarantee existed that Bougainville's force could defeat Wolfe, even if it came-up in time to cooperate with Montcalm. In fact, when Bougainville did arrive on the field after the defeat of Montcalm, the British sharply repulsed his attack and forced him to withdraw. For the French defenders, it was harsh reality that once Wolfe's army stood in battle formation on the Plains of Abraham, Montcalm had no good choices, only bad ones. Being a good and brave soldier, Montcalm chose the one he considered the most honorable.<sup>51</sup>

Once Montcalm attacked Wolfe's forces on the Plains of Abraham, the superior quality of the British soldier decimated his formations. Yet despite this display of tactical competence, it was the strategic and operational agility inherent in British amphibious forces that provided the key to defeat of French power at Quebec and in North America. This striking power, coupled with the ability of the Royal Navy to control sea-lanes and limit—even eliminate—French resupply of its North American forces set the stage for the operational victories that turned the tide of the French and Indian War.<sup>52</sup> The success of

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<sup>50</sup> Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 192-194.

<sup>51</sup> Fuller, *A Military History of the Western World*, 2, 264.

Amherst and Boscawen in opening the St. Lawrence River through victory at Louisbourg, and of Wolfe and Saunders's energetic gyrations at Quebec changed forever the political face of North America. As illustrated by these successes at Louisbourg and Quebec, amphibious operations proved essential to Great Britain's victory over France during the French and Indian War and in the broader Seven Year's War as well. Although these and other British victories during 1758-1760 decided the ultimate outcome of the conflict in North America, the war continued to rage in Europe, India, Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean until the Treaty of Paris ended the conflagration in 1763.<sup>53</sup> But after the fall of Quebec, the fortunes of war increasingly favored the British Empire.

Victory in the French and Indian War created a new strategic reality in North America and new requirements in London. Americans now believed themselves more secure with removal of the French threat and reduced risk of French inspired Indian attacks. They supposed less of a need for British troops in the colonies and expected a reduction in defense spending. British leaders perceived a need to protect a much larger area in North America with the acquisition of French Canada and other territory east of the Mississippi. They believed that defense spending must increase to pay for this protection and, most importantly, to pay off the war debt accumulated in achieving this great victory.<sup>54</sup> The conflict that arose from these two new realities led to the next, and most critical, step in the building of a new American nation—the American Revolution. Amphibious operations had played an important part in achieving success in the French

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<sup>52</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 453-454.

<sup>53</sup> Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 197.

<sup>54</sup> Ferling, *Struggle for a Continent*, 202-203.

and Indian War. They also contributed to the convoluted political situation that resulted, and would play an equally significant role in the upcoming contest.

## CHAPTER I

### NOTES ON SOURCES AND CONCEPTS

*Roots of Tradition* describes and analyzes the amphibious aspects of warfare during the early American period and explains how these activities provided the basis for future success. Over time, the United States developed into the world's premier amphibious power, rising to an especially high level of proficiency during the twentieth century. This success resulted from traditions with roots in numerous naval and military actions from the Revolution through the American Civil War. During this formative period, the United States experienced amphibious warfare on the offensive and defensive level, learning important lessons from both forms of the art.

The overwhelming superiority of British naval power during the eighteenth century ensured that most major amphibious operations of the Revolutionary War placed American forces on the defensive. The 1776 campaign for New York exemplifies this dominance as well as demonstrates the benefits of mobility and initiative in combat operations. British preeminence in naval and amphibious power diminished after 1778 when French sea power became a factor in the strategic mosaic of North America. The ensuing ability of George Washington to concentrate a joint and combined force at Yorktown in 1781 resulted in the most decisive American victory of the war. During the years that followed the Revolution, the United States engaged in conflicts against France in the Caribbean and the Barbary States of North Africa. Despite being naval in nature, amphibious warfare played a minor role in these disputes even though the attack on Derna proved crucial to American victory in Tripoli.

The War of 1812 qualifies as an amphibious war almost as much as the Second World War. Numerous amphibious operations, both large and small, occurred on the Great Lakes, throughout the Chesapeake and, of course, at New Orleans. As in the American Revolution, British forces conducted most of the large-scale offensive operations of this war, especially after 1813. Although the Battle of New Orleans overshadows other engagements in significance and historic memory, the Battle of Baltimore provides the most instructive case of the role of defense in amphibious warfare. During the war with Mexico, American amphibious operations shifted decisively to an offensive mode of action. The conquest of California demonstrates the advantages of naval mobility and power projection in achieving objectives ashore. The innovation and aggressiveness associated with the landing at Veracruz in 1847 served as a model for future operations of this kind; the success at Veracruz coupled with the conquest of California provided substantial precedent for Union amphibious actions during the American Civil War. Throughout that conflict, Union forces made full use of their naval superiority to maneuver against the Confederacy almost at will; the two landings at Fort Fisher late in the war provide a textbook contrast between ineffective and effective amphibious operations. Collectively, the traditions developed during these early years provided the foundation for future amphibious success and constitute the *Roots of Tradition* for American power projection.

Despite the importance of amphibious warfare in the American naval and military tradition, very little material deals exclusively with the subject. This is particularly true for the first hundred years of the American republic, which is the focus of this work. For the most part, the history of amphibious operations tends to be contained in larger studies

such as general works on the theory of warfare and those addressing a particular war, campaign, or military service. One of the few exceptions to this is Alfred Vagts' 1946 book, *Landing Operations: Strategy, Psychology, Tactics, Politics, From Antiquity to 1945*. Vagts deals with the broad subject of amphibious warfare throughout history, but touches lightly and erratically on the period of the early American republic. Yet his historical analysis is impressive and provides a basic assessment for any study of amphibious warfare. In fact, one of the strengths of Vagts' study is its coverage of Thomas More Molyneux and his 1759 work, *Conjunct Expeditions: or Expeditions That have been carried on jointly by the Fleet and Army, with a Commentary on a Littoral WAR*. By *Conjunct Expeditions*, Molyneux meant joint operations in the terminology of our time.<sup>1</sup> Too often, Molyneux's seminal work on the theory and application of amphibious warfare does not receive adequate attention in the historical studies of this subject. Of course, Molyneux published his observations prior to the formation of the American republic. Even so, his writings had a great influence on military and naval leaders during the early republic. *Conjunct Expeditions* constitutes the most astute treatise on the subject of amphibious warfare and is one of the great intellectual works of military analysis.

Although not widely recognized by naval and military historians today, Molyneux is a figure of importance to the study of strategy and operational art. Among other things, Molyneux provides both theoretical and practical insights into amphibious warfare that

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<sup>1</sup> Historians and historic publications often confuse the terms *combined* and *joint* when dealing with military activity because these meanings have changed over time. In the current language of the U.S. military and its allies, the term *joint* refers to operations involving more than one service, whereas the term *combined* refers to activities involving more than one nation. It is possible to have an operation that is both *joint* and *combined*, of course, which would include nearly all NATO actions. See Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Washington, D.C. 14 September 2007, 101, 293.

still have relevance today. His perceptions on joint operations and amphibious actions are comparable to those of Clausewitz, Jomini, and Sun-tzu on the subject of land combat, and Mahan and Corbett on naval war. Molyneux's work offers an exhaustive history of littoral warfare coupled with sophisticated insights into its nature and value. Equally important, Molyneux provides detailed guidance on how to prepare and execute amphibious operations based on his historical analysis and theoretical framework. His writing predates all other great masters of military theory and philosophy with the exception of Sun-tsu, and truly qualifies him as the intellectual father of modern amphibious warfare.<sup>2</sup>

Molyneux recognized that a nation with superior sea power possessed the advantage of initiative and, therefore, could bring powerful forces against an enemy at a time and place of its choosing. He emphasized that the element of surprise is key to an effective amphibious attack, calling it "a terrible Sort of War," that "comes like thunder and lightning to some unprepared Part of the World".<sup>3</sup> Despite his high opinion of the potential of amphibious landings, Molyneux recognized that they failed more often than they succeeded, providing numerous examples of both often in excruciating detail.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sun-tzu's series of essays on warfare, now entitled *The Art of War*, date from the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.; Carl von Clausewitz's *magnum opus* on the theory of war, *On War (Vom Kriege)* was written during the 1816-1830 period and first published in 1832; Antoine-Henri, Baron de Jomini published his most famous writing on warfare, *The Art of War, (Précis de l'Art de la Guerre)* initially in 1838; Alfred Thayer Mahan published numerous works on the history and theory of naval warfare between 1883 and 1899, the most famous of which is titled *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, which was published in 1890; Julian Stafford Corbett, a contemporary of Mahan and heavily influenced by Clausewitz and Jomini, also published numerous material on naval warfare of which his masterpiece, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, was first published in 1911. Collectively, these writers constitute the intellectual brain trust for the theory and philosophy of warfare and all are widely studied.

<sup>3</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part I, 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 5-8.

Molyneux insists that the main reason for failed amphibious missions, or miscarriages in his words, was mismanagement in planning and execution.<sup>5</sup> The most important aspect of this mismanagement (today we would refer to this as inadequate leadership) was a lack of cooperation between navy and army commanders, for which he primarily blamed the army.<sup>6</sup> He contended that the large armies and grandiose maneuvering, which occurred on the continent of Europe during his era, intrigued British army officers and dominated their interest and attention. As a result, they held amphibious operations involving both army and naval elements in low esteem and failed to study that art or to apply themselves to such missions with the high degree of professionalism it required. That army commanders had to share command with, or even be subordinate to, naval officers undoubtedly affected their attitude as well. They viewed littoral warfare as peripheral to the main theaters of war where decisive engagements resulted from the power of continental land armies. This inevitably resulted in deficient work by army officers and often contributed to a lack of cooperation with their navy counterparts.<sup>7</sup> In this criticism, Molyneux possessed a degree of credibility, being an army officer and having served with James Wolfe during the failed 1757 expedition to Rochefort, France.<sup>8</sup>

Molyneux also believed that British expeditions commonly failed to provide an adequate number of troops to accomplish their missions. This stems somewhat from army leaders placing low value on joint operations. Molyneux lamented that the problem

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<sup>5</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part 1, vii, 3; Part II, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part I, vii., 4; Part II, 8, 46.

<sup>7</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expedition*, Part I, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part 1, iii; Part II, 46; Vagts, *Landing Operations*, 150-151.

persisted beyond reasonable explanation, demonstrating convincingly that many important British expeditions required twice the number of troops actually assigned.<sup>9</sup> He considered this particularly inexcusable because it undercut the distinct naval advantage that Britain brought to the field of world conflict. By better matching the landing force to the mission, Molyneux suggested that British strength would become overpowering in littoral warfare.<sup>10</sup>

As much as Molyneux valued the potential of superior naval and landing power, he also believed that Great Britain must improve in the area we would today call operational security. Without this element, the assault force sacrifices the crucial element of surprise and as a result faced larger forces and stronger defenses on the enemy shores. Regrettably, many British expeditions during Molyneux's time became common knowledge in both concept and detail long before their departure. Again, Molyneux offers examples of British failures and their negative impact on operations.<sup>11</sup> By practicing operational security, achieving surprise in the objective area, and providing adequate numbers of troops, Molyneux suggests that the resulting "thunder and lightning" would become virtually irresistible.

Although Molyneux provided many explanations for British amphibious failures, it is his more positive prescriptions on how to conduct successful landings that makes his work so valuable. According to Molyneux, correcting repeated deficiencies (poor professional attitude, inadequate cooperation, insufficient troops, and lack of operational security) represents only a starting point for waging successful littoral warfare. His

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<sup>9</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 9-15.

<sup>10</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 18-19.

<sup>11</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 35.

critique of amphibious war finds its greatest value in constructive recommendations, which he proffers in the second part of his text. For example, he explained the need for adequate naval gunfire support for both the landing force and to protect the invasion fleet—particularly the transport ships.<sup>12</sup> He defined the appropriate logistical consideration, addressing both supply issues and the actual ship-to-shore movement. He even suggested boat specifications and insight on landing tactics.<sup>13</sup> Molyneux also provided a long discourse on amphibious tactics in general and their proper application under differing situations, including such details as the various uses of horses during and after the actual landing.<sup>14</sup> Although the use of horses may seem quaint to the twenty-first century military analyst, the important point that Molyneux offered was that military officers must think broadly about their mission while paying proper attention to detail and thoroughness.

Molyneux was never more astute than when he called for adequate training of all personnel involved in landing operations including the need to conduct large-scale training exercises prior to an invasion.<sup>15</sup> The greatest advantage of large-scale landing exercises was that they trained the entire amphibious force including—perhaps especially—officers at all levels. This provided Molyneux a subtle way to improve the professionalism and performance of high-ranking army officers whose mindset tended toward continental warfare. Large-scale training exercises also forced leaders to develop important communications techniques prior to conducting a landing operation.

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<sup>12</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 48, 149.

<sup>13</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 48-50, 100, 182.

<sup>14</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 29-54, 186.

<sup>15</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 53.

Molyneux offered recommendations for improved communication, not only between the landing force and its ships, but also among the landing boats during the amphibious assault.<sup>16</sup>

Another of Molyneux's particularly perceptive observations was the failure of British army officers to change with the times. He was less critical of naval officers in this regard because he understood that technological innovations forced them to be more open-minded. Yet he described how Great Britain's enemies learned to improve defenses along their littorals over time and develop defensive tactics that militated against Britain's superiority in sea power. The failure to understand this and to adjust offensive tactics and systems accordingly undercut Britain's ability to project power effectively from the sea.<sup>17</sup> Among the explicit examples Molyneux used was the failed 1757 attack on Rochefort, France, which he insists occurred because of the inability of British leaders to record and utilize the experiences of prior expeditions.<sup>18</sup>

Molyneux also noted that amphibious warfare was so complex that leaders needed to establish a system (doctrine in modern parlance) to facilitate the planning and execution of such operations. Using the historical and analytical material presented in his text, he produced ninety pages of highly organized information in chapter 7 of part II, covering all aspects of the art of littoral warfare.<sup>19</sup> The thoroughness of his information and the manner in which it is organized qualifies *Conjunct Expeditions* as one of the most

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<sup>16</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 196.

<sup>17</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 29.

<sup>18</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part I, 210-215; Part II, 32; Vagts, *Landing Operations*, 267-270; Julian S. Corbett, *England and the Seven Years' War: A Study in Combined Strategy*, Vol. 1. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1918), 209-227.

<sup>19</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 112-202.

complete and incisive document on the art of warfare produced up to that time. It is also very likely the first cogent doctrine ever written on the subject of amphibious war. The blending of history, detailed analysis, specific tactical guidance, and theoretical context all combine to make Molyneux's masterpiece a highly compelling treatise on warfare. Trying to understand the successes and failures of the past in order to improve amphibious performance in the future, he sought "to discover our own Thoughts, and Inventions upon thefe Matters; to reduce (if possible) this Amphibious Kind of Warfare, to some safe regular System, to leave as little as we can to Fortune and her Caprices... [sic]"<sup>20</sup>

Other than the writings of Vagt and Molyneux, there exist no studies dealing exclusively with amphibious warfare. The 1983 Book, *Assault from the Sea: Essays on the History of Amphibious Warfare*, edited by Merrill L. Bartlett, embodies little more than a collection of articles and essays placed in chronological order. Although a helpful reference book, *Assault from the Sea* represents an anthology more than a comprehensive study of amphibious warfare. One can often find information on amphibious warfare in the general studies of warfare that recount, analyze, and interpret the country's past conflicts. Among the better of these works are C. Joseph Bernardo and Eugene H. Bacon's 1955 book, *American Military Policy: Its Development Since 1775*; Lynn Montross' 1960 study, *War Through the Ages*; Richard A. Preston and Sydney F. Wise's 1970 book, *Men in Arms: A History of Warfare and its Interrelationship with Western Society*; Russell F. Weigley's 1973 book, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*; and Allen R. Millett and Peter Maslowski's 1984 book, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*. Yet

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<sup>20</sup> Molyneux, *Conjunct Expeditions*, Part II, 1.

none of these general histories deals exclusively with amphibious warfare or the period of the early American republic. Even so, they provide valuable information and insight on the subject.

Of the numerous historical studies that deal with the sea services, only histories of the United States Marine Corps provide comprehensive information on amphibious warfare in American history. Many naval histories address amphibious warfare from the seaman's point of view, but these usually come in the form of biographical accounts, studies of particular wars or battles, or analysis of naval craft and equipment. Even naval thinker Alfred Thayer Mahan barely addresses amphibious war in his extensive and detailed accounts of naval warfare. His 1890 seminal book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, deals almost exclusively with fleets at sea and their impact on the political, diplomatic, and economic situations of their times. Some of Mahan's later writings analyze specific wars and touch on amphibious issues, including his 1913 study *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, and his 1903 account of *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812* touch on amphibious warfare.

English writer, Julian S. Corbett, describes naval warfare more broadly and with a greater focus on littoral actions. As exemplified in this 1911 study, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, Corbett's observations and analysis provides greater value to the student of amphibious warfare than Mahan's blue sea fleet oriented material, but neither addressed this subject with much thoroughness or analytic insight.

There have been a number of worthy histories of the United States Marine Corps, written by historians with roots in both academia and the Marines, and much of this material deals with the amphibious history of the United States. These works are not

limited to the study of amphibious warfare as they address many aspects of Marine Corps history. Yet amphibious warfare constitutes a core element of these books. Clyde H. Metcalf's 1939 book, *A History of the United States Marine Corps*, deals with the early American period best because the era loomed more important at that time. Material written after World War II focused more exclusively on the twentieth century and particularly the Marine Corps' role in Pacific War and in Korea. For many years, the standard work on Marine Corps history was Robert Debs Heinl's 1962 book, *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps 1775-1962*. Subsequent works of value include Edwin H. Simmons' 1974 book, *The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1975*; Robert J. Moskin's 1977 book, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*; and Allan R. Millett's 1991 book, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*. Though supposedly comprehensive accounts of the Marine Corps, they tend to be weak on the subject of the early American republic. Additionally, they provided only minimal information about the role of other services in landing operations. Despite their obvious shortcomings, they remain essential to any study of amphibious warfare.

In the case of the American Revolution, the material dealing with amphibious warfare tends to be embedded in larger works about the war or its specific battles. Regarding the campaigns for New York and Yorktown, several important books illustrate this pattern. Barnet Schecter's 2002, *The Battle for New York: The City at the Heart of the American Revolution*, deals wholly with the campaign for New York and its implications for the overall war effort. Though not exclusively a study on amphibious warfare, its focus on the New York campaign provides much information relative to such

a study. John J. Gallagher's 1995 book, *The Battle of Brooklyn, 1776* provides a similar source of information for the opening battle of the New York campaign.

Perhaps the most valuable single work in understanding the British perspective in the campaign for New York is Ira D. Gruber's 1972 book, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*. The Howe brothers commanded both the naval and army elements during the New York campaign permitted Gruber to offer a particularly incisive study in joint command relations during amphibious operations and the decision making process that influenced its outcome. Gruber focused his study at the strategy level, and particularly the interplay between field commanders and ministry officials in London. Yet he never lost sight that the actual war occurred in North America where success or failure would be decided. Additionally, Gruber addressed all the important historical arguments that attempted to explain British failure in North America, giving each a fair and honest hearing. But ultimately, he contended they failed because the Howe brothers worked at cross purposes with the ministry. Although he makes a strong case for his viewpoint, it ultimately seems insufficient. Like the numerous other theories he addresses, his work provides yet another perspective that contributes important, but incomplete, information on the subject.

In understanding the Yorktown campaign, Richard M. Ketchum's 2004 work, *Victory at Yorktown: The Campaign That Won the Revolution* focuses on all facets of that campaign including its amphibious elements. In 2005, John D. Grainger provided a British perspective of Yorktown *The Battle of Yorktown, 1781: A Reassessment*, that deals with Yorktown as one element in the larger scope of events occurring during the fall and winter of 1781. Although he posited that Yorktown constituted an important

event in the war, he also insisted that the amphibious and land elements represented little more than adjuncts to the more important seaborne echelon under Admiral Francois-Joseph-Paul, Comte de Grasse and his French fleet. Grainger's argument is valid, but rather than expanding the historic debate into a discussion of the larger joint and combined effort, he instead shifts the focus from ground combat to the naval aspects of the Yorktown campaign. Perhaps the greatest strength of Grainger's book is how he places the Yorktown victory in perspective within the total war effort.

Other than these studies that deal specifically with the New York and Yorktown campaigns, assessments of amphibious warfare in the Revolution appear primarily within broader works and studies. Jeremy Black's 1991 book, *War for America: The Fight for Independence*, provides useful understanding of the era's military and naval environment. Additionally, his 2002 work, *America as a Military Power: From the American Revolution to the Civil War*, provides important insights and perceptions of how that environment expanded and changed. Although Black's work remains difficult to read, he provides impressive insight and analysis for the scholar and military professional. He not only tells the story of what happened and the analysis of the impact, but also explores the underlying forces that contribute to decisions and actions. J.F.C. Fuller's 1942 book, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.* contains a particularly good account of the Battle for Yorktown and the events that led to its culmination. Fuller has a masterful ability to combine the scholar's capacity for research and analysis with the soldier's understanding of forces and events to present particularly incisive descriptions and explanations of military actions. To gain a better understanding of the naval aspects of amphibious operations in the Revolution, Nathan Miller's 1974 book, *Sea of Glory: A Naval History*

*of the American Revolution*, and William M. Fowler, Jr.'s 1976 book, *Rebels Under Sail: The American Navy during the Revolution*, remain indispensable. Fowler's work is of particular value because it addresses the Continental Navy, which is one of the most overlooked aspects of the Revolutionary War.

Other important general histories of the American Revolution that contain some insight on amphibious warfare include Don Higginbotham's 1971 book, *The War for American Independence: Military Attitudes, Politics, and Practices, 1763-1789*, which tends to focus on the multiplicity of factors that influenced the outcome of the war. Dave Richard Palmer's 1975 work, *The Way of the Fox: American Strategy in the War for America* describes Washington's strategic leadership and his capacity for integrating military and political agendas to the benefit of his war effort. Piers Mackesy's 1964 book, *The War for America, 1775-1783*, provides a sympathetic view of British strategy and leadership in waging their war in America. Although he places the war in the larger global context, he ultimately suggests that the failure came from the operational commanders rather than senior policy makers. Robert Middlekauff's 1982 work, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1767-1789*, provides a narrative account of the Revolutionary War within the larger contest of American history and society.

During the Quasi War with France and the Barbary Wars in North Africa, amphibious operation played only a minor role in American campaigns. The 1805 joint and combined attack on Derna, Tripoli that forced Bashaw Yusuf Karamanli to make peace and end his war with the United States represented an important exception. During the early twentieth century, several studies kept these wars in the American memory, including Gardner W. Allen's 1905 account, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs*, and the

1945 study by Louis B. Wright and Julia H. McLeod entitled, *The First Americans in North Africa: William Eaton's Struggle for a Vigorous Policy against the Barbary Pirates 1799-1804*. During the second half of the twentieth century, several notable books interpreted the Derna campaign in light of the post World War II decolonization movement and the Vietnam experience; these include the 1968 book, *The Forgotten Wars: The Role of the U.S. Navy in the Quasi War and the Barbary Wars, 1798-1805*, by Howard P. Nash, Jr.; the 1968 book, *Barbary General: The Life of William H. Eaton*, by Samuel Edwards; the 1971 book, *The Wars in Barbary: Arab Piracy and the Birth of the United States Navy*, by Donald Barr Childsey; the 1991 book, *To the Shores of Tripoli: The Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines*, by A.B.C. Whipple; and the 1995 work, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815*, by Robert J. Allison. Although none of these books deal with amphibious operations in a substantive manner, some information can be gleaned from each with a thorough reading.

At the beginning of the Twenty-First Century, the rise in Islamic terrorism including such events as the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York influenced historians to revisit the era of Barbary conflict. This resulted in a number of publications including the 2003 book, *Jefferson's War: America's First War on Terror, 1801-1805*, by Joseph Wheelan, and the 2005 books, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, by Frank Lambert; *Victory in Tripoli: How America's War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation*, by Joshua E. London; and *The Pirate Coast: Thomas Jefferson, the First Marines, and the Secret Mission of 1805*, by Richard Zacks. These studies attempt to connect America's current war against Islamic terrorism to the earlier period of conflict with the

Muslim powers. The legitimacy of that comparison is specious because of the two hundred year's between the conflicts as well as the religious and cultural nature of the current trouble. But the present conflict between Islamic and western cultures has rejuvenated general interest in a historical period long the purview of specialized scholarship. The end of the Barbary War in 1805 turned the focus of American international interests away from the Islamic world and back toward the conflict among European empires. This redirection of attention culminated in the War of 1812, or as many Americans characterized it, the Second War of Independence.

The best material on the naval aspects of the War of 1812 remains Mahan's 1905 book, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, and Theodore Roosevelt's 1882, *The Naval War of 1812*. As previously noted, Mahan deals very lightly with the amphibious elements of sea power and Roosevelt's work is similarly limited with the exception of the Battle of New Orleans, which he covers extensively. Despite the limited assessment of amphibious actions, these are important works because they provide a thorough understanding of naval operations, which is essential to analyzing amphibious warfare. The most valuable general history of the War of 1812 is Donald R. Hickey's 1989 book, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. Hickey's work provides a comprehensive account and analysis of all aspects of the War of 1812 with particular focus on the military, political, social, and economic factors. Although it is necessary to extract the amphibious operations from throughout his book, these actions do receive attention within the context of the greater war effort. One can disagree with Hickey's conclusion that the United States lost the war because it failed to achieve its initial war

aims and still appreciate the excellence of the work. This study is likely to remain the standard work on the War of 1812 well into the future.

In dealing with the Battle of Baltimore, Walter Lord's 1972 book, *The Dawn's Early Light*, provides the best account and analysis published prior to the 1990s. As the bicentennial of the War of 1812 approaches, renewed interest has resulted in a number of new works about the conflict in general that include information on the Battle of Baltimore. Typically, these accounts address the entire Chesapeake Campaign of 1814 in which the Battles of Bladensburg (Washington) and Baltimore served as the largest and most significant incidents. Among these histories are Joseph A. Whitehorn's 1997 book, *The Battle for Baltimore, 1814*; Anthony S. Pitch's 1998 work, *The Burning of Washington: The British Invasion of 1814*; Christopher T. George's 2000 book, *Terror on the Chesapeake: The War of 1812 on the Bay*; and Scott Sheads's brief but graphic 1995 account entitled, *Fort McHenry: A History*. These studies of amphibious campaigning in the Chesapeake improve and update the very valuable 1962 book by Charles G. Muller, *The Darkest Day 1814: The Washington-Baltimore Campaign*.

For thirty years after the War of 1812, the United States military served in peripheral assignments such as policing the frontiers, suppressing smuggling and slave trading, and opposing piracy. Although amphibious actions occurred, they consisted of small-scale events with minimal impact on the progress of military and naval development. This changed drastically with the Mexican-American War. The conquest of California resulted from an amphibious campaign in which naval commanders and their ships maneuvered along the coastline conducting power projection operations. The landing at Veracruz and subsequent drive toward Mexico City in the main theatre of war

constituted the largest and, arguably, most significant amphibious operation of the nineteenth century. Despite the erroneous claim that American history tends to overlook the Mexican War, there exists a large and rich historiography on all aspects of this subject beginning in the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the best single work on the California theatre of this conflict is Neal Harlow's 1982 classic, *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846-1850*. In this book, Harlow tells the story of the conquest of California principally through the actions of major participants including James K. Polk, Stephen W. Kearny, John C. Frémont, Archibald H. Gillespie, and especially the naval commanders, John D. Sloat, Robert F. Stockton, James Biddle, and William Branford Shubrick. Although Harlow provides substantial information on the numerous amphibious actions that brought success in California, his work is much broader and incorporates political, social, and economic insights as well as military and naval analysis. Robert Erwin Johnson's 1963 work, *Thence Round Capt Horn: The Story of the United States Naval Forces on Pacific Station, 1818-1923*, provides an important, if brief, analysis on the conquest of California and is especially astute in recognizing that victory resulted from the Pacific Squadron and its ability to project power ashore. Karl Jack Bauer's 1969 book, *Surfboats and Horse Marines: U.S. Naval Operations in the Mexican War, 1846-48*, is masterful in its ability to blend narrative and analysis into a concise account of a complex conflict. Although Bauer attempts to focus on the naval aspect of the Mexican-American War in this book, the nature of his subject makes it essentially a study in amphibious warfare. Bauer's work is not limited to the California campaign, but also provides a superb description and analysis of the Veracruz landing and other actions in the Gulf coast theatre of the war.

The Veracruz landing of 1847 constituted the first large-scale joint offensive amphibious operation in the history of the United States. It initiated a pattern of joint power projection that has remained a standard feature in American naval and military actions ever since. Other than Bauer's *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, there is virtually no historiography that addresses the amphibious element of the Mexican-American War in the Gulf, although much information is included in larger studies of the war and its leaders. Biographies of the principal commanders of the Veracruz operation—Commodore David Conner, Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, and Lieutenant General Winfield Scott—provide much information for those willing to mine the material. This work began to emerge with the 1896 publication by Philip S.P. Conner entitled, *The Home Squadron Under Commodore Conner in the War With Mexico, Being a Synopsis of the Services, 1846-1847*. Conner was the son of Commodore David Conner and based his account on material from his father's papers. In fact, this book remains little more than an edited version of David Conner's papers with a memoir of Admiral William G. Temple attached. In addition to the information within the text of this book, Philip Conner included copies of all the written orders issued by David Conner and Winfield Scott, making this book a valuable and important asset in understanding the amphibious aspects of the Veracruz assault.

Although David Conner commanded the Home Squadron during the Veracruz landing, history has granted more attention to his replacement as squadron commander, Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry. Conner commanded before and during the actual landing, but Perry replaced him prior to capturing the city of Veracruz. Two standard biographies of Perry are William Elliot Griffis's 1890 book entitled *Matthew Calbraith*

Perry and Samuel Eliot Morison's 1967 work, "*Old Burin:*" *Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry*. In addition to updating Griffis's account, Morison brings his analytic and descriptive genius to bear in understanding this subject. Despite the book's focus on the life of Perry, Morison addressed the contributions of both Conner and Perry in describing the amphibious operation at Veracruz. Collectively, these books provide a substantive understanding of the naval—and by extension amphibious—aspects of the Veracruz operation.

A more recent biography of Perry is the 2001 work, *Matthew Calbraith Perry: Antebellum Sailor and Diplomat*, by John H. Schroeder. This book focuses on Perry's broader contributions to the United States such as opening Japan to American diplomacy and trade along with his efforts to modernize the U.S. Navy. Perry's efforts at modernization included support for iron hull ships and steam propulsion at a time when many top naval leaders questioned the value of both. Although Perry missed the landing at Veracruz, he participated in other amphibious actions during the Mexican-American War. Most notable of these landings involved the capture of Tabasco before Veracruz and Alvarado afterwards. In both cases, he demonstrated great leadership and courage. Schroeder provides the first major study of Matthew Perry since Morison's 1967 work and one which is somewhat more critical in its analysis while remaining balanced in its judgments.

Of the three primary leaders of the American victory at Veracruz, Scott is by far the most recognized in fame and literature. Several biographies written in the nineteenth century, including Edward Deering Mansfield's 1848 book, *The Life of General Winfield Scott, Embracing his Campaign in Mexico*, and Marcus J. Wright's 1894 book, *General*

*Scott*, focus almost entirely on the person of Scott although they provide some insight on his amphibious contributions. This can also be said for two good biographies published in 1937, *Old Fuss and Feathers: The Life of Winfield Scott* by Arthur D.H. Smith and *Winfield Scott: The Soldier and the Man*, by Charles Winslow Elliott. In 1997, John S.D. Eisenhower published *Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott*, and in 1998, Timothy D. Johnson published *Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory*, both of which provided small but excellent chapters on the Veracruz operation. These six biographies of Winfield Scott provide helpful insight on the Veracruz landing for those willing to extract the relevant information.

In addition to the biographies of the three major participants, a number of general histories of the Mexican-American War include material on the Veracruz landing. Some of the better early histories of the war include the 1849 book by Roswell Sabine Ripley, *The War With Mexico*; the 1860 book by Edward Deering Mansfield, *The Mexican War*; and the 1892 work by Cadmus Marcellus Wilcox entitled *History of the Mexican War*. Mansfield's book is particularly valuable for its statistical data and factual tables that provide details on the war effort. Wilcox provides a superb set of appendices and, although his book is not a memoir, it benefits from his participation in the war as a junior officer.

Perhaps the best book written to date on the Mexican-American War is Justin Harvey Smith book, *The War With Mexico*, published in 1919. Although criticized by some historians as being partisan, Smith's book provides enormous detail and analysis and remains the most thoroughly researched book on this subject. Bernard DeVoto's 1943 book, *The Year of Decision, 1847*, was somewhat critical of the United States and

tapped into an underlying strand of opposition to America's involvement. DeVoto leads the faction within academia that criticizes the work of Justin Harvey Smith, although his own work has come in for scholarly criticism as containing faulty analysis. Much of the writing in the second half of the twentieth century such as Robert Selph Henry's 1950 work, *The Story of the Mexican War*, and Otis A. Singletary's 1960 book, *The Mexican War*, favor DeVoto's more critical view of America's role. Singletary criticizes the entire war effort, suggesting that the internal conflicts among political, military, and naval leaders rivaled the fighting against the Mexicans. This critical view remains strong in the historiography of the Mexican-American War because of the prominence of two critics of the war, Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant. Yet Karl Jack Bauer's 1974 book, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* contends that the war was the most unavoidable conflict in American history because of the lure of the frontier and the miscalculations of both governments. Although Bauer's book focuses on the political and diplomatic elements of the war, it includes good coverage of the actual fighting. John E. Weems's 1974 book, *To Conquer Peace: The War Between the United States and Mexico*, also supports the theory that circumstances made war between the two countries inevitable. Additionally, Weems develops the theme that the Mexican War inexorably advanced the coming of the American Civil War, an idea that has become axiomatic among modern historians. For the most part, these general histories of the Mexican-American War deal only slightly with the subject of amphibious warfare. Yet they provide great value in understanding the larger context in which the amphibious actions occurred.

In addition to the work of professional historians and senior officers, a study of the Mexican-American War would not be complete without the superb memoirs of two

remarkable junior officers—Ulysses S. Grant and Raphael Semmes. Semmes proved to be a prolific writer over the course of his naval career, but none of his work exceeded the importance of his 1851 book, *Service Afloat and Ashore during the Mexican War*. During his time in Mexico, Semmes worked closely with both Conner at sea and Scott ashore, which placed him in proximity to the two commanders and provided him numerous insights into their character and the decision-making processes. Grant published his two-volume memoir, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, in 1885 after his retirement from public service. Grant served under both Taylor in northern Mexico and Scott at Veracruz. Although he wrote his account many years after the war, his capacity for penetrating analysis remains apparent throughout. Grant recognized the professionalism and ability of both his commanders without being hagiographic in the process. Of course, Grant's experience with amphibious operations was limited to Veracruz, but his views on that event are valuable. Both Grant and Semmes also wrote accounts of their experiences in the Civil War, and again their direct experiences in amphibious operations proved limited. But Grant served as commander-in-chief of the Union Army at the time of the attacks on Fort Fisher and this makes his observations and writings extremely important for analyzing the action.

In understanding the amphibious operations of the American Civil War, the most important book is Rowena Reed's 1979 work, *Combined Operations in the Civil War*. Although not exclusively a book on amphibious operations, it addresses all the important landings of the war. Reed's book is controversial because of her conclusions about the strategic thinking of Union leaders. Reed contends that George B. McClellan's concept of an indirect approach would have been superior—if allowed to develop fully—to the

direct approach of Henry W. Halleck and Ulysses S. Grant. This is, of course, contrary to the conventional wisdom of twentieth-century historians. Regardless of where one stands on the question of strategy, *Combined Operations in the Civil War* remains an important source for understanding and analyzing the amphibious aspects of this war including the 1864-1865 fighting at Fort Fisher.

For understanding the naval dimension of Civil War amphibious operations, Howard P. Nash, Jr.'s 1972 book, *A Naval History of the Civil War*, and Stephen R. Wise's 1988 work, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, provide information and insight. In 2006, Spencer C. Tucker published *Blue and Gray Navies: The Civil War Afloat*, in which he addresses all aspects of naval warfare including blockade duty and blockade running, commerce raiding, coastal defense, riverine operations, and amphibious warfare. In addition to being a superb narrative and analytic account, Tucker's book addresses the innovation and technology advances so important to the war effort. Tucker also points out that despite the ability of the Union military to conduct amphibious operations effectively, it never leveraged them into a major land operation. The amphibious successes Union forces experienced throughout most of the war usually resulted in the establishment of enclaves ashore of limited value.

Interest in the American Civil War has led to the publication of too many studies to list. Relatively few of these deal with amphibious operations because fascination with the large land campaigns has predominated in the field. The one exception to this is the landings at Fort Fisher that occurred in the final months of the war. Three publications during the 1990s provide a helpful adjunct to Reed's *Combined Operations* in understanding the Fort Fisher operations. In 1991, Ron Gregg published *Confederate*

*Goliath: The Battle of Fort Fisher*, which addressed the development and purpose of the defensive structure and described the two battles fought over its capture. The 1997 book, *The Wilmington Campaign: Last Rays of Departing Hope*, by Chris F. Fonvielle and the 1998 work, *Hurricane of Fire: The Union Assault on Fort Fisher*, both provide a good narrative on the battle and its importance. These three works on Fort Fisher—in conjunction with Reed’s controversial book—provide a good background for understanding the battles of Fort Fisher and placing them into the proper perspective of early American amphibious warfare.

For the historian interested in amphibious warfare in early America, the challenge is to extract relatively small bits of information from numerous larger accounts. There are no writings that address the entire subject or even amphibious operations of any one war. Unlike the vast amounts of material that deals with twentieth century amphibious warfare—particularly World War II and Korea—the subject has yet to be developed in any significant way for the period from the Revolution to the Civil War. This study, *Roots of Tradition: Amphibious Warfare in Early America*, should help fill that historiographical deficiency.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NEW YORK CAMPAIGN

The 1763 Peace of Paris that ended the French and Indian War altered the face of America and gave rise to conditions that would ignite even greater changes shortly thereafter. In an effort to raise revenue to cover war debt and consolidate control over its empire, British authorities in London initiated a series of ill-conceived acts that caused a tumultuous reaction in the North American colonies. The first of these actions involved the Proclamation of 1763 in which Great Britain closed the area west of the Appalachian Mountains to white settlement. Like many acts that followed, leaders in London had good intentions. They desired to avoid conflict between settlers and Indians long enough to arrange treaties with native tribes that would ensure an orderly and peaceful process of settlement.<sup>1</sup> But Americans viewed the action very differently. They felt betrayed much as they had in 1748 when British leaders returned Louisbourg to France after colonial forces had captured it during King George's War. One of the objectives of the French and Indian War had been to keep France out of the Ohio Valley. Colonials had fought, in part, for this goal with the implicit understanding that the territory would become available for their future development. Yet in 1763, the home government in London seemed to deny them the fruit of this victory. The Quebec Act, passed in 1774, tended to reinforce that belief by extending the province of Quebec into the Ohio and Illinois country.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John E. Ferling, *A Leap in the Dark: The Struggle to Create the American Republic* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 30-52.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Leckie, *The Wars of America* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), 92-93; William H. Hallahan, *The Day the Revolution Began, 19 April 1775* (New York: William Morrow an Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2000), 300.

With the Proclamation of 1763 already souring relations, Parliament undertook a number of equally unpopular measures including the Currency Act of 1764, the American Duties Act (Sugar Act) of 1764, the Quartering Act of 1765, the Stamp Act of 1765, the Townshend Acts of 1767, the Tea Act of 1773, and ultimately the Coercive Acts (Intolerable Acts) of 1775.<sup>3</sup> These measures and other actions by British leaders engendered intense resentment among colonial Americans, resulting in both nonviolent and violent reactions. One particularly effective measure, initially taken in response to the Stamp Act, involved non-importation movements (trade embargos), which created financial pressure on many influential English merchants.<sup>4</sup> The Americans also generated a number of petitions—which usually proved fruitless—for redress of their grievances. Yet even as colonists pursued peaceful approaches to dealing with their home government, a degree of violence often surfaced.<sup>5</sup> Sporadic mob riots occurred with increasing intensity, one of which culminated in the Boston Massacre of 1770 killing five Americans and wounding several more.<sup>6</sup> Other incidents of violence included the burning of the revenue schooner *Gaspee* in 1772, the Boston Tea Party of 1773, and the full-scale battle of Lexington and Concord during April 1775. When the Second Continental Congress issued the Declaration of Independence in July 1776, the loosely associated nation of thirteen former colonies found itself already in a shooting

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<sup>3</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 572-587, 641-663, 677-713.

<sup>4</sup> Ferling, *A Leap in the Dark*, 80, 83-84, 121.

<sup>5</sup> Ferling, *A Leap in the Dark*, 30-52; Hallahan, *The Day the Revolution Began*, 295-302.

<sup>6</sup> Ferling, *Leap in the Dark*, 76-77. J.F.C. Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1942), 1-8.

war with the most powerful nation in the world.<sup>7</sup> As with the previous imperial wars, naval power and amphibious actions would play a key role in resolving the question of American independence.<sup>8</sup>

Although the British Navy had deteriorated somewhat since its unquestioned superiority at the end of the French and Indian War, the rebellious colonies started the conflict with no navy at all. This granted complete control of the seas and littorals of North America to Britain during the first three years of the war, which proved particularly vexing to George Washington. The situation changed somewhat over time, with the advent of “Washington’s Navy,” the establishment of the Continental Navy, the creation of state navies, and the issuance of letters of marque by both federal and state governments.<sup>9</sup> Yet despite some spectacular victories at sea—such as those of John Paul Jones later in the war—the British usually dominated naval warfare and joint operations in American waters.<sup>10</sup> Not until the French recognized American independence and declared war on Great Britain in 1778 could the United States entertain any hope of mounting large-scale amphibious operations, and even then, such actions remained problematic.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> E.B. Potter and Chester W. Nimitz, eds., *Sea Power: A Naval History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), 66-67; J.F.C. Fuller, *A Military History of the Western World*, 2 (Minerva Press, 1955), 272-274; Ferling, *A Leap in the Dark*, 97, 103-107.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred T. Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1913), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Jeremy Black, *American as a Military Power: From the American Revolution to the Civil War* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2002), 32; Lynn Montross, *War Through the Ages* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 421.

<sup>10</sup> William M. Fowler, Jr., *Rebels Under Sail: The American Navy during the Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribners’ Sons, 1976), 93; Ian Barnes and Charles Royster, eds. *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 126.

After Spain and Holland joined the war as allies of France, Britain found herself outnumbered in total warships but still could usually maintain local naval superiority during key operations in North America.<sup>12</sup> One exception to this, of course, was the sea action associated with the battle of Yorktown in 1781. Even so, throughout most of the war the British Navy provided mobility, local sea control, and the advantage of the initiative to its army brethren.<sup>13</sup> The value of naval superiority first became apparent to American leaders with the British amphibious withdraw from Boston in March 1776 and the subsequent amphibious campaign to capture New York.<sup>14</sup> If the withdrawal from Boston demonstrated the efficacy of one of the lesser types of amphibious operations, the offensive in New York exemplified its most important. And if the capture of New York did not prove decisive in the ultimate outcome of the war, it clearly established strategic advantage for the British during its first phase.

The conflict between Britain and her American colonies—both the political and violent dimensions—had from the very beginning centered in Boston. As a result, Boston also became the focus of British reaction and served as the initial base for its military activity and political leadership. When colonial unrest grew into actual fighting at Lexington and Concord, the British found it necessary to retreat into the fortified city. Colonial militia from all over New England converged on the city, placing the British

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<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Black, *War for America: The Fight for Independence, 1775-1783* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 162.

<sup>12</sup> Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 210, 221-223.

<sup>13</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 9.

<sup>14</sup> Fuller, *A Military History of the Western World*, 2, 267-277; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 67; Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography*, IV (Norwalk, Connecticut: The Easton Press, 1951), 70.

forces in a virtual state of siege. In an effort to alter this situation and remove a potential threat to transportation and communication lanes, the British commander in North America, Lieutenant General Thomas Gage, ordered Major General Sir William Howe to attack the American fortifications located on the dominate high ground across Boston Harbor. On 17 June 1775, Howe landed a force of 2,200 soldiers and marines—later reinforced by 400 additional troops under Major General Sir Henry Clinton—on the Charlestown peninsula, and conducted three furious assaults against the American positions on Breed’s Hill (Bunker Hill). Ultimately, the British drove the militia from their forward positions on Breed’s Hill and captured Bunker Hill, giving them possession of the most dominant and important piece of terrain around Boston with the single exception of Dorchester Heights south of the city. After hard and vicious fighting, Howe’s attack ultimately succeeded, primarily because the defenders ran out of ammunition before they could repulse the final assault.<sup>15</sup>

British success in the Battle of Bunker Hill proved a Pyrrhic victory in every sense of that concept, succeeding at a terrible cost to the attacking force.<sup>16</sup> Even when forced to fall back, the Americans retreated in relatively good order, believing they had won a moral victory over the British regulars and willing to sell another hill at a similar price.<sup>17</sup> Clinton commented the night following the battle that Bunker Hill was, “A dear

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<sup>15</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 9; Lynn Montross, *War Through the Ages*, 420; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> George Washington to Samuel Washington, 20 July 1775, *PGW*, 1, 134-136.

<sup>17</sup> Nathanael Greene made the famous comment, “I wish we could sell them another hill at the same price we did Bunker Hill.” Nathanael Greene to Jacob Greene, 28 June 1775, Richard K. Showman, ed., *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* (*PGNG* hereafter), 1, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1776), 92-93.

bought victory, another such would have ruined us.”<sup>18</sup> Equally important, in the judgment of some analysts, the bloody experience on Bunker Hill seemed to change Howe from an aggressive, daring warrior to a cautious, irresolute commander.<sup>19</sup> British casualties in the battle of Bunker Hill amounted to 1,054 while the Americans suffered 411 plus 30 captured.<sup>20</sup> The dubious victory at Bunker Hill contributed to Gage’s relief as British commander in North America and the elevation of Howe.<sup>21</sup>

Rather than loosening the siege-like conditions around British forces in Boston, the Battle of Bunker Hill caused them to tighten as even more militia continued to assemble in the surrounding hills.<sup>22</sup> These fresh troops had a new commander in chief, George Washington, who arrived with the authority to create a national military force known as the Continental Army. With Washington came substantial changes in the organization and administration of the motley gathering of disparate units. Although the militia’s success in standing-up to British regulars on Bunker Hill impressed Washington, their state of training, discipline, and organization emphatically did not.<sup>23</sup> The lack of weapons and gunpowder coupled with the complete absence of a quartermaster

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<sup>18</sup> Douglas W. Marshall and Howard H. Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution: An Atlas of Manuscript Maps* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1976), 8; Richard M. Ketchum, *Decisive Day: The Battle for Bunker Hill* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 183.

<sup>19</sup> John E. Ferling, *The First of Men: A Life George Washington* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 121; Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of The American Revolution*, 74-75; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 8; Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 74.

<sup>21</sup> Ferling, *The First of Men*, 136; John Selby, *The Road to Yorktown* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 50.

<sup>22</sup> Greene to Nicholas Cooke, 6 February 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 192.

<sup>23</sup> George Washington to John Hancock, 10-11 July 1775, Philander D. Chase, ed., *The Papers of George Washington* (PGW hereafter), 1, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985-1991), 83-91; Hancock to Washington, 24 July 1775, PGW, 1, 164-166; Washington to Hancock, 21 September 1776, PGW, 2, 24-30.

department—needed to ensure systematic procurement and resupply—further distressed the general. Washington energetically set out to correct these and other deficiencies and build a new army for the new nation.<sup>24</sup> From an operational point of view, Washington focused on Gage's force bottled up in Boston. His instinct was to attack, and he frequently addressed the issue with his war council and the Congress.<sup>25</sup> Yet concern that any major failure at this point could doom the revolution before it had a chance to succeed caused him to delay, but not to forgo, the possibility of offensive action.<sup>26</sup> In this, he found a cooperative opponent, as Howe seemed satisfied to remain immobile within the confines of the city of Boston, awaiting reinforcements and unsure of what else to do.<sup>27</sup>

By February 1776, Washington had decided to attack Howe's force in Boston, pending the arrival of additional cannon and ammunition then in route from Fort Ticonderoga. In an incredible feat of logistics in the face of forbidding weather and terrain, Colonel Henry Knox delivered sixty-six field pieces and mortars to Washington's army, more than doubling its heavy weaponry.<sup>28</sup> With the guns from Ticonderoga and about sixteen thousand soldiers in camp, Washington believed the situation now

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Henry Lee to Washington, 26 September 1775, *PGW*, 2, 51-53; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 124-132, 126-128.

<sup>25</sup> Council of War Report dated 18 October 1775, *PGW*, 2, 183-184; Proceedings of the Committee Conference, 18-24 October 1775, *PGW*, 2, 185-203; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 132, 143-144; Dave Richard Palmer, *The Way of the Fox: American Strategy in the War for America* (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1975), 98.

<sup>26</sup> George Washington to John Hancock, 10 February 1776, *PGW*, 3, 289; Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Ferling, *The First of Men*, 132; Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography*, III, (Norwalk, Connecticut: The Easton Press, 1951), 505.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Knox to Washington, 5 December 1775, New York, *PGW*, 2, 495-496; Knox to Washington, 17 December 1775, *PGW*, 2, 562-566; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 144-145; Joseph J. Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 82.

demanded action against Howe's force in Boston.<sup>29</sup> Although the Continental Army still did not have a surfeit of powder, Washington felt he had enough to undertake an attack.<sup>30</sup> His plan involved the bombardment of British positions for three consecutive nights. On 4 March—the third night of shelling—the artillery increased its intensity while Washington's soldiers occupied and fortified Dorchester Heights, which overlooked Boston and its harbor.<sup>31</sup> The morning of 5 March witnessed a powerful American presence all along the Dorchester ridges and on other key terrain, an amazing feat of military engineering and hard work.<sup>32</sup> Howe and his commanders stood in utter amazement at the achievement and in terror of its military implications.<sup>33</sup> Washington had replicated on an even larger scale the threat Howe had previously faced from the heights on Bunker Hill.<sup>34</sup>

Washington believed that Howe would have to attack his new position on Dorchester Heights because failure to do so would ensure his eventual destruction.<sup>35</sup> Howe had the same thoughts and immediately began laying plans for such an assault.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Washington to Joseph Reed, 26 February 1776, *PGW*, 3, 369-375.

<sup>30</sup> Plan for Attacking Boston, undated but believed issued 18-25 February 1776, *PGW*, 3, 332-332; Freeman, *George Washington*, III, 513-515; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 107-108.

<sup>31</sup> Washington to Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., 9 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 444-446; Washington to General Ward, 2 March 1776, in Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Rufus Putnam to Washington, 11 February 1776, *PGW*, 3, 295; Washington to Hancock, 7-9 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 420-426.

<sup>33</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 63; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 11.

<sup>34</sup> Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 109.

<sup>35</sup> Washington to Hancock, 26 February 1776, *PGW*, 3, 364-366; Washington to Hancock, 7-9 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 421-426; Washington to Reed, 26 February 1776, *PGW*, 3, 369-375.

<sup>36</sup> Washington to Hancock, 7-9 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 420-426; Washington to Trumbull, Sr., 9 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 444-446; Freeman, *George Washington*, vol. IV, 45; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 11; Montross, *War Through the Ages*, 422.

Washington hoped for a replay of Bunker Hill, with even greater results because he considered the force on Dorchester Heights much better prepared for the ensuing fight. Yet weather considerations caused Howe to delay his attack for several days, and as time passed the memory of Bunker Hill began dominating his thinking.<sup>37</sup> An amphibious withdrawal from Boston—the only viable alternative to fighting for the heights—seemed a better option, and one that could save his army to fight another day.<sup>38</sup> Howe offered Washington a compromise. If allowed to depart Boston unmolested, Howe would not destroy the city.<sup>39</sup> Washington knew that his cannons and mortars on Dorchester Heights could devastate the British force in Boston and its ships in the harbor as they attempted to evacuate. It constituted an advantage that he did not want to give up easily.<sup>40</sup> But in the final analysis, he believed it in the best interests of the war effort to save Boston, even at the expense of Howe's escape. On 17 March, the British began their evacuation, and Washington's forces occupied the city fast on the heels of the exodus.<sup>41</sup>

Although not particularly heroic in appearance, amphibious withdraw can be an important strategic maneuver. Commanders conduct amphibious withdrawals to extract their troops from a hostile shore by sea. There are many reasons to conduct such an operation, including military pressure from an enemy, economy of force operations, and

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<sup>37</sup> Washington to Hancock, 7-9 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 424; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 64.

<sup>38</sup> Washington to Trumbull, Sr., 9 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 444-446; Montross, *War Through the Ages*, 422; Fuller, *A Military History of the Western World*, 2, 276; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 110.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from the Boston Selectmen to Washington, 8 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 434; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 42-44.

<sup>40</sup> Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 110.

<sup>41</sup> Washington to Nicholas Cooke, 17 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 483-484; Washington to Hancock, 19 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 489-490; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 146-148.

force redeployment.<sup>42</sup> All of these influenced Howe's withdraw from Boston, but the primary factor involved the military pressure that made his tactical situation untenable. Both armies claimed the British retirement from Boston as a victory. Howe saved his army to fight again under circumstances more to his advantage and better under his control. Washington had maneuvered Howe out of his position, off the American mainland, and reclaimed Boston for the United States. For him, it had been a clear tactical victory, and a bloodless one at that. But removal of the British Army from New England proved a temporary respite. With a dominant navy, and the ability to reintroduce his army at virtually any point along the American littorals, Howe held the advantage of initiative.<sup>43</sup> Washington faced the disadvantage of having to determine his adversary's intentions with limited information. Although he recognized the necessity to be on guard for a variety of options, Washington felt certain that the next major blow would come in New York.<sup>44</sup>

Upon assuming command in New England, Washington created a small naval force—often referred to as Washington's Navy—to support operations throughout the northeast.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, Congress had directed him to create a battalion of marines, but he deferred action due to manpower and recruitment shortfalls.<sup>46</sup> Recognizing the pressures and limitations on Washington, Congress took the first step to establish the

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<sup>42</sup> Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-02, *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, Washington, D.C., 19 September 2001, XV-5.

<sup>43</sup> Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 67.

<sup>44</sup> Washington to Reed, 28 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 557; Washington to John Augustine Washington, 31 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 566-570.

<sup>45</sup> Washington to Hancock, 30 January 1776, *PGW*, 3, 217; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 70-83

<sup>46</sup> Washington to Hancock, 24 January 1776, *PGW*, 3, 180; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 85.

Continental Navy on 13 October 1775 by ordering the construction of two armed vessels. On 10 November 1775, it created the Continental Marine Corps.<sup>47</sup> While Washington remained preoccupied with future British strategy, the new Navy and Marine Corps conducted a successful amphibious raid on the Bahamian island of New Providence under the command of Commodore Esek Hopkins and Captain Samuel Nicholas. Hopkins and Nicholas captured two forts, the town of Nassau, the British governor, and carried off large quantities of ordnance and military stores—all vital to the American war effort. The captured ordnance included 88 guns, 15 mortars, 16,535 rounds of shot and shell, and 24 casks of powder. Unfortunately, the take in powder did not prove as great as expected because two ships with approximately 150 casks (some sources report up to 200 casks) of powder had slipped out of port before Hopkins blockaded the harbor.<sup>48</sup> Yet this operation constituted the most successful American amphibious action of the Revolution and one of its most important naval victories, boosting the morale of the new sea services.<sup>49</sup> In addition to the stores of ordnance, Hopkins brought back three captured ships along with Governor Montford Browne and two other British officials as prisoners of war.<sup>50</sup> This proved helpful later during the battle for New York when Washington exchanged Brown for the American generals, Lord Stirling and John

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<sup>47</sup> Edwin H. Simmons. *The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1975* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 1-2.; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 52-53.

<sup>48</sup> Gurdon Saltonstall to Washington, 8 April 1776, *PGW*, 4, 50-51; Washington to Hancock, 15 April 1776, *PGW*, 4, 69-70; Moskin, 5; Robert Debs Heinl, Jr. *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1962), 6; Clyde H. Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1939), 12-15; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 111-112; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 111; Unattributed Article, "John Paul Jones," 148.

<sup>49</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 10; Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Saltonstall to Washington, 8 April 1776, *PGW*, 4, 50-51; Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 6.

Sullivan, after their capture on Long Island.<sup>51</sup> And, of course, the raid provided much needed arms and military stores for Washington and his Continentals.<sup>52</sup>

Washington realized that the power of the British navy operating in conjunction with Howe's army along the Atlantic coast represented the greatest threat to the Revolution.<sup>53</sup> During his investment of Boston, Washington developed a sophisticated intelligence gathering system that included agents operating within British lines.<sup>54</sup> Both his information and strategic instincts told him that an amphibious attack on New York would be Howe's next move.<sup>55</sup> In fact, New York offered one of the best harbors in the northeast and could serve as an ideal base for future actions along the American littorals.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, it offered the British control of the lower Hudson River (also called the North River in the Manhattan area), which would be critical in severing New England—the hotbed of rebellion—from the rest of the nation.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, the

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<sup>51</sup> Washington to Jonathan Trumbull, 23 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 380-382; Washington to Sir William Howe, 6 October 1776, *PGW*, 6, 489-490.

<sup>52</sup> Hopkins to Washington, 2 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 201.

<sup>53</sup> Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 4; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 133-134.

<sup>54</sup> One of the more mysterious characters of the Revolution was the Boston merchant turned fisherman, George Hewes. Information from Hewes and other agents in Boston, many of them members of the Sons of Liberty, not only helped Washington gather information, but also validated the necessity for a counterintelligence program. See Thomas B. Allen, *George Washington, Spymaster: How the Americans outspied the British and won the Revolutionary War* (Washington: National Geographic Society, 2004), 31-38; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 101-102.

<sup>55</sup> Council of War Report, 13 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 459-460; Washington to Hancock, 13 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 461-464.

<sup>56</sup> Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 9-10; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 94-98, 110.

<sup>57</sup> Ferling, *The First of Men*, 149; Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 9; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 83-84; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 61.

population of New York, unlike that of New England, waived toward the Tory cause and Howe could expect better local support and a friendlier environment.<sup>58</sup>

Although British commanders could occasionally confuse American leaders about their strategic plans, Washington had little doubt that their next major move would be an amphibious attack to capture New York and Long Island. Long before the British withdrawal from Boston, Washington had begun to address this concern. In January of 1776, he dispatched Charles Lee to develop a plan to defend New York and begin preparing positions. On 13 March, before the British had begun their withdrawal from Boston, Washington dispatched five regiments and one rifle battalion as an advance force for defense of New York.<sup>59</sup> After withdrawing from Boston, Howe initially moved his force to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he awaited reinforcements, including a new naval commander for North America. Vice Admiral Richard Lord Howe, Sir William's brother, arrived to take charge of all naval forces in North American waters including those soon to operate in the New York environs.<sup>60</sup> During July and August of 1776, British forces began to assemble in the waters surrounding New York and established an advance base on Staten Island.<sup>61</sup>

An additional force of 44 ships under Commodore Sir Peter Parker with about 2,500 troops under Lieutenant General Charles Lord Cornwallis also arrived from the

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<sup>58</sup> Charles Lee to Washington, 5 January 1776, *PGW*, 3, 30-31; John Adams to Washington, 6 January 1776, *PGW*, 3, 36-37; Washington to Charles Lee, 8 January 1776, *PGW*, 3, 53-54.

<sup>59</sup> Washington to Hancock, 11 January 1776, *PGW*, 3, 67-68; Council of War Report, 13 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 459; Washington to Hancock, 13 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 461-464.

<sup>60</sup> In order to avoid confusing the Howe brothers, Vice Admiral Richard Lord Howe will subsequently be referred to as Lord Howe, and his brother, Sir William Howe of the army will be called Howe. Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 30; Montross, *War Through the Ages*, 422.

<sup>61</sup> Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 39.

British Isles after a detour to the southern states of America. Prior to evacuating Boston, Howe sent Clinton with a small troop of infantry to Virginia and North Carolina to join Cornwallis's force, which arrived at Cape Fear during May 1776. Howe intended for Clinton and Cornwallis to organize British loyalist there and help them reclaim North Carolina and Virginia.<sup>62</sup> Although a good idea, this southern excursion proved unsuccessful because Congress had earlier taken Charles Lee from his duties in New York and dispatched him south to deal with Tory resistance.<sup>63</sup> Lee organized American efforts at Baltimore, Williamsburg, and Norfolk while southern Patriots battered and disbursed loyalist elements in battles at Great Bridge, Virginia, and Moore's Creek Bridge in North Carolina, all before Clinton and Cornwallis appeared on the scene.<sup>64</sup> With their primary mission in shambles before they even arrived, Parker, Clinton, and Cornwallis decided to capture Charleston, South Carolina, rather than give-up completely on their southern venture. Upon hearing of Parker's fleet moving south, Lee immediately proceeded to Charleston where he directed defensive efforts.<sup>65</sup> After an inept landing attempt on Long Island (now called the Isle of Palms) and a subsequent mauling of Parker's ships by the batteries of Fort Moultrie that protected Charleston Harbor, the British commanders acknowledged another failure and limped back to New York, joining

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<sup>62</sup> Washington to Hancock, 30 January 1776, *PGW*, 3, 217; Washington to Reed, 31 January 1776, *PGW*, 3, 225; Charles Lee to Washington, 5 February 1776, *PGW*, 3, 250; Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 31-32; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 148.

<sup>63</sup> Charles Lee to Washington, 3 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 404-405; Reed to Washington, 23 March 1776, *PGW*, 3, 518-519; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 153

<sup>64</sup> Charles Lee to Washington, 5 April 1776, *PGW*, 4, 42-45; John W. Shy, "Charles Lee: 'The Soldier as Radical,'" in George Athan Billias, ed., *George Washington's Generals*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964), 28; Lynn Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail: The Story of the Continental Army, 1775-1783* New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), 97-98; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 111; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 148-149.

<sup>65</sup> Lynn Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 100-103.

Howe's gathering forces.<sup>66</sup> This abortive effort undercut any prospect of a British southern strategy in 1776 and delayed further efforts in that quarter for two years. But the Howe brothers did not expect the war to last that long. They intended to end the rebellion in New York with the largest expeditionary effort ever assembled by Great Britain up to that time.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to the already powerful British forces gathering around New York, Howe received 8,000 Hessian soldiers, bringing his total force to between 34,000 and 42,000 men, depending on which source one accepts.<sup>68</sup> Although these Hessians are frequently referred to as mercenaries, they were actually well trained and disciplined units of established armies from various German principalities—primarily Hesse-Cassel, Hesse-Hanau, Anspach-Beyreuth, Anhalt-Zerbst, Waldeck, and Brunswick. The British government contracted with German princes for the services of their troops, thereby justifying the term “mercenary.” Yet the Hessians did not represent mercenaries in the twentieth century concept of the term where free-lance individuals sought work soldiering in various conflicts around the world. Ultimately, 30,000 Hessians served the

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<sup>66</sup> Charles Lee to Washington, 1 July 1776, *PGW*, 5, 168-171; General Orders, 21 July 1776, *PGW*, 5, 411-412; Greene to Nicholas Cooke, 22 July 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 259-260; Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 30-38; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 58-60; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 148-153.

<sup>67</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 17; Montross, *War Through the Ages*, 422; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 118; Black, *American as a Military Power*, 12, 32; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 153-154.

<sup>68</sup> The actual number of soldiers available for combat operations for either side is difficult to determine because sources vary and historians count troops differently. In the case of Washington's army, the numbers were always changing because of the constant rotation in and out of various militia units, the spasmodic expiration of short-term enlistments, and desertion due to either bad morale or ambiguous status. See Washington to Hancock, 7 August 1776, *PGW*, 5, 605-606; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 42.

British crown during the American Revolution to the financial benefit of their various sovereigns.<sup>69</sup>

To defend New York City, which consisted only of lower Manhattan during the eighteenth century, Washington had roughly 23,000 Continentals and militia spread over key terrain on Long Island and Manhattan.<sup>70</sup> Washington could not defend New York simply by placing an army within the city because the British Navy controlled the water that enclosed it from three sides. By positioning an army north of the city across Manhattan Island, the Howe brothers could surround, invest, and reduce New York by either starvation or bombardment.<sup>71</sup> The tactically sound way to defend New York involved dominating the prominent ground on Harlem Heights to the north, controlling the high ground across the East River in Brooklyn and further out on Long Island, and by occupying Governor's Island to the south. Howe's initial attack in New York focused on Washington's most forward positions across the East River on Gowanus Heights (also known as Guian Heights and Long Island Heights) and in Brooklyn. The American force there amounted to about 9,000 men under a fluid command structure.

Charles Lee had devised the defensive plan for New York and established the preliminary positions on Gowanus Heights and in Brooklyn prior to departing for the south. After Washington moved the bulk of his army to New York, he assigned Nathanael Greene to command the defensive effort on Long Island. But Greene came down with a severe fever just before the British landing and, therefore, played no role in

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<sup>69</sup> Leckie, *The Wars of America*, 139; Montross, *Tag, Tag and Bobtail*, 74; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 60.

<sup>70</sup> Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 42; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 160; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 151.

