UNREMITTING VIGILANCE: NAVAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE UNION
BLOCKADE DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

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Discussion begins with an overview of intelligence in the age of sail and the Navy department's intelligence system at the beginning of the war. Included is a detailed look at intelligence as information, a process and a system including an examination of period sources and communication methods. It then proceeds to examine the role of intelligence on the blockade, discussing its impact on operations and effectiveness in stopping the fast, steam, and sail-driven Confederate blockade runners.

Intelligence played a crucial role in the effectiveness of the blockade despite the fact that the Union was never able to completely interdict all maritime traffic from entering or leaving Southern ports. There were significant problems with intelligence on the blockade, especially in the realm of tactical intelligence and dissemination. This study investigates these problems as well as intelligence successes at a time when naval warfare was undergoing a dramatic transformation

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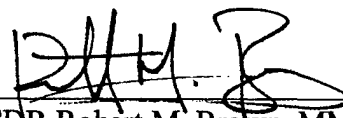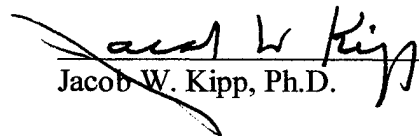Name of Candidate: LCDR John M. Dullum

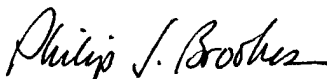Thesis Title: Unremitting Vigilance: Naval Intelligence and the Union Blockade during the American Civil War

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis investigates the role naval intelligence played in the Union blockade of the Confederacy during the American Civil War and examines intelligence support to blockade operations on the Atlantic coast between 1861- 1865.

Discussion begins with an overview of intelligence in the age of sail and the Navy department's intelligence system at the beginning of the war. Included is a detailed look at intelligence as information, a process and a system including an examination of period sources and communication methods. It then proceeds to examine the role of intelligence on the blockade, discussing its impact on operations and effectiveness in stopping the fast, steam, and sail-driven Confederate blockade runners.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Intelligence is the product we derive from analyzing all available and
> relevant information.[1]
>> Naval Doctrine Publication 2, *Naval Intelligence*

Intelligence is an essential component in the operational art of war. For any

military organization to be successful, it must operate an efficient intelligence system

capable of managing the informational needs of its commander. This has been true for all

naval operations since men took ships to sea. This thesis will discuss the role intelligence

played in the Union naval blockade of the Confederate States of American during the

American Civil War from 1861 to 1865. The Union naval blockade of the South was the

single most important maritime operation of the war and has been the subject of

numerous studies exploring many different aspects of the blockade, its conduct, and

operations. Yet, all these studies have largely ignored the role intelligence played in this

important operation88. This is curious considering the importance of intelligence in naval

operations.

The primary task of the Union Navy during the long period between 1861 and

1865 was maintaining an effective blockade of the Confederate coastline. From an

operational perspective, the Union naval blockade was never truly effective in stopping

Confederate blockade running operations. The failure to stop blockade running has been

argued by a number of historians who have examined all aspects of the Union blockade.

Stephen R. Wise, author of Lifeline of the Confederacy, conducted the most authoritative

study on blockade running and states,

> From the first run of *Bermuda* to the *Lark's* final escape from Galveston, just
> under 300 steamers tested the blockade. Out of approximately 1,300 attempts,

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over 1000 were successful. The average lifetime of a blockade-runner was just over four runs, or two round trips. Some 136 were captured and another 85 destroyed.[2]

Historian Marcus Price, who was one of the first historians to truly examine the blockade, estimated that out of 2,054 attempts to run past the blockading off the Carolina Coasts during the war 1,735 succeeded. This amounted to 84 percent success rate.[3] Other authors suggest that the blockade's effectiveness increased over time as more ships became available and pressure increased on blockade runners. This is perhaps the most commonly held belief. By war's end, the U.S. Navy had constructed over 200 ships and purchased 418, a majority that went to enforce the blockade and restricted blockade running to such an extent that they could no longer support the Southern war effort.[4] Whatever the outcome of these arguments, for the purposes of this thesis, the blockade will be declared a failure from an operational point of view. Confederate runners were able to defeat the blockade right up until the end of the war, and for the Navy whose mission was to prevent this outcome, it was frustrated.

There are many reasons for failure, but two are essential. First, the South enjoyed a technological advantage over the Union Navy, especially in ships that ran the blockade (termed blockade runners), verses ships that enforced the blockade. The Confederacy benefited from a purpose-built fleet of highly capable, small, fast, steam-powered blockade runners that were able to successfully elude the Union blockade during the majority of times. Second, the North could never directly attack the supporting infrastructure that supported blockade running. Blockade runners operated out of neutral ports in European colonies, the most famous being Nassau in the Bahamas and Bermuda. The support the English and other European nations gave Confederate runners, cloaked

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their activity in neutrality, and allowed them to compete against the more numerous Union fleet. This forced the battle on the high seas and specifically to waters off the entrances of Southern ports where the Union commanders chose to concentrate their efforts.

It was up to intelligence then, especially naval intelligence, to help explain this situation to naval commanders and provide the fleet with the essential information they needed to effectively enforce President Lincoln's blockade proclamation. This thesis will examine the role naval intelligence played in the Union blockade in the Civil War and discuss the problems naval commanders faced in managing information. The following subordinate questions will help answer this main research question:

1. How was naval intelligence defined in the mid-nineteenth century?

2. What types of intelligence were available to support blockade operations?

3. What was the Navy Department's intelligence organization, and how effective was it at managing information?

4. How was information collected, analyzed, and disseminated, and what effect did this have on operations and tactics?

5. What was the result of intelligence support on the Union blockade, and how did it contribute to the Union's failure in stopping Confederate blockade running?

To answer these questions this thesis relies on primary and secondary sources available through the Combined Arms Research Library at the U.S. Army Command and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This included extensive use of the Official Records of the Civil War Navies, published autobiographies, diaries, and secondary source materials, such as master's theses, doctorate dissertations, and published histories

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available in the library or through interlibrary loan. There are limitations to these sources. As naval historian and author W. J. R. Gardner remarks in a recent book on intelligence in the Battle of the Atlantic, there is often sources outside an authors reach where,

> The historian is limited largely to the available primary material, setting an obvious limit to both scope and depth of research. This has been described as a "looking under a lamp post" phenomenon. . . .[where] total darkness (lack of material) precludes further search (study).[5]

My amount of light was the sources available through the college though I know this is hardly inclusive. There are many sources that need to be studied before any definitive conclusions can be made on this subject. For example, Union Navy order books have not been used nor have any State Department consular records. I did not have access to many personal files of Union and Confederate commanders involved in the action as well (Rear Admiral S. P. Lee being the most obvious). My conclusions are based on the amount of research material available here at school given a finite amount of time for research and writing. A further search may reveal widely divergent conclusions once these sources are consulted.

The scope of the thesis will also be restricted to blockade operations along the Atlantic Coast, specifically Wilmington, North Carolina, and to a lesser extent, Charleston, South Carolina. Wilmington and Charleston remained the two primary objectives for blockade running throughout the war and were only effectively closed by direct occupation late in the war. Two Union blockading squadrons were responsible for the enforcement of the blockade on the Atlantic and faced identical problems in relation to the threat and the amount of intelligence available to support operations.

To approach the subject of naval intelligence during the Civil War, it is necessary to provide a fundamental understanding of two important concepts integral to this thesis. The first is the definition of a blockade and the second is a definition of intelligence. A blockade is defined in international law as, "A naval operation carried out by belligerents in time of war, designed to prevent vessels of any and all states from leaving or entering specific coastal areas."[6] To be effective, a blockade requires solid operational planning; a strong, capable naval force; and constant presence on the part of the blockading force off of the declared port.

Blockades have historically been a potent military and economic weapon wielded by maritime powers to effect a favorable outcome in war. Great Britain conducted a successful blockade against revolutionary France during the Napoleonic Wars, and the United States blockaded Mexican ports in the war with Mexico thirteen years before the Civil War. The Union modeled the blockade on these historical examples, but found it altogether different, for a variety of reasons. First, the war was an internal rebellion, not a fight between two sovereign states. This effected the definition of blockade under international law. The international community never recognized the Confederacy as an independent state. Though Southerners hoped the blockade would speed European intervention, the unique status of the blockade set a legal precedence European countries wished to use in future conflict.

The blockade was also the first naval operation to be significantly impacted by changes in naval technology including steam, armor, and long-range shell fire. This made a profound difference in both the prosecution of the war effort and intelligence operations that support operations. The blockade also created unique business opportunities for those

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individuals willing to run the risks involved. Blockade running became a lucrative business for many persons outside the South. Broad legal interpretation of neutral rights by the British government made good business sense which induced participation and aided the Southern cause. This created a superior blockade running force that the North found difficult to counter and had significant intelligence implications for the Union Navy as it tried its utmost to counter what in reality, became global war.

The second essential concept requiring understanding is the definition of intelligence. Using a modern definition of intelligence assists in the explanation and understanding of what constituted intelligence in the era of the Civil War. The modern definition of intelligence has three specific concepts: intelligence as *information*, intelligence *as a process*, and intelligence as a *system*.

Intelligence as Information: The current joint definition for intelligence is: "The product resulting from the collection, processing, integration, analysis, evaluation and interpretation of available information concerning foreign countries or areas."[7] Perhaps a better term for this study is the second joint definition, "Information and knowledge about an adversary obtained through observation, investigation, analysis and understanding."[8] Although slightly different, both definitions make a distinction between information and intelligence. Intelligence is information that is put through a process of analysis to glean important facts and understanding.

Intelligence as Process: The definition of intelligence as a process is: "The process by which information is converted into intelligence and made available for users."[9] Today that process is best described as an "intelligence cycle," where information is used to support operations and determine intelligence shortfalls. This leads to a re-

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determination of what information is required and what information needs to be collected, starting the cycle over again.[10] The result is a finished intelligence product. It is important to note that the flow of information through the cycle does not always follow all prescribed steps sequentially but can be modified as required. The cycle does provide a formal framework for the process of collecting, analyzing, and dissemination intelligence.

One additional topic that requires introduction here is the idea of using all-source intelligence. All-source intelligence is "Intelligence products, organizations and activities that incorporate all sources of information . . . in the production of finished intelligence."[11] To ensure a complete and accurate intelligence picture, one must obtain, consult, or incorporate information from varied sources. It repudiates the reliance on single sources for intelligence and injects a check-and-balance system into the analytical process. Today, all-source intelligence is associated with joint or combined intelligence centers. These institutions usually have both the means and authority to collect, obtain, fuse, and disseminate information and are the hallmark of a modern intelligence system. Using all-source intelligence does not necessarily lead to the use of established intelligence organizations, but is a formal process where reasoned, scientific analysis is used in combination with all available information to solve an intelligence problem.

Intelligence as a System: The definition of intelligence as a system is "A system of personnel, procedures, equipment and facilities, both afloat and ashore . . . [that] supports both naval and joint operations. It is embedded in all major echelons of command and is deployed continuously with naval forces."[12] This definition combines naval with intelligence and addresses the requirement for a professionally trained and

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staffed naval organization whose sole mission is the application of the intelligence process to support the informational requirements of a *naval* commander. The focus of information is usually on subjects uniquely naval or maritime but can be widely divergent as well. As a separate organization, naval intelligence is a modern development that few navies can afford today and one that did not formally exist in the U.S. Navy at the time of the Civil War. Still, all navies use some type of system to manage intelligence requirements, and the Union Navy had an established "system" for handling intelligence.

It is important to understand that the underlying principles imbedded in modern definitions of intelligence are universal. Civil War naval commanders had specific, detailed intelligence requirements, and the Navy Department had to answer their informational needs. How effective this system was in responding to the needs of naval commanders will be the primary focus of discussion in this thesis. The ultimate objective of this thesis is to provide a basic understanding of the role naval intelligence played in the blockade and whether naval intelligence aided or hindered the eventual outcome. Many of the lessons learned in the Civil War can still be applied today in the "Age of Information." This study not only hopes to glance backward at the formative years of the Navy but also provide a glimpse at the future, finding that in today's rapidly changing world is not so very different from the time when this nation fought a war over the question of freedom.

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[1] U.S. Department of the Navy, Naval Doctrine Publication 2, *Naval Intelligence* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, 1994), 5. Hereafter referred to as NDP 2.

[2] Stephen Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy, Blockade Running during the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 221.

[3]Marcus Price, "Ships that Tested the Blockade of the Carolina Ports, 1861-1865," *The American Neptune Magazine* 8, no. 3 (July 1948): 237.

[4]Paul Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), ix.

[5]W. J. R. Gardner, *Decoding History: The Battle of the Atlantic and Ultra* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1999), 13.

[6]Paul D. Hugill, *The Continuing Utility of Naval Blockades in the Twenty-First Century* (Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, 1998), 2.

[7]U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *DOD Dictionary for Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 1999), 222. Hereafter referred to as JP 1-02.

[8]Ibid., 222

[9]U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 2-0, *Doctrine for Intelligence Support to Joint Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 1995), II-2. Hereafter referred to as JP 2-0.

[10]Ibid., II-3

[11]JP 1-02, 27.

[12]U.S. Department of the Navy, Naval Doctrine Publication 2, *Naval Intelligence* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Navy, 1994), 5. Hereafter referred to as NDP 2.

CHAPTER 2

INTELLIGENCE IN THE AGE OF SAIL

> Were I to die this moment, want of frigates would be found engraved on my heart.[1]
>
> Sir Admiral Horatio Nelson, *The Eyes of the Fleet*

The U.S. Navy's peacetime mission during the antebellum era was comparable to the modern Navy's mission of forward presence. The mid-nineteenth century Navy was a small maritime force of slightly more than fifty active steam and sailing ships.[2] The service maintained six separate squadrons, five overseas and one home.[3] The entire Navy, its administration, shore establishment, and force structure, was designed primarily to send ships on long, extended deployments to foreign stations for commerce protection or peacetime presence operations. From 1798 to 1883, the U.S. Navy was involved in over 500 separate, individual incidents that ranged from peaceful diplomatic missions to open conflict.[4] Although peacetime operations were the Navy's primary mission, defending the nation in a war with a major European power remained a distant possibility. During general war, the Navy intended to revert to its traditional War of 1812 strategy of fighting a larger force through single-ship actions and commerce raiding.[5]

When Civil War came in the spring of 1861, the Navy was unprepared for the task that lay ahead. Lincoln asked the Navy Department to fight an entirely different type of conflict than the service envisioned. The Navy was not only required to assist in the suppression of armed civil conflict, but was also required to blockade an open coast of over 3,000 miles, "a length greater than the distance from New York to Liverpool."[6] This required a different force structure and a different intelligence organization to manage information requirements.

This chapter provides a historical overview of naval intelligence in the age of sailing ships that culminated in the years leading up to the Civil War and establishes the foundation for the discussion on intelligence during the conflict. It will also explain the role technology played in blockade operations and the impact technological change had on intelligence operations leading up to 1861.

Naval Intelligence under Sail

Naval intelligence played a significant role in the development of the American Navy during its formative years from 1794 to 1861. The Navy relied on a simple intelligence system that placed the burden of intelligence on the Secretary of the Navy and naval commanders. This system did not significantly change during the first half of the nineteenth century and was still in operation in 1861. It suffered from any formalized organization and was hampered by prodigiously slow communications. These two impediments limited the amount of direct support the Navy Department could provide commanders at sea, although this did not necessarily inhibit its effectiveness. Like all aspects of naval operations under sail, it was up to the individual commander to decided how to use intelligence according to his strengths and abilities, and who had to be as self-sufficient as possible.

When the nation created the Navy in 1798 and organized the Navy Department, there were no provisions made for establishing an independent office of intelligence. All aspects of intelligence were single-handedly managed by the Secretary of the Navy, who operated as the chief of intelligence for the service. This arrangement did not significantly change until after the Civil War.[7] The Secretary of the Navy oversaw the

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management of the bureaucratic shore establishments whose mission was to build and support the naval operations. The Secretary of the Navy was a trusted member of the president's cabinet and helped define and support national policy. This gave him access to national-level intelligence that could help support fleet operations. He operated at the strategic level of war, and his intelligence requirements reflected this outlook.

The Secretary was also in command of all afloat forces, though he rarely directed operations personally. He exercised control through the appointment of individuals to command positions and the support he gave to them underway. The Secretary of the Navy built and manned ships and sent them to sea based in part on strategic intelligence. Afloat commanders operated at the operational and tactical levels of war, and their intelligence requirements reflected this role. Once underway, afloat commanders carried out their assigned missions based on the information that sent them to sea. The great challenge for this system was providing timely intelligence support to afloat commanders because of the distances involved and the communications restrictions between Washington, D.C., and all parts of the operational fleet. By the time naval commanders could react to intelligence that sent them on their way, that information was usually outdated or supplemented by changing circumstances.

Written letters or dispatches were the only form of long-distance communications in the pre-Civil War era and relied upon period transportation methods powered by wind, animal, or man for dissemination. Travel times often took weeks if not months depending on distance. Transportation was often so unpredictable that large European navies employed swift dispatch vessels to handle fleet communications. The U.S. Navy did not have this luxury and sought to circumvent this problem by using established mail or

diplomatic courier service operated by civilian contract shipping. These factors created a system whereby the Navy Secretary provided overall guidance and support to forward-deployed forces and supplemented intelligence with relevant information obtained through national sources sent by dispatch. Naval commanders operated under the authority granted them by the Secretary and relied on their own ability and organic assets to carry-out their assigned missions.

A naval commander had a number of assets available to him for intelligence support and reconnaissance. Organic assets included his own ship and crew as well as other units assigned to his command. In larger fleets, these assets included frigates, brigs, sloops, or cutters, and were the period collection platforms of the time. When attached to a fleet or smaller squadron, these vessels acted in concert to form a surveillance and communication network. In the pre-electronic age, ship commanders relied upon a system of flag signals and visual identification methods to locate and track an enemy fleet. From the top of a frigate's mast on a clear day, a lookout could command forty miles of open water. With a chain of five frigates a commander could cover 200 miles of ocean and relay tactical messages in five minutes or less.[8] A widely dispersed fleet could effectively cover hundreds of square miles and track an enemy across an ocean. Experienced mariners could readily identify a ship or its country of origin by the hull-shape, sailing rig, or manner and skill in which sails were set or handled. Although rudimentary by today's standards, this information was critical to a commander because it gave him the ability to react quickly and set the conditions for operational and tactical success.

A commander also relied on local sources of information outside his fleet. Sources included friendly, neutral or captured enemy captains and crew or local port authorities, friendly businessmen, maritime insurance agents, and diplomatic consuls who sometimes accompanied ships on important missions. These sources were often the only reliable reference for timely or accurate intelligence. In times of peace, they provided political and diplomatic support that was useful in helping the commander to define and explain local conditions that affected his mission. The lack of outside sources often meant a commander relied solely on his own organic assets and visual observation for detection, which could be quite frustrating. Perhaps the most famous quote on the frustration of this is system came from Admiral Horatio Nelson during the Nile Campaign of 1801. When he was searching for the French expeditionary force in the Mediterranean in the weeks before battle, Nelson was hampered by a lack of frigates, which caused him to miss the French in his pursuit. At one time during the chase he exclaimed, "Were I to die this moment, want of frigates would be found engraved on my heart."[9] Only after his fleet captured a French merchant ship and interrogated the captain, did he learn of the French fleet's destination, where he then engaged them in battle at Abourkir Bay.

The most significant factor influencing intelligence in the age of sail was light and weather conditions, especially wind. Night and bad weather restricted visibility and reduced visual detection ranges, thereby inhibiting tactical intelligence. A change in wind usually preceded a change in weather, and wind itself was an indicator of enemy activity. Since wind restricted the tactical movement of sailing ships, it limited tactical freedom of action. When looking forward over the bow of a ship pointed directly into the wind, a commander could only use approximately two-thirds of the compass around him for

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movement, the forward third being completely blocked by wind blowing from ahead.[10] Conversely, wind provided a commander with great operational freedom of action even by today's nuclear Navy standards.[11] Wind determine movement and therefore could accurately predict where a ship or fleet was going and what type of operations it could perform. Intelligence was critical in maintaining the effectiveness of a blockade. It aided a commander 's decision-making process by determining the type of blockade he could employ against a particular port or location.

Three types of blockades were used in the age of sail. They included an inside blockade, close blockade, and distant blockade. An inside blockade, "which is always best when it can be done," meant positioning ships within the confines of a declared port.[12] This required offensive operations to occupy and defeat local enemy defenses before any force could occupy interior waters. During a close blockade, the blockading fleet operated just outside port within visual range of the coastline but outside any local defenses. A fleet normally conducted a close blockade when there was insufficient forces to conduct a more distant blockade, or when the threat or hydrographic conditions of the port prohibited the establishment of an inside blockade. A close blockade relied on a cordon of ships that surrounded the mouth or entrance to port. These ships were positioned in such a way as to prohibit the movement of ships in and out of port and to facilitate surveillance of the harbor mouth. Reaction times to any enemy incursion were usually short. A close blockade incurred considerable risk due to storms or wind change that threatened to blow ships ashore and was thus avoided whenever possible.[13]

The most arduous method of blockade was a distant or outside blockade where the major portion of the blockading fleet remained hull down below the horizon of the

enemy coast. In this type of operation, a blockade commander relied on a line of reconnaissance assets, such as frigates or gunboats, to conduct a close blockade just beyond gun-range of shore. This gave the blockading fleet a margin of safety in bad weather, but also allowed sufficient warning time from reconnaissance forces to react to any enemy attempts to violate the blockade. A commander could also cover the approaches to port thereby extending the blockade seaward for the interception of ships. A distant blockade required a large covering force and therefore was prohibitive when a navy had limited ships and resources. When this occurred, a blockading fleet had to revert to a close blockade until sufficient forces could be mustered to either force an entry and establish an inshore blockade or open the distance and enforce a distant blockade.

One trait common to all types of blockades was the advantage wind gave to the blockading force. Since wind dictated the direction and movement an enemy force would take in an attempt to breach the blockade, the local naval commander could reasonably anticipate and counter this threat. This aspect of naval operations was radically altered by the introduction of steam for propulsion in naval vessels and had direct ramifications for intelligence support.

The British Navy used all three-types of blockades during the French Revolution and War of 1812 with the United States targeting both military and commercial interests. Admiral Nelson preferred a distant blockade off the French naval base at Toulon in the years before Trafalgar in 1805, since he wanted the French to leave port so he could engage them in decisive battle. In the Atlantic, the British chose a close blockade to keep the French fleet in port, though these decisions were effected by local geography and weather conditions.[14] The British used a close blockade against the United States in the

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War of 1812 along the East Coast. Here they faced a similar challenge to that of the Union Navy at the start of the Civil war. The British North American squadron had only a few ships to cover the entire American Coast, so they operated in pairs off the more important ports or strategic locations where American naval forces were based until additional assets arrived from Europe to expand the blockade.[15]

The American Navy too faced similar challenges in the war with Mexico. The Navy chose to blockade only a few important Mexican ports leaving the rest of the coast unoccupied. When a belligerent power establishes a blockade, both the targeted port and neutral powers are informed of the declaration and the extent of blockade vis-a-vis specific location and type of contraband or illegal cargo. The blockading naval force then has to enforce the blockade through continuous presence along specific international rules and guidelines governing blockade under the adage, "blockades must be effective to be legal."[16] If the blockading force left the port open for any reason, the port could be declared open and the blockade lifted. At this time, the blockading force had to reestablish the legitimacy of the blockade by going through the procedures of declaring and reinforcing the blockade. A blockade could be extended along the coast to various other ports in the same manner as long as the legitimacy of the blockade under international law was maintained. This is key to understanding the dilemma facing the Union Navy of establishing a legitimate blockade in the eyes of Confederacy, England, and the international community. The legitimacy and extent of blockade, particularly in relation to neutral shipping and cargo was a particularly contentious issue and was one that the Union faced from the start of blockade operations in 1861. It was such an

overriding concern to the Lincoln administration throughout the war that it seriously influenced naval operations and intelligence operations.

The United States never maintained large fleets comparable to most European navies, though the service was an effective fighting force capable of supporting U.S. policies aboard. Naval leadership understood the value of intelligence and made an effort to enhance fleet operations and capabilities through the use of intelligence. For example, several Navy Secretaries sent qualified naval officers to Europe to gather information on significant naval technological developments, steam power, naval ship building, and use of underwater craft. In this endeavor, the Navy enlisted the support of other governmental agencies and in particular, the State Department.[17] Though these efforts rarely supported the operational commander directly, they did enhance America's maritime industry and increase operational knowledge.

Industrialization and the impact on blockade

In the years before the Civil War, the rise of an industrial society in Europe and America helped to transform the navy from a force that relied solely on wind for power to a fleet of hybrid steam-sailing ships. "Ships being machines...navies more than armies were technologically transformed by the industrial revolution."[18] The creation of heavy industry allowed naval architects and ship builders to combine steam power, armor, and heavy armament into a single hull form without seriously affecting the performance of the ship or impacting safety. In the span of one generation, between 1815 and 1861, ships were transformed from stately wooden vessels with a preponderance of short ranged

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cannon to powerful, smoke belching behemoths that carried a few large-caliber, long-range shell guns. This had a tremendous impact on fleet operations and intelligence. Free from the constraints of wind power by steam and protected by armor, major European navies built several iron-hulled hybrid ships two years before the outbreak of the Civil War. The French *Gloire* and English *Warrior* were the lead ships of this movement and easily outclassed any vessel afloat at the time.[19] In one swift moment, naval warfare was revolutionized. Navies could now fight each other independently of wind and inflict greater damage in a shorter period than previously possible under sail. Once the battle was over, fleets had to retire to a shore-based establishment for repairs and replenishment. A Navy to be victorious not only had to triumph at sea through superior technology but also had to be logistically agile to remain so.

Steam power had a great impact on blockade operations during the Civil War and changed the traditional relationship between the blockader and blockade runner. Admiral Samuel Du Pont mentioned this change in February 1863 when he discussed the impact technology had on blockade duty,

> Steam however, is the new element in the history of blockades, which no one at first understands, as both sides have it - but it is all in favor of the runner. He chooses the time, makes his bound, and rushes through, his only danger a chance shot while the watcher has banked fires, his chain to slip, his guns to point, and requires certainly fifteen minutes to get full way on his ship. It is wonderful how many we catch.[20]

He earlier estimated that "Steam has quadrupled the advantage to those who run the blockade, over those who cover the ports."[21] Blockade runners now had the advantage of surprise and agility, choosing both time and place to make the attempt and under what weather conditions. It also gave them the advantage of speed, something a blockading fleet found hard to counter. This meant intelligence must not only supply information on

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enemy capabilities and threats but also provide advanced warnings of possible attempts, and do so in a timely and efficient manner. This posed considerable problems given period communication methods.

Steam technology also impacted Civil War naval operations because ships were now tied to fixed logistical bases, perhaps for the first time in history since the age of galley warfare in the middle ages. This had an adverse influence on tactical intelligence since it limited the amount of time a ship could spend conducting surveillance operations. "For most of the war, the majority of the vessels could stay at their stations for about three or four weeks. An average steamer consumed fifteen tons of coal a day which allowed only about eleven days of full steaming."[22] Part of the steaming time was spent traveling from a blockade duty station to a nearby shore base for coal. It took at least a day to travel to the blockade off Wilmington, North Carolina from the nearest Union logistical base at Beaufort, South Carolina. The same factors applied to the blockade off Charleston where ships traveled to and from Port Royal.

Technology influenced maintenance as well. Although wooden ships required extensive upkeep, it was not in the same proportion as the upkeep and repairs demanded by steam engines. The increase in maintenance requirements was clearly apparent to Admiral Samuel P. Lee, Commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron from 1862 to 1864 when he "inspected the vessels in the sounds of North Carolina and at Cape Fear and found all but one needing some type of repairs."[23] The acquisition of merchant ships for blockade duty exacerbated the situation since the Navy purchased them by-expediency that often hid some mechanical or structural defect and they suffered acutely from the rigors of wartime duty. As the fleet grew so did the scope of the problem.

