OPERATIONS OF THE WESTERN GULF BLOCKADING SQUADRON AND THE DEPARTMENT OF THE GULF IN THE GULF OF MEXICO, 1862-1864

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

JEFFREY W. DESPAIN, CDR, USN
B.S., Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, 1975

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ABSTRACT

OPERATIONS OF THE WESTERN GULF BLOCKADING SQUADRON AND THE DEPARTMENT OF THE GULF IN THE GULF OF MEXICO, 1862-1864 by CDR Jeffrey W. Despain, USN, 206 pages.

During the Civil War, there were no joint commands with all service components unified under the same commander, with few exceptions. Instead, the command and control structure was based on close cooperation between the services, which was termed "combined" operations. This study analyzes the combined operations of the U. S. Navy's Western Gulf Blockading Squadron and the U. S. Army's Department of the Gulf to determine the significant factors that affected the success, or failure, of these operations in the Gulf of Mexico between 1862-1864.

The study analyzes the battle of New Orleans, operations along the Texas coast including Galveston, Sabine Pass, and the Rio Grande, and the battle of Mobile Bay. In these operations, the personalities and tactical abilities of the Union military leaders, sea power, and technology clearly had the most significant affect on the success of combined operations. The limitations of the command structure and the necessity to develop new tactics placed an added emphasis on the abilities of the commanders.

Although Union combined operations were successful overall, it is evident that joint operations have a clear advantage over the divided command structure of combined operations. Joint operations would have enhanced the operations and achieved greater success.

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INTRODUCTION

> The effects of power at sea intelligently integrated with power ashore has seldom shown more clearly than in the Civil War.[1]
>
> Virgil C. Jones, The Civil War at Sea

In April 1862, Union forces captured New Orleans, the South's largest city; in September 1863, Union forces were defeated in an attempt to capture Sabine Pass in Texas; and in August 1864, Union forces occupied Mobile Bay, closing Mobile to Confederate blockade runners. Each of these operations, and other similar operations in the Gulf of Mexico during the Civil War, was a combined effort of Union naval forces from the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron and Union army forces from the Department of the Gulf. There has been little study of these "combined" operations despite the fact that these operations can help provide insight and understanding of the development of modern joint operations. This thesis analyzes the "combined" operations of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron and the Department of the Gulf to determine the significant factors that affected the success, or failure, of "combined" operations in the Gulf between 1862-1864.

"Combined" operations in the Civil War, particularly those in the Gulf of Mexico, have not received the attention nor the level of analysis that other facets of the war have received. Of the many books

and studies on the American Civil War, a relatively small percentage discuss "combined" operations and even fewer analyze these operations or their impact on the development of joint operations. The majority of books and studies which discuss Union naval actions are primarily narrative accounts and provide little detail of the interaction or impact of "combined" operations with the Army. The same is true of most of the accounts of the Army's operations in the war. This lack of documentation and analysis leaves a significant gap in the knowledge and understanding of an important facet of military operations in the Civil War. This also misses an important opportunity to examine examples of operations between the Army and the Navy before the advent of joint operations and look at what affected their success and failure and how these factors influenced the development of the modern command and control system of joint operations.

"Combined" operations in the Civil War had a different definition than the term as used today. Civil War "combined" operations are defined as "all operations requiring strategic or tactical cooperation between naval and land forces under separate command."[2] Civil War operations between the Army and the Navy were not joint in the modern sense of joint operations as they did not have a central, unified commander of all forces. They also were not multinational as the term "combined" operations means today; forces from other countries were not involved. Civil War combined operations were agreed to by the individual services and the planning and success of the operation, for the most part, depended on the cooperation of the individual service commanders and how well each service commander executed his portion of

the plan. Alfred T. Mahan, the naval strategist, described Civil War combined operations as "the established rule by which, when military and naval forces are acting together, the commander of each branch decides what he can or can not do, and is not under the control of the other."[3]

There were no joint commands in the modern military sense in the Gulf, and with few exceptions, there were none in any Union or Confederate department. In a joint command, all service components are unified under the same joint task force or regional commander with a staff of joint officers controlling and directing all phases of the operation. Joint operations entail unity of command with the joint force commander exercising command and control of all forces involved in an operations, allowing the commander to effectively integrate all his forces and use them as he best determines in order to apply overwhelming force against the enemy.[4] This was not the case during the Civil War where combined Navy and Army operations required the close cooperation of the commanders involved to achieve success, without the benefit of a single, unified command. This requirement created problems at every level, tactical, operational, and strategic, which directly affected the success of combined operations. This thesis will demonstrate that one of the key factors in the success of combined operations was the personality of the military leaders involved in an operation. Military leaders had to have an ability to engender close cooperation with their counterparts in the other service in order to overcome the limitations of split command and control which combined operations created.

This study analyzes the Union Navy's Western Gulf Blockading Squadron's combined operations with the Union Army's Department of the

Gulf against Confederate ports in the Gulf of Mexico from 1862 to 1864. It does not include a detailed discussion of the combined operations on the Mississippi River above New Orleans nor other operations on inland rivers other than to look at their impact on subsequent combined operations. Although the operations on the rivers are an important part of Civil War history, the specialized nature of riverine warfare and the close inter-relationship with the Mississippi River Squadron and the Vicksburg campaign are beyond the scope and focus of this study. As combined operations after the capture of Mobile Bay in 1864 consisted exclusively of riverine operations, this study covers only the period from the formation of the Western Gulf Squadron in January, 1862 through the occupation of Mobile Bay in 1864.

This study is a historical analysis of the inter-relationship and combined operations of the Army and the Navy in the Gulf and does not include detailed descriptions of the tactics used in individual engagements or encounters except as they apply to combined operations. Only the level of tactical detail necessary to provide the context for the combined operations and ensure an understanding of the Army and Navy inter-relationships is included. Primary and secondary sources were used to research and analyze the combined operations in the Gulf to determine the significant factors which affected the success or failure of the combined operations. Within the framework of combined operations, command structure and relationships of involved units, how forces were structured and used, and the planning involved in each operation is analyzed. The operations are presented in both a regional and chronological order to highlight operations in each area and provide

the context to determine the impact of the operation on the war in relation to operations in other theaters of the Civil War.

Chapter 2 provides background information on the status of the Navy at the start of the Civil War in order to provide a context for the Navy's subsequent missions and operations. It includes information on the size and command and control structure of the Navy and looks at the Navy's strategy during the war, including initial actions taken to enforce the blockade. This information assists in setting the stage for the Navy's part of combined operations in the Gulf.

The core of the thesis is the focus on three specific areas of combined operations along the Gulf coast: Union operations to capture New Orleans (Chapter 3), operations along the Texas coast including Galveston, Sabine Pass, and the Rio Grande Campaign (Chapter 4), and the Battle of Mobile Bay (Chapter 5). Even though New Orleans is actually over 100 miles up the Mississippi, it is considered, for all intents and purposes to be a sea coast city[5] and is addressed in this study as such.

This study establishes the background for each operation, and looks at the successes and difficulties encountered in the planning process and execution of operations under the combined operations command structure. This study demonstrates that there were several factors which affected the success or failure of each operation but clearly the most significant were, first, the personality and tactical abilities of the military leaders involved in the operation; second, Union sea power; and third, improvements in technology.

It is clear that Army and Navy forces, working together, were necessary to achieve the objectives established for the military forces in the Gulf. The Battle of Mobile Bay, for example, "gave military tacticians an excellent example of the results which could be achieved by well-organized and well executed combined land and sea operations."[6] However, the divided command structure created by combined operations clearly created obstacles to success in the operations of the Army and the Navy which might have been overcome by operating in a joint, instead of a combined, arena. The significant factors in the success of the operations were those that tended to mitigate the limitations inherent to combined operations.

This study then is applicable to today's military officer by presenting a discussion and analysis of how combined operations worked and the problems encountered. It demonstrates the command and control problems which arise without jointness and clearly shows the advantages of joint operations and the benefits a joint commander enjoys with unity of command. This study also illustrates the importance of military leaders in achieving success.

Additionally, this study fills a gap in the knowledge and understanding of Union military activities in the Gulf of Mexico during the Civil War. Bringing together primary and secondary research, general discussion, and analysis, this study provides a new look into Union operations in the Gulf, enhancing the level of knowledge and understanding of this important facet of Civil War history.

The thesis first takes a look at the Navy as it prepares to go to war in 1861. The operations and command structure of the Navy in the

Civil War is, for the most part, less well known and understood than Army operations. The next chapter provides Navy background and context to enhance the study of combined operations in the Gulf.

Endnotes

[1] Virgil Carrington Jones, The Civil War at Sea (March 1862-July 1863) (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1960), 2:v.

[2] Rowena Reed, Combined Operations in the Civil War (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1978), X.

[3] Alfred T. Mahan, CDR, USN, The Navy in the Civil War, Volume III: The Gulf and Inland Waters: (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), 20. Also see: The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 1: Joint Warfare of the US Armed Forces (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 10.

[4] CJCS, Joint Pub 1, iii.

[5] Alfred T. Mahan, CAPT, USN, Admiral Farragut (1895) (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 238.

[6] Chester G. Hearn, Mobile Bay and the Mobile Campaign, The Last Great Battle of the Civil War (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1993), 211.

CHAPTER 2

THE NAVY GOES TO WAR

> In 1861, the navy was by no means in a condition of readiness for war, although war was the purpose for which it existed.[1]
>
> James R. Soley, The Blockade and the Cruisers

When Gideon Welles assumed duties as Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy on March 7, 1861, the United States Navy was a deep water force of 42 ships spread over the world's oceans, performing its primary mission of protecting U.S. shipping and displaying the flag. The Navy was not on a war footing nor were the majority of the Navy's ships even in home waters. Within a year the Navy had grown to over 260 warships enforcing a blockade of the Confederacy and involved in offensive combined operations with the Army. By 1865, the Navy had nearly 700 ships and its operations during the Civil War had been an integral part of the Union's success. The architect of the Navy's growth and much of its success was the Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles.

The Navy's command structure in 1861 was a peacetime organization. There were five independent bureaus with no integration. Their only uniting factor was that they each reported to the civilian Secretary of the Navy.[2] The five bureaus (Yards and Docks; Construction, Equipment, and Repairs; Provisions and Clothing; Ordnance and Hydrography; and Medicine and Surgery) were administrative, involved

with the day-to-day running of the Navy. In 1862, three additional administrative bureaus were added: Steam Engineering; Navigation; and Equipment and Recruiting. Each bureau was commanded by a senior Navy Line Officer, except Provisions, which was run by a civilian, and Medicine, which was run by a senior Navy surgeon.[3]

There was no Navy General Staff, no Chief of Naval Operations, nor any Navy bureau assigned to develop strategy and tactics, to compile lessons learned, or to otherwise monitor the big picture. No officer, or group of officers, was designated to evaluate tactical or operational information or to provide any input into Navy plans and policies to the civilian Secretary.[4] The Secretary of the Navy was responsible for developing the Navy's war plans. Squadron or ship commanders might provide inputs or suggest operations, but the final decision was left to the Secretary. The Secretary even selected officers for command of ships at sea. This was an inefficient organization, designed for peacetime, which easily could have led to disastrous operations in the Civil War. The fact that this did not happen was due primarily to the good stewardship and abilities of Secretary Welles and his Assistant Secretary Gustavus Fox.

Another leadership problem the Navy faced was an officer promotion policy based solely on seniority coupled with the lack of any type of retirement plan. This resulted in officers remaining on active duty well beyond their ability to command, and often until they died. In 1861 the senior Navy Captain was 75 years old, and unfit for command.[5] The large number of senior officers who remained on active duty also greatly slowed promotions. Officers with over 20 years of

service were still Lieutenants, waiting for command. Command of ships was also based on seniority. Officers who were no longer capable of command were kept on the active rolls but given positions ashore to allow them to stay on active duty. During the course of the war, Welles began to consider an officer's ability as well as seniority when being considered for selection to command, and Congress passed legislation for a retirement plan for both the Navy and the Army. Initially, however, aged officers in command, and in charge of the bureaus, hurt the Navy's ability to conduct the war.

In 1861 there were no Admirals in the Navy. Congress had not approved the rank because it "smacked of aristocracy."[6] The only permanent ranks in the Navy were lieutenant, commander, and captain. The lack of admirals, coupled with the lack of a general staff, meant there were no Navy counterparts to General Scott, the Army General in Chief, and his staff. Coordination between the Army and the Navy in Washington was up to the Navy secretary and his assistant.

The title "Flag-Officer" was a term courteously given to the commander of a squadron of ships. In order to provide some parity between the services, President Lincoln, by Executive Order on October 4, 1861, made flag-officers in the Navy equivalent to Army major generals.[7] The rank of rear admiral was approved by Congress in 1862, and the rank of vice admiral in 1865.

Due to the Navy's organization and rank structure, a great deal of responsibility fell on the Secretary of the Navy. Lincoln's first choice for this position was Nathaniel P. Banks, a former governor of Massachusetts and former Speaker of the House of Representatives. Banks

was not then available though he would later become a general in the Union Army, one of Lincoln's political generals. At the suggestion of Hannibal Hamlin, the Vice-President, Lincoln chose Gideon Welles to be the Navy Secretary.[8] Welles was politically well connected in his home state of Connecticut and in Washington. A journalist by trade, Welles had originally been a Democrat but shifted to the Republican Party in 1855 after the Democrats passed the Missouri Compromise. He had served in the Connecticut state legislature and had been a postmaster in Connecticut, a political appointment during this era. He had also served as Chief of the Navy Bureau of Provisions and Clothing under President Polk during the Mexican War.[9]

Welles proved to be an outstanding Secretary. He was responsible for all aspects of running the Navy. He not only oversaw the administration of the Navy through the bureaus but was responsible for force allocation, the buildup of the Navy, and the Navy's strategy, or lack of strategy, during the war. Squadron commanders and individual ship commanders sent their reports and requirements to Welles and he in turn sent out their orders and mission assignments. Much of the Navy's success in the Civil War can be linked to Welles's ability as an administrator and leader. He ran the Navy without incurring the level of presidential intervention that Lincoln exhibited with Army operations. In his diary, Welles wrote:

> I have administered the Navy Department almost entirely independent of Cabinet consultation, and I may say almost without direction of the President, who not only gives me his confidence but intrusts all naval matters to me. This has not been my wish. I should prefer that every important naval movement should pass a cabinet review.[10]

The Secretary's principal assistant was the Clerk of the Navy. Welles wanted to appoint William Faxon, a political friend from Hartford, to the post. Lincoln asked Welles to consider giving the job to Gustavus Fox, a former naval officer and the brother-in-law of Lincoln's Postmaster General, Montgomery Blair. Fox had been involved in the abortive effort to relieve Fort Sumter and Welles had been planning to offer Fox a commission in the Navy and command of ship. Fox, however, wanted the Chief Clerk's job and used his political contacts to get it.[11] Welles agreed to give the job to Fox, who became Chief Clerk on May 8, 1861.

On July 24, 1861, at the President's request, Congress created the post of Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Lincoln appointed Fox to the post on 1 August.[12] William Faxon then became the Chief Clerk.

Fox had served as an officer in the Navy and merchant marine for 18 years, leaving the service in 1856 to work at the Bay State Mills in Massachusetts.[13] He knew many of the senior officers from his time in the Navy and corresponded with many of them throughout the war. In this unofficial correspondence he provided the officers with insight into the thinking in Washington and some of the reasoning behind orders they had received. In return, they provided him with unofficial reports that helped Fox, and the Navy Department, keep abreast of events at sea.[14] Fox performed the duties of the present-day Chief of Naval Operations. He was also both a chief of staff and a general staff for Welles.[15] Welles was the boss and the policy maker; coupled with Fox's experience and ability, they created a unique and powerful team that effectively ran the Navy throughout the Civil War.[16]

The Navy Welles and Fox led was not the large, modern navy needed to execute a blockade of the Confederacy and to conduct combined operations with the Army. There were only 42 ships in commission in the United States Navy on March 4, 1861. Only 23 were modern, efficient steam propelled ships (steamers), 19 of which had modern screw propellers. The other four were older paddle wheelers. There were also two old, inefficient steam driven paddle wheelers still in commission but of limited value. The rest of the ships were even older sailing vessels.[17]

There were only eleven Navy ships in U.S. waters in March. Only three of those were in Northern ports and available to receive immediate orders. The other 31 ships were on foreign stations around the world, protecting the U.S. merchant fleet, which was the second largest in the world at the time, and showing the flag in foreign ports and seas.[18] This was what the Navy had been built for, large heavy ships designed to engage other ships at sea, and to prevent a blockade of the United States as had occurred in 1812, and as the United States had done to Mexico in 1848.

The Navy in 1861 was a deep water force not trained or practiced in operating along the U.S. coast, nor in operating with the Army.[19] Most of the ships were relatively deep draft and could not operate close to shore. This was nearly identical to the situation the Navy had faced at the start of the Mexican War in 1846.

The Mexican War

During the Mexican War, the Navy was ordered to blockade the Mexican ports in the Gulf of Mexico, seize Mexican vessels, capture

coastal towns, and support the Army.[20] The large ships of the line, with their deep draft, were unable to work in the shallow waters at the mouths of the bays and rivers where they could most effectively blockade. As a result they were of limited value in maintaining a tight blockade of the Mexican ports.[21] Large numbers of shallow draft schooners and brigs had to be purchased in order to conduct an effective blockade. Shallow draft vessels were also required to attack the Mexican ports, most of which were located up river from the coast.[22]

The majority of operations in the Mexican War were individual service operations. Almost all the attacks against the Mexican ports on the Gulf coast were carried out by forces made up of sailors and marines, supported by Navy ships.[23] Army forces often then took over garrison duties due to a shortage of marines and sailors. The major exception to unilateral operations was the assault on Vera Cruz.

General Winfield Scott had originally planned for the landing at Vera Cruz to be an Army-only operation. Scott and Commodore David Connor, the naval commander in the Gulf, conducted a reconnaissance of the landing site at Collado Beach, two and one-half miles south of Vera Cruz, when Scott arrived in the Gulf. When the reconnaissance showed that the area was too small for all the Army transports to operate at once, Scott had to accept Connor's earlier offer to use Navy ships to help transport his troops.[24] The landing at Vera Cruz on March 9, 1847, consisted of 70 ships and 12,000 soldiers, sailors, and marines and was the largest amphibious operation prior to World War II. The troops landed in surfboats, the first specially built American landing craft, under the guns of the Navy fleet.[25] Naval vessels also assisted in the

bombardment of the fortifications of Vera Cruz. Thus the Vera Cruz campaign was a true combined operation.

Many of the major Civil War naval officers had participated in the Mexican War though most were involved only in blockade operations, arriving after the Vera Cruz campaign.[26] Though they carried away several lessons learned from the war, the Navy as a whole seemed to have lost most of the lessons learned. Thus, in 1861, the U.S. Navy was prepared to combat a blockade but did not have the right types of ships to conduct its own coastal blockade. The Navy also did not train with the Army in amphibious or other combined operations so that skills developed in the Mexican War were lost by the start of the Civil War. Another lesson that was lost was the role and size of the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps

The Marines' primary missions were as guards on board ships and at naval installations ashore. On board ship they were also used to man guns and to join landing parties for limited operations ashore, such as boat raids or temporary occupation of forts.[27] Ashore they provided guards and security to naval yards and arsenals. These had been the Marines' missions since their inception, and little changed during the war.

Although manpower shortages had affected naval operations ashore during the Mexican War, the Navy and the Marines never developed their own amphibious assault force during or after that war. The same problems arose during the Civil War with the same result. Marines remained, for the most part, in small detachments aboard ship or at naval installations. Marines and sailors conducted limited operations

ashore but major amphibious operations were left to combined operations of the Army and the Navy.

A Marine battalion of about 350 men did participate in the First Battle of Bull Run but operations ashore did not become part of their normal mission assignments. A Marine battalion was part of the 15,000 man landing force in the Port Royal operation, but its boat sank during a hurricane enroute to Port Royal. Therefore they did not participate in the operation.[28] Another Marine battalion participated in the Fort Fisher campaign in 1865. These three examples of battalion sized operations by the Marines are the exceptions to their normal operations during the Civil War. The Marine Corps never grew large enough to become a major player in amphibious operations during the Civil War. The Marines had 1,892 officers and men on January 1, 1861, and never exceeded 3,900 men during the war.[29]

The fact the Marines never developed the amphibious assault role into a primary mission during the war can be traced to a lack of imagination at both the Navy Department and Marine Headquarters.[30] The Marines were faced with one of the same problems the Navy had, aged military leadership which was not prepared for the changes the Civil War required. The Colonel Commandant of the Corps was 68-year-old Lieutenant Colonel Harris. Well past his prime, he did not have the vision nor the energy to reshape the Marine Corps.[31] He had replaced 74-year-old Colonel Henderson in 1859 upon Henderson's death after 36 years as commandant. Neither pushed the Marines forward into modern warfare. One reason they were reluctant to risk new, extended missions

was a fear that the Marines might be absorbed by the Army,[32] often suggested by the Army throughout the Marine's history.

The lack of a large Marine Corps with the attendant assault force was often a problem for the Navy. The Navy was forced to wait for troops from the Army to carry out major operations, such as the attack on Mobile, or to reinforce their achievements, such as the Navy capture of Galveston. Cooperation from the Army was not always forthcoming due to differences in priorities and plans. The long delay in the capture of Mobile and the loss of Galveston to a Confederate attack, for example, were the result of a lack of cooperation by the Army. "The failure to have a sizable effective Marine Corps . . . reduced considerably the effectiveness of the Navy and may have lengthened the war."[33]

The Navy was clearly not ready for war. A small Navy with large, deep water ships and no training in coastal operations or operations with the Army was now going to be ordered to conduct a blockade of the South, a mission it was not prepared or equipped to perform on April 19, 1861.

Union Strategy

Following the fall of Fort Sumter on April 14, 1861, Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 ninety-day militiamen on April 15 to counter the insurrection. Jefferson Davis had previously issued a call for troops in the Confederacy and on April 17, he offered Letters of Marque to anyone wanting to become a privateer and attack Union merchant shipping. In response to Davis's call for the issuance of letters of marque, on April 19, 1861, Lincoln declared a blockade of the ports from

South Carolina to Texas. The blockade was to prevent any vessels from leaving or entering the ports. The stated purpose of the blockade was to assert the authority of the United States government, enforce its laws, and protect its citizens.[34] On April 27, Lincoln extended the blockade to include the ports in Virginia and North Carolina.

There was more to the blockade than just ensuring that Confederate commerce raiders did not leave port or were unable to return to port for supplies. Lincoln had considered a blockade of the Confederacy before hostilities had occurred or Davis had issued the call for privateers. In early April Lincoln had told General Scott that in the event of war, his ideas were to hold Fortress Monroe in Virginia, blockade the South, make Washington safe, and attack Charleston. Lincoln then asked for Scott's plans.[35] Lincoln had not yet received any plan from Scott when he proclaimed the blockade. It was not surprising that Lincoln, or anyone else, would consider a blockade as part of the strategy against the South. The British had established a blockade of the United States in the War of 1812, and the United States had blockaded Mexican ports during the Mexican War. Blockades were also used in many European conflicts.

One of the primary objectives of the blockade was to stop war materials and other goods from reaching the Confederacy. Another objective was to prevent the export of cotton which would affect the Confederacy's ability to buy war materials and goods from Europe.[36] This would, in turn, affect the Confederacy's warfighting ability.

Another primary objective was to prevent foreign intervention in the conflict. Lincoln had followed the recognized international rules

set forth in the Declaration of Paris for the blockade he proclaimed. Lincoln had stated that a sufficient force would be posted to prevent access to and from ports. This was in keeping with the idea that "blockades, to be binding, must be effective, . . . maintained by a force sufficient really to prevent access to the coast of the enemy."[37] The general interpretation was that the blockade must "create an evident danger in entering or leaving port."[38] Although the U.S. was not a signatory of the Declaration of Paris, England and France were. When the blockade was announced, they declared their neutrality while they waited to see if an effective blockade could be initiated and maintained.[39]

Welles had argued against a blockade for legal reasons, stating that a nation closes its rebellious ports, it does not blockade them. He said that proclaiming a blockade admitted to the world that there were two governments and gave the Confederacy status as a "separate national entity."[40] Lincoln, however, wanted a blockade because it was recognized by international law and Britain and France were more likely to observe a legally declared blockade than an announcement that the ports were closed.[41] Lincoln wanted to prevent foreign intervention and a blockade was an effective, and legal, way to help ensure that other countries did not support the Confederacy.

In a letter to General George B. McClellan on May 3, 1861, General Scott outlined his own plan to defeat the South. He advocated sending a strong force of steam gunboats and 60,000 troops down the Mississippi River, thus gaining control of the river and splitting the South. This, coupled with the blockade of the Southern coast, would

force the Confederate states to give up. He estimated this strategy would take up to three years to succeed.[42]

Scott's plan was more a political strategy than a military one. It might bring about the defeat of the Confederacy with the least amount of bloodshed, but it did not appeal to the public, or to the Union leaders.[43] The public wanted action, not a slow defeat of the rebels. The press dubbed the plan the "Anaconda" after the large South American snake that slowly crushes its prey.[44]

Lincoln rejected the Anaconda Plan. He wanted quicker results than the plan could accomplish. He also realized that the defeat of the South would require several ongoing efforts, not just a single operation. Lincoln did, however, make the occupation of the Mississippi "an integral part of his strategic thinking."[45]

Welles also rejected Scott's plan because it was too defensive in nature and not aggressive enough.[46] While Lincoln continued to grapple with a strategy for the Army ashore, Welles set about enforcing the blockade.

The Blockade Begins

Once the blockade was announced, it was up to the United States Navy to enforce it. There were 189 harbors and river inlets along a Confederate coastline 3,549 miles long that the Navy had to blockade.[47] Although the primary emphasis would be on the Confederacy's ten major ports (Norfolk, Virginia; New Bern, Beaufort, and Wilmington, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; Fernandina and Pensacola, Florida; Mobile, Alabama; and New Orleans, Louisiana)[48] the

blockade needed to include all ports and the entire coastline to be truly effective.

The ships on foreign stations had already been recalled, and with the ships in home waters, the blockade was slowly established. In order for the blockade to be officially established at each port, the blockading vessel had to notify the port authorities that a blockade had been established. Neutral vessels then had 15 days to depart the port.[49] On April 30, 1861, Norfolk became the first port to be officially blockaded. The blockade was established at Charleston, Savannah, and Mobile on May 28, at New Orleans on May 31, Galveston on July 2, and Wilmington on July 21. It took several months to fully and officially, establish a relatively complete blockade.

It was going to take more than the Navy's 42 ships to enforce the blockade. The Navy quickly began a massive buildup of ships which included readying inactive ships for sea, buying every available ship which could conceivably be used in the blockade, and beginning construction of new ships.[50] By July 4, 1861, the Navy had 82 ships in commission. By the end of 1861, the Navy had built 56 ships, purchased over 130 ships, restored several inactive ships to duty and converted some captured blockade runners into blockaders. As a result, the Navy had 264 ships in commission by the end of the year. By the end of the war, the Union Navy had purchased 418 vessels, built 84 wooden vessels, and built, or at least started, 60 ironclads.[51] There were nearly 700 commissioned vessels in the Union Navy when the blockade officially ended June 23, 1865.

A new command and control structure was required to control this rapidly growing fleet. In May 1861, the Navy's Home Squadron was divided into the Atlantic Blockading Squadron, responsible for blockading the east coast of the Confederacy, and the Gulf Blockading Squadron, responsible for blockading the coast from Key West to the Rio Grande. In September, the Atlantic Squadron was further divided into North and South Atlantic Blockading Squadrons. The Gulf Squadron was divided into East and West Gulf Blockading Squadrons on January 20, 1862.

Initially the blockade was not very effective in stopping traffic in and out of Confederate ports. There were simply not enough ships to blockade the major ports, let alone the smaller ports, harbors, and inlets. Even as the Navy grew in size there were not sufficient ships to maintain an effective blockade for a variety of reasons. Many of the merchant vessels converted to naval use could not carry sufficient ordnance to be effective. Many had inadequate speed or poor seakeeping qualities, or simply broke down; all of which resulted in the requirement to have several ships stationed off of a port to enforce the blockade. Many of the ships were sailing vessels, and as more and more of the blockade runners were steam powered vessels, the sailing ships simply could not keep up and were outrun.[52] As for the steamers, they had to keep their boilers fired up all the time in order to be able to catch any blockade runners. There was not time to start a cold boiler, bring up the steam, and still catch a blockade runner. The relatively inefficient boilers of the era used large amounts of coal, and the ships had to make frequent runs to the nearest coaling station to restock.

The ships were thus off-station for a period of time, the length of time directly affected by the distance to the nearest coaling station.[53] All of these factors significantly increased the number of ships required to blockade the Confederacy, and decreased the effectiveness of the blockade.

As the war progressed and more vessels were added to the Union Navy, and as ports were captured by Union forces, the blockade became more effective. Historians still debate how much the blockade contributed to the defeat of the Confederacy. There are books which state that the South would have won without the blockade, others that say the blockade did not affect the South's military operations but affected the people's will to continue the war, and others that say the blockade was only a minor factor. The answer to the overall effectiveness of the blockade to the war effort is far beyond the scope of this study. It is sufficient here to state that there were continuing efforts by the Union Navy to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the blockade in the Gulf of Mexico and these efforts were the driving force behind most of the Navy's operations in the Gulf. The blockade remained the Navy's primary task throughout the war.