<sup>71</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 154.

the subsequent fighting.<sup>72</sup> John Sullivan acceded to temporary command in Greene's absence. By the time of his arrival in New York, Sullivan already had a somewhat checkered career in the Continental Army. Replaced by Horatio Gates as senior commander in the Northern Department after the failed invasion of Canada, Sullivan had spent some time in the interim as a disgruntled officer.<sup>73</sup> But Washington, believing he could make use of Sullivan's abilities, retained confidence in him.<sup>74</sup> At the moment of the British attack, Washington placed Israel Putnam in overall command with headquarters in Brooklyn, while Sullivan retained command of the most forward position located on Gowanus Heights. Putnam had held senior command at Bunker Hill, a battle that continued to influence thinking in both camps. Washington, Putnam, Sullivan, and other American commanders thought they could replicate that battle if they entrenched on favorable terrain and enticed the British to make frontal assaults.<sup>75</sup>

Howe and his commanders had similar memories about Bunker Hill and sought ways to attack the Americans without repeating that experience. Charles Lee, who had initiated work on the New York defenses, organized the battlefield so that American defenders could fight on favorable terrain rather than directly oppose the British landing at the beaches.<sup>76</sup> Washington and Greene retained Lee's plan after arriving from Boston

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<sup>72</sup> Greene to Washington, 15 August 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 287-289; Greene to Jacob Greene, 30 August 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 291-292; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 152; Leckie, *The Wars of America*, 143.

<sup>73</sup> Greene to Nicholas Cooke, 22 July 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 259-260; Charles P. Whittemore, "John Sullivan: Luckless Irishman," in George Athan Billias, *George Washington's Generals*, 140-142.

<sup>74</sup> General Orders, 20 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 86-89; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 153.

<sup>75</sup> General Order, 23 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 109-111.

<sup>76</sup> Charles Lee to Washington, 29 February 1776, *PGW*, 5, 389-393; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 164-165.

and continued defensive preparation along similar lines.<sup>77</sup> The forward American defenses on Long Island stretched from west to east—from the American right to left—along the Gowanus Heights with forces under the command of Lord Stirling covering the right half and those under the direct command of Sullivan on the left.<sup>78</sup> On his extreme left, Sullivan placed a Pennsylvania regiment under command of Colonel Samuel Miles.<sup>79</sup> The main American position on Long Island lay to the rear of Sullivan's defensive line in Brooklyn where Putnam maintained his headquarters.<sup>80</sup> Washington and Greene envisioned a scenario where the soldiers in forward positions under Sullivan would inflict maximum casualties on the attacking British and Hessians and then conduct a fighting and orderly withdraw to the main position in Brooklyn where the British advance would be defeated.<sup>81</sup>

During July and August, Lord Howe conducted a naval reconnaissance in the waters around New York and harassed Washington's communications north of the city in the area of the Tappan Zee.<sup>82</sup> The relative ease with which they could operate on the multitude of waters surrounding New York pleased the Howe brothers as much as it

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<sup>77</sup> Barnet Schecter, *The Battle for New York: The City at the Heart of the American Revolution* (New York: Walker and Company, 2002), 117-119.

<sup>78</sup> William Alexander of New Jersey claimed title to a Scottish earldom and insisted on using the aristocratic name Lord Stirling. Ironically, his contemporaries in Revolutionary America, including Washington, addressed him as such with no apparent reluctance. He acquired his commission in the Continental Army through duty with the New Jersey militia and volunteers. Despite his claims to nobility, Lord Stirling provided skilled, competent, and loyal service to America and the Patriot cause. Ferling, *The First of Men*, 165; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 242; Webster's *American Military Biographies* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1978), 3-4.

<sup>79</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 156-160.

<sup>80</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 158-159.

<sup>81</sup> Ferling, *The First of Men*, 165; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 164-165; John J. Gallagher, *The Battle of Brooklyn, 1776* (New York: Sarpedon, 1995), 85.

<sup>82</sup> Ira D. Gruber. *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 104-105; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 154-155.

dismayed Washington.<sup>83</sup> American commanders had put a considerable effort into creating obstacles and establishing shore batteries to control, or at least minimize, British naval activity in the operational area, with little apparent success.<sup>84</sup> During this sparing period, Lord Howe pursued a last minute, yet fruitless effort, at peace negotiations. Although Washington agreed to some prisoner exchanges and left open the prospect of future talks, the movement toward independence had gained ascendancy among American leaders and not much came from Lord Howe's effort.<sup>85</sup>

At sunrise on 22 August, the British fleet moved into The Narrows between Staten Island and Long Island while approximately 400 transports shuttled Howe's amphibious force to the landing beaches within Gravesend Bay.<sup>86</sup> The initial landing inserted 4,000 soldiers, and by noon the British had 15,000 achieving a very rapid build-up of combat power. This increased to about 20,000 within the next three days as Howe introduced his reserve forces into the beachhead.<sup>87</sup> The advance element of the assault force under Cornwallis had immediately captured the township of Flatbush and began probing the American positions on Gowanus Heights.<sup>88</sup> Faulty intelligence reports from

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<sup>83</sup> Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 39; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 160; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 135-137.

<sup>84</sup> Council of War Report, 8 July 1775, *PGW*, 5, 238; Washington to Hancock, 12 July 1775, *PGW*, 5, 283-284; Washington to Hancock, 14 July 1776, *PGW*, 5, 304-307; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 160.

<sup>85</sup> Lord Howe to Washington, 13 July 1776, *PGW*, 5, 296; Washington to William Howe, 30 July 1776, *PGW*, 5, 521-522; William Howe to Washington, 1 August 1776, *PGW*, 5, 532-528; Lord Howe to Washington, 19 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 76; Washington to Hancock, 12 July 1776, *PGW*, 5, 284; Washington to Hancock, 14 July 1776, *PGW*, 5, 305-306; Memorandum of an interview with Lieutenant Colonel James Paterson, *PGW*, 5, 398-399.

<sup>86</sup> Washington to Hancock, 22 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 102; Washington to Hancock, 23 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 111; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 154.

<sup>87</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the USA*, 17; Leckie, *The Wars of America*, 143-144; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 126.

the front tended to understate the number of troops ashore, causing Washington concern that the landings on Long Island could be a ruse.<sup>89</sup> The fact that Howe did not attack Gowanus Heights for five days after his initial landings, coupled with continuing naval activity in The Narrows, in the waters near Governor's Island, and around Red Hook peninsula tended to reinforce this idea.<sup>90</sup> Washington personally made frequent trips to Long Island, and, as he observed the forces arrayed against him, he came to realize that the landing at Gravesend Bay must surely be the British main effort.<sup>91</sup>

Despite the strength of the British landing on Long Island, the battle appeared to be developing as Washington had hoped. He rushed additional troops to reinforce the American defenses, expecting that British honor would demand they attack his positions.<sup>92</sup> But Howe's memory of Bunker Hill proved as good as that of his opponents, and he did not intend to repeat the previous mistake.<sup>93</sup> Recognizing the strength of the American positions, he chose to envelop to the east, sending a force through the unguarded Jamaica Pass on the extreme left of the defensive line. American commanders knew of this threat of envelopment, of course, and Sullivan had ordered Miles to patrol and observe the Jamaica road on that flank.<sup>94</sup> Washington and Putnam apparently accepted Sullivan's arrangement, assuming they would have word of any British

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<sup>88</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 154; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 128.

<sup>89</sup> Ferling, *The First of Men*, 165; Schecter *The Battle for New York*, 128-129.

<sup>90</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 156.

<sup>91</sup> Washington to Hancock, 23 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 111-112; Washington to Trumbull, Sr., 24 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 123-124; Washington to Hancock, 26 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 129-130; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 165; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 130.

<sup>92</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 157.

<sup>93</sup> Washington to Hancock, 8 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 248-252.

<sup>94</sup> Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 133-138.

movement in that quarter in time to send reinforcements. Sullivan and Miles sent an observation team of five young militia officers to watch Jamaica Pass, and Washington ordered Miles to patrol toward Jamaica Pass. For the most part, Miles complied with his orders, but he made the disastrous decision not to patrol during hours of darkness.<sup>95</sup>

In the early hours of 27 August, a British column of some 10,000 soldiers under command of Clinton and guided by local Tories and an impressed Patriot began moving to the east in an effort to get around the American left flank.<sup>96</sup> By 0300, the British had captured the observation team protecting Jamaica Pass before they could give the alarm, thereby denying Sullivan an opportunity to react before the British could menace his rear.<sup>97</sup> At first light, British ships opened fire on American positions from The Narrows between Staten Island and Long Island to divert attention from the main effort.<sup>98</sup> They also attempted to get several ships into the East River to attack the American rear in Brooklyn, but the wind and tide worked against these endeavors.<sup>99</sup> As Clinton struck at Sullivan's rear with his enveloping force, Howe attacked all along the line. He sent Lieutenant General Leopold Philip von Heister's (or de Heister in some accounts) Hessians against the American left and center through Flatbush and Bedford passes, and General James Grant's Redcoats against Lord Stirling on the American right flank.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 159; Gallagher, *The Battle for Brooklyn*, 99-101.

<sup>96</sup> Gallagher, *The Battle for Brooklyn*, 101-107.

<sup>97</sup> Ferling, *The First of Men*, 165; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 177; Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 138.

<sup>98</sup> Council of War, 29 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 153-154.

<sup>99</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, vol. IV, 164.

<sup>100</sup> Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 111-112.

With Clinton attacking their rear, Grant pressing on the right, and von Heister attacking the left and center, many of the inexperienced Americans broke and fled to the defensive position located on Brooklyn Heights where Putnam had his headquarters.<sup>101</sup> Although the defeat on Gowanus Heights turned into a rout in some areas, in other cases units and individual soldiers stood their ground or retreated with good discipline. The fact that both Lord Stirling and Sullivan became prisoners of war amid stalwart units attempting to cover the retreat, illustrates this fact.<sup>102</sup> But isolated examples of courage and fortitude, no matter how noble, proved insufficient to stave off the British and Hessians. The psychological impact of rapidly shifting from a position of advantage to one of high risk proved too great for many of the inexperienced militiamen and Continentals.<sup>103</sup> In addition, when competent and responsible officers such as Lord Stirling and Sullivan saw their units in danger of being surrounded and destroyed, they often ordered them to disburse into the woods and find a way back to Brooklyn, thus contributing to the impression of a rout.<sup>104</sup>

Feeling pressed from front and rear, the Americans fell back, and Putnam consolidated his forces on Brooklyn Heights. Washington, still hoping for a defensive battle against a British frontal attack, reinforced Putnam with several regiments from New York City, bringing his force on Brooklyn Heights to about 9,500 men.<sup>105</sup> Although

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<sup>101</sup> Lord Stirling to Washington, 19 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 159-160.

<sup>102</sup> Washington to the Massachusetts General Court, 19 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 344-347; Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hanson Harrison to Hancock, 17 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 155-156; Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 149-150.

<sup>103</sup> Washington to Hancock, 2 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 199-200; Washington to Hancock, 8 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 248-252; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 166-168.

<sup>104</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 152-153.

many British officers wanted to continue the attack and immediately assault Brooklyn Heights, Howe demurred. He and his engineer officers recognized the American defenses as even more formidable than those at Bunker Hill.<sup>106</sup> He chose instead to conduct a siege, hoping he could use the guns of the fleet in conjunction with aggressive entrenchment to reduce the American positions through bombardment.<sup>107</sup> After two days of waiting and hoping for a British frontal assault, Washington had second thoughts. After holding a council of war, he decided to move Putnam's force from Long Island back to Manhattan.<sup>108</sup> Washington had long worried about the possibility of Howe conducting a landing on Manhattan while holding large numbers of American troops in place at Brooklyn. With this concern nagging his mind, he decided it was time to reunite his army on Manhattan.<sup>109</sup> This involved a dangerous and tricky undertaking since the British navy controlled the waters and potentially could interpose.<sup>110</sup>

On the night of 29 August, Washington combined bold planning with stealthy movement to evacuate his force along with all their arms and ammunition across the East River into friendly lines on Manhattan.<sup>111</sup> He accomplished this with the help of foul weather conditions and the superb work of Colonel John Glover's regiment of

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<sup>105</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 169; Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 156.

<sup>106</sup> Gallagher, *The Battle for Brooklyn*, 139-141.

<sup>107</sup> Montross, *War Through the Ages*, 422; Schechter, *the Battle for New York*, 148-149; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 66-67.

<sup>108</sup> Council of War, 29 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 153-154; Washington to Hancock, 31 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 177-178; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 43.

<sup>109</sup> General Orders, 31 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 171-173; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 173.

<sup>110</sup> Ferling, *The First of Men*, 168-169.

<sup>111</sup> Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 43.

Massachusetts fishermen turned fighters.<sup>112</sup> Although never a part of the Marine Corps or involved in power projection operations, Glover's troops became known as Washington's "amphibious regiment" due to their work here and elsewhere. When British patrols probed American lines the next morning, they found only empty positions. Amazingly, the American forces on Long Island had escaped the trap that Howe believed he had closed.<sup>113</sup> The following day, Washington conducted a smaller yet equally remarkable evacuation of American forces and their equipment from Governor's Island in the face of British naval power.<sup>114</sup>

During an interlude after escaping from Long Island, Washington attempted to challenge British naval power by use of an innovative underwater vessel invented by David Bushnell: the *Turtle*. Bushnell had previously invented an underwater bomb, and created his *Turtle* as a means for delivering it against British ships.<sup>115</sup> In a bold but failed effort to destroy Howe's command ship the *Eagle*, Washington inaugurated the concept of submarine warfare.<sup>116</sup> Although there had been previous attempts to create submarine technology, the *Turtle* constituted its first application to naval warfare. Sergeant Ezra Lee, the *Turtle* operator, submerged the vessel by allowing water into a ballast tank, and then pumping it out to rise above the waterline. He moved the submarine forward by use of screw propellers which he powered with a set of peddles. Lee steered the *Turtle* with a

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<sup>112</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 157.

<sup>113</sup> Washington to Hancock, 31 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 177-179; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 168; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 126-127.

<sup>114</sup> Washington to Hancock, 31 August 1776, *PGW*, 6, 177-178; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 43.

<sup>115</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 159-160; *The Submarine in the United States Navy* (Washington: Naval History Division, 1969), 2-3.

<sup>116</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 168-174.

rudder and when submerged, air entered the vessel through a snorkel tube.<sup>117</sup> The concept for using the *Turtle* as an attack system involved attaching a clockwork mine to the hull of the *Eagle*. Fastening the mine required drilling through the ship's hull, which in this case proved impossible due to the copper linings on British warships or perhaps Lee attempted to drill on an iron connecting rod.<sup>118</sup> Despite the inability of Sergeant Lee to implant an explosive charge and sink the *Eagle*, the *Turtle* worked remarkably well, being able to submerge, navigate under water, conduct under water operations, and resurface, representing a remarkable technological achievement.<sup>119</sup>

Also during this interlude, a second peace conference occurred involving Lord Howe, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Edward Rutledge. Just as with the earlier attempt, this effort also failed with both sides returning their attention to the war.<sup>120</sup> Unable to negotiate an end to the rebellion, British leaders resumed operations against the island of Manhattan to bring about its defeat.<sup>121</sup> With the enemy in complete control of the surrounding waters, Washington and his officers considered the tactical problems of defending against British operations on Manhattan Island. Their alternatives included defending New York City, moving further north to Harlem Heights, or abandoning New York entirely and reverting to a Fabian strategy.<sup>122</sup> Washington discussed the future of

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<sup>117</sup> Henry L. Abbot. *Beginning of Modern Submarine Warfare Under Captain Lieutenant David Bushnell* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1966), 18-22.

<sup>118</sup> Abbot, *Beginning of Modern Submarine Warfare*, 22-23; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 162.

<sup>119</sup> Gallagher, *The Battle for Brooklyn*, 157; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 236.

<sup>120</sup> Gallagher, *The Battle for Brooklyn*, 157; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 174-177; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 160.

<sup>121</sup> Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 118-120; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 68-69.

<sup>122</sup> Washington to Hancock, 8 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 248-252.

New York City with his generals and the Congress, evaluating both the feasibility of defending and the possibility of evacuation.<sup>123</sup>

On 7 September, Congress limited Washington's options by expressing its desire that the army defend New York City. Although strategically desirable, this proved a near tactical impossibility. Nathanael Greene—restored to health and duty—attempted to persuade Washington to abandon and destroy the city along with its suburbs. This, Greene pointed out, would deny its use to the British as a barracks for winter quarters and as a center for economic activity.<sup>124</sup> Washington agreed with Greene's assessment, but felt constrained by the will of Congress. On 12 September, the situation changed when word arrived from Philadelphia authorizing abandonment, but not destruction, of the city.<sup>125</sup> That same day, Washington held a council of war at which he and his generals reaffirmed they could not hold New York City.<sup>126</sup> Washington also learned that day that the British Navy had moved into position at Hell Gate (sometimes written Hell Gates or Hell's Gate) where it could interdict his possible escape route to the east.<sup>127</sup> This development required the Continental Army to maintain control of the avenue of access and egress at Kingsbridge across the Harlem River to the north.<sup>128</sup> Ever since moving

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<sup>123</sup> Washington to Hancock, 2 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 197-200.

<sup>124</sup> Greene to Washington, 5 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 222-225.

<sup>125</sup> Hancock to Washington, 10 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 273.

<sup>126</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 188.

<sup>127</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hanson Harrison to Hancock, 12 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 294; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 169.

<sup>128</sup> Historians and historic figures often spell Kingsbridge as King's Bridge. As a general rule, when spelled King's Bridge an author is referring to the bridge as a structure and when spelled Kingsbridge in includes the bridge and key terrain on both sides of the Harlem River at the bridge location. See Schechter, *The Battle of New York*, 79-80.

into the New York area, Washington had gone to great lengths to keep open his northern avenue of escape over the Harlem River.<sup>129</sup> With the enemy at Hell Gate to the east and in control of the Hudson River to the west, only Kingsbridge remained as a viable escape route from Manhattan Island.<sup>130</sup>

Once Congress authorized the abandonment of New York, Washington began evacuating the American troops north to Harlem Heights. But a shortage of wagons and draft animals slowed the effort, and before he could complete the movement, Howe launched the British attack on Manhattan Island.<sup>131</sup> Again taking advantage of their unchallenged naval supremacy, the Howe brothers conducted an amphibious assault at Kips Bay (also written Kip's Bay) on 15 September with about 4,000 Redcoats and Hessians under command of Clinton with Cornwallis leading the primary assault element. This threatened the American army by interposing Clinton's force between Putnam's troops still in New York City and the forces already positioned on Harlem Heights. Although a very complex operation, the British landing proved extremely efficient due to Howe and Clinton's organization and planning.<sup>132</sup> The British generals had orchestrated a movement involving the landing force, a deception operation, and the stationing of

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<sup>129</sup> Numerous correspondence including Washington to Major General William Heath, 8 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 157.

<sup>130</sup> Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 121-122.

<sup>131</sup> Washington to Hancock, 14 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 308-309; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 177-178.

<sup>132</sup> Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 89.

frigate fire support ships in such a manner as to maximize their combat power while restricting American ability to react.<sup>133</sup>

The British landing at Kips Bay came as a surprise since both Washington and Greene expected it to occur further north, perhaps on the Harlem Plains or above Kingsbridge.<sup>134</sup> Actually, Howe intended to land at Horn's Hook adjacent to Harlem Plain, but after receiving intelligence about its defenses, he considered the Americans too strong at that point.<sup>135</sup> As a result, he chose Kips Bay where the defenders consisted of the newest and least experienced recruits in the American army, primarily Connecticut militia. New to the stress of combat, they panicked at the impressive—although ineffective—naval bombardment that preceded the British attack. This coupled with the professional looking Hessian and British regulars arrayed against them, unnerved many of the green troops. Regrettably, their panic spread along the line and set others into flight back to the defensive positions on Harlem Heights.<sup>136</sup>

Having rushed to the sound of battle, an enraged Washington personally attempted to stem the tide at considerable risk to his own safety, all to no avail.<sup>137</sup> Clinton and Cornwallis penetrated into the island less than one mile to Inclineburg Hill and then, acting in accordance with Howe's orders, began to consolidate their beachhead.<sup>138</sup> A more aggressive leader may have pushed across Manhattan Island and

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<sup>133</sup> Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 122-123.

<sup>134</sup> Washington to Hancock, 6 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 231-232; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 170.

<sup>135</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 180-182.

<sup>136</sup> Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783*, 89-90.

<sup>137</sup> Washington to the Massachusetts General Court, 19 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 344-347; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 103-104.

completely cut off Putnam's force now marching from New York City to Harlem Heights.<sup>139</sup> Then again, a more aggressive leader may have stretched his landing force too thin and been defeated by the feisty Putnam moving north out of New York. This possibility is not an idle thought when one realizes that Colonel William Smallwood's Maryland regiment repulsed repeated British attacks, as it covered retreating American units subsequent to the British landing at Kips Bay. Smallwood's actions clearly demonstrate the vulnerability of a landing force when not concentrated. Had Clinton rushed across the island, he would have doubled the amount of terrain his forces would have to cover, making him weaker at all points.<sup>140</sup>

Upon hearing the firing at Kips Bay, Putnam set two brigades into motion to help defend against the landing. After the initial American rout by the landing force, "Old Putt" realized he must immediately try to slip past the developing British threat. Thanks to his aid's knowledge of the New York area and his own energetic leadership, Putnam found an open route leading out of New York west of the British beachhead at Kips Bay. This allowed Putnam's troops to elude Clinton's landing force and join Washington's main element on Harlem Heights.<sup>141</sup> Putnam evacuated five thousand men from New York but could not remove all of the Continental Army's heavy cannon or stores due to pressure from the developing threat.<sup>142</sup> That evening, the still furious Washington consolidated his exhausted army on Harlem Heights and sent out reconnaissance patrols

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<sup>138</sup> Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 123-124; Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 184-186.

<sup>139</sup> Ferling, *The First of Men*, 170-175; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 69-72.

<sup>140</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 192-193.

<sup>141</sup> The aid who advised Putnam of the seldom-used road was a future Vice President of the United States, Aaron Burr. See Ferling, *The First of Men*, 171; Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 188-193.

<sup>142</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 188.

to assess the enemy situation. Although he demonstrated anger and frustration at the actions of his troops at Kips Bay, he remained hopeful that they might yet acquit themselves well.<sup>143</sup>

After establishing his landing force ashore, Howe quickly occupied New York City and consolidated his beachhead at Kips Bay. Meanwhile, Washington attempted to restore some confidence in his soldiers and create a sound tactical situation for continuing the battle. At this point, Washington had about 16,000 men available, of which he sent 6,000 to reinforce Major General William Heath at Kingsbridge to protect his rear and secure the possible escape route.<sup>144</sup>

On the morning of 16 September, Washington's army regained some self-assurance when a reconnaissance patrol of about 150 rangers under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Knowlton observed an advanced British element vulnerable to isolation.<sup>145</sup> Staging a feint in front of the enemy, Washington enveloped the British force with Knowlton's rangers and three rifle companies of Virginians—later reinforced with two regiments from Maryland and New England—driving them back into the main British lines. Washington believed the American victory could have been even greater had the enveloping force penetrated deeper to the British rear as he had ordered.<sup>146</sup> Yet his untrained soldiers had fought well and courageously, somewhat offsetting the

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<sup>143</sup> Washington to Hancock, 16 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 313-316; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 192-194; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 170-171; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 195-196.

<sup>144</sup> Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 124; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 74.

<sup>145</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 198.

<sup>146</sup> Washington to Hancock, 18 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 331-333; Washington to the Massachusetts General Court, 19 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 344-347; Greene to Nicholas Cooke, 17 September 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 300-302; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 197-203.

embarrassment of Kips Bay the previous day, and from the earlier action on Gowanus Heights.<sup>147</sup> The engagement, resulting in some 230 British and 135 American casualties, had a noticeable impact on the morale of the army.<sup>148</sup> Washington appreciated the improvement in his troop's performance, but knew that the problems facing his army required more than local successes. He firmly believed that frequent dependence on militia units to augment his Continentals would ultimately prove disastrous. He also knew that short-term enlistments within the Continental Army would not provide a force able to contend with British power. He, therefore, began a relentless appeal to Congress for fundamental improvements including long-term enlistments, less dependence on militia, and stronger articles of war with which to regulate his army.<sup>149</sup>

After the American victory at Harlem Heights, Howe again sought to destroy Washington through an indirect approach, fearing the American position too strong to storm without excessive losses.<sup>150</sup> On 12 October, he sent Clinton and Cornwallis up the East River through Hell Gate to Throng's Point (also referred to as Throng's Neck and Frogg's Point during the Revolutionary War) where he conducted an abortive landing.<sup>151</sup> American defenders under Heath's direction made excellent use of the difficult terrain coupled with rapid reinforcement to stymie every British effort to project themselves

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<sup>147</sup> General Orders, 17 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 320-321; Washington to Nicholas Cooke, 17 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 321-325; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 171.

<sup>148</sup> Washington to Abraham Gates, 17 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 321-325; Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 83.

<sup>149</sup> Washington to Hancock, 2 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 199-200; Washington to Hancock, 20 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 351-353; Washington to Hancock, 22 September 1776, *PGW*, 6, 368-369; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 75.

<sup>150</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 147.

<sup>151</sup> Greene to Washington, 12 October 1776, *PGW*, 6, 547-548.

beyond their initial beachhead.<sup>152</sup> Recognizing his tactical error, Howe reembarked the landing force at Throng's Point and conducted a second landing at Pell's Point on the morning of 18 October.<sup>153</sup> This placed Howe in position to threaten Kingsbridge from either the east or north, with Washington's main army still south of the Harlem River.<sup>154</sup>

With the exception of 2,000 soldiers under Colonel Robert Magaw left behind at Fort Washington on northwest Manhattan, Washington moved his entire army across the Harlem River to a position where he could counter any action by Clinton and Cornwallis. Washington questioned the wisdom of maintaining a force at Fort Washington with the rest of his army north of the Harlem River.<sup>155</sup> But Greene argued that Fort Lee (previously known as Fort Constitution), across the Hudson River on the New Jersey bank, could support Fort Washington, and together, these two forts could interdict British naval activity on the river. After a council of war supported Greene's position, Washington reluctantly agreed to man the forts, but only on a temporary basis. He viewed this as a tentative commitment and held the issue open for further review.<sup>156</sup> Washington sent one brigade to a forward position at White Plains and located his main body where it could react to British actions from the various watercourses surrounding the operational area.<sup>157</sup> At this point, Washington had about 14,000 men under his immediate command, plus 3,500 across the Hudson River at Fort Lee in New Jersey.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 223-225.

<sup>153</sup> Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 131-132.

<sup>154</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 149; Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 226-227.

<sup>155</sup> Washington to Greene, 8 November 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 342-343.

<sup>156</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 218-219; Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 225.

In addition to repositioning his army, Washington conducted a reorganization based on changes resulting from the recent fighting. Charles Lee had returned from his successful operations in the southern states. John Sullivan and Lord Stirling had returned from British captivity through a prisoner exchange worked out between Washington and Howe. Washington restructured his army into seven divisions under Nathanael Greene, William Heath, Charles Lee, Benjamin Lincoln, Israel Putnam, Joseph Spencer, and John Sullivan.<sup>159</sup> Greene's division occupied Forts Washington and Mifflin on opposite sides of the Hudson, and Washington positioned the rest of the army where it could maneuver against British forces north of the Harlem River. Washington deployed a brigade under Colonel John Glover to engage Cornwallis's landing force after it came ashore at Red Bank Point.

Possibly due to his own sense of modesty, Glover is one of the unsung heroes of the American Revolution.<sup>160</sup> Earlier, his "amphibious regiment" had been key to moving the army across the East River to safety in Manhattan after Washington evacuated Brooklyn Heights. And his skillful and courageous delaying action against the British landing force at Red Bank Point provides a classic model for defending against amphibious attack by a superior force. In a series of leapfrog type retrograde movements, Glover drew the British and Hessians into one ambush after another inflicting severe damage and delaying their movement.<sup>161</sup> Despite his fighting withdrawal, Glover could not prevent

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<sup>157</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hanson Harrison to Hancock, 20 October 1776, *PGW*, 6, 592-593; Washington to Joseph Trumbull, 20 October 1776, *PGW*, 6, 595-596; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 76.

<sup>158</sup> Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 221; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 76.

<sup>159</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 244; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 76.

<sup>160</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 179.

the more powerful amphibious force from advancing to New Rochelle where Howe concentrated his army for an attack on Washington near White Plains.<sup>162</sup> But Glover's daylong fight impeded the British long enough for Washington to move his army into more favorable ground.<sup>163</sup>

On 22 October, Washington's advance elements reached White Plains, and by 27 October, he began to concentrate his forces. Throughout this period, constant skirmishing occurred between the opposing forces. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Washington engaged Howe's army of about 13,000-14,000 British effectives then located in Westchester County. After arriving at White Plains, Howe observed the American positions on three hilltops north and west of the town. Determining the American right flank on Chatterton Hill to be the most vulnerable, he sent two regiments (one British and one Hessian) across the Bronx River to attack frontally while enveloping the American right with a regiment of Hessians under Colonel Johann Gottlieb Rall, hoping to catch the defenders in a classic pincer movement. Initially, the militia and Continentals on Chatterton Hill withstood the assault, twice counterattacking and driving back the British and Hessians.<sup>164</sup> But as British cannon fire began to have an effect and British cavalry arrived on the scene, the Americans gave way. Howe's troops then occupied Chatterton Hill and established an artillery position from which they could bombard the entire

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<sup>161</sup> Greene to Hancock, 28 October 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 323-324; Black, *War for America*, 107.

<sup>162</sup> Harrison to Hancock, 25 October 1776, *PGW*, 7, 27-29; Washington to John Augustine Washington, 6-19 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 102-205; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 76-77; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 221; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 226-230; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 149-152.

<sup>163</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 153.

<sup>164</sup> Black, *War for America*, 107; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 154.

American line.<sup>165</sup> The British and Hessian forces had taken Chatterton Hill, but at a cost of 200 casualties to about 175 for the Americans. The determined resistance gave Howe pause, and he chose not to continue the attack against the entrenched Americans.<sup>166</sup>

Considering his positions untenable due to British cannon fire from Chatterton Hill, Washington moved his forces to prepared defenses about half a mile back, and then to a set of entrenchments on North Castle Heights. After probing Washington's position for several days, Howe determined it was too strong to assault, and on 4 November returned his army to Manhattan to consolidate his grip on New York.<sup>167</sup> Howe's move not only surprised American commanders, but it also confused them as well. If Howe did not chose to fight at White Plains, what did he intend to do? Many American leaders thought this might presage a complete change in strategy. Opinion ranged from predicting a move to reinforce Canada in the north, to a possible redirection of effort toward the southern states, or an attempt to capture Philadelphia.<sup>168</sup> Washington believed—correctly it turned out—that Howe would attempt to reduce Fort Washington on Manhattan then turn his efforts to New Jersey.<sup>169</sup> But he could not be certain of this and needed to guard against various possibilities. As a result, he sent Heath north to Peekskill with 4,000 men to reinforce the accesses to the Hudson Valley. He left Lee at

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<sup>165</sup> Ferling, *The First of Men*, 173-174; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 77.

<sup>166</sup> Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 132; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 154-155; Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 239-242.

<sup>167</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 244; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 78.

<sup>168</sup> Washington to Greene, 7 November 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 339-340; Washington to John Augustine Washington, 6-19 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 102-105; Ferling, *First of Men*, 174; Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 244-245.

<sup>169</sup> Washington to William Livingston, 7 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 110-111; Washington to Greene, 8 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 115-116; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 235; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 154-155.

North Castle Heights with 7,000 troops, and personally took 2,000 across the Hudson River into New Jersey to join Greene's 3,500 troops at Fort Lee, where he also expected to receive substantial reinforcement from the New Jersey militia.<sup>170</sup> At this point, neither Washington nor Greene considered giving-up the fight against Howe's army located in the New York and New Jersey area.

Greene continued to insist on the defense of Fort Washington across the Hudson on Manhattan and sent reinforcements increasing the garrison strength to nearly 2,800 men.<sup>171</sup> Even this effort would prove insufficient to defend the fort and all its outposts against the power Howe could bring against it. Congress continued to insist on obstructing the Hudson River, and this required American possession of both Forts Washington and Lee. Therefore, against his better judgment and with great reluctance, Washington acceded to the continued occupation of Fort Washington.<sup>172</sup> On 16 November, British and Hessian units launched a vicious assault on Fort Washington from the north, south, and east against stubborn American resistance. But by 1500, the attackers had compressed Magaw's force into a much-reduced perimeter, and he agreed to surrender rather than experience the bloodbath that would surely have followed.<sup>173</sup> The loss of Fort Washington constituted the greatest American defeat up to that point in the war. It was also Nathanael Greene's lowest point of the war although, for the most part,

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<sup>170</sup> Washington to Colonel Richard Humpton, 5 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 265; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 175; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 241; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 245.

<sup>171</sup> Greene to Washington, 15 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 162; Washington to Hancock, 16 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 162-165; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 245-247.

<sup>172</sup> Washington to Greene, 8 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 115-116.

<sup>173</sup> Washington to Hancock, 16 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 163-165.

he escaped criticism for his role in the disaster.<sup>174</sup> Despite this debacle, Washington and Congress did not lose faith in the abilities and fidelity of Greene. Although he had insisted throughout that he could defend or at least evacuate Fort Washington by water if pressed by the enemy, American leaders did not lose sight of the fact that that Greene's abilities would be crucial to ultimate success.<sup>175</sup> The losses at Fort Washington amounted to 78 killed and 374 wounded for the British and Hessians and 59 killed with 96 wounded for the Americans. More critically, the disaster resulted in the capture of roughly 2,800 American soldiers—most of whom suffered terribly in British captivity—and the loss of all their weapons and equipment.<sup>176</sup>

After the fall of Fort Washington, the Commander in Chief knew he must also evacuate Fort Lee and the New Jersey shore. He immediately began removing ammunition and supplies in anticipation of a retreat across New Jersey.<sup>177</sup> On 19 November, a force of 6,000 under Cornwallis moved across the Hudson and attempted to capture Washington and Greene's force still at Fort Lee. But despite having to leave some weapons and supplies behind, the Americans slipped away before Cornwallis could close his trap.<sup>178</sup> Thus began a march across New Jersey in which Cornwallis pressed Washington but could not quite catch him. Able to beat the British to Trenton,

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<sup>174</sup> Greene to Henry Knox, 17 November 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 351-352; Black, *War for America*, 107-108.

<sup>175</sup> Theodore Thayer, "Nathanael Greene: Revolutionary War Strategist," in Billias, ed., *George Washington's Generals*, 112-114; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 26-27; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 243-257.

<sup>176</sup> Washington to Howe, 13 January 1777, *PGW*, 8, 58-59; Washington to Howe, 13 January 1777, *PGW*, 8, 59-60; Washington to Howe, 10 June 1777, *PGW*, 9, 661-666, Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 255.

<sup>177</sup> Greene to Nicholas Cooke, 4 December 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 360-361.

<sup>178</sup> Washington to Hancock, 19 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 181-183; Black, *War For America*, 108; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 255-256.

Washington evacuated his army across the Delaware River and destroyed or captured all boats and ferries to avoid the possibility of further pursuit.<sup>179</sup>

Washington had lost the battle for New York but saved his army and the Revolution. He had also lost one of his most renowned officers when a British patrol captured Charles Lee as he attempted to bring his forces south to join Washington.<sup>180</sup> John Sullivan assumed Lee's command and ultimately brought that division into Washington's camp.<sup>181</sup> By that time, Washington had begun to have second thoughts about Lee's value to the war effort. Lee had been very slow in responding to orders, and when he did move, it lacked the energy and quickness that Washington expected.<sup>182</sup> In fact, among the major commanders on either side, only Washington acted with speed and agility during the entire episode following the fall of Fort Washington. This undoubtedly saved his army as Cornwallis, though slow, skillfully pursued with a large and determined force.<sup>183</sup> Washington demonstrated notable adeptness in getting his widely disbursed forces across the Delaware and establishing control over the river before Cornwallis and Howe could catch-up and affect a crossing.<sup>184</sup> In fairness to Howe, his

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<sup>179</sup> Washington to Hancock, 8 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 273; Washington to Hancock, 9 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 283-284; Washington to Lund Washington, 10-17 October 1776, *PGW*, 7, 289-291; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 276.

<sup>180</sup> Major General John Sullivan to Washington, 13 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 328.

<sup>181</sup> Washington to Lund Washington, 10-17 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 289-291; Washington to Sullivan, 15 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 350; Ferling, *The First of Men*, 178-179; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 288-294.

<sup>182</sup> Washington to Lee, 21 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 193-194; Washington to Lee, 1 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 249; Washington to Hancock, 2 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 251; Washington to Lee, 3 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 257; Washington to Colonel Richard Humpton, 5 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 265; Freeman, *George Washington*, IV, 260-290; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 46; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 157; John Shy, "Charles Lee: The Soldier as Radical," in Billias, ed., *George Washington's Generals*, 35-40; Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 260.

<sup>183</sup> Black, *War for America*, 110.

problems exceeded that of catching Washington before his escape into Pennsylvania. He needed to secure an all-weather port for harboring his brother's ships before the enclosed waters around New York began to freeze. Well before Washington began his retreat across New Jersey, Howe had begun preparing an army to move into Newport, Rhode Island, and gain control over the ice-free waters of Narragansett Bay.<sup>185</sup>

With Washington's escape across the Delaware, the amphibious aspects of the New York campaign essentially ended. The reversal of fortunes that resulted from Washington's attacks at Trenton on 26 December and Princeton on 2-3 January 1777 are, of course, among the most important American successes of the Revolution and two of the most brilliant tactical victories of the eighteenth century.<sup>186</sup> But a river crossing is hardly an amphibious operation even with Glover's "amphibious regiment" manning the oars and controlling the boats.<sup>187</sup> And the dazzling maneuvers that brought victory at Princeton rests more in the category of land warfare than amphibious operations despite the presence of Samuel Nicholas and three companies of Marines who joined Washington for the operation.<sup>188</sup> But the actions occurring throughout the New York campaign, including Long Island, Manhattan, and Westchester Country exemplify the nature and value of amphibious warfare and joint operations.<sup>189</sup> At no time in the eighteenth century

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<sup>184</sup> Washington to the New York Convention, 16 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 355-357.

<sup>185</sup> Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 136; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 260-261.

<sup>186</sup> General Orders, 25 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 434; General Orders, 27 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 448-449; Gruber, *The Howe Brothers*, 153-157.

<sup>187</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 165; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 266.

<sup>188</sup> General Orders, 30 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 484; Washington to Hancock, 5 January 1777, *PGW*, 7, 519-523; Washington to Putnam, 5 January 1776, *PGW*, 7, 535; Edward Howard Simmons and J. Robert Moskin, eds., *The Marines* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, 1998), 35.

<sup>189</sup> Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 40, 47.

did any military force execute amphibious evolutions more completely or more skillfully than did the Howe brothers in the campaign for New York. Although often criticized as being too slow in execution, they conducted one of the most successful amphibious campaigns in history. If they were slow, they were also skillful, and they recognized that any major mistake could spell disaster.

Washington's army although untrained, poorly equipped, inexperienced, and imperfectly disciplined could be an effective—if erratic—instrument of war as Howe learned at Harlem Heights, Pell's Point, and White Plains. Many observers suggest that Howe and his generals should have executed this campaign more aggressively. But bolder action would also result in more opportunities for the Americans to exploit, as they did at Harlem Heights and Pell's Point. There is no guarantee that a more forceful approach by Howe, Clinton, and Cornwallis would have resulted in a more complete victory or in destruction of the American Revolution during the New York campaign. That assumption, although widely held by historians, remains speculative.

The decision to defend New York against British power made excellent strategic sense. Of all the deep water ports along the American seacoast (Boston, Newport, New York, Norfolk, Charleston, Savannah), New York provided the best position to serve Britain's military and political objectives. It directly supported the British strategy of severing New England through control of the Hudson River valley from New York to Canada. It also allowed the Howe brothers to leverage the relatively strong loyalist sympathy that existed in that area. Defeating the British in New York would create great strategic benefits for the American war effort and this certainly influenced the thinking of Washington and members of Congress. But despite its strategic importance, defending

New York never made tactical sense in the presence of the Royal Navy. There simply existed too much water and shoreline available for amphibious operations. And at this point in history, no nation could conduct amphibious operations better than Great Britain.<sup>190</sup> The defense of New York may have been strategically desirable, but it proved tactically impossible given the power symmetry that existed between the adversaries.<sup>191</sup>

Although the New York campaign ended with the crossing of the Delaware, the Howe brothers had undertaken an important adjunct amphibious operation designed to occupy Rhode Island and control Narragansett Bay.<sup>192</sup> In early December 1776, Lord Howe sent Parker to Newport with a force consisting of 13 warships, 51 transports, and seven thousand troops under Clinton where they conducted an unopposed landing and began a three-year occupation of the area.<sup>193</sup> The small American garrison of about 600 men felt unable to oppose Clinton's landing and retreated north across the Bristol Ferry. Although they evacuated most of their supplies and ammunition, the Americans left behind 15-20 heavy cannon due to the speed of Clinton's amphibious operation.<sup>194</sup> In response to this amphibious thrust, Washington ordered Benedict Arnold and Joseph Spencer to Rhode Island, but they accomplished nothing more than to limit penetration of the countryside by the British and Hessians.<sup>195</sup> Control of Narragansett Bay not only

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<sup>190</sup> Washington to John Augustine Washington, 6-19 November 1776, *PGW*, 7, 102-105.

<sup>191</sup> Black, *American as a Military Power*, 13.

<sup>192</sup> Heath to Washington, 6 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 267; Jonathan Trumbull, Sr. to Washington, 6 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 267-268.

<sup>193</sup> Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 47-48; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 30; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 160.

<sup>194</sup> Nicholas Cooke to Washington, 8 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 272; Washington to Cooke, 21 December 1776, *PGW*, 7, 391-393; Black, *War for American*, 108.

provided the British with the best deep-water and ice free harbor in America but also denied its use to numerous privateers operating from those waters. Due to the depth of Narragansett Bay and Newport harbor, ship movement depended less on tidal considerations, thereby allowing for more free and aggressive naval operations.<sup>196</sup> This provided an obvious advantage to whoever controlled the sea space around Rhode Island. Additionally, establishing a base at Newport complimented naval operations conducted from New York and also helped to tighten the blockade of the American coast.<sup>197</sup>

Beyond the strategic value of Newport, Howe hoped to gain a logistical advantage by acquiring food and fodder from the surrounding area. New York and New Jersey could not provide an adequate supply of these staples because of the destruction of fields and stores by retreating Americans. Additionally, Howe and his staff had misjudged the potential of that area as a supply base. Unfortunately for Howe and his army, New England could provide very little beyond the needs of the local population and Clinton's occupying troops. This, coupled with harsh winter weather conditions, caused the entire Narragansett Bay expedition to be a disappointing and difficult undertaking.<sup>198</sup> Yet the capture of Newport accomplished British strategic goals and brought a knighthood to Sir Henry Clinton. Returning to New York in July 1777 after a triumphant visit to England,

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<sup>195</sup> Major General Joseph Spencer to Washington, 12 January 1777, *PGW*, 8, 51-52; Arnold to Washington, 13 January 1777, *PGW*, 8, 55-56; Arnold to Washington, 31 January 1777, *PGW*, 8, 197-198; Arnold to Washington, 7 February 1777, *PGW*, 8, 267-268; Spencer to Washington, 26 March 1777, *PGW*, 8, 640-641; Greene to Nicholas Cooke, 21 December 1776, *PGNG*, 1, 374-376.

<sup>196</sup> Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 47-48.

<sup>197</sup> Gallagher, *The Battle for Brooklyn*, 15.

<sup>198</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 30; Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, 140, 260.

Clinton clashed with his immediate superior, Sir William Howe, regarding the next British move in subduing the American rebellion.<sup>199</sup>

This phase of the Revolutionary War—from Bunker Hill to the capture of Newport—represents an entirely amphibious campaign. Although the landing on the Charlestown peninsula and subsequent attack up Bunker Hill is amphibious only in a narrow sense of that concept, it is so fundamental to the Boston and the New York campaign that it must be considered part of the whole. New York, of course, is the centerpiece of this first phase of the war and certainly the most important British victory of the Revolution. Washington became fixated with British occupation of New York and it influenced his thinking—for better and for worse—throughout the war. The struggle for New York is a classic of amphibious excellence and could easily have ended the Revolution had it not been for Washington's operational agility. There are lessons for both offensive and defensive aspects of amphibious warfare in this campaign.

British forces proved successful at New York for numerous reasons. Obviously, they had superior naval and military power in every sense of that concept. But equally important, they applied their power prudently. At this point in the war, the British exercised a harmonious interrelationship of policy, strategy, and operations. The objective of Lord George Germain—the Colonial Secretary in London—and the Howe brothers in North America were well aligned and consistent. This would not be true in subsequent operations and Britain later paid a high price for that at Saratoga. On the American side, this interrelationship proved less effectual. Congress placed numerous requirements on Washington—such as occupying New York City and maintaining free access along the North River—that constrained his operational and tactical decisions.

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<sup>199</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 286-287.

Washington deferred to Congress while he argued for changes in their policies. He usually got his way, but this took time and events on the battlefield moved faster than the decisions of Congress.

In addition to having effective relations among the various elements of cooperation, the Howe brothers performed well in the fundamental characteristics of amphibious operations. The integration between the navy and landing force proved excellent in all landings and immediate operations ashore. To some extent that may be attributable to the fact that the two component commanders were brothers. But in fact, the amalgamation of effort goes much deeper than that simple explanation. In every landing, the two elements developed mutually supporting plans at all levels, met timetables necessary for tactical implementation, and accomplished their missions with the synergy of a well-coordinated organization.

The ability to buildup combat power rapidly is perhaps the most important element of an amphibious landing, and the Howe brothers accomplished this in a notable manner. Even at Throng's Point where Howe landed in an undesirable area, the entire landing force had quickly established itself ashore in a full combat posture. When withdrawn and reinserted at Pell's Point, the operation proved equally efficient. As Glover fought his delaying action against the British landing force, he faced its entire combat power.

One reason that British commanders could consistently buildup combat power so rapidly involves the characteristic of task-organization. Simply stated this element allows commanders to properly configure the landing force based on the mission and capabilities of their fighting units. This structuring can include considerations regarding the mix of

types of units such as infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineers. It can also include considerations among national forces such as English, Scottish, and Hessians. Each of these groups had a slightly different training and equipment make-up and could bring different skill sets to the battle. Task-organizing to take advantage of all these attributes requires competent planning, of course, including mission analysis, evaluation of force structure, and the creation and dissemination of operation orders. British excellence in these areas is demonstrated by the fact that they always had the correct forces available when required. For example, Howe had artillery just when he needed it at White Plains and engineers when wanted at Brooklyn Heights. When they operated outside the discipline of amphibious operations, they proved less reliable such as arriving at the Delaware River without boats to cross. In that case, Washington simply needed to destroy or capture all boat along the river to halt Cornwallis's pursuit.

The final characteristic of amphibious operations involves unity of effort and operational coherence. Although the Howe brothers affected unity of effort very well, operational coherence proved more elusive for them. This is illustrated in the British failure to capture or destroy Washington's army despite outstanding amphibious landings and initial battle successes. On Long Island, Howe's force conducted an impressive landing and won a significant battle at Gowanus Heights only to have his offensive halted by the defenses on Brooklyn Heights. At Kips Bay, Howe routed the defenders near his landing site and occupied New York City. But his force could not cut off Putnam's retreat from New York and he suffered a set back when he engaged Washington at Harlem Heights. Again in Westchester County, Howe landed successfully at Pell's Point, drove Glover's defenders before him, won a victory against an isolated force on

Chatterton Hill, and then ran out of steam against Washington's strong positions on North Castle Heights.

Historians give various reasons for the British lack of operational coherence in the New York campaign. Some contend that the high casualties at Bunker Hill traumatized Howe, causing him to become too cautious. Others suggest that the three key leaders—Germain and the Howe brothers—still hoped for reconciliation and therefore avoided delivering a crushing defeat that would humiliate the Americans beyond repair. Some believe that Washington's operational skills explain this phenomenon. They argue that although he might lose tactical engagements, Washington always planned for actions several moves ahead of the current event. He developed what we now call branch and sequel plans for every eventuality, and placed his forces in such positions that they could always execute several options. If the British closed down one option, Washington could execute another.

Which of these theories best explain the British lack of operational coherence in the New York campaign? Undoubtedly all three—and more—played a role. But ultimately, the third possibility remains the most satisfactory. Throughout the war, Washington consistently avoided destruction of his army, even when faced with overwhelming superior force and flawless execution. Although Washington's performance at the tactical level may be mediocre in comparison to other great captains in history, his skill at the operational and strategic level was superior. It is the operational agility and strategic genius of Washington that best explains British lack of operational coherence during the New York campaign.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE YORKTOWN CAMPAIGN

After leaving winter quarters in the spring of 1777, Howe spent several months maneuvering around New Jersey in an attempt to entice Washington into open warfare. Rather than accept Howe's invitation to battle, Washington closely watched British movements from his fortified base at Middlebrook, New Jersey. In a Fabian-like operation, Washington struck small British detachments when he could and avoided battle where Howe would have the advantage.<sup>1</sup> Washington reluctantly played this game throughout the spring and summer of 1777 because his lack of troops and supplies made offensive operations impossible. Frustrated at his inability to bring Washington into a major battle and experiencing several minor yet sharp engagements resounding to the advantage of his adversary, Howe evacuated his entire army to Staten Island, leaving New Jersey to the Americans.<sup>2</sup> Here he remained encamped, pondering his next move.<sup>3</sup> At this point, the British match among policy, strategy, and operations broke down, due in part to the Secretary of State for Colonies Lord George Germain's incompetent leadership. The lack of effective coordination for the total war effort allowed the two

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Black, *War for America: The Fight for Independence, 1775-1783* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 122-123; Dave Richard Palmer, *The Way of the Fox: American Strategy in the War for American Independence, 1775-1785* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), 138-139.

<sup>2</sup> Tench Tilghman to Hancock, 22 June 1777, *PGW*, 10, 104-105; Washington to Reed, 23 June 1777, *PGW*, 10, 113-115; Washington to Hancock, 25 June 1777, *PGW*, 10, 123-125; Washington to Hancock, 28 June 1777, *PGW*, 10, 137; Washington to John Augustine Washington, 29 June 1777, *PGW*, 10, 149-150; Black, *War for America*, 123; Robert Leckie, *George Washington's War: The Saga of the American Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 346; Barnet Schecter, *The Battle for New York: The City at the Heart of the American Revolution* (New York: Walker & Company, 2002), 288-289; Lynn Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail: The Story of the Continental Army, 1775-1783* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), 187.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Stirling to Washington, 3 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 176-177.

main British armies in North America—Howe in New York and General John Burgoyne in Canada—to act almost as independent forces, rather than a synchronized team.<sup>4</sup>

Simultaneously with Howe's maneuverings in New Jersey during 1777, Burgoyne attempted to sever New England from the middle states by driving south along the Richelieu River, through Lake Champlain, and down the Hudson River.<sup>5</sup> This river and lake avenue provides a water route for armies moving south from Canada, or north out of New York. Germain and Burgoyne expected Howe to advance north along the Hudson River valley in coordination with the southern thrust from Canada, but Sir William had other ideas.<sup>6</sup> To resist Burgoyne's movement, Washington rushed reinforcements north to Philip Schuyler and Horatio Gates, while keeping his remaining force in New Jersey where he could defend Philadelphia from various possible British threats.<sup>7</sup> The presence of Washington's army in New Jersey coupled with the strong fortifications he had established along the Hudson River Highlands undoubtedly contributed to Howe's decision not to move north and operate in conjunction with Burgoyne. He would have to fight his way past the American strong points at Stony Point, Peekskill, Forts Clinton and Montgomery, and West Point with Washington in his rear—not an attractive prospect. But this decision left Burgoyne to face the full power of American military forces north of New York, which proved stronger than Howe had anticipated. In a series of defeats

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<sup>4</sup> Black, *War for America*, 117-121; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 44-46, 134-140.

<sup>5</sup> Ian Baner and Charles Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 94-99.

<sup>6</sup> Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 139.

<sup>7</sup> Washington to Putnam, 1 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 165-166; Washington to Hancock, 2 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 168-170; Washington to Schuyler, 2 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 170-172; Washington to Lincoln, 24 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 385.

including Fort Stanwix, Oriskany, Bennington, and ultimately Saratoga, Burgoyne's effort failed utterly, bringing not only defeat but also the surrender of an entire British field army.<sup>8</sup>

While Burgoyne attempted his penetration into American territory from the north, Howe planned to move against Philadelphia, the defacto American capitol. Not wanting to attack across New Jersey with Washington on his flank, the general decided to make an amphibious thrust from south of the city.<sup>9</sup> He left Clinton in New York with some 6,000 men to protect the city and provide what support he could to Burgoyne. That support proved to be little more than limited and ineffective probes against American positions along the Hudson Valley, particularly at Forts Clinton and Montgomery. On 23 July 1777, Howe sailed from New York with 260 warships loaded with 18,000 men, artillery, horses, and supplies for locations unknown to the Americans.<sup>10</sup> This constituted the very thing Washington feared and envied most about British power; the ability to employ naval supremacy in conjunction with the army to conduct and support landing operations at any point along the American coastline.<sup>11</sup>

When Howe initially loaded his amphibious force in early July 1777, Washington believed he would move north up the Hudson to cooperate with Burgoyne's southward

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<sup>8</sup> Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 96-97; Piers Macksey, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 122.

<sup>9</sup> Black, *America as a Military Power*, 14-15.

<sup>10</sup> Black, *War for American*, 122-128; Leckie, *George Washington's War*, 346.

<sup>11</sup> Washington to Hancock, 25 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 420-422; J.F.C. Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishing, 1942), 49.

thrust.<sup>12</sup> When the British fleet sailed to sea rather than up the Hudson River, Washington felt certain that Howe would move south, but could not yet be sure of his ultimate destination.<sup>13</sup> Would he enter the Delaware River, the Chesapeake Bay, or shift the focus of battle further south to Charleston or Savannah? Although not entirely certain of Howe's main objective, Washington determined it prudent to concentrate his forces near Philadelphia.<sup>14</sup> Once he received reports that the fleet had arrived in the northern Chesapeake and had started offloading at Head of Elk (present day Elkton) in Maryland, Washington concluded that Howe would attack Philadelphia from the south.<sup>15</sup>

After landing on 25 August 1777, Howe advanced north toward Philadelphia while Washington moved south to protect the capitol. Advanced detachments from Washington's army harried Howe's landing force as it moved from its beachhead including a particularly sharp engagement occurring at Cooch's Bridge.<sup>16</sup> Despite American interdiction efforts, Howe pressed on to the town of Kennett Square where he

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<sup>12</sup> Washington to Hancock, 22 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 356-357; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 187.

<sup>13</sup> Brigadier General David Forman to Washington, 23 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 374-375; Black, *War for America*, 115; Nathan Miller, *Sea of Glory: A Naval History of the American Revolution* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1974), 238-245.

<sup>14</sup> Washington to Hancock, 25 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 410-411; Washington to Colonel Theodorick Bland, 24 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 382; Washington to Colonel Daniel Morgan, 24 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 390; Washington to Colonel Stephen Moylen, 24 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 391; Washington to Putnam, 24 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 393; Washington to Stephen, 24 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 399; Washington to Lord Stirling, 24 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 399-400; Washington to Wayne, 24 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 401-402; Washington to William Livingston, 25 July 1777, *PGW*, 10, 412-413; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 188-189.

<sup>15</sup> Hancock to Washington, 22 August 1777, *PGW*, 11, 41; General Orders, 23 August 1777, *PGW*, 11, 49-50; General Order, 5 September 1777, *PGW*, 11, 147-148; Alfred T. Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies of the War of American Independence* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1913), 62-63; Leckie, *George Washington's War*, 346-349.

<sup>16</sup> Washington to Hancock, 5 September 1777, *PGW*, 11, 150; Washington to Brigadier General John Cadwalader, 28 August 1777, *PGW*, 11, 82-83; Washington to Hancock, 30 August 1777, *PGW*, 11, 93; Washington to Hancock, 3 September 1777, *PGW*, 11, 135-136; Black, *War for America*, 136; Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 386.

deployed his force to engage Washington.<sup>17</sup> The main elements of the two armies met on 11 September at Brandywine Creek. In a partial replay of the Battle of Long Island, Washington selected good defensive ground on the east side of the Creek hoping to entice Howe into a frontal attack. In a series of intense clashes, the British advantage in numbers and position overpowered the defenders and Washington withdrew his force from the battlefield.<sup>18</sup> Although recognized as a clear British victory, the Americans—with few exceptions—fought well at Brandywine and did not leave the field in despair.<sup>19</sup> Many felt pride in their efforts and confident regarding their ability to fight British and Hessian regulars in the future, although Washington realized that his army was not yet a match for the British and German professionals.<sup>20</sup> Despite the defeat at Brandywine, Washington continued to oppose Howe's drive, but could not prevent the British from occupying Philadelphia on 26 September.<sup>21</sup>

After the battle of Brandywine, the fighting between Howe and Washington ceased to be amphibious in nature. By the time subsequent operations occurred around Philadelphia—the Battle of the Clouds, Paoli, Germantown, Monmouth—Howe and Clinton (who replaced Howe as commander of British North American forces during June 1778) no longer maneuvered by sea to fight the Americans in the Mid-Atlantic colonies. But to ensure an ongoing supply and communications system to support the

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<sup>17</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hanson Harrison to John Hancock, 10 September 1777, *PGW*, 11, 182.

<sup>18</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 190-191.

<sup>19</sup> General Greene's Orders, 13 September 1777, *PGNG*, II, 156; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 245.

<sup>20</sup> Washington to Hancock, 11 September 1777, *PGW*, 11, 200-201; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 140; Leckie, *George Washington's War*, 349-356.

<sup>21</sup> Schechter, *The Battle for New York*, 292.

occupation of Philadelphia, British commanders needed to open the Delaware River access to the city. Lord Howe departed the Chesapeake on 14 September, three days after Brandywine, being satisfied that his brother had firmly established his position ashore and no longer required naval support.<sup>22</sup> He then turned his attention to the American defenses along the Delaware River approaches to Philadelphia. During October and November, Lord Howe conducted a series of joint attacks that were more naval and riverine than amphibious. Despite determined resistance, Howe reduced Forts Mifflin and Mercer, clearing the water access to Philadelphia just as Washington's forces tightened control of the overland access into the city.<sup>23</sup>

In February 1778, while Washington's army trained and endured conditions at Valley Forge, American diplomacy scored a major victory. Through a set of treaties of friendship and commerce, the United States essentially gained French recognition as an independent nation and set the groundwork for France to join the war as a belligerent against Great Britain. France had provided the United States covert aid in the form of munitions and money since 1775 with the implicit understanding that this could possibly lead to war.<sup>24</sup> But not until the American victory at Saratoga and the determined but failed attack at Germantown during October 1777 did the efforts of Benjamin Franklin, Silas Dean, and Arthur Lee bring about French recognition. By May of 1778, Congress had approved the treaties and by June, France had become an American ally in the war

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<sup>22</sup> Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 63; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 246-247.

<sup>23</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 238-254; Douglas W. Marshall and Howard H. Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution: An Atlas of Manuscript Maps* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1976), 58-59.

<sup>24</sup> John D. Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown, 1781: A Reassessment* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2005), 4; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 145; Richard M. Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown: The Campaign that Won the Revolution* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 17.

against Great Britain.<sup>25</sup> Spain and the Dutch Republic would eventually join France, although each had its own set of war aims and ambiguous relations with the United States. For Britain, this had the obvious effect of broadening the conflict well beyond the thirteen colonies and complicating their strategic planning.<sup>26</sup> To a considerable extent, the focus of British attention shifted from subduing a rebellion on the continental mainland to an imperial war with worldwide implications.<sup>27</sup> For America, French involvement offered the prospect of strong naval support and the fulfillment of Washington's long held hope of being able to execute joint and combined operations.<sup>28</sup> For both America and Britain, this presaged more of a naval focus in future operations.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the importance of the strategic alliance, relations with France started poorly and caused frustration among American leaders before producing results. Yet the alliance impacted British thinking even before it became an effective instrument of war. Most importantly, the British army could not remain in Philadelphia once France officially entered the war. All communications between Philadelphia and New York, including supply support, had to move by sea because Washington's army controlled the country between the two cities. With the prospect of French ships plying American waters, the British occupation of Philadelphia became untenable, prompting Clinton to

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<sup>25</sup> Washington, General Orders, 5 May 1778, *PGW*, 15, 38-40; Leckie, *George Washington's War*, 424-426; Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 398-405; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 20-24.

<sup>26</sup> Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 102; David Syrett, "The British Armed Forces in the American Revolutionary War: Publications, 1875-1998," *The Journal of Military History* (January 1999): 147-164; John D. Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown, 1781: A Reassessment* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: The Baydell Press, 2005), 5-10.

<sup>27</sup> Black, *America as a Military Power*, 18; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 323-328.

<sup>28</sup> Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 145-146.

<sup>29</sup> Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 406-411.

return his army to New York.<sup>30</sup> During June 1778, Clinton began his land and sea evacuation of Philadelphia. He loaded his noncombatants and all stores on transports, except for enough supplies for his main army as it moved overland to New York. The navy ferried Clinton's army across the Delaware River and then sailed for New York.<sup>31</sup> During the march across New Jersey, Washington attacked Clinton at Monmouth on 28 June, winning a tactical draw but a moral victory. In July 1778, a French fleet under Admiral Charles Hector Théodat, Comte d'Estaing, arrived off the Virginia coast with instructions to cooperate with his American counterparts.<sup>32</sup> D'Estaing came very close to catching Howe's fleet loaded with elements of Clinton's army and the bulk of his supplies at sea in a vulnerable situation. British leaders in London had dispatched a fleet under Vice Admiral John Byron to interdict d'Estaing and reinforce Howe.<sup>33</sup> But Byron departed three weeks behind d'Estaing, giving the French commander a window of naval superiority in North America.<sup>34</sup>

Although Lord Howe reached New York harbor before the French fleet could engage him, both d'Estaing and Washington intended to find a way to exploit their naval advantage.<sup>35</sup> D'Estaing pursued Howe to New York, but his deeper draft ships could cross the bar at Sandy Hook only during certain times and then very slowly, making them

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<sup>30</sup> Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Mahan, *Major Operations of the War of American Independence*, 62-63; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 149.

<sup>32</sup> D'Estaing to Washington, 13 July 1778, *PGW*, 16, 63; Washington to President of Congress, Henry Laurens, 14 July 1778, *PGW*, 16, 74-75.

<sup>33</sup> John B. Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence* (Newport, RI: The Redwood Press, 2005), 9-10.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 330-336.

<sup>35</sup> Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 153.

vulnerable to British fire.<sup>36</sup> Lord Howe had emplaced shore batteries and war ships where he could dominate the avenues of approach at Sandy Hook, further complicating any effort to cross the bar into New York Harbor.<sup>37</sup> Even if unable to enter the harbor, d’Estaing now controlled the waters outside Sandy Hook and around Long Island.<sup>38</sup> Hoping for a joint and combined action against New York, Washington moved his army across New Jersey, linking-up with a force from northern New York under Gates, and establishing strong positions north and west of Manhattan. Washington and d’Estaing now had Clinton’s forces bottled-up in New York, on Staten Island, and at Newport.<sup>39</sup> But d’Estaing did not believe they could dislodge Clinton from New York, and seeing no advantage to an extended blockade, agreed to support an amphibious attack to reclaim Newport and Narragansett Bay.<sup>40</sup>

In August 1778, British General Sir Robert Pigot held Newport with some 6,000 regulars, which Clinton reinforced during the ensuing battle.<sup>41</sup> John Sullivan and a small contingent of Continentals watched Pigot from nearby Providence while Washington and d’Estaing planned a combined and joint operation. Their concept involved landing a few

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<sup>36</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Hamilton to Washington, 20 July 1778, *PGW*, 16, 109; Washington to Henry Laurens, President of Congress, 22 July 1778, *PGW*, 16, 127-130; Mackesy, *The War for America*, 217-218; Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies of the War of American Independence*, 66-67; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 153.

<sup>37</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 334-335.

<sup>38</sup> Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Greene to Washington, 12-14 July 1778, *PGNG*, II, 456.

<sup>40</sup> Vice Admiral d’Estaing to Washington, 17 July 1778, *PGW*, 16, 89-90; Washington to Sullivan, 17 July 1778, *PGW*, 16, 92-93; Washington to d’Estaing, 22 July 1778, *PGW*, 16, 125; Greene to Sullivan, 23 July 1778, *PGNG*, II, 466; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 68-69; Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 428-430; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 345.

<sup>41</sup> Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 153; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 70-71; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 346.

of d’Estaing’s 4,000 troops on Conanicut Island—across from Newport—to observe activities and serve as a staging area for the main attack.<sup>42</sup> Sullivan would ferry his troops onto Rhode Island (Aquidneck Island) from the north and prepare to attack Pigot’s force. As Sullivan moved into position, d’Estaing would land his main force on the western side of the island just north of Newport for a simultaneous assault on the British defenses.<sup>43</sup> The ships of d’Estaing’s fleet would support both the landing of French troops and the movement of Sullivan’s force.<sup>44</sup> But just before d’Estaing landed his troops on Aquidneck Island, Lord Howe, later reinforced by Lord Byron arrived with British ships, threatening d’Estaing within Narragansett Bay.<sup>45</sup> This forced d’Estaing to recall his troops from Conanicut Island and move immediately to engage Howe’s fleet.<sup>46</sup>

For two days, the fleets maneuvered inconsequentially, each seeking the advantage of wind. Before any major combat occurred, a severe storm disbursed the ships, causing considerable injury to both fleets.<sup>47</sup> With British fleets too severely damaged to conduct a major action, Howe returned to New York, and d’Estaing sailed briefly back to Narragansett Bay. When d’Estaing returned to Narragansett Bay, he decided his fleet had suffered too much impairment to resume amphibious operations or

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<sup>42</sup> Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 66-67.