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Maintenance influenced tactical intelligence as well because it limited the number of ships on station that could perform the surveillance and reconnaissance duties.

To ease the burden of technology, the Union Navy first captured a number of suitable logistic depots on the Confederate coastline close enough to the blockade operations to limit travel times and increase logistical effectiveness. "The Navy never solved the problems of coaling . . . and only slightly improved procedures [for maintenance] after the navy established its depots. Stopping illicit trade was difficult inasmuch as one-third to two-fifths of the vessels were constantly away for repairs and fuel."[24] Thus, part of the success of blockade running can be directly attributed to the gunboats absences because of logistical maintenance.

Despite the ongoing technical transformation of naval warfare, the move towards industrialization did not significantly alter naval communications. Naval communications still relied on written dispatch. Steam power only increased the speed at which letters were delivered. This increase was offset by the speed at which enemy forces traveled. Even the invention of the telegraph did not seriously change the manner in which information was disseminated throughout the fleet. The telegraph allowed rapid, long-distance communications on land, but was not applicable for operations at sea, though the Navy's shore establishment was quick to use telegraphic communications. The service established connectivity between the Navy Department in Washington, D.C., and various shore establishments, bureau's, and Navy Yards.

The Navy then, had a rather well developed but loosely defined intelligence system based on the individual initiative of the naval commander. Directed by the Secretary of the Navy, the individual commander determined his own requirements and

utilized his own judgment and resources to carryout his assigned missions. He was

supported by the Secretary in this endeavor and assisted by various other personnel and

agencies outside the Navy, the most prominent being the diplomatic corps and local

business community. Intelligence also played an important role in the development of the

service, which underwent a technological transformation, brought on by the onset of

industrialization. Communications, particularly in the mode and speed of dissemination,

hindered intelligence support and technology had not yet progressed to a point where

active support could overcome the challenges of operating over long distances. This

leads us up to the next chapter, which discusses in detail the intelligence system of the

Navy as it existed in 1861 and assigns personal responsibility for the various intelligence

functions within the Department.

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[1]Anthony Price, *The Eyes of the Fleet* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), 91.

[2]Donald L. Canney, *Lincoln's Navy: The Ships Men, and Organization, 1861-65* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 17.

[3]Ibid., 9-10. Squadrons were the Mediterranean, Brazilian, African, Pacific and East Indies and Home squadron.

[4]David F. Long, *Gold Braid and Foreign Relations, Diplomatic Activities of U.S. Naval Officers, 1798-1883* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988), xv-xvi.

[5]Canney, 1.

[6]Wise, 13. The actual total was 3,549 miles.

[7]Canney, 22-32.

[8]John Keegan, *The Price of Admiralty: The Evolution of Naval Warfare* (New York: Viking, 1988), 22.

[9]Price, 91.

[10]John Harland, *The Line of Battle, The Sailing Warship 1650-1840*, ed. Robert Gardiner (London: Conway Maritime Press; Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1992), 172-173. A square-rigged ship could not use twelve points of the compass (135 degrees) if the wind was blowing from ahead.

[11]K. Jack Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines, U.S. Naval Operations in the Mexican War, 1846-48* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1969), vii and part 2, passim. Relying solely on wind power, the U.S. Pacific Squadron conducted two years of offensive operations along the Pacific coast of Mexico during the Mexican-American War (1846-48) without benefit of a friendly shore base for supply or repair. The Pacific squadron's line of communications was almost 6,000 miles long by way of Cape Horn and a letter from Washington could take three months to reach its destination. The Pacific Squadron's only reliable logistical base was Hawaii. One of the many successful operations conducted by this squadron was the blockade of Mexican ports for much of the war.

[12]Samuel F. Du Pont, *Samuel Francis Du Pont, A Selection from His Civil War Letters*, vol. 2, *The Blockade 1862-1863*, ed. John D. Hayes (New York: Cornell University Press, 1969), 61.

[13]Bauer, 23-25; and David Howarth, *Trafalgar, The Nelson Touch* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 38-42. The American Navy conducted several types of blockades during the war with Mexico (1846-48) as conditions and number of ships warranted. The British blockading fleet under Admiral Cornwallis conducted a close blockade of the French Fleet off Brest during the French Revolution with the aim of preventing a French sortie. In Contrast, Admiral Nelson off Toulon, France in the Mediterranean maintained a distant blockade. He hoped to lure the French out of port so he could decisively engage them in battle.

[14]Ibid., 38-42.

[15]Alfred T. Mahan, *Sea Power in Relations to the War of 1812*, 2 vols. (New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1969), 2:9-10; and Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1882), 284-285.

[16]Bauer, 23.

[17]Richard Deacon, *The Silent War, A History of Naval Intelligence* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1978), 34-35.

[18]Larry H. Addington, *The Patterns of War Since the Eighteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 55.

[19]Ibid., 55.

[20]Du Pont, 2:446.

[21]Gustavus V. Fox, *The Confidential Correspondence of Gustavus Vasa Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, 1861-1865,* ed. Robert Thompson and Richard Wainwright (New York: De Vinne Press, 1913), 112. Letter from Du Pont to Fox.

[22]Robert Browning Jr., *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear, The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron during the American Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 197.

[23]Ibid., 164

[24]Ibid., 199.

CHAPTER 3

INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNION NAVY

> The American Civil War, as far as the United States Navy was concerned, was an aberration. The entire history and tradition of the service had little bearing on the conflict of the 1860's and no other war -- before or since -- caught the service so thoroughly unadapted to its requirements.[1]
>
> Donald Canney, *Lincoln's Navy*

Having provided background for naval intelligence in nineteenth century, this chapter will explore naval intelligence as it existed during the Civil War using the three definitions of intelligence introduced in the first chapter; intelligence as information, as a process, and as a system. This chapter will begin with a short investigation of what type of intelligence was required by commanders to enforce the blockade and what formed the basis of their analysis. The remainder of the chapter will discuss intelligence as system by examining the command, control, communications and intelligence (C3I) architecture of the Union Navy. It will include an in-depth study of what individuals within the chain of command were responsible for intelligence duties, what sources provided intelligence to the Navy, and how intelligence was disseminated throughout the fleet using existing communications methods.

Intelligence as Information

Naval commanders in the Civil War required intelligence on a broad range of topics. The level and detail of intelligence on these topics varied between commanders and was based upon a myriad of factors including the commander's operational focus, rank, experience, position, and the type of operations he was expected to command. Before talking about information relevant to the blockade, two important points must be

highlighted. First, the scope and definition of intelligence was quite broad and embraced a wide-range of topics -- topics that today might seem out of place by modern definition. Intelligence included information on hydrography, weather, international and maritime law, naval tactics, and history as well as traditional subjects, such as threat information or intelligence on enemy naval activity. Since individuals or collective groups defined intelligence by what they believed was important given time and circumstance, than these topics must be included in any discussion. The second point to remember is that intelligence did not have as great a connotation of secrecy and security that surrounds the subject today. Despite the best endeavors of commanders to instill some measure of operational security, information was openly exchanged during the war and made collection surprisingly easy.[2]

The intelligence requirements for blockade duty fell into four separate categories and included information on blockade runners, Confederate naval activity, coastal defense activity, and intelligence on local hydrographic and meteorological conditions.[3]

1. <u>Intelligence on Blockade Runners</u>: Prevention of blockade running was the primary mission of the Union fleet during the war. Naturally, any information that lead to the capture, prevention, or destruction of blockade runners was vitally important. Besides information on attempts to run the blockade, commanders required information that supported the capture of blockade runners -- information that would hold up under the scrutiny of prize court and make the capture a legally condemned prize. Information on blockade running could include the name and description of a potential violator, ownership and nationality, cargo manifest, nationality of crew, port

of origin, destination and date of departure, intended route, and any historical information on past activities. The following is an example of a report submitted by the U. S. minister at Brussels, dated March 28, 1862:

> I have the honor to enclose herewith some information touching the steamer *Bahama* . . . as being engaged at Hamburg taking in a large and valuable cargo of cannons and small arms for the rebels. She will probably leave to-day or to-morrow, with the intention of seeking to run the blockade. I also enclose a sketch of the vessel. She is a new screw steamer of about a thousand tons measurement, painted black, with a narrow red stripe around her waist; yellowish-gray below the water line; yellow houses and boats; much gilt and filigree work about her bows and stern; upper half of her chimney red, lower half black; name gilded on light-blue ground on each bow and upon her stern; roofs of her houses rounded and painted white; three masts, two of them square-rigged, carrying topgallant sails; heads and yards painted black; five boats in sight.[4]

2. Intelligence on Confederate naval forces: Information included the construction, location, status, and intentions of Confederate naval forces operating against the blockade and the location of naval mines. For the most part, Confederate naval units were lightly armed wooden vessels that posed little threat to the fleet. However, two classes of vessels did pose a threat: Confederate Ironclads and high seas commerce raiders.[5] Ironclad vessels like CSS *Virginia* (ex *Merrimack*) or *Atlanta* and high-seas commerce raiders like CSS *Shenandoah* and *Alabama* posed a considerable threat to Union blockading forces since these warships were usually better armed and possessed greater speed. Force protection against these types of threats was a vital concern to blockade commanders. Mines were also a significant threat, especially during inshore operations and a large number of ships were lost to mines while operating in the confined waters of the South.

3. <u>Intelligence on Confederate coastal defense activity:</u> This information was important because blockade squadrons maintained a close blockade of the Confederate Coast throughout the war. Union warships often operated within range or just outside range of Southern coastal artillery while trying to enforce the blockade. Blockade runners used the protection offered by Confederate coastal batteries to cover their ingress and egress routes to and from port. Fort Fisher at the entrance to Wilmington was a prime example of the protection coastal fortifications offered violators and the union fleet often dueled with coastal artillery batteries when trying to capture or destroy a blockade runner.[6]

4. <u>Intelligence on local hydrographic and weather conditions:</u> This included information on tides, currents, and depth of water, location of navigation hazards and local weather conditions. This type of information was critical to daily operations as it defined the physical operating area of the blockade. Both Wilmington and Charleston were notorious for their dangerous and unpredictable weather and hydrographic conditions. Ship captains required detailed information on weather and sea condition that included information on the frequency and paths of hurricanes and storms, fog, currents, tides, and navigational hazards. The physical factors of operating on the Atlantic year round created more problems for the Union fleet than the Confederate Navy ever did.

Intelligence as a Process

The process by which Civil War officers used to analyze information was not clearly defined in period literature. Most officers never used a formal process to analyze intelligence information, but instead, appeared to have taken a methodical approach to

weighing the value of available information against their needs and coming up with sound conclusions. The most successful commanders adopted the scientific approach based on the procedures of trial and error and observation and application. The leading individuals within the naval service who used these procedures and instilled them within the Navy were those officers who worked in research and mapping.

The first Americans to apply formal, scientific analysis to the problems of intelligence were Army engineers trained at West Point. The Military Academy was the leading engineering school in the nation and began to associate intelligence work with reconnaissance through the curriculum taught by Dennis Hart Mahan, a West Point professor from 1833 to 1871 and leading American military theorist of the period. He bound the two subjects together when he stressed the critical nature of intelligence work.

> There are no more important duties which an officer may be called upon to perform, than those of collecting and arranging the information upon which either the general, or daily operations of a campaign must be based. For the proper performance of the former, acquirements of a very high order . . . are indispensable requisites.[7]

Academy instruction emphatically tied intelligence to engineering and science where "the skills developed in engineering, mathematics and drawing classes were transferable to intelligence operations, and where precision, accuracy and keen powers of observation had no substitutes."[8]

These same influences were at work within the naval service through the study of hydrography and navigation. Because of poor navigation standards and inaccurate maritime charts, Congress established the Coast Survey in 1807 whose mission was to make extensive surveys of the American coastline and supply the nation with accurate charts.[9] Although the Survey was primarily intended to support commercial maritime

interests, it had ample Navy and War Department support and involvement. In addition to the Coast Survey, the Navy undertook extensive explorations of the world's oceans conducting a wide range of explorations kin to the Army topographical surveys of the American West. Since the Navy had no formal school of instruction for young naval officers until 1845, assignment to the Coast Survey was critical in the intellectual development of the Navy since it exposed many naval officers and their work to the scrutiny of the nation's leading scientists and engineers, most of whom were taught at West Point. Admiral Samuel P. Lee, the commander of the North Atlantic Blockade Squadron for much of the Civil War wrote that the service provided "a great field of practice and instruction in seamanship, navigation, surveying and naval war operations."[10] For officers trained in coastal reconnaissance, intelligence was a natural step. It is no coincidence that Lee, Gustavus Fox, David Dixon Porter, and other prominent officers who played a significant role in blockade operations during the war, spent considerable time on survey work.

Intelligence as a System

The head of the naval intelligence system was the Secretary of the Navy who handled all intelligence matters for the Department and personally managed the flow of intelligence information to the fleet using the chain of command.[11] Operational commanders received information from the Secretary and in turn, disseminated intelligence to subordinate officers and laterally to other commanders. Information flowed upward to the secretary in the same manner. The Navy also exchanged

information with the Army and other governmental agencies and with private individuals within the business and political community.

The entire system was dependent upon individual initiative. Individuals within the system had to be willing to share information. When anyone tied the sharing of information to personal relationships, personality conflicts, politics, emotion, or institutional bias, the system broke down. When commanders acted professionally, the system worked reasonably well. Fortunately, the naval service was not as plagued by personality conflicts, politics or petty jealousies that seemed to infected the Union Army and information appeared to flow consistently throughout the Department. The Navy fared particularly well when it came to receiving information from outside the Department despite conflict with officials within the War and State Departments and was, perhaps, better served by those two agencies than the service realized.

This success was in large part due to Gideon Welles, Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy. As a loyal and trusted advisor to President Lincoln and a member of his cabinet, Welles was one of the most able and effective Secretaries in the history of the Navy. Nicknamed "Old Neptune" because of his graybeard and crazy wig, he was a competent administrator and a formidable politician. A former newspaperman, he had some experience with the Navy Department having spent time as Chief of Bureau for Provisions and Clothing in the 1840's, but lacked solid, operational experience. He made up for this deficiency through his choice of advisors and operational commanders, as he was an able judge of character. He seemed to put competent people in the right jobs and relied on instinct and the experience of his advisors for advice and judgment. As a career newspaper editor and astute politician, he obviously knew the value of good intelligence

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and was adept at managing information. These qualities not only made him a strong Navy Secretary but an able intelligence chief.

The energetic Gustavus Fox, a former naval officer and New England woolen mill executive, assisted Welles.[12] Fox came to the attention of the Lincoln administration in early April 1861 because of his political connections to the Republican Party and involvement in the aborted naval attempt to relieve Fort Sumter. Fox became Assistant Secretary in September, where his talents complemented his chief. Welles allowed his assistant wide latitude in duties and he acted like a modern-day Chief of Naval.[13] His duties included disseminating intelligence to squadron commanders and ship captains whenever possible. His one weakness concerning intelligence was his refusal to accept reports that ran counter to his own beliefs or understanding. At times this stubbornness impacted the Department's relationship with operational commanders particularly when he refused or ignored the intelligence or analysis of senior commanders.

Under the Office of the Secretary was a Byzantine world made up of the navies eight administrative bureaus and eight naval yards.[14] Each bureau and naval yard was under the command of a senior naval officer or appointed civilian. The appointment of bureau chiefs and yard commanders was based on seniority and politics and commanders jealously guarded their rights and prerogatives as bureau and yard chiefs. Despite periodic reform and able leadership, the bureau system remained relatively inefficient. In matters of intelligence, they appear to have had little direct influence over intelligence matters and seldom supplied intelligence directly to the operational fleet.

The Navy divided the fleet into multiple squadrons as the primary operational organization for the fleet. Squadrons were under the command of senior Navy captains or

Rear Admirals when Congress created the rank in 1862. At the start of the war, the Navy had six original squadrons, but the number quickly grew to meet operational requirements. The number of squadrons and their geographical responsibility varied throughout the war. Squadrons responsible for blockade were the North Atlantic Blockade Squadron, the South Atlantic Blockade Squadron and the two Gulf of Mexico squadrons. Both the North and South Atlantic Blockading squadrons were of primary importance since they were responsible for blockading Wilmington and Charleston respectively, the principle ports of entry for Confederate runners during the war.

Squadron commanders were the primary intelligence officers of the fleet and many displayed a remarkable grasp of its significance. All squadron commanders disseminated intelligence but the better ones utilized intelligence to improve the effectiveness of their operations. There was no standard means of disseminating intelligence to the fleet once intelligence reached the squadron level. Each commander had his own particular way of handling and sending information. Admiral Lee summarized intelligence information received from Welles and consular dispatches in reports called 'extracts' and had them published for dissemination to the squadron.[15] Admiral Du Pont, the first commander of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron developed a master list of suspected blockade runners;

> I have received . . . dispatches from the Department, enclosing communications from our ministers and consuls abroad, referring to steamers and sailing vessels suspected of the intention of running the blockade. A list has been printed under my direction . . . and a copy supplied to every ship in my squadron . . . The list of suspected vessels in my possession made up from various sources . . . amounts to 160 (vessels).[16]

A small staff assisted Squadron commanders in their duties. Staff members included a Flag Captain who acted as a squadron Chief-of-Staff, several clerks who were

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responsible for writing and recording official correspondence and a Flag Lieutenant who was the Admiral's aid and communications officer. The staff also received assistance from the captain of the admiral's flagship, who had certain operational and ceremonial operational duties. Below the squadron commander were the various commanding officers of individual ships assigned to the specific squadron. These officers received intelligence reports from the squadron commander and reported any significant activity back up the chain of command. When squadron ships operated in close proximity to each other, as they did on blockade duty, they operated in divisions. The senior officer on-station acted as the overall division commander for those ships. These officers wore the ceremonial title of commodore. They were of particular importance off Wilmington and Charleston where the Navy maintained permanent divisions.

Commodores acted as on-scene commanders and were responsible for intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance duties in their assigned division. The intelligence effort included surveillance and the positioning of individual ships to detect, track, and interdict blockade runners. They also acted as a funnel, reporting significant activity to the squadron commander as it occurred. Division commodores held positions of great importance, as he and his subordinate ship captains were the officers most directly responsible for acting on the intelligence supplied to them by the system. How successful these commanders were in the fulfillment of their duties was directly related to and greatly affected by the quality and quantity of information they received, and in turn, was a direct reflection of the intelligence system as a whole.

Types and Sources of Intelligence

The Navy relied on several types of intelligence in the pre-electronic age derived from multiple sources. Intelligence sources in the Civil War included Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Open Source Intelligence (OSINT), Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), and newcomer to the field, Imagery, or Photographic Intelligence (PHOTINT).

HUMINT is information derived from human sources and was the single largest type of information used during the war.[17] HUMINT was obtained through open and covert means. Although most agencies within the U.S. Government ran covert collections operations, the most reliable sources for HUMINT on the blockade came through governmental, business, or private organizations that had access to the required information.

Open Source intelligence (OSINT), a subset of HUMINT, is information available to the general public, usually reported in the news media.[18] In the 1800s, the news media meant the press. Newspapers were a major source of information on both sides of the war and soldiers and sailors spent a great deal of time reading newspapers, not only for information about the war but as a way of relieving boredom. Union sailors obtained Confederate newspapers from Southerners ashore or through the Union Army. Northern newspapers were included in the regular consignment of mail delivered to ships. Since news agencies maintained sources on both sides of the conflict, important information often found its way North or vise versa. Intelligence of value to the blockade included departure or arrival information on shipping and after action reports by both southern and northern commanders.

Southern newspapers and press agencies from Britain often reported successful blockade running attempts and provided lists of ships in operation against the blockade. Secretary Welles used this information to judge the efficiency of the blockade as well as gauge public opinion on the effectiveness of the Navy. Sometimes he sent blockade commanders extracts of news stories with a request for an explanation or answers to questions on the validity of press reports. Welles sent one such example to Admiral Lee in December 1863:

> The reports of vessels running the blockade at Wilmington are creating much excitement, and the Southern papers are publishing the arrival of a large number of steamers loaded with supplies for the insurgents. The Raleigh papers announce that 13 steamers got into Wilmington in one night recently, and but a short time since it was stated that 7 reached there safely at one time. . . . I would like to be informed if you place any reliance in the reports.[19]
>
> Lee emphatically replied:
>
> Sir, I do not credit the statement in the Raleigh Register, a violent secession sheet.[20]

Sources outside the Navy Department provided a great deal of HUMINT information to the service and were vital to the effectiveness of the naval intelligence organization. Sources included the War Department, State Department, Treasury, customs officials, maritime shipping industry and insurance agencies, the police and private investigative services as well as elected government officials, and politicians.[21] Taken as a whole, it appeared that the information supplied by outside sources was quite extensive. Most information had little direct application for fleet operations but helped the service build a comprehensive picture of the commercial industry that developed around blockade running. The most important sources were those individuals who had direct knowledge of Confederate attempts to purchase goods over seas, build and operate blockade runners, or specific attempts by runners to violate the blockade itself. Sources

for this type of information were usually rare and often had occupations in the maritime

industry, overseas businesses associations or worked in the diplomatic field.

One extremely important source were State Department consuls. Through these

diplomatic and commercial representatives of the United States, the State Department

collected whole sale information on Confederate naval activities and formed the basis for

most of the information transmitted to the Navy Department from an outside source.

Consular agents in the Bahamas, Bermuda, Havana, Halifax, and Europe created an

informal ocean surveillance network that observed and reported intelligence of great

value to the Union Navy. Information collected by consulates included "Itemized lists of

contraband cargo, insurgent procurement and naval building plans, sailing schedules of

suspected blockade violators, sketches, photographs and descriptions of vessels and

blockade running personnel, alleged schemes for sabotage of federal ships and shore

installations, and technical data concerning experimental naval and military devices."[22]

Secretary of State Stanton was the first person to ascertain the value of consular

reporting and expanded the role of consular activity during the war. The level of State

and Navy Department cooperation varied throughout the conflict and lacked any

executive control or coordination. The lack of collaboration between the two

Departments was surprising given the value of consulate information. The Navy

Department never fully cultivated this source to the great detriment of both services and

the nation and was one of the critical intelligence failures of the war.

A substantial amount of HUMINT came through unofficial sources including

deserters, civilians, and escaped slaves. The value of information provided by these

individuals varied due to personal motives and circumstance and needed to be judged by

the context of the situation. Taken as a whole, these sources were invaluable in helping to determine the particular details of Confederate naval and coastal activity. Perhaps the single greatest contribution of this type of information came from escaped slaves who provided squadron commanders with detailed information usually at great hazard to themselves and their families. Slaves had access to most southern ports and coastal defenses where they worked as laborers and were often overlooked or dismissed outright by Southerners as a threat because of bigotry.

A particularly valuable source were pilots who guided ships in and out of port for fees, some of whom were slaves. "These contraband . . . are of that superior class of pilots and watermen who have had their own time, paying their masters for it a certain sum."[23] These individuals had a great deal of knowledge on local hydrographic and weather conditions and served the Union fleet throughout the war. The most famous black pilot was Robert Smalls, a former slave who made a daring escape with his family by stealing the Confederate ship *Planter* and sailing it through Union lines. He served as a pilot in the Union fleet off Wilmington and was awarded $1,500 prize money for his escape.[24] The need for pilots on blockade duty increased tremendously during the war and became so acute that the Navy had to request outside help.[25] In one instance, the Navy hired a rebel pilot, a Mr. Burroughs, captured off the blockade runner *Merrimac* for service onboard the flagship USS *Minnesota*. Not surprisingly, after swearing loyalty to the Union, Mr Burroughs "escaped and returned to the rebels by way of New Berne with, of course, much information that could benefit the blockade runners."[26]

The Navy also received assistance from the U.S. Treasury, through the auspices of the U.S. Coast Survey. As discussed above, the coast survey dealt with hydrogrpahic

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information and coastal topography. The Coast Survey assigned individual civilians to Flag staffs as liaison officers on a case-by-case basis for survey work and reconnaissance. Their local knowledge and individual participation was a major contributing factor in the success of naval operations designed to seize and secure many Southern Ports early in the war before the Confederacy had a chance to fortify them against blockade.

SIGINT is intelligence derived from the study of enemy signal and electronic communications.[27] In the Civil War, both the Union and Confederacy attempted to exploit SIGINT by reading and deciphering visual flag or semaphore signals, deciphering written coded correspondence and intercepting telegraphic communications. The South never developed a sophisticated cryptologic organization and the Union was far more successful in protecting its communications and attacking Southern communications than the Confederacy was in attacking Union signals.[28] At the start of the war, the Confederate Navy retained and used coded signal books from the prewar American Navy that went south with Southern officers who resigned from service. The South made some efforts to revise signal codes but the Union Navy was able to obtain Confederate codebooks through capture or desertion. In 1862, a Confederate defector delivered a Confederate Navy signal book used by blockade runners off Charleston.[29]

The ability to read enemy signal traffic aided both sides in the war and helped commanders understand enemy intentions as well as decipher threat information. SIGINT had limited value for the Union Navy on blockade duty for the simple reason that the Navy could not track individual blockade runners by SIGINT. Confederate and neutral ship owners who operated blockade runners did not use SIGINT to control blockade running operations. The Confederacy did develop a signal system to identify ships

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entering a protected port and provide them protection. However, the Union Navy was not able to exploit this system. By the time a blockade runner was in visual range to send or receive signals from shore, the chase to enter port was lost or won already.

PHOTINT, information derived from photography, was a relatively new source to the intelligence world, and had little impact on naval operations.[30] Photography was widely used to record events on and off the Civil War battlefield, but few understood its intelligence value. One farsighted individual in the diplomatic community did comprehend the value of photography and began to take pictures of Confederate overseas agents and suspected privateersmen.[31] These pictures were sent to the State Department but there is no record of images being disseminated to the fleet. Photography was a relatively new invention and to the average American sailor and naval commander alike, photographs were unique and curious items of the age.

Despite a wide variety of sources and a vast network working to obtain information on the blockade, the single greatest source of information was obtained through direct observation of confederate naval activity. The Navy placed considerable reliance on the ability of the blockading fleet to observe and react to blockade running incursions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, ships controlled a significant area of water through direct observation. Ships operating on the blockade could peer into ports and observe ships preparing to get under way or detect contacts miles-off that might be trying to make port. The distance an enemy vessel could be detected was based on several factors including the size, shape, color and silhouette of the vessel, its sailing rig or funnels and the amount and color of smoke it produced. The amount of area under direct observation increased dramatically as the number of ships on station increased. When

weather or darkness restricted conditions, observation ranges dropped from tens of miles

to tens of feet. The ability of a commander to implement an effective surveillance plan to

detect and track blockade runners posed a considerable challenge to blockade

commanders for much of the war.

Union Naval Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence

Once the Navy obtained information, it had to be disseminated to those

commands that could best use it but communications constraints and dissemination times

restricted the agility of naval C3I. Communication methods included letters and written

dispatch, visual signaling and telegraph.

Telegraph was the latest addition to communications and had the potential to

revolutionize Navy communications but its impact was muted since the Navy could not

readily communicate with ships at sea by telegraph. This did not hinder the use of the

telegraph by the Navy and the Department's reliance on the system increased throughout

the war. The Navy headquarters in Washington, D.C., maintained telegraphic

communications with all major shore establishments and sent messages to these

establishments where they were relayed to afloat commanders by dispatch vessels or

semaphore. The Navy used the Army telegraph service to communicate with naval

commands that operated in conjunction with or in close proximity to Army field

commanders.