In June 1861, Secretary Welles formed a board, commonly referred to as the Blockade Board, to assist in improving the efficiency of the blockade. The board was first proposed to Assistant Secretary Fox by Professor Alexander D. Bache, head of the U.S. Coast Survey, as a means to condense the information available from the Army Engineering Department, the Coast Survey, and the Navy into a useful form for the blockading squadrons.[54] In addition to gathering information useful to

the blockade, Welles instructed the board to select two ports, one in South Carolina and one in Georgia or Florida, which could be forcibly taken by Union forces and used as coaling depots for the blockading squadrons.[55]

The Blockade Board included Captain Samuel F. DuPont, a well respected, senior naval officer, Professor Bache, Commander Charles H. Davis, and Major John G. Barnard. Major Barnard was the Chief Engineer of the Army Department of Washington and an expert on coastal defenses. He was included on the board because of his technical expertise on coastal defenses, not as a coordinator or advocate for army participation in the blockade. Though he was an Army officer, his presence did not make this a true joint staff board.[56]

The board produced seven reports between July and September 1861. Even though the board had a relatively narrow mandate, Bache, in DuPont's opinions, wanted to develop a "manual for blockading."[57] The information and recommendations eventually provided by the board did go beyond its original mandate, but this did not become a naval strategy board nor provide a far-reaching foundation of strategy as some have claimed.[58]

The board's first report on measures for "effectually" blockading the south Atlantic coast, submitted to Welles July 5, 1861, provided hydrographic data for the Atlantic coast and stated that the board deemed a coaling and stores depot on the southern Atlantic coast essential to the blockade. The board recommended that an expedition capture Fernandina, Florida, and establish a depot as Welles had suggested in his initial direction to the board.[59]

The board's second report, submitted July 13, was a study of three secondary bays and harbors as sites for a possible coaling station. They discussed Bull's Bay, Saint Helena Sound, and Port Royal Sound, all in South Carolina. The board preferred the first two sites over the latter, primarily because they could be taken and held with a smaller force than Port Royal due to their relatively remote locations and inaccessibility from land. The board further stated that rather than use a large army and naval force to take Port Royal, it would be more effective to hold a large force in New York where it would be a threat to the entire Southern coast. This would require the Confederacy to keep more men on the coast to counter the threat of the amphibious force and thus make less men available to be sent to the Confederate armies. Where the expedition would attack could be decided after the force was at sea. The board recommended taking Bull's Bay, then Saint Helena if required and stated there was no immediate need to take Port Royal.[60]

In its third report, submitted July 16, the board recommended splitting the blockade of the south Atlantic coast into two sections due to the differences in coastal characteristics. The northern section would extend from Cape Henry at the entrance to Chesapeake Bay south to Cape Romain, mid-way down the South Carolina coast. It recommended that some of the harbors and inlets in the northern sector be blockaded while others could be closed by sinking old vessels filled with ballast to block the entrances. The board also suggested capturing some of the coastal forts in this sector which would preclude having to blockade the harbors the forts guarded.[61]

The board's fourth report, dated July 26, recommended that not only should the coast of Georgia be strongly patrolled, but portions of the coast should be occupied and fortifications built at the mouths of several of the inlets. It stated that the coast of Florida need only be patrolled by two or more small cruisers.[62]

The board then turned its attention to the Gulf of Mexico, producing three reports discussing measures for effectively blockading the Gulf coast. In the first report discussing the Gulf, submitted August 9, 1861, the board divided the Gulf coast into six sections and began a discussion of the areas in order of importance.[63]

The most important area was the Mississippi and Louisiana coast from Ship Island in the east to Atchafalaya Bay in the west. This encompassed the Mississippi River delta and associated bays and lakes as well as New Orleans. The board stated that the capture of New Orleans was not compatible with more urgent military and naval operations. Due to the large Army and Navy force which would be required to capture New Orleans, it offered a plan to close the port rather than capture it. The plan recommended that Ship Island, in the Gulf of Mexico, be taken and used as a naval depot; a blockade be established in the sounds, bays and passes of the river delta; Chandleur Island should be seized and fortified; fortifications should be erected at the Head of the Passes (this is the point on the Mississippi River where the main channel separates into several branches or passes, each of which runs through the delta into the Gulf); Fort Livingston should be captured and Barataria Bay occupied; and the east end of Atchafalaya Bay should be occupied.[64]

The board then turned to the second most important area, the Alabama and Mississippi coast which included Mobile Bay and Ship Island. The board stated that the only real interest in the area was Mobile Bay. The importance of establishing a base on Ship Island for operations in the Gulf was also discussed.[65]

The board's second report on the Gulf, dated September 3, discussed the remaining portions of the coast in geographic order. In discussing the northern division of Florida from the Cedar Keys to the Alabama border it noted that only St. Marks, Apalachicola, and Pensacola needed to be blockaded. As to the Texas coast, the board stated that Galveston was the key port and that a blockade of Galveston was in reality a blockade of the whole Texas coast. The board noted that the six other principal entrances on the coast (the Rio Grande, Aransas Pass, Matagorda, the Brazos River, San Luis Pass, and Sabine Pass) were all relatively shallow and the entire coast could be blockaded with three to four vessels.[66]

The blockade board's final report on the Gulf coast, submitted to Welles on September 19, 1861, provided additional information on the occupation of Ship Island, a discussion of the requirements for fortifications at the Head of the Passes, and the requirements for the capture of Fort Livingston. In discussing the seizure of the Head of the Passes the board noted that a strong naval force and a fieldwork with 2,000 troops would be needed to hold the Passes once it was taken.[67]

The original reports were submitted to Welles and were also passed to the Army and the President. Captain DuPont noted that he and

Commander Davis presented the reports about the Atlantic coast operations to Generals Scott (Commanding General), Totten (Chief Engineer of the Army), and Meigs (Quartermaster General) and that Scott had "adopted every word of them."[68] Even before the reports on the Gulf were submitted, Welles had told DuPont that "The invasion and occupation of the seacoasts of the states in rebellion . . . [had] been accepted by the government"[69] and Welles was appointing DuPont to work with the Army to begin organizing an expedition to carry out this plan.

Though overall the blockade board's recommendations were relatively modest, there are two key points which are worth noting. First, the board advocated taking forts and occupying Confederate territory both to strengthen the blockade and to reduce the requirements for ships to blockade harbors and inlets. Secondly, the board turned the Navy Department's attention towards New Orleans and Mobile. Though it recommended against the immediate capture of New Orleans, the board pointed out New Orleans's importance and provided other options which could close the port. While the board's recommendations did not provide a cohesive naval strategy, nor discuss force allocations to accomplish all it recommended, the Blockade Board provided the initial impetus for the Union Navy's operations to improve the blockade.

Union Naval Strategy

To recapitulate, the Union Navy's primary task in the Civil War was to establish and enforce a formal blockade of the Confederate ports and coast. The Navy's strategy was to station ships off of each port to prevent vessels from entering or leaving, thus eliminating trade by the Confederacy. Additional ships were assigned to patrol the coast to

prevent ships from entering or departing the myriad bays and inlets along the coast. These measures required a lot of ships and were relatively inefficient, and often ineffective. The first documented proposal to enhance the blockade's effectiveness by capturing specific ports, or the forts controlling the ports, were contained in the Blockade Board's recommendations.

Capturing a port, or gaining control of a port by controlling its forts, eliminates its use by blockade runners. This in turn obviates the need for ships to blockade the port. Controlling a port and eliminating trade is simply more effective than stationing ships outside the harbor and trying to catch vessels as they depart or arrive. Controlling at least a portion of the Confederacy's ports reduced the number of ships required for the blockade and was more efficient. With the number of ships available, and with the technology of the times, the Navy simply could not maintain a tight blockade on all the Confederate ports and the entire coastline and thus cut off all trade. This made the capture of ports important to the effectiveness of the blockade, as capturing a port is the surest and most efficient means of maintaining a blockade.[70]

The Navy's overall strategy went beyond the blockade and the capture of Confederate ports to support it. In his first annual report, December 2, 1861, Secretary Welles outlined the Navy's strategy as: establishing a blockade to close all insurgent ports; seizing key coastal positions through combined naval and military expeditions; assisting the Army in closing the Mississippi to the Confederates; and defeating the commerce raiders at sea.[71] It was an ambitious strategy

but a detailed plan to efficiently execute the strategy was never developed.

Without a master plan detailing how the strategy was to be carried out, priorities as to which ports to capture, in what order, were not established. As a result, the allocations of ships and supplies did not necessarily match the tasks and expectations the Navy Department gave to the squadrons. Long range planning was difficult at the squadron level because there was no cohesive master plan,[72] and Navy priorities were subject to change whenever a new general took over the Army and came up with his own new plan and priorities which often required naval support to execute.

More importantly, there was no integration between the Navy's and the Army's overall strategy. Each service had different priorities and different plans. With few exceptions, the Navy's campaigns against coastal cities were "intended to help secure the blockade,"[73] not to advance the Army's plans or to become staging bases for Army expeditions into the South. There was no combined grand strategy. Though the Army had agreed to the recommendations of the blockade board, this applied only to one or two expeditions to capture and hold some coaling stations. There was no strategy of mutual support for mutual objectives nor a master, cohesive plan to integrate the efforts of the two services. As the Navy's plans normally required troops to succeed,[74] they were at the mercy of the Army as to when, and if, they would receive the troops necessary to execute their plan. The lack of a combined strategy or a combined plan created problems which affected the relationship between the two services, and directly affected the

execution of the Navy's plans, particularly in the Gulf, an area even lower on the Army's priority list than it was on the Navy's priority list.

The Navy Begins Action in the Gulf

In the fall of 1861, the Navy Department decided to attack and capture New Orleans. New Orleans was the sixth largest city in the United States, and the largest city and seaport in the South.[75] That New Orleans would become a target for attack is obvious. As the South's largest commerce center, and with a strategic position near the mouth of the Mississippi River, it was only a matter of time before the Union decided to try and capture New Orleans.[76]

The capture of Ship Island in September, 1861, had helped turn the Navy Department's attention towards the Gulf of Mexico. In its reports on the Gulf, the Blockade Board had strongly recommended establishing a naval depot on Ship Island. Inexplicably, the Confederates had abandoned the island, without Union provocation, and the island had fallen into Union hands without a fight.

Located south of Biloxi, Mississippi, midway between New Orleans and Mobile, Ship Island was located on the Mississippi Sound and was in a position to control shipping on the intercoastal waterway between New Orleans and Mobile. Ship Island is one-half mile wide and about seven miles long, with a deep water harbor. It had been used by the British as a base in the War of 1812.[77]

The War Department had authorized building a fort on the island in 1848, but by 1861 the fort was still under construction and no cannons had yet been delivered. On January 20, 1861, a force of

Mississippi militiamen took the fortifications on the island and forced the U.S. Army engineers building the fort to leave.[78] The Confederates started reinforcing and working on the fort in July. In September, the fort's temporary commander convinced General David E. Twiggs, the Confederate area commander, that the fort was indefensible and should be abandoned. General Twiggs forwarded the recommendation to Richmond.[79]

Twiggs received permission to abandon the fort on September 13, 1861.[80] After removing the guns, the Confederates set fire to the buildings and left the island.[81] After Union naval forces occupied the island the same day, Flag-Officer William W. McKean, commander of the Gulf Blockading Squadron, asked the Navy Department if he should hold the island or destroy the fort and abandon it. If required to hold it, he said he would need forces to do so.[82]

There was a long delay in Welles's reply to Flag-Officer McKean. It appears that during this period, the Navy Department not only decided to maintain control of Ship Island, but also began thinking about a campaign in the Gulf against New Orleans or Mobile.[83] Welles went to the War Department for troops to occupy Ship Island and they ordered Major General Benjamin F. Butler to supply the troops. Welles informed McKean that 2500 troops under General Butler would sail for Ship Island about November 20 and McKean was to hold the island until the troops arrived.[84] The first troops, under the command of Brigadier General J. W. Phelps, arrived at Ship Island December 3, 1861.[85]

Even with the capture of a base much closer to the mouth of the Mississippi, the blockading of New Orleans and the myriad entrances to the city through the delta reamined a difficult task for the Navy. The

capture of New Orleans would make the blockade in the Gulf much more effective and free ships for blockade duties against other ports. With the capture of Ship Island, the Navy and the Army now had a base close to New Orleans. An attack from the Gulf upriver to New Orleans in conjunction with a combined Union attack downriver from Cairo would also be a significant start in wresting control of the Mississippi from the Confederacy. General Henry W. Halleck, at Lincoln's urging, was working on a plan for his forces to attack downriver. The time was now right for an attack against New Orleans from the Gulf.

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CHAPTER 3

NEW ORLEANS FALLS TO COMBINED UNION FORCES

> Allow me to congratulate you and your command upon the bold, daring, brilliant, and successful passage of the forts by your fleet this morning. A more gallant exploit it has never fallen to the lot of man to witness.[1]

Major General Butler, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies

New Orleans was the South's largest city in 1860 with a population of 168,675. In comparison, the next largest cities were Charleston with a population of 40,500 and Richmond with 38,000. New Orleans was also a major commercial center with a large export trade, $92 million dollars in cotton exports and $25 million dollars in sugar exports between 1860-1861. New Orleans was the "focal point of the world's cotton trade" as well as the hub of maritime transportation on the Mississippi River and its tributaries, and the hub for three railroads.[2] This commercial trade, coupled with its manufacturing and shipbuilding facilities, made New Orleans strategically important to the Confederacy, and a primary target of the Union blockade and subsequently an attack to capture the city.

An effective blockade of New Orleans was nearly impossible. Intercoastal vessels could reach New Orleans via Lake Pontchartrain. Shallow draft vessels could transit the canals and bayous between the Mississippi River and the Gulf to enter or leave New Orleans. The New

Orleans, Oplousas, and Great Western Railroad ran west from New Orleans to Brashear City, providing a link to New Orleans from Atchafalaya Bay and other bays and inlets on the western shores of Louisiana. The Union Navy simply did not have enough vessels to effectively guard all the approaches to New Orleans.

The Navy was having difficulty just blockading the mouth of the Mississippi River. As the river flows to the Gulf, the Mississippi delta splits the river's main channel into three major passes: Pass a L'outre, South Pass, and the Southwest Pass. Thus the Navy was required to blockade several entrances into the river, not just a single channel. (See Figure 1.) Blockade runners coming downriver had the advantage of building up steam, or sail, plus the momentum of the river flow, to speed past the blockading ships. Blockade runners attempting to reach New Orleans had several avenues to pick from. The Navy was not very successful initially in stopping trade to or from New Orleans.

The Navy had tried to implement the Blockade Board's recommendation to close the river by erecting fortifications at the Head of the Passes. In September, 1861, four Union Navy ships proceeded upriver to establish the blockade at the Head of the Passes and begin building fortifications for a shore battery. On October 12, the Confederate ram *Manassas* attacked and drove off the Union flotilla.[3] The Union forces had been unprepared for the attack and, in the confusion and fog of battle, the Union ships fled the area even though their forces were superior in number and capability. In a report to the Secretary of the Navy, Flag Officer McKean called the engagement

"disgraceful" and stated he would return to the Head of the Passes when additional gunboats arrived in the Gulf.[4]

The Union capture of New Orleans clearly would make the blockade more effective and was the only way to fully stop trade through New Orleans. The failure of the Navy to fortify the Head of the Passes made the capture of New Orleans more imperative. The capture of Ship Island provided a base of operations to conduct such an attack. The problem was how to get past the forts guarding the southern approaches to New Orleans. New Orleans' primary defense against attack from the Gulf were two forts located across the river from each other, Fort Jackson and Fort Saint Philip, about twenty miles upriver from the Head of the Passes and eighty miles below New Orleans. (See Figure 1.) How to get past these forts was the difficult part of developing a plan to capture New Orleans.

There is some dispute among the individuals involved with the New Orleans operation, and among historians, about who actually came up with the plan to capture the city. One claim is that of Commander David D. Porter (later an Admiral) who said that he came up with the original plan to capture New Orleans and presented it to Welles, and later to Lincoln.[5] Porter's claim is rather dubious and discounted by many historians because of Porter's other self-serving claims made about his achievements during the war, and based on the statements of other participants in the decision.[6] One historian credited General Butler with the plan and others have said Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and General Butler created the plan together. Both of these claims can be discounted as Butler did not find out about the New Orleans attack until

late January, 1862, and Stanton was not even in office when the plan was formulated.[7]

It is most likely that the idea originated in the Navy Department and that the original idea came from Assistant Secretary Fox. Welles, in magazine articles printed in November and December, 1871, gave Fox credit for the idea though Welles stated that he also clearly saw the need to capture New Orleans. Welles discounted Porter's claim to have originated the idea though Welles stated that Porter did contribute to the final plan.[8] Welles' version of the initial planning for New Orleans differs somewhat from Fox's own version but they are substantially the same. Post Master General Blair, Fox's brother-in-law, also supported Fox's claim that the original idea was Fox's.[9]

In a letter to Welles in 1871, Fox reminded him that following the successful attack on Port Royal, Fox had proposed an attack on New Orleans and that Welles had adopted the plan. Fox's plan was for navy steam warships (steamers) to run past the forts at night, proceed upriver, and then force the surrender of New Orleans under the guns of the fleet. Once the city surrendered, Fox felt, the forts below would also surrender. The only Army troops necessary would be for the occupation of the forts and the city after they had surrendered. Fox also pointed out the strategic importance of New Orleans [10]

After Welles accepted the plan, Welles and Fox met with the President and General McClellan on 15 November, 1861, to discuss the plan.[11] (Welles' and Porter's accounts of this meeting also place Porter at the meeting, Fox's does not.) The President was somewhat doubtful of the plan but gave his consent. McClellan was skeptical of the ships'

ability to run by the forts and believed it would take 50,000 troops to conduct a siege of the forts and capture them. McClellan said he did not have that many troops available. Fox and Welles said the Navy would take responsibility for the forts and Army troops would only be required to occupy the forts and the city after they had surrendered. McClellan then agreed to provide 10,000 troops to the operation.[12]

Of the several accounts relating the formulation of the original idea for the attack on New Orleans, Fox's account in his letter to Welles is the most plausible and has the best corroboration from other sources, even though it is probably somewhat inflated by hindsight. Both Welles and Blair give some if not all the credit to Fox, and Fox's naval knowledge and experience were such that it is entirely feasible he originated the idea.

Hatteras Inlet and Port Royal Sound

The idea that Union ships could successfully attack the forts on the Mississippi and run by them came from the Navy's success at Hatteras Inlet and Port Royal. The prevailing belief at the start of the war was that wooden ships could not reduce or pass a fort.[13] The battles at Hatteras and Port Royal indicated that the old beliefs were no longer valid and gave rise to the idea that naval ships alone could defeat Confederate forts alone, and troops were only required to occupy the forts after the successful Navy attack.

The expedition to Hatteras Inlet was a combined operation primarily initiated to clear the privateers and blockade runners from the inlet.[14] Six ships under the command of Flag Officer Silas H. Stringham, commander of the Atlantic Blockading Squadron, and 860 troops

under Major General Butler assembled August 26, 1861. This was the first combined operation of the war, and the first amphibious operation.

The expedition arrived off Hatteras Inlet August 27 and the next morning the attack on the two partially completed forts, Forts Clark and Hatteras, began. The amphibious portion of the attack did not go well. Only 315 troops and two guns were landed above Fort Clark before two iron surfboats and two flat boats swamped in rough weather.[15] There was then no way to get supplies or more troops onto the beach, or to get the troops off the beach, until the weather cleared. Luckily the Confederate troops did not attack the stranded Union soldiers. The naval bombardment, however, went much better.

Flag Officer Stringham kept his steam-propelled warships in constant motion while they fired at the Confederate forts. This was a new tactic based on the increased mobility that steam propulsion provided. With steam power, the ships could now be in continuous motion, as opposed to the old tactic of anchoring the ship. Naval gunners, trained to fire from a moving ship, were able to get the range on their stationary targets ashore. The Confederate gunners were forced to fire at moving ships and thus were not able to accurately range the ships and fire effectively.[16] The ships had another advantage--many of their rifled guns outranged the older smoothbore guns in the forts.

Fort Clark was abandoned at 1225 on August 28. Although the fort had received some damage, the primary reason the defenders left the fort was that they ran out of ammunition.[17] The Union troops already ashore occupied Fort Clark. The Union ships continued to bombard Fort Hatteras until 1815 that evening and then withdrew out to sea for the

night. They recommenced the bombardment the next morning at 0800. Fort Hatteras, damaged and running out of ammunition, surrendered at 1110, August 29.[18] Thus both forts fell to naval gunfire, and Union forces now controlled Hatteras Inlet.

The next combined operation was at Port Royal Sound to establish a coaling station for resupply of the blockading fleet, as had been recommended by the Blockade Board. Secretary Welles had left the decision as to which point on the coast was to be taken as a depot to Flag Officer DuPont, now commander of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron.[19] DuPont decided he had sufficient forces to capture and hold Port Royal Sound. The combined force of seventeen Navy warships and the transports carrying 13,000 Army troops, under the command of General Thomas Sherman, began arriving in the vicinity of Port Royal Sound on November 4, 1861.

The entrance to Port Royal Sound was guarded by two forts, Walker and Beauregard. DuPont decided that his warships, arrayed in a column, would run by the forts, firing at both, and then turn towards Fort Walker to concentrate their fire at that fort's weakest side. The ships would continue moving in a circular pattern, much as Stringham had done, in order to continue firing on both forts. The naval attack began the morning of November 7. A small Confederate naval force was quickly chased away and the Union ships began their bombardment of the forts. By 1400, Fort Walker, damaged and running out of ammunition, was abandoned by Confederate troops. Union troops landed and occupied the fort. Fort Beauregard was abandoned later in the day and occupied by

Union troops the next morning.[20] Once again, forts had been defeated by naval gunfire alone.

Although there were many factors involved in the Navy's success, such as the fact that some of the forts ran out of ammunition before the naval bombardment had caused significant damage, or that there were smoothbore guns in some of the forts fighting rifled, longer range guns on the ships, and the fact the forts at Hatteras were not fully completed, the old belief that ships alone could not defeat forts had changed. These two successful operations provided the impetus for Fox's ideas on how to attack New Orleans. These two operations did not, however, prove conclusively that forts could be defeated by naval gunfire alone. Later operations would clearly demonstrate that combined operations were necessary to reduce and capture coastal fortifications.

Though the success of these operations was due primarily to naval gunfire, it was the Army who received credit in the press for capturing both Hatteras Inlet and Port Royal. When the New Orleans plan was first brought up, Welles wanted to take the city without any Army help. If the Navy took New Orleans on its own, the Navy would receive the publicity and accolades it had not received for the Hatteras and Port Royal expeditions. Thus, one of the many objectives of the New Orleans campaign was to improve the Navy's image in the press, and in the eyes of the people.[21]

Once the initial idea for an expedition to capture New Orleans had been approved by the President and McClellan, Porter was brought in to help plan the attack. Brigadier General Barnard, the former member of the Blockade Board and now a general, was also consulted. Porter and

Barnard both believed that the forts had to be reduced rather than bypassed by the fleet. They felt that running past the forts and leaving them intact would place the fleet in danger of being cut off should anything go wrong. Porter believed a squadron of mortar vessels, each vessel outfitted with a 13 inch mortar, could reduce the forts with a 48 hour bombardment, without the use of ironclads or the Army. Porter convinced Welles that the forts must be reduced, and the mortar squadron was added to the plan. Porter was also selected to command the mortar squadron.[22]

Initial discussion and planning for the attack on New Orleans was tightly controlled in order to keep it a secret as long as possible. Although McClellan had approved the plan, the Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, and members of the War Department were not told of the expedition because there had been numerous leaks from the War Department about other operations.[23] General Butler, who was to lead the Army troops in the expedition, was not told the intended location of the attack until January, 1862.[24]

Formation of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron

All the initial planning for the attack on New Orleans was done by the Navy Department. Fox's original plan to run by the forts on the river was changed to include Porter's recommendation that the forts first be reduced by naval bombardment. Ship Island was selected as the base for the expedition. The ships for the attack were to come from the Gulf Blockading Squadron. The Navy Department decided that the best way to control operations in the Gulf was to split the Gulf Blockading Squadron in two and form an east and a west squadron. With the initial

plans nearly complete, the Navy Department now needed a commander for the expedition. They selected Captain David Glasgow Farragut to lead the attack on New Orleans.

Farragut was then 60 years old and had been in the Navy for 50 years. He was currently assigned to the Navy Retirement Board. Farragut was not the most senior officer waiting to be assigned to command a squadron but as Welles looked over the list of available officers he felt that Farragut had the experience and capabilities to conduct the New Orleans operation. Welles had never meet Farragut but had read reports submitted by Farragut during the Mexican War and had formed a positive impression of Farragut. Welles also received a positive endorsement of Farragut from Porter, who was Farragut's foster brother.[25]

Farragut received notification from Secretary Welles on December 23, 1861, that he was to be appointed to command a division of the Gulf Squadron.[26] On January 9, 1862, Farragut received his orders to proceed to the Gulf and take command of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron which was to be responsible for the Confederate coast from St. Andrew's Bay in western Florida to the Rio Grande in Texas, and also included the coast of Mexico and Yucatan.[27]

On January 20, 1862, Welles issued orders to Flag Officer McKean, then commander of the Gulf Blockading Squadron, that upon the arrival of Flag Officer Farragut in the Gulf, McKean was to split his squadron in two. McKean was to take command of the Eastern Gulf Blockading Squadron, whose responsibility was to extend from St. Andrew's Bay on the west coast of Florida to Cape Canaveral on the east

coast, and included Bahama and Cuba. Farragut was to assume command of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron. Welles also listed which vessels were to be assigned to each squadron, specifying a nearly equal split of the ships. McKean and Farragut were authorized to modify the division of ships if required.[28]

Farragut received similar orders from Welles. Farragut's orders included a list of the thirty one ships which were to be assigned to his squadron and noted that a squadron of bomb [mortar] vessels and armed steamers under Porter's command would also be sent to Farragut. Farragut was also directed to attack New Orleans, and more.

> When these formidable mortars arrive, and you are completely ready, you will collect such vessels as can be spared from the blockade and proceed up the Mississippi River and reduce the defenses which guard the approaches to New Orleans, when you will appear off that city and take possession of it . . . keeping possession until troops can be sent to you. If the Mississippi squadron from Cairo shall not have descended the river, you will take advantage of the panic to push a strong force up the river to take all their defenses in the rear. You will also reduce the fortifications of Mobile Bay and turn them over to the Army to hold.[29]

Welles also stated that since Farragut had told him, in a meeting at the Navy Department before Farragut departed for the Gulf, that the forces Farragut was being assigned were sufficient to capture New Orleans, he must succeed in his primary mission, the capture of New Orleans.

These orders clearly represent over-centralized management from the national level. Not only do the orders provide the operational objectives, they direct much of the tactical plan Farragut is to follow, leaving little apparent leeway in tactics to the commander on the scene. This was due in part to previous problems Welles had experienced in getting naval commanders to carry out assigned tasks and partly due to

the absence of naval officers on the operational side of the Navy Department. Welles felt he must over-manage and provide explicit instructions to ensure that naval commanders understood and executed his desires.

A few days later, in a letter to Farragut, Welles stressed the importance of the blockade. He noted that the blockade would not only cripple the Confederate states but would also "destroy any excuse or pretext on the part of foreign governments to aid and relieve those who are waging war upon the government."[30] Welles directed Farragut to make the blockade effective along the entire coast, not just at the major ports. Welles acknowledged that this was a difficult task and said more ships would be sent when available, but in the meantime Farragut was to do his best to enforce the blockade.

Although it was made clear to Farragut, both in a face to face meeting with Welles in Washington and in his orders of January 20, that his primary mission was to take New Orleans, he was also directed to proceed up the Mississippi after he captured New Orleans to meet the Mississippi River Squadron, then take the forts at Mobile Bay, and also enforce the blockade along the entire coast. He was to do this with only a few more ships than McKean had employed to simply enforce the blockade. It is apparent that Farragut did not have enough ships to effectively complete all the missions assigned, at least not to the level of thoroughness Welles was directing. It does appear, however, that Welles was giving Farragut some leeway in how and when he would complete his assignments. First, Welles stated in his original orders that Farragut should wait until he was ready to attack the forts

guarding New Orleans, and then use only those vessels he could spare from the blockade. Welles then acknowledged the difficulty of Farragut's assignments and asked him to do his best under the circumstances, indicating that Welles was giving Farragut some discretion in how to accomplish his missions. Later correspondence from Welles and Fox, however, made it clear that Farragut was to conduct the New Orleans attack as soon as possible, and that Weeles and Fox were looking for action.

As early as January 30, Farragut had pointed out that there were not enough ships to properly conduct all the missions assigned. In a letter to Fox before Farragut even arrived in the Gulf, Farragut had said that there were not enough shallow draft ships to blockade all the necessary locations along the coast, though Farragut said he would do his best and move ahead with the plans.[31] Due to the shallow entrances to most of the bays and river bars in the Gulf, many of Farragut's larger ships could not enter, or even get close to, the entrances to the bars and rivers due to the ship's relatively deep draft. In a letter to Welles dated February 12, reporting his arrival at Key West, Farragut stated he was concerned about the poor condition of the gunboats assigned to his command and that there were not enough shallow draft vessels. Farragut said he urgently needed more shallow draft steamers.[32] In a similar letter to Fox, Farragut stated that when he had told Fox and Welles there were enough vessels assigned to complete his mission, he had meant there were enough for the attack on New Orleans, not that there were enough to also conduct the blockade. Farragut noted that fifteen of his assigned vessels were sailing ships

which were not effective against steam ships running the blockade. He also again complained about the lack of shallow draft vessels in his squadron.[33]

In each of his letters, Farragut requested additional assets but did not state that he could not complete his primary mission. He appears to have been concerned about his ability to carry out the blockade, not as to whether he could attack New Orleans. From the content and tone of his reports, it appears that Farragut was trying to keep his superiors informed of the status of his squadron and his needs, and was not trying to avoid the attack on New Orleans. In a letter to Fox dated February 17, Farragut said he intended to turn over New Orleans, once captured, to the Army, and quickly proceed up the Mississippi.[34] This is a further indication that Farragut was planning to conduct the New Orleans mission as soon as possible.

Welles and Fox apparently had other thoughts about Farragut's repeated requests for additional ships. They were upset with Farragut and believed he was already providing excuses to postpone the New Orleans operation.[35] Welles informed Farragut that he was sending Farragut seventeen of the 23 new gunboats being built and there were not any shallower draft vessels available. Welles stated he did not want Farragut to attack New Orleans until he was "prepared and confident" but that Farragut already had more ships than originally planned, as several additional vessels had arrived from the North. Welles also restated the importance of the New Orleans operation.[36] Fox eventually became so upset about Farragut's repeated requests for more ships that he wrote to Porter, telling him to go see Farragut at Ship Island and let Fox know

if Porter thought Farragut was up to the job. It was clear that Welles and Fox were both looking for action from Farragut as rapidly as possible, and they were concerned about possible delays in the New Orleans expedition.[37]

Farragut was not, however, purposefully delaying his attack on New Orleans, despite the shortage of ships. Farragut arrived at Ship Island on February 20, and assumed command of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron on February 21. In his report to Welles announcing his assumption of command, Farragut said he was concerned about the poor condition of most of his steamers but that he would keep them running until he had completed his mission on the river.[38] In a similar report to Fox, Farragut stated he was already starting to gather the ships necessary to conduct the attack and was sending ships to the Head of the Passes February 23. Farragut said he was just waiting for the arrival of Porter and the rest of the squadron's ships to start the operation.[39] Unfortunately, it would be almost two months before all Farragut's ships and supplies arrived, and he was able to get all his ships through the Passes and ready to commence the attack. In the meantime, the Army troops arrived in the Gulf and began preparing to participate in the expedition.

Welles had told Farragut February 10 that 18,000 troops were being sent to the Gulf to cooperate with Farragut and support the attack. Welles instructed Farragut not to wait on the Army though. Farragut was to "carry out [his] instructions with regard to the Mississippi and Mobile without any delay beyond that imposed upon you by your own careful preparation."[40] Some of the army units were already at

Ship Island. The rest, under Major General Butler, would soon be on their way to the Gulf, though not without some problems.

Formation of the Department of the Gulf

Major General Benjamin F. Butler was a political general, appointed because of his political influence, not necessarily his military ability. A highly respected lawyer and Massachusetts politician, Butler was a "War Democrat",[41] one who supported war in order to maintain the Union, unlike many Democrats who were willing to accept the Confederate secession rather than go to war. An early volunteer for service after Lincoln's initial call for volunteers, Butler was appointed a Brigadier General in the Massachusetts state militia by Governor Andrews. Butler had joined his hometown Massachusetts militia unit in 1839 as a private and had eventually been elected colonel so he was not without at least some military experience.[42]

Initially assigned as Commander of the Department of Annapolis, Butler was relieved of command by General Scott after seizing the city of Baltimore on his own initiative instead of following Scott's plan to take the city. Widely acclaimed by the press for his actions, Butler was promoted to Major General by Lincoln, despite his being relieved.[43] Butler was then assigned to command of Fortress Monroe but after losing a minor skirmish at Big Bethel on June 10, 1861, Scott took away most of Butler's troops, and again relieved him of command.[44]

Butler then convinced the new commander at Fortress Monroe to assign troops to Butler so he could assist the Navy in their attack on Hatteras Island.[45] After the completion of the attack at Hatteras,

Butler had rushed back to Washington with word of the Union victory. As a result, Butler and the Army received the credit and the press for the victory.