<sup>43</sup> Greene to Henry Marchant, 25 July 1778, *PGNG*, II, 470-472; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 346-347.

<sup>44</sup> Greene to d’Estaing, 21 August 1778, *PGNG*, II, 480-482.

<sup>45</sup> Washington to d’Estaing, 12 August 1778, *PGW*, 16, 297; Washington to Greene, 8 August 1778, *PGNG*, II, 478; Mahan, *The Major Navies in the War of American Independence*, 71; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 347.

<sup>46</sup> Sullivan to Washington, 13 August 1778, *PGW*, 16, 307-308; Mahan, *The Major Navies in the War of American Independence*, 73; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 348.

<sup>47</sup> Lafayette to Washington, 25-26 August 1778, *PGW*, 16, 369-374; Mahan, *The Major Navies in the War of American Independence*, 75-76.

even remain in the area.<sup>48</sup> On 22 August, despite extensive efforts by American leaders to dissuade him, d’Estaing sailed for Boston to make repairs.<sup>49</sup> Sullivan now confronted British power alone in Rhode Island, with his officers and troops believing the French had abandoned them in the middle of a crucial campaign.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the Royal Navy had gained uncontested sea control in the waters of Narragansett Bay.<sup>51</sup> Learning that Lord Howe’s fleet approached Newport with Clinton and 4,000 reinforcements, Sullivan decided to evacuate Aquidneck Island.<sup>52</sup> In retreating from Newport, Sullivan repulsed repeated attempts by Pigot to destroy his force on Aquidneck Island, winning several major tactical victories over his adversary.<sup>53</sup> John Glover’s “amphibious regiment” ferried the Americans to safety at the Tiverton and Bristol crossings.<sup>54</sup> By the time Clinton landed his reinforcements and interdicted the channels, Sullivan’s men had moved beyond his grasp.

The initial effort at combined warfare involving American and French forces had been a major disappointment, leaving many Americans unsure of the commitment and

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<sup>48</sup> Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 24-29.

<sup>49</sup> Sullivan to Washington, 21 August 1778, *PGW*, 16, 350-355; Greene to d’Estaing, 21 August 1778, *PGNG*, II, 480-483; A protest of the General Officers on Rhode Island to Count d’Estaing, 22 August 1778, *PGNG*, II, 487-489; Mackesy, *The War for America*, 218-219; Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 431-432; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 349.

<sup>50</sup> Greene to Charles Pettit, 22 August 1778, *PGNG*, II, 491-492; Sullivan to Greene, 23 August 1778, *PGNG*, II, 492-493.

<sup>51</sup> Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 35.

<sup>52</sup> Washington to Sullivan, 28 August 1778, *PGW*, 16, 406-407; Washington to Sullivan, 29 August 1778, *PGW*, 16, 417.

<sup>53</sup> Sullivan to Washington, 29 August 1778, *PGW*, 16, 418-419; Colonel John Laurens to Washington, 2 September 1778, *PGW*, 16, 479-480; Greene to Washington, 31 August 1778, *PGNG*, II, 501-502.

<sup>54</sup> Sullivan to Washington, 31 August 1778, *PGW*, 16, 450-451; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 71.

reliability of their new ally.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, Howe and Clinton made use of their enhanced naval power by conducting a series of amphibious raids along the New England and New York coastlines designed to destroy stores and cause confusion regarding British intentions.<sup>56</sup> In November, d’Estaing departed for the West Indies, ending any possibility for combined operations in the foreseeable future.<sup>57</sup> Newport and its superb harbor remained in British hands for another fourteen months. But with the introduction of French naval power and improved coordination between French and American commanders, such outposts became more vulnerable to amphibious attack. This fact, coupled with increasing demands on British resources and a shift in operations toward the southern states, caused Clinton to order the evacuation of Newport in late 1779.<sup>58</sup> By then, the focus of British strategy had shifted to the southern colonies and the West Indies.

While d’Estaing and British naval commanders directed their attention toward the West Indies, Clinton ordered Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell and a detachment of 3,500 troops including British regulars, American Loyalists, and Hessians to capture Savannah, Georgia.<sup>59</sup> Campbell departed New York on 27 November 1778 aboard a naval squadron commanded by Captain Hyde Parker.<sup>60</sup> Many leaders continued to think of southerners as more loyal to Great Britain than the inhabitants of northern states. By

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<sup>55</sup> Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 104.

<sup>56</sup> Washington to Henry Laurens, 12 September 1778, *PGW*, 16, 582-583; Sullivan to Washington, 14 September 1778, *PGW*, 16, 614-615; Greene to Washington, 7 September 1778, *PGNG*, II, 513-514; Black, *War For American*, 177.

<sup>57</sup> Mackesy, *The War for American*, 218-219; Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 431-432.

<sup>58</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 71.

<sup>59</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 315.

<sup>60</sup> Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 118.

freeing them from the Patriot's grip, British leaders reasoned, the southern colonies would happily return to the crown.<sup>61</sup> Attempting to reclaim Georgia and South Carolina in the winter of 1778-1779 made good sense to British planners, and Clinton initiated this effort by his attack on Savannah in late December. Clinton's southern strategy involved first capturing the city of Savannah and then moving up the Savannah River to take Augusta. After securing Georgia, he would attempt the more difficult task of capturing Charleston and reclaiming South Carolina. It seemed a well-conceived plan, and the operation got off to a good start. In a series of engagements on 27-29 December, Campbell defeated a disparate and inexperienced group of about 1,200 Continentals and militia under the confused command of the American Major General Robert Howe thereby capturing Savannah. After this defeat, Major General Benjamin Lincoln—who had been within a few days march of Savannah when the battle occurred—integrated remaining elements of the American force into his southern command.

Before another major action occurred in the southern theatre of war, American forces attempted an amphibious strike against Fort George on Penobscot Bay, in present-day Maine. During the summer of 1779, British commanders established a post on the Bagaduce Peninsula (Castine, Maine) under command of Colonel Francis McLean, to serve as a base for raiding the New England coastline and to counter the actions of privateers operating in nearby waters. Moreover, they also hoped to establish a colony there for the resettlement of displaced Loyalists.<sup>62</sup> The organizers of the expedition knew

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<sup>61</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 76; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 324-325.

<sup>62</sup> Jayne E. Triber, *A True Republican: The Life of Paul Revere* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 135; Marshall and Peckham, 81; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 312; Henry I. Shaw, Jr., "Penobscot Assault-1779." *Military Affairs*, (Summer 1953): 83; Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail*, 111; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 412.

they had to move quickly before the British constructed permanent defenses and established a strong naval and army presence in the area.<sup>63</sup> Commanded by commodore Dudley Saltonstall, the Penobscot expedition consisted of three frigates of the Continental Navy, three brigs of the Massachusetts Navy, one brig of the New Hampshire Navy, twelve privateers, assorted transports and supply ships, and a force of 900 volunteers under Brigadier General Solomon Lovell. Consisting primarily of Massachusetts forces, the operation also employed 300 men from the Continental Marine Corps augmented by state marines, which provided a professional force to spearhead the assault landings.<sup>64</sup> The total strength of the task force, including the marines, sailors, and army element amounted to some 2,000 men. Despite a promising start resulting from two amphibious landings, Lovell decided to siege Fort George rather than assault, not realizing that his British counterpart had overestimated American strength and was preparing to surrender.<sup>65</sup>

Lovell's lack of aggressiveness, coupled with Saltonstall's lack of commitment to the landing force ashore, allowed time for a British relief squadron under Commodore Sir George Collier to arrive and defeat the entire expeditionary force.<sup>66</sup> Penobscot stands with the Narragansett Bay operation of 1776 as examples of how irresolute leadership negated the advantages of military strength. At Narragansett Bay, it resulted from

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<sup>63</sup> Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail*, 112-113.

<sup>64</sup> Triber, *A True Republican*, 135; William D. Parker, *A Concise History of the United States Marine Corps, 1775-1965* (Washington: Historical Division, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1970), 4; Simmons, *The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1975*, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Buker, *The Penobscot Expedition*, 53-54; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 312; Shaw, "Penobscot Assault," 91.

<sup>66</sup> Washington to Horatio Gates, 17 August 1779, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington: From the Original Manuscripts* (GWG hereafter), 16, (Washington: United States Government Printing, 1931-1940), 117-118.

d’Estaing’s concern over the storm damage to his ships. At Penobscot Bay, it resulted from Saltonstall’s focus on wind, tides, and three British sloops of war.

As the Penobscot expedition and its aftermath played out in New England, operations in the southern states intensified. After Campbell had taken Savannah and Augusta, the new American commander of the Southern Department, Benjamin Lincoln, tried to challenge British forces in Georgia and the Carolinas. But Lincoln suffered a series of setbacks, beginning with a failed attempt—in conjunction with d’Estaing—to reclaim Savannah and the loss of Charleston. In September 1779, d’Estaing returned to American waters from French successes in the West Indies, intending to launch an amphibious attack against the British in Savannah.<sup>67</sup> Washington hoped d’Estaing would return to New York and join his army in an attack on British forces there, but d’Estaing chose to operate in Georgia.<sup>68</sup> After being repulsed at Savannah, the French and Americans retreated with d’Estaing departing for France and Lincoln returning to Charleston where he found himself in the difficult position of preparing defenses with insufficient troops and uncooperative political support.<sup>69</sup>

As the war progressed, Clinton came to believe that combining the perceived strength of southern Loyalists with a main force effort against Charleston provided the

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<sup>67</sup> Washington to Lafayette, 12 September 1779, *WGW*, 16, 267-269; Washington to Lafayette, 30 September 1779, *WGW*, 16, 368-376; Mahan, *The Major Operations of the War of American Independence*, 110-115; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 340; Black, *War For America*, 178.

<sup>68</sup> Washington to d’Estaing, 13 September 1779, *WGW*, 16, 272-275; Washington to Major Henry Lee, 13 September 1779, *WGW*, 16, 278-280; Washington to Lord Stirling, 14 September 1779, *WGW*, 16, 287-288; Washington to d’Estaing, 4 October 1779, *WGW*, 16, 409-414; Greene to Colonel Ephraim Bowen, 7 November 1779, *PGNG*, V, 24.

<sup>69</sup> Black, *America as a Military Power*, 22; Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence*, 356; Shipton in Billias, *George Washington’s Generals*, 201-202.

best opportunity to destroy American military power.<sup>70</sup> Confirming that Savannah remained in British hands and that d’Estaing had departed American waters, Clinton departed New York for South Carolina on 26 December 1779 with a force of 8,500 men, including Cornwallis as his second in command.<sup>71</sup> According to British cavalry commander, Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, Clinton selected Charleston because of the “mildness of the climate, the richness of the country, its vicinity to Georgia, and its distance from General Washington.”<sup>72</sup> Clinton and Cornwallis had failed to take Charleston during their 1776 venture largely because of the battering of Parker’s ships by the American defenders in Fort Moultrie at the mouth of Charleston Bay. But in 1780, Clinton and Cornwallis arrived aboard Vice Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot’s much more powerful fleet, consisting of 10 warships, 90 transports, and some 5,500 sailors and marines.<sup>73</sup> The British generals also commanded a much larger landing force, which they used more intelligently than on the previous occasion.

Believing he must leave at least 15,000 men in New York to oppose any moves by Washington, Clinton completely evacuated Newport to augment his amphibious force for this mission.<sup>74</sup> After landing his army south of the city, Clinton moved methodically into positions north of Charleston and began constructing parallel siege lines.<sup>75</sup>

Simultaneously, Arbuthnot’s fleet ran by the guns of Forts Moultrie and Johnson and

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<sup>70</sup> Black, *War for America*, 179-181; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 418-419.

<sup>71</sup> Washington to Lafayette, 18 March 1780, *WGW*, 18, 122-125; Black, *War for America*, 182; Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*, 151.

<sup>72</sup> Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1871 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 102.

<sup>74</sup> Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 106-107.

<sup>75</sup> John Collins to Greene, 2 May 1780, *PGNG*, V, 540.

defeated an American squadron of eight ships commanded by Commodore Abraham Whipple. With the British fleet now in control of Charleston Harbor, and the army established across the peninsula north of Charleston, Clinton dispatched Tarleton and Major Patrick Ferguson to seal off all means of communications and destroy any Patriot units operating in the surrounding countryside. Recognizing the hopelessness of his situation, Lincoln surrendered the city and his army on 12 May 1780.

The surrender at Charleston proved to be the greatest American defeat of the Revolutionary War. It constituted such a huge loss that even Washington doubted the initial reports.<sup>76</sup> In addition to a terrible loss in manpower and material, the American cause lost its most important port in the south. The Continental Navy lost eight ships (four sunk and 4 captured) which, when added to the earlier losses at Penobscot Bay, reduced it to a minor influence during the remainder of the war.<sup>77</sup> Recognizing the significance of his victory, Clinton quickly moved to consolidate his hold on the south by ordering Cornwallis into the countryside to reestablish British authority, discipline rebels, and destroy any lingering American fighting units. On 5 June, Clinton transferred command of the southern theatre to Cornwallis and returned to New York.<sup>78</sup> In so doing, Clinton set in motion a series of events that would culminate in the battle of Yorktown during October 1781 at which Washington and his French counterparts would conduct one of the most complex and successful concentration of forces occurring in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>76</sup> Washington to James Duane, 5 June 1780, *GW*, 18, 478-479.

<sup>77</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 423.

<sup>78</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 102; Black, *War For America*, 190; Grainger, *The Battle for Yorktown*, 13.

The year 1780 started very badly for the Patriot cause with the loss of Charleston and did not improve.<sup>79</sup> Despite guerrilla action in the Carolinas, some of which proved successful, Cornwallis generally had his way with American forces sent south to fight him. In August, Cornwallis inflicted a bloody defeat on American forces under one of its most renowned commanders, Horatio Gates, at the battle of Camden in South Carolina.<sup>80</sup> As British forces overran Georgia and the Carolinas, Benedict Arnold attempted to betray the key American position in the Hudson Highlands at West Point. Although the capture of British spy, Major John André, exposed Arnold's treason, the effort came very close to succeeding and presented Washington with one of his greatest shocks of the war.<sup>81</sup> In addition to nearly losing his key defensive position in the New York Highlands, Washington lost one of his most trusted lieutenants for whom he had genuine affection. Additionally, Washington's ongoing effort to persuade his French allies to cooperate in a joint and combined attack against New York met only with evasion and rebuff.<sup>82</sup> Lacking sufficient strength and funds to undertake offensive actions on his own, Washington reluctantly remained on the defensive. Yet even under these constraints, Washington would strike boldly if he felt an opening presented itself, such as Lord Stirling's January raid on Staten Island.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 151.

<sup>80</sup> Black, *War For America*, 190-193; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 379; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 38, 73.

<sup>81</sup> Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 152-153; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 50-73.

<sup>82</sup> Washington to Rochambeau, 30 April 1781 from New Windsor, *WGW*, 22, 12-13.

<sup>83</sup> Black, *War For America*, 199.

If the year 1780 started badly for the American war effort, it began very well for the British with major victories at Charleston and Camden, coupled with numerous lesser successes in the south. Yet by the end of the year, any optimism Clinton may have possessed had evaporated. Despite major victories in the southern states, the population did not prove as loyal to the crown as expected. Also, vicious guerrilla activity continued, and American frontiersmen won an important victory at King's Mountain on 7 October.<sup>84</sup> The failure of Arnold and André's effort to surrender West Point proved a major setback for the northern war effort. André served as Clinton's most trusted aide, and together they had worked long and hard to achieve this covert objective. Clinton believed the capture of West Point would unhinge Washington's defenses throughout New York and New Jersey, something he had been unable to do in three years of warfare.<sup>85</sup> Failing to capture West Point had the strategic and psychological effect of a major defeat to the British war effort.

Hoping to regain the initiative in the northern theatre, Clinton proposed an attack on French forces at Newport under Admiral Charles-Louis d'Arsac, Chevalier de Ternay and Jean-Baptiste-Doantien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau. Ternay and Rochambeau arrived in Newport during July with about 5,200 men and 7 ships-of-the-line.<sup>86</sup> This expeditionary force resulted from a visit to King Louis XVI and his ministers by Lafayette, who persuaded the government of the need for direct French support to Washington.<sup>87</sup> Upon landing, Rochambeau established a cordial and respectful

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<sup>84</sup> Black, *War For America*, 195; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown* 98-105.

<sup>85</sup> Black, *War For America*, 201; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 97.

<sup>86</sup> Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 58-62.

<sup>87</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 451; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 10.

relationship with Washington in which he deferred to Washington's position as commander in chief, and Washington displayed great respect for Rochambeau's professionalism.<sup>88</sup> Clinton believed he could destroy the French naval and military forces at Newport before they could join with Washington's troops around New York and undertake offensive operations. But Clinton could not gain the support of Arbuthnot for such a venture, thereby leaving French forces undisturbed and available for the 1781 joint and combined operation at Yorktown, Virginia.<sup>89</sup>

While British naval and army commanders fell into bickering and disagreement, cooperation among American and French commanders continued to improve. Rochambeau proved an enthusiastic supporter of the American Revolution and worked closely with naval commanders to concentrate French power against the British enemy. Despite Rochambeau's stabilizing influence, the French navy in Newport experienced some disruption beginning with the death of de Ternay on 15 December 1780. Temporary command fell to Charles-René-Dominique, Chevalier Destouches, who bested Arbuthnot in a sea battle off the Chesapeake Capes during March 1781 although he failed to follow-up his success.<sup>90</sup> In May, Jacques-Melchion Saint-Laurent, Comte de Barras, arrived in Newport to take command from Destouches and bring word that Admiral Francois-Joseph-Paul, Comte de Grasse, would sail for the West Indies with 26 ships-of-the-line.<sup>91</sup> The principle task of de Grasse's fleet involved protection of French

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<sup>88</sup> George C. Woodbridge, "Rochambeau: Two Hundred Years Later," in James L. Yarnall, ed., *Newport History: The French in Newport* (Newport, RI: Newport Historical Society, 2004), 85-86.

<sup>89</sup> Black, *War For America*, 199, 201; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 452-453; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 27, 33-34, 36-37.

<sup>90</sup> Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 86-94.

<sup>91</sup> Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 94-95.

possessions in the West Indies, but he also had authority to operate off the North America coastline if it did not endanger his primary mission.<sup>92</sup> Taking advantage of this opportunity, Washington and Rochambeau requested that de Grasse bring his fleet to either New York or the mouth of the Chesapeake to support a major operation by their armies.<sup>93</sup> Actually, Washington preferred New York while Rochambeau favored the Chesapeake. The ultimate decision rested with de Grasse, who had to balance his activities in North America with his obligations in the West Indies.<sup>94</sup> While awaiting de Grasse's reply, Rochambeau's force joined Washington's army near White Plains where they probed the British defenses of New York.<sup>95</sup> Finding British positions stronger than expected, and receiving de Grasse's reply that he could not operate as far north as New York, Washington cancelled his planned attack.<sup>96</sup> But de Grasse did agree to bring his fleet into the Chesapeake, and on 19 August 1781, Washington and Rochambeau moved south to rendezvous with the French admiral.<sup>97</sup> On 17 September, the three principal commanders met aboard de Grasse's flagship where they laid plans to destroy

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<sup>92</sup> Washington to Destouches, 14 May 1781, *WGW*, 22, 87-88; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 170; James L. Yarnall, ed., *Newport History: The French in Newport*, 161, 165, 174; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 471-473.

<sup>93</sup> Washington to Chevalier de la Luzerne, 23 May 1781, *WGW*, 22, 103-104; Notes from Conference with Rochambeau, 23 May 1781, *WGW*, 22, 105-107; Circular to the New England States, 24 May 1781, *WGW*, 22, 109-111; Rochambeau to Washington, 12 June 1781, *WGE*, 22, 206; Washington to de la Luzerne, 13 June 1781, *WGW*, 22, 205-206; Washington to Rochambeau, 13 June 1781, *WGW*, 22, 207-209; Conference at Dobbs Ferry, 19 July 1781, *WGW*, 22, 395-397; Washington to de Grasse, 21 July 1781, *WGW*, 33, 400-402; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 168.

<sup>94</sup> Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 100-101; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 138-143.

<sup>95</sup> Washington to the Army, Instructions for Reconnoitering the Enemy's posts at the North End of York Island, 13 July 1781, *WGW*, 22, 370-372; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 23.

<sup>96</sup> Washington, Thoughts on the Surprise of the North End of York Island, June 1781, *WGW*, 22, 296-299; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 479; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 23.

<sup>97</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 80-81.

Cornwallis's army then concentrated in what Cornwallis considered a relatively secure enclave at Yorktown, Virginia.<sup>98</sup> At last, Washington had achieved a joint and combined operation with the French fleet—a goal he had sought from the beginning of the alliance in February of 1778.<sup>99</sup>

While Washington and Rochambeau planned strategy in New England during late 1780 and early 1781, Cornwallis decided to move his army into North Carolina. He believed this necessary in order to prevent Nathanael Greene, the new American commander, from suppressing Loyalist activity, which he intended to rally in support of the British southern strategy.<sup>100</sup> But Loyalist support proved much weaker than expected, and Greene proved much stronger than imagined. When Greene arrived at Charlotte in December 1780, Gates turned over his army of about 1,500 effectives, which Greene began to rebuild and reinforce.<sup>101</sup> Demonstrating a capacity for strategic thinking, Greene shrewdly deployed his forces in such a way as to draw Cornwallis away from his supporting bases and gun ships. These maneuvers set the stage for Daniel Morgan's defeat of Tarleton at the battle of Cowpens on 17 January 1781.<sup>102</sup> In the 15 March battle of Guilford Court House, Cornwallis won a victory over Greene's army but at a cost he could not afford, suffering 532 casualties to 263 for Greene.<sup>103</sup> Unlike the

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<sup>98</sup> Washington to de Grasse, 20 September 1781, *WGW*, 23, 136; Woodbridge, in Yarnall, *Newport History*, 86; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 81-82.

<sup>99</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 486.

<sup>100</sup> Black, *War For America*, 206-207.

<sup>101</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 69; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 401; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 107-109.

<sup>102</sup> Black, *War For America*, 210-211; Selby, 177; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 404-409.; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 110-119.

<sup>103</sup> Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 31.

battle of Camden seven months earlier, Greene retreated in good order with his army intact and very able to continue its southern campaign.<sup>104</sup> Although winning a tactical victory at Guilford Court House, Cornwallis felt compelled to retreat some 175 miles to Wilmington, North Carolina, while Greene resumed his invasion of the Carolinas, attacking Loyalists along with British detachments and patrols.<sup>105</sup>

After the victory at Guilford Court House and retreat to Wilmington, Cornwallis turned his attention to Virginia while Greene moved into South Carolina, eager to link-up with Thomas Sumter's guerrillas. By threatening South Carolina and Georgia, Greene hoped to force Cornwallis to abandon his ambitions in North Carolina and Virginia.<sup>106</sup> But Greene suffered a minor defeat at Hobkirk's Hill near Camden, South Carolina, on 19 April, which convinced Cornwallis he could safely move north into Virginia rather than return to South Carolina.<sup>107</sup> Although technically a British victory, the battle of Hobkirk's Hill further strained British resources to the point that Lieutenant Colonel Francis Lord Rawdon, the British commander, felt compelled to leave the field and return to Charleston. Rawdon's action had the effect of turning his tactical victory into a strategic defeat.<sup>108</sup> These actions complicated the operational situation, but Cornwallis concluded he could best protect the Carolinas and Georgia by seeking and winning a

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<sup>104</sup> Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 129-131.

<sup>105</sup> Black, *War For America*, 213-214; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 108.

<sup>106</sup> Greene to Colonel William Davies, 17 July 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 23-24; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 131-134.

<sup>107</sup> Washington to the President of Congress, 30 May 1781, *WGW*, 22, 134-135; Washington to Rochambeau, 3 June 1781, *WGW*, 22, 154-155; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 32-33.

<sup>108</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 110; Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 116-117.

decisive battle on the Chesapeake.<sup>109</sup> With Cornwallis's army in Virginia and Rawdon back in Charleston, Greene and his subordinate commander, Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, incrementally attacked and captured a series of isolated British posts during May and June 1781. In this effort, Greene received support from the guerrilla bands of Thomas Sumter, Andrew Pickens, and Francis Marion.<sup>110</sup> In subsequent actions around Fort Ninety-Six and Eutaw Springs, both sides gave a good account of themselves, with the British gaining the upper hand. But irreplaceable British losses coupled with growing American strength made it necessary for British forces to retreat once again into Charleston.<sup>111</sup> Although American leaders did not consider these two battles tactical victories, they clearly perceived them as strategic successes.<sup>112</sup> By September 1781, British authority south of Virginia controlled only Charleston and Savannah, leaving Greene to focus attention on subduing Loyalists in the countryside.<sup>113</sup>

In April 1781, Clinton sent reinforcements under Major General William Phillips to join Benedict Arnold (now a British Brigadier General) in Virginia.<sup>114</sup> A series of inconclusive naval actions involving Destouches and Arbuthnot had left the British in control of the entrance to the Chesapeake, allowing Clinton the freedom to send these

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<sup>109</sup> Washington to Rochambeau, 3 June 1781, *WGW*, 22, 155-156; Black, *War For America*, 215; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 473; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 75.

<sup>110</sup> General Orders, 15 June 1781, *WGW*, 22, 215-216; Washington to Major General William Heath, 15 June 1781, *WGW*, 22, 217-218; Greene to General Thomas Sumter, 14 July 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 8-9; Greene to General Andrew Pickens, 15 July 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 10-11; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 439-440.

<sup>111</sup> Greene to Thomas McKean, President of the Continental Congress, 17 July 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 27-31; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 442-445.

<sup>112</sup> General George Weedon to Greene, 11 November 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 563-566.

<sup>113</sup> Black, *War For America*, 217-219.

<sup>114</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 74-75.

additional troops into Virginia.<sup>115</sup> Arnold and Lieutenant Colonel John Graves Simcoe had successfully raided American communities during the past four months while Lafayette attempted to meld militia units with his 1,200 Continentals to form a capable military force.<sup>116</sup> Washington also sent Anthony Wayne with about 1,000 troops to reinforce Lafayette.<sup>117</sup> Phillips assumed command of all British forces assembled at Portsmouth upon his arrival and launched a series of raids, which Lafayette could only partially contain.<sup>118</sup> Cornwallis continued his movement north and upon arrival at Petersburg, integrated Phillips's troops, bringing his force to about 7,000 men.<sup>119</sup> Phillips died of typhoid fever in mid May, and Clinton recalled Arnold to New York shortly thereafter, leaving Cornwallis in command of all British forces in Virginia.<sup>120</sup> On 6 July, Cornwallis inflicted a sharp check on Anthony Wayne, who had been dogging his army for more than a month, at Green Springs near the James River.<sup>121</sup> But a desperate stand by his Continentals coupled with timely support from Lafayette permitted them to give a good account of themselves and remain an important force in eastern Virginia.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 169-175; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 471-473.

<sup>116</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 114; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 470-471.

<sup>117</sup> Washington to Baron von Steuben, 16 May 1781, *WGW*, 22, 91; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 425.

<sup>118</sup> Washington to Governor Thomas Jefferson, 16 May 1781, *WGW*, 22, 93-94; Washington to Lafayette, 31 May 1781, *WGW*, 22, 139-140; Washington to Rochambeau, 7 June 1781, *WGW*, 22, 170-171; Black, *War For America*, 208-209, 220-221; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 114; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 179-181.

<sup>119</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 114-115; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 175.

<sup>120</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 77.

<sup>121</sup> Black, *War For America*, 222-223; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 77.

Throughout most of 1781, Clinton hoped to find a way to attack and destroy Washington's army around New York, to attack French forces at Newport, or to capture the American magazines in Philadelphia.<sup>123</sup> By the end of summer, Clinton had given-up on these strategic options and focused on Virginia, directing Cornwallis to establish a base on the Chesapeake, preferably at either Old Point Comfort or Yorktown.<sup>124</sup> Clinton had serious reservations about continuing operations in Virginia, but he and Cornwallis felt confident that the Royal Navy could ultimately control the waters of the Chesapeake. In early August, Cornwallis moved his army into Yorktown and a secondary position at Gloucester Point across the York River.<sup>125</sup> Although these positions provided an excellent location for a naval station, they had no prepared defenses, forcing Cornwallis to undertake an extensive fortification effort to create a support base for both ground and naval operations.<sup>126</sup>

Once de Grasse had committed to bring his fleet to the Chesapeake, Washington realized that conditions were ripe for a major victory over British forces, if he could make all the disparate elements work together effectively.<sup>127</sup> This would be no simple matter

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<sup>122</sup> Washington to Lafayette, 13 July 1781, *WGW*, 22, 367-368; Washington to Lafayette, 30 July 1781, *WGW*, 22, 431-434; Washington to Brigadier General Anthony Wayne, 30 July 1781, *WGW*, 22, 435-436; Wayne to Greene, 7 August 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 148-149; Lafayette to Greene, 8 July 1781, *PGNG*, vol. 8, 507-508; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 426.

<sup>123</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 118; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 197.

<sup>124</sup> Black, *War For America*, 222-225; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 118; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 183; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 77-78.

<sup>125</sup> Lafayette to Greene, 12 August 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 172-175; Major James McHenry to Greene, 13 August 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 178; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 118; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 175-176.

<sup>126</sup> Greene to Colonel Henry Lee, Jr., 22 August 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 222-223; Black, *War For America*, 225; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 44-45, 56.

because Washington did not control the most important element, the French fleet. Should de Grasse suffer a defeat at sea or chose not to challenge the British navy, it would reverse the tactical situation ashore and place Washington and Rochambeau in a compromising situation.<sup>128</sup> On 15 August, Washington instructed Lafayette to prevent Cornwallis from leaving the Chesapeake and marching south.<sup>129</sup> This proved more easily said than done because Cornwallis commanded a larger and more professional force than what Lafayette could muster. But the Marquis harassed his British adversary while destroying local infrastructure and creating obstacles to impede any southern move by the British.<sup>130</sup> Together with Rochambeau, Washington persuaded de Barras to transport the French siege train to the Chesapeake and then join his fleet with that of de Grasse in support of operations around Yorktown.<sup>131</sup> De Barras feared the more powerful British fleet operating in waters around New York could destroy his ships if he encountered them while moving south. As such, he needed to be convinced of the mission's value and then took a circuitous route to the Chesapeake, arriving off Yorktown on 10 September.<sup>132</sup>

Through a series of deceptive ploys, Washington extricated his and Rochambeau's army from contact with British forces in the New York area, and began a

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<sup>127</sup> Washington to Comte de Grasse, 17 August 1781, *GWG*, 23, 7-11; Washington Circular to States (New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey), 21 August 1781, *GWG*, 23, 26-28; Washington to Governor William Greene, 22-24 August 1781, *GWG*, vol. 23, 46-48; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 150-141.

<sup>128</sup> Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 152.

<sup>129</sup> Washington to Lafayette, 15 August 1781, *GWG*, 22, 501-502; Lafayette to Greene, 25 August 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 246-247; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 151.

<sup>130</sup> Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 184-185.

<sup>131</sup> Washington to de Grasse, 24 August 1781, *GWG*, 23, 39-40.

<sup>132</sup> Washington to Comte de Barras, 15 August 1781, *GWG*, 22, 499-500; Black, *War For America*, 225; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 59-60, 67; Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 101; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 187.

forced march to join with de Grasse's fleet then in route to the Chesapeake from Saint Domingue (Haiti).<sup>133</sup> By ordering his troops to carry pontoons and conducting a series of feints against British positions on Staten Island and near Sandy Hook, Washington kept Clinton confused about his real intentions.<sup>134</sup> Clinton's earlier interception of a message from Washington to Lafayette detailing his plan to attack New York in conjunction with the French navy added credence to Washington's deceptions.<sup>135</sup> Not until he received reports of the movement of Washington and Rochambeau's troops through Philadelphia could Clinton be certain they intended to attack Cornwallis on the Chesapeake.<sup>136</sup> Washington left William Heath behind with some 3,000 men—the bare minimum—to protect West Point and the key posts of the Hudson Highlands.<sup>137</sup> By 8 September, the Franco-American army had reached northern Maryland, in the upper reaches of the Chesapeake Bay. From that point and from docks at Baltimore and Annapolis, its major elements loaded into transports that de Grasse had sent and moved to the landing beaches near Williamsburg, where Washington organized his combined army for the siege of Yorktown.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Black, *War For America*, 226.

<sup>134</sup> Washington to Rochambeau, 27 August 1781, *WGW*, 23, 49-50; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 61-62; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 151.

<sup>135</sup> Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 156-157.

<sup>136</sup> Black, *War For America*, 226; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 118-119; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 479, 485; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 163-164.

<sup>137</sup> Washington to Heath, 19 August 1781, *WGW*, vol. 23, 20-22; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 63; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 157.

<sup>138</sup> Washington to Greene, 4 September 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 295-297; Washington to the Superintendent of Finance, 17 August 1781, *WGW*, 23, 11-12; Washington to Lafayette, 21 August 1781, *WGW*, 23, 33-34; Washington to the Superintendent of Finance, 27 August 1781, *WGW*, 23, 50-52; Washington to Lafayette, 27 August 1781, *WGW*, 23, 52-53; Washington to Brigadier General George Weedon or Alexander Spotswood, 10 September 1781, *WGW*, 23, 110-111; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 82; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 78, 83-88; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 178-181.

By the end of August, British commanders in New York recognized the seriousness of Cornwallis's position and dispatched a fleet under Admiral Thomas Graves—who had replaced Arbuthnot in July as the senior naval commander in North America—to evacuate Cornwallis from Yorktown.<sup>139</sup> But on 30 August, de Grasse's fleet of 28 ships-of-the-line arrived in the waters of the Chesapeake, and on 1 September, he landed about 3,500 French troops under Claude-Anne de Rouvroy, the Marquis de Saint-Simon to join Lafayette's Americans.<sup>140</sup> Although this combined force, coupled with the Franco-American army now in motion, outnumbered Cornwallis, British commanders did not consider the situation hopeless. They continued to believe the navy could support Cornwallis's position in Virginia despite the presence of de Grasse's fleet and the growing American ground strength.<sup>141</sup> Additionally, now that Washington's intentions to concentrate against Yorktown had become clear, Cornwallis expected reinforcements from Clinton.<sup>142</sup>

One of the key battles of the Yorktown campaign occurred on 5 September when Graves' fleet, reinforced by the ships of Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, arrived at the mouth of the Chesapeake and engaged de Grasse in the Battle of the Capes. Admiral George Brydges Rodney had dispatched Hood from the West Indies to join Graves once he learned de Grasse had departed Caribbean waters. Hood sailed past the Chesapeake,

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<sup>139</sup> Black, *War For America*, 226-227.

<sup>140</sup> Washington to Chevalier de la Luzerne, 5 September 1781, *WGW*, 23, 87; Washington to de Grasse, 6 September 1781, *WGW*, 23, 92-93; Lafayette to Greene, 2 September 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 279-280; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 68-69.

<sup>141</sup> Black, *War For American*, 227; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 198-199.

<sup>142</sup> Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 118-119; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 204-205.

noting the absence of French ships, and joined Graves at Sandy Hook on 28 August.<sup>143</sup> When the British fleet departed New York for the Chesapeake on 31 August, they knew of de Barras's departure from Newport but not of the arrival of de Grasse who had entered the Chesapeake after Hood's brief visit. When Hood returned to the waters off Virginia as part of Graves's fleet, the British admirals found not de Barras with eight ships-of-the-line, but de Grasse with twenty-eight.<sup>144</sup> Graves and Hood engaged de Grasse at the entrance to the Chesapeake in a brief battle in which neither fleet lost a ship. Despite the inconclusive nature of the encounter, de Grasse gained the upper hand because he retained control of the Chesapeake and maintained his superiority in war ships.<sup>145</sup> In the days immediately following the battle, Graves and de Grasse eyed each other and sought the advantage of wind, but neither proved able to renew the fighting on favorable terms.<sup>146</sup> On 10 September, de Barras arrived on the scene, bringing French strength to thirty-six ships-of-the-line.<sup>147</sup> Needing extensive repairs to his ships and being overmatched by de Grasse and de Barras, Graves returned to New York, departing Virginian waters on 13 September.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 160; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 177; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 50, 65; Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 102.

<sup>144</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 81-82.

<sup>145</sup> Washington to de Grasse, 15 September 1781, *GWG*, 23, 116-117; Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 130; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 73; Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 103-105.

<sup>146</sup> Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 187-192.

<sup>147</sup> Washington to the President of Congress, 15 September 1781, *WGW*, vol. 23, 117-118; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 177, 184; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 493; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 186.

<sup>148</sup> Black, *War For America*, 227; Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 120-121; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 206-207.

After the defeat of Graves in the Battle of the Capes, the vulnerability of British forces at Yorktown became obvious to both Clinton and Cornwallis.<sup>149</sup> Clinton and the British naval commanders organized a second relief operation while Cornwallis contemplated a possible breakout by attacking Lafayette's army. But damage to the British fleet required more time to repair than initially expected, and despite the arrival of Rear Admiral Robert Digby with three ships-of-the-line and Sir Peter Parker with two ships-of-the-line, Graves could not respond in time to save the army at Yorktown.<sup>150</sup> Although Cornwallis outnumbered Lafayette's force in the Yorktown area, the possibility of breaking out did not appeal to him because he still expected reinforcements from Clinton and relief from Graves.<sup>151</sup> Even if he could have broken free from Lafayette, Cornwallis did not have sufficient supplies to ensure his return to the Carolinas or to be in condition to fight Greene after arriving. As Washington's and Rochambeau's troops began to arrive and assume positions on 28 September, the possibility of a breakout faded. When de Barras landed the siege artillery on 6 October, the fate of Cornwallis and his British army had been sealed.<sup>152</sup>

Washington had achieved his long desired goal of isolating a major British force from its naval support and had set the stage for victory. Cornwallis held Yorktown and Gloucester Point with roughly 8,000 British and Hessian soldiers, while Washington encircled him with an army of about 9,000 American and 7,800 French troops while de

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<sup>149</sup> Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 208.

<sup>150</sup> Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 185; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 494; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 86.

<sup>151</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 86; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 90-92; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 204-205.

<sup>152</sup> Black, *War For America*, 228; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 86-87.

Grasse controlled the watercourses and sea lines of communication.<sup>153</sup> Yet even this accomplishment did not insure victory. De Grasse had made it clear that he could only stay in American water until the end of October (originally, de Grasse intended to remain only through mid-October).<sup>154</sup> Once he departed, Clinton and Graves would reinforce Cornwallis and provide the naval gunfire support that could pull victory from the grasp of disaster.<sup>155</sup> In fact, Clinton intended to reinforce Cornwallis once Graves could take to sea, even if it meant again challenging de Grasse's superior fleet. After the arrival of Rochambeau's siege train, Washington had less than one month to destroy Cornwallis's force or compel it to surrender.<sup>156</sup> The siege operation consisted of a very sophisticated engineering and tactical evolution of which the basic plan included 55 specific and detailed instructions.<sup>157</sup> While siege operations commenced around Cornwallis's main army at Yorktown, Tarleton's force of about 700 cavalry was held in check at Gloucester Point by 1200 Virginia militia under Major General George Weedon, augmented by Armand-Louis de Gontant, Duc de Lauzun's legion and troops under Claude-Gabriel, Marquis de Choisy who held overall command.<sup>158</sup>

Cornwallis may not have known of Washington's time constraints, but he had a sense that de Grasse's fleet could not remain in American waters for long. He, therefore,

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<sup>153</sup> Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 120; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 86.

<sup>154</sup> Washington to de Grasse, 17 September 1781, *WGW*, 23, 122-125; De Grasse to Washington 17 September 1781, *WGW*, 23, 125; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 78; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 210.

<sup>155</sup> Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 103.

<sup>156</sup> Washington to de Grasse, 25 September 1781, *WGW*, 23, 136-139; Black, *War For America*, 228.

<sup>157</sup> General Orders, 6 October 1781, *WGW*, 23, 177-185.

<sup>158</sup> Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 213-217; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 103, 119-122.

continued to believe, for some time, that relief would come through the gathering naval strength building-up in New York harbor.<sup>159</sup> Thinking naval support a possibility and expecting promised reinforcements from Clinton, Cornwallis struck back at Washington with a series of raids and artillery attacks.<sup>160</sup> But his efforts proved ineffective in checking the increasing fury of the Franco-American siege.<sup>161</sup> On the night of 9-10 October, Cornwallis lost the frigate *Chason* along with several transport ships, which guarded the passage between Yorktown and Gloucester Point.<sup>162</sup> As the bombardment of his positions intensified and Washington's siege lines constricted, Cornwallis faced the imminent destruction of his army.<sup>163</sup> On 14 October, assault forces under command of Lieutenants Colonel Alexander Hamilton and Guillaume, Comte de Deux-Point, stormed and captured the final two redoubts that obstructed the advancement of siege lines, causing Cornwallis to recognize that his army was now beyond help.<sup>164</sup>

On 16 October, Cornwallis attempted to escape across the York River to Gloucester Point where Tarleton's force of 700 remained contained by the Franco-American forces under de Choisy. Both Cornwallis and Tarleton realized that their last

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<sup>159</sup> Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 110; Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 105.

<sup>160</sup> Washington to Greene, 28 September 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 408-410; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 195; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 140-142; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 223-225, 232-233.

<sup>161</sup> Washington to the President of Congress, 16 October 1781, *WGW*, 23, 227-229; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 119; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 143.

<sup>162</sup> Washington to Greene, 16 October 1781, *GWG*, 23, 230-232; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 191; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 88.

<sup>163</sup> Cornwallis to Clinton, 11 October 1781, in Black, *War For America*, 228-229.

<sup>164</sup> Cornwallis to Clinton, 15 October 1781, in Black, *War For America*, 230; Washington to the President of Congress, 16 October 1781, *WGW*, 23, 227-229; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 119; Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 192-193; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 130-132; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 230-235.

hope involved a breakout through Gloucester and a retreat to the north.<sup>165</sup> But a severe storm prevented this scheme before it began.<sup>166</sup> With the failure of the breakout attempt, in the words of Tarleton, “expired the last hope of the British Army.”<sup>167</sup> On 17 October, Graves’s refitted ships began loading about 7,000 of Clinton’s troops and on 19 October, he set sail with twenty-five ships-of-the-line.<sup>168</sup> But Cornwallis had slipped beyond the ability of Graves and Clinton to save him. That same day, Cornwallis asked Washington for surrender terms, and on the 19<sup>th</sup>, the British and German troops from Yorktown and Gloucester Point marched out of the rubble and grounded their arms.<sup>169</sup> On 24 October, Clinton arrived at the Chesapeake with 7,000 reinforcements aboard Graves’s ships. But the continuing presence of de Grasse’s superior fleet coupled with Cornwallis’s surrender rendered his mission moot, and after remaining on station for several days, he returned to New York.<sup>170</sup>

The siege of Yorktown had been furious and devastating.<sup>171</sup> Knowing he had superior firepower but limited time, Washington assaulted the British positions vigorously, determined to force either capitulation or complete destruction of his

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<sup>165</sup> Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 237.

<sup>166</sup> Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 195; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 143-144.

<sup>167</sup> Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, 388.

<sup>168</sup> Black, *War For America*, 230; Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence*, 105.

<sup>169</sup> Washington to Cornwallis, 18 October 1781, *WGW*, 23, 237-238; Washington to Greene, 24 October 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 479-480; Black, *War For America*, 231-232; Marshall and Peckham, *Campaigns of the American Revolution*, 119; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 495; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 146-149; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 238-240, 252-253.

<sup>170</sup> Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 121; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 157-159.

<sup>171</sup> Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 155-156; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 237-238; 242-243.

enemy.<sup>172</sup> Once Cornwallis sought to terminate the contest and asked for terms, Washington offered the same “honors” granted to Lincoln at Charleston, causing consternation in the British camp.<sup>173</sup> The British suffered some 500 casualties during the siege and surrendered approximately 8,000 soldiers and seamen.<sup>174</sup> Clinton clearly recognized that the disaster at Yorktown resulted from French naval superiority, but he also felt Cornwallis could have held out longer with better fortifications.<sup>175</sup> He acted immediately to prevent another such disaster by dispatching Lieutenant General Alexander Leslie to bolster the defenses at Charleston.<sup>176</sup> Washington hoped to attack Charleston immediately but could not persuade de Grasse to cooperate in the venture.<sup>177</sup> He did obtain a provisional agreement from the admiral to support an action against Wilmington, but upon reconsideration, de Grasse chose not to carry out his tentative promise.<sup>178</sup> The French admiral had made assurances to his Spanish allies in the West Indies and believed any further actions in North America would delay his arrival beyond acceptable limits. The best Washington could wring out of de Grasse entailed a vague commitment to attempt another joint and combined operation sometime after May

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<sup>172</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 433; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 103.

<sup>173</sup> Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 243-245.

<sup>174</sup> Selby, *The Road to Yorktown*, 197; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 90.

<sup>175</sup> Clinton to Germain, 24 October 1781 and summer 1782, in Black, *War For America*, 232-233.

<sup>176</sup> Black, *War For America*, 233; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 90.

<sup>177</sup> Washington to de Grasse, 20 October 1781, *WGW*, 23, 248-250; Black, *War For America*, 234; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 435; Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 181.

<sup>178</sup> Washington to Greene, 31 October 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 504-506; Lafayette to Greene, 22 November 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 609-611.

1782.<sup>179</sup> The frustrated Washington saw the prospect of eliminating all British power from Georgia and the Carolinas disappear over the horizon with the ships of de Grasse.<sup>180</sup>

Despite victory in the Battle of the Capes and at Yorktown, British forces remained strong in America, and de Grasse recognized the ongoing threat from the fleets of Graves and Hood. But true to his commitment, he stayed in the Chesapeake through the end of October, and on 4 November, set sail for the West Indies.<sup>181</sup> French naval superiority existed just long enough to give Washington the victory he pursued so vigorously. Five months later at the Battle of the Saintes near the channel between Guadeloupe and Dominica islands in the West Indies, Rodney and Hood defeated de Grasse's fleet and restored British command of the seas. But the victory came too late for the British war effort. On 12 April 1782—the same day as the battle of the Saintes—British leaders opened negotiations with Benjamin Franklin in Paris for an end to the conflict.<sup>182</sup> Yet Washington remained anxious because he believed in “an old and true Maxim that to make a good peace, you ought to be well prepared to carry on the War.”<sup>183</sup> Moreover, he now knew that there would be no French fleet to help replicate the Yorktown success elsewhere in North America.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 438.

<sup>180</sup> Palmer, *The Way of the Fox*, 181.

<sup>181</sup> Black, *War For America*, 235; Mahan, *Major Operation of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 185.

<sup>182</sup> Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 135; Mahan, *Major Operations of the Navies in the War for American Independence*, 226; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 448.

<sup>183</sup> Washington to James McHenry, 11 December 1781, *WGW*, 23, 381.

<sup>184</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 451.

Washington did not believe the victory at Yorktown would be sufficient to ensure American independence. Britain retained strong enclaves in New York, Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, and St. Augustine.<sup>185</sup> Although Clinton evacuated Wilmington and most of North Carolina by mid November 1781, British commanders would continue to attempt excursions from their other bases until the signing of the Peace of Paris in September 1783.<sup>186</sup> After the surrender of Yorktown, Washington sent reinforcements under Major General Arthur St. Clair to Greene in South Carolina and returned with the rest of his army to New York in November 1781, renewing his quarantine of British forces in that city.<sup>187</sup> Greene blockaded Charleston while sending detachments to secure the countryside in Georgia.<sup>188</sup> Rochambeau remained in the Williamsburg, Virginia, area for the winter with orders to maintain close contact with Greene.<sup>189</sup> Yet despite containing British forces within strategic enclaves, the number of troops available to Clinton in North America amounted to over 30,000, considerably greater than could be mustered by his American and French enemies.<sup>190</sup> Additionally, the virtual destruction of the small Continental Navy coupled with the inability of the French to maintain a fleet in American waters left the British in control of the sea. With this capability, offensive

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<sup>185</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 497.

<sup>186</sup> Acting Governor Alexander Martin of North Carolina to Greene, 28 November 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 634-635; Washington to Greene, 15 December 1781, *PGNG*, IX, 61-63; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 179; Ketchum, *Victory at Yorktown*, 272.

<sup>187</sup> Washington to the President of Congress, 27-29 October 1781, *WGW*, 23, 294-295; Washington to Greene, 31 October 1781, *WGW*, 23, 309-312; Washington to Greene, 15 December 1781, *WGW*, 23, 389-391; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 435; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 156.

<sup>188</sup> Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 449; Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 177.

<sup>189</sup> Washington to Greene, 31 October 1781, *WGW*, 23, 309-312; Washington to Colonel Timothy Pickering, 4 November 1781, *WGW*, 23, 331-332; Greene to Rochambeau, 9 December 1781, *PGNG*, X, 20; Greene to Washington, 9 December 1781, *PGNG*, X, 23.

<sup>190</sup> Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 177.

actions remained possible for British commanders, and this preyed on Washington's mind.<sup>191</sup> But Washington also believed that the return of a French naval force, which could remain in American waters for an extended time and cooperate with his army, would defeat British power in North America. He pressed Lafayette to make this case with the government of France during his return home in early 1782.<sup>192</sup>

Small unit fighting consisting of forays out of Charleston and Savannah continued throughout 1782, often causing concern by Greene.<sup>193</sup> But with the fall of the North government in London during March 1782, followed by the replacement of Clinton by Sir Guy Carleton that same month, British authorities thought more about evacuation than operations in North America.<sup>194</sup> Washington and Greene believed they had to strive to remain strong despite the vexing problems they continued to face.<sup>195</sup> As information from John Adams and Benjamin Franklin trickled in from Europe, American leaders perceived a weakening of British resolve. Not only had Yorktown been a blow to British resolution, but pressure from France in the West Indies and India, coupled with Spanish successes in West Florida and at Fort St. Joseph on Lake Michigan also forced leaders in London to reevaluate their situation.<sup>196</sup> Recognizing the change in strategic balance, Washington believed that further reinforcements from Britain to North America would be unlikely. Yet he closely watched British activities with the intention of responding to any

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<sup>191</sup> Washington to Lafayette, 15 November 1781, *WGW*, 23, 340-342.

<sup>192</sup> Washington to Lafayette, 4 January 1782, *WGW*, 23, 429-431.

<sup>193</sup> Greene to Washington, 9 March 1782, *PGNG*, IX, 471-472.

<sup>194</sup> Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 501; Montross, *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, 451.

<sup>195</sup> Greene to Washington, 24 January 1782, *PGNG*, X, 256-257.

<sup>196</sup> Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 25-27, 180; Black, *War For America*, 204; Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 16.

evacuation or concentration they may undertake with the forces on hand.<sup>197</sup> He also believed that any future offensive success by his army would likely come with a return of de Grasse's fleet. But Washington never had high expectation of that happening, even before learning of de Grasse's defeat at the Battle of the Saintes.<sup>198</sup>

The importance of naval power and amphibious operations to combat actions in the American Revolution can hardly be overstated. Throughout the war, the ability of the British army and navy to operate along the North American littorals sustained their war effort and frustrated American hopes. The amphibious withdrawal from Boston in 1776 allowed Howe to redefine the symmetry of the conflict in North America. The damaging amphibious raids at Falmouth (Portsmouth), Maine, in 1775, Danbury in 1777, Chesapeake Bay in 1778, along the James River in 1781, and New London in 1781—not to mention numerous smaller but equally violent attacks—proved of great importance in disrupting recruitment, destroying stores, impeding commerce, and deceiving military commanders. But the most important element for the British war effort was the ability to conduct large-scale amphibious operations such as in the New York campaign of 1776, the capture of Newport in 1776, the capture of Philadelphia in 1777, the capture of Savannah in 1778, and the capture of Charleston in 1789. In each of these cases, the ability to project power ashore and support operation from the sea led to British victories, and, on several occasions, nearly ended American resistance. Yet despite this distinct superiority of naval and amphibious power coupled with the ability to win tactical victories and gain operational advantage, Britain could not force her rebellious adversary

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<sup>197</sup> Washington to Greene, 18 March 1782, *PGNG*, X, 524-525.

<sup>198</sup> Rochambeau to Greene, 6 April 1782, *PGNG*, X, 591-592.

to capitulate. Britain's tactical and operational success could not overcome the superior strategic thinking of American commanders.

For the American revolutionaries, the amphibious experience came primarily from the defensive for most of the war. In defending against amphibious operations, the Americans had mixed results. The defeat at Savannah resulted in excessive loss of men and material, and the surrender of Charleston proved an unmitigated disaster. But in the New York, Newport, and Philadelphia campaigns, the American defenders lost battles and key positions but survived with sufficient strength and morale to sustain the Revolution. Through this process of survival evolved the American grand strategy of keeping its army in the field as a viable instrument of war, regardless of British successes or failures. The ability to turn tactical defeats into strategic successes served American commanders well throughout the war, especially during Greene's southern campaign. Conversely, British failures inevitability had a great and lasting impact on their war effort.

On the few occasions when American forces executed offensive amphibious operations, they also experienced mixed results. The successful operation at New Providence in the Bahamas could not offset the failure at Penobscot Bay. The failure to retake Newport in 1778 or Savannah in 1779 resulted from the weakness of the new Franco-American alliance (although many Americans preferred to blame the unreliability of d'Estaing). But Washington recognized that French naval power coupled with ground forces provided the greatest hope for success in gaining American independence. As such, he maintained strong relations with his French counterparts, ever persuading, coaxing, requesting, and repairing frayed relationships in order to retain the prospect for a

joint and combined operation that would have a major impact on the outcome of the war. This came to fruition in October 1781 with the most successful and most important American amphibious offensive operation of the war at Yorktown.

Of the many important battles of the Revolutionary War, only two proved decisive for either side —Saratoga and Yorktown.<sup>199</sup> Of these two battles, only Yorktown involved naval and amphibious elements. Although the fighting at Freeman's Farm and Bemis Heights—the actions that led to Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga—involved some ancillary riverine operations, this American victory qualifies primarily as a ground battle fought between land armies.<sup>200</sup> The Saratoga victory proved decisive not only because of the surrender of an entire British field army, but also because it resulted in political recognition of the United States by France and the increased flow of military and material aid so crucial to sustaining the war effort. Saratoga does not stand alone in bringing about French recognition, of course, as French leaders looked beyond this single victory to assess the commitment and staying power of the American effort. For example, Washington's failed attack at Germantown had a positive influence on French decision makers because it demonstrated determination and tenacity.<sup>201</sup> Yet the success at Saratoga provided the actual impetus for formal French recognition and support, thereby validating its status as a decisive victory. After February 1778, the Revolutionary War changed as London confronted a worldwide threat, made even more critical when Spain and the Netherlands followed the lead of France by declaring war on Great Britain.

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<sup>199</sup> Grainger, *The Battle of Yorktown*, 1-3.

<sup>200</sup> Barnes and Royster, *The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution*, 96-97.

<sup>201</sup> Ferling, *A Leap into the Dark*, 203.

The battle of Yorktown also proved decisive because it convinced British leaders that the cost of the struggle to retain its North American colonies had exceeded its worth. Britain faced a protracted and pervasive rebellion on the North American mainland that had proved a strategic, if not operational, match for its armies. At Yorktown, Washington gained both a strategic and operational victory—with the help of de Grasse's success in the Battle of the Capes—underscoring the American commitment to sustain its quest for independence. Washington orchestrated the use of naval power, amphibious evolutions, and traditional land operations to win a tactical and operational victory with great strategic implications. This occurred when Britain faced mounting pressure worldwide. It provided the catalyst to focus British attention on growing threats to her international interests and even her national survival. Just as Saratoga served to coalesce French thinking toward recognition and support of the United States, the decisive and unequivocal Franco-American amphibious victory at Yorktown convinced British leaders that a change in policy and grand strategy must occur. Although it required eighteen more months of fighting before the Peace of Paris ended the struggle and granted American independence, within five months of the British defeat at Yorktown the peace advocates in London had gained ascendancy. Yorktown had sealed the fate of Great Britain in North America and provided an opportunity for creation of an American republic—the United States of America.

The victory at Yorktown further demonstrates the importance of understanding the characteristics of amphibious operations. It also illustrates the flexibility of such concepts and the lack of rigidity in their application. The most important of these characteristics, integration between the navy and landing force, could hardly have been

improved upon at Yorktown. The labors of Washington, Rochambeau, de Grasse, and de Barras in coordinating their effort proved exemplary in every sense. Although serious differences of opinion existed during the initial planning phase, they ultimately agreed upon a concept that all elements could support and execute. Subsequent to agreeing on the concept of operation, the unity of command throughout the operation—although disbursed and informal—proved effectual. All commanders deferred to Washington as the commander in chief, while Washington deferred to their professionalism and competence. This resulted in a unity of effort based on cooperation rather than pure authority, but it constituted a unity that worked very well.

The characteristic of task-organized forces applied at Yorktown, but in a somewhat limited manner. Washington and Rochambeau made every effort to ensure that de Barras would deliver siege weapons and engineers during the window of opportunity critical to the defeat of Cornwallis. Had de Barras failed to arrive (he could have been defeated in route) or arrived late, it would have unhinged the entire operation. But when de Barras arrived with the siege weapons and their crews, he delivered the exact tactical units at exactly the right time to ensure victory. Yet the siege artillery would have been useless without engineers to construct the complex and sophisticated lines, trenches, and structures necessary to support the tactics necessary to reduce Cornwallis's defenses. Again, the availability of the key elements at the crucial time and place illustrates Washington's skill at task-organization. Beyond these critical elements, task-organization played a relatively minor role because Washington and Rochambeau simply used all forces available to engage Cornwallis.

Rapid buildup of combat power from the sea to shore is usually among the most important characteristics of amphibious operations. Ironically, Washington failed to achieve this in the Yorktown operation. The buildup of combat power occurred gradually because of time and space problems so typical of eighteenth-century warfare. This failed to undercut the operation for two basic reasons. First, the presence of Lafayette's army distracted Cornwallis to some extent thereby holding his army in place at bases in Yorktown and Gloucester Point. Secondly, the landings occurred in areas where Cornwallis had no defensive positions thus ensuring that the amphibious forces would not be at risk during the initial landings. Once de Grasse landed de Saint-Simon's force in early September and Washington's and Rochambeau's troops later that month, the window of vulnerability closed, and Cornwallis had missed his best opportunity to survive.

With ground forces ashore and in position for subsequent operations, and the navy in control of the waters surrounding the target area, Washington had achieved the initial objective of an amphibious operation. The operational coherence that followed proved outstanding as de Grasse protected the sea echelon and Washington and Rochambeau progressively devastated Cornwallis's force ashore. The pressure of time ensured that this must occur because anything less would not succeed. Only a vigorous and powerful bombardment capable of destroying British forces in a relatively short period could work in this situation. The operational coherence orchestrated by Washington created a culminating effect that left Cornwallis with a choice between surrender and destruction. Faced with that reality, Cornwallis chose the more humane option and, like Burgoyne before him, surrendered an entire British field army.

As well as demonstrating the characteristics of amphibious warfare in the Yorktown campaign, Washington also applied the principles of war advantageously. He clearly exhibited the principle of maneuver through the concentration of his forces and the isolation of Cornwallis on the Chesapeake. To accomplish this, Washington maneuvered his army by sea and land using every mode of transportation—including ships, boats, wagons, horses, and the feet of his soldiers—available in that era to create a favorable tactical situation at Yorktown. He also used tactical deception in New York, and Lafayette’s combat power in Virginia to shape the battlefield and support his efforts to maneuver Cornwallis into an unfavorable position while concentrating his own army to advantage. With his army ashore and the French navy controlled the sea echelon, Washington applied the principle of mass through the vigorous concentration of all his combat power at the British center of gravity in the southern theatre—Cornwallis’s army. In an effort that would have pleased Clausewitz, and may have influenced his thinking, Washington focused the entire effort of his firepower against “the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends.”<sup>202</sup> Washington’s siege of Cornwallis at Yorktown provides a classic example of the application of the principle of mass against Clausewitz’s Center of Gravity.

Washington could maneuver so effectively and apply the principle of mass so well because he clearly defined the objective of his offensive campaign and achieved surprise (in the military sense of that term) by consistently acting faster than his enemy could react. He accomplished this, in part, through application the principle of economy of forces in which he minimized troop levels elsewhere, especially in New York and South Carolina, thereby providing maximum combat power at the point of main effort.

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<sup>202</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 595-596.

The principle of security also came into play as Washington ensured his enemy never gained unexpected advantages and that he preserved his forces for the decisive action. The only principle of war not demonstrated in the Yorktown is the principle of simplicity. In fact, Yorktown proved a very complex evolution with many potential failure points. Yet the unity of command and focus of effort achieved French and American commanders proved sufficient to overcome any problems this necessarily complex operation may have created. We can clearly see in the Yorktown campaign, a validation of the principles of war as applied in an amphibious operation.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ACTION AT DERNA, TRIPOLI

Once the Treaty of Paris ended the American Revolution and granted independence to the United States in September 1783, the new republic found itself in a state of near exhaustion. Needing to economize on expenses and having a weak central government under the Articles of Confederation, American leaders effectively disbanded the Continental army, leaving only one regiment on active status. They also eliminated the remnants of the Continental navy, auctioning off its last vessel in August 1785.<sup>1</sup> A variety of events such as Indian discord on the frontier and naval conflicts in the Mediterranean and West Indies forced the nation's founders to reconsider both the adequacy of their governmental structure and the commitment to national security. The debate on defense policy revolved around the issue of whether to protect the nation with regular, standing forces or by the use of non-professional militias. More accurately stated, the question focused on where to place the emphasis. Should the United States rely on a small regular force that depended on substantial augmentation from militia units in time of need? Alternatively, should the nation build a regular establishment that would be less dependent on militia support? Few issues in the early days of the American Republic raised greater dispute, and the argument applied to both army and naval forces.<sup>2</sup>

The controversy surrounding the nature of military force structure not only dealt with national security, but also with issues of republican ideology, which made the

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<sup>1</sup> Nathan Miller, *Sea of Glory: A Naval History of the American Revolution* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1974), 521; Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 40-41.

<sup>2</sup> Don Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 101-105; Craig L. Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists: The Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785-1827* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1980), 17-26.

problem even more vexing. The Whiggish fear of standing armies becoming an instrument of oppression remained a strong influence in the thinking of American leaders of the Revolutionary era.<sup>3</sup> George Washington believed in a relatively small professional army with a federally trained and organized militia system to augment the active force in time of need. In a very thoughtful memorandum to Congress entitled “Sentiments on a Peace Establishment,” Washington acknowledged the concerns associated with a standing army while pleading for a core of professionals “well skilled in the Theory and Art of War, who will be ready on any occasion, to mix and diffuse their knowledge of Discipline to other Corps.” He also believed that the government should provide funds to build and equip a navy “without which, in case of War We could neither protect our Commerce, nor yield that Assistance to each other, which, on such and extent of Sea-Coast, our mutual Safety would require.”<sup>4</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, Washington’s thoughts for developing a systemic defense program had not come to fruition. But his concepts remained in the minds of many American leaders, and after the frustrations of the War of 1812, Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, reintroduced a variation of Washington’s ideas in his plan for an expandable army.<sup>5</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>3</sup> Glenn A. Phelps, “The Republican General,” in Don Higginbotham, ed., *George Washington Reconsidered* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 174-176; Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists*, 18. Ian W. Toll, *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 33.

<sup>4</sup> George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, Chairman of the Committee of Congress on the Peace Establishment, 2 May 1783 from Newburgh with attachment entitled “Sentiments on a Peace Establishment,” in John. C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington*, 26 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938), 374-398; Don Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*, 124-125.

<sup>5</sup> Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists*, 207-208.

Washington's concepts served as the basis for the debate over national defense policy for the next hundred years.<sup>6</sup>

Although the United States possessed no navy between 1785 and 1794, pressure had been mounting throughout that period to create a credible naval capability. The capture of American seamen by Algerian and Moroccan pirates as early as 1784, drove pro-defense advocates to demand creation of a maritime service able to protect the American merchant fleet. Prior to the War of Independence, American vessels plying the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic operated under protection of the Royal Navy and agreements made between London and various Barbary States.<sup>7</sup> With independence and the growing prospect of economic competition from American trade, British leaders had no incentive to protect merchantmen of the United States from North African raiders.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, it would better serve their interests to encourage attacks on American ships, and evidence suggests they did just that.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the outbreak of the French revolution in 1789 and the wars it spawned further moved the national security debate in favor of a

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<sup>6</sup> Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*, 126-127; Weigley, *The American way of War*, 54-55.

<sup>7</sup> The Barbary States of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries include Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. See Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists*, 41. .

<sup>8</sup> Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists*, 30; Richard Zacks, *The Pirate Coast: Thomas Jefferson, the First Marines, and the Secret Mission of 1805* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), 12.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Walsh of Dominick Terry and Company, Cadiz, Spain, to Secretary of the Navy, 20 September 1794, Dudley W. Knox, ed. *Naval Documents Relating to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers* (*Naval Documents, Barbary Powers* hereafter), I, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), 82; Richard O'Brian to David Humphreys, U.S. Minister to Portugal, October 1794, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 82-86; Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 80-81; Joshua E. London, *Victory in Tripoli: How America's War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2005), 13-15, 27.

strong United States Navy.<sup>10</sup> By the time American leaders began to address the problems of Barbary pirates and the impact of the French Revolution on world affairs, the nation had a new form of government. The constitution of 1787 created a government within the United States more able to deal with its various problems, both internal and external.<sup>11</sup>

During March 1794, Congress passed an act that authorized the administration to either buy or construct six frigates, effectively recreating the United States Navy.<sup>12</sup> Ostensibly intended to protect American commerce from Barbary pirates, the Navy Act of 1794 marked an important step forward in the creation of a professional navy.<sup>13</sup> Secretary of War, Henry Knox (the office of Secretary of the Navy did not yet exist), ensured that the design of these initial frigates would make them superior to any then on the sea. He also arranged for production of these vessels to take place at numerous locations along the eastern seaboard, spreading business opportunities as widely as possible and tying many American citizens to the naval project.<sup>14</sup> In the summer of 1787, before authorization of its new navy, the United States concluded a treaty with Morocco. But the continuing Algerian depredations against American commerce

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<sup>10</sup> William S. Dudley and Michael J. Crawford, eds., *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History* (*Naval War* hereafter), 1, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985), xlv-xlvi.