The most important telegraph line used by the Navy for communications with the

blockading fleet was the Fort Monroe line with wire strung between Washington D.C.

and Hampton Roads, Virginia, via Maryland and Virginia's Eastern Shore. [32] Urgent

information was passed to Fort Monroe and relayed to the ships in Hampton Roads. This was one reason why the North Atlantic Blockade Squadron commander stationed his flagship in Hampton Roads. The profound effect telegraph communications could have on naval operations was no more apparent than when the USS *Monitor* fought CSS *Virginia* in the first battle between Ironclad ships on April 18, 1862. During the famous battle, the telegraph operator at Fort Monroe sent near real-time reports to the War and Navy Departments in Washington while the battle raged. It was perhaps, the first time in history where the strategic leadership was able to indirectly "observe" an ongoing battle from hundreds of miles away.[33]

Written letter or dispatch was the standard means of naval communications. Commanders and subordinates throughout the war exchanged a regular volume of hand written correspondence. Correspondence included departmental and squadron orders, intelligence and operational reports, movement notices, and private information of official nature. The Navy used two types of correspondence and had particular importance in the information they conveyed. The first type, official letters, contained orders that direct the movement of ships and personnel, command instructions or planning information. Unofficial letters were more general in nature and included operational or intelligence information, detailed after-action reports, or situation updates. Officers also exchanged personal information or observations under the title official private or unofficial private and were the equivalent of today's "personal for" messages. The highest classification level of official and unofficial correspondence was confidential or "most confidential."

The Department used the regular U.S. Postal Service to send official correspondence and letters. Letters sent by mail were protected from inadvertent or deliberate disclosure through the use of double-wrapped envelopes and closed by official seal. This system was not full proof and occasionally evidence arose of possible tampering or comprise. Captain Thomas Craven of the USS *Tuscarora* reported:

> I have the honor to suggest that any important communications from the Navy Department to me be folded as private letters, and without the official frank, as nearly all of the letters from the Department which came to me at Gibraltar came with seals broken and mutilated envelopes. I of course do not know if I have received all you have sent me, but it is evident that letters are opened in England.[34]

The U.S. government established regular mail service with all major blockade squadrons by using civilian contract shipping. Navy Department mail bound for the blockade would usually travel by rail to New York, where it was transferred to one of the many steam vessels hired by the Government. Government service vessels made regularly scheduled runs to squadron logistical bases along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts including the ports of Hampton Roads, Beaufort, Port Royal, Key West and points west for the Gulf Squadrons. Vessels sent to and from blockade duty for repair, supply or north as prizes carried mail as well. By this means, an Atlantic Coast Blockade Commander was in regular communications with superiors in Washington D.C. and any ship commander on blockade, given good weather or reliable service. Logistical bases became the central hub for all Navy communications and flag officers chose to remain in port, anchored in their flagships, rather than operating at-sea for this reason. But even this system wasn't always reliable as Admiral Du Pont related to Gustavus Fox, "The Vanderbilt played us a scurvy trick yesterday, having gone off without our mail, paid no

attention to a gun from this ship or a tug which followed her . . . whether it was accident or design . . . I cannot say."[35]

Once onboard, the squadron commander sorted mail with aid from the Flag Captain and clerks. Important mail was immediately sent forward to squadron units by other naval ships. Since warships were constantly shuttling back and forth from blockade duty to logistical ports for fuel, supply, or repair, these vessels provided an efficient means of communicating information from the squadron flag officer to the blockading fleet. Once mail reached the squadrons and individual ships, intelligence dissemination was carried out by tactical means.

The most common means of tactical communications was by visual flag, lantern or pyrotechnic signals. The Navy maintained a confidential signal book by which coded information could be rapidly transmitted between ships or shore. In 1859, the Navy began using the signal system designed by Benjamin Costen that included pyrotechnic lights, rocket and flare signals for nighttime use.[36] The Navy also used the Army semaphore system when available. Called wig-wag, it gave the commander added flexibility in the manner in which one could communicated over long distances. Wig-wag was the preferred method for tactical land communications during the war but the Navy's use was hindered by lack of trained personnel. To overcome this deficit, the Army stationed Signal Corps wig-wag operators aboard Navy flag ships in 1862 for joint operations and this service continued throughout the war whenever practicable.[37]

Utilizing the established Navy signal book and wig-wag whenever possible, naval commanders had the means to rapidly communicate over considerable distances as long as conditions remained good and there were ships to relay signals. The problem with this

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system occurred when weather or light conditions turned bad or the tactical situation became so complicated that commanders could not keep up with a rapidly changing situation and lost situational awareness. Under these conditions, tactical commanders lost direct control and individual ship captains relied on their own understanding of situation to make decisions. Blockade runners exploited the inherent limitations of the Navy's tactical communications by operating at night and in bad weather. Darkness limited visual detection ranges and the ability of the blockade commander to coordinate an effective response to their incursions. The ability of violators to exploit weaknesses in tactical communications was a prime reason for the success of blockade running.

In summary, the naval intelligence organization relied on multiple sources from within and outside the Department to supply intelligence. The organization had established means of disseminating information to the fleet but was hampered by limitations in communications technology that slowed transmission times. The primary individuals responsible for intelligence were squadron commanders, division commodores, and ship captains who coordinated all intelligence activities. Secretary Welles and the Navy Department assisted them when ever possible. This system, with all it's inherent strengths and weaknesses, went to war in 1861 with the primary mission of blockading the Confederate coastline and preventing blockade runners from supplying the material needs of the Confederacy. The effectiveness of this system in supporting the blockade is discussed in detail in the following chapters.

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[1]Canney, 1.

[2]Joseph E. King, "The Fort Fischer Campaign," U.S. Naval Institute, *Proceedings* 77, no. 8 (August 1951): 854.

[3]The four categories were developed by the author based on research compiled from primary source intelligence and are not all-inclusive. For example, information on foreign naval activity along the U.S. coastline was of paramount importance but not considered here.

[4]*War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921) and *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies* [CD-ROM] (Indiana: Guild Press of Indiana), Series I, vol. 7, 243. Here after listed as ORN followed by the volume and page number. All citations will be series I unless other wise noted. All quotes taken from CD-ROM edition.

[5]ORN, 10:348.

[6]Thomas Taylor, *Running the Blockade, A Personnal Narraitve of Adventures, Risks and Escapes during the American Civil War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 55-6.

[7]Dennis Mahan, *Out-Post* (New York: John Wiley Co., 1861), 105.

[8]William B. Feis, "Finding the Enemy: the Role of Military Intelligence in the Campaigns of Ulysses S. Grant, 1861-65" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1997), 11.

[9]Richard West, "The Beginning of the Coast Survey," U.S. Naval Institute, *Proceedings* 61, no. 5 (May 1935): 664.

[10]Dudley T. Cornish and Virginia J. Laas, *Lincoln's Lee: The Life of Samuel Phillips Lee, United States Navy, 1812-1897* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 71.

[11]Canney, 22. Welles was assisted in his extensive duties as secretary by a team of forty-two staff workers and clerks who resided in the department. How many of these individuals assisted Welles in his intelligence functions is not known.

[12]John D. Hayes, "Captain Fox - He is the Navy Department, " U.S. Naval Institute, *Proceedings* 91, no. 8 (May 1965): 66.

[13]Ibid., 64.

[14]Canney, 22-55. In 1860, the Navy had five Bureaus: the Bureaus of Construction, Equipment and Repair, Clothing and Provisions, Medicine and Surgery, Navy Yards and Docks, Ordnance and Hydrography. In July 62 Congress reorganized and increased the number to eight: the Bureaux of Equipment and recruiting,

Construction and Repair, Steam Engines, Ordnance, Navigation, Clothing and Provisions, Medicine and Surgery, Navy Yards and Docks. Navy Yards were located in Portsmouth, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Mare Island, Norfolk, and Pensacola. The Confederates captured the last two yards in 1861.

[15]Following is an example of an extract:

U. S. FLAGSHIP MINNESOTA,
Off Newport News, Va., October 1, 1862.

SIR: I forward to you herewith, for distribution among commanding officers off Wilmington, extracts received September 28, through the honorable Secretary of State, relative to the following vessels suspected of intending to violate this blockade: Steamer *Bonita* (with description), sailing vessels *Ella, Amathea, Ernestine, Clyde;* steamers *Ben Atwood* (with description), *Bahama, Julia Usher, Minnie, Merrimac* (loaded with arms), *Europa* (loaded with arms), *Minho, Gladiator, Harriet Pinkney,* and *Phoebe;* also account of the building of another gunboat for the rebels at Liverpool, and the affidavit of a seaman relative to the gunboat *Alabama,* or *290.* (ORN, 8:101.)

[16]ORN, 12:771.

[17]NDP 2, 63.

[18]Ibid., 66.

[19] ORN, 9:340.

[20]ORN, 9:345.

[21]List compiled by author from primary sources.

[22]Frank T. Edwards, "The United States Consular Service in the Bahamas during the American Civil War: A study of its function within a Naval and Diplomatic Context" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1968), 9.

[23]Du Pont, 2:23.

[24]Canney, 139; and Du Pont, 2:50.

[25]ORN, 7:348.

[26]ORN, 9:236. Report from Captain B. F. Sands to Admiral Lee. According to the report, Mr. Burrough's son deserted in a small boat and was rescued by a blockading ship.

[27]NDP 2, 67.

[28]William R. Plum, *The Military Telegraph During the Civil War in the United States*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Jansen, McCurg and Company, 1882), I:44-64. Plum provides an excellent review of Union and Confederate cryptologic efforts and encryption systems used throughout the war.

[29]Du Pont, 2:351. "A very small but new sloop came out of Charleston and was discovered by the Quaker City and captured - and what is extraordinary, the mails were secured, consisting of dispatches . . . with the cipher and the signals for running into the blockaded ports by the runner, with the shore people watching them."

[30]NDP 2, 66.

[31]Edwards, 396.

[32]Plumb, 2:137-138.

[33]Ibid., 2:138-141

[34]ORN, 1:359. The British postal system handled U.S. mail in Europe which occasioned wide-spread possibilities for tampering and compromise.

[35]Gustavus V. Fox, *The Confidential Correspondence of Gustavus Vasa Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, 1861-1865*, ed. by Robert M. Thompson and Richard Wainwright (New York: De Vinne Pres, 1913), 86.

[36]Samuel F. Du Pont, *Samuel Francis Du Pont, A Selection from His Civil War Letters*, vol. 1, *The Mission, 1860-1861*, ed. John D. Hayes (New York: Cornell University Press, 1969), 169.

[37]Fox, 87; Du Pont, 2:413.

CHAPTER 4

THE BLOCKADE ESTABLISHED (1861-1862)

No blockade in the history of the world had ever been more effective.[1]

Captain S. F. Du Pont, Letter to Secretary Welles

On May 2, 1861 the steam-frigate USS *Niagara* in command of Captain W.

McKean, was ordered south from New York Naval Yard to Charleston, South Carolina to

proclaim and enforce the federal blockade off the that port.[2] The first vessel to be ordered

south by Secretary Guideon Welles, *Niagara,* was one of many ships ordered south in

response to President Lincoln's Blockade proclamation declared on April 18, 1861. In his

declaration Lincoln imposed a general blockade of the Confederate states from South

Carolina to the Texas-Mexican Border in response to the Confederate bombardment of

Fort Sumter and resulting insurrection. When North Carolina and then Virginia

succeeded from the Union, the blockade was extended north. By May, the entire Southern

coastline, some 3,000 miles from the Chesapeake Bay to the Rio Grand, was under

blockade declaration[3]

The blockade required enforcement and the task of blockading the South was

daunting. The Southern shoreline was long, low, and sandy, with numerous bays, creeks,

and harbors from which vessels might elude the blockade and supply the Confederacy

with arms, ammunition, and supplies. Much of the coast was protected by a belt of outer

islands which formed a protective barrier to the actual shore and facilitated the movement

of shallow-draft shipping while prohibiting the movement of ships from the federal fleet

lying beyond.[4]

Just as daunting was the task of collecting and supplying information on Confederate efforts to circumvent Lincoln's blockade. No sooner had Wells ordered the first ships south then he received information announcing a Southern attempt to run weapons through the blockade to the rebel army in Mississippi. In response, Welles quickly diverted USS *Niagara* to the Gulf Coast.

> A dispatch was sent to you . . . to proceed and institute a blockade at Charleston. This morning, however, a communication was received . . . enclosing a letter . . . containing information so important that I deem it necessary to order the *Niagara* at once to the Gulf. . . . You will therefore on the receipt of this proceed to the Gulf and take measures for instituting and carrying into effect a rigid blockade . . . as the force under your command will admit . . . therewith use all diligence to capture the vessels with arms and munitions on board.[5]

Lincoln's proclamation unleashed a torrent of activity that took Lincoln's policy to task and gave the U.S. Navy its greatest operational challenge since the birth of the service seventy years before. As reflected by the information contained in the orders Welles gave to *Niagara*, intelligence played a major role in the blockade operations from the start. It took almost a full year for the Union blockade to become fully established and time for all the components within the intelligence system to unite into a coherent organization. Fortunately for the Navy, it took about the same amount of time for the Confederacy to organize and mount a serious challenge to the blockade. Throughout this chapter we will look at intelligence in the first year of war and discuss how intelligence influenced the establishment of the blockade on the Confederate Coast.

Intelligence and Blockade Strategy

The initial challenge to the Union blockade was not naval, but instead legal and came from the international community that questioned the validity of Lincoln's blockade

policy. This challenge influenced the formation of the blockade and the environment in which the blockade operated. The Confederacy was technically not a foreign belligerent, but a state in rebellion. Therefore, Lincoln had to weigh international opinion with domestic policy over this issue of the South's legal status. "Since the North viewed secession as rebellion and Southerners as traitors, the correct procedure was a domestic embargo that would close all ports within the rebelling states. By adopting this plan the North could legitimately claim that it was suppressing insurrection and deny the Confederacy belligerent Status."[6] However, the Union did not have the means to enforce an embargo by closing Southern ports. Lincoln, acting on advice from Secretary of State Seward and other cabinet members, declared a blockade that conceded belligerency and de facto recognition to the Confederacy.[7]

Europe received the blockade with considerable skepticism, especially on the part of England, which was rather dependent upon Southern exports of raw materials such as cotton. Europeans questioned if any navy could effectively close 3,000 miles of coastline in order to meet the stringent requirements of a blockade as defined by the 1856 Declaration of Paris that dictated the rights of belligerents and neutrals in war.[8] This issue was hotly debated within Britain, but Queen Victoria and her cabinet choose to declare British neutrality and uphold the legitimacy of the Union blockade. Minister Adams defined England's position when he stated,

> Assuming the blockade is duly notified, and also that a number of ships are stationed and remain at the entrance of a port, sufficient really to prevent access to it or to create and evident danger of entering or leaving it, and that these ships do not voluntarily permit ingress or egress, the fact that various ships may have successfully escaped through it . . . will not of itself prevent the blockade from being an effective one by international law.[9]

In effect, the British Government was going to enforce the legality rule. To be legal, the Union blockade had to make the blockade prohibitively dangerous for ships entering or leaving southern ports, but at the same time, did not have to be 100 percent effective in stopping all ships.

Britain's political stance did not prohibit British citizens from supporting the South as long as the spirit of neutrality was maintained. This manifestation quickly became apparent to the American government as British citizens and Confederate agents in England combined to begin the process of purchasing war supplies and shipping them through the blockade. Reports from American diplomatic and businessmen began to circulate through the State and Navy Departments that spelled-out these efforts:

U. S. CONSULATE,
Liverpool, June 21, 1861.

The English ship *John Parkinson* sailed a few days since for Vera Cruz with several packages containing arms, but entered as hardware; and another vessel, loading for the same place, is taking several similar packages. The English bark *Ariel*, which cleared 17th June for Ceara, had on board the following contraband articles: Ten cases, 12 quarter boxes, and 300 quarter barrels gunpowder; 26 hundredweight shot lead; 76 cases lead shot; 3 casks, 12 barrels saltpeter; 3 casks, 1 barrel sulfur, besides 167 packages entered as hardware and 63 hundredweight castings. She has a black hull and white ports. The *Thomas Killam*, for Halifax yesterday, had 13 cases of firearms.[10]

This example was one of many similar reports flowing into the government at the beginning of the war. They highlighted the need for the Navy to maintain a strict blockade of the coast and put enormous pressure on Welles and the Department to act swiftly and enforce Lincoln's proclamation. The problem for the Navy was twofold. First the service did not have enough ships to watch the entire Southern Coast and could not afford to send ships

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haphazardly around the world in response to all possible violation attempts.
More important, Welles had to build and operate a blockade that met the
stringent requirements of international law (but not necessarily stop every
shipment). Once the blockade was declared off a specific port, the Navy had to
maintain a continuous presence off that port or the Confederacy could declare
the blockade invalid. This presupposed a close blockade and did not take into
consideration the changes in maritime technology or steam propulsion. With the
small number of ships available to the Department, Welles was hard pressed to
maintain the blockade and respond to intelligence reports warning of violation
attempts.

Secretary Welles attacked this problem three ways. First, he sent as many
ships south as were available. Though these were never enough, it helped satisfy legal
requirements facing the blockade and helped silence some critics. Next, he embarked
on a program that would greatly increase the size of the Navy. Whole new classes of
ships, the 90-day gunboats and double-enders were built specifically for the war.[11]
Welles also sought to augment the Navy's building program by purchasing civilian
ships and converting them into gunboats. Though this acquisition program
dramatically increased the number of ships on station, it caused considerable
maintenance and logistical headaches for the service later on.[12]

The last measure Welles took was the creation of the Blockade Strategy
Board. In May 1861, Gustavus Fox wrote Admiral Du Pont:

> It is proposed to have a board of persons . . . meet here and condense all the
> vast information in the Engineers Department, Coast Survey, and Navy, for
> the use of the Blockading squadrons. . . . Professor Bache suggested it in an

answer to the numerous inquiries I have made of him. The Secretary is willing and . . . I suggested your name.[13]

Du Pont, then only a captain, was one of the most senior and influential officers in the service and had considerable experience on blockade duty during the Mexican War.[14] Besides Du Pont, the board included Professor A. D. Bache, the superintendent of the U.S. Coast Survey and one of the nation's leading scientists; Major J. C. Barnard, a U.S. Army Engineer and coastal defense expert; and Commander C. H. Davis, U.S. Navy, an officer with several years experience on the Coast Survey who acted as secretary.[15]

Welles wanted the board to look at several issues. First, they were to examine the feasibility of seizing a port along the Southern coastlines to facilitate the re-supply of ships on the blockade, specifically at Fernandina, near the Florida-Georgia Boarder. Second, they were to examine the problem of blockade and "devise ways and means for improving its efficiency."[16] The challenge facing the Blockade Strategy Board was to create a strategy that met the needs of the Navy, took advantage of the North's maritime superiority and exploited the South's maritime weaknesses. The board faced an interesting military dilemma since there was no serious maritime threat as a basis for planning. During the summer of 1861, the South had no navy and only a small merchant marine, and though the Confederacy was already attempting to remedy this fact, the board had no real threat to use as a basis for planning.[17]

The board met this problem by concentrating on the physical and logistical aspects of the operation instead of the military, examining areas where likely attempts would be made to circumvent the blockade and how best to stop these efforts. The

committee's most pressing intelligence requirement was for information that would help define the physical and economic aspects of the blockade in anticipation of a growing threat. Their primary source of information was the hydrographic and topographic surveys available through the Coast Survey.[18] From this information, board members were able to assemble a relatively comprehensive picture of the Atlantic Coast.

The strategy board's work resulted in a detailed plan of action that called for the seizure of Fernandina as a logistical base on the Southern Coast, the division of the Atlantic blockade into two separate commands, and suggested supplemental measures for augmenting the regular blockade. This included the use of block ships, or old ships sunk deliberately in port channels with ballast to block access.[19] The Board submitted its findings to the Department in three parts during the month of July before work began on the Gulf Coast. As a basis for strategy, the work was enduring and resulted in action that divided the Atlantic Blockading Squadron into two squadrons and created the joint Army-Navy expeditions that captured the Outer-banks and coastal North Carolina in August and Port Royal in November.

From an intelligence perspective, the work of the Blockade Strategy Board was remarkable in both scope and use of existing information. The fact that the board was able to turn to a ready source of material as the basis for strategic decision making is remarkable. One may question why detailed knowledge of a coastline that was friendly just a few short months before was so remarkable? It must be remembered that an orderly geographic survey of our nation's coastal environment was relatively new in 1861. The coastal region from Virginia to Florida was still wild,

unsettled and isolated, disease-prone, and hostile. It was a place people avoided, unlike today, where it attracts tourist dollars and major development. The systematic geographic survey of the U.S. Coast by the Army and Navy officers between the 1820s and 1850s was one of the many remarkable scientific achievements of the nineteenth century and had immense strategic significance for the war. Although its purpose was ostensibly peaceful and primarily served the commercial shipping industry, the Coast Survey became a major source of information for the military during the war. The bureau was able to provide naval and ground commanders with detailed hydrographic and topographic knowledge of the Southern Coast that otherwise would have had to be painstakingly collected, often in the face of the enemy. That the military could and did tap into this civilian database throughout the war was a significant intelligence victory for the Union.[20]

Intelligence and the Establishment of the Blockade

While the Blockade Board met in the sweltering summer heat of Washington, D.C., the tempo of blockade duty began to develop off the long, low Atlantic Coast. The ebb and flow of blockade duty was punctuated by the first captures of the war. As Union warships began enforcement, intelligence reports began to flow into the Navy Department reporting the onset of Confederate efforts to circumvent the blockade and receive foreign assistance. By the spring of 1862, these developments had slowly solidified into a coherent threat that was reflected in the intelligence extracts sent to the fleet. This gave commanders their first taste of the information

that they would require for the enforcement of the blockade. The quality and level of

detail in the reports varied and often included information that seemed incredible:

> U. S. CONSULATE, *Liverpool, August 3, 1861.*
> SIR: I received information about ten days since that a Mr. Grazebrook, an
> arms broker here, was executing a large order for rifles for the South; that
> they were being packed first in boxes and then in crates to resemble
> earthenware, in a private warehouse taken for the purpose.[21]

> U. S. CONSULATE, *Cardiff, February 17, 1862*
> DEAR SIR: It becomes my duty to inform you that I have just learned
> from good authority that a large Bremen bark, called the *Leibnitz,* Captain
> Schilling, is now loading here with salt, with the intention of running the
> blockade. I know that the bags first brought to her were not considered
> strong enough by the captain, as they might be subjected to much land
> transportation, and that stouter ones were procured. The broker will not
> tell where she is going; the captain says "To the East." [22]

Though somewhat incredulous, all attempts to violate the proclamation were

taken seriously by the Navy Department due to the critical need to legitimize the

blockade in the eyes of the American public and international community. The initial

effort to run the blockade was made by small, shallow-draft sailing vessels or coastal

craft that sought to avoid the large Union ships lying off port in favor of smaller bays or

coastal creeks.[23] A few ships though sailed directly through the blockade at night or in

bad weather. These vessels were usually large, steam, and sail-driven ships with clipper-

like speed and large cargo capacity that made the run from England to the Confederate

States with a hold full of supplies. With names like *Bermuda, Fingal,* or *Nashville* they

immediately attracted the attention of Americans consulate officials and naval officers

who followed the activity of these vessels with keen interest. It was these larger ships that

raised the most concern and directly challenged agility of the naval intelligence system.

An excellent example of this initial threat was the blockade runner *Bermuda*

which caused considerable consternation within the Navy Department and whose

reported action typified the intelligence support the Navy received in the first year of

war. The *Bermuda* was built in England during the summer of 1861 for the

Confederate blockade running firm of Fraser, Trenholm, and Company which owned

and operated the vessel. The *Bermuda* was the firm's first steamer to attempt a run on

the blockade and the activity surrounding the event attracted the attention of the State

Department Consuls:

> CONSULATE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
> *London, August 9, 1861.*
>
> SIR: I this morning received information, which I regard as entirely
> reliable, that the steamers *Victoria, Adelaide,* and *Bermuda* have been
> conditionally purchased by Messrs. Fraser, Trenholm & Co., of Liverpool,
> for parties in Charleston and the South. . . .These boats are propellers, over
> 2,000 tons in burden, and will steam over 10 knots per hour. . . .The
> *Bermuda* is the third boat and is not yet launched, though I think she is
> about ready to be launched. She is the boat to which I have heretofore
> referred, and she is building at Stockton, on the river Tees.[24]

Included in the report came a serious warning from the consulate-general:

> Permit me to suggest the great importance of making the blockade as perfect
> as possible, if it is not already so, for there seem to be indications that officials
> here are seeking and will be glad to find reasons or excuses for declaring the
> blockade insufficient and void.[25]

On August 13, the Vice-consul of Liverpool reported additional information

on *Bermuda*, partially revealing his source of information:

> I have now to inform you that my man followed up the track of the crates,
> etc., from Grazebrook's warehouse; that they went to West Hartlepool . . .
> where they are being shipped, with other packages, bales, boxes, etc., arriving
> from other places, on board the screw steamer *Bermuda*. She must, from
> appearances, have an immense quantity of arms and ammunition on board. . . .
> She is one of the steamers mentioned in my dispatch No 23. as having been
> bought by Fraser, Trenholm and Co. . . . My man saw Mr. Prioleau (the

partner of Fraser & Co. residing here) on board the *Bermuda*. The following is a description of the screw steamer *Bermuda*, of Liverpool, commanded by a Frenchman: Has two masts; brig rigged; lower part of funnel now painted black, upper part red; hull black, with a narrow red stripe around on the molding level with the deck; has six boats, now painted white; no poop; wheelhouse painted white, no figurehead; no bowspirit, is armed with four guns; bottom painted pink up to the waterline.[26]

The last report from Consulate at Leeds, dated August 20, reporting the sailing of

Bermuda, declared for Havana:

I . . . have now to advise you that the steamer *Bermuda* left Hartlepool on Sunday, the 18th instant without obtaining the required certificates form the Spanish consul at Newcastle. . . . There was a person named Ranks, about 31 years of age, from South Carolina, on board as supercargo. She is an iron [hull] screw [propeller], of about 900 tons, rigged as a square-rigged brig, flush deck with rope nettings: has two 12-pounders aft and two small guns forward. The Cargo consists of a large quantity of arms, ammunition of all kinds, and clothing.[27]

After receiving these reports from Seward, Welles sent them forward to Flag-

Officer Stringham, commander of the Atlantic Blockading Squadron. As an

attachment to the first report Welles warned, "The Department expects you to be

particularly vigilant in your lookout for this vessel, and will be chagrined if she is

allowed to enter port."[28]

Welles and the Department were destined to be chagrined. *Bermuda* left

England on August 22, two days after the last report and sailed directly for Savannah,

Georgia where she entered port on September 16. Her master, Eugene L. Tessier -

that "Frenchmen" from consulate extracts, reported seeing no Union ships on station.

Bermuda unloaded over 24, 000 blankets, 50,000 shoes, at least 18 rifled field pieces,

4 seacoast guns, 6,500 Enfield rifles and 20,000 cartridges worth over one million

dollars.[29] She then loaded 2,000 bales of cotton and left Savannah on October 29,

arriving in England several weeks later never having been stopped, challenged or even chased by a Union warship.[30]

The impact of *Bermuda's* voyage was immediate. For her owners, Messrs. Fraser, Trenholm, and Company, they reportedly made a fortune and a name for themselves in the blockade running business and their example induced other speculators to try blockade running.[31] For the Confederacy the ship was heaven sent. The arms and supplies unloaded in Savannah were quickly distributed to Georgian and South Carolina troops. For the Navy, the incident was an embarrassment and the chagrined Welles asked for an immediate explanation.[32] For naval intelligence, it was ironically, something of a success.