When Scott had taken away most of Butler's troops after Big Bethel, Butler had gone to President Lincoln seeking permission to raise troops in New England to replace those Scott had sent elsewhere. Lincoln gave his approval and signed an order authorizing Butler to raise 5,000 troops.[46] After the authorization from Lincoln was lost at the War Department, Secretary Cameron issued an order September 10, 1861, authorizing Butler to raise six regiments in New England.[47] Cameron signed another order two days later authorizing Butler to raise as many troops as he needed for operations along the eastern shores of Virginia.[48] To give Butler status in his recruiting effort, the War Department created the Department of New England and made Butler its commander.[49]

In October 1861 Union forces under General John A. Dix occupied portions of the York Peninsula in Virginia. This was the area in which Butler had planned to conduct his operations. Now Butler and his newly recruited troops were without a mission.[50] Thus, when Welles went to the Army for troops to occupy Ship Island, Butler's force was available and he was ordered to send troops there. Butler requested that Brigadier General J. W. Phelps, who had previously served with Butler, be added to the expedition to Ship Island. In his request to Cameron for Phelps, Butler noted that he would shortly have 2500 men ready to sail to "points agreed upon with the Secretary of the Navy [Ship

Island]" and would have 2500 more ready in two weeks.[51] Phelps, with 1908 troops, arrived at Ship Island December 3, 1861.

When McClellan pledged 10,000 troops to the Navy Department in November for the New Orleans campaign, he intended to use Butler's troops for the majority of the force since they were already preparing to go to Ship Island. Although the first contingent of Butler's troops departed for Ship Island as planned, McClellan directed Butler not to send the rest of his troops due to the growing tension with Britain over the *Trent* affair.[52] The *Trent* Affair refers to the U. S. Navy's arrest of two Confederate diplomats, James Mason and John Slidell, while they were embarked on the British steamer *Trent* on November 8, 1861 and the subsequent dispute between the United States and Britain over the removal of the men from a British flagged ship. The dispute was settled diplomatically with the release of Mason and Slidell in late December, 1861.

Even with the resolution of the *Trent* Affair, McClellan did not allow Butler to send the rest of his troops to Ship Island. The reason became clear in a report McClellan submitted to the new Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton. Stanton had replaced Cameron as Secretary of War on January 20 and upon assuming office had requested information on ongoing operations. In reply to Stanton's request, McClellan submitted a report on January 25 providing the background on Butler's recruiting operation in New England and detailing the subsequent plans for Butler's force. McClellan stated that it appeared Butler had abandoned his initial plan to conduct operations in Virginia and had then thought about an attack on Mobile, and had subsequently submitted a plan to

invade Texas and then to take New Orleans. McClellan noted that although a portion of Butler's force was already at Ship Island, there were higher priorities elsewhere than any operation in the Gulf, and suggested that Butler's troops be held as a reserve at Fortress Monroe. McClellan asked that Butler's expedition be suspended, other than those troops already at Ship Island, rather than let Butler raise the 30,000 to 50,000 men required to take New Orleans.[53]

McClellan clearly misstated the facts of the situation to Stanton. McClellan failed to point out that Butler's planned expedition to Virginia was canceled after Dix's campaign seized the York Peninsula, and that it was McClellan who had then ordered Butler to send troops to Ship Island. McClellan also failed to mention that Butler's proposal for operations along the Texas coast was initiated at McClellan's request.[54] McClellan appears to have conveniently forgotten that he had promised the Navy 10,000 troops for the New Orleans campaign, and that 30,000 plus troops would not be required. McClellan's report appears to be an attempt to gain additional troops for the Army of the Potomac rather than a report of ongoing operations.

When Welles and Fox heard about McClellan's attempt to pull Butler's troops, Fox went to Stanton to discuss the Navy's plan. After hearing the Navy's plan, and confirming with McClellan that he had indeed promised troops to the Navy, Stanton agreed to the Navy plan and directed that Butler's troops be sent to support the Navy.[55]

Butler received his formal orders to proceed to the Gulf and assist the Navy February 23, though he had been sending troops to the Gulf as fast as possible prior to receiving his written instructions.[56]

In the orders, McClellan assigned Butler to command the land forces "destined to cooperate with the Navy in the attack upon New Orleans."[57] The destination of the expedition was secret and Butler was directed to keep it secret even from most of his staff. Butler was assigned a total of 18,000 troops, 13 regiments that he currently had plus the loan of two regiments from the Department of Key West, and one from Fort Pickens. The orders stated that the Navy was expected to reduce the forts guarding New Orleans, but if they failed Butler was to lay siege to the forts and assault them if necessary. After New Orleans was captured, Butler was then to take Baton Rouge, Berwick Bay, and Fort Livingston. He was also to try and meet the troops coming downriver, and to capture Jackson, Mississippi when possible. After accomplishing those tasks, Butler was to cooperate with the Navy in a combined attack on Mobile to take the harbor, forts and railway terminals, and then continue on to Pensacola and Galveston.[58]

To support Butler's expedition, the Army formed a new military department, the Department of the Gulf. It was to be responsible for operations on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico from west of Pensacola harbor and included as much of the Confederate Gulf states as its forces could occupy. General Butler was assigned as the commander of the department.[59]

Butler's orders were similar in scope and objective to Farragut's, though Butler's included operations beyond an attack on Mobile. Butler's orders also specified cooperation and combined operations with the Navy, whereas Farragut's orders simply directed Farragut to turn over his conquests to the Army. Farragut's orders were

clearly intended to make both the New Orleans and the Mobile Bay campaigns primarily Navy operations. As with Farragut's orders, Butler's orders assigned him objectives which exceeded his resources. Although Butler's orders stated he would probably get reinforcements after the capture of New Orleans, it was obvious he would need many more troops to take and hold all the cities and forts he was ordered to capture and hold. Butler never received the two regiments from Key West,[60] thus leaving him with less than 16,000 troops initially to carry out his orders.

Having received his orders, Butler, with his wife, part of his staff, and 1,600 troops, set sail for the Gulf on board the transport ship *Mississippi*. Delayed when the ship ran aground in the vicinity of Hilton Head, South Carolina, Butler arrived at Ship Island March 20, 1862, and assumed command of the Department of the Gulf.[61]

Confederate Defense of New Orleans

While Farragut assembled his fleet in the Gulf and Butler's troops were arriving at Ship Island, there was little that Major General Mansfield Lovell, the Confederate commander at New Orleans, could do to improve his defenses. Since his arrival in October, 1861, Lovell had asked for additional forces, cannons, and supplies to defend New Orleans and each request was turned down by the Confederate War Department.[62] The government believed there were adequate defenses above the city, oriented towards the north where it was believed any attack upon the city would originate. The Confederates also believed New Orleans to be "invulnerable to attack from the Gulf"[63] due to the forts protecting the southern approaches. The Confederate were so confident that New Orleans

would not be attacked that they stripped New Orleans of trained troops. By February 1862, eight regiments and two artillery batteries had been taken from New Orleans and sent to Tennessee. Lovell then had only 3,000 poorly trained and poorly equipped troops to defend New Orleans and less than 1,500 troops to man the forts.

The two forts eighty miles below New Orleans were heavily fortified and strongly armed. Fort Jackson, on the west bank of the Mississippi, had 67 guns. Fort Saint Philip, across the river on the east bank, mounted 42 guns. In addition, a chain barrier across the river had been completed in October 1861 which was of great concern to the Union Navy. This barrier snapped in early March 1862, and the new barrier, fashioned out of pieces of the old barrier and smaller chain, was not nearly as formidable.[64] There were also two small earthwork forts at Chalmette, three miles below New Orleans.

In addition to the forts, New Orleans had the largest Confederate fleet of any Confederate port. The Confederate Navy Department, not having the advantage of a standing navy at the start of hostilities, had decided to concentrate on building a coastal defense navy to protect the rivers and ports rather than building a navy to challenge the Union fleet at sea.[65] The Confederate Navy consisted primarily of commercial steam ships, purchased or seized, with guns mounted on them; smaller steamboats fitted with metal rams and some armor, designed to ram and sink Union ships; and ironclad warships the Confederates built themselves.

The Confederate fleet at New Orleans consisted of the ironclad *Louisiana*, whose propulsion machinery was not completed before the Union

attack and was moored, immobile, to the riverbank under the guns of Fort Jackson during the attack; the ironclad ram *Manassas*, which had chased the Union ships from the Head of the Passes the previous fall; and six armed steamships.[66] In addition, there were six river steamboats which were part of the River Defense Fleet, a flotilla of ships formed for the defense of the Mississippi River and under the control of the Army.[67]

As with the Union forces, the Confederates defending New Orleans were a combined force, not a joint force. The forts and the River Defense Fleet were under Army control. The naval force was under a separate commander. The defense of the river and the approaches to New Orleans thus rested on cooperation between the commanders, which was not always forthcoming.

The Confederates knew that Union forces were preparing for operations in the Gulf but were not certain New Orleans was the target until Farragut started bringing his ships across the bar at the mouth of the Mississippi in March. General Lovell knew that Butler's forces were in the Gulf as early as February 27, even though Butler himself was still enroute the Gulf. Lovell had not thought Butler's target was New Orleans. He believed that

> Butler's Ship Island expedition [was] a harmless menace so far as New Orleans is concerned. A black Republican dynasty will never give an old Breckinridge Democrat like Butler command of any expedition which they had any idea would result in such a glorious success as the capture of New Orleans.[68]

Union Forces Prepare to Attack

As Butler was enroute to the Gulf, he had been concerned that he would arrive too late to participate in the attack on New Orleans. When he arrived March 20, he found that Farragut did not yet have all his

ships over the river bar and onto the river. In fact, Farragut was having significant problems getting some of his large, ocean going vessels into the river.

By March 5, Farragut had already sent some of his gunboats up to the Head of the Passes and was sending some of his larger ships to the passes. Farragut was not sure though whether he would be able to get all of his larger, deep draft ships over the bar.[69] By March 16, Farragut had his flagship, *Hartford*, and one other large steamer over the bar but had to send two other large ships back to Ship Island to offload guns, ammunition, and supplies in order to lighten the ships enough to get over the bar. By this time Porter and the majority of his mortar fleet and their escort gunboats had also arrived.[70] Thus when Butler arrived at Ship Island, Farragut was still struggling to get his forces ready.

When Butler arrived March 20, Farragut went aboard Butler's headquarters ship to discuss the operation. Butler did not have any different plan than that outlined in his orders, to garrison the forts and the city once the Navy captured them. Butler told Farragut he would hold whatever the Navy took.[71] Farragut expected to be ready to proceed in seven days so Butler kept 6,000 troops embarked and ready to go to support the Navy. When it became apparent Farragut would not be ready soon, Butler disembarked his troops at Ship Island to wait until the Navy was ready to begin the operation.[72]

On March 30, Butler informed Farragut that he could now embark up to six regiments from Ship Island and could be at the Passes within twelve hours but, due to a shortage of coal, would not actually embark

the troops until the Navy was ready. Butler had also apparently been thinking about his role in the attack. He now proposed that troops be landed above the forts once Farragut's ships got past the forts. Butler believed that landing troops would aid the attack on the forts, and might cause them to surrender.[73]

Farragut quickly agreed with Butler's plan, though stressing that the troops should only be landed after his ships had passed the forts due to the threat from Confederate forces on the river. Farragut said the troop landing would be relatively easy then, the difficult part of the operation would be for the ships to get past the forts. Farragut informed Butler that all the ships had not yet gotten over the bar and that he would inform Butler when the Navy was ready.[74]

This was the first discussion of making this a truly combined operation and effectively using the Army troops. Farragut was correct in insisting that Butler's troops not land before his ships had passed the forts as Confederate naval and land forces would be in a position to attack Butler's force as they landed unless Farragut captured or destroyed the Confederates, and could provide gunboats to cover Butler's landing.

Farragut did not finish getting his ships over the bar until April 7, and was not able to get his largest ship, *Colorado*, over the bar at all. On April 14, Farragut sent word to Butler that his ships were going to start moving into position the next day and recommended that Butler come up the river.[75] Butler arrived off the Passes three days later with eight regiments and three artillery batteries, all the

troops he had transports for.[76] The Union forces were finally ready to commence the attack.

Farragut had a force of seventeen warships, plus Porter's flotilla of twenty mortar vessels escorted by six gunboats, to conduct the attack on the forts. By April 18, Farragut's force was in position and the mortar vessels began the bombardment of Fort Jackson, each mortar firing a round every ten minutes. Porter had predicted his mortars would destroy the forts in 48 hours, but the mortar bombardment did little to the Confederate defensive capability. The mortars fired around the clock for six days, firing about 7500 shells at Fort Jackson but they did surprisingly little damage to the guns at the fort.[77]

Farragut had never had much faith in the mortar vessels. When the plan had first been briefed to him in Washington he had agreed to take the mortar squadron with him but had said he would not have included them if he had developed the plan.[78] Farragut had decided before the mortars had even started firing that he would probably have to run past the forts and had begun issuing orders for such an eventuality as early as April 17.[79] As the mortars continued to fire, with limited effect, Farragut issued a general order to his squadron telling them that when Farragut thought the time was right, the warships would run by the forts and then cover the landing of troops from the Gulf side at the Quarantine Station above the forts.[80] Farragut believed that action needed to be taken soon or the mortar vessels would be out of ammunition and the ships would never get past the forts.

At 0155 on the morning of April 24, Farragut gave the signal and by 0330 all the warships were underway and proceeding upriver. The

chain across the river had been cut open during the night of April 20 by two of Farragut's gunboats and, although it had not been completely removed, the ships were now able to get by. The mortar vessels added their fire to that of the ships as the ships slowly proceeded past the forts. Once past the forts, the Union ships engaged the Confederate fleet and reported destroying eleven of thirteen Confederate gunboats and the ram *Manassas*.[81] A Confederate account of the battle reported that Farragut had destroyed nine of twelve gunboats, the ram, and several unarmed steamers.[82]

Shortly after dawn that morning, Farragut's warships anchored off the Quarantine Station, five miles above the forts, to repair leaks and assess the damage. Thirteen of the seventeen ships which had attempted to pass the forts made it through. The gunboat *Varuna* was sunk by Confederate ships and the last three of Farragut's ships had to turn back before passing the forts due to the heavy fire from the forts. Despite damage to almost every ship, Farragut had lost only 37 killed and 147 wounded.[83]

In the vicinity of the Quarantine Station, Farragut's ships captured 500 soldiers of the Confederate Chalmette Regiment. These troops had been assigned to guard the approaches through the bayous and canals behind the forts but the river's high waters had forced most of the Confederate soldiers into a camp on the west bank of the river. It was there they surrendered after suffering 30 casualties from the guns of the Union ships.[84] The capture of the Confederate troops left the way open for the Union troops to occupy positions behind the forts, between the forts and New Orleans.

Farragut sent word back to Porter through the Quarantine Bayou that he had successfully passed the forts. Farragut informed Porter that he was continuing up the river to New Orleans and would then come back to take care of the forts. Farragut felt that if Porter demanded the surrender of the forts, they would surrender, especially since Farragut had cut the telegraph wires between the forts and the city. Farragut told Porter that Butler could now land his troops and that Farragut had left two gunboats to cover Butler's landing.[85]

Farragut's ships were underway from the Quarantine by 1100 and continued upriver. Due to the strong current and unfamiliarity with the river, Farragut's force did not arrive in the vicinity of New Orleans until 1030 the morning of April 25. The ships quickly silenced the gun batteries below the city and proceeded to anchorage near the levee. Once at New Orleans, Farragut sent the *Mississippi* back down the river to provide additional support to Butler's landing.

Farragut's dispatch to Porter did not reach him until April 25, but Butler had not waited for word from Farragut. Butler had observed Farragut's passing of the forts and, after it appeared that Farragut would be successful, had proceeded downriver to begin moving his troops into position to land. Butler had borrowed the gunboat *Miami* from Porter to go downriver and Porter had also sent the coastal survey steamer *Sachem* to assist Butler. Butler's transports were waiting at the Head of the Passes. He took the majority of his troops on five transports and the two escorts back into the Gulf and around to the vicinity of Sable Island in Quarantine Bay to prepare to land. He left

two regiments under the command of General Phelps on the river to be ready to occupy the forts if they surrendered.[86]

Butler was delayed 24 hours when the *Miami* ran aground at the mouth of the Mississippi. Once in Quarantine Bay, *Miami* and some of the transports began working their way into the bayou behind the forts. The Union ships were visible to the troops in the forts on April 26 but the forts did not have any guns facing that direction or which could fire that far. Butler had sent a reconnaissance party behind Fort Saint Philip on April 22 and confirmed that the Confederates had not placed any guns on the back side of the fort.[87] Thus the forts were not a threat to Butler's landing, and since Farragut had captured the regiment tasked to guard the bayou, Butler's landing was unopposed.

The ships were only able to get within six miles of Fort Saint Philip before the water became too shallow for them. Butler had 30 small boats and surfboats to take troops through the bayous. On April 27, troops began rowing the boats through the Maunels Canal. As the boats got closer to the river, the current became so strong that the troops had to get out and drag the boats through the canal the last mile and one-half, in water up to their waists. Later on the 27th, the troops reached the Quarantine Station and the Union gunboats ferried some of them across the river behind Fort Jackson.[88] There were now Union troops and ships both above and below the forts.

Farragut's initial dispatch to Porter and Butler did not reach Butler before he left the river to proceed with the landing. Nor did Butler's dispatch to Farragut informing Farragut that Butler was proceeding with the landing reach Farragut before he headed up the

river. In his dispatch, Butler requested that, if Farragut was "proceeding up the river, will you leave, say, two gun boats at the Quarantine Station to protect our landing?"[89] Farragut had left two gunboats, and sent the warship *Mississippi* back down the river to cover the landings as well. Yet when Butler discovered that Farragut had gone upriver, he was upset. Butler thought that this was

> an unmilitary proceeding on his [Farragut's] part, to run off and leave forts behind him unreduced, but such is the race for the glory of capturing New Orleans between him and Commodore Foote [commander of the Western Flotilla on the Mississippi River] that thus we go."[90]

And this was the sentiment of the man who had raced back to Washington from the victory at Hatteras Inlet and received the accolades of the press for a victory he had little to do with. Although relations between Butler and Farragut were overall very cordial and cooperative, there was some acrimony, especially when Butler thought he was not receiving his fair share of the glory.

Butler's troops could have been in a better position to follow up Farragut's successful passage of the forts. Butler should have had his transports already in position in Quarantine Bay once Farragut decided to make the run past the forts. Once successful, Farragut could have sent a signal or messenger through the bayou in order to tell Butler to begin landing. This would have eliminated the long delay in Butler's troops landing and may have hastened the surrender of the forts.

In the meantime, Porter had requested the surrender of the forts as Farragut had suggested but their commanders had refused. Porter, concerned about the Confederate naval threat, sent word to Farragut that

he had left four Confederate steamers and the ironclad behind in his dash up the river. Porter did not know that only two of the steamers were armed or that the propulsion of the ironclad was still not complete and it was immobile unless towed, thus there was really little, if any, threat to Porter's force. Due to his concerns about the Confederate ships, and nearly out of ammunition for the mortars, Porter sent all the mortar vessels downriver. Six of them were ordered to go into the Gulf and position themselves in Barataria Bay, behind Fort Jackson. Porter continued to watch the forts with his six gunboats.[91]

On April 26, Porter again asked the forts to surrender. He informed them that Farragut was in control of New Orleans, there were troops moving into positions above the forts, and that the forts were cut off from all supplies and communications. The commanders of the forts still refused to surrender.[92] Though the commanders of the forts planned to hold out as long as they could, however, not all their troops shared this sentiment. At midnight on April 27, the majority of the soldiers at Fort Jackson mutinied and 300 of them deserted. The deserters were captured by Union pickets on the west bank of the river.[93] With their troops in revolt and anticipating a combined attack from the Union Army and Navy forces, the commanders of the forts offered their surrender on April 28.[94] Porter accepted the surrender on board one of his ships, without any Union Army officers present. This caused problems later between Butler and Porter. Butler, who was in New Orleans with Farragut at the time, felt Porter should have had an Army officer present to accept the Confederate surrender since there were Army troops present who had contributed to the Confederate surrender.

There is an obvious difference of opinion between the Army and the Navy over the reason the Confederate troops mutinied and forced the surrender of the forts. The Navy of course said that it was the bombardment alone which caused the surrender. Butler claimed that since the majority of the garrisons actually surrendered to his pickets, the Army troops were the reason the forts had surrendered.[95] General Duncan, the Confederate commander, said that the decision to surrender was influenced by the fact there were forces above and below the forts. Duncan also noted that, according to the troops at Fort Jackson, they had started discussing the mutiny on April 25.[96] This was before the Union troops started landing. It is most likely, based on the evidence available and on human nature, that with the Navy ships above and below the forts and communication cut off, the landing of the Union troops was the final blow to the morale of the Confederate soldiers. The Confederate soldiers decided to mutiny when it became obvious to them that their leaders were not going to surrender. The Navy may have been able to force the surrender eventually but it is unlikely the forts would have surrendered in the near term without the Army troops in position. Thus it was the combined forces, not one or the other force, which caused the surrender of the forts on April 28.

After blowing up the ironclad *Louisiana*, the remaining Confederate Navy units also surrendered. Porter sent a ship downriver to inform General Phelps of the surrender and to bring his troops upriver. Union forces occupied the two forts the afternoon of April 28.

The Surrender of New Orleans

Farragut had arrived off the city of New Orleans at 1300 on April 25 but was not having much luck in forcing the city to surrender. As he had steamed upriver, he had passed ships full of cotton, on fire, floating downriver. At the levee, there were ships, bales of cotton, and coal, all on fire, as the citizens had ignited these valuable items to prevent them falling into Union hands.

Farragut sent ashore Captain Theodorus Bailey, his second in command, to demand the surrender of the city. The mayor, John T. Monroe, would not surrender because Confederate troops were still in the city. The mayor sent for General Lovell, the Confederate commander. General Lovell refused to surrender as he had withdrawn his troops and was going to follow them out of town.[97]

Lovell had been enroute to the forts when Farragut had passed them the morning of April 24. Lovell had raced back to New Orleans and implemented the plans he had developed to evacuate his troops and all military stores from the city. Lovell knew that the city could not hold out once the ships had passed the forts. In explaining his decision to evacuate New Orleans, Lovell said that when the Union ships passed the forts he "regarded the position the same as if both their Army and Navy were present before the city"[98] and decided to evacuate the city. Thus when Captain Bailey asked for his surrender, the majority of Lovell's force and supplies were already out of the city. Bailey then had to return to Farragut without the city's surrender.[99]

The next day, April 26, Farragut sent Captain Albert Kautz, accompanied by twenty Marines, to again demand the city's surrender.

Kautz and two other officers proceeded to the mayor's office, leaving the Marines on the pier, and delivered Farragut's demand for the city's surrender. Farragut also demanded the U.S. flag be flown over all federal buildings and that any other flags be removed from all public buildings.[100] The mayor replied that as a civil authority, he did not know how to surrender as that was a military act and that no one in the city would raise any flag other than the Louisiana state flag. Acknowledging that the city was defenseless, he said "the city is yours [Farragut's] by the power of brute force."[101]

Farragut could do little when the mayor refused to surrender the city. Farragut's force of 330 Marines was not sufficient to control the unruly population which faced the fleet. The population had been even more inflamed by Farragut's order to seize the U.S. Mint and hoist the U.S. flag over it.[102] If the mayor did not surrender the city and restore the peace, Farragut's force could not enforce a Union takeover of the city without using the guns of the fleet.

On the 28th, Farragut, still frustrated by the mayor's refusal to surrender the city, sent a letter to the mayor stating that the fleet may have to fire on the city since the Louisiana state flag was still flying, and because the mayor's response to Farragut's last surrender demand had been inappropriate. Farragut informed the mayor that in anticipation of the fleet firing on the city "it becomes my [Farragut's] duty to notify you to remove the women and children from the city within forty-eight hours."[103] The mayor promptly informed Farragut that he could not evacuate the women and children and Farragut could go ahead and bomb the unarmed city, though it would be "murder".[104]

Farragut, in more of a symbolic gesture than an actual capture of the city, informed the mayor on April 29 that Union forces would raise the U.S. flag over the U.S. Customs House. Farragut also stated that he would have no further communication with the mayor, and that upon General Butler's arrival, Farragut would turn the city over to him. Farragut then sent Captain H. H. Bell, USN, and 250 of the fleet's Marines under Captain John Broome, USMC, into New Orleans to raise the United States flag over the customs house. After raising the U.S. flag, they proceeded to the city hall and took down the Louisiana state flag which had flown in defiance of Farragut's orders, and delivered the flag to Farragut. The Marines then stood guard at the customs house until Butler's troops arrived on May 1.[105]

During the tribulations of getting New Orleans to surrender, Farragut had seized every available steamer and sent them downriver to the Quarantine Station to bring Butler's troops upriver. Butler's troops began landing in New Orleans and the surrounding area on May 1 and Farragut turned the city over to Butler.

Butler promptly issued a general proclamation stating the objectives and purposes for having taken New Orleans. His proclamation began "The city of New Orleans . . . having surrendered to the combined naval and land forces of the United States."[106] This was indeed true for although it was the Navy's actions which brought the ships before the city and opened the way for the Army, Army troops were required to force the capitulation of the city. The guns of the Navy had not been enough to cause the city to surrender as had been hoped, and planned, by the Navy Department. Butler had to station many more men in the city to

maintain order than had been originally envisioned but it was the weight and strength of the Army troops which finalized the capture of New Orleans.

Farragut's acceptance of Butler's proposal to land troops above the forts resulted in a quicker surrender of the forts than would have occurred with only ships in the area, as previously discussed. Similarly, although the Navy's successful running of the forts caused the Confederate Army to evacuate New Orleans, Union Army troops were required to force the city's final surrender. The Navy can cause destruction ashore and sometimes force the surrender of troops but they cannot occupy and hold land.

The Completion of the New Orleans Campaign

With the capture of New Orleans, Farragut and Butler could now turn their attention to their next assignment. Butler's orders had directed him to take the forts in the vicinity of New Orleans and to then take Baton Rouge. He was also to try to join with the column coming downriver, under General Halleck. Farragut's orders had directed him to proceed upriver and take all the Confederate defenses from the rear if the expedition from Cairo, the same "column" Butler was to try and join with, had not yet reached New Orleans. Both officers had been directed to accomplish these missions prior to proceeding to Mobile.

When the Union forces captured New Orleans, the expedition coming downriver, which consisted of troops from Halleck's Department of Missouri and the Western Flotilla under the command of Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote, was still above Memphis, over 800 miles upriver from New Orleans. Thus Farragut would have to ascend the river and take the

Confederate defenses. But Farragut also wanted to move on to attack Mobile as soon as possible, before the Confederates could build up their defenses there and complete the ironclad rumored to be under construction in Mobile. On April 25 Farragut reported to Welles that he had taken New Orleans and that once he had taken the forts, Farragut would ascend the river to meet Flag Officer Foote.[107] But Farragut also began his preparations for the attack on Mobile.

On April 29, Farragut reported to Welles that he had destroyed all four forts above the city, which he believed were the only obstacles between New Orleans and Memphis, and that he expected to proceed to Mobile shortly.[108] With the destruction of the forts, Farragut initially considered sending a large portion of his force to Mobile in preparation for an attack but apparently changed his mind and decided to keep most of his force on the river, at least until he was sure he had completed his mission.[109] Farragut did send Porter and his squadron to Ship Island in preparation for operations against Mobile. Farragut specifically instructed Porter not to attempt any independent operations, an order Porter later disregarded.[110]

Farragut sent an advance force of gunboats, supported by one of his larger steamers, up the river. The gunboats assisted the Army in taking Baton Rouge on May 7 and the gunboats forced the surrender of Natchez on May 13. Farragut decided that he should take the majority of his remaining ships and go upriver himself, though he was concerned about how far upriver the larger steamers would be able to go. Farragut's gunboats arrived off Vicksburg on May 18 and Farragut, with the rest of his ships, arrived two days later. Farragut's force was now

nearly 400 miles up the Mississippi River, though still 400 miles below Foote who was still above Memphis. Farragut noted that he was "at least 300 miles farther than I was ever from sea water before since the days of my childhood."[111]

Farragut was concerned about operating his large ocean going ships on the river. They had occasionally run aground during the trip upriver and a sudden fall in the river's depth could strand the ships. Farragut was also very concerned about the many demands on his forces. He had taken most of the available ships upriver, leaving a few to assist in guarding New Orleans, and still needed a large force to attack Mobile. The blockade was also being affected as Farragut had taken seventeen ships from the forty available for the blockade to conduct the New Orleans expedition. Farragut continued to appeal to Welles for additional ships to support an attack on Mobile.[112] Farragut had believed that his primary missions after New Orleans were to attack Mobile and to enforce the blockade. He had not thought that operations on the river would take as long or as much force as they eventually did.[113] But now, Farragut believed that he was fulfilling his orders to the letter, and even exceeding the requirements of his orders, by going upriver, even though he was delaying the attack on Mobile.[114]

Brigadier General Thomas Williams and 1500 troops arrived off Vicksburg May 22. These were all the troops Butler felt he could spare to support operations up the river. Butler still had troops on Ship Island, had occupied the forts on the river and the many forts around New Orleans, had occupied Baton Rouge, and had kept a large force in and around New Orleans. He was fearful of an attack on New Orleans and felt

he could not spare any more troops for the movement upriver. Butler would continue to believe New Orleans was under the threat of imminent attack for several months and that belief would keep him from providing support to the Navy for other operations in the Gulf.

Farragut, Williams, and the commanding officers of the ships determined that they should not attack Vicksburg. The city had refused to surrender to Commander S. Philips Lee, the commander of the advance detachment of ships, upon his arrival. The Union forces were confronted by numerous Confederate gun batteries located on the heights above the city, too high for the Navy guns to reach. There were an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 Confederate troops in the city with another 20,000 in Jackson, an hour away by train. Farragut decided to leave the majority of his gunboats to blockade Vicksburg and descend the river with the remainder of his ships and proceed with the attack on Mobile. General Williams decided to conduct operations along the Red River with the limited troops he had.[115] Butler could, and should, have sent more troops upriver with Farragut but it would have made little difference. It would have required almost all of the troops under Butler's command to take and hold Vicksburg.

Farragut felt he had fulfilled his orders to conduct operations on the river and was anxious to return to sea to work on improving the blockade and to prepare for the attack on Mobile. Arriving off New Orleans on May 30 and satisfied with his accomplishments, Farragut sent a detailed report of his river operations to Welles, noting his inability to take Vicksburg, the difficulty of operating far upriver, and the poor condition of his ships. Farragut also reported that Butler

was contemplating another attempt to take Vicksburg, this time with 7,000 troops and Porter's mortar fleet. Farragut felt that the possibility of the river level falling at this time of year precluded ships returning upriver.[116]

Later that day, Farragut received a telegram Fox had sent on May 16 directing Farragut to ascend the river in accordance with his orders.[117] Farragut sent a reply to Fox that he had gone up the river and carried out his instructions to the best of his abilities and resources.[118] Unbeknownst to Farragut, Welles and Fox had been following what they thought was Farragut's progress through newspaper reports and a few telegrams. Based on incorrect and partial information, Welles and Fox had become convinced that Farragut was not fully complying with what they thought were clear orders. Welles and Fox sent several letters which did not reach Farragut until after his return to New Orleans. In a letter dated May 12, Fox had told Farragut that the opening of the Mississippi was more important than Mobile and hoped that Farragut would soon reach Memphis to assist in operations against General Pierre Beauregard's Confederate army.[119] Based on incorrect information that Farragut had returned to New Orleans instead of going upriver on May 17, Fox wrote that the news Farragut had retreated had distressed the President and Fox reiterated that the opening of the river was the most important task. "Mobile, Pensacola, and, in fact, the whole coast sinks into insignificance compared with this."[120]

Farragut was, at the least, surprised when he received the letters from Welles and Fox. In two reports to Welles on June 3,

Farragut pointed out that he did not realize that he was supposed to go above Natchez, or on to Memphis, which Farragut considered impractical. Farragut had sent a force upriver as soon as possible after the capture of New Orleans and felt he had done well in getting a force all the way to Vicksburg. He again stated the difficulties in operating on the river and noted that the river was falling, which could have stranded his forces far up the river. Farragut stated in both letters that he would "endeavor to carry out . . . the orders conveyed in your different dispatches."[121]

The Navy Department's orders to Farragut on January 20 did not clearly direct Farragut to ascend the river to meet Foote or order Farragut to go all the way to Memphis as Welles and Fox said they did. Farragut's orders were to take the Confederate defenses if Foote and Halleck, the Cairo expedition, had not descended the river. Farragut clearly attempted to follow those orders, ascending the river all the way to Vicksburg which he was unable to capture. Although in one report Farragut had indicated he would meet Foote on the river, it is apparent that he thought Foote would be much farther down the river than Memphis. Welles and Fox had unrealistic expectations for Farragut and did not take into account either the condition of Farragut's ships after New Orleans or the problems in ascending the river with his deep draft ships. Fox, a former naval officer, should have known the problems and clearly should not have expected Farragut to have reached Memphis by May 12. Many of the orders from the Navy Department reflected too much political thinking and over estimates of the capabilities of the forces available in a theater of operation, this despite Fox's assistance to

Welles with writing orders for the naval commanders. This again reflects on the absence of involvement by any active duty naval officers in the formulation of operational plans and policies in the Navy Department.

