“GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD WITH ALL”: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION IN THE FIRST BARBARY WAR, 1801–1805

A dissertation presented

by

Abigail G. Mullen

to
The Department of History

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of

History

Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
April 2017
“GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD WITH ALL”: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION IN THE FIRST BARBARY WAR, 1801–1805

A dissertation presented

by

Abigail G. Mullen

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History in the College of Social Sciences & Humanities of Northeastern University April 2017
Abstract of Dissertation

This dissertation argues that when the United States went to war with Tripoli in 1801, its aims were threefold: (1) a peace settlement without tribute; (2) entrance and acceptance into the Mediterranean community; and (3) respect from the nations of the Mediterranean. The American navy found it difficult to wage war without land bases. Thousands of miles from home, the navy could not rely on supplies, information, and advice from the government back in the United States. Instead, the navy had to rely on the good graces of the Mediterranean nations, for everything from food to repairs, from commercial information to covert intelligence. Complicating relations in the Mediterranean was the signing of peace between Britain and France in 1802, and then the resumption of war in 1803. Alliances were quickly formed and quickly broken as the European continent convulsed in the Napoleonic Wars. As the Americans navigated the politics of the Mediterranean, they wanted to be seen as equal with the two great powers of the region, Britain and France.

Under Commodore Richard Dale, the first squadron was hamstrung by ineffective direction from the federal government. Dale had to work with the American consuls to forge connections that would make it possible for the squadron to operate. Dale’s successor, Richard Valentine Morris, discovered that the Mediterranean customary system was more difficult to penetrate than he had expected; he also chose to prioritize peace with Tunis and Morocco over war with Tripoli. Under Edward Preble, the focus of the war shifted to Tripoli, where Preble practiced the most aggressive tactics of the war. Samuel Barron, the fourth commodore, struggled to capitalize on the strong position Preble left for him, but with the help of Consul Tobias Lear, the United States was able to negotiate peace in June 1805.

By the time peace was settled in 1805, the United States had made inroads into the Mediterranean community through both official and unofficial channels. European diplomats had been intimately involved in peace negotiations; Barbary officials had vacillated between advocacy and antagonism for the United States; European ports had supplied American naval vessels with supplies, repairs, and crew, while also sparking controversy and resentment between
the Europeans and the Americans. In its quest to declare independence from the Barbary tribute system, the United States found that in the Mediterranean community, cooperation and conflict went hand in hand.

This dissertation includes a dataset of ship locations recorded throughout the war.
For Maggie
Acknowledgments

It takes a village to make a dissertation. Many people in many different villages have stepped up to help me as I’ve pursued graduate school, and I am grateful. My professors in the Northeastern history department deserve thanks for their patience, guidance, and flexibility. First, my advisor, Bill Fowler, for whom I was also a TA for three semesters, taught me how to both teach and write history approachably. He also encouraged me in my pursuit of digital humanities. Heather Streets-Salter, as a member of my committee and chair of the history department, gave me flexibility that allowed me to pursue digital history while working with my unusual travel schedule. Ben Schmidt pushed me to explore different avenues of digital history for my research; even if they did not entirely pan out, the knowledge I gained while trying to do text analysis for my dissertation has proved immensely valuable. Other professors—Gretchen Heefner, Laura Frader, Tim Cresswell, and others—saw parts of my dissertation in my seminar papers and provided useful critiques.

I did most of my on-site research for this dissertation in the Library of Congress and the National Archives, to whom I am grateful. I am also grateful to the Danish National Archives for searching for and finding me information about Nicholas Nissen, even though I didn’t end up using the sources. This dissertation would also not be possible without the huge number of sources available online. Of particular note are the Rotunda project, which digitized many of the Founders’ papers; the Early American Foreign Service Database, a database created by Jean Bauer that catalogs every diplomat and consul from the beginning of the diplomatic service until 1820; and the American Naval Records Society, which has digitized the document collections for the
Quasi-War and the Barbary Wars that were published in the 1930s and 1940s. The digitization of those collections has made my research go much more quickly than it might have. I also owe gratitude to several naval historians who have taken an interest in my work. In particular, Christopher McKee and Fred Leiner have both given me valuable feedback, as well as pointing me to sources I could not have found on my own.

One of the best things that happened to me in graduate school was being assigned to the NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks in my second semester. As one of its inaugural fellows, I joined the team working on the Viral Texts project and it transformed me. It was a real pleasure to work with Professors Ryan Cordell and David Smith, who stretched my thinking about history, literature, journalism, computer programming; trained me in professional development such as speaking at (and running) conferences and writing journal articles; and at a more basic level, encouraged me to explore questions that seemed impossible to answer. My work on Viral Texts is undoubtedly the definitive experience of my graduate school career.

Viral Texts is also in no small part responsible for getting me the job I currently have at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University. Stephen Robertson, Sean Takats, Stephanie Westcott, and others at CHNM have encouraged me and commiserated with me while I have finished my dissertation. Hopefully the software I’m now working on, Tropy, will make other graduate students’ dissertation writing just a little easier for them.

While I had amazing support from the academic community, I also had great support from friends and family in other communities. The people of Evangelical Baptist Church in Newton, MA, supported my family and me in many ways while we lived in Waltham. Now that we live in Virginia, the people of Truro Anglican Church have taken up the mantle and have been absolutely critical to my success in school and in life. Though there are too many people to thank individually, I must single out one couple, Keith and Sharon Jones, who have been there for my family during sorrow, fear, and discouragement, as well as in joy and triumph. I can never repay the debt I owe to them. Additionally, technology has enabled me to lean on far-flung friends for support. Stephanie Austin and Deborah Bitzer have hung with me, listening and encouraging
through late nights of euphoria and frustration.

For my whole life, my family has encouraged me in my pursuit of education. My mom passed away a few months before I was accepted to Northeastern, but without her lifelong mission to instill in me a curiosity about the world and a thirst for knowledge, I would not have made it into graduate school at all, much less finished. My father and stepmother have supported me and all three of my siblings as we all pursue graduate school at the same time; maybe someday soon we’ll all be finished. My parents-in-law likewise have encouraged me along the way; my father-in-law even asked to read this manuscript before it was done. My siblings have offered support both material and moral: my brother Andrew has listened to countless conundrums, complaints, and random tidbits from my sources; my sister Auria not only encouraged me, but jumped in with both feet to help me with data entry. This project would not have been completed without her.

I could not have accomplished this degree without the love and support of my husband and my two children. I began graduate school just as Lincoln was finishing his PhD, so I have benefited from not only his care for me as a person, but also his experience of school and the historical profession. I’m so thankful for his constant love for me through many difficult days. Though we’ve gone through some deep waters together, we’ve always come out the other end stronger than before. My daughter Maggie was one year old when I started school at Northeastern, so she has never known life without Mommy in school. Over the last five years, she has grown into a precocious, intelligent, curious little girl who craves knowledge. She has sat in classes with me; attended meetings with me; napped in my professor’s office; read pieces of my dissertation; and even written her own fan fiction based on what she has read. I could not have asked for a better cheerleader. My son Paul is now one year old. Though it isn’t easy to research and write with a baby around, I can’t imagine doing it any other way. Both Paul and Maggie have put up with complicated travel, writing deadlines, and a myriad of other shakeups in their young lives because of our family’s academic pursuits. I’m grateful that they have handled them all with such aplomb.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1801</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1802</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 1803</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 1804</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 1805</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note on Sources</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Cast of Characters</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Convention between the United States and Hamet Karamanli</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

1.1 This passport from 1819 illustrates the cut at the top that would be matched to a top carried by a Barbary ship. “Mediterranean Passport for the Ship Tea Plant,” issued 14 August 1819. Records of the U.S. Customs Service (RG 36), National Archives and Records Administration. ........................................... 44

1.2 Map of locations related to the war in 1801. .......................................................... 50

2.1 Map of locations related to the war in 1802. .......................................................... 93

3.1 Map of locations related to the war in 1803. .......................................................... 111

4.1 Map of locations related to the war in 1804. .......................................................... 161

5.1 Map of locations in the Eastern Mediterranean related to the war in 1805. ........ 213

5.2 Map of locations in Egypt .......................................................... 230
In his first inaugural address, Thomas Jefferson hoped that the United States would become “a rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye.”¹ This statement sums up three critical pieces of the ethos of the early republic: honor, identity, and prosperity. Jefferson and others did not want prosperity at the expense of honor, which they felt that Europe had lost in its pursuit of gain. They also wanted to forge their own way to achieving their “destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye.” When Jefferson gave this address, the United States was about to engage in a conflict that would test its ability to maintain prosperity, honor, and identity all at once: the Barbary Wars.

This dissertation takes up the question of how the American navy and diplomats could wage war in a region where they had no bases. It engages with problems of day-to-day life in the Mediterranean, such as weather, supplies, repairs, and disease, as well as the struggle to operate under a unified strategy when communications were difficult and the culture was unfamiliar. These problems were where the American squadrons worked out questions of honor and identity: could they get what they needed and make the friends that they needed, without compromising national honor or becoming just like the European nations? I argue that the United States’ mission in the First Barbary War encompassed more than just victory against Tripoli. The

American navy also found itself advocating for entrance into the Mediterranean community and for prestige amongst the Mediterranean nations. These two goals were accomplished not by mandates from the federal government, but by everyday interactions between the navy and the Mediterranean community.

Fought from 1801 to 1805, and then again in 1815, the two Barbary Wars were ostensibly about protecting American commerce from the depredations of North African privateers in the Mediterranean. In 1790, Thomas Jefferson reported that Mediterranean commerce had come to a standstill since the conclusion of the American Revolution. Losing the Mediterranean trade was no small matter for the new nation. Before the revolution, the Mediterranean had been the destination for “about one Sixth of the Wheat and Flour exported from the United States. And about one Fourth in Value of their dried and pickled Fish, and some Rice, found their best Markets in the Mediterranean Ports: that these Articles constituted the principal Part of what we sent into that Sea: that that Commerce loaded outwards from Eighty to one hundred Ships, annually, of Twenty thousand Tons, navigated by about Twelve hundred Seamen.”

After the revolution, American merchants had to rebuild that trade. We have little detailed information about the specifics of American trade in the Mediterranean after Jefferson’s report. In Lisbon in 1797, a merchant noted that American trade was “extremely dull,” and that wheat had to be gotten from North Africa instead of from the United States. By contrast, by 1800, William Eaton reported that Mediterranean trade was nearly as large as the other carrying

---


3Though American consuls should have have sent shipping reports home to the Secretary of State, most are no longer extant. Charles A. Keene, “American Shipping and Trade, 1798-1820: The Evidence from Leghorn,” The Journal of Economic History 38, no. 3 (1978): 682.

trades. Between 1798 and 1808, 641 American vessels passed through Leghorn. In May 1801, the Political Repository reported that “A very large amount of American property is now afloat in the Mediterranean—and hundreds of our valuable seamen are there employed.” The Treasury Department’s statistics on commerce are broken down by country, not by port, so we cannot get an accurate idea of how much trade was going into the Mediterranean specifically—France and Spain, for instance, had ports both within the Mediterranean and outside it—but by 1797, trade to Italy was huge and only increasing. Over the course of four years, from 1797 to 1800, foreign trade with Italy increased by 387%. Trade with Gibraltar and the Barbary states was less straightforward. Michael Kitzen asserts that the Mediterranean trade accounted for more than 20% of all foreign trade from the United States, but the numbers do not support his claim.

As the Americans rebuilt, they were able to take advantage of unrest in Europe. François Crouzet argues that the Napoleonic Wars turned Europe in toward industrialization after the continual wars destroyed the export trade of many prominent seaports. Though the United States also began to industrialize around the same time, coastal merchants worked to rebuild the maritime trade that had been largely destroyed by the American Revolution. American merchants learned how to work with and exploit the realities of international commerce and

---

5 Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers, 6 vols. (Government Printing Office, 1939), 1:397. This publication, accessed through the digital copy provided by the American Naval Records Society at http://www.ibiblio.org/anrs/barbary.html, will be hereafter referred to as BW.

6 Keene, 685.

7 “Mediterranean Commerce,” Political Repository (Brookfield, MA), 12 May 1801. Accessed through America’s Historical Newspapers.

8 Kitzen draws his assertion from American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation, 1:453, 487. However, even if we include all of France and Spain as part of the Mediterranean, the highest estimate I can arrive at from these numbers is 11% of the export trade (it is not clear what Kitzen means by trade—data about import valuations is not available). He also claims that the Mediterranean trade grossed $10 million annually, but the numbers in the sources he cites do not add up to anywhere close to $10 million.


politics. The Americans discovered in the 1790s how lucrative war could be, as the re-export trade from the United States boomed during the Napoleonic Wars.\footnote{Billy Gordon Smith, \textit{The “Lower Sort”: Philadelphia’s Laboring People, 1750-1800} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 76.} As neutrals, American merchants could go places that were not open to the British or French, the major powers in the Mediterranean. But more trade came at a cost: more vessels in the sea meant greater danger of capture by belligerent nations.\footnote{Silvia Marzagalli, “American Shipping into the Mediterranean During the French Wars,” \textit{Rough Waters: American Involvement with the Mediterranean in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries} (St. John’s: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2010). See also James Sofka, “American Neutral Rights Reappraised: Identity or Interest in the Foreign Policy of the Early Republic?,” \textit{Review of International Studies} 26, no. 4 (October 1, 2000): 599–622.}

**Barbary Threats**

In 1785, two American ships were captured by Algerian corsairs. Their crews were taken to Algiers and held as slaves. At the time, the United States could do little to succour the crews or avenge their capture. Unable to come to terms with Algiers diplomatically, the United States spent the next ten years in a state of undeclared war with Algiers. This war took its toll on American commerce: Jefferson’s 1790 report blames the war for the lack of trade in the Mediterranean. Fear, not captures, kept the commerce down—the next capture of an American vessel did not occur until 1793. In that year, it became evident how important Portugal had been to the protection of all trade in the Atlantic. After Portugal and Algiers signed a peace treaty, Algerian cruisers were free to venture into the Atlantic. In one year they captured eleven American vessels.\footnote{List of American vessels captured by the Algerines in October and November 1793, BW1:56.}

Many in the United States saw the Barbary states—Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli—as the major threat to American commerce in the Mediterranean. The Barbary states presented a unique threat to both American persons and the American way of life. The aggressors were not naval vessels or outright pirates; rather, they were privateers sponsored by their respective governments. These privateers had been agents of treaty enforcement (or exploitation) in the Mediterranean for hundreds of years. Their rulers demanded tribute of presents or stores from
the governments whose ships travelled the Mediterranean. If the governments did not fall in
line, the Barbary rulers authorized their cruisers to attack and capture vessels of the recalcitrant
nations, taking their crews as captives.¹⁴

The number of American captures by Barbary cruisers was quite small—from 1785 to
1805, there were fewer than thirty. But their cultural impact was very large. The fearful prospect
of becoming a Barbary captive inspired many plays, poems, and other cultural productions. The
actual likelihood of a merchant crew being taken into captivity was dwarfed by the national
fear of its occurrence. This fear was only exacerbated by captives who wrote narratives of their
experiences. These narratives spoke variously about national identity, definitions of liberty, and
comparisons with the chattel slave trade, but they all implicitly spoke to the fear of the Barbary
corsairs as the Other.¹⁵

More practically speaking, the captures—and the fear they engendered—raised insurance
rates for American shipping. A.B. Leonard argues that British merchants (and insurance compa-
nies) had learned the trick of profiting from wartime seizures using insurance, but the American
system of insurance differed from the British.¹⁶ Wartime insurance carried high premiums, as

¹⁴There are few historical works about the Barbary corsairs. They include Seton Dearden, A
Nest of Corsairs: The Fighting Karamanlis of Tripoli (London: J. Murray, 1976); Daniel Panzac, The
Barbary encounters with Europeans or Americans are Robert J. Allison, The Crescent Obscured:
The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995);

¹⁵Captivity narratives and cultural productions about Barbary captivity have been the subject
of a fair amount of scholarship in both literature and history in the last ten to fifteen years, e.g.,
Paul Baepler, “The Barbary Captivity Narrative in Early America,” Early American Literature 30,
Sea Narratives,” Early American Studies 1, no. 2 (October 1, 2003): 133–58; Elizabeth Maddock
Dillon, “‘Slaves in Algiers’: Race, Republican Genealogies, and the Global Stage,” American Literary
History 16, no. 3 (October 1, 2004): 407–36; Lawrence A. Peskin, Captives and Countrymen:
Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785-1816 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,
2009); Martha Elena Rojas, “‘Insults Unpunished’: Barbary Captives, American Slaves, and the
Negotiation of Liberty,” Early American Studies 1, no. 2 (October 1, 2003): 159–86. For an anthol-
gy of captivity narratives, see Paul Michel Baepler, White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of

¹⁶A. B. Leonard, “Underwriting Marine Warfare: Insurance and Conflict in the Eighteenth Cen-
American merchants had learned during the Quasi-War with France; one historian estimates that a one-way journey to the Caribbean from the United States in 1798 could carry a premium of up to 25%. Insurance companies also struggled to keep up with changing circumstances, needing news from far-flung ports and seas quickly so they could adjust their premiums to current conditions. Captures were one of the factors that insurance companies used to justify rate increases.

If the United States wanted to profit from the Mediterranean, then the government had to find a way to encourage merchants to risk capture and insurance hikes. Jefferson’s report offered three suggestions for how American commerce could be freed to travel the Mediterranean at will. First, the government could establish a fund, based on a tariff, that would be available to redeem captive sailors. Aside from the logistical problems, Jefferson rejected this idea as not really freeing anyone. Second, the United States could buy peace with the Barbary states. Nearly every European nation practiced this solution to the Barbary problem, though Jefferson thought it not proper for the United States. “For this we have the Example of rich and powerful Nations, in this Instance counting their Interest more than their Honor,” he wrote. Though he had solicited estimates on how much peace would cost, it was clear that no one could know until agreements were actually made. Jefferson’s third option was to send a naval force. In 1790, this suggestion was particularly hard to implement, as the United States did not have a navy. The last of the Revolution,” *International Journal of Maritime History* 25, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 173. For more on the insurance system in the United States, see A. Glenn Crothers, “Commercial Risk and Capital Formation in Early America: Virginia Merchants and the Rise of American Marine Insurance, 1750-1815,” *The Business History Review* 78, no. 4 (2004): 607–33; Hannah Atlee Farber, “Underwritten States: Marine Insurance and the Making of Bodies Politic in America, 1622-1815” (Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley, 2014). http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.neu.edu/pqdtglobal/docview/1667065943/abstract/500DF7AEF40B408APQ/50; Adrian Leonard, *Marine Insurance: Origins and Institutions, 1300-1850* (New York: Springer, 2016).


18 Kingston, 390.

19 After three years at war with Tripoli, Congress did set up a fund for this purpose, endowing it with $1 million. “An Act Further to Protect the Commerce and Seamen of the United States Against the Barbary Powers,” 26 March 1804.
olutionary naval vessels had been sold off in 1785, and new vessels had not been built. Jefferson pointed to the example of the Portuguese, who had successfully kept the Algerian privateers in the Mediterranean by cruising off Gibraltar for the last five years. Ultimately, Jefferson concluded, it was up to Congress to determine which of the three options they wanted to pursue.

In the meantime, the report identified the need for diplomatic representation at the courts of Mediterranean nations. Consuls would be vital for maintaining open trade relations. Until the 1790s, the United States had no official contact with Algiers, Tripoli, or Tunis. Special envoys were sent to engage in diplomatic negotiations, but the United States needed a more consistent presence in the Barbary states. Consuls in the European ports of the Mediterranean would also be critical to the protection of American commerce. As consuls communicated with each other and with local contacts, they used their networks to broadcast potential threats to American merchant vessels that passed through their port. They could also respond much more quickly than the federal government if a crisis occurred.20

Building a Navy

After Jefferson’s report, the Barbary problem stagnated in Congress until the eleven captures of 1793 gave the issues new life. The construction of a navy was a highly divisive issue, though as Craig Symonds points out, the question was not whether to have a navy at all, but rather whether the navy would be maintained during times of peace—whether the navy would be merely for defense, or for asserting the United States’ place in the world.21 In 1794, the navalists—those who

20The U.S. foreign service exploded quickly after its establishment. Consuls also moved around frequently. As a result, they are difficult to keep straight. To mitigate this problem, Jean Bauer has created a database of all agents of the U.S. Foreign Service, the Early American Foreign Service Database, at www.eafsd.org. It is an invaluable resource. Accompanying that database is Bauer’s dissertation on communication networks between foreign service members, Jean Bauer, “Republicans of Letters: The Early American Foreign Service as Information Network, 1775-1825” (University of Virginia), http://libraprod.lib.virginia.edu/catalog/libra-oa:9454.

wanted a peacetime navy—were able to get through Congress an act authorizing the construction of six frigates. In a concession to the antinavalists, though, the act allowed the construction to be halted if the United States was able to make peace with Algiers.22

While the navy was being built, Congress pursued Jefferson’s other option: payment. A trio of negotiators was able to conclude peace with Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli by promising large payments up front along with annuities in perpetuity. For Algiers, the sum was $642,500 plus an annuity of $21,600 payable only in naval stores. In Tunis, peace was concluded for $107,000. In Tripoli, the sum was much less—approximately $56,500. Jefferson disapproved of these actions, convinced that this money was only the beginning of the Barbary states’ demands. He thought that “it is money thrown away, and that there is no end to the demand of these powers, nor any security in their promises.”23

Peace with Algiers came in 1795, with Tunis and Tripoli in 1796 and 1797. Accordingly, naval construction halted under President Adams’s orders. But American commerce was still not safe on the ocean. The Barbary states remained a threat, but trade disputes with France had led French privateers to begin preying on American shipping, eventually taking hundreds of American vessels in the Caribbean and the Atlantic.24 In response, in 1797, President Adams restarted construction on three of the frigates and then all six, in addition to acquiring several other smaller vessels for the navy.25 Though the navy had been built for the Mediterranean, it

---

24 For a map of all the captures with known geospatial information, see http://abbymullen.org/projects/Quasi-War/.
25 The best book on the construction of the six frigates is Ian W. Toll, Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2006). In addition to vessels purchased with public funds, the government was also given several ships by merchants of various cities; see Frederick C. Leiner, Millions for Defense: The Subscription Warships of 1798 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000).
first cruised in the Caribbean during the Quasi-War with France.

The United States made peace with France in 1800, though troubles with privateers persisted. Only months after the treaty was signed, Barbary relations reached a boiling point. In September 1800, the annuity for Algiers arrived there in the first naval vessel to enter the Mediterranean, the George Washington, captained by William Bainbridge. After Bainbridge delivered the stores, the dey of Algiers dragooned him into taking the dey’s own tribute payment to the Ottoman Porte at Constantinople. Forced to fly the Algerian flag, Bainbridge delivered to Constantinople a literal menagerie of exotic animals as well as people and other cargo. The first action of the U.S. Navy in the Mediterranean was not a triumphant assertion of American power, but rather a humiliating capitulation that was roundly derided by naval officers, the American public, and foreign onlookers.

Meanwhile, the bashaw of Tripoli, one of the regencies that had heretofore been largely ignored by the American diplomats, grew tired of being treated like an inferior to Algiers. Kola Folayan argues that this treatment of Tripoli as subservient to Algiers was a major cause of the eventual war.\(^{26}\) The United States’ treaty with Tripoli was already significantly less expensive than their treaty with Algiers. When the government could not manage to pay even the smaller sum, the bashaw threatened that war was imminent. In 1801, rather than mothball the fleet returning from the Caribbean, newly elected President Thomas Jefferson decided to send a squadron to the Mediterranean to monitor Tripoli and the other Barbary states.

When the squadron got there, they found that Tripoli had declared war. Commodore Richard Dale implemented a blockade of Tripoli and began to convoy American vessels throughout the Mediterranean to protect them from Tripolitan corsairs. He also had to try to keep the peace with Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco. Aside from one battle, in which the USS Enterprize defeated the Tripolitan frigate Tripoli, Dale left the Mediterranean in 1802 with few accomplishments to show for his time. His successor, Richard Valentine Morris, likewise struggled to make head-

---

way against Tripoli. In part, he struggled because Morocco and Tunis had become more fractious toward the United States, so Morris had to spend time reestablishing friendly relations. Morris’s struggles also seem to have been personal—he lacked the energy to keep up the blockade when it was difficult to do so. Morris was recalled to the United States in disgrace in June 1803. Under the third commodore, Edward Preble, the tide of the war shifted from peacekeeping with the other Barbary states to actual warmaking against Tripoli. Preble was by nature a more hawkish sort than Morris, but he also had to deal with the great catastrophe of the war: the capture of the Philadelphia in Tripoli harbor on October 31, 1803. Preble kept up the blockade as well as engaging in direct assault on Tripoli. When the fourth commodore, Samuel Barron, arrived in 1804, he found the war against Tripoli at its strongest point thus far. Barron was able to bring together all the disparate threads of war and diplomacy and finally conclude peace with the bashaw of Tripoli.

In June 1805, the United States negotiated for peace. The treaty stipulated a ransom payment for the Philadelphia captives, but no further tribute. Though they had achieved a cessation of payment, the Americans’ standing with the Barbary states was anything but solid. It was not until the American navy returned in full force after the War of 1812 that they finally achieved the display of might that they had hoped for in the beginning. In their very brief war with Algiers in 1815, the United States finally demonstrated naval dominance that broke the system of tribute.

Though it was Tripoli that provoked the United States into sending their new naval force to the Mediterranean, calling this conflict the First Tripolitan War fundamentally mischaracterizes the struggle the Americans faced. If we think of this conflict as between only the United States and Tripoli, then the actions of both naval commanders, diplomats, and the government back in Washington are almost inscrutable. In fact, the conflict was, for the United States, about fighting (or paying) their way into a Mediterranean system that was foreign to their principles, goals, and practice. Along the way, they came into conflict with each of the Barbary states individually, and the Barbary system as a whole. Therefore, it only makes sense to call the conflicts “the Barbary Wars.”
Joining the Community

The United States had three goals in their dealings with the Barbary states. The most obvious goal was to bring the Barbary rulers to terms favorable to American trade. But the United States also had two less frequently stated goals, which were arguably more important than actual victory in North Africa: joining the Mediterranean community and establishing national credibility. Thomas Jefferson and his government saw war with Barbary as a way to join the Mediterranean community and establish lasting relations with European governments. The Americans were in sore need of cooperative partners for trade, and they often felt like second-class citizens in the ports of Europe. They needed to be able to work together with the European diplomats and officials in order to make their trade run as smoothly as possible. The Barbary states represented a common enemy, and the Americans saw the possibility of collaboration against this common enemy as a good that was greater than just defeating the North African corsairs. On occasion, they also had to collaborate with the Barbary states against each other, a task that required different strategies than collaborating with the Europeans.

I use the term “Mediterranean community” to mean all the nations and people who had dealings in the Mediterranean Sea. Though activities in the Mediterranean had ramifications for the larger Atlantic world, I see the Mediterranean community as a distinct region, a subset of the Atlantic world. The Barbary states, for instance, operated mostly within the confines of the Mediterranean, and anyone who interacted with them did so in the Mediterranean. Within this community, alliances and antagonisms formed quickly and broke just as quickly. A simple breakdown of European versus Barbary, or Christian versus Muslim, does not capture the complicated relationships that existed in the Mediterranean.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, England and France were the power players in the Mediterranean. That had not always been the case; Alison Games argues that during the seventeenth century, Protestant Englishmen were a minority to Spanish Catholics and Ottoman Muslims.27 Games argues that the British learned to function in the Mediterranean system by

---

27 Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660*
mastering the customs and practices of those already present in the region and adapting them to suit British imperial aims.\textsuperscript{28} When the British became one of the powers of the region, they benefited from a familiarity with the customs of the Barbary states and the Ottoman Empire and were able to use them to their advantage.

When the United States arrived in the Mediterranean, they faced similar challenges to the ones the British had undergone. Unfamiliarity with the sea and its peoples proved a difficult hurdle for the Americans to overcome. In order to wage war in the Mediterranean, American naval commanders and diplomats had to cultivate good relationships. In 1798, Secretary of State Timothy Pickering wrote to William Eaton, American consul at Tunis, that he should try to befriend some of his fellow consuls in Tunis, so that “by a friendly intercourse and mutual assistance the common interests of the several nations you and they represent may be advanced. While with such you will cultivate an acquaintance, you will endeavour to live on terms of civility and good neighbourhood with all.”\textsuperscript{29} When war broke out in 1801, good neighborhood became both more difficult and more critical than ever for the American pursuit of Mediterranean prosperity.

David Golove and Daniel Hulsebosch argue that the Constitution was a document designed to bring the United States into the European community through law.\textsuperscript{30} But I argue that the community into which the United States sought to intrude was more than just European. It also included the Barbary states and the Ottoman Empire. While the United States in theory prioritized European practices of law and custom, in the everyday dealings of the navy with both Europeans and Barbary courts, it became apparent that a monolithic idealized legal system or customary practice simply would not do.

\textsuperscript{28} Games, 74.
\textsuperscript{29} Pickering to Eaton, 20 December 1798. BW1:273.
Gaining Credibility

Collaboration often looked like the weaker nation bowing to the wishes of the greater powers, rather than two partners working together. The United States was not interested in that kind of collaboration. Instead, their third goal for the Barbary conflict was to establish international credibility, not just as a power, but as a major power on the oceans. They wanted to be taken seriously in terms of trade, military, and diplomacy: to prove that the republic was not a flash-in-the-pan experiment but rather a government that could stand up to age-old patterns of abuse in the Barbary states, and could find a solution better than the accommodations of the great monarchies. In a partnership between the United States and Europe, America had to be the leader.

Frank Lambert argues that American relations with the Barbary states stemmed from an incomplete resolution to the War for American Independence. After the revolution, Americans claimed equality and independence for themselves on the world stage, but events proved those claims to be mostly hollow. The Mediterranean system was one dictated by and organized to accommodate the great European powers’ mercantilism, and American merchants struggled to find their place in the system. Lambert addresses American struggles to come to terms with both Barbary captivity and the payment of tribute to Barbary rulers, but he spends very little time on the actual war between the United States and Tripoli. The war was the United States’ chance to break free of the system of payment to the minor powers of North Africa, thereby declaring itself different from the Europeans who had created the system. However, in its quest for independence from old systems of commerce and government, the American navy found itself completely and utterly reliant on exactly those systems.

Conflicting ideas about how to accomplish these three goals threatened not only America’s relationship with Europe, but also its internal coherence as a diplomatic and military force. This war was essentially unique for the United States—it was perhaps its only war in a location

where the United States had no land available to stage the conflict from. The nearest land that the United States could claim was thousands of miles away, across the Atlantic, so cooperation with the Mediterranean powers was not just a lofty goal; it had to be a priority. Where the American navy wanted to come in as an equal player or conqueror, more often officers had to come as supplicants, hat in hand, to work with the European forces and gain their trust and respect that way.

Clipping the Eagle’s Wings

Collaboration and respect were not easy for the United States to establish. Almost as soon as the United States declared independence, American merchants and consuls were crying foul about their mistreatment at the hands of the European powers. It was not enough to be directly challenged by belligerent navies; the Americans also felt certain that the Europeans were conspiring to cripple their Mediterranean commerce using the Barbary states as tools. In 1786, Captain Richard O’Brien, an American captive in Algiers who would later become consul general there, wrote to Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, “It is not the interest of any commercial nation that the Americans should obtain a peace with the Barbary States, whilst they reap such benefits in being the carriers of our commerce, particularly the English, French & Spanish being jealous of us.”

Nathaniel Cutting, consul in Havre de Grace, also thought that jealousy was provoking the European governments to unjustly conspire against American shipping when they could and should be fighting the Barbary states themselves: “A miserable spirit of illiberality has induced them to practice all the infamous arts of finesse rather than openly and steadily to pursue a gallant warfare against those petty villains who wantonly infringe the rights, and impede the social intercourse between different members, of the great family of mankind.”

William Willis, American consul in Barcelona, wrote, “There is no doubt that the Dey of Tripoly has in some measure been prompted to declare war against the United States by foreign influence as all the

32 O’Brien to Jefferson, 8 June 1786, BW1:2.
33 Nathaniel Cutting to Sec of State, 10 February 1793. BW1:67.
powers concerned in commerce are desirous of amasing the golden harvest of the mediterranean trade to themselves, & for this reason encourage the Barbary States to make war against their neighbors as also against the United States, which latter it is well known that if they support a good intelligence with the Barbary States will almost deprive the Northern Powers of Europe of the profits of this so much coveted harvest.”34

Perhaps unsurprisingly, American diplomats honed in on Great Britain as the source of a vast conspiracy to prevent the Americans from trading in the Mediterranean. Edward Church, then consul at Lisbon, wrote to Jefferson in 1793, “England & Spain seem to be plotting in what way they can most effectually clip our Eagle’s Wings, They are both extremely envious of her soaring.”35 Church complained again to Jefferson a month later that the treaties Britain was making between Portugal, Holland, and the Barbary states were specifically designed to open American shipping to attack.36

At that time, Church saw France as the United States’ only ally. In 1795, David Humphreys wrote in glowing terms that he expected “the friendly and efficacious co-operation of the French Republic in our Barbary negotiations.” But within just a few years, France had become the most aggressive opponent of American trade. By 1797, Joel Barlow had compiled a long list of all the depredations French cruisers had wreaked on Americans in the Mediterranean.37 Those depredations boiled over into outright conflict during the Quasi-War from 1798 to 1800, during which France took more than 300 American vessels in the Caribbean and Atlantic. Though relations were officially restored in 1800, many Americans had lingering concerns about France’s good faith.

Despite these misgivings, when the American navy arrived in the Mediterranean in 1801,

35Edward Church to Thomas Jefferson, 22 September 1793, BW1:43.
36Church to Jefferson, 12 October 1793, BW1:48.
37David Humphreys to Joseph Donaldson Jr., 18 May 1795, BW1:98; Joel Barlow to U.S. Minister in Paris, 14 March 1797, BW1:199-200.
they had no choice but to accommodate the British and the French. If the United States intended to mount a naval war against the Barbary states, the Americans would need assistance from both the British and the French, as well as any other nations they could convince to help.

**Winning a War of Attrition**

Historian Andrew Lambert argues that naval wars are almost always wars of attrition: decisive battles gain no ground, and the victor is not the navy with the most ships or biggest guns, but the navy whose ships can outlast all the others in the area, using whatever means necessary.38 Naval wars are usually supplements to land wars, so fighting a war far away from home and land is in some ways an exercise in futility. Even the mainstay of naval action, the blockade, is a never-ending battle not only with the enemy but also with the weather, lack of supplies, and disease.39 The British learned about the perils of distant battles and blockades when they fought in the Caribbean during the War of Jenkins’ Ear, while America was still part of the British Empire, as disease and lack of manpower crippled their fleet.40 Now the United States was attempting a very similar operation, only with even more tenuous a hold on the region. In the Caribbean, the British had fought a naval war, but they had at least held their own ports and supply towns. In the Mediterranean, the Americans had to rely entirely on the good graces of friendly (or at least neutral) nations.

Effectively running this war of attrition required more than just skill in fighting battles. The commodores had to see that the squadron had enough supplies, keep abreast of diplomatic issues, organize ships across a wide area without actually seeing many of them often, manage expiring enlistments and new recruits, and maintain their ships in fighting trim. Frequent disruptions to the efficiency of the squadron meant that the war could only proceed slowly and

---


40 Lambert, *War at Sea*, 110.
painfully. Operations could not even be considered when other concerns got in the way. Given the difficulty of outlasting the enemy, it is no wonder that the war had few battles and no impressive outcomes.

The weather in the Mediterranean turned out to be a critical barrier to successful operations. It did not matter how eager commanders were to engage with the enemy; for several months of the year, operations were impossible because of the storms on the sea. And even during the more temperate months, contrary winds could delay ships for weeks at a time. Bad weather wreaked havoc on sails, hulls, and rigging, forcing the vessels of the squadron to undergo seemingly endless repairs. Supplying the squadron also frustrated and incapacitated its commanders on multiple occasions. Buying and storing supplies required more diplomacy than most commanders expected. Making sure all of the squadron’s ships were able to access those supplies meant less time performing the duties for which the squadron had been sent, and highly complicated plans for rendezvous that could be thwarted at almost every turn.

Disease and the threat of disease changed the way the American navy fought—not in earthshattering ways, but in a thousand little ways. In every decision about where to seek supplies, a commander had to consider disease. Every time a ship’s company needed those supplies, disease as well as hunger was a concern. When a commander sailed into a dangerous area, he had to consider whether disease left him enough able-bodied men to manage the guns. When the commodore set rendezvous points and dates, disease was a determining factor. There were many times when disease caused the breakdown of authority, the delay of important messages or supplies, and the straining of relationships.

Communications difficulties represented one of the greatest difficulties for the squadrons. Dispatches from the United States were practically obsolete by the time a commander received them in the Mediterranean. Questions abounded about the various roles and seniority of the naval officers and consuls, who often did not communicate with each other until damage had been done to relationships with other nations. Even between members of the squadron, ship had difficulty communicating, as the navy’s affairs stretched 1200 miles from Gibraltar to Tripoli, and
the navy was supposed to be acting in nearly all of that space. As a result, a unified strategy was virtually impossible, as communications could not keep up with rapidly changing circumstances.

Rapidly changing circumstances meant that naval officers were often called on to act as diplomats, to both friendly and belligerent courts. None of the officers had any real diplomatic experience, nor did they have much familiarity with the customs of the Mediterranean system. An overarching disdain for the European practices of payment to the Barbary powers leached into their personal dealings with both Europeans and North Africans. Ignorant of Barbary custom, and often unwilling to learn, the officers who represented the United States diplomatically were often overly optimistic that the Mediterranean system would collapse under the pressure of one fairly minor power. Conflicts between naval officers and consuls also compromised their effectiveness at negotiating with foreign powers.

This dissertation will investigate how those details of everyday operations shaped the conflict with Tripoli. The customary breakdown of the war is by squadrons, viewing each of the four squadrons sent to the Mediterranean as an individual unit. But dividing the conflict up into such neat boxes obscures the struggles faced by commanders spread far from a central authority. Instead, my chapters break down by year. Chapter 1, 1801, focuses on the diplomatic and strategic challenges Richard Dale faced as the first commodore to arrive in the Mediterranean. In this chapter, I lay out some of the basic difficulties faced by the squadrons throughout the war, including maintaining the blockade, dealing with disease, and accommodating the varied tasks the navy had to accomplish. The squadron faced its first conflicts within the Mediterranean community in 1801, and Richard Dale had to address them as best he could while still following his orders. Chapter 2, 1802, takes up the question of how command structures developed amidst increasing tensions with all of the Barbary states. The complicated transfer of authority between Richard Dale and Richard Valentine Morris led to confusion between the squadron and its leaders, as well as confusion with the consuls. Morris’s inability to lead the squadron also hindered his ability to negotiate with the Barbary states. He too felt pulled between the navy’s many agendas: instead of prioritizing Tripoli, he chose to focus on Morocco and Tunis, though in
neither case did he prove an effective negotiator. In chapter 3, we see how different commanders interpret and execute nearly identical orders in the face of differing challenges from both North Africa and Europe. As Morris’s lackadaisical attitude toward Tripoli eroded American credibility, the navy and the American consuls in the Mediterranean began to snipe at each other. Relations between the United States and Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco all deteriorated, and Morris struggled to respond to the varied threats. When his replacement, Edward Preble, arrived in the Mediterranean, the navy’s zeal for their tasks dramatically increased. Along with increased activity came increased conflicts with other Mediterranean powers, however, particularly the British. When the Philadelphia was captured, Preble’s focus shifted immediately to Tripoli. Chapter 4, 1804, deals with how Preble handled the aftermath of the capture of the Philadelphia, in direct negotiations with the bashaw and in the ripple effects on American prestige in the Mediterranean. The international community rallied behind the Philadelphia prisoners, and Preble and the consuls reached out to as many of those community members as possible in order to strengthen their position with the bashaw. Even the navy’s shining moment, the destruction of the Philadelphia, was not accomplished without help from the community. Nevertheless, Preble too had to navigate the pitfalls of having a naval force in the Mediterranean, including many legal questions about the strategy Preble had employed. At the end of 1804, Preble’s replacement, Samuel Barron, was unable to capitalize on the strong position Preble had left him. Chapter 5 brings the war to a close, though the problems of dealing with the European community remain. This chapter traces two threads: an attempted coup in Tripoli, orchestrated by William Eaton to seat Hamet Karamanli on the throne instead of his brother Yusuf; and the activities of the squadron that led up to the peace settlement. Commodore Rodgers, to whom Barron had handed over command due to illness, was able to capitalize on Eaton’s famous march across the desert in order to achieve peace and gain the release of the Philadelphia captives. In the end, though the Americans perceived independence and national pride as the outcome of the war, their entire mission would have been impossible without the intervention of various members of the Mediterranean community.

Scholarly histories of the Barbary Wars have typically focused on naval operations, fore-
grounding military actions by the squadrons.\textsuperscript{41} Though the battles were undoubtedly important, this dissertation will focus on what happened between the battles that allowed the American squadrons to maintain their presence in the Mediterranean.

By and large, this is not a story about partisan government or principles of political economy. The president and other federal officials in the United States are but secondary concerns in this tale. Though they sent the squadrons to the Mediterranean, they had very little control over how the story played out. In fact, the Americans’ ties to other nations in the Mediterranean proved to be as important as, if not more important than, their connections to the government in Washington. Furthermore, this is not a story about how the American government interacted on a high level with other governments. It is not about heads of state coming to agreements that their subjects or citizens carry out. Instead, it is about the officers and enlisted sailors of the U.S. Navy, and how they interacted with the societies in which they found themselves.\textsuperscript{42} These societies


included bankers, diplomats, naval agents, naval officers from other nations, representatives of the Barbary governments, and many other people in diverse roles.

These social encounters gave American naval personnel the chance to forge global connections both for themselves and as representatives of the United States. They did not go into these encounters unbiased: race and religion played a role in how the Americans interacted with not just their Barbary connections, but also the British, French, and other Europeans. Additionally, the social dynamic of the squadrons was always changing: four different squadrons over four years meant new styles of leadership every year, and new sailors to acclimate to the conditions of the Mediterranean. Because of the distance from home orders, each squadron’s commander had to rely on his own instincts to maintain connections. American naval officers and diplomatic agents sometimes struggled to get along with each other and with their counterparts in foreign ports. Far from their respective metropoles, navies and diplomatic agents were able to exercise considerable latitude on their official orders. Therefore, we have to look at individual people, places, and events in order to understand the history of the Barbary Wars.  

Likewise, this is not a story about how the United States bested the evil Muslim empire. The scholarly surge of interest in the Barbary Wars after September 11, 2001, came along with a number of claims about the war being America’s first conflict with Islam, its first defeat of terrorism, and a number of other ill-informed conclusions about the causes and course of the war. Race and religion did play a part in the conflict, but shaky contemporary parallels do a

---

43I take this idea from Richard White’s book on Indian-imperial-American relations in the Great Lakes region, where he describes the continual disintegration and reformation of “middle ground” on a village level, rather than trying to describe the region as a whole or represent it as a model for empire. I believe the same type of situation applies here, where monolithic statements about empire or nation obscure the differences from port to port, person to person, ship to ship. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

disservice to both the Barbary Wars and contemporary events.

**Firm though Solitary**

Sometime in the 1790s, David Humphreys, American minister plenipotentiary to Madrid, wrote a long poem titled “On the Future Glory of America.” In it, he urges Americans to rise up and take back their honor from the uncivilized pirates who held them in thrall. “Shall the weak remains of barbar’rous rage Insulting, triumph o’er the enlighten’d age?” he asks.45

Then, though unaided by these mighty pow’rs,

Ours be the toil; the danger, glory ours:

Then, oh my friends! by heav’n ordained to free

From tyrant rage, the long-infested sea—

Then let us firm, though solitary, stand,

The sword and olive-branch in either hand:

An equal peace propose with reason’s voice,

Or rush to arms, if arms should be their choice.

---


45David Humphreys, *The Miscellaneous Works of David Humphreys, Late Minister Plenipotentiary ...: To the Court of Madrid* (T. and J. Swords, 1804), 55.
National honor demanded a firm stand against the Barbary states. But no matter how much Humphreys wanted that stand to be solitary, the United States was in the battle in community. Both help and hindrance came from the mighty powers of Britain and France, minor European powers such as Sweden and Denmark, and even the Barbary states. To fully accomplish their mission of independence, the United States would have to change the system from the inside out.
Chapter 1

1801

As the American government made plans to mitigate the rising threat from the Barbary states, Acting Secretary of the Navy Samuel Smith thought that the mere presence of an American squadron in the Mediterranean would motivate Tripoli to back down from its demands. In April 1801, Smith wrote to Thomas Truxtun, the most senior officer in the navy, that “such a squadron Cruizing in view of the Barbary Powers will have a tendency to prevent them from seizing on our commerce, whenever Passion or a desire of Plunder might Incite them thereto.” Accordingly, a small squadron was dispatched to the Mediterranean in June 1801. After fighting hundreds of privateers in the Caribbean during the Quasi-War, some naval officers viewed the cruise in the Mediterranean as a vacation. William Turner, surgeon on the Philadelphia, one of the frigates in the squadron, surmised that the squadron would have time to do some sightseeing in the Levant and Egypt, as the squadron would have “very little to do”; he wrote, “I sanguinely contemplate a great deal of Enjoyment on the Impending Expedition.”

Because Secretary Smith assumed that the squadron would not encounter much action, he saw the cruise as a training mission for the younger officers, anticipating the future when the Mediterranean would be an important strategic area. The secretary’s orders to Richard Dale, the commodore of the squadron, reveal the United States’ priorities for this first cruise. Smith ordered Dale to go first to Gibraltar, then to work his way down the North African coast, bringing

---

1Samuel Smith to Thomas Truxtun, 10 April 1801, BW1:429.
2William Turner to unknown, 1 June 1801, BW1:480.
dispatches to the consuls and presents to the rulers of each regency. Although the United States was at peace with the Barbary states, relations were tense and could erupt into war at any moment. If all of the Barbary states had declared war, Dale was to spread out his squadron to “protect our commerce and chastise their insolence.” If only one or two of the states had declared war, Dale was to cruise off that coast and form an unofficial blockade. Smith’s orders hint that he hoped any conflict would already be resolved by the time Dale and his ships got there.³

In addition to a broad application of force to cow the bashaw, the squadron also went to the Mediterranean to provide more specific demonstrations of force—namely, to protect American ships by convoying them as they navigated the sea. Thomas Jefferson himself stated this goal when he wrote to inform Yusuf Karamanli, the bashaw of Tripoli, that he was sending a squadron: “We mean to rest the safety of our commerce on the resources of our own strength and bravery.”⁴ This effort was intended as both physical protection and morale boost, as Smith noted in his orders to Dale that the squadron should “give confidence to our Merchants” as they sailed.⁵

The American government had larger concerns than just the Barbary states. Having just come out of an undeclared naval war with France, Smith did not want to cause problems in the larger Mediterranean community. Therefore, he ordered Dale to allow naval vessels of any nation except the Barbary states to search any merchant under the squadron’s convoy if Dale could not “avoid it in a friendly way.” The squadron’s own vessels were not to be boarded or searched, nor was any person to be allowed to be taken off them. Smith encouraged Dale, “In all cases of clashing with the Vessels, Officers or Subjects of other Powers, we enjoin on you the most rigorous moderation, conformity to right & reason, & suppression of all passions, which might lead to the commitment of our Peace or our honor.” This part of Dale’s orders was not about the Barbary states, but rather about keeping the tenuous peace with Britain and France.⁶

³Smith to Dale, 20 May 1801, BW1:465-47.
⁴Jefferson to Yusuf Karamanli, 21 May 1801, BW1:470.
⁵Smith to Dale, 20 May 1801, BW1:465.
⁶Smith to Dale, 20 May 1801, BW1:465-68.
CHAPTER 1. 1801

Strategy

When the squadron arrived in the Mediterranean in July 1801, the United States was no longer at peace. On May 14, 1801, Yusuf Karamanli had ordered the flagpole cut down at the American consulate in Tripoli, a signal that he had declared war. In response, on July 23, William Eaton, American consul at Tunis, announced in a circular that Tripoli was officially under blockade, anticipating Commodore Dale’s probable strategy. In principle, Dale agreed with Eaton’s actions, writing to the Secretary of the Navy, “Should the United States Determine to carry on the War against Tripoli it will be highly necessary to keep it closely Blockaded.”

The Americans set ambitious plans for their blockade. Naval historian Andrew Lambert argues that blockades can take two forms. A commercial blockade, which was particularly effective against nations that relied on the sea to bring their food, prevented commercial, civilian vessels from entering and exiting a particular harbor, keeping them from accessing needed supplies and trade routes. The commercial blockade affected the merchant traffic not only of the belligerent port but also of all its trade partners. Enforcing a commercial blockade was a calculated judgment that deprivation of the enemy was worth the irritation of friendly nations. A military blockade denied the navy of the blockaded country access to potential targets, by either keeping them within a particular area or capturing them out in the open ocean. The military blockade affected the government that relied on its warships for capital; the commercial blockade affected its people who needed food and goods to live.

The American squadron’s strategy combined these two types of blockade. When Eaton declared the blockade, Dale and his flagship, the frigate President, were already headed toward Tripoli, where they arrived on July 25, 1801. They planned to both block commerce coming into and out of Tripoli and prevent Tripolitan cruisers from getting to their prey. Some cruisers were bottled up in Tripoli harbor. The cruisers that were out at sea were to be kept out of friendly ports so that they had nowhere to return plunder to or acquire supplies. This strategy was one

---

7 Dale to Smith, 18 August 1801, BW1:553.
8 Lambert, War at Sea, 24.
that the American navy had implemented with a fair amount of success in the Caribbean during the Quasi-War. Eaton’s announcement of the blockade made these two purposes clear:

The Bashaw of Tripoli having declared War against the United States of America, a squadron has been destined by the American government to impede the mischief meditated by that Regency against our Commerce and tranquility. It consequently becomes obligatory on us, to inform the agents of all powers in friendship with us, that Tripoly is actually blockaded by said American squadron: and that any vessel attempting to enter that Port, will be dealt with according to the laws of Nations applicable in such cases.

The Tripolitan raiders were to be obstructed, and no vessels were to be allowed into port. The United States was thus making a territorial claim: the port of Tripoli. But the blockade of the port had ramifications for the entire regency: Eaton wrote to Richard Dale that the region was dependent on Tunis for basic foodstuffs, and though the two nations literally abut each other on land, food traveled on the sea. Restricting access to the port, then, might allow for leverage over the entire country.

The squadron Dale commanded was composed of a paltry four vessels: three frigates—the President, Philadelphia, and Essex—and the schooner Enterprize. Using only these four ships, the navy had to come up with a strategy to execute both the commercial and military blockades. Richard O’Brien, American consul in Algiers, suggested that the frigates should be deployed in a cordon from Gibraltar to Port Mahon in Minorca and possibly even to Syracuse in order to create an effective blockade. Since the United States did not have enough vessels to even consider

---

9See http://abbymullen.org/projects/Quasi-War/ for a map showing that the navy concentrated its attentions around key ports of origin for privateers, making many more captures in small areas than out on the high seas.
10Circular from William Eaton, July 23, 1801, BW1:528.
11Blockades present an interesting counterpoint to theories of territoriality espoused by Robert Sack, in Robert David Sack, Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986). This dissertation does not have the time or space to deal meaningfully with the theoretical spatial aspects of a blockade.
12Eaton to Dale, July 24, 1801, BW1:529.
such a strategy, nor was it legal under international law, it is not clear how O’Brien thought such
an effort would work. William Eaton, conversely, wanted a small concentrated force to not only
blockade Tripoli but also bombard it. The strategy employed by Dale was something in between
these two ideas.

Upon arrival in Gibraltar, Dale found Murad Reis, the Tripolitan admiral, at anchor in his
ship, the *Meshouda*, and another Tripolitan warship. Dale left Samuel Barron in the *Philadelphia*
at Gibraltar to keep Murad Reis penned up, which amounted to a military blockade at Gibraltar.
The *Essex*, under William Bainbridge, had orders to cruise between Gibraltar and Barcelona,
primarily on convoy duty. Only Dale’s *President* and the *Enterprize*, captained by Lieutenant
Andrew Sterett, sailed for Tripoli. Dale cruised off Tripoli for about a month and a half before
heading back to Gibraltar. *Enterprize* cruised off Algiers before joining the *President* off Tripoli in
late August, but Sterett headed back to Algiers early in September, so *Enterprize*’s total time at
Tripoli was very short. The *Essex* took over for the *President* in September 1801, in company with
the *Philadelphia*. The week that the *Essex* and the *Philadelphia* cruised together amounted to the
tightest the blockade ever got under Richard Dale.¹⁴

The Mediterranean was a new experience for many of the sailors, and they responded to
the unfamiliar and troubling sea in varied ways. The shallow waters and intricate harbors were
an ideal location for practicing the finer points of navigation, which was one of the original goals
for the cruise. To acclimate themselves mentally, the sailors compared the conditions to the more
familiar waters of the Atlantic. But far from making them feel at home, the comparisons indicate
a pervasive discomfort with their surroundings: they related the Mediterranean to “the latitudes
between the Island Bermuda & Cape Hatteras,” notorious as the Graveyard of the Atlantic.¹⁵
Neither Carolina nor the Mediterranean was comfortable space for these naval vessels.

The physical features of the sea also prevented the blockade from being too rigid in

¹⁴A digital map available at http://abbymullen.org/projects/barbary/ (see Appendix C) al-
lops a viewer to track the ships’ movements with more granularity; thus I have not taken the
time in the text to outline each ship’s track throughout the cruise.
¹⁵Journal of the *Essex*, October 13, 1801, BW1:598.
practice. Lack of ships made the blockade porous; but even if the United States had sent enough frigates to adequately cover the area under blockade, the squadron still would not have been able to access all parts of the sea. Deep-draft vessels, such as those that made up the entire American squadron, faced difficulties in the shallow Mediterranean waters: the coastline of Tripoli was simply too shallow and dangerous. Tripolitan vessels were designed for this coastal practice, but American vessels were built for deeper waters. In addition, the American vessels sailed solely under wind power, while the oar-powered Tripolitan galleys could maneuver in adverse or non-existent winds. During the winter it was not safe to anchor near Tripoli because the wind created such a heavy sea that the anchor might rip off the bottom and send the ship into the shore.

In the Waters of Tripoli

From July 1801 until February 1802 when Dale left the Mediterranean, his squadron did not treat Tripoli as their primary patrol ground. Dale faced an impossible task in blockading Tripoli with only one or two ships. In order to bolster the effectiveness of the blockade, Dale turned to his European counterparts. He formed an agreement with the Swedish admiral, Baron Cederstrom, in the Mediterranean, and the Swedish navy joined the Americans in the blockade. The Swedish government had reached out in 1800 about joining forces against the Barbary states, but President Adams had declined the offer. Dale’s agreement likewise received some pushback. James Leander Cathcart and William Eaton advocated against it because they wanted to set an example for the Barbary states without assistance; a joint operation would mean sharing the honor when the victory was won. Nonetheless, the Swedish chargé d’affaires N. Frumerie wrote to William Eaton in October 1801 to inform him that Sweden was sending a small squadron to join the block-

16 The draft of the President was nearly 14 feet; the Enterprize’s was 10 feet. James L. Mooney, Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships (Washington: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Naval History Division, 1959), https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/shiphistories/danfs.html.
19 Cathcart to Dale, 17 September 1801, BW1:576; Eaton to Sec of State, 13 December 1801, 1:637.
ade and also give convoy to American vessels.\textsuperscript{20} Commodore Dale embraced the Swedes with open arms. He met with Admiral Cederstrom several times to discuss strategy, but Dale let the Swedes do most of the work on the blockade. Dale rarely ordered more than one American vessel to be off Tripoli; by May 1802 Alexander Murray, captain of the \textit{Constellation}, could assert that the Americans did not need to worry about the blockade at all because the Swedes were there.\textsuperscript{21} The Americans did provide convoy to Swedish vessels along with their own. Furthermore, Dale offered Cederstrom advice about attacking Tripoli directly, and promised his help, but he was not authorized to directly attack anything.\textsuperscript{22}

Dale gave potentially hostile states a great deal of leeway about their interactions with Tripoli. He granted Tunisian ships a longer period of free trade with the Tripolitans before enforcing the blockade, purportedly because he wanted to make sure the notification had reached them all.\textsuperscript{23} In November, he also asked Thomas Appleton, U.S. consul at Leghorn, to remind Greece, Ragusa, and the Ottoman Empire that the port of Tripoli was under a blockade, as four months of blockade had not caused them to cease trying to get into the port.\textsuperscript{24}

There were always exceptions to blockade enforcement. The traditional method of distinguishing whether or not a ship could be where it was, carrying what it was, involved the issuance of passports. Passports were designed as agreements between countries who were not at war, but who might have commerce with countries that were. They served varying purposes in the Mediterranean. In the seventeenth century, the French used passports to protect their trade monopolies, stipulating that only Moroccan vessels carrying French passports would be able to do business in French ports. Ships not carrying the French passport could be attacked by the French navy.\textsuperscript{25} In the nineteenth century, ships carried passports, issued by their own home government, that served to indicate their nationality and therefore their protection under any peace

\textsuperscript{20} James Leander Cathcart, \textit{Tripoli: First War with the United States} (Herald Print, 1901), 342-43.
\textsuperscript{21} Murray to Sec of Navy, 7 May 1802, BW2:146.
\textsuperscript{22} Dale to Cederstrom, 2 February 1802, BW2:46; Dale to Rufus King, 7 February 1802, BW2:54.
\textsuperscript{23} Dale to Eaton, August 28, 1801, BW1:562.
\textsuperscript{24} Dale to Thomas Appleton, November 24, 1801, BW1:625.
treaties that were in effect.\textsuperscript{26} A ship was eligible for an American passport if it was owned by an American, whether it was built in the United States or not. This distinction was critical because the re-export trade boomed in European ports, where ships were easier to acquire. Thomas Jefferson argued that American commerce should be given all the advantages possible: if passports were only given to American-built vessels, “we shall lose also a great proportion of the profits of navigation. The great harvest for these is when other nations are at war, and our flag neutral. But if we can augment our stock of shipping only by the slow process of building, the harvest will be over while we are only preparing instruments to reap it. The moment of breeding seamen will be lost for want of bottoms to embark them in.” Jefferson was well aware that this more liberal categorization of American vessels might lead to abuse by unscrupulous captains, so he argued that ships should only be issued passports when they left American ports.\textsuperscript{27} However, the consuls of the Mediterranean were able to grant passports as well, and they did so frequently.

Treaties with the Barbary states included stipulations that ships from the treaty nations had to carry passports in order to keep from being captured. Article 12 of the treaty between Algiers and the United States of September 5, 1795, read, “Should Any American Citizen be taken on board an Enemy-Ship by the Cruisers of this Regency having a Regular pass-port Specifying they are Citizens of the United States they shall be immediately Sett at Liberty. on the Contrary they having no Passport they and their Property shall be considered lawfull Prize as this Regency Know their friends by their Passport.” Sometimes, American ships traveling within the Mediterranean had to get passports from the Mediterranean authorities, seemingly in addition

\textsuperscript{26}Passports could include the name of the master, the ship name, its tonnage, its guns, its crew complement, its type, and its home port, but the only feature that was mandatory were the signatures of the President of the United States and the Secretary of State, who had to sign every single passport. If some of the ship’s information changed, a new passport was not issued; rather, changes were noted on the reverse of the passport and usually validated by a consul. Mediterranean Passports, 1802-1840, Record Group 36: Records of the U.S. Customs Service, 1745 - 1997. National Archives and Records Administration.

to whatever American papers they carried. To prevent forgery, the tops of the passports were cut off using a specific pattern. Barbary corsairs were given the top of a passport, which they matched to an American bottom of the passport. If the patterns matched, the passport was considered valid. If not, the passport was assumed to be a forgery. This system was not foolproof, however; Richard O’Brien complained in November 1801 that the passports being issued for Algiers were defective, as the bottoms issued to American vessels did not match the top that the corsairs at sea had. Though no Americans suffered as a result of this confusion, several other nations had lost ships and cargos because of similar discrepancies.

Passports were also issued on a more ad hoc basis. American consuls and naval officers could issue passports to foreign ships for identification. For instance, Richard Dale issued the Tunisians passes so they could travel freely throughout the Mediterranean except to Tripoli. These passports were the only way the navy could discern whether a ship was friend or foe. Dale exhorted those vessels to keep their passes with them at all times, since he could not distinguish a Tunisian vessel from a Tripolitan on sight. The ability to give or deny passports turned out to be a vital part of the consuls’ job in the Barbary states.

When the blockade was declared, representatives of other Mediterranean nations quickly asked for clarification of its terms. In July, despite the concessions Dale had already granted, Tunis was the first to ask for an exception for their wheat ships bound for Tripoli. Eaton refused their request. Soon after, the British chargé d’affaires at Malta, Henry Clarke, wrote to William Eaton, asking whether Tripolitan ships supplying cattle to Malta would be permitted to deliver their cargoes. If not, he suggested, America’s friends might be hurt more severely than their enemies. The general concern the British chargé expressed was indeed one possible ramification

---

28 An example Algiers-issued passport was good for one year of travel within the Mediterranean; the passport also protected against molestation by Tunis, Tripoli, or Morocco, 1795, BW1:125.
29 It is not clear whether O’Brien thought the American government had erred or the Algerian government was being deceptive. O’Brien to Sec of State, 25 November 1801, BW1:625.
30 Dale to Nicholas Nissen, 8 August 1801, BW1:537.
Figure 1.1: This passport from 1819 illustrates the cut at the top that would be matched to a top carried by a Barbary ship. “Mediterranean Passport for the Ship Tea Plant,” issued 14 August 1819. Records of the U.S. Customs Service (RG 36), National Archives and Records Administration.
of the blockade strategy: the blockade might end up hurting other neutral or friendly nations more than its intended target. But Dale gave both nations the same answer: the blockade was agnostic about the vessels it applied to—no vessels of any kind would be allowed to pass.