<sup>11</sup> John Ferling, *A Leap in the Dark: The Struggle to Create the American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 291-292, 312-313; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 4-6, 15, 71-72; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 34-35.

<sup>12</sup> United States Statutes at Large, Third Congress, Sess. I, 27 March 1794, "An Act to Provide a Naval Armament," *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 69-70.

<sup>13</sup> London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 47; Toll, *Six Frigates*, 40-45.

<sup>14</sup> Secretary of War to Secretary of Treasury, 21 April 1794, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 71-74; Howard P. Nash, Jr., *The Forgotten Wars: The Role of the U.S. Navy in the Quasi War with France and the Barbary Wars 1798-1805* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1969); E.B. Potter and Chester Nimitz, *Sea Power: A Naval History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), 189.

increased pressure for a broader solution to the piracy problem.<sup>15</sup> A subsequent treaty concluded with the Dey of Algiers in March 1796 and with the Bashaw (sometimes spelled Pasha) of Tripoli in 1797 seemed to hold promise for a general peace with the Barbary powers. These treaties generated a call from Republican leaders within the United States to halt the shipbuilding program.<sup>16</sup> In fact, a provision in the Navy Act of 1794 required construction of the frigates to stop once the president certified that peace existed with Algiers.<sup>17</sup> But not all political leaders agreed with that view, and pro-defense advocates in Congress proved strong enough to retain three ships nearing completion, despite resistance from many anti-navalists. These frigates—the *United States*, the *Constellation*, and the *Constitution*—would not present a threat to the Barbary States or any other potential foe while remaining inactive in American shipyards. But their survival in face of budget cuts provided the base for future naval expansion, which world events would soon dictate.<sup>18</sup>

Within the next twenty-five years, the United States found itself involved in no fewer than four wars. These include the Quasi War with France fought mostly in the West Indies between 1798 and 1801; the Barbary War against Tripoli in the Mediterranean during 1801-1805; the War of 1812, often called the second war for independence, conducted from 1812 to 1815; and a brief naval conflict with Algiers in

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<sup>15</sup> Treaty with Morocco ratified by the United States 18 July 1787, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 6-9.

<sup>16</sup> Treaty with Algiers ratified by the United States 7 March 1796, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 107-117.

<sup>17</sup> United States Statutes at Large, "An Act to Provide a Naval Armament," *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 69-70; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 36-37.

<sup>18</sup> Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 55-56; Symonds, *Navalists and Anti Navalists*, 46-49; Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 42-43.

1815.<sup>19</sup> Amphibious operations played only a minor role in the Quasi War but proved a major element in the Barbary War and the War of 1812. During the War of 1812, as during the Revolutionary War, the United States usually found itself on the defensive as Great Britain conducted numerous amphibious landings along the American littorals, especially during 1813, 1814, and early 1815. During the Barbary War—and to a lesser extent in the Quasi War—the United States established roots in expeditionary warfare which would grow to become among the most important defense concepts of the twenty-first century. As we shall see, the amphibious operation at Derna, Tripoli provides an ideal case study for this form of warfare, demonstrating virtually all of its important elements.

Although the 1796 treaty with the Dey of Algiers theoretically ended the confrontation with that North African state, the release of American prisoners did not occur until the United States delivered all of the tribute agreed upon in February 1798.<sup>20</sup> The United States also concluded treaties with the Bashaw of Tripoli in 1796 and the Bey of Tunis in 1797, which included payment of tribute in both money and naval stores.<sup>21</sup> Yet despite these agreements, relations remained problematic between the United States and the Barbary powers as treaty compliance proved sketchy on all sides, and North African pirates continued to harass American interests whenever they chose.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 189-226.

<sup>20</sup> Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 88.

<sup>21</sup> Treaty with Tripoli ratified by the United States, 10 June 1797, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 177-181; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 92-93.

<sup>22</sup> Richard O'Brien, U.S. Consul General, Algiers to Captain William Brainbridge, U.S. Navy, 9 October 1800, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 375-378; Brainbridge to the Secretary of the Navy, 10 October 1800, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 378-379; James L. Cathcart, U.S. Consul, Tripoli to Charles Lee, Secretary of State Protempore, 18 October 1800, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I,

Despite ongoing problems in the Mediterranean, world conditions in the 1790s turned American attention to a new challenge, closer to home and perceived as a greater threat. With the outbreak of war between Great Britain and Revolutionary France, the navies and privateers of both nations began to capture American merchantmen in route to their enemy's ports. Both the Washington and Adams administrations declared neutrality in the wars of the French Revolution, hoping this would protect American vessels carrying non-contraband goods. But both nations chose to define contraband very broadly and, despite the declaration of neutrality, continued to take American ships. Seeking a peaceful resolution to this and other outstanding issues, Washington dispatched John Jay to London and later Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to Paris. Jay returned with a controversial treaty that at least ameliorated the problem of commerce raiding, but French authorities refused to see Pinckney.<sup>23</sup>

President John Adams sent a second mission consisting of Pinckney, John Marshall, and Elbridge Gerry, to France in 1797 again, in hope of finding an accommodation. This effort resulted in the infamous XYZ Affair in which French Foreign Minister, Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, demanded a large amount of cash coupled with an even larger loan simply to open negotiations. When Americans learned of this, it caused a great public and political outcry originating the catch phrase "millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute."<sup>24</sup> Ironically, Americans felt outrage

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382-384; Account of William Brown commanding the ship *Brutus* regarding voyage to Constantinople and Algerine Spoliation, 11 December 1800, 385-388; Protest of James L. Cathcart, U.S. Consul, Tripoli to All Whom It Doth Or May Concern, 20 October 1800, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 391-394; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 94-95.

<sup>23</sup> Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 49-54; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 191; William Stinchcombe, *The XYZ Affair*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 4-5.

at the thought of paying tribute to French leaders although they reluctantly did so to the petty tyrants of Barbary.<sup>25</sup> But Talleyrand's recalcitrance not only came from the lack of bribes, but also from concern about the Jay Treaty with Britain. French leaders resented that the United States would not join their war against Great Britain, especially in the West Indies. They considered it a violation of the 1778 pact that allied France with the United States during the American Revolution. The Jay Treaty further exacerbated this resentment because French officials feared it might hold secret protocols creating an alliance between Britain and America.<sup>26</sup> As a result, French leaders intensified their assault on American shipping.<sup>27</sup>

Because of French actions at sea and the XYZ Affair, American opinion about France shifted.<sup>28</sup> The favorable attitude resulting from French support during the American Revolution and the initial affinity with France as a new sister republic gave way to anger and hostility. Actually, the familial affection many Americans felt for the French Revolution had already begun to erode due to the excesses of France's leaders and the European war it generated. The assault against American shipping in North American and Caribbean waters coalesced support within the United States for some form of action. In July 1797, Congress passed the Act Providing for Naval Armament, which authorized the manning and employment of the three frigates initially built under

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<sup>25</sup> Jeffersonians coined the phrase "petty tyrants" during the 1780s in referring to the leaders of Barbary States, Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 40-42; Stinchcombe, *The XYZ Affair*, 36-38.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Pickering to Samuel Sewall, 27 December 1797, in Dudley W. Knox, ed., *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War Between the United States and France* (*Naval Documents, Quasi War* hereafter), 1, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1835-1938), 20-33; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 49.

<sup>28</sup> George Washington to Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddert, 26 September 1798, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 1, 455-456; Secretary of War James McHenry to Honorable Samuel Sewall, 9 April 1798, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 1, 51-52.

the Naval Act of 1794.<sup>29</sup> In July 1798, Congress authorized construction of the three additional frigates, fulfilling the original six intended under the 1794 act.<sup>30</sup> This legislation also created the Navy Department headed by a Secretary of the Navy, reestablished the Marine Corps, and authorized American warships and privateers to take offensive action against French vessels.<sup>31</sup> Marines previously recruited under the various naval acts served aboard ships from the beginning of this crisis. The 11 July 1798 act establishing a Marine Corps placed those marines, as well as new recruits, under the Commandant of the Marine Corps who assigned them to vessels and shore posts as detachments. Of course, these marine detachments would serve under the operational orders of the ship or post commander to which assigned.<sup>32</sup>

Public fervor against France reached a high pitch by the spring of 1798, and Americans fully expected to go to war with their former ally.<sup>33</sup> Congress authorized a large increase in the army and George Washington agreed to return as its commander in

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<sup>29</sup> Act Providing for Naval Armament, 1 July 1797, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 1, 7-8.

<sup>30</sup> An Act to make further appropriation for the additional Naval Armament, 16 July 1798, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, I, 211.

<sup>31</sup> An Act to establish an Executive Department, to be denominated the Department of the Navy, 30 April 1798, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 59-60; Act Pertaining to the Navy: An Act More Effectively to Protect the Commerce and Coasts of the United States, Act of Congress, 28 May 1798, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 1, 87-88; John Adams, President of the United States, Instruction to Commanders of Armed Vessels, 28 May 1798, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 1, 88; An Act to Authorize the Defense of the Merchant Vessels of the United States Against French Depredations, 25 June 1798; An Act Further to Protect the Commerce of the United States, Act of Congress, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 1, 181-183; President of the United States and Secretary Stoddert, Instruction to Armed Vessels, 10 July 1798, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 1, 187; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 191-192.

<sup>32</sup> An Act for the Establishing and Organizing a Marine Corps, 11 July 1798, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 1, 188-189; Thomas Pinckney to Major Commandant Burrows, U.S.M.C., 30 August 1798, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 1, 355-356; Lieutenant Colonel Commandant Franklin Wharton, U.S.M.C. to Second Lieutenant Alfred Grayson, U.S.M.C., 8 April 1812, *Naval War*, I, 94-95.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Knox to the President of the United States, 26 June 1798, *Naval Document, Quasi War*, 1, 139-141; Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War With France, 1797-1801* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 74-108.

chief. To the chagrin of President Adams, Washington stipulated that Alexander Hamilton would serve as inspector general and second in command.<sup>34</sup> Although Congress never actually declared war on France, it did authorize attacks upon its ships worldwide. It also abrogated all accords between the two countries, including the 1778 treaties of friendship and commerce, declaring them invalid due to repeated French violations.<sup>35</sup> Once American militancy became apparent, Talleyrand began to seek reconciliation.<sup>36</sup> But it would take nearly three years of fighting at sea and negotiating ashore before the two republics came to an agreement. In the latter part of 1800, peace negotiations finally produced the Môtrefontaine Convention (also called the Convention of 1800) designed to stop the conflict. When the U.S. Senate ratified the accord in February 1801, the Quasi War with France officially ended.<sup>37</sup>

The Quasi War with France amounted to a limited naval war fought primarily in the West Indies. Throughout the conflict, the United States Navy escorted American merchantmen, sought out and attacked French privateers, and attempted to retake American ships captured by French forces. Only rarely did the major combatant ships of the two navies directly engage in fighting each other. The most famous exception to this involved the battle between the American frigate *Constellation* and the French *Insurgente* near Nevis in the Leeward Islands of the Lesser Antilles on 9 February 1799. Despite the superiority of the *Insurgente*, Captain Thomas Truxtun and the *Constellation's* crew

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<sup>34</sup> James McHenry to Samuel Sewall, 9 April 1798, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 1, 51-53; John Ferling, *John Adams: A Life* (Newtown, CT: American Political Biography Press, 1992), 356-362; Millett and Maslowski, *For the Common Defense*, 96-98.

<sup>35</sup> Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 55-59; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 191.

<sup>36</sup> DeConde, *The Quasi-War*, 145-147, 176-177, 331.

<sup>37</sup> Ferling, *John Adams*, 408-409, 423.

outfought and captured the French frigate.<sup>38</sup> One year later, Truxtun and the *Constellation* repeated their victory off Guadeloupe, defeating the frigate *Vengeance*, although the French ship limped away under the cover of night and smoke. American officers on the scene during the battle thought that the *Vengeance* sank from battle damage.<sup>39</sup>

The United States Navy did not face the full force of French naval power in the Quasi War, of course, because the French had to contend with the Royal Navy and its allies worldwide.<sup>40</sup> Yet the reconstituted U.S. Navy of the 1790s performed well during the Quasi War and grew in both size and effectiveness during the course of the war. The United States Marine Corps also performed well, serving aboard fighting ships at sea. The Corps' primary contribution to combat operations involved providing musket fire from the quarterdeck and fighting tops of the frigates and boarding or repelling boarders when ships came into close quarters.<sup>41</sup> Although the Marine Corps had no mission independent of its role with the navy at that time, an important part of its tasking included conducting and leading landing operations.<sup>42</sup> During the Quasi War, two small

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<sup>38</sup> Captain Thomas Truxtun to the Secretary of the Navy, 10 February 1799, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 2, 326-328; Extracts from *Constellation's* journal (log book) 9 February 1799, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 2, 328-329; Gardner W. Allen, *Our Naval War With France* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909, 1962), 99-101; Michael A. Palmer, *Stoddert's War: Naval Operations During the Quasi-War with France, 1798-1801* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 98-103.

<sup>39</sup> Captain Thomas Truxtun to the Secretary of the Navy, 3 February 1800, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 5, 159-161; Allen, *Our Naval War With France*, 163-170; Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 184-187; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 192-195.

<sup>40</sup> Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, x.

<sup>41</sup> Dudley and Crawford, Editorial Comment, *Naval War*, I, 93-94; Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 32; Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 186.

<sup>42</sup> Clyde H. Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1939), 51-52.

amphibious landings occurred in which the marines played an important role as intended in their mission.

The most interesting amphibious incident of the Quasi War occurred in May 1800 at the Spanish port of Puerto Plata, Santo Domingo, where French authorities held a captured British ship named the *Sandwich*. Captain Silas Talbot of the frigate *Constitution* learned of the presence of the *Sandwich* in the Spanish port and sought an opportunity to capture the prize. The task presented a particular problem because the *Sandwich* had good protection from heavy cannons located at the principal fort protecting the harbor as well as having 14 guns of her own. The deep draft *Constitution* could not attack directly into the harbor, so Talbot decided upon a ruse, coupled with an amphibious raid to accomplish his goal.<sup>43</sup> Talbot placed about ninety marines and sailors under command of Navy Lieutenant Isaac Hull and Marine Captain David Carmick into an innocuous looking sloop named the *Sally*. He then ordered it to sail into Puerto Plata harbor and come along side the *Sandwich* without attracting undue attention if possible.

The *Sally* had recently departed Puerto Plata, announcing that she would return shortly. With the port authorities expecting the arrival of *Sally*, and the landing force hiding below deck and out of sight, this action gave no cause for alarm. In the words of Captain Carmick, the *Sally* reminded him of “the wooden horse of Troy.”<sup>44</sup> Once along side the *Sandwich*, the marines and sailors quickly captured the vessel with little resistance. The sailors immediately began rigging the *Sandwich* for sea while the marines went ashore to attack the fort protecting the harbor. Before French or Spanish

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<sup>43</sup> Captain Silas Talbot to the Secretary of the Navy, 12 May 1800, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 5, 503-504; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 136-164.

<sup>44</sup> Captain David Carmick to friend in Philadelphia, 12 May 1800, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 5, 500-501.

authorities could respond to the assault, the marines had captured the fort, spiked its cannons, and returned to the *Sandwich*. The taskforce initially planned to defend against a possible counterattack from within these two ships—the *Sally* and the *Sandwich*—until later in the evening when the prevailing wind would allow them to sail free of the port. But a favorable wind arose earlier than expected, allowing both ships to set to sea unassailed. The amphibious raid on Puerto Plata proved a model of speed, efficiency, and effectiveness even if of dubious legality.<sup>45</sup>

The second amphibious raid occurred on 22-23 September 1800 on the Dutch island of Curacao. After the February 1800 battle between the *Constellation* and the *Vengeance*, the French frigate made its way to the port of Curacao seeking to refit and resupply.<sup>46</sup> During its battle with the *Constellation*, the *Vengeance* had suffered such a drubbing that she struck her colors three times and later reported that she had engaged a ship-of-the-line.<sup>47</sup> But American officers never noticed these acts of capitulation due to smoke, darkness, and the confusion of battle. When Dutch officials at Curacao refused to assist the severely damaged *Vengeance*, they evoked the ire of French officials who invaded the island driving its inhabitants into a single fort and intimating hostile intentions against local Americans.<sup>48</sup> The United States Navy responded to a call for

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<sup>45</sup> Captain Silas Talbot to the Secretary of the Navy, 12 May 1800, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 5, 503-504; Extract from journal of the U.S. Frigate *Constitution*, 12 May 1800, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 5, 509; Edwin H. Simmons, *The United States Marine Corps 1775-1975* (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), 14-15; Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps*, 34-35; Robert Debs Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1962* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1962), 13-14; J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977), 51; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 162-163, 166; Allen, *Our Naval War With France*, 182-186.

<sup>46</sup> Allen, *Our Naval War With France*, 168-170.

<sup>47</sup> Account of Captain F.M. Pitot, commanding the French frigate *La Vengeance* during her engagement with the U.S. Frigate *Constellation*, 2 February 1800, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 5, 166-169.

help from the U.S. Consul, Benjamin H. Phillips, by sending the sloops of war, *Merrimack* and *Patapsco*, into the area on 22 September, and landing a force of marines led by Lieutenant James Middleton on 23 September.<sup>49</sup> The British had previously sent the frigate *Nereide* to oppose French efforts to control Curacao, and Dutch authorities had placed their island under British protection. Despite the presence of a British frigate, the French landing party nearly captured the island before the Anglo-American response could control the situation. Ultimately, the American naval and amphibious actions proved too great for the French forces deployed to Curacao. After an extended exchange of naval gunfire and mounting pressure from the marine landing party, French forces withdrew during the night of 24 September and returned to Guadeloupe leaving the island in allied hands.<sup>50</sup> American amphibious operations, like the naval service in general, proved to be an effective tool of U.S. policy during the Quasi War.

Much of the credit for American effectiveness in the Quasi War is due to the efforts of the first Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin Stoddert. A cost conscious businessman and Revolutionary War veteran, Stoddert organized his new department into an efficient operation capable of holding its own with the powerful corporations in the shipbuilding industry.<sup>51</sup> Stoddert not only effectively managed the war effort, but also

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<sup>48</sup> Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 196.

<sup>49</sup> William D. Robinson to the Secretary of the Navy, 10 September 1800, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 5, 337-341; Letter to a Merchant in New York concerning the surrender of Curacao to Great Britain, 18 October 1800, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 5, 341-342; Letter from an officer on board the U.S. Sloop *Patasco* to his friend in Philadelphia concerning conditions in Curraco [sic], 22 September 1800, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 5, 372-373.

<sup>50</sup> B.H. Phillips, U.S. Consul at Curacao to the Commander of the U.S. Squadron, Guadeloupe, 10 October 1800, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 5, 451-452; Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps*, 34; Heintz, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 14; Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 50; Allen, *Our Naval War With France*, 196-199; Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 199-201.

<sup>51</sup> Toll, *Six Frigates*, 105-106.

built a capable fleet ultimately amounting to some 50 ships including 14 frigates.<sup>52</sup> An additional frigate neared completion as Stoddert left office. His administrative and organizational skills, coupled with intense energy and incisiveness, had created and sustained the new navy throughout the Quasi War.<sup>53</sup> Stoddert's combatants effectively engaged French sea power, capturing more than 90 enemy vessels and usually besting their opponents in open combat.<sup>54</sup> Of equal importance, Stoddert and the Adams administration left behind a reduced, yet capable, naval force for President Thomas Jefferson as he faced the next challenge to American rights on the high seas—the Barbary State of Tripoli.<sup>55</sup> The outgoing Federalist Congress passed last minute legislation, signed by Adams virtually as he left office, that preserved the frigate navy, although it eliminated most ships of lighter draft.<sup>56</sup> Contrary to the fears of Stoddert and his Federalist associates, Jefferson did not reduce the navy beyond the recommendations of the outgoing administration. In fact, the new president retained fifteen frigates after the end of the Quasi War, two more than Stoddert actually recommended before leaving office.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Data Gathered From Official Sources Relative to U.S. Ships-of-War During the Quasi-War with France, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 7, 364-371.

<sup>53</sup> Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 191-192.

<sup>54</sup> A List of French Armed Vessels Captured by United States Men-of-War, *Naval Documents, Quasi War*, 7, 372.

<sup>55</sup> Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 195-196; Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 236-239.

<sup>56</sup> London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 84; Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 230-232; Gene A. Smith, "For the Purposes of Defense:" *The Politics of the Jeffersonian Gunboat Program* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 7-8.

<sup>57</sup> Secretary of the Navy Memorandum, 13-23 March 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 455-460; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 173-174; Allen, *Our Naval War With France*, 255-259.

The Barbary War of 1801-1805 technically began on 14 May 1801 when the Bashaw of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli, ordered the American flagstaff cut down on the grounds of the U.S. Consulate. This traditional declaration of war resulted in part from the Tripolitan leader's resentment that Algiers, Tunis, and Morocco received larger tribute from the United States than his own country.<sup>58</sup> Despite the various treaties negotiated between the United States and the Barbary powers in the latter 1790s, relations had not always been good among the parties. This unstable relationship with Barbary States not only applied to the United States but also to numerous European nations as well. By declaring war against a seafaring nation, the Barbary rulers thereby justified raiding and capturing their merchant ships along the North African coast. Paying tribute, ransoming prisoners, and providing gifts to Barbary rulers allowed trading nations to obtain peace and purchase use of the seas.<sup>59</sup> By arranging treaties with the seafaring states, the Barbary rulers received income, which substituted for the booty they gained from outright piracy.<sup>60</sup>

The various Barbary rulers liked to be at war with at least one nation at any given time in order to keep their corsairs fully employed. Therefore, they would often find a pretext to chop down the flagpole and begin raiding the commerce of nations that considered themselves at peace with Barbary. This normally occurred against lesser naval powers such as Sweden, Denmark, Venice, and other European principalities. Only

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<sup>58</sup> Circular issued by James L. Cathcart, U.S. Consul, Tripoli, 15 March 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 454-455; Cathcart to the Secretary of State, 16 May 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 455-460; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 181; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 95-96; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 12.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, "For the Purposes of Defense," 26.

<sup>60</sup> Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists*, 19-20, 29, 90.

naval powers of the status of Britain or France held sufficient strength to avoid this treatment, although they also paid tribute.<sup>61</sup> By the time of American independence, Barbary raiders in the Mediterranean and along the North African Atlantic coastline had practiced such activity for several centuries. Although most major seafaring nations of this era could have defeated any or all the Barbary Powers, they found accommodation more cost effective. They also used the volatile rulers of Barbary as helpful tools in their competitive machinations against commercial and political rivals. Although an accepted custom by the eighteenth century, this practice of tribute, appeasement, and unpredictable warfare did not set well with the new American Republic. In 1801, the President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, chose to come to grips with the problem. Jefferson had attempted to deal with Barbary commerce raiding in the 1780s while serving as American ambassador to France and later as Secretary of State.<sup>62</sup> As President, he hoped to find a permanent solution to this very vexing problem.

In June 1801, after long deliberations within the Jefferson administration, the president dispatched a naval squadron under command of Commodore Richard Dale to reconnoiter conditions along the North African littorals.<sup>63</sup> Dale's task force consisted of the frigates *President*, *Philadelphia*, and *Essex*, along with the schooner, *Enterprize*.<sup>64</sup> At the time that Dale sailed for the Mediterranean, Jefferson and his advisors did not yet

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<sup>61</sup> Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 90-91.

<sup>62</sup> Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 27-28.

<sup>63</sup> During this period, the highest rank in the U.S. Navy was that of captain. When several ships came together to form a squadron, the senior captain would take overall command and assume the title of commodore. Although he held the position and title of commodore, his rank remained that of captain.

<sup>64</sup> Samuel Smith for Acting Secretary of the Navy to Captain Richard Dale, 20 May 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 463-465; Smith to Dale, 20 May 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 465-469; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 179-180; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 92-95.

know that the Bashaw had declared war. But warnings from numerous American consuls assigned throughout the Mediterranean area had alerted them of impending trouble.<sup>65</sup> More significantly, the Dey of Algiers had commandeered an American frigate, the *George Washington*, in October 1800, forcing it to conduct a personal mission for himself between Algiers and Constantinople.<sup>66</sup> Not only did this act prove intolerable to the outgoing Federalists, but Thomas Jefferson—incorrectly considered a pacifist by many people—also found it unacceptable.<sup>67</sup>

The Bashaw of Tripoli chose to declare war and resumed attacks on American merchantmen because the United States did not meet his demand for increased recognition. He resented the fact that Algiers and Tunis received more recompense than Tripoli and demanded a more equitable remuneration. American authorities resisted this demand, believing it unreasonable and fearing that Algiers and Tunis—who considered themselves more important and more powerful than Tripoli—would escalate their requirements in response.<sup>68</sup> Although neither Jefferson nor his Secretary of State, James Madison, wanted war with Tripoli or the other Barbary states, both considered Barbary leaders guilty of piracy and felt they must eventually confront and defeated them with

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<sup>65</sup> James L. Cathcart, U.S. Consul, Tripoli, to Nicholas C. Nissen, Danish Consul General, Tripoli, 15 May 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 453-454.

<sup>66</sup> Secretary of State to William Eaton, U.S. Consul, Tunis, and Richard O'Brien, U.S. Consul General, Algiers, 20 May 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 460-462; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 1-9, 84-90; Smith, "For the Purposes of Defense," 27.

<sup>67</sup> Secretary of State to William Eaton, U.S. Consul, Tunis and Richard O'Brien, U.S. Consul General, Algiers, 20 May 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 460-462; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 102-103; Smith, "For the Purposes of Defense," 27.

<sup>68</sup> Richard O'Brien, U.S. Consul General, Algiers, to the Secretary of State, 26 September 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 581-584; James Madison, Secretary of State to James Leander Cathcart, U.S. ex-Consul, Tripoli, 18 April 1802, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 126-128.

naval power.<sup>69</sup> Jefferson had no doubt that the United States Navy could easily defeat the Barbary corsairs, but he did not relish the idea of keeping an American squadron permanently stationed in the Mediterranean. He also regretted America's having to deal with the Barbary threat without support and cooperation from major European powers.<sup>70</sup> In addition to the cost and exposure associated with fighting the Barbary States, Jefferson struggled with the constitutional separation of powers that granted Congress, not the President, authority to declare war.

When Dale's squadron arrived in the Mediterranean in July 1801, it had the dual mission of seeking reconciliation with Tripoli while intimidating the Barbary powers with American naval strength.<sup>71</sup> After visiting Algiers and Tunis and receiving assurance of their continuing friendship, Dale sailed to Tripoli where he found a very different attitude. Unmoved by the diplomatic aspect of Dale's visit, the Bashaw insisted on his demands for increased tribute and persisted in his declared war against the United States.<sup>72</sup> This simply meant that he would continue to capture American merchant ships, keeping their cargos and holding the crews for ransom. On 1 August 1801, the *Enterprize*, commanded by Lieutenant Andrew Sterret, engaged and decisively defeated

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States of America, to the illustrious and honored Bey of Tripoli of Barbary, whom God Preserve, 21 May 1801 from Washington, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 470.

<sup>70</sup> Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 124-128.

<sup>71</sup> Samuel Smith for Acting Secretary of the Navy to Captain Richard Dale, U.S. Navy, 20 May 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 465-469.

<sup>72</sup> Circular letter to U.S. Agents and Consuls in Europe from William Eaton, U.S. Consul, Tunis, 23 July 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 528; Eaton to Captain Richard Dale, U.S. Navy, 24 July 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 528-530; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 101-102.

the corsair *Tripoli*, inflicting at least 60 casualties at no cost to itself.<sup>73</sup> After taking the *Tripoli*, Sterret cast its weapons and gunpowder overboard, stripped the ship of all rigging except one sail, and released it to make its own way home.<sup>74</sup> The victory received attention worldwide, praise in the United States, and contributed to Congressional authorization for offensive (as opposed to strictly reactive) action against Tripoli.<sup>75</sup> The defensive and diplomatic nature of Dale's original mission allowed for naval action when arriving on the Barbary Coast, yet some uncertainty remained regarding his authority to act and the actions he could take.<sup>76</sup> All parties involved in this campaign, from Jefferson to Sterret, felt constrained by constitutional issues. In February 1802, Congress eliminated this ambiguity by passing the Act for Protection of the Commerce and Seamen of the United States Against the Tripolian Cruisers.<sup>77</sup> Although not a formal declaration of war, this act provided the President and his navy sufficient authority to take aggressive action against Tripoli and its ships.<sup>78</sup>

After Sterret's victory, there followed an extended period of relative inaction involving an ineffective blockade of Tripoli. In the spring and summer of 1802, a larger

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<sup>73</sup> Secretary of the Navy to Benjamin Tallmadge, United States Congress, letter with Sterret's report enclosed, 13 January 1802, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 536-537.

<sup>74</sup> London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 102-104; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 185-187.

<sup>75</sup> Article entitled "Capture of Ship of War *Tripoli* by U.S. Schooner, *Enterprize*" in *National Intelligencer and Advertiser*, 18 November 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 538-539; Act Pertaining to the Navy, United States Statutes at Large, "Resolutions Expressing the sense of Congress on the Conduct of Lieutenant Sterret,- the officers and Crew of the United States Schooner, *Enterprize*, 2 February 1802, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 539-540; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 128-133.

<sup>76</sup> London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 100-101.

<sup>77</sup> An Act for the protection of the Commerce and Seamen of the United States, against the Tripolitan Cruisers, United States Statute at Large 6 February 1802, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 51-52; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 190-191.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States, Instruction to the U.S. Ships of War, 18 February 1802, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 60; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 107-108.

American naval force under command of Commodore Richard Morris gathered in the Mediterranean to relieve Dale's squadron.<sup>79</sup> Both Morris and Dale complained of the lack of gunboats, which hampered their efforts to conduct an effective blockade of Tripoli. Their deeper draft combat ships had to remain too far at sea to maintain tight control over Tripoli's harbor and coastlines.<sup>80</sup> In February 1803, Congress responded to the need for gunboats and other requirements of war by authorizing the production of fifteen gunboats and four ships of war mounting twelve to sixteen guns (brigs).<sup>81</sup> Despite this and other efforts by the government to support operations along the Barbary Coast, enforcement of the blockade proved erratic and inconsistent throughout Dale's tour as American commander in the Mediterranean and did not improve under Morris.<sup>82</sup> Other than some successful convoy escort duty, Morris's service on the Barbary Coast proved lackluster at best, and a failure at worst.<sup>83</sup> In fact, upon return to the United States, Morris faced a court of inquiry that found his performance censurable and cashiered him from the navy.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Resume of the Squadron of Commodore Robert Dale dated 1806-1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 118-119; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 108-110.

<sup>80</sup> Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 197-198; Smith, "For the Purposes of Defense," 28; Spencer C. Tucker, *The Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 12-14.

<sup>81</sup> Act Pertaining to the Navy, United States Statutes at Large, dated 28 February 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 366-367; Tucker, *The Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy*, 13, 17.

<sup>82</sup> London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 108-112.

<sup>83</sup> Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 136-139; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 115; Smith, "For the Purposes of Defense," 27-28.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Smith, Secretary of the Navy, concerning Commodore Morris's squadron in the Mediterranean, Court of Inquiry, 31 August 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 526-531; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 206-208; *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 457-458, 526-527, 528; IV, 105.

The fact that Morris's tour as commander in the Mediterranean proved ineffective does not mean no action occurred. In addition to convoying American merchantmen and maintaining an erratic blockade, American ships chased and often captured Tripolitan vessels. The first amphibious action of the war occurred on Morris's watch during June 1803. On the last day of May, the *John Adams* and *Enterprize* left their station on blockade duty in Tripoli Harbor to chase a ship spotted about 35 miles northwest of the city.<sup>85</sup> The American ships began to engage the vessel when they noticed ten small craft offloading wheat. The *John Adams* maintained a relatively ineffective fire on the enemy while the *New York* joined the action. That night, a team led by Lieutenant David Porter reconnoitered the Tripolitan logistics site and exchanged gunfire with its defenders ashore. Porter recommended a subsequent landing to destroy the boats and cargo, which Morris approved.<sup>86</sup>

The next morning, Porter led a party of fifty men equipped with a large amount of explosives to destroy the shuttle boats and their cargo of grain. The amphibious raiding force established itself ashore, engaged the enemy defenders, and attempted to set fire to the vessels and the wheat. After expending all their ammunition and combustibles, the landing party departed for its ships, hoping the fires they started would destroy the boats and their cargos. Although the timbers of the boats caught on fire, the grain resisted the flame, and many Tripolitan defenders rushed to extinguish the fires once the landing party departed. The *John Adams* kept firing at the Tripolitan troops ashore, making it

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<sup>85</sup> Extract from the journal of Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, U.S. Navy, on board the U.S.S. *New York*, Captain Richard V. Morris, U.S. Navy, Commanding, 31 May 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 432.

<sup>86</sup> Extract from journal of Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, U.S. Navy, on board U.S.S. *New York*, Captain Richard V. Morris, U.S. Navy Commanding, 2 June 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 435-436; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 17.

difficult, but not impossible, for them to save their boats and grain. Five Americans, including Porter, received wounds during the raid though all returned to their ships alive. The landing force and naval gunfire managed to kill some of the defenders and inflict damage to the grain boats. But other than these modest achievements, the amphibious landing had little affect in Tripoli or on the larger operation.<sup>87</sup> Three weeks after Porter's landing against the grain boats, Captain John Rodgers and the *John Adams* engaged and destroyed a 22-gun cruiser, the largest and most powerful ship in the Tripolitan fleet.<sup>88</sup> Thinking that this spectacular victory would force the Bashaw to make peace, Morris called off the blockade of Tripoli. But the commodore had misjudged his enemy, and this decision proved to be another of his frequent mistakes.<sup>89</sup>

On 12 September 1803, Commodore Edward Preble arrived at Gibraltar in command of a seven-ship squadron to relieve Morris's force. Before proceeding to the Tripoli Coast, Preble sailed to Tangier where he compelled the Emperor of Morocco—whose officers had been guilty of instigating hostile actions—to enter into a treaty arrangement with the United States.<sup>90</sup> In addition to the powerful naval squadron he

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<sup>87</sup> Extract from journal of Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, U.S. Navy, on board U.S.S. *New York*, Captain Richard V. Morris, U.S. Navy Commanding, 2 June 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 435-436; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 125-137.

<sup>88</sup> Captain John Rodgers, U.S. Navy to the Secretary of the Navy, 4 December 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 459-460; Extract and translation from a journal kept in French by and unknown person on board the U.S. Frigate, *John Adams*, Captain John Rodgers, U.S. Navy, Commanding, from Tuesday, 28 to Wednesday, 29 June 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 404; Rodgers to Morris, report dated 30 June 1803 from on board the *New York*, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 465-466; Extract from the journal of Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, on board the U.S.S. *New York*, 6 July 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 469.

<sup>89</sup> James Leander Cathcart, appointed U.S. Consul, Tunis, to Captain Richard V. Morris, U.S. Navy, Naples, 1 August 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 503-504; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 128-131.

<sup>90</sup> Resume prepared by the Navy Department in 1806 or 1807 concerning the U.S. Squadron in the Mediterranean, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 11-13; Declaration of Peace between the United States and the Emperor of Morocco under Imperial Seal, 8 or 9 October 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary*

brought to the war effort, Preble looked forward to acquiring gunboats and bomb ships (mortar ketches) from the Kingdom of Naples, which Jefferson and the Navy Department had authorized.<sup>91</sup> With gunboats working inside the harbors and near the coastlines, coupled with frigates and schooners controlling the sea-lanes, the commodore believed he could quickly achieve victory against Tripoli. Undoubtedly, Preble had the right idea, but before he could bring about the intended results, he experienced a major setback. While chasing a Tripolitan corsair off the North Africa coast in October 1803, Captain William Bainbridge ran the frigate *Philadelphia* aground on uncharted rocks below the water's surface. Unable to move his ship off the rocks and feeling pressure from hostile gunboats that closed-in on his stationary vessel, Bainbridge surrendered the *Philadelphia* rather than suffer inevitable loss of life.<sup>92</sup> This fiasco proved to be a national disaster comparable to the *George Washington* incident of 1800. Ironically, Bainbridge served as the hard luck captain of both vessels.<sup>93</sup> Loss of the *Philadelphia* provided Tripoli with 307 American crewmen for ransom along with a modern frigate, although the Bashaw doubted his seamen could operate the vessel. Yusuf, therefore, authorized his consul at Malta to find a customer and negotiate the sale of the frigate. This incident distressed

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*Powers*, III, 118; Emperor of Morocco to President Thomas Jefferson and the Senate of the United States, letter under Imperial Seal, 11 October 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 124-125; Preble to the Secretary of the Navy, 5 to 17 October 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 139-143; Tobias Lear, U.S. Consul General, Algiers, to the Secretary of State, 18 October 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 146-153.

<sup>91</sup> Secretary of the Navy to Captain Edward Preble, U.S. Navy, 13 July 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 474-477; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 154-155; Tucker, *The Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy*, 14.

<sup>92</sup> Captain William Bainbridge, U.S. Navy to the Secretary of the Navy, 1 November 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 171-173; Bainbridge to Preble, 12 November 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 173-174; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 17-28.

<sup>93</sup> Smith, *For the Purposes of Defense*, " 28-29.

Preble very much, but he did not intend to allow the *Philadelphia* to be of service to Tripoli or any other Barbary State.<sup>94</sup>

The ineffectiveness of American naval power during 1801-1803 under Dale and Morris did not persuade the Bashaw of Tripoli to alter his war-making course. The loss of the *Philadelphia* obviously did nothing to impress the Bashaw either. Yet despite the humiliation of this incident, it failed to dissuade Jefferson or Preble from their determination to achieve an American victory on the Barbary Coast.<sup>95</sup> To do this, they must ensure that no Barbary ruler could make use of the *Philadelphia*. On 16 February 1804, Preble launched a dramatic attack to destroy the *Philadelphia*, which was moored within the harbor of Tripoli and under the guns of its defenses. Executing a plan devised by Preble and based on information provided by Bainbridge from his imprisonment in Tripoli through coded messages, Lieutenant Stephen Decatur led a crew of seventy volunteers, including eight marines, in a daring raid that fired and destroyed the *Philadelphia*.<sup>96</sup> Decatur and his team sailed toward the frigate in a captured Tripolitan ketch originally named the *Mastico* and renamed the *Intrepid* by Preble. Using deception, the *Intrepid* pulled alongside the *Philadelphia*, overpowered the Tripolitan guards, and ignited combustibles at key locations within the ship before coming under

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<sup>94</sup> Joseph Pulis, U.S. Consul, Malta, to Preble, 26 November 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 236-237; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 140-141; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 155-158; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 232-233; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 29-30, 77.

<sup>95</sup> Smith, "For the Purposes of Defense," 29-30.

<sup>96</sup> Bainbridge to Preble, 5 December 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers* III, 253-254; Bainbridge to Preble, 18 January 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 346-347; Preble to the Secretary of the Navy, 19 February 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 413; Decatur to Preble, 17 February 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 414-415; Lieutenant Charles Stewart to Preble, 19 February 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 415-416; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 231, 234.

fire from the shore batteries.<sup>97</sup> With the fire and explosions from the *Philadelphia* causing confusion, Decatur's party escaped from the scene without the loss of a single man, and America had a new naval hero. Lieutenant Charles Stewart and the U.S. Brig *Siren* arrived at Tripoli Harbor too late to support Decatur's attack on the *Philadelphia* but in time to cover the *Intrepid's* retreat from its raid.<sup>98</sup> The boldness and efficiency of this action altered the situation on the North African Coast, changing the attitude of Barbary authorities, American leaders, and other international powers that operated in the Mediterranean.<sup>99</sup> American prestige rose in wake of the attack, and Preble intended to retain the initiative until he obtained victory over Tripoli. Among other actions designed to follow-up this success, the American commander arranged with the King of Naples to borrow six shallow-draft gunboats and two mortar ketches. By combining these vessels with his frigates, brigs, and schooners, Preble believed he could control the harbor and blast Tripoli into submission.<sup>100</sup>

As spectacular as Decatur's raid on the *Philadelphia* had been, the next major operation—the joint and combined attack and capture of Derna, Tripoli in April 1805—managed to exceed it in both drama and effectiveness. The capture of Derna and its

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<sup>97</sup> Preble to Stewart, 31 January 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 375-376; Preble to Decatur, 31 January 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 376-377; Preble to the Secretary of the Navy, 3 February 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 384-386; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 236-242; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 81-83.

<sup>98</sup> Robert Smith, Secretary of the Navy, Statement concerning the destruction of the frigate, *Philadelphia*, 13 November 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 422-424.

<sup>99</sup> George Davis, U.S. Charge d'Affairs, Tunis, to the Secretary of State, 26 March 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 524-535; Extract from the journal of Surgeon Jonathan Cowdery, U.S. Navy, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 529-532; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 142-144.

<sup>100</sup> Preble to the Secretary of the Navy, 17 January 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 337-340; Preble to the Secretary of the Navy, 11 March 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 485-486; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 154, 169-170, 195; Nash, *The Barbary Wars*, 243-247; Tucker, *The Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy*, 14.

impact on strategic and diplomatic efforts demonstrated the unique value of amphibious operations in expeditionary warfare. Additionally, the success of this action under incredibly difficult circumstances places the Derna operation among the most important events in developing the amphibious traditions of the United States Marine Corps. The attack on Derna sprang from an ongoing effort by Hamet Karamanli (sometime spelled Ahmet Qaramanli) to regain control of the Barbary State of Tripoli. Hamet believed himself to be the legitimate ruler of Tripoli, which his younger brother, Bashaw Yusuf Karamanli, had usurped. Hoping to exploit the conflict between America and Tripoli to his advantage, Hamet offered a guarantee of lasting peace if the United States helped restore him to power.<sup>101</sup> Hamet had engaged the support of Richard Farquhar, a shady manipulator who operated out of Malta, to assist in his efforts to obtain American support.<sup>102</sup>

William Eaton, who had served as American consul to Tunis from 1799 to 1803, became an early advocate of returning Hamet to power as a means of ending Tripolitan piracy.<sup>103</sup> The first step in this process involved the capture of Derna, the largest and most important coastal city in the eastern part of the principality of Tripoli. This strategy fit nicely with Preble's plan to conduct strong attacks against Tripoli by both land and sea. Attacking Derna not only opened another military front, but also increased the political, economic, and diplomatic pressure on the Bashaw. Preble believed supporting

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<sup>101</sup> Hamet, Lawful Bashaw of Tripoli to President Thomas Jefferson, 20 January 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 347; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 86.

<sup>102</sup> Richard Farquhar to President Thomas Jefferson, 15 November 1803, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 222; Farquhar to Preble, 11 April 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 19.

<sup>103</sup> James Leander Cathcart, ex-Consul, Tripoli, to William Eaton, U.S. Consul, Tunis, 29 June 1801, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, I, 493-495; Eaton to any American Commander or Agent in the Mediterranean, 29 March 1802, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 97; Eaton to Mohamet Caramelli [sic]. Bashaw of Tripoli, 6 August 1802, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, II, 227.

Hamet offered a good prospect for success and that restoring him to power would bring substantial benefits to the United States throughout the Barbary Coast.<sup>104</sup>

In September 1804, a powerful naval squadron under command of Commodore Samuel Barron arrived in the Mediterranean with permission from Jefferson and the Secretary of the Navy to support Hamet's efforts to achieve control of Tripoli.<sup>105</sup> The president also made it clear that he expected the United States to attain peace with Tripoli through naval victory.<sup>106</sup> During much of 1804, Eaton had been in the United States where he promoted his ideas for regime change in Tripoli. Although Eaton had convinced the administration in Washington of the efficacy of reestablishing Hamet in power, officials delegated the ultimate decision authority regarding this operation to Barron, not Eaton. Eaton returned to the Mediterranean aboard Barron's flagship with the power to coordinate affairs with Hamet and oversee American support of the effort under Barron's overall leadership.<sup>107</sup> Through vigorous lobbying efforts and enthusiastic promotion of his plan, Eaton persuaded Barron to support his ideas for ultimate victory against Tripoli.

While awaiting arrival of Barron's squadron and preparing for the attack against Derna, Preble did not remain inactive as his predecessors had done. During July 1804, he assembled all available naval power under his control and moved to inflict maximum destruction on the city and defenses of Tripoli. Before moving into Tripoli Harbor,

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<sup>104</sup> Preble to the Secretary of the Navy, 17 January 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 337-340; Preble to the Secretary of the Navy, 11 March 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, III, 485-488.

<sup>105</sup> Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 268-269.

<sup>106</sup> Smith, "For the Purposes of Defense," 30; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 103.

<sup>107</sup> Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 145-150.

Preble had acquired the gunboats and bomb vessels needed for his attack as a loan from the King of the Two Sicilies (King of Naples) along with procuring other weapons and ammunition.<sup>108</sup> On 3 August, Preble sent Decatur into Tripoli Harbor with six gunboats and two mortar ketches to attack enemy vessels and shore defenses. Decatur captured three Tripolitan gunboats, sank one, and damaged at least fifteen more. He also engaged in a celebrated incident of hand-to-hand combat with an enemy commander, which further cemented his standing as a naval hero.<sup>109</sup> Decatur's gunboats joined the ships of Preble's squadron in pounding the city and shore batteries, wreaking further damage to the Bashaw's war making capability. Preble continued his attacks against Tripoli until early September when Barron arrived with Eaton and the operation against Derna got underway.<sup>110</sup> Despite Preble's determined and effective offensive against Tripoli, the Bashaw persisted in his demands for ransom and tribute, thinking he could withstand America naval power.<sup>111</sup> But American strategy did not rely only on bombardment from the sea, and William Eaton intended to bring the war directly to the Bashaw by means of an amphibious operation against his more vulnerable provinces to the east.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Sir John Acton, Prime Minister of State, the Two Scilies, 13 May 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 197-198; Preble to the Secretary of the Navy, 15 May 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 103; Preble to Joseph Barnes, U.S. Consul, Naples, 1 June 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 140-141.

<sup>109</sup> Recognition of Gallant Conduct of Personnel in Action of 3 August 1804 by Commodore Preble, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 361; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 147-148; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 173-182; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 250-254.

<sup>110</sup> Preble to the Secretary of the Navy, detailed report of the attacks against Tripoli, 18 September 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 293-310; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 148-149; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 103-106.

<sup>111</sup> London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 188-189; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 107

<sup>112</sup> Eaton to the Secretary of the Navy, 6 September 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 525-526.

When Barron arrived to take command of American forces and operations in the Mediterranean, he possessed the largest naval force the United States had ever assembled up to that time. It included six frigates, two brigs, three schooners, one sloop, and as many gunboats as he or Preble could acquire in Italy.<sup>113</sup> In addition to a powerful naval squadron, Barron carried instructions from the President of the United States directing, in the strongest terms yet, aggressive and determined action against Tripoli and other Barbary powers if necessary.<sup>114</sup> In addition, of course, he brought William Eaton whose contribution to the war effort and the building of amphibious traditions within the American sea services is hard to overstate. Eaton held a commission from the Secretary of the Navy as the U.S. Naval Agent to the Barbary Regencies subject only to the orders of Barron.<sup>115</sup> To undertake the Derna operation, Eaton first needed to find Hamet, last known to be in Alexandria, Egypt.<sup>116</sup>

Barron assigned Master Commandant Isaac Hull and his ship the U.S. brig, *Argus*, to support Eaton's effort to locate Hamet and assist his operation against Bashaw Yusuf who he viewed as an illegitimate usurper.<sup>117</sup> Arriving in Alexandria on 29 November

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<sup>113</sup> Preble to the Secretary of the Navy, 30 May 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 130-131; Secretary of the Navy to Captain Samuel Barron, 6 June 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 152-154; The relative Force of the four Squadrons sent to the Mediterranean, official listing of ships, 22 May 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 30-31; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 191-192.

<sup>114</sup> President Thomas Jefferson to Captain Samuel Barron, 31 May 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 132.

<sup>115</sup> Secretary of the Navy to William Eaton, Appointment and Commission, 26 and 30 May 1804, Navy Department, Washington, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, IV, 120.

<sup>116</sup> Farquhar to Barron, 1 November 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 109-110; Salvatore Bufuttil, Consul of Hamet Caramanli, rightful Bashaw of Tripoli to Barron, 1 November 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 110.

<sup>117</sup> Barron to Hull, 13 September 1804 with Enclosure dated 15 September 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 19-20; Barron to Hull, 10 November 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 134; Eaton to the Secretary of the Navy, 13 November 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 140-141.

1804, Eaton immediately proceeded on a dangerous trip to Cairo where he believed Hamet had allied himself with a Mameluke faction. The Mamelukes once held great power throughout the Middle East, although, their influence had diminished by 1804. During the time of the Tripolitan war, they remained one of several important factions contending for supremacy within Egypt. The Mameluke's reputation as ferocious fighters made them a disruptive factor in Egypt, and they continued to fight Turkish rule until 1811 when Ottoman power finally destroyed their remaining forces.<sup>118</sup> In December 1804, while Eaton attempted to find Hamet in the interior of Egypt, fighting between the Turks and Mamelukes raged on, making his efforts more difficult and highly dangerous.<sup>119</sup> As Eaton perceived the situation, he faced perils in three areas including the "dangers of Robbery and assignation [sic] by the wild Arabs; danger of falling into the hands of the Arnaut Turks and being murdered as Enemys, and danger of being executed as Spies by the Mameluke Beys."<sup>120</sup> Despite the risky environment, Eaton and his small party survived and ultimately found Hamet.

After locating and meeting with Hamet, Eaton returned to Alexandria where he made final his plans, coordinated with Hull for joint action, and recruited Greek soldiers and other Christian mercenaries to join his marines and Hamet's Muslim supporters.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 1 December 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 171; Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 26 November 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 162; Eaton to the Secretary of the Navy, 28 November 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 166-167; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 199-203; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 127-140, 168-169.

<sup>119</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 1 December 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 171; Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 7 December 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 186-189.

<sup>120</sup> Eaton to Hull, 8 January 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 267-268.

<sup>121</sup> Eaton to Hull, 24 December 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 214-215; Eaton to Hull, 8 January 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 268; Eaton to Preble, 25 January 1805 – 16

Hamet agreed that Eaton—a former captain in the U.S. Army—would hold the rank of general and command the force organized to capture Derna.<sup>122</sup> Once assembled in the Egyptian desert, Eaton’s motley band constituted a diverse legion including American and Greek Christians along with Arab, Turk, and Tripolitan Muslims.<sup>123</sup> According to the plan developed by Eaton and Hull, the army would attack Derna from the landside while the maritime force under Hull would provide naval gunfire support from the sea.<sup>124</sup> The task force would then continue west along the coastline, repeat the operation at Benghazi, and finally capture the capitol city of Tripoli.<sup>125</sup> As originally planned, this constituted more of a joint action than an amphibious operation. But as events played out at Derna, the battle took on more of an amphibious character. Eaton’s entire force consisted of about 500-600 men including the American detachment of seven marines under command of Lieutenant Presley O’Bannon.<sup>126</sup> O’Bannon accompanied Eaton on

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February 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 300-305; Eaton to Hull, 5 February 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 333-334.

<sup>122</sup> Hamet Caramanli, rightful Bashaw of Tripoli to Barron, 15 February 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 356; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 173.

<sup>123</sup> Extract from a letter to an officer on board U.S. Brig *Argus*, from Midshipman Pascal Paoli Peck, U.S. Navy, 4 July 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 361-363; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 176.

<sup>124</sup> Eaton to the Secretary of the Navy, 13 February 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 348-350; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 194-195.

<sup>125</sup> Eaton to the Secretary of the Navy, 13 February 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 350-351; Eaton to Barron, 14 February 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 353-354; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 161.

<sup>126</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 2 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 478; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 198-199; Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 59; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 280.

his harrowing quest of Hamet in Egypt and had proven a stalwart and dependable officer.<sup>127</sup>

Before departing Egypt for his march across the Libyan Desert, Eaton formalized the relationship between Hamet and the United States by creating a convention (written agreement) signed by both parties. Unfortunately for Hamet, Eaton, and U.S. credibility in the area, the American commander exceeded his authority and made commitments never intended by Barron or his government.<sup>128</sup> American leaders at the highest levels viewed the Hamet connection as a means of bringing pressure to bear on his brother, Bashaw Yusuf. If successful, the U.S. would reward Hamet, but Barron and political authorities back in Washington considered the relationship to be a limited and conditional commitment.<sup>129</sup> Eaton disagreed, believing that once the U.S. sanctioned the restoration of Hamet, it should have the force of moral imperative. Whether because he genuinely believed the government would support this agreement or because he felt it would force the hand of American officials, Eaton created the convention with that objective in mind. He also conducted the operation against Derna with all the fervor of a committed zealot, often holding Hamet's army together by the strength of his personal leadership alone.<sup>130</sup> On 29 March 1805, while on the march about half way between Alexandria and Derna, Eaton issued a dramatic and inspirational proclamation to the inhabitants of Tripoli

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<sup>127</sup> Eaton to Barron, 14 February 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 353-354; Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 2 March 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 384.

<sup>128</sup> Eaton to the Secretary of State, letter with enclosed Convention between the United States of America and his Highness, Hamet, Caramanly, Bashaw of Tripoli, 14 March 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 367-369.

<sup>129</sup> Barron to the Secretary of the Navy, 6 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 485-486.

<sup>130</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 1 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 475-476; Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 2 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 478.

declaring Hamet the rightful ruler and Yusuf a “treacherous scoundrel.” Eaton called on the inhabitants of the kingdom to join hands with the forces of America and Hamet. This impassioned appeal clearly established Eaton’s commitment to Hamet and his claim as the rightful ruler of Tripoli. It is obvious that Eaton did not consider his support of Hamet a mere tactic to gain advantage in negotiations with Yusuf.<sup>131</sup>

Although Bashaw Yusuf knew of Eaton’s efforts in Egypt and his intention to move against Derna, the effectiveness of the attack proved surprising because the defenders did not think American ships could get close enough to the shoreline to do any real damage to the city or its forts. Additionally, they did not expect an attack from the landside because that would require a 600-mile march across the North African desert, which they considered unlikely or even impossible. The defenders of Derna proved to be wrong on both accounts. Eaton’s naval support included three ships under Hull’s command—the *Argus*, *Hornet*, and *Nautilus*—which had off loaded all the arms and ammunition needed for Eaton’s army in Alexandria and Bomba, and then further lightened the ships so that they could get closer to shore and range the defensive structures and guns of Derna.<sup>132</sup>

While Hull prepared his ships for the assault, Eaton and O’Bannon undertook one of the most heroic and arduous marches in military history across a hostile desert with limited provisions and mutinous comrades.<sup>133</sup> At one point, an intelligence report from

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<sup>131</sup> Proclamation of William Eaton to the Inhabitants of Tripoli, 29 March 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 467-470; Eaton to Barron, 29 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 550-553.

<sup>132</sup> Barron to Eaton, 15 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 511-512.

<sup>133</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 20 March 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 432-433.

Derna indicated that Bashaw Yusuf had sent 500 replacements to that city, causing panic among Hamet's Arab supporters in camp. In response to the near mutiny, Eaton suspended rations in order to reestablish discipline. This action, coupled with growing concerns about naval support for the mission, created the constant threat of desertion by the various Arab elements of Hamet's army during the march to Derna.<sup>134</sup> Despite the grueling and dangerous nature of the desert march, Eaton found time to examine ancient ruins and observe long abandoned artifacts telling of Greek and Carthaginian settlements from the distant past.<sup>135</sup> Despite the intellectual stimulation of discovering historic attractions, the march remained taxing, becoming so desperate that at one point the party found it necessary to kill and butcher a camel in order to feed the caravan.<sup>136</sup> During one of the worse moments of the march when mutiny and internecine warfare threatened, only O'Bannon, his marine detachment, and a few Greek Christians within the army stood between Eaton and a revolt of Arab troops that included Hamet himself. But Eaton's strength of character and personal courage—and the help of a few marines—kept the army together throughout the challenging and eventful march across the desert. Eaton credited O'Bannon as playing the key role in suppressing this potential disaster. Hamet also praised O'Bannon after the crisis subsided, calling him "The Brave American" and

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<sup>134</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 26 March 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 459; Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 27 March 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 459; Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 30 March 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 472.

<sup>135</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 5 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 482-483; Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 14 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 509-510; Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 9 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 495.

<sup>136</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 13 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 509.

“imbraced him with enthusiasm and respect.”<sup>137</sup> Although Eaton does not specifically mention it, there is a strong probability that Hamet awarded O’Bannon his Mameluke sword at this time out of respect for his courage.

Before the situation within the army could deteriorate beyond the point of recovery, Hull and the *Argus* met Eaton’s army at the coastal town of Bomba just 40 miles short of Derna. Not only did the American ship restore confidence and tranquility to Hamet’s fighters, it also provided the supplies that permitted the army to arrive at Derna in a combat ready state.<sup>138</sup> Most important of the supplies included rations to feed the troops and money for their pay.<sup>139</sup> Just before the arrival of the American navy, another mutiny appeared imminent, but the appearance of Hull’s ships in the bay at Bomba helped avert disaster. With sails on the horizon, according to Eaton, “In an instant the face of everything changed from pensive gloom to inthusiastic gladness.”<sup>140</sup>

While refreshing his army at Bomba, Eaton conducted detailed planning and coordinated with Hull for the attack on Derna. He also arranged to receive additional weapons and ammunition from Hull’s ships and requested naval gunfire support for the actual assault on the fort and city.<sup>141</sup> While at Bomba, Eaton received an additional

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<sup>137</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 8 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 490-491; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 175-207.

<sup>138</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 15-22 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 512-513; Extract from a letter to and officer on board the U.S. Brig *Argus*, from midshipman Pascal Paoli Peck, 4 July 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 361-363; Barron to Eaton, 22 March 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 438-441; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 152; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 204-207; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 223-226.

<sup>139</sup> Hull to Eaton, 9 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 493-494.

<sup>140</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 10 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 498-499.

<sup>141</sup> Eaton to Hull, 21 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 527-528.

report of enemy reinforcements arriving at Derna, which he judged to be no more than about five hundred troops. Confirmation of the appearance of enemy reinforcements at Derna reached Eaton's camp during the march from Bomba to Derna and caused considerable consternation among Hamet and his Arab supporters.<sup>142</sup> Eaton could only get them to move the next morning with a promise of two thousand additional dollars, which apparently helped soothe the fears of the sheiks, if not that of Hamet. Upon conducting a reconnaissance and evaluating the defenses of Derna the following day, Eaton commented that he "thought the bashaw [Hamet] wished himself back to Egypt."<sup>143</sup>

By 26 April, Eaton and Hamet's force had arrived at the walls of Derna, and coordinated with the ships of Hull's task force for the joint and combined attack against the city. Before launching the assault, Eaton invited the governor of Derna to accept Hamet as the legitimate sovereign and permit his army to enter the city. The governor rejected Eaton's request with the words, "your head or mine."<sup>144</sup> On 27 April, Eaton landed additional fieldpieces from Hull's ships and made final arrangements for naval gunfire support during the attack. The following day, Hull began a powerful naval bombardment of Derna and its forts. The naval gunfire destroyed several batteries and eventually drove some of the Tripolitans from their guns and defenses. The marines then attacked the city along the beach at water's edge with Hull's naval guns clearing the way.

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<sup>142</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 24 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 538.

<sup>143</sup> Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 25 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 540-541.

<sup>144</sup> Eaton to the Governor of Derna, 26 April 1805 (with reply), *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 542; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 210-211; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 286-287; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 228-229.

Concurrently, Hamet and his mounted Arabs circled south and west of the city attacking from the opposite direction. Under the direct leadership of Eaton and O'Bannon, the Americans, along with a few Greek cannoneers, assaulted against heavy musket fire, carrying the hostile ramparts and part of the city. O'Bannon then turned the defender's guns on the fleeing enemy just as they engaged Hamet's Arabs attacking from landside. This situation proved devastating for the defenders, and, by the end of the day, Eaton possessed both the fort and the city.<sup>145</sup> During the assault, Eaton received a painful but not incapacitating wound to his hand and wrist. Just before turning the fort's guns on the fleeing enemy, O'Bannon had removed the enemy flag from its staff and planted the American flag for the first time on a hostile foreign shore. The United States Marines had gone "to the shores of Tripoli."<sup>146</sup>

Determined and repeated efforts by forces loyal to Yusuf Karamanli attempted to retake Derna, but all failed due to strong defensive efforts under the leadership of Eaton and O'Bannon, coupled with Hull's naval gunfire. Eaton and O'Bannon led several sorties against the hostile forces gathered around Derna, further discouraging their efforts to retake the city.<sup>147</sup> The loss of Derna, coupled with the bombardment of Tripoli by

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<sup>145</sup> Hull to Barron, 28 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 547-548; Eaton to Barron, 29 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 553-555.

<sup>146</sup> The first two lines of the Marines' Hymn, "From the Halls of Montezuma, To the Shores of Tripoli," are among the most famous of any service hymn in the world. The second line obviously refers to the 28 April 1805 attack on Derna, Tripoli. See William D. Parker, *A Concise History of the United States Marine Corps 1775-1969* (Washington: Historical Division, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 1970), 8-10, 143; Hull to Barron, 28 April 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 547-548; U.S. Senate, Resolution concerning Reward for March to and Capture of Derna, 18 March 1806, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 545-546; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 152; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 288.

<sup>147</sup> Extract for the journal of William Eaton, 8 May 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 6; Eaton to Barron, 15-17 May 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 14-15; Extract from the journal of William Eaton, 28 May 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 55; Eaton to Barron, 29 May-11 June 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 58-63; Resume concerning the U.S. Squadron

Preble and Barron and economic pressure created by the blockade, caused the Bashaw to seek peace negotiation through the offices of the Spanish consul in Tripoli.<sup>148</sup> On 4 June 1805, a treaty negotiated by Tobias Lear agreed on terms by which the United States would pay \$60,000 for release of all prisoners and would evacuate Derna. But the historic treaty did not include the traditional tribute or customary presents to the Bashaw.<sup>149</sup> Never before had a Barbary state signed an agreement without these two essential elements. But the peace agreement did not help the plight of Hamet, who decided not to pursue his claim against Yusuf without American support.<sup>150</sup> He chose to depart North Africa for Syracuse where he lived for sometime thereafter on an American pension.<sup>151</sup> The peace treaty with Tripoli stipulated that Yusuf would release Hamet's wife and children—held for several years as prisoners by Yusuf—from their captivity in Tripoli. Unfortunately for Hamet's family, Lear agreed in a secret article to the treaty that allowed Yusuf to delay their release for four years.<sup>152</sup> Fortunately, the subsequent

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in the Mediterranean prepared in 1806 or 1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 8-11; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 214-215; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 287.

<sup>148</sup> Tobias Lear, U.S. Consul General, Algiers, to Captain John Rodgers, 1 May 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 1-2; Resume concerning the U.S. Squadron in the Mediterranean prepared in 1806 or 1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Power*, V, 8-11; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 213, 251-252, 256-257.

<sup>149</sup> Treaty of Peace and Amity between the United States and Tripoli, 4 June 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 81-82; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 169; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 273-277.

<sup>150</sup> Eaton to Barron, 29 May-11 June 1804, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 58-63.

<sup>151</sup> Hamet Bashaw to the People of the United States of America, 1 September 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 263-264; Statement of the Account of Captain Hugh G. Campbell, U.S. Navy, 7 June 1807-15 February 1808, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 531; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 372-372.

<sup>152</sup> Treaty of Peace and Amity between the United States and Tripoli, 4 June 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 81-82; Resume concerning the U.S. Squadron in the Mediterranean prepared in 1806 or 1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 8-11.

American Consul to Tripoli proved able to affect their release two years early.<sup>153</sup> Despite the satisfaction of achieving an acceptable peace with Bashaw Yusuf, there remained some ongoing support for Hamet and his claim to power. Many Americans—particularly Eaton—believed the United States had failed the rightful claimant to the title of Bashaw by not restoring Hamet to power in Tripoli.<sup>154</sup> Eaton considered the treaty with Yusuf premature and contended that his campaign would have achieved a much greater American victory if allowed to continue. He also believed that the United States had betrayed many supporters left behind in Derna when, under orders, he and Hamet slipped out of the city and harbor aboard the *Constitution*.<sup>155</sup>

The American victory over Tripoli created a number of celebrities for the new Republic including William Preble, Stephen Decatur, William Eaton, and Presley O'Bannon, all of whom came home to a hero's welcome.<sup>156</sup> Eaton used his new public status to vent resentment at what he considered a betrayal of Hamet Karamanli and his own strategy for the complete conquest of Tripoli.<sup>157</sup> In the process, he became a

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<sup>153</sup> George Davis, U.S. Consul, Tripoli, 12 May 1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 522-523; Davis to Hamet Caramanli, 7 October 1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 570; Thomas Jefferson to the United States Senate, 11 November 1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 577-578.

<sup>154</sup> Eaton to the U.S. House of Representatives, 3 November 1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 575-576; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 218-220; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 288-289; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 292-297, 315-316.

<sup>155</sup> Officers of the Expedition to Derna to Eaton, 20 May 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 28-29; Eaton to Rodgers, 13 June 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 116-117; Eaton to the Secretary of the Navy, 9 August 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 213-219; Eaton to the Secretary of the Navy, 5 December 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 315; Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 162-167; London, *Victory in Tripoli*, 221-227.

<sup>156</sup> Resolution in the Senate of the United States, 18 March 1806, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 545-546.