The Navy Department was receiving pressure from the President to open the river. Both Welles and Fox told Farragut that the President wanted the river opened before any other operations in the Gulf were completed. This was primarily because of the renewed emphasis Lincoln had placed on the Western campaigns after the Army's defeats in the East, and due to Lincoln's understanding of the importance of the Mississippi River. The insinuation that Farragut was supposed to be responsible for the opening of the river was clearly beyond the scope of Farragut's original orders. The Navy Department's inclusion of an attack on Mobile Bay in Farragut's orders and the emphasis on maintaining the blockade indicated that Farragut was not expected to spend as much time, with such a large force, as he did. Farragut did carry out his orders, as originally issued and briefed, and now carried out his new, expanded orders, another advance up the Mississippi.

Farragut recalled Porter's mortar squadron to augment the naval force and, with 3,000 troops from Butler, again ascended the river with his ships. On June 28, several of Farragut's ships, unable to destroy the batteries at Vicksburg, ran upriver past the city. They were joined by the ships of the Western Flotilla, now under the command of Flag Officer Charles H. Davis, coming downriver on July 1. There was really no purpose in Farragut running past Vicksburg. There was little more the Navy could do as their guns could not destroy the Confederate

batteries or drive the troops from the city. Farragut's force had only 3,000 troops, still below Vicksburg, and Halleck would not provide any additional troops for an attack on Vicksburg. As with the first expedition, there simply were not enough troops to attack and hold the city, and Butler was not going to send any additional troops either.

On July 10, Farragut informed Welles that there was little more he could do on the river. He estimated it would take 12,000 to 15,000 troops to take Vicksburg and that number of troops simply was not available from the Department of the Gulf. Now that Davis's squadron had descended the river, Davis could take over the blockade of Vicksburg.[122] On July 15, Farragut again ran by the guns at Vicksburg, this time downriver. On July 20, Farragut received instructions from Welles dated July 14 to return to the Gulf.[123] This was only four days after Farragut had sent the letter with his own reasons for returning to the Gulf. Based on the delays normally experienced in the exchange of letters between Farragut and Washington, it appears that Welles had come to the same conclusion as Farragut, before Welles had received Farragut's letter of July 10.

Farragut's squadron began the descent of the river July 24, leaving Davis in charge of the Vicksburg blockade, supported by three of Farragut's gunboats. Farragut reached New Orleans 28 July and for the next several weeks conducted limited operations along the lower Mississippi while his ships underwent much needed repairs.

After the New Orleans Campaign

On August 14, Farragut, recently promoted to the newly created rank of Rear Admiral, the first to hold that rank in the history of the

United States Navy, left New Orleans on board his flagship *Hartford* and proceeded to Pensacola. He left three ships and three gunboats on the river to support Butler in the defense of New Orleans. The remainder of the ships from the New Orleans campaign were sent to Ship Island or Pensacola for maintenance, or sent to augment the blockade.

Pensacola had been abandoned by the Confederates on May 9. Most of the Confederate troops had been withdrawn in February to support operations in Tennessee, as had most of the troops in Mobile and New Orleans. The Confederates wanted to hold Pensacola as long as possible, though, so they kept a small garrison there. The Union Army had maintained control of Fort Pickens, on Santa Rosa Island in Pensacola Bay, since the start of the war, effectively blockading the bay from Confederate use, but the Union forces were not strong enough to take the town.

The Confederate garrison had begun removing the remaining guns and supplies when they had heard Farragut's forces had run by the forts protecting New Orleans, knowing they would not be able to hold out against a similar attack. When they learned a Union force was off Mobile on May 7, the Confederate garrison completed preparations for their evacuation and on the night of May 9, they set the majority of the public buildings and all the facilities at the Navy Yard on fire.[124]

The Union force off Mobile was Porter's. He had taken some of his gunboats to Mobile, despite Farragut's order to remain at Ship Island, to look for places to deploy his mortar squadron when the time came to attack Mobile. In the early morning of May 10, Porter's force saw the illumination in the sky from the fires in Pensacola. Upon

investigating they found much of the Navy Yard and other buildings in Pensacola in flames and ashes. Porter than assisted the Union Army by transporting troops into the city from Fort Pickens.[125]

Farragut arrived at Pensacola on August 20. He quickly decided to establish a depot for his squadron at the old Navy Yard. Pensacola is one of the finest harbors in the Gulf and provided an excellent base for Farragut's future operations. Farragut remained at Pensacola, directing the operations of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron until November. This marked the end of the New Orleans campaign.

Farragut and Butler had accomplished a great deal, though not all that the leaders in Washington had expected them to accomplish. Although much of the success in the capture of New Orleans was a result of the Navy's actions, it took a combined force to capture the forts and force the capitulation of the city. The close cooperation and planning between Farragut and Butler had ensured that this was accomplished. The effective use of troops coupled with the success of the Navy had caused the surrender of the forts and the capture of New Orleans with minimal loss of life or ships.

Farragut had to strip the blockade force in order to gather enough ships to carry out the New Orleans campaign. With only a little more than twenty ships actively participating in the blockade while Farragut operated on the river, the blockade had been significantly weakened and less than effective. Moreover, Farragut did not have ships to replace those damaged in battle, or to rotate ships for maintenance, thus the ships he did have were not in good material condition. After the nearly constant operations on the river, Farragut's ships needed

long maintenance periods, again limiting the forces available for the blockade and for an attack on Mobile. Farragut carried out his orders to ascend the river with his first expedition up the river. He did not have the forces, naval or army, to take Vicksburg but he destroyed or captured all the other defenses on the river. He would not have been able to go much farther upriver even if he had run by the city on his first trip upriver due to the draft of his larger ships. On his second expedition upriver, Farragut meet the Western Flotilla, but it meant nothing without more troops to take Vicksburg.

Butler had enough troops for the initial objectives, the forts and the city of New Orleans. However, he never received the reinforcements his original orders had indicated he would receive and, coupled with the large troop requirements to control New Orleans and garrison the city's defenses, the 12,000 effective troops under his command were not enough to support an attack on Vicksburg.

Neither Butler nor Farragut were truly prepared for the directed attack on Mobile. Butler promised Farragut troops for the attack on Mobile several times over the next few months but they were not forthcoming. Butler was overly worried about a Confederate attack on New Orleans and intended to keep a large force to protect the city. He had too few troops, in his opinion, to spare for an attack on Mobile. Had Butler received the reinforcements he had been promised, he could have supported Farragut and they could have attacked the forts on Mobile Bay with much less difficulty and fewer losses than were experienced in the attack two years later. Without reinforcements though, it is

unlikely Butler would have had sufficient troops to garrison and hold the forts at Mobile Bay had they been taken.

Farragut wanted to attack Mobile, or to at least attack and hold the forts guarding the approaches to the bay before the Confederates built up defenses which would be too strong for him to conquer. He simply lacked the ships, and the troops, to complete this portion of his initial orders.

Farragut continually appealed to Welles for more ships. In response, Welles said he would try to send more vessels, but in the meantime, without troops to attack or hold Mobile and with the poor state of Farragut's vessels, Welles told Farragut to pay more attention to the Texas coast rather than trying to conduct an attack on Mobile. Welles informed Farragut that operations on the east coast had taken most of the available ships and when these operations were completed, Farragut would get more ships.[126]

Farragut thus turned his attention to the operations of his squadron, strengthening enforcement of the blockade, assisting in the defense of New Orleans, and conducting operations aimed at improving Union control of the Texas coast. The Mobile campaign would have to be postponed, though it was never far from Farragut's thoughts. Little did he know it would be two years before he could conduct the attack. In the meantime, operations along the Texas coast occupied much of the squadron's attention.

Endnotes

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[33] Thompson, Farragut to Fox, 12 February 1862, 1:300-302.

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CHAPTER 4

OPERATIONS ON THE TEXAS COAST

> The Galveston disaster is the most melancholy affair ever recorded in the history of our gallant navy.[1]

Gustavus Fox, Confidential Correspondence of Gustavus Vasa Fox

The Union's combined operations along the Texas coast did not have the success experienced in the combined operation to capture New Orleans and its defenses. The Navy had some limited, early success along the Texas coast but was not able to hold its gains due to a lack of troops to occupy the captured ports. Combined operations at Galveston and in the Sabine Pass expedition resulted in Union defeats. Although the Rio Grande expedition later in 1863 did demonstrate some success in the execution of combined operations, on the whole, combined operations along the Texas coast were a dismal failure.

There were many factors which caused the failures in the combined operations. For the most part though, the failures were caused by poor planning, poor leadership, and poor cooperation in both the Navy and the Army as well as a lack of understanding of the purpose and benefits of combined operations. At New Orleans, Farragut's direct leadership of the fleet, the cooperation between Farragut and Butler, and the shared primary objective resulted in overall success. As we shall see, operations along the Texas coast were missing these

attributes. As a result, Union objectives were either not easily reached or not achieved at all.

Texas was far removed from what was considered the main theater of the war in the east and from most of the operations east of the Mississippi. Texas did provide the Confederacy with wheat, meat, cotton, wool, and most importantly, troops. However, it was difficult to move any goods, either those locally produced or those arriving on blockade runners, from Texas to the east. Poor roads, long distances, and limited railroads significantly affected the Confederacy's ability to transport goods from Texas.[2] The Texas rail system was not linked to the rest of the Confederacy's rail system and the fall of New Orleans, previously the closest rail center, significantly increased the distance to any railheads which could be used to reach the east. New Orleans had also been the destination of most of Texas's coastal maritime trade so its capture affected both overland and sea transportation. Union control of the Mississippi River, achieved in 1863, further reduced the strategic value of Texas ports and goods.[3]

There were still important reasons, however, for operations against the Confederates in Texas. Texas provided much of the supplies to Vicksburg and Port Hudson until their capture in 1863. The Confederacy maintained a substantial force in Texas and western Louisiana throughout the war which threatened New Orleans and later, Union control of the Mississippi. As a result, the Union was compelled to maintain a large force to defend the area around New Orleans and western Louisiana. Much of the war materials to supply these forces came by blockade runners into Texas ports. Thus operations to close

these ports and strengthen the blockade were important to the war effort in the far west.

Additional war materials and hard currency for cotton exports came through Matamoras, Mexico. Matamoras, 30 miles up the Rio Grande River, across from Brownsville, Texas, became a booming seaport after the blockade was declared. A high volume of Confederate trade went through Matamoras.[4] Goods from England, France, and other nations were legally delivered to the neutral Mexican port and then went across the river to Brownsville. Although it was difficult to get goods from Matamoras to the rest of the Confederacy, the goods and war materials could be effectively used in Texas. Similarly, cotton was sent across the river from Brownsville to Matamoras and, now labeled as Mexican cotton, could be shipped to Europe. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo with Mexico had made the Rio Grande a neutral river and its mouth could not be blockaded. Union vessels could be posted at the river but could do little about the trade going through the neutral Mexican port.[5]

Texas also became important for international political reasons. In July 1861, Mexico had decided not to pay interest on her European debt. The British, French, and Spanish took over several Mexican Gulf ports and forced payment. The British and Spanish then left but the French stayed and in 1863 Maximilian, Archduke of Austria and loyal to Napoleon III of France, assumed the Mexican throne. French troops entered Mexico City on June 10, 1863. This, and Confederate friendship with France, caused concern in Washington. Rumors of French interest in Texas prompted Lincoln to order operations in Texas in July of 1863[6].

Early Navy Operations along the Texas Coast

Lack of forces prevented any significant Union operations along the Texas coast during the first year of the Civil War. The Texas coast represented nearly a quarter of the Confederate coast and there were simply not enough ships to effectively blockade the numerous inlets and bays along the coast. Though many were very shallow, others were deep enough to support intercoastal traffic and small, shallow draft blockade runners. When Farragut arrived in the Gulf, he took many of his ships up the river for the New Orleans campaign and posted the largest number of blockading ships off Mobile. Though there were always some blockaders off the Texas coast, there were not enough and many ports were left unguarded. Even when Navy ships were blockading a port, the ship's draft was often too deep to get close enough to stop the intercoastal traffic. As more ships were added to the blockade, more were sent to Texas but there were still holes in the blockade. The Texas blockade would not be truly effective until the ships were able to blockade from inside the passes or the ports were under Union control.

There were some early successes in Union naval operations against the Texas coast. The Union ships sometimes sent small landing parties ashore which captured and burned small schooners and boats, thus reducing the coastal traffic, and also garnered supplies which allowed the blockaders to remain on station longer. These were normally parties of five to forty men which could not stand up to any sizable Confederate force. There were no Union troops available to support the Navy and make these sorties anything more than minor raids.

One of the more successful Navy officers was Acting Volunteer Lieutenant John W. Kittredge. A career merchant marine officer familiar with the Texas coast, he was assigned a ship to blockade the Texas coast from Pass Cavallo off Matagorda Bay to Aransas Pass off Corpus Christi in early 1862.[7] Kittredge made several captures of blockade runners and had made a few forays ashore with limited success. In July, 1863, he captured two schooners in Corpus Christi Bay which he converted into gunboats and added to the two vessels under his command. With these vessels, he now controlled Corpus Christi Bay and effectively stopped trade through that city.[8]

Kittredge then decided to capture Corpus Christi. On August 13, 1862, Kittredge landed under a flag of truce and demanded to examine the public buildings of the United States Government. When his request was refused, he told the Confederates if they were going to fight, they should evacuate the women and children, and he gave the Confederates forty eight hours to do so. Kittredge's vessels conducted an all day engagement with Confederate shore batteries on August 16 with little effect on either side.[9] On August 18, Kittredge landed a party of thirty men and a howitzer to attack the Confederate battery. They were driven off by a small Confederate force and forced to return to their ships.[10]

Although Kittredge received credit in the press and from Admiral Farragut for capturing Corpus Christi, he did not succeed in that endeavor.[11] He did succeed in halting commerce around Corpus Christi, thus strengthening the blockade in the area. The lessons learned from Kittredge's efforts were that the blockade was much more effective when

the Union blockaders were inside the bar and that troops were required to take and hold a town of any size on the Texas coast.

Defeat at Galveston

Galveston was Texas's largest and most important port.[12] A city of 10,000 built on an island, it had both rail and water connections to Houston, which was the hub of Texas's railroad system, and thus was accessible to much of the interior of the state. (See Figure 2.) Goods from the interior were sent by rail or inland waterway to Galveston and then by ship to New Orleans or to the railhead at Brashear City on Atchafalaya Bay which connected to New Orleans.

Galveston was a difficult port to blockade because it had two main entrances. At least two ships were required to maintain even a perfunctory blockade though there were often not two ships available to blockade the city. One of the ship's commanding officers had requested three gunboats to take the city in March 1862, but Farragut did not have the ships to send much less keep at Galveston.[13] Once the New Orleans campaign was over, and after Welles directed more emphasis on the Texas coast, Farragut turned more of his attention to the Texas coast, and to Galveston in particular.

On September 19, 1862, Farragut directed Commander William B. Renshaw to take vessels from the mortar flotilla and proceed down the Texas coast. Renshaw was to attack Confederate coastal defenses wherever possible in order to gain control of the coast and intercoastal waterways. Galveston was expected to be the most likely port for Renshaw to attack.[14]

Renshaw, commanding the *USS Westfield*, had three other steamers and a mortar schooner under his command when he arrived off Galveston on October 4. Renshaw sent *USS Harriet Lane* into the harbor under a flag of truce to demand the surrender of the city. The commanding officer of the *Harriet Lane*, Commander Jonathan M. Wainwright,[15] notified the Confederates that he had a message for their commander. Wainwright waited several hours for the messenger promised by the Confederates to receive the message. Finally tired of waiting, he proceeded back out to sea. At about the same time, the Confederate messenger boat, flying a white flag of truce, proceeded out into the harbor. Wainwright did not wait for the boat and continued out to sea.[16]

Renshaw then ordered all five of his ships to proceed into Galveston Bay. As the ships proceeded into the bay, the single gun at Fort Point on the northern end of Galveston Island fired a shot. The Confederates claimed this was a warning shot, similar to one which had been fired in front of the *Harriet Lane* when she first entered port.[17] Renshaw, however, believed it was the fort opening fire on his ships and returned fire, quickly disabling the gun. Artillery in the town then opened fire on the ships but Renshaw, not wanting to fire into the town to silence the artillery, raised a flag of truce and the Union ships anchored in the bay. The Confederate messenger boat, which had been in the bay with its white flag flying throughout the brief encounter, then came alongside Renshaw's ship whereupon Renshaw demanded the unconditional surrender of the city.[18]

The Confederates refused to surrender the city and after some negotiations, Renshaw granted a four day truce to allow the Confederates

to evacuate the women, children, and foreign consuls from the city. The terms of the truce stated the Confederates were not to improve their defenses in the city during the truce. They did not, instead the Confederates used the truce period to evacuate all their troops, war materials, and most of the citizens from the town. The Confederates retreated to fortified positions on Virginia Point, on the mainland across from Galveston Island.[19]

The Union forces now controlled the city but could not occupy and hold it without troops. Renshaw sent a small landing party into the city and raised the United States flag over the Custom House for 30 minutes but there was little else he could do. Renshaw sent a request to Farragut for troops to hold the city. He did not know how many would be needed but guessed a minimum 300 troops and six artillery pieces could defend Fort Point or Pelican Island in the bay with the assistance of Renshaw's gunboats.[20]

Major General John Bankhead Magruder, who assumed command of Confederate forces in Texas November 29, 1862, later claimed the Union ships had captured Galveston under a flag of truce.[21] There was ambiguity by both sides in the use of the flag of truce during the capture of Galveston but the city would have fallen anyway. Renshaw had significant fire power with his ships' guns and the Confederate commander of Galveston had previously received instructions to withdraw to Virginia Point if the Union brought an overwhelming force to attack the city.[22] With the Confederates strongly entrenched at Virginia Point and reinforced to over 3,000 troops, Renshaw's problem now was to hold the city with just his ships until Union troops arrived.

Farragut immediately requested troops for Galveston from Butler though he knew he would have difficulty getting them. Farragut had told Welles that he could take the whole Texas coast if he was provided any troops.[23] Farragut had been requesting troops for an attack on Mobile since the end of the New Orleans campaign in August. Butler kept agreeing to give Farragut troops when they became available but as yet had not provided any troops. Nor did Butler quickly provide troops for Galveston.

There were several reasons Butler decided not to immediately provide troops to Galveston, or to Mobile. One was that Butler was indeed short of men, he had less than 10,000 effective troops. Disease, expiring enlistments and desertion had significantly reduced his force and no reinforcements had arrived from the North. Many of his current troops had been recruited locally among Union sympathizers in New Orleans, and Butler was also raising "colored" regiments of former slaves.[24] Butler had abandoned Baton Rouge August 21 in order to consolidate his force. He continually requested additional troops to carry out his missions, but Halleck made it clear there were no troops available to send.

Butler was also continually worried about a Confederate attack on New Orleans. There were constant rumors of large Confederate forces moving towards New Orleans and Butler did not want to disperse his troops. Others doubted the reality of such a Confederate attack. Farragut did not believe an attack was coming and continued to pressure Butler for troops.[25]

Butler was also using his forces to attack Confederate troops in order to enforce his control of the areas around New Orleans. He had sent a small expedition up the river to Donaldsonville in late September and sent a larger expedition of over 3,000 troops there October 26, despite Farragut's request for troops to be sent to Galveston. Butler notified Farragut that once the expedition to Donaldsonville was completed he would give Farragut troops for Mobile and could spare a regiment for Galveston.[26] Butler continued to promise troops to support Farragut but by mid-December had still not provided any.

Butler should, and could, have provided troops to Galveston. He should have either reduced the size or canceled the Donaldsonville expedition in order to provide troops. Not providing troops for an expedition to Mobile was one thing, but not providing troops to occupy a port already under Union control was inexcusable. This lack of cooperation was a significant mistake by Butler and directly contributed to the loss of Galveston a few months later.

In the meantime, Farragut directed Renshaw to leave a gunboat to control Galveston and continue to attack down the coast. By October 26, Renshaw had captured Indianola, Matagorda, and Powderhorn, all on Matagorda Bay. He had forced the surrender of each town under the guns of his ships though he told citizens that he would hold the towns from the water and no troops would land.[27]

Renshaw's success, coupled with Kittredge's earlier success, and the capture of Sabine Pass September 28 by Navy ships under the command of Acting Master Frederick Crocker, gave the Navy control of the principal Texas ports from Corpus Christi to Sabine Pass. Though the

Navy did not control the cities themselves due to a lack of troops, they were able to blockade from inside the bar of the bays and rivers which made the blockade much more effective, and much easier to conduct.

Blockaders operating inside the bar, without supporting troops ashore, were more vulnerable to attack however, both from Confederate forces ashore and from Confederate river boats. There were persistent rumors that Confederate forces were going to attack the Union forces at Galveston. Renshaw was so concerned about the reports that he pulled ships from other Texas ports to strengthen the force at Galveston. Farragut was upset that Renshaw had taken such action based on rumors and, concerned that Renshaw might abandon Galveston, directed he hold Galveston until Army troops arrived.[28] Farragut now thought that the concerns about attacks were one of the reasons ports should not be taken without troops to defend them.[29]

On December 14, more troops finally arrived in New Orleans. Major General Nathaniel Prentiss Banks arrived with about 20,000 troops, Banks himself was not sure of the exact number. Banks had also received a promise from Halleck that he would send Banks 10,000 more troops as soon as possible. Banks also arrived with orders to relieve Butler and assume command of the Department of the Gulf,[30] something no one in Washington had gotten around to telling Butler.

Banks was another influential political general, and a Republican unlike the Democrat Butler. Banks did have previous combat experience. He had been appointed commander of the Department of the Shenandoah in July 1861. Banks had remained in command of several divisions when his department was absorbed into the Army of Virginia

under General John Pope in July 1862. Banks' primary combat experience was the loss of two battles in the Shenandoah Valley to the Confederate general, Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson.

Banks had been raising troops in New England for the previous two months, initially for an expedition to Texas. Lincoln had changed the destination of Banks' expedition to the lower Mississippi in November, 1862,[31] but the new orders to New Orleans were kept as secret as possible. Butler had heard of Banks' Texas expedition through the Confederate newspapers and, concerned about his own position, had written a letter to Lincoln asking why another general was to lead an independent expedition within his department.[32] Butler had not yet received a reply, and his first notice of his impending relief was Banks' arrival in New Orleans with orders to relieve him. Banks officially relieved Butler on December 16, 1862. Butler returned to Washington and eventually was again assigned as commander of Fort Monroe.

Banks' orders directed him to conduct operations to open the Mississippi as "the President regards the opening of the Mississippi River as the first and most important of all our military and naval operations."[33] His secondary mission was to gain control of Mobile Bay by either reducing the forts or taking the city. Halleck also stated in the orders that Banks would have Farragut's support in the Gulf and on the river.[34]

Banks met with Farragut shortly after his arrival and presented Farragut a letter from Lincoln asking Farragut to cooperate with Banks, consistent with any orders from the Navy Department.[35] This was another

example of some of the difficulties associated with combined operations as opposed to joint operations: it required a letter from the President to establish a higher level of cooperation between the services. At Farragut's suggestion, Banks sent 12,000 troops directly to Baton Rouge, with Navy gunboat support, to recapture the city as the first move in the Union's operations to open the Mississippi. Banks also agreed to send troops to Galveston to occupy the city. Initially, at least, the two commanders quickly established an effective level of cooperation.

Three companies of the Forty-Second Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers, left New Orleans for Texas on December 21. The rest of the regiment and the supporting artillery were to follow as soon as possible. The three companies, 260 troops, arrived in Galveston on December 24 and the next morning they landed at Kuhn's Wharf on Galveston Island. They were originally planning to land on Pelican Island, as Renshaw had originally suggested, and use the barracks there, at least until the rest of the regiment arrived. Renshaw convinced the Army commander, Colonel Isaac S. Burrell, to land on the wharf instead, believing it was the best place for the gunboats to cover the Army troops.[36] This was one of several tactical errors Renshaw made about the defense of Galveston.

The troops patrolled the city during the day but they had to be pulled back to the wharf under the guns of the Navy at night. The limited numbers of troops was not sufficient to ensure control of the city at night or to defend the city if attacked. They did not have any artillery and were dependent on the navy guns for support and

protection. The Army troops clearly should have gone to Pelican Island until additional troops arrived.

Renshaw had left the long railroad bridge between Galveston and the mainland intact so supplies could be brought from the mainland to the citizens remaining in the city.[37] This too was a serious tactical error on Renshaw's part and was not corrected by Burrell upon his arrival. The bridge allowed the Confederates to send cavalry into the town every night, and allowed Major General Magruder to lead his troops onto the island on the night of December 31, 1862, in preparation for a coordinated attack on the Union forces.

Renshaw had received information from Union informants that the Confederates were going to attack on 30 December. The attack had not occurred that night but the Union forces had now been alerted as to a pending attack. At 0100 on January 1, 1863, Union pickets reported Confederate artillery in the city. At 0130, Confederate steamers were sighted in the upper bay.[38] The Union forces were thus not caught by surprise when 1,500 Confederate troops, supported by field artillery and siege guns, opened fire at 0300.

Renshaw had five ships and an armed yacht to defend the city and support the troops ashore. *USS Sachem*, *USS Owasco*, and the armed yacht opened fire on the Confederate positions in support of the troops ashore. The *USS Westfield*, Renshaw's flagship, had gone aground near Pelican Island as she moved towards the city after sighting the Confederate ships and *USS Clifton* was trying to assist her. The *USS Harriet Lane* was also in port, farther out from shore, but was not in position to support the troops ashore.[39]

Two Confederate cotton clad steamers, who were supposed to have attacked simultaneously with the land forces, finally arrived in the lower bay at sunrise. The cotton clads were river boats with cotton bales stacked on their sides for protection, carrying a large number of troops on board as sharpshooters and a boarding force. They attacked *Harriet Lane* and after a brief engagement, boarded and captured her.

The capture of the *Harriet Lane* provided a classic example of how the Civil War split families apart. After the ship's capture, Major Albert M. Lea, an officer on Magruder's staff, went aboard the ship. There he discovered his son, Lieutenant Commander Edward Lea, the ship's executive officer, mortally wounded. The son died later that day and Major Lea conducted the burial service for his son the next day.[40]

At 0730, the Confederates raised a white flag of truce on *Harriet Lane* and sent a messenger to the Union ships with a proposal that all the Union ships surrender and then all Union Navy personnel would be allowed to depart on one ship. A three hour truce was arranged in order to give the ships time to talk the proposal over and subsequently, all the Union ships raised a white flag. No thought was apparently given about the Union troops ashore.

The Union troops, seeing the flags of truce on the ships, raised their own flag of truce. Colonel Burrell sent a messenger out to the ships to find out the reason for the truce, and to have one of the gunboats take the troops off the wharf as the enemy force was too strong for the small contingent of Union troops.[41]

In the meantime, the Confederate commander ashore informed Colonel Burrell that the truce arranged with the ships did not apply to

the Army troops ashore and demanded Burrell's immediate surrender. Burrell asked for a similar three hour truce and was refused. Faced with the loss of his supporting gunfire and heavily outnumbered, Burrell surrendered his troops.[42]

In the harbor, Renshaw had decided not to surrender the ships. He planned to blow up *Westfield*, which was still aground, and have the rest of the ships steam out of the harbor when the truce period ended. As the truce period was nearing an end, *Westfield* blew up prematurely, killing Renshaw and twelve crewmembers. *Clifton*, *Sachem*, the armed yacht, and two Army transports lowered their white flags and steamed across the bar out to sea.[43] In the meantime, the Confederates had raised another flag of truce in order to propose an extension of the truce and sent a messenger to *Owasco*, who refused to accept the messenger and also steamed out of the harbor. The ships abandoned the blockade and headed north out of fear the *Harriet Lane*, under Confederate control, would come out and destroy them.

This terrible defeat resulted from poor planning, poor execution, and probably a little panic on the Union side. The litany of errors began when Renshaw did not destroy the railroad bridge from the mainland, providing the Confederates an easy avenue approach into the city. The long delay in the arrival of Union troops further exacerbated the problem. Had they been sent when first requested in October, they would have had time to fortify the Galveston end of the bridge, as well as the rest of the town. There would also have been considerably more troops in Galveston, making the Confederate victory less likely.

Renshaw's handling of events in the harbor was equally poor. There was no justification for him blowing up his flagship or for the ships to leave the harbor.[44] The capture of *Harriet Lane* was a significant loss but Renshaw still had four other ships and an armed yacht with which to fight. He could have used ships to protect *Westfield* until she could be refloated, and still have assets to counter the cotton clads. His decision to accept a three hour truce and not continue to fight resulted in the loss of the troops ashore and to his premature decision to blow up his ship. The defeat at Galveston was clearly one which should not have happened.

Lack of Army support in providing sufficient troops, poor placement and use of the troops which were provided, and the failure of the Navy to provide and maintain proper fire support to the troops resulted in the capture of all the troops and the loss of the city. The failure of the Navy to withdraw the troops when they were overwhelmingly outnumbered, and the Navy's failure to ensure the truce included the Army troops were failures in leadership which also contributed to the defeat. All these factors were avoidable but lack of understanding of the other service, and the lack of a central commander of the entire force, led to defeat.

When Farragut received word of the disaster at Galveston, he immediately dispatched Commodore H. H. Bell with *USS Brooklyn* and three gunboats to reestablish the blockade, determine the status of the city and retake it if possible. Bell arrived off the city on January 7 and found the Confederates building earthworks and fortifying the city. Bell's vessels had too deep of a draft to enter the harbor or get within

two miles of the city so there was little he could do. Farragut sent additional gunboats to support Bell but by the time he had a sufficient force of gunboats, the city was too heavily fortified for him to enter without troops to conduct a combined attack.[45]

There was little else Farragut could do about Galveston. He had not asked for any troops to retake the city immediately after it fell and Banks had already turned his attention to operations in western Louisiana. The campaign against Port Hudson followed and no troops were to become available until after the surrender of Port Hudson on July 9, 1863. Farragut himself and much of his squadron would once again be on the Mississippi to support the Army from February until July. A strong blockade was established and maintained at Galveston but the port would remain in Confederate hands until the end of the war.