**Actions and their Consequences**

Given the difficulties of the task Richard Dale had been given, it is not surprising that during his command no decisive action occurred. For this first cruise, there was little that could be done aside from cruise off Tripoli and convoy merchants from one end of the Mediterranean to the other. With only three frigates and a schooner in the squadron, each ship had more than enough to keep it busy.

The *President* was meant to maintain the blockade of Tripoli along with the *Enterprize*. As it turned out, between sickness, bad weather, and ship repairs, the *President* spent almost no time before Tripoli. The one action of any consequence during the first squadron’s cruise was accomplished not by one of the frigates, but by the schooner *Enterprize* on its way to Malta to get water for the *President*.

The encounter between the *Enterprize*, captained by Andrew Sterett, and the 14-gun, 80-man *Tripoli* was a promising start for the American squadron. On August 1, 1801, while flying British colors, the *Enterprize* sighted a ship. When Sterett asked what the ship was doing, its commander replied that it was out “to cruise after the Americans.” Upon hearing this reply, Sterett hauled down the British colors, which he had been sailing under in order to deceive any potential threats, and raised the American flag, firing muskets into the *Tripoli*. The *Tripoli* fired a partial broadside in return.

The fight lasted about three hours, during which time the Tripolitans attempted to board the *Enterprize* three times. Each time the crew and marines repulsed them. The *Tripoli’s* captain also tried a strategy that most sailors considered dishonorable: striking his colors and then resuming the fight. The third time the *Tripoli* struck, Sterett disregarded the surrender and ordered the vessel to be sunk. Eventually the *Tripoli’s* crew “cried for mercy,” and Sterett ordered their
officers to come on board the Enterprize. He refused to board the Tripoli with his own officers, lest this cry for mercy be yet another trick. After lying about the destruction of their boat, the Tripoli-tans eventually came over to the Enterprize and revealed the extent of the devastation Sterett and his crew had wreaked. Twenty of the eighty crewmen had been killed, with another thirty wounded. The captain and first lieutenant had been wounded, and the second lieutenant and surgeon killed. The Tripoli itself suffered so much damage that it was almost unable to be sailed, “having received 18 shot between wind and water.” By contrast, the Enterprize had suffered almost no structural damage and none of the crew were injured at all.  

As the surgeon of the Tripoli had been killed, Sterett ordered the Enterprize’s surgeon to patch up the wounded, but the ship itself he ordered dismantled entirely. Because his orders did not permit him to take an enemy ship as prize, he had to let the Tripoli go, but not before he cut down its masts and threw all its guns overboard. In practical terms, this victory meant little, but it purportedly demoralized the Tripolitans so much that all the sailors who were to man other corsair vessels deserted them instead. On the American side, it helped to throw popular opinion behind the use of force against the Barbary states. A letter from President Jefferson to Lieutenant Sterett, published in newspapers throughout the country, highlighted the victory while also allowing Jefferson to speak to the American public: “In proving to [Tripoli] that our past condescensions were from a love of peace, not a dread of them, you have deserved well of our country.” Tripoli was not the only recipient to whom Jefferson wished to communicate this message; in explaining why the navy had not been sent before now, he justified the decision to send it at all.

After such rousing success, James Leander Cathcart believed that the time was ripe for a favorable treaty. He wrote to Secretary of State James Madison,

Never was a more fortunate inst. for establishing a permanent Peace upon honorable

---

34 “Naval Victory,” BW1:539.
35 American Citizen (New York), 17 December 1801. Accessed through America’s Historical Newspapers.
terms, not one of our Citizens in Captivity, two of their Cruisers block’d up in Gibral-
tar, & their capital in a state of blockade, while our third Ship the Essex is employ’d
to Convoy our defenseless Merchantmen. The very judicious arrangement of so small
a force by our Comodore undoubtedly merits the greatest applause and commenda-
tion, & I should not be in the least surprized to hear in his next dispatch, that the
whole force of Tripoli were either destroy’d, or in our power.36

Cathcart’s optimism about a quick settlement came to nothing. Just days before the cap-
ture of the Tripoli, Richard Dale had written to the bashaw that he had no treaty-making powers,
and the capture had not changed that fact.37 Dale was trapped in diplomatic limbo, authorized to
make neither war nor peace. Instead, he went back to trying to maintain the blockade. In Europe,
newspapers noted the lack of swift action: “The outrages committed by the States of Barbary on
the American commerce still continue to excite a considerable degree of speculation; but it does
not appear that any vigorous measures have been adopted to take vengeance for the injuries
sustained,” wrote one London newspaper.38

Barriers to Success

Many factors affected the squadron’s lukewarm performance in 1801. For one, communications
amongst the Americans in the Mediterranean proved a difficult task, both for holding together
diplomatic relations and for keeping abreast of the squadron’s movements. For instance, Richard
Dale relied on Thomas Appleton to enforce the terms of the blockade with the Ottomans. David
Humphreys, the U.S. minister to Madrid, passed information to Consul William Kirkpatrick in
Malaga about a scheme he had heard about from the Spanish chargé d’affaires that the Tripolitans
were using to evade the blockade. Kirkpatrick then passed this intelligence on to Dale, who could
change his strategy accordingly.39 This network of correspondence was a secondary form of

36Cathcart to Madison, 10 August 1801, JM, http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JSMN-
02-91-02-0115
37Dale to Yusuf Karamanli, 24 July 1801, BW1:533-34.
38Bell’s Weekly Messenger (London, England), 30 August 1801. Accessed through 17th-18th Cen-
tury Burney Collection Newspapers.
39Humphreys to Kirkpatrick, October 24, 1801. The scheme Humphreys heard about was that
the Tripolitans were using English papers and flags to deceive the Americans about their origins.
enforcement. Though the consuls had no actual power to stop ships, they nevertheless wielded diplomatic power with those ships’ governments. What physical force could not accomplish, sometimes diplomatic force could.

The consuls were remarkably swift to discover and report the ways that various ships and governments were trying to thwart the blockade. In a circular in September, James Leander Cathcart alerted the squadron and other merchants to the fact that Morocco was trying to smuggle wheat into Tripoli. Cathcart also informed Dale that the Tripolitan ambassador was trying to slip out of Tripoli to Algiers, probably to influence Algiers against the Americans. William Eaton resorted to outright deception to avoid exposing the ineffectiveness of the squadron. The crews of the blockaded ships at Gibraltar intended to go overland to Oran and then charter a new vessel to become “an Enemy in the Rear” of the two frigates nearer Tripoli. To discourage them from trying this scheme, Eaton leaked a story that four more frigates would be arriving from America any day, hoping that the crews would be intimidated by the threat of more force and abandon their plan. Apparently Eaton’s plan worked—the crews did go to Oran but left without a vessel.

The consuls to the Barbary states occupied a unique position in the consular service. Normally, consuls did not receive a salary from the federal government; it was assumed that their business interests would allow them to earn enough to live. In the Barbary states, however, the volume of trade was not as important as maintaining constant diplomatic ties to the governments. Therefore, the consuls in Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli did earn a salary from the United States. In theory, all consuls were also supposed to be American, but in practice, many consuls in the Mediterranean were not. James Simpson, consul at Tangier, was one of those: he was a British merchant who had taken the post in 1796 after serving as first the Russian consul and then the American consul at Gibraltar. Aside from his business acumen and his interest in helping False colors were standard deceptive practice; the scandal in this scheme was in presenting false papers.

40 Cathcart to Dale, 11 September 1801, BW1:573-74.
41 Cathcart to Dale, 13 October 1801, BW1:598.
42 8 November 1801, BW1:616.
the United States, “he has also a considerable correspondence in Barbary & knowledge of the affairs in that Country,” wrote David Humphreys when he recommended Simpson for the post in Gibraltar. Of the four Barbary consuls, Simpson was perhaps the most suited to the consular duties.

The consuls for Algiers and Tripoli, Richard O’Brien and James Leander Cathcart, had a different sort of knowledge of the Barbary system than Simpson. Both merchants, they had been captured by Algerian cruisers and spent several years in captivity in Algiers. Richard O’Brien had spent ten years in captivity after his ship was the first American ship to be captured by a Barbary power, in 1785. After his release, he returned to Algiers with an appointment of consul general, following on the heels of Joel Barlow, who had recently negotiated the peace. When he arrived in Algiers to take over, he was greeted by James Leander Cathcart, who officially presented him to the dey on September 11, 1795. After his capture in 1785, Cathcart had risen to be chief Christian clerk for the dey, so he spent a great deal of time in the court and learned about Algerian customs and culture. By 1796, he was in such a prominent position that the dey allowed him to be part of his own ransom negotiations. In 1797, Cathcart returned to the Mediterranean in an official capacity: consul for Tripoli. He was accompanied by William Eaton, the new consul in Tunis. Eaton did not have any Barbary experience but was a soldier in the army, where he had served in the Georgia backwoods.

It was important that the three consuls work in concert, but personal conflict soon got in the way of their success. After Cathcart propositioned his wife’s maid on the voyage from the United States, she took refuge in the consulate of Algiers and eventually married Richard O’Brien. Cathcart took great umbrage at the ascension of his servant to be his social superior,


44 Allison, 163-64. This chapter from Allison goes into great detail about the diplomatic situation O’Brien inherited in Algiers.

45 Baepler, 103.
as the consul general’s wife.\textsuperscript{46} From that point on, relations between Cathcart and O’Brien were anything but cordial. Cathcart thought that O’Brien purposely sabotaged all of Cathcart’s activities for the rest of the war.\textsuperscript{47} O’Brien thought that Cathcart was pompous and deceitful; he accused Cathcart of philandering with a Moorish woman in 1787 and embezzling money from the dey in 1800.\textsuperscript{48} And Eaton was caught in the middle, though he tended to side with Cathcart against O’Brien. He wrote about O’Brien to the Secretary of State, “I do not hesitate to allege that the most essential communications of Mr. O’Brien relative to Barbary in General are gross misrepresentations calculated to bewilder and deceive rather than to instruct: and it is not un-charitable to believe that these misrepresentations are rather the effect of speculative views than of ignorance.”\textsuperscript{49} Setting aside their differences to work together proved almost impossible for the three men to do.

![Map of locations related to the war in 1801.](image)

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{46} Allison, 164-65.
\textsuperscript{47} Cathcart to Sec of State, 30 March 1803, BW2:379.
\textsuperscript{49} Eaton to Madison, 19 October 1801. JM, http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JSMN-02-91-02-0182.
\end{footnotesize}
CHAPTER 1. 1801

Connections in the Navy

As the consular networks worked to ease tensions in the Mediterranean, Dale had to test his connections as well. While he was in Port Mahon in November 1801, he heard a rumor that Tripolitan corsairs were being permitted to fit out there and were also flying British colors to avoid detection. He wrote to the governor of Minorca, Major-General Douglas Clephane, that he found this situation unacceptable. Dale was sure the governor would not wish to trespass on the good standing between Britain and the United States, since it was undoubtedly the king’s wish to maintain good relations. If polite entreaties were not enough to convince Clephane to cooperate, Dale then reminded him of the tenets of Jay’s Treaty between Great Britain and the United States that forbid the use of British or American ports for the fitting out of privateers. Dale gave the governor a chance to deny the rumor, but he also made it clear that the protection of the British flag would not help any privateers he found that had been using it fraudulently.

Because the President was under quarantine when Dale sent Clephane the letter, he could not go on shore to discuss the matter with Clephane directly. Instead, Clephane sent his secretary out to the President to inform him that the governor was innocent of the charges laid by Dale. The secretary reported that there was a Tunisian xebec at Port Mahon, but Clephane promised not to let it leave until its captain had signed a bond that the vessel was not owned in Tripoli or going to Tripoli.

50 Dale does not name the governor in his letter, but it appears to be Major-General Douglas Clephane, who had just taken over for Henry Edward Fox, Lord Holland, in September 1801. Within a year, the British would cede Minorca back to Spain and whatever connection the American navy had with Port Mahon would be lost. Almost no American naval vessels visited Port Mahon again during the war. Desmond Gregory, *Minorca, the Illusory Prize: A History of the British Occupations of Minorca Between 1708 and 1802* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 97.

51 Dale cited Articles 21 and 24 of the Jay Treaty. Article 24 states: “It shall not be lawful for any Foreign Privateers (not being Subjects or Citizens of either of the said Parties) who have Commissions from any other Prince or State in Enmity with either Nation, to arm their Ships in the Ports of either of the said Parties.” *Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy*, Yale University. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/jay.asp#art21.

52 Dale to governor of Minorca, 19 November 1801, BW1:623.

53 Dale to Thomas Appleton, 20 November 1801, BW1:624.
Communications amongst the squadron posed significant difficulties. Dale reported on August 18, 1801, that he had seen neither the Essex nor the Philadelphia since July 18. His orders to Andrew Sterett, commander of the Enterprize, indicate how little control Dale would have over Sterett once the Enterprize sailed away—his orders are couched in four different potential circumstances, all with different commands. Sterett was to proceed off Tripoli and cruise until Dale got there. If he met the Philadelphia, he was to tell Captain Barron to stay near Tripoli, unless he needed water, in which case he should go to Syracuse. If the President did not arrive at Tripoli after ten or twelve days, Sterett was to return to Malta, and if Dale was not there either, to Gibraltar. He was also to investigate the port of Syracuse to see whether it was fit for resupply.

To more senior officers, Dale gave even more leeway. His orders to Samuel Barron, whom he left at Gibraltar in the Philadelphia, indicated a trust in Barron’s discernment: “After saying what I have, I leave it to your own, good Judgement, being on the spot you will be better able to judge how to act than it is possible for me to direct.” Dale’s orders to Bainbridge were similar: “Should you find it necessary to deviate from the above orders you have my consent so to do alway’s keeping in view the honor and Interest of your Country, and the good of the Service.” These orders had a qualifier—not a geographical or even military qualification, but a moral one: it was assumed that the good of the service and the honor of the country would be sufficient guidance.

The squadron received little to no direction from home, either. Though the commodores appealed to the president for authority when dealing with foreign powers, in reality he was just as distant and shadowy to the navy as he was to the bashaw of Tripoli. In December 1801, Dale complained to minister Robert Livingston in Paris that he had received no instructions at all from the federal government for the entire time he had been in the Mediterranean. Far from being a strong centralized force, the ships of the squadron often had to act completely independently of

---

54 Dale to Sec of Navy, 18 August 1801, BW1:552.
55 Dale to Sterett, 18 August 1801, BW1:554.
56 Dale to Samuel Barron, July 4, 1801, BW1:500.
57 Dale to Bainbridge, July 17, 1801, BW1:515.
CHAPTER 1. 1801

each other and their home government.

Maintaining the Station

Enforcing the blockade involved more than cruising off Tripoli for long stretches of time. The ships had to leave their station frequently to refill on water and provisions, a process that could take up to a few days. The Americans had to work closely with their European counterparts in order to keep their ships in the Mediterranean. In order to help the squadron pay for any supplies or repairs in foreign ports, the Secretary of the Navy lodged a sum of money with a European commercial house, DeButts and Purviance, and asked them to place letters of credit with a few ports that he thought the navy might use. He identified Naples, Palermo, and Syracuse as likely ports.

To provision the squadron, the government preferred to send store ships from America, but this supply system had many limitations. The journey of one of the first store ships highlighted several of the difficulties. The American Packet, dispatched from New York to Gibraltar on August 14, 1801, was captured by Spanish privateers and brought to Algeciras on October 5. Napoleon had railroaded the Spanish into fighting for France, and now he was using its maritime forces in a blockade of Gibraltar, in lieu of the decimated French navy. The American Packet was one of several American vessels that had fallen into the Spanish snare. The Americans thus found themselves on the outside of a commercial blockade, and they made the same protests as others would levy against the American squadron.

Before the American Packet arrived, Dale had written to the governor of San Roque in Spain notifying him of its imminent appearance. Dale thought that notification would be sufficient to protect the ship from the Spanish privateers, but it was not. He grumbled to David Humphreys, American minister at Madrid, that the blockade was a farce, carried out not by ships from the Spanish navy, but privateers. “It is very strange to me, that the King of Spain suffers such nefar-

---

ious conduct to be carried on under his flag,” he wrote. Dale thought that the use of privateers
gave too much power to the governors of the Spanish ports, who were both owners of the priva-
tees and also the judges of their prize cases.\textsuperscript{60} The charge of corruption was also levied by one
of the merchant captains who had been taken by the Spanish privateers. John Gibson, writing to
his banking house to ask for money, lamented, “Every officer under this corrupt Government is
open to bribery, and have no doubt but a few thousand dollars would be the most solid argument
we could advance in our defense.”\textsuperscript{61}

In order to get his supplies, Commodore Dale had to petition the governor of San Roque
to release the supply ship.\textsuperscript{62} He requested simply that the governor would release the ship
quickly, reminding him that he had notified the governor that it was coming and had promised
that the ship contained only supplies for the squadron.\textsuperscript{63} After the governor released the vessel,
Dale discovered that the ship had in fact carried cargo not intended for the use of the squadron,
in direct opposition to Dale’s guarantee to the governor. Dale was furious with the master of
the \textit{American Packet}, writing, “Such transactions might have a tendancy to bring Both me and
my Country into Disgrace in the Eyes of the People of this Country, particularly in the present
situation of things.” When Dale finally got the supplies, he again had reason to be angry: there
was no butter, cheese, molasses, or candles, and “the Bread that was sent is full of weevil.”\textsuperscript{64}
The deficiencies of the supplies sent from America would be a refrain sounded again and again
throughout the next four years.

Though the case of the \textit{American Packet} was extreme, the squadron spent a great deal of
time waiting for supply ships. Dale had been waiting in Gibraltar for five days when the \textit{American

\textsuperscript{60}Dale to Humphreys, 18 October 1801, BW1:600.

\textsuperscript{61}John Gibson to Willings and Francis, Nicklin and Griffin, and Henry Nixon, 7 August 1801, 
\textit{American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, 2:442-}
\textit{43}.

\textsuperscript{62}It is unclear why the governor of San Roque would have jurisdiction in the \textit{American Packet’s}
case; in John Gibson’s case, the governors of Algeciras and San Roque argued over who would
adjudicate. \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{63}Dale to governor of St. Roque, 9 October 1801, BW1:596.

\textsuperscript{64}Dale to Sec of Navy, 26 October 1801, BW1:607-8.
Packet was captured by the Spanish. During that time, he had been anchored at Gibraltar without enough provisions to go out on a cruise. It took Dale ten more days, until October 16, to get possession of the ship. He waited a few more days at Algeciras for the other naval vessels who were supposed to put in for supplies from the American Packet. All told, it was not until the 26th of October that Dale once again put to sea.65

The Secretary of the Navy sent a supply ship approximately every three months for the duration of the war. The contents of the cargo were roughly the same each time. No one got the dairy, molasses, or candles that Dale had hoped for; instead, barrels of beef, pork, and flour were shipped along with quantities of bread, pease, and rice.66 If the crews were to get fresh vegetables and fruit, which they needed to prevent scurvy, they would have to get them somewhere in the Mediterranean.

The importance of good relations with European powers was especially evident when the squadron needed to find supplies and get repairs. The navy tended to favor British ports for their supplies, even though their relations with and regard for the British were anything but solid. The ease of being able to freely communicate in English might be one reason for this tendency, as most of the naval captains did not speak any other languages. In July 1801, the British officially opened the ports of Malta, Minorca, and Gibraltar to American warships, according to Rufus King, the American minister in London.67 Despite the agreement, that very month, the governor of Gibraltar turned away Samuel Barron and the Philadelphia, who ended up getting water at Tetuan, across the straits in Morocco.68 After that, however, the squadron was on good terms with the officials at Gibraltar; the officers there even promised to sell Dale supplies if the American Packet did not arrive.69

Malta was a better choice for supplies and water, geographically speaking, as it was much

65 Dale to Sec of Navy, 26 October 1801; BW1:606-608.
66 See records from 9 July 1802, 18 September 1802, 15 April 1803, and others for a list of the items shipped to the squadron, BW2:197, 276, 392.
67 Abihiel Thomas to John Shaw, July 24, 1801, BW1:531.
68 Gavino to Sec of State, 24 July 1801, BW1:530.
69 Dale to Rufus King, 7 October 1801, BW1:596.
CHAPTER 1. 1801

closer to Tripoli. But Malta proved a disappointment on many occasions. In August 1801, Dale sent the *Enterprize* to Malta to get water for the *President* as well as itself so that Dale would not have to leave the blockade. But the *Enterprize* was not able to get enough to prevent *President* from having to leave. Dale ended up at Malta himself, and while he was able to get water, he was not able to get other supplies there.\textsuperscript{70} After his experience in Malta, Dale recommended Syracuse to Samuel Barron, writing, “You may get every supply that you may want in the, Eating way, and that very cheap.”\textsuperscript{71} Syracuse became increasingly important as relations deteriorated with Malta over the course of the war.

Despite difficulties with Spanish privateers, American warships got supplies on occasion from Spain; Tangier and Tetuan were also possibilities for resupply.\textsuperscript{72} Because of the great diffusion of the squadron, it was paramount that they be able to get supplies from as many ports as possible. Finding ports and supplies for repairs was a slightly different matter. In some instances, repairs had to be done immediately, at whatever port was closest, no matter the relations with the port officials or their government. In other cases, more routine repairs could be put off until the vessel was going to an optimal location. As the war went on, the squadron pushed further and further into the Mediterranean, forging relationships with more and more ports where they could get supplies or repairs.

**Convoy**

Despite the war with Tripoli, the navy had other duties in the Mediterranean as well. In the first months of the war, the navy did not have authorization to fire on enemy ships unprovoked. In fact, during Richard Dale’s entire tenure as commodore, he did not have authorization to make war in any way, despite Tripoli’s declaration of war against the United States.\textsuperscript{73} Until February 6,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[70] Dale to Sec of Navy, 18 August 1801, BW1:553.
\item[71] Dale to Barron, 25 October 1801, BW1:603.
\item[72] *Essex* journal, 3 September 1801, 5 September 1801, BW1:569, 570.
\item[73] Whether the president could grant the navy authorization to act in a war-like manner without an official declaration of war from Congress was a matter of some dispute at the time. See James R. Sofka, “The Jeffersonian Idea of National Security: Commerce, the Atlantic Balance of Power,
1802, Dale’s squadron could engage only in passive action to protect American commerce. But there were ships aplenty that wished for protection: William Willis recorded, for instance, that 24 ships waited at Barcelona, “some of them with rich cargoes on board, but cannot go to sea for want of a Ship of war to protect them.” Aside from a blockade that was practically meaningless, the best way to protect Americans was to sail alongside them in convoy.

Convoy duty was like sheep herding—the commercial vessels were the sheep and the naval vessel were the sheepdogs responsible for getting the sheep through to safe harbor. American convoys tended to use only one naval vessel per run, and the number of commercial vessels in the convoy was also fairly small. British and French convoys could contain hundreds of ships, but American convoys usually had fewer than thirty. Keeping even thirty ships together in the Mediterranean could be quite challenging. Commodore Dale complained, “It is Impossible to keep a number of Merchant ships togeather, in bad weather and long nights.” Because of these difficulties, Dale considered ceasing convoys during the winter just as he would relinquish the blockade.

The convoy system worked thus: a naval captain coming into a friendly port sent word ahead that he would be providing convoy to another port. Commercial ships would wait for the naval captain to arrive, or their captains might send word for the navy to wait for them. It could take days or weeks for the convoy to assemble. The Secretary of the Navy had instructed his captains to take under convoy as many ships as possible at one time, but the captains had to balance between waiting for a large convoy party and moving on to the next port where other ships might be also waiting for escort. Convoys did not span the entire length of the Mediterranean; instead, particularly dangerous portions of the ocean would be convoy areas—at various times, the navy offered passage through the Adriatic Sea or the Straits of Gibraltar, for example.

---

74 Smith to Dale, 20 May 1801, BW1:463-69.
76 Dale to Sec of Navy, 6 November 1801, BW1:615.
example.\textsuperscript{77}

Naval commanders had to balance convoy duty with their other objectives in the Mediterranean. A small squadron meant few ships were available to provide convoy. As a result, commercial vessels sometimes had to wait quite a while for an available naval ship. Richard Dale summed up the problem for his squadron: “It is my wish and Intention to give protection to all American Vessels, Either bound up the Mediterranean or down, as much, as in my Power lays, but the Commanders must have patience, I have to observe to you there is only three Ships of War in those seas at present belonging to the United States, one of them must be kept in or about this place, one off and about Tripoli so you see there is only one to go on the convoy Business.”\textsuperscript{78} Dale and the other commanders relied on the American consuls in various Mediterranean cities to both make commercial vessels aware of the convoy system, and also to persuade them to wait till one was available. The consuls themselves strongly encouraged merchants to use the convoy system. For example, Richard O’Brien desired that “the Essex Should Convoy out of this Sea, The american Vessels so long detained on acct. of the Threatenings of Tripoli and The Snarling of Algiers, & murmurs of Tunis.”\textsuperscript{79}

Disease

Disease and the threat of disease were another hindrance to the squadron’s efforts to maintain the blockade. Disease caused delays on both sides of the Atlantic and strained relationships between the United States and the nations in the Mediterranean, especially regarding quarantine regulations. Disease also took a toll on the manpower of the navy, striking down both officers and common seamen. One anthropologist argues, “Diseases do not exist in a social vacuum nor solely within the bodies of those they inflict, thus their transmission and impact is never merely

\textsuperscript{77}For example, Barron to Sec of Navy, 10 December 1801, BW1:632; Simpson to Morris, 19 June 1802, BW2:183-84.
\textsuperscript{78}Dale to William Kirkpatrick, 3 October 1801, BW1:593. He seems to be excluding the Enterprise.
a biological process.” Diseases in the Mediterranean did not exist in a social vacuum, and the navy experienced the ways in which their transmission and impact collided with politics, diplomacy, and military action. Nevertheless, perhaps because disease did not have any obvious catastrophic effects on the navy, historians have largely failed to consider disease as a factor relevant to naval operations during the Barbary Wars.81

Keeping sailors disease-free was no small task. Illnesses typically found on board ship, such as scurvy, were only part of the problem. Diseases contracted in port formed the other part. Some, such as syphilis, had easy explanations and were easily (though not desirably) preventable. Others, such as yellow fever or plague, wreaked havoc on both ship and shore. Ironically, the disease that presented the most difficult diplomatic and logistical challenges was one that no American sailor contracted during the Barbary Wars. The Mediterranean was primarily known and feared for the Levant plague, which could be either pneumonic plague, bubonic plague, or a combination. Outbreaks occurred frequently; epidemics occurred in Egypt and Syria about every nine years, according to one historian. Benghazi, a city in Tripolitania, was a focus of the plague because it was a crossroads for both sea and overland trade.82 This disease was related to the feared Black Death that had swept Europe in previous centuries, though some doctors believed that the Levant plague was not able to survive the less temperate climates of northern Europe.83

By the early 1800s, another disease in the Mediterranean excited almost as much fear as the plague: yellow fever. This disease was much more intelligible to Americans than the plague—almost anyone who had ever sailed in the Caribbean had come into contact with it, and during the

81Even Harold Langley, who wrote the definitive text on medicine in the navy, tends to treat the medical aspects of cruises as separate from commodores’ command decisions. Harold D. Langley, A History of Medicine in the Early U.S. Navy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the east coast of the United States was continually battling the fever. Philadelphia, the seat of the federal government, had experienced a particularly virulent epidemic of yellow fever in 1793, and during the time of the Mediterranean campaign, it struck again.  

In the nineteenth century, doctors had no effective treatment for either plague or yellow fever. Yellow fever presented with high fever, muscle pain, and headache. After the initial fever dissipated, it sometimes returned with even worse symptoms—all the original symptoms plus hemorrhage and jaundice. Coughing up blackish-colored blood meant that the sufferer’s organs were failing and he would soon die. There was no cure, and the typical remedies such as bleeding were ineffective. The only benefit to getting yellow fever was that surviving the disease gave a person lifelong immunity. Contagious diseases were particularly fearful for ship’s crews, since close quarters made rapid spread almost a foregone conclusion. But contagious diseases also threatened cities, where many people lived in little space. This was certainly the case in the port cities of the Mediterranean.

The spread of yellow fever caused diplomatic concerns in the Mediterranean even before the navy arrived. David Humphreys expressed concern to the Secretary of State over potential contamination in 1799: “I have been much alarmed by a report circulated here a few days ago, that the yellow fever from the United States had been introduced at the Port of Gijon [Spain] with a Cargo of Codfish.” The introduction of a deadly disease into a friendly port could have disastrous diplomatic and commercial consequences. It turned out that the report was false, but

---


the American foreign service did experience some angst about the possibility.\textsuperscript{86} Disease on the other side of the Atlantic also caused diplomatic problems: in 1800, for instance, President John Adams had to conciliate the bey of Tunis, Hamouda Pasha, about why the expected payments were not forthcoming. Adams averred that it was because epidemics in several large American cities had forced the relevant officials to flee into the countryside, thus halting all government activities.\textsuperscript{87}

The fear of contagion was especially great in the islands of the Mediterranean, where close quarters meant a quicker spread. City officials took correspondingly strict steps to guard against diseases. Port officials did not necessarily want to close their ports to any ship that might carry the plague contagion, but they also could not allow infected sailors free rein in their city. So they began to delay potentially infected ships’ entry into the inner harbor, a practice known as quarantine, until there was no question of an active contagious disease. The term \textit{quarantine} means “forty days,” though by the early nineteenth century, maritime quarantines were usually much shorter. When quarantine was originally implemented in the British ports in the Mediterranean, it was specifically legislated for isolating the Levant plague, but as yellow fever became more prevalent, the port authorities quarantined against that disease as well.\textsuperscript{88}

One author described the treatment of the plague thus: “The soldier is the best physician, and the sword and bayonet, enforcing segregation of the diseased from the sound to be the surest treatment.”\textsuperscript{89} As separation from the disease was considered the only sure way to keep from getting it, the Levant plague was the impetus for the introduction of quarantine regulations in almost every European port in the Mediterranean. For decades, the plague traveled by ship across the entire Mediterranean region, and epidemics killed thousands of people. Amongst


\textsuperscript{87} John Adams to Hamouda Pasha, 15 January 1800, BW1:344.

\textsuperscript{88} John Booker, \textit{Maritime Quarantine: The British Experience, c.1650-1900} (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 258.

\textsuperscript{89} “The History of the Plague,” in \textit{The Spirit of the English Magazines} (Monroe and Francis, 1821), 438.
medical experts in England in the early nineteenth century, considerable contention arose about how the plague spread—whether through physical contact or the air. This dispute led to major policy arguments in the British parliament about whether or not quarantine regulations were even effective; despite the voices who argued against the regulations, quarantine against the plague was practiced for centuries. It was easy to identify “plague ships” and isolate them until the crews (and microorganisms) were no longer a threat, and one historian argues that the almost-complete elimination of plague was a result of rigid quarantine practices.90

Officials from a port’s Board of Health determined whether a vessel would be quarantined and for how long. Coming alongside the vessel, the health officer asked questions such as where the vessel had been, what other vessels it had communicated with, and how many sailors were sick. If the master’s answers were satisfactory, the health officer granted the vessel pratique. If not, he ordered the yellow flag to be raised, signaling that the ship had been quarantined. Under quarantine, no sailors were allowed to leave ship, and no people were allowed to come on board. Captains could also be forced to remove their cargoes from the hold and either air them out or smoke them to remove any contagion clinging to them. All vessels, merchant and military, were subject to these regulations.91

Most European ports’ regulations made quarantine mandatory for any ship that had even spoken a ship from North Africa. Europeans feared the North African coast as the origin of the Levant plague (even though the Levant itself was considerably east of the Barbary states). It appears that the North African ports did not have corollary regulations against the European ports, which harbored just as much disease as North Africa. Maria Martin, a captive in Algiers, wrote that the citizens of Algiers in fact appeared to be extremely healthy, with only minor complaints. According to Martin, the Algerines did practice a type of sequestering, distancing themselves from foreigners in order to keep from catching disease.92 But they did not regulate

91 Booker, 15, 247.
92 Maria Martin, History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin: Who Was Six Years a Slave in Algiers, Two of Which She Was Confined in a Dark and Dismal Dungeon, Loaded with Irons
ships that entered the port of Algiers.

Disease also took its toll on the navy’s relationships in the Mediterranean. Disease and the threat of disease caused rifts between the navy and friendly nations, hostile nations, and even its own diplomats. Perhaps no subject put greater strain on the Americans’ friendly relations in the Mediterranean than quarantine. In an environment in which good relationships with neutral nations were vitally important, quarantine practices always seemed to be the issue about which the navy groused the most, both to each other and to the quarantine officials. The American navy often bridled at quarantine regulations, but their vessels had to abide by other nations’ laws, whether they wanted to or not, lest they risk an international diplomatic incident. Some naval commanders also bristled at what they perceived as irrational or inconsistent quarantine practices, seeing political undercurrents in an ostensibly medical regulation. They were very touchy about the honor of the American flag, which they often felt was being dishonored by unequal quarantine regulations.

On one occasion, Richard Dale lashed out at the commandant of the marine at Toulon, whom he thought was unreasonably detaining American naval vessels (particularly his own) there. In addition to objecting to the capriciousness of the regulations, Dale also objected when the health office at Toulon sent a “guard” on board the President to make sure that no one broke the quarantine. Dale promptly sent the guard back, writing, “Such a custom may be very necessary on Board of Merchant Vessels but will not be permitted on board of Ships of War Belonging to the United States, nor will it be, on Board the President, so long as I Have the honor to Command therefore I send him on shore.”

The Toulon Board of Health returned the guards to the President, stating that the frigate would not get any supplies unless the guards remained.

Paul Baepler believes Martin’s account is fictional, but he also suggests that the descriptions of Algiers in it are accurate. Baepler, White Slaves, African Masters, 11.

Dale to President of Board of Health at Toulon, 9 December 1801, BW:630-31. Dale’s next letter, to the Secretary of the Navy, reports that he had not stopped at any of the Barbary ports—but he did have over 100 seamen on the sick list only 20 days previous. So it might not have been unreasonable suspicion on the commandant’s part that made him insist that the President be quarantined.
Though the Tripoli campaign involved few pitched battles, nonetheless a ship needed a full complement of crew in order to function properly. In wartime, ships had to be in fighting condition at all times, and the navy simply was not in that condition most of the time. After only a few months before Tripoli, Commodore Dale's *President* had to return to Malta because 152 of his men, out of around 400, were on the sick list. Dale had intended to stay before Tripoli for several more months, but when he left the blockade in September, the vessels that replaced the *President* remained there only a week before leaving for the winter.

The *President*'s torpor can be attributed at least in part to reduced manpower. On board ship, lack of manpower had several detrimental effects. First, a ship without its full complement suffered loss of maneuverability. In the Mediterranean, where shifting seas and weather caused frequent changes in sail, the absence of men meant that the ship was at greater risk of running aground or losing a mast in a sudden storm. For example, on board the *Essex*, "many of our people being sick, . . . the ship works heavy, for want of their assistance." Second, fewer men available for the watch meant that those men had to stand watch more often, leading to a general fatigue amongst the crew. A more fatigued crew was even more susceptible to diseases.

Third, reduced manpower could mean a loss of the rigid naval discipline and structure that kept naval vessels functional. Common seamen were not the only ones to be attacked by disease; if officers were stricken, the command structure became confused and efficiency lapsed. In the case of the *Essex*, only a few days after Bainbridge noted the loss of efficiency in the crew, he reported that all of the officers on the ship were sick except one lieutenant and two midshipmen. The structure of gun crews could also be damaged by disease. Gun crews were generally set, with the same people in them and the same officer as the leader of the crew, for long periods of time. But if sickness meant that some members of a gun crew were not available, then either the crews had to be rearranged or the affected gun crews had to be taken off duty.

On any given day, it was common to have at least one or two men in sick quarters on

---

94 Dale to Eaton, 6 September 1801, BW1:571.
95 *Essex* journal, 10 November 1801, BW1:618.
96 *Essex* journal, 16 November 1801, BW1:621.
a naval vessel. In a ship with a complement of 150 or more, this small number was not too significant (as long as the sick person was not a high-ranking officer). But in 1801, several ships in the Mediterranean had more than fifty on their sick lists at one or more points in their tour. During the same time the Essex was battling contagious disease, with 80 on their sick list, the President also had 100 men sick, and the Philadelphia 70.\footnote{Dale to Sec of Navy, 4 October 1801, BW1:594.} On Christmas Day, the Philadelphia put in to Malta with fifty men on its sick list, all suffering from pleurisy or scurvy. Though scurvy was relatively easy to cure, especially in the Mediterranean where fresh fruits and vegetables were readily available, it was also one of the more debilitating maladies suffered by seamen, depending on how advanced the cases were. Once his crew received the needed vitamins, Captain Samuel Barron had to simply wait for them to recover, a process that took more than two weeks.\footnote{Barron to Cathcart, 9 January 1802, BW2:15-16. Barron noted that at least he had received a warm welcome from Lord Keith and the British naval officers in Malta, which “prevents time hanging on me so heavily as a different reception might have occasioned.”}

**Conclusion**

As winter fell, the American squadron gave up even the pretense of blockade. Sailors’ enlistments were coming to an end, and the squadron’s ships one by one were ordered home. The war with Tripoli was in stalemate, relations with the other Barbary states were fragile but holding, and despite the Enterprize’s victory, the Americans had generally demonstrated that they were only a lesser power in the Mediterranean community. But circumstances were ripe for change. A new squadron was being formed under a new commodore, Richard Valentine Morris. As Dale’s squadron prepared for departure, the words of Richard O’Brien, uttered at the beginning of the cruise, rang even more true: “I Must repeat we want more Frigates in This Sea.”\footnote{O’Brien to Sec of State, 26 September 1801, BW1:581.}
Chapter 2

1802

American squadrons neither came nor went from the Mediterranean in concert with each other. Sometimes they traveled in small groups, but more often than not, a ship would come when it was ready, and leave whenever it intersected with whatever diplomat or naval officer held its orders to return. For analyzing the course of the war, the division that seems most logical—four distinct squadrons—is really a fiction that causes more confusion than clarity. For instance, though the Secretary of the Navy envisioned that a new squadron would relieve Dale’s squadron around the first of the year, the transfer of power from Richard Dale to the commodore of the new squadron was not so clean or timely.

The first few months of 1802 saw little activity from Dale or his squadron. Hamstrung by ineffectual orders and serious repairs to his ship, Dale spent the winter of 1801-1802 in Toulon. When the relief squadron sailed for the Mediterranean, it had several new circumstances to account for. First, on February 6, 1802, Congress passed a resolution authorizing the navy to make captures of enemy ships.¹ This resolution changed the character of the mission, as it gave the navy authorization to use force where Dale’s squadron had not been able to. Second, relations with the other Barbary states had deteriorated to the point where a naval presence might be required. To that end, the new commodore was also authorized to negotiate with belligerent powers, an authority Dale had not been granted. Third, the Secretary of the Navy confirmed the strategy

¹“An Act for the protection of the Commerce and Seamen of the United States, against the Tripolitan Cruisers,” 6 February 1802, BW2:51.
the navy should employ: the blockade. He did not, however, relieve the navy’s responsibility to continue convoying merchant vessels through dangerous passages.

**Problems in the Squadron**

While Dale prepared to return to the United States, his captains sometimes behaved in ways that jeopardized the squadron’s reputation in the Mediterranean. Perhaps the worst offender of this kind was Captain Daniel McNeill of the *Boston*. On many occasions, he chose to flout international custom and convention, as well as disobeying direct orders from his commanding officers. In January 1802, McNeill was in such a hurry to leave Toulon that he left port with some French officers and the purser of the *President* still aboard. Likewise, when he left Malaga, he left three of his own officers on shore. Commodore Dale was none too pleased with McNeill’s careless attitude, nor did the French officials at Toulon find his actions amusing. Dale reminded McNeill that being able to maintain a squadron in the Mediterranean meant “keeping up a good understanding with the Commanders of the Ships that you have to act in conjunction with.”

In addition to carrying off foreign officers, McNeill also violated a cardinal rule for interacting with foreign port officials: Tell the truth to the health officer. When he arrived in Toulon after delivering a diplomat to L’Orient in France, he informed the quarantine officers that he had not touched anywhere in the Mediterranean before Toulon. In fact, the *Boston* had stopped at both Gibraltar and Malaga. If McNeill had not entered any Mediterranean port, then the *Boston* would not require quarantine. But if he had, then the ship would be stuck in Toulon for several days, possibly up to 20 or 25. Knowing this likelihood of quarantine, McNeill lied to the officials and thus evaded quarantine. He did the same thing when he arrived in Naples from Malta, claiming he had come from Syracuse, “a place I never saw,” Purser Charles Wadsworth

---

2Sec of Navy to Dale, 20 March 1802, BW2:92.
3Dale to Daniel McNeill, 2 February 1802, BW2:44-45.
4McNeill had probably taken on supplies in L’Orient; doing so was in his orders from the Secretary of the Navy. Why he then chose to stop at both Gibraltar and Malaga is uncertain. 1 October 1801, BW1:587.
Commodore Dale was furious about this deception as well. In his report to the Secretary of the Navy, he wrote, “Nothing should tempt a man to deviate from the truth in his report to a Health office,” but many American captains probably longed to have the boldness to lie their way out of quarantines.

Delays

The new squadron was expected to arrive in the Mediterranean by the spring of 1802 so that it would be ready to resume the blockade when the weather cleared. Richard Dale believed they were to leave the United States around January 1. As of March 3, however, Thomas Truxtun, the captain chosen to relieve Dale as commodore, was still in Norfolk superintending the preparations of the Chesapeake, which was to be his flagship. He was not pleased with the state of the squadron. He wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, “The officers destined for this ship are all young and very inexperienced and though in due time may be clever they are deficient at present and the task for me on the intended service would be too severe without some aid and I have had heretofore much trouble in organizing a squadron and at the same time attending all the duty in detail on board my own Ship.” He told Secretary Smith that if he could not have a flag captain who would tend to the everyday duties of the ship while Truxtun worked on larger problems, he would resign the service.

The secretary refused the demand for a flag captain, and Truxtun resigned as he had said he would. In Truxtun’s place, the Secretary of the Navy appointed Richard Valentine Morris. Morris was directly beneath Truxtun in seniority, and had fought alongside him during the Quasi-War in the Caribbean, from whence he had only recently returned. The transfer of

---

7 Dale to Sec of Navy, 24 January 1802, BW2:28. I assert this based on the many accounts of captains chafing under quarantine restrictions.
8 Dale to DeButts and Purviance, 13 January 1802, BW2:20.
9 Truxtun to Sec of Navy, 3 March 1802, BW2:76.
11 Morris had captained the *New York* during the Quasi-War. His orders to return to the United States
command to Morris proved complicated. Most of the American consuls and naval officers in the Mediterranean knew that Dale’s tenure was up, but few knew who his replacement would be or when he would arrive. Many communications from the first few months of 1802 are addressed to “the commander of the U.S. squadron,” rather than to an individual. The ships of the squadron left the United States without rendezvousing with the other members of the squadron; as a result, sometimes important information was not passed on to them. For instance, Alexander Murray and the Constellation made it all the way to Malaga without knowing that the commodore of the squadron would be Richard Valentine Morris, and not Thomas Truxtun as had been previously announced.12

When Dale arrived back in the United States, Commodore Morris had not yet even left for the Mediterranean. Other ships left well before Morris was able to, including the Constellation. When he arrived, Murray took charge of the whole Mediterranean operation as the most senior officer, much to the chagrin of the diplomats and naval officers already present in the area.13

Planning a Coup

Murray arrived in Gibraltar on April 28. Only a few days later, William Eaton became the target of Murray’s first power move. Eaton had been working for months on a plan, concocted along with James Leander Cathcart, to defeat the bashaw: a coup to replace Yusuf Karamanli with his brother Hamet.14 Yusuf had been the ruler of Tripoli for seven years; he had himself staged a coup, in which he killed one of his brothers and banished another.15 That banished brother, Hamet Karamanli, formed the cornerstone of Eaton’s plan. He intended to overthrow Yusuf and set up Hamet, who had made many promises of support to the Americans if they would assist

---

12 Alexander Murray to John Gavino, 30 April 1802, BW2:140.
13 Ibid. Murray expected that Thomas Truxtun would be the commodore of the squadron, not knowing he had resigned and had been replaced by Richard Valentine Morris.
14 Cathcart to Sec of State, 25 August 1802, BW2:250-51.
15 Dearden, 127.
CHAPTER 2. 1802

him.

Eaton met Hamet in Tunis to work out the details of the plan. Eaton wanted the Americans’ help to gain the throne, but he felt swayed by his brother’s promises as well. Yusuf had caught wind of the plan and tried to stop it by offering Hamet the city of Derna, where Hamet had once ruled. Hamet found this offer appealing and almost accepted it. When he asked Eaton in November 1801 for assurances that the Americans would back him as bashaw, Eaton gave him an unsatisfactory answer: “I recommended to him patience and silence; at the same time gave him leave to entertain the hope (may it not be illusive) that the next summers Operations would favor his views.” After this less-than-reassuring response, Hamet gave indications that he would return to Derna, taking his chances that Yusuf would keep his word and give him the rule of the city.

Eaton tried to convince Hamet that Yusuf had no intentions other than to “cut his throat.” He also refused to issue Hamet a passport to travel to Derna, instead informing him that if he tried to go to Tripoli he and his family would be seized and taken as prisoners to the United States. When Hamet suggested that he might retire to Malta, as the bey of Tunis was no longer willing to allow him sanctuary in Tunis, Eaton told him that he must go to Leghorn or Sardinia instead (for reasons that are not clear). Eaton felt optimistic about Hamet’s chances if he could just have a little more time to prepare: “He is assured of a revolution in his favor if he can be offered to his people with Sufficient show of force . . . if [Eaton’s plans] succeed it will be productive of incalculable advantages.”

To keep his plans moving despite Hamet’s vacillation, Eaton chartered a vessel, the Gloria, captained by Joseph Bounds, to carry dispatches for him to Malta, where he hoped to find Daniel McNeill, captain of the Boston. If Bounds did not find McNeill at Malta, he was to search for McNeill off Tripoli until he found him. Eaton instructed Bounds that the Gloria was now in public service and was eligible to get supplies from American naval agents or naval ships. The

---

16Eaton to Sec of State, 18 March 1802, BW2:90.
17Eaton to Sec of State, 13 December 1801, BW1:637.
18Eaton to Sec of State, 18 March 1802, BW2:90-91.
letter to McNeill informed him of the possibility that Hamet and his entourage were planning to depart from Tunis in a ship flying Russian colors, and asked him to detain Hamet “that we may use him as an instrument of pacification at Tripoli.” He wrote to McNeill that he had engaged the *Gloria* because he needed an armed vessel to communicate with the navy, and that the vessel would be considered in public service until the next squadron arrived.\(^\text{19}\) To Bounds, Eaton wrote that if he could not find and deliver this letter to McNeill, he should detain Hamet himself.\(^\text{20}\)

This decision to engage the *Gloria* raised Alexander Murray’s ire. He castigated Eaton for the action, writing on May 6, 1802, that he had dismissed the *Gloria* from service because “as an Officer in the U. States service my Duty compels me to check all unwarrantable expences.”\(^\text{21}\) Murray also felt that the consuls had been crying wolf about the severity of the danger from Tripoli, noting that an entire squadron of Swedish frigates cruised off Tripoli.\(^\text{22}\) As the situation was not as dire as he expected, Murray disapproved of Eaton’s entire plan for overthrowing the bashaw.

For his part, Eaton was furious at the lack of support he received from the navy. None of the American captains backed his plan, but Murray was particularly abrasive: he had rejected the plan “in an air of authority and reprimand which I should not expect from the highest departments of the government.”\(^\text{23}\) Eaton was particularly incensed at the manner in which Murray had expressed his disapprobation: he did not “modestly express” his opinion, but simply denied the *Gloria* any naval stores and tried to take crew off the ship. Eaton also offered his own criticisms of the navy’s performance—he noted that almost no American ships had been off Tripoli for any length of time during the whole war. If the navy was not committed to the blockade, then they should not object when someone who strongly wanted to win this war came up with a new plan to do just that. In contrast to the Americans, Eaton claimed that the Swedish both upheld the blockade and also (along with all non-American commanders in the

\(^{19}\)Eaton to McNeill, 24 March 1802, BW2:95.  
\(^{20}\)Eaton to Joseph Bounds, 24 March 1802, BW2:95.  
\(^{21}\)Murray to Eaton, 6 May 1802, BW2:145.  
\(^{22}\)Murray to Sec of Navy, 6 May 1802, BW2:146.  
\(^{23}\)Eaton to Sec of State, 8 June 1802, BW2:166.
CHAPTER 2. 1802

Mediterranean) supported the coup. When Murray met Hamet in Malta in August, he wrote that restoring Hamet to the throne was “certainly a desireable object, he is a mild, amiable man, & would be perfectly friendly & Peaceable towards us,” but he thought Morris would have to give the commands for the navy to assist. Most likely, Murray thought the plan was good but the leader, Eaton, was not.

Because of the slow speed of communications in the Mediterranean, the feud between Murray and Eaton dragged on for several months. In August, Eaton was still complaining to the Secretary of State, “Whatever may be Cap. Murray’s opinion of my measures, he ought not to sacrifice the interest of service to individual resentments. Government may as well send out quaker meeting-houses to float about this sea as frigates with Murrays in command.” Others sided with Eaton, even if they disagreed with his overall plan. Charles Wadsworth, the purser on board the Boston, signed an affidavit claiming that Eaton had solicited his advice before hiring the Gloria, and Wadsworth had recommended that he go ahead. James Leander Cathcart also weighed in, writing that Murray was ill-informed, unjust, and illiberal in his manner, but also that he was not even the senior officer of the squadron. That rank belonged (according to Cathcart) to Daniel McNeill of the Boston, who was the only officer who had a right to dismiss a vessel from service. Cathcart also complained that Murray’s actions blurred the lines between the Navy Department and the State Department. He wanted the president to make the distinction clear, so that the consuls, with years of experience in Barbary negotiations, could not be blamed when they were overruled by the inexperienced and ignorant naval officers.

Without a clear leader, the squadron struggled to maintain a coherent mission. Com-

24 Eaton to Sec of State, 8 June 1802, BW2:166-67.
26 Eaton to Sec of State, 9 August 1802, BW2:229.
27 Affidavit, 22 August 1802, BW2:247-48. This affidavit was co-authored along with George G. Coffin, a merchant seaman who had been in Tunis at the time Hamet Karamanli was also there. Coffin appears to have been a regular visitor to Tunis, as he entered an agreement with Eaton to carry cargo for the bey of Tunis a year later in March of 1804. American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, 9:339.
28 Cathcart was mistaken—Murray was ahead of McNeill in the seniority list.
29 Cathcart to Sec of State, 25 August 1802, BW2:252-53.
pounding their internal command problems, the navy found cooperation with the consuls difficult. It was impossible to discern who was in charge, and therefore difficult to proceed with determination. These command fractures, which were birthed during Dale’s tenure as commodore, grew to almost-disastrous proportions under Richard Valentine Morris.

Waiting for Direction

Having spent the winter in Toulon, Dale and the President departed for the United States in February 1802. While he was in Toulon, Dale met with Admiral Cederstrom again, recommitting the squadron to the joint blockade and mutual convoy. He reminded Cederstrom, however, that he did not have the authority to join an assault on Tripoli. He hoped that the next squadron’s commodore would have more aggressive orders. He also expected to meet the next squadron when he arrived at Gibraltar in mid-February.\(^\text{30}\)

After Dale’s departure, the vessels still in the Mediterranean continued their duties of convoy and blockade, awaiting the arrival of their new commodore. The first few months of 1802 saw the depleted squadron in dire need of repairs and supplies. When the Boston sprung its bowsprit off Tripoli in May, McNeill had to take the ship to Messina for repairs. Likewise, when the Constellation arrived in April, Murray went straight to Malaga to get two new anchors.\(^\text{31}\) When he could not get them there, he had to go to Gibraltar and petition Lord Keith to acquire them.\(^\text{32}\) Murray also parcelled out supplies to the Philadelphia while waiting in Gibraltar for the anchor and for the new commodore to arrive.\(^\text{33}\)

Commodore Morris clearly believed that this cruise would not be too taxing, since he brought his wife and her servant along with him.\(^\text{34}\) He was not the only man to bring family on the Chesapeake, and it seems impossible to believe that the presence of women and children did

\(^{\text{30}}\)Dale to Rufus King, 7 February 1802, BW2:54.
\(^{\text{31}}\)Murray to Gavino, 30 April 1802, BW2:140.
\(^{\text{32}}\)Murray to Lord Keith, 5 May 1802, BW2:144.
\(^{\text{33}}\)Murray to Sec of Navy, 7 May 1802, BW2:146.
\(^{\text{34}}\)Midshipman Henry Wadsworth referred to Mrs. Morris as the “Commodoress.” Wadsworth to Nancy Doane, 18 June 1802, BW2:180.
CHAPTER 2. 1802

not keep him from being as aggressive toward belligerents as he might otherwise have been.\textsuperscript{35} When the \textit{Chesapeake} arrived at Gibraltar, on May 31, 1802, the ship had a rotten mainmast, which had sprung four days out from the United States.\textsuperscript{36} Instead of being able to strike at Tripoli, Morris and his crew were forced to remain in Gibraltar while their ship underwent critical repairs (Mrs. Morris resided on shore with an acquaintance). He too depended on the goodwill of Lord Keith, with whom the Americans had made an agreement allowing them to get supplies and repairs at Gibraltar.

Upon his arrival at Gibraltar, Morris discovered that the conflicts with Morocco over the \textit{Meshouda} and other matters had become untenable. Early in 1802, the emperor of Morocco, Mulay Sulayman, had requested that James Simpson, consul at Tangier, provide a passport for the \textit{Meshouda} so that it could leave Gibraltar, as well as for some Moroccan ships that would carry wheat to Tripoli. Simpson had asked Dale his advice about the request, but Dale had deflected the problem, saying that he could not make a determination without asking the president of the United States. At the very least, Dale suggested that the problem be left for his successor to untangle in conjunction with Admiral Cederstrom. Simpson reported the delay due to command change, which held the Moroccan demands at bay for the first few months of 1802. Though Simpson thought the emperor was overstepping his authority in intervening on Tripoli’s behalf about the \textit{Meshouda}, he could not justify going to the court of the emperor to make his case. Simpson recognized the need to tread carefully with Sulayman: “With him it is not proper to speak all we think,” he wrote. In order to plead his case, he relied instead on the advocacy of Peter Wyk, Swedish consul in Tangier, who “would use his utmost endeavours to convince Muley Soliman, of the impropriety of his taking the part he has done in behalf of the Tripolines, in a

\textsuperscript{35}For instance, Henry Wadsworth records the birth of Melancthon Woolsey Low, son of James Low, captain of the forecastle on the \textit{Chesapeake}, and his baptism in the berth of his godfather, midshipman Melancthon Woolsey. Wadsworth records that there were at least three other ladies on board as well, and possibly more children as well. This was not a frequent enough occurrence to know whether it was typical to have such ceremonies. Wadsworth journal, 22 February 1803, BW2:387.

\textsuperscript{36}Morris to Sec of Navy, 31 May 1802, BW2:162.
War which they have so unjustly made against Sweden & the United States.”

Eventually, the emperor grew tired of waiting for the American reply. Simpson received word on June 19 that he had declared war on the United States. Forced to leave Morocco, Simpson relocated from his home in Tangier to Gibraltar, where he could keep an eye on the emperor’s ships. He was surprised at the declaration of war, for though relations had been tense, he had been given signs of friendship from some of the emperor’s court, and he hardly thought the denial of a few passports for wheat ships was worth a full-scale war. He consulted with Commodore Morris, and together they determined to wait for the arrival of the Adams, due at Gibraltar any day, which was hopefully carrying dispatches from the federal government with advice about what to do. On July 3, the governor of Tangier invited Simpson to return to Tangier for six months in order to reopen negotiations. As Simpson was reluctant to return without consulting first with the navy, he was forced to send the Enterprize off to look for Morris, who had sailed for Tripoli on July 1. Morris returned near the end of July, and the two men decided it would be best for Simpson to return. In Tangier, he met with the governor of Tangier and spokesperson for the court of the emperor, Alcayde Abdashaman Hashash, who Simpson believed was responsible for the increase in aggression toward the United States. Through Hashash, Simpson begged the emperor to have patience with him and his government, as communications with the United States were painfully slow, and agreed to issue a passport for a Moroccan ship carrying wheat to Tunis. He also told the emperor that the president was sending him one hundred gun carriages from the United States, as a sign of good relations between the two countries.

On August 6, 1802, Simpson received a letter from the emperor’s court re-establishing the previous terms of their agreement: annual, or possibly biennial, presents from the United States as a guarantor of peace. Secretary of State Mohamet Ben Absalem Selawy, who wrote the

38 Simpson to Sec of State, 26 June 1802, BW2:186.
39 Simpson to Sec of State, 3 July 1802, BW2:190.
40 Simpson to Sec of State, 27 July 1802, BW2:210; Simpson to Sec of State, 3 August 1802, BW2:220-21. “Alcayde” is a title indicating a governor or municipal ruler.
CHAPTER 2. 1802

letter, blamed the Americans for all the troubles, but said that the emperor forgave them and wanted relations restored.\(^{41}\) Though peace was restored, there were a few minor negotiations yet outstanding. Simpson believed that the presence of the Adams, the Chesapeake, and the Enterprise in Gibraltar had limited the emperor’s antagonism, so he wrote a few days later to suggest that Morris leave a frigate off Gibraltar in order to monitor Moroccan warships.\(^{42}\) Morris had orders to keep the Secretary of the Navy informed of all movements by the emperor of Morocco, and he interpreted those orders to mean that he personally needed to be near Morocco.\(^{43}\)

While negotiations with Morocco continued, Tripoli was still at war with the United States. As the Americans had no direct entree into the court of Tripoli, they had to attempt to gain access through their international connections. The bashaw, according to William Eaton, wanted to use Tunis as a go-between, but James Leander Cathcart did not trust the bey of Tunis to act in the United States’ best interest: he wrote to the Secretary of State, “We prefer peace to war when we can obtain it on honorable terms, but not otherwise.”\(^{44}\)

At the same time, Richard O’Brien sought to bring peace with Tripoli through the dey of Algiers. As early as February 1802, the Algerian ambassador offered to broker peace in exchange for a small financial consideration. O’Brien declined to pay, but Algiers continued to try to orchestrate peace settlements. In April, Secretary of State James Madison wrote to Cathcart that he must not allow Algiers to get involved in the negotiations—but it must seem like the bashaw was the instigator behind the Algerians’ removal. Additionally, Madison instructed Cathcart to consult with the Swedes, who were also trying to settle peace with Tripoli. However, the two countries could not be seen as colluding with each other, and any peace settlement had to be

\(^{41}\) Selawy to Simpson, 6 August 1802, BW2:226.
\(^{42}\) Simpson to Morris, 16 August 1802, BW2:235-36.
\(^{43}\) Richard Valentine Morris, A Defence of the Conduct of Commodore Morris during His Command in the Mediterranean (New York, 1804), 24-25. Accessed through HathiTrust, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112204857009. This publication will be referred to hereafter as RVM.
CHAPTER 2. 1802

completely separate from a peace between Tripoli and Sweden.\textsuperscript{45} It was important for the United States to maintain its ties with the Mediterranean community, but only on its own terms.

The \textit{Franklin}

In June 1802, an American merchant vessel, the \textit{Franklin}, was taken off Cape Pallas by a Tripolitan corsair while traveling without convoy.\textsuperscript{46} Its captain, Andrew Morris, and its nine crew members were taken to Algiers. From there, they were taken to Bizerte in Tunis and then eventually arrived at Tripoli. When he learned of the capture as the prisoners passed through Tunis, William Eaton lamented the fate of the crew: “They will be carried to Tripoli, where they also will be cried for sale at public auction, like so many cattle; or, perhaps, stationed on the batteries to slay & be slain by their Countrymen.”\textsuperscript{47}

When the crew of the \textit{Franklin} arrived in Algiers, the importance of the United States’ international connections became clear. Though the United States did not wish to be seen as equivalent to the Scandinavian countries, Sweden and Denmark consistently stepped up to help Americans more than any other nations. The \textit{Franklin} situation was no exception. Nicholas Nissen, Denmark’s consul to Tripoli, seemingly motivated by nothing other than kindness, immediately began to work to give Morris, at least, his liberty within the town. He had been the unofficial mediator between the United States and Tripoli since the declaration of war, and he continued that work as much as he could for the \textit{Franklin}’s crew. The British chargé at Tripoli, Bryan McDonogh, claimed two of the \textit{Franklin}’s officers and a seaman as British; as subjects of a non-belligerent nation, they could not be taken captive, and therefore they were to be let go. Two other seamen were also released because they were “foreigners.” This left only Morris and four crew members captive in Tripoli.\textsuperscript{48}

As American consuls learned of the capture, they tried to ransom the captives in different

\textsuperscript{45}Sec of State to Cathcart, 18 April 1802, BW2:126-27.
\textsuperscript{46}Guiseppe Manucie to Eaton, 6 July 1802, BW2:194.
\textsuperscript{47}Eaton to Summert & Brown, 9 July 1802, BW2:196.
\textsuperscript{48}Andrew Morris to Cathcart, 22 July 1802, \textit{American State Papers: Foreign Relations}, 2:463.