<sup>157</sup> Eaton to the Honorable Stephen Row Bradley, Chairman of the Committee on the Application of Hamet Caramanli, United States Senate, 16 February 1806, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 370-

controversial figure—exploited by both Federalist politicians and Republican dissidents—and an ardent critic of both Tobias Lear and Thomas Jefferson.<sup>158</sup>

O'Bannon's fame, although substantial, did not burn quite as bright as Eaton's at the end of the war with Tripoli. But he remains an icon within the United States Marine Corps to this day, revered for his contribution to the creation of a culture of dedication and courage. Although no documentary evidence exists to substantiate that Hamet awarded O'Bannon his personal sword, it remains a strong oral tradition, widely accepted by Marines. As a result, the Mameluke sword remains within the Marine Corps to this day, carried by commissioned officers as a standard item of dress uniform.<sup>159</sup>

Just as the war with Tripoli reached its favorable conclusion, the Bey of Tunis threatened the United States with a new Barbary war. Upset by the capture of one of his xebecs and two of its prizes as they attempted to run the blockade of Tripoli, he demanded the United States return them or face a declaration of war.<sup>160</sup> But the time for bullying the United States on the Barbary Coast had passed. John Rodgers, who had replaced Barron as commodore of the Mediterranean squadron, concentrated a force of five frigates, three schooners, one brigantine, and one sloop at Tunis and gave the Bey

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371; President Thomas Jefferson to the Congress of the United States, 13 January 1806, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 344-345; Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 319-329.

<sup>158</sup> Zacks, *The Pirate Coast*, 345, 370.

<sup>159</sup> Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*, 17; Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, 16; Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps*, 46-47; Simmons, *The United States Marines 1775-1975*, 17; Zacks, *The Barbary Coast*, 378-379.

<sup>160</sup> Lear to George Davis, U.S. Charge d'Affairs, Tunis, 15 May 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 16-17; Lear to Davis, 23 May 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 44; Hamuda Bey of Tunis to Barron, 28 May 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 53-54.

thirty-six hours to choose between war and peace.<sup>161</sup> The Bey backed down, ending the Barbary War—at least for the time being.<sup>162</sup> Success against the Barbary corsairs proved inspirational to the new American republic. Ironically, it also marked the beginning of a demise in American naval power.

When measuring the Derna action against the characteristics of amphibious operations, several issues predominate. Most significantly, the integration between the navy and landing force proved very effective, providing the most important explanation for success. Although Barron endorsed the project halfheartedly, once he assigned Hull to support Eaton the two commanders wielded their efforts into a common enterprise. Hull assisted Eaton during his efforts to locate Hamet and recruit an army in Egypt and sustained him during the drive across North African. Eaton could not have succeeded in either effort without Hull and his ships.

Upon arrival at Derna, Hull and Eaton task-organized their force by augmenting the assault element with artillery units, as well as repositioning their troops for a beach attack against the sea facing defenses. The fire support from Hull's guns coupled with Eaton's beach assault and Hamet's flanking attack exemplified the concept of unity of effort and operational coherence. Three of the characteristics of amphibious operations—Integration between the Navy and landing force, Task-organized forces, and Unity of Effort and Operational Coherence—are clearly demonstrated at Derna and explain the success of the operations. The fourth characteristic, rapid buildup of combat power from

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<sup>161</sup> Conversation between the Bey of Tunis and George Davis, U.S. Charge d'Affairs, (about) 1 August 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 200; Rodgers to Davis, ultimatum to the Bey of Tunis, 2 August 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 202.

<sup>162</sup> Hamuda Bassaw Bey, the Bey of Tunis, to Rodgers, 14 August 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 227; Rodgers to Lear, 14 August 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 228; Nash, *The Forgotten Wars*, 289.

the sea to shore occurred only in a vague manner. The actual tactics at Derna involved a joint and integrated attack with most of the forces already ashore when the assault occurred. Getting his army across the dessert and in place at Derna's defenses constituted the concentration so important to an amphibious operation. Unlike the direct assaults against defended beaches of the twentieth century, eighteenth and nineteenth century amphibious landings primarily occurred at undefended sites from which the attacking force would move against the objective. In the case of Derna, the ground elements assembled at several points and converged—in conjunction with naval support—at the point of attack. These included several locations in Egypt and on the beaches at Bomba and Derna. Yet even if this fourth characteristic of amphibious warfare fell short of perfections, the commanders addressed it well enough that, in conjunction with the other three, it served the purpose of the mission. Application of the characteristics of amphibious operations is not always perfect. It is desirable to achieve perfection in all four in every action, yet success remains possible so long as the amphibious force observes the preponderance of these principles. Such was the case at Derna.

In considering the expeditionary nature of the Derna operation, it clearly satisfied the defining characteristic of an expeditionary operation—the projection of forces into a foreign setting. By gaining entry into the objective area by force—in this case through maneuver at sea and on land—the assault on Derna further exemplified the ideals of expeditionary warfare. Eaton effectively used Egypt and the Libyan Desert as forward bases, while Hull's ships provided sea basing. For a successful assault on Derna, both forms of expeditionary basing were required. Additionally, the purposes for which the

Derna operation had been conceived and launched—to secure policy objectives, to seize key physical objectives, to establish visible presence, and to (ultimately) rescue U.S. citizens—are all missions of expeditionary warfare. The most important of these missions is the securing of policy objectives, of course, which in this case involved ending the commerce raiding against U.S. shipping. Clearly, the success at Derna achieved this and other policy goals. Although Clausewitz is not normally associated with expeditionary warfare and amphibious operations, his overarching principle that war is policy by other means is clearly fundamental to these two modes of conflict.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DEFENSE OF BALITMORE

President Thomas Jefferson and Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin constantly sought ways to reduce costs and eliminate unnecessary expenditures. The effectiveness of gunboats during the Barbary Wars coupled with the high cost of maintaining a frigate navy stimulated interest in developing a harbor defense system rather than maintaining a blue water navy.<sup>1</sup> Although this concept seemed perfectly logical at the end of the Barbary War, the policy created problems for the United States when facing the Royal Navy during the War of 1812. The Jeffersonian gunboat fleet that replaced much of the frigate navy did not prove adequate to the needs of a renewed war against Great Britain, proving particularly vexing along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico littorals where command of the sea allowed the British to conduct amphibious operations almost at will. Unfortunately, this did not represent the last time the United States sought a “peace dividend” after a long and arduous struggle that left the armed services inadequate for future security challenges.

In fairness to Republican leaders who promoted a shift from the deep draft navy to a gunboat fleet, these vessels proved particularly valuable during the war with Tripoli. Initially, the friendly government in Naples loaned gunboats to the United States. As the war progressed, the United States began building its own gunboat fleet. During the final stages of the Barbary War, the Secretary of the Navy had started sending American gunboats to the Mediterranean for combat duty.<sup>2</sup> The acquisition of Louisiana from

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, “*For the Purposes of Defense*,” 30-31, 54-57; Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists*, 105-108; Tucker, *The Jefferson Gunboat Navy*, 17-20.

France in 1803 and the consequent trepidation over security for New Orleans, further stimulated interest in a defensive oriented gunboat policy. The prospect of creating an economically palatable gunboat fleet to secure new American territory proved particularly attractive to the United States Congress.

In September 1805, Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith held a more hawkish view of security requirements than the Republican Congress. He believed that defending New Orleans required a gunboat flotilla to fill the rivers, lakes, and bayous surrounding the city and a powerful naval force to command the Gulf of Mexico. He even went so far as to recommend building six ships of the line of 74 guns each.<sup>3</sup> Although the frugal Jefferson initially favored a balanced navy of both gunboats and sea going vessels, the more frugal Congress did not support this approach, and economy trumped naval power in the budget battles that followed the Barbary War. Indeed, Jefferson's 1807 message to Congress requesting expansion of the gunboat fleet became the focus for future naval armament although the President had not intended it as a limiting factor.<sup>4</sup>

Secretary Smith's concerns for the security of New Orleans stemmed from a perceived threat from Spain, or perhaps from an alliance of Spain and France.<sup>5</sup> But in June 1807, an ominous incident occurred that presaged yet another conflict with an old

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<sup>2</sup> Secretary of the Navy to Barron, 7 March 1805, Dudley W. Knox, ed., *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 395; Circular letter to Commander of Gunboats from the Secretary of the Navy, 25 March 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, V, 451-452.

<sup>3</sup> Secretary of the Navy to President Thomas Jefferson, 16 September 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 280-282.

<sup>4</sup> President Jefferson's Message to Congress dated 10 February 1807, William s. Dudley and Michael J. Crawford, eds., *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History (Naval War hereafter)* vol. I, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985-2002), 12-15; Gene A. Smith, "*For the Purposes of Defense*": *The Politics of the Jeffersonian Gunboat Program* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 6-12.

<sup>5</sup> Secretary of the Navy to President Thomas Jefferson, 16 September 1805, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 280-282.

and established enemy. On 22 June, the U.S. frigate *Chesapeake* weighed anchor at Hampton Roads and set to sea for duty in the Mediterranean. After passing two British men of war in Lynnhaven Bay, the *Chesapeake* encountered the British ship *Leopard*, which demanded the return of deserters believed to be aboard the *Chesapeake*. Initially refusing this demand, Captain James Barron submitted after receiving fire from the *Leopard* that killed three Americans and wounded 18 others. Barron then allowed British Captain Salusbury P. Humphreys to take four sailors that his officers determined to be British deserters.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, Barron received a court marshall for failure to have his ship combat ready resulting in suspension from the navy for a period of five years.<sup>7</sup>

The Royal Navy became a major concern to American leaders even before this incident because in 1803—at the outset of the second war against Napoleonic France—Britain resumed capturing American merchant ships and impressing its seamen. In 1806, the British ship *Leander* fired on an American merchantman off Sandy Hook, killing one American and outraging the citizens of New York. Although a grand jury indicted the *Leander's* captain, Henry Whitby, for murder little else resulted from this incident.<sup>8</sup> But the 1807 *Chesapeake* incident involved a ship of the United States Navy and the death of American naval personnel. This episode caused outrage throughout the United States and political controversy regarding the appropriate American response. Although a war atmosphere initially developed, it subsided after several months as Jefferson sought a

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<sup>6</sup> Captain James Barron to the Secretary of the Navy, 23 June 1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 537-538; Extract from the Log of U.S. Frigate *Chesapeake*, 22 July 1807, *Naval War*, I, 27-28; Smith, “*For the Purposes of Defense*,” 50.

<sup>7</sup> Secretary of the Navy to Barron, 12 September 1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 557-558; Secretary of the Navy to Captain John Rodgers, 4 November 1807, *Naval Documents, Barbary Powers*, VI, 561-570.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, “*For the Purposes of Defense*,” 45-46.

solution short of war with Great Britain.<sup>9</sup> His immediate actions included ordering all British naval vessels out of American waters and demanding an explanation from authorities in London.<sup>10</sup> Ironically, the attack by the *Leopard* actually strengthened the hand of the advocates of gunboat security. The gunboats already in existence could immediately move to protect America's ports and harbors, thereby increasing security without directly confronting the British Navy.<sup>11</sup> The government could construct more gunboats, relatively quickly and cheaply, thereby creating the illusion of strong defensive actions. Unfortunately for the balanced navy concept of Jefferson and Smith, this allowed the antinavalists in Congress to promote and sustain a gunboat program at the expense of deep-water ships to which the administration ultimately acceded.<sup>12</sup>

The avoidance of war over the *Chesapeake* affair did not reduce tensions as the United States imposed an embargo against foreign trade in 1807 followed by a non-intercourse act in 1809.<sup>13</sup> In May 1811, an engagement occurred between the U.S. Frigate *President* under the command of Captain John Rodgers and the British Sloop of War *Little Belt* (also known as the *Lille Belt*) commanded by Commander Arthur Bingham. Americans believed that this engagement served as just retribution for the *Chesapeake* affair as Rodgers inflicted severe damage on the *Little Belt*, killing nine and

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<sup>9</sup> Proclamation by Thomas Jefferson, President of the U.S. of America, 2 July 1807, *Naval War*, I, 29-31; Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Proclamation by Thomas Jefferson, President of the U.S. of America, 2 July 1807, and Presidential message to Congress, 17 October 1807; *Naval War*, I, 29-33.

<sup>11</sup> Presidential Message to Congress, 27 October 1807, *Naval War*, I, 32-33.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, "For the Purposes of Defense," 55-57.

<sup>13</sup> Secretary of the Navy to Lieutenant Samuel Elbert, 2 May 1808, *Naval War*, I, 35-36.

wounding eighteen British seamen.<sup>14</sup> The renewed impressments of American seamen, coupled with Orders in Council that restricted U.S. commerce, exacerbated ongoing hostility between the two English-speaking nations and enhanced the drift toward war.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Americans believed that British agents instigated Indian attacks on the Northwest frontier, which further inflamed public and official fervor for war.<sup>16</sup> By the middle of 1812, many Americans considered Britain a tormentor and believed, with righteous indignation, that war had become a patriotic duty.<sup>17</sup>

A faction of Republicans known as the “War Hawks” supported—even promoted—the movement toward war while most Federalists, particularly in New England, resisted.<sup>18</sup> The question of war aims complicated the issue as many leaders hoped to limit the fighting to naval actions—as happened in the Quasi War—whereas others promoted a more general war. After a complex and rancorous debate, the Republican majority won by a relatively close vote in Congress. War with Great Britain became official on 18 June 1812 when President James Madison signed the Congressional declaration.<sup>19</sup> The objectives of the war involved ending British impressment of American seamen, eliminating or modifying the Orders in Council, and

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<sup>14</sup> Commander Arthur Bingham, R.N. to Vice Admiral Herbert Sawyer, R.N., 21 May 1811, *Naval War*, I, 41-43; Rodgers to Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton, 23 May 1811, *Naval War*, I, 44-48.

<sup>15</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 17-24; James Fulton Zimmerman, *Impressment of American Seamen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925), 182-184.

<sup>16</sup> Barry Gough, *Fighting Sail on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 2-4; Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 24-26, 44; Reginald Horsman, *The Causes of The War of 1812* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1962), 17. 59-177, 267.

<sup>17</sup> President James Madison to Congress, 1 June 1812, *Naval War*, I, 73-81.

<sup>18</sup> Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812*, 124, 225-236, 179; Robert V. Remini, *The Battle of New Orleans* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999), 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> Providence Resolution, 7 April 1812, *Naval War*, I, 69-72.

stopping Indian depredations on the American frontier by breaking British power in Canada.<sup>20</sup> Many Americans believed that conquering Canada would not only end British power in North America, but also result in some or all of its provinces joining the Union.<sup>21</sup>

The initial campaign of the War of 1812 amounted to a three-pronged attack to conquer British Canada. The concept of operations included a drive against Detroit in the west, an offensive along the Niagara River in the center, and a main thrust against Montreal in the east. Given the weakness of British military forces in Canada, and the questionable loyalty of the recently conquered French-Canadians, many Americans believed they could easily achieve victory. The strategy and assumptions underlying this approach seemed perfectly logical, but the militia-based army did not prove adequate for the task.<sup>22</sup> The militia, and to some extent the small regular army, suffered from inadequate discipline, insufficient training, poor equipment, and deficient leadership. Many officers and soldiers questioned the use of militia units outside their home state or in foreign lands such as British Canada. As a result, unity of command proved impossible and the initial attacks against Canada in 1812 resulted in complete failure and total embarrassment.<sup>23</sup>

Fortunately, the U.S. Navy performed very well during these initial months of war. Despite the shift toward a gunboat fleet, the naval service had seven frigates and

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<sup>20</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 46-47.

<sup>21</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 72-75; Alfred T. Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903-reprinted by Greenwood Press, New York, 1968), I, 292-295.

<sup>22</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 80-90.

<sup>23</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 80-90.

about ten fighting ships of lesser draft available for duty on the high seas.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the most famous of these naval victories involved the destruction of HMS *Guerriere* by the *Constitution* under the command of Isaac Hull.<sup>25</sup> During this battle, the *Constitution* withstood the *Guerriere*'s fire so well that it received the affectionate moniker of "Old Ironsides."<sup>26</sup> The engagement so endeared the American public to the frigate that the *Constitution* remains a commissioned ship of the U.S. Navy to this day.<sup>27</sup> Other important American victories at sea include the capture of the HMS *Macedonian* by the *United States* under command of Stephen Decatur and destruction of the HMS *Java* by "Old Ironsides," this time commanded by William Bainbridge. Lesser American successes brought the toll to three frigates, two sloops, one brig, and one transport ship lost to the British at the cost of three vessels for the United States. Additionally, the navy captured fifty merchant ships, and equally important, American privateers captured some 450 British prizes by the end of 1812.<sup>28</sup>

The fighting in 1813 centered in the Great Lakes area, and began poorly for the United States. In late January 1813, British commander, Colonel Henry Proctor, and his Indian allies under the Wyandot leader Roundhead attacked and captured Frenchtown (now Monroe, Michigan) on the River Raisin. The American commander, Brigadier

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<sup>24</sup> Secretary of the Navy Hamilton to Langdon Cheves, Chairman of the Naval Committee, 3 December 1811, *Naval War*, I, 53-60; Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 90-91.

<sup>25</sup> Captain Isaac Hull to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton, 28 August 1812, *Naval War*, I, 238-242; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, I, 330-336.

<sup>26</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 93-94.

<sup>27</sup> Old Ironsides History Page, <http://www.usconstitution.navy.mil/historyupdat.htm>, accessed 10 April 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 96; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, I, 403-423, II, 1-27.

General James Winchester, placed his force in an exposed and vulnerable position contributing to its defeat. Winchester lost 197 Americans killed and 737 captured, many murdered by Proctor's Indian contingent after surrendering.<sup>29</sup> This depredation enraged American troops for whom "Remember the Raisin" became a battle cry in subsequent fighting on the frontier.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the setback at Frenchtown, Captain Isaac Chauncey intended to establish the U.S. Navy as the dominant power on the Great Lakes during 1813. Failure of the 1812 invasion of Canada convinced American leaders that they must establish naval control on Lakes Erie and Ontario to have any hope of success in the region. These lakes provided the only effective avenues for transportation in the northwestern wilderness. Additionally, the most important population centers and military bases rested on the shores and tributaries of these lakes.<sup>31</sup> To accomplish his goal, Chauncey converted available merchant ships into combatants and began constructing new fighting ships.<sup>32</sup>

While his ship building effort progressed, Chauncey launched an amphibious attack he believed would secure control of Lake Ontario. On 27 April 1813, a force of 1700 Americans under Brigadier General Zebulon Pike attacked York (now Toronto), the provincial capitol of Upper Canada. In a classic amphibious action, Chauncey landed the assault force west of the city where it could maneuver against the defending army. His

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<sup>29</sup> J.F.C. Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1942), 108; Robert Leckie, *The Wars of America*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), 252-254.

<sup>30</sup> David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Encyclopedia of the War of 1812* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1977), 195, 431-433, 556; Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 85-86.

<sup>31</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 126-128.

<sup>32</sup> Commodore Isaac Chauncey to Hamilton, 1 January 1813, *Naval War*, II, 406-407; Chauncey to Hamilton, 8 January 1813, *Naval War*, II, 407.

ships provided accurate naval gunfire to cover the landing and support the subsequent operation ashore.<sup>33</sup> This joint amphibious operation proved very successful, driving out the British and Indian defenders while capturing York and the surrounding area.

Unfortunately, an explosion of the British powder magazine late in the battle killed more Americans than did the actual fighting, including the commander and renowned explorer, Zebulon Pike.<sup>34</sup> The American commander lived long enough to receive the surrender of York and see British commander, Major General Roger Sheaffe, retreat with his remnant force to Kingston. This explosion infuriated the U.S. troops who considered it an act of treachery because they believed it occurred during the drafting of capitulation papers.

The attack on York yielded outstanding results including the capture of one British ship and the destruction of another. The American force also captured large quantities of ordnance and stores and destroyed everything of military value they could not carry away. This created problems for the British Navy on Lakes Ontario and Erie and the ground forces they supported.<sup>35</sup> In fact, the first attack on York proved so beneficial that Chauncey conducted a second landing in July 1813, which proved equally successful and destructive to the British.<sup>36</sup> On 27 May 1813, Colonel Winfield Scott and Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry won an impressive amphibious victory at Fort George

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<sup>33</sup> Chauncey to Secretary of the Navy Jones, 28 April 1813, *Naval War*, II, 449-450; Major General Sir Roger Hale Sheaffe, British Army to Governor-General Sir George Prevost, 5 May 1812, *Naval War*, II, 455-457; Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812 or the History of the United States Navy During the Last War with Great Britain* (New York: 1882), 229-230.

<sup>34</sup> Major General Henry Dearborn, U.S.A., to Secretary of War John Armstrong, 28 April 1813, *Naval War*, II, 450-452; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, vol. II, 36-37.

<sup>35</sup> Chauncey to Jones, 7 May 1813, *Naval War*, II, 452-453; Lieutenant Robert H. Barclay, R.N., to Noah Freer, British Military Secretary, 9 May 1813, *Naval War*, II, 458-459.

<sup>36</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 129-130.

at the mouth of the Niagara.<sup>37</sup> Under the overall command of Major General Henry Dearborn, who had also been Pike's superior at the Battle of York, Scott worked closely with his naval counterpart to plan and execute the assault landing. Not only did Scott conduct detailed planning very well, but he also personally led the first wave and established a reputation as an effective and courageous combat leader during the subsequent operation ashore.<sup>38</sup> On 28-29 May, British commodore, Sir James Yeo, attempted to restore the balance of power on Lake Ontario by attacking the American base at Sackets Harbor, New York. But his 750 man landing force suffered a sharp defeat by American defenders under the command of Brigadier General Jacob Brown, who forced them to return to their ships and retreat back to Kingston.<sup>39</sup>

The amphibious successes of Chauncey, Dearborn, and their commanders temporarily turned the balance of power on Lake Ontario in favor of the United States. But the crowning victory of the 1813 Great Lakes campaign occurred on Lake Erie where the U.S. Navy not only gained control of that lake but also established American strategic supremacy in the western theatre. On 10 September, Commodore Olive Hazard Perry engaged and defeated the British naval force on Lake Erie under Captain Robert Barclay in a savage battle lasting more than three hours.<sup>40</sup> Like the performance of Winfield Scott in the Battle of Fort George, Perry's conduct became legendary for its effectiveness and heroism. Perry's flagship, the brig *Lawrence*, remained in the forefront of the

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<sup>37</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 38.

<sup>38</sup> Heidler and Heidler, *War of 1812*, 464-465.

<sup>39</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 129-130; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 41-45.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Gardiner, ed. *The Naval War of 1812* (London: Chatham Publishing, an imprint of Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd, 1998), 13; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 80-94.

fighting and suffered the greatest damage and highest casualties of the American fleet. The damage to the *Lawrence* proved so great that Perry had to transfer his flag to the *Niagara* in order to continue the battle.<sup>41</sup> After securing victory, Perry sent a laconic report to Major General William Henry Harrison stating, “We have met the enemy, and they are ours: Two ships, two Brigs one Schooner & one Sloop.”<sup>42</sup>

Perry’s victory on Lake Erie (sometimes called the Battle of Put-in-Bay) paved the way for the recapture of Detroit and the destruction of Indian power on the northwestern frontier.<sup>43</sup> Harrison had remained in a defensive posture after Winchester’s defeat at Frenchtown until Perry’s victory changed the strategic and operational situation in the northwest.<sup>44</sup> Within weeks of his victory on Lake Erie, Perry moved Harrison’s army of about 7,000 effectives across the lake, landing it at Detroit on 29 September 1813. Proctor chose to evacuate Detroit and retreat toward Moraviantown in an attempt to save his command. But Harrison caught him on 5 October, inflicting a severe defeat on the Anglo-Indian force at the Battle of the Thames and killing the Shawnee leader Tecumseh.<sup>45</sup>

British success in the eastern theatre—arguably the most important area of conflict during 1813—more than offset the American successes on the western periphery of war. The British remained strong in the Montreal-Lake Champlain area and on the

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<sup>41</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 91-94.

<sup>42</sup> Captain Oliver H. Perry to Major General William Henry Harrison, U.S.A., 10 September 1813, *Naval War*, II, 553.

<sup>43</sup> Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 268-271.

<sup>44</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 67, 69.

<sup>45</sup> Gardiner, *The Naval War of 1812*, 13; Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 136-139; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 99, 102-103.

Niagara frontier. The United States proved effective in controlling Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, and destroying British and Indian power in the northwest. Only Mackinac Island on the northern extreme of Lake Huron remained an isolated British stronghold in this area.<sup>46</sup> In the American south, a militant branch of the Creek tribe, known as Red Sticks, joined the conflict, bringing about the rise of Major General Andrew Jackson. Although Jackson did not completely defeat the Red Stick Creeks until March 1814, he effectively destroyed Indian power in the south just as Harrison had done in the northwest.<sup>47</sup>

An important British objective of 1813 involved increased pressure on the United States at sea and along the Atlantic littoral. With a fleet ultimately consisting of 10 ships of the line, 38 frigates, and 52 craft of lesser draft, Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren tightened the blockade that Britain instituted at the beginning of the war and sought to confine American combatant ships and commerce raiders within their harbors.<sup>48</sup> Warren also intended to conduct amphibious raids along the Atlantic littorals and especially throughout the Chesapeake Bay. For this mission, Warren assigned an amphibious task force under one of his most able officers, Rear Admiral Sir George Cockburn. During April-July 1813, Cockburn conducted numerous amphibious raids in Maryland and Virginia, in which he destroyed ships, captured property, looted and burned towns, destroyed factories, freed slaves, and committed violent assault against numerous U.S.

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<sup>46</sup> Gough, *Fighting Sail on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay*, 12-13, 54-56, 79-80; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 329

<sup>47</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 146-151; Remini, *The Battle of New Orleans*, 9-14.

<sup>48</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 151-152; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 152-154.

citizens, according to a prominent British officer.<sup>49</sup> The mobility of the British task force allowed them to conduct amphibious raids at the times and locations of their own choosing. But despite general success in the Chesapeake, British forces occasionally met with determined resistance such as the first attack against Norfolk, Virginia. In the early morning of 22 June, British troops conducted a landing on Craney Island as the preliminary action for capturing Norfolk and its surrounding naval facilities. In the sharp battle that followed, a joint American force of marines, sailors, and Virginia militia soundly drubbed the British landing force. The repulse came from defenders using canister, grape, and round shot coupled with fire support from the *Constellation* located in Norfolk Harbor and American gunboats in the Elizabeth River.<sup>50</sup>

By the end of 1813, both sides had experienced success and failure in their war efforts, resulting in an inconclusive situation. During October 1813, Napoleon's defeat in the Battle of Leipzig presaged the end of war in Europe and redeployment of British forces against the United States, altering the balance of power for the remainder of the war.<sup>51</sup> The fighting in 1814 involved increased amphibious action along the Atlantic coastline particularly in Maine and within the Chesapeake. In northern Maine, where the border between the United States and Britain remained in dispute, Sir John Sherbrooke and Captain Thomas Hardy launched a series of amphibious attacks in the summer of

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<sup>49</sup> Colonel Sir Thomas Sidney Beckwith, British Army, to Admiral Sir John Warren, R.N., 5 July 1813, *Naval War*, II, 304-305; British officer Charles Napier quoted in Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 154; *Niles' Register* quotation from 1813 and 1814 in Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 154, 383n; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 155-190.

<sup>50</sup> Captain John Cassin to Secretary of the Navy Jones, 23 June 1813, *Naval War*, II, 359-360; Admiral Sir John B. Warren, R.N., to First Secretary of the Admiralty John Croker, 24 June 1813, *Naval War*, II, 360-361; Christopher T. George, *Terror on the Chesapeake: The War of 1812 on the Bay* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Books, 2000), 40-48.

<sup>51</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 157-158.

1814 that captured Eastport, Maine, along the coastline and Castine in Penobscot Bay. During September, they drove up the Penobscot River, destroying property and taking control of large areas in that state.<sup>52</sup> With British troops on the ground, Sherbrooke administered the area as if it were British territory, which caused great consternation among American leaders.<sup>53</sup> Despite several plans to recapture that part of Maine, none came to fruition, and the occupied section remained in British hands until the end of the war.<sup>54</sup> British actions in 1814 also involved two of the most important amphibious landings of the war, including the battle of Bladensburg followed by the destruction of Washington, and the battle for Baltimore, bringing mixed results to the combatants.

In April 1814, following a series of defeats, Napoleon abdicated his position of leadership, temporarily ending the European war and freeing 35,000 British troops for war in America.<sup>55</sup> British officials earmarked most of these men for a major push against the United States from Canada under command of governor-general, Sir George Prevost. But to distract American attention from their northern strategy, British authorities assigned a reinforced brigade under the command of Major General Robert Ross to serve with Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane—who had replaced Warren as naval

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<sup>52</sup> Robert Aitchison, *A British Eyewitness at the Battle of New Orleans: The Memoir of Royal Navy Admiral Robert Aitchinson, 1808-1827*, Gene A. Smith, ed. (New Orleans: The Historic New Orleans Collection, 2004), 49-52.

<sup>53</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 353-354.

<sup>54</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 194-195.

<sup>55</sup> Hand Bill issued by the Portland Gazette on 2 June 1814, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA hereafter) Record Group (RG) 107, Microcopy No. 222 (M 222 hereafter), Roll 14, 1814 (S-Z); Croker to Cochrane, letter No. 40, 4 April 1814, *Naval War*, III, 70; Croker to Cochrane, letter No. 61, 19 May 1814, *Naval War*, III, 71-72; Bathurst to Major General Edward Barnes, British Army, 20 May 1814, *Naval War*, III, 72-74. (Although initially addressed to Barnes, this letter actually went to Robert Ross for action. Barnes remained with the British army in Spain.); Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 122-123.

commander on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts—and his joint expeditionary force then operating on the littorals of the United States.<sup>56</sup> Cockburn, who served Warren so effectively, remained with the fleet as Cochrane's principal naval lieutenant although he retained a clear penchant for operations ashore. The Admiralty also assigned Cochrane an additional thousand marines organized into ten companies under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James Malcolm to further enhance British amphibious capability.<sup>57</sup>

Ross's instructions clearly subordinated him to Cochrane, with the stipulation that he had the right to refuse any missions he considered imprudent. Ross commanded all ground forces while ashore, and determined when they would return to their ships after completing combat actions.<sup>58</sup> British authorities communicated their expectation regarding command relations to all principal commanders, and this issue did not seem to be a problem during the Chesapeake operations.<sup>59</sup> Yet despite clarity regarding the lines of authority among the top commanders, true unity of command required cooperation, and individual personalities often played a role in decision-making.

During the spring of 1814, Cochrane's enhanced amphibious task force intensified operations on America's Atlantic seaboard. Originally intended to distract attention from Prevost's attack down the Richelieu-Lake Champlain corridor against Plattsburg, New York, the raids assumed a life of their own, especially those actions

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<sup>56</sup> Bathurst to Barnes, 20 May 1814, *Naval War*, III, 72; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 330, 340.

<sup>57</sup> Croker to Cochrane, 4 April 1814, *Naval War*, III, 70.

<sup>58</sup> Bathurst to Barnes, 20 May 1814, *Naval War*, III, 72-73.

<sup>59</sup> Bathurst to Barnes, 20 May 1814, *Naval War*, III, 72-73.

within the Chesapeake Bay.<sup>60</sup> These incursions had both military and economic implications. Strategically, they kept the American government guessing about British intentions and created a major debate within the Madison administration regarding British objectives. From an economic point of view, the British seized large quantities of tobacco and other commodities, causing financial disadvantage to the United States and considerable annoyance to its citizens. The British also attempted to free and recruit slaves during these raids, and they experienced some success.<sup>61</sup> Although Cockburn's raids proved troublesome to the government and its citizens, they did not constitute a significant factor in the military outcome of the struggle. A major engagement between British and American forces in this theatre could be a very different story, and both sides carefully avoided serious mistakes as they groped for advantage. During June 1814, British commanders initiated a series of events that began with two sharp engagements at St. Leonard's Creek followed by the battle of Bladensburg, the burning of Washington, and the battle of Baltimore.

During the spring and summer of 1814, Commodore Joshua Barney commanded a flotilla of gunboats and barges instructed to contest the Chesapeake area with the British navy. Secretary of the Navy, William Jones—who had replaced Paul Hamilton in early 1813—and Barney began building this force in the later part of 1813 in response to

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<sup>60</sup> First Secretary of the Admiralty John W. Croker to Vice Admiral Sir Alexander F.I. Cochrane, R.N., 4 April 1814, *Naval War*, III, 70; Croker to Cochrane, 19 May 1814, *Naval War*, II, 71; Secretary of State for War and the Colonies Earl Bathurst to Major General Edward Barnes, British Army, 20 May 1814, *Naval War*, III, 72.

<sup>61</sup> Captain Thomas Brown, R.N., To Rear Admiral George Cockburn, R.N., 23 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 121-122; Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 316-317.

Cockburn's raids within the Chesapeake Bay.<sup>62</sup> By early June 1814, Barney found himself out classed by the more powerful British fleet and forced to move into the Patuxent River and then into St. Leonard's Creek.<sup>63</sup> Unable to reach Barney with his main fleet, Cochrane armed a series of barges and sent them upriver under escort of a schooner and two frigates in an effort to destroy Barney's flotilla. In anticipation of the first engagement on St. Leonard's Creek, which occurred on 10 June, Barney asked Jones to send land based artillery batteries to provide additional fire support for his expected engagement with the British.<sup>64</sup> Barney intended these batteries to augment the militia forces already supporting him from the banks of St. Leonard's Creek.<sup>65</sup> Before the reinforcements arrived, Barney and his flotillamen repulsed a British effort to navigate up St. Leonard's Creek and destroy his flotilla. They not only drove off Cochrane's barges, but also inflicted serious damage to the eighteen-gun schooner, HMS *St. Lawrence*, located at the mouth of St. Leonard's creek.<sup>66</sup>

On 12 June, Jones dispatched Marine Lieutenant (soon to be captain) Samuel Miller with about 110 marines and three light 12 pounders to support Barney's flotilla and maintain security along the banks of St. Leonard's Creek.<sup>67</sup> Jones had great faith in

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<sup>62</sup> Secretary of the Navy William Jones to Captain Joshua Barney, 18 February 1814, *Naval War*, III, 33-35; Barney to Jones, 1 March 1814, *Naval War*, III, 35.

<sup>63</sup> Barney to Jones, 3 June 1814, *Naval War*, I, 80-81; Rear Admiral George Cockburn, R.N., to Captain Robert Barrie, R.N., 5 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 84.

<sup>64</sup> Congressman Jonathan Roberts to Jones, 18 December 1812, *Naval War*, II, 634-436; Captain Joshua Barney to Secretary of the Navy William Jones, 9 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 84-85.

<sup>65</sup> Captain Joshua Barney to Secretary of the Navy William Jones, 9 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 84-85.

<sup>66</sup> Barney to Jones, 11 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 88-89; Barrie to Cockburn, 11 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 89-91; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 338-340.

the training and professionalism of these marines whom he considered among the finest troops within the Washington area.<sup>68</sup> He had also coordinated with the Secretary of the Army, John Armstrong, for additional artillery and infantry to support Barney.<sup>69</sup> Collectively, the joint force of navy, Marine Corps, and army units provided an adequate capability for Barney to launch an attack against British ships at the mouth of St. Leonard's Creek.

During the early morning hours of 26 June 1814, the combined fire from the army, Marine Corps, and flotilla awoke the British seamen with a violent attack focused on the frigates, HMS *Lorie* and HMS *Narcissus*.<sup>70</sup> After a two hour pounding in which the Americans gained an advantage, the British ships withdrew and moved down the Patuxent to new positions near the Chesapeake Bay.<sup>71</sup> Barney then fled from his confinement in St. Leonard's Creek, moving his flotilla up the Patuxent where he hoped to have more options for future action.<sup>72</sup> Yet as Cochrane continued to press Barney's gunboats, a large British amphibious force landed on 19 August at Benedict, Maryland.<sup>73</sup> The combined effects of these actions ultimately forced Barney to scuttle his flotilla and

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<sup>67</sup> Secretary of the Navy Jones to Samuel Miller, 18 June 1814, *National Archives and Records Administration (NARA hereafter), Washington, DC. Record Group (RG) 80, General Records of the Department of the Navy, Officer of the Marine Corps*, 205; Secretary of the Navy Jones to Lieutenant Colonel F. Wharton, Commandant of the Marine Corps dated 10 June 1814, *NARA, RG 80*, 205-6.

<sup>68</sup> Jones to Barney, 10 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 85-88.

<sup>69</sup> Jones to Barney, 12 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 97-98.

<sup>70</sup> Barney to Jones, 26 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 123; Joshua Barney to Louis Barney, 27 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 123-125.

<sup>71</sup> Brown to Cockburn, 27 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 127.

<sup>72</sup> Barney to Jones, 26 June 1814, *Naval War*, III, 123.

<sup>73</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 341; Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 317-318.

to use his sailors and marines for other service in defense of Washington.<sup>74</sup> The aggressive British action on the Patuxent coupled with the landing at Benedict convinced Barney that Washington represented the primary objective of the British campaign.<sup>75</sup>

Despite the landing of British troops and their subsequent movement toward Washington, confusion about the strategic and tactical situations remained in the minds of American leaders. Some members of the Madison cabinet, led by Secretary of the Army, John Armstrong, believed Washington offered no strategic advantage to the British and that the landing at Benedict could only be a feint. Others considered Washington the objective, but remained confused about the tactical situation. This group included the Commanding Officer of the 10<sup>th</sup> Military District, Brigadier General William Winder, who had responsibility for the defense of Washington.<sup>76</sup> The British used tactical deception very well in their march toward Washington, and the lack of good reconnaissance by American commanders enhanced their efforts.<sup>77</sup> Uncertain of British intentions, Winder floundered under the fog of war and continually moved his troops around the countryside in the days approaching the battle. Uncertain where to position his force, Winder fell back to Washington on 23 August with most of his army, including the naval detachment under Barney and Miller.<sup>78</sup> On the morning of 24 August, Winder

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<sup>74</sup> Jones to Barney, 20 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 188; Jones to Barney, 19 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 186-87.

<sup>75</sup> Barney to Jones, 20 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 187.

<sup>76</sup> Anthony S. Pitch, *The Burning of Washington: The British Invasion of 1814* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 18; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 341.

<sup>77</sup> Marine Corps Research Center (MCRC hereafter), Quantico, Virginia. Archives, Samuel Miller Papers, *The Battle of Bladensburg: in a Letter to Henry Banning, Esq., by an Officer of General Smith's Staff, 10 September 1814*, 12.

<sup>78</sup> Barney to Jones, 29 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 207-208.

finally realized that the British intended to move against Washington along the Bladensburg road; he immediately moved his forces to Bladensburg where he could dispute their passage.<sup>79</sup>

The city of Bladensburg sits near the upper forks of what is now called the Anacostia River. At the time of the battle, the local population referred to it as the Eastern Branch of the Potomac. The river did not represent a formable obstacle at that point, but was sufficient to compel an army to slow its advance and canalize its movement. Additionally, good defensive ground lay across the river to the west of Bladensburg. All of these factors should have worked to the benefit of the American defenders. British units marching from the south and east needed to pass through the town of Bladensburg, and either cross the bridge or move through the river in order to reach American defenses.<sup>80</sup> The terrain, as occupied at the beginning of the battle, provided military advantage to the American army.<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately, Winder's force did not arrive on the battlefield in time to organize their defenses properly or to prepare good positions.

Both armies arrived at the battle site in a state of near exhaustion from the marching of that morning and the previous several days.<sup>82</sup> In addition, both commanders introduced their forces into the battle in a piecemeal manner. But British commanders would do so more quickly and more effectively, and this had an impact

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<sup>79</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 3.

<sup>80</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 344.

<sup>81</sup> Determined by personal observation of the author and the comments of General Ross. Also, see Ross's comments in Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 346.

<sup>82</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 5.

during the early stages of the fighting. When British forces entered the town of Bladensburg, either side had the capability to win the battle. The British had the advantage of experienced regular troops, Congreve rockets, and the initiative of the offense. Yet their artillery lagged behind and did not arrive in time to provide fire support during the battle.<sup>83</sup> The Americans had the advantage of superior ground, artillery on the field, and a slight advantage in numbers, although very few regulars.

First blood in the battle of Bladensburg went to the American army when its artillery and riflemen opened fire on British troops moving through Bladensburg.<sup>84</sup> As the British moved across the Bladensburg Bridge, American cannon raked their forces but did not prevent passage.<sup>85</sup> Failure to destroy the bridge across the East Branch and contain British troops within Bladensburg constituted the first major American mistake. The leading British elements charged across the bridge and conducted a frontal assault against the most forward positions while enveloping to the American left flank. The unexpected collapse of Colonel Tobias Stansbury's Baltimore militia, which constituted the forward edge of the American defenses, facilitated the British envelopment.<sup>86</sup> Concerned with the disjointed deployment of his forces, the exposure of his left flank, and the collapse of Stansbury's regiment, Winder decided to order a retreat.<sup>87</sup> At this point, the tactical advantage shifted decisively to the British as confusion reigned within

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<sup>83</sup> Cockburn to Cochrane, 27 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 220-223.

<sup>84</sup> Cockburn to Cochrane, 27 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 220-223.

<sup>85</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 8; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 347.

<sup>86</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 8.

<sup>87</sup> Winder to Armstrong, 27 August 1814, *Documents Accompanying the Report of the Committee to Inquire into the Causes and Particulars of the Invasion of Washington by the British Forces in the Month of August 1814*, 120-121.

the American army. Winder's forward elements had reached the field just before the battle, and his follow-on forces were still arriving as the retreat began.<sup>88</sup> The withdrawal quickly deteriorated from an orderly retirement, intended to reposition the army, into a disorganized rout.<sup>89</sup>

Winder intended to regroup his force on the high ground further to the rear of the battle area and again engage the attacking British.<sup>90</sup> Just as Winder ordered his retreat, the flotillamen and marines arrived and began establishing good defensive positions on terrain the British had not yet occupied.<sup>91</sup> Winder hoped that a strong defense from these positions would weaken the enemy enough so that a reorganized defense from high ground at the rear of the battle area could repulse the British attack. Winder's idea was tactically sound and could possibly have worked considering the excellent performance of the naval detachment once it engaged the British advance. But Winder lost control of the movement as many of his retreating troops left the battlefield without restraint.<sup>92</sup> Most of these soldiers simply did not know what their commander expected of them, or where to go.

The collapse of command and control over the American army resulted from inadequate planning and Winder's confused communications. He continually issued direction, and then changed or withdrew what he had ordered.<sup>93</sup> This created uncertainty

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<sup>88</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 13.

<sup>89</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 7.

<sup>90</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 9.

<sup>91</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 9.

<sup>93</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 12.

in the minds of his officers and men. Additionally, he had failed to explain his concept of defense in depth, and had not designated rally points at which the retreating troops could reassemble.<sup>94</sup> As a result, only the marines and flotillamen stood their ground, and they provided a virtuoso display of combat effectiveness. Had the majority of Winder's force performed like his naval contingent, he could have conceivably prevailed at the Battle of Bladensburg.<sup>95</sup>

As the American forces fled the battlefield in disorder, the marines and flotillamen took a position on the high ground about 400 yards from the forward defenses. As the British approached, they recognized this new threat and momentarily halted their advance. Considering the condition of the American army at this point, the British did not expect a serious engagement. When the defenders held their fire, the British troops again moved forward against Barney's position. The flotillamen had established themselves astride the main road with the two 18 pounders that Miller acquired from the Navy Yard. Miller had positioned his marines and a few flotillamen on excellent ground to Barney's right and retained the three 12 pounders acquired from the Marine Park. Troops not required to serve the batteries provided musket fire to support and protect the big guns.<sup>96</sup> Still further to the right, a strong force of approximately 700 Maryland militiamen under the command of Colonel William Beall occupied a commanding piece of terrain.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 13.

<sup>95</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 6; Barney to Jones, Report of the Battle of Bladensburg, 29 August 1814, Marine Corps Historical Center, Navy Yard, Washington, DC, Archives, 1-2.

<sup>96</sup> Barney to Jones, 29 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 207.

<sup>97</sup> Smith Staff letter, *Miller Papers*, MCRC, 6.

When the British resumed their attack against Barney's position astride the main road, the flotillamen opened up with a withering fire that cleared the road and decimated the forward echelon of the British force. The British attempted two more assaults with disastrous results, and then moved by their left flank to envelop Barney's right. This brought them into the marines' field of fire who opened up with equally destructive fires, halting the British attack.<sup>98</sup> The battle then raged between the British and marines. At one point, British troops attempted to move further to the right but Miller ordered a counterattack, which drove them back and discouraged further effort in that quarter.<sup>99</sup> The nature of the immediate terrain, coupled with the fields of fire available to the naval detachment, forced the British to move by their left flank in an attempt to resume their attack.<sup>100</sup>

British efforts to outflank the naval contingent had met with devastating results at the hand of the marines. The best tactic remaining to the British involved a yet wider envelopment conducted beyond the range of the marine's fire. This would take them onto terrain in front of Beall's regiment on the American extreme right. Since the Marylanders held strong positions, both Barney and Miller expected them to repulse any British effort in their front. Success on the battlefield remained a theoretical possibility for the American army, even at this late stage in the fighting. But when the British appeared before Beall's force, the Marylanders fired several token shots and—to the astonishment of Barney and Miller—retreated before their enemy. This left the naval

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<sup>98</sup> Barney to Jones, 29 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 207; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 347-348; Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 319.

<sup>99</sup> Joseph A. Whitehorne, *The Battle for Baltimore, 1814* (Baltimore: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1997), 133.

<sup>100</sup> This conclusion is based on the author's personal observation and evaluation of the battlefield.

detachment as the only remaining American fighting unit on the field of battle.<sup>101</sup> It also exposed Miller's right flank to British attack at the same time the enemy began a wide envelopment to the left.

The marines and flotillamen continued the fight until their ammunition ran out and both Barney and Miller suffered serious wounds. With the enemy on all sides and moving toward their rear, Barney ordered the naval force off the battlefield, ending all resistance to the British advance.<sup>102</sup> Although Barney and the flotillamen received considerable recognition for their stalwart effort, Miller and his marines received the most widespread recognition for the fight they had staged. For his performance, Miller received promotion to brevet Major from President Madison, being one of only four officers so honored at the battle of Bladensburg.<sup>103</sup>

The battle of Bladensburg remains controversial because of the quick defeat and disorganized rout that became general over most of the battlefield. The outcome of that battle, coupled with its culminating event—the burning of much of the nation's capitol—engendered bitter recriminations at the time, and ensured perpetual attention thereafter.<sup>104</sup> Further adding to the humiliation, a British naval element under Captain James Gordon attacked other sites near the capitol including Fort Washington and Alexandria, Virginia. During these actions, Gordon destroyed military facilities and captured merchantmen and

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<sup>101</sup> Barney to Jones, 29 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 207-208; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 348.

<sup>102</sup> Barney to Jones, 29 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 207-208; Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 348.

<sup>103</sup> Citation of President James Madison 26 November 1814, *NARA*, RG 80.

<sup>104</sup> Marine Corps Historical Library, Navy Yard, Washington D.C., Archives, Rare Book Collection. *Documents Accompanying the Report of the Committee to Inquire into the Causes and Particulars of the Invasion of Washington by the British Forces in the Month of August, 1814* (Washington: A. and G. Way, Publishers, 1814), 24.

cargos.<sup>105</sup> The gallant though unsuccessful efforts of John Rodgers and a small naval party to harass Gordon's retreat down the Potomac offset—somewhat but not entirely—the disgraceful abandonment of Fort Washington and surrender of Alexandria.<sup>106</sup> After the British burned Washington and inflicted other destruction along the Potomac, many leaders felt certain that Baltimore would be their next major objective.

The battle of Baltimore in September 1814 resulted from an ongoing British effort to punish the United States with the amphibious force they had built-up during 1814. Encouraged by the success of their raids in the Chesapeake and the victory at Bladensburg, British commanders believed a similar success at Baltimore could be easily achieved. The decision to attack Baltimore amounted to a strategic compromise from the various views of principal commanders in the Chesapeake Bay.<sup>107</sup> Although the destruction of Washington had important political and psychological value, many believed that Baltimore offered a better target due to its dynamic commerce, shipbuilding capacity, and support of privateering activity. Additionally, British commanders had become accustomed to raiding at will. Effective opposition occurred only rarely, and never when Cockburn had direct command of the landing operation.<sup>108</sup>

During the weeks immediately following the sacking of Washington, Cochrane, Cockburn, and Ross agreed to undertake an attack on Baltimore before leaving the Chesapeake Bay.<sup>109</sup> Cochrane acceded to this plan although he preferred to attack Rhode

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<sup>105</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 350.

<sup>106</sup> Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 319-320.

<sup>107</sup> Cochrane to First Lord of the Admiralty Viscount Robert Saunders Dundas Melville, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 289.

<sup>108</sup> Cochrane to Melville, 3 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 269.

Island first, and then return south to destroy Baltimore.<sup>110</sup> In a private letter written to the First Lord of the Admiralty immediately after the Battle of Baltimore, Cochrane expressed regret at not following his instincts, stating he only changed his mind at the insistence of Ross, and to preserve unanimity between the two services.<sup>111</sup> Throughout the Chesapeake operation, Cockburn proved the most aggressive and strong willed of the senior British officers. Most likely, Cockburn convinced Ross to attack Baltimore immediately, and collectively they persuaded Cochrane.

Cochrane's regret at attacking Baltimore during September did not stem from any empathy for the city or its inhabitants. He considered Baltimore the richest and most democratic city in America, and one that "ought to be laid in Ashes."<sup>112</sup> Cochrane expected to receive further reinforcements during November to enhance his ability to "act with vigor." By raiding Rhode Island first, he could return south able to act against Baltimore with greater strength.<sup>113</sup> But Cockburn and Ross convinced Cochrane to destroy Baltimore while still in the Chesapeake despite the smaller troop strength, and concern for health risks associated with "the sickly season."<sup>114</sup> In his official report, Cochrane characterized the attack as a probe, intended to be converted into an attack

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<sup>109</sup> Cochrane to Croker, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 186; Rear Admiral Edward Codrington to Jane Codrington, 10 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 271.

<sup>110</sup> Cochrane to Melville, 3 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 269-71.

<sup>111</sup> Cochrane to Melville, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, page 289; Codrington to Codrington, 10 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 271.

<sup>112</sup> Cochrane to Melville, 3 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 269-270.

<sup>113</sup> Cochrane to Melville, 3 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 269-270.

<sup>114</sup> Codrington to Codrington, 10 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 271; Cochrane to Melville, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 289.

should the opportunity appear advantageous.<sup>115</sup> This is an obvious face-saving device as he committed his entire combat capability to the ill-fated mission, including three infantry brigades reinforced with artillery and marines, and sixteen major combat ships.<sup>116</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1814, American authorities in Baltimore and the War Department conducted extensive planning for defense of that city.<sup>117</sup> On 25 August, at the urging of regular naval and army officers in the vicinity, the Baltimore Committee of Vigilance and Safety—acting as the *de facto* city government—appointed militia Major General Samuel Smith as the overall commander of Baltimore defenses.<sup>118</sup> On 26 August, Governor Levin Winder validated the appointment and further implied that Smith held federal service rank—not mere militia rank—because of President Madison’s call-up order of 4 July 1814.<sup>119</sup> As commanding general of the third division of Maryland militia, Smith had energetically taken control of defensive preparations without waiting for direction or official sanction. Both military and civilian leaders on the scene

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<sup>115</sup> Cochrane to Croker, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 286.

<sup>116</sup> Cochrane to Croker, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 286.

<sup>117</sup> Major General Samuel Smith to Secretary of War John Armstrong, 30 June 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Smith to Armstrong, 11 July 1814 regarding enemy sightings and requesting callout authority, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Smith to Armstrong, 19 July 1814, requesting rifles and power, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Smith to Armstrong, 20 July 1814, relating to command relations, artillery support, and reinforcements for Fort McHenry, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Smith to Armstrong, 28 July 1814, requesting his troops not be requisitioned upon call up, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>118</sup> Smith to Armstrong, 24 July 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Lord, *The Dawn’s Early Light*, 229.

<sup>119</sup> Smith to Armstrong, 24 July 1814, NARA RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Lord, 231.

generally accepted Smith's authority and leadership role. But the potential for command disunity remained on the horizon due to Smith's status as a militia officer.<sup>120</sup>

Immediately following the destruction of Washington, citizens and leaders in Baltimore became highly excited, fearing that the British planned a similar fate for their city. But rather than take council of their fears, Baltimoreans redoubled their efforts to defend themselves.<sup>121</sup> In the process, Secretary of the Navy William Jones had ordered Rodgers to the Washington-Baltimore area during the crisis surrounding the British march on the nation's capital. But Rodgers and his force of sailors and marines arrived late in the process and played no important role during these disasters.<sup>122</sup> After the destruction of Washington, Jones used Rodgers and his naval contingent as a mobile reserve, able to respond to enemy activity at Alexandria, Annapolis, or Baltimore. During this period, Rodgers developed respect for Smith's abilities and considered his leadership essential to the defense of the city. Rodgers also recognized the need for strong leadership among the various naval forces located in the Baltimore area. Following the lead of Smith, he began to assert his authority as the ranking naval officer, and in the process, subordinated such illustrious officers as David Porter and Oliver Hazard Perry. Rodgers organized all naval personnel in or about Baltimore into two divisions under these subordinate commanders.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Commodore John Rodgers to Secretary of the Navy William Jones, 27 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 259-260.

<sup>121</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the war of 1812*, II, 350.

<sup>122</sup> Commodore John Rodgers to Secretary of the Navy William Jones, 27 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 259-260.

<sup>123</sup> Commodore John Rodgers: General Orders issued at Baltimore, 28 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 260.

During the final days of August, many American leaders remained uncertain about British intentions. As a result, Jones ordered Rodgers and the bulk of his force to the Washington area where they could react to British moves along the Potomac or Patuxent watercourses. At Smith's insistence, Jones authorized Rodgers to move to Snowdens, Maryland where he could also respond to British incursions against Baltimore.<sup>124</sup> But even this did not satisfy Smith, and he continued to press officials in Washington for the return of Rodgers and his men, which he considered essential to defend his most vulnerable positions.<sup>125</sup> When American observers at Point Lookout detected the British fleet sailing up the Chesapeake Bay on 29 August, Smith and Rodgers agreed that the naval contingent could do little good at Snowdens.<sup>126</sup> Large-scale activity in the Bay suggested a change in British intentions and portended an attack on either Baltimore or Annapolis. Because of Smith's badgering, Jones ordered Rodgers to return to Baltimore, and by 8 September, his seamen and marines had encamped amid the impressive "Forts, Redoubts, and Entrenchments thrown up all round the Town."<sup>127</sup>

Although Rodgers had wearied of playing soldier and questioned if Baltimore still required his services, he continued an energetic effort to improve the city's defenses.<sup>128</sup> He ordered the sloops of war located in Baltimore harbor into positions where they could

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<sup>124</sup> Smith to Rodgers, 1 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 261; Rodgers to Smith, 1 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 261.

<sup>125</sup> Smith to Armstrong, 5 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>126</sup> Thomas Swann to Armstrong, report from observers at Point Lookout, 29 August 1814, NARA, RG 107, Roll 66; Smith to Rodgers, 1 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 261; Rodgers to Smith, 1 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, page 261-262.

<sup>127</sup> Rodgers to Commodore Alexander Murray, 9 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 263.

<sup>128</sup> Rodgers to Commodore Alexander Murray, 9 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 263.

support Forts McHenry, Babcock, and Covington.<sup>129</sup> He placed barges and batteries in position to provide additional support to these forts as well as at Point Lazaretto across the Patapsco River from Fort McHenry.<sup>130</sup> Rodgers also reinforced Smith's main defensive line on Hampstead Hill by emplacing batteries manned by sailors and marines, to cover key avenues of approach along Philadelphia Road and Sparrow's Point Road. Additionally he stationed marines—those not required to serve artillery pieces—into entrenchments located between the batteries to function as infantrymen.<sup>131</sup> This contribution proved so important that the defenders named it Rodgers Basin. The defensive line that Smith laid out along Hempstead Hill provided open fields of interlocking fire throughout the battle area.<sup>132</sup> Rodgers's sailors and marines constituted an important and fully integrated element within these revetments. Other units involved in the defensive plan included numerous infantry and artillery units of Maryland militia, one division of Pennsylvania militia, one division of Virginia militia, and various detachments of U.S. infantry, artillery, and dragoons.<sup>133</sup>

Despite strong leadership from Smith and Rodgers, and the strong defensive preparations, the question of command relations threatened to undercut the military effort at Baltimore. Brigadier General William Winder, nephew of the Maryland governor,

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<sup>129</sup> Rodgers to Master Commandant Robert T. Spence, 8 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 263.

<sup>130</sup> Lieutenant Solomon Rutter, Flotilla Service, to Rodgers, 11 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 264.

<sup>131</sup> Rodgers to Jones, 23 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 298-302.

<sup>132</sup> George Robert Gleig, *A Narrative of the Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans, under Generals Ross, Pakenham, and Lambert, in the Years 1814 and 1815; with some accounts of the countries visited* (London: John Murray, Albemarle-Street, 1821), 187.

<sup>133</sup> Smith to acting Secretary of War James Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66. (President Madison appointed Monroe as acting Secretary of War as a replacement for John Armstrong on 4 September 1814.)

commanded the 10<sup>th</sup> Military District, which included both Washington and Baltimore. Since Winder held a commission in the regular army, and Smith held a militia commission, Winder technically outranked him in the hierarchy of that era. But Winder had not been involved in the months of preparation for the defense of Baltimore, and he suffered discredit due to the defeat at Bladensburg and the burning of Washington. When Winder arrived at Baltimore on 27 August, he fully expected to hold the senior command position, and potential for confusion and disunity prevailed.<sup>134</sup>

Smith recognized the need for unity of command, and quickly acted to remove any doubt and clarify his status. In a letter to Secretary of War John Armstrong, Smith formally assumed command at Baltimore, citing the 4 July 1814 call-up by President Madison as having placed him into federal service. Although somewhat ambiguous, being in “federal service” could imply that Smith now outranked Winder on the field since Smith possessed a major general’s commission and Winder held that of a brigadier. Smith also emphasized that Governor Winder—a Federalist whose support the Madison government openly courted—had endorsed him over his nephew as the joint commander for Baltimore defenses. In the same missive, Smith intimated that he intended a subordinate role for Winder, thereby placing the Secretary of War in a position where he must affirm or repudiate the assertion.<sup>135</sup> The acquiescence of acting Secretary of War James Monroe—who replaced Armstrong on 4 September—and President Madison to Smith’s assumption of command resolved the issue much to the chagrin of William

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<sup>134</sup> Smith to Armstrong, 27 August 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Rodgers to Jones, 27 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 259.

<sup>135</sup> Smith to Armstrong, 27 August 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

Winder. It is to Winder's credit that he cooperated entirely with Smith during the period of adjudication and in all subsequent activities despite what he considered an injustice.<sup>136</sup>

As American lookouts observed British fleet activity during the first week of September, many leaders could not discern their intentions.<sup>137</sup> But Samuel Smith had no such confusion, believing with certainty that the British planned to attack Baltimore.<sup>138</sup> As Smith predicted, the British fleet sailed up the Chesapeake on 9 and 10 September and into the Patapsco River, where it found anchorage at North Point, Maryland, on 11 September.<sup>139</sup> Even before the British landing force came ashore, Smith dispatched a reinforced Brigade under Brigadier General John Stricker to contest its advance on Baltimore.<sup>140</sup> During the early morning hours of 12 September, the British began an unopposed landing at North Point, where the Patapsco meets the Chesapeake. The landing site lies roughly fourteen miles southeast of Baltimore. The route of march from North Point to Baltimore dissects a peninsula that juts southeast from the city between the Patapsco and Back Rivers.

The British scheme of maneuver consisted of marching the army up the peninsula to attack Baltimore from either the east or north, depending on the situation they found.<sup>141</sup> The second and equally important aspect of this plan involved sending a squadron of frigates and bomb-ships up the Patapsco to provide naval gunfire support for

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<sup>136</sup> Rodgers to Jones, 27 August 1814, *Naval War*, III, 259-260.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas Swann to Armstrong, 29 August 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, roll 66; Swann to Armstrong, 5 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M221, roll 66.

<sup>138</sup> Smith to Monroe, 11 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M221, Roll 66.

<sup>139</sup> Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 164-165.

<sup>140</sup> Smith to Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>141</sup> Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814 *Naval War*, III, 282.

the attacking force and to bombard the city of Baltimore.<sup>142</sup> By 0700 on 12 September, the British had established their landing force ashore and quickly began the movement toward Baltimore.<sup>143</sup> By the time Ross had his army in motion, Stricker knew of the landing and began preparing forward positions from which to dispute the advance.<sup>144</sup> For his main defensive line, Stricker selected a position at the narrowest point on the peninsula, about midway between North Point and Baltimore.<sup>145</sup> His position lay adjacent to the Methodist meetinghouse, with its left flank tied into an inlet from Back River named Bread and Cheese Creek, and his right protected by Bear Creek. This location provided Stricker the ability to concentrate his combat power, and his troops immediately started digging entrenchments, establishing fields of fire, and building obstacles.<sup>146</sup> Meanwhile, he advanced a contingent of riflemen and cavalry to harass the British approach and provide intelligence about its size and movements.<sup>147</sup>

Stricker's reinforced brigade consisted of the Fifth, Sixth, Twenty-seventh, Thirty-ninth, and Fifty-first regiments of Maryland Militia. Additionally he had the fifth Maryland Cavalry regiment, the First Maryland Artillery Regiment, the First Maryland Rifle battalion, and a detachment of Pennsylvania infantry assigned to his brigade, further

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<sup>142</sup> Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282-285; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 166-167.

<sup>143</sup> Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 170-171.

<sup>144</sup> Brigadier General John Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282.

<sup>145</sup> Brigadier General John Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282.

<sup>146</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 176.

<sup>147</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 1007, M 221, Roll 66; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 172-176.

enhancing his combat capability. As he prepared to challenge Ross's passage, Stricker had about 3,185 effectives and the advantage of a good position on the ground.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, Stricker had a limited mission intended only to delay and inflict punishment on the British enemy. Smith intended the main defense of Baltimore to occur at the extensive entrenchments along Hampstead Hill and Rodgers Bastion, not on the approaches to the city.<sup>149</sup> Ross's force moving toward Stricker consisted of three reinforced regiments including infantry, artillery, and marines, totaling about 4,000 effectives.<sup>150</sup> If Stricker had the advantage of ground, Ross had the advantage of numbers. He also had benefit of well-trained, well-equipped, well-disciplined, and well-led, veteran fighters.

The British army deployed from its beachhead in column of regiments with good tactical security to the front and flanks. They located the artillery batteries in the center of their column, providing protection during the march and the capability for rapid deployment upon contact. After a short time, the British passed a partially completed entrenchment line, which the American defenders had prepared but chosen not to occupy.<sup>151</sup> This provided the British an important position three days later for protecting their force during its tactical reembarkation.<sup>152</sup> Just past this unfinished trench lay Gorsuch's farm about three miles in front of Stricker's line. One mile beyond Gorsuch's

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<sup>148</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M221, Roll 66.

<sup>149</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Lord, *The Dawn's Early Light*, 248.

<sup>150</sup> Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 170-171; Charles G. Muller, *The Darkest Day, 1814: The Washington-Baltimore Campaign* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1963), 186; Whitehorne, *The Battle for Baltimore, 1814*, 232-233.

<sup>151</sup> Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 170-172.

<sup>152</sup> Smith to Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

farm, Stricker's advanced force of riflemen had taken positions in a blacksmith shop and the surrounding woods.<sup>153</sup>

Initially, Ross had no knowledge of Stricker's force, due to deceptive information received from a captured American cavalryman.<sup>154</sup> British leaders expected to meet only vedettes and skirmishers during the march to Baltimore. When the advanced element of Ross's force reached the vicinity of the blacksmith's shop American riflemen opened fire, causing confusion among the British troops. Due to the flat ground and heavy woods, British officers could not assess the situation without moving to the point of action.<sup>155</sup> As Ross rode toward the sound of musketry, he received a fatal wound from the rifle of an American sharpshooter. But as Ross lay dying, his advanced guard began to drive the Americans from the woods, much to the chagrin of Stricker.<sup>156</sup> This action brought about the battle of Long Log Lane (also known as the battle of North Point) just as Stricker intended. But Stricker expected the riflemen and cavalry to inflict greater casualties on his enemy before they reached his entrenchments.<sup>157</sup>

Stricker probably held expectation beyond the capability of his advanced force. He conceived the riflemen laying down a "galling fire" against the invaders, while the cavalry continuously harassed their flanks.<sup>158</sup> In Stricker's mind, the more his advanced element could degrade the enemy, the longer he could hold his position. The longer he

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<sup>153</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>154</sup> Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 172.

<sup>155</sup> Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 173.

<sup>156</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 175.

<sup>157</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>158</sup> Stricker to Smith, dated 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

held his position, the weaker the enemy would be upon arriving at the Baltimore defenses. Although this constituted sound tactical thinking, it failed to consider the inexperience of his soldiers. It also failed to consider that British commanders could rapidly deploy regimental sized units against his advanced element, which amounted to little more than a harassment party. Yet despite these factors, the American riflemen did not immediately break when the British moved against them. They maintained a desultory action until a rumor spread that the British had made an amphibious landing to their rear from Back Bay. With this, they gave up the idea of a fighting withdrawal, and retreated to Striker's line where he placed both the rifle battalion and cavalry units in a position on his right flank.<sup>159</sup>

After driving the riflemen from the woods near the blacksmith shop, the British force pressed on until about 1400 in the afternoon when it confronted Stricker's main line of defense.<sup>160</sup> The British leaders immediately recognized the strength of Stricker's position, noting his use of terrain and skillful deployment of artillery and infantry units. Most British officers overestimated the defenders at 6,000 men or greater.<sup>161</sup> The new British commander, Colonel Arthur Brooke immediately advanced his force and made disposition for a general attack.<sup>162</sup> After driving in Stricker's vedettes and other advanced elements, an artillery duel opened between the two forces that lasted for about

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<sup>159</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 175-176.