The Western Gulf Blockading Squadron continued to receive additional ships, though there were never enough ships to meet all the requirements and the continuous operations were taking their toll on the ships. By June 1, 1863, there were 61 ships assigned to the squadron but only eight were newer screw steamers. There were 25 gunboats, the rest were converted ferries, sailing vessels, and supply ships. Farragut had enough ships to maintain a fairly effective blockade but not enough for any major operations, and all the ships needed maintenance and repairs. There were usually seven or more gunboats at a time undergoing repairs in New Orleans and Pensacola. Farragut had to send three of his large screw steamers and four gunboats to shipyards in the north because he could not keep up with repairs in the Gulf.

On August 1, Farragut formally turned control of the Mississippi River above New Orleans over to Porter who now commanded the Mississippi River Squadron. Farragut then turned temporary command of the squadron over to Commodore Bell and proceeded to New York for a well deserved rest, having been involved in operations continuously since his arrival in the Gulf in January 1862. He would remain in the north until January 1864 when he returned to the Gulf. With Farragut went his tactical abilities, strong leadership, and experience, areas in which Bell was less capable.

The United States Flag Must Fly Over Texas

After the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, General Grant and Banks both recommended operations against Mobile.[46] However, the arrival of French troops in Mexico had garnered the attention of President Lincoln and the Cabinet. Secretary of State Seward, Welles, and Stanton meet with the President to discuss occupying some part of Texas.[47] As a result, Grant was ordered to send a portion of his troops to reinforce Banks, and Banks was ordered to quickly occupy a point in Texas.

In a series of dispatches, Halleck gave Banks his guidance for his expedition into Texas. In each dispatch Halleck reiterated the importance of having the U.S. flag fly over some point in Texas. Halleck also told Banks this was primarily a diplomatic rather than a military necessity due to the French intervention in Mexico. The destination of the expedition was ultimately left to Banks. If Banks decided to move by sea, Halleck assured him Farragut would cooperate in the expedition.

Though the final decision on the destination was left to Banks, Halleck did provide some suggestions. Halleck believed that a combined Army and Navy movement up the Red River towards Alexandria and Shreveport and then into northern Texas would be the best alternative. He felt that an expedition to Indianola as suggested by Welles was too far from New Orleans. Galveston was also mentioned as a possible destination.[48]

Banks quickly decided to make his initial move against Sabine Pass, which was the nearest point to his line of supply and could be easily reached by sea. After taking Sabine Pass, Banks initially planned to move his force down the coast to Galveston while other troops moved overland towards Houston. He then modified the plan, deciding to move from Sabine Pass first to Houston and then to Galveston, primarily due to the large Confederate force he had heard was at Galveston. Banks decided against the Red River campaign suggested by Halleck because the river would be too low this late in the season to allow Navy vessels to proceed up the river, and Banks believed it impractical to support his force by wagons alone on the 400 mile trek to Shreveport.

Though Banks was quick to decide on his destination, he was not as quick in getting the expedition underway. First telling Halleck he would begin his move by August 22, Banks asked for more troops and said the Navy was not strong enough to fully support his expedition, particularly for the attack on Houston. This was typical of Banks. He had delayed his initial departure for New Orleans to try to get more troops and supplies, and had started complaining about having too few troops within days of arriving in New Orleans. His complaints about

lack of troops and Navy support continued through the Port Hudson campaign despite receiving reinforcements throughout the campaign. He had over 38,000 effective troops as of July 31, 1863, and had been promised 10,000 more from Grant's forces, and he still pleaded for more, though Halleck had told him no more were available. Banks finally got the expedition underway to Sabine Pass on September 4, 1863.[49]

Failure at Sabine Pass

The Sabine River originates in northeast Texas and its southerly course forms the boundary between Texas and Louisiana for over two hundred miles. Sabine Pass is formed by the confluence of the Sabine River and the Natchez River six miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico, below Sabine Lake. Sabine City is on the Texas side, about four miles upriver from the Gulf. Just below the city, the Confederates built an earthen fort to guard the Pass. (See Figure 3.) Although relatively shallow, the Pass was frequently used by small blockade runners to transport goods in and out of Texas due to the nearby rail connection to Houston.[50]

The Navy's first expedition to Sabine Pass had been a success. In September 1862, shortly before sending Renshaw to Galveston, Farragut sent Acting Master Frederick Crocker with two ships to blockade Sabine Pass, and to capture the Pass if possible.[51] Upon Crocker's arrival at Sabine Pass on September 23, he found a Union mortar schooner on station which Renshaw, who had since begun operations on the Texas coast, had sent to blockade the Pass. Apparently Farragut had failed to tell Renshaw that he had sent Crocker to Sabine Pass. Crocker then took one of his vessels and the mortar schooner over the bar and attacked the

fort, driving off the Confederate defenders. The city surrendered to Crocker September 26, 1862.[52] Crocker could not occupy the city due to a lack of troops but his success did permit the Union blockaders to now blockade from inside the bar, making the blockade much more effective.

Union ships continued their blockade from inside the bar until early December. Rumors of an impending attack on the blockading vessels, similar to the rumors of attack Renshaw was hearing in Galveston, caused the Union ships to move out to sea in order to have more maneuvering room in the event of attack. On the morning of January 21, 1863, two Confederate cotton clad steamers came out of the Pass and ran out to sea after the two Union blockaders currently off Sabine Pass. After a two hour running gun battle, the Confederates captured both blockaders.[53] Although the Union Navy quickly sent other, more powerful warships to blockade Sabine Pass, the size of the Confederate force and their actions demonstrated they were clearly in control of Sabine Pass itself, at least for now.

Banks assigned Major General William Buel Franklin to command the expedition to capture Sabine Pass. Due to a chronic shortage of sea going transports, Banks could only transport about 5,000 troops and five artillery batteries at a time. Although this would be sufficient for the initial attack, the 22 available transports were to return to Berwick Bay and pick up additional troops once they landed the first wave of troops in Texas.[54] Banks wanted to assemble a force of 20,000 troops to make his move on Houston.

Franklin's orders were to attack the fortifications defending Sabine Pass. He was to land below the Pass, or wherever feasible along

the coast, and proceed to attack the fortifications. The Navy was going to cooperate in the expedition by providing gunboats to escort the transports and to cover the troops landing and their movement along the coast. Banks instructed Franklin that if the Navy found the fortifications were unoccupied, or if the Navy determined that they could easily and quickly defeat the fortifications, Franklin could then land his troops at Sabine Pass itself. Franklin was also directed to meet with the Navy leaders before leaving New Orleans.[55]

Banks had requested naval assistance from Commodore Bell and Bell quickly agreed. He assigned command of the naval force to Acting Volunteer Lieutenant Frederick Crocker, who had successfully captured Sabine Pass in September 1862. Due to the shallow depth of the bar at Sabine Pass, only six to seven feet, ships which had been converted into gunboats rather than regular Navy gunboats would have to be used. Crocker was to command *USS Clifton*, a sidewheel steamer and former ferryboat. The other vessels under his command were *USS Arizona* and *USS Granite City*, both sidewheel steamers, and *USS Sachem*, a screw steamer. None of the vessels was heavily armed nor built for an intense fight but they were the only vessels available for the expedition which could pass over the bar.[56]

Franklin, Bell, and Crocker met to discuss the plan for the expedition. They decided that the Navy gunboats, with Army sharpshooters embarked, would attack the fort alone. After the ships drove off the Confederate defenders, the Army troops would then land at the Pass. This plan was formulated without any current intelligence

about the defenses at Sabine Pass, which they believed to be two guns in the fort supported by field artillery and two riverboats.[57]

Presumably, Crocker's earlier success at defeating the fort at Sabine Pass, coupled with Renshaw's initial success at Galveston, led the Navy to propose this plan, and Franklin to accept it. It was a poorly conceived plan which did not effectively use the full power of the combined forces, Army troops and artillery in addition to naval gunfire, available. Banks had made it clear in his orders that Franklin was to land his troops and attack the fort unless the Navy knew it could quickly take the fort, and the Navy could not know that until they had at least some current information, or until their arrival at Sabine Pass. Failing to use the troops in a coordinated attack was clearly a misuse of the available assets, especially since the ships being used were all converted gunboats with limited firepower.

The Navy's decision that they could reduce the forts alone, and the Army commander's acceptance of that plan, showed a lack of understanding of the purpose and capabilities of combined operations on the part of Bell and Franklin. Failing to use all their available assets and to base the plan on Navy firepower alone set the expedition up for failure. Franklin should not have agreed to the plan, going to Banks if necessary to correct the Navy's faulty plan. Franklin's lack of understanding of the Navy's capabilities and limitations, as well as an apparent lack of understanding of the increased power of a combined attack on the fort allowed overconfident naval officers to propose, and Franklin to agree, to a poor plan.

When Farragut, currently in the North, heard about the plan, he said it would fail and that it should be a coordinated attack.[58] Unfortunately he could do little as the plan was executed before Farragut, or Welles, received the information about the expedition.

Late on September 4, 1863, four transports with 1,000 troops under the command of Brigadier General Weitzel departed New Orleans enroute to Berwick Bay. They were to rendezvous there with Crocker and the convoy would then proceed to Sabine Pass. The gunboats would begin the attack on the morning of September 7 and Weitzel's troops would then land and hold the fort until the remainder of the troops arrived. Franklin and the rest of the troops left New Orleans on the morning of September 5 and expected to arrive at Sabine Pass late in the morning on September 7.[59]

During the planning of the expedition, Bell had neglected to notify the ships blockading Sabine Pass, or the senior officer on the Texas coast who controlled the blockade in that area, of the impending operation. Bell did not send notification of the expedition until September 3, when he sent *Granite City*, one of Crocker's ships, ahead of the rest of the expedition with a dispatch about the operation to the commanding officer of *Owasco*, the ship who was supposed to be on blockade duty.[60] This resulted in a chain of events which significantly affected the operation.

Once *Granite City* had notified *Owasco*, she was to anchor off Sabine Pass to mark the entrance of the Pass so Crocker could find it in the dark. *Granite City* did not arrive at Sabine Pass until the afternoon of September 6, but could not find *Owasco*. *Owasco*, not

knowing of the expedition, had left her station that morning and proceeded to Galveston due to a shortage of machinery oil on board. The commanding officer of *Granite City*, Acting Master C. W. Lamson, a former sea captain in the merchant marine, was alarmed at not finding the blockader on station, and when he saw a steamer pass by in the distance, Lamson decided it must be the Confederate raider *Alabama*, even though the raider had not been in the Gulf since January. Lamson then headed out to sea instead of anchoring off Sabine Pass in accordance with his orders.[61]

Without *Granite City* as a marker, Crocker's group of gunboats and transports passed the entrance to the Pass twice, first headed south and then back north. Though the sun had now risen and the chance for an attack at daybreak was gone, Crocker still wanted to attack. Weitzel, however, wanted to wait until the next morning and Crocker, since his orders were to cooperate with the Army, agreed and the group moved out to sea so as not to alert the Confederates at the fort of their presence.[62] Unfortunately, they had unknowingly passed Franklin's transports during the night. Franklin arrived at Sabine Pass at 1100 on September 7, on schedule, and proceeded to cross the bar in accordance with the plan. His lead transports came back out though when they did not see the Union ships who were supposed to have attacked the fort. One of Crocker's gunboats then arrived to tell Franklin of the change in plans. The Confederates had seen the transports though and it was obvious that all chances of a surprise attack were now gone.[63]

Franklin, Weitzel, and Crocker then met to form a new plan. They decided that Crocker, on board *Clifton*, would cross the bar and

reconnoiter the Pass. If it was safe he would signal the rest of the force, using the Army signalmen onboard his ship, to come into the Pass. Crocker crossed the bar at daylight on September 8. He fired several shots at the fort but did not receive any return fire. The other gunboats and seven of the transports then crossed the bar, the rest were too deep draft to cross the bar, and anchored in the river, out of range of the fort's guns. Crocker then met with the Army generals to formulate a new plan of attack.[64]

Crocker had seen a formidable earthen fort with six guns. The Confederates had built a new fort, which the Confederates had named Fort Griffin, to replace the one damaged in Crocker's attack the previous year. Built about a mile above the location of the old fort, the new fort was much stronger than had been expected during the initial planning and Crocker decided it was too much for the gunboats to attack alone. He had also seen a Confederate cotton clad steamer farther up the river, near the city.[65]

What Crocker did not know was the fort was manned by only 43 men, forty-one Irish born Confederates, a cavalry surgeon, and an engineer officer. They were a company comprised of dock workers, laborers, and saloon workers from Houston. Called the Davis Guards, they were officially now Company F of the First Texas Heavy Artillery. They had taken part in an early expedition to the Rio Grande in 1861 and had been part of Magruder's force in the capture of Galveston. First Lieutenant Richard W. "Dick" Dowling, an Irish saloon owner from Houston, was in charge of the fort. His brother-in-law, Captain

Frederick H. Oldum, was the company commander and maintained a headquarters in Sabine City.[66]

Crocker and the generals took a small boat up the river to find a place to land troops. The banks and shoals of the river were composed of deep mud and much of the land beyond was marsh. The only acceptable point to land troops was in the vicinity of the old fort, which was within gun range of the current Confederate fort.[67] (See Figure 3.)

The three leaders then formulated a new plan. The river across from the fort was split into two narrow channels by a mile long, shallow reef. They decided Crocker's ship, *Clifton*, would shell the fort while two ships went up the channel on the right side, the Louisiana side, of the river. The Confederates would have to retrain their guns to fire on the ships in the right channel and then Crocker would move up the left channel to engage the fort at close range while Army sharpshooters on board his ship picked off the Confederate gunners. The fourth gunboat would then cover the landing of troops from the transport *General Banks* in the vicinity of the old fort. The troops would then attack the fort and drive out the remaining Confederates.[68]

This plan was somewhat better than the original plan for the Navy ships to attack alone, but not much better. The river channels were narrow and the ships would have little room to maneuver, grounding would be a constant concern. Crocker was almost certain his ship would go aground during the attack, and told Franklin that his ship would be destroyed if it went aground and the troops did not land as planned. Franklin assured Crocker the troops would land quickly.[69]

The Union commanders were still only using part of their available forces. Only five hundred troops were to land, and their supporting artillery would not be able to land with them. Additionally, the Confederate guns would have a long time to fire at the Union ships before the Union infantry landed and attacked the forts. The landing would also be made within range of the Confederate guns. All previous Union amphibious landings had been made miles away from Confederate troops and forts. This would mark the first time a landing would be attempted under the guns of the enemy. It was unlikely the ship's fire power would be able to drive the Confederates from the forts on their own. A much better plan would have been for Franklin to land his troops down the coast and attack the fort with his entire force, supported by artillery, in a coordinated attack with the Navy, as Banks had originally directed. Franklin should have made that decision, and it is nearly certain that Crocker would have gone along with it. Crocker was already concerned about his ability to attack the fort and a coordinated, simultaneous attack would have been much more effective. That neither Franklin nor Crocker would insist on such an attack, and that Franklin took the easy route by having the Navy attack first, showed a lack of understanding of the effectiveness of combined operations and a lack of effective leadership on Franklin's part.

The Union forces began the attack at 1545. *Sachem* proceeded up the right channel with *Arizona* behind her. As the Confederate guns concentrated on *Sachem*, *Clifton* started up the left channel. *Sachem* was hit by a shell which passed through her boiler, forcing her to anchor to prevent going aground. *Arizona* did go aground and once free, failed to

assist *Sachem* and tow her out of danger. In the meantime, the Confederates shifted their fire to *Clifton.* Her wheel ropes were shot away and she grounded much sooner than expected.[70]

Crocker continued to fight his ship for over twenty minutes after it went aground but to his surprise, neither *Granite City* nor *General Banks* moved up to support him or land troops as planned. Increasingly accurate Confederate fire pierced his boiler, causing many of his sailors and Army sharpshooters to abandon ship. With most of his guns no longer functioning, increasing casualties, and no support in sight, Crocker surrendered his ship. *Sachem,* seeing *Clifton* surrender and with no support forthcoming from *Arizona,* also raised the white flag and surrendered.[71]

When *Clifton* surrendered, *Granite City* headed back out to sea. Lamson, the commanding officer, claimed he had not moved up to support the *Clifton* because he had seen Confederate field artillery moving towards the force.[72] There was no Confederate artillery and whether Lamson simply confused movement ashore by a few Confederates as artillery due to the smoke and fire or whether he just made up the story to cover his cowardice, he had not supported *Clifton* and now was running out to sea without regard for the transports. Lamson also passed his story of Confederate artillery onto Franklin as he ran past the transports.

Arizona also headed back out to sea. Though the commanding officer claimed he had moved towards the bar to cover the transports, he had actually gone aground on the bar trying to go around a transport and get out to sea.[73] *Arizona* finally got over the bar about midnight.

With two gunboats having surrendered, one gunboat running back out to sea, and one aground on the bar, Franklin now decided that he must withdraw. He believed that the Confederate guns and field artillery, which were a figment of Lamson's imagination, precluded him from landing the troops he had available in the transports which had crossed the bar. He was also concerned about the two Confederate gunboats above the city. Franklin took his transports back across the bar and out to sea.[74]

Once out to sea, Franklin decided to return to New Orleans. He determined there was little else he could do since the Confederates commanded the road to Sabine City from the coast and he could not attack over the bar again. He made this decision despite the fact that his orders had instructed him to land wherever feasible along the coast in order to make the attack at Sabine Pass. Franklin also claimed a shortage of water drove his decision to return to New Orleans.[75]

The large Union combined force had been defeated by a force of forty three Confederates with six guns in a partially completed earthen fort. Dick Dowling became an Irish American hero due to the Confederates success and ballads and stories have been written of his exploits.

Additional Navy support for a landing somewhere along the coast was also enroute. *USS Cayuga* had arrived the previous evening to take *Owasco*'s place blockading Sabine Pass. Though too deep of draft to join the expedition, she remained outside the bar during the engagement and had Franklin send one of his boats down to Galveston to arrange naval reinforcements from the ships blockading that port. *Cayuga* also kept

Arizona and *Granite City* in the vicinity rather than letting them continue on to New Orleans.[76] Despite the prospect of additional support, Franklin still returned to New Orleans.

There were many causes for the defeat of this expedition. Banks put all the blame on the Navy, claiming the Navy did not send a large enough force nor correctly determine the enemy's strength.[77] Banks was correct in his assessment, though all the blame did not belong to the Navy. The Navy was chronically short of shallow draft vessels, but sending only four converted gunboats against a fort of unknown strength, on a shallow river with narrow channels, was poor planning indeed. However, the lack of intelligence about the Confederate's strength in the area was a failure for both the Army and the Navy.

Bell's agreement to an initial plan which had the Navy attacking the fort alone is indefensible. No matter how successful Navy ships had been in previous attacks on Confederate fortifications, Bell did not have current intelligence to determine if he had sufficient firepower to succeed nor did he take into account that this operation was to be conducted on a shallow river with narrow channels, something Crocker was aware of and should have considered himself. This operation was different than previous successful operations and Bell should have realized this and supported a plan which used all available assets. Instead he opted for a plan which would make the Navy, and himself, look good. It was certainly an error in judgment for Bell, and one that directly contributed to the failure of the operation. Based on Farragut's comments upon hearing of the plan, it is certain that he

would not have approved such a plan and that he was distressed Bell had approved it.

Welles also blamed Bell for giving command of the expedition to an officer with relatively little experience in naval operations.[78] Crocker was a former merchant marine master with many years of experience at sea, but with less than two years experience in the Navy. Though he had been successful in the first expedition to Sabine Pass, that had been a Navy only operation. Though most of the senior officers in the Navy had little experience with combined operations, their general experience in naval operations, and seniority, may have resulted in a better initial plan and in better subsequent planning with Franklin.

There were clearly several lapses of leadership during the battle itself. The commanding officers of both *Granite City* and *Arizona*, failed to carry out their orders, or to respond well under fire. Their failures to support the other ships and complete their missions were key factors in causing the defeat.

The Army's failure to land their troops as agreed was the other major contributor to the defeat. Weitzel claimed that *Clifton* had gone aground in the area of the proposed landing, but that Weitzel had ordered the landing anyway. However, *Clifton* had surrendered before he could affect the landing, and then Franklin had ordered the withdrawal.[79] This does not effectively explain, however, the failure of the *General Banks* to move up and land troops. Crocker continued his fight for over 20 minutes after going aground yet the transport never even moved up to the landing point. There was no plausible explanation

by the Army as to why their troops never landed, and it is almost certain that the landing of even a small number of troops would have resulted in a Union victory. There were only 43 Confederate troops in the fort during the battle and few others in the vicinity.

Similarly, Franklin could have attempted a landing down the coast and tried attacking the fort at the pass from another direction. This would have been in compliance with his orders, and with additional naval vessels enroute to support his landing, he could have landed his force for a land attack on the fort. Banks suggested that Franklin did not try again because the Confederates now had too much advance warning.[80] That is a plausible reason but not one which Franklin used in his report. Franklin had sufficient forces to try the attack from another direction, and the orders to do so. He did not, and Sabine Pass remained in Confederate hands for the remainder of the war.

There were few Confederate troops in the southeastern region of Texas in September, 1863. The commander of the Confederate trans-Mississippi Department, General Kirby Smith, had believed the Union forces were going to attack along the Red River and had concentrated most of the available Confederate troops in the vicinity of Shreveport. Had the Sabine Pass operation been a Union success, there would probably have been 20,000 Union troops in eastern Texas, virtually unopposed, and in control of Houston and most of the Texas railway system.[81] Instead, Banks had failed to raise the United States flag over Texas and had to plan another expedition in order to carry out his instructions from Washington.

Banks initially contemplated moving overland from western Louisiana to Sabine Pass. He quickly determined this was impractical as his troops would have to march 300 miles over land which had minimal supplies and water and would have to be supported only by wagons. For the same reasons, a move to Shreveport was also impractical until the Red River started rising in the spring. Banks decided to move along the coast again, this time to the Rio Grande.[82]

The Rio Grande Campaign

Banks assembled a force of about 4,000 troops for the expedition to the Rio Grande and appointed Major General Napoleon J. T. Dana to command the expedition. Although Dana was in command of the expedition, Banks was also going along on the expedition. Whether Dana was in command in order to allow Banks to concentrate on his duties as commander of the Department of the Gulf or to be a convenient scapegoat should the expedition fail is unknown, but Banks would be there to take credit for any success the expedition would achieve.

The purposes of the expedition, in addition to fulfilling the requirement to raise the U.S. flag over Texas, were to take possession of the Rio Grande and then to take command of the passes along the coast of Texas as far north as Pass Cavallo.[83] (See Figure 4.) Taking control of the Rio Grande and capturing Brownsville would also cut off Confederate trade through Matamoras. The Navy had been unable to stop the trade through Matamoras due to the prohibition on blockading the mouth of the Rio Grande and the legal issues caused by the goods going through a neutral state before going to or from Texas. The capture of Brownsville would put an end to most of the problems along the border.

Banks asked Bell for convoy escorts for the expedition. The Confederates had a few small gunboats and cotton clads along the Texas coast, and there was always the possibility that one of the Confederate commerce raiders would appear. Overall, however, there was a very limited threat to the expedition from Confederate naval forces. Bell was only able to put together a force of three ships, under the command of Commander James H, Strong, to support Banks. None of the vessels had a shallow enough draft to cross the bars of the southern Texas passes but they would be able to assist the Army with their guns and their small boats.[84]

The expedition, consisting of 16 transports and three gunboats, left New Orleans on October 26, 1863. The majority of the transports and one gunboat arrived at Brazos Santiago Pass, the first pass north of the mouth of the Rio Grande, on November 2. Army troops landed on Brazos Island and raised the U.S. flag over Texas soil. The remaining three transports and two gunboats, separated from the main body in a storm, arrived at the Pass the next day.

Army troops were landed on the mainland on November 3 by surfboats and small boats from the Navy ships. The troops marched the 30 miles inland to Brownsville, capturing the city on November 6 without a fight as the Confederates, severely outnumbered, had evacuated the city the previous day. The majority of available Confederate troops were farther north to defend against Union operations in western Louisiana and any further operations against Sabine Pass so the expedition proceeded with little opposition.

On November 15, 1,900 troops reembarked on transports and the next day headed north under Navy escort to move against the passes above Brazos Santiago. (See Figure 4.) On November 16, 1,200 troops, accompanied by two Navy howitzers, landed by surfboat on the southern end of Mustang Island and proceeded up the 22 mile long island. The remaining 700 troops landed early on November 17 four miles below the Confederate fortifications at the north end of the island. Following the landing, the Union gunboat *Monongahela* opened fire on the Confederate fortifications. With Union troops moving in from two directions and the gunboat shelling them, the Confederate garrison of 100 troops surrendered.[85]

The Army was now in possession of Mustang Island. As such, they controlled Corpus Christi Pass at the southern end of the island, and more importantly because of its greater depth, Aransas Pass at the northern end of the island. This effectively closed off Corpus Christi from the Gulf and only small vessels could reach the city via the intercoastal waterway.

Army troops landed on Saint Joseph's Island, the next island above Mustang Island, on November 22 and reached Cedar Bayou at the head of the island the next day. On November 25, the troops were ferried across the Bayou onto Matagorda Island and began their march up the island to their principle objective, Fort Esperanza. The fort, manned by an estimated 700 troops, commanded Pass Cavallo, the entrance to Matagorda Bay, second in importance only to Galveston.[86]

Union Army troops began engaging Fort Esperanza on November 27. Union gunboats had escorted the Army's advance up each of the islands

but strong winds prevented the gunboats from closing to within firing range of the fort. The Army continued the siege without Navy support. On the evening of November 29, the Confederates evacuated the fort and blew it up.[87] The Union Army troops occupied the fort the next morning. Union forces now controlled Pass Cavallo and had cut off the ports of Indianola, Lavaca, and Matagorda from access to the Gulf.

Union troops had already begun crossing over the Pass to the Matagorda Peninsula in preparation for continuing the move north when Banks ordered the troops to remain at Fort Esperanza. Major General Cadwallader C. Washburn, the commander of the Union troops who had taken the fort, was ready to move up the peninsula to the Brazos River and take the two Confederate forts there to use as a base for operations against Houston and Galveston. All he needed was additional troops. He was already using the gunboats to reconnoiter the bay and the peninsula.[88]

Banks had been moving additional troops from New Orleans to Texas throughout the campaign and had over 8,000 troops available. Washburn's force had grown to over 5,000 by the middle of December but Banks was afraid to advance. As usual, he had vastly overestimated the number of Confederate troops he was facing and was afraid an engagement with Magruder's forces would be too dangerous.[89] Instead of continuing the advance, he waited and continued to plead with Halleck for more troops. Banks had over 53,000 effective troops in his command by the end of December but he felt he still did not have enough to proceed up the coast to Galveston and Houston. As a result, Banks gave Magruder

time to assemble troops and strengthen his defenses in the vicinity of the Brazos River, the next point north should Banks decide to advance.

Halleck did not have the troops to send Banks, and Banks never continued the drive north. There were numerous skirmishes between Union and Confederate forces on Matagorda Peninsula over the next few months. Navy gunboats were used to move Union troops to various points on the Peninsula and cover their patrols, engaging Confederate forces whenever seen. There were also a few minor engagements between Confederate and Union naval forces. For the most part, the operations were similar to those the Navy had experienced on the Mississippi river, escorting and transporting troops and patrolling for Confederate forces. Little changed along the Texas coast for the next several months.

The Rio Grande campaign was successful and fulfilled Banks' instructions to raise the U.S. flag over part of Texas but Banks' attention had already turned away from southern Texas. By January 1864 he was beginning to plan for an expedition along the Red River to Shreveport and into northern Texas, as Halleck had suggested the previous summer. Banks told Halleck he did not have enough troops but that if some of the other Union armies in the west contributed troops, Banks would be able to conduct the campaign when the rivers started rising. Banks did not want to abandon totally his gains in Texas but he proposed to maintain only minimal garrisons at Brownsville and Matagorda Island and withdraw the rest of the troops to support a Red River campaign.[90]

Thus Banks gave up an excellent opportunity to take the rest of the Texas coast. Had he transferred a larger force to Texas, he could

have continued his advance north along the coast with naval support, and most likely defeated Magruder. This accomplished, Banks could have occupied Galveston and Houston. Instead he turned towards the Red River for an expedition into northern Texas, where he would face a stronger Confederate force and much greater difficulty with his line of supply. In so doing he gave up almost all he had accomplished in southern Texas.

In April 1864, Banks ordered all but 2,000 troops to be withdrawn from the garrison at Pass Cavallo and sent to join him along the Red River.[91] By June 15, all the Union troops had been withdrawn from Pass Cavallo and Fort Esperanza was blown up. This was done despite pleas from Farragut to Banks to leave at least some troops there. Without troops at the fort covering the Pass, Farragut would be forced to station additional ships there to enforce the blockade.[92] Aransas Pass was also evacuated by Union troops at the same time.

The next month, almost all the remaining Union troops in southern Texas were withdrawn. A garrison of 1,200 troops was maintained on Brazos Island and the rest were sent to New Orleans to support operations there, and for the Mobile campaign.[93] By the end of July 1864, all of the gains from the Rio Grande campaign had been lost and the southern Texas coast was back in Confederate hands, except for Brazos Island, and would remain in Confederate hands until the end of the war.

The Rio Grande campaign had not only fulfilled Banks' orders, it had also strengthened the Union blockade of the Texas coast. With the Union Army controlling the passes, the number of ships required for blockading was reduced significantly. Although some blockade runners

may have been able to slip by the Army's guns, the Confederate ports were essentially closed. Union Navy ships were also able to patrol inside the bar at Matagorda, further strengthening the blockade. With the Army's withdrawal, Farragut was forced to send additional ships back to Texas in order to enforce the blockade.

The combined operations during the Rio Grande campaign were effective, though somewhat limited in scope. Although the Navy contribution was not decisive, the Navy provided convoy protection, transportation, and gunfire support to the Army. In attacking the fortifications at the northern end Mustang Island and in the planning for the attack on Fort Esperanza, not executed due to weather, naval gunfire was used to support the attack by Union troops, not in place of an Army attack as had been tried at Sabine Pass. The cooperation continued during operations along the Matagorda Peninsula, with Union gunboats providing these services to Union patrols and expeditions over the next several months. The planning and execution of the combined operations seemed to be much improved over the debacle at Sabine Pass but the limited scope and limited number of ships involved in the operation make definitive conclusions hard to draw.

The end of the Rio Grande campaign marked the end of Union operations in Texas. Generally, the combined operations along the Texas coast had been failures. Even though the combined operations during the Rio Grande campaign were successful and showed signs of improved planning and execution by both services, they can not overshadow the defeats at Galveston and Sabine Pass. Poor combined planning, poor leadership in both services, and poor execution resulted in the failure

of both of those operations. The failure of Union operations along the northeast Texas coast coupled with Banks' decision to move up the Red River despite his success in southern Texas left Texas in Confederate hands for the remainder of the war. The closing of the Mississippi River had significantly reduced Texas's strategic value to the Confederate's main war effort in the east. However, Texas was able to continue to help man and supply the army west of the Mississippi which required the Union to maintain a large number of troops in the west to guard New Orleans and the Mississippi River.

As preparations for the Red River campaign began in earnest and operations along the Texas coast continued to wind down, a major change in Union leadership occurred which would significantly affect operations in the Gulf. On March 9, 1864, Ulysses S. Grant was promoted to Lieutenant General and given overall command of the Union Army. Grant's plans for the Union's spring campaigns included his long standing desire to attack Mobile. Farragut, after two years of planning and requesting assets and support, would finally be able to make his attack on Mobile, with Army support.