77
ways, without consulting any of their counterparts. William Eaton wanted to leverage the obligations Tripoli had to the Ottoman Porte, recalling that a prisoner exchange might be possible on the basis of the United States’ having released some Turkish prisoners to the bashaw of Tripoli the previous year. Eaton was counting on the fact that the bashaw owed allegiance to the Grand Signior, and the Grand Signior owed a debt of honor to the United States.\textsuperscript{49} James Leander Cathcart likewise speculated about how to redeem the prisoners, though he noted that the brig itself and its cargo were surely unrecoverable, as they were good prize.\textsuperscript{50}

In July 1802, Nicholas Nissen persuaded some Tripolitan officials to speak to the Americans. He had been approached by Sidi Muhammad Dghies, the prime minister of Tripoli, about settling with the United States. Dghies suggested that the government had turned considerably less hawkish, and so now was the time to negotiate.\textsuperscript{51} In order to get the Americans to the table, Nissen wrote to Alexander Murray, the only commander Nissen had seen much of during the year, rather than Richard Valentine Morris.\textsuperscript{52} But no one came. The lack of naval leadership meant that the Franklin situation was largely resolved without intervention or input from the commodore. On July 21, Murray, patrolling off Tripoli with a Swedish frigate, noted the arrival at Tripoli of the two galleys carrying the Franklin prisoners, under the nose of the blockaders. But he did not try to capture those galleys or free the prisoners. The next day, the Constellation skirmished with some Tripolitan gunboats, sinking one.\textsuperscript{53}

In the end, the mutual connection with Algiers proved the mechanism for getting the Franklin’s crew released. Through negotiations by a combination of Nicholas Nissen and representatives from the Algerian government, the bashaw of Tripoli agreed to release the prisoners into the custody of the dey of Algiers. Thanks to Nissen’s involvement, the crew had been taken care of during their stay in Tripoli, and on September 22, 1802, Nissen reported their departure

\textsuperscript{49} Eaton to any American commander, 11 July 1802, BW2:201.
\textsuperscript{50} Cathcart to Sec of State, 15 July 1802, BW2:204.
\textsuperscript{51} Nissen to Cathcart, 8 July 1802, BW2:195.
\textsuperscript{52} Nissen to Eaton, 27 July 1802, BW2:213.
\textsuperscript{53} Murray to Morris, 20 August 1802, BW2:242.
for Algiers.\textsuperscript{54} When they arrived in Algiers on October 6, the dey ordered them released, as a “present” to the United States.\textsuperscript{55}

Algiers was not a neutral party in this negotiation. By intervening on the United States’ behalf now, Algiers could call in a favor later, and even go to war if that favor was not granted. The dey framed the whole negotiation in terms of friendship: he declared the United States his “best friends” because the George Washington had carried his cargo to Constantinople. But this redemption of the captives should not be construed as a \emph{quid pro quo} for that action.\textsuperscript{56} William Eaton expressed gratitude for the assistance in redeeming the captives, though he remained suspicious of the dey’s motives. His suspicions turned out to be accurate. In January 1803, the dey requested $6500 from the United States as a present for rescuing the Franklin. Eaton was incensed at that request, which he felt was excessive. He believed that even if they paid the money, the dey would not consider the score to be even, instead hobbling the United States with “an Imaginary weight of obligation the value of which at some future period may be very considerable.”\textsuperscript{57} Eaton had discovered one of the perils of being part of an international community—the possibility that the United States might be under obligation to rulers it could not trust.

The Franklin matter deepened the rift with Tripoli, as the bashaw saw clearly the fragility of the American blockade. But Cathcart felt that it had hurt relations with the other Barbary states as well: “To have our vessels captured while the squadrons of the U, S of America & of Sweden are lending their aid to protect our commerce implies something very unfavorable to our energy & undoubtedly will be construed much to our disadvantage by the heads of the Barbary States.”\textsuperscript{58} The Franklin incident was just one of the ways in which the dey of Algiers tried to work his way back into the peace negotiations with Tripoli after being turned away earlier in the year. Cathcart had warned previously against the dey’s duplicity: “The interference of the Dey of Algiers will never militate in favor of the United States, tho: their is a very great probability

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{54}Nissen to Cathcart, 22 September 1802, BW2:281-82.
\textsuperscript{55}O’Brien to Sec of State, 11 October 1802, BW2:288.
\textsuperscript{56}Eaton to Sec of State, 5 August 1802, BW2:2:224.
\textsuperscript{57}Cathcart to Sec of State, 25 January 1803, BW2:349.
\textsuperscript{58}Cathcart to Sec of State, 15 July 1802, BW2:204.
\end{flushleft}
that he will interfere in favor of his brother pirate of Tripoli, especially as we have manifestly
the advantage of that Tyrant.” Eaton appealed to the bashaw of Tripoli himself, suggesting that
the dey’s interference would reduce the bashaw’s honor and taint the negotiations against both
parties and in favor of the dey. He further urged Richard Valentine Morris, who had official
standing to negotiate, not to include Algiers, since Tripoli had declared war after Algiers had
reneged on its role as guarantor of peace between the United States and Tripoli. He argued that
the United States should take a lesson and conclude negotiations with Tripoli only.

These negotiations raised tensions between the consuls, Cathcart, Eaton, and O’Brien,
whose feud continued. Cathcart and Eaton believed that O’Brien was trying to collude behind
their backs to bring about a treaty using Algiers without official authorization. Cathcart wrote
to remind O’Brien that he was the only person authorized to make treaties with Tripoli, and so
any agreement O’Brien had entered into with Algiers was not only ill-advised, but illegal. In
fact, Richard Valentine Morris was also authorized to make treaties in concert with Cathcart, but
Morris was in Morocco and was not around to take a large part in the negotiations.

Morris’s decisions demonstrated some of the core tensions of the Barbary War. Which
Barbary state deserved priority? Was it the state that was actively at war but with less power
to interrupt American shipping? Or was it the state with whom peace was essential to protect
Americans both in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic? In addition, how vital to the defense
of American shipping was the blockade strategy? Almost all the people involved in its execution
had expressed serious doubt about its efficacy and merit. Morris had to decide whether to expend
his resources on the blockade, in which he had little confidence, or to allocate his men and vessels
to a more active strategy protecting American shipping via convoy or an aggressive attack.

Others in the Mediterranean had plenty of ideas about what Morris should be doing.

60 Eaton to Sec of State, 18 September 1802, BW2:271-72.
61 Eaton to Morris, 16 October 1802, BW2:298.
CHAPTER 2. 1802

Before Morris even arrived in Gibraltar, the Secretary of the Navy suggested that he should go to Tripoli and stand off that port with as much force as possible, “holding out the olive Branch in one hand & displaying in the other the means of offensive operations.”63 The Secretary of State made a similar suggestion to Cathcart—that the entire squadron should rendezvous at Tripoli in a show of force designed to intimidate, but that Cathcart should tread lightly in his initial advances.64 Of course, Alexander Murray had a contrary opinion: he wrote in July that he was not sure a show of force, even a skirmish with Tripolitan gunboats, would make the bashaw any friendlier to American interests.65 Eaton felt that friendly overtures had failed—“experiment has already demonstrated that nothing will render our nation respectable here and secure the faith of treaties but a decided dread of our resentment.”66 In the end, Morris had to decide for himself the best way to keep the peace.

Trouble with Tunis and Algiers

While Morris sorted things out at Morocco, relations had been deteriorating with the other Tunis and Algiers as well. In May 1801, Commodore Dale had been given $30,000 to provide as a payment to Algiers, but the dey wanted stores, not money.67 In September, Richard O’Brien was concerned that the dey was losing patience with the American inability or unwillingness to honor the terms of their agreement: “The Regency seems to be Very discontent at present and is Continually growling on acct. of The Regalia or Stores or the annuities not arriveing. They are nearly of Opinion that I have been feeding Them with a String of lies,” he wrote to the Secretary of State.68 At the beginning of the new year, Algiers was still waiting for payment in both money and stores. O’Brien wanted to retire as consul, and the Americans were scrambling to find a

63Sec of Navy to Morris, 20 April 1802, BW2:130.
64Sec of State to Cathcart, 18 April 1802, BW2:126.
65Murray to Sec of Navy, 30 July 1802, BW2:218.
66Eaton to Morris, 16 October 1802, BW2:298.
67Sec of Navy to Dale, 20 May 1801, BW1:461.
suitable replacement for him.

In Tunis also, the American inability to provide promised tribute exasperated the bey, Hamouda Pasha. In April, William Eaton scuffled with the bey over the question of presents, and the bey ordered Eaton to leave Tunis immediately. Eaton then refused to grant passports to any Tunisian vessels. He also announced that he had chosen to leave the consulate; Hamouda requested that he be replaced by someone who was friendlier to Barbary interests. When Eaton informed him that James Leander Cathcart would be replacing him, the bey refused to allow Cathcart to enter Tunis at all, much less speak as the representative of American diplomacy.69

Subsequent conversations with the bey of Tunis revealed where the United States fit into the hierarchy of nations. From afar, Cathcart reported that Hamouda Pasha considered the United States on par with Sweden or Denmark—in other words, a minor power. This status was not in line with what Cathcart envisioned. He wanted the United States to be a major power like Britain or France. He saw the disparity in treatment between those nations and his own: the major powers paid less in tribute and received appropriate salutes from the port when their warships came in, whereas Cathcart regularly felt that American honor was affronted. If the United States was recognized as a major power, then it would be able to set its own agenda and its own representatives before the Tunisian government. Perhaps he was also feeling personally attacked—his position was the one threatened by the bey’s refusal to accept American diplomatic appointments. But he also felt that acquiescing to the bey’s every whim reflected dishonor on the United States.70

While Eaton was in the midst of negotiations with Hamouda, Alexander Murray arrived in Tunis with some of the gifts promised. The bey accepted the gifts, but then demanded that the United States build him a ship of war. Eaton reminded him that the treaty did not allow for such a gift, privately noting to the Secretary of State that if the United States did choose to build one for Tunis, they would almost certainly have to build one for Tripoli as well.71 These negotiations

69 Eaton to Cathcart, 26 April 1802, BW2:134.
70 Cathcart to Eaton, 11 June 1802, BW2:171.
71 Eaton to Rufus King, 6 June 1802, BW2:166.
CHAPTER 2. 1802

dragged into the fall, when the bey wrote directly to President Jefferson with his demands for a
warship. Couched in terms of conciliation, the bey’s letter expressed hope that Jefferson would
honor his demand in order to “strengthen ever more the ties of our friendship which, on my
side, I will preserve as firm and inviolable.”

Tunis also became a battleground over the legality of captures made by the American
navy. In May 1802, the Boston captured four Tunisian xebecs that McNeill believed were intending
to run the Tripolitan blockade. The bey demanded that the xebecs and their cargo be returned,
as the United States was not at war with Tunis. There followed a dispute between Eaton and
Hamouda about international law and the differing authorities each nation claimed. The bey
invoked a precedent of an encounter with Venice; Eaton countered with examples from Britain
and France. The bey turned an American maxim against Eaton: Free bottoms make free goods.
Eaton countered that blockades were a clear example where that principle did not apply. The
bey again tried to use the Americans’ words against them, citing the president’s letter to him
as evidence that his ships would not be spoiled. Eaton reinterpreted that letter, stating that a
“fair construction” of Jefferson’s intent was to maintain peace so long as Tunis did not violate
neutrality. At that point, discussion of legal authorities devolved into threats of further captures
from both parties.

Eaton thought the United States should hold firm about the legality of the capture. “What-
ever restitution may be in future conceded,” he wrote to the Secretary of State, “this is not the
moment to yield in the smallest matter that will go to diminish that opinion of our energy with
which these pirates begin to be impressed - It will be Seasonable enough to be generous when
they shall be taught to appreciate duly our generosity.”

72Bey of Tunis to Jefferson, 8 September 1802, TJ, http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/TSJN-
01-38-02-0321.
73A xebec was a small three-masted ship used in the Mediterranean predominantly for trade.
74In 1799, Eaton and the bey had had a similar discussion about a Ragusan vessel captured by
the Portuguese; the bey argued then that “Free botoms do not make free goods.” Eaton to Sec of
State, 6 October 1799, BW1:335.
75Eaton to Sec of State, 4 May 1802, BW2:142-43.
76Eaton to Sec of State, 4 May 1802, BW2:143.
McNeill again found himself in the middle of controversy when a Captain Norman returned to the United States from the Mediterranean with news that McNeill had intervened in a chase between a Neapolitan frigate and a Tunisian squadron. Norman reported that McNeill had sunk two of the seven Tunisian warships, dismasted two, and frightened off the other three. But the *Boston* and its crew were badly injured. Norman lamented, “The imprudence of that Mad Man will I fear have brought a Severe Enemy upon us,” as McNeill had no legal right to fire on the Tunisians unless they were running the blockade or firing at him unprovoked.\(^77\) Newspapers in the United States picked up the story, though some were more credulous than others about its veracity. The *Commercial Advertiser* (Philadelphia), for instance, found it inconceivable that McNeill would jeopardize peace with Tunis in this way.\(^78\) The news alarmed the cabinet; Albert Gallatin, secretary of the treasury, suggested that the United States prepare some financial compensation for Tunis in case McNeill had fired first.\(^79\)

Fortunately for McNeill, the rumors were not true. In fact, McNeill had not encountered the Tunisian squadron at all. The story did not completely lose air until early 1803, though, highlighting once again the perils of slow communication. For nearly six months, government officials in the United States believed that it was at least possible that one of their naval officers in the Mediterranean had acted in a way that would surely lead to war against Tunis, a circumstance the navy (and the treasury) could ill afford.

The fact that people found McNeill’s purported actions against unsuspecting Tunisians believable illustrates how difficult the Americans found it to treat the people of the Barbary states as equals in the Mediterranean community. Perceptions of difference between white Americans and Arab “pirates,” often connected to race and religion, had been encoded into cultural produc-


\(^78\) *Commercial Advertiser*, 11 August 1802. Newspaper reporting was a little like the modern game of “Telephone”; by the time the story made the rounds, it could take on an entirely different cast from the original, and certainly different from the truth. For instance, the *National Intelligencer* reported on 11 August 1802 that nearly all of the *Boston’s* officers were killed.

tions such as literature, illustrations, and music for several decades in America and in Europe for even longer, and these perceptions had worked their way into the navy as well.\textsuperscript{80} Albert Gallatin, secretary of the treasury, called Morocco “a nation not within the pale of civilization,” an opinion shared by Midshipman Ralph Izard. After visiting Tangier, Izard expressed amazement that the Moroccans had not been incorporated more fully into the European standard of civilization: “It is matter of astonishment to me that a people living so near a civilized nation as Spain should not imbibe some customs less barbarous than such as they have been accustomed to.”\textsuperscript{81} Even if Americans could grant the Barbary peoples a measure of civilization, they found them wanting in honor and justice. Cathcart wrote of the bashaw of Tripoli, “The Bashaw like Satan only flatters to deceive & is destitute of every honourable sentiment which dignifies the human heart.”\textsuperscript{82} The Algerians were no better; Lieutenant John Shaw called them “a people of no confidence or honor and ever ready to deceive there Nearest Friend.”\textsuperscript{83} The Tunisians were, of all the Barbary states, the most honorable, according to William Eaton, who offered the faint praise that the bey “seldom robs a man without first creating a pretext. He has some ideas of justice and not wholly destitute of a sense of shame.”\textsuperscript{84}

The Americans were none too impressed with European actions in response to the Barbary states either. Instead of upholding ideals of honor that the Barbary peoples lacked, the Europeans had allowed their selfishness and materialism to temper their actions, turning them more barbaric instead of bringing the Barbary states closer to civilization. “Why will the narrow & selfish policy of European Nations suffer those Piratical powers thus to usurp the dominion

\textsuperscript{80} Much has been written about the cultural productions involving the Barbary states, including Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, “‘Slaves in Algiers’: Race, Republican Genealogies, and the Global Stage,” \textit{American Literary History} 16, no. 3 (2004): 417. This idea is expanded upon in Nabil Matar, \textit{Europe Through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727} (Ithaca: Columbia University Press, 2008), and Robert Battistini, “Glimpses of the Other before Orientalism: The Muslim World in Early American Periodicals, 1785—1800,” \textit{Early American Studies} 8, no. 2 (2010): 446–74.


\textsuperscript{82} Cathcart to Dale, 10 August 1801, BW1:545.

\textsuperscript{83} Shaw to Sec of Navy, 2 March 1802, BW2:74.

\textsuperscript{84} Eaton to Sec of State, 10 April 1801, BW1:431.
CHAPTER 2. 1802

of this Sea?” Alexander Murray asked. Eaton thought that money trumped honor for Sweden, who brokered a treaty with Tripoli in the summer of 1802 through the French (whom Eaton also thought were corrupt); he argued that though the French saved the Swedish $100,000, “the national honor and independence of Sweden are thrown into the scale to balance the obligation!” Eaton saw greed as a pervasive problem amongst the European powers: “I know we have some politicians among us who talk of reliance on the magnanimity of the great powers of Europe to interfere in our behalf - When the lion and the lamb shall lie down together this event will take place; but while jarring interests agitate this world and while the greater powers of Europe are actuated by a counting-house policy, in stead of relying on their magnanimity we must think of defending ourselves against their intrigue here.”

While the demeaning attitudes of the navy’s sailors often had no outlet other than grand posturing about the weakness and deceitfulness of the people of the Mediterranean, on occasion they took out their aggression in more concrete ways. Believing the Barbary sailors to be inferior and savage, they saw no problem treating them in ways that they would have strongly objected to be treated themselves. On May 21, 1802, William Eaton wrote in a panic to the Secretary of State about a report that an American schooner had looted a Tunisian xebec when it stopped the vessel on blockade duty. Eaton does not mention the schooner by name, but as there was only one schooner in the squadron at the time, it had to be Andrew Sterett’s Enterprize. Investigation revealed that three privates had taken some money and a watch off one of the Turkish passengers on the xebec. Eaton smoothed things over with the bey of Tunis, but “it went very nearly to have produced a rupture with this Regency.” Charles Wadsworth wrote later that he hoped the three sailors would get the death penalty, and that they would be executed in the harbor of Tunis so that the bey could see that those sailors’ behavior was not authorized by their superiors.

85Murray to Thomas Bulkeley, 18 May 1802, BW2:155.
86Eaton to Sec of State, 22 October 1802, BW2:306.
87Eaton to Morris, 16 October 1802, BW2:298.
88Eaton to Cathcart, 21 May 1802, BW2:158.
89Wadsworth to Eaton, 29 May 1802, BW2:161.
CHAPTER 2. 1802

Convoy

Because relations with both Tunis and Morocco had deteriorated, the convoy system became much more important. Richard Valentine Morris personally recommended that ships wait at Cadiz before trying to pass through the Straits of Gibraltar, as war with Morocco seemed imminent. The consuls also did their best to force the merchants to join convoys. Cathcart lamented that despite the entreaties of himself and Thomas Appleton, consul at Leghorn, merchants continued to embark alone, “intent upon gain only.” He solaced himself with the thought that at least he and the other consuls had tirelessly informed the merchants of the convoys available, and if they chose to go their own route, their fate would have to be on their own heads.

Ironically, when Morris’s suggestion that vessels wait for convoy in Cadiz garnered a few interested merchants, he wrote to Joseph Yznardi, consul at Cadiz, that no naval vessels were available for convoy, precisely because the situation with Morocco was so tense. If Simpson was able to bring Morocco to a peaceful settlement, Morris wrote, then no naval vessels would need to provide convoy. If not, he would send the Adams to collect merchants at both Cadiz and Malaga.

Although naval captains received instructions from their commanders about how convoy ought to work, invariably there were difficulties. In January 1802, Lieutenant John Shaw of the George Washington received instructions from Commodore Dale that he should plan to remain only a few days in each port, unless at least four or five masters asked him to wait. He was also to write to consuls informing them of when he was coming to their respective ports and asking them to have the vessels wishing convoy already assembled. However, when he arrived in Naples, he learned that one of the ships wishing convoy had been detained by the government of the Two Sicilies for some unknown reason. Shaw wrote to General John Acton, prime minister of state at Naples, asking the reason for the detention of the brig Traveller, citing his desire for the convoy

---

90 Morris to Rufus King, 25 June 1802, BW2:184.
91 Cathcart to Sec of State, 15 July 1802, BW2:205.
92 Morris to Yznardi, 3 August 1802, BW2:223.
93 Dale to Shaw, 14 November 1801, BW1:619.
to leave at the first fair wind. Shaw eventually decided that if the ship could not be released in time to sail, it would have to be abandoned, and the cost of its abandoned cargo would have to be repaid to its owner by the United States government. When the George Washington moved on to Leghorn after the delay, Shaw found that nearly all the commercial vessels had sailed without waiting for convoy. The three that did wait for him, once at sea, proved such lethargic sailors that Shaw eventually gave up on them and let them go by themselves, commenting later, “the[y] pay but very little attention to Convoy I apprehend the[y] will repent – when its to late.”

In contrast to Shaw’s at least half-hearted attempts to work with the convoy system despite its trials, Daniel McNeill clearly felt that convoy duty was pointless or beneath him. When McNeill put in to Naples, he gave the merchants one day to assemble, despite being told that several merchants would be ready in just three or four days. The Boston’s purser wanted to write to ports that would be part of the Boston’s path going forward, but McNeill’s determination to spend just one day in each port made that communication impossible.

Rethinking the Strategy

As the negotiators scrambled to regain the advantage after the Franklin capture, the navy also had to re-evaluate their strategy. While he was in captivity, Andrew Morris wrote to William Eaton. He sidestepped the consuls’ frustrations about ships not using the provided convoys by blaming the navy’s own ineffectiveness at maintaining the blockade: “It was the assurances I had from all quarters of the impossibility of their Cruizer to evade the vigilance of the Blockade that led me to sea without convoy or Arms–fatal experience has convinced me to the contrary, for their small Vessels can go out any night in the week that they please and penetrate as far to the westward as Malaga, which is manifest on a late occasion except a different plan is adopted by our fleet.” He suggested that two ships be posted to Tripoli to “keep up appearances,” and the remainder sent

---

94 Shaw to General Acton, 7 January 1802, BW2:14.
95 Shaw to General Acton, 15 January 1802, BW2:22.
96 Shaw to Sec of Navy, 2 March 1802, BW2:76.
to cruise between Cape Bon, Susa, and Sicily, where the real danger lay.\footnote{Andrew Morris to Cathcart, 22 July 1802, BW2:177.} There was no way the navy could enact this plan, as Morris’s suggestion did not comply with the international rules governing blockades that the United States had cited in its dispute against Tunis. Those rules stipulated that a blockade had to be directed at one or more belligerent ports, not a generic area or a neutral’s territory.

Morris’s ideas about how to correct the blockade might not have been possible, but he was not alone in his criticism of the strategy. Alexander Murray observed that the small Tripolitan galleys could easily get in and out under the cover of darkness despite the fact that the squadron maintained the blockade “with all our diligence.”\footnote{Murray to Sec of Navy, 5 July 1802, BW2:192-93. Murray was quick to mention that he himself was almost always on station, implying that the failure of the blockade could not be laid at his feet.} In July, when the blockade should have been at its most vigorous, Nicholas Nissen wrote to William Eaton that he had not seen a frigate off Tripoli for five days. He observed that when the galleys that were fitting out left, they would surely get out and back in with their prizes without interference from the American squadron. He also noted that the grain harvest in Tripoli had bounced back from the previous year’s famine, so the blockade of foodstuffs had much less effect this year.\footnote{Nissen to Eaton, 27 July 1802, BW2:212.} Murray confirmed the lack of ships on the station; he wrote to the Secretary of the Navy that none of the American squadron stayed off Tripoli for more than a day or two except himself and sometimes Captain McNeill in the \textit{Boston}, presumably because of their commodore’s apathy toward the blockade. Even the coalition with Sweden, which was supposed to ensure full coverage at all times, had broken down—the Swedes were off getting supplies and would not be back until August. Murray himself would also have to return to Malta to re-provision soon, leaving the port of Tripoli wide open.\footnote{Murray to Sec of Navy, 30 July 1802, BW2:218.} By September, Murray had completely given up on the blockade; he wrote that maintaining the facade of the blockade was merely wasting a ship that could be doing something more useful.
Despite his skepticism about the effectiveness of the blockade, Murray was in fact one of the few captains who spent any time off Tripoli (as he noted). As a result, he was involved in one of the only skirmishes with Tripoli during 1802. On July 22, the Constellation and the Swedish frigate Thetis, patrolling together, encountered nine gunboats near the fort of Tripoli. Firing between the antagonists commenced around 11:00 a.m., and it concluded by 11:30, so it was by no means a pitched battle. Murray reported that as the skirmish progressed, Tripolitan landsmen began to congregate on the shore, eventually numbering around 6,000. The two frigates fired in their general direction and dispersed them.

**Insubordination and Incompetence**

During 1802, Commodore Morris had demonstrated an ignorance of his squadron’s activities, with little interest in taking a firm leadership role. The one commander who took charge was Alexander Murray, whose leadership style garnered him few friends and supporters. His ship was not a happy one; he had frequent disputes with his lieutenants, at least one so severe that he put Lieutenant Jacob Jones in irons until he apologized. When the Constellation’s lieutenant, R.H.L. Lawson, killed his captain of marines, James McKnight, in a duel, Murray was furious, but marine captain Daniel Carmick admitted that “Captain Murray (being hard of hearing) had no idea of the Dissentions there were on board his ship.” His reputation spread beyond just his own ship; Charles Wadsworth of the Boston wrote in July that he was glad that Richard Valentine Morris had arrived, since he felt Morris would be able to bring the bashaw to terms, “notwithstanding what the old Woman Capt'n Murray has done.”

Murray’s Constellation also suffered from a raft of illnesses and accidents. Before it even

---

102 Murray to Eaton, 5 September 1802, BW2:266.
103 Murray to Sec of Navy, 30 July 1802, BW2:218.
104 Jacob Jones to Murray, unknown date, BW2:299.
106 Wadsworth to Eaton, 28 July 1802, BW2:216.
left the United States, three men died, two from smallpox and one from a cold.\textsuperscript{107} The ship’s log records four more deaths of unknown causes throughout 1802.\textsuperscript{108} In September, the \textit{Constellation} spent around ten days in Naples repairing a broken pintle.\textsuperscript{109} In November, the ship sprung its foremast and foreyard on its way from Toulon to Gibraltar. Murray found Malaga a good place to get repairs, but he estimated the repairs would take a month.\textsuperscript{110} While in Malaga, the ship’s log records over 100 men on the sick list with violent colds.\textsuperscript{111} Despite all these barriers, Murray managed to keep the \textit{Constellation} off Tripoli or on convoy for most of the year.

Richard Valentine Morris seemed less eager to get back on station—or rather, to get on station at all. During 1802 Morris never came even close to Tripoli. The closest he got was a large convoy the \textit{Chesapeake} and the \textit{Enterprize} escorted from Gibraltar to Malta in August, stopping in at Malaga, Leghorn, and Palermo.\textsuperscript{112} Circumstances beyond his control conspired to keep him away from Tripoli—Morris noted that the passage from America alone took 55 days (an exceptionally long time), and then he had to stay in Gibraltar to superintend the Morocco affair. He intended to go to Tripoli, but November and December had such bad weather that he did not think it likely he or any of the squadron would be able to remain on station.\textsuperscript{113} Facts seem to bear out his concern. Because of an outbreak of influenza on the \textit{Chesapeake} in December, Morris could not get out of Malta for almost three weeks, as he feared “risking the increase of their complaint, by exposing them to the inclemency of the weather.” When the crew was well enough to sail, the \textit{Chesapeake} still could not sail for several days because of adverse wind. Though the \textit{Chesapeake} left Malta on January 1, the frigate could not approach Tripoli at all; instead, it took more than

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Constellation} journal, 1 April 1802, BW2:102.
\textsuperscript{108} Entries in the \textit{Constellation} journal: 16 August 1802: Thomas Bird, ordinary seaman (BW2:236); 8 September 1802: Mathias Guise, ordinary seaman (BW2:270); 5 December 1802: Frances Sweeny, marine (BW2:329); 18 December 1802: John Brown, marine (BW2:335).
\textsuperscript{109} BW2:277, 18 September 1802.
\textsuperscript{110} BW2:316, 19 November 1802.
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Constellation} journal, 29 November 1802, BW2:326.
\textsuperscript{112} Morris to Sec of Navy, 17 August 1802, BW2:237; Henry Wadsworth journal, 26 August 1802, BW2:263; Cathcart to Sec of State, 30 March 1803, BW2:381.
\textsuperscript{113} Morris to Sec of Navy, 15 October 1802, BW2:296.
two weeks to get from Malta to Tunis, arriving after several detours on January 22, 1803.\footnote{Morris to Sec of Navy, 30 March 1802, BW2:382-83.}

Since he spent almost no time on blockade, Morris was more dependent than ever on foreign friends. For the many months he remained at Gibraltar, he depended on the goodwill of the British officials there to keep his ship supplied. Before Morris left for Tripoli, he stopped in at Syracuse in December for supplies, but discovered that they were much more expensive and scarce than in Malta.\footnote{Morris to Sec of Navy, 26 December 1802, BW2:382.}

The continued pleas of both diplomats and naval officers for more ships finally bore fruit: the \textit{John Adams} arrived in September, and the \textit{New York} in November, though their purpose was to protect against possible Moroccan trouble, rather than deal with Tripoli. The \textit{New York} came bearing orders for the \textit{Constellation} and the \textit{Chesapeake} to return home, but Richard Valentine Morris was to transfer his command to the \textit{New York} or the \textit{John Adams} and stay in the Mediterranean to superintend negotiations. The \textit{Essex} had already returned home in August, despite its crew’s desire to stay longer. Its captain, William Bainbridge, had quashed a near-mutiny of men who refused to return home for some reason. He gave them a choice: either give up their objections and do their jobs, or he would clap them in irons. Eighteen men chose irons.\footnote{Essex journal, 25 July 1802, BW2:210. It appears that the crew may have found out about their orders to return home from the newspapers instead of from Captain Bainbridge, so they may have been miffed about his lack of communication more than the prospect of returning home.} The \textit{Essex} made it home anyway and was laid up in ordinary.\footnote{Resume of ships, BW2:117.} Daniel McNeill and the \textit{Boston} too were recalled. McNeill’s shenanigans finally proved too much for the Secretary of the Navy, and when he returned home, he was dismissed from the service ostensibly under the Peace Establishment Act.\footnote{Sec of Navy to McNeill, 27 October 1802, BW2:307.} The Peace Establishment Act of 1801 ordered that most of the navy’s ships be laid up in ordinary after the Quasi-War, in an effort by the antinavalists to avoid keeping a peacetime navy.\footnote{Symonds, 86.} Fewer ships on active duty meant fewer officers needed, though most of the officers whose positions were terminated under the Peace Establishment Act had not been sent on further duty; clearly
the Secretary of the Navy was just using the legislation as a convenient way to get rid of McNeill.

If 1802 seems like a year of disarray, it was. Historians have typically characterized Morris’s cruise as one lacking in action, as Commodore Morris spent much of the cruise at Malta, Gibraltar, and other safe ports. This cruise that may not have furthered the mission with Tripoli, but its events did complicate the United States’ relationship with Europe and the other Barbary states. Morris’s tenure shows how the differing priorities amongst the leadership manifested in confused and lethargic strategic decisions, complicated again by the struggle to maintain a squadron with no bases. Nevertheless, 1802 was not completely without important events.120 During 1802, the rift also widened between the navy and the consuls of the Mediterranean. Lack of leadership in both camps meant that neither camp was willing to work with the other. The result of this infighting was the loss of a unified front before both Tripoli and the other Barbary states. The capture of the Franklin demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the blockade strategy, as William Eaton’s continued scheming about a coup against Yusuf Karamanli wandered toward an eventual end.

![Map of locations related to the war in 1802.](image)

**Figure 2.1:** Map of locations related to the war in 1802.

---

120 Historians often dismiss Morris quickly; Ian Toll, for example, dispatches Morris’s entire tenure in two pages in *Six Frigates.*
Chapter 3

1803

The year 1803 began with stormy seas in the Mediterranean. For almost two weeks, the Constellation tried to cross from Gibraltar to Tangier, eventually sailing instead to Tetuan to avoid the fate of fourteen other vessels, which had been dashed on the rocks attempting the same crossing.\(^1\) Midshipman Henry Wadsworth complained, “The Deck directly over my Cot leaks very much, of course my bed & bedding are much wet as the Element water is continually in boisterous weather washing over the Gun Deck.”\(^2\)

The diplomatic unrest continued into 1803 as well. In Algiers, the situation was so precarious that Richard O’Brien asked John Gavino, consul at Gibraltar, to address his letters to the Swedish consul at Algiers rather than sending them directly.\(^3\) The dey was still demanding naval stores instead of the $30,000 in cash O’Brien had been authorized to pay. O’Brien entreated the government back home to take the demands seriously, as the dey tended to declare war first and then backtrack rather than waiting for diplomatic resolution. The United States was not alone in its struggle to work with the dey; even the agent of Napoleon was not immune to the whims of Algerian caprice.\(^4\) In Tunis, William Eaton was also concerned at the bey’s unfavorable disposition toward the Americans. He told one of the bey’s courtiers that the new, more powerful American squadron would soon be arriving off Tunis. Knowing that the courtier would report

---

\(^1\)Murray to Morris, 11 January 1803, BW2:343; Murray to Sec of Navy, 12 March 1803, BW2:373.
\(^2\)Wadsworth journal, 31 January 1803, BW2:356.
\(^3\)O’Brien to John Gavino, 2 February 1803, BW2:357.
\(^4\)O’Brien to Sec of State, 2 February 1803, BW2:356-57.
this news to the bey, he hoped that the threat of force would bring the bey into a more conciliatory frame of mind.\(^5\)

Eaton had reason to be concerned. On January 26, he had been summoned to the court of the bey in order to make restitution for the Ottoman vessel *Paulina*, which had been carrying Tunisian cargo, captured on January 17 by the *Enterprize* while it attempted to run the blockade into Tripoli. After conceding that the *Paulina* was in violation of the blockade, Hamouda raised the same legal questions that he and Eaton had clashed on in 1802. Which law? Which precedent? Whose legal practice should prevail? As before, the argument devolved into threats. Eaton protested that the United States wished to be at peace with Tunis, but the actions of the Tunisian merchants indicated that Tunis wished a war with the United States. In the end, the question of international law was subordinated to local authority: Eaton had to bring the matter before Richard Valentine Morris. As it was a ship from his squadron who had made the capture, Morris was the person with the legal authority to restore the prize.\(^6\)

Morris had already made up his mind about the legality of the capture—it was under his orders that the *Enterprize* had gone to lie in wait for the *Paulina*.\(^7\) Nevertheless, he appeared as demanded at Hamouda’s court to make his case. He arrived along with James Leander Cathcart, who was there to provide diplomatic advice and to translate (into Italian) for Morris. After the niceties were observed, “the ceremony of shaking hands and drinking coffee,” Hamouda demanded that the legal questions about the *Paulina* should be settled at Tunis. Morris suggested that the ship be sent to Gibraltar for adjudication in Admiralty Court. This was a surprising suggestion, given that the British had no jurisdiction over American prize cases. If the ship was not adjudicated in Tunis, Hamouda countered, the United States would find itself at war with Tunis as well as Tripoli. Morris quickly backed down, agreeing to leave the *Paulina* in Tunis, provided all the evidence was weighed fairly. Hamouda, perhaps sensing weakness, pressed his advantage. He demanded that Tunisian ships should not be subject to the rules of the blockade.

\(^5\)Eaton to Sec of State, 8 February 1803, BW2:359.
\(^6\)Eaton to Morris, 26 January 1803, BW2:344-45.
\(^7\)Cathcart to Sec of State, 25 January 1803, BW3:349.
Morris would not allow the Tunisians through, for every Tunisian ship the Americans captured, the bey’s cruisers would take two American merchant vessels. Morris refused to give free rein to Tunisian vessels, but he did agree to bring back the Paulina’s paperwork for inspection.

The Paulina dispute highlights the fact that proximity in both time and space were critical to keeping the peace. It was clear from Hamouda’s exchanges with both Eaton and Morris that their presumptions of law and neutrality were vastly different. If the differences had to be ironed out via letters back to the United States, the dispute would have dragged on for months or even years, or the bey would have gotten tired of waiting and declared war. Instead, Hamouda seemed to enjoy arguing face-to-face with the Americans on questions of law.

These personal exchanges offered more than the opportunity for two antagonists to lock horns, however. In diplomatic practice between Europe and the Barbary states, signed and ratified treaties often took a secondary position to custom or precedent as the rule of law in disputes, and the victor in those disputes was the one who could spin in their favor the history shared between the two antagonists. Since the United States had little history with Tunis or the other regencies, the Americans had to build experiences that would establish that history. Consequently, the social niceties such as coffee with the bey, salutes in the harbor, and other ritual forms of acknowledgment were much more important than the words of a far-off president or secretary.

James Leander Cathcart did provide some knowledge of Barbary customs. Since he spoke Italian, he was able to provide translation services typically performed by European captives in the courts of the bey. As a former captive of Algiers, Cathcart might have been both comforting and jarring to the bey: instead of performing services as a slave, he now advocated for peace which would prevent the taking of more slaves like himself. His presence also allowed the negotiations to be done orally, rather than through written means. Written treaties generally had to be written in Turkish, often alongside a copy written in the language of the other party. The

---

8Cathcart to Sec of State, 28 February 1803, BW2:352.
10Windler, 85.
Turkish was the canonical sealed version; any disputes were settled by the wording of that version.\footnote{Windler, 87. Windler notes that the use of Turkish was an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the Porte, and that the beys of Tunis sometimes could not even read the Turkish without difficulty.} Face-to-face meetings prevented the need for writing up official documents that had to be translated in multiple languages and verified by multiple people.

A few days after the initial meeting, on March 2, Morris and Cathcart returned to the bey’s court, bringing the ship’s manifest from the *Paulina*. The two Americans and Hamouda determined that a large portion of the cargo was not intended for Tripoli (though perhaps some of it was), and Morris agreed to restore it to the master of the ship. The agent representing the *Paulina*’s master agreed not to demand any of the cargo that might have been bound for Tripoli, nor to make any further claims. Cathcart attributed the ease with which the dispute had been settled to the fact that the American squadron waited in the harbor, but it seems more likely that Morris’s quick acquiescence to the Tunisian interpretation of the law kept the peace.

The *Paulina*’s agent, like the bey, pressed his advantage. Reneging on the agreement, he returned the next two days with fresh claims for the cargo. After the second day, Cathcart “lost all patience at so barefaced a falsehood, [and] called him an impostor destitute of shame.” But after being detained by the bey for a day, Morris agreed to settle all his claims, fearful that the bey would not let the Americans leave the city at all. After another two days of arguing about debts, particularly a debt owed by William Eaton, Morris finally left Tunis and returned to the Chesapeake. Cathcart returned to bring the bey the new consul in place of Eaton, Dr. George Davis. After yet more posturing and arguing over the details of various financial transactions, on March 13, Cathcart recorded that he, Morris, and Eaton weighed anchor from the Bay of Tunis, “the abode of happiness.”\footnote{Cathcart journal, 13 March 1803, BW2:353-55. The city of Tunis was often called the “abode of happiness” as a descriptor, but Cathcart’s use was obviously dripping with sarcasm.} After this point, Eaton would no longer be welcome in Tunis.

Despite the resolution of the *Paulina* dispute, Morris recognized the fragility of the settlement. A few weeks later, he wrote that the peace between the United States and Tunis would not last, because the “Northern Countries,” Sweden and Denmark, had renegotiated their an-
annual tribute treaties, but the United States had not agreed to further tribute. Despite all of the Americans’ protests, Morris realized that the United States was still a minor power in Tunis’s estimation and would be treated as such.\textsuperscript{13}

“A Mad Action”

After the disappointing negotiation with Tunis, Morris and the \textit{New York} began the journey back to Malta. On their way back, Morris’s bad luck continued. At 8:00 in the morning on April 25, sparks from a signal lantern lit some powder in the hold, and a series of explosions destroyed many supplies and injured nine men who were in the cockpit. Although four of the men died of their burns, Midshipman Henry Wadsworth was convinced that but for a fortunately open passageway, the “explosion would momentarily have been followed by the magazine & then adieu.” The \textit{New York} limped back to Malta, arriving on May 1.\textsuperscript{14}

The other ships of the squadron spread out across the western Mediterranean. The \textit{John Adams} patrolled off Tripoli for several weeks, skirmishing from time to time with gunboats that ventured out from the harbor.\textsuperscript{15} Though the crew had long since found other ways home, the Tripolitan flagship, the \textit{Meshouda}, still lay at anchor in Gibraltar. In September 1802, the emperor of Morocco had claimed the ship as his property, so consul James Simpson had granted the ship a passport to travel out of Gibraltar. But Hugh G. Campbell and the \textit{Adams} had stayed in Gibraltar, leading the captain of the \textit{Meshouda} to complain to the emperor that the Americans were lying in wait to capture him, passport or no passport.\textsuperscript{16}

When the \textit{Meshouda} attempted to leave the harbor, Captain Campbell had no choice but to honor the agreement made with the emperor and let it go. The \textit{Meshouda} set sail for Tripoli, in direct opposition to the emperor’s promise that he would honor the blockade. As the vessel approached Tripoli on May 13, it encountered the \textit{John Adams} and was captured. When Rodgers

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13}Morris to Sec of Navy, 30 March 1803, BW2:384.
  \item \textsuperscript{14}Wadsworth journal, 12 May 1803, BW2:403.
  \item \textsuperscript{15}\textit{John Adams} journal, 7-8, 9-12 May 1803, BW2:400-401.
  \item \textsuperscript{16}Simpson to Sec of State, 24 December 1802, BW2:337-38.
\end{itemize}
brought the *Meshouda* to Malta, he discovered that not only was the ship trying to run the block-ade, but it was also carrying naval stores for Tripoli, which were contraband under the laws of the blockade. The stores had been taken on board in Algiers after leaving Tangier, in order to avoid trouble at Gibraltar. Commodore Morris called the discovery “a detestable Fraud,” but he offered no advice for how Consul Simpson should handle the matter.\footnote{Morris to Simpson, 19 May 1803, BW2:409.} If the emperor had ordered the *Meshouda* to Tripoli, it would be difficult to avoid a fresh declaration of war, which the United States could ill afford.

The capture demonstrated again how foreign the American navy was. The wheels of communication amongst the Barbary regencies started turning almost immediately. It was an agent of Tripoli in Malta who wrote to the Moroccan emperor informing him of the capture and expressing concern that the *Meshouda* be given a fair trial.\footnote{Hadji Abdel-Wahed Nasar to emperor of Morocco, 2 June 1803, BW2:434.} The close relationship between the Barbary states had manifested itself before—from the beginning of the war with Tripoli, the other Barbary states had been providing both moral and physical support through supplies and obstructions to the Americans. Historian Kola Folayan argues that commercial and religious ties between Tripoli and the other Maghribi states resulted in a concerted effort on their part to dismantle the American blockade of Tripoli.\footnote{Folayan, “Tripoli and the War with the U.S.A., 1801-5,” 267.} The other Barbary states were not acting purely out of concern for the bashaw, but rather out of a desire to maintain the communal ties that made them all stronger at the expense of nations who did not have the resources to fight them all at once.

James Simpson certainly believed that the emperor was colluding with Tripoli. He wrote to Secretary of State James Madison, “We have seen the Emperour since the commencement of the War with Tripoly, do what he could to favour them. All Nations experience the like conduct from every State in Barbary, when they have War with any of the others.”\footnote{Simpson to Madison, 9 July 1803. JM, http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JSMN-02-01-02-0769.} But the emperor vowed that he had not authorized Omar Reis, the captain of the *Meshouda*, to sail for Tripoli or to carry
CHAPTER 3. 1803

contraband. The governor of Tangier, Alcayde Hashash, likewise expressed astonishment: “Even after a long conversation he could not be made fully to believe that Omar could have committed such a mad Action, and so diametrically opposite to the Instructions he had given him, by His Majesty’s Command.” Hashash even went so far as to demand that Omar be delivered up in irons and forthwith be beheaded.21

Simpson suggested to Morris that it would be politic to take the emperor at his word and release the ship back to him, especially considering that peace had been so recently restored. Morris, however, was determined to send the ship to an international court for condemnation. Simpson acknowledged that the Americans had a strong case for condemnation, but he judged it more important to make a gesture of goodwill toward the emperor.22 While the two men worked out their plan for the Meshouda, it remained in Malta.

Olive Branch in One Hand

It was May 1803 before Commodore Morris turned to the primary task he had been given: negotiating peace with Tripoli. In April 1802, the Secretary of the Navy had ordered Morris to post the majority of his squadron off Tripoli while Cathcart went ashore to negotiate peace with the bashaw; Morris was to show the squadron in a grand naval gesture intended to bolster Cathcart’s credibility, but he was not to get involved himself.23 When these orders were issued, Morris was still in the United States. By August 1802, when he was finally in the Mediterranean, he received orders that he should be a “superintending agency in the negotiations.” Cathcart should be consulted if he was available. Eaton was not to be consulted, and Morris had the final authority to negotiate even if Cathcart was not available. Morris was also “empowered to negotiate an adjustment of our differences with Morocco or with any of the other Barbary powers that may have declared or waged war against us.”24 Morris had taken seriously this directive to

23Sec of Navy to Morris, 20 April 1802, BW2:130.
24Sec of Navy to Morris, 27 August 1802, BW2:257.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

negotiate with other nations. Since his arrival in June 1802, he had negotiated with Morocco and Tunis, but had barely even seen Tripoli harbor.

When he decided to open negotiations with Tripoli, perhaps Morris was feeling the sting of humiliation in his negotiations about the Paulina—he informed Cathcart that his services would not be needed. This decision infuriated and confused Cathcart, who reminded Morris that he was still a newcomer to the Mediterranean world: he did not know the rituals that must accompany any audience with the bashaw, nor did he (seemingly) know the history of negotiations with Tripoli. Morris had also chosen not to communicate his intentions to his superiors in the United States, a circumstance that the Secretary of the Navy found concerning. Leaving Cathcart in Leghorn, Morris sailed for Malta, and from thence to Tripoli on May 19.

Morris, in the New York, along with the John Adams and Enterprize, arrived off Tripoli on May 22, 1803. The first day the New York was on station, a Tripolitan feluca tried to escape the harbor. The New York and the Enterprize drove the vessel on shore, but Isaac Hull, acting as the New York’s flag captain, ordered the American ships to back off rather than pursue it under Tripoli’s batteries. Midshipman Henry Wadsworth was disappointed: “Had she been but an oyster boat t’would have been amusement for us to skirmish a little.” Wadsworth got his chance to skirmish a few days later, when the squadron found nine gunboats and a xebec off the coast. In the afternoon, Morris signaled for the John Adams to lead the attack. Wadsworth was delighted, though darkness made it impossible to continue the battle: “Had their been anyone on board who like Joshua of Old could have commanded the sun to stand still, Thy Gun Boats would have been ours Tripoly, & thy people our Slaves.” The squadron disengaged around 9:00,

---

25Cathcart to Sec of State, 5 May 1803, BW2:398.
26Sec of Navy to Morris, 4 May 1803, BW2:396.
27Morris to Simpson, 19 May 1803, BW2:409.
28Wadsworth journal, 22 May 1803, BW2:417. Morris was the commodore, but Wadsworth comments that he wishes Morris had been on command that day. Morris seems to have had a flag captain, possibly Isaac Hull, who gave the order to back off. This is ironic because Thomas Truxtun, the erstwhile commander of the squadron, resigned over not being permitted a flag captain.
unable to see their quarry anymore.29 This was just one of several skirmishes the navy had with the Tripolitans.30

Despite the success of the previous night, the next day Wadsworth watched two vessels run the blockade into Tripoli right in front of the squadron.31 On May 29, the Enterprize, using a signal set up by Commodore Dale in 1801, signaled the fort of Tripoli, requesting that the Danish consul come out to the squadron.32 A few days previous, Captain John Rodgers of the John Adams had requested that Nissen make overtures of peace to the bashaw, and now Commodore Morris wanted to discuss the topic.33 Though Morris seemed reluctant to accept help from anyone regarding his negotiations with Tripoli, he nevertheless benefited from others’ willingness to ask for help. Without assistance from Nissen, the negotiations might never have occurred.

Nissen saw the signal, and he accordingly requested a boat from the bashaw. Yusuf responded strangely to the squadron whose ships had been attacking his batteries for the last six days. He gave Nissen the boat, but refused to use Nissen to open communications with the commodore. He informed Nissen, though, that if the squadron needed any fresh provisions, the Americans were welcome to get them from Tripoli.34 When the boat came aside the New York later that day bearing two representatives from Tripoli, the bashaw’s reticence was elucidated:

---

30 For a list of the skirmishes between the American navy and the Tripolitans in gunboats and on shore, see Glenn Tucker, Dawn like Thunder: The Barbary Wars and the Birth of the U.S. Navy. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963). Tucker’s restatement of all the skirmishes is useful to get a sense of how often the navy interacted with the Tripolitans, but Tucker imbues the skirmishes with much more drama and dash than I find warranted from the texts he is clearly drawing from. For instance, he draws a picture of one skirmish that he says involves an amphibious assault with hand-to-hand combat on the shore between the Americans and the Tripolitan cavalry. My reading of the text is that Henry Wadsworth climbed onto a rock, claimed it for the United States, and then returned to his boat with his compatriots. Tucker does not use footnotes, and I have not been able to trace any sources that corroborate the more dramatic version.
32 The Enterprize was selected to give the signal rather than the New York because its smaller size meant it could get closer to the shore and make the signal more visible. Wadsworth journal, 29 May 1803, BW2:428.
33 Nissen to Cathcart, 4 June 1803, BW2:439.
he would only treat with the American squadron when they approached him directly instead of through Nissen. Morris obliged, writing a letter directly to the bashaw, which the boat took back to Tripoli for him.35

The United States was not the only nation trying to juggle its international connections. Aside from Britain and France, all the other nations who traded in the Mediterranean were on the same shaky ground as the United States. The Dutch, without a naval force in the sea, were in a bad situation, and the United States was an unwitting factor in their treatment by the bashaw. The bashaw would not declare war with Holland while he was at war with the United States, because he could continue to extort money from the Dutch consul if Dutch ships were not getting through to Tripoli with their annuities.36 In other words, the American continuance of the blockade was actively injuring the cause of other members of the Mediterranean community.

On June 4, Morris received the bashaw’s answer to his letter, in the form of the Tripolitan minister of war and an entourage, who boarded the New York to deliver the message. The bashaw invited a representative of the United States to come ashore and discuss peace with an official duly authorized by the bashaw. Poor weather prevented the Tripolitan entourage from returning to shore that day, so they stayed all night on the ship.37 Morris sent a letter with them when they returned, but he did not go ashore until June 6.38 When he did, he took a group of officers from his own ship along with John Rodgers, captain of the John Adams. Though some of the officers returned to their ships that day, Morris stayed on shore.39

Though the white flag of truce was flying in Tripoli, Morris still felt uneasy about being on shore away from the squadron. He requested a guarantee of protection from three different consuls; only the French consul agreed to provide it.40 It was a good thing Morris had insisted on this protection. The negotiations broke down after less than a day. To the bashaw’s demand

---

35Wadsworth journal, 29 May 1803, BW2:429.
36Nissen to Cathcart, 4 June 1803, BW2:439.
37Wadsworth journal, 4 June 1803, BW2:441.
38John Adams journal, 6 June 1803, BW2:442.
40Nissen to Cathcart, 8 June 1803, BW2:447.
of $200,000 up front, plus $20,000 and some naval stores as annual presents, Morris replied, “Were the Combined World to make the demand it would be treated with contempt.” Furious, the bashaw ordered the truce flag to be hauled down while Morris was still in the city. Only the intervention of the French consul kept Morris from being detained. Morris returned to the New York in the morning of June 9, whereupon hostilities officially resumed.\footnote{Wadsworth journal, 9 June 1803, BW2:449.}

By June 15, the New York was back in Malta.\footnote{Wadsworth journal, 15 June 1803, BW2:453-54. The ship was quarantined for 14 days as a result of their activities before Tripoli, so Morris could not go ashore to see his infant son, born on June 10 in Malta.} The other American vessels, including the John Adams, the Adams, and the Enterprize, remained off Tripoli. On June 21, the squadron’s de facto commander, John Rodgers, noticed some unusual activity by the gunboats in the harbor. He ordered the American vessels to spread out so that they could catch any vessel that tried to leave the harbor. Early the next morning, the Enterprize discovered a large armed Tripolitan vessel anchored near the shore. The squadron converged and began firing at the ship, as well as at the gunboats that rowed out to its assistance. After forty-five minutes of constant firing from both sides, the crew of the Tripolitan ship “abandoned the Ship in the most Confused and precipitate manner.” The John Adams had to wear back from the ship a little, as the harbor became shallow and rocky near their position, but the Enterprize was able to keep firing at the boat and at the military that had assembled on the shore. The gunfire from the shore meant that Rodgers could not capture the ship. Instead, some of the vessel’s crew returned to the ship, though only to haul down its colors in surrender. While the colors were being lowered, the ship exploded in a spectacular manner: the blast “burst the Hull to pieces and forced the Main and Mizen Masts perpendicularly into the air 150 or 160 feet.” Rodgers declared it “one of the Grandest Spectacles I ever beheld.”\footnote{Rodgers to Morris, 30 June 1803, BW2:465-66.}

After this spectacular event, the squadron stayed on station for only four more days, departing for Malta on June 26 as ordered by Morris before he left.\footnote{Ibid.} The squadron remained in
Malta, watering and resupplying, for the next two weeks. While the squadron lingered, orders were traveling across the Atlantic for Commodore Morris’s recall. Though Morris himself had been stinting with his reports to the Secretary of the Navy, others had not been. Allegations of Morris’s lack of zeal for the blockade, and his ineptitude as negotiator, had reached Secretary Smith. Morris was summoned home to answer for his actions.

Frustration with Morris’s poor leadership extended to nearly all the Americans in the Mediterranean. Cathcart summed up his frustrations: “I long ere now expected to see Tripoli prostrate at our feet, one small effort would have establish’d our national character with that Regency for a century better than a million sterling, but for want of energy & a spirit of enterprize we bring our humiliations to their Bashaws foot stool.”

Cathcart had traveled with the commodore for several months and had seen his inattention to the blockade of Tripoli. After he was dismissed from assisting in the negotiations with Tripoli, he wrote bitterly to Secretary Madison blaming Morris’s wife for his diffidence: “I cant help thinking that neither the zeal for the service nor its activity would have been impeded or injured had Mrs. Morris been left to propagate her species at Balls town or Morrisina.”

In Tripoli, Nicholas Nissen observed that the blockade was not working, for a number of reasons. A good harvest had diminished the effectiveness of the commercial blockade, and the blockade was so porous that European supply ships came in and out of Tripoli at will. Because the bashaw had come to terms with the Swedish a few months previous, he had plenty of money to support both his people and the war effort.

William Eaton questioned the leniency with which vessels were allowed to legally run the blockade: “Our squadron, it is beleived, is before Tripoli. But what kind of a blockade is this, where the invested enemy is furnished with arms, amunition and provisions under the guarantee of the passports of our ministerial agents! Is it pretended that these submissions are the

45Cathcart to Sec of State, 24 July 1803.
46Cathcart to Madison, 20 June 1803. JM, http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JSMN-02-91-02-0738. Mrs. Morris had given birth to a son in Malta while the commodore was in Tunis. He may have returned to Malta prematurely in order to be with her.
47Nissen to Cathcart, 4 June 1803, BW2:440.
preservative of peace? The calculation is erroneous. They tend rather to precipitate a war; because they show that we dread it; and, it is on weakness and submission that these brigands make war.”

Eaton referred to the practice of consuls granting passports to ships of neutral nations that allowed them to enter Tripoli. The passports were a calculated risk: was it better to aid Tripoli, or to risk war with another power? In 1802, Richard Valentine Morris had chosen the former, instructing Simpson to issue passports to Moroccan wheat ships. He reasoned that since Tripoli already had plenty of grain because of their good harvest, the wheat ships would not matter to them, but granting the passports might smooth relations with Morocco. James Simpson had also advocated for granting the Moroccan passports, concerned that unrest in Morocco might drive insurance rates so high that American commerce would suffer real consequences. Eaton clearly thought this move, rather than improving relations elsewhere, would show the weakness of the American grasp on the Mediterranean and cause more war.

These misgivings could not countermand the squadron’s orders to maintain a blockade of Tripoli. Throughout the summer, the squadron continued to cruise, stopping suspicious vessels to inspect their papers. Boredom set in, as vessel after vessel turned out to be benign, or at least not officially belligerent. The American officers frequently acknowledged their inability to tell the difference between Tripolitan sailors and ships and other North Africans, so they had to put special confidence in the passports issued to neutral ships by the American consuls in each port.

Midshipman Wadsworth recorded the disappointment when his shipmates boarded a Tunisian galley only to find a passport from George Davis: “The Men were all hot for Battle, friends or Foes. - The sight of a Turban soon enrages them.”

---

49 Morris to Sec of Navy, 15 October 1802, BW2:296.
50 Simpson to Morris, 17 June 1802, BW2:182.
51 When the Essex, a member of Richard Dale’s squadron, had first arrived in the Mediterranean, the officers’ inability to distinguish Tripolitans from Moroccans led to the Essex’s firing into a Moroccan vessel. The Essex’s doctor went on board the Moroccan vessel to bind up the wound of the sailor who had been injured by the shot, but no further trouble occurred because of the incident, BW1:556.
52 Wadsworth journal, 22 July 1803, BW2:495.
Fractured Community and Divided Focus

Since Morris could not leave the *Meshouda* unattended in a foreign port, the squadron brought the ship on the cruise off Tripoli. Meanwhile in Morocco, Simpson waited in vain for Morris to make a decision about what would happen to the *Meshouda*. Cathcart suggested that rather than sending the *Meshouda* to Gibraltar for adjudication, Morris should instead give it to the bashaw of Tripoli as a gift. He argued that the ship, which had already divided the squadron between Tangier and Tripoli when it should have been unified off Tripoli, would never be condemned in a court that the bashaw or the emperor of Morocco would recognize. But it might be able to be leveraged as a gift to the bashaw in lieu of a portion of the demanded money.\(^{53}\)

Morris was never likely to have taken Cathcart’s suggestion. But his failure to communicate any plans at all for the *Meshouda* caused James Simpson significant anxiety. Simpson had to wait and hope that the emperor would be reasonable when he arrived in a few weeks. Under pressure to maintain peace, Simpson was also forced to grant passports to two more Moroccan ships, the *Maimona* and the *Mirboka*, ostensibly cargo vessels. He felt certain that the two Moroccan cruisers had actually been authorized to capture American vessels, possibly due to his inability to demonstrate the American’s goodwill in returning the *Meshouda*.\(^ {54}\) He was not the only one under pressure—all the consuls in Tangier had received (and granted) the same demand.

He also observed that there were a large number of both British and French privateers in the waters around Gibraltar.\(^ {55}\) American shipping was not immune to the depredations of European privateers either. The Mediterranean community into which the Americans sought to enter was not a simple coalition of Europe against North Africa. On the contrary, relations between European nations were fractured—the peace of Amiens between Britain and France had dissolved two months previous—and the North African states used those fractures to their

---


\(^{54}\) Simpson to Sec of State, 15 August 1803, BW2:514.

\(^{55}\) Simpson to Sec of State, 28 July 1803, BW2:500.
advantage.\textsuperscript{56} Alliances and antagonism shifted quickly and frequently, and the United States was caught in the middle.

The resumption of hostilities had indirect consequences for the Americans as well. The American squadron had been on fairly friendly terms with the kingdom of the Two Sicilies since the beginning of the war, but the rising tensions between Britain and France made Naples wary. When Morris requested the loan of some gunboats from Naples, the king’s minister declined, expressing a desire to keep neutral with all nations until matters between England and France were settled. He was perfectly willing to allow the Americans to resupply in Naples and even keep prisoners there if necessary, but actually contributing to another nation’s war effort was farther than he was willing to go.\textsuperscript{57} It was fairly clear that Britain and France were the controlling interests in the Mediterranean system.

Morris seems to have changed his mind about cruising off Tripoli; instead the squadron sailed for Gibraltar with the \textit{Meshouda} as well as a commercial convoy. As the squadron passed by a small Italian island, the \textit{Adams} took fire from the fortification on the island. Though the \textit{Adams} was not hit, Captain Hugh G. Campbell sent his boat to shore to discover the reason for this unprovoked aggression. The fortification was French, and the officer in charge demanded that the Americans pay him a guinea for each gun he had fired at the \textit{Adams}. He held Lieutenant John H. Dent as a hostage until the money should be paid. The \textit{Adams} was carrying William Smith, former minister to Portugal, who went ashore and paid the money.\textsuperscript{58} When Commodore Morris spoke the \textit{Adams} to find out what had happened, he was furious. He expostulated, “Well, by God if they had fired at me I would have returned it.” Midshipman Wadsworth added privately, “Thro’ his damn’d foolishness our country is insulted & we pay for it too. Blast him - if I were

\textsuperscript{56}The best recent book on the origins and dissolution of the peace of Amiens is John D. Grainger, \textit{The Amiens Truce: Britain and Bonaparte 1801-1803} (Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2004).

\textsuperscript{57}RVM, 96.

\textsuperscript{58}Wadsworth identifies Smith only as a former envoy, but it seems likely that this was William Loughton Smith, a well-regarded diplomat, former minister plenipotentiary to Portugal, and head of an aborted mission to make a treaty with the Ottoman Porte in 1799. \textit{Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society}, vol. LI (Massachusetts Historical Society, 1918), 27.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

Com’ I’d arrest him & pack him off to the United States for Trial.”

Ironically, most others in the Mediterranean wished that Morris had done more firing, and he was the one summoned back to the United States for trial. But the incident illustrated the point that the Americans would have to accept indignity from someone—fighting against Tripoli in order to maintain their honor meant taking blows to their pride from many other sources.

As 1803 progressed into August, Commodore Morris felt keenly the many directions in which the Americans were being pulled. The squadron was slowly making its way toward Morocco, convoying vessels along the way, while diplomatic relations with Tunis and Tripoli remained uncertain. James Leander Cathcart had received orders from the Secretary of State giving him full authority to treat with Tunis and Tripoli, and this time Morris was all too happy to leave the negotiating to Cathcart. He wrote to Mohammed Dghies, the prime minister of Tripoli, to inform him of the change of negotiators, which would, he hoped, “prevent the further effusion of blood.”

Morris offered to send the Enterprize to bring Cathcart to Tunis. However, he said Cathcart would not be able to use a naval vessel to get to Tripoli, as Morris needed the entire squadron off Morocco to deal with the Meshouda situation.

Cathcart was upset at both Morris and the American government for what he felt was a craven capitulation to the standard European system. He still wanted the Americans to take their free trade by force, but his orders were to negotiate for payment to the bashaw. He felt that the Americans had lost any advantage that they had held earlier and were in danger of becoming like the Scandinavian countries, unless their advantage was “speedily retrieved by a brilliant act.”