<sup>160</sup> Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 175.

<sup>161</sup> Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282; Cockburn to Cochrane, 15 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 279; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 175.

<sup>162</sup> Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 175-181.

half an hour prior to the British assault on the American position. Stricker actually ceased firing his artillery in order to prepare his guns with grape and canister for the British infantry attack.<sup>163</sup> At this point, the American defensive line consisted of one rifle battalion, the Fifth and Twenty-seventh regiments, and the artillery units forward deployed near the main defensive position. About half a mile to his rear, Stricker had the Thirty-ninth and Fifty-first regiments preparing entrenchments, and one half mile behind them, he had placed the Sixth regiment.<sup>164</sup> By positioning of his forces in this manner, Stricker intended to engage the British in successive actions, inflicting attrition throughout their march toward Baltimore. It is a classical application of the tactical evolution known as defense in depth.<sup>165</sup>

As the enemy assaulted his position, Stricker quickly discerned that the main effort would come against his left flank. Realizing that he did not have the necessary strength to defend all along the line while resisting a major thrust on his flank, Stricker ordered the Thirty-ninth regiment to move into position at the left end of his line, and the Fifty-first to refuse his left flank from a position at right angles with the Thirty-ninth.<sup>166</sup> Although this provided Stricker a greater opportunity to fight from his main defensive line, it eliminated his second defensive position. That action left the Sixth regiment as his only reserve and the only prepared position to which he could withdraw. In short, his three-phased defense in depth suddenly became limited to only two echelons. As the

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<sup>163</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>164</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1813, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>165</sup> Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Washington: 14 September 2007, 147.

<sup>166</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; The word “refuse” is a tactical term which means to bend the end of a defensive line to protect it from a flanking attack.

British pressed their attack, Stricker's left gave way, but his center and right held fast until their position became untenable.<sup>167</sup> At that point, the American and British accounts of the action differ substantially.<sup>168</sup>

According to the British, after the collapse of the American left flank, the defenders took to their heels and fled as precipitously as they had at the battle of Bladensburg.<sup>169</sup> Most British observers contend the American force suffered between 500 to 600 casualties and retreated all the way to the Baltimore defenses.<sup>170</sup> In fact, American casualties amounted to 24 killed and 139 wounded against British casualties of 39 killed 251 wounded.<sup>171</sup> Colonel Brooke admitted that the brief engagement had been sharp but believed he completely routed his enemy. He also suggested that he did not pursue the retreating Americans because of the lateness of the day and the fatigue of his own troops.<sup>172</sup> Brooke's troops may have been tired, but they still had plenty of daylight left as the battle ended at about 1600 that afternoon.<sup>173</sup> Regardless of his reasons, the British army encamped the evening of 12 September on the field of battle.

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<sup>167</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 180.

<sup>168</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 351.

<sup>169</sup> Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282-285; Cockburn to Cochrane, 15 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 180; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 182-183.

<sup>170</sup> Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282-285; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 181.

<sup>171</sup> Gilbert Auchinlek, *A History of the War between Great Britain and the United States of America During the Years 1812, 1813, & 1814*. (London: Arms and Armor Press, 1855), 375; Muller, *The Darkest Day*, 190-191.

<sup>172</sup> Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282-285.

<sup>173</sup> Smith to Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 181-182.

The American account of the battle contends that the defensive line held very well until the Fifty-first regiment failed to refuse the left flank. After moving from its reserve position to the main defensive line, the regiment immediately met the advancing enemy, and “delivered one random fire and retreated precipitately,” according to Stricker<sup>174</sup> He blames the failure to check the enemy for a longer period entirely on the Fifty-first, calling its actions “senseless desertion.”<sup>175</sup> He admits that some further disorder followed the collapse of the Fifty-first, but insists that the remaining troops rallied, continued resistance for a time, and retreated in an orderly manner only when ordered to do so. Regardless of the manner of his retreat, Stricker established a new defensive position at the site occupied by the Sixth regiment about one mile from the original line of battle.<sup>176</sup> After seeing that the enemy had not pursued, Stricker decided to move his force back to the Baltimore defenses where Smith assigned his brigade an area in front of the left flank, adjacent to the forces under Winder.<sup>177</sup>

The next day, Brooke gingerly pushed his force forward through obstacles and foul weather arriving at a position two miles in front of Hampstead Hill at about 1000 on the morning of 13 September.<sup>178</sup> Upon conducting a reconnaissance of the defensive positions, British leaders realized they had engaged only a small portion of the American combat force in the previous day of fighting. Brooke and other British officers estimated

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<sup>174</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, Roll 66.

<sup>175</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, Roll 66.

<sup>176</sup> Stricker to Smith, 13 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, Roll 66.

<sup>177</sup> Smith to Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>178</sup> Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282-285; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 185-187.

the American army at between 15,000 and 20,000 effectives supported by vast amounts of well-placed artillery.<sup>179</sup> The officers also recognized the formidable nature of the defensive entrenchments and the advantage that surrounding terrain offered to the defenders.<sup>180</sup> If the British army felt any exultation from the battle of Long Log Lane, the American positions at Baltimore severely dampened that spirit.<sup>181</sup>

As Brooke pondered the situation, he considered three viable options. A frontal attack against the American positions on Hampstead Hill offered no military advantage to the assaulting force. The British would have to move forward over a large open space for an extended period while being subject to massive firepower from well-protected defenses. To do this would invite slaughter on a massive scale. Additionally, the position of Winder and Stricker's forces would threaten their flank and rear as they assaulted the prepared defenses on Hampstead Hill. Brooke believed he could minimize these disadvantages by conducting a night attack, thereby negating the American advantage of superior artillery. But even a night attack would require support from the Royal Navy within Baltimore harbor. During the day of 13 September, Brooke still believed naval gunfire support would be available to support his attack on the city.<sup>182</sup>

A second option for British action involved a movement to the north, enveloping the strong entrenchments on Hempstead Hill and attacking the city at a weaker point. Initially, Brooke believed this to be his best choice although it also required naval gunfire

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<sup>179</sup> Cockburn to Cochrane, 15 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 279-82.

<sup>180</sup> Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282-285; Cockburn to Cochrane, 15 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 279-282; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 187.

<sup>181</sup> Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 187-188.

<sup>182</sup> Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 188.

support to ensure success.<sup>183</sup> Additionally, the surrounding terrain limited the amount of maneuver space available to Brooke, and the forces under Winder and Stricker held ground from which they could dispute his passage.<sup>184</sup> While engaged in any battle with Winder and Stricker, Brooke would offer his flank and rear to the American forces manning the palisades on or about Hampstead Hill. Given the vast numerical advantage of American forces on the battlefield, it would even be possible for them to threaten Brooke's army from the rear without weakening the defenses in the revetments. Brooke apparently recognized this as a high-risk option, as he concentrated his force in front of Smith's main defensive line in preparation for a night attack. In response, Smith moved Winder and Stricker to positions from which they could attack the British flank whether Brooke assaulted the ramparts or merely remain in place.<sup>185</sup>

The third available course of action amounted to a British retreat. Either of the first two options might be feasible, but only with substantial naval gunfire support.<sup>186</sup> Without it, the only good option involved moving back to North Point, reembarking on the ships, and placing the best possible face on their failure. But throughout the day, British leaders continued to seek a way of bringing the navy to bear. To provide the required naval gunfire support, British ships needed to destroy the guns and defenses of Fort McHenry, force their way through a set of obstacles at the mouth of the Northwest Branch, and position themselves to attack the American defenses around Baltimore. Fort

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<sup>183</sup> Brooke to Cochrane, 13 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 277.

<sup>184</sup> Smith to Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>185</sup> Smith to Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>186</sup> Brooke to Cochrane, 13 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 277; Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 188-189.

McHenry provided the key to this battle because without its destruction or neutralization, the accumulated firepower that Rodgers had organized would destroy British ships before they could reach battle stations in Baltimore harbor. Yet every time Cochrane's ships moved within range, the guns of Fort McHenry forced them to retreat. Not wanting to lose ships, the British admiral ordered his captains to bombard the fort from beyond two miles.<sup>187</sup>

British commanders knew their two-pronged attack on Baltimore could succeed only if executed in an integrated manner. The joint operation (combined operation in British parlance of the time) began as two separate events designed to converge during the final assault on the city. But prior to the climatic event, each element found itself confronted with obstacles greater than it could overcome alone. Although the British army could hope to attack the Baltimore defenses only with support from the guns of the fleet, the navy could not pass Fort McHenry.

As Ross landed his army at North Point and began to move up the peninsula on 12 September, Cochrane deployed sixteen ships to a position two and a half miles below Fort McHenry just outside the range of its guns.<sup>188</sup> Major George Armistead, a professional army officer, commanded the fort and about 1,000 men both regular and volunteer.<sup>189</sup> The defenders included artillerists, infantrymen, and assorted naval personnel from Commodore Joshua Barney's defunct flotilla. Armistead had worked closely with Smith, Winder, and Rodgers to ensure he had all the assets necessary to

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<sup>187</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59; Lord, *By the Dawn's Early Light*, 273.

<sup>188</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59.

<sup>189</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59; Norman G. Rukert, *Fort McHenry: Home of the Brave* (Baltimore: Bodine & Associates, Inc, 1983), 27.

defend his position.<sup>190</sup> The main structure of Fort McHenry consisted of a star shaped bastion made primarily of brick, wood, and masonry. It sat at the end of Whetstone Point where the Patapsco River splits into the Northwest Branch and Baltimore harbor to the north, and Ferry Branch to the south.<sup>191</sup> In addition to the batteries within the main structure, the fort included two powerful artillery positions outside the walls, which the defenders referred to as the upper battery and the lower battery.<sup>192</sup> Armistead located his infantry in a lower ditch where the soldiers could respond to any British landing directed against the fort.<sup>193</sup>

As Brooke's rain-soaked army struggled through American obstacles toward Baltimore during the morning hours of 13 September, Cochrane's vessels began an incessant bombardment of Fort McHenry, which continued throughout the day and night.<sup>194</sup> Finding the British ships beyond the effectiveness of his guns, Armistead ceased firing except when enemy vessels occasionally ventured into range.<sup>195</sup> The British attack came primarily from mortars and rockets, both firing projectiles designed to explode upon impact, or in the air over their targets. Fortunately for the American

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<sup>190</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59; Lord, *By the Dawn's Early Light*, 249; Whitehorne, *The Battle for Baltimore 1814*, 49.

<sup>191</sup> Rukert, *Fort McHenry: Home of the Brave*, 26.

<sup>192</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59; Rukert, *Fort McHenry: Home of the Brave*, 32.

<sup>193</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59.

<sup>194</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59; Gleig *Campaigns of the British Army*, 185-186

<sup>195</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59.

defenders, the rounds did not always explode due to the state of technology at that time.<sup>196</sup>

The British bombardment of Fort McHenry had mixed results during the day of 13 September. The ships inflicted some damage on the fort, and destroyed one 24-pounder killing or wounding several men.<sup>197</sup> Yet they could not suppress its guns, and every effort to move forward met with failure.<sup>198</sup> Even if the British ships had been able to run past the guns of the fort, they would have been easy targets when they reached the Northwest Branch due to obstacles emplaced across the mouth of the inlet. Smith and Rodgers had created a barrier that ran from Fort McHenry across the river to Point Lazaretto. It consisted of sunken merchant ships, covered by guns at Fort McHenry and Lazaretto Point; sloops of war; and barges mounting naval guns and artillery.<sup>199</sup> Undoubtedly, Cochrane could force a passage through the sunken ships, but not with the guns from the American forts and vessels covering them with fire. In an effort to break what had become a tactical stalemate, Cochrane devised a plan to conduct an amphibious assault against these American positions during the night of 13 September.

Cochrane reasoned that a stealthy landing force could move up the Ferry Branch under cover of darkness and attack Fort McHenry from the rear rendering it

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<sup>196</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59; Muller, *The Darkest Day*, 197.

<sup>197</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59

<sup>198</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59; Cochrane to Cocker, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 286-288.

<sup>199</sup> Rodgers to Master Commandant Robert T. Spence, 8 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 263; Lieutenant Solomon Rutter, Flotilla Service, to Rodgers, 11 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 264; Cochrane to Crocker, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 286-288; Cochrane to Ross, 12 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 273; Rukert, *Fort McHenry: Home of the Brave*, 22.

ineffective.<sup>200</sup> But doing so would not be easy, as several other defensive positions existed in the general vicinity where the landing would have to take place. Battery Babcock (sometimes called Fort Babcock) lay about a quarter of a mile up the Ferry Branch from Fort McHenry, and Fort Covington lay another quarter of a mile beyond that.<sup>201</sup> Cochrane assigned navy captain Charles Napier to lead a force of 1,250 men intended as both a diversion for Brooke, and a means to reduce Forts Covington and McHenry. Cochran's plan called for an assault element to move up the Ferry Branch with muffled oars, and establish a lodgment near the intended landing site. At 0100 in the morning of 14 September, the bomb and rocket ships would intensify their attack on Fort McHenry while the assault force opened fire on its objective area. At 0200, the assault force would go ashore and attack the forts using grappling hooks and scaling ladders.<sup>202</sup> Cochrane's order for this operation survives, and American accounts cover the engagement extensively.<sup>203</sup> But British commanders omitted any mention of it in their after action reports for the obvious reason that it proved to be a disaster.<sup>204</sup>

Unfortunately for Napier and his men, the defenders at Fort Covington discovered their movement before they could find a lodgment for their barges or otherwise get the landing force ashore. Detecting them by the dim navigation lights they used to maintain formation and stay within the channel, Lieutenant Henry S. Newcomb ordered his guns at Fort Covington to open fire on the British. The increased firing from the British bomb

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<sup>200</sup> Cochrane to Captain Charles Napier, 13 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 178.

<sup>201</sup> Rukert, *Fort McHenry: Home of the Brave*, 27-28.

<sup>202</sup> Cochrane to Captain Charles Napier, 13 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 178.

<sup>203</sup> Cochrane to Napier, 13 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 178.

<sup>204</sup> Cochrane to Croker, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 286-288.

and rocket ships had already alerted Newcomb to the possibility of a British night landing. Shortly after Newcomb began firing, Sailing Master John A. Webster opened up with his six guns from Battery Babcock.<sup>205</sup> The only illumination available to the American gunners came from the blaze of British Rockets and the muzzle flashes from cannons mounted on the barges as the attacking force fought to defend itself.<sup>206</sup> In the ensuing firefight, the British suffered severe casualties in men and vessels. Unable to suppress the American fire, or to reach the shoreline to effect a landing, Napier attempted to retreat to the protection of the fleet. As he moved back down Ferry Branch, the guns at Fort McHenry and Lazaretto Point engaged his force inflicting further destruction.<sup>207</sup> Although no accurate accounting of the damage exists, Americans reported numerous bodies floating in the river and along the shoreline the next day.<sup>208</sup>

Even before the repulse of his night attack, Cochrane had serious doubts about the efficacy of the operation. Knowing of the formidable defenses at Baltimore, he sent a message to Cockburn and Brooke during the day of 13 September indicating that his ships could not support an attack on the city, and advised caution.<sup>209</sup> Should Napier's night attack succeed in reducing Fort McHenry, they could always attack at some point in the future. Just before Napier experienced his setback on the Ferry Branch, Brooke held

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<sup>205</sup> Lieutenant Henry S. Newcomb to Rodgers, 18 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 292-294; Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59.

<sup>206</sup> Newcomb to Rodgers, 18 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 292; Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59.

<sup>207</sup> Newcomb to Rodgers, 18 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 292; Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59; Rodgers to Jones, 23 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 298-302.

<sup>208</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59; Smith to Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>209</sup> Cochrane to Cockburn, 13 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 277-279.

a council of war to discuss the next move for the landing force. Evaluating Cochrane's earlier message, Brooke and his staff decided to order a retreat, which would begin just before first light.<sup>210</sup> Leaving behind an element to deceive American defenders and serve as a rear guard, Brooke's army began its return to North Point about 0300 that morning.<sup>211</sup>

Cochrane continued the bombardment of Fort McHenry until about 0700 in the morning of 14 September, at which time he began moving his ships down the Patapsco River.<sup>212</sup> By 15 September, all of Brooke's force had loaded on transports, and the British fleet began sailing down the Chesapeake Bay. The bombardment of Fort McHenry had lasted for 25 hours, receiving between 1500 and 2000 British shells and as many as 800 rockets.<sup>213</sup> The fort suffered casualties amounting to four killed and twenty-four wounded.<sup>214</sup> The British commanders did not include casualties in their reports, and American estimates of between 600 and 700 from all actions in the Baltimore campaign are possibly somewhat high.<sup>215</sup> The British commanders claimed success in the action based on having created difficulties for the people of Baltimore, and Brooke's success in

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<sup>210</sup> Brooke to Cochrane, 13 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 279; Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282-285.

<sup>211</sup> Gleig, *Campaigns of the British Army*, 193.

<sup>212</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59.

<sup>213</sup> Rodgers to Jones, 14 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 293; Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59.

<sup>214</sup> Armistead to Monroe, 24 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 59; Smith to Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

<sup>215</sup> Smith to Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66.

the battle of Long Log Lane.<sup>216</sup> American commanders claimed victory due to the retreat of the British on both land and sea, and particularly because of the defeat of Napier's night amphibious attack at Ferry Branch.<sup>217</sup>

The most important characteristic of an amphibious operation involves the integration of effort between the navy and landing force.<sup>218</sup> The inability of the British expedition to accomplish this task is the most significant lesson from the Battle of Baltimore. American commanders planned and constructed their defenses to prevent any such joint concentration against the city. By blocking the mouth of the Northwest Branch, and covering those obstacles with fire from Fort McHenry, Lazaretto Point, and sloops and barges, Smith and Rodgers prevented any possibility of joint British actions at the culminating point of attack. By establishing formidable defensive positions around Baltimore, Smith created an objective too strong for the British army to attack by itself. Cochrane's idea of reducing Fort McHenry through a nighttime amphibious raid in a highly defended area could be characterized as high risk at best and desperate at worst. Given the tactical situation they faced, the British commanders made the best possible decision in ordering a retreat. To press the attack without joint combat power would invite defeat, or success at a cost beyond justification.

The lessons from the Battle of Baltimore demonstrate the pitfalls of landing operations. Amphibious actions are complex and begin from such a disadvantageous position that the landing force must do everything correctly to ensure success. The

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<sup>216</sup> Cochrane to Croker, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 286-288; Brooke to Bathurst, 17 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 282-285.

<sup>217</sup> Smith to Monroe, 19 September 1814, NARA, RG 107, M 221, Roll 66; Rodgers to Jones, 14 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 293; Rodgers to Jones, 23 September 1814, *Naval War*, III, 298-302.

<sup>218</sup> Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-02, *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations* (Washington: 19 September 2001), I-4.

British showed skill in their ability to rapidly build-up forces ashore, and the army moved rapidly thereafter in an effort to mass its forces against the decisive point of the operation. Despite effective action during the ship to shore movement and the initial operations ashore, British leaders failed to adequately task organize and never achieved operational coherence. Conversely, the American defenders did well in every area except that they failed to interpose with British landing and the delaying action at North Point proved insufficient. Collectively, the lessons from the Battle of Baltimore provided an enormous body of information upon which to base future amphibious actions.

Unfortunately for British ambitions, more bad news accompanied their failure at Baltimore. On 11 September, the day before Ross landed his amphibious force at North Point, Britain suffered a significant defeat on Lake Champlain in the battle for Plattsburg, New York.<sup>219</sup> The encounter at Plattsburg resulted from inconclusive fighting in Canada and the Great Lakes area, forcing British commanders to seek a breakthrough in that theatre of war. They believed that success on Lake Champlain could unhinge American defenses, sever New England from the rest of the nation, and provide additional territory for bargaining at the peace discussions getting under way in Ghent.<sup>220</sup> But the defeat of Captain George Downie's naval squadron by Lieutenant Thomas Macdonough in a furious two and half hour battle ended British hopes for strategic advantage in that quarter.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, II, 381-382.

<sup>220</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 189-190.

<sup>221</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1912*, II, 376-382; Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 375-381, 389-399.

British leaders also believed that operations along the Gulf coast—like the earlier operations in the Chesapeake—would relieve pressure on their northern army and gain U.S. territory to enhance their negotiating position.<sup>222</sup> Cochrane thought he could persuade Creek, Seminole, and Choctaw Indians, along with run away slaves, to support British objectives by providing them with arms, supplies, training, and leadership. These efforts led to a series of clashes, culminating with the most famous American victory of the war—the Battle of New Orleans. British planners had failed to consider the determination and effectiveness of Major General Andrew Jackson, who rose to prominence during the Red Stick War, when planning their southern campaign.

Before another major engagement occurred, the War of 1812 ended on basis of the *status quo antebellum*. Coming on the heels of the American victory at New Orleans and British failures at Baltimore and Plattsburg, news of the peace treaty caused many Americans to believe they had again defeated Great Britain.<sup>223</sup> Viewed from the overall war effort, that constituted an extreme interpretation of the outcome. Yet in the fullness of time, it is clear that the United States had fought the conquerors of Napoleon to nothing less than a stalemate.<sup>224</sup> Amphibious operations had played a major role in the fighting but never enough to tip the outcome in a decisive way for either side. Yet by launching successful amphibious operation at York, Fort George, and Detroit, the United States expanded on traditions begun at New Providence and Yorktown during the Revolution. Moreover, by effectively repulsing British landings at Sackets Harbor,

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<sup>222</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 205.

<sup>223</sup> Andrew Jackson, General Orders, 14 March 1815, in Latour, *The War in West Florida And Louisiana*, 277-279.

<sup>224</sup> Millett and Maslowski, *For the Common Defense*, 113-114.

Baltimore, and New Orleans, military and naval leaders learned many vital lessons about how to conduct amphibious operations for future wars. The British amphibious attacks in the War of 1812 would be the last that Americans would experience for 127 years. Not until 1942, when Japanese forces landed in the Philippines and on Wake Island would the United States again be on the defensive side of an amphibious operation. With those two exceptions, offensive amphibious operations would become synonymous with American power projection from the middle of the nineteenth century into the twenty-first century. This pattern of offensive amphibious warfare, with its roots in early American wars from the Revolution to the Treaty of Ghent, actually began in a major way in 1846 with the advent of the Mexican-American War.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CONQUEST OF CALIFORNIA

As the War of 1812 drew to a close, the United States did not experience an end to political strife. Despite the era of good feeling brought about during the presidency of James Monroe, issues of discord remained present within the nation and on the world scene. American victories in the later part of the War of 1812, particularly at New Orleans, created a sense of nationalism, which the Republican Party used to sustain its control of domestic politics. The general reluctance of many Federalists to support the war effort, as exemplified by the Hartford Convention, contributed significantly to their demise as a major political force.<sup>1</sup> But Republican leaders had learned bitter lessons about national security from early defeats in 1812, and their defense policy proved more dynamic in the post-war period. The debate over regular and militia defense forces did not end, but the war changed the way many leaders thought about national security, resulting in increased defense spending for both the army and the sea services.<sup>2</sup> The ability of the nation to maintain a strong navy and build a robust amphibious capability became a hallmark of American military policy thereafter.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically, Congress had no sooner ratified the Treaty of Ghent than it declared war on Algiers. Taking advantage of America's struggle with Great Britain, the Dey resumed depredations against American shipping in 1812, capturing merchantmen and imprisoning their crews. On 3 March 1815—two weeks after ratification of the Treaty of

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<sup>1</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 308.

<sup>2</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 304; Spencer Tucker, *Stephen Decatur: A Life Most Bold and Daring* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 153.

<sup>3</sup> Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, 435-437; Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 54-55.

Ghent—Congress again authorized war against a Barbary Power.<sup>4</sup> On 20 March, a squadron of three frigates, one sloop, four brigs, and two schooners under Stephen Decatur departed New York for North Africa. Shortly after arriving in the Mediterranean, Decatur captured two Algerine ships and sailed into waters off Algiers demanding peace on American terms.<sup>5</sup> The power of the American squadron and determination of its commodore convinced the Dey to accept peace and release the American prisoners. Decatur then sailed to Tunis and Tripoli where he also imposed terms and freed American and European prisoners.<sup>6</sup> He not only forced the Barbary Pirates to disavow tribute and ransom, but also demanded and received compensation for American ships held in Tunisian and Tripolitan ports. To underscore the American commitment to security in the Mediterranean, a second and larger squadron under William Bainbridge arrived a few months later, further enhancing American power and prestige in the area. American naval presence in the Mediterranean—coupled with British action against the Barbary threat—set a new pattern for dealing with Barbary piracy, and became a permanent fixture in the geopolitics of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

Decatur's success in the Barbary conflict of 1815 did not involve amphibious operations due to the overwhelming naval power that intimidated the North African rulers. But amphibious operation remained a viable method for combating piracy, and often found an application in other parts of the world. In the early years of the nineteenth century, the United States encountered piracy in the western hemisphere, particularly in

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<sup>4</sup> Tucker, *Stephen Decatur*, 153-154.

<sup>5</sup> Tucker, *Stephen Decatur*, 154-160.

<sup>6</sup> Tucker, *Stephen Decatur*, 162-166.

<sup>7</sup> Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 189-194, 199-202.

the West Indies. American leaders had no sympathy for these buccaneers but believed that dealing with them required a more subtle approach.<sup>8</sup> To address the problem, the United States assigned one of its most unsubtle officers, Commodore David Porter.<sup>9</sup> Frustrated with the ineffective manner in which American courts dealt with the Caribbean pirates that he delivered for justice, Porter frequently preferred to hand over captives to British authorities who had a less formal, and more permanent, way of dealing with the miscreants. He also conducted landings against pirate camps and facilities when he could identify them. Always the aggressive commodore, Porter often pushed the boundaries of his mandate in carrying out this mission, and on 14 November 1824, he overstepped his authority by conducting a major amphibious operation against the Spanish fort at Fajardo, Puerto Rico. Believing that Spanish authorities harbored and abetted pirates, and that they had unlawfully held an American officer, Porter landed two hundred marines and sailors, spiked the guns of the fort, and demanded an apology from the Spanish governor.<sup>10</sup> The incident became an embarrassment to the U.S. Government, resulting in a court marshal and six months suspension from duty for Porter.<sup>11</sup> He chose to leave the service rather than accept censure, and became commander in chief of the Mexican Navy;

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew C. Perry to David Porter, 26 May 1823, *Manuscript Item 126*, Naval War College Archives, Newport, Rhode Island.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Birkner, "The 'Foxardo Affair' Revisited: Porter, Pirates and the Problem of Civilian Authority in the Early Republic," *The American Neptune: A Quarterly Journal of Maritime History* (July 1982): 166-168.

<sup>10</sup> Birkner, "The 'Foxardo Affair' Revisited," 170-171; David F. Long, *Nothing Too Daring: A Biography of Commodore David Porter, 1780-1843* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1970), 229-239; Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps*, 89; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 59.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Beale, *A Report of the Trial of Commodore David Porter: of the Navy of the United States, before a General Court Marshal, Held at Washington, in July 1825* (Washington: 1825), 1-53.

later, during Andrew Jackson's presidency, he returned to serve his country as a member of the consular service.<sup>12</sup>

Piracy in the Mediterranean and West Indies created challenge enough for American maritime interests, but seamen also faced threats in Malaya and the East Indies. Most amphibious landings on the Pacific Rim—like those in Africa, Latin America, and the West Indies—amounted to minor incursions often involving little or no fighting. But in 1832, a landing force of about 250 marines and sailors went ashore at Quallah Battoo, Sumatra inflicting considerable casualties and destruction. Although Commodore John Downes found it necessary to conduct other landings in the East Indies and on certain Pacific Islands during this period to protect American commerce, none rose to the level of violence attained at Quallah Battoo.<sup>13</sup> In addition to combating piracy and protecting maritime commerce, the U.S. Navy also remained active opposing the slave trade and protecting the American littorals during the decade following the War of 1812.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1830s, a new set of problems confronted the United States as relations with Mexico deteriorated over the issue of Texas.<sup>15</sup> After rebelling against Mexican rule in 1836 and establishing an independent republic, Texas petitioned for annexation to the United States. On 1 March 1845 in the last days of his presidency, John Tyler signed a

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<sup>12</sup> Birkner, "The 'Foxardo Affair' Revisited," 177-178; Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 256-257, 288-289.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Erwin Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn: The Story of United States Naval Forces on Pacific Station, 1818-1923* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1963), 43-44; Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 241; Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps*, 90; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 59-60.

<sup>14</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 249-250; Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 615-617.

<sup>15</sup> Neal Harlow, *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 47.

joint resolution of Congress formally authorizing the annexation of Texas into the United States. Relations between the United States and Mexico immediately moved from strained to belligerent. By the end of the month, Mexico had broken diplomatic relations with the United States, and Secretary of the Navy, George Bancroft, had ordered Commodore David Conner's Home Squadron (formerly known as the U.S. West Indies Squadron) into Mexican waters. At that time, Conner's squadron consisted of one frigate, one sloop of war, and two brigs. Shortly thereafter, Bancroft sent an additional squadron under Commodore Robert F. Stockton consisting of one steamer, two sloops, and one brig to reinforce Conner near Veracruz.<sup>16</sup>

On 4 July 1845, Texans voted to ratify the annexation treaty specified in the Congressional resolution of 1 March.<sup>17</sup> On 29 December, James K. Polk—who became president on 4 March 1845—signed a second joint resolution of Congress, which officially admitted Texas into the Union.<sup>18</sup> Shortly thereafter, Polk instructed Major General Zachary Taylor to move his small army from Louisiana to a forward base in Corpus Christi, Texas; Taylor's forces of some 3,000 effectives began arriving at Corpus Christi in September, and by March 1846 had moved south to the Rio Grande River.<sup>19</sup> Polk and the U.S. government contended that the Rio Grande constituted the southern border of Texas and the correct frontier between the two nations. The Mexican government did not recognize the independence of Texas nor its subsequent integration

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<sup>16</sup> K. Jack Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines: U.S. Naval Operations in the Mexican War, 1846-48* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1969), 4-7.

<sup>17</sup> Otis A. Singletary, *The Mexican War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 9

<sup>18</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 48.

<sup>19</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*. 1, (New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1885), 61-64, 84-91; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 55-57; Singletary, *The Mexican War*, 11.

into the United States. It also insisted that the Nueces River, not the Rio Grande constituted the southern border of Texas regardless of which country possessed it. Moving the army into the area of contention supported the American assertion whereas keeping it north of the Nueces would undercut their claim. Critics of U.S. policy contend that Polk moved the army into the disputed area just to provoke war with Mexico.<sup>20</sup> But Polk hoped to solve the crisis by purchasing the stretch of territory in question along with New Mexico and California.<sup>21</sup> He believed the presence of U.S. troops would increase pressure on Mexican leaders for a resolution, but by May 1846, efforts at negotiations had failed. Conner, who temporarily moved his squadron out of Mexican waters to facilitate discussions, returned to Veracruz.<sup>22</sup> As the drift toward war between the United States and Mexico moved toward a flash point in southern Texas, American leaders surveyed the entire theatre of probable war. California became a paramount consideration because of the potential to bring the navy to bear in the effort.

The Study of California during the Mexican-American War is particularly interesting in amphibious history because it provides an early example of a concept that became prominent and formalized in the last decade of the twentieth century. As the United States sought a new theory of national defense to address issues of post-Cold War security, the navy and Marine Corps published two white papers (essentially policy statements intended to provide planning and training guidance) that presaged a new approach to naval warfare. Entitled *...From the Sea* and *Operational Maneuver from the*

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<sup>20</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 67-68.

<sup>21</sup> John Adams Hussey, "The Origin of the Gillespie Mission," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, (March 1940), 44; Robert Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea: From the War of 1812 to the Mexican War, The Saga of America's Expansion* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 508, 519.

<sup>22</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 9-15.

Sea, these documents addressed combat in low and mid level intensity environments, which combines maneuver warfare with naval warfare to provide rapid, flexible and focused application of power projection across a wide range of geographical objectives. As we shall see in this chapter, the conquest of California exemplified these concepts 150 years before they were codified in U.S. naval doctrine.

Major European powers such as Great Britain, France, and Russia had long coveted California as a desirable enhancement to their empires.<sup>23</sup> By the 1840s, California had also come into the peripheral vision of American Manifest Destiny. Throughout the decade preceding war with Mexico, American frontiersmen entered and settled in California just as others had done in Texas during the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, by the 1840s the California coast had become a center for the hide trade and a layover point for ships of the Pacific whaling fleet.<sup>25</sup> American leaders also considered California strategically important for protecting possessions in Oregon and securing natural harbors on the Pacific coastline. As early as 1842, the United States demonstrated its interests in the west coast when Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones captured Monterey, California under the mistaken assumption that war had broken out with

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<sup>23</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 135; Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps*, 93-94; Hussey, "The Gillespie Mission," 45; Sheldon C. Jackson, "The British and the California Dream: Rumor, Myths and Legends," *Southern California Quarterly*, (Fall 1975): 251-267; Justin Harvey Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), 324-325; Smith, *Thomas ap Catesby Jones*, 105-106; Stenberg, "Polk and Frémont, 1845-1846" *The Pacific Historical Review*, (September 1938): 211.

<sup>24</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 45, 115; Gabrielle M. Neufeld Santelli, *Marines in the Mexican War*, (Washington: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1991), 6-7; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 322-323.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 317-326.

Mexico.<sup>26</sup> Although the incursion had been bloodless and subsequent relations with locals proved peaceful, the incident strained the increasingly delicate relations between the United States and Mexico.<sup>27</sup> Reacting to official Mexican outrage over the Monterey incident, officials in Washington replaced Jones as commander of the Pacific Squadron, but refused to take disciplinary action against him. Many high level leaders, including Presidents Tyler and Polk and Secretary of the Navy, Abel P. Upshur, believed Jones had acted in good faith and possibly forestalled a British takeover of California.<sup>28</sup>

By 1846, the situation in California, like the relations between the United States and Mexico, had undergone considerable change. Native Californians had effectively—though not officially—achieved a form of independence in 1845 by ousting the appointed governor, Brigadier General Manuel Micheltorena and installing Pío de Jesus Pico as governor and José María Castro as comandante (military commander).<sup>29</sup> Pico even located the seat of government in Los Angeles while Castro kept his headquarters in Monterey, creating a defacto partition of the province. Spanish and Mexican control of California had never been strong, and the local people had always considered themselves somewhat separate from the central government. All these factors served to weaken the government of California at a critical time in its history. The U.S. Consul at Monterey, Thomas O. Larkin, believed conditions might support a peaceful conquest of California if

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<sup>26</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 135-136; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 5-9; Smith, *Thomas ap Catesby Jones*, 108-112; Gene A. Smith, "The War That Wasn't: Thomas ap Catesby Jones's Seizure of Monterey." *California History*, (June 1987): 104-113, 155-157.

<sup>27</sup> Edwin A. Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat of the United States Navy: Who Took Possession of California and Raised the American Flag at Monterey on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1846* (Oakland, CA: Carruth & Carruth, Printers, 1902), 39-40.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, *Thomas ap Catesby Jones*, 120-122.

<sup>29</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 137; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 30; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 319.

handled with proper finesse.<sup>30</sup> But the presence of Army Captain John C. Frémont—the explorer and Pathfinder—and rebellious American settlers under the leadership of Ezekial Merritt and William B. Ide presented complications for Larkin and his plans.<sup>31</sup> The U.S. Pacific Squadron operating out of Mazatlán under Commodore John D. Sloat provided Larkin an important tool in dealing with the political crosscurrents underway in California. On 1 April, at the request of Larkin, Sloat dispatched the sloop *Portsmouth* to Monterey out of concern that machinations by Frémont and American settlers could upset the situation in California, causing reprisals and bloodshed.<sup>32</sup> At this point, the United States and Mexico remained at peace although the expectation of imminent war prevailed.

On 8 May, fighting broke out in Texas with Taylor defeating a larger Mexican force at the Battle of Palo Alto. Taylor won a second engagement the following day in the Battle of Resaca de la Palma.<sup>33</sup> By the middle of the month, the United States had declared war (Mexico had already declared war on 23 April 1846). Unlike the aggressive Thomas ap Catesby Jones, Sloat chose a cautious approach to handling the immediate crisis. In fairness to Sloat, he often received equivocal orders from Washington that

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<sup>30</sup> Harlan Hague and David J. Langum, *Thomas O. Larkin: A Life of Patriotism and Profit in Old California* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 112-135; Hussey, "The Gillespie Mission," 47.

<sup>31</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 70-73, 79-80, 97-98, 110; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 77; George Tays, "Frémont Had No Secret Instructions," *The Pacific Historical Review*, (June 1940): 159; Joseph Wheelan, *Invading Mexico: America's Continental Dream and the Mexican War, 1846-1847* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2007), 104; Stenberg, "Polk and Frémont," 222-223.

<sup>32</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 140-141; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 117; Henry Bulls Watson, journal entries for 10, 11, 14, and 20 June 1846, *The Journals of Marine Second Lieutenant Henry Bulls Watson*, Charles R. Smith, ed. (Washington: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1990), 139, 144-145, 147.

<sup>33</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 93-99; Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 536-539.

called for forceful action in case of war, but cautioned against acts of aggression.<sup>34</sup> Such directives protected the politicians back in Washington but failed to clarify expectations for commanders on the scene.<sup>35</sup> Sloat also received messages suggesting that war with Great Britain over the Oregon question might be looming. This possibly influenced his judgment because he knew the Royal Navy posed a greater threat to his squadron than the problems with Mexico.<sup>36</sup> Undoubtedly, the official reaction to Porter's incursion in Puerto Rico and Jones's at Monterey also had an effect on Sloat's thinking.<sup>37</sup> Once the United States declared war on Mexico, Secretary of the Navy, George Bancroft, issued orders requiring the capture or blockade of every significant port facility on the west coast of Mexico and California. These orders—as well as earlier instructions—specifically mentioned the taking of San Francisco, Monterey, and Mazatlán.<sup>38</sup>

On 1 July 1846, Sloat arrived in Monterey Bay to confer with Larkin. Bancroft's war directive had not yet arrived, and neither Sloat nor Larkin had received official notice that war existed between the two nations. But evidence had mounted to the point that

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<sup>34</sup> Secretary of the Navy Bancroft to Sloat, directive dated 24 June 1846, in Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 138-139, 144; Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 553.

<sup>35</sup> Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat*, 52.

<sup>36</sup> Sloat to Bancroft, letter dated 29 July 1845 in Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 71; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 141-142.

<sup>37</sup> Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat*, 40-41; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 145; David F. Long, *Sailor-Diplomat: A Biography of Commodore James Biddle, 1783-1848* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983), 228.

<sup>38</sup> Bancroft to Sloat, directive dated 15 May 1846 in George Winston Smith and Charles Judah, eds. *Chronicles of the Gringos: The U.S. Army in the Mexican War, 1846-1848, Accounts by Eyewitnesses and Combatants* (Chronicles hereafter), (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1968), 149; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 145-146; Singletary, *The Mexican War*, 56-57; Stenberg, "Polk and Frémont, 1845-1846," 211; Tays, "Frémont Had No Secret Instructions," 169.

Sloat, and to a lesser degree Larkin, considered it likely that war had broken out.<sup>39</sup> This escalating information, coupled with Frémont's open support of the settler's rebellion then underway in the Sonoma Valley, convinced Sloat that the time for action had arrived. On 7 July, he landed a force of 225 marines and sailors at Monterey with explicit orders to capture the city while respecting its inhabitants.<sup>40</sup> Captain Mariano Silva refused Sloat's request to surrender the city, stating he had no authority to take such action. But Silva and his soldiers withdrew from Monterey before the American force came ashore, permitting an unopposed landing and bloodless operation.<sup>41</sup> Later that morning, Sloat proclaimed California to be part of the United States, and established temporary military rule. After completing formalities, the sailors returned to their ships leaving a detachment of U.S. Marines under Second Lieutenant William A.T. Maddox to garrison the city.<sup>42</sup> Sloat also sent messages to Frémont and Ide—president of the recently proclaimed Bear Flag Republic in Sonoma—explaining the situation and requesting their support. Most significantly, he sent a communiqué to General José María Castro—who had already suffered at the hands of the Bear Flag rebels and Frémont's expedition—demanding his surrender and cooperation. Castro refused to capitulate or even meet with Sloat for discussions.<sup>43</sup> Almost as an afterthought, Sloat

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<sup>39</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 118-119; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 78; Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat*, 60, 62-63; Singletary, *The Mexican War*, 65.

<sup>40</sup> Commodore Sloat, General Order, 7 July 1846, in Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 150-151, 153-154; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 332-335.

<sup>41</sup> Sloat to Bancroft, 31 July 1846, *Chronicles*, 150-151; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 151-152; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 123; Watson, 8 July 1846, *Journals of Watson*, 158-160.

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 78; Santelli, *Marines in the Mexican War*, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 152-154, 170; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 125; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 335.

sent a message to Pio Pico in Los Angeles, explaining his actions and inviting him to a meeting in Monterey.<sup>44</sup>

After deciding to capture Monterey, Sloat contacted Commander John B. Montgomery of the *Portsmouth*—now located in San Francisco Bay—explaining his plans and instructing him to seize San Francisco.<sup>45</sup> On the morning of 9 July, Montgomery landed a force of 70 marines and sailors ashore at Clark’s Point to capture and occupy San Francisco. Unable to find anyone who could surrender the city, Montgomery marched his force to the customhouse, ran up the Stars and Stripes, and read Sloat’s proclamation to those citizens sufficiently interested to listen.<sup>46</sup> He assigned Second Lieutenant Henry Bulls Watson and a detachment of 16 marines to occupy the city.<sup>47</sup> Montgomery also authorized Watson to organize a local militia force to serve under his command in time of need.<sup>48</sup> Montgomery sent copies of Sloat’s proclamation along with U.S. flags to Sonoma and Sutter’s Fort announcing American primacy in California.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Sloat to Bancroft, 31 July 1846, *Chronicles*, 150-154; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 125.

<sup>45</sup> Sloat to Montgomery, 7 July 1846, in Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat*, Official Reports and Correspondence, ii; Prior to 30 January 1847, the village of San Francisco was known as Yerba Buena. For purposes of clarity and simplicity, this study uses the name San Francisco throughout. See Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 143.

<sup>46</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 154-156; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 78.

<sup>47</sup> Watson, 9 July 1846, *Journals of Watson*, 160.

<sup>48</sup> Montgomery to Watson, 9 July 1846, *Journals of Watson*, 160-163.

<sup>49</sup> Montgomery to Sloat, 9 July 1846, in Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat*, Official Reports and Correspondence, ii-iii; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 157; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 126.

Upon learning of the capture of Monterey, Frémont and his irregular force of explorers and frontiersmen departed to meet with Commodore Sloat.<sup>50</sup> Marine Lieutenant Archibald H. Gillespie—who had earlier delivered confidential dispatches from President Polk and Secretary of State James Buchanan to Sloat, Larkin, and Frémont—remained with the Pathfinder after delivering the missives.<sup>51</sup> Locating Sloat and Larkin proved no problem, but finding the famed explorer challenged Gillespie. He finally located Frémont at Klamath Lake where he delivered messages both official and personal.<sup>52</sup> Gillespie remained with Frémont for some time thereafter and became a principal figure throughout the California campaign. Gillespie is one of the most colorful and interesting characters in the entire California saga. Although an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, his role in the conquest of California involved him in a range of duties and responsibilities beyond those normally expected of a junior officer in the naval service.

When Frémont arrived at Monterey for his meeting with Sloat, it became apparent that the two commanders held very different views about future activities in California. Sloat's innate caution clashed with Frémont's inherent aggressiveness and he resisted Frémont's plans for additional offensive operations.<sup>53</sup> But Sloat would not constrain the Pathfinder for long, as a new naval officer arrived on the scene to take control of events. Commodore Robert F. Stockton arrived in Monterey Bay on 15 July with orders to serve

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<sup>50</sup> Fremont to Senator Thomas Hart Benton, 15 July 1846, in *Chronicles*, 144-148; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 124-125.

<sup>51</sup> Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat*, 53; Stenberg, "Polk and Frémont," 216-219; Tays, "Frémont Had No Secret Instructions:" 160

<sup>52</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 77-78, 81-82; Santelli, *Marines in the Mexican War*, 9; Stenberg, "Polk and Frémont," 222-223; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 104.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 78-79; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 124-1125; Long, *Sailor-Diplomat*, 228-230.

as Sloat's second in command.<sup>54</sup> His orders also permitted Sloat to transfer command to Stockton and return to the United States should his health so dictate. On 29 July Sloat did just that, handing over command of the Pacific Squadron to Stockton and departing for home waters.<sup>55</sup> This change in command shifted American policy away from the methodical caution of Sloat and Larkin to the flamboyant aggressiveness of Stockton and Frémont.<sup>56</sup>

Stockton and Frémont believed that a campaign by both sea and land would be necessary to secure California. Stockton created the California Battalion of Mounted Rifles from Frémont's irregular team of explorers and frontiersmen, making the Pathfinder its commander with the rank of major. He also promoted Gillespie to captain, assigning him as second in command.<sup>57</sup> Frémont and his California battalion served under Stockton's command throughout the campaign, functioning primarily as an amphibious adjunct to the Pacific Squadron. With few exceptions, the California battalion operated under Stockton's overall direction as an extension of naval power.<sup>58</sup> The administrative and legal aspects of this special organization required some correction after Brigadier General Stephen W. Kearny arrived in California. But in the interim, the California battalion performed very well as a highly mobile naval power projection force

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<sup>54</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 131-132.

<sup>55</sup> Sloat to Bancroft, 31 July 1846, in *Chronicles*, 150-154; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 158-159, 162; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 74.

<sup>56</sup> George Walcott Ames, Jr. "Horse Marines: California 1846," *California Historical Society Quarterly* (March 1939): 4; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 165; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 79-80; Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 556; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 336.

<sup>57</sup> Stockton to Bancroft, 28 August 1846, *Chronicles*, 154-155; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 139-140; Singletary, *The Mexican War*, 65.

<sup>58</sup> Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat*, 91.

operating in concert with Stockton's marine and naval landing forces.<sup>59</sup> The two commanders introduced a more aggressive phase into the conquest of California. Despite a tendency toward caution, Sloat had occupied Monterey and San Francisco, forestalled potential British action in California, claimed California for the United States, and established the framework for future conquest.<sup>60</sup> He had made a substantial and long-term contribution to the objectives of his nation under perplexing circumstances.<sup>61</sup>

Stockton's first move to subdue California involved defeating Castro's military force then located near Los Angeles. To accomplish this, Stockton planned a series of amphibious landings designed to control key areas, isolate Castro's forces, and destroy all residual opposition. Stockton sent Frémont's California battalion to San Diego where—preceded by a party of marines—he conducted an unopposed landing on 29 July 1846.<sup>62</sup> After obtaining needed horses from a relatively friendly populous, Frémont began moving north along the coast on 8 August while his support ship, the sloop *Cyane* under Commander Samuel F. DuPont, set sail for San Pedro. While Frémont and DuPont conducted the amphibious operation at San Diego, Stockton and Larkin sailed for San Pedro aboard the frigate *Congress*. On 4 August, while in route to San Pedro, Stockton had stopped at Santa Barbara where he sent a small landing party ashore to claim the

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<sup>59</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 144.

<sup>60</sup> Sloat to Bancroft, 31 July 1846, in *Chronicles*, 150-154; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 162-163; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 133-136; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 80, 91; Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat*, 78-80.

<sup>61</sup> Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 5 December 1846, in Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat*, 84-85.

<sup>62</sup> Stockton to Fremont, 23 July 1846, in Sherman, *The Life of Rear-Admiral John Drake Sloat*, ii.

town and establish a garrison.<sup>63</sup> Two days later, the *Congress* arrived at San Pedro, where First Lieutenant Jacob Zeilin lead his Marines ashore and established a lodgment for the main body of the landing force. Stockton consolidated his amphibious force ashore and prepared to move toward Los Angeles, where he hoped to catch Castro stranded between himself and Frémont's army moving north from San Diego.<sup>64</sup>

While Stockton moved to eliminate resistance in California through naval power, Larkin made a final attempt to find a peaceful settlement. He recommended to Governor Pico that California declare independence under American protection. Although Pico and Castro showed some interest in this approach, and Stockton seemed amenable to it, nothing came from the effort.<sup>65</sup> On 11 August, Stockton's landing force departed its encampment near San Pedro and headed to Los Angeles, arriving two days later. With American forces converging on Los Angeles, and their own support dwindling, Castro and Pico fled south to Sonora and Baja California, while Juan B. Alvarado and a few of Castro's California soldiers fled north toward San Luis Obispo. Stockton entered Los Angeles to the accompaniment of a band from the frigate *Congress*, and Frémont entered shortly thereafter.<sup>66</sup> The remaining elements of Castro's force surrendered to Stockton on 14 August along with their weapons and equipment. Stockton paroled the prisoners captured at Los Angeles, but sent a small detachment under Maddox in pursuit of

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<sup>63</sup> Captain Jacob Zeilin, USMC to Brigadier General Archibald Henderson, Commandant of the Marine Corps, 7 April 1848, *Mexican War General File (MWGF)*, *Marine Corps Historical Division*, (MCHD), Quantico, Virginia; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 81; Santelli, *Marines in the Mexican War*, 14.

<sup>64</sup> Zeilin to Henderson, 7 April 1848, *MWGF*, *MCHD*; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 165-168.

<sup>65</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 147-148; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 337.

<sup>66</sup> Stockton to Bancroft, 28 August 1846, *Chronicles*, 154-155; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 151; Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 556-557; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 337.

Alvarado, whom he captured near San Luis Obispo. On 17 August, official notice arrived at San Pedro that a state of war existed with Mexico.<sup>67</sup>

After the victory at Los Angeles and the disbursement of all organized resistance, Stockton turned his attention to governing the province and blockading the Mexican Pacific coastline. His ultimate goal involved capturing Acapulco and threatening Mexico City from the west.<sup>68</sup> The first step in his grandiose plan called for sending the sloop *Warren* to blockade Mazatlán and the sloop *Cyane* to blockade San Blas (south of Mazatlán). Upon arriving at San Blas, DuPont sent a landing party ashore that spiked 24 cannons. He then captured a Mexican sloop and brig and sailed on to Mazatlán to meet with the *Warren*'s captain, Commander Joseph B. Hull. At Mazatlán, Hull had captured two Mexican brigs and proclaimed a blockade of that port. The *Cyane* then sailed to La Paz on the Baja peninsula where DuPont captured nine merchantmen as prizes of war and headed across the Gulf of California to blockade the port of Guaymas.<sup>69</sup>

While his sloops initiated the blockade of Mexican ports, Stockton returned to Monterey where he finalized plans for capturing Acapulco. Frémont moved the bulk of his force into the Sacramento Valley, leaving a small detachment of forty-eight men under Gillespie to garrison Los Angeles.<sup>70</sup> At this point, both Stockton and Fremont believed the United States had secured California. Before Stockton's plan for the conquest of Acapulco progressed beyond the initial actions of DuPont and Hull in the

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<sup>67</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 168-169; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 154.

<sup>68</sup> Stockton to Mervine, 19 September 1846, in Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 82; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 155; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 338.

<sup>69</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 170-173.

<sup>70</sup> Zeilin to Henderson, 7 April 1848, *MWGF, MCHD*; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 173-174; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 159.

Gulf of California, problems arose that ended any hope for this strategic masterstroke. First, Frémont could not recruit the large number of soldiers needed for the venture. Although he persuaded some to join his ranks, he could not find enough to make his force sufficiently strong to carry out Stockton's mission. The second problem involved a counter-rebellion that broke-out in Los Angeles under the leadership of Mexican Captain José María Flores. Some accounts fault Gillespie for creating the uprising by his undiplomatic and tyrannical administration of the conquered city.<sup>71</sup> Yet it remains difficult to be certain to what extent the problem resulted from Gillespie and to what extent it resulted from his enforcement of Stockton's policies.<sup>72</sup> Flores—who violated his parole from Stockton to lead this rebellion—organized a force large enough to compel Gillespie to surrender his small garrison. Flores agreed that Gillespie and his men could keep their weapons and march unmolested to San Pedro. Upon arriving at San Pedro, Gillespie's men boarded an American merchantman, the *Vandalia*, there at anchor.<sup>73</sup> Flores moved to consolidate his control over Southern California, and by October, he controlled everything except a small enclave at San Diego. No longer able to think in terms of a bold stroke against Acapulco, Stockton now had to recapture an area he believed already secure.

Initially, Stockton intended to retake Los Angeles with another two-pronged attack. This time, he planned to land Frémont's California Battalion at Santa Barbara while he moved to San Pedro in the *Congress*. While awaiting Frémont's arrival in San Francisco

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<sup>71</sup> Watson, 2 February 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 287-291; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 83.

<sup>72</sup> Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 557; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 339.

<sup>73</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 174-175; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 163-167; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 83.

for embarkation, Stockton ordered Captain William Mervine's frigate *Savannah* to San Pedro. Upon arriving, Mervine met with Gillespie—still in harbor aboard the *Vandalia*—and they decided to attack Flores's forces immediately and reclaim Los Angeles on their own. On 7 October, Mervine landed a force that included Gillespie's troops, along with marines and sailors from the *Savannah*, and moved against Los Angeles. Having no horses or artillery, they faced a California force under José Antonio Carrillo at Dominguez Ranch that possessed both. After several attempts to break through Carrillo's well-conceived defense in depth, Mervine recognized the futility of the situation and returned his force to its ships. He then sent a dispatch to Stockton and awaited his arrival at San Pedro.<sup>74</sup> Carrillo and his Californians considered their check of Mervine and Gillespie a military victory and some American leaders at that time tended to agree.<sup>75</sup>

On 25 October, Stockton arrived at San Pedro, and two days later, he ordered his forces ashore for an advance on Los Angeles. After the initial landing party of marines and sailors skillfully made a lodgment against scattered resistance, the main body came ashore and established a beachhead. But as Stockton consolidated his landing force, Carrillo staged a series of deceptions that suggested he had a larger force than he really possessed.<sup>76</sup> Concerned over the size of Carrillo's force and the lack of horses and cattle in the San Pedro area, Stockton reembarked his landing force before any serious fighting occurred and sailed for San Diego where he believed conditions would better support his operations. Additionally, he had received reports of an imminent attack on San Diego,

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<sup>74</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 178-179; Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 557-558; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 340.

<sup>75</sup> Watson, 2 February 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 287-291; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 83-84.

<sup>76</sup> Zeilin to Henderson, 7 April 1848, *MWGF*, *MCHD*.

which he hoped his redeployment would forestall.<sup>77</sup> Frémont also changed his point of debarkation from Santa Barbara to Monterey for much the same reason.<sup>78</sup>

The limited carrying capacity of Stockton's ships made it difficult to bring enough livestock to support his large landing forces. American commanders needed to procure horses for riding and draft as well as cattle and sheep for food from local suppliers. Both sides attempted to prevent their adversaries from acquiring these needed commodities, and this problem greatly affected tactics and strategy. But logistics did not constitute Stockton's sole problem. Throughout the months of October and November, he struggled with the frustration of trying to execute a mission with inadequate resources. He simply did not have enough ships to conduct numerous amphibious operations on the California littorals while maintaining a blockade of the Mexican coast. But that situation improved late in 1846 as Bancroft ordered reinforcements to the Pacific Squadron, which resulted in a substantial improvement in the military situation.<sup>79</sup> But acquiring sufficient livestock from local sources remained a problem throughout the California war.

On 3 December, Stockton learned that another American force had arrived in California when he received a dispatch from Brigadier General Stephen W. Kearny, having just arrived at Warner's Ranch northwest of San Diego on the road between Los Angeles and Sonora. Stockton sent a forty-man detachment with one brass 4-pounder under Gillespie to meet Kearny's force and guide him into San Diego.<sup>80</sup> In May 1846, the Polk administration ordered Kearny to lead an overland expedition to capture and

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<sup>77</sup> Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 84.

<sup>78</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 181-182; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 171.

<sup>79</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 184.

<sup>80</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 184-185; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 341.

occupy New Mexico. After an easy conquest of Santa Fe, Kearny established a garrison and provisional government to control the territory. Exercising the next phase of his orders, Kearny pressed on to California where he intended to establish a new government. He departed Santa Fe on 25 September with 300 dragoons and ancillary engineers, guides, and hunters, thinking himself the senior American officer west of the Mississippi.<sup>81</sup> While Kearny marched overland to California, a regiment of New York Volunteers and a regular artillery company with weapons and provisions would be sent around Cape Horn to join him on the west coast.<sup>82</sup>

After an arduous march across the rugged terrain of New Mexico and California, Kearny's legion hoped to rest and refit before having to face a combat situation. By the time he arrived at Warner's Ranch, Kearny had only 100 dragoons, having sent 200 back to Santa Fe after meeting Kit Carson in route to California. When Carson left California to deliver dispatches from Stockton to Washington, California appeared to be under American control and that is what he reported to Kearny. Unknown to Carson, the California uprising occurred after his departure. Thinking the conquest of California complete, Kearny believed his troops would be of greater use in New Mexico and kept only the detachment of 100 dragoons to serve as his personal escort.<sup>83</sup> But on arriving in California, Kearny received intelligence that revealed the true situation. Rather than arriving to govern a conquered province, Kearny discovered he would be riding into a hostile environment with a much-reduced force.<sup>84</sup> Kit Carson, whom he persuaded

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<sup>81</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 147, 185.

<sup>82</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 175; Singletary, *The Mexican War*, 60.

<sup>83</sup> Kearny to Brigadier General Roger Jones, Adjutant General, Washington, D.C., 12 December 1846, *Chronicles*, 156.

(coerced) to guide him into California, accompanied Kearny into this cauldron. Tom Fitzpatrick, another of Frémont's legendary mountain men would deliver the dispatches that Carson had been carrying.<sup>85</sup>

Upon learning that Captain Andrés Pico and a troop of Californians had moved near the Indian village of San Pasqual between his force and San Diego, Kearny ordered an attack on 6 December. With Gillespie's reinforcements, Kearny had superior numbers and one field artillery piece under his command. But his attacking force engaged Pico in a disjointed manner, permitting the Californians to fight a series of separate actions. Gillespie attempted to rally the American troops by riding to the point of action, receiving three wounds and a brevet for his efforts. Kearny forced Pico to retreat from the field of battle, yet suffered greater casualties and could not pursue the California force.<sup>86</sup> Pico considered himself the victor in the Battle of San Pasqual, but he lacked sufficient strength to follow-up with offensive action. Both sides eyed the other but could not renew the battle. Since both Kearny and Gillespie suffered wounds in the battle, active command fell temporarily to Captain Henry S. Turner of the first U.S. Dragoons.<sup>87</sup> With the exception of several minor skirmishes and a failed attempt by Pico to drive wild horses over the American camp at Rancho San Bernardo, the fighting had

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<sup>84</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 185.

<sup>85</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 175-176; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 214-215.

<sup>86</sup> Irving Berdine Richman, *California Under Spain and Mexico, 1535-1847* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), 326-327; Santelli, *Marines in the Mexican War*, 17; Singletary, *The Mexican War*, 68; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 342.

<sup>87</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 183-188; Watson, 10 December 1846, *The Journals of Watson*, 255-258.

been limited to that one-day engagement.<sup>88</sup> Kearny's force arrived in San Diego by mid December, meeting in route a relief column of about 180 marines and sailors under Zeilin and Lieutenant Andrew V.F. Grey.<sup>89</sup>

After Kearny arrived in San Diego, he conferred with Stockton who proclaimed himself the senior American officer in California to which Kearny temporarily acceded. Kearny actually carried orders from the President authorizing him to take control of California and establish a government, yet he chose not to confront Stockton with the issue, intending to address the matter in due course.<sup>90</sup> While Stockton's troops foraged for livestock and Kearny's soldiers recuperated from their arduous expedition, the two leaders developed a plan to regain Los Angeles. By 29 December, Stockton's troops had completed their preparations and departed on the march north. His force consisted of Kearny's dragoons, elements of the California battalion, an artillery detachment under Lieutenant R. Lloyd Tilghman, a detachment of marines under Zeilin (who also served as adjutant for the force), sailors from various ships of the Pacific Squadron, and a native Californian element under Santiago Anguillia.<sup>91</sup> Stockton appointed Montgomery to remain in San Diego as commander of the station and the American ships in the harbor. Just prior to departing, Stockton appointed Kearny as field commander for the expedition while he remained commander in chief. Expecting Frémont to advance on Los Angeles

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<sup>88</sup> Letter of John M. Stanley, 19 January 1847 cited in the Saint Louis *Reveille*, *Chronicles*, 157-159; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 85; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 217-218.

<sup>89</sup> Zeilin to Henderson, 7 April 1848, *MWGF*, *MCHD*; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 186-189; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 190-192; Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 558-559; Watson, 11 and 12 December 1846, *The Journals of Watson*, 258-259.

<sup>90</sup> Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 85.

<sup>91</sup> Watson, 16-29 December 1846 and 1 January 1847, *Journals of Watson*, 259-263, 264.

from the north, Stockton and Kearny pressed up from the south, engaging and defeating Flores and his Californians twice in route.<sup>92</sup>

The first action came on 8 January 1847—the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans—at the San Gabriel River where the Americans forced a river crossing under fire and drove the defenders from the battlefield.<sup>93</sup> When Stockton's column came within two miles of the San Gabriel River, it shifted into a hollow square (not really hollow since wagons and stock filled the center). The front of the square consisted of dragoons and sailors under Turner, the right flank consisted of marines, sailors, and pikemen under Zeilin, the left consisted of marines and sailors under Lieutenant Stephen C. Rowan, and the rear consisted of volunteers under Gillespie. Stockton placed all logistical support including stock and wagons inside the square, which moved forward as an integral body. Stockton and Kearny placed four cannons along the front line and two with the rear. The hostile Californian force held positions on the high ground across the river from which their artillery could fire on Stockton's army as it approached and attempted to cross. Despite a bold effort to attack the American rear during the river crossing, the California troops could not halt the American advance. When Stockton's artillery established firing positions after crossing the river, it began to destroy systematically the Californian's field pieces. As the Americans reformed their square and resumed the attack, they received a determined charge on the left flank from Flores's cavalry. But musket fire broke the assault and the hollow square resumed the attack, driving the Californians from the field. In the last action of the day, American firepower

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<sup>92</sup> Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 559.

<sup>93</sup> Rickman, *California Under Spain and Mexico*, 330.

again halted a strong Californian effort against their right flank. That night, Stockton's army camped on the heights previously occupied by Flores's rebels while Zeilin and a company of marines conducted an all night reconnaissance.<sup>94</sup>

The next day fighting resumed as the American force continued its quest to recapture Los Angeles. In the subsequent battle of La Mesa, Stockton essentially destroyed Flores's army and opened the way for reoccupation of Los Angeles. Early in the morning, Stockton and Kearny reconstituted the hollow square formation, which the Californians called the infernal corral. At 0800, the formation began moving forward and by 11:00, the enemy engaged them with cannon fire from a strong position on the right flank. But the fire proved ineffective and the American force slightly adjusted their line of march allowing them to bypass the Californian stronghold. This forced Flores to sally from his position and initiate a cavalry charge. Many American leaders considered Californians the best horsemen in the world, and Lieutenant Henry Bulls Watson described their attack formation as a beautiful sight. Notwithstanding their magnificence, the Californians could not break the American line despite determined assaults against both the left flank and rear. The volume and accuracy of American musket and cannon fire shredded the assault, emptying many saddles and forcing the Californians to retreat in confusion. As Flores retreated, Stockton pushed his force across the Los Angeles River stopping within easy marching distance of the city of the angels.<sup>95</sup> On 10 January 1847, local officials surrendered the city, which the Americans immediately occupied along

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<sup>94</sup> Brevet Major William H. Emory, Notes on a Military Reconnaissance from Fort Leavenworth in Missouri to San Diego in California, *Chronicles*, 159-165; Watson, 8 January 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 268-276; Zeilin to Henderson, 7 April 1848, *MWGF*, *MCHD*; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 343; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 221.

<sup>95</sup> Brevet Major William H. Emory, Notes on a Military Reconnaissance from Fort Leavenworth in Missouri to San Diego in California, *Chronicles*, 159-165; Watson, 9 and 10 January 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 276-281; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 344.

with the surrounding hills. As Stockton consolidated his tactical position, Gillespie once again raised the colors over Government House, which Flores had forced him to lower in capitulation the previous September<sup>96</sup>

Although Frémont did not arrive at Los Angeles in time to participate in its capture, he had an active and productive experience on his march down. After leaving San Juan Bautista—near Monterey Bay—in November, Frémont (now a Lieutenant Colonel) moved south, occupying San Luis Obispo on 14 December, and capturing a California detachment of 35 men under Jesus Pico at nearby Wilson's Ranch. Jesus Pico—a relative of both Pío Pico and Andrés Pico—presented serious problems for Fremont, because he, like Flores, had violated his parole by leading rebellious Californians. Stockton had earlier promised to execute Flores for his role in the rebellion, and that fact surely rested on the Pathfinder's mind.<sup>97</sup> Frémont ordered a court-marshal for Pico, which found him guilty and sentenced him to death. But upon reflection, Frémont relented and pardoned Pico thereby setting a precedent and generating good will among native Californians.<sup>98</sup> Frémont then continued moving south occasionally skirmishing with California forces, and reclaiming or capturing Santa Barbara, Mission San Buenaventura, and Mission San Fernando. At Rancho Los Verdugos, Frémont came upon the remains of Flores's defeated force and invited them to discuss surrender terms. Flores turned over his command to Andrés Pico, recommended they negotiate with Frémont, and then departed for his native Mexico where he might be beyond the reach of

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<sup>96</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 191-199; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 208-218; Richman, *California Under Spain and Mexico*, 330; Singletary, *The Mexican War*, 68-69; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 222.