Endnotes

[1] Thompson, Fox to Farragut, 6 February 1863, 1:324.

[2] Fowler, 95.

[3] Ibid., 228.

[4] Welles, 1:334-335.

[5] Wise, 88.

[6] Frank X. Tolbert, Dick Dowling at Sabine Pass (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1962), 11-13.

[7] Norman C. Delaney, "Corpus Christi- The Vicksburg of Texas," Civil War Times Illustrated, 16.4 (July 1977): 4.

[8] Ibid., 6.

[9] ORN, Kittredge to Welles, 17 August 1862, 19:151-152.

[10] ORN, Kittredge to Welles, 20 August 1862, 19:160-161.

[11] Delaney, 47.

[12] Selcer, 217.

[13] ORN, Farragut to Eagle, 12 March 1862, 18:60.

[14] ORN, Farragut to Renshaw, 19 September 1862, 19:213.

[15] Commander Wainwright was the grandfather of the World War II general of the same name.

[16] ORN, Renshaw to Farragut, 8 October 1862, 19:255-256.

[17] ORN, Cook to Franklin, 9 October 1862, 19:262-263.

[18] ORN, Renshaw to Farragut, 8 October 1862, 19:256.

[19] ORN, Cook to Franklin, 9 October 1862, 19:262-263.

[20] ORN, Renshaw to Farragut, 8 October 1862, 19:259-260.

[21] ORN, Magruder to Cooper, 2 January 1863, 19:465.

[22] ORN, Cook to Franklin, 9 October 1862, 19:262-263.

[23] ORN, Farragut to Renshaw, 14 October 1862, 19:260.

[24] Marshall, Butler to Stanton, 1 September 1862, 2:244. See also Butler to Wilson, 12 November 1862, 2:465-466.

[25] ORA, Farragut to Butler, 31 August 1862, 53:535.

[26] ORA, Butler to Farragut, 25 October 1862, 53:315-316.

[27] ORA, Cleveland to Shea, 26 October 1862, 15:847.

[28] ORN, Farragut to Renshaw, 12 December 1862, 19:404.

[29] ORN, Farragut to Bell, 24 November 1862, 19:372.

[30] ORN, Halleck to Banks, 8 November 1862, 19:340-341.

[31] Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 293.

[32] ORA, Butler to Lincoln, 29 November 1862, 53:543-544.

[33] ORN, Halleck to Banks, 8 November 1862, 19:341.

[34] Ibid.

[35] ORN, Lincoln to Farragut, 11 November 1862, 19:342.

[36] ORN, Long to Houston, 10 January 1863, 19:459.

[37] ORA, Farragut to Butler, 28 October 1862, 53:541.

[38] ORN, Proceeding of Court of Enquiry[sic], 12 January 1863, 19:447-448.

[39] Ibid., 19:448-449.

[40] ORN, Report of General Magruder, 26 February 1863, 19:475-476.

[41] ORN, Davis to Schouler, 10 January 1863, 19:457-458.

[42] ORN, Unofficial statement of Colonel Isaac S. Burrell, 23 January 1863, 19:462.

[43] ORN, Proceeding of Court of Enquiry[sic], 12 January 1863, 19:449-450. Major General Magruder claimed the Union ships sailed out of the harbor with their flags of truce still flying, in violation of military propriety, just as they had entered the harbor. See also Magruder to Cooper, 2 January 1863, 19:465.

[44] ORN, Farragut to Welles, 18 January 1863, 19:446-447.

[45] ORN, Bell to Farragut, 24 January 1863, 19:554.

[46] ORA, Banks' report on operations of the Department of the Gulf in 1863, 6 April 1865, 26:18. See also Banks to Halleck, 1 August 1863, 26:666. (Note: all references to ORA, Volume 26, are to Part 1 unless otherwise indicated.)

[47] Welles, 1:387-389.

[48] ORA, Halleck to Banks, 31 July 1863, 26:664; 6 August 1863, 26:672; 10 August 1863, 26:673; 20 August 1863, 26:693.

[49] ORA, Banks to Halleck, 15 August 1863, 26:682-683; 26 August 1863, 26:697; 15 September 1863, 26:723-724; Banks' report on the operations of the Department of the Gulf, 6 April 1865, 26:18-19.

[50] Henry Sheldon McArthur, "A Yank at Sabine Pass," Civil War Times Illustrated, 12.8 (December 1973): 40.

[51] ORN, Farragut to Crocker, 9 September 1862, 19:185.

[52] ORN, Crocker to Farragut, 2 October 1862, 19:217-219. The commanding officers of the other two vessels at Sabine Pass used slightly different dates in their reports (Hooper to Farragut, 5 October 1862, 19:219-221 and Pennington to Renshaw, 29 September 1862, 19:221-223). Crocker's dates are used here as the chronology in his report is more logical and appears to be the most likely to be correct. Confederate accounts of the battle and the Navy Department's chronology also use Crocker's dates.

[53] ORN, Sherfy to Welles, 12 April 1864, 19:558-560. See also Farragut to Welles, 29 January 1863, 19:554.

[54] ORA, Banks to Halleck, 5 September 1863, 26:286.

[55] ORA, Banks to Franklin, 31 August 1863, 26:287. See also Banks' report on operations of the Department of the Gulf in 1863, 6 April 1865, 26:19.

[56] Tolbert, 63.

[57] ORN, Bell to Welles, 4 September 1863, 20:515.

[58] Welles, 1:442.

[59] ORA, Franklin to Banks, 11 September 1863, 26:294.

[60] ORN, Bell to Madigan, 2 September 1863, 20:514-515. See also Bell to Madigan, 29 August 1863, 20:493.

[61] Tolbert, 71.

[62] ORN, Crocker to Welles, 21 April 1865, 20:545.

[63] ORA, Franklin to Banks, 11 September 1863, 26:294-295.

[64] ORN, Crocker to Welles, 21 April 1865, 20:545.

[65] Ibid.

[66] John F McCormack, Jr., "Sabine Pass," Civil War Times Illustrated, 12.8 (December 1973), 5-6.

[67] ORA, Franklin to Banks, 11 September 1863, 26:295.

[68] ORA, Crocker to Bell, 12 September 1863, 26:301-302. See also ORN, Crocker to Welles, 21 April 1865, 20:546.

[69] ORN, Crocker to Welles, 21 April 1865, 20:546.

[70] Ibid., 20:546-547.

[71] ORA, Crocker to Bell, 12 September 1863, 26:301-302.

[72] Tolbert, 111.

[73] ORN, Statement of Mr. James G. Taylor, undated, 20:551-552. Also see Tibbits to Welles, 15 May 1865, 20:548-549.

[74] ORA, Franklin to Banks, 11 September 1863, 26:297.

[75] Ibid.

[76] ORN, Dana to Bell, 9 September 1863, 20:521-522.

[77] ORA, Banks to Halleck, 13 September 1863, 26:288.

[78] ORN, Welles to Bell, 9 October 1863, 20:538.

[79] ORA, Weitzel to Hoffman, 11 September 1863, 26:298-299.

[80] ORA, Banks to Halleck, 16 October 1863, 26:768.

[81] Tolbert, 9.

[82] ORA, Banks' report on the operations of the Department of the Gulf in 1863, 6 April 1865, 26:20. See also Banks to Lincoln, 22 October 1863, 26:290-292.

[83] ORA, Banks to Halleck, 4 November 1863, 26:397-398.

[84] ORN, Bell to Welles, 23 October 1863, 20:643.

[85] ORN, Strong to Bell, 17 November 1863, 20:679-680.

[86] ORA, Banks to Halleck, 18 November 1863, 26:410.

[87] ORA, Washburn to Banks, 30 November 1863, 26:416-417.

[88] ORA, Washburn to Banks, 1 December 1863, 26:417-418.

[89] ORA, Banks to Halleck, 12 December 1863, 26:847.

[90] ORA, Banks to Halleck, 23 January 1864, 34, Part 3:133-134.

[91] ORA, Drake to McClernand, 11 April 1864, 34, Part 3:128.

[92] ORN, Farragut to Banks, 4 June 1864, 21:318.

[93] ORA, Christensen to Banks, 5 July 1864, 41, Part 2:46.

CHAPTER 5

THE BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY

> Nothing could have been more harmonious than our combined operations. We had no ambition to excel each other but in the destruction of the enemy's works, which was effectually done by both Army and Navy.[1]
>
> Rear Admiral Farragut, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion

Mobile, Alabama, was the second largest cotton export port in the United States prior to the Civil War.[2] The city was built on the banks of the Mobile River at the head of Mobile Bay, thirty miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico. Although the entrance to the bay was over twenty feet deep and there was excellent anchorage inside the bay, the bay grew shallow closer to Mobile and only vessels with drafts of eight feet or less could actually reach the city's piers. Larger vessels arriving at Mobile had to be offloaded by lighters in the bay. Due to this requirement, Mobile was primarily active as a port only during the cotton harvest season.[3]

Mobile had ready access to the interior of the country. The Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers joined thirty miles above the city to form the Mobile River and both rivers provided excellent access to the interior of the south. Additionally, Mobile was serviced by two railroads. The Mobile and Ohio ran north to Kentucky. The Mobile and

Pensacola, which started in Blakely across the river, ran east and joined with the Alabama and Florida railroad.

The main entrance to Mobile Bay was guarded by two brick forts built over thirty years before the start of the war. Fort Morgan, on the eastern side of the bay entrance, was built on Mobile Point, the western tip of a peninsula from the mainland which forms the eastern side of the bay. It was the larger and more formidable of the two forts, built to defend the 2,000 yard wide main shipping channel which began just 300 yards west of Fort Morgan, within easy range of the fort's guns. (See Figure 5.)

Three miles west of Fort Morgan, across the entrance to the bay, was Fort Gaines. Somewhat smaller, it was too far from the main shipping channel to be a significant threat to deep draft ships entering the bay and protected the shallower western side of the bay entrance and the bay itself. Fort Gaines was built on the eastern tip of Dauphin Island. North of Dauphin Island, between the island and the mainland, was shoal water crossed by several shallow channels which connected Mobile Bay with the Mississippi Sound. The deepest of these channels was Grant's Pass, which was used by shallow draft coastal steamers.

The city of Mobile itself was not considered strategically important.[4] It was the bay which was considered important. Whoever controlled the bay controlled blockade-running in and out of Mobile. Mobile Bay was difficult to blockade due to its configuration and the guns in the fort which kept the blockaders from getting too close to the bay's entrance. Though Mobile was not frequently used by blockade runners in 1862, as more ports were closed and the blockade on the

eastern coast improved, more blockade runners used Mobile. By mid-1864, Mobile had become a large import center, though still far behind Wilmington and Charleston, each of which handled more than five times as many blockade runners.[5]

Even with a Union force of nine or more blockaders, the vast majority of steam powered blockade runners attempting to enter or leave Mobile were successful. Welles often complained to Farragut about the success of the blockade runners and directed Farragut to maintain a large force of ships in the vicinity of Mobile Bay to enforce the blockade. The only way to stop the blockade runners was to take control of the bay, something Farragut had wanted to do for over two years.

Initial Delays in the Mobile Expedition

In July 1864, Farragut was finally preparing for the operation he had been trying to arrange for over two years, an attack on the fortifications guarding Mobile Bay. Ever since his original orders in January, 1862, had instructed Farragut to "reduce the fortifications of Mobile Bay and turn them over to the Army to hold,"[6] Farragut had made the operation one of his highest priorities. Control of the forts and the bay would significantly increase the effectiveness of the blockade of Mobile as well as reduce the number of ships required to enforce the blockade. Unfortunately the timing and availability of resources for the operation had never been quite right, until the summer of 1864.

Farragut knew a combined force of ships and troops would be required to attack and capture the forts guarding Mobile Bay, and to maintain control of them. He had wanted to conduct the operation as quickly as possible in 1862, before the Confederates had time to improve

the forts or increase their naval force in the bay. Farragut initially planned to conduct the Mobile operation as soon as the New Orleans campaign was over, and he expected to get the necessary troops from Butler, who had orders to cooperate with the Navy in an attack on Mobile. Higher priority missions, a lack of troops, and an insufficient number of ships combined to delay the Mobile campaign for over two years.

The first delay came when Union control of the Mississippi River became the President's highest priority. Farragut's fleet and Butler's troops made two abortive trips up the Mississippi after New Orleans fell. Once Farragut finally left the river in August 1862, he turned to Butler for troops to conduct the Mobile operation. Butler had a limited number of troops as well as his own priorities and concerns and would not provide troops to Farragut. Farragut made several requests for troops to Butler over the next several months. Farragut needed troops primarily to cut off communications between the forts and the mainland as well as keeping a line of communication open between his ships in the bay, once they passed the forts, and the Gulf. Based on observations of the forts and information obtained from Confederate deserters, Farragut believed the defenses of the forts were still relatively weak and there were not very many Confederate troops at the forts or in Mobile. He was certain the forts, at least, could be taken with a small number of troops and asked for as few as 1,500 to 2,000 troops to conduct the operation, but Butler never provided the necessary troops.

Farragut even considered attacking Mobile Bay without Army support. As Farragut became more frustrated trying to get troops, he

told Butler that he was "becoming very impatient, and will have to go it alone if you do not hurry up a small force for me."[7] Farragut knew better though than to try the attack without troops. His ships were in poor shape after months of operating on the river and the Navy Department had not yet sent him the ironclads and other ships they had promised, ships he would need to successfully reduce the forts. Welles could not spare the ships he had promised to send Farragut because Union operations in Virginia were going poorly and ships were needed to support Army efforts there. Even if Farragut had reduced the forts, he would need Army troops to garrison them and prevent the Confederates from retaking the forts and trapping Union vessels in the bay.

Butler certainly should have provided the troops to Farragut. The Confederates had pulled the majority of their troops out of Mobile early in 1862, as well as those from Pensacola and New Orleans, to support operations in Tennessee. Confederate deserters had told the Union commanders that forts were undermanned, many of their guns were not yet mounted, and many of those that were mounted were older smoothbore guns with limited range. The Confederate naval force consisted of only three gunboats and a small ram, though Farragut and others had heard that the Confederates were building several ironclad rams to defend the harbor, and possible even attack the blockading ships. Even with the limited number of Union ships available, and with a small force of Army troops, the Union forces would probably have been successful had they attacked Mobile Bay in the fall of 1862. A larger Army force may have been necessary however, to maintain control of the forts. Though there were few Confederate troops in Mobile in 1862, it

is likely the Confederates would have made the recapture of the Mobile Bay forts a priority, especially if the Union defense was not very strong.

When Banks arrived in New Orleans in December 1862, Farragut thought he would finally get the troops he needed to attack Mobile Bay. Although Banks' first priority was the opening of the Mississippi, Banks' orders included a secondary mission to take control of Mobile Bay either by reducing the forts or by taking the city. However, the primary mission to open the river took all Banks' available troops, and all of Farragut's available ships. Both were occupied on the river until the fall of Port Hudson on July 9, 1863. By then, Farragut's vessels were in poor shape and many required extensive repairs. Farragut did not have vessels for an expedition against Mobile. Banks, though advocating an attack against Mobile, had been ordered to conduct operations in Texas so there were no troops available either. Thus there were no serious plans or opportunities for an attack on Mobile Bay in 1863.

Farragut, on his return to the Gulf from the North in January 1864, had reconnoitered Mobile Bay and determined he could destroy the Confederate naval force and reduce the forts if he could get one ironclad and 5,000 troops.[8] He requested one or two ironclads from the Navy Department, and also asked Porter if he could provide one or two ironclads from his squadron. but neither provided the ships. Banks would not provide the troops either. Banks was finalizing plans for the Red River campaign, which he expected to commence in early March, and

told Farragut he was unable to cooperate with the Navy on any operations along the coast.[9]

There was other interest in Mobile however. Grant, still in command in the west, had proposed to Lincoln that Grant should take Mobile and use it as a base for attacking into the interior of the Confederacy. Lincoln had agreed in principle though stipulating that all Confederate troops had to be out of Tennessee before Grant undertook the Mobile operation.[10]

When Grant was elevated to overall command of the Union Army a few months later, in March 1864, an operation against Mobile was included in Grant's spring campaign plan. Major General William T. Sherman was to attack from Chattanooga towards Atlanta, engaging General J. E. Johnston's Confederate army in the interior of Georgia, while Banks attacked Mobile and then moved to meet Sherman. This was to be part of a general advance by a majority of all Union forces. In the eastern theater, the Army of the Potomac under General George G. Meade was to attack south from northern Virginia and attack General Robert E. Lee's Confederate army. General Butler, once again in command of Fortress Monroe, was to move west and attack Richmond. A smaller Union force in West Virginia, under the command of General Franz Sigel, would attack east into Virginia to cut the rail lines and seize the main roads connecting Richmond to the southwest interior of the Confederacy. Grant's primary goal was to take Atlanta, which was a central rail hub. He also hoped to inflict a significant defeat on Lee's army and possibly capture Richmond, but Sherman's movement was the primary effort. Grant planned for all the operations to begin simultaneously, or at least

within two to three days of each other, near the end of April or in early May.[11] One of his main concerns though, was how soon Banks would be ready to attack Mobile because Banks' command was spread out and deeply involved in the Red River campaign.

Further Delays: The Red River Campaign

When Grant assumed overall command, Banks, augmented by two divisions from Sherman, had already started to move up the Red River towards Shreveport, and planned to then move into Texas. Grant notified Banks that he must take Shreveport quickly because Sherman's troops had to be back at Vicksburg by April 10 in order to commence the move towards Atlanta, and the majority of Banks' troops were required for the attack on Mobile. Grant told him that the spring campaign took priority, even if it meant abandoning the Red River Campaign.[12]

Grant sent even more explicit orders to Banks at the end of March, directing him to begin consolidating his forces for the attack on Mobile. Banks was directed to withdraw all his forces from Texas except those in the vicinity of the Rio Grande and to reduce his force in New Orleans and along the Mississippi. This would give Banks' 30,000 troops to use in the attack on Mobile. Grant informed Banks that Farragut was getting at least two ironclads for the attack and that Banks and Farragut were to work out the details of the combined attack.[13]

Banks, having received Grant's first orders, decided to continue up the Red River. He knew Sherman's troops would not be able to get back to Vicksburg by Grant's deadline but hoped that he could still take Shreveport and then get Sherman's troops back only a little late. On April 17, Grant, still anxious to execute his coordinated attack, sent

Major General D. Hunter to see Banks in order to emphasize the necessity to begin moving east as soon as possible. Hunter was instructed to stay with Banks until he started towards Mobile which Grant wanted to begin by May 1.[14]

Grant's efforts to get Banks moving were in vain however. As yet unknown to Grant, Banks had been defeated by a smaller Confederate force on April 7 and again on April 8. Despite a Union victory on April 9, Banks commenced a slow retreat back to Alexandria. During the operation, the water level on the Red River had fallen significantly and Porter's ships, which had been supporting Banks, were stuck on the river above Alexandria. The Union Army had to build a dam to allow the ships to continue downriver, keeping Banks in the Alexandria area until May 14. Banks' force did not return to southern Louisiana until the end of May.

Any hope of a major attack on Mobile in conjunction with Sherman's march towards Atlanta appeared to be gone. Grant was furious and lay blame for the entire disaster on Banks' incompetence.[15] The slow move towards Shreveport and the defeats suffered by Banks were almost entirely due to his lack of military ability and knowledge. Banks' failure to capture Shreveport and to maintain control of the region allowed Confederate troops to divert water from the Red River at several points, further reducing the level of the river and resulting in the ships being entrapped on the river. The defeat was Banks' fault, plus he had disobeyed orders by keeping Sherman's troops rather than getting them back in time for Sherman's attack, which proceeded without the troops or Banks' supporting attack.

For political reasons, Grant could not fire Banks, but he could isolate Banks and remove him from operational command.[16] Grant created the Military Division of West Mississippi on May 7, 1864, which included the Department of Arkansas and the Department of the Gulf, and later the Department of Missouri. Grant appointed Major General Edward R.S. Canby to command the military division.[17] Canby, an 1835 graduate of West Point and a career infantry officer, had fought in the Mexican War and had fought Confederates in the West before serving two years on the Army staff in Washington.[18] He would now control all combat operations in the military division. Banks' was left with little more to do than handle the administration and defense of New Orleans.

A New Plan and Another Delay

In early June 1864, Sherman proposed that Canby conduct a feint or an actual attack on Mobile in conjunction with Farragut's fleet to support Sherman's operations in Georgia. Sherman was willing to provide 6,000 to 10,000 troops, all that could be spared from Vicksburg, to support Canby's effort.[19] Sherman thought that at a minimum the attack would draw Confederate troops away from Georgia, and that Mobile might even be captured.[20]

On June 17, Canby went to confer with Farragut about a combined attack on Mobile.[21] Canby anticipated raising a force of 20,000 troops, including those Sherman was providing, to make the attack.[22] Canby expected to start his troops toward Mobile by July 6.

Once again, however, other priorities intervened in the plans to attack Mobile. In late June, Canby was ordered to send all his available troops to Fortress Monroe to provide reinforcements to the

Army of the Potomac. Canby was to retain sufficient troops to secure New Orleans and the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers, but his military division was, for now, to be limited to defensive operations.[23] Canby's command would still have about 100,000 effective troops, but most were tied to the defenses of New Orleans and the rivers as well as defending against an active Confederate force in western Louisiana under General Kirby Smith, the force Banks was supposed to have defeated. Canby would now not be able to assemble a sufficient force to attack Mobile. Canby notified Farragut that the attack against Mobile was suspended, but that they should continue to plan for a demonstration or feint against Mobile. Canby told Farragut he would meet with him in a few days to discuss their options.[24]

Farragut Assembles a Fleet

While waiting for the Army to assemble the necessary troops for an operation against Mobile, Farragut had continued to increase the number of ships operating in the vicinity of Mobile Bay. By February 1864, he routinely had at least fourteen of his ships in the waters off Mobile Bay. Several more of his lighter draft vessels were in the Mississippi Sound to interdict intercoastal traffic through Grant's Pass. Farragut had increased his force off Mobile both to strengthen the blockade and to defend against the Confederate's new ironclad which was rumored to have been recently completed in Mobile and was supposed to then attack the blockaders.

The Western Gulf Blockading Squadron had grown to 72 ships by the spring of 1864 though they were still stretched thin along the long Gulf coast. Continuous operations had resulted in a poor level of

maintenance and readiness in the squadron, at any one time as many as one fourth of the ships were undergoing repairs in New Orleans or Pensacola. But Farragut's biggest problem was still the lack of ironclads.

Despite repeated requests to Welles since mid-1862, the Navy Department had yet to send any ironclads to the Gulf Squadron. Welles had promised in early 1863 to send ironclads to Farragut as soon as Charleston was taken but the attacks on Charleston failed and Welles decided to keep the ironclads for operations on the east coast and on the James River in Virginia in support of the Army. The Gulf theater had a lower priority than the eastern theater and Farragut did not receive the ironclads, or other ships, when promised.

Welles finally sent Farragut ironclads in June 1864. Welles had told Grant in March that he would send ironclads to Farragut in order to support Grant's plan to attack Mobile. Once it was clear Banks would not be attacking Mobile, Welles delayed sending ironclads to Farragut in case they were needed in the east but finally sent the first ironclad south to Farragut on June 20. Welles informed Farragut that another ironclad would be sent within a week or so and also ordered Porter to provide Farragut with two additional ironclads.[25]

Farragut was finally getting the ironclads he had been asking for the last two years but the necessary Army support still did not appear to be forthcoming. Farragut would have to wait until Canby's promised visit to determine what, if any, operation would be undertaken.

The growing size of the Navy had significantly increased Farragut's fleet. Though he would always need more ships to increase

the effectiveness of the blockade, he finally felt he had sufficient power to attack Mobile. The Army in the Gulf area had continued to grow also but as with the Navy, the primary theater was in the east and when the Army of the Potomac needed extra troops, they had been pulled from the Gulf. The Gulf's lower priority for ships and troops coupled with the high priority missions of opening the Mississippi and the Texas campaign had thus far delayed an attack on Mobile for over two years. As Farragut had feared, the Confederates had used this time to significantly increase their defenses at Mobile Bay.

Confederate Defenses at Mobile Bay

The Confederates had improved both forts guarding the entrance to Mobile Bay. Their work was hampered though by higher priorities in the east, much as the Union forces had been affected, which took away men and materials and precluded the forts from receiving all the guns they could use.[26] However, in the spring of 1864, Brigadier General Richard L. Page took command of the forts and made significant improvements in their capabilities.

By the summer of 1864, Fort Morgan had mounted 38 main guns in the fort and had 29 additional guns mounted in exterior batteries. The Confederates considered Fort Morgan nearly impregnable with most of its guns aimed at "point-blank range of the only channel through which the [Union] fleet could pass."[27]

Fort Gaines now mounted 27 guns though all but seven were relatively short range and could not effectively reach the main channel. The Confederates had also built an earthen battery on Tower Island at the mouth of Grant's Pass which they named Fort Powell. This fort,

which was never completed, had seven large guns though only two faced out toward the Mississippi Sound. The remaining guns were pointed into Mobile Bay.[28] The Confederates had also built two forts and four permanent gun batteries on the upper bay and along the rivers to protect the city of Mobile. The forts on the bay were fully manned, about 1,645 men total in the three forts, but there were less than 5,000 Confederate troops manning the defenses of the city, less than half as many as the Union leaders had estimated.[29]

Obstructions and mines had been placed in the entrance to the bay to further deter an attack. From Fort Gaines to the main channel, piles had been driven in the bay to prevent shallow draft vessels from entering. Ropes to foul propellers and paddlewheels were attached to buoys anchored in the deep shipping channel. Torpedoes were then attached to the ropes. Only a narrow entrance about 100 yards wide on the eastern side of the channel was left open for blockade runners.[30] Ships entering the bay would thus have to pass close to Fort Morgan in order to avoid the torpedoes and other obstructions.

The Confederate Navy had used the additional time to improve its force in the bay. Though lack of materials and manpower had delayed completion of the ironclads they were building, the first, *CSS Tennessee*, was commissioned in February 1864. The commissioning had led to the rumors of an imminent attack on the Union blockaders but the ship was not completed and over the Mobile River bar into Mobile Bay until May 18.

The *Tennessee* was heavily armored and carried eight modern guns. It was more than a match for Farragut's fleet of wooden vessels and its

presence in Mobile Bay created genuine concern about an attack on the blockading fleet. The *Tennessee* had planned to attack the Union fleet on May 23 but rough weather precluded the ship from leaving the bay. The ship was to try again on May 24 but went aground and by the time it floated free, the Union force had seen the ship and was prepared to defend against it.[31] The Confederates then decided the Union force blockading the bay was too strong for a single ironclad to defeat and kept *Tennessee* in the bay for defense. The Union Navy maintained a high state of alert as they were not sure they could defeat the ironclad, at least not until the Gulf Squadron received its own ironclads.

The Confederates also had three gunboats in the bay to support *Tennessee*. With the combination of ships, torpedoes, and forts, the Confederates were confident they could defeat Farragut if he tried to enter the bay. The Confederates were also confident they could defeat a land force attacking the city though the defenses and manning of the city were not as strong as the fortifications guarding the bay.

Combined Planning

On July 8, 1864, Canby and Brigadier General Gordon Granger met with Farragut on board *Hartford*, off Mobile Bay, to discuss the options in order to provide the feint Sherman had requested. Canby informed Farragut he did not have enough troops available to attack the city as originally planned due to the requirement to send about 20,000 troops to the Army of the Potomac. Canby believed he did have the estimated 4,000 troops and supporting artillery necessary to invest the Mobile Bay forts from the rear and cut off their communications with the city while Farragut's fleet ran by the forts and entered the bay. The forces would

then work together to attack and capture the forts. Canby agreed to provide all the troops he could spare to support Farragut and assigned General Granger, a West Point graduate and regular Army Officer, to lead the Army force.[32]

Canby sent Captain M. D. McAlester, chief engineer of the Military Division of West Mississippi, and an assistant to report to Farragut in order to assist in planning the combined operation. McAlester was to reconnoiter the bay and collect the information necessary to ensure effective cooperation by the Army. He was to help determine the best points for an Army landing, decide the best way to execute the landing operation, and coordinate support from the fleet. He was to make these decisions in conjunction with Farragut.[33]

Although Canby told Farragut the continued transfer of troops to the east was causing delays in assembling a force for the attack, Canby believed he would be able to have 4,000 troops available by the time Porter's ironclads were ready to leave New Orleans and join Farragut's force.[34] The timing was fine with Farragut as he planned to wait for all the promised ironclads before commencing the attack.

The initial plan was for the Army to land troops behind both Fort Gaines and Fort Morgan but Canby informed Farragut he would not be able to send enough troops initially to attack both forts simultaneously. A new plan was developed to land the troops behind Fort Morgan first but after another downward revision in the number of troops of available, it was agreed the Army would land its troops on Dauphin Island behind Fort Gaines and the Navy would provide ships to cover the landing.[35]

Other factors had also affected which fort would be attacked first. A landing behind Fort Morgan would have required the troops to land from the Gulf, where the water and the surf could be rough. A landing on Dauphin Island could be made from the Mississippi Sound in much smoother, and safer water. Also, by taking Fort Gaines first, it would be easier to open a supply channel to Farragut's fleet inside the bay.[36] Once Fort Gaines fell, Union troops could be transported inside the bay to land behind Fort Morgan.

Canby truly wanted to provide troops to the operation but the requirement to send troops east and ongoing operations to protect the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers forced Canby to reduce the size of the initial force he could send to support Farragut. Canby was withdrawing all but a few troops from Texas as Grant had ordered in March and planned to use those troops in the Mobile operation but transportation problems had delayed their transfer to New Orleans. Canby promised both Farragut and Granger he would send additional troops as soon as possible.

The most important point is that Canby, Granger, and Farragut remained in constant contact and together formulated the plans for the combined attack. The liaison officers Canby had sent to Farragut worked closely with the Navy to ensure an effective plan for Army support of the Navy was developed. The level of coordination and combined planning for the Mobile Bay operation clearly exceeded the level which had occurred for the New Orleans campaign or any other operation in the Gulf. This was primarily due to the spirit of cooperation and the military capabilities of the two principals, Canby and Farragut, and

also General Granger. By working closely together, the two services ensured a viable plan was developed to use their limited assets effectively. For this operation, lack of cooperation or understanding of mission between the Army and the Navy would not be a factor in the success or failure of the attack.

Canby assembled a force of 1,500 infantry troops, artillery, and engineers, a total of 2,400 troops, and had them ready to go by the end of July. Although the force was not as large or as well equipped as originally planned, Canby thought it would be enough for the initial attack on Fort Gaines and told Granger more troops would be sent once they arrived from Texas. Canby ensured Granger understood that this was primarily a Navy operation and that Granger was to provide all possible support to Farragut, and not go after other objectives. Canby told Granger that "the present object is simply that of co-operation with the Navy in the operations about to be undertaken by Admiral Farragut against the rebel works in Mobile Bay."[37]

By the end of July, Farragut had assembled a fleet of 18 wooden gunboats and sloops and three ironclads off Mobile. The fourth ironclad, *Tecumseh*, was at Pensacola and was expected to join the fleet within a couple of days. Farragut also had five gunboats in Mississippi Sound to cover the Army landing behind Fort Gaines and to attack Fort Powell. To ensure communications with Granger once the attack began, Army signal officers and flagmen were embarked on five of Farragut's ships.