---

60 Morris to Daguize, 25 August 1803, BW2:517-58.
61 Morris to Cathcart, 15 August 1803, BW2:511-12. Morris seems to have still been smarting from the varied humiliations Cathcart had witnessed; he rather grumpily observes that he himself has not received orders revoking his authority to negotiate, so he insisted on seeing all of the documents Cathcart had received, “that I may avoid interfering & thereby prevent or retard such negotiations as are intrusted to your particular care & discretion.”
honor, as his jealousy for personal glory rendered him unable to admit where he was weak. “He acknowledges his being unacquainted with the usages of Barbary,” Cathcart wrote. “How extraordinary then doth it appear that at the moment he contemplated a negotiation he should refuse to accept the assistance of a person legally authorized by government for that purpose & who was perfectly acquainted with their views usages and intrigues.” Unable to find his place in the Mediterranean system, Morris struggled to discern when to assert himself and when to back down.63

Though Morris did not accompany Cathcart to Tunis, Cathcart found himself again saddled with a naval partner reluctant to play by the rules of Barbary diplomacy. Cathcart was taken to Tunis by Hugh G. Campbell in the Adams, who took seriously Morris’s instructions to remain at Tunis only four days. He also declined at first to go on shore to pay his respects to the bey. Only the entreaty of George Davis convinced him that it would be counterproductive to stay on ship, as the bey would insist on receiving a visit from the senior naval officer before any negotiations started. When negotiations started after the traditional coffee, it was clear that compromise was not in the offing. The bey demanded the same things—a warship, plus money and stores—and Cathcart refused. Campbell was not immune to the bey’s wrath, either: Hamouda insisted that he make restitution for some prize goods sold at Malta illegitimately. Though Campbell protested that these questions were for the commodore of the squadron to decide, the bey decided to hold Campbell accountable for them.

Davis feared that Campbell would be held captive until the debts of the Tunisian prizes were paid. Campbell replied, “He may keep me to all Eternity; but the Ship Sails to-morrow; and I will write home for government never to pay the debt; I will remain here for ever, before I suffer such indignity to be offered with impunity.” Though Campbell did give orders to the Adams to sail without him, Davis was able to promise payment or restoration for all the disputed stores, thus avoiding a major incident.

After things were settled with Campbell, Cathcart washed his hands of Tunis, writing,

---

63 Cathcart to Sec of State, 30 August 1803, BW2:524.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

“To what a degrading situation are we reduced! the Commanders of the very Squadron which we sent out to preserve the Honor of our Nation and dignity of our Flag cannot land as the Officers of all other Nations do, and depart unmolested; but have twice, in the small period of Six Months been subjected to arrest; and at this moment it would be the height of imprudence to land at Tunis, as certain arrest maybe imprisonment, would be the consequence.” He waited until he and Campbell were safely back on board to write to the bey that Morris had revoked Davis’s consular status, and therefore any agreement Davis had signed was invalid.64 The Adams left Tunis on September 8, with no war, but no peace either.

Figure 3.1: Map of locations related to the war in 1803.

Treachery in Morocco

At the end of July, the ships of the new relief squadron began to arrive in the Mediterranean. The Philadelphia, captained by William Bainbridge, arrived in August. Upon his arrival, Bainbridge almost immediately encountered a Barbary ship (he could not discern what nationality at first).

---

64 Cathcart to Sec of State, 8 September 1803, BW3:4-6; see also Cathcart to the Bey of Tunis, 8 September 1803, BW3:25, where Cathcart alleges that Davis’s job was only and ever to sign passports and nothing else. Edward Preble later reinstated Davis with full authority as chargé d’affaires.
Bainbridge ordered the ship’s papers brought on board the Philadelphia, where he discovered that it was the Mirboka, carrying passports from James Simpson and the other European consuls. Bainbridge had not heard from Simpson about the latter’s suspicions of treachery regarding the Moroccan cruiser. Sailing with the Mirboka was an American brig, the Celia. Bainbridge sensed something amiss, and after the officer who brought the papers gave less than satisfactory answers about whether the brig was a prize, he had the Mirboka searched. Belowdecks, the search party found the officers of the Celia, who were clearly not on board voluntarily.

Since his men were already on board, it was easy for Bainbridge to take the Mirboka, which he did immediately, citing a violation of the passports. After such an easy capture, the weather proved more difficult to manipulate than the crew of the Mirboka—getting a prize crew on board the vessel took all night long. While Bainbridge was dealing with the Mirboka, the Celia repeatedly got separated from the other two ships. The next day both the Philadelphia and the Mirboka spent the day chasing the Celia, unable to bring the brig back under control until late afternoon. The Philadelphia had been headed for Malta, possibly to rendezvous with Commodore Morris, but after Bainbridge recovered both prizes, he turned back for Gibraltar to meet with Commodore Preble, the commodore of the relief squadron that would be arriving soon.65

Bainbridge also set the chain of communications in motion. Upon his arrival in Gibraltar, he immediately informed consul John Gavino of his unsettling discovery: orders to Ibrahim Lubarez, captain of the Mirboka, to capture American shipping. Gavino then notified Joseph Yznardi, consul at Cadiz.66 Bainbridge also sent a letter through William Kirkpatrick at Malaga to James Simpson.67 These consuls presumably notified yet other consuls, spreading the news for American merchants to be on the lookout for Moroccan cruisers, who could no longer be

65Bainbridge to Simpson, 29 August 1803, BW2:518-19. The squadron convoying the prize Meshouda encountered similar problems, encountering unusual weather and water phenomena that separated the squadron from their prize for several days. Henry Wadsworth noted, “It could not have been a very pleasant sight to the Commodore to see his own ship in danger & the rest of his squadron dancing about the straits, governed neither by helm or canvass.” Wadsworth journal, 16 July 1803, BW2:490.
66Gavino to Joseph Yznardi, 1 September 1803, BW3:1.
67Bainbridge to Simpson, 1 September 1803, BW3:3.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

considered harmless.

When James Simpson heard that the Mirboka had captured an American brig, he immediately appealed to the Moroccan government for answers. The answer to his appeal revealed that Morocco, just like the United States, suffered from poor communication and differing strategies for victory amongst the government’s leaders. Alcayde Hashash, the governor of Tangier, denied ordering the Moroccan vessels to attack American ships, but the captains of the Mirboka and Meshouda pointed to him as the source of their orders. When he pressed the issue, Simpson was detained in the governor’s house in Tangier. Only the intervention of the European consuls convinced Hashash to release him. Simpson wrote directly to the emperor informing him of the circumstances. He resented the interference of Hashash, in whom “the Emperor has of late placed unbonded confidence, insomuch that we have seen acts of his of a most extraordinary nature sanctioned by his master.” The emperor summoned Simpson to Tangier along with Bainbridge and Ibrahim Lubarez and their respective papers to sort out the mess, assuring Simpson that Morocco was still friendly toward the United States. The emperor also believed his authority to have been undermined by Hashash in front of the international community, so he wrote a circular to all the consuls at Tangier reaffirming that war could not happen without his express authority, and that if war occurred, he would respect the consul’s safety while he was in Tangier.

When the Mirboka arrived at Gibraltar, Captain Bainbridge faced a dilemma: where the ship should be held while its status was determined. To have the easiest access to Consul Simpson, Tangier was the logical place, but anchoring the vessel in that harbor was probably foolish. When John Gavino, American consul in Gibraltar, asked the government of Gibraltar to anchor the Mirboka there, he got a tepid response. Lt. Governor Thomas Trigge agreed to let the ship in, but only if the Americans did not intend to dismantle or sell it in Gibraltar. He also requested

68 Bainbridge to Simpson, BW3:3; Simpson to Bainbridge, 3 September 1803, BW3:9-10.
69 Simpson to Bainbridge, 3 September 1803, BW3:9-10.
70 Emperor of Morocco to Simpson, 9 September 1803, BW3:25.
71 Emperor of Morocco to consuls, 11 September 1803, BW3:26-27.
that its stay be as short as possible, as Britain did not want to get caught in the middle of the
dispute between the United States and Morocco, “the Mischivious consequences of which you
are well acquainted with.”72 Gavino could make no promises about either of the two stipulations,
but he noted that neither the departing Commodore Morris nor the incoming Commodore Preble
would likely involve the British in a dispute.73 When Preble visited Trigge later, Trigge reiterated
his concerns over the possibility that Britain might be caught between the United States and Mo-
rocco. He told Preble that Gibraltar was almost entirely dependent on Morocco for its provisions,
so any disruption to the relations between Britain and Morocco would certainly have unfortunate
ramifications for Gibraltar.74

Wild Goose Chases

The new commodore, Edward Preble, had served in both the navy and merchant service. As a
naval sailor during the Revolution, he had experienced both success and captivity; during the
Quasi-War, he had captained the Essex on the first voyage of an American naval vessel beyond
the Cape of Good Hope. Poor health had prevented him from serving in the Mediterranean thus
far, however; he had been appointed to serve under Morris but was unable to do so because of a
chronic illness.75

The transfer of power from Commodore Morris to Commodore Preble was fraught with
complications, almost comically illustrating the difficulties of communication. The first ship from
the new squadron to arrive was the Nautilus, captained by Richard Somers, on July 31, 1803.
Somers did not lack initiative: taking on supplies from the American stores and purchasing the
rest in Gibraltar, he stayed in Gibraltar for only two days before sailing to find the squadron.76 A
headwind slowed Somers’s progress to Malta, a journey that took twenty days. Along the way,

72Trigge to Gavino, 6 September 1803, BW3:22.
73Gavino to Trigge, 6 September 1803, BW3:22.
74Lear to Sec of State, 13 September 1803, BW3:82.
75Preble’s life has been documented in great detail by Christopher McKee in his biography, Edward Preble: A Naval Biography, 1761-1807 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996).
76Somers to Sec of Navy, 31 July 1803, BW2:502.
Somers “chased every thing that had appearance of Tripolitan.” Despite good reason to think the squadron would be in Malta, as it had been there for the greater part of the year, Somers did not find the commodore when he arrived in Malta. As Morris’s orders were to blockade Tripoli, the next logical place to look for him was off Tripoli. But again Somers was unsuccessful. Returning to Malta, he learned that he had missed the Enterprize by one day, and that the squadron was at Leghorn. He sailed for Leghorn after anchoring at Malta for only half an hour.

Near Sicily, Somers finally found one member of the squadron, the Adams, of which he inquired the location of Captain Rodgers. The fact that Somers asked after Rodgers and not Morris seems to indicate that he knew of the commodore’s recall. Campbell informed Somers that Rodgers had gone to Barcelona with a convoy. Again, the weather was against Somers. His description of meeting with the Adams seems to indicate that the waves were so high that from a distance he could see only the Adams’s topgallant sails, and he noted that no matter what course he plotted, he got a headwind within a few hours.

When Somers arrived in Barcelona, he found that Rodgers and the convoy had sailed for Gibraltar two days previous. Making his slow way back toward Gibraltar, through storms that were so severe that the Nautilus was nearly driven on land, Somers stopped in at Malaga. There, to his surprise, he found Commodore Morris. Somers was not pleased to see the commodore. He had dispatches for Rodgers, and having Morris there made his position rather awkward. Rodgers himself did not arrive till a day later, whereupon Somers was able to finally deliver his dispatches, a task which he confessed had been causing him considerable anxiety.

Henry Wadsworth, on board Morris’s New York, provided a different perspective on Somers’ arrival. Wadsworth learned from Somers that the Philadelphia had taken the Mirboka, that there was war with Morocco (there was not), and that Commodore Preble was soon to arrive in the Mediterranean. Somers also delivered the dispatch that recalled Commodore Morris to the

---

77 Somers’s orders directed him to place himself under the unnamed commander of the squadron in the Mediterranean; he seems to have inferred that that commander was Rodgers. Sec of Navy to Somers, 7 June 1803, BW2:443.
United States. Wadsworth records his utter surprise at the news: “We learn! Strange to tell!! We learn that the commodore is order’d home.”

Morris on Trial

Though Midshipman Wadsworth was shocked to learn of Morris’s recall, many others surely saw it coming. The court of inquiry that tried Morris when he returned home in November found him guilty of dereliction of duty and he was dismissed from the service. Morris’s failures illustrate the larger struggles of the American squadron to support itself across the ocean from its leaders.

The court—made up of three senior captains from the navy, Samuel Barron, Hugh G. Campbell, and John Cassin—alleged that Morris “did not conduct himself, in his command of the Mediterranean squadron, with the diligence or activity necessary to execute the important duties of his station,” listing several long periods of time where neither Morris himself nor any member of his squadron had been maintaining the blockade off Tripoli. Surprisingly, they found his conduct between May 1802, when he had arrived, and January 1803, to be blameless. He had not been on blockade then either, but he had been trying to sort things out with Morocco; apparently the court of inquiry found that activity a suitable substitute for his duty to Tripoli.

The court repeatedly used the phrase “without necessity, or any adequate object” to describe Morris’s decisions to remain away from Tripoli. Two of the three members of the court, Barron and Campbell, had served in the Mediterranean either before or under Morris, so he appealed to their knowledge of the realities of the Mediterranean as a window of experience by which to defend himself.

In his defense, Morris pointed first to the ambiguity of his orders. He argued that the government’s priority was to protect American commerce, which President Jefferson had claimed as the mission of the squadron. His orders from the Secretary of the Navy indicated that a blockade was the proper means to that end, and that he should maintain the blockade insofar

79 Wadsworth journal, 12 September 1803, BW3:30.
80 RVM, 11-12.
as it led to the protection of American commerce. Morris argued that when it became clear that the blockade was not preventing depredations, he had every right to interpret his orders to follow their spirit. He pointed out the vague terms in which the orders had been couched, as the Secretary of the Navy acknowledged his unfamiliarity with both the physical space of the Mediterranean and also the diplomatic climate, which could change frequently.\(^{81}\) Morris’s point was entirely valid, but even granting the ineffectiveness of the blockade, the court was right to judge that sitting in a port—particularly one where relations were stable—was not furthering a mission of any kind.

Once Morris dispensed with the philosophical and semantic defense, he turned to a more mundane argument: the difficulties of maintaining the squadron, and particularly his own ship. He observed that his Atlantic crossing had taken 55 days (by contrast, the Adams crossed in July 1802 in 44 days). He noted the time he had to spend repairing the Chesapeake’s bowsprit when he arrived in Gibraltar at the beginning of his cruise. Acting as a diplomatic agent in the Moroccan conflict caused yet more delays, until the weather made it impossible to get to Tripoli in the winter season.\(^{82}\) The spring was supposed to bring better weather, but when Morris tried to take the squadron to Tripoli in March 1803, he turned back because of “the fury of a severe gale of wind.” He cited Samuel Barron’s own experience of wintering at Malta because of the strong storms in the Mediterranean.\(^{83}\)

Provisioning the squadron was another barrier to Morris’s success. Supply ships from America delivered their cargo to Gibraltar, so ships either had to return to Gibraltar periodically, or rendezvous with one of the ships who had. Morris detailed the difficulty of making these rendezvous points, particularly the frustration of having to return to Gibraltar so frequently. Morris adopted the viewpoint of the sailors of his ship in his defense: “The poor seaman, struggling with the tempest on a lee-shore, must have something to eat. While he cheerfully performs his hard duty, he looks up to his officer to provide for his necessities, and the officer could hardly

\(^{81}\)RVM, 18-19.  
\(^{82}\)RVM, 44-45.  
\(^{83}\)RVM, 63-64.
apease the hunger of a starving crew, by describing the abundance heaped up in stores, at a
distance of twelve hundred miles.” He further blamed Alexander Murray for not bringing the
supplies out to the squadron as instructed.

The squadron had also been using Malta as a supply depot, but community fractures
threatened that practice. Morris had heard that the British had agreed to evacuate the island as
part of the peace of Amiens, surrendering the island to a “neutral” third party, the Order of
St. John. Morris had no experience at all with the Order of St. John and had no idea how they
might respond to the Americans. D.F. Allen argues that the British thought that the French were
colluding with the knights of the order to gain control of the island; Morris was not much better
off if Malta ended up back in French hands. Though the French might also have been willing to
supply the American ships, Morris had returned only a few years ago from fighting the French in
the Caribbean over trade, so he might have had legitimate concerns about the France’s good faith
concerning Malta if Britain evacuated. Thus, he took the time to investigate Syracuse as a possible
alternate location, nearer to Tripoli than Gibraltar. Syracuse proved to be a disappointment, so
Morris stuck with Malta.

Morris’s defense rang true in many particulars. Communications amongst the squadron
and with other parties were slow, unreliable, and likely to be outdated by the time they were
received. Provisions were hard to come by. The squadron’s ships were worn down and injured
by hard use. The weather was unpredictable. Relations with other nations were neither simple nor
always congenial. Morris also experienced the debilitation of sickness, though he did not bring
it up during his defense. He likely suffered from malaria during a critical part of negotiations
with the bashaw of Tripoli, when he initially refused to go on shore at Tripoli to treat with the
bashaw’s minister (a certain way to displease the bashaw). Though he argued that he refused

84RVM, 65.
85RVM, 58.
86D. F. Allen, “New Light on Malta During the Peace of Amiens, 1801–1803,” The British Library
87RVM, 58-59.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

because he did not wish to be quarantined at Malta, it is also possible that he was not physically
able to go, since he was at that exact time being treated for malaria by Pierre St. Medard, the
New York’s surgeon.\(^{88}\) Thus Morris’s authority, already shaky, was compromised even further by
illness. All of these factors were certainly reasons the squadron struggled to make an impact.

Morris’s tenure was not without merit. He had appeared in person before three of the
four Barbary courts. Though his negotiations were largely unsuccessful, his personal attention
to these matters was critical in maintaining tenuous relations where the American consuls had
proved too abrasive. But Morris’s deferential manner was not what the court of inquiry wanted.
The court ruled that Morris had been negligent, and he was dismissed from the service.

There’s a New Commodore in Town

On September 13, the day after Morris received his recall papers, Commodore Preble arrived in
Gibraltar. Preble wanted to settle affairs with Morocco, but he lacked key information about the
most recent developments. On September 7, as the Constitution neared Portugal, it had spotted a
frigate flying French colors. Upon closer pursuit, the ship turned out to be Moroccan. Knowing
the fragility of the peace, Preble boarded the frigate to inspect its papers. The ship carried all the
proper papers, including a signed and sealed passport from James Simpson. All of the papers’
validity was verified by Colonel Tobias Lear, incoming consul general to the Barbary states and
passenger on the Constitution. Since everything was in order, Preble let the ship go.\(^{89}\) Preble did
not know that this ship was the Maimona, carrying the same orders as the Mirboka to capture
American vessels.

Upon his arrival in Gibraltar, Preble learned from Consul Simpson the news surrounding
the three Moroccan vessels, the Meshouda, the Mirboka, and the Maimona. In each case, he was dis-
satisfied with the American actions. For the Meshouda, he was vexed with Commodore Morris’s
determination to return the ship to the emperor, stating, “Commodore Morris has the Controul

\(^{88}\) J. Worth Estes, Naval Surgeon: Life and Death at Sea in the Age of Sail (Canton, MA: Science
of that business, and must act as he pleases, but if she came within my command, I should most certainly send her to the United States. The Captains and Officers of the Emperor, dare not act without his Orders.” In the Mirboka’s case, he felt a similar passion: “You may acquaint the Emperor from me, that it is my intention in future to sink every such vessel as a Pirate, as he denies having given Orders to justify their conduct.” Preble did not leave his own conduct unexamined, expressing regret that he had not acted on his doubts about the Maimona’s unusual behavior.90

Though the American sailors must have been cheered by Preble’s bold declarations, his brashness showed as much naiveté about the Americans’ place in the Mediterranean system as had Morris’s torpor. Preble gave his own ship’s company a huge list of daily routines and rituals,91 but at times he seemed not to acknowledge that other groups might also have routines and rituals that would not easily brook alteration.92

By September 14, ships from both squadrons had converged on Gibraltar.93 Because he found Preble at Gibraltar, Morris was able to pass on to his successor information about all the various operations and negotiations the navy had undertaken in the last twelve months, a benefit Morris himself had not had when he arrived. Even so, the meetings were undoubtedly awkward. Morris was no longer commodore even of his own squadron, having given up the broad pennant to John Rodgers upon his recall. Rodgers was also technically senior to Preble, according to the secretary’s list. Therefore, when Preble hoisted the broad pennant of the commodore, Rodgers felt his seniority had been ignored. Preble assured him that no offense was meant, quoting his orders from the Secretary of the Navy as proof that his squadron was separate from Rodgers’s and therefore he could also be considered commodore. Rodgers did not agree. “It is not in the power (Even) of the Government,” he wrote, “to place you or any other Officer in a situation

---

91 Instructions, BW3:32-41.
92 For instance, James C. Bradford notes that Preble fumbled as a negotiator because he was unwilling to listen to the advice of the French consul who had much more experience in negotiating with the bashaw. James C. Bradford, Command under Sail: Makers of the American Naval Tradition, 1775-1850 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1985).
93 Constitution log book, 14 September 1803, BW3:45. The ships included the Philadelphia (Bainbridge), New York (Morris), John Adams (Rodgers), Vixen (Smith), and Nautilus (Somers).
which could afford an opportunity of treating me with Disrespect.” 94 Eventually, Preble was able to bring Rodgers around by requesting that he join Preble in the negotiations with the emperor of Morocco.

Preble also requested that Colonel Lear, who was ultimately bound for Algiers, stay in Gibraltar for a few days longer so that he might bring his diplomatic expertise to the negotiating table. 95 The juxtaposition of Preble’s bold statements about Morocco and his desire to sur-round himself with good advisers set the tone for his tenure as commodore. Faced with many of the same problems as Commodore Morris, Preble prioritized communication and collaboration rather than isolation and defensiveness, which allowed him to exercise a more active approach to the conflicts.

Same Old Problems

As soon as he arrived in Gibraltar, Preble faced the evergreen challenge of parceling out his ships in the most effective manner. Despite the problems with Morocco, Tripoli was the regency actually at war with the United States. He chose to stay near Morocco, but he sent two of his ships to Tripoli, lest “the Tripolines would be induced to think we neglected them.” 96 It took only a few days before the squadron was requested for convoy duty as well—Consul William Kirkpatrick wrote from Malaga that he had fourteen vessels ready for convoy, if Somers and the Nautilus could be spared. 97 Preble sent the Nautilus once, but no vessels were ready for him. Preble declined to send Somers back, instead dispatching the Nautilus and the Vixen to cruise looking for the Maimona and other Tripolitan or Moroccan vessels. 98

Off Tangier, Preble and Rodgers waited for the arrival of the emperor, Mulay Sulayman. Consul Simpson constantly worked to find out the whole truth about the Moroccan ships in dis-

---

94 Rodgers to Preble, 15 September 1803, BW3:47.
95 Preble to Sec of Navy, 18 September 1803, BW3:56.
96 Preble to Sec of Navy, 18 September 1803, BW3:58.
97 Kirkpatrick to Preble, 18 September 1803, BW3:59.
98 Preble to Somers, 19 September 1803, BW3:63; Preble to Charles Stewart, 19 September 1803, BW3:64.
pute. On the one hand, he had to quash the rumors spread by Hashash that the Moroccan crews had received poor treatment. On the other hand, new information from Captain Rodgers about the *Meshouda* led him to question whether he had taken the right approach. As the mediator among the three parties—the navy, the emperor, and the alcayde—it was paramount that Simpson have accurate information about the situations, which was difficult since he was essentially under house arrest. He grumbled to John Gavino, “There is no dependence on any thing in this country.”

While he waited, Preble took care of administrative tasks, such as sending out orders for the various ships in the squadron, as well as taking care of provisions. He also met with James Leander Cathcart, who arrived on the *Adams* on September 23, and heard the news from Tunis of Cathcart’s rejection as consul and the bey’s demand for a frigate. Disgusted by news from both Tunis and Morocco, Preble wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, “I know not how long we shall be obliged to submit to this sort of treatment, the Moors are a deep designing artfull treacherous sett of Villains and nothing will keep them so quiet as a respectable naval force near them.” Preble thought that United States and all the other “Christian powers” must determine to pay no more in tribute to the Barbary states, but rather to “destroy every thing they can belonging to them.”

On September 24, Simpson received word from the Moroccan secretary of state, Mohamet ben Absalem Selawy, that the emperor would see them as soon as he reached Tangier. More importantly, Selawy directed, the naval officers must be there with the *Meshouda* and the *Mirboka* if they wanted to treat with the emperor. “Beware of delays,” he wrote; “dont be slack or deficient in this matter of consequence for yourself.” The American officers seemed to be enjoying the company of the Moroccan crews. Preble himself shared his cabin with two of the *Mirboka*’s officers, the captain and a priest. Henry Wadsworth, transferred to the *Constitution* when Commodore Morris left for the United States, commented of the *Mirboka*’s captain, “A princely fellow

---

99 Simpson to Gavino, 19 September 1803, BW3:63.
100 Preble to Sec of Navy, 22 September 1803, BW3:70.
101 Selawy to Simpson, 24 September 1803, BW3:74. He reiterated this directive the next day in another letter, BW3:77.
102 Preble to Simpson, 25 September 1803, BW3:76.
invites me (after the War) to go home to Sallee with him & says he will give me four wives.”

A less effusive Tobias Lear nevertheless called Captain Lubarez “a sensible, considerate and well informed man.” Eventually, though, the differences in customary behavior on board a warship, about which Preble was very particular, proved too much to handle, and Preble tried to ship half of the 12 Moroccan officers to the New York. They begged him to let them stay, but their behavior finally pushed Preble too far, and he eventually confined them.

The same rains and winds that kept the American ships from easily reaching Tangier also delayed the emperor’s overland journey. While the squadron waited for his return, they engaged in short convoys and cruises off the coast, still looking for the Maimona. Letters of little import went back and forth between Consul Simpson and Minister Selawy frequently, as if both sides merely wanted to keep the lines of communication open but did not really have anything to say to each other. One of the ways the Moroccan government demonstrated their good faith was in releasing Simpson from house arrest. Colonel Lear announced Simpson’s release in the circular where he also announced his promotion to Consul General in place of Richard O’Brien. He hoped to be taking up his post in Algiers soon, as relations with Morocco seemed to be improving.

Finally, on October 4, word came that the emperor would be arriving the next day. Preble asked Simpson for guidance regarding proper (and safe) procedure for the meeting. Though the Moroccans seemed friendly enough, Preble did not trust the emperor, so he asked Simpson whether he should risk coming ashore to greet the emperor. Likewise, he wanted to know the proper etiquette on board ship: Should he dress ship and salute, or merely salute? Simpson suggested that it would be acceptable for Preble to wait to come ashore until Simpson had had a chance to meet with the emperor himself. He recommended as much pomp as possible from

---

103 Wadsworth to Nancy Doane, 24 September 1803, BW3:75.
104 Lear to Sec of State, BW3:85.
105 McKee, Edward Preble, 153.
106 Simpson to Preble, 3 October 1803, BW3:97.
107 Circular from Tobias Lear, 3 October 1803, BW3:99-100.
the ship, but to wait until after the garrison had fired its own salutes. These details were just as important to Preble as they were to Mulay Sulayman, both of whom had a strong sense of honor and were easily affronted. In fact, the emperor was greatly pleased with the Americans’ attention to him; Simpson reported that he watched another round of salutes the next day from a high place with a telescope. Simpson highly approved of the care Preble had taken: “Nothing could have been more apropos than your Salute just finished.”

When the emperor arrived, the Americans began to lose confidence about an easy settlement. Preble was concerned that Hashash would exert malignant influence over the emperor and Preble would have to recall his whole force to Morocco. After the ceremonies accompanying the emperor’s arrival, Simpson began to make overtures toward the negotiating table. However, he was not permitted to come to the Constitution to discuss strategy with the commodore. His lines of communication to the emperor were also compromised. Written communications to the emperor had to be in Arabic, which Simpson did not know, so he employed the services of two interpreters from the Spanish consulate. They were willing to help Simpson, but they would not go aboard the Constitution to translate the affidavits of the officers of the Mirboka. Simpson had to find a different way to get the documents into a form the emperor could see.

The emperor continued to give off mostly positive messages about his friendship. When the emperor brought an entourage onto the beach to view the squadron, Preble humored them with a salute in front of huge crowds, and the emperor’s band played the Olester March, which signified friendship. That day, the squadron received ten bullocks, twenty sheep, and four dozen fowls as a present. Given the struggles the squadron had experienced in the past with provisioning the ships, this present was eagerly received and quickly distributed. The emperor also ordered the release of an American ship, the Hannah, which had been taken to Mogadore a

---

108 Simpson to Preble, 4 October 1803, BW3:103.
109 Simpson to Preble, 7 October 1803, BW3:110.
110 Preble to Simpson, 5 October 1803, BW3:106.
111 Simpson to Simpson, 7 October 1803, BW3:108.
112 Constitution logbook, 8 October 1803.
113 Simpson to Preble, 7 October 1803, BW3:111.
few months previous. As a sign of his good faith, Preble promised likewise to return the Mirboka (once the treaty re-establishing peace was signed and ratified).114

Though the Americans waited for several days to speak to the emperor after his arrival, their optimism increased as they waited. Preble wrote with confidence that the treaty of 1786 would be restored, with no further payments or presents to the emperor: “I am fully aware of the happy combination of circumstances which has facilitated that so much desired object of our Government, without the agency of money, or even the promise of any future tribute or present, either of which must have degraded us in the eyes of these barbarians, and would only have been a prelude to greater insolence and demands.”115

On October 10, the American delegation finally received permission to meet the emperor. The next day, Mulay Sulayman ratified the former treaty with the United States, restoring peace without payment. In exchange, James Simpson asked Commodore Preble to release the Mirboka back to Ibrahim Lubarez and let him raise the emperor’s flag.116 Preble was able to disperse his squadron, revoking the order to capture Moroccan vessels and turning his attention to Tripoli.117 By October 14, the Constitution was the only American ship left at Tangier.118

Peace was restored, but the squadron did not leave Tangier entirely without injury—as the New York departed the harbor, it collided with the Siren, causing damage to both vessels. Only the quick thinking of Captain Charles Stewart kept the Siren from being destroyed in the “dreadfull crush.”119

On November 10, the Secretary of State wrote to James Simpson giving instructions for how to negotiate with the Moroccans regarding the Mirboka.120 When the letter was dispatched, it had been exactly a month since the Americans in Tangier had made peace.

---

114Simpson to Sec of State, 8 October 1803, BW3:114-15.
115Preble to Simpson, 8 October 1803, BW3:119.
118Preble logbook, 14 October 1803, BW3:134.
120Sec of State to Simpson, 4 and 10 November 1803, BW3:198-99.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

Trouble with the British

In Gibraltar, where several American ships still lay waiting for peace with Morocco, a conflict arose between Charles Stewart, captain of the *Siren*, and John Gore, captain of the HMS *Medusa*. Stewart, who was charged with the keeping of the *Mirboka*, had discovered that three of his prize crew had deserted and found their way to the *Medusa*, where they were given safe haven. Stewart wrote to Gore, requesting that he return the men, as it was the only right decision as a representative of a country with whom the United States had amicable relations. Gore refused to return the men, stating that one was not aboard and the other two had claimed the protection of the crown. He hoped the treaty of friendship between the two nations would motivate Stewart not only to revoke his claim to the deserters, but also to hand over any other men who were of British origin, who had shipped with the Americans while Britain was at peace but were now needed for the war against Napoleon. "As such Conduct is a violence against the laws of Nations," Gore wrote, "I must presume it Cannot be the intention of yourself and other Officers Commanding the Ships of the United States to persevere in it."

More angry words passed between Stewart and Gore. Stewart finally told Gore that he had no authority to release anyone and referred the matter to the commodore. In his letter to Preble, Stewart acknowledged that Gore had the legal high ground: "We are liable to great inconvenience and contention with the Officers of the British Navy, as, many of our men may be claim’d on the same principle" as the one Stewart had claimed. Preble too recognized that Gore was technically right, but he argued that he had no knowledge of his sailors’ previous backgrounds, only that he had enrolled them as American citizens. This was not true—his crew was likely a majority non-American—but the American ships could not afford to lose the crew.

---

122 It is not certain what treaty Gore was invoking here, possibly the Jay Treaty.
123 Gore to Stewart, 8 October 1803, BW3:113. Initially, Gore demurred on whether or not the men were actually on board the *Medusa*. Joseph Tarbell, the commander of the prize crew, led a mission through Gibraltar to trace the men’s whereabouts, in fine detective form. He found them, as he had suspected, on the *Medusa*. BW3:133-134.
124 Stewart to Preble, 9 October 1803, BW3:121.
125 Christopher McKee argues that foreign-born seamen represented a majority of sailors.
Ralph Izard, a midshipman on the *Constitution*, got to the heart of the matter: "It appears to me a matter of impossibility to draw a proper line of distinction, by which we may know an American from a British Seaman."\(^{126}\)

Desertions quickly grew into a major dispute between the American and British navies. Just a few days after Preble wrote to Gore informing him that he would go over his head to get his men back, Preble lost two of his own men to the HMS *Amphion*.\(^{127}\) Sensing a trend, Preble wrote to George Hart, the commander of the British squadron, requesting that he order his subordinates to return the deserters. Hart refused to do so. Preble invoked the character of Lord Nelson, who he argued would “not approve the late conduct towards us.” Calling Preble’s bluff, Hart said that he would in fact write to Lord Nelson and ask him.\(^{128}\)

This dispute affected more than just crew enlistments. It was the first major clash between the two navies, which was perhaps remarkable considering they had been sharing space in various ports for two years. Previously, the Americans had been concerned about British diplomats conspiring against them, but their relations with the Royal Navy had been quite cordial.\(^{129}\) But if the British were going to continue to encourage sailors on board American ships to desert, then Preble chose to make it hard for them rather than argue. He saw the desertions as a threat to running an efficient ship, because “every man we punish will desert if in his Power.” Since both

\(^{126}\)Izard to Mrs. Ralph Izard, 11 October 1803, BW3:127.

\(^{127}\)Preble to Captain Sutton, 19 October 1803, BW3:154-55.

\(^{128}\)Correspondence between Hart and Preble, 20-22 October 1803, BW3:155-159.

\(^{129}\)For instance, in August 1801 James Leander Cathcart thought that Murad Reis, the Tripolitan admiral, had been encouraged to violence by his friends Brian McDonogh and Simon Lucas, British agents in Tripoli. 10 August 1801, BW1:545-46. Eaton thought that the British had helped Reis escape from Gibraltar when the American navy had the *Meshouda* blockaded in. 7 August 1802, BW2:228. In contrast, many American naval officers reported good reception by various British naval officers at Malta and Gibraltar. See BW2:68, BW2:116, BW2:150, BW2:247 for examples.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

Gibraltar and Malta were in British hands, Preble chose to relocate the hub of his operations to Syracuse. The port was not as inviting as Malta, but Preble believed “we will find amusement enough in the necessary duties of our Ships.”\(^{130}\) In the short term, the squadron moved from Gibraltar to the Spanish port of Algeciras, “because the English commanders have treated us with great indignity.”\(^{131}\)

Disturbing news about the British came in from other quarters as well. Nicholas Nissen reported an alarming sight in Tripoli harbor: the arrival of an armed brig and a store ship with timber from Malta, flying the British flag. “Pray Sir,” asked Nissen, “is Great Britain at War with the U States of America, that their flag is permitted to protect the Cruisers & maratime & military stores belonging to the enemies of the United States of America?” And even though the bashaw surely knew by now that Nissen communicated with the Americans, Nissen asked that they keep quiet his role in providing information.\(^{132}\)

Not knowing of the conflicts and shifts of operations, William Bainbridge, who had been sent on to Tripoli by Commodore Preble, stopped in at Malta on his way. There, he received permission from the British commander to store some spare spars and gunners’ stores, continuing the relationship the navy had had with the British government in Malta. Removing extraneous cargo from his ship was especially critical since he had left 13 men at Gibraltar and now had nearly 30 men sick, so he had considerably less than his full complement to run the ship. Given the likelihood of bad weather and high seas, Bainbridge did not want to waste manpower keeping the extra stores from rattling around.\(^{133}\)

Supplies were hard to come by no matter where the squadron went. Disruptions in the Mediterranean had already hurt the American squadron, as the resumption of war between England and France had limited the supplies available for purchase at Gibraltar and drastically increased the prices on what was available.\(^{134}\) But moving operations to Syracuse did not guaran-

---

\(^{130}\)Preble, 23 October 1803, BW\(^3\):161.
\(^{131}\)Wadsworth journal, 10 November 1803, BW\(^3\):212.
\(^{132}\)Nissen to Cathcart, 28 September 1803, BW\(^3\):92.
\(^{133}\)Bainbridge to Preble, 4 October 1803, BW\(^3\):103.
\(^{134}\)Preble, 18 September 1803, BW\(^3\):58.
tee better supplies. The Americans had found Syracuse unreliable in the past. At the end of 1802, Richard Valentine Morris had tested out Syracuse as an alternative to Malta, but found “every article was much more exorbitant, and in fact, impossible to procure.” Preble wished to rely more heavily on the American supply ships, but they were also unreliable and costly.

Disease also caused the squadron difficulty in obtaining supplies. Because Preble did not want to get supplies at Gibraltar, he sailed for the nearest port, Algeciras. He was unable to get water there, because an epidemic of yellow fever at Malaga had closed all the Spanish ports between Malaga and Gibraltar. Instead, the Constitution and the Enterprize got water and repairs at Cadiz. The combination of desertions and disease had left the Constitution short of its complement of crew, though Preble did sign some crew on at Cadiz. A full crew was needed to man the ship when storms arose, “and we have had no other since we came on Station.” Tired and shorthanded, the Constitution nevertheless sailed back to Gibraltar as soon as it could to pick up Colonel Lear’s family to deliver them to Algiers.

The Mediterranean Don Quixote

On October 14, Mustafa Pasha, the dey of Algiers, wrote to Thomas Jefferson, “If you are my friends and wish to remain so,” then he required that the president several long cannons and 60,000 bricks to build furnaces. He wrote to Jefferson directly because Richard O’Brien, consul at Algiers, had refused to do so. O’Brien did write to the Secretary of State, outlining all the ways that the United States would be in trouble whether they acceded to the dey’s request or not. He suggested that Madison write “at least 3 different letters – differing in words,” which the consul (not himself, he hoped) could then use depending on how the situation unfolded. He recommended refusal, but only after several months so that the consul and other Americans in Algiers would have time to get to safety. He saw a conflict with Algiers as likely to lead to war.

---

135 Morris to Sec of Navy, 26 December 1802, BW2:382.
136 Preble to Sec of Navy, 23 October 1803, BW3:161.
137 Preble to Sec of Navy, 23 October 1803, BW3:161-62.
138 Mustafa Pasha to Thomas Jefferson, 14 October 1803, BW3:132.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

with all the Barbary states, so he suggested more force should be built and sent over. O’Brien wanted to break the Mediterranean system with force in a way that Europeans had thus far failed to do: “We shall have to do it at last – if some great Event of Europe does not Curb the pride avarice & System of Barbary.”\(^{139}\) He did not seem sanguine about the possibility of European intervention, however; the Danish, Dutch, Swedish, and Spanish consuls had already agreed to provide guns that the dey had also demanded of them.\(^{140}\)

O’Brien took the liberty of drafting one of the proposed letters himself, in which he refused every demand, writing, “We have too great a regard to our Honor & dignity Then to condescend and acquise to all The Unjust and Extra demands of your Highness.” He signed it “Jefferson” and addressed it to “The Meditteranian Don Quixotte.”\(^{141}\)

Sea Change

On October 31, the focus of the war suddenly shifted from Morocco to Tripoli. While cruising off Tripoli, the *Philadelphia* had sighted a Tripolitan vessel. Pursuing the vessel into Tripoli harbor, the frigate had run aground four or five miles east of the town. Despite cutting away anchors, guns, and even the foremast, the crew could not lift the *Philadelphia* off the bar. Four hours of fire from Tripolitan gunboats and shore batteries convinced Captain Bainbridge that he could not hope to defeat them. Around sunset, the *Philadelphia* struck its colors and the ship’s crew were taken prisoner.

The United States’ ally in Tripoli, Nicholas Nissen, took immediate action to get the prisoners into as comfortable accommodations as the bashaw would allow. The enlisted sailors were imprisoned in the bashaw’s castle and made to perform hard labor. The officers were settled in the consular house formerly occupied by James Leander Cathcart, though the Tripolitans blocked their view of the sea, presumably to keep them from knowing whether American help had ar-

\(^{139}\)O’Brien to Sec of State, 15 October 1803, BW3:134-35.

\(^{140}\)O’Brien to Sec of State, 15 October 1803, BW3:136.

\(^{141}\)O’Brien to Sec of State, 15 October 1803, BW3:136. O’Brien was clearly irritated at the dey, whose demands bore the same relationship to reality as Cervantes’ Don Quixote’s.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

rived.\textsuperscript{142} Six days later, the blocked windows kept them from seeing the Tripolitans raise the ship off the bar, assisted by a strong westerly wind.\textsuperscript{143}

In a letter to Preble, Bainbridge acknowledged two faults regarding the capture.\textsuperscript{144} The first was in sailing alone, instead of with the Vixen, which he had been ordered to do. His reason for sending the Vixen away was in order to cover more area for the protection of commerce.\textsuperscript{145} The second was that he did not know the shoals existed because no charts of the area showed them. Unfamiliarity with the area had already set the Americans up for failure in terms of the blockade, since their deep-draft vessels could not access the shoreline where the Tripolitan gunboats and commercial vessels slipped out. Now the deep draft of the Philadelphia had proved its undoing. Ironically, in 1802 the Secretary of the Navy had solicited the advice of Captain Bainbridge, whom he considered an expert in Mediterranean affairs on the basis of his one cruise there under Commodore Dale, about the size and trim of ships that would work best in the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{146} And he had listened to the pleas for smaller vessels from a number of people. Commodore Preble’s squadron had several schooners—the Vixen, the Argus, the Enterprize, the Siren, and the Nautilus—that were better suited to navigating in shallow waters.

While the Philadelphia’s crew languished in prison, Preble, knowing nothing of the capture, went about the daily business of the blockade. He had prepared better for the dispersal of the squadron than his predecessor. Acknowledging that distance might prevent proper communications, he instructed Isaac Hull, new captain of the Argus, to charter a “small swift Sailing Vessel” to send him any urgent news rather than leaving his station.\textsuperscript{147} That way, Preble could be informed of important occurrences without loss of blockade coverage. Dispatching his squadron to convoy duty, blockade duty, and his own ship to Syracuse to bargain for the use of the port as a base, he assured the Secretary of the Navy, “There shall not be an idle Vessel in

\textsuperscript{142} Bainbridge to Sec of Navy, 1 November 1803, BW3:172.
\textsuperscript{143} Bainbridge to Preble, 6 November 1803, BW3:173.
\textsuperscript{144} Though the officers were prisoners, the bashaw allowed them some censored mail service.
\textsuperscript{145} Bainbridge to Preble, 1 November 1803, BW3:171.
\textsuperscript{146} Sec of Navy to Bainbridge, 23 December 1802, BW2:337.
\textsuperscript{147} Preble to Hull, 7 November 1803, BW3:205.
my Squadron.” The blockade had essentially fallen apart over the last year, so Preble officially reinstated it, notifying all the relevant consuls that all neutrals trying to enter the port of Tripoli would be detained.

In November, the Constitution delivered Tobias Lear and his family to Algiers, where Lear took up the post of Consul General. Though Lear was supposed to go to Tripoli to negotiate, he suggested instead that he should wait until the spring, when the weather was better, so that the squadron could accompany him and provide an appropriate show of force. Preble agreed.

What to Do About the Philadelphia

It was almost a month before Commodore Preble received the news of the Philadelphia from a passing British frigate. With the loss of the Philadelphia, Preble was now faced with the prospect of continued, and perhaps escalating, war in the Mediterranean: “The loss of that ship and capture of the Crew with all its consequences are of the most serious and alarming nature to the United States; and if it should not involve us in a war with Tunis and Algiers in consequence of the weakness of our squadron, yet still it will protract the war with Tripoly.” At the very least, it had caused the prestige of the United States serious damage, not only among the Barbary states, but also amongst the Europeans.

The United States was already in a precarious position because of Richard Valentine Morris’s struggles to negotiate. James Leander Cathcart outlined the stakes:

All Europe as well as Barbary has view’d our conduct in silent expectation, since the war with Tripoli commenced, the former with an intention to follow our example if worthy imitation, & the latter to know how to rank us among the nations of the earth, whether to class us with Great Britain and France the only nations who make themselves respected, or with the northern nations whose miserable pusilannimoous acconomy has so far preponderated in their Councils as to induce them in many instances to sacrifice their national dignity merely because it cost’s them something

---

150 Preble to Lear, 13 November 1803, BW3:218.
151 Preble diary, 24 November 1803, BW3:175.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

less to bribe those Regencys to confer the honor of permitting them to navigate the Mediterranean sea, than it would to maintain a Squadron in the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{152}

Cathcart echoed many others’ concerns about the place the United States occupied in the Mediterranean community.\textsuperscript{153} The Americans saw themselves as far above the Barbary states, whom they considered savage, but they were less certain where they fit into the European hierarchy. The loss of the \textit{Philadelphia} did not improve their standing.

But the \textit{Philadelphia}’s crew needed the Mediterranean community. Bainbridge suggested that a mediator from a more powerful nation would be advisable, particularly Britain or France. He also advocated for an official treaty with the Ottoman Porte, which he thought might have some influence on Tripoli.\textsuperscript{154} A commission to formally establish relations with the Turkish government had fallen apart in 1799 and had not been revisited.\textsuperscript{155} As a result, Bainbridge was the only naval officer to have direct experience with the Ottomans, though his previous encounter was under similarly degrading circumstances. His delivery of a menagerie of presents from Algiers to the Ottoman emperor had set a tone of subordination that the United States was still trying to overcome. But at this moment, the navy might have to swallow its pride and take whatever help it could get.

Nicholas Nissen continued to act on behalf of the prisoners, including receiving and sending letters for them. Even before the \textit{Philadelphia} loss, he often wrote to Cathcart with news from Tripoli. When Cathcart passed on the information to Commodore Preble, he cautioned Preble to keep Nissen’s role quiet: “Mentioning the source from whence you gain your intelligence . . . might have serious consequences and might even tend to place Mr. Nissen’s life in jeopardy.”\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{152}Cathcart to Preble, 18 November 1803, BW3:229.
\textsuperscript{153}See Dale to Humphreys, 28 October 1801 (BW1:611); Eaton to Sec of State, 8 June 1802 (BW2:169); David Humphreys, \textit{The Miscellaneous Works of David Humphreys, Late Minister Plenipotentiary . . . : To the Court of Madrid} (T. and J. Swords, 1804), 71.
\textsuperscript{154}Bainbridge to Preble, 25 November 1803, BW3:176.
\textsuperscript{155}Roger R. Trask, \textit{The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914-1939}, (University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 3. The minister in charge of that mission was William Loughton Smith, who had smoothed over the incident between the \textit{Adams} and the French in August 1803.
\textsuperscript{156}Cathcart to Preble, 17 November 1803, BW3:226.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

Bainbridge wrote to Preble that he should send non-sensitive letters through the British consul at Tripoli, but sensitive materials should go to the Danish consul at Malta, who could then send them on to Nissen while providing another layer of security.\(^{157}\)

Bainbridge wanted help from another consul as well. One of the crew of the Philadelphia, John Wilson, had been “telling the Bashaw numerous lies to exasperate him,” expecting to be claimed by the Swedish consul as a subject of Sweden. Bainbridge entreated Preble to write to the Swedish consul asking him not to claim Wilson, as Bainbridge wanted him to “answer for his villainous conduct.”\(^{158}\)

Setting up at Syracuse

Commodore Preble could do little about the Philadelphia situation until he provided for the rest of the squadron, so he continued his path to Syracuse after leaving Consul Lear at Algiers. He arrived at Syracuse on November 28.\(^{159}\) The governor of Syracuse agreed to let the American squadron use the port for their base of operations, giving Preble “the use of Magazines Gratis to deposite any provisions and stores.” Other gentlemen of the town also paid their respects to Preble and offered whatever help the squadron needed. Their outreach was not entirely altruistic; Preble noted that they saw the presence of the squadron as “the means of protecting the coast from the depredations of the Barbary Cruizers.”\(^{160}\)

Preble immediately started to take advantage of the help offered. He found an American ship in the harbor that carried stores from the Secretary of the Navy, which were unloaded into the magazines. The supplies were somewhat less than satisfactory. “Most of the Casks are the worst sort of fish Barrels, and very few of them full hooped; in consequence of which, the Pickle

\(^{157}\)Bainbridge to Preble, 5 December 1803, BW3:253.

\(^{158}\)Bainbridge to Preble, 15 November 1803, BW3:223-24.


\(^{160}\)Preble’s diary, 29 November 1803, BW3:243. The Americans thought that the Neapolitan people were too cowardly to protect their own. Henry Wadsworth wrote that the people of Naples were amazed at the Meshouda, “a Tripoline vessel, which to them is a rare sight, for in their wars with the Barbarians they have shewn themselves such infamous cowards, that a capture on their part rarely occurs.” Wadsworth journal, 30 July 1803, BW2:502.
has leaked out, and the provisions spoiled. - Several [barrels] have been condemned and thrown overboard, being too offensive to be retained in the ship,” Preble wrote.\footnote{Preble to Sec of Navy, 10 December 1803, BW3:258.} Preble noted that they also had to re-pickle all the salted provisions in order to make them usable.\footnote{Preble diary, 9 December 1803, BW3:256. One would imagine that even these provisions, which were not condemned out of hand, were in pretty bad shape.} He also ordered his crew to make repairs to the Constitution. He allowed several officers to go ashore, where they found nothing but fruit for sale, though Preble assumed that they would eventually be able to buy “fresh Meat, Vegetables, Fruit, Candles, and Rice, cheaper than they can be purchased in America.”\footnote{Preble to Sec of Navy, 10 December 1803, BW3:256.} Alongside the ship, many bum boats, small harbor craft used by the townspeople as movable storefronts, offered their wares, but Preble would not permit them to sell to the crew, for the sake of “the duty of the ship.” He had enough problems already with his crew being disorderly—he had punished five men in one day for drunkenness—and he did not need them causing problems in Syracuse when they had just arrived.\footnote{Constitution log book, 29 November 1803, BW3:243-44.}

Many of the Constitution’s crew members had been sick over the past few months, including the purser, who eventually died. To deal with these illnesses, Preble requested a hospital ship. The squadron had sent sick seamen to Malta and Gibraltar in the past, but now Preble was reluctant to do that. Grateful as he was for the warm welcome at Syracuse, Preble did not want to put down roots too deep by building a hospital, “for it is uncertain how soon we may be disturbed by the French or English taking possession of this Country.”\footnote{Preble to Sec of Navy, 10 December 1803, BW3:258.}

\textbf{Meanwhile in Algiers}

Meanwhile, Colonel Tobias Lear settled in at Algiers in his role as consul general, replacing Richard O’Brien. Lear had served as President Washington’s personal secretary until his death. He then became consul at Saint-Domingue during the Quasi-War, so he had some experience in bringing together the navy and its foreign connections. When Lear arrived in Algiers, he found

\footnote{Constitution log book, 29 November 1803, BW3:243-44.}
that the *Siren*, bringing the consular presents from Cathcart at Leghorn, had not yet arrived. In consultation with Richard O’Brien, Lear decided that he could not wait till the ship arrived, as the dey might view a delay in a consular visit as a snub. Accordingly, he went to the Jewish bankers of Algiers, the house of Bacri and Busnach, to request a loan from them. Bacri and Busnach were much more than just a lending house; they served as an intelligence service, advisory board, and maritime commercial house for the court of the dey. They wielded immense power in Algiers. As diplomatic representative for the dey, Naphthali Busnach negotiated treaties and payments from the Europeans, and the consuls all went to him first.166

Lear’s loan from the Bacris was not the first time the Americans had used their services. Richard O’Brien had used them several times, as early as 1800, to help pay the American debt to Algiers, but he was no friend of theirs. He had written in 1801 that he hoped the American government would provide consular funds for presents so as “not to be dependent on those leeches and extortioners the Jews.”167 Now the government had provided consular presents, but they had not arrived, so O’Brien and Lear were back in the same position. They contracted with the Bacris for the presents and also the remainder of the annuity the United States had not yet paid, a total of over $20,000. Lear thought that when the *Siren* did arrive, the presents originally intended for the dey could simply be sold in order to recover the loan.168 It was perhaps for the best that Lear made the deal with the Bacris, as the store ship carrying naval stores for the dey had been lost off Cadiz on November 20, though Lear did not learn about it until December 10.169 But only a few weeks later, the Bacris were already refusing to pay the loans they had agreed upon. Lear believed that David Bacri was “determined to throw obstacles in the way to obtain advantages which he ought not to have.”170

Lear gave O’Brien credit for keeping the United States out of war with Algiers despite the

167O’Brien to William Smith, 10 January 1801, BW1:411.
168Lear to Sec of State, 2 December 1803, BW3:246.
169Joseph Yznardi to Sec of State, 10 December 1803, BW3:261.
170Lear to Davis, 18 December 1803, BW3:278.
tardiness of the promised gifts. “I should not apprehend much difficulty in keeping fair with this
Regency,” he wrote, “provided we are punctual in complying the stipulations in our Treaty, and
proper measures are taken by the Consul here to keep on good terms with the leading men; but
unless such punctuality is observed, and the Consul has the power or means to meet any sudden
or unforeseen storm, I presume we shall always be in danger of a Rupture, and the situation
of a public Agent here very precarious and unpleasant.”171 Lear also reached out to the French
chargé in Algiers, Dubois Thainville.172 Thainville in turn reached out to Bonaventure Beaussier,
the French chargé d’affaires at Tripoli, to secure his assistance in providing for the American
prisoners in Tripoli.173

In 1800, Thainville had been consul at Algiers when Bainbridge came in the George Wash-
ington; Bainbridge had provided Thainville and his family passage on the George Washington
when the dey ordered the French consul’s immediate dismissal. “As he considers himself un-
der great obligations for his friendly aid,” Lear wrote, Thainville was now doing whatever he
could to assist the Philadelphia’s crew. Thainville had returned to Algiers later and forced the dey
to back down on his demands for tribute, so he could be a powerful advocate in the Algerian
court, an ally worth having.174 Lear noted that Bainbridge’s reputation amongst the nobles of
Algiers was also favorable because of the George Washington’s voyage to Constantinople, so Lear
felt confident that Algiers would intervene on the crew’s behalf if needed.175

In a strange twist, Lear also reached out to Thomas Trigge, governor at Gibraltar, on behalf
of the dey. A few months previous, the dey had dismissed the British consul from his court, and
just a few days previous, some Algerian cruisers had captured a ship carrying a British passport
and sold it in Tunis. The dey wanted Lear to assure any British officials he knew that the dey
wanted friendly relations with Britain, and these two incidents should not be taken as acts of

171 Lear to Sec of State, 2 December 1803, BW3:248-49.
172 Lear to Dubois Thainville, 2 December 1803, BW3:249.
173 Lear to Bainbridge, 16 December 1803, BW3:274.
174 Green Mountain Patriot (Peacham, VT), 1 June 1803. Accessed through America’s Historical
Newspapers.
175 Lear to Davis, 17 December 1803, BW3:277.
aggression. It gave Lear great pride to be asked to intercede on the dey’s behalf: “If any good should result from a communication of this disposition on the part of the Dey (let it proceed from what course it may) I shall feel peculiarly happy in having been the organ of it.”

**Operations off Tripoli**

Whereas his predecessors had felt no need to cruise off Tripoli during the winter, Commodore Preble thought he had no choice, given the capture of the Philadelphia. He knew the Constitution could not remain out all winter, but he intended to keep a presence off Tripoli as much as possible. He also changed the procedure for cruising—two ships had to be on station at any given time, and no ship was to cruise alone.

Despite Preble’s plans, the wind held the squadron in Syracuse for several days in December. They could not get out until December 19, whereupon they headed to Malta. There, Preble left a letter for Nicholas Nissen expressing his desire to speak to him about the Philadelphia affair. He also encouraged Bainbridge to let him know the names of any other person who might be able to help the captives. In particular, he suggested Bryan McDonogh, who Richard O’Brien had said might be of assistance. This recommendation was peculiar, as Richard Dale had been convinced that McDonogh had encouraged the bashaw to declare war in the first place.

O’Brien, conversely, wrote to James Madison, “I believe the US. has inadvertantly done an injury to McDonough. I believe he is a good man and has ever been a sincere friend to the UStates.” O’Brien suggested that Cathcart’s jealousy had poisoned the American relationship with McDonogh. As proof of McDonogh’s good faith, O’Brien cited his assistance to the captured crew of the Sophia, O’Brien’s own ship, and the Betsey. Preble apparently believed Richard O’Brien’s side of the story.

---

176 Lear to Trigge, 3 December 1803, BW3:250.
177 Preble to Sec of Navy, 10 December 1803, BW3:258.
178 Preble to Nissen, 19 December 1803, BW3:279.
179 Dale to Sec of Navy, 1 October 1801, BW1:591.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

As the squadron sailed for Tripoli, finally a piece of good luck came their way. On December 23, the Enterprize and the Constitution captured a small Tripolitan ketch named Mastico. Preble sent the prize off to Syracuse with the Enterprize.\textsuperscript{181} Storms prevented them from leaving immediately, as the high seas had caused the prize to get separated from the Enterprize. To prevent this from happening again, the Enterprize took the Mastico in tow and headed off to Syracuse. Following his own rule, Preble and the Constitution came with them, stopping in at Malta on the way. There, he requested that Joseph Pulis, the American consul, find someone to translate the papers he had found on board the Mastico, hopeful that they would contain useful information.\textsuperscript{182}

Lessons from 1803

The year 1803 was, for the United States, the pivotal year of the First Barbary War. Key changes in the strategy and logistics for the navy began to shift the Americans’ focus. Though the contrast between the leadership styles of Richard Valentine Morris and Edward Preble could not be more stark, not all of Morris’s problems can be laid on him. Preble benefited from the decision of the government to send more ships, a need that had been identified since the very beginning of the war. Because of his larger squadron, he was able to meet the primary opponent—Morocco—while still monitoring the other Barbary powers. Morris had not had that luxury.

Morris chose to prioritize Morocco over Tripoli. In the long run, this decision had larger ramifications than historians have previously acknowledged. Though Preble sealed the deal with the emperor, Morris’s less hawkish behavior set up the negotiations. By keeping both the Meshouda and Mirboka in the Mediterranean, instead of sending them to America for adjudication (Preble’s suggestion), Morris had given Preble a bargaining chip that meant nothing to the Americans and a lot to the Moroccan emperor. With peace firmly established in Morocco, Preble could truly turn his attention to Tripoli, which he would have had to do whether the Morocco

\textsuperscript{181} Preble diary, 24 December 1803, BW3:294.
\textsuperscript{182} Preble to Pulis, 28 December 1803, BW3:300.
CHAPTER 3. 1803

question was settled or not. The capture of the Philadelphia might not have changed that much for the squadron, aside from the loss of a powerful frigate. But it did energize the squadron, the government back home, and the international community of the Mediterranean, to fight against Tripoli by whatever means necessary.
Chapter 4

1804

Behave Like Americans

On January 4, 1804, Commodore Edward Preble wrote to the captives of the Philadelphia, “Behave like Americans be firm and do not despair the time of your liberation is not far distant.” He ordered them not to work as slaves for the bashaw, but rather to “obstinately persist in your rights of being treated as prisoners and not as Slaves.” The United States would not ransom any American sailor who chose to work for the Tripolitan ruler. As official representatives of the American government, these naval seamen had to be treated as captive military rather than human spoils of war. Preble wrote to Yusuf Karamanli the same day explaining his stance. In addition to declining to ransom any captive who worked for the bashaw, Preble also informed the bashaw of his plans for the Tripolitan ketch Mastico.

The Mastico had been sailing for the Ottoman Porte when it was captured. It was carrying slaves and presents for the Ottoman emperor, as well as Tripolitan officers. The captain and crew were Turkish, and therefore were neutral. This distinction followed the British Report of Law Officers from 1753 that stated that “the lawful goods of a friend on board the ship of an enemy ought to be restored.” Preble intended to release the captain and his part of the crew, giving

1 Preble to Officers, Seamen, and Marines of the USS Philadelphia, 4 January 1804, BW3:312.
2 “Report of the law officers as to the action of Frederick II in withholding payment of interest on the Silesian loan in reprisal for losses alleged to have been suffered by his subjects at the hands of English privateers,” in R.G. Marsden, ed., Documents Relating to the Law and Custom of the Sea,
them a passport to continue on to Constantinople. But the Tripolitans on board, civilian and military, as well as the black slaves, Preble planned to send to the United States as prisoners, unless Yusuf thought it “proper according to the custom of other Nations, and as humanity dictates, to enter into a negotiation for an exchange of prisoners.”

Hamet’s Coup

While Preble considered how to deal with Yusuf, William Eaton worked on his plan to depose him. The year 1803 had been disappointing for Eaton’s plans for Hamet Karamanli. In mid-1802, he had convinced Hamet to go to Malta to wait for Eaton to organize a resistance, but Hamet had proved unable to resist his brother’s enticements to return to Tripoli. By November 1802, Hamet had taken the offered rule of Derna, though his family remained in Tripoli under his brother’s captivity. Cathcart dismissed him as useless: “There was a period when he might have been of service to us. That period is past. . . . I do not think it advisable to have any thing to do with him.” Instead of abandoning Hamet, Eaton began to strategize how to help him foment revolution from Derna in order to garner support for a larger coup. Unfortunately, Hamet turned out to be just as weak and unstable as alleged, and the support never materialized.

In November 1803, Hamet wrote to Richard Farquhar, a Maltese merchant who acted as Hamet’s intermediary, a requesting a loan of $40,000 Spanish dollars, along with guns and powder. In return, Hamet promised to give the Americans one fort in the city of Tripoli until he could pay back the loan. He requested these supplies as he was leaving Derna, unable to hold back a force his brother Yusuf had sent against him. Despite the obvious failure, Farquhar wrote to Thomas Jefferson, “If the United States assist the Said Bashaw of Derna [Hamet] to be Bashaw vol. 2 (Navy Records Society, 1916), 350. Preble seems to have included people in this ruling. See Donald A. Petrie, The Prize Game: Lawful Looting on the High Seas in the Days of Fighting Sail (New York: Berkley, 2001), 140-41.
3Preble to Prime Minister of the Bashaw of Tripoli, 4 January 1804, BW:312-13.
4Cathcart to Madison, 29 November 1802, JM, http://rotunda.upress virginia.edu/leaders/JSMN-02-91-02-0551.
of Tripoli they are certain of being successfull and it will be the means of keeping America at peace with all the other Barbary States.”