<sup>97</sup> Watson, 4 January 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 267; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 345.

<sup>98</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 225; Richman, *California Under Spain and Mexico*, 328.

Stockton.<sup>99</sup> In the subsequent Treaty of Cahuenga—signed on 13 January 1847—Frémont overstepped his authority by concluding an agreement that treated the defeated Californians with dignity, respect, and provided them a degree of security.<sup>100</sup> When Frémont and the California Battalion marched into Los Angeles on 14 January, the terms of his treaty were already in force, and Stockton had little choice but to accept the agreement.<sup>101</sup>

The Treaty of Cahuenga effectively ended the fighting between Americans and Californians. But it marked the beginning of a power struggle among U.S. officials regarding control of California.<sup>102</sup> Both Stockton and Kearny believed themselves the ranking authority on the west coast. Stockton appointed Frémont as the governor of California who notified Kearny on 17 January that he would only accept orders from the commodore. Stockton also promoted Gillespie to major and assigned him to command the California Battalion as Frémont's replacement.<sup>103</sup> But on 19 January, a new naval officer—William Branford Shubrick—arrived in California to relieve Stockton and assume temporary command of the Pacific Squadron. Kearny met with Shubrick in San Diego, persuading the new commodore of his legitimate claim to govern California. By

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<sup>99</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 231-232.

<sup>100</sup> Watson, 11 January 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 282; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 85-86; Richman, *California Under Spain and Mexico*, 330-331.

<sup>101</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 199-201; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 232, 236; Singletary, *The Mexican War*, 69-70; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 345-346; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 223.

<sup>102</sup> Watson, 14 January 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 284; Long, *Sailor-Diplomat*, 230.

<sup>103</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 238-239; Watson, 2 February 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 287-291.

accepting Kearny's authority, Shubrick undercut Stockton's claim of seniority and Frémont's authority as governor.<sup>104</sup>

In February, orders from both the navy and war departments arrived affirming Kearny's authority to establish a government in California and command American forces ashore.<sup>105</sup> The commodore of the Pacific Squadron would be responsible for all activities at sea as well as port and customs operations. On 2 March, James Biddle arrived as the permanent commodore of the Pacific Squadron and issued a set of joint proclamations sustaining Shubrick's decisions and further clarifying the command situation in California.<sup>106</sup> As Kearny took control of the California government, reinforcements began arriving and he soon had garrisons scattered throughout the territory. Despite the establishment of military authority in California, the various governors—Stockton, Frémont, Kearny, and (later) Mason—consistently proclaimed their desire to return to civil government as soon as conditions permitted.<sup>107</sup>

The campaign for control of Alta California had been completed by mid January 1847. The area of Baja California and the Mexican coastline along the Gulf of California and Pacific Ocean had played only a minor role during that phase. After the Treaty of Cahuenga, the attention of leaders in both Monterey and Washington turned to in the southern region. One of Stockton's last actions as commodore of the Pacific Squadron involved reestablishing the blockade of Mazatlán and capturing the Baja harbors at San José del Cabo (at the tip of the Baja peninsula), La Paz, Pichilínque, and Loreto. The

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<sup>104</sup> Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 560; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 224-225.

<sup>105</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 250-253.

<sup>106</sup> Long, *Sailor-Diplomat*, 231.

<sup>107</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 202-204; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 278, 313.

blockade of the Mexican Pacific Coast had questionable legal standing due to a lack of sufficient ships to ensure enforcement. This received some criticism and created the possibility of conflict with British or French ships whose captain rightly believed they did not need to respect an unenforceable blockade.<sup>108</sup>

On 17 February, Montgomery and the *Portsmouth* began to enforce the blockade of Mazatlán, and then sailed to capture San José del Cabo one month later.<sup>109</sup> On 30 March, a landing party of 140 men under Lieutenant Benjamin F.B. Hunter went ashore at San José del Cabo, and although local authorities refused to surrender the port, they offered no resistance. After running up the colors, the landing force reembarked on the *Portsmouth*, and sailed to San Lucas to repeat the entire scenario.<sup>110</sup> A similar action followed on 13 April at La Paz—the capital of Baja California—where Colonel Francisco Palacios Miranda surrendered the city and signed articles of capitulation similar to those in the Treaty of Cahuenga.<sup>111</sup> Three months later, Lieutenant Colonel Henry S. Burton and two companies of New York volunteers occupied La Paz. Mexican forces under Captain Manuel Pineda made three subsequent attempts to retake the capital without success. After the capture of La Paz, there followed a confused and erratic effort to blockade Mazatlán and the Baja ports that satisfied neither the interests of the United States nor the requirements of international law.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Watson, 4 March 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 303-304; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 86.

<sup>109</sup> Watson, 17 February 1847, *The Journal of Watson*, 296.

<sup>110</sup> Watson, 30 March and 3 April 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 313-315.

<sup>111</sup> Watson, 13 and 14 April 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 318-320.

<sup>112</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 205-209.

As the United States began to assert itself in the Gulf of California through amphibious power projection, the American command structure in California began to stabilize. On 31 May, Kearny transferred his authority and responsibilities to Colonel Robert B. Mason and on 16 June, he and Frémont departed Sutter's Fort, returning overland to the United States. Upon arriving at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas on 22 August, Kearny placed Frémont under arrest and charged him with insubordination for his defiant actions in California during Stockton's period of control.<sup>113</sup> A subsequent court-martial held in Washington found Frémont guilty although the court recommended clemency due to the confused command situation that had existed during the period in question. President Polk agreed, approving only one portion of the conviction and ordering Frémont back to active duty. But Frémont believed the conviction entirely unjust and resigned from the army rather than acknowledge any aspect of the charges.<sup>114</sup> Many Americans sympathized with Frémont's view and he remained a popular and influential leader who would play a prominent role in the affairs of his nation for another thirty years.<sup>115</sup> Among other things, he served as one of California's first U.S. senators and became the first Republican Party candidate for President during the 1856 election.

Once Shubrick and Biddle recognized the authority of Kearny to govern California, joint command relations became stable and cooperative. But within the navy, important issues of command continued to create problems. Shubrick did not enjoy holding a secondary position once Biddle arrived on the scene.<sup>116</sup> On 1 June, Shubrick

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<sup>113</sup> Harlow, *California Conquered*, 272-275; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 225.

<sup>114</sup> Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 85; Leckie, *From Sea to Shining Sea*, 560.

<sup>115</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 209; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 275.

<sup>116</sup> Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 87.

requested that he be relieved of his duties with the Pacific Squadron. But before any action on the request could occur, Biddle departed from the scene after his short tenure as commodore. His orders contained an option to transfer command of the Squadron to Shubrick once he believed the situation no longer required his services. On 19 July, Biddle transferred command of the Pacific Squadron to Shubrick and shortly thereafter departed aboard the *Columbus* for the United States.<sup>117</sup> Shubrick remained Commodore of the Pacific Squadron until the end of the war, when Thomas ap Catesby Jones relieved him of command on 6 May 1848.<sup>118</sup>

Consistent with the policy of shifting attention to the Gulf of California after securing Alta California, Shubrick issued a new blockade proclamation for Mazatlán, Guaymas, and San Blas on 6 August 1847.<sup>119</sup> He also dispatched the *Dale* under Commander Thomas O. Selfridge, to conduct amphibious incursions within the Gulf of California. On 1 October, Lieutenant Tunis A. M. Craven led a landing party that attacked a Mexican force near Mulejé. With support from the guns of the *Dale*, marines and sailors drove the Mexican defenders away from the city, but accomplished little else. At the end of the day, the landing party reembarked and Selfridge then sailed to Loreto where on 5 October, Craven again landed a force of marines and sailors. After capturing a few cannons and guns, the landing force reembarked and the *Dale* sailed to La Paz. These amphibious incursions accomplished very little other than to show American strength and arouse Mexican fighting spirits.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 89; Long, *Sailor-Diplomat*, 231-232.

<sup>118</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 209-210, 232; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 275; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 90.

<sup>119</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 210.

On 17 October, the *Congress* and *Portsmouth* arrived at Guaymas and the following day, Captain Elie A.F. LaVallette of the *Congress* called on Colonel Antonio Campuzano to surrender the harbor and its 400-man garrison. After delaying his attack to allow for the evacuation of women and children, LaVallette opened the battle in the early hours of 20 October 1847. The *Congress* and *Portsmouth* bombarded Guaymas for an hour and a half before LaVallette learned that the Mexican troops had withdrawn to Bocachicacampo four miles to the north.<sup>121</sup> Marines from the American ships intermittently occupied the town of Guaymas but did not attempt to maintain a constant presence.<sup>122</sup> During November, Campuzano made several attempts to infiltrate troops back into the city, and on 17 November engaged the Americans in battle at Casal Blanca Hill. The Mexican force numbered some 250 men, but the American landing party supported by naval gunfire from the *Dale*—which had replaced the *Portsmouth* in Guaymas harbor—drove them from the town.<sup>123</sup> On 30 January 1848, Craven and his marines and sailors from the *Dale* conducted a subsidiary landing at Cochori where they routed a Mexican detachment and captured fifteen soldiers including its commander and captain of the port. On 13 February, a similar landing occurred under Lieutenant Fabius Stanly against Campuzano's remnant forces at Bocachicacampo, which defeated and disbursed the last Mexican position in the vicinity. Other than a minor skirmish on the

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<sup>120</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 212-213; Santelli, *Marines in the Mexican War*, 23-24.

<sup>121</sup> Watson, 17, 18, 19, and 20 October 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 355-359; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 89.

<sup>122</sup> Zeilin to Henderson, 7 April 1848, *MWGF*, *MCHD*.

<sup>123</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 217.

Soldado River on 9 April, the destruction of Campuzano's force at Bocachicacampo ended the fighting in and around Guaymas.<sup>124</sup>

While Shubrick's naval forces struggled with subduing Guaymas and maintaining control of other Baja ports, a task force consisting of the *Independence*, the *Congress*, and the *Cyane* arrived in the water off Mazatlán on 10 November. The next day, Shubrick called on officials to surrender the port and city, which the Mexican commander, Colonel Rafael Telles, refused. Within hours, Shubrick landed a force of 730 men under LaVallette and raised the American flag over the port.<sup>125</sup> Although not willing to surrender, Telles chose to retreat rather than oppose the American incursion.<sup>126</sup> The Americans then prepared defenses for the city and port and established a military government under LaVallette. Telles did not feel strong enough to attack the American defenses at Mazatlán, but he remained on its periphery maintaining the attention of American commanders.<sup>127</sup> In mid November, LaVallette learned of a 90-man force at nearby Urias and on 20 November reacted with a two-pronged attack. Sending one element overland to attack the enemy flank, and a second force by sea to conduct an amphibious landing, LaVallette caught the Mexican force between the two and compelled it to flee in confusion. The only other fighting that occurred at Mazatlán involved two skirmishes in which American patrols surprised and bested Mexican elements operating

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<sup>124</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 214-219.

<sup>125</sup> Zeilin to Henderson, 7 April 1848, *MWGF, MCHD*; Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 90.

<sup>126</sup> Watson, 16 November – 31 December 1847, *The Journals of Watson*, 368-369.

<sup>127</sup> Santelli, *Marines in the Mexican War*, 26.

in the area.<sup>128</sup> By the beginning of 1848, the American position in Mazatlán had become too strong for Mexican forces to challenge.

While Shubrick and LaVallette established the American presence at Mazatlán, Mexican forces on the Baja peninsula reinforced and reorganized under the leadership of Captain Manuel Pineda, who had made several determined but failed attacks against La Paz and San José del Cabo. Even so, his efforts demonstrated that a resurgent Mexican force existed to threaten American accomplishments in the Gulf of California. Yet Pineda could not prevail in face of the U.S. Navy whose ships always arrived in time to provide gunfire, reinforcements, and supplies. Using ships that he intended for blockade duty, Shubrick supported the American garrisons making Pineda's mission of driving Americans out of Baja California impossible. The situation began to favor U.S. forces even more when a landing party under Lieutenant Frederick Chatard destroyed the guns at San Blas on 12 January 1848. During February and March of 1848, Colonel Barton and his New York Volunteers began offensive operation out of La Paz with attacks against Pineda's camps at San Antonio, Todos Santos, and Santiago resulting in the total defeat of Mexican resistance.<sup>129</sup>

Although fighting continued in Baja California during March and April 1848, the war had entered its terminal period. Negotiators had signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on 2 February, and commanders announced an armistice on 29 February. Although the ratification process in both the United States and Mexico remained, major operations had ended and only isolated skirmishes occurred. Shubrick's work in Baja had been in vain, as the Treaty returned the entire peninsula to Mexico. But the

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<sup>128</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 221-226; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 207.

<sup>129</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 226-230.

amphibious campaign in Alta California had not been in vain as the joint efforts of naval and army forces ensured that California—along with New Mexico and southern Texas—would remain in American hands.<sup>130</sup>

With only minor exceptions such as the battles of San Pasqual, San Gabriel, and La Mesa, the entire conflict over California constituted an amphibious campaign. Even the battles of San Gabriel and La Mesa had amphibious aspects since marines and sailors provided much of the manpower and the operations received their logistical support from a forward expeditionary base and the ships of Stockton's Pacific Squadron. Although Kearny functioned as field commander for these battles, a naval officer—Stockton—served as commander in chief, and a marine performed the duties of adjutant. In both a conceptual and literal sense, the conquest of California exemplified the theory of power projection and an early refinement of operational maneuver from the sea.

Among the most significant principles of operational maneuver from the sea as applied to the California campaign involved use of the sea as maneuver space. From San Francisco to Monterey, San Pedro, San Diego, the littorals throughout the Gulf of California, and the Mexican Pacific coastline, American commodores inserted amphibious forces at points of enemy weakness thereby avoiding direct attacks against strongly held defenses. Focusing on a series of key operational objectives that would eventually undermine the ability of Californians to continue the struggle, American forces integrated units (from all services), weapons, and logistical support to maximize combat power at the decisive points of battle. In the few cases where hostile forces presented a threat to the landing force, such as at San Pedro during the second effort to

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<sup>130</sup> Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, 92; Long, *Sailor-Diplomat*, 232; Fletcher Pratt and Hartley E. Howe, *The Compact History of the United States Navy* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1957, 1962), 114.

capture Los Angeles, Stockton simply back loaded his amphibious force, moved to San Diego, and launched his operation from a new direction. Throughout the California theatre of war, all important objectives were situated on the coastline or within easy marching distance, providing a benefit that further enhanced the advantages of operational maneuver from the sea.

The use of maneuver at sea coupled with sea basing and integrated combat power allowed American commanders to retain the initiative, thereby generating an overwhelming tempo and momentum with which Californian and Mexican forces could not cope. Even during the brief counter-rebellion in the Los Angeles area, it only required Stockton to forsake his Acapulco-Mexico City scheme and refocus his naval power in Alta California to subdue Flores and his cohorts. U.S. officers did not always apply these concepts perfectly, of course, as exemplified by the failed effort at Dominguez Ranch by Mervine and Gillespie. Yet in general, senior commanders based the overall California campaign on the principles of operational maneuver from the sea, long before naval and marine thinkers conceptualized them as a coherent doctrine for amphibious warfare.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE LANDING AT VERACRUZ

As Sloat and Stockton undertook their amphibious conquest of California, Taylor followed-up his victories in Texas with a drive into northern Mexico. During 20-24 September 1846, he assaulted a Mexican army under General Pedro de Ampudia in the fortified city of Monterrey, winning a hard fought victory at great cost to both sides.<sup>1</sup> To Polk's chagrin, Taylor agreed to an eight-week armistice following the battle, which allowed the Mexican army to retreat from Monterrey while providing respite for his own hard-pressed troops.<sup>2</sup> American leaders hoped that a victorious army on Mexican soil would force a negotiated settlement to the conflict. But Taylor's successes in Texas and at Monterrey, though impressive, did not convince Mexican authorities to end hostilities. As a result, leaders in Washington lost faith in the strategy of attacking overland and sought another way to force Mexico into negotiations.<sup>3</sup>

The decision to assault Mexico at Veracruz resulted from both strategic and operational considerations. Although Taylor had won every engagement he fought against Mexican forces, the distance to Mexico City and the difficult terrain along the route caused concern among leaders in Washington. Pressing deeper into Mexico would stretch Taylor's lines of communication making them more susceptible to guerrilla

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<sup>1</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 104-118; Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 71-73.

<sup>2</sup> Major General Zackary Taylor to Roger Jones, Adjutant General of the Army, 25 September 1846, in *Joint Forces Staff College, Case Study: Mexican War (Staff College Case Study hereafter)*. Norfolk, VA: National Defense University, January 2006, 40; Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 148-151.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison. "*Old Bruin*" *Commodore Matthew C. Perry 1794-1858*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 186; Otis A. Singletary. *The Mexican War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 71.

attack, already a growing problem.<sup>4</sup> By the winter of 1846, it had become clear that victory in northern Mexico would not be sufficient to bring Mexican officials to terms. Operational victories in Texas, Monterrey, and later at Buena Vista did not translate into the strategic advantage intended. Capturing and holding the more vital areas of central Mexico—even Mexico City if necessary—made more strategic sense at this point in the war.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the Home Squadron had been blockading Mexican ports and operating freely throughout the Gulf of Mexico since the beginning of the conflict. With the war stalled in northern Mexico, the prospect of bringing naval power to bear along these littorals had strong appeal.<sup>6</sup>

Operationally, Veracruz presented the most viable location for invasion on the Gulf Coast. It offered good landing sites and accessible routes of egress from the beaches into the heart of Mexico. Like all military operations, landing at Veracruz also had disadvantages. The unprotected waters near the city required specialized landing craft. It would be necessary to design, build, and deliver these surfboats on very short notice. Even more challenging, the city's wall and protective forts made Veracruz the strongest fortified city in North America in the minds of many observers.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, summer epidemics of malaria and yellow fever (*vomitó negro*) restricted the time when forces

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<sup>4</sup> Zackary Taylor, letter published in the New York *Express*, 9 November 1846, in George Winston Smith and Charles Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos: The U.S. Army in the Mexican War, 1846-1848, Accounts of Eyewitnesses & Combatant* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1968), 169; Correspondence of the New Orleans *Picayune*, 14 November 1846, in Smith and Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 166-167.

<sup>5</sup> Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, xix; Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 72, 75.

<sup>6</sup> Raphael Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore During the Mexican War* (Cincinnati: W.H. Moore & Co., Publishers, 1851), 75-76; Robert W. Love, Jr. *History of the U.S. Navy 1775-1941* (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1992), 203.

<sup>7</sup> Bauer, "The Veracruz Expedition of 1847," *Military Affairs*, (Autumn 1956): 162; Morison, *Old Bruin*, 206-207.

could concentrate along the coast. A common nineteenth century view held that storms guarded the Mexican Gulf Coast during winter and disease during the summer.<sup>8</sup>

By November 1846, the idea of an amphibious attack at Veracruz had gained currency in political and military circles. Even powerful Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, became a strong proponent of that option, and his influence among Democratic politicians proved essential to counterbalance Whig opposition to this apparent escalation in Polk's war strategy. Initially, Polk had reservations about landing at Veracruz even though Commodore Conner and other military and naval officers favored such an operation.<sup>9</sup> But meetings with the former U.S. Consul at Veracruz, Francis M. Dimond, helped convince him of the city's vulnerability and the prospect for a successful campaign.<sup>10</sup>

After discussing the concept with his cabinet during November 1846, the President decided to move forward with the operation. Polk actually considered placing Benton in command of the expedition—with the rank of lieutenant general—but Congress would not agree to the proposition.<sup>11</sup> Most Washington politicians—both Democrat and Whig—recognized Benton's lack of military qualifications despite his

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<sup>8</sup> Philip S. P. Conner. *The Home Squadron Under Commodore Conner in the Mexican War*. (Philadelphia, 1896), 12; Morison, *Old Bruin*, 186.

<sup>9</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 77.

<sup>10</sup> Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 63; J.F.C. Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.* (New York: Harpers & Brothers, Publishers, 1942), 149; Joseph Wheelan, *Invading Mexico: America's Continental Dream and the Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishing, 2007), xix.

<sup>11</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 117-143; Winfield Scott, *Memoirs of Lieut-General Scott, LL.D., Written by Himself*, vol. I, (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1864, 1970), 400-401; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 247-248; Robert Leckie, *The Wars of America* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), 348; Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 207.

political brilliance.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, Polk assigned Major General Winfield Scott to command the expedition.<sup>13</sup> Scott's position as Commander in Chief of the U.S. Army, coupled with a sterling record of achievement made him the logical—even inevitable—choice.<sup>14</sup> It did not make Polk happy to do so because he despised Scott both personally and professionally.<sup>15</sup> Yet only Scott and Taylor had the credibility with Congress and the American public to command a mission of this magnitude, and Polk had come to despise Taylor even more than Scott. Under no circumstances would he consider providing Taylor such a prestigious assignment.<sup>16</sup> Scott and Taylor had Whig inclinations and presidential ambitions, which did not endear either of them to the Democratic President despite their professional competence. Relations between Polk and his top generals proved deplorable throughout the conflict with both sides believing the other played politics with military affairs.<sup>17</sup> It seems remarkable that the United States could succeed in such a controversial war under these conditions. Yet despite this rancor, Polk and his generals kept focus on their objective, and cooperated well enough to ensure ultimate victory.

Scott's amphibious force for the invasion of Veracruz consisted of new units arriving from the United States, marines and sailors from the Home Squadron, and a large

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<sup>12</sup> John S.D. Eisenhower, *Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 235; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 122.

<sup>13</sup> Secretary of War, William L. Marcy to General Winfield Scott, 23 November 1846, in Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 397-398.

<sup>14</sup> Marcy to Scott, 23 November 1846, in Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 397-398.

<sup>15</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 120-121.

<sup>16</sup> Leckie, *The Wars of America*, 347; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 248-249.

<sup>17</sup> Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 401-415.

element of Taylor's force then located near Saltillo in northern Mexico. After detaching about 9,000 of his best veterans for the Veracruz mission, Taylor, and his small force of no more than 5,000 mostly green troops could no longer undertake offensive operations.<sup>18</sup> This would not pose a problem for Taylor if he only had to deal with the remnants of Ampudia's force and a few guerrillas. But General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna had recently returned to Mexico from Cuba—through intrigue and American help—to gain command of the Mexican armed forces.<sup>19</sup> He immediately reorganized and motivated the army, inspiring greater resistance to the American invasion. Unfortunately for Taylor, Santa Anna intercepted a copy of Scott's message ordering the redeployment of American forces.<sup>20</sup> Seeing this an opportunity to overwhelm Taylor's depleted force with his army of 20,000, Santa Anna set out from San Louis Potosi (located about half way between Mexico City and Monterrey) to destroy the Americans at Saltillo.<sup>21</sup>

With the approach of the Mexican army, Taylor concentrated near the village of Buena Vista where the two forces met on 22-23 February 1847. In another hard-fought engagement, Taylor withstood Santa Anna's repeated attacks forcing him to withdraw back to Mexico City.<sup>22</sup> Even despite considerable losses from two days of fighting, Santa Anna still possessed vastly superior numbers over his American foe. But his supply situation had become critical whereas Taylor replenished during the night of 23

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<sup>18</sup> Eisenhower, *Agent of Destiny*, 232; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 122-123.

<sup>19</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 189; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 117-120.

<sup>20</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 175; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 119-120; Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 402; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 251-252.

<sup>21</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 176-177.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor to Marcy, 6 March 1847, in *Staff College Case Study*, 82-91; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 122.

February. After two days of fighting, Santa Anna retained a quantitative advantage, but Taylor had a qualitative edge and continued to hold good defensive ground. The Mexican commander attempted to entice Taylor out from his defensive position during the retreat from Buena Vista, but Taylor did not fall for the ruse. Santa Anna then returned to the Mexican capital where he proclaimed a great victory and accepted the Presidency from the Mexican Congress.<sup>23</sup>

Although the Battle of Buena Vista constituted a victory for Taylor, it had been a very close fight.<sup>24</sup> It is not clear what would have been the outcome had Santa Anna chosen to continue his attacks against Taylor. The Mexican general had the advantage in numbers and initiative, but suffered severe supply problems, particularly with a shortage of ammunition.<sup>25</sup> Taylor's strong defensive positions coupled with a good supply situation made his army a formidable challenge. Surveying the strategic and political situation throughout Mexico, Santa Anna believed he could better serve his cause by retreating to the capital rather than risk continued attacks against Taylor. As he redeployed to deal with Scott and attend political affairs in Mexico City, American forces in northern Mexico settled into the role of an army of occupation. The focus of war now shifted to the Gulf Coast where Scott and Commodore David Conner organized the largest and most innovative amphibious force the United States had ever assembled. Not only did the Americans develop uniquely designed landing craft, but also used steam powered ships for the first time in a major amphibious operation. Not all of Conner's

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<sup>23</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 122-124.

<sup>24</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 190-191.

<sup>25</sup> Eisenhower, *Agent of Destiny*, 236.

ships had steam engines, of course, and some of those that did were not present for the landing. But by the time of the amphibious assault, Conner had one frigate and three gunboats with steam power, and they ensured the landing would depend less on the vagaries of nature.<sup>26</sup> The use of steam ships and specifically designed surfboats also permitted American commanders to plan and execute the assault and support landings with greater precision than ever before. Meanwhile in northern Mexico, Taylor nursed resentments against both Polk and Scott, which he would assuage in 1848 with a successful run for the presidency.<sup>27</sup>

Planning for the Veracruz invasion actually started with a series of memorandums written by Scott to convince his superiors of the benefit of such a concept.<sup>28</sup> As Scott began to refine the plan, he engaged the services of Quartermaster General Thomas J. Jesup to acquire transport ships and landing craft necessary for the operation. It quickly became clear to American leaders that the Veracruz operation required more troops and equipment than currently available in this theatre of war. Due to the complexity of the operation, a strong professional—if not personal—relationship between Scott and Jesup needed to develop. Cooperation between army and navy components would also prove equally critical. The fact that the Department of War, and not the Department of the Navy, acquired and controlled the transport ships and landing craft complicated this

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<sup>26</sup> Cornelius C. Smith, Jr., “Our First Amphibious Assault.” *Military Review* (February 1959): 24-25.

<sup>27</sup> Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 405-406, 418-421.

<sup>28</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 120; John Fleming Polk, “Vera Cruz, 1847: A Lesson in Command,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (September 1974): 74.

relationship and created potential for conflict.<sup>29</sup> Yet Scott established an excellent working relationship with Conner whose Home Squadron supported the landing and subsequent operations.<sup>30</sup> Together, they worked as a professional team that negated the friction inherent in this operational environment.<sup>31</sup> Indeed their cooperation exemplified that most important characteristic of amphibious operations, the integration between the navy and landing force.

Scott designated a number of points of embarkation for his army including Mobile, New Orleans, Brazos Santiago (sometimes spelled San Jago or St. Iago) on the Rio Grande, and Tampico in Mexico.<sup>32</sup> Those troops arriving from the United States would ultimately assemble at the mouth of the Brazos Santiago, and those arriving from Taylor's army would march south through Victoria to the port city of Tampico.<sup>33</sup> Conner had captured Tampico on 14 November 1846 with an amphibious landing involving 300 marines and sailors from the Home Squadron.<sup>34</sup> After embarking his force, Scott concentrated on the island of Lobos (Isle de Lobos) south of Tampico where he organized, equipped, and trained for the upcoming mission.<sup>35</sup> Conner provided a sloop

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<sup>29</sup> William G. Temple, *Memoir of the Landing of the United States Troops at Veracruz in 1847*, included as attachment in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 63-65.

<sup>30</sup> Scott to Conner, 23 December 1846, in Smith and Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 171; Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 255; Polk, "Vera Cruz, 1847," 76.

<sup>31</sup> Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 64.

<sup>32</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 207.

<sup>33</sup> Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 413-414; Justin H. Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), 17.

<sup>34</sup> Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 207.

<sup>35</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 256-257; Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 149-150; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 17-18.

of war to guide Scott's transport and supply ships into secure anchorages, and officers for each ship to pilot them on to the staging area at Antón Lizardo, about twelve miles south of Veracruz.<sup>36</sup>

While Scott prepared his army for invasion, Jesup chartered fifty transport ships and acquired sixty-five new surfboats for the assault landings. He contracted to have these landing craft built to detailed specifications, which allowed them to fit compactly on the transports yet operate effectively in the unprotected waters (rough surf conditions) near Veracruz.<sup>37</sup> These surfboats constituted the first American landing craft specifically designed for amphibious operations.<sup>38</sup> The contract for the surfboats specified the type of wood, the metal fasteners required, and the method of caulking. It also specified three sizes for the boats including 35 feet, 37 feet 9 inches, and 40 feet in length, thereby allowing flexibility in planning the assault waves.<sup>39</sup> Scott and Jesup originally ordered 141 landing boats, but only sixty-five arrived in time for the operation.<sup>40</sup> With the army in control of the transport ships and landing craft, Scott could theoretically conduct the amphibious operation without naval help. Although some observers have suggested that he initially considered such action, there is no evidence to support that contention. In fact, the professional relationship that Scott and Conner developed during the planning

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<sup>36</sup> Conner to Captain John H. Aulick, 28 February 1847 in Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 80; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 78, 124-125; Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 3-64.

<sup>37</sup> Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 60-62.

<sup>38</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 207; Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 76.

<sup>39</sup> Smith, "Our First Amphibious Assault," 23-24.

<sup>40</sup> Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 62.

and execution phases of this undertaking suggests just the opposite. Throughout the operation, cooperation between the two leaders and services proved to be exemplary.<sup>41</sup>

By early March 1847, Scott considered his army adequately prepared and equipped to begin operations. As the transport ships rendezvoused with the Home Squadron at the anchorage off Antón Lizardo, Scott and Conner conducted a reconnaissance and conferred on the operational plan.<sup>42</sup> Scott accepted Conner's recommended landing site at Collada, just south of Veracruz. By landing at Collada, the boats would be somewhat sheltered from dangerous surf conditions by Sacrificios Island thereby making the landing safer.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, Mexican artillery at Veracruz and Fortress San Juan de Ulúa (also spelled Ulloa) could not range the landing beach although it remained within a short marching distance of the objective area.<sup>44</sup> Conner and his subordinate commanders had a good understanding of the Mexican coastline from their service on blockade duty and numerous amphibious incursions during the first years of the war, and Scott gladly took advantage of their expertise.<sup>45</sup> But landing at Collada required first transferring the landing force from their transports onto Conner's more agile ships, which could maneuver into the proper position for debarkation near Sacrificios Island. Scott concurred in that process, and also accepted Conner's plan for

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<sup>41</sup> Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 429.

<sup>42</sup> Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 18; Brevet Major George Archibald McCall, account in Smith and Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 178-179.

<sup>43</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 125; Jay Slagle, *Ironclad Captain: Seth Ledyard Phelps & the U.S. Navy, 1841-1864* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1996), 61-64; Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 64.

<sup>44</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 208.

<sup>45</sup> Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 12, 19.

the navy to man the surfboats that would take the landing force ashore.<sup>46</sup> These arrangements, coupled with the use of Connor's ships to provide fire support to the landing force, placed naval officers in complete control of the amphibious operation until Scott established his army ashore.<sup>47</sup>

Conner assigned the surfboats to his naval ships in five-boat increments. For example, the frigate *Raritan* received fifteen surfboats whereas the steamer *Princeton* received only ten. Each warship would provide the officers and sailors to operate the surfboats assigned to them. Each landing craft would have a naval officer or petty officer in command and a crew of at least seven sailors. The surfboats used an anchor—or kedge—and line to prevent broaching and maintain stability during beach operations.<sup>48</sup> The assault plan organized the surfboats in divisions of ten boats each commanded by a navy lieutenant. Captain French Forrest of the frigate *Raritan* commanded the overall ship to shore movement. The landing of the assault elements progressed in three waves after which each individual boat made independent trips between the beach and ships.<sup>49</sup>

During the morning hours of 9 March 1847, Scott transferred his troop from their transports onto Conner's ships near Antón Lizardo while steamers towed the surfboats into position. That afternoon at Sacrificios Island, each vessel reclaimed its surfboats and the landing force loaded for the ship to shore movement.<sup>50</sup> The cross decking of troops

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<sup>46</sup> Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 25.

<sup>47</sup> K. Jack Bauer. "The Veracruz Expedition of 1847." *Military Affairs* (Fall 1956): 166.

<sup>48</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 208; Smith, "Our First Amphibious Assault," 24.

<sup>49</sup> Conner to Captain French Forrest, 7 March 1847 in Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 82; Major General Winfield Scott, General Order No. 17, 7 March 1847 in Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 79; Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 64-66, 68.

<sup>50</sup> Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 57.

and their deployment into the surfboats proved a complex and detailed operation, all the more so because of last minute changes in the operational plan. The efficiency of these evolutions is due entirely to the professionalism and leadership skills of Conner and his staff of naval experts.<sup>51</sup> Each landing boat carried between twenty-five and seventy soldiers with a naval officer in command and sailors manning the oars.<sup>52</sup> Seven of Conner's gunboats (two steamers and five schooners) stood in line near the beach to provide fire support to the landing force.<sup>53</sup> The landings began just before sunset when a detachment of marines under Captain Alvin Edson and 5,500 men under the command of Brigadier General William J. Worth assaulted the undefended beach.<sup>54</sup> Reconnaissance boats had earlier detected Mexican lancers and field artillery pieces near the landing beach. Many Americans feared these forces may have staged behind the first set of sand dunes, but they failed to materialize during or after the landing. A detachment of cavalry observed on the beach just prior to the landing had been disbursed by fire from Conner's gunboats and did not reappear during the operation.<sup>55</sup>

Once the first assault wave loaded into their surfboats, some initial confusion developed due to a lack of rehearsals. This coupled with an expectation that Mexican forces would oppose the landing, created anxiety among the officers and men of the amphibious force. But the aggressive Worth ordered the regimental colors raised on the

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<sup>51</sup> Commodore David Conner, General Orders, 7 March 1847 in Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 81-82; Morison, *Old Bruin*, 208; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 126; Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 76.

<sup>52</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 126-127; Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 419.

<sup>53</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 127; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 25-26.

<sup>54</sup> Major General Winfield Scott to Secretary of War William L. Marcy, 12 & 13 March 1847 in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 41-42; Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 19-20.

<sup>55</sup> Timothy D. Johnson. *Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1998), 172; Polk, "Vera Cruz, 1847," 76.

surfboats around which the assault line formed and began to pull ashore.<sup>56</sup> Worth's personal leadership complimented the excellent work of Conner and his staff, assuring a proper and effective assault. In addition to his organizational and leadership skills, Worth set an example for courage and aggressiveness when he claimed the honor of being the first American on the beach.<sup>57</sup> By 2200 that evening, Scott had his entire army of 12,000 ashore and ready for subsequent action.<sup>58</sup> Scott and Conner had achieved another of the important characteristics of amphibious operations, the rapid buildup of combat power from the sea to shore. Landing operations continued for several days until the navy had delivered the bulk of artillery, horses, conveyances, and supplies ashore.<sup>59</sup> The efficiency and speed of the landing served as a tribute to effective planning and military-naval cooperation.<sup>60</sup> Had General Juan Morales, the Mexican Commander at Veracruz, chosen to oppose the American landing, he could have inflicted casualties and complicated the operation. But the availability of fire from the gunboats close to shore, and larger ships at sea, ensured that he would also suffer high casualties. Without the prospect of reinforcement anytime soon, Morales decided against fighting at the water's edge, believing his only hope lay within the defenses of Veracruz.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Bauer, "The Veracruz Expedition of 1847," 167.

<sup>57</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 258-259.

<sup>58</sup> Accounts differ regarding the size of Scott's landing force at Veracruz, with some being as low as 10,000 and others as high as 12,000. See Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 128; Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 19-20.

<sup>59</sup> Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 20.

<sup>60</sup> Scott to Marcy, 17 March 1847 in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 42; Morison, *Old Bruin*, 211; Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 420-421.

<sup>61</sup> Bauer, "The Veracruz Expedition of 1847," 167.

The lack of resistance on the landing beaches created no illusions in the minds of Scott and Conner. Capturing Veracruz posed no small task as its walls and protective forts—Fort Santiago to the south and Fort Conception to the north—presented a formidable challenge.<sup>62</sup> The landward wall included nine strong bastions facing sand dunes and rising plains reaching an upland forest about three miles inland.<sup>63</sup> The city's main defenses protected against an attack from the sea and included Fortress San Juan de Ulúa, which set on Gallego Reef about three quarters of a mile from the coastline. These interlocking defenses possessed well-placed cannons, which provided defensive fires against hostile forces on land or sea.<sup>64</sup> Yet despite this formidable defensive system, authorities had not adequately maintained the structures over time, and no system for sustaining the garrison at San Juan de Ulúa under siege conditions had been prepared.<sup>65</sup> Regardless of these shortcomings, Scott recognized the defenses as daunting and knew he could not fight the battle for Veracruz on his enemy's terms.<sup>66</sup>

Despite objections from some of his subordinate commanders, Scott wisely decided to attack the city by siege tactics rather than direct assault.<sup>67</sup> That decision had risks, because Scott needed to capture the city and move his army away from the coast before the onset of yellow fever season.<sup>68</sup> A direct attack may cause more initial

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<sup>62</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 127.

<sup>63</sup> Johnson, *Winfield Scott*, 175.

<sup>64</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 206-207; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 102, 105-106.

<sup>65</sup> Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 428; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 19-20.

<sup>66</sup> Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 422.

<sup>67</sup> Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 312-313.

<sup>68</sup> Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 423-425.

casualties, but it would also bring about a quicker victory. A protracted siege that left the army lingering along the coast once the yellow fever struck could potentially be more costly in terms of casualties and morale. Siege warfare against Veracruz would be successful only if it brought quick results. By deciding to invest the city rather than conducting an assault, Scott committed himself to an aggressive and powerful bombardment, which would force surrender after a relatively short engagement.<sup>69</sup> This created a moral dilemma for Scott because of the collateral damage to civilians and property that such a barrage would surely inflict.

Upon his landing at Collada Beach, Scott quickly maneuvered the army to seal off Veracruz from the landside. Moving into siege positions proved challenging due to a gale force storm known as a *norther* that struck on 12-15 March, terrain, chaparral, Mexican guerillas, and harassing fire from the forts.<sup>70</sup> Placing his divisions in column, Scott ordered Worth to clear and occupy the southern portion of the line. Following Worth, Major General Robert Patterson's division then cleared and occupied the center portion, and Brigadier General David E. Twiggs's division cleared and occupied the northern part. Thus, Scott drove in all Mexican outposts and established a trench line—beyond effective range of artillery from the city—anchored at each end on the Gulf of Mexico at Collada Beach south of Veracruz and Vergara to the north. He then advanced artillery-infantry teams into forward positions from which he could bombard the city.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 129-130; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 23.

<sup>70</sup> Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 27; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 312-313.

<sup>71</sup> Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 425-426; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 129; Brigadier General David E. Twiggs, Account of Siege, in Smith and Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 188-189.

With the army investing Veracruz from land and the navy blockading from sea, Scott had surrounded and isolated the objective area. Not only did the navy play a key role in this effort, it also supplied Scott with heavy naval guns and gunners to make-up for the lack of siege artillery, which failed to arrive on schedule.<sup>72</sup> As American forces moved into position and prepared to bombard the Mexican defenses, fear and fatalism gripped the people of Veracruz. They not only felt imprisoned by the American army and navy, but also abandoned by their own government. Santa Anna felt restrained in what actions he could undertake at the time of Scott's landing. With Taylor's army in northern Mexico, albeit considerably weakened, and revolution breaking out in the capital, he needed all his regular soldiers and National Guard troops in Mexico City. He could spare no reinforcements for Veracruz, and Mexican leaders on the coast realized they must face Scott with the resources on hand.<sup>73</sup> Santa Anna believed that if Veracruz fell, he could always stop Scott in the mountains west of the coast.

Just before the siege began, Commodore Mathew Calbraith Perry relieved Conner as commander of the Home Squadron. Conner had proved to be a professional and cooperative naval officer setting a high standard for close and continuous coordination.<sup>74</sup> His positive attitude, coupled with the responsiveness of Scott, permeated the entire amphibious force, and constituted one of the most important factors underlying its success.<sup>75</sup> But after placing the amphibious force ashore, it remained necessary to fight

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<sup>72</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 261-263; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 310-311.

<sup>73</sup> Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 314-315.

<sup>74</sup> Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 5-6, 29; Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 70.

<sup>75</sup> Secretary of the Navy, John Y. Mason to Conner, 23 April 1847, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 37.

and win the subsequent battle on the ground. The navy played a crucial role throughout that action not only in providing naval gunfire support, but also in serving as the logistical base for supplying Scott's army.<sup>76</sup> For the Secretary of the Navy, John Y. Mason, to relieve a key commander in the middle of a major combat operation from his distant post in Washington—especially a leader so highly respected by both army and naval personnel—can only bring into question his competence as a service secretary.<sup>77</sup> Certainly, the senior army officers then engaging the enemy on a hostile shore resented the loss of Conner, whom they trusted implicitly.<sup>78</sup> Perry had missed the Veracruz landing and its preparation because he accompanied the steamer *Mississippi* to Norfolk for maintenance and essential repairs.<sup>79</sup> He returned to the Gulf of Mexico after the successful landing, and brought not only the *Mississippi*, but also an order from Mason to relieve Conner as commodore of the Home Squadron.

Fortunately for the war effort, and for the American troops ashore, Perry proved equal to Conner in both professionalism and cooperation. Although some historians have suggested otherwise, Conner's relief did not result from dissatisfaction with his performance. In fact, the Navy Department had extended Conner's command of the Squadron one year beyond the normal period.<sup>80</sup> Polk and Mason had previously selected Perry to replace Conner, and dispatched him to the Home Squadron to serve as Vice

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<sup>76</sup> Scott to Marcy, 17 March 1847 in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 42.

<sup>77</sup> Polk, "Vera Cruz, 1847," 77.

<sup>78</sup> Scott to Marcy, 21 March 1847 in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 42-43; Brigadier General William J. Worth to Conner, 28 March 1847, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 44; Slagle, *Ironclad Captain*, 63.

<sup>79</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 206.

<sup>80</sup> Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 4-6; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 128.

Commodore until Conner chose to turn over command. But once the Veracruz operation got underway, Conner had shown no inclination to give-up command, despite some ongoing health problems. Perry's critics suggest that he intrigued with Mason and Polk for an immediate change of command while back in the United States with the *Mississippi* during January-March 1847.<sup>81</sup> They also contend that the decision to relieve Conner at that time had a political dimension. Active duty military and naval officers of the nineteenth century tended to be more openly political than in our own time.<sup>82</sup> Perry was a well-known Democrat whereas most important commanders of the Mexican War (Scott, Taylor, and Stockton) had Whig affiliations and political ambitions. Having a Jacksonian Democrat in a key command position may well have made the Polk administration feel more comfortable with the political aspects of the war. Conner, for better or for worse, had no party connections and no known political ambitions.<sup>83</sup>

Conner had received some criticism in the press due to three failed efforts to capture the port city of Alvarado during the summer and fall of 1846. Although the failures resulted more from issues of hydrography than from enemy resistance, it hurt his standing in the eyes of politicians and the public. To offset this, he had sent a task force to capture Tabasco during October. In a visible, but militarily insignificant operation, Tabasco surrendered to the commander of the task force, Matthew Perry. The Tabasco operation restored confidence in the Home Squadron among Americans back in the States. But the credit redounded not to Conner, who ordered the operation, but to Perry

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<sup>81</sup> Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 208.

<sup>82</sup> Leckie, *The Wars of America*, 337.

<sup>83</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 212-213.

who carried it out.<sup>84</sup> Whether because of press relations, political intrigue, or legitimate personnel rotation policy, changing commanders in the middle of a tactical operation is a risky business. Credit for avoiding the potential disaster that such a change could create must go to Perry and Scott, not to Marcy or the president.<sup>85</sup> Ultimately, the change of command did not have a disastrous impact, but it caused a period of confusion and uncertainty for the amphibious forces ashore and at sea. Regrettably, it also robbed David Conner of the recognition he deserved as the most important single person involved in the landing at Veracruz. The more colorful and heroic Perry, with great exploits throughout his career, attracted greater attention in historical memory.<sup>86</sup>

In addition to the problems of command, logistical support for the Veracruz operation proved deplorable. This resulted primarily from a leadership failure back in the United States, and not from the forward deployed forces. Despite the good work in acquiring transports and surfboats, other aspects of support proved disappointing. Even the surfboats did not arrive in the quantities required to support the original landing plan. Less than half arrived in time for the amphibious assault.<sup>87</sup> This resulted in the surfboats returning to their ships to reload after landing each wave ashore. The time consumed in this operation could have been disastrous had the Mexican army made a determined defense on at the waterline. With 141 surfboats available, one wave could load while another landed on the beach. This would ensure a very rapid build-up of combat power

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<sup>84</sup> Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 205-206.

<sup>85</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 262-263.

<sup>86</sup> K. Jack Bauer. *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: Macmillan Publisher Co., Inc, 1974), 248.

<sup>87</sup> Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 62.

ashore. With only 65 boats, the amount of time for the build-up would essentially double. The lack of enemy resistance, coupled with innovative planning and the hard work of sailors manning the boats, allowed the landing force to overcome this deficiency. Whereas the buildup of combat power ashore proved rapid enough for the Veracruz operation, more surfboats would have made it even faster, and it is always smart to gain every possible advantage when conducting an amphibious operation.

Imperfect logistical support plagued Scott throughout the war, because reinforcements, equipment, weapons, and draft animals never arrived in the quantities promised and needed. Even by the most optimistic estimates, troop levels in Scott's army never exceeded 13,500 soldiers despite Washington's promise of twice that amount.<sup>88</sup> Not only did the thousands of wagons, horses, mules, and supplies arrive in a fraction of the numbers needed, but also those that did arrive were often too late to support the mission.<sup>89</sup> By sharing assets, Scott and Perry minimized the impact of this shameful lack of support, but only up to a point. Although the logistical problem initially resulted primarily from bureaucratic inefficiency, as the war progressed and Scott continued to win victories many political leaders came to believe that the army could get by with a lower level of support than originally planned. Sympathy with Scott's constant requests for support waned, and ultimately he had to solve his own logistics problems as well as fight Santa Anna's resilient army.

On 22 March, Scott asked General Juan Morales to surrender Veracruz and its forts. Morales rejected the demand as he had a similar request prior to the Collada

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<sup>88</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 122; Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 420.

<sup>89</sup> Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 430-431; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 311-312.

landing. After Morales's rebuff, Scott opened fire on Veracruz and its forts while Perry's ships bombarded from the sea.<sup>90</sup> The following day, Commander Josiah Tattnall took the steamer, *Spitfire*, within 800 yards of the main defensive castle and blasted away for several hours before returning to the main force. Tattnall's excursion—actually one of several—proved exciting, colorful, and risky. Despite a mild rebuke from Perry for recklessness, Tattnall's daring proved an inspiration to the entire amphibious force.<sup>91</sup> But as in all wars, the horrors of battle counterbalance the glory of heroics. Both American and Mexican accounts of the bombardment of Veracruz describe a devastating experience for the occupants.<sup>92</sup> Scott had little choice other than to act aggressively, for to show mercy to his enemy within the city would ultimately be costly to his own army. He must reduce Veracruz and move inland in a race against the onset of disease and the movements of Santa Anna. If that meant the residents of the city must suffer, so go the fortunes of war.

The first several days of bombardment did not produce good results because the army's siege guns had not yet arrived. At Scott's request, Perry provided six heavy guns (three 68-pounder shell-guns and three 32-pounder solid-shot guns) along with their crews for use on the line of battle. On 24 March, these guns came into action, having an

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<sup>90</sup> E. Kirby Smith to his wife, 22 March 1847 in, E. Kirby Smith, *To Mexico with Scott: Letters of Captain E. Kirby Smith* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917), 121-125.

<sup>91</sup> Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 47; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 130-132; Morison, *Old Bruin*, 218; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 29-30.

<sup>92</sup> "Mexican Narrative of Events at the Heroic City of Vera Cruz, While Besieged by the American Army," published at Jalapa, 1847, in Smith and Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 192-193; "War With Mexico," New Orleans *Delta*, 17 April 1847, in Smith and Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 194-195.

immediate impact on the siege.<sup>93</sup> The heavy naval guns provided the punch necessary to breach the defensive walls making the city susceptible to infantry assault.<sup>94</sup> Previous bombardment had failed to accomplish this, primarily inflicting damage to the structures and people within the walls. After the big guns came into play, the collective fire from cannon, mortars, rockets, and ships reached climatic levels, inflicting devastating punishment on the physical structures and mental condition of the Veracruz defenders.<sup>95</sup> Despite a courageous effort at counter-battery fire from the forts and strongholds, the defenders could not suppress the American guns, and on 26 March, Mexican leaders raised the white flag.<sup>96</sup>

Prior to the Mexican surrender, Scott developed a plan to assault the city. The breaching of its walls by the heavy naval guns had made that an appropriate—even attractive—tactical choice. He organized the assault force into three columns consisting of regulars, volunteers, and marines and sailors respectively. Although this attack undoubtedly would have succeeded, the offer to negotiate presented a less costly alternative.<sup>97</sup> After two days of discussions, Mexican General Jose Juan de Landero (Morales slipped away in a small boat on the night of 25 March) surrendered Veracruz

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<sup>93</sup> Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 47; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 133-134; Temple, *Memoir*, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 69; Morison, *Old Bruin*, 215-218.

<sup>94</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 219-220.

<sup>95</sup> General Scott's General Order No. 80, 30 March 1847, in Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 43-44; Wheelan, *Invading Mexico*, 315.

<sup>96</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 150; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 127; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 135-142.

<sup>97</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 219-220; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 142.

and Fort San Juan de Ulúa with all officers and arms passing into American control.<sup>98</sup>

The terms of capitulation paroled the Mexican enlisted men and permitted them to march out of the city under full honors of war before surrendering their weapons.<sup>99</sup> The agreement also protected the civil and religious rights of the Mexican citizens and permitted Mexican sick to remain in the city under their own medical care. While Veracruz passed into American hands, Scott looked west toward the National Highway and the 1519 route taken by Hernando Cortez.<sup>100</sup>

As Scott built-up supplies ashore, he extended his beachhead inland and created the Military Department of Veracruz. He also undertook a major clean up of the city to minimize the prospect of disease.<sup>101</sup> Scott and Perry then launched a joint attack on Alvarado about thirty miles southeast of Veracruz under command of Brigadier General John A. Quitman. By attacking and capturing Alvarado, Scott believed he could strengthen his hold on the coastline as well as obtain horses, mules, and beef cattle to support his army.<sup>102</sup> Quitman arrived at the city only to discover that Navy Lieutenant Charles G. Hunter and his steamer, *Scourge*, had already taken the surrender of Alvarado

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<sup>98</sup> Scott to Marcy, 29 March 1847, in Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 141, 143-144; Conner, *The Home Squadron*, 47.

<sup>99</sup> George Ballentine. *Autobiography of an English Soldier in the United States Army*, in Grady McWhiney and Sue McWhiney, eds. *To Mexico with Taylor and Scott 1845-1847* (Waltham, MA: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1969), 117-119; Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 427-428; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 145-147.

<sup>100</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 264-265.

<sup>101</sup> Leckie, *The Wars of America*, 360; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 37-38.

<sup>102</sup> Dunnavent R. Blake. *Brown Water Warfare: The U.S. Navy in Riverine Warfare and the Emergence of a Tactical Doctrine, 1775-1970* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003), 48-49; Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 208; Morison, *Old Bruin*, 222-223.

and nearby Tlacotalpán as well.<sup>103</sup> Although Quitman appeared to see the humor in one small naval steamer capturing the two cities before his division or Perry's force of 13 vessels even arrived, the commodore did not. Perry ordered Hunter court-marshaled for contempt toward authority.<sup>104</sup> Perry's criticism occurred because Hunter's early actions caused the Mexican troops to retreat from the Alvarado area and take their livestock with them. Despite that fact, Quitman returned to Veracruz with approximately 500 horses.<sup>105</sup> Hunter's penalty included dismissal from the Squadron, but he became a folk hero back in the United States.<sup>106</sup> Most Americans believed that Hunter only followed orders in arriving at Alvarado in advance of Perry and Quitman. They sent him on the reconnaissance, and he simply exploited an opportunity presented on the field of battle. These constituted qualities that deserved praise, not punishment in the minds of most people. Perry's actions seemed petty and vindictive, and proved that even giants have flaws.

Concurrent with Scott's move into the west, Perry established headquarters in Veracruz, which became the center for regulating shipping and controlling activities throughout the harbor. He also took control of the customhouse and the collection of duties.<sup>107</sup> Shortly after the surrender of Veracruz, traffic in its harbor rapidly returned to

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<sup>103</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 147-148; Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, 100-101.

<sup>104</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 223.

<sup>105</sup> Johnson, *Winfield Scott*, 180.

<sup>106</sup> Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 209.

<sup>107</sup> Secretary of the Treasury, R. J. Walker, to President Polk, letter regarding collection of duties in Mexican ports, 30 March 1847 and Polk implementation, 31 March 1847, in *Staff College Case Study*, 96-100.

a very high level of activity.<sup>108</sup> This included some ongoing support for Scott's army then moving toward Mexico City. To further tighten control over the Mexican littoral, Perry attacked and captured the fortified compound at Tuxpan, located between Veracruz and Tampico, with a landing force of about 1500 Marines and sailors.<sup>109</sup> Believing he could take the city only by joint land and sea action, Perry organized the landing party from the Home Squadron, which included his own son, Marine Lieutenant William F. Perry. After capturing Tuxpan, Perry destroyed its fortifications and removed its guns, rendering it useless to the Mexican war effort.<sup>110</sup> Destroying the defenses of Tuxpan positioned him to control the key areas of Lobos, Soto de la Marina, and the Tabasco River basin.<sup>111</sup>

On 30 March, Santa Anna received word of the fall of Veracruz. Several days later, he set out from Mexico City to challenge the American effort to move west through the mountains and threaten the Mexican capital. Knowing the mountainous terrain between Veracruz and Mexico City favored the defense, Santa Anna felt very confident that he could stop Scott's army at numerous places along the route. He first chose to defend at a narrow pass near the town of Cerro Gordo where high ground protected both flanks and the Rio del Plan served as a natural obstacle to his front.<sup>112</sup> Santa Anna established his army in a strong defensive position, which he believed would ensure a

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<sup>108</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 224; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 148-149.

<sup>109</sup> Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 210.

<sup>110</sup> Blake, *Brown Water Warfare*, 48-49; Morison, *Old Bruin*, 227.

<sup>111</sup> Perry to Mason, 26 April 1847 in Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 156-157.

<sup>112</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 272; Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 175.

tactical victory against any American attack.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, by holding the line at Cerro Gordo, he would keep his enemy within the yellow fever zone, which he knew would be a strong ally as the summer season approached.<sup>114</sup>

On 8 April 1847, Scott began his movement toward Mexico City along the National Highway. Twiggs's division led the march followed by Patterson and a siege train.<sup>115</sup> Worth's division did not get underway until 16 April due to the delayed arrival of wagons and draft animals.<sup>116</sup> Twiggs's lead elements first engaged the enemy when they skirmished with a patrol of Mexican lancers on 11 April. The next day, Twiggs made contact with the main enemy force near Cerro Gordo and halted his advance.<sup>117</sup> Patterson came forward to take overall command and the two generals decided to await Scott's arrival before initiating further action.<sup>118</sup> Upon joining his lead element, Scott ordered Captain Robert E. Lee to conduct a reconnaissance of the area with the purpose of finding an alternate avenue of advance against Santa Anna's formidable positions. Lee located a promising route, which offered an opportunity to surprise the Mexican left flank. The boldness of Lee's concept impressed Scott who approved the plan. He assigned Lee and a detachment of pioneers to clear an avenue of approach by which Twiggs's division and several batteries of light artillery could advance on the enemy.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Montross, *War Through the Ages*, 576-577.

<sup>114</sup> Leckie, *The Wars of America*, 361; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 41-42.

<sup>115</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 174.

<sup>116</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 130; Leckie, *The Wars of America*, 360; Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 430-431.

<sup>117</sup> Ballentine in McWhiney, *To Mexico with Taylor and Scott*, 127-128; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, II, 48-49.

<sup>118</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 176.

<sup>119</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, I, 131-132.

Lee accomplished this with stealth and secrecy, thereby providing Scott's army the opportunity to flank, surprise, and defeat Santa Anna in the Battle of Cerro Gordo.<sup>120</sup>

On the morning of 17 April, Scott attacked Santa Anna at Cerro Gordo with Twiggs enveloping force advancing along Lee's avenue of approach while Pillow's brigade of Patterson's division drove along the main road.<sup>121</sup> Despite being surprised, the Mexican defenders fought with determination, barely avoiding defeat on the first day of fighting. But Scott reinforced Twiggs's attack overnight and moved additional forces into the high ground in the Mexican rear. By 1400 on the second day of battle, Scott's army had defeated and routed the Mexicans at Cerro Gordo capturing large numbers of prisoners and hotly pursuing the survivors westward toward Jalapa. He also captured so many field pieces that he could not move them from the battlefield due to lack of transportation.<sup>122</sup>

Despite the continuing presence of numerous marines in Scott's army, the invasion of Mexico ceased to be an amphibious operation after the battle of Cerro Gordo.<sup>123</sup> None of the navy ships could provide fire or direct logistical support.<sup>124</sup> In fact, they provided very little support—other than a large marine detachment—during the fighting at Cerro Gordo. Although the army continued to receive some supplies and reinforcements through the port Veracruz for a period of time, those operations ceased to be tactical in nature after its capture. Support through the port became administrative and

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<sup>120</sup> Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 432-433.

<sup>121</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 180-182.

<sup>122</sup> General Order No. 111, 17 April 1847; Scott to Marcy, 19 April 1847; Scott to Marcy, 23 April 1847, all in Scott, *Memoirs*, I, 433-451; Montross, *War Through the Ages*, 577.

<sup>123</sup> Morison, *Old Bruin*, 221.

<sup>124</sup> Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 75.

commercial following the departure of Scott's army. In addition, Scott began to augment the support he received through Veracruz from other sources within Mexico.<sup>125</sup> When his army concentrated at Puebla during May 1847 some distance from Veracruz, Scott called in all his garrisons and essentially cut his line of communications with the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>126</sup> It constituted a bold and risky move, and one that would ultimately place Winfield Scott in the pantheon of history's great commanders.<sup>127</sup>

After the Battle of Cerro Gordo and American forces had pushed on to Jalapa and Puebla, Scott initiated a strategic pause to entice Mexican authorities to enter into negotiations.<sup>128</sup> Thinking the victories at Buena Vista, Veracruz, and Cerro Gordo might force concessions from Santa Anna, the U.S. Government undertook a modest diplomatic initiative to end the war.<sup>129</sup> The Polk administration had earlier sent Nicholas Trist to accompany Scott's army and act as Commissioner Plenipotentiary (peace commissioner).<sup>130</sup> Nothing came of this effort until Scott pushed on toward Mexico City winning hard fought victories at Contreras and Churubusco. With their capital now at risk, Mexican officials agreed to a meeting of commissioners and Scott temporarily suspended operations. But Mexican leaders could not yet pay the price for peace (the establishment of the Rio Grande as the northern boundary and cession of New Mexico

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<sup>125</sup> Leckie, *The Wars of America*, 365; Morison, *Old Bruin*, 221-222; Montross, *War Through the Ages*, 577-578.

<sup>126</sup> Eisenhower, *Agent of Destiny*, 261; Johnson, *Winfield Scott*, 196-197.

<sup>127</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 166.

<sup>128</sup> Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.*, 150.

<sup>129</sup> Montross, *War Through the Ages*, 577.

<sup>130</sup> Leckie, *The Wars of America*, 364.

and California), and the attack toward the capital resumed.<sup>131</sup> On 8 September 1847, Scott launched a series of attacks that resulted in the fall of Chapultepec Castle several days later. On 13 September, a detachment of Marines attached to Quitman's division overran the Halls of Montezuma.<sup>132</sup> After the victory, Scott issued General Order No. 284 in which he appointed Quitman to be the Civil and Military Governor of Mexico and exhorted his soldiers to remain disciplined and vigilant.<sup>133</sup> It took the fall of Mexico City and its subsequent occupation by American troops to set in motion the negotiation that resulted in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed on 2 February 1848.<sup>134</sup>

Success in the Mexican-American War came from numerous hard fought battles and the will of many resolute leaders. But the successful amphibious operation at Veracruz created the strategic environment that made ultimate victory possible. One of the unique aspects of amphibious warfare is that it tends to function at all three levels of war simultaneously. The fighting occurs on the tactical and operational levels, of course, but the impact of amphibious action is usually strategic in nature. Whereas the payoff for success is usually great, the complexity and vulnerability of amphibious operations also makes them risky. The amphibious force must build-up combat power ashore from nothing at all to a level capable of defeating an enemy force on its own ground. This requires support from strong naval forces coupled with extensive and detailed planning.

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<sup>131</sup> President James K. Polk, Third Annual Message to Congress, 7 December 1847, in *Staff College Case Study*, 132-159; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 147-149.

<sup>132</sup> Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848*, 322; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1, 161; Johnson, *Winfield Scott*, 204; Love, *History of the U.S. Navy*, 210.

<sup>133</sup> General Order No 284, Headquarters of the Army, Mexico, 14 September 1847, the *Aztec Club* archives, 1847-1964, OCLC 47922580, Box 3, Folder labeled Aztec Club copies of Gen. Taylor's Order # 30, Gen. Scott's G.O. # 284, U.S. Army Historical Center, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

<sup>134</sup> Polk to the Senate of the United States, 22 February 1848, and Polk to the Senate of the United States, 29 February 1848, in *Staff College Case Study*, 165-166 and 167-168.

In short, professionalism must permeate every aspect of the naval and ground forces involved. Cooperation between naval and ground elements must be strong and totally focused on mission accomplishment. Until the interwar years between World War I and World War II, the cooperation tended to be ad hoc and personality driven. As amphibious doctrine became codified during the 1930s, and tested throughout the Second World War, these critical issues of command relationships and integration of effort became developed and clarified. At Veracruz no such doctrine existed, and only the intelligent, professional, and results oriented leadership of Conner and Scott provided the necessary direction.

At Veracruz, American leaders took every measure to mitigate the risk and provide conditions for a successful battle. Despite personality conflicts among Polk, Marcy, Scott, and Taylor, the amphibious commander received the support and freedom of action he needed to lead the invasion force. Despite the failure of Marcy and Jesup to provide all the logistical support they committed to, they did provide enough to allow Scott to succeed, though by a narrow margin. Despite the lack of doctrine in joint operations (and a tradition of rancor between navy and army officers), Scott and Conner worked out the issue of unity of command so satisfactorily that it serve as a model for cooperative effort in joint operations.

Not only did the command relations set a high example of effective leadership, but also the entire Veracruz operation foreshadowed the American amphibious actions of the Second World War. Innovations in landing craft (surfboats in the 1840s, Higgins boats and tracked landing vehicles in the 1940s) provided an effective assault capability against the defensive capability of each enemy. This allowed commanders to rapidly

transfer combat power ashore and then sustain the landing force through the subsequent fighting. The innovation in sea based fire support (steam powered gunboats and frigates in the 1840s, close-in naval gunfire ships and carrier based airpower in the 1940s) provided a force multiplier that destroyed or discouraged opposition on the beach and provided ongoing fire support to the landing force. Any student of World War II can clearly see the model for the amphibious campaigns in the Pacific and European theatres of war in the landing at Veracruz.

Veracruz not only served as a model for subsequent amphibious operations, it established the United States as the preeminent amphibious power in the world. America's previous experience with amphibious warfare had been more on the defensive side of the action rather than on the offensive. This changed with Veracruz. After that successful landing, the United States remained an offensive power projection force. After 1847, the United States suffered from offensive amphibious attack only twice, at Wake Island and in the Philippines during 1942. During that same period, American amphibious power conducted hundreds of offensive landings, virtually all successful, based on precedent established at Veracruz.

Victory in the Mexican War established the United States as a continental power, spanning North America from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. Control of the West Coast ensured future American dominance in trade with Asia and enhanced its growing role as a major sea power. It established the conditions that would one day ensure—despite a few detours—that the United States would become the preeminent naval and military power in the world.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore*, 474.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FORT FISHER CAMPAIGN

If the conquest of California and the landing at Veracruz proved the value of amphibious operations during the Mexican-American War, land warfare predominated in the American Civil War. Historians and military professionals agree on the importance of large armies to the outcome of the American Civil War. So much attention has focused on the major battles and leaders of land warfare, that other elements of military significance often receive less attention than deserved. Yet the ultimate victory of Union forces resulted from a total war effort involving the use of political, diplomatic, economic, military, and naval power. In no arena of conflict did the Union hold greater advantage than in the ability to assert naval power and to conduct amphibious operations.<sup>1</sup>

Examples of the importance of amphibious warfare and related activity during the Civil War include joint operations on the inland rivers, assaults on the littorals of the Gulf of Mexico, and landings along the Atlantic coastline.<sup>2</sup> The application of naval strategy and amphibious tactics constituted integral elements of President Abraham Lincoln's wartime thinking, as he sought to maintain pressure on the Confederacy at every point.<sup>3</sup> The effects of this war strategy eroded Confederate strength in many areas, including the tactical power of their armies in the field. As Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant and his lieutenants maneuvered against Southern armies, they faced smaller forces than they

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<sup>1</sup> Spencer C. Tucker, *Blue and Gray Navies: The Civil War Afloat* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 81-82, 102.

<sup>2</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 370-372.