Bermuda proved that the system could be responsive and supply relevant intelligence information to the Navy Department and operational fleet. Not only did the Navy possess a comprehensive description of the vessel and cargo at the time of the ship's departure, but a good understanding of her ownership, crew composition, and intentions, all relevant information for the tracking and capture of the vessel as well as legal proof of her guilt had it been captured and sent to prize court.

The voyage did reveal weakness. One weakness was the time factor involved in disseminating information from England to the State and Naval Departments in Washington, D.C., and fleet commanders in the Atlantic. The first report on *Bermuda* was sent on August 9, 1861 from London. Seward's cover letter attached to the report sent to Welles was dated August 24. The report Welles sent to Stringham, had a cover letter dated September 3, almost a full month after the initial report. Records contain no information on the specific time of arrival to Stringham, but probably took two to

three days given existing transmission time.[33] The August 18 report from Albert Davies, consul at Leeds who reported *Bermuda's* departure, did better. It took just sixteen days to reach Seward and was forwarded to Welles on September 5. Gustavus Fox disseminated the report on the September 9, which gave the squadron roughly four days advance warning before the *Bermuda* made land fall on the Southern Coast around August 15. The question then becomes did the fleet get the information in time and did it provide sufficient warning? Would it have made a difference?

It is hard to answer these questions based on available records. The various reports sent to the fleet gave warning of *Bermuda's* attempt to run the blockade but mentioned no specific destination other than Havana, which was a ruse. The reports also did not mention any interim stops or estimated date of arrival on the East Coast. Her size and draft precluded any use of one of the many shallow, isolated spots along the Southern Coast not being observed. This left only the major ports of Charleston, Savannah, and Wilmington on the Atlantic or one of the deep water ports on the Gulf Coast. All of these ports were covered, but just barely. Atlantic Blockading Squadron records show that the squadron had twenty-two ships assigned during the time-frame when *Bermuda* made her inbound run, but only nine on blockade duty off the Atlantic Coast.[34] The squadron had just completed a highly successful operation that captured the outer-banks of North Carolina in August. It was in the process of replenishment, while Stringham, the squadron's commander, was embroiled in an argument with the Department over his previous behavior and plans to divide his squadron; action that later caused him to resign.

There was but one ship assigned to the blockade off Savannah, the USS *Savannah*, which had just arrived on station as a replacement for USS *St Lawrence*. Stringham claimed that *Savannah* departed Hampton Roads on the August 17, in routine traffic, the day after *Bermuda's* arrival[35] but in his initial report on the violation states that weather prevented *Savannah's* interception of the runner. "It seems that a heavy gale of wind occurred the day before, which drove the blockading vessel, away from her station, and this event was availed of by the steamer to effect her entrance."[36] He then defended himself and his command by attacking the meager number of ships available for blockade duty using a argument that later commanders often repeated. "In my judgment less than four active steamers can not effectually blockade that place, and the moment it is in the power of the Department to send them to me I shall dispatch them thither."[37]

Bermuda is but one of many examples to draw lessons from in the first year of the War, and its hardly fair to criticize the service based on this single, historical example. *Bermuda's* voyage though is quite useful as an introduction to intelligence due to the successes and failures that went into the tracking of the vessel. All elements of the intelligence system were played out in the chase but one, and that was the system of tactical intelligence used by ships on blockade. Tactical intelligence did not come into play for the simple reason that there was but one ship on station and was apparently no where near the scene of action. The problems associated with the establishment of the blockade were not directly associated with intelligence, though it too needed improvement. The Navy lacked ships and men to enforce the blockade during the early stages of the war regardless of the information available to prevent

violation attempts. It is then for us to decide if the intelligence system improved

during the course of the war and if so what part intelligence played in the

improvements of the blockade.

The run of the *Bermuda* provided one interesting intelligence side note that

highlighted the civil-military relationship of intelligence. Welles apparently learned

of the violation before Stringham and from a civilian, Mr. Jeremiah Olney,

Postmaster of Thompson, Connecticut. Mr. Onley wrote the Navy Secretary after he

learned of *Bermuda's* success from an acquaintance of his that had just returned from

a trip to Savannah:

> THOMPSON, *CONN., September 30, 1861.*
> From information perfectly reliable in my possession, a new screw steamer,
> *Bermuda,* ironclad, from Liverpool, about 1,500 tons, Peck, master, arrived at
> Savannah September 16, 1861. Her cargo, 18 rifle cannon, 32-pounder, 42-
> pounder, and two 168-pound(er) Lancaster guns, with all necessary carriages
> and equipments, powder, shot, etc., for action, 6,500 Enfield guns, some
> 200,000 or 300,000 cartridges for these guns, 60,000 pair army shoes, 20,000
> blankets, 180 barrels gunpowder, large quantity of morphine and quinine, and
> other medical stores, together with many other articles of more than money
> value to the rebel Army. Her cargo in Liverpool cost $1,000,000. . . . She was
> twenty-nine days on passage from Liverpool and touched at Falmouth and
> Madeira for coal. Two more steam ironclad frigates are expected on the coast
> by the 15th October. . . . My informant had this from the mate of the vessel by
> word of mouth. He has just arrived from the South to his home from a year's
> sojourn on the Georgia Coast, and knows something of its defenses. Much
> more information is doubtless in his possession.[38]

A fairly well-informed individual, Welles forwarded Olney's letter to Stingham

without comment on October 2. It arrived aboard Stingham's flagship on October 4,

the same day he heard of the incident from his commanders down south.[39]

State Department Consular Intelligence

Bermuda's voyage also highlighted the role of the State Department Consular intelligence and the Navy's dependence on information derived from this source. Both the Navy and State Department understood the criticality of consular reporting, but surprisingly it was Seward, not Welles, who took the lead in nurturing this valuable source of information. In 1856, the State Department operated almost 300 consular posts that had varying degrees of responsibility when it came to reporting intelligence. The State Department immediately recognized the intelligence potential of overseas diplomats when it came to spying on Confederate activities abroad. Soon after Fort Sumter "confidential instruction were being prepared and forwarded to [consuls] . . .charging them with the responsibility for collecting naval, political, and economic intelligence about insurgent plans and movements."[40] By August 1862, Secretary Seward received presidential authority that created new consulates specifically for the collection of naval intelligence. In effect, Seward and the State Department created and operated a worldwide ocean surveillance network that supported naval operations in the collection and dissemination of intelligence on Confederate naval activity.

Consuls were uniquely suited for this role. Cloaked in diplomatic legitimacy, they operated as if behind enemy lines within the neutral ports of the British Empire, which sanctioned, and actively supported blockade running. Consuls in Britain and Europe maintained surveillance on ports and shipyards where blockade runners were built or reconstructed for their intended service and shadowed the transactions of Confederate and English agents involved in blocked running. The State Department

maintained consulate offices in Bermuda, Nassau, Halifax, and Havana throughout the war, watching the activities of blockade runners from within their very lair. There are few examples in history such as this where an intelligence agency had such direct and continuous access to an enemy force for the purpose of collecting intelligence.

Consular intelligence had problems. Consuls and their subordinates in England and elsewhere were subject to ridicule, harassment, and occasionally violence while carrying out their assigned duties, particularly in areas where the South had broad public support, such as Nassau and Bermuda. Consular officials often had little or no training in naval operations or intelligence. They often misidentified ships or gave wrong information, such as calling a ship an ironclad verses iron hulled. This effected both the value and content of their information and caused some underlying resentment within the naval circles, especially when consuls added editorial comments on the ineffectiveness of the blockade or offered unsolicited advice on how to make it better. Sea-going officers had their faults as well, when it came interpreting intelligence from this source. They often misunderstood the value or relevancy of the information or the conditions in which consuls had to operate. This led to some disagreements, particularly at higher level, and not a few missed opportunities to increase the overall effectiveness of the blockade, as we shall see. Still the consuls were a unique and valuable source of intelligence and a critical asset in the battle against the Confederacy.

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The Blockade by April 1862

From the cruise of *Bermuda* in September 1861 to April 1862, the owners or

firms that operated blockade runners made continued attempts to violate the blockade.

Most were successful. During the calendar year of 1861, a total of 1,856 attempts

were made to run through the Atlantic blockade. Of these, 1801 were successful, an

astounding 97 percent success rate. Of these vessels, the Navy caught forty sailing

ships, but captured no steamers.[41] While witnessing these attempts, the Navy

Department continued to stress the need for increased vigilance on the blockade as

the number of warships on-station increased. Nevertheless, the blockade competed for

scare shipping resources with coastal and power-projection operations. The result of

these operations resulted in the capture of many of the South's Atlantic ports and

would continue while the Navy had Army support. Ships and men of the South

Atlantic Blockading Squadron were involved in the capture of Port Royal, the closing

of Savannah and the occupation of most of the key coastal facilities along the Georgia

and Florida Coast. Flag Officer Goldsborough and the North Atlantic blockading

squadron completed Stringham's conquest of coastal North Carolina and were

supporting McClellans' Peninsula campaign and the threat posed by the Confederate

Ironclad CSS *Virginia* in Hampton Roads.

This appeared to be sound policy. All that remained open to blockade running

was Charleston and Wilmington, both too heavily defended to be captured without a

significant commitment of land forces, something the Army wasn't prepared to do. As

far as they were concerned, both Du Pont and Goldsburough felt they were getting the

upper hand. "The *Bermuda* and the *Fingal* are the only foreign steamers that have

evaded the vigilance of the squadron," Du Pont wrote Welles in a letter on the

efficiency of the blockade in April 1862,

> As the Department is aware, the former is at present at Bermuda, not daring to
> run the hazard again, and the later had never made her escape from the
> Savannah River. During the progress of this expedition, I had abundant
> evidence of the stringency of the blockade. . . . Only one small vessel (and
> that was captured) had entered the harbor of Fernandina for ninety days prior
> to our taking possession. . . . No blockade in the history of the world has ever
> been more effective, particularly when the extent and character of our coast in
> all it features are considered.[42]

Yet, Yankee intelligence operatives as well as the rebel and foreign press disagreed.

They reported the coast to be open and free from obstruction. Du Pont took exception,

> Much has been said in the papers at home and abroad of the utter insufficiency
> of the blockade, and a too ready credence given by our public functionaries
> and our merchants to the representations of parties interested in making out a
> case against the Government.[43]

He did note though,

> With a rare exception none but very small craft and two or three rebel
> steamers, with the assistance of local pilots of long experience, concerted
> signals in rowboats and on the shore, and mostly under the protection of the
> night or dense fogs, have been successful.[44]

Du Pont and the Navy could not ignore the growing number of ships reported

by the intelligence service of being involved in blockade running activity. By his own

admission, Du Pont's list of suspect vessels amounted to 160.[45] The list had grown

since the War began and included a new type of ship specifically designed to run the

blockade from the Bahamas to Charleston or Wilmington. The Navy began to get an

inkling of the change in threat as Du Pont noted it in his letter,

> The steamers *Gladiator, Talisman, Sidney Hall, Tage, Cambridge,
> Imperatrice, Economist, Southwick, Herald, Bahama, Minna, Sedgwick,* and
> others which have left the friendly shores of Britain, said to be loaded with
> arms and munitions of war of all kinds for the rebels, seek shelter in the so
> called neutral colonies off our coast, and, not venturing to approach the

blockaded ports, transship their cargoes into small vessels of the lightest draft, provided in a great measure by the merchants of these same neutral colonies, who seem ever ready to assist in any attempt to embarrass the Government of the United States.[46]

The business of blockade running was changing. Firms had stopped using deep draft-oceangoing vessels of the type represented by *Bermuda* and instead concentrated on purchasing small, swift coastal steamers that operated from bases on the periphery of the Confederacy. This change in business tactics constituted a whole new threat to the blockade that challenged the Navy over the next two years. How the Navy met this challenge will be the focus of discussion in the next chapter.

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[1]ORN 12:772.

[2]ORN 4:155.

[3]Bern Anderson, *By Sea and by River, The Naval History of the Civil War* (New York: Da Capo Paperback Press, 1962), 26-29.

[4]ORN 12:195-206.

[5]ORN 4:155.

[6]Stephen Wise, introduction to *Running the Blockade*, by Thomas Taylor, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), ix.

[7]Anderson, 26-29.

[8]Ibid. 26.

[9]Edwards, 18.

[10]ORN 5:783.

[11]Donald Canney, *The Old Steam* Navy, *Vol 1 Frigates, Sloops and Gunboats, 1815-1885* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 91 and 109.

[12]Edward Merrifield, "The Sea Board War, A History of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, 1861-1865." (Diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1975), 5. Merrifield quotes the number of converted merchantmen in naval service as 180 ships in 1862.

[13]Du Pont, 1:71.

[14]James Merrill, *Du Pont,The Making of an Admiral* (New York: Dodd, Meade and Co. 1986), 182-198. Du Pont commanded USS *Cyane* during the Mexican war while operating in the U.S. Pacific Squadron. During several long periods, *Cyane* blockaded various Mexican ports, an arduous but mundane duty. He later boasted, "In the Mexican War I probably blockaded more than any one officer in the Navy" (Du Pont 1:73).

[15]Anderson, 39.

[16]Ibid. 38.

[17]Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 230-232. According Wise in Appendix 4, the South owned or operated ten ocean-going steamers and just twenty-one coastal steamers. Although several would enter blockade running, taken as a whole they posed little threat to the Navy at the start of the war.

[18]ORN 12:195-206.

[19]Anderson, 40-41.

[20]Proffessor Bache and the coast survey not only provided the Blockade Strategy Board with detailed information on the Confederate coast, but supported operations in the field as well. Bache assigned civilian assistants to the blockading squadrons to act as assistants and aid commanders during operational planning sessions, conducting local hydrographic surveys, replacing aids to navigation and acted as bureau contacts for Coast survey products.

[21]ORN 6:100.

[22]ORN 7:90.

[23]Price, 222; and "Ships that tested the Blockade of the Georgia and East Florida Ports, 1861-1865," *The American Neptune Magazine*, 15, no.2 (April 1955): 125. Of the 368 vessels noted in these two articles in use against the blockade in 1861, 331 were sailing ships while only 37 were steam powered.

[24]ORN, 6:164-165.

[25] ORN 6:164-165.

[26] ORN 6:146.

[27] ORN 6:190-191.

[28] ORN 6:146.

[29] Wise, 51; and Merrifield, 9.

[30] Wise, 51.

[31] ORN 6:510. Thomas Dudley, the U.S. Consul in Liverpool wrote of the Bermuda's success, "I have reported to me on good authority a statement made by Mr. Prioleau [Confederate agent in England] that he had made a fortune by the *Bermuda* venture and should send her again." The Bermuda, in fact, was used only once.

[32] ORN 6:286.

[33] ORN 6:146, 164-165, 190-191.

[34] ORN 6:236. In Stingham's report on the distribution of squadron ships, September 19, he lists nine ships on blockade duty at various location along the Atlantic coast; USS *Savannah* off Savannah, *Wabash* and *Vandalia* off Charleston, *Gemsbok* and *Young Rover* off Wilmington, *Cambridge* and *Albatross* off Beaufort and *Susquehanna* and *Pawnee* off and inside Hatteras.

[35] ORN 6:226.

[36] ORN 6:286.

[37] ORN 6:286.

[38] ORN 6:279, 300.

[39] ORN 6:279, 286, 287 and 300.

[40] Edwards, 8. Most of the background information on the consular service was taken from this source unless other wise noted.

[41] Price, Carolina Ports, 222; and Georgia and East Florida Ports, 125.

[42] ORN 12:772.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

INTELLIGENCE AND THE BLOCKADE (1862-1863)

There seems to be little doubt that most of these vessels will endeavor to run the blockade . . . the Department therefore enjoins unremitting vigilance.[1]

Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles

During the evening hours of June 22, 1862 the ships on blockade duty off Charleston took up their nightly positions just outside range of the forts protecting the harbor. All was quite on watch until early morning when two blockade runners attempted to make port. The first runner named *Hero*, remained undetected until daylight revealed her position hard aground near Fort Moultrie, an apparent victim of poor navigation. The second runner was the notorious *Nashville*.

Like, *Bermuda*, *Nashville* was a large, fast, oceangoing steamer of the type first used in blockade running and a well-known culprit within the U.S. Navy. Reports of *Nashville's* presence at Nassau had been circulating through the fleet since April and noted among other things her sale to new owners and a name change to *Thomas L. Wragg*. Du Pont himself had specifically mentioned this vessel in his orders for increased vigilance.[2] Some time after 2:00 am in the morning of the June 23, watch standers on Union ships spotted *Nashville's* latest blockade running attempt and sounded the alarm. Finding it impossible to enter, *Nashville's* captain turned the ship back out to sea. It was closely followed by the USS *Keystone State*, *Flag*, and *James Adge* in chase The latter two soon gave up, but the *Keystone State* continued the pursuit for an entire day. *Keystone's* skipper, Captain Leroy, used every possible trick to increase the speed of his ship and by evening, had rapidly gained on *Nashville*. But as darkness fell and in thick rain squalls, he lost the rebel and gave up the pursuit.[3]

The chase of the Nashville had covered almost 800 miles and ended for all practical purposes, the use of large ocean-going vessels for blockade running. Although *Nashville* survived the chase with *Keystone State* and made one more successful attempt to run the blockade, her career was over. Ships like *Nashville* and *Bermuda* were simply too large and expensive to operate successfully. Smaller, steam-driven ships like the ill-fated *Hero, Nashville's* consort on the June 23, had become the ship of choice for blockade running, a distinction that would remain for the rest of the war. Known collectively as "Clyde Steamers," they were exceedingly capable vessels for this venture. Small, swift and difficult to detect, they were the nemesis of the Navy on blockade duty and a primary subject for intelligence collection in the war with the South.

This chapter will discuss the intelligence effort against the Clyde Steamer and explain how blockade commanders used information to help combat this threat during the middle years of the war. It will also examine intelligence successes and failures on the blockade and see how these effected the Union's ability to enforce the blockade. Blockade running had undergone a significant transformation since the start of the war and the business of blockade running had become a specialized art. To combat swift blockade runners, the Navy required specific, detailed information on the enemy so that it could develop effective counter-measures and tactics. Intelligence played an essential role in this effort and its successes and failures helped decide the outcome of the blockade for the remainder of the war.

<u>The Clyde Steamer Threat</u>

Secretary Welles anticipated the rise of a serious threat to Lincoln's blockade policy when it was first proclaimed in April 1861. In a letter to the President he wrote,

> To effectively blockade our extensive coast so that there shall be no ingress or egress by the insurgents or by foreigners, is next to an impossibility. . . . We shall by blockade invite a common union on the part of the whole world, certainly the whole commercial world, with the insurgents, and of common enmity toward ourselves.[4]

Though Welle's never speculated on how this threat would manifest itself, he was certainly correct about the outcome. The unity of the commercial world had occurred with the marriage of Confederate and British political and commercial interests during the first two years of the war. The tremendous profits reaped by John Fraser and Company in their operations of *Bermuda* and other Confederate blockade runners had initiated a stampede of investors that fueled the Confederate war effort. "All sorts of people - women, Yankees, and especially Englishmen, many of whom were either naval officers 'on leave' or deserters from Her Majesty's North Atlantic squadron tried their hands at the trade."[5] A host of Consortiums quickly purchased ships and put them in operation. War goods and civilian merchandise bought in Europe and run through the blockade sold for enormous profits in the South. Vessels returning from Dixie were loaded with cotton, which in turn, sold for sensational prices in England. Total profits could be enormous, sometimes reaching a phenomenal return of 700 percent.[6]

Upon failure of the large Trans-Atlantic steamers, operating firms turned to smaller vessels used in British coastal trade. These ships "combined long iron hulls, narrow beams, powerful engines, and light drafts for tremendous speeds."[7] Vessels of this type were originally built on the River Clyde in Scotland and became the British answer

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to U.S. Clipper ships before the war. They were built with iron hulls because of a shortage of suitable naval timber in England. These ships had masts, rigging, and sails and steam propulsion was a secondary power system because of limited coal bunker space. This practice reduced the need for recoaling while running the blockade. With a small silhouette and daring crews, they could easily out-run most Union warships and enter waters where Yankee ships dared not go. They also had enough cargo carrying capacity to make a profit on the first voyage, even if caught on a subsequent attempt. The first business to recognize the utility of these vessels was Fraser, Trenholm, and Company. Although ships were purchased throughout England, this class of vessel became known collectively as Clyde Steamers after the area and river in Scotland where many were built.

Bought off the shelf or purpose built, they quickly developed a reputation for success because of their speed and cargo capacity. They were also quite adaptable. Over the course of the war, these ships acquired many unique features that enhanced performance and survivability. Modifications included telescoping steam pipes and masts; turtle-shell bow covers for the protection of deck cargo and use of fog-gray or off-white paint scheme that acted as camouflage. With well-paid, handpicked crews and a support infrastructure that spared no-expense, they were the maritime marvel of the age and a significant threat to the Union. Many people who backed these vessels were the same brass-fisted capitalists that prevailed in the nineteenth century. As long as profits remained high and financial backers received a return on investment, blockade running continued, regardless of the consequences.[8]

The first inkling of the Clyde Steamer threat came from Consulate officials

overseas.

> From Consul at Liverpool, April 30, 1862:
> In dispatch of April 24, I enclosed a slip from one of Liverpool papers in
> reference to the steamers *Hero* and *Modern Greece*. The steamer *Hero* arrived
> at Queenstown on 26th, instant . . . and sailed yesterday for Nassau. There is
> no doubt about her destination. She will make for Charleston.[9]

> From Consul at London, May 9, 1862:
> I think there is no doubt but that many steamers have been purchased by the
> Confederates within the last two months. Many, or rather several, of them are
> small, say from 175 to 400 tons net. These are very fast and seem designed for
> running into our ports and thus keeping up a trade with Nassau.[10]

> From Secretary Welles, June 7, 1862:
> I transmit herewith extracts . . . from dispatches of the consul at Liverpool . . .
> in relation to the *Eliza Bonsall, Stanley, Despatch, Lilla, Astoria, Arnold
> Boninger, Malacca, Matilda, Memphis, Julia Usher, Adela, Roscoe,* and
> *Rosalind;* extract from dispatch of the consul at Glasgow . . . relative to the
> *Columbia, Leopard,* and *Adela,* and extract from dispatch of the consul at
> London, . . . in relation to the *Melita* and *Merrimac.* There seems to be but
> little doubt that most of these vessels will endeavor to run the blockade, or
> that their cargoes will be transferred to others at Nassau that will attempt it.
> The Department therefore enjoins unremitting vigilance in the blockade of the
> coast under your command.[11]

Sightings of Clyde Steamers operating against the blockade soon replaced these

warnings and by summer the Clyde Steamer was the most prevalent vessel in use

running the blockade. They left the Navy confounded. Admiral Du Pont reported to

Welles in August:

> This evening Captain Hazard came from Charleston and I am fairly oppressed
> by what he tells me of the insufficiency of the blockade. While he bears
> testimony . . . to the ceaseless vigilance of both officers and men, he admits
> that the violations have been frequent, and, according to the best accounts,
> there are at this moment no less than eight steamers painted lead color in the
> harbor of Charleston. Though my force has been kept up to twelve vessels. . . .
> I have been very apprehensive that some vessels would get in . . . but I was
> not prepared for such a result. I think it probable that some two million
> sterling of arms and merchandise have gone in the last ten days.[12]

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The Blockade (1862-1863)

The focus of blockade during the first year of war had been off Charleston since most blockade runners used this city as their primary port of entry on the Atlantic. Events began to change this pattern as Union forces commenced the long campaign to capture Charleston from the sea. The Navy had given Du Pont and the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron priority of effort in ships, supplies and men, including the use of almost all Ironclad monitors. This forced many blockade runners to look for alternate ports of entry and most turned to Wilmington, North Carolina. Heavily defended and easily accessible through the twin mouths of the Cape Fear river, Wilmington not only offered an excellent alternate port for entry, but was closer to Richmond and battlefields in Virginia than Charleston. It was also closer in proximity to both Nassau and Bermuda, which had already become the primary operating bases for blockade runners.

Coincidental in this shift towards Wilmington was the replacement of Flag Officer Goldsburough with Rear Admiral S. P. Lee as the commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron in September 1862, whose area of operations included Wilmington. Welles chose Lee over many senior captains then serving in the Navy. With a solid, if undistinguished career, Welles decision to pick Lee was a reflection on Lee's competency as a naval commander and honesty as an individual. [13] He brought a thorough, dedicated and scientific mind to the problem of blockade and was an excellent commander.

Known to his subordinate commanders as "Old Triplicate" because of his penchant for paper work, he was unrelenting in his quest to establish an effective blockade. Lee was neither flamboyant nor outwardly aggressive which caused complaint later in his tenure, but his years on the coast survey gave him instant insight into the tactical problems of blockade. He drove his subordinates hard, yet supported them up the chain of command. He was something of a perfectionist and neither delegated nor released responsibility easily to his subordinates. Lee also insisted on authoring or reviewing all squadron paperwork, which was enormous and bogged down the detailed flow of information and routine business of war. His attention to detail also made him an excellent intelligence officer. His one strong suit was his continuous reappraisal of the operational and tactical situation, as new information became available.

Upon assumption of command, Lee immediately began a long, seemingly endless correspondence with Welles requesting additional support for the blockade off Wilmington. The squadron needed more ships, more men, more coal, more of everything and he let Welles and Fox know it. His harping became an irritant to the Department, but Lee understood the problem off Wilmington. He needed a efficient coastal surveillance network if he was going to stop violators and to accomplish this mission, he need ships -- lots of them, and solid intelligence on the enemy.

"The blockade off Wilmington is the blockade of two widely separated entrances, each requiring as much force as Charleston did, if not more."[14] Cape Fear and the frying pan shoals separated the twin mouths of the Cape Fear and divided the

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blockade by almost fifty miles. When Lee took over command the squadron had just eight vessels off Wilmington to cover these two widely separated areas.[15]

Goldsburough had divided the blockade into two separate divisions, one for each mouth. At this time the standard division tactic was to keep individual ships anchored in a single line off port approximately five miles from the mouth of the river bar. After the escape of blockade runner Kate, Lee ordered a change in operations. "The steamers should between evening and morning twilight, shift their berths and maintain positions just as near the bar as is safe and practicable." He also made these changes with an eye towards counter targeting. "With the Steamers both day and night in distant and permanent positions in the offing, not only may steamers and other vessels run or drift out by night, but the positions of the blockaders may be laid down and sent aboard for guidance of vessels to run or drift in by," which was in fact, what the Confederates were doing. [16]

Confederate Blockade Running Tactics

For almost a year, the rebels had watched Union attempts to blockade the coast. They also expended considerable effort running ships though the blockade and with each passing attempt, they learned. By the time Lee took over command of the blockade at Wilmington, Confederate and English operators had developed tactics that allowed them to succeed. They quickly found that the best means to circumvent the blockade was to take advantage of the qualities Clyde Steamers provided -- stealth, speed, and surprise.