Joseph Pulis, American consul at Malta, wrote a few weeks later that Hamet had fled to Alexandria in Egypt, “dreading the loss of his head.”

In January 1804, Hamet, through his agent at Malta, again requested funds and supplies from the squadron, “to purchase some more articles of War & to collect some of his Freinds.” He intended to go back and retake Derna, and from there to conquer Benghazi and then Tripoli. Salvatore Busuttil, the agent, must have realized that Hamet’s position did not invite help of any kind. In case Preble did not know of the navy’s previous informal agreements, Busuttil included a letter that indicated Commodore Morris’s willingness to help Hamet.

In Malta, Commodore Preble met with Busuttil in person to discuss Hamet’s situation. Busuttil had little evidence of Hamet’s ability to lead an insurrection, but Pulis, whom Hamet had befriended during his stay in Malta, urged Preble to give Hamet a chance. Busuttil requested that the navy collect Hamet from Alexandria and bring him to Derna in order to begin the fight in the summer of 1804. Preble apparently demurred on going this far, even though Busuttil wrote him a letter reiterating his suggestion.

Richard Farquhar continued to advocate for Hamet. He reported that the political climate in Tripoli was unfavorable to Yusuf, and “when your Vessels appear off Tripoli with his Brother on Board they will Murder the present Bashaw.” Hamet apparently waited eagerly for the arrival of an American ship to take him to Derna from Alexandria in order to begin the fight. Preble had not yet agreed to any action on Hamet’s behalf. Hamet was nothing if not persistent: on February 8, a letter from Hamet to Joseph Pulis arrived at Malta, once again begging for the

---

6Richard Farquhar to Jefferson, 15 November 1803, BW3:222.
7Pulis to Preble, 26 November 1803, BW3:236.
8Salvatore Busuttil to Commanding officer of the squadron, 4 January 1804, BW3:314. The letter enclosed was probably from 20 November 1802, Richard Valentine Morris to the agent of Hamet Karamanli, BW2:317.
10Busuttil to Preble, 22 January 1804, BW3:352.
11Farquhar to Preble, 1 February 1804, BW3:380.
Americans’ assistance.\textsuperscript{12}

**Communications about the *Philadelphia***

If communications were difficult between the roaming ships of the squadron, they were doubly difficult between Commodore Preble and the captive Captain Bainbridge. Bainbridge developed a cipher so that he and Preble could communicate undetected, but as of January 18, he had received no letters from his commodore.\textsuperscript{13} Though Preble had written to Bainbridge a few times, the letters did not get through.

Bainbridge’s letters contained the information Preble needed to mount an effective assault on Tripoli. In his letter of January 18, Bainbridge’s observations related to two tactical issues: blockade effectiveness and the *Philadelphia*’s situation. Bainbridge observed that a Russian vessel carrying Turkish soldiers had arrived around the same time Preble had, and since then a Tripolitan cruiser. He noted a departure as well—a 12-gun polacre around January 8. It was obvious that the blockade was not working. He also suggested again that the best solution to the problem of the *Philadelphia* was for the navy to destroy it.\textsuperscript{14} This idea seems to have occurred to Preble, Bainbridge, and Lieutenant Stephen Decatur at roughly the same time, but only Bainbridge had intimate knowledge of the bashaw’s security measures on the *Philadelphia*.\textsuperscript{15} He also suggested an ideal time for the attack based on his observations of the weather.\textsuperscript{16}

Bainbridge continued to provide valuable intelligence to the squadron; he wrote in cipher to Commodore Preble about a planned attack on the squadron that lay at Syracuse, warning Preble not to take any vessel or crew’s appearance for granted—“they intend to disguise their Crew in Christian dresses”—and not to assume that the American ships were safe while at anchor.

\textsuperscript{12}Pulis to Preble, 10 February 1804, BW3:401.
\textsuperscript{13}Bainbridge to Preble, 18 January 1804, BW3:346. Bainbridge would eventually switch to writing in lime juice, which functioned as invisible ink, a much less painstaking system for both parties.
\textsuperscript{14}Bainbridge had suggested this idea to Preble in December 1803 as well.
\textsuperscript{15}Bainbridge reports the lack of guards at night, for instance, as though he could see them leaving. Apparently the officers’ quarters had had their window blocks removed.
\textsuperscript{16}Bainbridge to Preble, 18 January 1804, BW3:346-47.
in the harbor. Bainbridge knew that in order to keep the lines of communication open, caution and secrecy were paramount: “Keep it a secret that you receive any letters from me, thro’ Mr Nissen; and even better to not let it be known of your receiving any from me. - Place not too much confidence in the Neapolitan Doctor you have on board,” he wrote.

Both Preble and Bainbridge had been communicating with George Davis at Tunis, but delivery of that mail was appallingly slow as well. Preble did not trust his letters to Davis to any but an American naval vessel, which made “unrestrained communication” impossible. Mail was slow in the other direction as well—Preble noted on January 17 that he had just received a packet of letters from Davis addressed to Commodore Morris, who had been gone from the Mediterranean for nearly five months.

The entire consular network in the Mediterranean was interested in helping the Philadelphia—not just Americans, but Europeans as well. Consul General Tobias Lear and Commodore Preble were technically the only ones authorized by the American government to spend money on behalf of the Philadelphia captives, but others jumped in to help. Charles Pinckney, American minister at Madrid, asked the French, British, and Danish ministers in Spain to solicit the help of their respective consuls in Tripoli. Pinckney promised to reimburse whatever expenses they incurred, up to about $3000. Though he was not actually authorized to pay out any funds, Pinckney argued that the federal government could hardly fault him for having compassion on so many Americans in chains. James Monroe, minister to London, reached out to the Swedish chargé in Constantinople for assistance as well.

Robert Livingston, American minister to Paris, approached Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, Napoleon’s minister of foreign affairs, about getting France’s help. In response, Talleyrand offered the help of the French consulate in Tripoli, as well as a personal letter from Napoleon to the bashaw urging a quick peace. He assured Livingston that the French wanted to be friends with

---

17 Bainbridge to Preble, 17 February 1804 BW3:431.
18 Bainbridge to Preble, 18 February 1804, BW3:432.
19 Preble to Davis, 17 January 1804, BW3:341.
20 Charles Pinckney to Lear, 18 January 1804, BW3:349.
the United States: the first Consul’s “greatest pleasure would be, to be able to effect or preserve the blessings of Peace in all civilized parts of the World. He holds a sincere attachment to the people & Government of America, depending on a just return on their part. In short, his natural feelings excite compassion for the misfortune of your Country Men.”

Even Russia offered aid to the Philadelphia’s crew. When Levett Harris, American consul to St. Petersburg, learned of the capture, he wrote to Count de Vorontsov, chancellor of the Russian empire, asking for his assistance in the release of the crew. Vorontsov immediately did as Harris asked, writing to Constantinople to encourage the Porte to issue a firman releasing not only the crew but also the ship itself. For some reason, the emperor of Russia was very interested in helping the Americans. Perhaps it was because the Americans represented a challenge to Bonaparte and the standard European practices in the Mediterranean. Perhaps it was because the Russians wanted to break British monopolies and establish better trade with the Americans. In November 1803, Vorontsov’s representative, Adam Czartoryski, had expressed a desire to build up the United States’ West Indies trade with Russia, but the existing commercial treaty between the two nations was set to expire in February 1805. The two countries were also trying to negotiate carrying rights through the Black Sea at the time, so perhaps the emperor wanted to do everything in his power to appear friendly to American interests. It is also notable that Russia’s intervention went through the Ottoman Porte, and not directly to Tripoli. Russia had relations with the Ottoman Empire on the Black Sea (and of course by land), but its ties to the

---

22Talleyrand to Livingston, 17 January 1804, BW3:335-36.
24Vorontsov to Harris, 25 January 1804, The United States and Russia, 392.
25Russia’s foreign minister, Adam Czartoryski, was responsible for the empire’s shift from pro-France to anti-Bonaparte over the span of 1801 to 1803, according to W. H. Zawadzki. W. H. Zawadzki, “Prince Adam Czartoryski and Napoleonic France, 1801-1805: A Study in Political Attitudes,” The Historical Journal 18, no. 2 (1975): 245.
26Harris to Madison, 17 November 1803, JM, http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JSMN-02-06-02-0062.
27Robert Livingston to Pierre D’Aubril, 26 March 1804, The United States and Russia, 398.
Barbary states were minimal.

Not all the communication was positive. James Leander Cathcart heard rumors being spread about by the “Jews of Barbary... manifestly calculated to lessen our importance as a nation & sully our maratime reputation.” As national honor was paramount for the Americans’ reputation in the Mediterranean community, Cathcart requested specific details about the capture so that he could refute the stories “in the most pointed manner.”

Likewise, British goodwill did not extend to claiming some of the crew as British. Marine first lieutenant John Johnson reported a story he heard third-hand at Cadiz about how 140 of the Philadelphia’s crew had claimed British citizenship and requested Lord Nelson to acknowledge them. Nelson’s response, reportedly, was “if he done any thing in the Business, it would be to have the Rascals all hung.”

Given the American squadron’s tussles with the British over the question of nationality, it is not surprising that Nelson should feel no obligation to either real or fraudulent British subjects.

**Negotiations with Tripoli**

Though the Constitution needed repairs, Preble had business to transact in Malta, so he left the frigate in Syracuse and traveled to Malta on his own. While he was in Malta, Commodore Preble wrote to the secretary of the navy that he had received overtures of resolution from the bashaw “indirectly,” probably from the bashaw’s agent in Malta, Gaetano Schembri. Supposedly, the bashaw offered a one-to-one prisoner exchange of prisoners from the Philadelphia for prisoners from the Mastico. Preble believed the remainder of the crew could be ransomed for $400 each and a peace concluded that did not include annuities. This arrangement seemed implausibly good, but Preble intended to “take the necessary steps for lessening the Bashaw’s expectations” even further while waiting for advice from Consul Lear. Preble wrote that he had plans that he could not write about in case the letter was intercepted; surely those plans included the destruction of

---

28Cathcart to Bainbridge, 23 January 1804, BW3:353.
Preble received news on January 28 that changed his mind about returning the *Mastico* to Tripoli. The master of a British vessel, whom Preble had hired to be the *Constitution’s* pilot, reported that the *Mastico* and its crew had been involved in the capture of the *Philadelphia* after it grounded. Preble immediately decided to treat the Tripolitan crew of the *Mastico* as prisoners and keep the ketch, in retribution for its role in the capture of American sailors. He sent only one crew member back to Tripoli, with a message explaining his actions. That same day, the *Mastico* finally received pratique after a quarantine of 29 days. Preble immediately took the crew off the ketch and began to prepare the vessel to sail.

Preble also requested the assistance of Richard O’Brien, whom he offered to retrieve from Algiers. Recognizing the disadvantages of unfamiliarity with the Barbary states, Preble wrote to O’Brien, “Your knowledge of the Language and people with whom we have to negotiate, would give us advantages which we cannot otherwise have.”

At Malta and Syracuse

Despite Preble’s shift to Syracuse instead of Malta as his headquarters, Malta continued to be the mail stop for most communications with Tripoli. This decision turned out to be detrimental to the squadron. Joseph Pulis, the American consul at Malta, was supposed to forward mail to all the appropriate recipients, but instead he had kept many of the letters. When Preble discovered this bizarre action, he demanded that Pulis hand over all the letters, which Pulis claimed were all written by himself and his friends. It turned out that Pulis had kept letters from America, from foreign officials, and from the captives at Tripoli; letters that arrived for the captives, he

---

30 Preble to Sec of Navy, 20 January 1804, BW3:350. In April 1804, the secretary of the navy wrote privately to Thomas FitzSimons that the federal government had no intention of ransoming the prisoners, arguing that focusing on the prisoners and not on peace would complicate and protract the negotiations rather than shorten them. Sec of Navy to FitzSimons, 13 April 1804, BW4:23.

31 Preble’s diary, 28 January 1804, BW3:371. This story was later confirmed by many others.


was sending back to America instead of delivering to Tripoli. This, then, explained how Bainbridge had not received any of Preble’s letters to him. Preble demanded that Pulis be removed as consul, suggesting that naval agent William Higgins be appointed in his stead.\(^{34}\) Though Pulis remained consul, Higgins took over the task of mailman, whereupon the mail service drastically improved.\(^{35}\)

In early 1804, the navy seemed to spend nearly as much time at Malta as at Syracuse. Partially because it was a clearinghouse for information, but also because the British garrison on the island was more familiar to the Americans than the Sicilian officials, Preble and his ships found themselves at Malta quite frequently. Cementing Preble’s preference for Malta was the assurance of the British admiral there that the Americans would not face the threat of impressment as they had at Gibraltar.\(^{36}\)

Preble returned to Syracuse and the Constitution on January 25. While he was gone, the Constitution had lost one crew member to sickness, and at least forty-three more had been on the sick list.\(^{37}\) Preble was able to make up some of the crew he had lost by signing seven Greek Christians, presumably slaves of the bashaw, from the Mastico as ordinary seaman in the Navy’s service.\(^{38}\) Keeping crews healthy was difficult in both Malta and Syracuse. Food was a problem: the storehouses at Syracuse could not save the supplies sent from the United States. Ten barrels of beef, already re-pickled three times to try to make them edible, finally had to be condemned and thrown overboard, “stinking and rotten.”\(^{39}\) Spending time on shore apparently was bad for the crew of the Constitution; in addition to ten sailors on the sick list for “coughs, Fevers, and declines,” Nathaniel Haraden recorded that three sailors on the sick list had contracted venereal disease at Malta.\(^{40}\)

Shore leave at Malta was more enjoyable than at Syracuse. Ralph Izard, midshipman on

\(^{34}\)Preble to Sec of Navy, 3 February 1804, BW3:385-86.
\(^{35}\)Higgins to Preble, 9 February 1804, BW3:400.
\(^{36}\)Preble’s diary, 21 January 1804, BW3:351.
\(^{37}\)Haraden logbook, 21 January 1804, BW3:351.
\(^{38}\)Preble diary, 30 January 1804, BW3:374.
\(^{39}\)Haraden logbook, 7 February 1804, BW3:397.
\(^{40}\)Constitution logbook, 4 March 1804, BW3:472.
the Constitution, wrote to his mother about how much he missed the masquerade balls, parades, and diverse people with whom to converse in Malta, complaining, “Nothing can be more detestable than this Syracuse.” Nonetheless, Izard seemed to take pleasure in his difference from the inhabitants of the city, perhaps not always to their benefit. He wrote, “We are astonishing the folks in these parts & we do as we please with the Syracusans.” More generally, Izard was disappointed in how little honor this war would bring to its participants. He found the Barbary navies “a parcel of poor wretches without a single spark of honor & in conquering them no honor is to be derived.” He castigated the public back in America for their overblown adulation at the victories of the war so far: “What a mountain they have made of a mouse”!

Blockade and Neutrals

Though the blockade had been reinstated, questions about its legality remained. On January 30, Talleyrand wrote to the American consul in Paris, Robert Livingston, contesting the blockade’s adherence to the “principles which have become, in this matter, the basis of international law and universally accepted usage.” Talleyrand cited several violations. First, a blockade must be equal to the force of the blockaded port; therefore, the one ship Preble had cruising off Tripoli was not sufficient to legitimate the blockade. Second, a blockade could apply only to a specific port, and not to a general region or coastline; Preble could not claim the entire coast of Tripoli was under the blockade. How the Americans treated their blockade could have ramifications for how their own merchants were treated when other nations enforced blockades. Talleyrand was not ignorant of the advantage of American wartime trade; he wrote, “Perhaps the United States is more interested than any other power in not adopting a system contrary to the rights and commerce of neutrals.” He entreated Livingston to ask Preble to stop taking liberties with his orders and restrict his blockade to a legal version.

41 Ralph Izard to Mrs. Ralph Izard Sr., 2 February 1804, BW3:381-82.
42 Izard to Mrs. Ralph Izard Sr., 20 February 1804, BW3:416.
43 Izard to Mrs. Ralph Izard Sr., 2 February 1804, BW3:381-82.
44 Talleyrand to Livingston, 30 January 1804, BW3:372.
The French were not the only ones concerned about Preble’s strong rhetoric: when the Secretary of the Navy received Preble’s circular announcing the blockade, he wrote back to Preble clarifying a few points. Most pressing, a neutral who was not carrying contraband articles could not be taken as prize unless it was clearly attempting to enter the blockaded port. It could not be taken merely in the general vicinity—it had to actually be heading for the port of Tripoli. A neutral ship that did not know about the blockade could, and should, be turned away from entering the port; if it persisted, then it could be taken.\(^{45}\) Secretary Smith further noted that Preble’s circular was not sufficient to allow him to assume that every ship that passed through a port to which the circular had been sent was notified of the resumption of the blockade.\(^{46}\)

Preble was not ignorant of the rights of neutrals. In his orders to Lieutenant John Smith of the *Vixen*, he wrote, “You are not to suffer the vessels of any nation to enter or to have commerce with Tripoly, but have a right to treat as an Enemy whoever may endeavor to enter that place or carry any thing to it whilst blockaded by us. You are to respect the rights of Nations with whom we are at Peace and not to capture Vessels within the Jurisdictional limits or under the protection of such nations.” But his orders would not have made the French happy—his own concession to his blockade rules was in issuing passports for two ships to go to Tripoli to pick up bullocks for the British garrison at Malta.\(^{47}\)

On February 16, the *Nautilus* captured one of those ships with Preble’s passport on board. The *Santo Crucifisso*, flying English colors, was supposed to be carrying only ballast to Tripoli, but Captain Somers found six men of uncertain North African lineage (either Turkish or Tripolitan); two women; and a cargo including sails, hemp, and linen, all of which constituted contraband naval stores.\(^{48}\) Preble believed Somers’s capture to be fully justified, and sent the *Santo Crucifisso*

\(^{45}\)Donald Petrie states that when a ship was warned off from a blockaded port, it would receive a mark on its identifying papers. Thus, if it returned at any later time, the blockading force could easily determine that it had already been warned. Petrie, 107.

\(^{46}\)Sec of Navy to Preble, 4 February 1804, BW3:389. Of course, by the time these clarifications reached Preble, the blockade had been in effect for several months.

\(^{47}\)Preble to John Smith, 3 February 1804, BW3:87-88.

\(^{48}\)Somers to Preble, 16 February 1804, BW3:411.
to Philadelphia to be adjudicated in prize court. The master of the brig protested that he had been taking the cargo to Yerba, not to Tripoli, and “did not intend to violate the Blockade of Tripoli.” He argued that contrary winds had blown them off course and nearer Tripoli than intended. The master further argued that one of the passengers, Gaetano Schembri, could speak to the honorable intentions of the master. Schembri’s presence did not allay the Americans’ suspicion: Schembri had functioned as Yusuf Karamanli’s commercial agent in Malta, so his presence bespecked the ship’s intention to go to Tripoli.

Regaining Control

The blockade’s uncertain efficacy and legality sent Preble searching for a more aggressive strategy toward the bashaw. He wanted to bombard the city, but the American navy had no vessels adequate to that task. Therefore, he requested gunboats from Naples and Leghorn, a request that James Leander Cathcart at Leghorn was eager to meet. Cathcart also put out feelers to Marseilles about getting gunboats built to his specifications. In case the French government should be concerned, he assured Stephen Cathalan, the agent at Marseilles, that these boats were intended for the American navy’s use only. Cathalan thought that the French would indeed be concerned—exporting guns and ammunition was illegal in France, and the French might not want to get in the middle of a war with Tripoli. Cathalan also questioned the wisdom of the bombardment. He recalled that when the Swedes planned to bombard Tripoli, the bashaw threatened to execute all Swedish prisoners. With four hundred American prisoners of war behind Tripoli’s walls, Cathalan was not sure the navy should risk the same outcome.

On January 31, Preble outlined for Lear everything he had done to regain control of the Philadelphia situation. He had written to Bainbridge several times, though Bainbridge had apparently not received any of his letters. He had also sent money, clothes, and stores to the

---

49Preble statement, 16 February 1804, BW3:411-12.
50“Statement concerning the brig St. Crucifisso,” 16 February 1804, BW3:412.
51Preble to Lear, 31 January 1804, BW3:378-79.
52Cathcart to Cathalan, 3 February 1804, BW3:383.
prisoners, care of Bryan McDonogh and Nicholas Nissen. He had written to the bashaw to request a prisoner exchange. He had listened to the bashaw’s agent at Malta propose a ten-year truce or $125,000 as ransom for the captives along with an exchange of the Mastico and its crew. He had requested gunboats from Naples and Leghorn.\textsuperscript{54}

Most importantly, Preble described his orders to Charles Stewart and Stephen Decatur. Stewart, in the Siren, and Decatur, in the Mastico (renamed the Intrepid), were to sail to Tripoli in disguise. Under cover of darkness, the Intrepid was to take a boarding party of seventy volunteers to the Philadelphia, anchored in the harbor, and burn the ship.\textsuperscript{55} The Siren and the Intrepid were ideal for this task; the Intrepid was a Tripolitan vessel originally, and the Siren had never been on a cruise before Tripoli, so the two vessels should not arouse the suspicion of the Tripolitan harbor guards.\textsuperscript{56} Preble noted matter-of-factly in his memoranda of February 3, “The Syren and Intrepid sailed for Tripoli to burn the Philadelphia.”\textsuperscript{57} The plans were tightly guarded; the Constitution’s logbook recorded only that the two ships had gone on “some Secrete Expuditen.”\textsuperscript{58}

Once the two vessels were underway, their crews found out the exact nature of their mission. Cornelius DeKrafft, midshipman on the Siren, recorded that “they were pleas’d to express their satisfaction by 3 hearty cheers.”\textsuperscript{59} Poor weather slowed their progress toward Tripoli and their plans once they arrived. The two vessels lay for ten days off Tripoli waiting for the perfect weather conditions.

In the evening of February 16, the conditions were finally right for the assault. Decatur took his men, came up as close to the Philadelphia as possible, and boarded the ship. After subduing the guards, Decatur’s men set charges throughout the Philadelphia. Decatur wrote, “I immediately fired her in the Store Rooms, Gun Room Cockpit & Birth Deck and remained on board until the flames had issued from the Spar Deck hatch ways & Ports, and before I got from alongside

\textsuperscript{54}Preble to Lear, 31 January 1804, BW3:378-79.
\textsuperscript{55}Preble to Lear, 31 January 1804, BW3:378.
\textsuperscript{56}Preble to Sec of Navy, 3 February 1804, BW3:384.
\textsuperscript{57}Preble memo book, 3 February 1804, BW3:388.
\textsuperscript{58}Constitution logbook, 3 February 1804, BW3:388.
\textsuperscript{59}DeKrafft journal, 3 February 1804, BW3:389.
the fire had communicated to the rigging and tops.” As the ship burned, its loaded guns fired into the city. Though the noise of the conflict raised an alarm on the shore, the Americans were able to accomplish their mission before any relief arrived from the city.60

The boarding party quickly returned to the Intrepid and sailed away. Decatur reported that twenty Tripolitans had been killed, and many more had jumped into the sea or gotten off in a boat.61 The Americans had suffered only one slight injury. Decatur lauded his crew, both officers, enlisted seamen, and even the Maltese pilot they had hired for the mission.62 Charles Stewart, captain of the Siren, lamented that the Siren’s boats had not been able to join in the fight and destroy some of the other Tripolitan cruisers in the harbor, but the expedition had nevertheless been a triumph.63

Even in this, the Americans’ boldest declaration of difference from the system of capitulation to the Barbary states, they could not accomplish the mission all on their own. Some of the help was intentional, but some was not. When the Intrepid drew close to the Tripolitan shore, it was flying English colors. Seeing the Intrepid’s colors, the English consular house raised its own colors in response.64 This recognition was not trivial. On the very day the Intrepid entered Tripoli harbor, the Nautilus was capturing the Santo Crucifisso, which the British expected to arrive to load the bullocks for Malta. The British consul thought the Intrepid was the Santo Crucifisso. So during the critical period when the Intrepid was exposed to enemy fortifications, the ship was not invisible—it was vouched for by the British accidentally.

The Maltese pilot that the navy had hired to navigate the waters around Tripoli turned out to be a valuable asset. The mission on the 16th was the third attempt the Americans had made to get into the harbor. On the night Decatur wanted to try the first time, February 7, the

---

61 McKee states that only four or five Tripolitans were killed and only 20 or so were on board, based on the testimony of Bonaventure Beaussier; McKee, Edward Preble, 197. I choose instead to take Decatur’s deposition at its word, BW3:423.
63 Stewart to Preble, 19 February 1804, BW3:415.
64 Izard to Mrs. Izard, 20 February 1804, BW3:417.
pilot warned them not to do it, as the winds would drive the boat into the shore and they would not return. Furthermore, on February 16, the pilot, Salvatore Catalano, was able to speak to the guards on the Philadelphia in Arabic, informing them that this ketch was in fact the vessel sent for the bullocks.\textsuperscript{65} Though Decatur disagreed with Catalano’s strategic acumen, there was no doubt that without him the mission would not have succeeded.\textsuperscript{66}

**Aftermath**

There were no mild reactions to the burning of the Philadelphia. In Tripoli, the bashaw put the American prisoners under intensified guard and threatened fire and brimstone.\textsuperscript{67} The Americans’ strongest advocate, Nicholas Nissen, found more barriers in his way to helping the prisoners. For the past few months, he had been helping them in direct violation of the treaty the Danish government had signed with the bashaw, which specifically stipulated that he was not to interfere in any matters except his own nation’s. After the bashaw tightened security on the prisoners, though, Nissen noted that they could not receive communications of any kind. Whether Nissen would be permitted to come out to Preble’s ship when it arrived depended entirely on the bashaw’s mood.\textsuperscript{68} Nissen assumed that Preble would be arriving soon to negotiate for peace.

Operating from a position of strength, Preble wrote to the secretary of the navy a few days after the Philadelphia’s destruction, “My heart is fixed on obliging [the bashaw] to sue for Peace and I hope yet to make him consent to sign a treaty as favorable as ours with Morocco without a cent for Peace or Tribute. I had rather spend my life in the Mediterranean than we should ever consent to either.”\textsuperscript{69} Gaetano Schembri, the bashaw’s agent in Malta whose proposals for

\textsuperscript{65}McKee, Edward Preble, 196.

\textsuperscript{66}McKee records that Catalano wanted to board before Decatur was ready to do so, McKee, Edward Preble, 197. In addition, Catalano later gave a deposition that he thought the Philadelphia, with his help as a pilot, could have been raised and retaken rather than destroyed. No one else shared his opinion on this matter at the time; “Certificate of Salvatore Catalano,” BW3:421.

\textsuperscript{67}Nicholas Nissen reported on their condition to his counterpart in Marseilles, 29 February 1804, BW3:422.

\textsuperscript{68}Nissen to Preble, 20 February 1804, BW3:446-47.

\textsuperscript{69}Preble to Sec of Navy, 19 February 1804, BW3:439.

155
peace had previously been rejected by Preble, arrived in Tripoli knowing Preble’s own plans for peace.\textsuperscript{70} On March 5, Schembri met with the bashaw in order to work out a proper settlement.\textsuperscript{71}

For Decatur, this mission would vault him into the path of glory. The secretary of the navy was so pleased that he broke seniority (an action he had not been willing to do for anyone else thus far), writing to Commodore Preble, “As a testimonial of our high sense of the brilliance of this Enterprize, we send The Hero a Captain’s Commission.”\textsuperscript{72} Congress also voted to give Decatur a sword, and the crew of the \textit{Intrepid} two months’ pay, in gratitude.\textsuperscript{73} The action garnered the respect of other nations as well. In Tunis, George Davis saw the mission as an atonement for the disastrous blunders of Richard Valentine Morris: “It has made much noise in Tunis, and is the only occasion, on which I have heard our Countrymen spoken of with due respect.”\textsuperscript{74}

While the American squadron regrouped, James Leander Cathcart worked to get the squadron gunboats from Marseilles. These gunboats marked a new level of integration into the Mediterranean community—they would be built in a Mediterranean port, by European workmen, and would be manned by European bombardiers hired by Preble. When the United States had requested armaments from the community in the past, they had gotten a cool reception. This case seemed to be no different: Marseilles was a dead end.\textsuperscript{75} When Cathcart inquired at Leghorn, he found some mortars that would suit for his gunboats. But when their owner heard that Cathcart wanted to buy the mortars, he destroyed them rather than selling to the Americans. Cathcart surmised that this action was because the merchant, who was Jewish, did not want the bashaw of Tripoli to take vengeance on Jews living in Tripoli if he heard that the Jews of Leghorn were providing the Americans with implements of war. The government of Leghorn was more accommodating, granting Cathcart permission to have gunboats built in the port.\textsuperscript{76}

Preble informed Cathcart that he had reached out to the government of Naples about

\textsuperscript{70}Nissen to Danish consul in Marseilles, 29 February 1804, BW3:422.
\textsuperscript{71}Dghies to Bainbridge, 5 March 1804, BW3:474.
\textsuperscript{72}Sec of Navy to Preble, 22 May 1804, BW3:427.
\textsuperscript{73}Resolution of 28 November 1804, BW3:428.
\textsuperscript{74}Davis to Lear, 9 March 1804, BW3:483.
\textsuperscript{75}Cathcart to Preble, 27 February 1804, BW3:458-59.
\textsuperscript{76}Cathcart to Preble, 19 February 1804, BW3:435-36.
building gunboats, and had also looked into buying some at Palermo or Messina. All of these possibilities were in neutral ports who might be willing to help the Americans, but they might be happier to stay out of a war in which they were not obligated to assist.\footnote{Preble to Cathcart, 19 February 1804, BW3:437.} Where the French were reluctant to get involved, Abraham Gibbs, American consul at Palermo, felt certain that General Acton, the governor of Naples, would be happy to sell to the Americans “upon giving Security that they are to serve against the Common Enemy Tripoli.”\footnote{Abraham Gibbs to Preble, 21 February 1804, BW3:448. It’s not certain that Gibbs had an actual commission from the United States to serve as consul, but he seems to have taken on some consular duties. He may have received an official commission later, possibly 1805. See Early American Foreign Service Database, www.eafsd.org.}

Taking heart from Gibbs’ positive reaction, Cathcart wrote to Acton requesting four gunboats and four mortar boats. He reminded the general that the Americans had enjoyed good relations with Naples in the past, and also that the American presence in Syracuse was “in reality promoting the Welfare of his subjects, by giving security to their persons and property, and lessening the risk of navigating under the Neapolitan flag.”\footnote{Cathcart to Sir John Acton, 5 March 1804, BW3:476.} John Broadbent, the navy’s agent in Messina, gave Cathcart some help in publicizing the benefits of assistance to the United States. He sent the story of the Philadelphia’s destruction to the gazette of Messina, as well as sending a copy to General Acton. He argued, “Achievements of this nature cannot be too well known; it will have a good effect on the Court of Naples, and may give courage to this Government.”\footnote{Broadbent to Preble, 6 March 1804, BW3:478.}

Acton replied to Cathcart on March 27. The king of the Two Sicilies would be happy to give the Americans the gunboats and mortar boats they had requested, but he was less willing to give them the guns that went in the boats. Acton suggested that if Preble came to Naples personally, the American navy would surely be able to get everything it wanted.\footnote{Acton to Cathcart, 27 March 1804, BW3:538.}

Preble could not wait for the gunboats; he planned to go back out on a cruise, and wished to take Cathcart with him. As though he were inviting Cathcart on a holiday weekend, he wrote, “What think you of a cruise for a few weeks? I am in want of a volunteer who possesses your
knowledge of the Nation we are at war with. My Cabin & table is at your Service, if you incline to favour me with your company; & I will engage to show you sport before the summer is out.”

Even with the loss of the Philadelphia, Commodore Preble still commanded the largest American squadron that had yet been seen in the Mediterranean. Hard sailing and bad weather had begun to take their toll on the ships, though. Preble had to balance his desire to lose not a moment with the reality that if his ships did not get repairs, they would fall apart. He compromised by ordering the minimum possible work and the greatest possible haste. Just one day after Stephen Decatur returned in triumph from Tripoli, Preble ordered him to take the Enterprize to Messina, to “give her such repairs as are absolutely necessary to make her a safe Vessel.” He requested of John Broadbent that “the repairs which Capt. Decatur directs to be made, may be finished in the shortest possible time.”

Keeping Up Relations

In Morocco, the peace had to be kept. Affairs with Morocco were settled at the highest level, but the small details were still problematic. The captain of the Meshouda claimed that though the ship had been returned, some money had been stolen from him and a few others, and Omar, the captain, had been badly beaten by one of the prize crew on the Meshouda. Simpson wished that the New York had stayed long enough to complete the transfer of the Meshouda, since now he was left to iron out these details himself when it was the navy who was possibly at fault. These minor problems seem not to have hurt the navy’s relations with the emperor himself; the newly arrived Argus received fresh meat and vegetables from the emperor as a gift.

Early in 1804, a year after they were originally commissioned, one hundred gun carriages finally arrived from the United States for Morocco. Unfortunately, even after all the communi-

---

82 Preble to Cathcart, 19 February 1804, BW3:437.
83 Preble to Decatur, 20 February 1804, BW3:446.
84 Preble to Broadbent, 20 February 1804, BW3:446.
85 Simpson to Preble, 22 February 1804, BW3:450-51.
cations about them—they had been ordered, canceled, and reordered depending on the federal government’s knowledge about peace with Morocco—the carriages sent were useless to the emperor. He had requested gun carriages for his fortifications, but the ones sent were for ships. His batteries were mounted with 18- and 24-pounder guns, but the ones sent were for 12-pounders. Only one handspike per carriage was sent. Simpson was able to acquire one hundred more handspikes from Gibraltar, but he could not remedy the size problem.\textsuperscript{87} Luckily, the emperor seemed pleased with the gift, wrong size or not.\textsuperscript{88}

Preble also had to keep the peace with Britain. He was sensible of his awkward position concerning the \textit{Santo Crucifisso}. Convinced he was in the right, he had to make sure that the British saw the vessel’s actions in the same light as he did. Therefore, he wrote to Sir Alexander Ball at Malta. He started by describing the destruction of the \textit{Philadelphia}, an action that was sure to garner Ball’s respect and approbation. Then he explained the situation of the \textit{Santo Crucifisso}: “I suppose he thought to smuggle in our Enemies & their property with impunity. I am confidant this transaction is without your sanction, and without your knowledge.” Though Preble was planning to take the ship and cargo, he sent it back to Malta for Ball’s approval.\textsuperscript{89}

Though the Ottoman Porte had showed no signs of wanting trouble with the United States, Preble took precautions with them as well. He sent one of the Turkish officers who had been captured on the \textit{Mastico} back to Constantinople, bearing a letter of conciliation. Preble noted that the officer had done nothing to provoke the capture, instead averring that “his conduct as an Officer, and Gentleman, reflects great honor on his Nation.” But Preble also wanted to make sure that the honor of the United States was acknowledged: the blockade in which the \textit{Mastico} had been caught, he wrote, “is of the first importance in compelling them [Tripoli] to a peace that may be consistant with the honor and dignity of our Country.” Preble sent the letter to the French ambassador for relay rather than directly to the sultan, acknowledging his unfamiliarity with

\textsuperscript{87}Simpson to Sec of State, 28 February 1804, BW3:460-61.  
\textsuperscript{88}Emperor of Morocco to Simpson, 18 March 1804, BW3:498.  
\textsuperscript{89}Preble to Alexander Ball, 24 February 1804, BW3:454-55.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

proper protocol about these sensitive matters. He wrote an additional letter to the ambassador explaining why he could legally capture the *Mastico* even though it was flying Turkish colors. He argued that because the *Mastico*’s captain and crew had participated in the capture of the *Philadelphia* while flying Tripolitan colors, their subsequent attempt to run the blockade under Turkish colors amounted to piracy. He sent to Ambassador Brune a statement by the officer he was sending home, as well as several other statements that exonerated the Turkish government from blame for their ship’s behavior, and lay the blame instead on the bashaw of Tripoli.91

He sent similar letters to the “Captain Pasha,” the head of the Ottoman navy, invoking the community’s laws as evidence of commonality: “I hope and expect from the friendship & respect which the Government of the United States of America have for the Grand Seignior, and the Ottoman Nation that it will please him to grant us that Justice for which he is so renowned by ordering the Bashaw to surrender up to me, the Officers and Crew of the Frigate [*Philadelphia*], and by punishing in an exemplary manner those of his subjects who were concerned in this flagrant violation of the law of Nations.”92 Preble invoked both the laws which he intended to follow—the Law of Nations—and also the Ottomans’ own sense of law and justice, acknowledging that both legal systems were in play.

**The Inconveniences of Success**

Thus far, 1804 had been the most successful year of the war for the navy. However, having no bases in the Mediterranean meant that success could be its own problem. Prisoners had to remain on naval vessels indefinitely instead of being held on shore, causing overcrowding and a drain on supplies. Preble had kept the prisoners of the *Mirboka* on the *Constitution* for as long as he could, but “their want of attention to cleanliness was injurious to the health of my Crew.” He was given permission to detain the prisoners in some castles at Syracuse, but he kept eight of the

---

90 Preble to General Brune, 4 March 1804, BW3:469.
91 Preble to General Brune, 4 March 1804, BW3:470. Preble recorded that he sent similar letters to the English ambassador as well, BW3:485.
92 Preble to Captain Pasha, 7 March 1804, BW3:480-81. “Captain Pasha” is a bastardization of the title “Kapudan Pasha.”
officers, whom he deemed too important to be placed under someone else’s care.\footnote{Preble to Sec of Navy, 11 March 1804, BW3:485.}

The squadron also had to focus on making war now that the Philadelphia was taken care of. But it would be difficult to concentrate on Tripoli if the other Barbary states became fractious. Therefore, Preble was concerned when he found three Tunisian frigates and a number of smaller Tunisian naval vessels fitting out at Malta. Hearing that the Tunisians were going to target Americans, Preble lamented that his squadron could not be at full effectiveness in four places at once: blockading Tripoli, monitoring Tunis, monitoring Morocco, and convoying merchants. This was particularly true as Tunis intruded more boldly into American affairs. On March 13, the Tunisian admiral at Malta came to the Constitution to demand that he be allowed to inspect the prisoners on board, in case any of them were Tunisian. Preble rebuffed the admiral, noting that he had already released the one Tunisian he had found. The admiral made threats toward the American navy, which Preble feared might turn out to be true—the Tunisians certainly seemed to be escalating toward war.\footnote{Preble to Sec of Navy, 14 March 1804, BW3:491.}

In order to be effective, Preble wanted two more frigates and the Argus. (The Argus had arrived in the Mediterranean and was on its way toward Preble.) For Preble’s squadron, the

Figure 4.1: Map of locations related to the war in 1804.
secretary of the navy had tried to follow the advice received from the previous commodores about the need for shallower-draft vessels, but Preble thought the pendulum had swung too far in the other direction. He had five schooners, but only one frigate now that the Philadelphia was gone. He also wanted more guns and more powder, as “I expect to spend a large quantity of Powder in Fire Ships, and Infernals to blow up the Bashaw’s Works.” Preble argued that the commerce of the United States was worth the expense to protect it, and that the Barbary states must be brought to submission soon in order to prevent their continued naval buildup. Thomas Jefferson agreed, bringing to Congress a request to provide more ships and more money for the navy in light of the Philadelphia loss. But any money Congress provided would not reach the Mediterranean in time for Preble to use it. In the United States, the President and the Congress also began to take on water and supplies in preparations for a cruise.

For the first time, a naval commander also seriously considered the possibility of helping Hamet Karamanli. Apparently the badgering of Farquhar and Busuttil had been effective. Preble could only support Hamet’s coup if he received reinforcements, but he seemed inclined to do so if possible. He wrote, “I am in hopes the arrival of some additional force to our little Squadron will enable me to do this before the season is so far advanced as to dry up the Springs, and prevent the march of Troops from Egypt to Bengaza & Tripoly.” Preble must have realized that if the reinforcements were not already on their way, the long delays in communications and travel would thwart his plans. He intended to start an assault on Derna and Benghazi by the middle of May, with or without Hamet’s cooperation. These towns would have to be destroyed in order to keep Yusuf from using them, unless Hamet’s forces were there to secure the citadels.

Though Preble’s primary goal was to defeat Tripoli and secure respect in the eyes of the watching Mediterranean community, he also kept an eye on other areas in which the United States had a reputation. Preble suggested that a minister to Constantinople would solidify the

---

95 Preble to Sec of Navy, 11 March 1804, BW3:486.
97 Sec of Navy to John Cassin, 21 March 1804, BW3:509.
98 Preble to Sec of Navy, 11 March 1804, BW3:486. Preble eventually scrapped this plan.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

United States’ standing with the Ottoman Empire, and that connection by extension would provide checks on Barbary aggression. He found the American vice consuls in Sicily (Syracuse, Palermo, and Messina) to “have no respectability attached to them.” They had purchased their consulships in Naples, a highly irregular and likely unethical practice. American consuls were not paid by the federal government, but they did have to receive a commission from Congress in order to act in an official capacity.99 These Sicilian consuls were not Americans, some of them did not speak English, and it seems unlikely that they had received such commissions; perhaps they were only calling themselves consuls when they had no real claim to that title. The best-case scenario was that they were guilty of graft against the distant and weak American government. The worst case was that they were agents of the Neapolitan government. Either way, Preble found them “the laughing stocks of their own Country Men as well as Foreigners.”100 These consuls were not the kind of men needed to help the United States find its place in the Mediterranean community.

Regarding Tripoli, Preble was not in a conciliatory mood. When informed that Gaetano Schembri was closeted with the bashaw making peace proposals on his behalf, he wrote archly, “Mr Schambri whom the Minister styles (in his letter to you) my Ambassador, has no more authority from me than I have knowledge of him, and I assure you I never spoke to, or saw him since I was created. When the Bashaw chooses to propose a Negotiation I will attend to it, if consistent with the honor and dignity of the United States.”101

With Friends Like These

In the upper levels of command, the Americans seemed to be getting along quite well with their European counterparts. The squadron commodores had enjoyed a good relationship with

100Preble to Sec of Navy, 11 March 1804, BW3:487.
101Preble to Bainbridge, 12 March 1804, BW3:489.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

most of the British officials and naval officers they encountered. One British captain even allowed an American sailor to ship to Gibraltar on board a British naval vessel with dispatches for Consul Gavino. The more junior officers were more irascible. Though they had been charged to be at peace with their counterparts, sometimes the temptation to boast was too great. Henry Wadsworth, midshipman on the Constitution, wrote, “The envy & jealousy of the British officers is excited by our fine Ships & handsome manoeuvring: we meet on shore but to fight - & insult each other. The Politeness of the American officers will always induce them to give the reference to such as do not claim it but we wage eternal war with those who arrogate superiority.”

Working with the British was a matter of necessity for the squadron. Preble needed to exploit every channel he could in order to come to terms with the bashaw. In particular, he was able to re-establish relations with Bryan McDonogh, British consul at Tripoli. But Preble preferred to work with the French. He obviously admired Napoleon: “The generous and friendly interference of the first Consul for the purpose of endeavouring to liberate our unfortunate Citizens in Tripoly and restore Peace between the United States and that Regency is truly characteristic of that great Man, and an additional proof of the close alliance of humanity, with intrepidity.”

Preble also hoped to leverage France’s standing in the Mediterranean community to get what he wanted from weaker states. He asked Robert Livingston to solicit Napoleon’s help in getting the Neapolitan government to provide the American navy with the gunboats he wanted. The squadron’s standing in Naples was somewhat shaky, according to Joseph Barnes, American consul in Palermo. Having offered in 1803 to assist the American squadron, General Acton had apparently not heard anything from the American navy until he received Preble’s request for gunboats. Acton thought that the failure of communication was because of the United States’

---

102 The exception was Captain Sutton of the HMS Amphion, with whom the American navy had had problems before. He was still impressing sailors off public American vessels, according to John Gavino. Gavino to Sec of State, 22 March 1804, BW3:515.
103 Preble diary, 15 March 1804, BW3:493.
104 Wadsworth to Nancy Doane, 17 March 1804, BW3:495.
105 McDonogh to Preble, 19 March 1804, BW3:504-5.
106 Preble to Livingston, 18 March 1804, BW3:498.
107 Preble to Livingston, 18 March 1804, BW3:499.
preoccupation with the acquisition of Louisiana, but it seems more likely that it was a combination of a lax commodore, Richard Valentine Morris, and a faulty mail system.\textsuperscript{108} Barnes’s apprehensions were unfounded; Preble was able to get gunboats from Naples with little trouble.\textsuperscript{109} Acton promised to have both boats and artillery delivered to Messina for the use of the American squadron.\textsuperscript{110}

\textbf{At Sea}

The schooners of the squadron cruised off Tripoli as ordered. It was clear that other nations were not taking the blockade seriously. On March 17, the \textit{Siren} captured a Maltese brig, the \textit{Transfer}, which was sent to Syracuse for adjudication.\textsuperscript{111} Two days later, the \textit{Siren} and the \textit{Nautilus} collided with each other, precipitating repairs for each vessel and the loss of effective blockading.\textsuperscript{112} When the \textit{Siren} captured a Russian brig on March 21, the flimsiness of the blockade was only confirmed: the master of the \textit{Madonna di Catapoliano} told Captain Stewart that he was aware of the blockade, but intended to run it anyway.\textsuperscript{113}

The three ships the Americans had captured thus far—the \textit{Santo Crucifisso}, the \textit{Transfer}, and the \textit{Madonna di Catapoliano}—all had something in common: the interest of Gaetano Schembri. Schembri, a merchant who did frequent business with Malta and Tripoli, had inveigled his way into the court of Yusuf Karamanli, receiving what he called the consulship of Malta from the bashaw. Somehow he made the leap from commercial agent for the bashaw to negotiator for the

\textsuperscript{108}Barnes himself observed the vagaries of the post, noting that dispatches were “being Lost either thro’ neglect, or design; or from jealousy taken up by parties & destroyed.” Barnes to Madison, 28 March 1804, \textit{JM}, http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JSMN-02-06-02-0591. Barnes was one of the consuls with whom Preble was irritated. Preble had noted that one of the consuls for Sicily had not been seen there for a year; this letter from Barnes to Madison was posted from Leghorn, so he certainly was not in Palermo where he should have been. Preble wrote to Barnes on 18 March that he had not been aware of Barnes’ appointment, BW3:500; Preble to Secretary of State, 3 June 1804, BW4:145.

\textsuperscript{109}Preble to Cathcart, 18 March 1804, BW3:501.

\textsuperscript{110}Cathcart to Preble, 17 April 1804, BW4:31.

\textsuperscript{111}DeKrafft journal, 18 March 1804, BW3:502-3.

\textsuperscript{112}DeKrafft journal, 20 March 1804, BW3:508.

\textsuperscript{113}Stewart to Preble, 22 March 1804, BW3:511.
Americans. After overhearing conversations between Preble and the commissary for the British fleet at Malta, Patrick Wilkie, Schembri took it upon himself to go to the bashaw and put out feelers for a peace settlement. Wilkie seems to have told Schembri that Preble was sure to approve, so Schembri set out on the Transfer. He did go to the court of the bashaw, where he tried to steer Yusuf toward a settlement with no tribute, only ransom for the prisoners. (Preble did not wish to ransom the prisoners, but he was absolutely adamant about the end of further tribute.)

When the Transfer sailed to Malta, Schembri shipped, along with the licensed cattle, several casks of his own. “In so withdrawing his property our Memorialist was so little apprehensive of incurring your Excellencys displeasure that the Transfer sailed from Tripoli in open day when some of your Cruizers were actually in sight,” he wrote to Commodore Preble. He expressed surprise that his cargo should be so mistreated, in this ship and the other two, as the irregularities that existed were due “partly to his Zeal in executing your Excellency’s commission,” so that he could not adequately secure the proper paperwork. Unfortunately for Schembri, Preble had disclaimed all knowledge of his business in Tripoli. Schembri seems to have been hoping that his helpfulness to the Americans would give him free rein to continue his business with Tripoli.

Preble was not amused. He wrote in fury,

You have prefaced your appeal with circumstances which only exist in Idea. You arrogate to yourself the possession of the “confidence and esteem of the Bashaw of Tripoly”: and the particular acquaintance of Mr Wilkie His Majesty’s Commissary for the Fleet at Malta - This you seem to suppose a sufficient reason why you should (unasked) interfere in the Affairs of the U. S. of America - Insolent Medlar! - Have you sagacity enough to calculate the pernicious consequence of your Duplicity? Do you know, that your ill timed officiousness served only to raise the sordid expectations of a Barbarian?-No - You do not exactly comprehend the extent of the mischief you have done - but this you well know, that the motives of this fraud against the U. S. were to secure the money you had then due in that regency and to make as much more as you could by the Violation of the faith reposed in you by his Excellency Gov Ball.115

114Schembri to Preble, 22 March 1804? (Probably a later date; 22 March relates to the capture of the Madonna di Catapaliano), BW3:513.
115Preble to Schembri, 19 September 1804, BW3:513-14. Christopher McKee believes that Schembri and Preble did know each other, and that Preble had indeed instigated Schembri’s visit to the bashaw. It does seem likely that Preble and Schembri had at least talked before, but I do not see
CHAPTER 4. 1804

Captain Bainbridge reported from Tripoli about Schembri’s negotiations, concluding that he had “done some injury and not the least service.” He made many mistakes in protocol and discernment, surprising for one who supposedly had been so close to the bashaw. Bainbridge again encouraged Preble to send for Richard O’Brien, who knew and would follow proper procedure, “a man of the world [who] has great discernment and much politeness.”

The official negotiator for the United States, Tobias Lear, feared to leave Algiers in order to join Preble at Tripoli. The United States was in good stead with Algiers at the moment—in fact, Lear had just paid off the last of the annuities the United States had owed, after nearly four years in arrears. But relations between Algiers and Britain were tense, and Lear thought that war might break out soon. He could not leave his position, as he feared that a departure now would seem like an “act of relinquishment.” In other words, as Lear explained later to the Secretary of State, if Algiers could not get what they wanted from Britain, they would need to get money from somewhere, presumably a weaker nation upon whom they could prey. Lear feared that leaving his post would signal that the United States was an ideal target. In his place, Lear suggested Richard O’Brien, who was still at Algiers assisting the new consul. O’Brien had many of the qualifications that were needed for a good negotiator with the Barbary states: “His knowledge of the language, Manners, and Politicks of these Regencies, must be highly useful to you,” Lear wrote.

Preble had been making overtures himself to the prime minister of Tripoli, Muhammad Dghies. Dghies had been fairly friendly in the past, but he had refused to answer Preble’s most recent inquiries about prisoner exchange. When Preble wrote again to ask the reason for his silence, Dghies replied that he had heard that Preble had mistreated the prisoners from the Mastico, “against all laws.” Dghies told Preble that if he sent a prisoner to Tripoli and that man in the sources evidence that Preble authorized Schembri’s expedition in any way.

---

116 Bainbridge to Preble, 26 March 1804, BW3:526.
117 Lear to Preble, 23 March 1804, BW3:517.
119 Lear to Preble, 23 March 1804, BW3:517.
was in as good health as Preble claimed, then the negotiations could commence. Preble took exception to the accusation that he mistreated prisoners. He observed that the wounded prisoner they had taken during the raid on the Philadelphia had fully recovered under the care of the Constitution’s doctor, but he could not send him on shore without an exchange.

When Preble arrived off Tripoli, he took on board the French chargé, Monsieur Beaussier. Napoleon had promised Beaussier’s help, and Beaussier seemed perfectly willing to give it. Beaussier made the first overtures to the bashaw and Minister Dghies on March 27. He heard again from Dghies that the prisoner from the Mastico must be released in order to “destroy the general Credited opinion among the inhabitants that [the Americans’ prisoners] have been Massacred.” Beaussier added his voice to the Tripolitans, urging, “I assure you from my own knowledge how much this condescension on your part, would facilitate obstacles, and not pass without Compensation.”

Beaussier also informed the bashaw of the American plan to assist Hamet Karamanli in his coup. That information did not strike the fear into Yusuf that Beaussier had hoped. Instead, the bashaw scoffed that “he only sent him from his Governm[ent] at Derne, because he had began to Vex & discontent the people, but not from dread of any injury he might be able to do - he added his Brother was without means, inclined to drunkeness and incapable of acquiring partizans.” Beaussier added privately, “All these assertions are truths.” Even when Beaussier invoked a much more potent opponent, Napoleon, the bashaw brushed off his concern by stating that he was sure Napoleon would not take away from him the advantageous position he had acquired through three years of war.

Beaussier was very much a man of the community. He knew how negotiations had gone with Tripoli in the past, where the Americans stood in comparison to those previous attempts, and where he stood as a representative of Napoleon. He told Preble that a host of factors had

---

120 Dghies to Preble, 26 March 1804, BW3:527.
121 Preble to Dghies, 27 March 1804, BW3:535-36.
122 Preble to Beaussier, 27 March 1804, BW3:535.
123 Beaussier to Preble, 28 March 1804, BW3:543.
likely inflated the price the bashaw would want for peace. These factors included the Portuguese negotiations at Algiers (for a lot of money), a Swedish prisoner exchange, the peace signed with the Batavian government while their squadron (like the Americans) lay off the port, the unacknowledged strength of the Tripolitan fortifications, and perhaps most importantly, the negotiations of Gaetano Schembri.\footnote{The Dutch republic of Batavia was in a similar position as the United States: without bases, far from the metropole, trying to establish trade in the lucrative Mediterranean while adjusting to a new form of government.} Taking into consideration all of these factors, Beaussier feared that the Americans would not be able to make peace for less than $500,000. He expressed concern that the more Preble bombarded the town, the more the bashaw would dig in his heels. He also wanted to ascertain his place in the negotiations: he needed to know all of Preble’s ideas and his bottom line in order to properly fulfill the role he had been given.\footnote{Ibid.}

Preble was not pleased with Beaussier’s assessments. He grumbled that the English, French, and Swedish consuls were all siding with the bashaw, and only Nicholas Nissen could be trusted as an advocate for the Americans. Since Nissen had been barred from coming to the American ships, “We must therefore depend wholly on our own exertions for effecting a peace,” Preble wrote. He redoubled his efforts to get gunboats and mortar boats to bombard the town, incredulous about Beaussier’s analysis of the Tripolitan fortifications.\footnote{Preble diary, 28 March 1804, BW3:544-45.} He also believed that Beaussier and his government hoped that war with Tripoli would turn into war with Tunis as well, so that the American navy would blockade both nations and prevent the foodstuffs of the North African ports from reaching Syracuse and Malta, which they assumed the British would take permanently.\footnote{Preble to Lear, 2 May 1804, BW4:82.} Preble refused to be caught in the middle of the war between the two great nations of the Mediterranean.
Not at Full Strength

While the Tunisian navy fitted for sea at Malta, the American navy made an impression in Tunis. The intermittent appearances of Stephen Decatur in the Enterprize kept a Tripolitan cruiser that had been refitting in Tunis. George Davis heard a firsthand account of the burning of the Philadelphia from Decatur, and then he sent the Enterprize away before retelling the tale to the bey of Tunis, lest Hamouda try to detain the Enterprize in retribution for the Philadelphia, which was supposed to have been given to him (Davis said). The story quickly became almost a minstrel tale in the streets of Tunis, as “each wandering Bedouin, details the daring action, and augurs something dreadful to our enemy from this event.”

Eventually, after the Enterprize appeared yet again, the Tripolitans abandoned their ship and went overland to Tripoli.

Though the Enterprize had served its purpose off Tunis, when it returned to Messina, Captain Decatur informed Preble that the schooner was “in a much worse state, than I had any idea of. To give her a sufficient repair would be a lengthy and expensive Job. which I know is not your intention consequently I shall only do what she cannot do without to make her safe in any season.” Even that work would take twelve days.

The Nautilus likewise needed refitting. In a storm off Tripoli, the schooner had been so beaten about that the crew had been forced to throw four of its guns overboard. Preble sent the schooner to Messina, where the Enterprize was, for repairs, with orders to proceed to Tripoli as soon as possible. The Nautilus had been forced to leave the blockade twice in a month for repairs, and this time Richard Somers thought the repairs would have to be substantial.

While the Nautilus and the Enterprize refitted, the Americans took another step to help their deteriorating squadron. The brig Transfer, which the Enterprize had captured, was taken into

---

129Decatur to Preble, 15 March 1804, BW3:492.
130Decatur to Preble, 30 March 1804, BW3:547.
131Argus journal, 11 April 1804, BW4:20.
132Preble diary, 15 April 1804, BW4:27.
133Somers to Preble, 16 April 1804, BW4:28.
the navy as the *Scourge* and given to John H. Dent.\textsuperscript{134} The *Scourge* gave the navy more firepower, but it also taxed the already-strained resources the navy received from supply ships. The most recent store ship, the *Woodrop Sims*, had delivered a quantity of naval stores such as cordage and sailcloth, but 22 of the 27 bolts of sailcloth were moldy from a leak in the ship’s storage and had to be scrubbed clean of the black mold. Sixty-two pounds of the 144 pounds of twine were also damaged and could not be salvaged.\textsuperscript{135} Foodstuffs were also in short supply: Nathaniel Haraden recorded throwing 233 pounds of cheese and two barrels of beef overboard, “stinking & unfit for men to eat,” in addition to 66 pounds of moldy bread.\textsuperscript{136} Luckily, fresh provision and vegetables were available for purchase in Syracuse.\textsuperscript{137}

The *Scourge*’s arrival also put a strain on the manpower of the squadron. Preble sent several seamen home because of their poor health, and three officers from the *Constitution* joined the *Scourge*’s crew. Manning the *Scourge* required taking men from all of the other ships in the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{138} Complicating matters, some of the crews’ enlistments were well past expired, particularly on board the *Enterprize*. As no orders had come to send the schooner home, the crew were getting restless. “Can we then call ourselves Men if we do not cast our thoughts on our families, most of whom exist in that Country that we have risked our lives to defend and protect -?” they asked. “Or may we expect to be impressed in a service, whose liberty and independence our fathers fought and bled to establish and defend - against tyranny & oppression?”\textsuperscript{139}

**In Tunis**

Despite the awe Decatur’s success had inspired in Tunis, Davis still had to deal with the aftermath of Richard Valentine Morris’s treatment of the *Paulina*, an Imperial vessel captured in 1802. The bey had written to Thomas Jefferson in 1803 about his grievances with the United States on this

\textsuperscript{134}Preble to Dent, 17 April 1804, BW4:34.
\textsuperscript{135}Constitution logbook, 18 April 1804, BW4:37.
\textsuperscript{136}Constitution logbook, 24 April 1804, BW4:61.
\textsuperscript{137}Constitution logbook, 25 April 1804, BW4:66.
\textsuperscript{138}Constitution logbook, 18 April 1804, BW4:37.
\textsuperscript{139}Seamen of the USS *Enterprize* to Preble, 5 April 1804, BW4:11.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

matter. On January 27, 1804, Jefferson wrote back. While declining the bey’s demand for a frigate, he wrote, “We set a just value on your friendship, as we do on that of all other Nations with which we have intercourse; and as we presume those Nations do on ours.” Though he refused all of the bey’s requests, Jefferson was apologetic for the manner of James Leander Cathcart, who had incurred the bey’s wrath by his rude and demeaning attitudes. “The consideration that the bands of Peace between Nations ought not to be burst asunder by the hasty and unauthorised acts of a Public Agent was worthy of your wisdom and Justice,” Jefferson wrote, telling the bey that he would take better care when selecting the next consul.\footnote{Jefferson to Hamouda, 27 January 1804, BW3:361-62.} In fact, Jefferson rather liked Cathcart; he had described him in 1802 as “the honestest & ablest consul we have with the Barbary powers: a man of very sound judgment & fearless.”\footnote{Jefferson to Abraham Baldwin, 10 February 1802. TJ, http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/TSJN-01-36-02-0361.}

The last time the bey had seen Cathcart, their encounter had centered on the Paulina. On that day, the consul had stormed out of Hamouda’s court. In 1804, the old grievance cropped up again. Under threat of captivity in 1802, Richard Valentine Morris had agreed to restore the Paulina to its owner, as well as any cargo that was not bound for Tripoli. After Morris left Tunis, the brig had been returned to its master. But David Valenzin, the passenger on board whose cargo \emph{was} bound for Tripoli, had been taken prisoner and sent to America when neither the governor of Malta nor the governor of Gibraltar would adjudicate the case. Valenzin’s portion of the cargo, partially made up of perishable foodstuffs such as raisins, was sold instead of being sent to America with him for adjudication.

In February 1804, a Congressional investigation into Valenzin’s case against the government found the sale of the Paulina’s cargo and treatment of Valenzin to be illegal and inappropriate. There were lingering questions about Valenzin’s statements of his citizenship (he claimed to be Austrian, but Cathcart, Eaton, and others found secret papers asserting his residency in Tripoli), but Congress found it highly irregular that he and his papers had been sent to Amer-
ica without the vessel or cargo in question.\textsuperscript{142} The investigation demurred on the question of whether the capture had even been legal, but James Madison was not so coy. He argued that because there was no legally justified blockade in place at the time of the capture in January 1803, Valenzin’s nationality did not matter; the capture was illegal.\textsuperscript{143}

George Davis knew none of these proceedings while he waited in Tunis for instructions. He was badgered both by the bey himself and by the merchants who owned cargo on the \textit{Paulina}. Preble also did not know the outcome of the Congressional hearing, but after Beaussier’s ineffectual negotiations, he headed for Tunis along with the \textit{Siren} to show some force there while waiting for his gunboats.\textsuperscript{144} When Preble arrived off Tunis, he and his ship were not in their best form. Low on supplies, he requested that Davis send animals, eggs, and vegetables out to the \textit{Constitution}. He particularly wanted vegetables and meat, as his crew was sickly. Sailing master Nathaniel Haraden recorded only seven men sick and eight convalescent, not even close to the highest numbers the \textit{Constitution} had seen, but perhaps Preble wanted to exercise preventative measures.\textsuperscript{145} Preble himself, who suffered from chronic illness, was unable to go ashore to meet with Davis.\textsuperscript{146} But he did not intend to stay until he was well; he wanted the supplies immediately so he could return to sea.\textsuperscript{147}

The next day, April 5, Preble sent a letter to the bey of Tunis explaining his situation. He wrote that he was not familiar with the details of the \textit{Paulina} dispute, as his predecessor had been in charge then, so he had forwarded the correspondence on the subject to the United States where it would be properly addressed by Captain Morris and Congress. He also apologized if Cathcart had given offense at the time of the \textit{Paulina} negotiations, and begged the bey to consider George Davis the official representative of the United States in Tunis. He further apologized for not coming ashore himself, but he pled illness and urgent business elsewhere—Tripoli—and

\textsuperscript{142}American State Papers, Claims, 1:292-94. Valenzin eventually committed suicide rather than answer questions about his citizenship.