<sup>3</sup> Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 262.

might have, because of the Confederate strategy of defending all points, including the entire coastline against a free-ranging Union navy.<sup>4</sup> In addition, as the Union Navy closed Southern ports to blockade-runners, Confederate armies lost important sources of materiel and equipment needed to sustain their war effort.<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of the American Civil War, leaders understood sophisticated concepts of naval strategy but very little doctrine existed regarding amphibious operations.<sup>6</sup> Yet a tradition of amphibious excellence had begun to germinate, crowned by the innovative and aggressive masterstroke at Veracruz in March 1847.<sup>7</sup> Despite this precedent by set Conner and Scott, American experience with amphibious operations during the Civil War produced mixed results until the final action at Fort Fisher in January 1865. Grant made good use of the navy in maneuvering his army along the Cumberland, Mississippi, and Tennessee Rivers during the first two years of the war. These did not represent pure amphibious actions in the classic blue-water sense of the concept, yet they possessed many of the attributes of amphibious warfare, including a supportive relationship between army and navy commanders. In the era before the existence of joint doctrine, nothing required greater attention than cooperation between

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<sup>4</sup> Rear Admiral David D. Porter to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, after action report (AAR hereafter) dated 22 January 1865, in *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies of the War of the Rebellion* (ORN hereafter), The Guild Press of Indiana, Inc., 1999, Republished by Oliver Computing LLC. Series 1—Volume 11 (S# 11); Potter and Nimitz, 326-327.

<sup>5</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, any, II, 387; Stephen R. Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War* (Columbia, SC: The University of Alabama Press, 1988), 3, 6-8; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 327.

<sup>6</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 313-314.

<sup>7</sup> J. F. C. Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), 150-167; Matthew F. Steele, *American Campaigns*, 1 (Washington: United States Infantry Association, 1943), 105-126; Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 73-76; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 232.

service leaders. No one in the Civil War did that better than Grant.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, Grant's subordinate commanders did not always prove as skillful in applying this aspect of operational art.

The capture of New Orleans by amphibious forces early in the war established an important strategic advantage for the Union. Yet despite operational success, cooperation between the navy and army elements had not been ideal. In April 1862, troops under Major General Benjamin F. Butler arrived at New Orleans nearly one week after Flag Officer David G. Farragut initiated his naval attack on the city. This delay allowed Confederate officials to remove almost everything of military value, including an entire armaments factory.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, discord developed between Butler and Captain David D. Porter, commanding a flotilla of mortar craft, regarding the role of each service in the conduct of tactical operations. This did not bode well for future relations between the two forceful commanders.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the New Orleans operation embodied both good and bad elements of amphibious warfare.

Union forces also conducted a series of amphibious operations along the Atlantic coastline early in the war. The 1862 operations of Flag Officer Louis M. Goldsborough and Brigadier General Ambrose Burnside on the North Carolina littorals proved highly successful and enhanced the reputation of Burnside, contributing to his subsequent

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<sup>8</sup> Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-02, *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, (Washington: 19 September 2001), xi, II-1, VII-1; Department of Defense, *Joint Staff Officer's Guide*, AFSC Pub 1 (National Defense University, Norfolk, VA, 1984), 142-143.

<sup>9</sup> Rowena Reed, *Combined Operations in the Civil War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 195.

<sup>10</sup> Howard P. Nash, Jr., *A Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1972), 138-140.

promotion to command of the Army of the Potomac.<sup>11</sup> But the lack of determined Confederate defense, coupled with superior Union firepower created mistaken ideas about the ease of conducting amphibious operations, which led to costly errors during later landings.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout most of the war, the U.S. Navy and Army struggled with the problem of planning, organizing, and conducting effective amphibious operations against important enemy positions ashore. Such actions proved especially difficult when the entire support for an operation had to come from the sea.<sup>13</sup> Moving and sustaining large armies such as George B. McClellan's on the York Peninsula in 1862, and Benjamin F. Butler's at Bermuda Hundred, Virginia, in 1864, contained important amphibious elements. From the perspective of power projection and sustainment, both of these operations proved highly successful, whatever failures occurred during subsequent operations ashore. But the real test of amphibious capability comes when fighting must occur against a determined defense during or shortly after the landing, as in the case of Fort Fisher.

The importance of Fort Fisher to the Confederacy lay in the role it played in protecting the port of Wilmington, North Carolina. During the war, Wilmington proved a major irritant to the United States government, as a source of military supply and a base for Confederate commerce raiding.<sup>14</sup> Throughout much of the war, tension existed

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<sup>11</sup> David D. Porter, *The Naval History of the Civil War* (Secaucus, NJ: Castle, a Division of Book Sales, Inc., 1984 - Reprint Issue), 114; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 570.

<sup>12</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 371-373.

<sup>13</sup> Department of the Navy, United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0, Marine Corps Operations* (Washington: 27 September 2001), 2-8.

<sup>14</sup> Reed, *Combined Operations*, 331; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 387.

between the army and navy regarding what to do about Wilmington. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells consistently advocated a joint action against the city and its defenses, becoming more vigorous in his demands during 1864.<sup>15</sup> Although eventually acceding to the operation, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton remained indifferent to it even until the first attack on the fort.<sup>16</sup> But Grant came to realize that closing Wilmington would eliminate the only outside source of supplies to Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia—with which the Union Army of the Potomac was in nearly constant contact after May 1864—and further isolate him on the battlefield. After the failure of the first Union effort, Grant became even more committed to the destruction of Fort Fisher and the closing of the port of Wilmington.<sup>17</sup>

By December of 1864, only Wilmington and Charleston, South Carolina remained open to blockade-runners as Union forces had either captured or effectively blockaded all other Confederate ports. Of the two, Wilmington proved more important due to the difficulty it posed to blockading ships and its proximity to Lee's army.<sup>18</sup> Located twenty miles up the Cape Fear River, Wilmington presented a particularly difficult challenge to the Union navy. Due to its position, offshore bombardment remained impossible, and the hydrography of the estuary severely restricted avenues for the movement of ships

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<sup>15</sup> Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles to President Abraham Lincoln, 28 October 1864, ORN, Series I – Volume 11 [S# II].

<sup>16</sup> Ron Gragg, *Confederate Goliath: The Battle of Fort Fisher* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 34-35; Reed, *Combined Operations*, 331-332.

<sup>17</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 387; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 322; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 107.

<sup>18</sup> Wise, *Lifeline*, 124, 205.

attempting to attack up river.<sup>19</sup> Access to the Cape Fear River consisted of two inlets separated by Smith's Island and Frying Pan Shoals, which penetrated deeply out to sea.<sup>20</sup> These conditions forced the blockading squadron to disburse its ships over a large sea space, thereby making it easier to penetrate.<sup>21</sup>

Fort Fisher served as the anchor for this powerful defensive complex, and in 1864 it represented the most advanced fortification in the world.<sup>22</sup> In addition to being the strongest defensive structure in the Confederacy, many considered it the strongest earthwork ever built.<sup>23</sup> For more than two and a half years, Fort Fisher's energetic and brilliant commander, Colonel William Lamb, labored to improve, strengthen, and expand its defenses. Working closely with his commanding officer, Major General William Henry Chase Whiting, Lamb created a masterful defensive complex that dominated the mouth of the Cape Fear River.<sup>24</sup> As an observer during the Crimean War, Porter had visited formidable Fort Malakoff just after it surrendered to French and British forces. In his view, it did not compare to Fort Fisher in either size (the walls were nearly four thousand feet long overall) or strength.<sup>25</sup> As the naval commander during the attacks on

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<sup>19</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 819.

<sup>20</sup> Chris E. Fonvielle, Jr., *The Wilmington Campaign: Last Rays of Departing Hope* (Campbell, CA: Savas Publishing Company, 1997), 21.

<sup>21</sup> Howard P. Nash, *A Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1972), 256; Gragg, 11-12; Porter, 686.

<sup>22</sup> Charles M. Robinson III, *Hurricane of Fire: The Union Assault on Fort Fisher* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 188-189; Nash, *Naval History*, 257; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> Reed, *Combined Operations*, 336; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 18-20; Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 322; David Porter, *Naval History of the Civil War*, 694.

<sup>24</sup> Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 17-26; Robinson, *Hurricane of Fire*, 32-40.

<sup>25</sup> Porter to Welles, 16 January 1865, ORN Series 1, Volume 1 [S# 11].

Fort Fisher, Porter may have been inclined to overstate his case somewhat, but few would deny that the fort represented a strong defensive structure.

Fort Fisher lies on a peninsula jutting south from Wilmington in what looks like an elongated and inverted pyramid. Confederate Point, or Federal Point, lies on the lower portion of the peninsula, which terminates at New Inlet.<sup>26</sup> New Inlet provided one of the two entrances to the Cape Fear River for deep-draft ships. The second entrance, Old Inlet, lies further south, near Smith's Island, and is controlled by no fewer than four mutually supporting forts. Piloting through these two inlets was slow and hazardous even under the best of conditions, and the guns of the various forts could either protect or destroy any ship attempting passage.<sup>27</sup> Fort Fisher, only one of numerous forts defending the avenues into Wilmington, dominated all traffic through New Inlet channel. But if Fort Fisher offered the advantage of strength and location to its Confederate defenders, these very qualities also offered Union strategists an operational center of gravity for taking Cape Fear and closing the Port of Wilmington.<sup>28</sup> By neutralizing Fort Fisher, Union forces could control the entire region.

The design reflected the tactical and engineering skills of Whiting and Lamb. Fort Fisher lies on Confederate Point like a great numeral "7," with the horizontal top line stretching roughly from west to east about a thousand feet across the peninsula, and the longer vertical stem extending roughly north to south, parallel to the coastline for some three thousand feet. The horizontal, west-east portion faced north and protected the fort

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<sup>26</sup> Reed, *Combined Operations*, 336; Nash, *Naval History*, 257.

<sup>27</sup> David Porter, *Naval History of the Civil War*, 694; Nash, *Naval History*, 256-257.

<sup>28</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 485-487; Porter to Welles, 27 December 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

from land attack down the peninsula. Any force large enough to threaten the fortress had to deploy in the area to the north and assault that rampart, a formidable defensive challenge to Union commanders.<sup>29</sup> Direct assault against the ocean-facing wall offered small prospect for success, given the weapons and equipment available to attacking forces of that era. An attack from the rear required passage through New Inlet, an unlikely avenue since the fort's guns could destroy the shipping before an attacking force landed.<sup>30</sup>

In early December 1864, Grant decided, in conjunction with naval leaders in Washington, to send a joint expedition to attack and capture Fort Fisher.<sup>31</sup> He assigned Major General Godfrey Weitzel to lead the assault force but issued his orders through Major General Benjamin F. Butler, who commanded the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, as well as the Army of the James.<sup>32</sup> Exercising command discretion, Butler chose to join the expedition off the coast of Fort Fisher and personally take charge of the operation.<sup>33</sup> Porter commanded the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron with responsibility for actions at sea and against the Confederate littoral.<sup>34</sup> The overall plan of attack agreed on by Grant and Porter involved moving 6,500 soldiers from Bermuda Hundred to a rendezvous point off the North Carolina coast within striking distance of

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<sup>29</sup> Weitzel to Turner, 31 December 1864, in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (OR hereafter) The Guild Press of Indiana, Inc., 1997 Republished by Oliver Computing LLC), Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>30</sup> David Porter, *Naval History of the Civil War*, 694.

<sup>31</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 388.

<sup>32</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 388.

<sup>33</sup> Richard S. West, Jr., *Lincoln's Scapegoat General: A Life of Benjamin F. Butler, 1818-1893* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 280; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 390.

<sup>34</sup> David D. Porter, General Order No. 70 10 December 1864, in ORN Series 1-Volume 11 [S# 11].

Fort Fisher. The force would wait in readiness until Porter exploded a powder boat near the fort and conducted extensive naval bombardment to destroy the fort's guns and defensive structures. At a point when the defenders appeared sufficiently weakened, the landing force would go ashore and assault Fort Fisher from the north.<sup>35</sup>

The concept of operations seems sound, but the detailed planning proved utterly deficient. For example, detonation of the powder boat, naval "preparatory fires" (in modern parlance), and the infantry assault against the fortress required an integrated and fluid execution, creating shock for the defenders and momentum in the offensive.<sup>36</sup> Instead, the efforts occurred as disjointedly and spasmodically, allowing the defenders to concentrate their full attention on each in turn. The powder boat detonated at approximately 0200 on the morning of 24 December, with absolutely no effect on the troops, defenses, or subsequent battle.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the day of 24 December, Porter's fleet conducted a slow bombardment of Fort Fisher, inflicting only minor damage on its structure and guns. The defenders suffered very few casualties under this fire, moving into protective "bombproofs" whenever they could not serve their guns to good effect.<sup>38</sup>

On Sunday, 25 December, while Porter continued his naval gunfire assault on Fort Fisher, the landing force of some three thousand men went ashore about three miles

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<sup>35</sup> Benjamin F. Butler to Ulysses S. Grant, 3 January 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87]; Porter to Welles, 26 December 1864, ORN, Series I, Volume 11 [S# 11]; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 390.

<sup>36</sup> *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, I-1 – II-1, XV-1 – XV-4.

<sup>37</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 391; Porter to Welles, 26 December 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

<sup>38</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 393; Butler to Grant, 3 January 1865, in OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87]; Porter to Welles, 26 December 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Colonel William Lamb to Major James H. Hill, Chief of Staff, 27 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

north of the fort, and out of range of its guns.<sup>39</sup> Weitzel pushed his force down the peninsula, capturing several small outposts along the way and scouting the approaches to the fort. In an act of courage and bravado, Lieutenant William H. Walling of the 142<sup>nd</sup> New York Infantry actually ascended the fort's parapet and brought back a Confederate flag knocked down by naval gunfire.<sup>40</sup> Afterward Weitzel and Grant made much of this incident, along with the capture of a dispatch rider, but none of this had any real military significance.<sup>41</sup> Weitzel halted and deployed his main force about 800 yards from the base of Fort Fisher to evaluate the situation.<sup>42</sup> An advance force of about 500 skirmishers had already probed the fort's north facing defenses, with unsatisfactory results.<sup>43</sup> The Confederate defenders had repulsed the Union line with canister and musket fire from strong positions, inducing anxiety in Weitzel's mind.<sup>44</sup>

In fact, what Weitzel observed from his reconnaissance of the fort appalled him and caused him to question the prospect for success. Despite a later tendency to overstate the minor accomplishments of his attacking force against Confederate outposts, and to understate his skirmishers' repulse, Weitzel at the time saw Fort Fisher's north wall as

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<sup>39</sup> Major General Godfrey Weitzel to Brigadier General J. W. Turner, Chief of Staff, 31 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>40</sup> Weitzel to Turner, 31 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87]; Porter to Welles, 26 December 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Fonvielle, *Wilmington Campaign*, 155-157.

<sup>41</sup> Weitzel to Turner, 31 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87]; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 393.

<sup>42</sup> Weitzel to Turner, 31 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>43</sup> Major General W. H. C. Whiting to Lieutenant Colonel A. Anderson, adjutant, cover letter to Lamb's AAR, 31 December 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Lamb to Hill, 27 December 1864, in OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87]; Weitzel to Turner, 31 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>44</sup> Butler to Grant, 27 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87]; Lamb to Hill, 27 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

very formidable.<sup>45</sup> Attacking it may have been the only viable option, but that did not make the task any more palatable. The assault force must first overcome an electrically detonated minefield, then an infantry line behind the log-and-earthen palisade, and finally storm a 23-foot rampart holding twenty-four guns and mortars capable of firing shot, shell, grape, and canister.<sup>46</sup> The wall terminated at the west end adjacent to a slough covered by fire from field artillery, and on the east at the formidable Northeast Bastion, which mounted two 8-inch guns.<sup>47</sup> Weitzel also noted that despite the apparent accuracy of the naval gunfire during the day, it had done little damage to the guns or structure of the fort.<sup>48</sup>

Thoughts came to Weitzel's mind of Fort Jackson (south of New Orleans in April 1862), Vicksburg (on the Mississippi, besieged May-June 1863), and Charleston (July 1863), where heavy bombardment had failed to destroy enemy defenses. His recollection of two bloody and failed assaults of 10 July 1863 on Battery Wagner in Charleston Harbor "which were made under four times more favorable circumstances than those under which we were placed," weighed heavily on him.<sup>49</sup> Weitzel returned to the army transport *Chamberlain* to meet with Butler and discuss the situation. He reported that in his opinion—and that of his senior officers—an assault under the present circumstances would be "butchery."<sup>50</sup> Butler concurred, conjuring up his own thoughts of Battery

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<sup>45</sup> Weitzel to Turner, 31 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>46</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 391-392.

<sup>47</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 391-392.

<sup>48</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 391-392.

<sup>49</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 391-392.

<sup>50</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 391-392.

Wagner as well as Port Hudson, Louisiana on the Mississippi (May-July 1863) from Weitzel's vivid description of conditions.<sup>51</sup> After further consideration, Butler ordered the landing force to disengage and reembark on its ships, believing his duty dictated such action.<sup>52</sup>

Porter did not agree with the decision to call off the assault on Fort Fisher, and attempted to persuade Butler to reconsider. He explained that his ships had been bombarding at only a slow rate of fire. He felt confident that once they commenced rapid firing, they would suppress the fort's defenders until the assault force reached a position within twenty yards of the ramparts. He further informed Butler that he had dispatched his largest vessels to Beaufort, North Carolina to fill up with ammunition in order to provide sustained support should Butler and Weitzel agree to resume the attack.<sup>53</sup> Whether because of personal animosity or professional distrust, Butler appears not to have placed any confidence in Porter's commitment. By 27 December, all troops had departed the beach, and by 28 December, most had returned to their bases.<sup>54</sup>

Grant also disagreed with Butler's decision. After receiving Butler's preliminary report indicating he had withdrawn from offensive action, Grant telegraphed President Lincoln on 28 December stating that the expedition had "proven to be a gross and

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<sup>51</sup> Butler to Grant, 3 January 1864, in OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>52</sup> Butler to Grant, 3 January 1864, in OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>53</sup> Porter to Butler, 26 December 1864 ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Porter to Welles, 26 December 1864 ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Porter to Welles, 27 December 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

<sup>54</sup> Lamb to Hill, 27 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87]; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 391.

culpable failure.”<sup>55</sup> “Culpable” would prove to be the operative word. On 7 January 1865, Grant forwarded Butler’s after-action report to Stanton stating in his endorsement that he never intended for Butler to accompany the expedition, and that his orders “contemplated no withdrawal, or no failure after a landing was made.”<sup>56</sup> It is clear from these two communications that Grant believed Butler had disregarded his orders, and must assume responsibility for the failure at Fort Fisher. It is also clear that Grant’s objection concerned the decision to remove the troops from the beach rather than the decision not to attack.<sup>57</sup> Grant believed that simply establishing the landing force ashore constituted success in itself, because a subsequent siege would have been sufficient to guarantee ultimate victory.<sup>58</sup> Weitzel had recommended against launching an assault on the fort, but did not become associated with the decision to evacuate the beachhead. Because of this and his prestige within the army, he escaped the full force of Grant’s wrath. Yet Weitzel had missed his opportunity to excel and would have no role in future operations against Fort Fisher.

Even the 3,000 men Butler and Weitzel had landed of their 6,500 men, represented a strong and threatening presence ashore.<sup>59</sup> Fort Fisher’s garrison consisted of roughly one thousand men including infantrymen, gunners, and engineers, both regular

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<sup>55</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 395.

<sup>56</sup> Grant to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, endorsement on Butler’s AAR, 7 January 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>57</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 394; Horace Porter *Campaigning with Grant* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1897), 362-363.

<sup>58</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 394; Horace Porter, *Campaigning with Grant*, 363.

<sup>59</sup> Porter to Welles, 26 December 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume II [S# 11].

and reserve.<sup>60</sup> The formidableness of the defenses would cause pause to any prudent commander, but did not—as Grant pointed out—dictate to evacuation of the beachhead.<sup>61</sup> Nor did the developing weather conditions require evacuation, as Butler later contended, and Porter emphatically rejected.<sup>62</sup> What better explains Butler’s decision to withdraw his force was the arrival of Major General Robert F. Hoke’s division, dispatched from the Army of Northern Virginia by Lee.<sup>63</sup>

As Weitzel’s troops came ashore north of Fort Fisher, the advance elements of Hoke’s division began arriving through Wilmington and deployed to a position known as Sugar Loaf, six miles north of the fort. Commanded by Brigadier General William Kirkland, the Confederates initially engaged the lead brigade of the Union amphibious force under Brevet Brigadier General Newton Martin Curtis. Seeing himself outnumbered, and not certain when the rest of his division would arrive, Kirkland pulled back. As Weitzel and Curtis began moving their troops south toward Fort Fisher, Kirkland established a cross-peninsula line north of the landing site and awaited reinforcements. Weitzel had no idea of Kirkland’s strength, but interrogation of prisoners caused him to inflate it in his mind.<sup>64</sup> Undoubtedly, this later weighed on his mind as he observed the awesome defenses facing his attacking force.

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<sup>60</sup> Lamb to Hill, 27 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>61</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 394-395.

<sup>62</sup> Porter to Welles, 22 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

<sup>63</sup> Porter to Welles, 22 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 392; West, *Lincoln’s Scapegoat*, 289-290.

<sup>64</sup> Weitzel to Turner, 31 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

In fact, the Confederates were weak both north and south of Weitzel. Braxton Bragg, the new commander of the Department of North Carolina, had pulled forces out of the Wilmington-Cape Fear area, including garrison troops belonging to Fort Fisher. Whiting and Lamb became alarmed, considering the fort dangerously undermanned. They also deplored Bragg's lack of urgency about the situation, which caused them to distrust his competence.<sup>65</sup> Confederate weakness in the Wilmington area had prompted Lee to send Hoke's division to stiffen the defenses. Whiting and Lamb considered these reinforcements essential to the defense of their position.<sup>66</sup> Despite Kirkland's timely arrival, the bulk of Hoke's division did not arrive until after Weitzel and Butler had evacuated their lodgment ashore, due to conflicting railroad priorities.<sup>67</sup>

Union commanders did not appreciate their advantageous position on 25 December 1864, when they decided to end the operation.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, neither Kirkland nor Bragg realized the vulnerability of Weitzel's force once it began to withdraw. Whiting severely criticized Bragg's failure to send Kirkland against Weitzel's constricting beachhead on 26 December. To Whiting and Lamb, the most important lesson from the first battle at Fort Fisher involved the need to coordinate a total military effort throughout the Wilmington-Cape Fear area. Unfortunately for the South, Braxton

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<sup>65</sup> Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 59.

<sup>66</sup> Whiting to Anderson, cover letter to Lamb's AAR, 31 December 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 61.

<sup>67</sup> Whiting to Anderson, cover letter to Lamb's AAR, 31 December 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

<sup>68</sup> Porter to Welles, 22 January 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Butler to Grant, 27 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

Bragg appeared insensitive to the military situation and its impact of Fort Fisher.<sup>69</sup> In fact, Whiting believed Bragg demonstrated incompetence throughout both battles for Fort Fisher, and deserved the utmost censure.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, Confederate forces believed they had won a victory. In the words of Lamb, “December 27, the foiled and frightened enemy left our shores.”<sup>71</sup>

The Union forces did not believe they had been defeated, but they could hardly deny they had failed in their effort. Joint planning existed only on a superfluous level, and independent action became commonplace during execution, demonstrating the lack of coordination between the army and navy. Additionally, it is fair to state that Butler and Weitzel exhibited tentativeness, if not outright timidity. Of course, they had no way of knowing the true strength of the fort’s garrison or of Hoke’s force to their north. But even if Hoke’s entire division had arrived, it would be no larger than their own force.<sup>72</sup> The fire support available from Porter’s guns would have been superior to anything Hoke could bring to bear. The navy had demonstrated its ability to deliver effective fire support during the probe against Fort Fisher’s north wall on 25 December.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, Porter had made a personal commitment to Butler that he would provide continuous fire support to the army should they resume the attack.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Whiting to Lee, 18 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>70</sup> Whiting to Butler, 22 February 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>71</sup> Lamb to Hill, 27 December 1864 OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>72</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 392; West, *Lincoln’s Scapegoat*, 282.

<sup>73</sup> Lamb to Hill, 27 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>74</sup> Porter to Butler, 26 December 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

Both Porter and Grant contended that the attack lacked vigor and commitment. But Porter's support of Butler and Weitzel had been erratic as well. Certainly, he had demonstrated the professional capability of his naval force even if the slow rate of fire had not caused much damage to the defenses of Fort Fisher. Yet his cooperation with the army in the explosion of the powder boat and the pre-invasion bombardment had been abysmal.<sup>75</sup> Porter not only exploded the powder boat too early and without notifying army leaders, but also he had failed to establish any means of communicating with forces ashore to direct or evaluate the effectiveness of his gunnery. Additionally, his detailed planning with respect to ammunition and fuel proved as deficient. Butler also lacked a logistics plan to support his troops ashore.<sup>76</sup> In General, both commanders failed in their obligation to ensure good integration of effort. They acted like separate commanders merely informing each other of their actions, rather than a cohesive and synergetic team.

Grant's disappointment at the failure of the operation is understandable, but his reaction appears somewhat disingenuous. Although he contends that he "contemplated no withdrawal or no failure after a landing was made," his initiating order to Butler had been ambiguous in that respect.<sup>77</sup> It clearly states the objectives of the expedition, but concluded, "Should the troops under General Weitzel fail to affect a landing at, or near Fort Fisher they will be returned to the army operating against Richmond without delay."<sup>78</sup> No doubt, this sentence caused Butler to believe he had the discretion to

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<sup>75</sup> Porter to Welles, 22 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

<sup>76</sup> Reed, *Combined Operations*, 252-253.

<sup>77</sup> Grant to Stanton, cover letter to Butler's AAR, 7 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>78</sup> Grant to Butler, 6 December 1864, OR Series 1, Volume XLII/1 (S#87).

withdraw his force back to Virginia. Since Weitzel never landed more than half of his troops, he could rationalize that the landing had never been effected.

The best outcome of the first attack against Fort Fisher was that Union leaders learned from the failure.<sup>79</sup> Despite their efforts to make Butler the scapegoat, both Grant and Porter realized that their own leadership could stand improvement. Porter and Butler had held several meetings but had conducted no real planning and did not communicate on an effective level.<sup>80</sup> Grant had left a certain ambiguity regarding his intentions and expectations.<sup>81</sup> Although it is possible to interpret Grant's directive as definitive, it did not appear so to Butler and Weitzel under the stress of combat. Generals like William T. Sherman or Philip H. Sheridan would probably have discerned Grant's intention better than did Butler or Weitzel. But in any case, Union leaders would avoid similar errors in the second attempt. Grant made his expectations perfectly clear to everyone, and required most emphatically close coordination between the army and navy.<sup>82</sup>

The final lesson from the Fort Fisher failure involved the problem of "operational security." The intention to capture Fort Fisher and close Wilmington harbor in December 1864 had become general knowledge in both armies.<sup>83</sup> Even worse, Confederate spies at Hampton Roads had reported specific intelligence about ship and troop movements to Lee, permitting him to send Hoke's division to interpose.<sup>84</sup> Grant did not intend to

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<sup>79</sup> Reed, *Combined Operations*, 354.

<sup>80</sup> Reed, *Combined Operations*, 354.

<sup>81</sup> Grant to Butler, 6 December 1864, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLII/1 [S# 87].

<sup>82</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 396.

<sup>83</sup> Robinson, *Hurricane of Fire*, 147.

permit such compromises in the second attempt, in January 1864. Only individuals with an absolute need to know would receive advance information about the mission. Even his new commander, Major General Alfred H. Terry, for instance, had to wait until he put to sea to open the orders explaining his mission and destination.<sup>85</sup> Rightly perceiving that disinformation could help even more, Grant let the suggestion leak that Terry and his force had embarked to join Sherman's army in Savannah, thus providing a plausible explanation for all the naval activity.<sup>86</sup>

When the fleet assembled off Beaufort on 8 January 1865, Terry met with Porter to finalize plans for the amphibious operation.<sup>87</sup> For the second Fort Fisher mission Porter embraced a more cooperative approach at the outset, because he trusted Grant and had confidence in the new army commander.<sup>88</sup> Terry and Porter developed a strong working relationship, which created the synergy so lacking in the first expedition.<sup>89</sup> After the planning sessions they sailed through heavy weather toward Cape Fear, arriving off Confederate Point after dark on 12 January, too late to attempt a landing.<sup>90</sup> At 0800 the next morning, Porter's ships began a bombardment of Fort Fisher, and landing

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<sup>84</sup> Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command, Volume Three: Gettysburg to Appomattox* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), 617-618; Horace Porter, *Campaigning with Grant*, 367; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 60.

<sup>85</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 396; Major General Alfred H. Terry to Brigadier General John A. Rawlins, Chief of Staff, 25 January 1865, OR Series I—Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>86</sup> Robinson, *Hurricane of Fire*, 147.

<sup>87</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series I—Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95]; Porter to Welles, 17 January 1865, ORN, Series I—Volume 11 [S# 11]; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 396.

<sup>88</sup> Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, II, 395.

<sup>89</sup> Porter to Grant, 14 January 1865, ORN, Series I—Volume 11 [S# 11]; Porter to Welles, 14 January 1865, ORN, Series I—Volume 11 [S# 11]; Porter to Welles, 15 January 1865, ORN, Series I—Volume 11 [S# 11].

<sup>90</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series I—Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95]; Porter to Welles, 17 January 1865 in ORN, Series I—Volume 11 [S# 11].

operations commenced about 0830. By 1400 that afternoon, Porter and Terry had landed 8,000 men with twelve day's provisions and all their equipment, again north of the fort.<sup>91</sup>

Terry's advance element threw out pickets, who engaged Confederate scouts and captured a few prisoners. From these Terry learned that Hoke's division had not moved south to oppose Sherman's army (which had just seized Savannah, Georgia and then moved northward), as Union intelligence had previously indicated.<sup>92</sup> Terry now had to concern himself with a strong force to the north as he moved south against Fort Fisher. He had planned a defensive line across the peninsula to protect his rear, and new information added urgency to that precaution and increased the size of the force needed.<sup>93</sup> Finding the best place to establish the line became a larger challenge than expected. Darkness set in before Terry could find ideal terrain, and a lake on the planning map—upon which he intended to anchor his defenses--proved to be a dried-up sand pit, providing no protection at all. In the end, Terry felt compelled to commit over half of his force to protect his rear.<sup>94</sup>

By 0800 on the morning of 14 January, Terry had created a strong breastwork across the peninsula, which his troops continued to improve throughout the period of the battle. Terry knew he had a secure foothold, which he made even stronger by emplacing field artillery, creating interlocking fields of fire, and establishing naval gunfire "kill zones." He then conducted a reconnaissance of the fort in conjunction with his engineer

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<sup>91</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865 in OR Series I—Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95]; Porter to Welles, 17 January 1865 in ORN, Series I—Volume 11 [S# 11].

<sup>92</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series I – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95]; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 118.

<sup>93</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series I – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>94</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series I – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

officer, Colonel Cyrus Comstock, and assault force commander, the same Brevet Brigadier General Martin Curtis who had led it in December. What they saw led Terry to take immediate and aggressive action rather than besiege the fortress.<sup>95</sup> That evening he returned to the flagship to meet with Porter and arrange activities for the next day.<sup>96</sup> Terry and Porter came to a complete understanding, by which a strong naval bombardment from all vessels of the fleet would begin on the morning of 15 January, and continuing until the moment of assault. The assault would involve a two-pronged effort with army units on the right, attacking the western flank of the north facing wall, and a detachment of sailors and marines on the left, simultaneously attacking the Northeast Bastion.<sup>97</sup> Terry assigned an army signal team to serve onboard Porter's flagship so they could maintain communications throughout the next day's battle.<sup>98</sup>

Terry commanded a stronger force in his attack than had Weitzel the previous month. Brigadier General Adelbert Ames's Second Division—which included Curtis's 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade—and Brigadier General Charles J. Paine's Third Division along with attached artillery and engineers, had been present in December. Terry also had an additional brigade under Colonel Joseph C. Abbott, and a naval brigade of sailors and marines under Lieutenant Commander K. Randolph Breese.<sup>99</sup> The naval brigade, specially created by Porter for the attack, did not formally belong to Terry's command but Porter made it

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<sup>95</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series I – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>96</sup> Porter to Welles, 17 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

<sup>97</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>98</sup> Porter to Welles, 17 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

<sup>99</sup> Porter, Landing Order, 15 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

available for his use.<sup>100</sup> It consisted of 1,600 sailors and 400 marines armed with cutlasses, revolvers, carbines, and Sharps rifles.<sup>101</sup>

At approximately 0900 on the morning of 15 January, most of Porter's North Atlantic Squadron began moving into position to deliver preparatory fires against Fort Fisher. One naval division remained in position to support Terry's defensive line north of the fort. By 1100, the ships had opened fire, initiating a furious duel with the guns of Fort Fisher.<sup>102</sup> The ground attack had been set at 1400 in the afternoon, but not all of Terry's forces had reached their attack positions by that time. At approximately 1500, Terry signaled the fleet to shift to new targets and launched his two-pronged assault against the Confederate bastion.<sup>103</sup>

Furious fighting developed on both flanks over the next several hours as Terry introduced one unit after another in an attempt to break through the fort's defenses.<sup>104</sup> Despite stiff resistance, Terry made progress on the Confederate left, due in part to the defenders' having mistaken the naval brigade at the other end of the line for the main Union effort and concentrated their combat power at that point.<sup>105</sup> Despite the courageous attack by Breese's troops, confusion in the assault formation exposed it to a

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<sup>100</sup> Organization of U.S. Forces, commanded by Major General Alfred H. Terry, at Fort Fisher, N.C., January 13-14, 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95]; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 275-277; Robinson, *Hurricane of Fire*, 199-202.

<sup>101</sup> Lieutenant Commander K. Randolph Breese to Porter, 16 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Porter to Welles, 17 January ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11].

<sup>102</sup> Porter to Welles, 17 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>103</sup> Porter to Welles, 17 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR.

<sup>104</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>105</sup> Whiting to Lee, 18 January 1865, OR; Porter to Welles, 17 January 1866, ORN.

devastating fire from the ramparts, and ultimately defeated the effort.<sup>106</sup> Breese believed that the failure of his attack resulted from organizational problems and lack of cohesiveness within his naval brigade. His force consisted of small squads from every ship in the fleet, thrown together to form a combat unit. They had no training as an integrated unit, and the first time they worked together involved storming the revetments of one of the strongest forts in the world.<sup>107</sup> But Breese had no need to apologize or rationalize, because the effort of his naval brigade provided the diversion that allowed Terry to establish a lodgment at the other end of the Confederate line.<sup>108</sup>

As Breese and his brigade struggled with organizational problems and devastating fire on the Union left, Terry's brigades made gradual progress on the right. Having fed in all three brigades of Ames's division, Terry sent in an additional brigade and regiment drawn from his northern defensive line.<sup>109</sup> Reinforced, Terry pressed the attack and entered the fort around 1800 although resistance continued well into the night.<sup>110</sup> Fearing an attack from Hoke, Terry moved Breese's spent naval brigade into the defensive line to replace the troops he had withdrawn.<sup>111</sup> By 2200 that night, the Union army had taken Fort Fisher, having killed or captured all its defenders. Whiting and Lamb, both seriously

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<sup>106</sup> Breese to Porter, 16 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Whiting to Lee, 18 January 1965, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>107</sup> Breese to Porter, 16 January 1864, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Whiting to Lee, 18 January 1965 OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>108</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>109</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>110</sup> Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95]; Whiting to Lee, 18 January 1865 OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>111</sup> Breese to Porter, 16 January 1865, ORN, Series 1 – Volume 11 [S# 11]; Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

wounded, became prisoners of war when the fighting finally ended at Battery Buchanan, roughly one mile from Fort Fisher.<sup>112</sup>

By any standard, the second attack against Fort Fisher stands as a superb example of naval competence, military efficiency, combat effectiveness, and the value of joint operations. But like all great victories, the results at Fort Fisher reflect both competence in the victor, and deficiencies in the defeated. Robert Hoke's division, sent to protect Fort Fisher and keep Wilmington open, numbered 6,000 effectives.<sup>113</sup> Only Kirkland's lead brigade arrived during the first attack in December, and it did very little to oppose that landing, aside from the psychological pressure on Weitzel and Butler its presence created. As it turned out, that presence coupled with the strength of Fort Fisher's north wall proved sufficient. In January 1865, Hoke's entire division was present and available for action, yet it proved of little more value. The division remained in defensive positions well north of the fighting, posing a threat to Terry's force but taking no action against it. The most charitable view is that Hoke's proximity required Terry to maintain a strong defensive line in his rear, manned by over half of his troops. Yet even that had no impact on the outcome of the battle. Hoke and his division served as little more than spectators.

In Whiting's view, Fort Fisher fell to the Union for two principle reasons. First and most important, he believed Bragg's generalship during the battle to have been deficient. Bragg had first weakened the defenses of the area, and then failed to use the replacements provided by Lee to good effect. Whiting's second reason involved the

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<sup>112</sup> Whiting to Lee, 18 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95]; Terry to Rawlins, 25 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>113</sup> Robinson, *Hurricane of Fire*, 116, 150.

naval bombardment on 14–15 January, which he believed the most powerful of the war.<sup>114</sup> If Whiting thought the bombardment in December “diffused and scattered,” the second attack he considered ferocious and tenacious. The shelling destroyed all the guns on the north wall, swept away the palisade, and plowed the minefield cutting most of the detonating wires. Nevertheless, Whiting believed could have held out if supported by Bragg. Lamb believed that a fresh brigade could retake the fort immediately after it fell to the Union, but had none in position.<sup>115</sup> In Whiting’s evaluation, ultimately the defeat at Fort Fisher resulted from Bragg’s failure to send in Hoke’s division during the fighting.<sup>116</sup>

Whatever Hoke’s division might have accomplished, the amphibious lessons are apparent. The most important characteristic of an amphibious operation is the effective integration between the navy and landing force.<sup>117</sup> This element was not entirely missing in the first attack, as exhibited by the fire support provided during the probe of the north wall on 25 December. But compared to the overwhelming power of the bombardment on 15 January coupled with the integration of effort achieved by Porter and Terry throughout the second attack, it seems to have been almost feeble. Establishing army signal teams aboard Porter’s flagship in January illustrates the extent to which these two commanders worked at coordinating their efforts. The close and continuous planning that occurred among Porter, Terry, and their staffs throughout the operation contrasts with the minimal

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<sup>114</sup> Whiting to Lee, 18 January 1865, and 19 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>115</sup> Brigadier General A.H. Colquitt to Lieutenant Colonel Archer Anderson, Assistant Adjutant General of the Army of Northern Virginia, 17 January 1865 in OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>116</sup> Whiting to Lee, 18 January 1865, and 19 January 1865, OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>117</sup> *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, I-4

communications between the army and navy commanders in December. The potential existed for victory or defeat during both attacks on Fort Fisher. Integration of effort between the army and navy is an important reason why the first effort failed and the second one succeeded.

The rapid build-up of combat power from sea to shore provides another key to success in landing operations.<sup>118</sup> In the first attack, Butler and Weitzel took an almost leisurely approach to landing their force. They never got more than half their troops ashore and even that element did not possess the logistical support needed to sustain itself beyond a few days. In contrast, Terry and Porter landed 8,000 troops in about five hours with all their equipment and supplies for twelve days. This illustrates the difference between a tentative effort and a determined commitment. Terry also task organized his force—including use of the naval brigade—in such a manner as to support his operations ashore with flexibility and fluidity.<sup>119</sup> He deployed his task-organized units in a manner that allowed easy reinforcement of his tactical evolutions without creating undue vulnerability elsewhere. There is no evidence of Butler or Weitzel giving any thought to task organization during the first attack.

Related to integration between naval and landing force is the concept of unity of effort and operational coherence.<sup>120</sup> Simply stated, this goes beyond integration of effort to include a unified approach at all levels coupled with a single-minded commitment to mission accomplishment. This unity and coherence emerged in the second attack in great

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<sup>118</sup> *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, I-4

<sup>119</sup> *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, I-4

<sup>120</sup> *Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, I-5 – I-6.

part due to the failure of the first. Determined not to experience another setback, the Secretaries of War and Navy, Admiral Porter, and Generals Grant and Terry realized they had to produce a common, unified effort and conduct a coherent operation. This resulted in a unity of effort at the highest levels that flowed down through all ranks and permeated the entire operation—perhaps more completely than any other episode of the Civil War. Certainly, it also stands in stark contrast to the disunity and disjointedness among the defenders. The concept of unity of effort and operational coherence appeared not to have entered into the thinking of the Confederate leadership during the struggle over the Wilmington-Cape Fear area.<sup>121</sup>

Despite the superb example of the Veracruz landing, naval and military commanders of the American Civil War had no doctrine or specially trained officers to plan or execute amphibious operations. Neither did they have a systematic way to capture, analyze, and document lessons from their own joint actions such as those at Fort Fisher. As a result, the lessons of Veracruz were not recorded for use in the Civil War, and the lessons of Fort Fisher were not formally preserved for use during the next major conflict—the Spanish-American War of 1898. Nonetheless, it remains apparent that some institutional memory survived from one war to another.<sup>122</sup> Of the four major landings undertaken by American forces in 1898, all proved successful even if not models of efficiency.<sup>123</sup> The commanders associated with these amphibious operations—George Dewey and William T. Sampson of the navy; Nelson A. Miles, William R.

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<sup>121</sup> Colquitt to Anderson, 17 January 1865 in OR, Series 1 – Volume XLVI/1 [S# 95].

<sup>122</sup> Graham A. Cosmas, “Joint Operations in the Spanish-American War,” in *Crucible of Empire: The Spanish-American War & Its Aftermath*, ed. James C. Bradford (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 104.

<sup>123</sup> Alfred Vagts. *Landing Operations: Strategy, Psychology, Tactics, Politics, From Antiquity to 1945* (Harrisburg, PA: Military Service Publishing Company, 1946), 452-458.

Shafter, and Wesley Merritt of the army; and Robert W. Huntington of the marines—all had combat experience during the Civil War. In every case, the planners during 1898 ensured that the landings would be unopposed at the water's edge, and that sufficient naval gunfire would support subsequent operations ashore.

Interestingly, the most outstanding example of interservice cooperation in both planning and support during the Spanish-American War occurred between Dewey and Merritt during complex amphibious actions in the Manila-Cavite area.<sup>124</sup> Dewey served on the *Colorado* under Porter during the fight for Fort Fisher bringing firsthand experience forward to America's next war. In comparison, the Daiquirí landings near Santiago, Cuba, lacked sound doctrine and officers with direct amphibious experience appeared amateurish. Fortunately, the planning of Sampson and Shafter proved sufficient to permit establishment of the force ashore without enemy resistance.<sup>125</sup>

Fort Fisher, Veracruz, and to a lesser extent the Spanish-American War contributed to the U.S. amphibious tradition and historical record in ways useful to the future. They provided twentieth military and naval thinkers with solid examples on which to develop their theories, doctrine, and war plans. By then a melding of military history with the diligence of professional officers ensured the amphibious experiences of the nineteenth century, and especially the example of Fort Fisher, would be available for future commanders. Today, even in a substantially changed operational environment, many of its lessons remained valid and instructive.

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<sup>124</sup> Cosmas in Bradford, *Crucible of Empire*, 110, 116.

<sup>125</sup> Potter and Nimitz, *Sea Power*, 376.

## EPILOGUE PAST AND FUTURE

For many Americans, the concept of amphibious warfare derives from the World War II model where landing forces assaulted foreign shores against determined resistance. These actions resulted in very high casualties, yet proved uniformly successful for American operations. They involved isolating and preparing the amphibious objective area with naval and air power, then aggressively introducing landing forces to assault the defensive positions. Naval task forces not only inserted the amphibious troops, but also sustained them with naval gunfire, tactical aircraft, and logistical support once ashore. This resulted in battles characterized by very high levels of violence and destruction. The circumstance of geography coupled with the weapons and equipment available at that time dictated this type of warfare. To make incremental progress in the war effort, military and naval forces of the United States needed to attack Pacific islands held by Japanese forces, and conduct forced entry on the European continent against beaches defended by the German army. Weapons such as attack aircraft and precision naval gunfire coupled with newly designed amphibious ships, landing craft, and tracked vehicles made these attacks possible. This type of amphibious warfare gave rise to the theory, principles, and doctrine that influenced officers, defense analysts, and historians throughout much of the twentieth century.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, no such equipment or weapons existed for assaulting defended beaches. Commanders attempted to land their forces in areas where the resistance would be light or nonexistent as illustrated in the cases of this study. Even at Veracruz and Fort Fisher—the two most sophisticated landings of the nineteenth century—the assault force did not have to fight its way ashore. The initiative

and maneuverability inherent in naval forces permitted the establishment of combat power ashore before having to engage the enemy. The naval echelon could deliver forces to the point of attack faster than land-based defenders could react. In cases where landing forces experienced opposition on the beach, it usually consisted of light resistance that only delayed and harassed the attack. The action at Pell's Point, New York, during the Revolutionary War clearly demonstrates this concept.

In cases where defenders could determine the landing site in time to prepare defenses at the water's edge, they often chose not to do so for fear of naval gunfire. The defense of Baltimore provides an example where the entire concept of defense focused on avoiding naval gunfire. The decision to engage Ross's army at Long Log Lane rather than North Point coupled with the defenses created at Fort McHenry and Point Lazaretto all contributed to the goal of preventing Cochrane's naval guns from supporting British operations ashore. Typically in this era, both the attacking force and the defenders preferred to avoid direct engagement at the point of amphibious assault. The landing force did not want to face prepared defenses before they could concentrate combat power ashore, and the defenders did not want to face naval gunfire. Ironically, the weapons and equipment available in early America tended to prevent frontal amphibious battles, whereas modern weapons and equipment in the twentieth century lead to such assaults. In the amphibious combat of World War II, both sides believed their superior weapons, equipment, and fighting spirit could destroy the enemy.

During the second half of the twentieth century—after the Korean War—a change in amphibious combat emerged. With the advent of larger and more agile amphibious ships, advanced landing craft, and helicopters, amphibious options expanded greatly.

Harkening back to the amphibious warfare of early America, doctrine developed that called for unopposed insertions at landing sites where enemy forces were not concentrated. While retaining the ability to conduct forced entry against defended beaches, American commanders no longer expected to conduct such operation. Modern technology and innovation has permitted amphibious warfare to progress forward into the past.

Although the modern concept of amphibious operations may compare with the earlier American period, the actual conduct of combat is not the same. The modern Marine Corps—the world’s preeminent amphibious force—typically conducts a landing with one element advancing in helicopters and two across the surface of the water in amphibious assault vehicles (tracked vehicles). When possible, commanders launch amphibious attacks from over the horizon and support them with fixed wing aircraft (AV8B Harriers) based on the same amphibious ships that launch the attack. The advent of Landing Craft Air Cushioned (LCAC) has also contributed to the flexibility of a modern landing operation by permitting heavy weapons—such as tanks and vehicle mounted weapons systems—and equipment to be delivered rapidly and with maneuverability. This newer approach to amphibious warfare focuses American strength against enemy weakness and depends greatly on the element of surprise.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas the modern equipment and weapons of the World War II era forced amphibious attacks into frontal assaults, the subsequent generations of advancements permitted a return to a more indirect approach, causing fewer casualties and inflicting less collateral damage. The next generation of weapons and equipment leverage this newer

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 3-02, Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, I-1-I-8, XIV-1-XV-6; Department of the Navy, United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0, Operations*, 2-2-2-11.

approach to amphibious warfare by permitting more rapid buildup of combat power ashore while retaining the element of surprise. Such items as the advanced amphibious assault vehicle and the V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft (can function as both an airplane and helicopter) provide greater speed of closure, a wider range of landing sites, more flexibility for task-organizing, and greater sustainability once ashore.

One change that occurred during the World War II era that has been more permanent is the prominence of the United States Marine Corps. During the amphibious warfare of early America, marines played a relatively small role due to their size and the ambiguity of their mission. Even so, they created the roots of a tradition that allowed the Corps to grow into the world's premier amphibious force. Throughout the period of early America, Marines participated in amphibious operations exclusively naval as well as those involving army forces. In the case of naval landing parties, marines provided the core combat element although often having fewer men than the navy contingent. When participating with army landings—usually large-scale operations—marines often provided advance forces that secured initial lodgments for the main landing force, amphibious reconnaissance, and other special and adjunct operations ashore. The amphibious campaign for the conquest of California provides numerous examples of this, especially the landings at San Pedro and San Diego.

Over time, the role of the Marine Corps changed and evolved into the force that exists today. One of the key reasons for that growth and maturation involves an important service provided by key officers in the 1920s and 1930s. During that era, senior officers of military forces throughout the world believed amphibious warfare had no important place in serious military planning, due to the disastrous 1915 Gallipoli

campaign of the First World War. But a small group of marine officers thought otherwise and worked to develop the theory, concepts, doctrine, and equipment that proved so critical to the amphibious success of all services during World War II.<sup>2</sup> This intellectual undertaking coupled with operational success in actual warfighting established the Marine Corps as the lead service for amphibious warfare, a position that has grown stronger since. Despite a tendency since the 1980s to focus on the concept of expeditionary warfare, amphibious capability remains the mainstay of the Marine Corps and constitutes its unique contribution to the nation. The United States Marine Corps of the twenty-first century is the true inheritor of these Roots of Tradition established in early America.

The concepts presented in this study—the Levels of War, Characteristics of Amphibious Warfare, the Principles of War, Expeditionary Warfare, and Operational Maneuver from the Sea—were structured into doctrine subsequent to the period of early America. But the ideas they embody are timeless and provide the historian and analyst a basis for evaluating military and naval events from any period. Although crafted to address the planning and educational requirements of the present era, there are few thoughts within these documents that military leaders from the Revolution up to our own time would not recognize. They serve as excellent tools for both the professional officer and the analytical historian.

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of the development of amphibious thinking during the interwar years of the 1920s and 1930s, see Gary J. Ohls, *Changing Modes of Warfare: Amphibious Doctrine and the Interwar Years*, Master's Thesis, (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University, 2004).

## THE LEVELS OF WAR

### STRATEGIC LEVEL OF WAR

The level of war at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) strategic security objectives and guidance, and develops and uses national resources to achieve these objectives. Activities at this level establish national and multinational military objectives; sequence initiatives; define limits and assess risks for the use of military and other instruments of national power; develop global plans or theater war plans to achieve those objectives; and provide military forces and other capabilities in accordance with strategic plans.

### OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR

The level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theatres or other operational areas. Activities at this level link tactics and strategy by establishing operational objectives needed to achieve the strategic objectives, sequencing events to achieve the operational objectives, initiating actions, and applying resources to bring about and sustain these events.

### TACTICAL LEVEL OF WAR

The level of war at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces. Activities at this level focus on the ordered arrangement and maneuver of combat elements in relation to each other and to the enemy to achieve combat objectives.

Source: Department of Defense, Joint Staff. *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Washington, D.C. 12 April 2001 (As Amended Through 14 September 2007)

## CHARACTERISTICS OF AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE

### INTEGRATION BETWEEN THE NAVY AND LANDING FORCES.

The key characteristic of an amphibious operation is close coordination and cooperation between the amphibious task force, landing force, and other designated forces. An amphibious operation is ordinarily joint in nature and may require extensive air, maritime, land, space, and special operations forces participation. It is typified by close integration of forces trained, organized, and equipped for different combat functions.

### RAPID BUILDUP OF COMBAT POWER FROM THE SEA TO SHORE.

The salient requirement of an amphibious assault is the necessity for swift, uninterrupted buildup of sufficient combat power ashore from an initial zero capability to full coordinated striking power as the attack progressed toward amphibious force objectives. To achieve success, an amphibious force should be assured of maritime superiority against enemy surface and subsurface forces at sea, air superiority throughout the operational area, and a substantial superiority over enemy forces ashore. In the face of compelling necessity, commanders may undertake an amphibious operation on the basis of a reasonable superiority of the entire force. For example, maritime and air superiority may justify a landing even though the landing force does not possess the desired numerical superiority in ground forces, if friendly surface and air units can be used effectively to negate the enemy's advantage. In addition to reasonable superiority within the landing area, an amphibious force should have the ability to provide continuous support for forces ashore.

### TASK-ORGANIZED FORCES.

Task-organized forces, capable of multiple missions across the full range of military operations to enable joint, allied, and coalition operations. Amphibious forces are task-organized based on the mission. While forward-deployed amphibious forces routinely deploy with a similar task organization, they can be quickly reinforced or augmented with other assets in theatre, adjacent theatres, or the continental United States. These forces provide sustainable power projection to respond to a full range of crisis, from forcible entry to humanitarian assistance. The command and control (C2) capabilities of the Navy and landing force facilitate the accomplishment of multiple missions and the integration of joint and multinational forces.

## UNITY OF EFFORT AND OPERATIONAL COHERENCE.

The complexity of amphibious operations and the vulnerability of forces engaged in amphibious operations require an exceptional degree of unity of effort and operational coherence. The difficulties inherent in amphibious operation may dictate that the joint force commander participates in planning, theatre integration, and support. To meet contingencies, commanders of assigned and supporting forces must prepare in anticipation of the needs of the amphibious force.

Source: Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 3-02, Department of Defense Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, Washington, D.C. 19 September 2001, xi, I-4-I-6.

## PRINCIPLES OF WAR

An important issue throughout military history has been the way a military organization addresses the qualities that war demands from its participants. Military leadership has dealt best with the intractable problems of war as a form of military and naval art. In the maritime environment, with its distinctive factors, we fight using the principles that apply to combat everywhere. Wisdom gained from study of the basic principles of war underscores that war is not the business of managers with checklists; it is the art of leaders.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF THE OBJECTIVE

Direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective. The naval services focus their operations to achieve political purposes defined by the National Command Authorities. With national strategic purpose identified, we can select theater military objectives and form operational and tactical objectives based on specific missions and capabilities. Whether the objective is destroying an enemy's armed force or merely disrupting his ability to use his forces effectively, the most significant preparation a commander can make is to express clearly the objective of the operation to subordinate commanders.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF MASS

Concentrate combat power at the decisive time and place. Use strength against weakness. A force, even one smaller than its adversary, can achieve decisive results when it concentrates or focuses its assets on defeating an enemy's critical vulnerability. A naval task force, using the sea as an ally, can compensate for numerical inferiority through the principle of mass. Mass further implies an ability to sustain momentum for decisive results.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF MANEUVER

Place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the feasible application of combat power. Use of maneuver (mobility) capitalizes on the speed and agility of our forces (platforms and weapons) to gain an advantage in time and space relative to the enemy's vulnerabilities. Whether seen in historic warships "crossing the T," or modern ground forces enveloping an enemy, or forcing the tempo of combat beyond an adversary's ability to respond, maneuver allows us to get ahead of the enemy in several dimensions. Our advantage comes from exploiting the maneuver differential—our superiority in speed and position relative to our adversary.

## APPENDIX C

## THE PRINCIPLE OF THE OFFENSIVE

Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative. Since the days of sail—racing and opponent for the upwind advantage to take the initiative—offensive action has allowed us to set the terms and select the place of confrontation, exploit vulnerabilities and seize opportunities from unexpected developments. Taking the offensive through initiative is a philosophy we use to employ available forces intelligently to deny an enemy his freedom of action.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF ECONOMY OF FORCE

Employ all combat power available in the most effective way possible; allocate minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts. With many more available targets than assets, each unit must focus its attention on the primary objectives. A successfully coordinated naval strike at an enemy's critical vulnerability—for example, knocking specific command-and-control nodes out of commission—can have far more significance than an attempt to destroy the entire command-and-control system.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF UNITY OF COMMAND

Ensure unity of effort for every objective under one responsible commander. Whether the scope of responsibility involves a single, independent ship at sea or the conduct of an amphibious landing, we achieve unity in forces by assigning a single commander. After he expresses his intent and provides an overall focus, he permits subordinate commanders to make timely, critical decisions and maintain an high tempo in pursuit of a unified objective. The result is success, generated by unity in purpose, unit cohesion, and flexibility in responding to the uncertainties of combat.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF SIMPLICITY

Avoid unnecessary complexity in preparing, planning, and conducting military operations. The implementing orders for some of the most influential naval battles ever fought have been little more than a paragraph. Broad guidance rather than detailed and involved instructions promote flexibility and simplicity. Simple plans and clear direction promote understanding and minimize confusion. Operation Order 91-001, dated 17 January 1991 summarized the allied objectives for the Desert Storm campaign into a single sentence: "Attack Iraqi political-military leadership and command and control; sever Iraqi supply lines; destroy chemical, biological and nuclear capability; destroy Republican Guard forces in the Kuwaiti Theater; liberate Kuwait." These objectives were succinct, tangible, and limited.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF SUPRISE

Strike the enemy at a time or place or in a manner for which he is unprepared catching the enemy off guard immediately puts him on the defensive, allowing us to drive events. The element of surprise is desirable, but it is not essential that the enemy be taken completely unaware—only that he becomes aware too late to react effectively. Concealing our capabilities and intentions by using covert techniques and deceptions gives us the opportunity to strike the enemy when he is not ready.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF SECURITY

Never permit the enemy to acquire unexpected advantage. Protecting the force increases our combat power. The alert watch stander, advanced picket, or such measures as electronic emission control all promote our freedom of action by reducing our vulnerability to hostile acts, influences, or surprise. Tools such as gaming and simulation allow us to look at ourselves from the enemy's perspective. We enhance our security by a thorough understanding of the enemy's strategy, doctrine, and tactics.

The principles of war have been proven effective in preparing for combat, but the complexities and disorder of war preclude their use as a simple checklist. Instead, we must be able to apply these principles in war's turbulent environment, to promote initiative, supplement professional judgment, and serve as the conceptual framework in which we evaluate the choices available in battle. These principles provide a solid basis for our warfighting doctrine, that complements the experience and operational skill of our commanders by describing a flow of action toward objectives, rather than by prescribing specific actions at each point along the way. In a chaotic combat environment, doctrine has a cohesive effect on our forces, while enabling us to create disorder among our adversaries. It also promotes mutually understood terminology, relationships, responsibilities, and processes, thus freeing the commander to focus on the overall conduct of war.

Source: Department of the Navy, *Naval Doctrine Publication 1, Naval Warfare*, 28 March 1994

## EXPEDITIONARY WARFARE DEFINED

An expedition is a military operation conducted by an armed force to accomplish a specific objective in a foreign country. The missions of military expeditions may vary widely. Examples of missions of military expeditions include providing humanitarian assistance in times of disaster or disruption; establishing and keeping peace in a foreign country; protecting U.S. citizens or commerce abroad; retaliating for an act of aggression by a foreign political group; and destroying an enemy government by defeating its armed forces in combat. The defining characteristic of expeditionary operation is the projection of force into a foreign setting. By definition, an expedition thus involves the deployment of military forces to the scene of the crisis or conflict and their requisite support some significant distance from their home bases. Expeditionary operations involve the establishment of forward bases, land or sea, from which military power can be brought to bear on the situation.

Because, as Julian Corbett's epigraph (see below) suggests, political issues are ultimately decided on land, there will be no shortage of conflicts requiring an ongoing physical presence at the scene of conflict. Expeditionary forces will thus be required for a variety of reasons including:

- To assure that policy objectives pursued by other means have in fact been secured; for example, to ensure compliance with established diplomatic solutions such as the adherence to cease-fire arrangements or an agreement to hold free elections.
- To seize or control key physical objectives such as airports, ports, resource areas, or political centers in order to deny their use to an enemy or disruptive element, or to facilitate future actions such as the introduction of follow-on forces.
- To control urban or other restrictive terrain.
- To establish a close, physical, and highly visible presence in order to demonstrate political resolve, deter aggressive action, or compel desired behavior.
- To establish and maintain order in an area beset by chaos and disorder.
- To protect or rescue U.S. citizens or other civilians.
- To separate warring groups from each other or from the population at large, especially when enemy or disruptive elements are embedded in the population.
- To provide physical relief and assistance in the event of disaster.

## APPENDIX D

It is not enough to be able to deploy forces to a foreign theatre. There is also the problem of access, gained by force if necessary. Many expeditionary forces are not capable of forcible entry, although all amphibious forces are. “Entry” refers to the initial introduction of forces onto foreign soil. During this period, expeditionary forces are often at greatest risk, and for this reason, the introduction of forces is often a complicated military evolution. Entry is normally accomplished by seaborne or airborne movement, although in some cases forces may be introduced by ground movement from an expeditionary base in an adjacent country. Historically, entry has required the establishment of an expeditionary base ashore from which to operate, but this is not necessary if the expeditionary force can operate effectively from a sea base.

Source: Department of the Navy, United States Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 3, Expeditionary Operations*, Chapter 2. The Nature of Expeditionary Operations, Washington, D.C. 16 April 1998.

“Since men live upon the land and not upon the sea, great issues between nations at war have always been decided—except in the rarest cases—either by what your army can do against your enemy’s territory and national life or else by the fear of what the fleet makes it possible for your army to do.”

Source: Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 16.

## OPERATIONAL MANEUVER FROM THE SEA

The centerpiece of our preparations for the future is an approach to expeditionary, littoral, and amphibious warfare known as Operational Maneuver from the Sea. While Operational Maneuver from the Sea will not define all Navy/Marine operations, the attitudes, skills, techniques, and equipment associated with it will provide naval forces with a solid foundation for future improvisation.

The heart of Operational Maneuver from the Sea is the maneuver of naval forces at the operational level, a bold bid for victory that aims at exploiting a significant enemy weakness in order to deal a decisive blow. Mere movement, which may lead to indecisive results or even be counterproductive, does not qualify as operational maneuver. That is to say, operational maneuver should be directed against an enemy center of gravity—something that is *essential* to the enemy's ability to effectively continue the struggle.

Principles of Operational Maneuver from the Sea:

- Operational Maneuver from the Sea focuses on an operational objective.
- Operational Maneuver from the Sea uses the sea as maneuver space.
- Operational Maneuver from the Sea generates overwhelming tempo and momentum.
- Operational Maneuver from the Sea pits strength against weakness.
- Operational Maneuver from the Sea emphasizes intelligence, deceptions, and flexibility.
- Operational Maneuver from the Sea integrates all organic, joint, and combined assets.

Just as a littoral is formed by the meeting of land and sea, Operational Maneuver from the Sea is a marriage between maneuver warfare and naval warfare. From maneuver warfare comes an understanding of the dynamic nature of conflict, the imperative of decisive objectives, and the requirement for skillful operations executed at a high tempo. From naval warfare are derived a deep appreciation for the strategic level of war, the advantages inherent in sea-borne movement, and the flexibility provided by sea-based logistics. When properly united, these elements of Operational Maneuver from the Sea provide the United States with a naval expeditionary force that, while deployed unobtrusively in international waters, is instantly ready to help any friend, defeat any foe, and convince potential enemies of the wisdom of keeping the peace.

Source: Marine Corps white paper *Operational Maneuver from the Sea: A concept for the Projection of Naval Power Ashore*, and Navy and Marine Corps white paper *...From the Sea: Preparing the Naval Service for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* dated September 1992

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He completed a thirty-five year career in the United States Marine Corps including service as an enlistedman, a regular officer, and a reserve officer. During his military career, he served as the Senior Marine Officer at the Naval ROTC Unit at the University of Colorado where he taught courses in military history. In addition, he worked in several management positions for Northrop Grumman Corporation within the defense industry.

In January 2003, he enrolled in graduate study at Texas Christian University, where he held a Teaching Assistantship and taught survey courses in United States History. In August 2007, he received an appointment as Assistant Professor on the faculty of the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. He is the father of two daughters and the grandfather of two boys.

## ABSTRACT

### ROOTS OF TRADITION: AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE IN THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

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This dissertation describes and analyses the major amphibious operations of the early American Republic and assesses their role in building naval and military traditions within the United States. The introduction provides an overview of amphibious warfare throughout history and specifically during the colonial period of North America. The first chapter provides insight into the concepts and sources underlying amphibious warfare, and addresses the more significant historical contributions to its study.

The second chapter, entitled The New York Campaign, addresses the largest amphibious undertaking of the eighteenth century. This study takes an objective view of the campaign and its battles and finds that, although the New York Campaign constituted a defeat for American forces, it was not the unmitigated disaster often pictured. The third chapter addresses the Yorktown campaign, which was the most complex operation of the American Revolution. It involved both joint and combined actions with diverse forces coming together from three widely disbursed points in North America and the West Indies. The Yorktown campaign demonstrated the awesome power of navies and land forces working together on the world's littorals. Yorktown was all the more remarkable because of the primitive communications available to leaders of that era.

Chapter Four describes the first U.S expedition to foreign shores in which naval forces projected American power against a hostile nation. This campaign set a pattern for subsequent naval incursions in support of diplomatic objectives. The action at Derna served as the single most important action in convincing the Bashaw of Tripoli to accede to American terms. The War of 1812 involved many amphibious actions by both British and American forces. But the Defense of Baltimore, Chapter Five of this dissertation, provides the greatest example of a successful defense against amphibious forces.

The Mexican-American War provides two very different, yet equally important, patterns of amphibious warfare in the nineteenth century. Chapter Six, The Conquest of California, describes how a series of many small amphibious incursions can cumulatively constitute an important amphibious campaign. The next chapter, entitled The Landing at Veracruz describes a single amphibious landing that was very large in scale and initiated the events leading to ultimate victory. These two actions demonstrate how very different amphibious campaigns can bring about equally satisfactory results.

The dissertation concludes with the two amphibious attacks on Fort Fisher, North Carolina, which illustrate both failed and successful landings occurring only a few weeks apart. Building on the traditions established at Veracruz, United States forces established naval dominance on the Confederate littorals during the final months of the Civil War as a result of the fall of Fort Fisher. This successful action hastened the defeat of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and contributed significantly to the victorious conclusion of the conflict.