After making thorough preparations at Nassau or Bermuda, a blockade runner would leave port for Wilmington, timing their arrival on the East Coast to coincide with nightfall. During the first two days of the three-day run, ships were usually unmolested. The Union Navy chose to guard the entrances off each port, like cats waiting around a mouse hole, rather than cruising for them on the high seas. On the last day, after having attained a good fix, a runner would make landfall around dusk approximately fifteen and twenty miles north or south of their intended port. Then, as darkness fell, they began their run. "We steamed cautiously on until nightfall," wrote Thomas Taylor, supercargo of the runner Banshee, "No lights were allowed -- not even a cigar. . . . With everything thus in readiness, we steamed on in silence except for the stroke of the engines and the beat of the paddle-floats . . . the captain, the pilot and I, were straining our eyes into the darkness." [17]

Blockade runners navigated down the coast by compass and soundings, the depth of water taken every so often. This allowed the pilot to guide the ship into port by "feel" and experience. Pilots were responsible to owners and ship captains for the safe navigation of the vessel into and out of port. They were extremely important individuals since they were the acknowledged experts on local weather and hydrographic conditions of the blockaded area. They tried to keep the ship well inshore, in shallow water near the surf line where deep-draft Union ships could not operate. When a warship was sighted, slight course and speed changes guided them around or though the fleet, so that by morning, the runner was safely in port. If detected, they went full steam ahead directly to port, hoping that darkness and confusion protected them from the gunfire of Union warships. In memoirs and

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accounts of blockade running, individual commanders often stated that they repeatedly sailed past warships at night without being seen, sometimes as close as several hundred yards. Many a chagrined Yankee skipper, having seen nothing all night, found in the morning a rebel steamer in port under the guns of the coastal forts wondering how they got in.[18]

When exiting a blockaded port, blockade runners used the same conditions in their attempt to make open sea. Captains would station their ships just inside port a day or two before the run, usually behind a large land feature or promontory that hid their presence from Union observers. Coastal observers in Southern forts provided information on the strength and disposition of the blockading fleet. Armed with this knowledge, they planned and made their escape. Some commanders followed the same track along the coast used to enter port, while others made a dash directly through the fleet. Either way, the objective was to get to sea beyond sight of the blockading fleet by daylight without being detected. Once at sea, they could usually outrun or outsmart their larger, slower, uniformed advisories if detected. These tactics were well established by the summer of 1862 and did not appreciably change during the course of the war.

Tracking the Clyde Steamer Threat

At the beginning of the war, most Union officers felt that an increase in numbers of ships would effectively stave off attempts at blockade running. However, as the number of ships on station increased without a corresponding increase in captures or sinking, blockade commanders began to take a hard look at the threat and

develop the means by which the Navy might stop blockade running. The Navy used all sources analysis and a wide variety of assets to track Clyde Steamers. Sources included consular reports disseminated as intelligence extracts, debriefs of individuals captured or detained by blockading forces, and through direct observation and surveillance.

These intelligence sources provided blockade commanders with an understanding of the tactics, techniques, and procedures blockade runners used to circumvent Union efforts at interdiction and allowed them the information they needed to modify the disposition of the vessels on station. Most of these changes can be directly attributed to an increased understanding of the tactics and patterns employed by blockade runners and intelligence played a vital role in helping commanders understand the enemy. For example, through simple pattern analysis, commanders quickly realized that blockade running was tied to the phases of the moon. As the moon entered a new phase of almost total darkness, activity increased. Subsequently, there was a decrease in activity around the time of a full or partial moon. This was critical in maintaining the blockade and dedicating effort to periods when ships were needed the most.

<u>Consular Intelligence and Blockade</u>

As was mentioned in previously, the State Department's diplomatic and consular service were major contributors of intelligence to the Navy and a primary source of information on blockade running activity, particularly from overseas. American consuls and diplomats used a variety of methods and sources to obtain

information including direct observation, open source reporting, the use of

intermediaries or paid informants, and spying. They were especially adept at

providing information on new ship construction, detailing the ownership and history

of a vessel and tracking the movement of vessels into and out of ports within their

jurisdiction. Admiral Du Pont commented indirectly on the value of Consular

reporting when he stated after the capture of the runner Princess Royal, "Through the

letters from the State Department transmitting their correspondence from consular

agents, etc., we had traced the Princess Royal from the Thames to Newfoundland and

then to Halifax. She had, we were aware, some things onboard of the utmost value to

the rebels."[19]

There were problems with diplomatic reporting however. Most State

Department employees were neither professional intelligence officers nor experts on

naval matters, though this was not always the case. More importantly, there were no

standards for reporting, no standing collection requirement list or official guidance.

Consuls reported information they believed to be relevant at the time, place and

circumstance and could confuse legitimate maritime business with suspect activity.

Their information could be of prime importance to the Navy or of little use: extremely

accurate, misleading, or just dead wrong. However, they were often the only Yankees

who had access to areas where relevant information could be obtained because of

their diplomatic credentials.

The consulate services paid a price for the support they gave to the Navy,

sometimes quite literally. Consulate intelligence activities consumed a great deal of

time and money and the added cost of these operations was usually paid for by the

consuls themselves, straight from their own salaries or personal funds. For example, Consul Hawley in the Bahamas, hired native wreckers (those individuals who made money from the salvage of wrecked or sunken ships) to deliver messages to the Union Navy in an attempt to expedite the delivery of important intelligence. The State Department and U.S. Treasury made no provisions for this type of expense and refused to pay the additional cost. When approached by Seward, Welles refused to pay such costs because of Navy budgetary constraints, even though Hawley's work directly benefited the service and nation. Hawley used Consulate funds to pay for the service even though he had no means to recover the costs. [20]

Consulate officials also paid a personal price while working and living in areas where the Southern cause was actively supported. Daily taunting, harassment, and restrictions were common place. It was extremely difficult for Northerners to work under these conditions while observing the daily success of the Confederacy in blockade running without seeing the result of their effort and sacrifice. The war caused friction on many fronts and personnel within both Departments undoubtedly felt frustration over the lack of success in stopping blockade running. Still, consulate intelligence remained a primary source for tracking blockade and on the whole were truly professional individuals who did their best to provide relevant information to the government.

HUMINT and Blockade

The Union Navy obtained a great deal of HUMINT through the capture and confiscation of individuals, their vessels, and their property. One of the more

important examples of this type of intelligence came early in the war, from an individual interviewed by Admiral Du Pont and his staff. His name was Mr. John Martin Lussen, a French-borne adventurer of the type found throughout the nineteenth century. Something of a naval officer gone mercenary, Mr. Lussen entered the blockade running business in 1861 making several runs through the blockade in *Nashville* and *Kate* before being captured in the schooner *Louisa*, on August 25, 1862. After his capture, he talked with his captors who, realizing the importance of the man, immediately forwarded him to Du Pont. Du Pont was so impressed during conversations with this man that he mentioned him several times to the Department.[21]

Lussen provided a great deal of in-depth information about blockade running operations. Not only did he discuss his voyages and capture in detail, but talked openly and at great length on such topics as the business and motives behind blockade running, the routes and tactics used by blockade runners and how they exploited the local hydrographic conditions off Charleston. He also divulged a great deal of information on Confederate defenses around Charleston and on the progress of the Southern commerce raiding program. He was evidently well traveled, well connected and unencumbered with guilt. Although Du Pont and his staff suspected his motives and properly cross-checked information, they were suitable impressed. Du Pont stated that "I knew more about this coast and my business after he got up to retire" for bed.[22]

It is important to remember that intelligence obtained through capture not only had value to the fleet but was used in prize court to determine guilt. Individuals who talked appeared to have been motivated by self-interest or bravado, while those that remained silent did so out of pride or patriotism or to avoid self-incrimination.

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Information was also obtained through the capture of individual and official correspondence, such as logbooks, letters, and cargo manifests. Personnel aboard a captured runner would often destroy or throw overboard important papers or incriminating evidence, while official personnel almost always made an effort to escape by small boat when captured. Confederate pilots and ship captains especially loathed capture.

Union officers and sailors went to great lengths to detain personnel and preserve information if they thought that it would benefit them in court and prize money. To them, the intelligence value of any information obtained in capture was often of secondary importance to the requirement to obtain information that would lead a court to condom a ship as a legal prize. Admiral Charles Post relates a failed attempt at debriefing the master of a captured ship for this purpose when he was captain's clerk on the USS *Florida*.

> Last night we had the skipper of the *Calypso* in the cabin to dine and after dinner wasted a bottle of our best port on him, hoping to get him to talking and making admissions which would be valuable before the prize court. We were not very successful with the old fox. He took his grog like an old stager.[23]

Problems with Tactical Intelligence

Although consular reporting and HUMINT provided a great deal of background information on blockade running and queued commanders to possible violation attempts, the single greatest source of intelligence was gleaned through direct observation of blockade running activity. The nightly battle between hunter and hunted taught both sides lessons about each other and allowed commanders the means to assess whether their tactics and methods were successful. The Navy suffered under

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these circumstances because the service had a great deal of trouble tracking blockade runners in the tactical arena. The problem was twofold. First, it was extremely difficult to detect and track runners at night or in bad weather. Second, the Navy was never able to effectively correlate information provided by outside sources to the tracks of individual blockade runners attempting to pass through the Union lines. To be truly potent, intelligence had to supply information on a tactical level that directly contributed to the capture or destruction of individual ships. This had yet to happen with any frequency during the first three years of the war.

There were many problems stemming from this fact. First, the Navy had a continual problem with timeliness of information. Information simply did not travel fast enough and in a usable format to be of use in tracking individual ships across the western Atlantic. As noted in the chase of the *Bermuda* in the previous chapter, the timeliness of information from sources overseas hindered the Navy's ability to track that ship in its attempt to run the blockade. This problem became even more acute with the advent of Clyde Steamers operating from bases on the periphery of the South. They had significantly less distance to travel than intelligence warnings originating from Nassau, Bermuda, Havana, or Halifax. It took three or four days for a runner to reach port from the Bahamas or Bermuda (decreasing available warning time). However, it took as long as a month for a message to travel to the United States and get disseminated to the fleet.

The reason consular information was not directly disseminated to the fleet, nor followed the same route as blockade runner traveled to the American East Coast. Information instead, had to travel in a circuitous route before it ended up as extracted

information. For instance, consular correspondence originating from Nassau had to travel first to Havana and then Key West, before it found its way to fleet commanders. This round-about passage was due to the isolation of the Bahamas in terms of the availability of U.S. and foreign mail steamers operating to or from Nassau and the restrictions placed on Consular movements by British colonial officials in Nassau.[24] This considerably delayed the flow of information to the fleet and effected its usefulness to the Navy in countering reported violation attempts.

The Navy also had trouble identifying individual blockade runners unless they were captured or destroyed (in modern parlance: recognition). This problem should not be a surprise given the circumstances surrounding the blockade. The Union blockade was fought primarily at night or in bad weather. It was extremely difficult for Union sailors to identify specific ships under poor visual conditions. Darkness, rain, spray, fog, and gunfire hid specific details of a ship providing little chance for the crew to note individual or national characteristics. In the age of sail, the approach of a ship took minuets if not hours allowing ample time for recognition. On blockade, however, Confederate runners were so low and fast that individual ship sightings lasted only a few minutes before the ship disappeared into the gloom.

The career and life expectancy of a blockade runner also influenced recognition. Clyde Steamers averaged three-to-four runs through the blockade before they were captured, destroyed, or sold. This did not give the Navy much of a chance to build a detailed record of the ship and crew. Vessels were bought and sold quite frequently and altered in appearance or configuration. Any description of a vessel provided by an overseas agent or included in a after-action report was, by all

probability, out of date by the time the ship was spotted again. To illustrate this point,

three examples are provided:

Commander Almy, captain of the USS *Connecticut* in his report of the

destruction of the runner *Phantom* off Cape Fear:

> The Phantom never at any time hoisted a flag and none was found aboard, which induced me to think that she belonged to the Confederates. The names of this steamer and the *Juno* [another ship present during the chase] are upon the printed list of suspect vessels furnished by the Department.[25]

Captain Case's remarked in his report on the escape of three runners off New Inlet on

May 13, 1863:

> One paddle-wheel steamer was long and low with two pipes not far apart and a short light mast forward and abaft them; she appeared to be painted white. I think she is the *Cornubia*.[26]

Finally, Acting Master J. D. Warren, commanding officer of the USS *Daylight*

provided this statement in a report of an escaped steamer on February 16, 1863:

> On the evening of the 15th instant (weather foggy), . . . whilst standing toward Fort Fisher, we discovered a steamer running for the river channel from the south. . . . I was near enough for a good view of her. . . . She was a long, low rakish side-wheel steamer, with two funnels and two masts, with yards on the foremast, and on examination of your extracts from Liverpool and Glasgow, she strongly resembles the *Iona, Pearl, Lloyds* and *Neptune*.[27]

All three statements provide examples on how difficult it was to identify the

chase. If it was difficult to identify a vessel under blockade conditions, it was equally

hard to correlate information obtained through extracts and compare it to an

individual sighting of a fleeing runner. This does not take into consideration ships that

made successful, undetected runs into port or did not operate in blockade running

activity, even if reported so. Under these instances, ships could not be properly

accounted for and hindered the Navy's ability to track ships suspected of nefarious

activity. In all three examples, the officers possessed information on blockade runners, but only in the first case was a commander able to directly correlate information to a ship mentioned in extracts. The other two officers could only guess.[28]

This begs the question, did the Navy require in-depth intelligence in order to locate and capture blockade runners if intelligence could not be correlated to specific attempts or tracks? The answer is yes, but not in the manner that a modern Navy is accustomed. The Navy did not hunt down vessels on the high seas tracking them from their point of embarkation to the port of destination. Instead, the Navy chose to establish a cordon around the Confederacy in an attempt to isolate the South from the outside world. What the service had in fact done, was spread a large net across the entrance of Confederate ports and wait for the blockade runners to attempt entry, like fish entering a net. Information was useful in identifying likely candidates and determining the type and quantity of "fish" entering or exiting port but not in tracking every individual ship. In doing so, naval commanders were able to judge what type of net was most effective given the threat.

This appeared to be sound strategy based on starting assumptions. First, the Navy had to establish a close blockade in order to demonstrate to the world, the legality of Lincoln's proclamation. Second, any ship attempting to violate the blockade, whether reported by intelligence or not, had to get past the fleet and was therefore subject to destruction or capture. Third, it placed the maximum number of limited assets at vital choke points thereby using the Navy in the most efficient manner. The problem with this strategy is that it seceded initiative to the Confederate

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and English runners, and when combined with superior British marine technology, the Navy was incapable of enforcing Lincoln's goals. The service simply could not stop enough of the Clyde Steamers to be effective because blockade runners had found the means to avoid detection, and the crux of the problem was surveillance.

Surveillance and Blockade

"The importance in blockade running of seeing before you are seen is too great for any chance to be neglected" stated one authority. To that end the owners of blockade runners paid sailors who stood watch a dollar a ship sighting to ensure that the runner saw the enemy first and had strict rules for avoiding detection.[29] More importantly, blockade runners used the cover of darkness to hide their movements which gave them a tremendous advantage over the Union fleet in the surveillance game and caused untold problems for the Navy. Intelligence influenced surveillance in two ways. First, it queued surveillance assets to the location where an attempt was likely to originate from or along a possible threat axis. Two, it heightened the awareness of the fleet to any likely attempts.

As was stated earlier, Union Sailors on watch at night could only spot a ship a few hundred yards away rather than tens of miles they could in daylight. With only a few ships to cover the open coast off each port, the advantage was all with the runner. Both Lee and Du Pont understood this problem only too well and began to combat weaknesses in surveillance immediately. First, they asked for more ships to expand the area of coverage. Second, they began to analyze enemy activity and position ships where they could be most effective. This is where the two blockade commanders

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began to diverge. During this timeframe, Du Pont's priority of effort was not on the blockade but on his operations to take Charleston. The blockade at Charleston never attained preeminence over offensive operations until 1864. Although both squadrons developed similar tactics in an effort to thwart blockade running, Admiral Du Pont was able to enforce an inside blockade for most of 1863 because of his offensive operations. On the other hand, the blockade off Wilmington was Lee's main effort. He and his subordinate commanders were never given the opportunity to go on the offensive and instead expended a great deal of energy trying to devise means of improving a defensive blockade.

At the beginning, Lee had only a few ships available for duty off Wilmington. These ships were distributed in a line across the twin-mouths of the river, but left wide gaps in coverage that runners exploited.[30] As more ships became available through the Union's wartime acquisition building program, Lee strengthened, then doubled the line, creating an outer and inner line of blockading ships laying between one and ten miles off the coast at each mouth. These ships closed in around the entrances to port at night, then dispersed during the day in an effort to cover as much area as possible and avoid counter targeting.

By January 1863, as information on blockade running habits became better known, he ordered an extension of the blockade out along the coast, north and south of Cape Fear. Ships began to periodically patrol areas where blockade runners first made land fall in their attempt to run down the coast, or where smaller vessels reportedly off loaded supplies in an attempt to bypass Wilmington and the Navy. These included Topsail and Masonboro inlet to the north of Cape Fear and

Lockwood's Folly and Little River inlet to the south.[31] The squadron also began to receive captured blockade runners for use on blockade duty in a twist of the old adage, "it takes a thief to catch a thief." Additionally, in one of the more important moves towards improving surveillance, Lee established picket patrols within the entrances to port at night to increase inshore surveillance.

Picket boats were used off Wilmington and Charleston in an effort to provide early warning of an attempted breakout from port. Crews from ships on the inshore blockade manned launches, whale boats and other open-air craft that comprised a normal complement of small boats for a ship in that era. Picket crews would row inshore at dusk to the bar that forms at the entrance of a port or river, near the ship channel. Here they anchored, and waited until a vessel attempted to leave port, staying on station until dawn. Equipped with small arms, signal rockets and lights, they often operated within range of the enemy shore batteries that guarded the entrance.

When a warship detected a blockade runner, the crew sounded the alarm by firing signal rockets and guns in a prearranged serial to alert the fleet. It was extremely hazardous duty as Acting Master W. M. Earle of the USS *Dacotah*, relates in one episode off the western entrance to Wilmington:

> Last evening . . . I took the second cutter and proceeded to the bar on picket duty . . . [and] at 1 o'clock came to on the northern side of the channel in 12 feet water, Fort Caswell bearing N. N. E. about one-fourth of a mile distant. Here we lay till 4 o'clock, when we saw a light bearing west; by its rapid approach, I knew it to be a steamer's light, and by the course she was steering I was convinced that we were in imminent danger of being run down. I ordered the anchor to be taken up, and a few strokes of our oars placed us in safety. As she came abreast of us she stopped her engine, and we sent up a rocket over her stern, and she then steamed ahead fast again. . . . She was a

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long, low steamer, with two masts and two smokestacks; her length I thought fully equal to that of the *Dacotah*.[32]

Another report by Acting Master John Rodgers of the USS *Bienville* off Charleston indicated just how difficult detecting a Clyde Steamer could be, even in close:

> I left the ship last night in command of the launch, with a 12-pounder howitzer and an armed crew. At 8:30 p.m., anchored about three-fourths of a mile E. S. E. from Fort Moultrie; about 9:45 saw a steam propeller passing outward, close along the beach; she moved silently and swiftly. I immediately (got) up anchor and turned to follow in chase, fired a rocket and burned a blue light. Soon after the battery at Breach Inlet fired a shell which ricocheted across the bow and exploded outside of me. . . . I would remark that he passed within 300 yards of me, but when the land behind him was higher than his hull I could not see him. As he passed the low opening in the beach I had a fair view of him, but lost it as soon as he passed in front of high land.[33]

Ship and division commanders soon realized that these fragile craft were dangerously exposed on surveillance duties and began lobbing for their replacement. What was needed, they felt, were small, lightly-armed tug boats, which could act as pickets in the dangerous waters off port. Lee agreed and tugboats began to augment open launches on picket duty in the spring of 1863 and were the workhorses of inshore surveillance patrols for the rest of the war.[34]

Still, the problem of detecting small, swift camouflage vessels on dark nights was immense. Captain Ludlow, commanding officer of the *Iroquois*, commented on these problems in March 1863 when he discussed the escape of two steamers with Lee:

> The *Cornubia* and the *Giraffe*...have been quite often in and out of Wilmington . . . [and] hope we may yet have success in stopping them...When going out, of a dark night, it is pretty much the same thing; the ground is clear for their light draft, and they have pilots who know every inch of it. Such vessels as [ours] are visible long before we can see them, and they come, after seeing us, with a full head of steam and are by us and away in a jiffy. The officers are anxious, the men are anxious, all keep a sharp lookout. . . . There is but little rest for a blockader, night or day.[35]

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The constant grind of duty and lack of success in stopping blockade runners lead to a great deal of frustration on the part of Union sailors during this timeframe. Awake and attentive to duties around the clock, in storm or in hot weather, either offshore during the day or patrolling in close at night, Union sailors became quite critical. One young officer wrote:

> I am kept pretty constantly upon blockade service, and hard and discouraging duty it is . . . I do not believe it possible to blockade the place effectually, and at times I am inclined to believe that with good pilots and judicious choice of time and opportunity the blockade is but a trifling impediment in the way of steamers entering the harbor, painted lead color as they are; of a dark night, or a rainy one, they will pass, or can pass, within a few hundred yards without being detected, and, guided by signal inside the harbor, they almost invariably manage to avoid the blockading vessels. I would be glad if I could only impress upon you some faint notion of how disgusting it is to us, after going through the anxieties of riding out a black, rainy, windy night in 3 or 3½ fathoms water, with our senses all on the alert for sound of paddles or sight of miscreant violator of our blockade and destroyer of our peace, when morning comes to behold him lying there placidly inside of Fort Sumter, as if his getting there was the most natural thing in the world and the easiest.[36]

Just what effect fatigue, frustration, and apathy had on blockade duties is hard to determine, but it must account for some of the more remarkable escapes of blockade runners reported in the first years of war.

By September 1863, things began to change. The blockade had reached sufficient strength and had gained enough insight to where it began to impacting blockade running operations. Between September 15, and the end of October, the two divisions off Wilmington destroyed six runners and captured an additional one. These included the *Arabian, Hebe, Phantom, Douro, Venus, Elizabeth, Juno*, and *Eugenic*.[37] Where Admiral Lee reported just nine month earlier that he had captured but one steamer, and in July had only captured or destroyed seven, the squadron captured seven ships in rapid succession.[38] Then in early November, the squadron made

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another series of remarkable captures. First the *Margaret and Jessie* was taken. Then

between November 8 and 9, in the space of forty-eight hours, the *Ella and Annie*,

Cornubia and famous *Robert E. Lee*, which held the record of thirteen round trips

through the blockade, were captured. Several more ships succumbed in December

including the famous *Banshee*, *Antonica* and *General Beaureguard*, which ran

aground near Fort Fischer. These captures not only shook the confidence of the

Southern shipping industry, but the Confederacy as well. Not only were all five ships

operated by the Confederate Army's Ordnance Bureau captured but several of the

ships considered the mainstays in Confederate seaborne resupply operations were

removed from service. [39]

The effect on the South was profound. The Confederacy, which had just

suffered defeat at the battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg and required extensive

supplies, had been reluctant to control blockade running operations. These captures

forced Richmond to regulate overseas trade. Additionally, the owners and operators

of blockade runners began to look for alternate ports as bases for their operations and

points of entry into the South. Some owners even contemplated the use of small

sailing ships again to avoid blockaded ports.

The effect of all this was by January 1864, the Navy looked like it was finally

gaining the upper hand. Assistant Secretary Fox said as much when he complemented

Lee on the captures.

> I congratulate you upon the captures off Wilmington. Nine steamers have
> been lost to the rebels within a short time, all due to the fine spirit of our
> people engaged in the blockade. It is a severe duty and well maintained, and
> Jeff. Davis pays us a higher compliment than our own people when he

declares that they have but one port in 3,500 miles . . .through which they can get in supplies.[40]

This success was short lived. Just as the naval service reacted to the threat of Clyde Steamers, the Confederacy began to counter naval efforts to cut its lifeline. Additionally, the problems associated with intelligence remained and influenced the Navy's ability to counter Confederacy. Intelligence and the naval reaction to the Confederate initiatives will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[1]ORN 7:463.

[2]ORN 13:34. Previous to this attempt, *Nashville* was sold to new owners who changed the name of the ship to *Thomas L Wragg.*

[3]ORN 13:134-137.

[4]ORN 6:54.

[5]Frank J. Merli, *Great Britain and the Confederacy,* 1861-65 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 236.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Wise, 108.

[8]Taylor, 1-5. Taylor provided some explanation on why he and his fellow Englishmen ran the blockade for the Confederacy, in rather clear terms: "Firm after firm, with an entirely clear conscience, set about endeavoring to recoup itself for the loss of legitimate trade by the high profits to be made [in blockade running] . . . ; and in Liverpool was awakened a spirit the like which had not been known since the palmy days of the slave trade. It was a spirit of adventurous commerce savoring of the good old days of the French wars." He also remarks that the Trent affair was also an active catalyst. "There is no doubt that the English nation was prepared to make any sacrifice to resent this outrage . . . [and the U.S] was not made to apologize -- she barely expressed regret . . . [and] confirmed in many Englishmen their inchoate partisanship for the South (Taylor, 9-10 and 13-14).

[9]ORN 7:372-373.

[10]ORN 7:432.

[11]ORN 7:, 463

[12]ORN, 13:288.

[13]Cornish and Laas, 108-9. Beyond the necessity of obtaining a capable naval officer for command of the blockading squadron, Welles was looking for a perfectly honest individual to oversea the issuing trading permits for personnel in occupied tidewater Virginia. This had been an especially contentious issue between the Army and Navy in an area where great many individuals made money. Welles wanted someone he could trust to enforce government policy. Ironically, Lee made a great deal of money on the blockade, legally through prize money. As squadron commander, his share was over $126,000 (Cornish and Laas, 123).

[14]ORN 9:496.

[15]ORN 8:5.

[16]ORN 8:80.

[17]Taylor, 50.

[18]See Map 3, 129, for routes used by blockade runners when operating between Nassau or Bermuda and the East Coast.

[19]Du Pont, 2:402.

[20]Tousley, 268-272.

[21]ORN 13:288-290.

[22]Du Pont, 2:209-212 and ORN 13:288-290.

[23]Charles Post, "A Diary on the Blockade in 1863," *Proceedings* 44, no. 10 (October, 1918): 2584-2585.

[24]Tousley, 10-14.

[25]ORN 9:216-217.

[26]ORN 9:19.

[27]ORN 8:531.

[28]ORN 9:18-19; and Wise, 234, 288-289, 294 and 316. Even today, it is hard to determine who was correct. In the first example, Captain Case estimated the contact he saw was the *Cornubia* and might have been correct. According to Stephen Wise in his detailed estimates of blockade running, *Cornubia* ran the blockade on the morning of May 13, and so did steamers *Annie Childs,* and *Banshee.* In Captain Case's report he states up front that three ships managed to get into port, "One paddle wheel and two propeller." According to Wise, *Cornubia, Annie Childs,* and *Banshee* successfully ran the blockade on or near May 13. Annie Childs was a single-screw blockade runner, while *Cornubia* and *Banshee* were side-wheel (paddle wheel) steamers. *Pet,* which is also a candidate, was a single screw propeller but was estimated to have entered port a day prior, on May 12 (Ibid.).

[29]Taylor, 48. Lieutenant John Wilkinson, CSN and commander of the blockade runner *Robert E. Lee* used the following precautionary rules to avoid detection, rigidly enforced:

> (1) All lights were doused. Anyone who showed a light upon nearing the blockading fleet was liable to death on the spot. (2) Reliable leadsmen were stationed in the port and starboard chains to permit the correct soundings to be taken. (3) The quartermaster took the wheel.(4) A hood was fitted over the binnacle. (5) The fire room hatch was covered with a tarpaulin. (Hamilton Cochran, *Blockade Runnerers of the Confederacy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1958), 103).

[30]ORN 7:237; ORN 9:225. In April 1862, Goldsburough had four ships on station. By October 1863, Lee had 12 ships on station.

[31]ORN 8:335, 449 and 533. As early as winter 1862, Lee and his commanders understood the importance of patrolling areas where runners made landfall and began to expand operations accordingly. Lee requested charts of Top Sail inlet in December and later ordered Captain Sands to,

> Pay attention to the southern limit of this blockade. I have possession of intercepted information that the enemy make use of Little River, near the boundary line of North and South Carolina. Send a smart steamer there commanded by a reliable officer, say, the Chocura. The rebels next to the Cape Fear entrance refer their correspondents to the inlets on the coast north and south of these entrances. Of course, Western Bar and New Inlet are the points upon which they will concentrate if they are preparing, as we are advised, to force the blockade. Keep your best armed vessels at these points; a small, active steamer or two on the coast above and below, with a good, long-ranged gun, aided by the schooners, can guard against and perhaps catch those making the coast, either to run it up or down at night or to enter the inlets Lockwood's Folly, Shallotte, Tubb's, and Little River, on the south coast, and Masonboro, New Topsail, New River, etc., on the north coast (ORN, 8:440).