\textsuperscript{143}Madison to Charles Pinckney, 21 April 1804, BW3:343.

\textsuperscript{144}Preble diary, 1 April 1804, BW4:1.

\textsuperscript{145}Constitution logbook, 4 April 1804, BW4:7.

\textsuperscript{146}Preble had suffered from a variety of ailments in his adult life. McKee, \textit{Edward Preble}, 349.

\textsuperscript{147}Preble to Davis, 4 April 1804, BW4:6.
informed the bey that Tobias Lear would be coming to help sort any problems out. He closed by
telling the bey that he was sure the warships that were soon to arrive from America would bring
satisfactory resolutions to the bey’s questions.\textsuperscript{148}

Davis’s meeting with the bey did not go well. The bey refused to open Preble’s letter, in-
sisting that no more delay would be tolerated. When Davis gave Preble the report of the meeting,
Preble told him that the Constitution was leaving the next day regardless, but would return with
more naval force if necessary.\textsuperscript{149} Preble did indeed leave the next day, April 8, sailing through
stormy seas back to Tripoli. The Siren remained off Tunis to support Davis and to get further
supplies.\textsuperscript{150} Davis was able to talk the bey into a six-week extension on payment for the Paulina’s
cargo, so the Siren sailed to cruise with the Constitution, bringing the needed fresh provisions
from Tunis.\textsuperscript{151} Preble was still sick with a fever, so negotiations with Tunis and Tripoli had to be
put on hold.\textsuperscript{152}

\textbf{Our Old Friend Schembri}

After Preble denounced Gaetano Schembri’s attempts at negotiation, Schembri returned to the
bashaw and joined his side completely. Richard Farquhar reported that Schembri had advised
the bashaw to make peace with the Americans now so that the navy would leave and Yusuf could
restart his attacks without the navy’s presence to hamper him. Farquhar blamed Schembri for
scuttling negotiations with Richard Valentine Morris by spreading false stories about how much
money the Americans were willing to pay for peace. The bashaw was pleased with Schembri,
though; he reportedly gave Schembri an expensive breast pin as a thanks for his work on the
bashaw’s behalf. Farquhar noted that Hamet Karamanli was still waiting for the assistance of the

\textsuperscript{148}Preble to bey of Tunis, 5 April 1804, BW4:10.
\textsuperscript{149}Preble to Davis, 6 April 1804, BW4:13.
\textsuperscript{150}DeKrafft journal, 8 April 1804, BW4:16.
\textsuperscript{151}Davis to Preble, 9 April 1804, BW4:17; Constitution logbook, 10 April 1804, BW4:19; DeKrafft
journal, 10 April 1804, BW4:19.
\textsuperscript{152}Constitution logbook, 10 April 1804, BW4:19.
Americans, and would soon be marching to Derna in hopes of meeting the navy there.\textsuperscript{153}

The navy was not heading to Alexandria to pick up Hamet. The Constitution had returned to Malta, presumably before going back to Tripoli. But when the frigate arrived, it was placed in quarantine, as it had touched at two Barbary ports.\textsuperscript{154} The Constitution rendezvoused with the Vixen, collecting Richard O’Brien, and received some supplies from the shore, but no crew members left the ship. In the evening of April 13, the frigate departed for Syracuse without completing its quarantine.\textsuperscript{155}

Richard O’Brien had come highly recommended by Captain Bainbridge and others, but James Leander Cathcart had reservations (to say the least) about his ability and his integrity: “One arm’d with all the mean intrigue & low artifice of that sink of perfidy and corruption the Sanhedrim of Algiers [the house of Bacri and Busnach] sent on to beg a peace through the influence of such perfidious mediators engenders the most unpleasing reflections.” Cathcart offered to travel with Preble and help with the negotiations, as long as he never had to interact with O’Brien or Davis. He thought that both men were more interested in their own advancement than in helping the United States make its mark in the Mediterranean: “the one is cultivateing the good graces of the Bey of Tunis & ministers in order to be appointed Consul; the other has been the mere echo of the Algerine Jews ever since he has been in Barbary.”\textsuperscript{156}

Trouble with Deserters

In Syracuse, Commodore Preble found that his relationship with Governor Marcello de Gregorio was on dubious ground. A sailor from the Enterprize had deserted while in Syracuse and had taken refuge on a French privateer in the harbor. Trusting the power of the French protection, he did not even bother to hide from the Americans who were looking for him. The deserter sailed with the privateer on a cruise and returned sometime later as part of the prize crew on board a

\textsuperscript{153}Farquhar to Preble, 11 April 1804, BW4:19-20.
\textsuperscript{154}Preble diary, 12 April 1804, BW4:22.
\textsuperscript{155}Preble diary, 13 April 1804, BW4:24.
\textsuperscript{156}Cathcart to Preble, 17 April 1804, BW4:32-33.
Maltese vessel that the French had captured. When Stephen Decatur heard of his arrival, he went on board the Maltese vessel and forcibly removed the deserter. In response to the prize master’s appeal to the governor, Gregorio shut the gates of Syracuse, effectively detaining the American officers who had come to the town to get the deserter. Gregorio sent word to Preble that he would not release the officers until they returned the man to the French privateer.

In turn, Preble detained the messengers, including Gregorio’s aide-de-camp, until the next morning, when he wrote Gregorio a stern letter informing him that he would be taking the matter to the king of Naples unless his men were released immediately. Apparently, in the light of the new day, the situation looked different to Gregorio; he immediately released the officers, opened the gates, and begged Preble’s forgiveness for his “hasty conduct.”\footnote{Preble diary, 22 April 1804, BW4:53.}\footnote{Gregorio to Preble, 21 April 1804, BW4:47.} He claimed that he had re-evaluated his actions once he was certain that American and French laws allowed the American officers to take the deserter. This was an unusual intrusion of American law into the Mediterranean—usually the Americans had to force their legal interpretations on others, rather than defend themselves against foreign interpretations of their own laws. To make up for his behavior, Gregorio asked Preble and Decatur to dine with him the next evening.\footnote{Preble diary, 22 April 1804, BW4:53.} Preble declined.\footnote{Preble diary, 22 April 1804, BW4:53.}

Gregorio also called on surrogates who he thought would bolster his case before the irate commodore. In particular, he asked Frances Leckie, a British lady, to intercede for him. She did so, though perhaps not in the vein he had hoped. She said what Gregorio could not say in so many words—that his position in Syracuse depended on capitulation to the French government. She also elucidated some of Gregorio’s craven character, not disguising her disdain for him, calling him “a man whose weakness is ever the cause of those disputes which arise more from the bad advice of those about him, than from any evil intention of his own.” She did not ask that Preble not go to Naples, only that he would impute Gregorio’s actions to those bad counselors.\footnote{Mrs. F. Leckie to Preble, 21 April 1804, BW4:46.}
CHAPTER 4. 1804

Gregorio’s plan worked. Preble replied to Mrs. Leckie, “The Governour in having prevailed on you to become his advocate, has acted wisely for once in his life.” Nevertheless, he still planned to make his case at Naples, arguing, “He certainly has a very singular way of discovering that attachment to the American Nation which he professes to have for it.”

Though Mrs. Leckie was sympathetic to Gregorio’s position, it seems unlikely that Mrs. Leckie had any desire to maintain the bonds between Syracuse and the French. Her husband, Gould Francis Leckie, who was an honorary British consul in Syracuse, saw the islands of the Mediterranean as a beginning point to an “insular empire” that Great Britain needed in order to combat France’s control of the European continent. Syracuse was just such an island.

Preble recorded in his memorandum book simply, “Some difficulty with the Govt. of Syracuse respecting the detention of officers by closing the gates, which was adjusted next day.” But Preble had learned something from this clash with Gregorio: the governor of Syracuse could be bullied. The Americans would not forget this lesson. Preble was not an unfair man, though. The very next day, a soldier from the garrison at Syracuse tried to desert by swimming out to the Constitution. Preble immediately wrote to the governor to send someone to take the deserter back.

Three weeks later, the squadron found itself in the same position again, only in Malta and with the British. As in previous disputes at Gibraltar, two deserters from the American squadron found their way to a British privateer in Malta. The captain, under orders from Governor Alexander Ball, refused to give them up. A week later, the captain of the HMS Narcissus acted even more aggressively than the commanders at Gibraltar—his men boarded the American prize Madonna.

---

161 Preble to Mrs. F. Leckie, 21 April 1804, BW4:46.
162 Samuel Baker, Written on the Water: British Romanticism and the Maritime Empire of Culture, British Romanticism and the Maritime Empire of Culture (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wrm42.13, 193-95. Leckie was, incidentally, part of the circle of British romantic writers who visited the Mediterranean during this period. He was friends with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and by extension William Wordsworth and Lord Byron.
163 Preble memorandum book, 22 April 1804, BW4:52. It does not appear that Preble ever did take his case to a higher authority.
164 Preble diary, 23 April 1804, BW4:56.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

*di Catapoliano* and took three men off, saying that they had applied to him for release as Englishmen. Midshipman Thomas O. Anderson, commander of the prize vessel, immediately went to the commander of the *Narcissus* to demand his men back. But the British lieutenant would not give them up, citing an order he had received to take any Englishmen wherever he could find them. Anderson protested, but left without the men.\(^{165}\)

**Confusion Amongst the Consuls**

In accordance with his instructions, Richard O’Brien left Algiers, took his family to Malta, and then went to Syracuse to rendezvous with Commodore Preble. He took passage on the *Enterprize* for Tunis, where he was to liaise with Davis to try to iron out the difficulties with Tunis. He observed that “Malta is the Arsenal for Tunis”; the Tunisian letters of marque that needed repairs at Malta brought cattle with them to sell in order to pay for their repairs.\(^{166}\)

When O’Brien arrived in Tunis, he found that Davis had not received any instructions from Tobias Lear about an annuity for Tunis. O’Brien thus declared that the Americans would pay between $9,000 and $10,000 per year, due every other year, “to secure the Peace and friendship of this Regency towards the United States.” He noted, however, that the bey should expect a delay of eight months for the sanction of the American government. He also instructed Davis to acquire $4,000-5,000 from Lear in order to settle the claims of the Tunisian cargos from the *Paulina*.\(^{167}\)

When O’Brien and Davis went to see the bey, they found that he was still clamoring for a frigate. Their conversation with his minister the next day revealed the consuls’ perceptions of the United States’ place in the Mediterranean community. The minister told the Americans that he knew they had 50 or 60 sail in their navy (not true), so they could spare one. If the United States wanted to wait until peace had been signed with Tripoli, then the bey was willing to wait. O’Brien told him he should not expect a frigate at all.\(^{168}\) The minister protested that the Americans had

---

\(^{165}\) Anderson to Stewart, 31 May 1804, BW4:136.
\(^{166}\) O’Brien to Lear, 24 April 1804, BW4:59.
\(^{168}\) Though the conversation is likely recorded here by a clerk or by George Davis, and who said
given Algiers a frigate; O’Brien countered that they had asked for it when the original treaty was negotiated, and not in addition. He offered the sum of $8,000-10,000 per year as a token of friendship. Again, the minister protested that the Americans paid Algiers much more, and again O’Brien said that it was part of the treaty stipulations. The minister asked O’Brien how they could deviate from the standard practice of Spain, Denmark, and Sweden “and most all other Nations.” O’Brien’s reply was simply, “Our situation is superior to those mentioned Nations.”

The minister, who is not named, argued that the United States had sought out peace with Tunis initially, when Tunis “knew nothing about your Country,” and therefore the United States should go above and beyond the treaty in order to keep Tunis as a friend. Tunis did not want or need peace with the United States, as war was probably more lucrative than peace. Furthermore, the United States had spent three years in a pointless and expensive war with Tripoli, and Tunis had more power than Tripoli. O’Brien replied that despite some setbacks, the United States was winning the war. He ended the discussion by saying, “We repeat, that, our system is Peace and will continue the War to obtain it.”

The Tunisian minister’s assertions were correct. The Americans had forced their way into peace with Tunis. They had engaged in three disappointing years of war with Tripoli. And they were tired of war. But they also considered themselves superior to not only the Barbary states, but also the states that capitulated to the demands of those barbarians. Americans put up a bold front to their neighbors’ faces, but at this point they could not wage war with Tunis and Tripoli simultaneously and could not afford to alienate even one of the European nations vying for commercial space along with them.

The negotiations ended for the day, but O’Brien encouraged Davis to continue to speak to the bey through his ministers. To help the ministers advocate for the Americans, O’Brien authorized Davis to pay any ministers $5,000 as “greasing fees.” Davis also retained a personal secretary, who spoke Arabic and a number of other languages. Commodore Preble recommended what is not marked, O’Brien seemed to take the lead in the conversation. Therefore I will refer to him as the conversant here.

170 O’Brien to Davis, 1 May 1804, BW4:80.
that Davis keep him as long as possible, as his loss “will lessen the Respectability of Your Official appointment with the Regency.”\textsuperscript{171} Preble also authorized Davis to hire commercial agents in various Tunisian ports in order to expedite information transfer about the Tunisian preparations for war.\textsuperscript{172}

Davis continued to speak to the Tunisian ministers after O’Brien left with Commodore Preble on May 1. But the conversations inevitably circled back to the same problems: the United States had treated Tunis as lesser than Algiers, and the Americans saw themselves as better than the other nations with whom Tunis interacted. Davis noted that despite their aggressive words, the Tunisian government was also embroiled in disputes with the Turkish Grand Signior and the Russian government, and so could not devote their full attention to the American problem. They were willing to wait until the Americans settled with Tripoli. The outcome with Tripoli mattered for Tunis; Davis wrote, “rest assured Sir, unless a National Character, be established on the Ruins of that Pirate, we shall never remain in Security with this.”\textsuperscript{173}

**Prizes and Procedure**

While O’Brien and Lear attempted to iron out the disputes over the *Paulina*, John Matthieu, American consul in Naples, heard about another possibly illegal capture. The Russian consul in Naples, Nicolo de Manzo, wrote to Matthieu with concerns about the capture of the polacre *Madonna di Catapoliano*, which he argued was illegal. De Manzo tried to argue in contradictory terms about the laws that made the polacre good prize. First, he argued that the polacre had been forced to land in Tripoli because of bad weather after the blockade was announced, and the master, Captain Morfino, could not have known about the blockade. But second, he stated that while in Tripoli, Morfino had leased his polacre to Gaetano Schembri to carry bullocks—and Schembri had certainly known of the blockade. All of de Manzo’s questions centered on the idea that Morfino could not bear responsibility for “accidentally” running the blockade, and the United

\textsuperscript{171}Preble to Davis, 2 May 1804, BW4:81.
\textsuperscript{172}Preble to Lear, 2 May 1804, BW4:82.
\textsuperscript{173}Davis to Sec of State, 11 May 1804, BW4:93.
States therefore acted unlawfully to detain him. The problem with de Manzo’s arguments was that when the polacre had been captured, its crew had admitted that they knew the blockade was in place and that they intended to run it anyway (perhaps with the encouragement of Schembri).

Matthieu forwarded the Russian agent’s letters to Commodore Preble, noting that the Neapolitan government might intercede on behalf of the Russians, as “the strictest friendship passes between this court and that of Russia.” Preble also received a letter from Mr. P. d’Karpow, Russian chargé d’affaires for the Two Sicilies, in which he argued that the deposition of the master did not provide sufficient evidence that he knew about the blockade. The timing was wrong, Karpow insisted—Preble’s order had not arrived at Smyrna, where the polacre sailed from, until after it had left. More importantly, Karpow reminded Preble that the vessel had been able to enter the port while it was supposedly under blockade. Karpow conceded that if the vessel had been stopped while entering, the circumstances might be different, but it had been stopped while leaving Tripoli. Standard blockading practice, upheld by international law, did not bar the departure of vessels from a blockaded port, only their arrival. Karpow stated, “This is a point universally known, & which cannot be controverted.” Preble had already been rebuked by his own government for pushing the boundaries on internationally accepted common law, so Karpow may have had a point.

After these heated exchanges with Karpow, Preble received word of the intervention of Russia on behalf of the Philadelphia’s prisoners. Russia’s attempts to win over the Americans proved successful. Discovering the kindness of the Russian emperor, Preble chose not to send the Madonna di Catapoliano to America for adjudication, but released the ship “as a compliment to [the Russian] flag.” Perhaps Preble felt genuine gratitude to the Russian government, or perhaps he was just tired of dealing with these prize cases.

Legal questions about the blockade continued to plague the squadron. On May 18, George

---

174N. de Manzo to John S. M. Matthieu, 3 May 1804, BW4:83.
175Matthieu to Preble, 5 May 1804, BW4:86.
177Preble to Harris, 26 May 1804. In The United States and Russia, 403. See also Preble to M. D’Italinsky, 6 June 1804, BW4:159.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

Davis wrote that the bey had demanded his immediate departure from Tunis after a vessel bearing Davis’s passport had not been permitted to enter Tripoli, and the Americans had (supposedly) taken some small vessels off Yerba. The American squadron continued to claim the same rule that had infuriated the Russians: the vessel “might enter Tripoli; but if he attempted to come out, the Vessel would be captured.” Davis was able to conciliate the bey by re-issuing the passport and apologizing for the mistake the squadron had made. But relations with Tunis continued to move toward a breaking point. Davis again underscored the difficulty of juggling multiple sets of fluid legal customs: “It is very certain, that we shall never be freed from similar complaints, and outrages on the laws of Nations, as long as our difficulty continues with Tripoli - these are evils without a remedy; for where one Party alone, has the right to accuse, adjudge, & condemn - there is but a partial field for reasoning or argument.”178

The United States also pushed the boundaries on the definition of contraband. International law was clear that vessels carrying contraband to an enemy port could be stopped anywhere, not just in the “blockade zone.” But exactly what constituted contraband was less clear. Naval stores and munitions always qualified. But the American squadron sometimes treated people as contraband. For instance, on May 31, 1804, Isaac Hull sent a ketch to Malta for adjudication after capturing it coming out of Tripoli harbor. The ship ostensibly traveled to Tripoli, with Davis’s passport, to deliver an ambassador from the Ottoman government. But when it left Tripoli to return the ambassador, it carried with it a cargo of slaves as well, presumably a gift to the Grand Signior. Hull saw this addition of slaves as enough reason to declare Davis’s passport invalid and take the vessel.179 In essence, he treated slaves as instruments of war.

Preparing for Assault

On May 13, Commodore Preble received official word from General Acton, the prime minister of the Two Sicilies, that the king would gladly loan the Americans six gun boats and two bomb

178Davis to Preble, 18 May 1804, BW4:109-110.
179Hull to William Higgins, 31 May 1804, BW4:137.
ketches, with corresponding artillery, for the assault against their common enemy.\textsuperscript{180} Not satisfied with this overture of friendship, Preble wrote to Acton the next day arguing against the long quarantine American vessels had to endure at Naples.\textsuperscript{181} Though he couched his request in terms of “mercantile interest,” he was particularly concerned with the length of quarantine because he expected reinforcements from America, and he did not want them to be trapped in port when he needed them in his assault off Tripoli.\textsuperscript{182}

The loss of the \textit{Philadelphia} had shaken the federal government’s confidence that limited force would be sufficient. On May 22, the secretary of the navy wrote to Preble, “A due regard to our situation with Tripoli and precautionary considerations in relation to the other Barbary Powers, demanded that our forces in that quarter should be so far augmented as to leave no doubt of our compelling the existing Enemy to submit to our own terms, and of effectually checking an hostile dispositions that might be entertained toward us by any of the other Barbary Powers.” To that end, he was sending four heavy frigates to the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{183} Unfortunately, this new force also meant the end of Preble’s tenure as commodore. The captain of the coming frigate \textit{President}, Samuel Barron, outranked Preble on the seniority list; in fact, Preble also ranked lower than Captain John Rodgers, captain of the \textit{Congress}. Knowing that the loss of command would be a heavy blow to Preble, the secretary tried to placate him, “Be assured, Sir, that no want of confidence in you has been mingled with the Considerations which have imposed upon us the necessity of this measure.”\textsuperscript{184}

When the \textit{Constitution} arrived at Messina on May 25, Preble found the \textit{Nautilus} still undergoing repairs. He also found his gunboats, but the bomb vessels would not be ready for another few weeks.\textsuperscript{185} The addition of the new vessels meant further strain on the squadron’s resources.

\textsuperscript{180}Preble diary, 13 May 1804, BW4:98.
\textsuperscript{181}Preble to Acton, 14 May 1804, BW4:99-100.
\textsuperscript{182}Preble to Cathcart, 15 May 1804, BW4:102.
\textsuperscript{183}These frigates were the \textit{President} (Samuel Barron), \textit{Congress} (John Rodgers), \textit{Essex} (James Barron), and \textit{Constellation} (Hugh G. Campbell).
\textsuperscript{184}Sec of Navy to Preble, 22 May 1804, BW4:114-15.
\textsuperscript{185}Preble to Livingston, 26 May 1804, BW4:121.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

Preble hired some crew from Naples, but he also needed Americans on board each vessel. He placed Richard Somers in command of the six gunboats. In order to man the gunboats, Preble decided to lay up two of the schooners and use their crews. He decided to go ahead and sail for Tripoli with his squadron plus the gunboats, rather than waiting for the bomb vessels. With this force, Preble wrote, "I think it probable the Bashaw’s Gun Boats and Cruisers may meet the fate they long since ought to have met with; and his old walls rattle about his ears."  

Personnel problems continued to impede the preparations of the squadron. Preble designated the Intrepid as a hospital ship because so many of the crew of the Enterprize had fallen ill. He also had to discharge twelve men from the Enterprize who insisted on leaving now that their term of enlistment had expired.

The Stakes  

On May 27, George Davis wrote to Captain Bainbridge,

The incalculable movements of all Europe, predict a new era, big with the fate of Kingdoms, States, Empires, & Worlds. - An epocha, more replete, with the destiny of Governments, than any period since the downfall of Rome. Recent arrivals from Marseilles inform us, that Bonaparte, is actually declared Emperor of the Gauls, King of Navarre & Italy, to be continued in his descendants. Private letters to various characters, state, that he is to be divorced, and marries the Sister of Alexander the Emperor of Russia. - his brother also forms some Royal connection, to provide against the failure of issue on the part of the first. - What wd be the probable result? The fate of the Northern Powers, the commercial existence of Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, are all involved in such an event.

Davis hit upon an important feature of life in the Mediterranean: the United States and the Barbary states were only bit players. They would be affected by any of these epochal changes,

---

186 Preble to John Broadbent, 28 May 1804, BW4:126.
187 Preble to Cathcart, 28 May 1804, BW4:126. Preble’s lack of manpower for his ship meant that he also could not send a ship to Leghorn to pick up James Leander Cathcart and take him to Gibraltar, from whence Cathcart intended to return to the United States. Preble did not think there would be much danger around Gibraltar, though, since the peace with Morocco.
188 Preble diary, 1 June 1804, BW4:142.
189 Davis to Bainbridge, 27 May 1804, BW4:122.

184
but as things stood, they would not be the ones effecting the change. This reality was at odds with
the triumphal rhetoric that Preble and the navy had been trumpeting for the last year. Davis’s
view from inside Tunis, which was fighting for its own survival amidst stronger nations and
independence from the Ottoman Porte, looked quite a bit different from the view of Commodore
Preble, who was confident in his position at the head of a naval force that had done more to
injure the Barbary states than any other navy had done so far. In light of his plans for Tripoli,
Preble had little interest in thinking about the larger Mediterranean community for any other
reason.

Preble’s main concern was getting the powerful nations of Europe on his side in the
fight against Tripoli. As such, he was disappointed in the results of Monsieur Beaussier’s efforts
to succour the prisoners of the Philadelphia. “It is probable,” he wrote to Beaussier, “the First
Consul expected his mediation would have had more weight with the Bashaw of Tripoly than
it appears to have had.” He also warned Beaussier not to give credence to anything said by
Gaetano Schembri or his English friend (probably Mr. Wilkie), as Preble had not given them
authorization to “interfere in the affairs of the United States at Tripoly.” Instead, Beaussier could
assist Richard O’Brien, whom Preble was sending ashore at Tripoli with an offer for the bashaw.
Preble reminded Beaussier that in his assistance to O’Brien, he should remember that the United
States would treat ransom of the captives as a separate matter from a treaty of peace, and “we
will not pay one dollar for Peace.”

Beaussier did not take kindly to Preble’s implication that he had been remiss. He thought
that his efforts to prepare the bashaw for a peace offer from the Americans had been wasted by
the arrogant and ill-considered actions of the commodore. Richard O’Brien had come ashore, and
without waiting to confer with Beaussier, had made an offer of $40,000 to ransom the 300 pris-
oners of the Philadelphia. This offer was entirely out of the scope of the usual dealings of Tripoli.
Compounding the extremely low offer was the dismissal of proper protocol in negotiations nec-
essary to treat with the bashaw. Beaussier felt that the Americans had thrown away all his hard

Preble to Beaussier, 12 June 1804, BW4:180.
work on their behalf by an “offer truly ridiculous and offensive abruptly made after an absence of two Months and a half, which breaks off all Conference and negociation that could only be renewed with difficulty.” Beaussier called the offer “worse than that made by Commodore Morris at an Epoch when none of your Countrymen were deprived of their liberty.” Beaussier thought that the Americans could no longer plead ignorance of Barbary custom; they were just being obstinate.  

Preble’s obstinacy extended to his own advisers. Richard O’Brien had brought him a letter from Tobias Lear, who was supposed to be the lead diplomat in the Mediterranean, suggesting that Preble offer $600 per prisoner to ransom them, if the bashaw would agree to no annuities or excessive consular presents for peace. Preble wrote, “I am confident was I to make the Offer it would be accepted immediately, but it would be imprudent to offer a sum which would stimulate the avarice of the other Barbary Powers.” Instead, Preble told Bainbridge to try to secretly make the offer of $40,000 to the prime minister of the bashaw, with an additional $10,000 kickback for the minister. But Preble was skeptical that this tactic would work, so he preferred to bombard Tripoli into submission. Bainbridge wrote to George Davis that he wished that whoever came to negotiate would follow the standard pattern of starting with the minister and then approaching the bashaw after initial contact with the minister. Bainbridge did reintroduce Preble’s offer to the Tripolitan court, but it was rejected. He pointed out that as a prisoner, he had no standing with the government; a designated negotiator would be better suited to make both the offer and the bribe. Beaussier, writing to Preble to probe why Preble had developed such a dislike for him, again argued that the Americans were trying to break the system too hard—their proposal was “too extravagant to be listened to” (by which Beaussier meant too ridiculous).

Bainbridge frequently complained of the severe restrictions placed on himself and his fellow officers, arguing that this cruelty was counterproductive, as he would be a better advocate

---

191 Beaussier to Preble, 13 June 1804, BW4:184.
192 Preble to Sec of Navy, 14 June 1804, BW4:188.
193 Bainbridge to Davis, 15 June 1804, BW4:195.
194 Bainbridge to Preble, 8 July 1804, BW4:258.
195 Beaussier to Preble, 6 July 1804, BW4:251.
for generous terms if he had more liberty. Furthermore, he argued, the situation of the prisoners would not likely affect Commodore Preble’s outlook toward the Barbary states. “You are equally with myself acquainted with the disposition of Americans,” he wrote to Davis, “and know that they may lead, but cannot be drove.” He saw the Philadelphia captives’ suffering as part of the grander American project: “political union” with the “first Powers in Europe.” Where Davis had seen the United States as a small fish in a big ocean, Bainbridge saw the Americans’ disruption in the Mediterranean as a catalyst for sweeping political change in Europe, as well as a change in the United States’ national standing, “America’s rising Glory will make her friendship Courted by the Nations which at present form an erroneous opinion of her strength & respectability,” he proclaimed.196

On a Cruise

Preble continued to be suspicious of the activities of the European nations. He observed that Spain had sent carpenters to Tripoli to help the bashaw build gunboats. As they had passed through the blockade because they bore a passport from Charles Pinckney, American minister at Madrid, Preble thought “they must have deceived him” about their intentions.197 The squadron had also captured a Spanish bomb vessel coming out of Tripoli. Finding the crew with fourteen more men than the vessel had come with, the Americans declared La Vergine del Rosario to be in violation of its passport from Davis and sent it to Malta for adjudication. Preble released the vessel when he heard of the capture, but Davis warned the Spanish that from that point on, no vessel, passport or not, would be permitted to enter Tripoli. Apparently Preble had had enough of the questions about passport violations.198 Thereafter, Don Joseph Noguera, the Spanish consul general at Tunis, wrote to Commodore Preble requesting “special permission” for a Spanish courier to be allowed through the blockade to deliver dispatches.199 Preble refused.200 The em-

196 Bainbridge to Davis, 17 June 1804, BW4:199-200.
197 Preble to Sec of Navy, 14 June 1804, BW4:190.
198 Davis to Don Joseph Noguera, 22 June 1804, BW4:216-17.
199 Noguera to Preble, 24 June 1804, BW4:224.
200 Preble to Noguera, 18 July 1804, BW4:275.
peror of Morocco also complained about the revocation of the passports. Though Preble did not find their grumbling a threat, Simpson wished to restore the American presence to the straits in order to keep the Moroccans in line.\footnote{Simpson to Preble, 1 August 1804, BW4:329.} This Preble also declined to do.

June was prime cruising time for the squadron. The weather was reasonable, and there was enough activity along the coast of Tripoli to keep the sailors interested in the cruise. But summer also brought with it the fever season. Davis wrote to Preble that he was unable to provide a detailed account of affairs at Tunis, as he had been confined to his bed for twelve days with a “violent fever.”\footnote{Davis to Preble, 19 June 1804, BW4:204. Davis had suffered a similar malady the previous summer as well. Davis to Lear, 22 June 1804, BW4:215.} The Constitution had its share of sickness as well, compounded by lack of fresh food. Its surgeon, James Wells, petitioned Preble to find some sheep or fowls to “contribute to the recovery of the sick.”\footnote{James Wells to Preble, 20 June 1804, BW4:210.}

Preble had been as good as his word about keeping all of his ships active. In June, Henry Wadsworth, now on board the Scourge, wrote to his friend that the Scourge had been out on a cruise for two solid months, which was the longest cruise Wadsworth had experienced since his arrival in the Mediterranean. The squadron had found ways to amuse itself, too: “The Boats of the squadron frequently go on shore at a distance from the Town for Sand to scrub our decks: & for amusement, to chase & be chased by the Natives, but they always retire before the people begin to collect.” They had been running a gunboat up near where the Philadelphia had grounded, but the commodore stopped that exercise because it gave the Tripolitans target practice.\footnote{Wadsworth to unknown, 28 June 1804, BW4:234. Bainbridge had noted before that the Tripolitans were terrible shots; Preble did not want to help them improve.}

Sometimes the games the Americans played turned deadly. Wadsworth recorded a chase that ended when the Vixen ran a ship on shore after making a “riddling sieve” of its hull. The fire from the American vessels supposedly killed 150 on the shore, but four Americans were also killed in the return fire.\footnote{Ibid.} The skirmishes between the Americans and the Tripolitans on shore continued to escalate in intensity as the summer progressed, though little actual damage was
done. A skirmish on July 7 led to the wounding of three Americans and the death of one.\footnote{Stewart to Preble, 8 July 1804, BW4:255.}

**New Blood**

On July 22, 1804, the *John Adams* arrived in Gibraltar. Armed *en flute*, or without most of its cannons, the ship essentially functioned as a supply ship and tender to the squadron. The *John Adams* had not weathered the long journey across the ocean well, but it had made the journey quickly—only 26 days. Master Commandant Isaac Chauncey, its captain, intended to sail for Malta, in accordance with the last word Preble had left with Consul Gavino.\footnote{Isaac Chauncey to Sec of Navy, 23 July 1804, BW4:287.}

On his way, Chauncey stopped at Algiers in order to deliver dispatches to Consul Lear. When he reached Algiers on July 29, Consul Lear asked to come aboard to transact business. Chauncey was reluctant—he knew the rules of quarantine meant that if Lear came aboard, the *John Adams* would be quarantined at Malta. The loss of time stuck in quarantine would be significant for the squadron, since the *John Adams* was bringing stores. But Lear insisted.\footnote{Chauncey to Sec of Navy, 30 July 1804, BW4:319.} Lear planned to travel with the *John Adams* to Malta to transact business, but after reading Chauncey’s dispatches, he decided that the trip was unnecessary.\footnote{Chauncey to Sec of Navy, 30 July 1804, BW4:320-21.} Chauncey was correct about the quarantine: the *John Adams* received an 18-day quarantine upon its arrival in Malta.\footnote{Chauncey to Sec of Navy, 30 July 1804, BW4:320-21.} Chauncey considered the quarantine too long to wait out, so after delivering his dispatches to naval agent William Higgins, he left Malta only one day after arriving.\footnote{Journal of John Darby, 4 August 1804, BW4:364.} Not being able to get water at Malta, he also put his crew on 3/4 ration of water because he was bringing water to the rest of the squadron, and he did not want to have to return to Malta for resupply.\footnote{Darby journal, 5 August 1804, BW4:367.}

Chauncey’s information about Preble’s location was significantly out of date. As Preble headed from Messina to Tripoli on July 12 to begin the bombardment with his new bomb vessels, [206Stewart to Preble, 8 July 1804, BW4:255.]
[207Isaac Chauncey to Sec of Navy, 23 July 1804, BW4:287.]
[208John Adams journal, 29 July 1804, BW4:319.]
[209Chauncey to Sec of Navy, 30 July 1804, BW4:320-21.]
[210Journal of John Darby, 4 August 1804, BW4:364.]
[211Darby journal, 5 August 1804, BW4:367.]
[212John Adams journal, 5 August 1804, BW4:366.]
he left a letter at Syracuse for the coming reinforcements, requesting that they make their way as swiftly as possible to the coast of Tripoli to join the rest of the squadron. He needed their guns and their manpower.\textsuperscript{213} The squadron hit heavy winds and had to remain anchored off Syracuse for another day. The store ship they were traveling with lost its mast in the wind, and the gunboats were unable to withstand the heavy seas.\textsuperscript{214} On July 14, Preble and the squadron were finally on their way to Tripoli.

Preble’s squadron arrived in Malta on July 16, where they met the \textit{Vixen}, who had left the blockade because the schooner needed repairs after a skirmish on the coast.\textsuperscript{215} There, the ships all received the assistance of the British fleet in taking on water.\textsuperscript{216} Preble received visits from Sir Alexander Ball and other military dignitaries at Malta while his officers went ashore to purchase supplies.\textsuperscript{217} The stores were especially needed as a survey of the stores at Malta revealed a large amount of spoilage in the butter, cheese, beef, bread, and flour.\textsuperscript{218} Due to high winds, the squadron was not able to leave Malta until July 21.\textsuperscript{219}

On July 26, the whole squadron reunited off Tripoli. Preble’s forces numbered over a thousand men, but he was not ignorant of the difficulty of the task. He described the setting:

A city well walled, protected by batteries judiciously constructed, mounting one hundred and fifteen pieces of heavy cannon, and defended by twenty-five thousand Arabs and Turks; the harbor protected by nineteen gunboats, two galleys, two schooners of eight guns each, and a Brig mounting ten guns, ranged in order of battle, forming a strong line of defence, at secure moorings, inside a long range of rocks and shoals, extending more than two miles to the eastward of the town, which form the harbor, protects them from the northern gales, and renders it impossible for a vessel of the Constitution’s draught of water to approach near enough to destroy them, as they are sheltered by the rocks, and can retire under that shelter to the shore, unless they choose to expose themselves in the different channels and openings of the reefs, for

\textsuperscript{213}Preble to commanders, 12 July 1804, BW\textit{4}:268-69.
\textsuperscript{214}\textit{Constitution} logbook, 12 July 1804, BW\textit{4}:269.
\textsuperscript{215}Preble diary, 16 July 1804, BW\textit{4}:272-73.
\textsuperscript{216}\textit{Constitution} logbook, 17 July 1804, BW\textit{4}:272.
\textsuperscript{217}\textit{Constitution} logbook, 17 July 1804, BW\textit{4}:274.
\textsuperscript{218}Supply survey, 20 July 1804, BW\textit{4}:282.
\textsuperscript{219}Preble diary, 21 July 1804, BW\textit{4}:284.
Continued high winds prevented the squadron from commencing operations until August 3. The battle of that day proved that the Tripolitans were more formidable—and more treacherous—than the Americans had anticipated. The American gunboats moved in closer to the shore to engage with Tripolitan gunboats while the larger vessels tried to both provide cover fire and assault the town. Gunboat No. 2, commanded by Lieutenant James Decatur, was able to overcome one of the Tripolitan gunboats, but as Decatur moved to take command of the gunboat after it struck, the captain shot Decatur in the head, killing him. Lieutenant Decatur’s older brother, Captain Stephen Decatur, who had been commanding one of the other gunboats, sought out the Tripolitan captain to avenge his brother’s death. Decatur and the Tripolitan captain grappled in hand-to-hand combat, and when the Tripolitan tried to strike a blow at Stephen Decatur as well, a young crew member named Daniel Frazier stepped in and took the blow.

The battle lasted until about 5 p.m. after two hours of fire. The squadron disengaged with no ship losses, and only one death, Lieutenant James Decatur, and thirteen wounded. Preble commended the crews of all the gunboats, including the Neapolitans he had hired. Three Tripolitan gunboats were sunk, and Preble thought that the bombardment of the town had “done great execution.” He awaited the response of the bashaw.

On August 5, Preble took advantage of a passing French privateer to send some prisoners back to Tripoli for treatment of their wounds. “The sending these unfortunate men on shore, to be taken care of by their friends, was an act of humanity, on our part, which I hope will make a proper impression on the minds of the Barbarians,” Preble wrote, “but I doubt it.” In reality, Preble also sent the prisoners back because he could not spare the food to feed them. The Constitution sent back 14 prisoners to Tripoli, but had to keep on board 35 more, a significant strain on resources.

---

220 Preble to Sec of Navy, 26 Julyff. 1804, BW4:294. The general outlines of the events described during this assault on Tripoli are all taken from this same letter.
221 Preble to Beaussier, 4 August 1804, BW4:363.
222 Constitution logbook, 5 August 1804, BW4:365.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

On August 7, the French privateer brought back news that the bashaw was interested in treating with the Americans, according to Monsieur Beaussier. Beaussier also sent the unwelcome news that Muhammad Dghies had been too ill to join the discussions.\textsuperscript{223} If he wanted to talk, the bashaw did not show it: he did not raise a white flag from the castle, a sign that a boat going ashore would not be fired upon, so Preble instead began to bombard the town. The gunboats were able to raze a battery, but not without cost. One of the gunboats blew up when hit by a shot from the battery, killing two officers and some of the crew. All told, the squadron lost twelve men that day and two later from their wounds.

After two battles with little accomplished, Preble was buoyed by the arrival of the \textit{John Adams}. Chauncey brought news that the frigates Preble wanted were indeed coming, so Preble decided to wait for the reinforcements before launching another attack. Unfortunately, the arrival of the frigates also meant the end of Preble’s tenure as commodore, since he would no longer be the senior officer. He grumbled, “I cannot but regret that our naval establishment is so limited as to deprive me of the means and glory of completely subduing the haughty tyrant of Tripoli, while in the chief command; it will, however, afford me satisfaction to give my successor all the assistance in my power.”\textsuperscript{224}

On August 9, the French consul raised a white flag over the castle. Preble sent a boat to the town to hear what the bashaw had to say. That afternoon he received a letter from the bashaw offering to accept peace for $500 per prisoner, with no additional payments, for a total of $150,000. Though this number was approximately $350,000 less than the bashaw’s last offer, Preble turned it down instantly. He had already told Beaussier that his final offer was $80,000.\textsuperscript{225} The bashaw proved to be as intransigent as Preble; Beaussier reported that “since the Effusion of blood had already commenced, his country [Tripoli] was bent upon continuing the war - that the Bashaw, electrified more than ever by the decision of his council, and by the patriotic transport

\textsuperscript{223}Beaussier to Preble, 6 August 1804, BW\textit{4:369}.
\textsuperscript{224}Preble to Sec of Navy, 26 Julyff. 1804, BW\textit{4:301}.
\textsuperscript{225}Preble to Beaussier, 9 August 1804, BW\textit{4:389}.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

of his People, is determined to wait the event, unless the sum is considerably augmented.” Preble felt certain that the addition of four heavy frigates would be sufficient to force the bashaw to release the prisoners with no ransom. But the long cruise was beginning to take its toll on the squadron. “Officers and men are worn out for want of necessary rest,” wrote Purser Noadiah Morris.

Preble waited for almost two weeks for the frigates to appear. Communications with the bashaw revealed that neither side would budge. Water and supplies began to run low. Crews began to fall prey to scurvy. Preble had to order the Enterprize to Syracuse for water and fresh vegetables. It was August 20 when the Enterprize returned, followed the next day by a store ship. On August 31, the crew of the Constitution received some potatoes and onions from a small supply ship, but were forced to heave overboard 1200 pounds of cheese that had rotted.

With no sign of the reinforcements, Preble decided to launch another bombardment before the winter set in and the weather prevented the squadron from remaining off Tripoli. The squadron bombarded the city on August 24, and again on August 28. The battles continued to take their toll on the vessels of the American squadron, as sails and rigging were shot away and hulls damaged by the cannon from the town.

On September 3, after another day of bombardment, Preble decided to take more drastic action. He turned the ketch Intrepid into an “infernal,” or a fireship loaded with explosives, that would sail into Tripoli harbor and be blown up, hopefully along with enemy ships. Richard Somers volunteered to be the officer who went with the Intrepid and lit the fuses from a boat.

---

226 Beaussier to Preble, 10 August 1804, BW4:393.
227 Letter from Noadiah Morris, 7 September 1804, BW4:356.
228 Preble to William Higgins, 15 August 1804, BW4:417. Nathaniel Haraden, clearly concerned about the dwindling supply, began recording how much water was left for the squadron in his daily logbook entries, e.g., 19 August 1804; BW4:433.
229 Preble diary, 16 August 1804. Scurvy could be literally crippling to a ship. Scurvy first presented as sluggishness and body aches, but it moved on to painful gum inflammation and body pain. Then the inflammation turned into full-blown putrefaction, plus ulcers, hemorrhages, and more intense pain in the joints. In the final stage, diarrhea, fever, seizures, spreading ulcers, and general organ failure could end in a very painful death. Estes, 155-56.
230 Constitution logbook, 31 August 1804, BW4:493.
nearby. The next day, after loading the *Intrepid* with the explosives, Somers and a small crew began to sail the ketch into the harbor. The crew was supposed to light a small fire to distract any Tripolitans who might try to stop them, but instead, as the *Intrepid* reached its destination, the entire ship blew up prematurely while the crew was still on board. The entire crew was killed, including Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, who had been in the Mediterranean longer than almost any other officer.

The loss of the *Intrepid* was a blow to morale at the end of a long and fruitless campaign. By September 5, the squadron was scuffed up and low on ammunition. The weather had started to turn bad, so Preble began to make preparations to leave Tripoli. He wrote to his friend in Malta, Captain Schomberg of the HMS *Madras*, “Our Gun boats want much nursing, & create a vast deal of uneasiness for their Safety in rough Weather,” and he decided he could no longer keep them on station.\(^{231}\) On the 7th, he ordered the gunboats back to Syracuse, along with the *John Adams*, *Siren*, *Nautilus*, and *Enterprize*. Captain Decatur of the *Enterprize* was to transfer his crew members whose enlistments were up into the *John Adams*, which was headed for home, taking on whatever crew he needed from the *John Adams*. He was also to deliver the gunboats back to Messina.\(^{232}\)

On September 10, the *President* and the *Constellation* finally hove into sight off Tripoli. Preble noted only that “the command of the squadron was surrendered to Commodore Barron, with the usual ceremony.” Preble requested from Commodore Barron that he be allowed to return to the United States in the *John Adams*, leaving the *Constitution* for the newly minted Captain Stephen Decatur. Preble’s assault on Tripoli had left 32 Americans dead, and 22 wounded. There was no way to know the casualties the American squadron had inflicted on the town of Tripoli, but the naval officers estimated the death toll in hundreds or even thousands.

\(^{231}\)Preble to Schomberg, 20 August 1804, BW4:437.
\(^{232}\)Preble to Decatur, 6 September 1804, BW4:522.
Preble’s Legacy

Commodore Preble had been a very different sort of commander from his predecessors. Hampered by similar problems—lack of manpower, lack of ships, poor communications, poor supplies—he had improvised ways to work around the problems. Preble’s brashness and unwillingness to operate within the culture of the Mediterranean sometimes created controversy. However, for the first time, some of the arrogance with which the Americans had entered the Mediterranean seemed to be justified, and the weaknesses of the Mediterranean system exposed. Noadiah Morris wrote of the weakness,

“The existence of these States depend in a very great degree on each other - that their manners and customs [sic] are the same, there is no question, and that their strength and arrogance has rather proceeded from the duplicity of the Maritime powers of Europe, than from any superiority in bravery or enterprize is equally certain. The truth of this has been fully demonstrated by our small squadron. The Americans have conquered them, hand to hand, one to five; and they have reduced the insolent demand of the redoubtable Bashaw to the standard of reason.”

Morris thought that the commodore’s exposure of the Barbary weaknesses had begun with Morocco: the resumption of the peace there “has been brought about by his ready conception of the Turkish character, which has been but too long mistaken.”233 Sometimes the more experienced sailors shocked the newly arrived officers with their cavalier attitudes toward the destruction of the Tripolitans. John Darby wrote, “They seem to talk of butchering and cutting up a Turk with as much indifference as one is accustomed to carve a Turkey or chicken.”234

Noadiah Morris also noted the ways he perceived the Americans had acted as foil to the Europeans, including Preble’s stern rebuke of the Neapolitan government when it held American vessels under a more strict quarantine than other nations’ vessels.235 His feelings were echoed by John Darby, purser on the John Adams, who believed that the Europeans’ familiarity with the Barbary states had engendered timidity: “This brave and daring attack [the bombardment]

233Letter from Morris, 7 September 1804, BW4:358.
234Darby journal, 9 August 1804, BW4:391.
235Letter from Morris, 7 September 1804, BW4:358.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

will hardly be credited by the Europeans who know the greate Advantage of a fort and strong fortifyed Battery with their greate superiority of gun boats, nor do I beleive any other nation except the Americans woud have attempted it with the same force.”

The rhetoric surrounding Preble could not have been more different from the rhetoric that followed Richard Valentine Morris home. Consul George Davis wrote to Preble, “You have laid the foundation for a National Character; and on so solid a Basis, that Tripoli at least, will learn to respect, even its ruins; and in doing which, You have in a great degree removed the degrading opinion, they had entertained of Our Nation - Your example, will stimulate all the Secondary Nations; and I trust, finally destroy the false Policy of Europe.”

It was not just the Americans who appreciated Preble’s zeal. When he heard the news that Preble was being superseded, Governor Alexander Ball of Malta, whose relationship with Preble had not been entirely smooth, wrote to him that when he gave the news to his government on Malta, “They join me in regretting that an officer whose Talents and professional abilities have been justly appretiated, and whose manners and conduct eminently fit him for so high a command should be removed from it.” Preble’s conduct had thus achieved one of the aims of the war: the respect and community of at least one powerful nation in the Mediterranean.

The New Commodore

While Preble was cannonading Tripoli, the new commodore stopped at Gibraltar to be briefed on the Mediterranean situation. He inherited relative calm in the other Barbary states, though he noted that the emperor of Morocco had become fractious. As with the arrival of Preble in 1803, the appearance of Barron’s two frigates had a calming effect on the emperor’s complaints. Tunis likewise, though making a good deal of noise about their treatment, was unlikely to actually do anything while Preble’s squadron was so close. Spain might represent a threat. Dissatisfaction with the United States’ deals with France about Louisiana might spill over into harassment of

236Darby journal, 7 August 1804, BW4:385.
237Davis to Preble, 21 August 1804, BW4:442.
238Ball to Preble, 30 August 1804, BW4:488.
Mediterranean commerce, according to Minister Charles Pinckney. George Davis suggested, though, that European alliances to defeat Napoleon might distract Spain from their concerns with the Americans.

James Simpson remained concerned about the state of Moroccan affairs. He continued to refuse a passport to the Moroccan wheat ships bound for Tripoli, and it appeared that a rerun of the previous year’s disputes might be at hand. Commodore Barron affirmed Simpson’s decision to refuse the passports, and he also followed Simpson’s lead about keeping American ships off Morocco as a preventive measure. He instructed the Congress and the Essex to remain at Gibraltar until Simpson’s perceived crisis was past. John Rodgers, captain of the Congress, took a different view; he chose to sail out to Salle to investigate the Moroccan navy and determine for himself whether they had hostile intentions. He ordered James Barron and the Essex to stay at Gibraltar as Commodore Barron had instructed. His inspection of Salle indicated that the Moroccan navy was not going anywhere, so after taking on water at Gibraltar, he headed for Tripoli.

While at Gibraltar, Commodore Barron also met with William Eaton. Eaton outlined his still-unfinished plan for the coup under Hamet. Eaton further requested that any treaty the Americans made with Tripoli ought to include provisions for both Denmark and Sweden. He wanted to repay the kindness of Nicholas Nissen, and also repay the Swedish for the poor help the Americans had been in their alliance in 1801 and 1802. Eaton decided to travel back to Tripoli with the squadron in order to superintend his plan for Hamet.

When the two squadrons converged on September 10, Preble turned over command to Barron, giving the new commodore a rundown of the state of the squadron, which was in considerable disrepair. The Constitution returned to Syracuse to undergo repairs. After settling his

---

239 Barron to Sec of Navy, 12 August 1804, BW4:403.
240 Davis to Preble, 24 September 1804, BW4:448.
241 Barron to Rodgers, 14 August 1804, BW4:414.
242 Rodgers to J. Barron, 17 August 1804, BW4:424.
243 Rodgers to S. Barron, 27 August 1804, BW4:467-68.
245 Preble to Barron, 10 September 1804, BW5:13.
affairs at various ports throughout the Mediterranean, a process that took several months, Preble returned to the United States in the *John Adams*. In writing, Barron ordered the *Argus* to refit and then provide convoy duty. But he verbally countermanded those orders and instead sent the *Argus* to Alexandria to find Hamet Karamanli and help him. William Eaton had finally found a commodore willing to go along with his plan.

**Refitting the Squadron**

The *Constitution*, *John Adams*, and *Enterprize* were in such bad shape after their long cruises that they were almost unable to be sailed. The *Constitution* headed to Malta and *John Adams* headed to Syracuse to refit. They had to make the necessary repairs as quickly as possible, but were hampered by a long quarantine imposed because of their lengthy stay off Tripoli. Preble discovered when he arrived in Syracuse that his officers had been bullying the government of Syracuse in his absence, “for which, I hope, they may suffer severely.” Lear observed that “the Americans are in fact commanders of the Town” in Syracuse, unlike in Malta where they were subject to strict quarantine and the constant threat of deserters claiming British protection. One of Preble’s last acts in the Mediterranean was to establish a land hospital for American sailors in Syracuse, about two years after the idea had received authorization from the secretary of the navy.

Barron arrived at Syracuse from Tripoli on September 27, along with Consul Lear and his wife. Barron was in no shape to sail out on a cruise; his health was so poor that he could not be at sea during the winter months, and William Eaton expressed doubt that he would be

---

246 Barron to Chauncey, 14 September 1804, BW5:21.
247 Barron to Isaac Hull, 15 September 1804, BW5:20.
248 Preble to Lt. Charles Gordon, 17 September 1804, BW5:30. The *Constitution’s* quarantine ended up being 25 days.
250 Lear to Sec of State, 3 November 1804, BW5:114.
252 Eaton journal, 27 September 1804, BW5:56.
recovered in time for a spring cruise either.\footnote{Eaton to Sec of Navy, 27 October 1804, BW5:35.} In Malta, the Constitution was almost ready to return to Syracuse as well. It was a good thing, because the sick list had started to grow, due to “the quality of the water, which we daily receive from shore, & which from the late heavy Rains is white & empregnated with a limy substance.”\footnote{Constitution logbook, 23 October 1804, BW4:95.} In a mere two days, the sick list swelled from 20 to 60 because of “Graping with a flux,” some kind of gastrointestinal distress.\footnote{Constitution logbook, 24 and 25 October 1804, BW4:97, 98.}

When the President sailed on a cruise in October, Barron stayed on shore at Syracuse.\footnote{Darby journal, 7 October 1804, BW4:78.} Barron ordered the available vessels to continue the blockade of Tripoli as long as weather permitted. The Congress, Constellation, and Nautilus kept up the blockade for another month, conducting nighttime tests about how close the American ships could get to the shore without being detected. Captain John Rodgers bragged that one night he could “hear the People on Shore distinctly in common conversation.” Armed with this information, Rodgers left the blockade in the hands of Captain Hugh G. Campbell of the Constellation and returned to Malta.\footnote{Rodgers to Barron, 27 October 1804, BW4:102-3.}

On October 29, one of the crew of the Argus fell sick with smallpox. Smallpox is transmitted through fairly close contact, so if one member of a ship’s crew got the smallpox, then it was extremely difficult to keep the other crew members from becoming infected. Since one episode of smallpox renders a person immune, certain ships in the navy built up a “herd immunity” to the disease. However, as new crew members came on board (navy enlistments were only for one year), immunity started to break down. To prevent an epidemic on board their ships, American naval surgeons practiced inoculation.\footnote{Inoculation was not common amongst merchant seamen; it is not certain how many of the naval sailors had previously been inoculated as opposed to being exposed to the smallpox in a different way. Simon P. Newman, “Reading the Bodies of Early American Seafarers,” The William and Mary Quarterly 55, no. 1 (1998): 69.} On board the Argus, a survey of the crew revealed seventeen men who had not been exposed to smallpox before. The sailor who had fallen ill died of the pox; sixteen others were sent to the hospital ship.\footnote{Argus journal, 7-8 November 1804, BW5:128-29. It is not recorded whether these men were}
CHAPTER 4. 1804

The smallpox on the *Argus* also indirectly affected the other ships of the squadron. No other cases appeared, but the Americans should have been subject to a long quarantine at Syracuse out of caution that they should bring the smallpox ashore. In fact, due to the Americans’ undue influence in the town, the port authorities gave the American ships pratique immediately, and were “much alarmed at having done so.” To allay their fears, Barron ordered the *President* to sea for a few days to perform a pseudo-quarantine. The *President* was none too healthy either; its sick list numbered 49 men on November 2. Barron was able to sail from Malta to Syracuse, but he left Master Commandant George Cox in charge of the day-to-day operations of the *President* because he was unwell. In order to deal with the rise in illness among the squadron, Commodore Barron found a place for the hospital on shore in Syracuse and ordered the *President’s* surgeon, Edward Cutbush, to set it up.

Disease affected the American ships even as they departed the Mediterranean: no ships were to touch at Gibraltar or Cadiz because a terrible yellow fever epidemic had virtually shut down the two cities. Consul John Gavino could not send or receive dispatches from the squadron because he could not speak to them (and he had been sick himself).

On November 5, the *John Adams* left Syracuse with Captain Preble, bound eventually for New York. Preble had to pull strings with the Neapolitan government one last time, as the frigate lost its anchors and had to borrow one from Naples. The frigate’s journey back to the United States demonstrated once again the difficulties of long cruises overseas—the loss of anchors requiring help from both British naval vessels and the Neapolitan government; the crew made inoculated, as the records do not indicate whether they were sent to the hospital ship to be inoculated or because they had contracted smallpox. In every other instance of smallpox in the squadron, men were inoculated, though, so it is reasonable to posit that the *Argus* sailors were as well.

---

260Note to certificate of John Rodgers, 1 November 1804, BW5:109.
261Barron to Rodgers, 3 November 1804, BW5:116.
263Barron and Rodgers to Edward Cutbush, 10 November 1804, BW5:134-35. Apparently Preble’s hospital house was either unknown or unacceptable to Barron, as this hospital seems to be different from the one Preble set up. Perhaps Preble’s was only a temporary solution.
264Gavino to Sec of State, 11 November 1804, BW5:135.
up of 60 able men and 80 invalids from all over the squadron; an outbreak of smallpox requiring
the inoculation of twenty-four sailors; the poor condition of the water casks that caused the loss
of over two thousand gallons of water; and the loan of over $10,000 from Preble for repairs just
to keep the frigate afloat.\textsuperscript{265}

Commodore Barron also asked Preble to request the loan of more gunboats from the
Neapolitan government, for the spring campaign against Tripoli. Though General Acton was
willing, the king of Naples declined. His reason was that the Neapolitans had been especially
harassed by privateers from all the Barbary regencies recently, so they needed all their armament.
Preble thought that the king was under the thumb of both the British and the French, neither of
whom wanted the United States to achieve peace with Tripoli while they were at war with each
other. As a consequence of this setback, Preble and the \textit{John Adams} cancelled their remaining
Mediterranean stops and headed straight for the United States in order to expedite the building
of gunboats there.\textsuperscript{266}

\textbf{Negotiations after the Assault}

The six-week assault on Tripoli did little to change the situation at Tripoli. From his confinement,
Captain Bainbridge hit on a key element that had been missing thus far from the way in which
the Americans had interacted with the bashaw: “In making peace with these people we must not
consider them as savages, but treat them as a nation with whom we wish peace.”\textsuperscript{267} Consul Lear
likewise intended to break from tradition in the Americans’ dealings with Tripoli. The dey of
Algiers had permitted Lear to leave Algiers in order to go negotiate with Tripoli, and even wrote
the bashaw a letter ordering him to treat on American terms. Lear decided not to deliver the
letter, because “we should not owe a peace, in any shape, to the interference of another power.”
The Americans’ deference to Algiers had contributed to the break with Tripoli to begin with, so

\textsuperscript{265}Chauncey to Sec of Navy, 26 February 1805, BW5:119; \textit{John Adams} logbook, 30 December
1804, BW5:228.
\textsuperscript{266}Preble to Lear, 23 December 1804, BW5:208.
\textsuperscript{267}Bainbridge to Lear, 14 October 1804, BW4:83.
Lear was likely wise to decline their intervention. But he did not intend to begin the negotiations until spring, when he thought the bashaw would be more inclined to talk.  

To Alexandria

Meanwhile, William Eaton continued to pursue his plans for the overthrow of Yusuf Karamanli, intending to take passage with the Argus to Alexandria to rendezvous with Hamet Karamanli. Despite Barron’s orders, Eaton discovered that his interest did not extend to providing arms, money, or men to the cause. Eaton further discovered that his alternate source of money, a debt owed to him by a Sardinian noble, had been forgiven by the American government. Discouraged by these events, Eaton wrote, “I cannot forbear, however, expressing, on this occasion, the extreme mortification I suffer on account of my actual situation; destitute of commission, rank, or command; and, I may say, consideration or credit. And even without instructions for the regulation of my conduct while ostensibly charged with the management of an enterprise on which, perhaps, depends the successful issue of this war.” With so little to work with, Eaton thought it would be a miracle if the plan succeeded.

Eaton’s mood fell further when the Argus spent nearly a month refitting at Messina. Upon its return to Syracuse, the brig was sent on a search mission for three American naval vessels that had been blown off course during a severe gale. As such, “the expedition to Alexandria [was] suspended.” In the meantime, Eaton roomed with George Dyson, Preble’s navy agent at Syracuse, “a plain, frank, up and down, hospitable Yorkshireman.” Richard Farquhar and Salvatore Busuttil began to badger the new commodore, just as they had done to Edward Preble, about when the American navy could be expected to sail to Hamet’s aid.

Eaton might have felt sanguine about Hamet’s possibility for success, but Tobias Lear

---

268 Lear to Sec of State, 3 November 1804, BW5:114.
269 Eaton to Sec of Navy, 18 September 1804, BW5:33-34.
270 Eaton to Sec of Navy, 27 October 1804, BW5:35.
271 Eaton journal, 26 September 1804, BW5:55.
272 Farquhar to Barron, 1 November 1804, BW5:109-110; Busuttil to Barron, 1 November 1804, BW5:110.
did not. He told the secretary of state that he did not think Hamet had the character to effect a successful government in Tripoli, and that he certainly would be no help to the American cause. Captain Bainbridge felt the same, writing to Lear that he could “sincerely hope that such an Impolic & extraordinary measure has not intruded itself on the wisdom, of our Govt.” Bainbridge had good reason to reject Hamet: “The right of the present Bashaw is acknowledged by the Grand Signior, and all the Governments of Europe, and I can’t conceive that the least benefit could derive to the U. S. from pecuniary or any other aid given to the poor effeminate fugitive brother of the Bashaw of Tripoli.” Bainbridge believed that a fools’ errand to help the hapless Hamet was not worth risking the ire of the rest of the Mediterranean community who recognized the legitimacy of Yusuf.

Barron disagreed, authorizing Isaac Hull, captain of the Argus, to assist Eaton in whatever way he could. Barron wrote to Lear, “I conceive that if no other use can be made of him there will be no difficulty in placing him in possession of Derne & Bengaze. It may have a good effect, On his Brother it cannot I think, have an ill one.” Perhaps Barron saw Eaton’s expedition as a way to keep the pressure on the bashaw, as it was becoming obvious that Barron himself would be doing little to help the squadron.