Granger had dinner with Farragut on board *Hartford* the night of August 1 and together they finalized plans for the attack. They agreed

that the troops would land on Dauphin Island on August 3, covered by navy gunboats. Farragut would make his attack on the forts and enter the bay the same day.[38] This meeting ensured a complete understanding of the operation by both commanders and was an essential element of the subsequent success of the operation. The dinner was an example of the close cooperation between the commanders for this operation, a refreshing change from the less than cordial cooperation from some other commanders, such as Banks.

The Union Attack on Mobile Bay

The coordinated attack envisioned by Granger and Farragut did not occur as planned. On August 3, Farragut was still waiting on *Tecumseh* to arrive from Pensacola, and for the two ships he had sent to get her when she had not arrived off Mobile as expected. He would have attacked without the ironclad but not without all three ships. Granger did not begin landing his troops until 1600 on August 3 due to delays in the arrival of his troop transports.

Granger's troops landed on Dauphin Island unopposed, under the guns of the Navy, about seven miles west of Fort Gaines. Despite problems with the wind and surf, the troops landed without incident and all were ashore by the morning of August 4. The force proceeded down the island and by midnight on August 4 had light artillery and a picket line positioned within 1,200 yards of Fort Gaines. Movement of the heavier guns was slowed down by the deep, heavy sand and Granger had to land his biggest guns on the south side of the island the next day because of the sand.[39]

Farragut was finally ready to begin his attack and run past the forts the morning of August 5. *Tecumseh* had joined the fleet the afternoon of August 4 and Farragut decided to attack the next morning.

Farragut had previously issued his orders for the attack. His plan was to send the four ironclads in a column along the eastern edge of the channel, ahead of the rest of the force, to help suppress the guns in Fort Morgan. Fourteen wooden vessels, lashed together in pairs as he had done when passing Port Hudson, would pass the fort in a column to the left and behind the ironclads. The ships were to be lashed in pairs so that if one ship was damaged, its consort could pull the ship past the forts and clear of the torpedoes. All of the ships were to pass east of the easternmost buoy in the channel which marked the Confederate torpedoes.[40] Four gunboats would remain in the Gulf and bombard Fort Morgan.

Farragut's ships were underway by 0545 August 5 and proceeding into the bay. The lead ironclad *Tecumseh* opened fire on Fort Morgan at 0647. Granger's artillery opened fire on Fort Gaines "simultaneously with the passage of the batteries [fort] by the fleet."[41] The five gunboats in Mississippi Sound opened fire on Fort Powell at about the same time. Farragut's delay in commencing his attack had actually increased the effectiveness of the combined attack, having given Granger time to be in position to attack Fort Gaines when the fleet passed and the gunboats in the Sound were available to attack Powell rather than still covering the Army landing.

The ships proceeded up the main channel, firing at Fort Morgan and receiving intensive return fire. The lead wooden ship, *USS*

Brooklyn, suddenly slowed when abeam the fort. Her commanding officer signaled Farragut, using the embarked Army signalmen, that he could not proceed without passing the slower moving ironclads which he had now caught up with in the channel. Farragut signaled back that *Brooklyn* should continue ahead.[42] As this signal exchange was occurring, *Tecumseh* hit a torpedo and quickly sank, taking 93 of its 114 man crew down with it, including the commanding officer.

Brooklyn, whether to avoid the same fate as *Tecumseh* or to avoid "suspicious looking buoys"[43] as the commanding officer claimed, started backing. By slowing down and then backing, *Brooklyn* had caused the entire Union column to begin bunching up in the channel, making the ships easy targets for the gunners in Fort Morgan. Farragut, his flagship *Hartford* the second ship in the column, decided to take the lead. He ordered the ship to port and headed across the rows of torpedoes, the rest of the ships following. As the ships passed through the torpedoes, the crews heard the torpedoes strike the ships and the primers on the torpedoes could be heard going off, but none exploded.[44] The strong current and corrosive sea water rendered most torpedoes inactive within a week of being laid.[45] *Tecumseh* apparently hit one of the newly laid torpedoes, the rest of the fleet was much luckier.

As the Union ships entered the bay, they were attacked by the Confederate ships and an intensive naval battle ensued. One of the Confederate gunboats was captured, one was driven ashore and was later burned by its crew. The third took shelter under the protection of Fort Morgan's guns, escaping up the bay to Mobile that night. *Tennessee* participated in the initial battle but did little damage to any Union

ships due to her slow speed. She then retreated under the guns of Fort Morgan but later that morning, *Tennessee* attacked the Union force single-handedly. After a brief but intensive fight, she was disabled by Union gunfire and forced to surrender. By 1000 the morning of August 5, the Confederate naval forces in the bay were no longer a threat to the Union forces.

Farragut had entered the bay with the loss of one ship, 145 killed and 170 wounded. A small supply ship was also destroyed trying to enter the bay, against orders, after the warships. Confederate naval losses were twelve killed and twenty wounded plus 280 captured. All of Farragut's remaining ships were still operable though several had suffered significant damage from the guns of the fort and the Confederate ships.

The loss of life and the toll on the Union ships was, most likely, significantly higher than would have occurred in a similar attempt in 1862. The number of guns in the forts had risen dramatically over the relatively small number of guns mounted and ready in the fall of 1862. The Confederate ironclad was also a formidable foe which would not have been present in 1862. That Farragut's losses were not higher in running the forts is directly attributable to Farragut's tactics and ability, and luck. Farragut's positioning of the ironclads and ships maximized their gunfire against Fort Morgan, helping to suppress some gunfire from the fort. Farragut's decision not to try to first reduce the forts but to run past them and then try to defeat them from inside the bay also demonstrated Farragut's keen tactical insight. The fact he was able to lead his force across the torpedoes without the loss of

another ship demonstrated strong agility in his command ability, and a good dose of luck when none of the torpedoes exploded.

The long delay in the attack on Mobile Bay had cost the Union forces a number of lives, though far fewer than might have been expected. With Farragut's fleet now inside the bay, the Navy could concentrate on assisting the Army in the siege of the forts and hopefully preventing a significant casualty list in the process.

The Fall of the Forts

While the naval battle had continued in the bay, Union gunboats had continued to fire on Fort Powell. The fort stopped firing about 1000, apparently when the defenders saw the Union fleet in the bay, and a short time later part of the garrison was seen wading across the shallow channel to the mainland. Despite the lack of casualties or serious damage, the Confederates abandoned Fort Powell the evening of August 5 and blew it up, an act for which the commanding officer of the fort was later severely chastised.[46] Sailors from the Union ships took possession of the fort the next morning and found most of the guns of the fort still in good shape. They also removed the obstructions which had been placed in Grant's Pass.[47] Farragut now had a supply route into the bay from the Mississippi Sound.

Granger's force had shelled Fort Gaines throughout the day on August 5 with the six field pieces they had in place. On August 6, one of the Union ironclads shelled the fort while the Army began moving its heavy siege guns into place in preparation for a combined Army and Navy bombardment of the fort.[48] The Union troops also continued to improve their trenches around the fort.

Colonel Charles D. Anderson, the commander of Fort Gaines, asked Farragut for surrender terms on August 7. Farragut, wanting to maintain the good working relationship established with the Army, asked Granger to join him on the flagship to confer about the offered surrender. Farragut and Granger accepted Anderson's unconditional surrender on board *Hartford* the evening of August 7. The official ceremony took place at the fort at 0800 the next morning.[49] Anderson surrendered his 46 officers and 818 enlisted men despite having sustained little damage to the fort from Union shelling and still possessing over six months of rations. He had also defied the orders of General Page who had ordered him to hold the fort.[50]

Though Anderson was excoriated by the Confederate press and General Page for surrendering, Anderson had decided he had little choice. His position, surrounded by a combined force of troops ashore and ships in the bay, and cut off from communication with mainland, was untenable. He would have been forced to surrender eventually, that was clear, and Anderson decided to surrender now rather than sacrifice the lives of his men. Failing to fight to the end is an arguable decision for a military commander to make but here, the decision can be traced directly to the strength of the combined Union force investing the fort.

With the capture of both Fort Powell and Fort Gaines, Farragut's communications and supply lines in and out of the bay were secure. The next step was the capture of Fort Morgan, the most formidable of the three forts. Granger requested reinforcements from Canby for the attack, asking for 3,000 more troops. Canby, having heard a rumor on August 6 that Fort Gaines was surrendering, had already begun assembling

every available soldier he could find.[51] Though he was only able to send an additional 2,000 troops, mainly those just arriving from Texas, Canby kept his promise to both Granger and Farragut that he would send all the additional troops he could for the attack on Fort Morgan.[52]

On the morning of August 9, Granger's troops, moving by transports inside the bay and protected by Union gunboats, began landing at Pilot Town, three miles east of Fort Morgan, between the fort and the mainland. Union reinforcements and siege guns arrived from New Orleans the same morning and also landed at Pilot Town. The Union forces advanced towards Fort Morgan and occupied a line across the peninsula 2,000 yards from the fort. The Union soldiers discovered a series of trenches the Confederates had dug and left intact only 1,400 yards from the fort. Using it as their main trench line, the Union troops began building firing positions for the large Parrot guns, larger siege guns, and four naval guns provided by the fleet.[53]

In the meantime, Farragut and Granger sent a joint demand for surrender to General Page, the commander of Fort Morgan. Page refused to surrender, saying he would continue to fight until he had no means left to defend the fort.[54] He was not going to give up as easily as had the commanders at Forts Powell and Gaines.

Commencing on August 9, Union ships began to bombard the fort daily, sometimes for several hours and sometimes just firing an occasional round into the fort. While the ships fired on the fort, the Army continued to prepare firing positions for their big guns and building their trench lines closer to the fort. The Army moved mortars

behind sand hills to within 500 yards of the fort and eventually had sharpshooters within 250 yards of the fort.[55]

On the afternoon of August 21, Granger informed Farragut that all his shore batteries were in place and ready to fire. At daylight the next morning, August 22, the Army opened fire with 45 guns and mortars. The Navy opened fire at the same time, the three ironclads and the captured *Tennessee* firing from close range and the majority of the wooden ships firing behind them. The combined bombardment was too intense to allow the Confederates to return fire.[56] Over the next twelve hours the combined bombardment fired 3,000 rounds into the fort and the bombardment continued into the night.

The bombardment was effective, knocking out all but two of the Confederate's guns and breaching the walls in several places. Page realized he could not hold out any longer. At 0600 on August 23, he raised the white flag of truce over Fort Morgan and offered to surrender.[57] After conferring, Farragut and Granger agreed to accept the surrender. Page formally surrendered the fort at 1400 that afternoon.

Aftermath

The close cooperation and coordination between the Army and the Navy had resulted in a successful operation. The Union now controlled Mobile Bay and had effectively closed the city to blockade runners. The loss of Mobile was a blow to Confederate supply efforts though not decisive as both Wilmington and Charleston, which each handled more blockade runners than Mobile, remained open until 1865. The city of Mobile could still receive food supplies from the interior of the

country via the railroads and the rivers but would no longer be able to send out cotton or receive supplies via the bay.

President Lincoln sent Farragut and Granger his own and the nation's thanks for the "skill and harmony with which the recent operations in Mobile Harbor and against Fort Powell, Fort Gaines, and Fort Morgan were planned and carried into execution."[58] Welles sent a similar letter of congratulations. Gun salutes were ordered throughout the nation and a special day of thanksgiving was ordered to celebrate the fall of Mobile Bay and the capture of Atlanta by Sherman on September 1.

There was little else Farragut and Canby could do for the present. Canby did not have enough troops available to attack Mobile. He and Farragut both believed that 20,000 or more troops would be required to take the city and Canby had had difficulty raising the 5,000 troops who now occupied the forts on the bay. It would also be hard for Farragut to support an attack as obstructions had been placed in the main channel approaching Mobile, and the shallow water precluded all but a very few of his vessels from approaching Mobile any closer than twelve miles.[59]

Many did not think an attack on Mobile, now that the Union controlled the bay, was either necessary or a good idea. Farragut had never thought taking the city itself was a good idea, except for the morale effect it would have on the people.[60] Sherman recommended against taking the city because it would tie up too many Union troops to hold the city, plus the Confederate troops now defending the city could not be used elsewhere.[61] Welles did not believe the capture of the city

was important either once the bay fell, though he knew the country was expecting the city to fall.[62]

Nevertheless, Canby still hoped to get additional troops within the next month or two in order to attack Mobile, especially after Sherman's victory in Georgia. However, on September 1, Canby informed Farragut that he had to withdraw all his troops from Mobile except the minimum required to man the forts in order to reinforce the Union troops fighting Kirby Smith's Confederate force in Louisiana.[63] This was the Confederate force that Banks should have defeated, first in Texas and later in western Louisiana along the Red River. Banks had failed, and his failure had precluded an attack on the city of Mobile and now continued to keep the attack from happening.

The capture of Mobile Bay did allow Farragut to significantly reduce the size of the force required to maintain the blockade of Mobile. Keeping only a few gunboats and ironclads in the harbor to help defend the forts and to ensure no blockade runners tried to get in or out of the city, he was able to send the remaining ships elsewhere. By September 15, he was able to double the force off Texas, tightening the blockade on the only significant ports remaining in Confederate control in the Gulf.

Farragut turned down a request from Welles' that he lead the upcoming attack on Wilmington. Pleading poor health and the need for rest, Farragut turned over control of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron to Captain Palmer in November 1864 and headed north for a long leave. Farragut, the first naval officer to be promoted to the newly created rank of vice admiral in December 1864, would later command Union

naval forces on the James River until the end of the war. After the war, he was promoted to admiral when that rank was created on July 25, 1866.

Canby finally received additional troops to attack Mobile in January 1865. By reorganizing his department, Canby was able to put together a force of 45,000 troops to attack the city, though he was not ready to attack until March. The long delay had allowed the Confederates to continue to improve the defenses of the city, however, plus there were now more than 12,000 Confederate troops manning the defenses of the city and the surrounding fortifications. Canby commenced the campaign against Mobile in mid-March and on April 9, the day Lee surrendered to Grant, Canby captured Fort Blakely, the principal fort guarding the city of Mobile. The Confederates abandoned Mobile on April 11, 1865 and Canby's forces occupied the city.

The battle for Mobile Bay marked the last major operation of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron. The squadron provided limited support to Canby's campaign against Mobile in 1865. A few shallow draft gunboats and ironclads provided gunfire support against the forts built on the banks of the rivers around the city, riverine operations in shallow water much as had occurred on the Mississippi. The remainder of the squadron's operations were limited to maintaining the blockade of the Confederate coast until the end of the war.

The battle also marked the last of the combined coastal operations of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron and the Military Division of West Mississippi, of which the Department of the Gulf was included. The last operation was the most successful in terms of

cooperation and coordination between the services in the Gulf though it did not have the same importance or impact as had the first combined operation in the Gulf, the capture of New Orleans. Combined operations at Mobile Bay were an immense success and "gave military tacticians an excellent example of the results which could be achieved by well-organized and well-executed combined land and sea operations."[64]

Endnotes

[1] ORN, Farragut to Palmer, 23 August 1864, 21:538.

[2] Wise, 20.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Hearn, 206.

[5] Wise, 180.

[6] ORN, Welles to Farragut, 20 January 1862, 18:8.

[7] ORA, Farragut to Butler, 23 October 1862, 53:540.

[8] ORN, Farragut to Welles, 22 January 1864, 21:52-53.

[9] ORN, Farragut to Welles, 7 February 1864, 21:212.

[10] Williams, 291-292.

[11] Hattaway, 528-532.

[12] ORA, Report of Lieutenant General Grant, 22 July 1865, 34, Part 1:11.

[13] Ibid.

[14] ORA, Grant to Hunter, 17 April 1864, 34, Part 3:190-191 and Grant to Banks, 17 April 1864, 34, Part 3:191-192.

[15] ORA, Grant to Halleck, 25 April 1864, 34, Part 3:279.

[16] West, Mr. Lincoln's Navy, 262-263.

[17] ORA, General Order No. 192, 7 May 1864, 34, Part 3:490.

[18] Hearn, 70.

[19] ORA, Sherman to Canby, 4 June 1864, 34, Part 4:212.

[20] ORA, Sherman to Smith, 4 June 1864, 39, Part 2:79.

[21] Hearn, 70.

[22] ORN, Canby to Halleck, 18 June 1864, 21:339.

[23] ORA, Halleck to Canby, 24 June 1864, 34, Part 4:528.

[24] ORN, Canby to Farragut, 1 July 1864, 21:357.

[25] ORN, Welles to Farragut, 25 June 1864, 21:344.

[26] Hearn, 19.

[27] John Coddington Kinney, 1LT, USA, "Farragut at Mobile Bay," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, vol 4, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: Century Company, 1884, 1887, 1888): 1:381.

[28] Hearn, 47.

[29] Ibid., 45-47.

[30] Ibid., 48-49.

[31] Ibid., 58.

[32] ORN, Farragut to Welles, 12 August 1864, 21:416. See also Farragut to Welles, 15 July 1864, 21:375.

[33] ORA, Christensen to McAlester, 18 June 1864, 41, Part 2:229.

[34] ORN, Canby to Farragut, 18 July 1864, 21:379.

[35] ORA, McAlester to Delafield, 20 August 1864, 39, Part 1:408-410. See also ORN, Farragut to Welles, 12 August 1864, 21:416.

[36] Loyall Farragut, The Life of David Glasgow Farragut (New York: D. Appleton & Co, 1879), 465-466.

[37] ORA, Canby to Granger, 31 July 1864, 39, Part 2:216.

[38] ORN, Farragut to Welles, 12 August 1864, 21:416. Note: In this report, Farragut says he and Granger agreed to an August 4 attack. However, in a letter to Captain Jenkins August 2 (Farragut to Jenkins, August 2, 1864, 21:401), Farragut said the Army would land August 3. The August 3 date is supported by a letter from Captain Drayton, commanding officer of Farragut's flagship, which also said the Army would land August 3 (Drayton to Jenkins, 2 August 1864, 21:399.) Based on the other two letters, and the fact the Army did land on August 3, I believe Farragut used the wrong date in his report to Welles. This is not the first time Farragut used an incorrect date in one of his reports.

[39] ORA, Granger to Canby, 5 August 1864, 39, Part 2:227. See also Farragut, 466.

[40] ORN, General Order Number 10, 12 July 1864, 21:397-398 and General Order Number 11, 29 July 1864, 21:398.

[41] ORN, Granger to Christensen, 5 August 1864, 21:519.

[42] ORN, Report of Captain E. A. Denicke, U.S.A., 12 August 1864, 21:508.

[43] ORN, Alden to Farragut, 6 August 1864, 21:445.

[44] Mahan, The Gulf and Inland Waters, 233.

[45] Hearn, 38.

[46] ORA, Maury to Seddon, 12 August 1864, 39, Part 1:428.

[47] Foxhall A. Parker, Commodore, USN, "The Battle of Mobile Bay," Naval Actions and History: 1799-1898, published for the Military Society of Massachusetts (Boston: Griffith Stillings Press, 1902): 230.

[48] W. L. Rodgers, LCDR., USN, "A Study of Attacks upon Fortified Harbors," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, 30.4 (December 1904): 773.

[49] ORN, Farragut to Welles, 8 August 1864, 21:524.

[50] ORN, Butler to Stanton, 10 August 1864, 21:441.

[51] ORN, Canby to Sherman, 6 August 1864, 21:521.

[52] ORN, Canby to Farragut, 26 July 1864, 21:388.

[53] ORA, McAlester to Delafield, 9 September 1864, 39, Part 1:411.

[54] R. L. Page, Brigadier General, CSA, "The Defense of Fort Morgan," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, vol 4, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: Century Company, 1884, 1887, 1888): 1:408-409.

[55] ORA, McAlester to Delafield, 9 September 1864, 39, Part 1:412-413.

[56] Page, 410.

[57] Ibid.

[58] ORN, Lincoln's message of congratulations, 3 September 1864, 21:543.

[59] ORN, Farragut to Welles, 27 August 1864, 21:612.

[60] ORA, Farragut to Canby, 5 September 1864, 39, Part 2:344.

[61] ORA, Sherman to Halleck, 20 August 1864, 39, Part 2:275.

[62] Welles, 2:127.

[63] ORN, Canby to Farragut, 1 September 1864, 21:619.

[64] Hearn, 211.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

> It is hardly necessary to assure you that we all feel that the Navy and the Army can have no divided interests in this struggle. Our great object is to perform the work we are appointed to do.[1]
>
> Major General Canby, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies

As the Civil War began, the Army and the Navy did not have any recent experience in conducting combined operations. The services had traditionally operated independently, with little knowledge or understanding of the other service. There was no doctrine to turn to, no litany of lessons learned to provide guidance and training in what became an important facet of the war effort. Any lessons learned from the limited combined operations of the Mexican War had faded away. Many of the Union's senior officers had participated in the Mexican War but few had participated in combined operations or carried away any lasting lessons. Thus there was little knowledge or understanding of combined operations as the war began.

However, the Union blockade strategy required the use of combined operations to sustain and improve the blockade. Ports and resupply facilities to support the ships were required and a combined force was required to take and hold those ports. The decision to capture Confederate ports to increase the effectiveness of the blockade,

a logical progression in the blockade strategy, required a combined force to take and hold the ports, especially in view of the Confederate strategy to strongly fortify its principal ports.

However, simply assembling and using a combined force did not guarantee success. The various combined operations in the Gulf of Mexico theater were relatively similar in nature yet there were both successes and failures in the operations. The most significant factors that affected the success of a combined operation were the personality and the tactical abilities and acumen of the military leaders planning and directing the operation. The divided command structure which existed in a combined operation increased the difficulty of executing the operation. This factor, when coupled with the requirement for commanders to develop new tactics to employ a combined force, necessitated a higher level of ability and leadership than independent operations required and thus ability directly affected the success of a combined operation.

By definition and design, there was not a central, unified commander of a combined operation, at either the tactical or operational level. This lack of a central commander violated one of the fundamental principles of modern warfare, unity of command. The U. S. Army's Field Manual 100-5, Operations states that unity of command is a principle that is fundamental to operating successfully and means "all the forces are under one responsible commander. It requires a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces."[2] Naval Doctrine Publication 1 echoes a similar view of the importance of unity of command. Although this is a modern principle of war, it is an important

concept to use when analyzing the effects of the divided command structure created by combined operations. The combined operations command structure imposed limitations on the commanders which they had to overcome in order to achieve success, and which would not have been present under a unified, joint command structure. While the Union commanders did achieve success in most cases, unity of command would have made the planning and execution of the operations easier and more successful, in most cases.

Although some of the general orders issued from the War and the Navy Departments, and some issued from operational commanders, directed subordinate commanders of one service to cooperate with the other service, the orders did not establish a joint or unified command. Nor, as will be discussed later, were there any significant calls or proposals for true joint command. For example, Butler's initial orders to the Gulf directed him to take command of the land forces "destined to cooperate with the Navy in the attack upon New Orleans"[3] but did not place Butler under the command of Farragut or in any way assign either officer as overall commander. Similarly, Canby, in directing Granger to cooperate with Farragut in the attack on Mobile Bay, did not place Granger under Farragut's orders or command. This also applied to Crocker at Sabine Pass. Though only a Lieutenant, he was to cooperate with the Army, not report to the Brigadier General in charge of the Army forces.

Thus there were no joint commands in the Gulf theater and an ability and disposition to engender close cooperation between the services by the individual commanders was essential to achieving success

and overcoming the limitations of a divided command structure. The importance of cooperation, and the fact that cooperation between the services was not always forthcoming, was epitomized in the letter from Lincoln to Farragut, asking him to cooperate with Banks. Without close, mutual cooperation, combined operations would not have succeeded.

At the tactical level, the personality of the military leaders, for the most part, produced the necessary level of cooperation and coordination to achieve success. Farragut and Butler, for example, quickly established an effective level of cooperation and rapport in developing plans for the capture of New Orleans. This cooperation was demonstrated when Butler recommended landing troops behind the forts on the river and Farragut quickly acceded, both to ensure cooperation between the services and demonstrating Farragut's understanding of the power of a combined force.

Farragut's close cooperation and effective working relationship with Granger and Canby at Mobile Bay was essential to the success of that battle. Close coordination and cooperation in formulating the plans, adjusting plans due to changes in force structure, and in execution of the battle were critical to the overall success of the operation. Similarly, Commander Strong's cooperation in providing support to the Army in the various engagements during the Rio Grande campaign contributed to the tactical success of this operation.

Poor cooperation between the commanders at the tactical level at Sabine Pass directly contributed to the failure of that operation. Crocker had counted on Franklin's cooperation to execute their plan. Franklin's subsequent failure to land troops to support the Navy's

attack on the fort resulted in the loss of two ships, the retreat of the Union forces, and the failure to achieve the mission objectives.

At the operational level there was a divergence in the goals and priorities of the service commanders which directly affected the relationship and cooperation between the services. When the goals and individual agendas of the commanders diverged, the lack of a joint commander precluded the development of a central plan in the theater and left no one to establish priorities and allocate forces, thus there was a lack of unity of effort within the Gulf theater. The concept of unity of effort is nested within the principle of unity of command. Joint Publication 1 states that "success in war demands that all effort be directed toward the achievement of common aims."[4] The lack of unity of effort in the Gulf was one of the most significant causes of the two year delay in attacking and gaining control of Mobile Bay. The lack of a unified operational commander also directly contributed to the loss of Galveston as Union troops were not sent to hold a captured city but instead were sent on an expedition of less importance and tactical significance. Overall, cooperation between the military leaders at the operational level was not as abundant as that generally enjoyed at the tactical level, even though it often involved the same leaders who had worked well together at the tactical level.

For example, although Farragut and Butler had a good relationship, they had different agendas. Farragut wanted to attack Mobile in accordance with his original orders but Butler decided to use his troops in operations in western Louisiana rather than support Farragut. With no unified commander to direct operations in the theater

and allocate resources, the lack of cooperation between the commanders meant Farragut was unable to execute his assigned mission.

The initial relationship between Farragut and Banks was one of cooperation, Banks took Farragut's advice to recapture Baton Rouge and also sent troops to Galveston, though too late. Banks enjoyed a cooperative relationship with Bell during Farragut's absence in late 1863, receiving Navy support for Sabine Pass and the Rio Grande campaign. This spirit of cooperation did not continue however, when Banks had his own priorities, such as when he refused to supply Farragut with troops for Mobile when Banks began concentrating on the Red River campaign.

A spirit of cooperation at the operational level did exist between Farragut and Canby. Though Canby was ordered to send troops to the eastern theater and was directed to conduct primarily defensive operations, he enthusiastically cooperated with Farragut in the operation against Mobile Bay. Had this level of close cooperation existed between operational commanders earlier in the war, the capture of Mobile Bay might have occurred two years earlier with significantly less loss of life or damage to ships.

It is clear then that the level and spirit of cooperation between the commanders was a significant factor, first in planning a combined operation at the operational level, and then in the tactical success or failure of the operation itself. In the absence of a unified command structure, cooperation between the commanders was required to achieve success and where cooperation did not occur, there was failure. While cooperation is also important in joint operations, the joint

commander has the right and authority to execute command and control over the other service components in order to execute his directives. In Civil War combined operations, cooperation was the only basis for command and control between the services.

The other principal factor in the success of combined operations which was directly attributable to the military leader was his tactical ability and insight. Because there was no doctrine or lessons learned to guide commanders in the use of combined forces, tactics and strategies had to be developed and learned "on the job." Not only must the commander understand the abilities and tactics of his own force, he must have an appreciation for the ability and limitations of the other service's forces. Innovation and integration, as well as cooperation, were required to mass effectively the combat power of a combined force on the enemy and achieve success. Those commanders who were tactically proficient and innovative, who understood or gained an understanding of the power and limitations of a combined force succeeded. Those who did not usually failed.

Farragut's keen tactical ability, insight, and tactical innovations are a prime example of this important factor. Not only was Farragut adept at developing new tactics for the Navy side of operations, such as lashing ships together to pass the forts at Mobile Bay, he also understood the power that combined operations could provide, and he understood the limitations of the Army. In agreeing to Butler's suggestion to land troops behind the forts on the Mississippi, Farragut recognized they would open and maintain a line of communication and supply for his ships until the forts fell. He also understood the

vulnerability of the troops during a landing operations and insisted the Army not land until the Navy had dealt with any land forces and ships which might interfere with the Army landing. Farragut also provided ships to cover and protect the Army landing. Farragut agreed with Butler's assessment that Army troops behind the forts, coupled with Union ships above and below, might result in a quicker surrender of the forts. Each of these decisions and deductions was made without the benefit of previous experience and guidance. The insight and vision of the commanders foresaw the success of the combined actions.

Similarly, Farragut did not attack the forts at Mobile Bay until he had troop support which would help ensure that a line of communication could be opened between the bay and the Mississippi Sound. The troops would also assist in cutting the forts' line of communication with the mainland, thus ensuring that the forts were not reinforced while the combined power of the Army and Navy bombarded the forts. The combined tactics against the forts on the Mississippi and the forts at Mobile Bay were similar in nature, with similar results.

Banks, though clearly a poor general in conducting his land campaigns, did appear to understand the power of combined operations. He postponed an expedition up the Red River because he would not be able to have Navy gunboat and transport support. Similarly, Banks requested Navy assistance for the operations against Sabine Pass and along the south Texas coast to improve the combat power of his force. In the Sabine Pass expedition, Banks expected the Navy to cover the Army's landing and movement against the fort and for the two forces to work together. He did not expect the Navy to unilaterally attack and defeat

the fort, unless it could easily and quickly be defeated. Banks clearly understood the importance of the two forces working together and using the strength of both forces to capture Sabine Pass. It was Bell and Franklin who did not understand the added power that combined operations contributed to an engagement.

Bell and Crocker's insistence that the Navy attack the Sabine Pass fort unassisted belied their understanding of combined operations. Bell did not display the degree of tactical insight expected of a senior commander in formulating the plan, instead he appeared to be more concerned that the Navy, and he, receive credit for the capture of Sabine Pass rather than the Army, even though it was to be primarily an Army operation. Farragut saw the problems when he read of Bell's plan. Bell, however, does not appear to have had the tactical insight to understand the increased potential of a combined force. That Franklin acquiesced to the plan indicates that he did not understand the limitations of the Navy nor understand the combined power which would have resulted from a simultaneous attack. The subsequent plan developed during the battle finally recognized that Army troops were needed ashore to achieve success but it was too late. Franklin's failure to land troops to support the ships' attack ensured the failure of a flawed plan developed without an understanding of combined power and tactical limitations.

The defeat at Galveston was also attributable to a lack of tactical insight and understanding of combined operations. Renshaw's insistence that a small Army unit occupy a wharf in town instead of waiting on an island in the bay for additional troops was a tactical

mistake. He did not understand that a small land force, without artillery, solely dependent on naval guns for fire support, was vulnerable to an attack by a large land force, especially if the naval gunfire were cut off. Renshaw also did not recognize the tactical implications of leaving the railroad bridge to the mainland intact, resulting in the Confederates moving a large force into the city which imperiled the Union troops ashore. Renshaw's poor tactical decisions in placement of the Army troops as well as in the employment of the Navy ships during the battle resulted in the Union defeat.

Tactical knowledge and ability is always important in a military operation but was clearly more important in the Civil War's combined operations as the Army and Navy began to learn how to operate together. Tactical insight and innovation were required to develop effective techniques in combined operations and those commanders who did so were rewarded with success. There was not, however, a definitive trend in the tactics of combined operations in the Gulf. The tactics used at Mobile Bay were very similar to those used at New Orleans, albeit with some improvements, but without significant differences. The Rio Grande campaign did not add any significant insights into combined operations though they were a good example of the power of combined operations. The poor planning and execution at Galveston and Sabine Pass did not add any universal insights into combined tactics. Sabine Pass simply reemphasized the need for combined operations against land fortifications. There were also few, if any, lessons acquired from the other theaters in the war. Thus much of the success of combined

operations in the Gulf was attributable to the individual commanders and their abilities rather than a maturation of combined operations.