It was easier said than done. Captain Sand responded in February:

> If I had another active steamer to guard from Lockwood's Folly along the coast eastward to [Cape Fear], I would stand a better chance to intercept some of these blockade runners, who, under the cover of dark nights, are succeeding in passing us unseen (ORN, 8:533).

[32]ORN 8:527-528.

[33]ORN 13:293.

[34]ORN 13:290; and ORN 8:572 and 635. Lee stated in a letter responding to Captain Sand's request for picket boats:

> A careful perusal of your reports strengthens me in the belief that picket boats are a bad substitute for picket steamers. It is evident from your narrative of the entrance into the river on the morning of the 14th and 25th of a steamer, that had a steamer been on picket instead of a boat, the blockade runner would probably have been intercepted and caught. Now that you understand how closely they track the land and how steep the beach is, you can take efficient measures to stop them there (ORN 8:589).

[35]ORN 8:630-631.

[36]ORN 13:324.

[37]ORN 9:248.

[38]ORN 8:242 and Wise, 137.

[39]Wise, 137-143.

[40]ORN 9:196.

CHAPTER 6

THE FINAL YEAR OF BLOCKADE (1864-1865)

There is a thundering blockade off here now, that's pretty certain.[1]

Daily Journal, Wilmington, North Carolina

At the beginning of 1864, the blockade off Wilmington was on a high. Having eliminated 23 blockade runners in six months of operations, many officers within the Navy believed that the service was finally winning the campaign. Rear Admiral Lee headed the list of individuals praising the blockade when he wrote Assistant Secretary Fox in February, "Thank you for your agreeable congratulations on the last hit off Wilmington, which makes the number of blockade runners captured or destroyed since July 12, 26, and since the blockade was strengthened last fall the number is 23 steamers lost to the trade. Can the history of the blockade beat this?"[2] In the midst of this cheering, Lee also re-emphasized the problems of commanding a modern blockade in his never-ending request for additional assets:

> Experience teaches that a mere inner line will not answer for blockading in this steam era. Now the blockaders are from 1 to 2 miles, and more, apart. This is only thick when it is so dark that all is thickness. In estimating the sea strength of this blockading squadron, one must only count the steamers off Wilmington. The rest are keels, not pennants.[3]

Though Lee was only reiterating to the Department what Welles and Fox already knew, his comments reflected pride in his squadron's achievements since he assumed command. The Union blockade around Wilmington had begun to impede blockade running operations and he knew it. Intelligence had played a crucial role in this development by providing Lee and his subordinate commanders the necessary information to combat the Clyde Steamer threat. It also gave him the ability to gage the potency of his operations and the effect it had on the Confederacy.

The Blockade (1864)

The nature of the blockade changed in late 1863 and into 1864. The war expanded

outward away from the coast as the U.S. Navy began to search for Confederate blockade

runners on the high seas between Bermuda, the Bahamas and the Southern Coast. The

Confederacy initiated changes by instituting a series of initiatives designed to regain

maritime superiority in order to continue the importation of vital war materials. One

important tactical change occurred almost immediately and was soon highlighted in after

action reports of submitted by commanders on station, as exemplified by the following

statement:

> It is my duty to report to you that at daybreak on the morning of the 7th . . . we
> saw what we took to be smoke on the land W. N. W. of us. We soon saw she was
> a steamer [the *Aries*] moving to the westward; immediately gave chase . . . [and]
> fired the 30-pounder rifle. The chase then showed Confederate colors; continued
> firing at intervals, shot falling very near him . . . [and at] 10:30 a.m., the chase
> hauled up west. This brought the *Aries* ahead of us and well on our starboard bow.
> 12:30 p.m., chase finding escape impossible, ran on the beach a little to the
> northward of North Inlet.[4]

As noted above, rebel captains were no longer content to let their vessels be

captured when cornered by Navy warships. Instead, they drove their ships ashore in an

effort to salvage part of the cargo rather than seeing it all taken or destroyed. Though this

move was an indicator of the blockade's success, the change in tactic resulted in a

decrease in the numbers of ships captured in comparison with ships destroyed in the first

two months of the year. In January, four blockade runners had been destroyed on the

beaches of Carolina while attempting to run the blockade. Five more were destroyed in

February. By comparison, only a single ship was captured during the same period.[5] Lee

noted this change in his letter to Welles:

I don't believe that many prizes will be made hereafter; the runners now take to the beach too readily when they see a blockader by day or night. I pride myself on the conduct of the blockade, which has given me much care, thought, and writing. My instructions will show this when I send them to you; they certainly cover the whole ground, and work well, though several runners have got in lately. I think the additions to the runners are less than the numbers destroyed.[6]

The Confederacy initiated other changes as well. The rebel government began the regulation of all overseas trade and demanding priority of shipments on blockade runners. Though individual shipping firms resisted regulation, they knew in the end that it was in their best interest to comply.[7] Owners and ship captains also initiated change by shifting operations away from crowded Wilmington to less conspicuous ports. These ports included Charleston, Savannah, and Fernandina on Florida's East Coast. Some firms switched home ports, moving operations away from Nassau or Bermuda to Halifax or Havana. There was also reports of a small resurgence in the use of sailing ships. Though extremely vulnerable to detection and capture, they had the ability to avoid detection through the use of shallow bays or estuaries since they did not need large port facilities to offload cargo. These ships targeted the isolated coasts of Georgia and Florida, shunning the more active Carolina shores. Thomas Kirkpatrick, Consul at Nassau in 1864, reported the following information on September 24, after the capture of the *Elsie* and *A. D. Vance*: "They are now organizing a company here for purchasing and equipping a lot of sailing vessels to run the blockade to and from Florida, along its coasts and up its rivers, and they look upon schooners as being (better) calculated and less suspicious than steamers."[8] However, most of these were stop-gap measures that held little promise of weakening the growing effectiveness of Union power or maintaining the flow of imports at a level required by the Confederate government.[9]

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The only strategy that still held promise of beating the Union Blockade was the continued use of the Clyde Steamer. Shipping firms opted to purchase better ships with increased performance capabilities, faster sustained speeds and larger cargo-carrying capacity. Just as the Navy began to make serious headway against the Clyde Steamer, Confederate and British shipping firms ordered new vessels with better capabilities.[10] Construction of these second generation Clyde Steamer began in earnest during the beginning of 1864 and by spring were in use against the blockade. They were the epitome of blockade runner design. New vessels were introduced to the Confederate fleet with names like *Owl, Bat, Stag, Falcon, Flamingo,* or *Condor.*[11] Union agents took notice of these developments and quickly reported them to the Navy through the State Department;

From U. S. consul at Liverpool, dated February 3, 1864:

The steamer *Mary,* late *Prince Albert,* cleared from here on Saturday evening last, January 30, for Havana, in command of Captain J. Peat. She is owned by Walter B. Forwood, the same who has been so largely engaged in the blockade business, and was cleared by Leech, Harrison & Co., the same firm with which her owner is a partner. She goes out to run the blockade; took nothing but coals.[12]

From U. S. consul at London, dated February 5, 1864:

The steamer referred to as the sister to the *Nutfield* is, I believe, destined for some special and important service. She is over 300 tons not, of light draft, paddle wheel, and fast, new, and fitted up to carry quite a number of passengers. Mr. Eustis, Mr. Slidell's secretary, has been down to see her and remarked that she must be got through, for she would have a valuable cargo. . . .I hear that she is to be owned, and is really owned, by cotton speculators from the Southern States, and is therefore rebel property, though she will no doubt go out under the protection of English papers and the English flag.[13]

From U. S. consul at Cardiff, dated February 11, 1864:

A large, or rather long, iron steamer has just come in here to load with coal for Nassau. Her name is the *North Heath,* of London. She is about 260 feet long, with large paddle wheels, and very, very sharp. She doubtless intends to engage in the business of blockade running, and will be hard to catch, but when caught will be a

good vessel for us, for a faster vessel I have never seen. Hoping she will soon grace our own Navy under some other name.[14]

As these reports arrived, the names of the new ships were added to the list of suspect vessels. The Navy observed other changes that signaled the Confederates continued determination to protect its access to vital overseas supplies. In 1863 Colonel Lamb, the garrison commander of Fort Fisher, ordered the construction of a large mound battery on the seaward face of the fort to increase the range of cannon fire and extend protective coverage. He also created a flying battery of mobile artillery that could quickly deploy along the beach in an effort to defend grounded blockade runners from the depredations of Union Navy boarding parties.

In 1864, he increased his support for blockade running by mounting a lighthouse on top of the mound battery and provided range lights and signals to help guide blockade runners to port at night. As the Union Navy watched the construction of the Lighthouse, it gained additional insight of the motives behind these actions from a rather unique source, as related by Captain Sands:

> Upon my arrival at New Inlet I found that a scaffolding which was being erected upon the Mound fort when I left for Norfolk the week before had been finished and surmounted by a brilliant light at night, as a leading mark for vessels entering or leaving that inlet. The mulatto servant of Colonel Lamb, commandant of Fort Fisher, who escaped to the *Niphon* a few days ago, states that his master said that as the coast was now so strongly guarded by the Yankee gunboats, the runners must take their chance to run directly through the fleet in and out, and the light was to aid them in doing so. Upon this change of tactics of the enemy, I have altered somewhat the positions of the vessels (endeavoring at the same time to keep the coastline strong, for they can easily make signal, when it is weak).[15]

The Distant Blockade

Although these changes impacted blockade operations, the largest modification occurred when Lee instituted a distant blockade of the Confederate Coast. After the November victories, Lee redoubled his efforts to interdict runners on the outer blockade, by ordering ships to patrol the sea-lanes between Nassau, Bermuda and Wilmington, effectively creating a distant blockade. USS *Quaker City* was the first ship ordered out on patrol in December and more followed. Although contacts were made and ships chased, no runners were captured. In February, the plan hit pay dirt. Lee ordered the USS *Sassacus* and *Eutaw* out on patrol, "The *Sassacus* to intercept the Bermuda and the *Eutaw* the Nassau runners."[16] Both were brand new steam ships built specifically for blockade duty and rated at thirteen knots. Lieutenant Commander Roe, captain of the *Sassacus* was the first to strike, destroying two blockade runners in four days. "The result has equaled my expectations," wrote Lee, "[with] the destruction of the steamers *Wild Dayrell* and *Nutfield* by the *Sassacus*, both new and fast steamers, the latter on her first voyage, are added to the long list of disasters to the blockade runners."[17]

Lee's tactics struck at the heart of the surveillance problem and directly attacked a major weakness of the Clyde Steamer, their lack of endurance. The outer patrol focused on the Navy's ability to detect, track, and interdict blockade runners in daylight, thereby increasing the probability of detection. This placed warships along routes blockade runners used took to and from their home ports in Bermuda and Nassau. To avoid capture, ship captains now had to change their routes or face possible capture. This increased the possibility that blockade runners would be detected and chased, exhausting their limited supply of fuel. Although Clyde Steamers used auxiliary sail power while en

route, in a long chase, they had to rely on steam power. A long chase easily exhausted the small quantity of coal they had onboard their vessels before they ever reached port. Lee mentioned these facts to Fox when he asked for faster ships for this type of patrol:

> Will you not give this blockading squadron its proportion of fast navy vessels? As far as blockade running is concerned, this squadron has more to do than all the others. . . . A modern blockading squadron has much more to do than merely threatening an entrance. It should intercept runners where daylight shows them after a long night's run from either end of their lines. In no other way can a wooden blockade be made effective.[18]

As mentioned above, the speed of a vessel was an important factor in blockade operations. With the creation of the distant blockade, speed now became an essential feature, since the detection of any blockade runner on the open ocean invariably resulted in a long chase. Victory usually belonged to the captain who's ship could maintain the highest sustained speed and had the most endurance.

Intelligence extracts, after action reports and surveys of captured runners provided highlighted the need for speed and endurance. Through the combination of intelligence and experience, the Navy quickly realized that it had to have warships for the blockade duty that had these qualities. At the start of the war, the Navy initiated a building program designed to increase quickly, the number of ships available for operations. This resulted in the construction of a large number of 90-day gunboats and double-enders during the first three years of war. Though this program was reasonably successful, it suffered from a number of problems, including poor or shoddy construction on a number of ships that limited their effectiveness of the blockade.

As the Navy began to understand the role technology played in the naval blockade, and in particular, the vital requirement for speed. The service made a concerted effort to build or acquire ships that had these qualities, though no class of ship was

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designed specifically to counter the Clyde Steamer. The Navy placed high hopes on several classes of warships, including the *Sassacus* class, as a steamer capable of running down Clyde Steamers. The lead ship USS *Sassacus* had done so in January and further success was expected.[19] Unfortunately, these vessels arrived at a time when British ship manufacturers had advanced the level of technology one step beyond the capabilities embodied in the Navy ship designed. The Department's only other recourse was the acquisition of civilian vessels or the conversion of captured blockade runners for use by the Navy.

The Navy converted several former blockade runners for use on the blockade and placed them at the disposal of the squadron commanders. Lee used them extensively on the outside blockade and, in fact, used one as his flagship. Though they represented the first generation of Clyde Steamers, they were more than capable of catching the latest runners with a good captain and crew. The Navy also acquired several fast civilian vessels that were more than capable of running down a blockade runner on the open ocean under certain circumstances. These included the USS *Connecticut, Key Stone State, Nansemond, Santiago de Cuba*, and *Vanderbilt*. By 1864, these ships were in use on the outer blockade where they soon proved their worth.

With the creation of a distant blockade, blockade runners no longer found sanctuary on the open ocean. Swift naval vessels were now perusing runners all the way to Bermuda and Nassau. A newspaper clipping from the *Bermuda Royal Gazette* dated 12 July forwarded by Captain Sands to Admiral Lee, summarized the results:

> The steamer *Little Hattie,* which arrived at St. George yesterday morning, was pursued to the Wilmington bar on Thursday last by a Federal blockader. On crossing she was again met by another, which chased her for two days. The H. ran

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50 miles north of Cape Hatteras. The Federal vessel made 16 knots throughout the chase.[20]

Lieutenant Lamson, commander of the USS *Gettysburg* (former blockade runner *Margaret and Jessie*), reinforced the dominance of speed when he recorded the comments of the blockade runner Armstrong's skipper after his capture. "The Captain of the prize said pointing to the 'G' that is the only vessel that could have caught me alone, and I should not have been captured for her."[21] During the chase, both ships averaged 13 1/2 knots and the *Armstrong* almost escaped by using an old trick of throwing cargo overboard to lighten a vessel to increase speed. Lamson noted, "The *Armstrong* threw overboard a large quantity of cotton during the chase and today we have picked up about one-hundred and forty bales."[22]

The tactic of throwing cargo overboard was one indicator of how dramatically the blockade had changed in a single year. Commander Clary of the USS *Dacotah* highlighted this tactic and the effect it had on the blockade runners speed in these comments:

> There were nine chases in all, in about thirty days; of these, two captures and 92 bales of cotton picked up. Three or four [blockade runners] were compelled to throw their cargo overboard. In one of these chases where the *Connecticut* joined (and beating her), the *Keystone State*, going at the speed of nearly 13 knots for the best part of a day, was compelled to give up the chase. The speed of these contraband steamers is beyond all precedent of late. I have never experienced anything like it. Our 12 and 13 knot cruisers may gain on them in the early part of the chase, but as soon as they lighten of their cargoes they outspeed them.[23]

Intelligence, the Naval Staff and Blockade

With the development of the outer blockade, the service's intelligence requirements changed too. A larger blockade required a more robust intelligence organization in order to support the more widely dispersed operations. Unfortunately, this

never happened. It is ironic that Admiral Lee and his subordinates spent a great deal of time trying to work out solutions to the problems of blockade problem but never modified or enhanced his own naval staff or intelligence organization (nor did the Navy Department for that matter). The service maintained excellent sources of information on the threat, had established a slow but efficient means of disseminating intelligence and built a tradition of using intelligence to support and enhance operations. But that's where development stopped. Commanders never modified the naval staff to support its growing operations and used the same intelligence system that was in place at the beginning of the war and printed extracts remained the sole means of disseminating intelligence within the fleet.

Though Lee and his commanders used all-source intelligence in their operational analysis, they never established a separate intelligence organization at the flag level that could fuse all-source intelligence into a single product. This type of staff intelligence organization was not unprecedented at the time. The Army of the Potomac created an all-source intelligence organization to support army operations called the Bureau of Military Information (BMI). BMI was created under General Hooker when he commanded the army in early 1863 and all subsequent army commanders to include General Grant retained its service. Colonel George H. Sharpe, a volunteer officer and civilian attorney, commanded BMI and was responsible for all intelligence functions within the Army of Potomac. In addition to running the army's intelligence activities, the staff collected, collated, and "gathered the latest intelligence and presented daily summaries to the army commander."[24] BMI used all-source analysis in its operations including intelligence through spies and open source reporting as well as information gathered from the field;

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from scouts, observers and the cavalry. Throughout its battles, the Army of the Potomac had one of the most thorough and robust intelligence organizations of any command in the war, Union or Confederate.

For some unknown reason, the naval senior leadership never developed any such organization. Instead, Welles and his flag officers retained direct, personal control of all intelligence functions within their respective organizations. Whether this was the result of standing procedures ingrained through time and tradition or a wartime economy of effort due to personnel shortage is hard to determine. The development of a naval staff was rather new and the Navy had little experience dealing with operations on a grand scale. The rank of Admiral was also new. Congress created the rank in 1862 to meet wartime concerns. In effect, the Navy was still working out the detailed responsibilities of flag-level command and the development of flag staff duties and functions were ongoing. The only modification to Lee's staff during the war occurred in the fall of 1863 when he requested two additional members for his staff above his normal complement for a flag officer. From the manner in which assistant secretary Fox responded to his request, Lee might have asked them to act as intelligence officers on his staff:

> Your extracts printed for the use of the squadron, and copies sent to the Department, are very satisfactory. The Secretary says that you may recommend for special service on your staff two young men who will be appointed acting ensigns (we shall understand they are to do clerical duty only, as I suppose you will have to take them from mercantile life, sailors preferring to go to sea, their appointment to cease when their special duties cease).[25]

Would intelligence have better utilized by the Navy had the service created an organization akin to General Pope's BMI? This is a hard question to answer. It is interesting to note that Lee only requested two individuals for his staff, even though his overall work load was consummate with a much larger staff. A BMI-type organization

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would have at least relieved the Admiral of his intelligence duties and perhaps solved the intelligence correlation problems dogging the fleet. As it was he and his small staff were pulling double and triple duty, taking care of the squadrons operational and logistical issues, conducting detailed planning, all the while playing staff intelligence officer. This was far too much for one person or even a small staff to handle given the size and scope of operations. It must be remembered that Lee not only commanded the blockade off Wilmington but was in charge of naval operations on the York and James Rivers, on the Chesapeake Bay, and in the sounds of North Carolina. The scale of his operations were vast and so were his problems. Intelligence was merely one assignment out of many and was certainly not his top priority.

Professor Robert Browning in his monumental book, *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear*, conducted a wide-ranging study of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, and in particular, Admiral Lee and his staff. Browning relates a story associated with the appointment of Lieutenant Commander John Sanford Barnes as Lee's fleet Captain. Lee apparently chose Barnes for the position in a move to help solve persistent problems stemming from the enormous amount of paperwork required to run the squadron. When Barnes arrived onboard Lee's flagship, he apparently ran into a quagmire of paper "piled up in confusion on the desks and in the pigeon holes" that kept Lee and Barnes "scribbling form morning till night." Browning then relates, "Much of the work can be blamed on Lee's meticulous nature. The admiral placed his correspondence as a high priority and Barnes constantly wrote and rewrote, altered in "phraseology and not in meaning, signed and sealed, reopened and reread, criticized and discussed, repunctuated, sometimes to a wearisome minutiae."[26] How much intelligence was lost in the paper

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quagmire is unknown, but the effect of Lee's enormous workload must have had a

negative, if unquantifiable, impact on the efficient use of intelligence.

HUMINT and Distant Blockade

One area that deserves more discussion is the use of HUMINT since it highlights

both the workload of the Admiral's staff and was one area of continued success. One of

the many duties assigned to the flag staff was the debriefing of individuals captured or

detained in the blockade. The following is a wonderful example of the information

obtained through debriefs. The source is a British merchant captain Daniel Martin, who

commanded the blockade runner *Lilian*. After his capture by the USS *Gettsyburg* in July

1864, Martin was taken aboard Lee's flagship and debriefed by Lee's flag captain. Martin

provided the following statement that is repeated in its entirety below:

> My name is Daniel Martin; native of Liverpool, England; late commander
> of steamer *Lilian,* engaged in running the blockade. Left Bermuda in ballast on or
> about the 24th July; on the 30th, being off to the eastward from Wilmington, was
> chased by a large steamer, square-rigged forward, no bowsprit, the fastest screw
> boat I ever saw; since ascertained to be the *Shenandoah.* I ran to the northward.
> She chased until 7 o'clock and then gave it up, it being then near dark. At that
> time we had Cape Lookout light in sight on our port bow. She fired a good many
> shots at us. After losing sight of her steered to the eastward and then ran inshore
> again. Came in near the beach above Masonboro and ran down the beach and in at
> New Inlet. About 3 o'clock a.m. saw two blockading vessels off the bar, but do
> not think they saw me. Was three weeks at Wilmington repairing boiler, injured in
> the chase. Came down the river on the 23d, and came out over the Western Bar
> between 8 and 9 p.m. of that night; was seen and fired at by several of the
> blockading fleet, but succeeded in getting clear without being hit. Between 10 and
> 12 a.m. of the 24th was chased by the *Gettysburg* and *Keystone State,* and being
> hit under water by the *Gettysburg,* surrendered.
> This is my second trip; I have made one trip before in the *Lilian.* Captain
> Maffitt brought her from England and commanded her on her first trip in; his first
> lieutenant brought her out, and then I took her. I do not know who are the owners,
> but think she is owned in Scotland. Only two boats were loading while I was in
> Wilmington, one, the *Coquette,* the other, I do not know her name. Six vessels
> arrived while I was there; they were all put in quarantine for thirty days. The *City*

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of Petersburg was one of them. The blockade is considered by those engaged in running it as a very stringent one, and the danger of capture great, especially by the outside cruisers. The steamer *Hawk* was loading cotton when I left, bound for Liverpool. If I had got in safely my pay would have been $3,000 for the trip.

While at Wilmington I saw 28,000 muskets brought down from Petersburg, said to have been captured from Grant's army. There is talk in Wilmington of the Confederate Government taking all the vessels engaged in the blockading running business and putting them under command of Confederate officers. When chased the day before going in, the Confederate colors were hoisted on the *Lilian* by some of the passengers. We had English and Confederate colors on board. I have been a seafaring man in the English merchant service; have been in the East India Company service and in the French transport service during the Crimean war. When chased by the *Gettysburg*, the *Lilian* ran 13½ knots.[27]

Although Captain Martin probably was not forthcoming in all details, his statement is presented in the matter-of-fact language typical of a nineteenth century mariner who might face any number of dangers on the high seas, including the loss of $3,000. He paints a fairly comprehensive picture of the blockade in 1864 from the enemy point of view. What is interesting about this particular report is that Admiral Lee provided a short intelligence summary attached to the statements when forwarded to Welles for review:

> I yesterday transmitted the reports . . . of the chase and capture of the *Lilian* by which the Department will perceive that the blockade runners consider the blockade as very stringent; that the Badger, chased by the blockaders and driven ashore as she was entering Wilmington last month, was so seriously injured that she will probably prove a total loss. It also appears from these statements that there are about twenty steamers engaged in the blockade-running business to Wilmington from Bermuda and Nassau, and that in consequence of the prevalence of yellow fever at Nassau and Bermuda a quarantine of thirty days is enforced at Wilmington. This accounts for the number of blockade runners (eight) reported to the Department on the 16th instant as lying in the lower part of Cape Fear River.[28]

Distant Blockade and Tactical Intelligence

The Navy never solved the problem of correlating operational intelligence with tactical intelligence. Even when operating in daylight on the outside blockade where recognition and identification should have been easier, the Navy never overcame the this problem. The following examples highlight this issue and are taken from the chase of a runner that occurred in August 1864:

> U. S. S. SANTIAGO DE CUBA,
> *Off New Inlet, August 8, 1864.*

> At daylight [on the 7th] the chase [was] a little on [our] starboard bow, about 4 miles off, often varying her course. At 5 a.m. saw two steamers on our port bow standing for the chase. At 5:15 a.m. exchanged signals with the *Shenandoah* and *Gettysburg;* at this time the chase changed her course to the southward and commenced throwing overboard cotton, and dropping us very fast. . . . At 6:50 a.m. the *Shenandoah* and *Gettysburg* had dropped in between us and the chase; finding that we could not keep up with the chase and the other two men-of-war, we gave up the chase and commenced picking up cotton. . . . This blockade runner was the three-pipe steamer that you saw while at anchor on this side . . . [and] was one of the most beautiful chases that I ever saw, and it is but seldom that any of our vessels have been able to keep sight of one of these swift steamers during the night. That steamer, I do not think, can make more than 13 miles per hour, loaded as she was. I was averaging over 12 miles with a log line marked 52 feet for a 28-second glass, with plenty of stray line.[29]

> U. S. S. SHENANDOAH,
> *Off Beaufort, N. C., August 10, 1864.*

> At daylight on the morning of the 7th instant, we made a blockade runner with three smokestacks with the *Santiago de Cuba* in chase. We came up with him the first two hours when he commenced throwing over bales of cotton. After he had lightened, the blockade runner's speed increased very much and he gained on the chasing vessels. The *Santiago de Cuba* gave up the chase at about 7 o'clock a.m., the *Gettysburg* at 8:30 a.m. The *Quaker City* hove in sight from the south and eastward at 7 o'clock. The *Quaker City* and this ship chased him until 12:30 o'clock, when we lost sight of him, steering for Bermuda. The blockade runner was the *Falcon,* I think, from the description given in the consular extracts.[30]

These two examples were selected from reports filed by commanders on the outer

blockade between September 8 and 10, covering the chase of a single blockade runner on

the morning of September 7, believed to be the *Falcon*. Four ships on the outer blockade were involved in this chase and had encountered at least two other runners that day, one of which was forced back into port. Out of four ships that sighted and chased this particular vessel, only Captain Daniel Ridgely of *Shenandoah* ventured a guess at which ship they pursued. He gave the name of the *Falcon*, one of the new second-generation blockade runners reported in State Department extracts.

Five days later, Lieutenant James Trathen commanding officer of the USS *Mount Vernon*, reported sighting an inbound steamer that matched the description of the *Falcon*. "She was a very long, light lead-color painted steamer, with three smokestacks and one mast forward . . . going 15 knots at least."[31] Lee reviewed then forwarded these reports to Welles, with the following comments, "I enclose also a report just received of a chase yesterday (12th instant) by the *Mount Vernon* of a steamer with three funnels, supposed to be the *Falcon*, as the New York papers of the 9th report that she had left Halifax on the 8th."[32] Although Lee may have been correct in his assumption, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that anybody knew for certain what ship they had chased. In two separate sighting, five days apart, warships on the outer blockade reported seeing the same ship going and coming despite the improbability of this occurrence. It appears from these examples that captain and crew were simply trying to match sightings to known descriptions of vessels reported in extract intelligence while making an educational guess at identification.[33]

This example highlights one notable attribute of Lee, his ability to change operations in response to intelligence. In the quoted report, Lee mentions the use of Halifax as the home base for *Falcon*. The shift to Halifax had occurred around the same

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period as the sightings and the use of Halifax by blockade runners resulted in an increased number of intelligence reports originating from the consulate at that location. Lee reacted to this change almost immediately. By September, when he had additional ships were available, he immediately sent ships on patrol along the "Halifax route" looking for runners.[34]

The chase of the *Falcon* highlights one additional problem in tactical intelligence; the tracking of blockade runners as they left port. Lee and his division officers detected this weakness as they reviewed the results from the initial spout of captures in the fall of 1863. Lee noted among other things that the vast majority of ships captured or destroyed by blockaders were on the inbound run to Wilmington, not outbound. The trouble for the blockade was the pernicious problem of initial detection, when ships left port under the cover of darkness.