The Argus finally sailed for Alexandria on November 14, 1804, with Eaton and Richard Farquhar on board. Eaton prepared to make a land journey from Alexandria to Derna with Hamet’s forces, supported with supplies and munitions from the Argus. Knowing he would need help from the British, Eaton wrote to Alexander Ball at Malta to request an introduction to the British consul at Alexandria. Ball agreed, giving him letters of introduction to both Mr. Briggs, the civilian consul, and Major Misset, the British resident at Cairo.

273 Lear to Secretary of State, 3 November 1804, BW5:116.
274 Bainbridge to Lear, 11 November 1804, BW5:136.
275 Bainbridge to Davis, 22 November 1804, BW5:155.
276 Barron to Hull, 10 November 1804, BW5:134.
277 Barron to Lear, 13 November 1804.
278 Eaton to Sec of Navy, 14 November 1804, BW5:140-41.
279 Eaton to Ball, 16 November 1804, BW5:143.
280 Ball to Eaton, 16 November 1804, BW5:144.
CHAPTER 4. 1804

The Argus arrived at Alexandria on November 25. The British consul came on board the next day. The Americans met with the admiral and the governor of Alexandria on November 27. On November 28, Eaton, Farquhar, Marine Lieutenant Presley O’Bannon, and a few others began the journey to Rosetta in a smaller craft; from there they were to Hamet’s residence in Grand Cairo, a journey that Eaton predicted would be difficult because of the unrest in the country. The evidence of the European conflicts in Egypt were everywhere on their journey. Eaton recorded that near Aboukir Bay he saw “the battle grounds of 8th and 21st of March 1801, yet covered with human skeletons.” On December 2, the company reached Rosetta. Eaton’s entourage met with Major Misset, who would assist them in getting to Cairo. Eaton told Captain Hull that he would be back to Alexandria in ten days. He suggested that Hull take advantage of the pristine waters of the Nile to get rid of his old water and take on fresh. On December 4, Eaton wrote to Hamet directly, informing him that the United States had finally come to help him.

Winter in the Mediterranean

As Eaton made headway with his plans for Hamet, the squadron struggled to regroup from the fall’s assault on Tripoli. In November, Commodore Barron ordered John Rodgers, now captain of the Constitution, to raise the broad pennant and take temporary command of the squadron, while Barron himself retired to the country near Syracuse, hopeful that the pure air would improve his health. He invited Consul Lear to join him there in order to strategize about the next steps for the war effort. The other ships of the squadron went back out to cruise off Tripoli for the month

---

281 Eaton journal, 26 November 1804, BW5:162.
282 Eaton to Sec of Navy, 28 November 1804, BW5:166.
283 Eaton journal, 30 November 1804, BW5:169. Eaton saw the bones from the two battles of Aboukir between Napoleon’s armies and the army of Great Britain.
284 Eaton to Hull, 2 December 1804, BW5:171.
285 Eaton to Hamet Karamanli, 4 December 1804, BW5:172. The remainder of Eaton’s adventure will be discussed in Chapter 5, even though its beginning is in December 1804.
286 Barron to Lear, 13 November 1804, BW5:139-40.
of November.

To fill out the crews of the Constitution and other ships short of complement, Commodore Barron ordered Rodgers to sail for Lisbon in order to recruit sailors. It is uncertain why he picked Lisbon as a likely place to find sailors—that port was at least three weeks’ sail from the American headquarters at Syracuse. Perhaps it was in order to consult with Consul Simpson at Tangier en route about the necessity of leaving a ship off Morocco. The Constitution arrived at Lisbon on December 29, badly injured from the poor weather throughout the cruise. Despite Rodgers’ entreaties and careful planning (he had deliberately not touched at Tangier on his way down), the Constitution received quarantine.

Affairs at Malta continued to be contentious. When the Vixen arrived at Malta on December 6, the ship received its fifth quarantine in two months. Steward Hezekiah Loomis wrote bitterly, “It appears by some of the arbitrary power which stimulates the English as much as virtue does the Americans, that they inflicted this imposition more for their own fancy than the Laws of their port or their Country.” The Vixen also lost a crew member to an English store ship, whose master took a boy out of the Vixen.

Consul Lear had a brief scare in Algiers when the dey detained three American ships in retribution for the annuities he still had not received. Lear was able to pay the dey the money and set the ships free. He asked Robert Montgomery, consul at Alicante, to spread the news widely that Algiers was no longer a threat. Likewise, Commodore Barron thought that the threat from Morocco was so minimal that he approved the release of the Siren back to Syracuse, leaving the port unprotected, provided Consul Simpson agreed with his assessment. Simpson did not agree.

---

287Barron to Rodgers, 27 November 1804, BW5:163.
288Rodgers to Sec of Navy, 30 December 1804, BW5:226.
289Loomis journal, 6 December 1804, BW5:176.
290Loomis journal, 10 December 1804, BW5:181.
291Lear to Robert Montgomery, 16 December 1804, BW5:196.
292Rodgers to Charles Stewart, 19 December 1804, BW5:199.
293Simpson to Rodgers, 24 December 1804, BW5:212.
On December 12, Spain declared war on England. Though the war would add danger to American commerce, it would likely also leave the United States as the sole neutral in the Mediterranean, Charles Pinckney believed, as all the European nations would be forced to take sides. The Americans might not be liked, but they were necessary. “I am convinced there is not one which does not wish us sunk in the Sea, & even England has but a splenetic cordiality for us,” Pinckney wrote; “the increase of our Commercial Marine, now treading fast on her own - the probability of our being, if not the only, certainly always the most respected neutral flag in the world - the numbers & wealth this circumstance, connected with our freedom, will draw to us, & the consequent increase of our Commerce, & when we please, of our Naval force, will make England view us with jealousy.”

Conclusion

The year 1804 was full of contradictions for the American navy. Edward Preble’s efforts had been the strongest display of American force since the beginning of the war, but Samuel Barron could barely get out of bed, much less capitalize on Preble’s success. The destruction of the Philadelphia had lionized the American navy’s bravery and skill, but the captives of the Philadelphia remained imprisoned. The nations of the Mediterranean had rallied to aid the Philadelphia captives, evidencing the integration of the United States into their community. They had also provided food, storage, clothing, men, and even munitions to the American squadron. At the same time, they had imposed regulations and harbored fugitives in a manner decidedly unfriendly.

For its part, the United States continued to insist that it would defeat the bashaw on its own, without interference from any other nation. Growing in familiarity with the Barbary system, Preble and others also seemed to be growing in contempt for it. In December 1804, the United States was no closer to peace with the bashaw than in January 1804. But the navy had slowly begun to garner respect in the ports it frequented, and the narrative of power and influence that the naval officers spun seemed to be working its way into the Mediterranean community. More

Pinckney to Sec of State, 12 December 1804, BW5:184.
dependent than ever on their Mediterranean neighbors, the navy had talked itself into superiority over the corrupt Mediterranean system. In 1805, it would have to try to convince everyone else.
Chapter 5

1805

On December 30, 1804, Captain John Rodgers wrote to William Kirkpatrick, American consul at Malaga, “Every Effort is now using to give Tripoli her death blow next Summer, and no doubt it will be effected in a manner to prevent them ever again from feeling an inclination to make War on our Commerce.”¹ In the United States, optimism about the prospect of peace was high. President Jefferson insisted that further tribute was out of the question, but he expressed confidence in Samuel Barron’s squadron. If the summer’s expedition proved fruitless, Jefferson was prepared to keep a small force off Tripoli perpetually rather than pay tribute. He argued that it would cost the same amount of money to do so as to pay the tribute, but it would at least keep the United States from the disgrace of cowing to an inferior power.²

Part 1: In the Mediterranean

The squadron was in no shape to give anyone a death blow.³ In December, the commodore’s illness was so severe that many expressed concern that he would not survive.⁴ Perhaps Com-

---

¹Rodgers to Kirkpatrick, 30 December 1804, BW5:227.
²Jefferson to Judge Tyler, 29 March 1805, BW5:465.
³In this chapter, two strands of the story develop simultaneously: the actions of the naval squadron under Commodore Samuel Barron, and the actions of William Eaton and Hamet Karamanli. Since these two strands do not intersect until midway through the year, I will address each one in its turn and then address their convergence, rather than switching back and forth between them.
⁴Lear to Dyson, 27 December 1804, BW5:221.
modore Barron had learned from his predecessors that English and French ports were minefields for diplomatic and social problems, so he ordered his squadron far and wide for refitting. But if he thought he could escape the long arm of the Napoleonic wars, he was mistaken.

At the end of 1804, the Constitution had sailed for Lisbon to replace its depleted crew. The journey to Lisbon was long and brutal to the ship’s repair. Despite its urgent need for repairs, as of January 1, the Constitution had sat in port for five days without seeing the health officer or hearing word directly from the American consul, William Jarvis. When Jarvis contacted Rodgers, he apologized for the delay, citing fears about yellow fever in Spain and Gibraltar. The fever was also responsible for the long quarantine the Constitution would still have to undergo. Jarvis assured Rodgers that he would try to shorten the quarantine time, but he needed exact information about where the ship had been and whether its crew had been sick on the way.

Rodgers was furious at Jarvis, who he felt had neglected his duty. Rodgers had provided the information Jarvis requested four days previous, when the vice consul had come alongside, so he was astonished that Jarvis did not have it. He argued that he could only stay in Lisbon for twenty days, and the quarantine predicted by Jarvis would leave him almost no time for the needed repairs. Rodgers declared that Jarvis would have to convince the health officers to take Rodgers’ word about where the ship had stopped, and if he could not, then Rodgers would leave Lisbon and limp to Gibraltar, taking his chances with the yellow fever, “sooner than tamely subject the American Flag to such Disgrace.”

Jarvis was equally furious at Rodgers’ accusation. He informed Rodgers that the health officers did not consult foreign consuls when assigning quarantine lengths and that Rodgers should have expected a long quarantine. He suggested that the Constitution would be able to acquire seamen more easily in the spring or summer, but if Rodgers could not wait that long, Jarvis would ready the sails and rigging for repairs for when the ship was released from quarantine.

---

5 Rodgers to Jarvis, 1 January 1805, BW5:245.
6 Jarvis to Rodgers, 1 January 1805, BW5:245-46.
7 Rodgers to Jarvis, 1 January 1805, BW5:246.
8 Jarvis to Rodgers, 3 January 1805, BW5:250-51.
Though Rodgers continued to rail at Jarvis for the perceived insults to his character, he accepted Jarvis’s offer to provide the items for repairs. Rodgers was also able to sign on nearly eighty men from Lisbon.

Predictably, the signing of seamen provoked a conflict with the British. James Gambier, British consul at Lisbon, wrote to Jarvis to request that Rodgers hand over any British seamen he had signed on to the *Constitution*. British law stated that all British seamen must serve in the navy “whenever our fleets may stand in need of them,” and with the war against Napoleon escalating again, Consul Gambier needed every man he could get. He invoked both the sailors’ sense of duty to their country and Rodgers’s duty to his position of neutrality as reasons for the return of any British sailors. Rodgers replied that he had not knowingly shipped any British sailors, but even if he had, justice was on his side. He pointed out that he was not bound by British law, and there was no formal agreement between the United States and Britain that militated for his giving up sailors that he had found unemployed in a neutral port. However, he wrote, “The high respect I entertain for the British Government, will prevent my detaining one of its deserters a Single moment after I know him to be such.”

The Danish consul likewise requested that Rodgers deliver up four deserters believed to be on the *Constitution*. Rodgers disclaimed knowledge of them as well but promised to hand them over if they should appear. Jarvis apparently thought that Rodgers was lying; he wrote that he hoped Rodgers would hand the deserters directly back to the Danish captain, writing, “The Capt from whom they have absconded should regain them again.” The deserters were in fact on board the *Constitution*, but Rodgers put them on shore instead of giving them back to the Danish captain. He wrote, “I cannot conceive that I am bound either by National or Personal honor to deliver Men into the hands of an authority that would punish them for their wishing

---

9 Rodgers to Jarvis, 4 January 1805, BW5:253-54.
11 Gambier to Jarvis, 15 January 1805, BW5:281.
12 Rodgers to Jarvis, 16 January 1805, BW5:282-83.
to serve our Country in preference to their own, particularly when at the same time, I had no Election in the motive that influenced their conduct.” Rodgers did not have a high opinion of the conditions on board Danish vessels, apparently; he thought Jarvis wanted to punish the deserters for “prefering FREEDOM to SLAVERY.”

Political changes in Europe continued to affect the American navy. Jarvis wrote that Great Britain threatened Portugal’s colonies, making it likely that Portugal would not join the British against Napoleon. However, outside forces were likely to have a say in Portugal’s political future, as one of Napoleon’s most aggressive generals, Jean Lannes, was soon to arrive in Lisbon. Likewise, the city of Cadiz, where the Siren was refitting, was put under blockade by the British, limiting the Americans’ ability to continue to use that port. Everywhere the ships of the squadron went, they ran up against the changing alliances of the European states. At Messina, where the squadron had done business in the past, a change in government meant that the Nautilus was refused naval stores, which was especially unfortunate because the Nautilus needed timber not only for itself but also for the President.

While the Constitution was in Lisbon, the Enterprize was ordered to Trieste and Venice. The consul, William Riggin, was there ready and waiting, having negotiated with the government of Venice to allow the Enterprize to refit and purchase stores at a fair price. Consul Riggin noted that the Austrian government, under whose governance Venice fell, was inclined to be friendly to the United States. The schooner’s captain, Thomas Robinson, gushed to Commodore Barron about

---

15Rodgers to Jarvis, 20 January 1805, BW5:296. Jarvis had had enough of Rodgers’ insults and condescension; in laying out his argument for why the sailors should be handed straight to their captain, he wrote, “If I do not answer your Letter with that gravity which becomes a public officer, it is because I conceive that any person who attempts to support an opinion evidently wrong is not entitled to be treated seriously.” Jarvis to Rodgers, 22 January 1805, BW5:298.

16Jarvis to Sec of State, 5 January 1805, BW5:257.

17Anthony Terry to Sec of State, 5 January 1805, BW5:259; Gavino to Preble, 6 January 1805, BW5:260-61.

18For a lengthy explanation of the many changes over the course of the early nineteenth century, see Paul W. Schroeder, The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848, Oxford History of Modern Europe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

19Barron to Lear, 11 January 1805, BW5:276-77.

20William Riggin to Sec of State, 1 January 1805, BW5:247.
the abundance of supplies and the helpfulness of the Venetian locals in repairing the *Enterprize*,
which was in bad shape. The American vessel was able to take advantage of stores that had
been abandoned when Italy had fallen under the control of Austria; Robinson wrote, “There are
piles of timber in the Arsenal sufficient for twenty line of battle ships.” But the Italian republics
too were subject to domination by French coalition forces or British-Russian coalition forces.
Robinson noted that the political situation was anything but stable. He thought that when the
war came to Italy, Venice would probably side against France.21

Like Rodgers, Robinson had only praise for the locals with which he interacted, and only
scorn for the consuls. For one thing, the consuls handed out American passports unheedingly, to
whoever desired one, not just to Americans. He found their conduct degrading to the honor of
the United States, and potentially harmful: “a designing man might under the character [of an
American] do infinite injury to a belligerent [power] with whom we are at peace and perhaps on
terms of warm friendship.”22

Access to friendly ports was more important than ever for the American squadron. The
larger squadrons required larger quantities of supplies, but their supplies from America were
of poor quality and variable frequency. After several shipments of cheese had been nearly all
lost to rot, the *President’s* purser, Charles Wadsworth, wrote to the accountant of the navy sug-
gesting that staples such as cheese, vinegar, and candles could be purchased more easily in the
Mediterranean, with less cost to the navy department.23

But some of the squadron’s favored ports were less available to them. In Gibraltar, the
yellow fever had ravaged the city.24 When the *John Adams*, carrying Edward Preble home, stopped
there to get water and supplies for the voyage to the United States, it was difficult to get supplies.
The health officer had died, as well as almost all the men responsible for loading ships. Almost
no supplies were available because of the tight quarantine and the lack of workers to supply

22Robinson to Sec of Navy, 18 February 1805, BW5:358.
23Charles Wadsworth to accountant of the navy, 5 January 1805, BW5:260.
24Isaac Chauncey recorded that the health officer reported over 6000 dead as of January 6.
Chauncey logbook, 6 January 1805, BW5:262.
Figure 5.1: Map of locations in the Eastern Mediterranean related to the war in 1805.
more. In addition, the weather was so bad that nothing could be loaded onto any boats for the entire first week of January.\textsuperscript{25} As a result, Preble sent a boat to Tangier to acquire fresh vegetables, eggs, and fowls.\textsuperscript{26}

Political struggles with the British also stunted American activities in the Mediterranean. For instance, the United States was getting a taste of its own medicine about blockades: an American brig had been captured and brought to Malta for a violation of the British blockade of Genoa. However, the judge ruled that the Americans represented a special type of neutral, different from neutral Europeans, and released the ship with only a fine to compensate for the captors' effort. The judge's ruling accentuated the ways in which the United States could not be part of the European community. The United States was not likely to entangle itself in the Napoleonic conflict directly, so it was different from other neutrals who needed pressure to keep them on the correct side (the British side, in this case).\textsuperscript{27} When the United States found itself on the commercial side of the blockade of Cadiz, it was the Americans' turn to ask for special treatment. Joseph Yznardi, consul at Cadiz, wrote to Admiral John Orde to renew the agreement the Americans had enjoyed with Lord St. Vincent that allowed them to send produce in and out of Cadiz.\textsuperscript{28} Just as the American consuls had declined to allow British vessels into Tripoli, so Admiral Orde declined to allow American vessels into Cadiz.\textsuperscript{29}

Back in Syracuse, Commodore Barron had recovered enough to transact some business. He wrote to entreat General Acton of Naples to intervene on behalf of the navy's request for the loan of gunboats.\textsuperscript{30} Preble had thought that the king's refusal to grant the gunboats had more to do with the French than the Barbary states, and he was probably right. But the Neapolitan forces had stepped up their attacks on Barbary vessels: George Davis informed Commodore Barron that the Tunisian warships that had been fitting out at Malta were now abandoned. The bey of Tunis

\textsuperscript{25}Gavino to Preble, 6 January 1805, BW5:261.
\textsuperscript{26}Preble to Simpson, 9 January 1805, BW5:269.
\textsuperscript{27}Lear to Barron, 10 January 1805, BW5:273.
\textsuperscript{28}Yznardi to Admiral John Orde, 27 February 1805, BW5:453.
\textsuperscript{29}Orde to Yznardi, 11 March 1805, BW5:453-54.
\textsuperscript{30}Barron to General Acton, 10 January 1805, BW5:270-71.
wanted them returned to him, but he feared the Neapolitan forces. He therefore requested that
the American navy convoy the vessels home to Tunis.\footnote{Davis to Barron, 11 January 1805, BW5:274-75.}

Barron also had to mediate yet more complaints about the American blockade, including
another one from Russia about the polacre \textit{St. Michael}, taken in September 1804 by the \textit{Con-
stellation}.\footnote{Barron to Nicolo de Manzo, 15 January 1805, BW5:278-79; Barron to Levett Harris, 16 January 1805, BW5:283-86.} When Levett Harris received Barron’s letter about his correspondence with Nicolo de
Manzo, he immediately went to Prince Adam de Czartoryski to get his side of the story on record
first. Czartoryski objected to the practice of the blockade, which he argued was both antiquated
and the exclusive province of the British. Harris was able to convince him that the Law of Nations
allowed for blockades and that the American naval officers had acted properly. The minister also
informed Harris that the Russian influence toward the release of the \textit{Philadelphia}’s prisoners had
fallen on deaf ears—the Ottoman Porte had less influence on Tripoli than he had believed.\footnote{Harris to Barron, 20 March 1805, BW5:428-30.}

The Ottomans had their own complaints about the blockade. The Ottoman court re-
quested that Sir Alexander Ball at Malta intervene in several irregularities involving Ottoman
vessels. The first was the \textit{Mastico}, which had been captured over a year previous, and had been
destroyed in Tripoli harbor as an infernal. Little remained of the \textit{Mastico}’s cargo or crew, but
Barron offered to return the slaves that the Americans still held, if Ball would tell him where to
send them. The other two Ottoman prizes had been taken more recently, and Barron could speak
more authoritatively about them. He thought there could be no dispute that they were trying to
run the blockade, so they would be good prize. Because their cargoes were perishable, he had
sold them, but (unlike Morris with the \textit{Paulina}) he had kept the money in escrow until the prize
court ruled. He expected to send them to prize court as soon as he received direction from the
American government.\footnote{Barron to Ball, 20 March 1805, BW5:430-31.}
CHAPTER 5. 1805

What of Tripoli

On January 27, Captain Bainbridge wrote to Consul Lear that the bashaw seemed interested in peace. He hoped, however, that the Americans would improve their tactics from the last assault in August 1804. He advised Barron to bring a strong force, as “the Bashaw apprehens a very severe attack, and the apprehension perhaps would have as great an effect as the attack itself.” More importantly, Bainbridge hoped that a negotiation would be done face-to-face, instead of through letters as Preble had chosen to do. Bainbridge assured Lear that a personal meeting would not be beneath the Americans’ dignity, unlike in Algiers, where Lear had been required to kiss the dey’s hand.35

Bainbridge also wrote to Commodore Barron, asking him to send a negotiator. Prime Minister Dghies, seeming to know that Bainbridge was communicating via a secret method with the outside world, requested that he discreetly recommend to Barron to begin negotiations. Bainbridge argued that if an American negotiator would come and offer the same terms as Preble had, he would likely be accepted; if not, the Tripolitan people would see that the bashaw’s obstinacy caused the continuation of war, not the bloodthirstiness of the United States. But Bainbridge also thought that the United States would never be able to secure the release of the Philadelphia captives without payment, even if no money was given for peace specifically, unless they landed troops in Tripoli.36 Nicholas Nissen also advocated for Dghies. Nissen informed Barron that Dghies wanted to begin negotiations very soon because poor health would soon drive him to the countryside. Losing Dghies as an advocate would be detrimental to the American cause. Nissen admitted that Dghies had asked him to write to Barron, but he would not have done so unless he believed that Dghies really intended to help.37

35Dearden argues that Tripoli treated its foreign consul with much more dignity than the other Barbary states—kissing the hand of the dey was a mild indignity compared to what some consuls at Algiers had endured. Dearden, Nest of Corsairs, 29; Bainbridge to Lear, 27 January 1805, BW5:311-12.
36Bainbridge to Barron, 16 March 1805, BW5:417.
37Nissen to Barron, 18 March 1805.
What of Algiers and Morocco

Algiers had been relatively quiet for the entire duration of the Tripolitan war. A few ill-tempered complaints and demands had been dispatched with relative ease by Richard O’Brien and Tobias Lear. On January 20, the dey sent word to Timothy Mountford, who had taken over for Tobias Lear while Lear went to negotiate with Tripoli, that he wanted a 74-gun ship of the line as a present. Mountford argued that a ship of the line would cost more than a million dollars, well outside the stipulations Algiers’ treaty with the United States. When the dey countered that a French ship of the line could be built for $100,000, Mountford emphasized the differences between France and the United States: in this case, access to materials for shipbuilding which had to be shipped to the United States from Europe. Mountford’s arguments had the desired effect, as the dey backed down on his demand.38 The dey probably had little time to deal with the Americans, as he was dealing with the much larger threat of British influence in Algiers. The Americans encouraged this interference. When Lord Nelson asked Consul Lear to house two British officials who came to Algiers to speak with the dey, Lear and Mountford were only too happy to oblige.39

In Morocco, the emperor continued to complain that his wheat ships should be allowed to go to Tripoli. Simpson again refused to grant the passports. Fearing repercussions, he requested that Commodore Barron send two frigates and two smaller vessels to patrol off Morocco during the spring and summer, or whatever Barron could spare immediately. In the meantime, Simpson wrote, he would continue to spread the story that an American force would soon arrive, hopeful that the mere threat of force would be enough to keep the emperor in line.40

38Timothy Mountford to Gavino, 1 February 1805, BW5:325-26.
39Lear to Lord Nelson, 19 February 1805, BW5:363-64.
40Simpson to Barron, 13 February 1805, BW5:345-46. Simpson had to have known that there was no way that he would get what amounted to an entire squadron to protect against the threat that was least intimidating at the moment.
CHAPTER 5. 1805

Next Steps

The health of Commodore Barron had not greatly improved by his stay in the Syracuse countryside. At the beginning of February, he decided to move back to Malta in hopes that the change would do him good. George Dyson, the naval agent at Syracuse, wrote privately to Edward Preble, “I am of the opinion He can never recover.”41 The President stayed in Syracuse, under the command of Master Commandant George Cox.42 The Congress and the Vixen likewise converged on Syracuse while the Constitution made its way back from Lisbon.43 The Siren remained near Gibraltar, where the port had been reopened on January 30.44 Captain Rodgers had been given authority to recall the Siren to Syracuse if it was not needed off Morocco, but he took Consul Simpson’s concerns seriously and ordered the schooner to stay.45

Though Barron would not be on board, he ordered the President, the Constitution, and the Constellation off Tripoli for a cruise. The Nautilus was to cruise off Tunis after a quick convoy trip.46 The Essex was ordered to Venice, where Captain James Barron was to try to acquire gunboats from the government there. Commodore Barron was not sanguine about Captain Barron’s chances, but since Naples had not worked out, he felt he had no choice.47 While the Essex, Constitution, President, and Nautilus prepared for the cruise in Malta, they were met by the Nautilus, who brought in a Tripolitan brig.48

Barron’s orders to Rodgers sounded similar to the orders the Secretary of the Navy gave to commanding officers, emphasizing the latitude given to the officers on station because of the rapidly changing circumstances and the poor communication: “The foregoing Instructions you will always View as subject to the changes that may result from the operation of circumstances

---

41Dyson to Preble, 9 February 1805, BW5:341.
42Charles Morris journal, 11 February 1805, BW5:343.
43Loomis journal, 11 February 1805, BW5:344.
44Simpson to Rodgers, 13 February 1805, BW5:347.
45Rodgers to Sec of Navy, 16 February 1805, BW5:356-57.
46Orders from Robert Denison, secretary to Samuel Barron, to Rodgers, 21 February 1805; Barron to Dent, 21 February 1805, BW5:365; Barron to Rodgers, 28 February 1805, BW5:377.
47Samuel Barron to James Barron, 3 March 1805, BW5:386-87.
48Constitution journal, 26 February 1805, BW5:375.
which cannot be foreseen or calculated upon, As the senior officer on the station and having
the fullest Confidence in your judgement, I wish to give you the utmost Latitude in adopting
such Dispositions as you may deem best adapted to accomplish the important objects confided
to us.” Barron advised caution around the Tripolitan batteries, as the squadron was not equipped
to make many repairs while on station. In essence, Barron was handing over the reins of the
squadron to Rodgers.

The squadron’s cruise off Tripoli was met with few challenges from the Tripolitans. However,
the Constellation was struck by smallpox, and thirty-three crew members had to be in-
oculated. Captain Hugh G. Campbell requested permission to leave the station, pleading that
“should we Experience bad weather their situation will be truly unpleasent.” Rodgers con-
sented, advising Campbell to go to Malta to fill up on water and supplies, so that he could return
and relieve one of the other ships who would be staying longer in the Constellation’s place.
Campbell made a sudden reversal, however, informing Rodgers that he had enough supplies to
last for two months, so Rodgers should return to Malta (presumbly to get orders from Com-
modore Barron). Rodgers ordered Campbell to stay until the President arrived. Then either the
Vixen or the Constellation could return to Malta. But two ships should always be on station at any
given time.

Rodgers observed that the Tripolitan navy, though numbering between sixteen and twenty,
was by no means ready for sea. One of the vessels did not even have masts, and none of them had
sails bent (attached to the masts). He suggested to Commodore Barron that a six-ship rotation,
where two ships were always off Tripoli, would be an easy and efficient means of maintaining
a strict blockade. The other vessels could cruise in locations where they would likely intercept
the Tripolitan cruisers that were not in the port, or they could be available to do whatever other

\[49\] Barron to Rodgers, 28 February 1805, BW5:378.
\[50\] Campbell to Rodgers, 9 March 1805, BW5:401.
\[51\] Rodgers to Campbell, 9 March 1805, BW5:401.
\[52\] Rodgers to Campbell, 12 March 1805, BW5:409.
\[53\] Rodgers to Barron, 19 March 1805, BW5:426.
business the commodore might require of them.\textsuperscript{54}

**Turmoil in the Mediterranean**

On March 20, George Davis wrote to Edward Preble that all of Europe was in turmoil, forming alliances and preparing for war. The smaller nations were arming, but Davis thought they could not withstand France’s might, which would “annex them to the french dominions and as Nations wipe them from the face of the Earth.” He also observed that both Tripoli and Tunis were also in turmoil. Tripoli felt the pressure not only of the American forces, but also of “civil comotions” and famine. Tunis was “on growling order,” which was not much different from its usual attitude toward the United States.\textsuperscript{55}

The *Essex* headed to Venice in search of gunboats. Captain James Barron hoped to meet up with Captain Robinson and the *Vixen*, but he ended up in Trieste after learning that the deep draft of the *Essex* would not allow it to cross the bar into the harbor. He found that either Trieste or Venice might be willing to let the Americans have gunboats, but getting them might require some diplomacy.\textsuperscript{56} Robinson reported back that boats were easy enough to get, but mortars had to be approved by the Austrian government at Vienna.\textsuperscript{57} While Robinson and Barron negotiated with Austria, Robinson took matters into his own hands. He built out machinery on the deck of the *Enterprize* capable of holding a 24-pounder gun, which would give the schooner considerably more firepower than it had had during the previous summer. Though he had not completely secured it to the deck, in case Commodore Barron disapproved, Robinson was obviously quite pleased with himself: “I am certain she can carry it in almost an Sea, & if so what a nice tickler she will be for nightwork on Tripoly, & altho her seranades may not be so agreable as from the Guitar to a Turk, they no doubt will generally have as respectable an audience.”\textsuperscript{58}

James Barron continued to search for gunboats. Though he found that he could have some

\textsuperscript{54}Rodgers to Barron, 19 March 1805, BW5:426.
\textsuperscript{55}Davis to Preble, 20 March 1805, BW5:431-32.
\textsuperscript{56}James Barron to Robinson, 21 March 1805, BW5:434.
\textsuperscript{57}Robinson to James Barron, 3 April 1805, BW5:479.
\textsuperscript{58}Robinson to Samuel Barron, 13 April 1805, BW5:507.
built at Trieste, he anticipated some kind of trouble there, and recommended that any gunboats Robinson could acquire in Venice be routed through Piran, a port in Slovenia, rather than going to Trieste. He discovered that the government of Trieste had just enacted a law that made it illegal for any citizen to sell a vessel without permission from the government. Barron had found this out the hard way when the owner of a gunboat he wished to purchase was detained in the castle before completing the sale.\(^5^9\) In the end, Robinson was able to purchase two gunboats in Venice, and Barron was able to acquire an American brig and two other gunboats from Trieste. With this addition to their force, Robinson predicted that “Tripoly certainly gets a severe dressing next summer.”\(^6^0\)

Keeping up the force off Tripoli was paramount to the American strategy. Consul Lear wrote to William Bainbridge, “We have a very Considerable Force now in this Sea, which, if exercised, must be productive of all the fatal effects of War; for our Country will never admit of any terms of peace which shall not be honorable and as permanent as we can expect.” Whatever reservations the federal government had entertained about sending the navy, they were committed now. Lear argued that the expense was a secondary consideration to the acknowledgment of the “rising Character of our Nation” and the establishment of peace with honor. Furthermore, honor dictated that the United States no longer come to Tripoli as a supplicant for peace. “If the Bashaw wishes for peace it now remains for him to come forward,” wrote Lear.\(^6^1\) The only way to force the bashaw’s hand was to increase the pressure on his city and commerce. After almost four years of attrition, the navy would have to finish what it started. Despite Lear’s bold words, he also wrote to the European consuls in Tripoli to reestablish contact with nations who could potentially help his negotiations.\(^6^2\)

Barron adopted Rodgers’ suggestion of a rotation for the squadron. Since he was at Malta, the Americans had essentially moved their headquarters back to that port. Barron suggested that

\(^{59}\)Barron to Robinson, 23 April 1805, BW5:531.
\(^{60}\)Robinson to Sec of Navy, 23 April 1805, BW5:531-32.
\(^{61}\)Lear to Bainbridge, 28 March 1805, BW5:461-62.
\(^{62}\)Lear to Don Joseph de Souza; Lear to Nissen; Lear to Beaussier, 28 March 1805, BW5:463-64.
the *Constellation* should go to Syracuse when it came off station, however; the health officers at Malta would likely impose a stricter quarantine on the smallpox-ridden ship than those at Syracuse.\(^{63}\) While the *Constellation* was in port, Rodgers urged its captain, Hugh G. Campbell, to make necessary preparations for an aggressive summer offensive against Tripoli. “Good Powder & plenty of Shot will in all Probability, be as necessary to ensure success as good supply of Beef and Bread to give us strength to use it,” Rodgers wrote.\(^ {64}\)

Campbell was concerned about the turmoil in Europe as well. Discovering that the *Constellation* would need significant repairs, he set about getting them done quickly, as there was no guarantee how long the Americans would be permitted in European ports. “Intrigue has conquered Italy,” he wrote; “Naples is entirely directed by French influence, in so much as to leave the King with little more than a name; and obliged many of its Inhabitants: like little Birds in Autumn, to rove in search of milder climes. - Nor shall I be surprized if the European Wars continue much longer, to find ourselves debarr’d the Privilege of refitting our Squadron in their Ports.” This prediction, along with the squadron’s inability to get gunboats in Naples, left Campbell skeptical of the Americans’ chances in their summer campaign against Tripoli.\(^ {65}\)

Affairs at Malta also seemed to be rather shaky. Commodore Barron advised Rodgers to anchor outside Malta harbor and send a boat in for dispatches, rather than coming all the way into the port, “in consequence of some recent occurrences here” that Barron did not elaborate on. He also indicated that he might be returning to Syracuse in short order.\(^ {66}\) He sent Captain Decatur to Messina on a mission that he was reluctant to commit to paper.\(^ {67}\)

Captain John Rodgers felt that the time was quickly approaching to strike the death blow to the Tripolitans. Tripoli’s fleet of gunboats had not increased since the winter, and Rodgers wanted to strike before the circumstances changed. In a letter of April 17, he wrote that if the navy

\(^{63}\)Barron to Rodgers, 1 April 1805, BW5:475.

\(^{64}\)Rodgers to Campbell, 5 April 1805, BW5:482-83.

\(^{65}\)Campbell to Sec of Navy, 11 April 1805, BW5:502-3.

\(^{66}\)Barron to Rodgers, 15 April 1805, BW5:510-11.

\(^{67}\)Barron to Decatur, 16 April 1805, BW5:514. It seems probable that this mission was to acquire fieldpieces for the Eaton expedition discussed later in this chapter.
could attack within six weeks, he felt confident in a mighty victory.\footnote{Rodgers to Lear, 17 April 1805, BW5:518.} The American naval force had increased over the winter and was set to increase even more. In addition to the gunboats that Captains Robinson and Barron had acquired, the Secretary of the Navy was sending back to the Mediterranean the \textit{John Adams} as a troop transfer ship carrying 500 men, plus eight additional gunboats. The \textit{John Adams} was intended to be a transfer ship only from this point forward, “plying between this country and the Mediterranean to furnish the Squadron in that sea with such succours of provisions and Men as may from time to time be required.”\footnote{Sec of Navy to Barron, 23 April 1805, BW5:532.}

The secretary of the navy also officially ordered the \textit{Siren} to leave Morocco and join the squadron off Tripoli, no matter what Consul James Simpson said about the hostile intentions of the emperor.\footnote{Sec of Navy to Stewart, 24 April 1805, BW5:535.} Like Morocco, Algiers was peaceful with the United States even though its internal politics were in upheaval. To keep the peace, Consul Lear sent Algiers a ship of wheat, which doubled as both annuity and goodwill gift to the famine-stricken country. Additionally, Lear officially transferred diplomatic authority in Algiers to Timothy Mountford so that Lear could remain with the squadron and begin negotiations with Tripoli when the time was right.\footnote{Lear to Mountford, 30 April 1805, BW5:557-60.}

The force that was already off Tripoli continued to cruise. The \textit{Constitution} captured a Tunisian xebec and its two Neapolitan prizes on April 24, sending them to Malta with the \textit{President} for adjudication.\footnote{Rodgers to Barron, 25 April 1805, BW5:539.} Other than infrequent chases, the squadron saw little activity in their cruise before Tripoli. The real action was happening nearly 600 miles away, where William Eaton and a ragtag band of warriors prepared for an assault on Derna.

Part 2: Across Tripoli

On December 1, 1804, William Eaton arrived at Rosetta in the \textit{Argus}. With him traveled Richard Farquhar, Lieutenant Joshua Blake of the \textit{Argus}, and Lieutenant Presley O’Bannon of the Marine
Corps. They had come to Rosetta in order to use the Nile to get to Cairo, where they hoped to find Hamet Karamanli. At Rosetta, they met Major Missett, the British resident at Cairo. Missett had fled from Cairo because of the internal unrest in Egypt between the Turks and the mamelukes. After Napoleon’s forces had left Egypt in 1801, a power struggle had erupted between various forces in Egypt, which was only just being resolved as Eaton and his company arrived in 1805.

Eaton recorded that the American company was welcomed at both Alexandria and at Rosetta as saviors, come from England as the advance of a large British army. He supposed that the Argus had given the impression of being British, as it had flown the British flag to ease entrance into the harbor at Alexandria, and the ship had been met by Mr. Samuel Briggs, the British consul. Eaton and his company did nothing to dissuade the people from their mistake. “It would have been cruel to have undeceived them,” Eaton wrote. “Consequently without positively assuming it, we passed in the character of Englishmen among the middle and lower orders of society, and as their allies among those of better information.”

From Rosetta, Eaton wrote to Hamet that he had come to honor the agreement he had made in Malta. He affirmed his belief in Hamet’s claim to the throne of Tripoli. He averred that while Yusuf was ruling America would never have peace with Tripoli, but “when God shall have restablished the rightful sovereign upon the throne of Tripoli we will seek peace with that kingdom.” But Eaton did not want to cause more trouble than necessary: he requested that Hamet instruct him on the best way to communicate that would not cause suspicion amongst the

---

73 A resident is a diplomatic official who is a permanent resident of another country, often a colonized one, but with official diplomatic standing for his country of origin. He is less connected to commercial concerns than a consul, but also has more permanency than an envoy. It was a position of indirect rule over a subject nation, including maintaining political ties with other nations and advocating for citizens who got into trouble in the colonies. For a study on how political residents functioned, see James Onley, “Britain’s Native Agents in Arabia and Persia in the Nineteenth Century,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (April 6, 2005): 129–37.


CHAPTER 5. 1805

Egyptians. On the same day, December 4, Eaton’s company, now numbering eighteen, started for Cairo. Along the way, Eaton recorded several more instances of the Egyptians’ excitement at the prospect of a British re-conquest.

On December 8, the company reached Grand Cairo. In Cairo, Eaton recorded that the people were interested in them because they were American, not because they were British. They settled into Major Misset’s house and made overtures to the viceroy. While Eaton was in Cairo, he appointed Doctor Francisco Mendrici, who was the viceroy’s personal physician, to be agent for the United States in Cairo. Eaton and Mendrici had known each other in Tunis, when Mendrici had been the bey’s physician, and they had both been thrown out of the country by the bey. Eaton also visited and was visited by many dignitaries. He took special time to see the viceroy of Cairo, who wanted to know about the state of European affairs as well as about the commerce and power of the United States. Though Eaton never mentions him by name, the viceroy was almost certainly Muhammad Ali, an Albanian who had defeated the Turks and the mamelukes and taken control of Egypt after the French left. Known as a brutal and wily leader, Muhammad Ali undoubtedly wanted as much information on potential threats as possible—including the United States itself. Though he had welcomed Eaton, he expressed suspicion that the Americans’ visit was for more than “mere gratification of curiosity.”

In response, Eaton told him of their mission to overthrow Yusuf. The viceroy pledged his help, unless Hamet had joined the mamelukes (he had). Eaton knew that Hamet had, so he invoked the common God of Christianity and Islam, arguing that “it was more like God to pardon than to punish a repenting enemy.” The viceroy agreed to search for Hamet, but Eaton sent out his own couriers to find him as well. Even when the viceroy granted Hamet a pardon for

---

76 Eaton to Hamet, 4 December 1804, BW5:172-73.
77 Eaton journal, 4 December 1805, BW5:173.
78 Eaton journal, 6 and 7 December 1804, BW5:175, 177.
79 Eaton journal, 8 December 1804, BW5:178.
80 Eaton to Francisco Mendrici, 13 December 1804; Eaton to Sec of Navy, 13 December 1804, BW5:185-86.
81 Tignor, 210-11.
82 Eaton to Sec of Navy, 13 December 1804, BW5:189.
colluding with the mamelukes, Eaton thought convincing Hamet to leave might be a challenge. Eaton could not help sounding imperial as he evaluated the Egyptians’ situation. He wrote to Sir Alexander Ball, “Why this misery, and spirit of revolution? from a despotic or rather a total want of Government! Egypt has no master: though the most frightful despotism.” He continued, “Egypt must have a new master - and the, first comer will be welcome. One of the belligrent parties will be apt to join the foreign standard - The peasantry will embrace protection.” He hinted that Ball should encourage the British powers to be the first comer, even providing him with tactical information (as if there were no British people in Cairo to provide it). He thought that the glory days of Egypt were long past, however, even if Britain intervened. He found the geography, flora, and fauna of the area wanting in comparison to American alligators and the mighty Ohio River, but more importantly, he found that the channels of international commerce had taken their paths elsewhere and had left Egypt desolate. Reflecting on the rising glory of the United States in contrast to the fallen splendor of Egypt, Eaton concluded, “I almost lose the sensibility of pity in the glad reflection that I am a citizen of the United States.”

The British took good care of the company while they waited for word of Hamet. Eaton did not think Hamet would join them immediately; he requested instead that Hamet rendezvous at Rosetta when he was able to. Hamet’s troops could go directly to Alexandria. But Eaton’s perpetual enthusiasm for his project waned a little under the new circumstances. Hamet was clearly a poor leader and a poor manager of both people and goods; he had chosen to join the “rebel army,” increasing the difficulty of getting him out of the country and back to Tripoli; and Eaton was unable to directly communicate with him. He sent word to Hamet that the viceroy

83 Ibid.
84 Eaton to Ball, 13 and 16 December 1804, BW5:190-91.
85 Eaton to John Cotton Smith, 26 December 1804. In The Life of the Late Gen. William Eaton: Several Years an Officer in the United States’ Army, Consul at the Regency of Tunis on the Coast of Barbary, and Commander of the Christian and Other Forces That Marched from Egypt Through the Desert of Barca, in 1805 . . . Principally Collected from His Correspondence and Other Manuscripts (E. Merriam & Company, 1813), 284-85.
86 Eaton to Hamet, 10 December 1804, BW5:180.
87 Eaton to Sec of Navy, 13 December 1804, BW5:189.
CHAPTER 5. 1805

had granted him safe passage, and he instructed Captain Hull of the Argus to prepare to receive around three hundred men in Hamet’s entourage.\(^{88}\) Hull told him there was no way the Argus could ship and provision even one hundred men. He suggested that they should simply collect Hamet and repair to Malta to regroup before an attack.\(^{89}\)

By Christmas, Hamet still had not appeared. Captain Hull and his crew spent the day in Alexandria with the British consul and his family, who had entertained the Argus’s officers many times during their wait in Alexandria. Hull continued to raise objections to Eaton’s plans: Eaton had requested more money be sent to him in Cairo, but Hull had no money available. He reiterated his inability to carry the number of people Eaton wanted. But he also wanted to stop treading on the hospitality of the British, so he did not want to house the troops in the city of Alexandria either.\(^{90}\)

The wait was starting to wear on Eaton’s company as well. Repeated missives to Hamet had gone unanswered; Eaton began to consider trying to pass through the Turkish and Mameluke armies to see Hamet personally. This was a last resort, however, as the task would be extremely dangerous: “We shall have three perils to encounter, danger of Robery and assassination by the wild Arabs; danger of falling into the hands of the Arnaut Turks and being murdered as Enemys, and danger of being executed as Spies by the mameluke Beys; If we surmount these perils, we shall have carried a point, and gained an object.”\(^{91}\) The boredom of the mission got to Eaton’s entourage as well—he wrote in disgust about Richard Farquhar and Purser Robert Goldsborough’s exploits at the billiard table that had resulted in a fistfight between them and black eyes for both. Eaton sent both Goldsborough and Farquhar back to Alexandria with dispatches the next day.\(^{92}\)

By the new year, still without word from Hamet, Eaton began to suspect that Hamet was a captive of Eli Bey, the captain of the mamelukes. Since the mamelukes were fast closing in

\(^{90}\)Hull to Eaton, 27 December 1804, BW5:222.
\(^{91}\)Eaton to Hull, 8 January 1805, BW5:268.
\(^{92}\)Eaton to Hull, 29-31 December 1804, BW5:223-25.
on Cairo, Eaton figured they would have an answer soon one way or the other.\textsuperscript{93} Hull, on the other hand, thought that the nefarious hand of the French was behind Hamet’s silence. He again suggested that Eaton’s plans were too grand; so much reliance on English hospitality made Hull uneasy.\textsuperscript{94}

On January 3, Hamet finally responded. He rebuked Eaton for taking so long to come to him from Tunis, but he was no less eager to carry out the coup. He suggested a meeting in order to arrange the expedition.\textsuperscript{95} When Eaton received Hamet’s letter on January 8, he was elated, writing to Hull, “I cannot but congratulate you and felicitate myself after so much apprehension doubt and solicitude, that we now calculate with certainty on the success of our expedition, we are sure of the Bashaw.” Eaton’s grand words about certain success rang a little hollow, though; his next thoughts were of Derna and Benghazi, which he learned had been fortified more strongly in the last few months. Eaton suspected Joseph Pulis, American consul at Malta, of leaking the American plans to Yusuf Karamanli, but the expedition would carry on.\textsuperscript{96}

Meanwhile, Isaac Hull and the Argus waited in Alexandria. Farquhar and his men were housed in Alexandria at the navy’s expense; Hull wanted to discharge them until Eaton’s plans for returning to Alexandria were more secure. The Argus planned to leave for Malta on January 20 in order to report to the commodore the progress of the mission. Hull suggested that Farquhar should come along on that journey, since he had been with Eaton in Cairo and knew the details better than Hull did.\textsuperscript{97} Eaton departed Cairo on January 12.\textsuperscript{98}

Hamet had relocated to the meeting point he had suggested, where he wrote to Eaton requesting clothes, animals, money, and tents for his men. “Friend, you must have courage,” he wrote; “do not think about money because the occasion demands heavy expenditure.”\textsuperscript{99} Eaton

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{93}Eaton to Hull, 3 January 1805, BW5:251-52.
\textsuperscript{94}Hull to Eaton, 5 January 1805, BW5:254.
\textsuperscript{95}Hamet Karamanli to Eaton, 3 January 1805, BW5:252.
\textsuperscript{96}Eaton to Hull, 8 January 1805, BW5:268. The news of extra fortifications turned out to be false. Eaton to Hull, 29 January 1805, BW5:320.
\textsuperscript{97}Hull to Eaton, 11 January 1805, BW5:275.
\textsuperscript{98}Eaton to Hull, 14 January 1805, BW5:277-78;
\textsuperscript{99}Hamet Karamanli to Eaton, 15 January 1805, BW5:279.
\end{footnotesize}
thought that Hamet would come to Rosetta, as he had suggested in his messages, but when he arrived there on January 14, Hamet was not there. Eaton went on to Alexandria, and on January 20 he received Hamet’s message reaffirming his plan to decamp to some 190 miles inland in Fiayum. Though Eaton was still uneasy about inland travel, he saw little choice. He headed for Fiayum on January 22 with two officers from the *Argus* and 23 additional men.

On January 23, one of Eaton’s fears came true: attempting to pass through Turkish battle lines, Eaton and his company were arrested by the Kerchief of Damanhour. Eaton admitted privately to Edward Preble that though the arrest was inconvenient, he was impressed by the military acumen of the Turkish general who was suspicious of a band of foreign military wandering through his camps. Exacerbating the problem was the French consul, who told the Turks that Eaton had come to Egypt with anti-Turkish intentions. Eaton was able to convince the general otherwise. After that, the general brought Eaton to a chief of a Bedouin tribe who knew of Hamet’s troubles. The Bedouin chief was delighted with Eaton’s plans, and volunteered to go find Hamet and bring him back, in addition to pledging 20,000 men for the cause.

To put the Turkish general at ease, Eaton decided to send back to Alexandria most of his company, leaving only himself and a few others to wait for Hamet’s return. The general agreed to this, setting up accommodations for the remaining Americans in Damanhour. Despite their friendly words, the Kerchief did not trust Eaton; armed guards around Eaton’s quarters, supposedly to protect him, also kept him within close range. Though relations thawed between Eaton and the general, the Americans were still eager to leave as soon as possible.\(^{100}\)

In Alexandria, the presence of the Americans was becoming a source of concern. After Hull spent some time recruiting men for the *Argus* in the city, the governor sent Mr. Briggs, the British consul, to tell Hull to stop recruiting. Since Hull had been given permission to recruit previously, this was a surprising reversal. The governor claimed that the new orders came from the viceroy, who had countermanded the governor’s permission.\(^{101}\) Hull did not want trouble,


\(^{101}\)Given the viceroy’s help both before and after this order, it seems likely that the governor gave this order on his own and used the viceroy for cover.
Figure 5.2: Map of locations in Egypt
CHAPTER 5. 1805

so he instructed Richard Farquhar to dismiss all the men that they had signed on. Hull and Farquhar then returned to the ship, withdrawing from the town as much as possible. Tales of Eaton’s recruitment of men at Damanhour also caused concern in Alexandria; in an audience with the governor, Hull tried “to do away his fears, but find that he is as much alarmed as ever.” He was concerned that the effort the Americans were making indicated an objective larger than simply unseating Yusuf. Eaton denied recruiting any men at Damanhour, and even suggested that Farquhar had overstepped his orders in recruiting openly in Alexandria.

The French continued to make trouble for the entourage. Eaton arrived at Alexandria on February 7, but when the company arrived, Eaton was informed that Hamet would be denied entrance into the city. Despite the viceroy’s decree of amnesty for Hamet, the French had convinced the governor of Alexandria to deny him admittance. Hamet therefore made camp about thirty miles from Alexandria, at Arab’s Tower, to prepare for the overland march to Derna. Eaton prevailed on the viceroy to issue a firman of amnesty for Hamet (a document with much more weight). The viceroy did so, as well as fining the governor of Alexandria 25,000 piastres for violating his initial order of amnesty. He also granted Eaton’s request to recruit Christians in Alexandria. Concerned that the governor might choose to exact retribution for his harsh punishment, Eaton advised Hamet to remain outside Alexandria. They made plans to begin their march on February 20.

Once Hamet and Eaton were together, it was time to begin serious preparations. The firman of safe passage that the viceroy had granted Hamet contained a request: that Hamet bring into his army the Arabs called Aulad Ali and allow them to march with him to Derna. On the

---

102Hull to Eaton, 28 January 1805, BW5:317.
103Hull to Eaton, 29 January 1805, BW5:320.
104Eaton to Hull, 31 January 1805, BW5:323.
105Hull thought that the governor had invented a letter from the viceroy instructing him not to let Hamet in. Hull to Eaton, 5 February 1805, BW5:333.
106Hull to Eaton, 29 January 1805, BW5:320. Arab’s Tower is now the town of Burj al-Arab.
107Eaton to Hull, 5 February 1805, BW5:333-34.
other hand, Richard Farquhar, who Hamet had said was essential to his success, seemed inclined to abandon the whole mission because of conflict with Eaton. Farquhar insisted that he would quit unless Eaton “shall be more reserve in his manner of speaking, and that my Account shall be paid up till today, and that at least one hundred and fifty men shall go from this [Alexandria] to join the Bashaw, with three or four small Guns, and an agreement stating the pay and time of service.” Farquhar had become tired of Eaton’s practice of making casual promises that he often had no authority to follow through on and thought Eaton was going to dismiss all the men he had worked so hard to recruit. Hull thought that Eaton would never let Farquhar make any command decisions, so Farquhar should abandon any idea of going on the overland march and come with Hull in the Argus. Farquhar did more than that: he apparently embezzled or mishandled the funds given to him by Consul Briggs for the expedition, delaying their departure for several days while the finances were sorted out. Eaton dismissed him entirely.

While the company was outside Alexandria, an envoy from Yusuf Karamanli, working on information from his old friend Gaetano Schembri, arrived to prevent Hamet from leaving. The envoy could not convince the town authorities that he had a case, however, and without force, he could do little. In fact, Eaton also thought that Tripolitan expatriates who had fled the reign of Yusuf would join Hamet’s forces and increase their ranks by 20,000 or 30,000. Armed with these hopes, and $10,000 that Hull had managed to acquire from the Briggs Brothers banking house, Eaton felt quite secure against any intrigue Yusuf orchestrated.

The navy had a role to play in this coup as well. Eaton sent Hamet’s prime minister to Malta in the Argus to acquaint Barron of the events thus far. He also requested that Barron send him one hundred firearms, two fieldpieces, and one hundred marines to join his march across

---

110 Farquhar to Hull, 12 February 1805, BW5:344.
111 Hull to Farquhar, 13 February 1805, BW5:352.
112 Eaton journal, 3 March 1805, BW5:388. It is uncertain exactly where Farquhar ended up. He is mentioned in Eaton’s journal, 6 April 1805, BW5:487. But his letter to Samuel Barron of April 17 is written from Syracuse, where he indicates that he left with the Argus as planned. Perhaps there was another Farquhar in Eaton’s party, BW5:518-19.
113 Eaton to Sec of Navy, 13 February 1805, BW5:349-50.
the desert. Neither Hamet nor Eaton had any illusions about the character of the men they had signed on: instead of assaulting Derna from the sea, Hamet had decided to march overland, for fear that the troops he had assembled would not make the journey without him. Eaton wanted support from the sea, though; he intended to rendezvous at Bomba with the navy, who he hoped would bring supplies and reinforcements. Lieutenant Presley O’Bannon, Midshipman Pascal Paoli Peck, and seven other marines remained with the expedition. Eaton had also signed on Christian mercenaries along with a French captain of light artillery, in order to deal with the fieldpieces he hoped to get from the navy at Bomba.

Hamet had little to offer the expedition except some men and solemn promises. He recognized the importance of being in community with other Mediterranean powers, so he reached out through Barron to the kingdom of the Two Sicilies as well. He offered the same treaty to them as he planned for the United States: a treaty with no tribute and most-favored-nation status. He also promised Eaton to hand over Yusuf and his court for the United States to hold hostage, and to give the United States any ships that had attacked their commerce.

Eaton formalized the agreement with Hamet on February 23. The treaty contained all of the stipulations the two had already agreed on. To pay back the Americans for the expense they had gone to, Hamet agreed to give them all the tribute money paid to Tripoli by Denmark, Sweden, and Batavia. He also formalized his relationship with Eaton, officially making him the general of his troops. It was not uncommon for foreigners to have high military ranks in the Barbary states; Yusuf’s own admiral, Murad Reis, was actually a Scotsman named Peter Lisle. Though the agreement indicated a certain level of trust between the two parties, it also stipulated conduct between the two nations in case war broke out between them after Hamet was bashaw.

---

114 Eaton to Sec of Navy, 13 February 1805, BW5:350-51.
115 Eaton to Barron, 14 February 1805, BW5:353; Hamet to Barron, 15 February 1805, BW5:356.
116 Eaton to Barron, 14 February 1805, BW5:354.
117 Eaton to Barron, 14 February 1805, BW5:353.
118 “Convention between the United States of America and his Highness, Hamet, Caramanly, Bashaw of Tripoli,” 23 February 1805, BW5:367-69. See Appendix B for full text of this convention. The stipulation of war protocol was fairly common; it also appears in many other treaties with the Barbary states.
CHAPTER 5. 1805

After such difficulty in getting into Alexandria, when it was time to leave the city, Eaton found his way again barred. He and the other Americans could leave, but Hamet’s servants, who had come to help with supplies, were forbidden to leave. Patrols of Turkish soldiers were also sent out close to Hamet’s camp, which was now about 12 miles from Alexandria. Consul Briggs intervened to let the company leave, and Lieutenant O’Bannon was able to keep Hamet from fleeing from his camp. A crisis was, for the moment, averted.119 As he was leaving, Eaton wrote a scathing letter to Monsieur Drovetti, the French chargé d’affaires in Alexandria, who he believed was responsible for the Egyptians’ unfriendly behavior. He asked for “your explanations to our respective governments and to the world, for the open indignity you have shown the flag of the United States in this port.” Drovetti had spread rumors that the Americans were British spies, and he had refused to allow French subjects in Alexandria any contact with the Americans; these actions were, in Eaton’s mind, a “singular and calculated insult.”120

Drovetti was not finished interfering with the Americans. To Consul Briggs, he wrote a now-familiar refrain: French subjects, sought by the government, had possibly taken refuge by signing onto the American expedition. He requested that Briggs deliver them up. Briggs demurred, however. He was only assisting the Americans; he had no jurisdiction to return any member of the expedition, whether he wanted to or not.121

Lack of funds was proving to be an intractable problem. Sheik il Taib, one of the Arab chieftains in the company, insisted that he would not march unless paid more money. As Eaton had no money to pay soldiers, he had to placate the sheik by promising him money later. Eaton did spend money to purchase 190 camels, for $11 apiece.122 Dr. Mendrici and the Briggs Brothers collaborated to charter a boat to sail to Bomba, where the expedition could rendezvous to pick up supplies and intelligence. They cautioned, though, that supplies would be difficult to acquire, so Eaton should not expect much from the boat.123 Consul Briggs also informed Eaton that

---

119 Eaton journal, 2 March 1805, BW5:384.
120 Eaton to Drovetti, 3 March 1805, BW5:388.
121 Samuel Briggs to Drovetti, 5 March 1805, BW5:390.
122 Eaton journal, 5 March 1805, BW5:391.
123 Briggs Brothers to Eaton, 7 March 1805, BW5:395.
Monsieur Drovetti had been monitoring their forces and reporting back to Yusuf about their numbers and armament. Eaton welcomed this espionage, writing, “The information he sends forward of our movements, will be essentially serviceable to us; as it goes from a quarter which will attach full credit, and of course leave no doubt with the enemy of a coalition which he most dreads, and which he has used all possible means to counteract: it will through his Capital into convulsions.”

On March 6, the company, numbering about 400, marched back to Arab’s Tower to begin their journey to Derna. The group Eaton had assembled was an unusual example of collaboration amongst the people of the Mediterranean. It included nine Americans; twenty-five cannoniers commanded by a Frenchman; thirty-eight Greeks; ninety men that Hamet had accumulated in Fiyaum and Alexandria; and a group of Arab cavalry. It also included over one hundred camels and a few donkeys. In bringing these factions together, many of whom were expatriates from Tripoli, Eaton capitalized on generations of conflict between the city of Tripoli and the country around it. The money brought in from the tribute payments to the bashaw and the sale of prizes rarely made it out into the countryside; the difference between the city’s mode of survival and the country’s stronger reliance on agriculture often caused political disputes that Eaton hoped to channel into anger at Yusuf.

Despite their common enemy, the factions did not have much love for each other. Keeping all of these groups happy with him and with each other would be Eaton’s most difficult

---

124 Eaton to Briggs Brothers, 7 March 1805, BW5:395-96.
125 Eaton journal, 6 March 1805, BW5:394. In his journal, Eaton recorded details about nearly every day of the march from this point forward. His journal and correspondence are basically the only sources we have about this march. Rather than try to address each day’s occurrences in text, I have created a map of Eaton’s journey from Alexandria to Derna, where each day is marked with the journal entry for that day. Here in the text, I will distill general themes from the journey; for a more granular look at the progress of the expedition, see http://abbymullen.org/projects/barbary/eaton.html.
task during the march. Near-mutinies were a weekly occurrence, if not more frequent. Conflicts between the Christian and Muslim factions were also frequent, neither side trusting the other to not betray them. Each faction had its own commander and its own supplies, though they all looked to Eaton to supplement those supplies.

For the first part of the journey, water was plentiful—in fact, sometimes too plentiful. The camp was flooded out at least once, and the mud made it difficult for the troops to march. Money was also scarce, and Eaton had to make many promises of future payment in order to keep members of the company from turning back. While negotiating one of these conflicts about payment, Eaton wrote in despair, “We have marched a distance of two hundred miles, through an inhospitable waste of world,” and now the expedition was in danger of falling apart. He determined to press on, as “pilgrims, bound across this gloomy desert on pursuits vastly different from those which lead to Mecca; the liberation of three hundred Americans from the Chains of Barbarism, & a manly peace.” Eaton wrote later, “Cash, we find, is the only deity of Arabs, as well as Turks.”

While Eaton and his company slogged through the desert, Isaac Hull reported to Commodore Barron at Malta. Upon Hull’s report, Barron wrote to Eaton, “I cannot but applaud the energy and perseverance that has characterized your progress through a series of perplexing and discouraging difficulties.” He sent Eaton $7000, which he suggested Eaton should retain possession of instead of handing it to Hamet. Though Barron encouraged Eaton’s efforts, he also began to lay the groundwork for the United States to get out of its agreement with Hamet in case he turned out to be the ineffective leader so many had warned that he was.

You must be sensible, Sir, that in giving their sanction to a cooperation with the exiled Bashaw, Government did not contemplate the measure as leading necessarily and absolutely to a reinstatement of that Prince in his rights on the regency of Tripoli - they appear to have viewed the cooperation in question as a means, which provided there existed energy and enterprise in the exile, & attachment to his person on the part of his former subjects, might be employed to the common furtherance and advance of

---

129 Eaton journal, 23 March 1805, BW5:448.
CHAPTER 5. 1805

his claims and of our cause, but without meaning to fetter themselves by any specific or definite attainment as an end, as the tenor of my instructions . . . and the limited sum appropriated for that special purpose clearly demonstrate.