Another important factor which affected the success of combined operations was Union sea power and Union control of the seas. The Union's nearly uncontested ability to move troops and supplies from the North to the Gulf, and then to move freely about the Gulf, gave the Union a critical advantage. The ability to maneuver from the sea to gain positional advantage at decisive points was an integral factor in Union success in combined operations.

The Union Navy was able to mass combat power with little threat of interdiction by the Confederate Navy, and to use that combat power against Confederate defenses. By massing their forces, the Navy was able to defeat Confederate naval forces defending New Orleans, Mobile, and those operating along the southern Texas coast. Union naval forces could then coordinate with the Army in subduing the forts as they did at Mobile Bay and Mustang Island. There were setbacks, such as the defeat at Galveston, but overall Union naval power ensured control of the sea and the ability for the Navy to mass its ships for combat where needed and for the Army to move by sea unhindered.

The Navy routinely escorted Army transports to the location of an operation, though there was a limited threat from Confederate forces, and normally covered the landing of the Army troops with naval gunfire. These amphibious operations were crude and poorly coordinated in comparison to today's amphibious operations[5] but formed the roots of modern amphibious doctrine. Amphibious operations in the Gulf did not involve landing troops under enemy fire. The landings normally took

place some distance from the objective and the troops then marched to the objective, normally supported by Union gunboats. The one exception to this was the planned landing of troops at Sabine Pass within gun range of the current fort. That landing, though, was not executed and the other amphibious landings in the Gulf were unopposed.

All of the combined operations in the Gulf, except Galveston, involved some level of amphibious operations. Troops were landed behind the forts below New Orleans and at Mobile Bay and troops were transported from island to island along the Texas coast during the Rio Grande campaign. In each case, Union control of the sea ensured that the Army troops could land wherever they wanted, without Confederate interference or interdiction. Once landed, the troops continued to work with the Navy to achieve their objective. Thus Union sea power and control of the sea was a significant factor in ensuring the success of Union combined operations.

Improvements in technology were also a significant factor in the success of combined operations. Improvements in naval guns, ship's armor, and the advent of steam propulsion now allowed ships to successfully attack fortifications ashore.[6] The Navy's success at Hatteras Inlet and Port Royal led to an erroneous belief by many that ships could now challenge and reduce a fort, and troops were superfluous, necessary only to occupy whatever the Navy took with its guns. This was not universally true, and the more knowledgeable officers understood that combined operations would be required to take most forts.

Farragut had understood that the mortars assigned to his force to reduce the forts below New Orleans would probably not succeed and that even though his orders were to reduce the forts, he would have to run past them and cut off their communications in order to subdue them. Thus, the introduction of Union troops behind the forts would cut off their communication with the city while at the same time opening a line of communication and supply to the fleet. Farragut was correct in his belief that the ships alone could not reduce the forts and that the troops would hasten the fall of the forts. Events at Sabine Pass further demonstrated that ships alone were unlikely to force the surrender of a fort.

Technology now allowed ships and troops to work more effectively together to capture coastal fortifications. The improved guns on board ships allowed them to effectively bombard coastal fortifications and to provide support to troops trying to do the same. Improved propulsion not only let Farragut steam upriver past forts but also allowed ships better maneuvering capability close to shore, allowing them to challenge the forts and assist the troops ashore. The additional firepower and maneuverability of the ships provided the attacker with a significantly more powerful force and the massed fire power of a combined attack added to the chances of success for the attacker.

Why Not Joint Operations?

The limitations and problems inherent in the command and control structure of combined operations, especially at the operational level, clearly demonstrated a need for joint rather than combined operations. Unfortunately, the long history of independent operations by each

service and a strong concern that neither service be subservient to the other, coupled with a rivalry between the services, primarily at the service Secretary level, precluded the formation of a truly joint command at any level in the Gulf, or in Washington.

The services had seldom worked together, their diverse missions limiting any opportunity to establish integrated training exercises or practice an integrated command structure. There was also competition between the services, both for prestige and to maintain or increase their limited budgets in an era where a small Army and Navy were the norm, and military budgets were always in jeopardy of being reduced. When the war began, competition and rivalry between the services increased, in part fueled by the desire on the part of many political generals to make a name for themselves. Butler rushing back to Washington after the victory at Hatteras Inlet is a prime example. The rivalry and competition was not limited to the military officers, it also existed at the national level. Welles' desire to take New Orleans without Army assistance was in order to improve the Navy's prestige and visibility with the press and the people, not due to tactical considerations. At one point early in the war, Stanton tried to make the Navy subject to the orders of the War Department. Welles not only fought this, he insisted that he be notified if the Army needed Navy assistance and directed that any general needing Navy assistance had to ask for the cooperation of the senior naval officer.[7]

The rivalry heightened the concern among the service leaders that neither service be subservient to the other. Thus neither service wanted a joint commander to control the assets of both services during a

combined operation, at any level. For example, General Winfield Scott, the General in Chief of the Union Army, in ordering Brigadier General T. W. Sherman to take command of the land forces for the Port Royal campaign, reminded Sherman:

> No land officer can be subjected, in strictness, to the orders of any sea officer unless placed on ship to serve as a marine, and no sea officer under the orders of a land officer unless placed in some fortification to assist in its defense.[8]

Welles provided similar guidance in his orders to Flag-Officer DuPont, the commander of the operation's naval force.[9] Both senior officials stressed in their orders that "The President expects and requires, however, the most cordial and effectual cooperation between the officers of the two services."[10] Cooperation was desired, but unity of command was not and this pattern continued throughout the war. Jointness must start at the top and work down to be effective and clearly there was not a push for jointness from the top. Though there were a very few exceptions to this divided chain of command, early operations of the Mississippi River Squadron being the primary example, for the most part, combined, not joint, operations were the norm during the Civil War.

The lack of jointness at the national level affected the conduct of the war and the planning for combined operations. There was no integrated master plan or strategy between the services for combined operations nor was there a commonality of purpose. With no master plan, there was little integration between the services and force allocations were often not coordinated. This further exacerbated the problems with unity of effort and force allocations experienced at the operational level.

For example, Banks was sent to the Gulf without orders to assist Farragut in holding the ports on the Texas coast already under Union control, despite Farragut's repeated pleas to Washington for troops. Banks' orders included a possible attack on Mobile after the Mississippi was opened, and Farragut was requested to support Banks, but Banks was not similarly tasked to support Farragut because of the lack of integration and planning at the national level.

Similarly, although a combined attack on Mobile was originally part of Grant's master spring campaign, the attack was dropped from the plan when Banks did not disengage from the Red River in time to conduct it. The subsequent attack planned against Mobile was a diversionary effort to help support Sherman. Since the diversionary attack was a much lower priority than other Army operations, the Army readily withdrew troops from the Gulf in 1864 to support operations in the primary theater in the east. The Army did not take into consideration the priority the Navy attached to an attack on Mobile, and such an attack was important to the Navy in order to strengthen the blockade.

Had there been a coherent, joint strategic plan for combined operations in the Gulf, the Union could have experienced a significant level of early success in the Gulf. With a few more ships and troops, an earlier attack on Mobile Bay would have strengthened the blockade and provided a base for Army operations into the interior of the Confederacy, perhaps shortening the war. Maintaining control of Galveston would have precluded the need for the operation against Sabine Pass or the Rio Grande campaign. Instead, without a coordinated master strategy or joint strategic and operational planning, the Gulf became an

economy of force operation with "ad hoc" expeditions which achieved little long term success and did not achieve a primary operational objective, control of Mobile Bay, until late in the war, over two years later than originally planned.

Combined operations in the Gulf of Mexico provide examples of why joint organizations and planning are required at every level of warfare. The successes enjoyed by the Union forces in the Gulf often occurred despite the limitations of combined operations, not necessarily because of them. Although the combined combat power of the two services operating together ensured success in many cases, the command and control problems caused by a divided command structure were a significant problem in achieving objectives at the tactical and operational levels.

Joint operations cannot, of course, always overcome poor leadership and judgment which occurs in some situations. Bell's decision that the Navy was to attack the fort at Sabine Pass unilaterally or the panic and flight of the *Granite City*'s commanding officer at Sabine Pass still could have occurred during a joint operation. Joint operations do however, strengthen the command and control structure of operations between the services and force the services to plan and work more closely together. This enhanced teamwork and integration can help to better understand the other service and overcome problems which arise.

This analysis of combined operations in the Gulf of Mexico theater of operations has provided examples and clear evidence of the advantages of joint operations over the divided command structure of

combined operations. Despite the lessons learned from the Civil War however, this " 'mutual cooperation' among the Services was the best doctrinal accommodation that was achieved until 1942."[11] The military services today are still struggling with concepts of jointness that should have been resolved after having to deal with the problems encountered with the Civil War command structure.

The personalities and tactical abilities of the Union military leaders, sea power, and technology all combined to affect the success of combined Union operations in the Gulf. Though other factors at times also affected individual battles or engagements, these were the primary factors which affected the success, or failure, of operations. The personality and ability of the leaders was particularly important in overcoming the limitations of the command and control structure of combined operations. Though overall, Union combined operations in the Gulf of Mexico were successful, truly joint operations would have enhanced the operations and achieved even greater success.

Endnotes

[1] ORA, Canby to Farragut, 24 August 1864, 39, Part 2:299.

[2] Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-5, Operations (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1993), 2-5.

[3] Marshall, McClellan to Butler, 23 February 1862, 1:360.

[4] CJCS, Joint Pub 1, 21.

[5] Anderson, By Sea and By River, 296.

[6] Selcer, 324.

[7] Welles, 1:69.

[8] ORN, Scott to Sherman, 14 October 1861, 12:220.

[9] ORN, Welles to DuPont, 12 October 1861, 12:215.

[10] Ibid.

[11] CJCS, Joint Pub 1, 35.

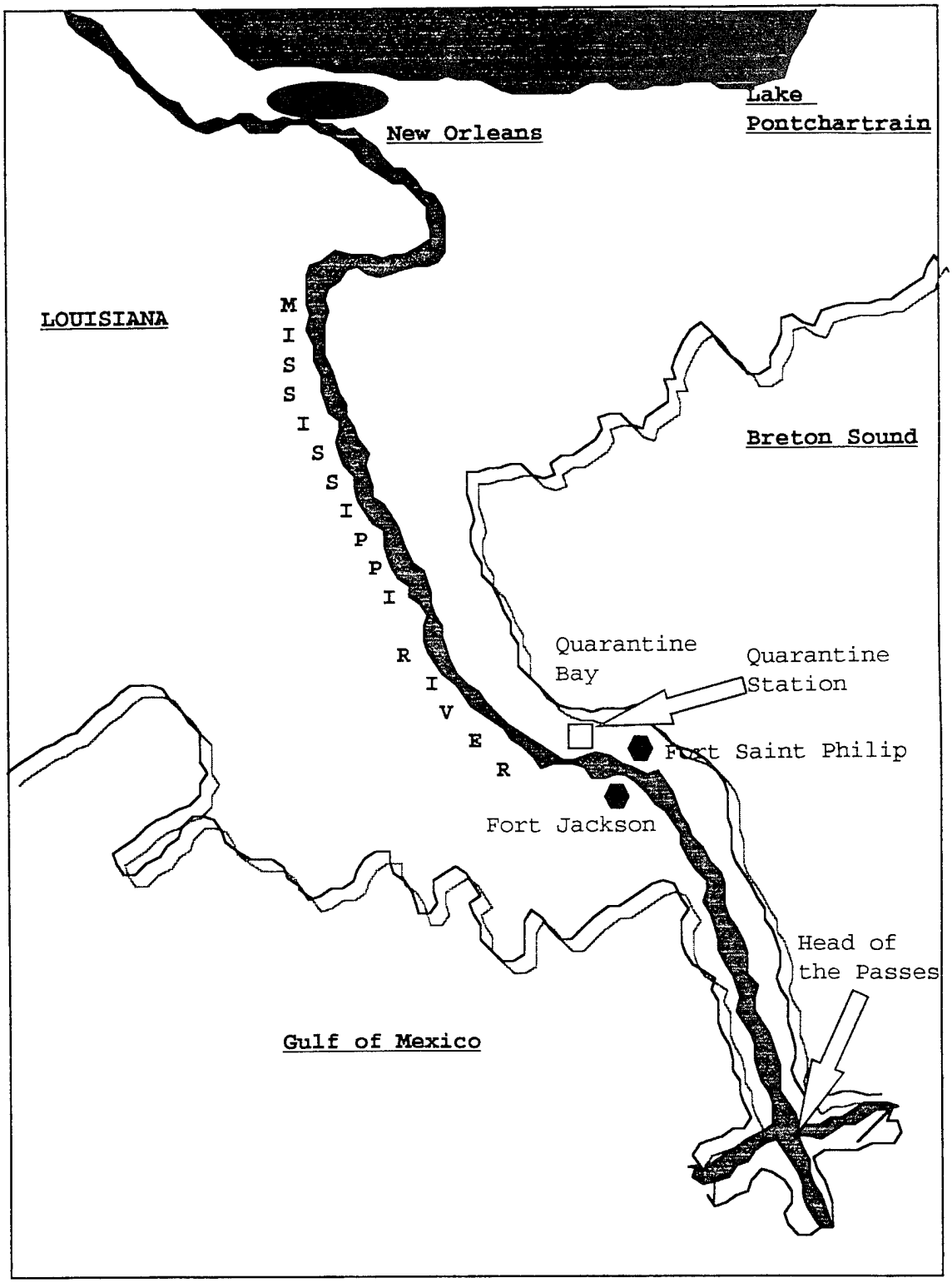

Figure 1. New Orleans and the forts on the Mississippi River
Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 30 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1884-1922), 18:130.

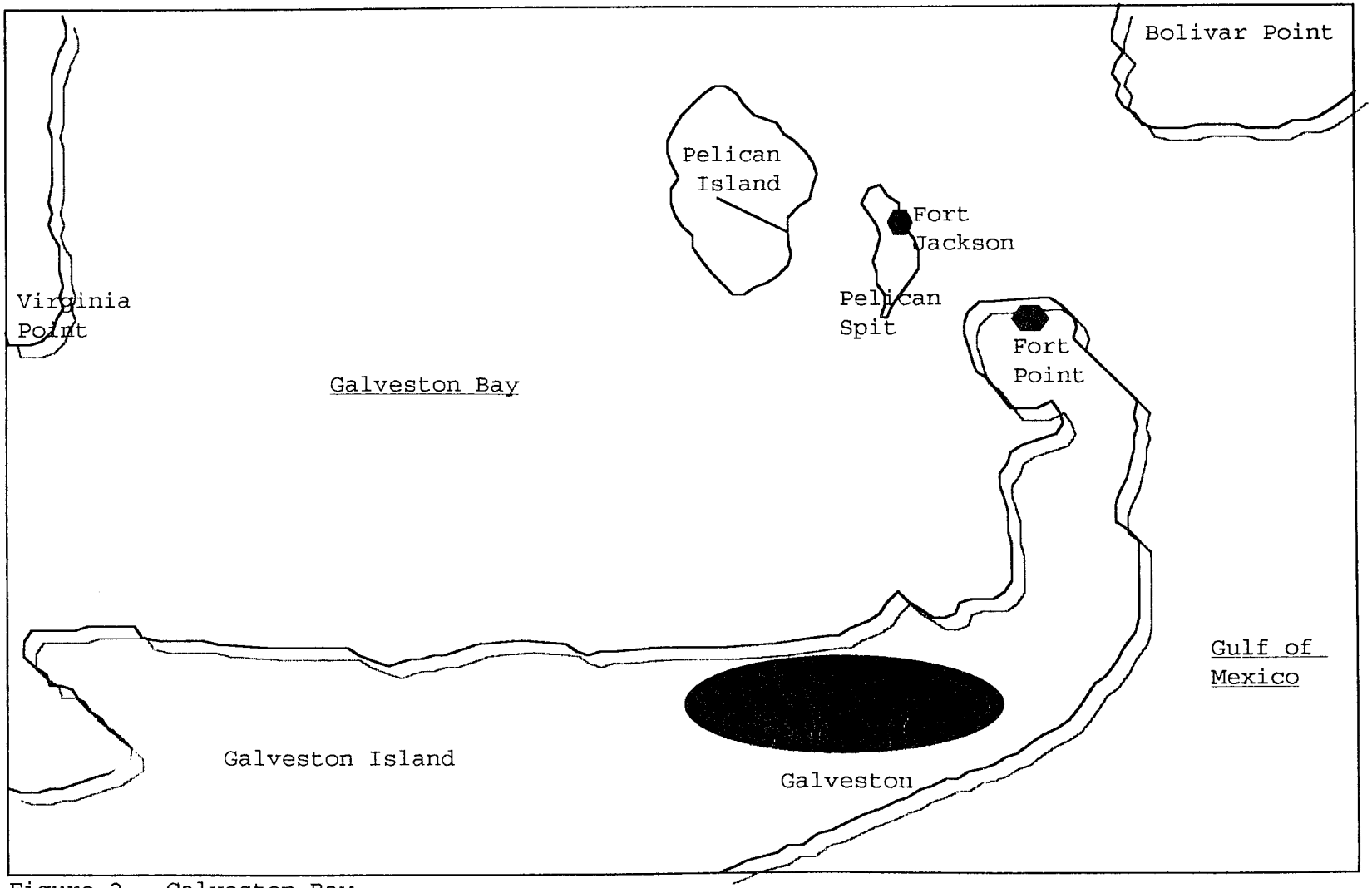

Figure 2. Galveston Bay.
Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 30 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1884-1922), 19:450.

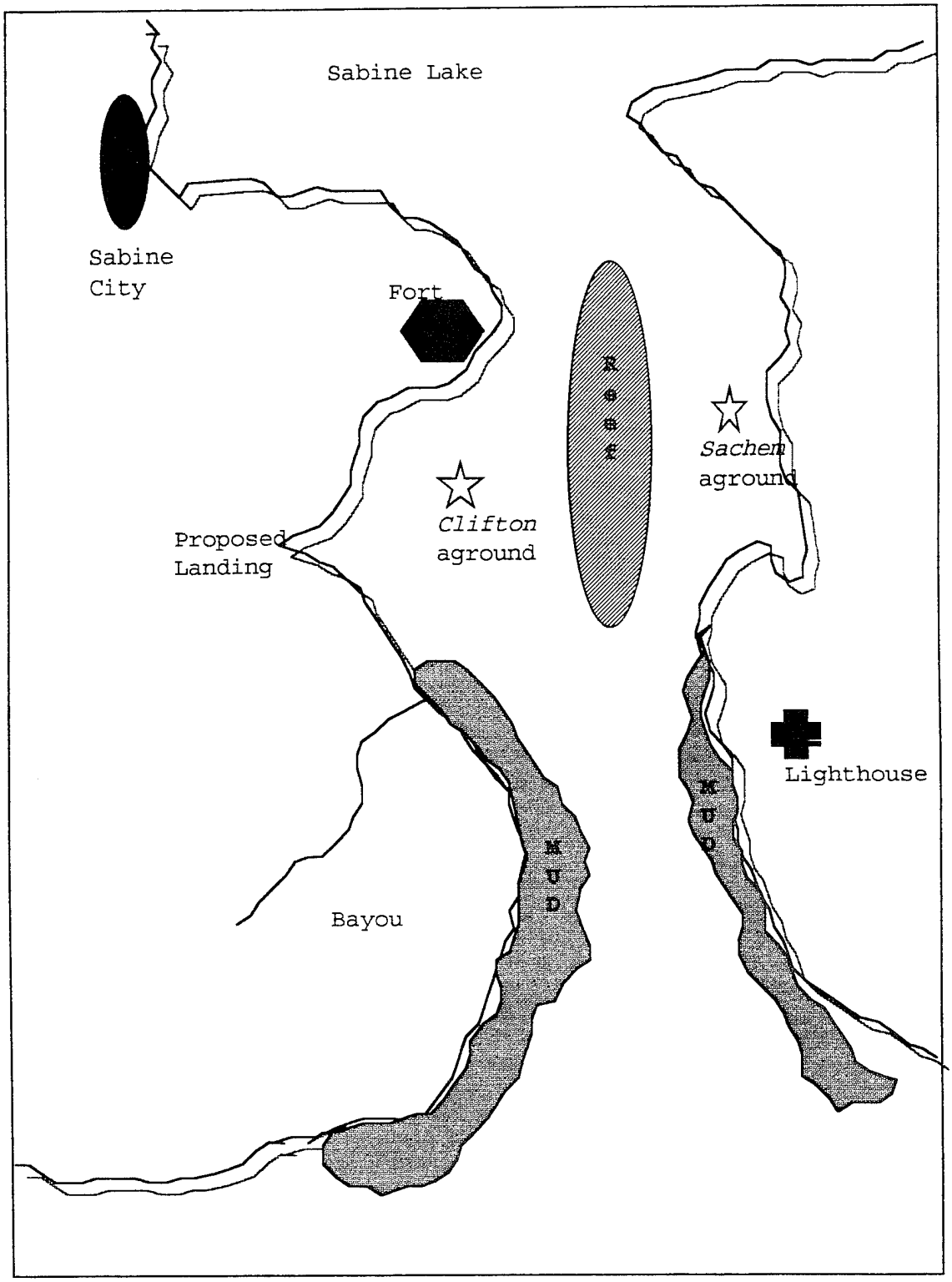

Figure 3. Sabine Pass
Source: The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 128 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1880-1901), 26:296.

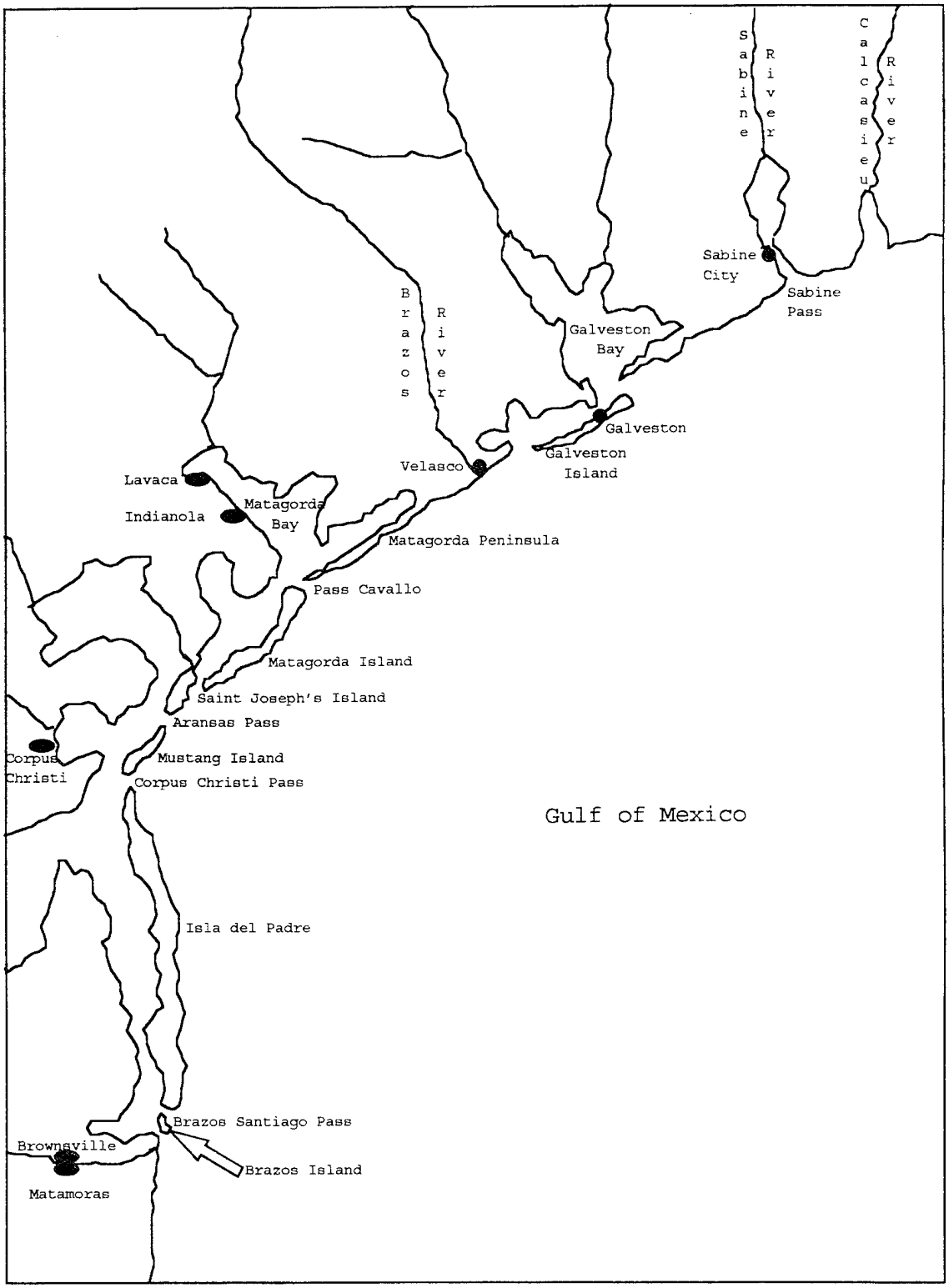

Figure 4. Coast of Texas.
Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 30 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1884-1922), 17:3.

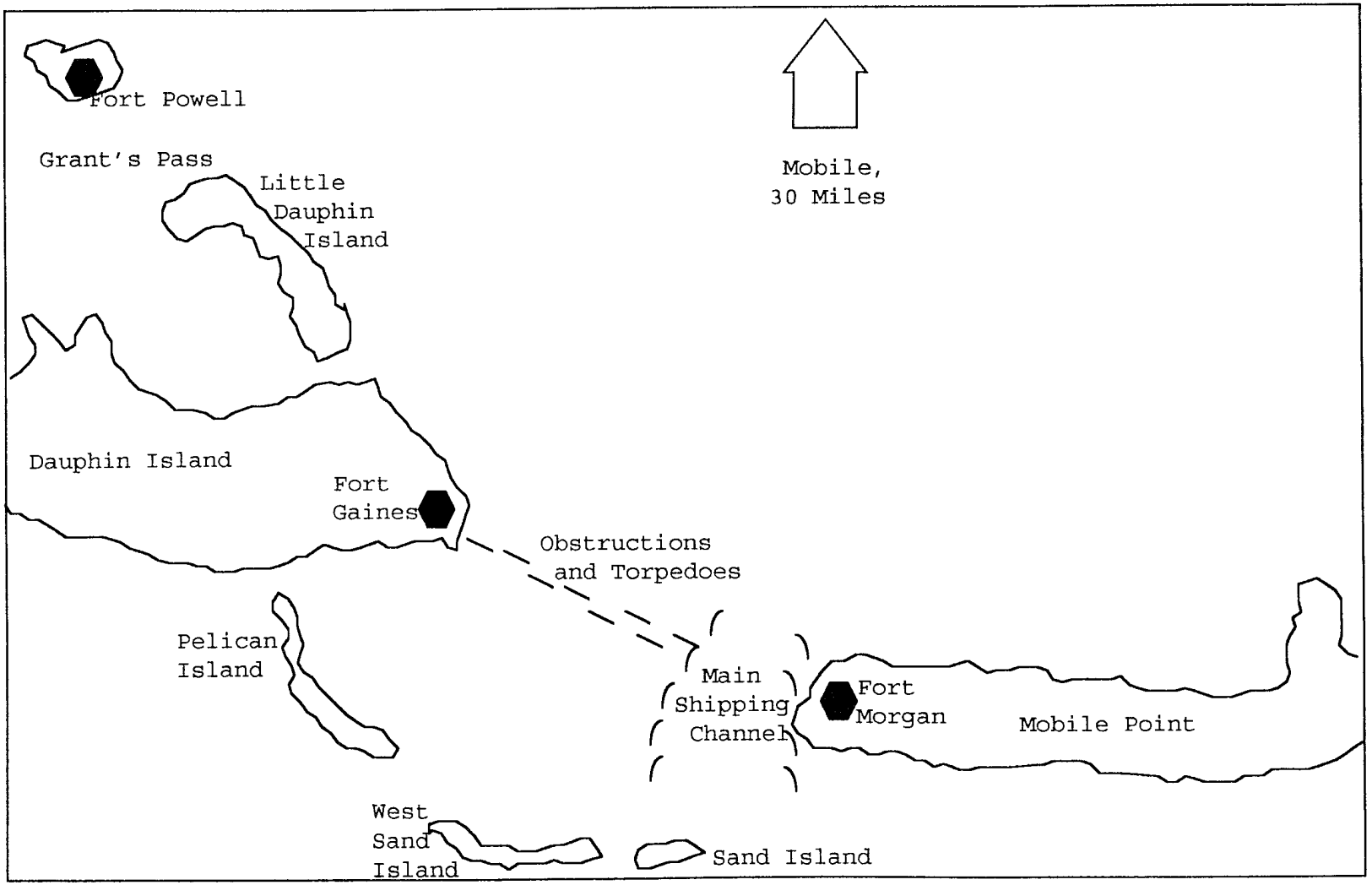

Figure 5. Mobile Bay.
Source: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 30 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1884-1922), 21:600.

GLOSSARY

Bar. An offshore shoal of sand built up by waves or currents. At the entrance to a river or bay, it is normally the shallowest point in the channel. Also called a sandbar. The Confederate coast, particularly in the Gulf of Mexico, consisted of many bays and inlets with very shallow water over the bars.

Combined Operations. "all operations requiring strategic or tactical cooperation between naval and land forces under separate command."[1] Civil War combined operations were not joint in the modern sense of joint operations as they did not have a central commander of all forces. They also were not multinational as the term combined operations means today; forces from other countries were not involved. These were operations agreed to by the individual services where the planning and success of the operation, for the most part, depended on the cooperation of the individual service commanders and how well each service commander executed his portion of the plan.

Department of the Gulf. A military department formed by the Union Army on February 23, 1862. The department was responsible for Union Army operations on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico beginning west of Pensacola Harbor and continuing to the Rio Grande. The department was initially commanded by Major General Benjamin F. Butler and was later commanded by Major General Nathaniel P. Banks.

Invest. The military definition is to surround and besiege an enemy force or fortification with troops or ships, or both.

Military Division of West Mississippi. A military division formed by the Union Army on May 7, 1864. The division included the Union Army Departments of Arkansas and of the Gulf, and later included the Department of Missouri. The military division was commanded by Major General Edward R. S. Canby who had control of all combat operations in the military division.

Torpedoes. Civil War torpedoes were the forerunner of the modern underwater mines. The term "torpedo" used during the Civil War did not refer to the modern self-propelled weapon fired from a submarine or ship but to early underwater explosive devices similar to what are now called mines. The Confederacy developed a wide variety of underwater torpedoes which were used to protect harbors and rivers against Union naval operations. Torpedoes were

also attached to a spar on a small craft or ram and propelled into enemy ships. Both types of torpedoes, stationary underwater devices and those propelled into the enemy on spars, were an effective deterrent to naval activity. "Torpedoes destroyed more Union warships than all the ironclads in the Confederate Navy combined."[2]

Western Gulf Blockading Squadron. On January 20, 1862, the Gulf Blockading Squadron, formed to conduct the blockade of the Confederacy ordered by President Lincoln on April 19, 1861, was divided into an Eastern and Western Squadron. Flag Officer David G. Farragut was assigned command of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron whose area of operations started at Saint Andrews Bay in western Florida and extended to the Rio Grande. The squadron's primary mission was to maintain a blockade of the Confederate Gulf coast.

Endnotes

[1] Reed, X.

[2] Hearn, 205.

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