> The Department will perceive the difficulties of preventing these low, swift, and well colored steamers from running out at night in weather to suit them--thick and foggy, or on moonless nights. So far, we have only captured two outward-bound vessels, but have driven several others on shore. Since August, 1862, our long list of blockade runners destroyed and captured consists principally of those inward bound.[35]

In response to this analysis, Lee instituted another change in policy. He had all squadron ships painted a light gray, the same color blockade runners used. Additionally, picket boats and ships on the inshore blockade were no longer allowed to chase vessels seaward but were only responsible for the prevention, detection, and warning of the initial escape of a blockade runner from port. Once a vessel was through the inshore blockade, the outer blockade would continue the chase and run the ship down. This resulted in the larger number of chases of outbound vessels reported throughout the spring and summer of 1864. With the appearance of the rakish *Falcon*-class runner, Lee

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modified his plans again and in mid-August asked Welles for additional support to implement the plan:

> The large number of steamers of great speed recently built abroad for the express purpose of eluding the blockade, and favored by the rebel system of light houses, makes it absolutely necessary to have, in addition to vessels of battery power to protect the blockade, two other classes of vessels, one adapted to the close blockade of the bar, the other of great speed for chasing, together with reasonable capacity for supplies. A half dozen small steamers for each inlet, of light draft, turning quickly, and with stability allowing of accurate firing, with a transport collier for each inlet, would admit of a reasonably close and effective blockade of the bar. One swift chasing steamer, always present off each inlet to follow up vessels seen to run out at night, and a half dozen very swift steamers, capable of making certainly 14 to 15 knots, to chase on the Bermuda and Nassau routes, would soon put a stop to the violation of the blockade and its attending bad consequences.[36]

How much more effort did Lee require to stop blockade running? In 1863, Lee wanted more ships for the inside blockade. In 1864, he requested faster ships for the distant blockade, now this new requirement. His command was becoming immense. Since September 1863, the fleet off Wilmington had grown to a total of twenty-six vessels alone outside the commitment of ships to other operations. The North Atlantic Blockade Squadron now had over one hundred ships assigned, though many were undergoing repair or badly need of overhaul.[37] Lee's constant stream of requests to Welles became tiresome and the winds of change began to shift against Lee. With General Grant's accession to command of all U.S. ground forces, the Army finally decided to cooperate in an operation to take Wilmington. Welles was looking for a man to lead the Navy contingent that would take what he was given and use it effectively. After this last request, Lee did not appear to be the man.

The previous year, Welles fired Rear Admiral Du Pont for his failure to take Charleston and a disagreement with Welles over strategy and replaced him with Rear

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Admiral John Dahlgren. Welles wanted to do the same with Lee. The Navy Secretary had been impressed with Lee's work, but had opted for Admiral David Farragut, the naval hero who had taken New Orleans and Mobile Bay without asking for the moon. The Secretary initiated a swap of the two commanders and notified Lee of the change in September. Previous to his leaving, Lee stated, "The blockade is now as close as it can be made with the means at my command" and waited for the inevitable.[38]

When Lee traveled to Norfolk to meet Farragut he was met by Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter who had been given command of the prestigious North Atlantic Blockading Squadron instead of Farragut. Farragut declined the move and General Grant, who had worked closely with Porter at Vickesburg, wanted Porter. Welles concurred. Lee was given command of Porter's squadron on the Mississippi. In final analysis Lee's squadron had done an immense amount of work. They had captured or destroyed over fifty steamers, "equivalent to the capture or destruction of a [Confederate supply] train of 12,600 wagons," but had not been able to stop blockade running.[39] Now it was Porter's turn. After four years of continuous sea duty, Rear Admiral Lee departed for the Mississippi, having taken just one week of leave enroute.

<u>Finale</u>

The blockade off Wilmington now belonged to Admiral Porter. Admiral Dahlgren had taken command of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron a year before. Both flag officers took command of their respective squadrons when the Navy gained the upper hand and claimed success. They actually expanded on the foundations Lee and Du Pont built in the middle years of the war and in Dahlgren's case, found himself struggling with

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the same operational and intelligence problems that Lee faced. Dahlgren enacted many of

his own strategies and tactics but was unable to interdict blockade running any more

successfully than Lee. Porter expanded on Lee's plans, but only had a few weeks of

blockade operations before the assault on Fort Fisher began.[40]

When Porter arrived, he was immediately confronted with the latest challenge to the

blockade. What was to be the last and most advanced blockade runner used in the war

had arrived in Halifax and were soon on its way to Wilmington:

> The British new side-wheel steamer *Colonel Lamb*, 688 tons, 57 men, built
> expressly for running the blockade, arrived at Halifax about October 5 with a
> large cargo, and will leave soon for Wilmington. The *Colonel Lamb* is long, low,
> rakish, schooner-rigged, and two smokestacks, and is at present painted a light
> lead color.[41]

> From U. S. consul at Nassau, November 7, 1864:

> Arrivals since last report from England via Halifax and Madeira: *Caroline,
> Marmots, Colonel Lamb,* and *Laurel*. . . . The *Colonel Lamb* is commanded by the
> notorious Tom Lockwood, who used to make his boast that his success lay in his
> managing to make arrangements with the naval officers to let him pass. She is 285
> feet long, good beam, but can not carry as much as expected; light draft and of
> great speed. The Charleston route appears to be still open, and they are looking
> for two more arrivals during the morning.[42]

But Porter he had not been hired to play tag with blockade runners, including the

Colonel Lamb. He had the job of capturing the real Colonel Lamb and Fort Fischer and as

soon as he arrived, began to make good on that promise. His intelligence focus was not

on the blockade but on obtaining updated information of Fort Fisher's defenses and

surrounding environment. In three months, between October 1864 and January 1865,

Porter cooperated with the Army in capturing Fort Fisher which fell to Union troops on

January 15, 1865 after a second assault. A month later, Admiral Dahlgren entered

Charleston harbor after General Sherman's army had isolated that city. In just four short

months, with massive Army cooperation, the Union Navy effectively ended blockade

running on the American East Coast. Two months later General Lee surrendered at

Appomattox and the war was over.

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[1]ORN, 10:503. Editorial comment from the *Daily Journal* of Wilmington,
September 27, 1864, sent as extracts by Lee to the squadron.

[2]ORN, 9:496.

[3]ORN, 9:496.

[4]ORN, 9:388.

[5]Wise, 278.

[6]ORN, 9:496

[7]Wise, 144-147.

[8]ORN, 10:477; and Tousley 412-414

[9]Price, 125-131. Statistics support Consul Kirkpatrick's reports on the resurgence
of sailing vessels. According to Price, there indeed was a small rise in the number of non-
steaming vessels using ports along the Georgia and Florida Coasts. In 1862 there were a
total of 24 ships engaged in running the blockade in that area. in 1863, there was 39. By
1864, the number grew to 48 then fell off appreciably in 1865 to just one (Ibid.).

[10]Wise, 145.

[11]Wise, 148-150.

[12]ORN, 9:539.

[13]ORN, 9:540.

[14]ORN, 9:538.

[15]ORN, 9:729-730.

[16]ORN, 9:496.

[17]ORN, 9:482.

[18]ORN, 9:497.

[19]ORN 9:496. Lee wrote the following comment to Welles after the success of the *Sassacus*, " The *Sassacus* has done well and the *Eutaw* will do well, and may be better as to speed than the *Sassacus*. I congratulate you on the success of this class. With a little improvement in the steering in some of them, they'll beat the Clyders (ORN 9:496).

[20]ORN, 10:318.

[21]Roswell H. Lamson, *Lamson of the Gettysburg, The Civil War Letters of LT Roswell H. Lamson USN*, ed. by James and Patricia McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 213.

[22]Ibid.

[23]ORN, 10:160.

[24]Feis, 304-305.

[25]ORN, 9:312.

[26]Browning, 172.

[27]ORN, 10:393-394.

[28]ORN, 10:391.

[29]ORN, 10:359

[30]ORN, 10:360-361

[31]ORN, 10:361

[32]ORN, 10:358.

[33]ORN, 10:358; and Wise, 240, 248. Even today with all available records, it's hard to determine who was right. The ship reported on the morning of August 7, was probably not the *Falcon* as the it was reported to have left Halifax on the August 8, by the Consulate office. All ships chased on the morning of the seventh were outbound. The *Falcon's* appearance was similar to other ships of her class with three stacks, including *Flamingo* which is estimated to have departed Wilmington around August 7. The *Falcon* entered Wilmington on some unknown date between August 8 and 24, when it departed

Wilmington on a return trip to Halifax. It might very well have been the ship *Mount Vernon* sighted inbound on the August 12 (Ibid.).

[34]ORN, 10:471.

[35]ORN, 9:422.

[36]ORN, 10:358 and 414-415.

[37]ORN, 10:410-412.

[38]ORN, 10:492.

[39]ORN, 10:222; and ORN, 10:504. Lee's estimate of 12,600 wagons was for the 42 ships that had been captured/destroyed by July 01, 1864. Lee's lists 50 ships captured or destroyed as of August 1, 1864 (Ibid.)

[40]Like all new commanders when taking over a command, Porter immediately reorganized the squadron, issued new orders and new regulations. One of the more interesting modifications was his idea of using calcium lights for picket duty and forbidding ships in chase of runners from picking up cotton as long as the vessel could be seen. However, even with these changes, he did not fundamentally change the system of blockade developed by Lee (ORN, 10:557-562).

[41]ORN, 10:563.

[42]ORN, 10:601-602.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

> The study of every officer should be the science of naval warfare and his
> watchword "preparation for battle," for war is his profession. If such be
> the aim of the . . . navy, the information . . . should be published by an
> Intelligence Office.[1]
>
> Charles Rogers, *Naval Intelligence*

The momentous news of the capture of Fort Fisher arrived in Bermuda and

Nassau a few days after the fort fell and was greeted with trepidation:

> The U.S. Consul in Bermuda recorded that 'Upon receit (sic) of the information
> . . . business was nearly suspended, and had they know the Islands were to sink in
> twenty-four hours, there could hardly have been greater consternation; the
> blockade runners and their aiders feel their doom is sealed.[2]

The war ended, and on the whole, naval intelligence played a successful role

towards achieving this victory. Throughout the war intelligence was able to paint an

accurate picture of the enemy and allowed commanders to understand the enemy's

strengths and weaknesses, motives and methods. The system that provided intelligence to

the fleet developed over time to support peacetime missions. It relied heavily on the

support of institutions and personnel outside the Navy and the initiative of its own

commanders. This included the use of State Departments consuls who relayed

information to the fleet and never flinched in their willingness to report on Confederate

naval actives.

Within the fleet, squadron and division commanders retained personal control of

all intelligence activities within their authority and displayed a remarkable grasp of all-

source intelligence analysis that had been developed through scientific study before the

war. Using all available intelligence, Du Pont, Lee and their subordinates were able to

develop new tactics and strategies that enabled them through trial and error to severely

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restrict, but not stop blockade running. Secretary Welles and Fox also displayed a remarkable grasp of the Intelligence. They both allowed their subordinate commanders the leeway to make decisions for the enforcement of the blockade by providing them with essential information on which to base their decisions and then backed them up with the ships, arms, men, and equipment to get the job done. Their one shortcoming was their refusal to support or fund intelligence activities outside the Navy Department that would have benefited the service.

Naval intelligence also had its share of problems and failures. The system was never flexible enough to allow the timely use of information to capture individual ships. This was partly due to period communications methods of delivering information to ships at sea that remained unresolved until the advent of radio in the early twentieth century. Even the telegraph did not seriously enhance the flow of information to the fleet. Rapid communications stopped at the waters edge and only written dispatch (and to lesser extent visual signals) could permeate this boundary. The Navy also had problems in surveillance and identification. This included the correlation of information to individual sightings or chases of blockade runners. A host of factors influenced these problems and included the timely dissemination of intelligence, the operating environment and tactics blockade runners employed to avoid detection and capture. This remained a major obstacle in the enforcement of the blockade right to the end of the war.

The Navy suffered from institutional norms, traditions, and weaknesses that influenced the effectiveness of intelligence and restricted the development of the naval staff and system. The service never developed an intelligence section on the Admiral's staff or within the Navy Department. The traditional instance of a commander retaining

control of all intelligence functions added considerable burden to an already oppressive workload and probably inhibited the development of better methods of using information.

One weakness resulting from the lack of an intelligence directive was the lack of stated goals for the blockade. The mission always remained the successful interdiction of Confederate and neutral ships from entering Southern ports, but what was the main goal in meeting this objective. Was stopping 50 percent of all shipping a good target, 75 percent or all of them? It appears the Navy wanted all of them stopped, but was this realistic? Though the Navy maintained an accurate count of the number of ships employed in blockade running, it never tried to determine how many ships must be stopped to be truly effective.

This type of analysis is normally the duties of an intelligence staff. In 1861, there was also no organized intelligence office, institution or agency within the Navy or nationally, that was charged with or capable of making this type of prediction. How much material did the Confederates require to wage war and how much was actually getting through the blockade? Historians continue to argue this question today. An official estimation by the either the Navy or War Departments would have gone a long way towards determining just how effective the blockade had to be to make it a success. The development of a permanent intelligence organization had to wait until the American naval reformation of 1870s and 1880s and a national intelligence agency until after World War Two.

This then revisits the original question of just how effective was the Navy in stopping blockade running and what role did intelligence have in this effort? According to Marcus Price, the number of successful attempts at running the blockade through

Wilmington for the entire war was 84 percent for both sail and steam driven vessels. The number of successful attempts in 1864 was 83 percent; 85 percent for steamers alone. It appears by these numbers that the blockade, from a statistical view, was never able to stop roughly more than 15 percent of all attempts. Price's study also indicates the number of steam driven vessels engaged in blockade running actually increased during the war, from 21 in 1861 to 98 in 1864. However, the number of total vessels, both sail and steam went down, from 274 in 1861, to 112. In 1864, there were but 14 sailing vessels plying the trade.

From these statistics, one could include that the blockade and intelligence effort to support it was simply inadequate. But Marcus himself says otherwise. "The blockade was the North's most potent weapon, the one that made it impossible for the industrially impoverished South to win. Its effectiveness lay not so much in the ships and cargoes captured as in the ships and cargoes its mere existence kept away from Southern ports. Scores of vessels that would have plied their merchandise high on the Carolina wharves had there been no blockade simply did not choose to incur the risk of capture."[3] Marcus goes on to say that by May 1861, when the blockade had yet to be established. "There were not less than 181 entrances and clearances of the Carolina ports. At this rate, 1448 attempts should have been made to enter and clear these ports . . . [by the end of] 1861. Actually, there are known to have been 733 attempts" one-half the number there should have been in peacetime.[4] What would have been the result of the war if the South had unimpeded access to trade and the world's markets? These numbers do not take into account the exorbitant price for food and civilian products charged throughout the South. The blockade imposed untold suffering on the common Southerner and hastened the end

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of the war. Intelligence played a crucial part in restricting the amount of trade to the levels described by Marcus in his studies.

In 1861, the United States Navy entered the war as a second rate naval force. Its ships and men had never conducted operations on the scale of a first rate naval power. By 1865 it was the largest navy in the world and had effectively conducted a blockade thought impossible a few years previously. Although the country and service quickly abdicated this role, the lessons learned and taste of victory was not easily forgotten. In the 1870's a group of reform minded officers fought a different campaign, one to create a modern Navy. The result was a steel fleet that that took its rightful place as a first rate naval power, consummate with the nation's position as a world leader. One lesson was heeded, the need for a permanent intelligence organization to support a modern Navy. In 1882, the Navy created the Office of Naval Intelligence, the country's first established intelligence organization. The ultimate victory of naval intelligence in the Civil War wasn't its success or failure on the blockade, but the lessons it taught an adolescent Navy about the need for good, solid intelligence to support its continuing mission of protecting and serving the nation.

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[1] Charles C Rogers. "Naval Intelligence," U.S. Naval Institute, *Proceedings* 9 (1883): 661.

[2] Wise, 209.

[3] Marcus, 53.

[4] Ibid.
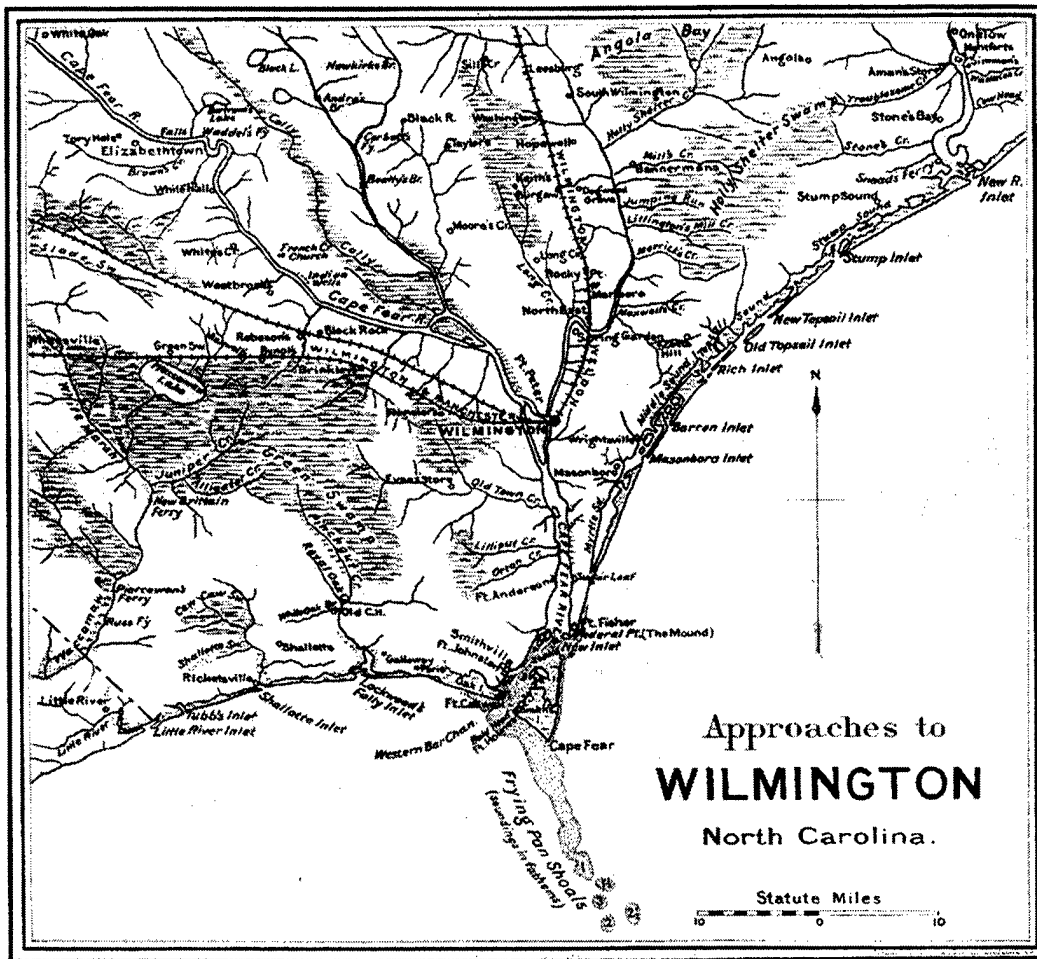
Map 1. Approaches to Wilmington, North Carolina. Source: ORN.
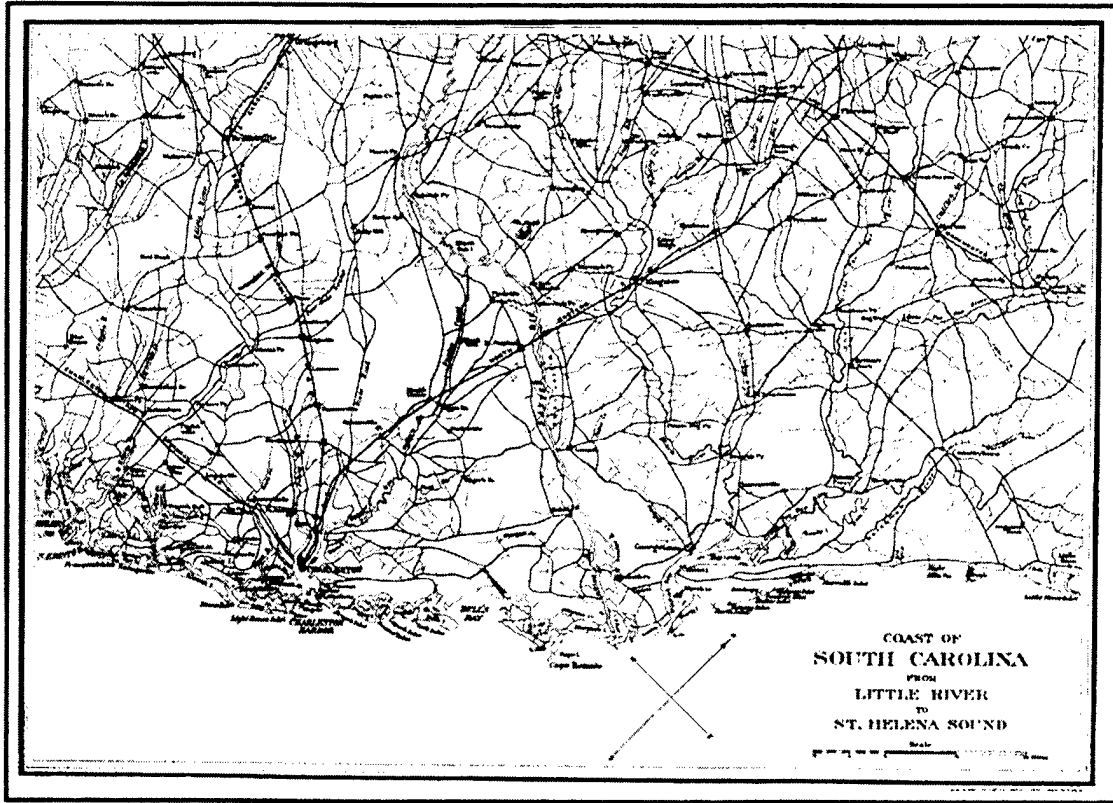
Map 2. Coast of South Carolina vicinity of Charleston. Source: ORN.
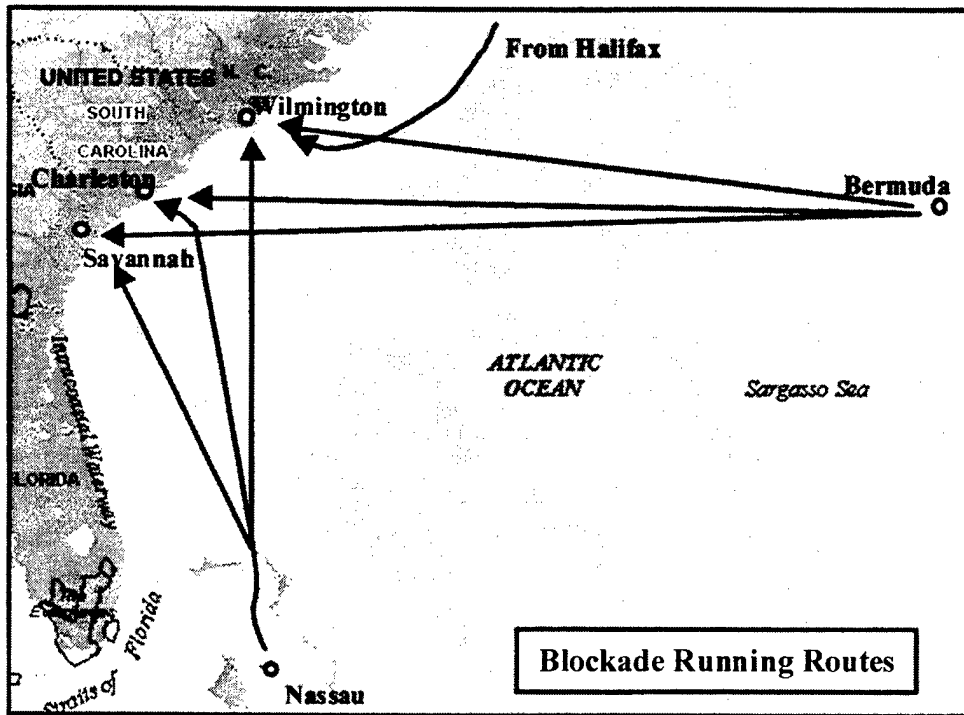
Map 3. Blockade running routes in the Western Atlantic.

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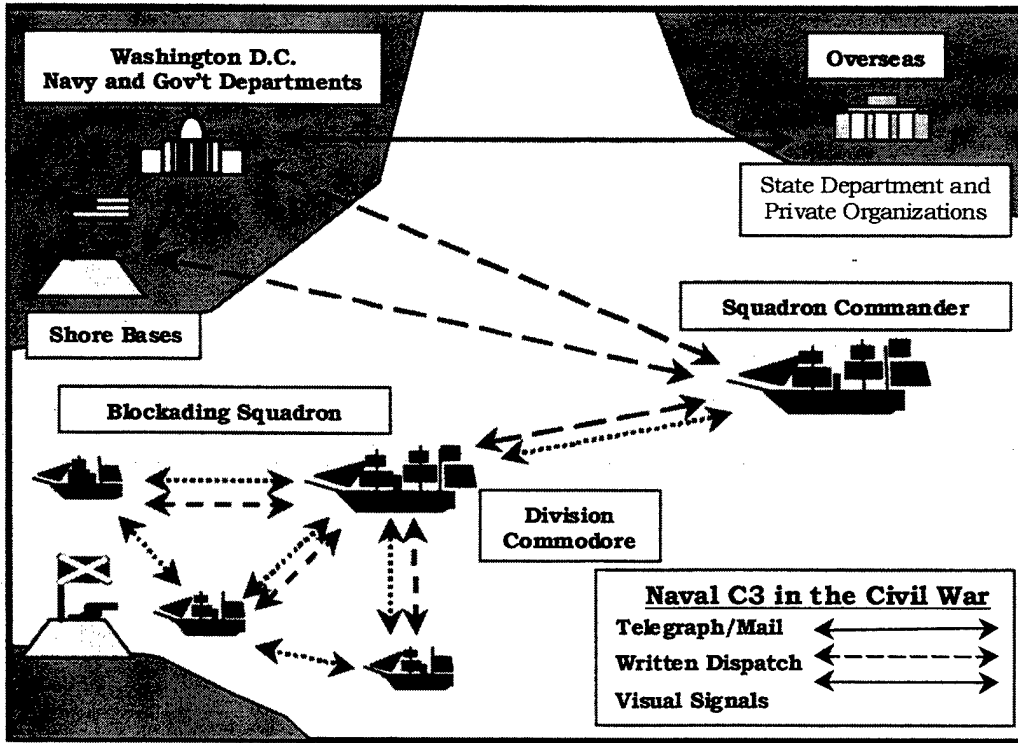
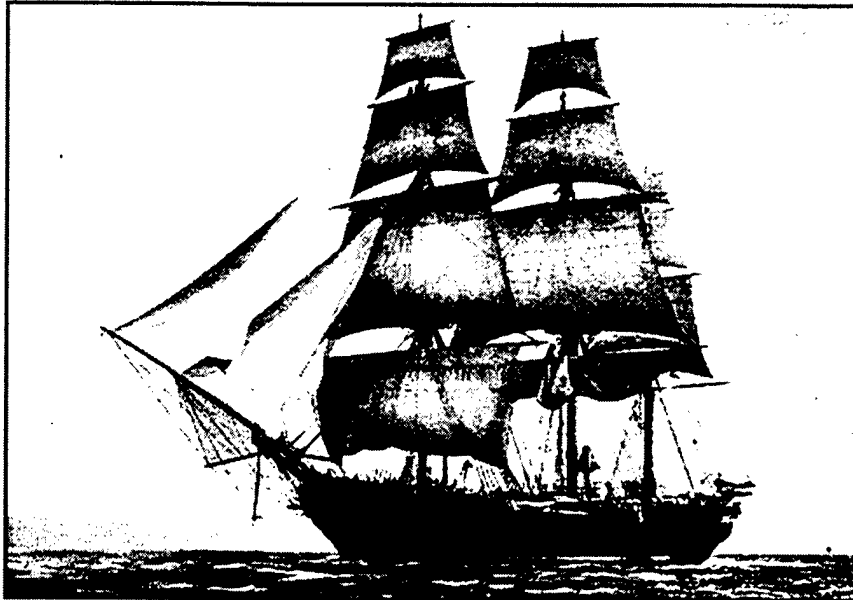Figure 1. Union Navy Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence architecture diagram

Figure 2. USS *Constellation*. The "Eyes of the Fleet," frigates like *Constellation* and its predecessors were assigned intelligence collection duties in the age of sail. Large, fast and powerful, they could act independently while on collection duties or relaying communications. In the U.S. Navy, they deployed singularly overseas or acted as commerce raiders in war. During the Civil War, their large size precluded active use on the blockade and were instead, used as flagships, stations ships or for shore bombardment. Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies
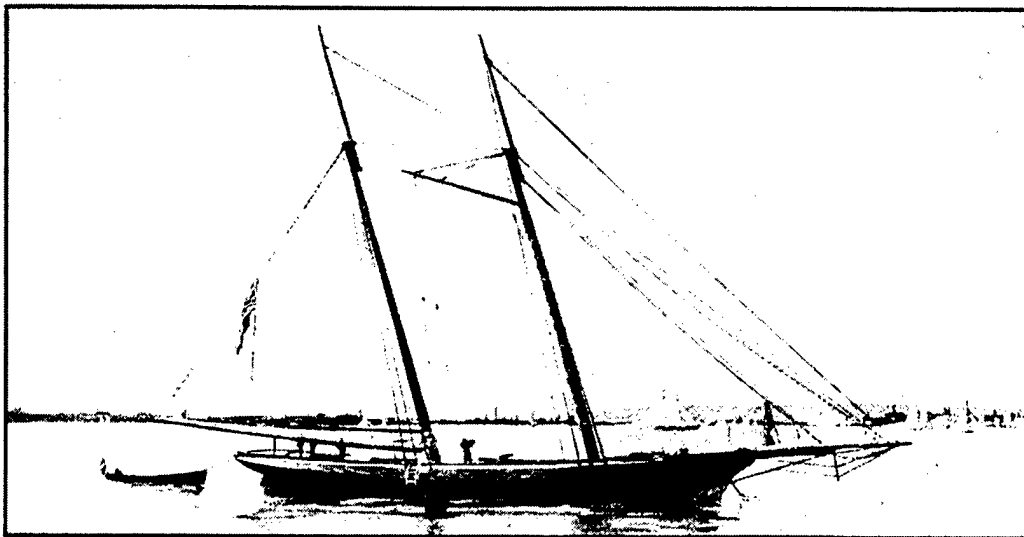
Figure 3, Yacht *America*. The famous yacht that gave its name to the *America's Cup* was recovered by Union naval forces in 1862 and used as a fast dispatch vessel. Ships like *America* represented the most reliable means of delivering written dispatches and letters over the world's oceans and navies used ships like *America* for long-distance naval communications. Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies
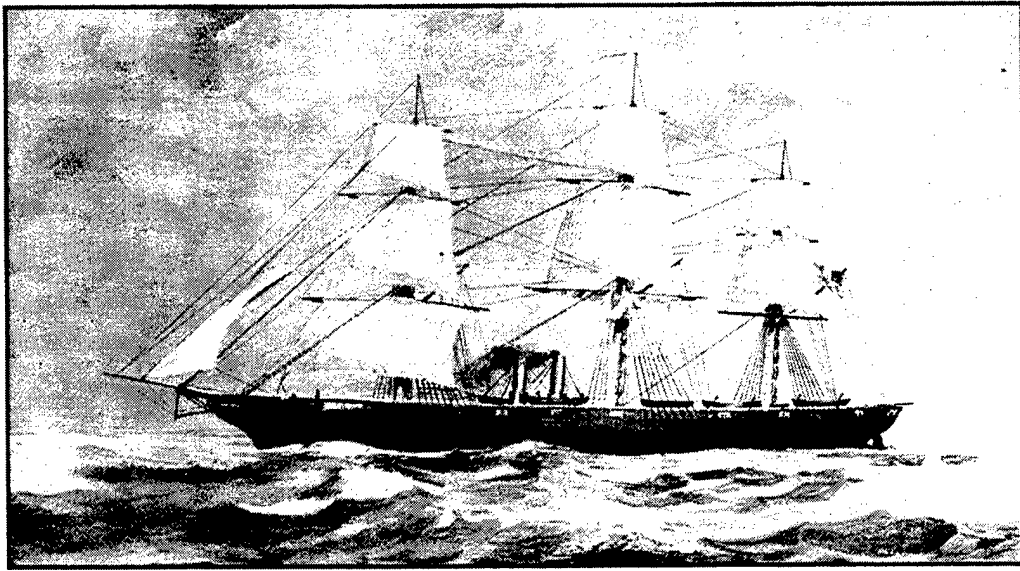
Figure 4. USS *Niagara*. A pre-Civil War steam frigate and one of the first ships sent south to establish the Union blockade. This ship was diverted from her original mission to blockade Charleston by intelligence reports that suggested the Confederates would attempt to run arms through the blockade in the Gulf of Mexico and represents an early example of the effect intelligence had on blockade operations. Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies
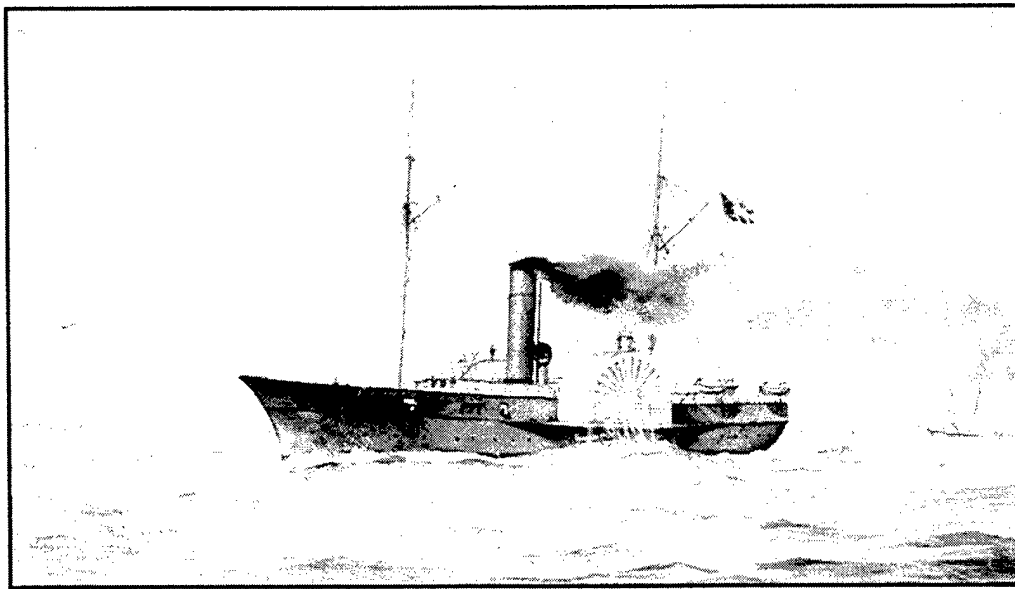

Figure 5. CSS *Nashville*. One of the Navy's fist nemesis on the blockade. Ships like Nashville were used early in the war as blockade runners because of their size, speed and endurance making the Trans-Atlantic run from England to Dixie. They were ultimately rejected as blockade runners in favor of smaller steam and sail powered vessels operating out of Bermuda or the Bahamas. Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies
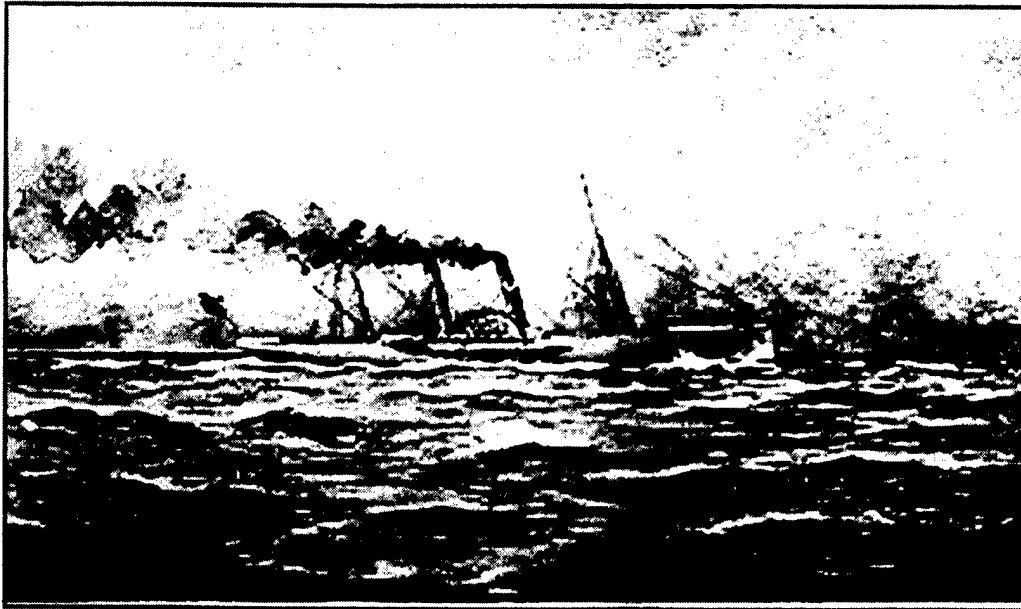
Figure 6. Blockade Runner *Banshee*. Typical of the first generation runners in size, speed and silhouette, *Banshee* was unique in that this vessel was built with a steel hull on an iron frame. An extremely successful runner, Banshee made multiple runs through the blockade until captured by USS *James Adger* on November 21, 1863.
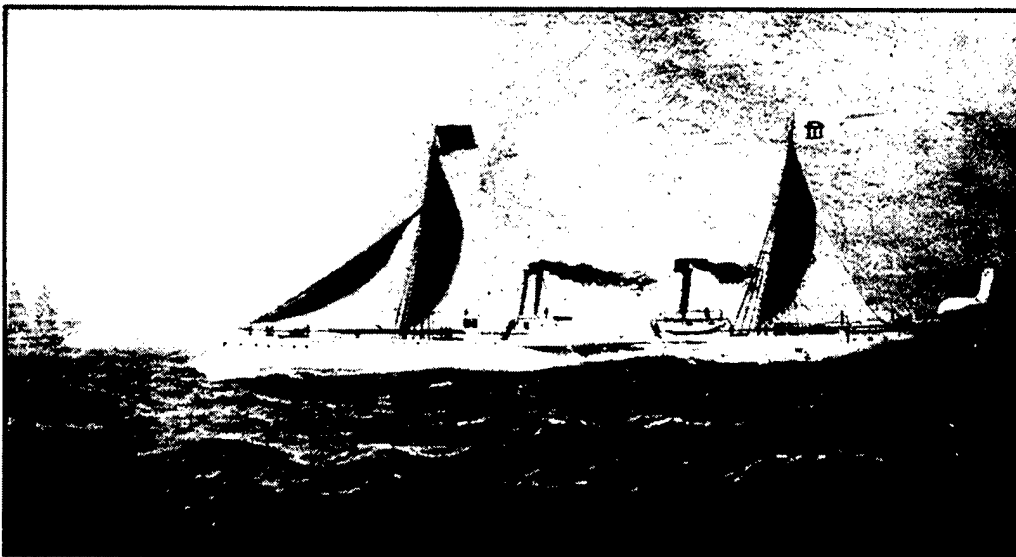Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies

Figure 7. Blockade Runner Armstrong. This picture shows the use of both sail and steam for propulsion. Due to a limited mount of coal, blockade runners used sails exclusively except when making the final run into or out of port or when chased. The lack of a large fuel supply made them vulnerable in a long chase against determined Union blockaders. Armstrong was captured in just such a chase by USS *Gettysburg*, itself a former blockade runner. Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies
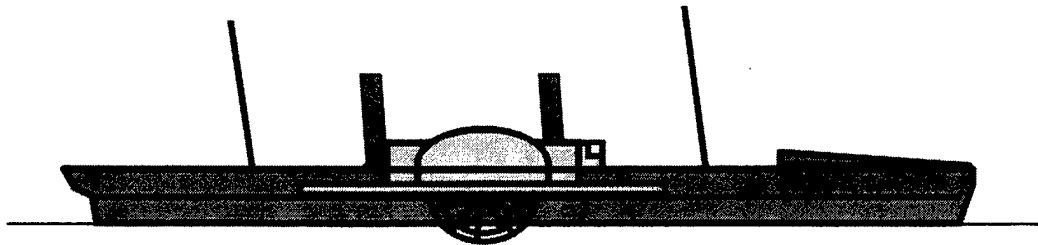
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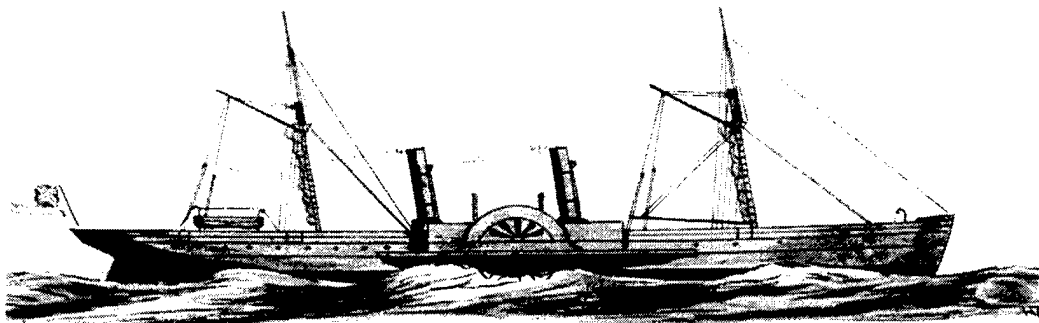Figure 8. Side view drawing of *Banshee*, one of the first generation Clyde Steamers.

Figure 9. Side view drawing of *Robert E. Lee*. *R..E. Lee* was one of the most successful blockade runners making 13 round trips through the blockade before capture on November 9, 1863. The vessels was bought and taken into service by the U.S. Navy and renamed USS *Fort Donelson*. Source: U.S. Navy
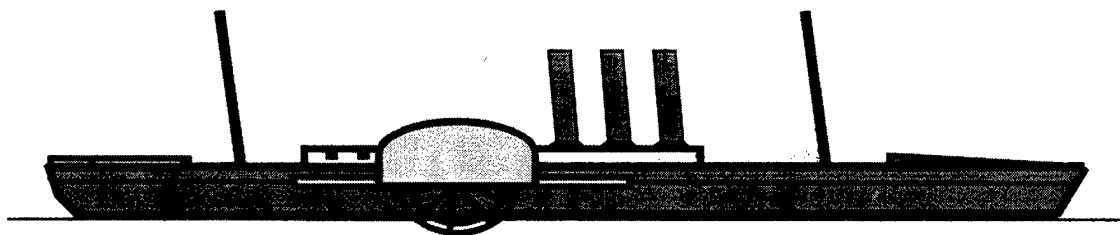

Figure 10. Side view drawing of *Flamingo*. *Flamingo* was one of the *Falcon*-class of ships built late in the war. A second-generation Clyde Steamer, it had all the latest contrivances including its distinctive recognition feature of three funnels. *Flamingo* and its sister caused a great deal of confusion for the Navy in its attempts at tracking these vessels to and from port.

Figure 11. Picket boat and crew on patrol. A romanticized rendition of a U.S. Navy picket boat on blockade by *Harper's Weekly*. It does show all the essential details of this extremely important but hazardous duty. Source: U.S. Navy
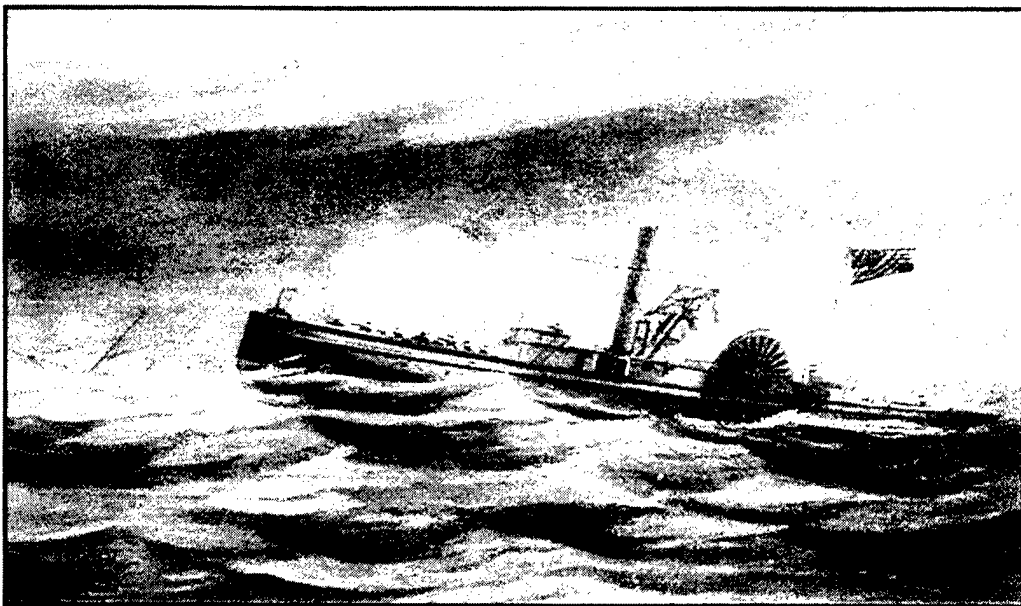

Figure 12. Picket Tugboat. Due to the extreme hazard of picket boat duty, blockade commanders began using tug boats on picket patrols. Shown here is the USS *Eolus*, one of several small steamships used by the Navy for such duties. Source: U.S. Navy
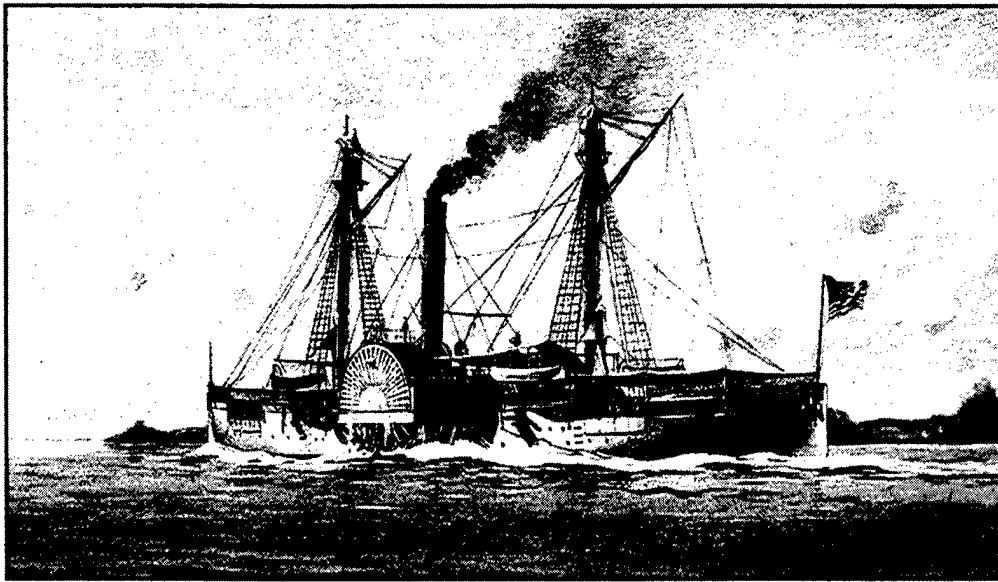
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Figure 13. USS Agawam. One of several Sassacus class double-enderss built specifically for the war against the Confederacy. Extremely versatile, double-enderss were used in a variety of roles and missions including blockade duty where it was hoped they would successfully counter the Clyde Steamers. Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies
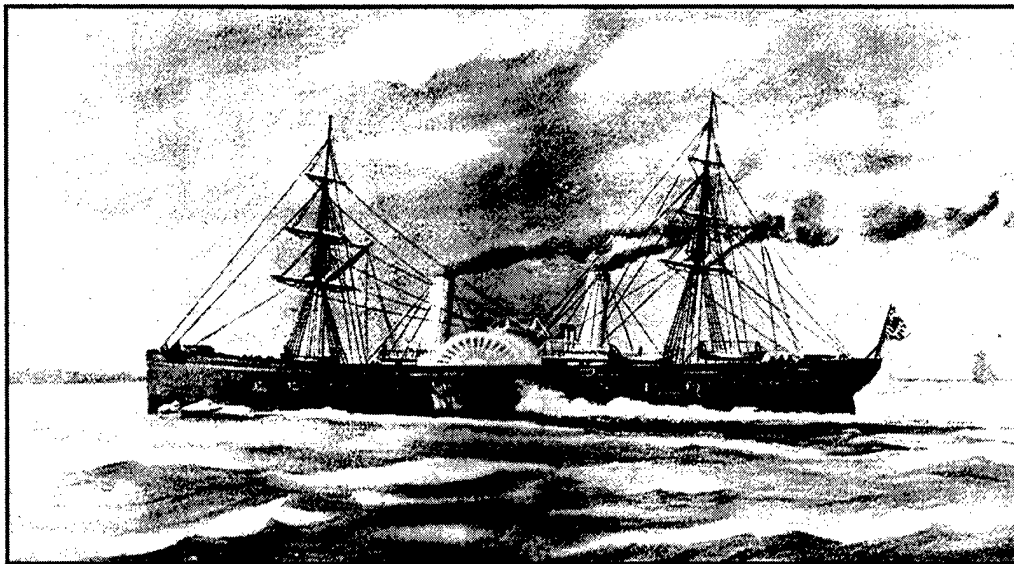

Figure 14. USS *Vanderbilt*. One of the many civilian acquisitions, the *Vanderbilt* lead a successful career as a dispatch and supply ship, hunter of commerce raiders and blockader on the outside blockade. Fast, powerful and with great endurance, V*anderbilt* was the U.S. Navy's answer to the Clyde Steamer threat. Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies
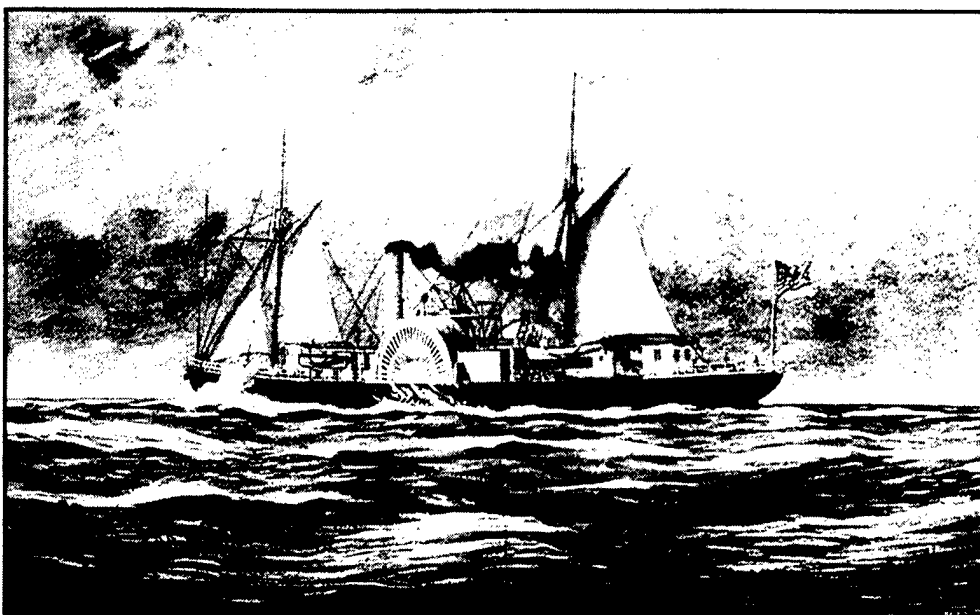
Figure 15. USS *Malvern*, ex-blockade runner *Ella and Annie*. In an ironic twist of fate, this captured runner became the flagship of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron for both Rear Admiral Lee and Porter. Shown here, *Malvern* is displaying use of both sail and steam. Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies
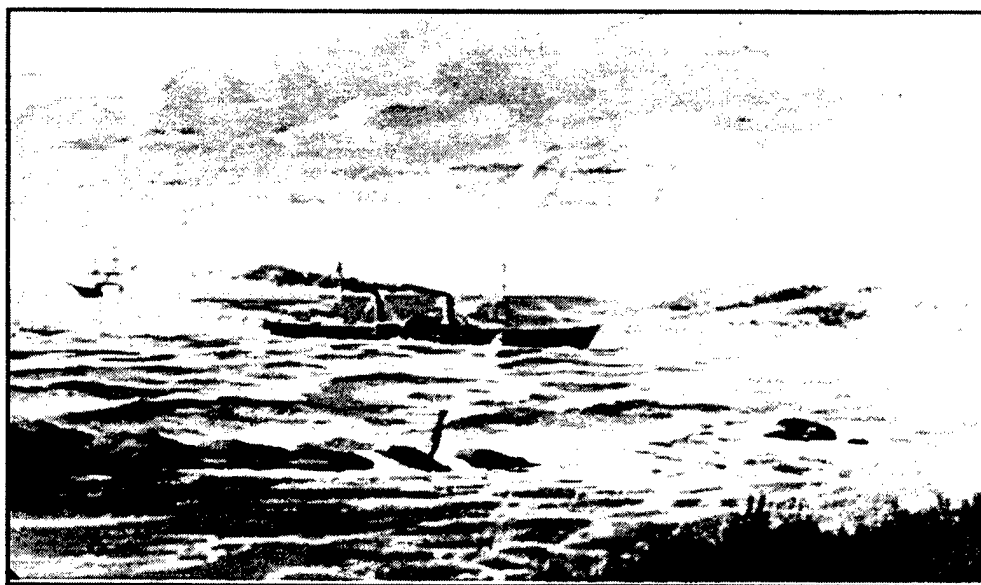

Figure 16. Blockade Runner heading for Port. A fanciful illustration of a successful attempt at blockade running, this drawing was featured in the centennial addition of the U.S. Navy's *Civil War Naval Chronology*. It does display all the elements of the blockade; the elusive Clyde Steamer, the blockading fleet, stormy weather and a hostile shore. Only the time is wrong as most attempts at blockade running occurred at night.
Source: U.S. Navy

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