Seeking to drive home his point, Barron reiterated twice more that he could not definitely sanction Hamet’s ascension to the throne of Tripoli. Nevertheless, he hoped that Eaton would press on in his expedition, and he would provide whatever support he could. He sent the Argus and the sloop Hornet to Bomba with supplies, though he was unable to acquire the requested fieldpieces.130

The supplies could not arrive soon enough. Eaton recorded on March 22 that the company had no cash to purchase produce from the Arab tribes they passed by, so they traded rice for dates. The grain for the horses had also been used up.131 As more troops joined the expedition, the lack of food and money became more alarming. On March 23, eighty horsemen joined the company, though Eaton had no way to pay them.132 On March 25, 150 more soldiers arrived, along with their families.133 News that Yusuf had amassed five hundred soldiers to confront the expedition frightened some of the company, however; the camel drivers fled, and the Bedouins threatened to leave as well. Eaton (not for the first time) stopped their rations until they would sit down and discuss the problems rationally.134 The Sheik al Taib took his soldiers off in rage when Eaton called him a coward, but the next day they returned after Eaton ignored all attempts to conciliate. Apparently they respected his unwillingness to beg them to come back.135 This incident illustrated the fragility of the coalition as well as Eaton’s drive to complete the mission one way or another.

The expedition continued in fits and starts, with perpetual delays because one group or another (including Hamet) wanted to withdraw, and sometimes did, only to return a few

130 Barron to Eaton, 22 March 1805, BW5:438-41. Barron expressed the same sentiments to the secretary of the navy, 6 April 1805, BW5:485-86.
131 Eaton journal, 22 March 1805, BW5:444.
132 Eaton journal, 23 March 1805, BW5:448.
days later. Eaton tried to galvanize his soldiers by proclaiming to the people of Tripoli their intentions, at least in part in order to shame his soldiers if they chose not to follow through. In his proclamation, he drew parallels between the tribes of Tripoli and the United States, emphasizing how the United States had been able to transform a fragmented group of colonies into a powerful nation-state. He also explained how the common God of Islam and Christianity affected the United States: “People of every nation, every tongue and every faith could come to us and dwell in safety, because our religion teaches us to fear and to worship God and to be kind to all his creatures.” He accused Yusuf Karamanli of breaking faith with his God when he “sent out his armed pirate ships against our commerce and even brought some of our ships into the port of Tripoli, and without provocation had their crews put in chains and reduced to slavery; thereby outraging every obligation of honor and decency, and transgressing against the law of God which forbids us to be the first in aggression.” Eaton wrote of a litany of ways in which Yusuf had betrayed the faith of his fathers in his treatment of Americans. Eaton invoked Yusuf’s counselors, the Jews, as one of the ways in which he had fallen away. Anti-semitism was a trait shared by Christian and Muslim, and Eaton put that connection to work.

This call to arms was the first time in the war that religion had been invoked in a significant way. Eaton wrote, “Oh, Moors, oh, Arabs, can you calmly behold the shedding of your children’s blood, without avenging yourself! Will you meekly allow them to be put in chains and reduced to slavery in order to satisfy the cruel and savage cupidity of a usurper, a traitor, a barbarian, who fears not the Lord and who has no regard for human rights!” Eaton argued that this war had nothing to do with religion, but rather only with morality: the downfall of a morally bankrupt ruler who would be condemned under any religious system. In the end, the war really was about national prosperity:

Be assured that the God of the Americans and of the Mahometans is the same; the one true and omnipotent God. Be assured, therefore, that there was no thought of any difference in religion which could have induced us to make war on the city of Tripoli and on its piratical ruler. . . . Be faithful unto God. Be loyal to the Grand Signor. Be loyal to the rightful prince, Hamet Bashaw of Tripoli, and let us not doubt that
the Almighty will grant us his succor and his assistance to accomplish his wishes. A fasting peace; free and extensive trade, wealth and fidelity will be the result.\textsuperscript{136}

The actual recipient of this proclamation is uncertain. Eaton could have no real idea of who would hear or read it, especially considering that it was written in English, and most Tripolitans could not read in any language. Seton Dearden argues that it shows how great was the disparity between Eaton’s idealism and the realities of his situation. Though Eaton did view his entire project with unfailing optimism, this proclamation seems more like Eaton’s internal monologue he set to paper, his justification for his actions under both American and Muslim law.\textsuperscript{137}

As the expedition continued, the obstacles loomed larger. On April 6, Eaton recorded that the horses had not drunk any water for almost two days, and the men had only gotten some foul water from a well near a ruined castle.\textsuperscript{138} By April 8, a mutiny had broken out in earnest. Only the intervention of Lt. O’Bannon kept the Arab soldiers from turning on the Greeks in order to take their provisions. Eaton berated Hamet for his inability to keep his soldiers in line, but praised O’Bannon for his quick and decisive action to protect the coalition. But the situation was still extremely tense; provisions were nearly expended.\textsuperscript{139}

Captain Hull had arrived at Bomba on April 2. Not finding Eaton’s company, he cruised for a few days in the area, stopping in at Cape Razatin for news, where he found a messenger with information about the company’s whereabouts. He also encountered some Arabs who said they were from Hamet, but Hull did not believe them, and refused to give them information. The weather was poor, so Hull could not stay anchored at Bomba. Instead, he continued to cruise in the vicinity, stopping in every few days to see whether the expedition had yet arrived. He sent Eaton word of his plan by the messenger he had taken aboard.\textsuperscript{140}

On April 10, a courier that Hamet had sent to find news of the Argus returned. He brought

\textsuperscript{136}Proclamation of William Eaton to the Inhabitants of Tripoli, 29 March 1805, BW5:467-70.
\textsuperscript{137}Dearden, \textit{A Nest of Corsairs}, 180-90.
\textsuperscript{138}Eaton journal, 6 April 1805, BW5:487.
\textsuperscript{139}Eaton journal, 8 April 1805, BW5:490-91.
\textsuperscript{140}Hull to Eaton, 9 April 1805, BW5:493-94.
CHAPTER 5. 1805

tidings that the Argus had indeed arrived at Bomba, and none too soon—the company was in
danger of yet another mutiny. “In an instant the face of everything changed from pensive gloom
to enthusiastic gladness,” Eaton wrote, and Hamet promised to redouble his efforts to reach the
meeting place. Even this promise had to be broken, though; Hamet fell desperately sick that
evening, possibly from drinking water that had been contaminated by two dead bodies. After a
day of slow marching because of Hamet’s illness, the company resumed a brisk pace on April 12
despite near-famine.141 By April 14, the company was completely out of food.142

News of Hamet’s march had by this time spread to Tripoli. Captain Bainbridge was in-
formed of it by Muhammad Dghies, who informed him that Yusuf was now taking the fight
personally. Before, the conflict had been a simple commercial dispute, but now that the Ameri-
cans were trying to dethrone him, he would hurt the Americans (presumably, the prisoners) in
the manner in which his feelings of honor had been injured. Bainbridge, who had expressed his
disapprobation of the coup in the past, informed Barron of this threat, declining to elaborate on
his feelings about it, assuming Barron’s were the same.143

On April 15, the expedition arrived at Bomba. The Argus was not there. The various
parts of the expeditionary force spent the rest of the day deciding what to do, each accusing
the other groups of treachery. They all separated for the night, and in the morning, one of the
men spotted the Argus off the coast. “Language is too poor to paint the joy and exultation which
this messenger of life excited in every breast,” Eaton wrote. That morning, Eaton went on board
the brig, and provisions were distributed that afternoon. On the 17th, the Hornet arrived with
more provisions, and over the next few days the company found a good harbor for the ships and
an “inexhaustible cistern” for the troops. With food and supplies finally plentiful, the company
began to make their plans for the assault on Derna.144

Since the field artillery had not yet arrived, Eaton asked Hull if he could spare a few

141 Eaton journal, 12 April 1805, BW5:505-6.
142 Eaton journal, 14 April 1805, BW5:509-10.
143 Bainbridge to Barron, 12 April 1805, BW5:505.
cannonades from the Argus, as well as ammunition for small arms. He hoped that Hull would follow the company to Derna and provide bombardment from the sea, if possible. He also asked Hull to allow the marines from the Argus to remain with the expedition until Derna was secure.\textsuperscript{145} Lt. O’Bannon seconded Eaton’s request to stay with the land forces.\textsuperscript{146}

Hull made good his time off Bomba: on April 22, the Argus captured an Ottoman vessel carrying Tripolitan passengers and cargo. Hull sent the vessel to port for adjudication, though he admitted that the capture might not be good prize. He was uncertain whether the blockade could be considered enforceable some 700 miles from Tripoli, and he could not be sure whether the vessel was carrying contraband, which would make it eligible for capture anywhere.\textsuperscript{147}

Eaton and the expedition began the march toward Derna on April 23 in driving rain. As they began to approach more cultivated areas, Eaton made sure that the whole group knew not to spoil fields or harvests along the way.\textsuperscript{148} As Hamet needed as much popular support as he could get, the company had to take care not to alienate anyone. When the expedition camped about five hours’ march from Derna, they learned that Yusuf had indeed known they were coming, and had sent troops to fortify the town. It was likely that those troops would arrive before Hamet’s assault could begin, especially since the rainstorm had blown the Argus and the Hornet out to sea. The leaders of the various groups met to discuss strategy—without Eaton.\textsuperscript{149}

By April 25, the Nautilus was close to Bomba, bringing the fieldpieces Eaton had requested.\textsuperscript{150} But the expedition had not yet seen the ship, and from the closer vantage point they took up, the situation looked even more grim than before. The town had been fortified, and even though some of the local rulers had come out to express support, they had also brought news that the governor of Derna had an 800-man army in addition to Yusuf’s forces that would be arriving soon.\textsuperscript{151} The next morning, in desperation, Eaton wrote to the governor of Derna, asking

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{145} Eaton to Hull, 21 April 1805, BW5:527-28.
\item\textsuperscript{146} O’Bannon to Hull, 21 April 1805, BW5:528.
\item\textsuperscript{147} Hull to Barron, 22 April 1805, BW5:529-30.
\item\textsuperscript{148} Eaton journal, 23 April 1805, BW5:533.
\item\textsuperscript{149} Eaton journal, 24 April 1805, BW5:538.
\item\textsuperscript{150} Hull to John H. Dent, 25 April 1805, BW5:540.
\item\textsuperscript{151} Eaton journal, 25 April 1805, BW5:540-41.
\end{itemize}
him to join Hamet’s forces or at least let them pass the city unmolested. The governor’s answer came back the same day: “My head or yours.”

After a discouraging few days, April 26 provided a little hope for the expedition: the Nautilus arrived off the coast where the company was encamped. It brought the fieldpieces and a quantity of ammunition, as well as some other stores for the expedition. Captain Dent requested that Eaton send a company of men the next morning to unload. When they began to remove the fieldpieces, the men discovered that the hill up which they were attempting to get the fieldpiece was extremely steep. They managed to get one to the top, but Eaton decided not to waste time getting the other, as he intended to attack that day.

The expeditionary force began the attack at 2:00 in the afternoon. At the same time, the Nautilus, Hornet, and Argus began bombarding the town from the sea. Astonishingly, the town’s defenses crumbled quickly. By 3:30, O’Bannon had raised the American flag over the fort; by 4:00, Hamet’s forces, which by that time numbered around two thousand, had come in from the rear. Combined with Eaton’s Greeks, the expeditionary force had complete control of the town. Eaton himself took a musket ball to the left wrist, and thirteen men were wounded all together, but only one man was killed. Against all odds, despite mutinies, famine, storms, and grumblings, Eaton and his men had accomplished the first part of their mission: they had taken Derna.

Once Eaton’s company took Derna, their momentum disintegrated. Eaton realized now that Hamet could not be trusted to continue the campaign on his own, writing to Commodore Barron,

I cannot conceal my apprehensions, grounded on experience, that when arrived there he would effect little, without more military talent & firmness, than exists either in himself or the hordes of Arabs who attach themselves to him; They are . . . rather a rabble than an Army, & in our affair here, they held safe positions to catch fugitives, untill the doors of the Enemy were open’d for plunder, when they became at once brave, & impetuous. If therefore the co-operation is to be pursued with him and its direction is to be confided to me, it must be on condition that detachments of regulars

---

152 Eaton to Governor of Derna, 26 April 1805, BW5:542.
153 Dent to Eaton, 26 April 1805, BW5:542.
may be occasionally debark’d from the Squadron, or procured elsewhere, to aid and
give effect to such operations as require energy.

Eaton felt he had to stay on and guide Hamet’s affairs, but he expressed doubt about
the navy’s intentions for Hamet. If the American government intended to cast Hamet aside once
his usefulness was expended, Eaton felt honor-bound not to pursue the coup any further. If the
navy came to an agreement with Yusuf now, Eaton hoped that the government would insist that
Hamet be treated fairly, perhaps allowed to stay in Derna with his family returned from their
captivity under Yusuf. While Eaton waited to hear from Barron, Isaac Hull took charge of
the naval operations. He sent the Hornet back to Malta with dispatches for the commodore and
prisoners taken in the assault. But seeing that the conquered bey of Derna was still in the city
with some soldiers, he ordered the Argus and Nautilus to stay off Derna to keep them in check.

The troops from Yusuf who had not arrived in time for the battle now surrounded the
town. Eaton and his men secured the fortifications as best they could, but the townspeople did
not know who to follow. The former bey had organized a counterinsurgency as well, leading to
more trouble. As the troops closed in, Eaton wanted to try a deception like the Old Testament’s
Gideon against the Mideonites: he requested that Hull send him one hundred men from the Argus
so he could stage a parade of force. He wanted to convince the undecided tribal leaders to join
the stronger side, only his was not the stronger side. So he had to deceive them from a distance
by making it look like he had more men than he had.

Eaton was right about the vacillating loyalties of the Arab tribal leaders. The day after
one of the sheiks of Derna helped the bey of Derna to escape, the sheik returned and pledged
his loyalty to Hamet, despite harsh words about Hamet’s collusion with Eaton. Unfortunately
for the Americans, the sheik’s escape gave Yusuf’s forces the intelligence and incentive they
needed to mount an attack. They attacked the town on May 13 and nearly retook it. Only a

---

156 Hull to Samuel Evans, 30 April 1805, BW5:557.
157 Eaton journal, 8 May 1805, BW6:6. The Americans renamed the fortress “Fort Enterprize.”
158 Eaton to Hull, 13 May 1805, BW6:12.
fortunate explosion caused them to retreat. On May 16, two sheiks changed sides and joined Eaton, bringing news that Yusuf’s camp was in disarray. Disarrayed though they might be, the bashaw’s forces had blocked Eaton’s access to food from the country. With both sides too weak to mount another aggressive attack, Derna was under siege. Eaton sent off the *Nautilus* in hopes that it would bring back reinforcements soon.\(^\text{160}\)

After several more days of posturing on both sides, Eaton was having a hard time keeping the allied factions happy. Strapped for cash and still under siege, Eaton appealed to Hull for help. Hull could only advise that “he must have Patience for a few days” until the *Nautilus* or the *Hornet* returned.\(^\text{161}\) At least, Eaton noted on many occasions, Yusuf’s troops had similar characteristics to his own: confronted with the prospect of a superior opponent, the leaders of the bashaw’s troops had great difficulty getting them to fight. He heard that the assembled tribes “were willing to fight an enemy of their own mode of warfare; but they could not resist the Americans, who fired enormous balls that carried away a man and his camel at once, or rushed on them with bayonets without giving them time to load their muskets.”\(^\text{162}\)

**Part 3: Convergence**

Even before the news of Derna’s fall came, Yusuf Karamanli was putting out feelers for peace. Consul Lear received a letter from the Spanish consul at Tripoli, “written at the express desire of the Bashaw,” offering $200,000 total for peace and ransom. Though the Spanish consul assured Lear that this offer was only the opening salvo in a negotiation, Lear dismissed the offer out of hand. He thought that the bashaw would refuse the Americans’ terms in order to save face with his fellow Barbary rulers.\(^\text{163}\) The Tunisian government tried to inveigle its way into the negotiations, believing that its time to antagonize the United States was near.\(^\text{164}\) The dey of

\(^{162}\)Eaton to Barron, 2 June 1805, BW6:59.
\(^{163}\)Lear to Rodgers, 1 May 1805, BW6:1.
\(^{164}\)Davis to Lear, 9 May 1805, BW6:7-8.
Algiers also sent word to the bashaw, ordering him, “Our American Consul in Algiers will arrive and present himself to you for the purpose of discussing the Peace; I am sending him to you myself; you know that the Peace you made first was effected through my mediation; therefore since the Peace first made has ended, you are now going to discuss the Peace with this Consul Lear once more.” The American negotiators had already decided not to allow Algiers to be mediators in this discussion, but that did not keep the dey from trying.

Lear felt the time slipping away from the squadron. He had hoped that the navy would be bombarding Tripoli again by this time in the spring, but it seemed unlikely that the squadron would be ready any time soon. Master Commandant Thomas Robinson felt the same; he had finally found a place to build gunboats—Ancona—and was now rushing to complete them. He wrote to James Barron, “Reflect one moment on the Consequences attending an inactive Summer, and how are we to be active with a probability of success without some Boats”?

The Constitution had been off Tripoli since April 25. On May 10, it took a Tripolitan ketch attempting to run the blockade. The President was also blockading off Tripoli. The vessels the squadron had sent back for adjudication had already become a source of contention; the Tunisian passports the vessels carried were irregular, but the United States could not afford war with Tunis. Therefore, Consul Lear recommended that Consul Davis give the bey a chance to deny his complicity in sending the vessels to Tripoli. If he did deny it, then the vessels could be returned and further escalation averted.

In Malta, Samuel Barron had realized that he might never be well enough to resume command of the squadron. He wrote to Consul Lear that he would likely give up command. Barron too felt the time slipping away. With crew enlistments expiring in the fall, the window for action was shrinking rapidly. Three of the frigates were not in sufficient trim to survive another

---

166 Robinson to James Barron, 1 May 1805, BW6:2.
167 Constitution logbook, 10 May 1805, BW6:9.
169 Lear to Davis, 15 May 1805, BW6:16-17.
winter in the Mediterranean. Barron was also frustrated by the difficulty in acquiring gunboats from Naples. The reports from Eaton, meant to encourage Barron, had the opposite effect: Barron saw the prospective bashaw’s lack of nerve under pressure, that he “has not in himself sufficient energy address & Courage,” and therefore “must be considered as no longer a fit subject for our support and Cooperation.” Nevertheless, Eaton’s successes thus far with Hamet surely must have interested Yusuf in peace. Barron hoped that Lear could capitalize on this instability.170

Lear agreed. He intended to take passage on the Essex to Tripoli as soon as possible to begin negotiations.171 Barron made it quite clear to Eaton, however, that the government’s dealings with Hamet were at an end. He had achieved the conquest of Derna; he should not expect more in Lear’s negotiations with Yusuf. Barron added, “The interests of Sidi Hamet will not be overlooked: - it is with Colonel Lear’s express sanction that I mention his intention to endeavor at stipulating some Conditions for the unfortunate Exile, provided this can be done without giving up points that are essential, & without any considerable sacrifice of National advantage on our part.”172 In other words, they would hang Hamet out to dry if needed.

On May 22, Commodore Barron officially transferred command of the squadron to John Rodgers, acknowledging that his health would “greatly diminish & perhaps preclude the probability of my serving my Country at any future Day.”173 On May 26, the Essex, bearing Consul Lear, arrived off Tripoli. The Essex also brought Samuel Barron’s letter relinquishing control of the squadron to John Rodgers. The next day, Captain James Barron hoisted the flag of truce indicating that the Americans wanted to talk.174 The Americans viewed their negotiating position as very strong, but even at their strongest, they still worked in community. This time, the Spanish consul operated as go-between for the bashaw and Colonel Lear.

The arrival of letters from George Davis reminded Rodgers that the Americans also were not working against a single antagonist. Tunis needed to be dealt with, and soon. “Although it is

170Barron to Lear, 18 May 1805, BW6:22.
171Lear to Barron, 19 May 1805, BW6:24.
173Barron to Rodgers, 22 May 1805, BW6:32.
174Morris journal, 27 May 1805, BW6:52.
evident that the Bey of Tunis is afraid of the consequences of a War with the U. States,” Rodgers wrote, “yet at this critical moment, I conceive it necessary that he should not be neglected.” He determined to send one ship to Davis to consult with him as soon as possible about the best strategy.\textsuperscript{175} The bey continued to spar with Davis over the captured Tunisian vessels, continuously asserting his right to send ships on official business into Tripoli without capture. To deny Tunis such a right might send it into war with the United States or the Ottoman Porte.\textsuperscript{176} It was obvious why the American should care about a declaration of war against them, but less obvious why they should care whether Tunis went to war with the Grand Signior. Perhaps Hamouda was reminding Davis that wars in the Mediterranean could be bad business for everyone, not just for the combatants.

The Mediterranean community was constantly shaped by wars amongst its members. Even when the United States was not the cause of conflict, it got caught in the middle of conflicts between others. The war with Tripoli to this point had proved how interconnected Mediterranean society was. In order to navigate this web of connections, the navy relied on sources who knew the best ways to get things done unofficially. For instance, in the search for gunpowder in Leghorn, Stephen Decatur enlisted the help of the navy agents Degen, Purviance, and Company, who observed that “the Commission for Gun Powder being rather of a delicate nature in the actual political state of this Country, some management would be necessary, to get it executed without drawing the attention of Goverment or rather of the Powers which influences & in a manner directs its measures.” This was a subtle way of hinting at the lack of autonomy in the city, which was controlled at the time by the French. Degen and Purviance were able to make an under-the-table agreement with the garrison suppliers at Elba, and sent Decatur there to collect the powder.\textsuperscript{177}

Barron and Lear had concluded that Hamet Karamanli now should be left to his own fate, and Commodore Rodgers agreed. In a letter of May 29, Rodgers assumed that Eaton had

\textsuperscript{175}Rodgers to Barron, 28-30 May 1805, BW6:52-53.
\textsuperscript{176}Davis to Barron, 29 May 1805, BW6:56-57.
\textsuperscript{177}Degen, Purviance, and Co. to Barron, 29 May 1805, BW6:57.
evacuated the town under orders from Barron and Lear, and was headed back to Syracuse or Malta, but Eaton did not even receive the letter ordering his recall until June 1. In his reply to Barron, he argued that his expedition was the reason for the bashaw’s sudden pacific leanings. He rightly observed that the navy had done little since Preble’s bombardments in August 1804, but the bashaw’s interest in peace had started in January, around the time Eaton’s mission to Egypt had become widely known. Thus, he was surprised and outraged at the order to leave Hamet just when the mission had succeeded. “I cannot, from any shape in which the subject can be viewed,” he wrote, “be persuaded that the manner of serving ourselves of Hamet Bashaw, and abandoning him, can be reconciled to those principles of honor and justice which, I know, actuate the national breast.” He further argued that Hamet’s lack of character was not such an obstacle, as he had observed the same pusillanimity in the forces of Yusuf. If he pulled out of Derna now, and then Lear’s negotiations failed, the Americans would be in a worse position than ever, with nothing to bargain with.

“Could I have apprehended this result of my exertions, certainly no consideration would have prevailed on me to have taken an agency in a tragedy so manifestly fraught with intrigue, so wounding to humane feelings, and, as I must view it, so degrading to our national honor,” he told Barron. The tide of sentiment was with Hamet, it seemed to Eaton, and to abandon him now would be not only dishonorable, but foolish. Every day Hamet’s forces scored another victory of some sort, whether holding off an enemy attack or bringing more chieftains into their number. On June 11, Hamet’s forces alone, without the American marine contingent and with little cover from the American ships in the bay, were able to hold off a sustained attack by Yusuf’s forces. But when Eaton reported some of Barron and Lear’s orders, Hamet admitted that he could not maintain his position without the American navy’s assistance. His confidence waned again, and he asked to at least go with the Americans if they made peace with Yusuf.

Back in Tripoli, peace was imminent. On May 29, the Spanish consul, Don Gerardo

---

178 Rodgers to Barron, 29 May 1805, BW6:56.
180 This section on the peace negotiations is taken, unless otherwise indicated, from Lear to
Joseph De Souza, brought to Lear a proposal of $130,000 for ransom of the *Philadelphia* captives, with no tribute going forward. Lear countered with a prisoner exchange of all the Tripolitan prisoners the United States held for the *Philadelphia* prisoners. This would be an exchange of about 100 for about 300 men, and Lear was willing to pay $60,000 to make up the difference. Lear had determined not to go on shore to negotiate, which was surprising because it flew in the face of convention, and it also ignored advice William Bainbridge had given repeatedly over the last year: face-to-face meetings were the most likely to accomplish results. But Lear steadfastly refused, instead forcing Don Joseph to go back and forth between the shore and the *Constitution* for several days.

On June 1, the bashaw allowed Captain Bainbridge to come out to the squadron, as a gesture of goodwill. Lear told Bainbridge that he would attempt to have the prisoners released before an official treaty was signed, but the bashaw would not do any further business with Don Joseph. On June 2, then, Nicholas Nissen came out to the *Constitution*, commissioned by the bashaw to negotiate the specifics of the peace treaty. Lear gave Nissen a “sketch” of his stipulations for the treaty. Though Nissen observed that some of the stipulations were more favorable to the Americans than any other comparable treaty he had seen, he took Lear’s ideas back to the bashaw. Later that day, Nissen returned to inform Lear that Yusuf had agreed to the articles Lear stipulated, but he had one to add: he wanted the Americans and his brother out of Derna. Lear agreed to these terms if Yusuf would agree to give Hamet’s family back to him.

Initially, the bashaw would not agree to release Hamet’s family, but Lear stood firm and Nissen wore Yusuf down. He insisted on keeping the family for a little while longer but agreed to give them back eventually. In the treaty as sent to Congress, Yusuf agreed to hand them over immediately, but he and Lear actually made a secret agreement giving Yusuf four years to return them. On June 3, Lear and Yusuf agreed on all the articles of the treaty, and the fort and the *Constitution* exchanged salutes. When Lear went ashore that afternoon, he was met by the

---


**181**Report of Nicholas Nissen, 10 June 1805, BW6:103-104.
officers of the Philadelphia, who had been freed.

On June 4, Lear went ashore again to meet the bashaw. Now that the danger was past, Lear saw him in a different light: “He is a man of a very good presence, manly & dignified, and has not in his appearance so much of the Tyrant as he has been represented to be.” The two men complimented each other about their mutual honor and justness. Over the next few days, the treaty articles began to be enforced. The Constitution returned to Malta to collect the Tripolitan prisoners and bring them home. The Constellation went to bring the Americans off from Derna. Lear established Dr. John Ridgely, one of the Philadelphia prisoners, as naval agent for Tripoli, citing his familiarity with the customs of the court. The past had shown that doctors, who possessed skills of interest to the Barbary rulers, made good liaisons between Barbary courts and their erstwhile enemies, and Ridgely was already well-liked in the court of Tripoli.182

The United States had bested all the European nations who had dealt with Tripoli in the past, according to Lear, which did not sit well with those nations. “Our peace will be so unusually honorable, that we must not expect it will be fully relished by all the Representatives of the European Nations here, which is already manifested, by the conduct of some which I shall hereafter relate to you,” he told Rodgers.183 Perhaps he referred to a letter he received from Monsieur Beaussier, requesting that Lear give him the wages due to three sailors of the Philadelphia, now free, who Beaussier claimed were French. Lear dismissed his claim, saying that if Beaussier chose to leave the men in slavery for nineteen months, rather than redeem them for “the cause of humanity,” then Lear certainly would not give their wages to Beaussier, but rather to the men themselves as long as they chose to stay in the American navy.184 Two of the men deserted to Beaussier, apparently; Rodgers was furious that Beaussier would harbor them now “in a manner as equally degrading to yourself, as the tenor of the proceeding is insulting to

---

182 Lear to Ridgely, 6 June 1805, BW6:93. The bashaw had already become attached to another captive doctor, Dr. Jonathan Cowdery of the Philadelphia; upon his departure from Tripoli, Cowdery recorded, “I bid the Bashaw a final adieu, at which he seemed much affected.” Cowdery journal, 6 June 1805, BW6:96.
183 Lear to Rodgers, 4 June 1805, BW6:82.
184 Lear to Beaussier, 5 June 1805, BW6:88.
CHAPTER 5. 1805

me.”

On June 10, the treaties were officially drawn up. To meet the legal requirements of each country, three copies were made: one in English, one in Turkish, and one in Arabic. Though the Turkish one was the “official” version, supposedly the one drawn up first, scholars later have noted that it is obvious that the English version was the primary document, as there are pieces of the Arabic version that make no sense unless collated with the English version, and some pieces are virtually unintelligible. The primacy of the English version backs Lear’s claim that the bashaw rested such confidence in Lear that he allowed him to write most of the treaty articles as he pleased.

The Constitution returned from Malta on June 17. To Lear’s chagrin, the 100 Tripolitan prisoners he had expected turned out to number only 48. The other 41 people brought back were black slaves owned by the Tripolitans who had been taken prisoner. In order to skirt the discrepancy, Lear told Yusuf that the black slaves were his subjects, not his property. Lear thought this argument perfectly reasonable, though he was not sure the bashaw completely believed him.

After meeting with the bashaw on June 20, Commodore Rodgers weighed anchor from Tripoli on June 21 along with Colonel Lear. Peace with Tripoli had been restored.

Part 4: Cleaning Up

The prisoners from the Philadelphia were taken to Syracuse, where Agent George Dyson had secured for them some land to recuperate on. Dyson said that the land had “open free air, and an excellent Spring of water,” but not much development, so the sailors would be sleeping in tents.

187 Preble had sent 7 prisoners to the United States as well.
188 Dyson to Rodgers, 8 June 1805, BW6:100.
185 Rodgers to Beaussier, 20 June 1805, BW6:128.
service still pressed on them: on June 12, Rodgers instructed that the able-bodied marines from the *Philadelphia* join the crew of the *Constitution* to replace the men who had been placed in hospital. On June 29, Rodgers assembled a court-martial, at Bainbridge’s request, to determine whether he had been delinquent in his actions during the *Philadelphia*’s capture. James Barron, Hugh G. Campbell, and Stephen Decatur unanimously acquitted Bainbridge.190

Once considered the linchpin of operations off Tripoli, the gunboats that had consumed so much American effort to obtain turned out to be unnecessary. By the end of May, Master Commandant Thomas Robinson had finally found a city willing to sell him gunboats; “I cou’d line the Coast of Tripoli with Gun Boats from this place,” he wrote after purchasing two boats from Ancona and four from Senigallia. “I am well aware that I am late,” he wrote on June 1 to Samuel Barron. He certainly was—on that same day Lear came to an informal agreement of peace with the bashaw.191 Eight gunboats also arrived from the United States, but peace was signed before the first of them arrived at Gibraltar on June 5.192 It took Robinson until July 8 to shepherd his fleet of gunboats to Syracuse.193

Nevertheless, there was work left to be done. Commodore Rodgers wrote to James Barron that he should begin transferring the American headquarters back to Malta. Assuming the British were going to take Sicily in the next few weeks, Rodgers thought that the disruption of the regime change would “give us more difficulties to contend with” at Syracuse, so he preferred the more stable environment at Malta. He was not yet ready to pull out of the Mediterranean altogether. Tunis still needed to be dealt with, and after Rodgers received dispatches from Consul Simpson at Tangier, he believed he would have to stop at Morocco as well.194

Rodgers sent the *Essex* to Syracuse to drop off its sick men in the hospital and collect the Tunisian prisoners, in order to take them back to Tunis.195 He ordered George Cox, now

---

189 Rodgers to Thomas W. Hooper, 12 June 1805, BW6:110.
190 Morris journal, 29 June 1805, BW6:144.
191 Robinson to Barron, 1 June 1805, BW6:72.
192 Haraden to Sec of Navy, 9 June 1805, BW6:103.
193 Robinson to Rodgers, 12 July 1805, BW6:133-35.
194 Rodgers to James Barron, 2 June 1805, BW6:75; Rodgers to Barron, 3 June 1805, BW6:78.
195 Rodgers to Lear, 5 June 1805, BW6:87.
the captain of the *Essex*, not to release the prisoners until talking with Consul Davis, however. He wanted the bey to know that it was not out of guilt over an illegal capture that he was returning the men, but simply because they were an unnecessary bother now that peace with Tripoli had been achieved.\footnote{Rodgers to Cox, 12 June 1805, BW6:112.} But the captures would continue to be a bother: the Neapolitan government registered a protest with the navy about the restitution of the vessels, two of which were Neapolitan prizes to the Tunisian cruiser.\footnote{Davis to Rodgers, 20 June 1805, BW6:128-29.} Rodgers, however, had not yet released the actual vessels—only the prisoners were sent back to Tunis.\footnote{Rodgers to Davis, 20 June 1805, BW6:123.}

In Derna, William Eaton did not yet know that peace was signed. On June 5, he told Isaac Hull that he could not leave Derna until he heard official news of the peace negotiation or received explicit instructions from Commodore Rodgers.\footnote{Eaton to Hull, 5 June 1805, BW6:89.} Before he stepped down, Commodore Barron had sent orders for Eaton’s departure, but Rodgers was not at all sure Eaton would obey. “To be sure,” he wrote to Lear, “after he [Eaton] has received Commodore Barrons directions to evacuate Derne, a none compliance will make the responsibility his own: nevertheless the consequence will be his Country’s.”\footnote{Rodgers to Lear, 4 June 1805, BW6:83.} Rodgers dispatched the *Constellation* to Derna to reinforce Eaton’s instructions to abandon Derna, informing him that the treaty now stipulated his withdrawal.\footnote{Rodgers to Eaton, 6 June 1805, BW6:91.} Just to make sure that the treaty was being followed, Yusuf sent a man on board the *Constellation* to observe the proceedings. He would not go on shore at Derna, but he would serve as both proof and guarantee that the treaty was indeed in effect.\footnote{Lear to Rodgers, 6 June 1805, BW6:91.} Lear did throw a bone to Eaton, writing to him that it was his efforts at Derna that had turned the tide toward peace, and that Lear would do what he could for Hamet.\footnote{Lear to Eaton, 6 June 1805, BW6:92.}

Captain Hugh G. Campbell delivered Lear’s messages to Eaton on June 11.\footnote{Campbell to Eaton, 12 June 1805, BW6:111.} Surpris-
CHAPTER 5. 1805

ingly, Eaton agreed to come on board the next day. Concerned that the bashaw’s troops would fall on Derna before the evacuation was complete, Eaton sent out extra rations and spread a story that the Constellation brought reinforcements, not evacuation orders. He also ordered all preparations to be done quickly and secretly. He hoped that fear of the reinforcements would buy enough time to get everyone out. As the last of the Americans and Hamet’s retinue boarded the boats for the Constellation, the townspeople realized what was happening. They crowded the shore to beg the Americans to return, but it was too late. The Constellation had received all its boats back by about 2:00 in the morning; by dawn, all of the Arab chieftains had abandoned the town, along with any townspeople who could flee with them. The bashaw’s representative who had traveled on the Constellation went ashore with assurances from Yusuf that the townspeople would receive amnesty if they swore renewed allegiance to Yusuf, but “they knew his perfidy too well to suffer themselves to be ensnared by it.” Instead, the inhabitants began to fortify the town against the inevitable assault by Yusuf’s forces. Eaton had bought them some time, but not much. As the Constellation prepared to sail, Eaton wrote,

In a few minutes more we shall loose sight of this devoted city, which has experienced as strange a reverse in so short a time as ever was recorded in the disasters of war; thrown from proud success and elated prospects into an abys of hopeless wretchedness - Six hours ago the enemy were seeking safety from them by flight - this moment we drop them from ours into the hands of this enemy for no other crime but too much confidence in us! The man whose fortune we have accompanied thus far experiences a reverse as striking - He falls from the most flattering prospects, of a Kingdom to beggary! 

Eaton requested again that Rodgers deal with Hamet “in such a manner as to acquit our conscience and honor,” but he did not want to stay to see the result. As his usefulness to the cause of American peace had clearly come to an end, he requested to return to the United States on the first available warship. The Constellation, the Argus, and the Hornet sailed for Syracuse at noon on June 13.

---

205 Eaton to Campbell, 12 June 1805, BW6:111.
206 Eaton to Rodgers, 13 June 1805, BW6:116-17.
207 Eaton to Rodgers, 13 June 1805, BW6:117.
CHAPTER 5. 1805

The appearance of Hamet’s entourage in Syracuse caused great alarm in the city. Governor de Gregorio requested that Rodgers put them back on board one of his ships, as the townspeople were “apprehensive of the gravest consequences (from the presence of these men).”\(^{208}\) Rodgers ordered the entire company, except for Hamet and a few others, back on board the Constellation, from which they had only disembarked the previous day, and then to spread them out across the squadron as necessary.\(^{209}\) Hamet wrote Eaton a heartfelt letter of gratitude, in which he admitted that his chances of success had been small and that the United States had done everything they could reasonably be expected to do for him: “I ought therefore to say that I am satisfied with all your Nation has done concerning me - I submit to the will of God; and thank the King of America and all his servants for their kind dispositions towards me.” His parting request was that Eaton would prevail on Rodgers to send a ship to Tripoli to collect his family and then give him a little money to resettle himself and his family in some faraway country. Thanks to Lear’s secret treaty article, this request would be denied.\(^{210}\)

Though Tripoli had been taken care of, the navy’s concerns spread further than Tripoli. As more and more of Europe became embroiled in the contest against Napoleon, Americans continued to get caught in the middle. In Spain, R.W. Meade informed Master Commandant Charles Stewart that Americans were being captured by Spanish privateers as they sailed for Gibraltar. Meade suggested that a naval vessel or two off Algeciras and Cadiz would alleviate this problem.\(^{211}\) In addition to the threat to commerce, not even American warships were safe from the Spanish. On June 15, four Spanish boats captured Gunboat No. 3 and brought it to Algeciras “without assigning the smallest reason.”\(^{212}\) The general intervened and the gunboat was released that day; Gunboat No. 5 was also brought to by Spanish cruisers and delayed

\(^{208}\)De Gregorio to Rodgers, 29 June 1805, BW6:142.

\(^{209}\)Rodgers to Campbell, 29 June 1805, BW6:143.

\(^{210}\)Hamet Karamanli to Eaton, 29 June 1805, BW6:144.

\(^{211}\)R.W. Meade to Stewart, 31 May 1805, BW6:69. Meade was not the consul at Cadiz, but he had tried to take on consul-like authority in the past, clearly angling for Joseph Yznardi’s job. See Meade to Jefferson, 8 December 1802, Founders Online, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-39-02-0108.

\(^{212}\)Joseph J. Maxwell to General Castanio, 15 June 1805, BW6:119.
before being allowed to proceed.\textsuperscript{213}

The British continued to cause problems as well. On its journey from America, Gunboat No. 6, captained by James Lawrence, had been stopped off Cadiz by an English squadron under Admiral Collingwood. Three members of the crew had been removed by the British after they had claimed British citizenship. Though the men were no great loss—Lawrence observed that they had been “very unruly during the passage”—Lawrence felt he needed to fight for the right of American warships to pass unmolested. The three men voluntarily gave evidence that they were indeed British, but Lawrence wanted to hold them under their oath of allegiance to the United States. When Admiral Collingwood refused to give them back, Lawrence tried to surrender his gunboat to the British. His strategy may have been to force the British into an illegal capture, which would then cause them a great deal of time and expense to iron out. Collingworth refused to allow him to surrender the vessel, and Lawrence had to depart without his men because of oncoming weather that the gunboat could not withstand.\textsuperscript{214}

John Shaw, commander of the \textit{John Adams} newly arrived at Gibraltar, had more “amiable” sailor exchanges. When two American sailors, one from the \textit{John Adams} and one from Gunboat No. 10, deserted to the HMS \textit{Amphitrite}, Captain Boyle received them and brazenly wrote to Shaw asking that he would send over their slops because they had been forced to leave them behind when they deserted. Shaw agreed, as long as Boyle would give him the advance that the sailors had received on their salaries, since the American navy would could not pay the salaries of British sailors. He also requested that Boyle return to him Robert Williamson, an American that had deserted, including for proof an affidavit that Williamson had signed in 1804 certifying his American citizenship.\textsuperscript{215}

\textsuperscript{213}Gavino to Sec of State, 22 June 1805, BW6:131.

\textsuperscript{214}Lawrence to Rodgers, 12 June 1805, BW6:112-13.

\textsuperscript{215}Shaw to Captain C. Boyle, 18 June 1805. Shaw noted in a postscript that the belongings that the men had left on the \textit{John Adams} were so insignificant that they could not have missed them that much; Shaw was letting Boyle know that he knew that the request for the clothes was really a way to rub the desertions in the face of the Americans, BW6:124-25. He told John Gavino that he had answered Boyle “in as perfect a style as my feelings could comply with.” Shaw to Gavino, 19 June 1805, BW6:126.
CHAPTER 5. 1805

The Ottoman and Russian governments pressed their grievances with the United States through Sir Alexander Ball at Malta. Rodgers told Ball that he intended to make a ruling on the Ottoman three vessels in question—the Mastico, which had been called the Gheretti while under Ottoman colors and Intrepid under American, plus two additional vessels—but he had received information that a frigate was coming from the United States, and Rodgers hoped that someone else had ruled on their cases and was sending him their decision. When the John Adams did not bring him any orders, Rodgers ruled that he would not do anything further about the Mastico, having already released its Turkish crew and sent the Tripolitan slaves back to the bashaw of Tripoli. He simply released the other two vessels back to the Ottoman consul, including money to reimburse the cargoes that were sold. He also released the Russian vessels and reimbursed their cargoes.

There was some unfinished business in Messina as well. In January, the governor of Messina had written to Captain John H. Dent requesting that he deliver up two of his crew who were accused of murdering a British subject while in the port on January 23. It took until April 13 to track down the men who were supposedly responsible for the crime. Charles Ridgely offered to give himself up to the Neapolitan government for trial, asserting his complete innocence. The two officers had intervened when they saw the British man being hauled off by a Sicilian gang of men, and thought they had rescued him. If he had murdered the man, it was in a state of such total inebriation that he did not remember anything about the event or its surroundings, he candidly admitted. The other officer Ridgely was with on the night in question, Midshipman George Reed, likewise had not known of the man’s murder until informed by Captain Dent. Despite the testimony of some of the Sicilians, Ridgely did not see any way that he or Reed could possibly be convicted. John Broadbent, naval agent at Messina, hoped that

216 Rodgers to Ball, 25 June 1805, BW6:1137-38.
217 Rodgers to Ball, 15 July 1805, BW6:182-83.
218 Rodgers to Higgins, 17 July 1805, BW6:186.
219 Charles L. Ridgely to Barron, 13 April 1805, BW5:508-9. The Reed that Ridgely speaks of was probably Midshipman George Washington Reed, also an officer on the Nautilus. See Register of Officer Personnel, United States Navy and Marine Corps, and Ships’ Data, 1801-1807 (Washington:
“this misfortune will be of Service to him for the remainder of his days, & that it will make some impression also on the minds of other young Men in the Service, inducing them to guard against the vice of Intoxication, particularly when they are on shore in foreign Countries.”

Despite some judicial practices that Broadbent found barbaric, he had no doubt that Ridgely would be acquitted, but his opinion of the government of Messina had waned significantly.

Finishing off Tunis

By the end of June, Rodgers was tired of dealing with the threats from Tunis, which continued despite his return of the Tunisian prisoners. He wrote to George Davis, “Lest you should again meet with embarrassment, by my not being sufficiently explicit in my communications, I shall in future express myself in such language, as cannot be misunderstood.” He would not return the Tunisian vessels. His plan was to appear in force off Tunis to remind the bey that the United States would not be bullied. Eaton approved of this plan; his experience with Tunis led him to the opinion that the bey was a coward: “You will have no war with Tunis - That Bey finds a better Account in stealing Sheep, than in hunting Tigers.”

On July 23, Rodgers had finally taken care of enough of his administrative tasks that he could sail for Tunis with his entire squadron. The gunboats and smaller vessels that had arrived too late for the war with Tripoli at least got a little action off Tunis; when the squadron rendezvoused in Tunis Bay on July 30, it totaled eighteen vessels: four frigates, three brigs, two schooners, a sloop, and eight gunboats. Hamouda had declared to George Davis that any appearance of American naval force would spark a war; when Rodgers heard this news, he demanded “that your Excellency will have the goodness to inform me whether there has been


220 Broadbent to Barron, 17 June 1805, BW6:123.
221 Broadbent to Barron, 4 July 1805, BW6:159.
222 Rodgers to Davis, 29 June 1805, BW6:143.
223 Eaton to Hull, 26 July 1805, BW6:196.
any mistake in the application of your assertions tending to a declaration of War with the U. States, as your Excellency will without doubt see the propriety as also the necessity on my part of commencing both defensive and offensive operations against your regency in the course of 36 hours, should I not hear from you on this important & equally (to me) painful subject.”

Davis thought Rodgers had killed the American chances for a reconciliation. He asked for an extension of Rodgers’ ultimatum, as the letter did not arrive in court until after the bey had concluded business for the day. Rodgers gave him another day, but he did not back down. Davis requested that Rodgers write to the federal government for advice on this subject, but Rodgers was tired of waiting for orders from America. He informed Davis that he would commence attacks as scheduled unless he received an assurance from Hamouda that he would observe the peace treaty in place. Not trusting Hamouda (or Davis either, apparently) he further demanded that the French and British consuls ratify Hamouda’s recommittal to the treaty.

Tobias Lear, on board the Constitution, tried diplomatic measures bolstered by the imminent threat of force. On August 5, he invited Lear to come ashore to discuss the situation. But Lear declined to come ashore until the bey gave Rodgers the assurance he wanted. Rodgers prepared a statement for the bey to affirm exactly:

\[
\text{WHEREAS the Commander in chief of the Squadron of the U. States of America, now laying in Tunis Bay, has been induced to believe that it was my determination to declare War against the said U. States, in consequence of one of my cruisers and her two prizes having been detained by the aforesaid Squadron in their attempting to enter Tripoli during the late Blockade of that place or from some other cause, I do hereby solemnly declare that it is not my intention, and that I will not commence hostilities or declare War against the said U. States so long as the Treaty existing between myself and the said United States shall be faithfully adhered to by them, and not until I shall have made an application to the Government of the U. States for redress of any injuries which I may receive or have recieved from the said United States, as your Excellency will without doubt see the propriety as also the necessity on my part of commencing both defensive and offensive operations against your regency in the course of 36 hours, should I not hear from you on this important & equally (to me) painful subject.”}
\]

---

227 Davis to Rodgers, 3 August 1805, BW6:204.
228 Rodgers to Davis, 3 August 1805, BW6:204.
229 Rodgers to Davis, 4 August 1805, BW6:206.
230 Hamouda to Lear, 5 August 1805, BW6:207-208.
States and have been refused such redress.\textsuperscript{231}

He gave the bey until noon on August 9 to affirm this pledge. If Hamouda did not do so, Rodgers told Davis to leave Tunis and come to the squadron so that he would not be injured in the assault.\textsuperscript{232} Hamouda did not affirm the pledge. He reached out again to Lear, who agreed to meet him in the morning of August 10.\textsuperscript{233} In a letter to the bey, Rodgers reminded him of the immense force anchored off the town, which would be supplemented any day by yet more bomb vessels and gunboats, and suggested that the bey make his pacific intentions clear to Lear when he arrived.\textsuperscript{234} Finally, on August 14, Hamouda wrote to Rodgers, “It was never my intention to declare War, against your Nation, nor to begin any hostility if not first provoked on your part.” He proposed that the best way to resolve any lingering conflicts was to send an envoy from Tunis to the United States to meet with the president. He also requested that a new American chargé be appointed to Tunis.\textsuperscript{235}

Rodgers accepted Hamouda’s declaration. He wrote, “Your friendly treatment of Consul Genl Lear; and wherein you profess an Intention of placing the U. States on a footing with the most favored Nations, added to the pacific features of your Letter, wherein you inform me that you have resolved to send an Embassador to the U. States; are the strongest and most expressive proofs of your pacific Intentions toward the President and Citizens of my Country.” Peace with Tunis, for the moment, had been maintained.\textsuperscript{236}

Rodgers appointed Dr. James Dodge as the new chargé, and George Davis requested to go home on the \textit{Congress}, which would take the Tunisian ambassador to the United States.\textsuperscript{237} Rodgers likewise reorganized the crew lists of 8 or 9 of the vessels in order to send men home whose enlistments had expired.\textsuperscript{238} The \textit{John Adams}, the \textit{Franklin}, and the \textit{Constellation} would also

\textsuperscript{231}Rodgers to Davis, 5 August 1805, BW6:208.
\textsuperscript{232}Rodgers to Davis, 8 August 1805, BW6:212.
\textsuperscript{233}Lear to Hamouda, 9 August 1805, BW6:222.
\textsuperscript{234}Hamouda to Rodgers, 11 August 1805, BW6:223.
\textsuperscript{235}Hamouda to Rodgers, 14 August 1805, BW6:227.
\textsuperscript{236}Rodgers to Hamouda, 16 August 1805, BW6:233.
\textsuperscript{237}Davis to Rodgers, 18 August 1805, BW6:236.
\textsuperscript{238}Rodgers to Lear, 19 August 1805, BW6:236.
CHAPTER 5. 1805

return home. But Rodgers and the other half of the squadron would stay in the Mediterranean to make sure the bey kept his word.²³⁹

²³⁹Rodgers to Sec of Navy, 21 August 1805, BW6:240.
Conclusion

As of September 1805, the United States was officially at peace with all nations. The navy maintained a presence in the Mediterranean for some time after peace was restored, for defense and administration. For one thing, Rodgers was none too sure that the bey of Tunis would keep his word. In addition, the Napoleonic wars had put a target on American shipping once again; as neutral carriers, American merchant vessels ran the risk of capture by French, Spanish, or British warships or privateers. Keeping a few American warships in the area of Gibraltar might cut down on the number of attacks. There were many administrative tasks to be concluded as well. Over the past four years, the Americans had formed relationships—and obligations—with many ports, government officials, and private citizens. Now accounts had to be closed or paid off and disputes over American prizes had to be settled.

In terms of the Barbary states, the United States had basically gotten what it wanted. Despite the rhetoric of captains such as Preble, most of the people involved in the war never thought that the United States would be able to escape paying anything at all to Tripoli. It was enough to have signed a treaty ending tribute payments going forward. In Tunis, the bey had been persuaded not to go to war, but the annuities would continue. In Algiers, which had been remarkably quiet during this period, payments would continue. The United States could not take credit for the complacency of Algiers, though—they had benefited from Algiers’ preoccupation with Britain and France. In Morocco, with the crisis of 1803 averted, the United States maintained its most favorable treaty of the four Barbary states.

The four years of war had certainly drawn the United States into the Mediterranean
community in ways that mere diplomatic relations could not. Integration had been forced by the need for shelter from weather, repairs, supplies, and men. This integration was often effected through the navy’s relationships with various diplomats and consuls spread across the area. The navy also gradually came to acknowledge, if not always to respect, the customs and practices that pre-dated their interactions with the Mediterranean powers. These customs could be as lofty as the Law of Nations, or as banal as kissing the dey’s hand, but they all helped to hold the Mediterranean system together. Just as the United States was trying to use commerce to provide stability to its nation, so the nations of the Mediterranean were looking for stability as well. Nearly all of the ports the Americans frequented had changed hands or undergone political change in the decade previous to the Americans’ arrival, and most of them would change hands again in the decade after. In the midst of this turmoil, custom helped to protect the commercial and social bonds that made Mediterranean community possible.

The United States received a variable welcome into the community, however. Embraced by Sweden at the beginning of the war, and Denmark for the rest, the Americans’ relationships with the other nations of the Mediterranean were more complex. Agreement between the leaders of nations did not translate to agreement between their citizens. For instance, the American navy, though its representatives wished to be seen as a major power, could do little against the networks of superior military and diplomatic force of Britain and France. In addition, the networks that linked the Barbary states proved difficult to penetrate. Intrigues between the Barbary states, and between them and the European consuls in their dominions, created awkward and dangerous situations for the American navy.

American integration into the Mediterranean community was not temporary. One of the effects of the navy’s presence was the establishment of naval agents and consuls all across the Mediterranean, as well as personal relationships with the courts of the Mediterranean. These agents gave the United States a better way to mitigate disputes between American persons and foreign governments.

Whether or not the Americans gained respect in the eyes of the world is another compli-
cated question. Some respected the Americans’ brash and aggressive behavior, but others found it offputting. The lackadaisical conduct of Commodore Morris had jeopardized the reputation of the navy, but the destruction of the Philadelphia had restored it. The officers of the navy were prickly about violations of their personal honor, often imputing personal affronts to insults to the nation. And they certainly had received their fair share of insults, mostly deriving from the insistence of the British and French on harboring deserters from the American fleet. But the Americans also demonstrated that honor did not trump expediency: though abandoning Hamet Karamanli undoubtedly was the politically expedient thing to do, it held at least a tinge of dishonorable treatment toward an ally.

In the final months of the war, Thomas Jefferson thought that American efforts had had the desired effect on the Europeans: “There is reason to believe the example we have set, begins, already to work on the dispositions of the powers of Europe to emancipate themselves from that degrading yoke. Should we produce such a revolution there, we shall be amply rewarded for what we have done.” For Jefferson and the navy, changes in Europe were as important as changes in North Africa.¹

Of the three goals the Americans started out with, the first two were relatively successful. However, the acts of dishonor toward the American navy and merchant fleets only accelerated as the Napoleonic Wars continued. The benefits of wartime trade had to be balanced with the increased threat of depredations from the belligerents, and the need for more crew to man the navies of the belligerents meant more aggressive recruiting from American vessels. Disputes with the Barbary states faded into the background as Americans suffered more at the hands of the British and French. These insults culminated in the Chesapeake-Leopard affair of June 22, 1807, when the American frigate Chesapeake surrendered to the HMS Leopard after a brief battle over the impressment of British sailors on the Chesapeake. Over the next 8 years, Mediterranean affairs would have to take a back seat to worldwide incursions by the British, even though the Barbary states saw the distraction of the American government and began to ramp up their attacks against

¹Jefferson to Judge Tyler, 29 March 1805. BW5:465.
American commerce in the Mediterranean.

The primary offender was Algiers, who took an American ship, the Eliza, in 1812. Ironically, the Americans’ troubles with Britain gave Algiers the opening to begin depredations but deprived them of actual opportunities: commerce to the Mediterranean all but ceased during the War of 1812. Nevertheless, after the peace with Britain was signed in 1815, the navy was ready to break the Barbary system for good. When Stephen Decatur sailed for Algiers in May of 1815, he took a large naval force and a newfound sense of international standing, ready to avenge the honor that had been stripped away by the British blockade. It took only a few months to bring Algiers to peace, but even in the United States’ hour of triumph, the navy could not bring lasting change to the Mediterranean system by itself. It was not until Lord Exmouth negotiated with Algiers in 1816 that the system of Barbary depredations and enslavement was dissolved.

---

Note on Sources

The sources for this dissertation come from a vast variety of manuscripts spread in archives across the country. In the 1930s, the Department of the Navy published a large number of these manuscripts in a six-volume document collection, titled *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*. As I surveyed the manuscripts available in the Library of Congress, National Archives, and elsewhere, it became clear to me that almost all the valuable sources had already been collected and published in this set. In cases where I found overlap between the manuscripts I viewed and this document collection, I have chosen to cite the published work.

In the early 2000s, the American Naval Records Society digitized the Barbary Wars document collection, making it even easier to access. Likewise, huge collections of the papers of the Founding Fathers have been made available online through the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the University of Virginia, and many others. Thousands of secondary sources are available online through services such as JSTOR and ProQuest. Rather than shying away from using these online sources, I have embraced them, in some cases even citing an online version of a document I looked at in print. I have cited online collections deliberately. Many popular histories of the Barbary Wars either omit footnotes altogether or use them sparingly so that interested readers cannot trace their claims back to sources. I chose to make my source use as transparent as possible, hoping to make it easy for others to verify, question, or expand upon my findings.

All the static maps in this dissertation were created using QGIS with geolocation data from Google Maps.
Appendix A: Cast of Characters

Naval personnel

- Thomas O. Anderson, midshipman on George Washington and Siren (in command)
- William Bainbridge, captain of Essex and Philadelphia; captured and imprisoned in Tripoli (31 October 1803-10 June 1805)
- James Barron, captain of President, New York, Essex, and Chesapeake
- Samuel Barron, captain of Philadelphia; commodore of the fourth squadron, flagship President
- Hugh G. Campbell, captain of Adams, John Adams, Constellation, Essex, and Constitution
- John Cassin, member of court for Richard Valentine Morris
- Salvatore Catalano, Maltese pilot of the Intrepid
- Isaac Chauncey, lieutenant in President and Chesapeake; captain of John Adams
- George Cox, master commandant in President and Chesapeake; captain of Essex and Vixen
- Richard Dale, commodore of the first American squadron, captain of President
- John Darby, purser of John Adams
- James Decatur, lieutenant in Philadelphia, Boston, Adams, and Nautilus; killed in action, 3 August 1804
- Stephen Decatur, lieutenant in Essex and New York; captain of Argus, Enterprize, Constitution, and Congress
- John H. Dent, lieutenant in Essex, John Adams, and Constitution; master commandant (in

1Data on these officers compiled in Register of Officer Personnel, United States Navy and Marine Corps, and Ships' Data, 1801-1807 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1945).
APPENDIX A: CAST OF CHARACTERS

command) of Enterprize, Scourge, and Nautilus

• Nathaniel Haraden, sailing master of Constitution and John Adams
• Isaac Hull, lieutenant in Adams; commanded Enterprize and Argus
• Ralph Izard, midshipman in Boston, Constitution, and Scourge
• Daniel McNeill, captain of Boston
• Richard Valentine Morris, commodore of second squadron; captain of Chesapeake and New York
• Alexander Murray, captain of Constellation
• Edward Preble, commodore of third squadron; captain of Constitution
• Charles Ridgely, midshipman in President, New York, John Adams, and Constitution
• Thomas Robinson, lieutenant in George Washington and Constitution; master commandant (in command) of Enterprize
• John Rodgers, captain of John Adams, Congress, Constitution, New York, and Essex; commanded the fourth squadron when Samuel Barron resigned
• John Shaw, lieutenant (in command) of George Washington; master commandant (in command) of John Adams
• Richard Somers, lieutenant in Boston; master commandant (in command) of Nautilus; killed in action in the explosion of the Intrepid, 4 September 1804
• Andrew Sterett, lieutenant (in command) of Enterprize
• Charles Stewart, lieutenant (in command) of Siren; master commandant (in command) of Essex and Constellation
• Thomas Truxtun, senior officer of the navy who never sailed to the Mediterranean
• Charles Wadsworth, purser in Boston and President
• Henry Wadsworth, midshipman in Chesapeake, New York, Constitution, and Scourge; killed in action in the explosion of the Intrepid, 4 September 1804
APPENDIX A: CAST OF CHARACTERS

American civilian officials²

- John Adams, president of the United States, 1797-1800
- Thomas Appleton, consul at Leghorn
- Joel Barlow, consul general at Algiers, 1796-97; special negotiator to the Barbary states, 1796
- Joseph Barnes, consul at Palermo, 1802-1806
- James Leander Cathcart, consul at Tripoli, 1797-1801; special negotiator, 1801-1805
- Edward Church, consul at Lisbon, 1792-97
- George Davis, chargé d’affaires in Tunis, 1803-1805
- James Dodge, chargé d’affaires in Tunis, 1805-1806
- William Eaton, consul at Tunis, 1797-1803; special agent for the Barbary states, 1803-1805
- John Gavino, consul at Gibraltar, 1797-1815
- Abraham Gibbs, consul at Palermo, 1805-1816
- Levett Harris, consul at St. Petersburg, 1803-13
- David Humphreys, minister plenipotentiary at Madrid, 1797-1801
- William Jarvis, consul at Lisbon, 1802-11
- Thomas Jefferson, president of the United States, 1801-1809
- Rufus King, minister plenipotentiary at London, 1796-1803
- William Kirkpatrick, consul at Malaga, 1800-1818
- Tobias Lear, consul general at Algiers, 1803-1812
- Robert Livingston, minister plenipotentiary to Paris, 1801-1804
- James Madison, secretary of state, 1801-1809
- Robert Montgomery, consul at Alicante, 1793-1823
- James Monroe, minister plenipotentiary to London, 1803-1807
- Timothy Mountford, secretary to Tobias Lear, consul general at Algiers
- Richard O’Brien, consul general at Algiers, 1797-1803

²Most of these details are found in the Early American Foreign Service Database, http://www.eafsd.org.
APPENDIX A: CAST OF CHARACTERS

- Timothy Pickering, secretary of state, 1795-1800
- Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, minister plenipotentiary to Madrid, 1801-1805
- Joseph Pulis, consul at Valetta, Malta, 1801-15
- William Riggin, consul at Trieste, 1802-15
- James Simpson, consul at Tangier, 1796-1820
- Robert Smith, secretary of the navy, 1802-1809
- Samuel Smith, acting secretary of the navy, 1801-1802
- William Loughton Smith, minister to Portugal and Spain, 1797-1801; appointed minister to Constantinople but mission was not created
- William Willis, consul at Barcelona, 1797-1803
- Joseph Yznardi, consul at Cadiz, 1801-1815

Naval agents

- William Higgins, agent at Malta
- John Broadbent, agent at Messina
- Stephen Cathalan, agent at Marseilles
- George Dyson, agent at Tunis
- Francisco Mendrici, agent at Alexandria
- John Ridgely, agent at Tripoli

Commercials

- Joseph Bounds, captain of the Gloria
- Salvatore Busuttil, agent of Hamet Karamanli at Malta
- Richard Farquhar, agent of Hamet Karamanli at Malta
- R.W. Meade, merchant at Cadiz
- Andrew Morris, captain of the Franklin
- Gaetano Schembri, agent of Yusuf Karamanli at Malta

270
APPENDIX A: CAST OF CHARACTERS

- David Valenzin, owner of cargo condemned in the *Mastico*

**Foreign consuls and diplomats**

- Bonaventure Beaussier, French chargé d’affaires at Tripoli
- Samuel Briggs, British consul at Alexandria
- Henry Clarke, British chargé d’affaires at Malta
- Nicolo de Manza, Russian consul at Naples
- Gerardo Joseph de Souza, Spanish consul at Tripoli
- Bernardino Drovetti, French chargé d’affaires in Alexandria
- N. Frumerie, Swedish chargé d’affaires in Tripoli
- James Gambier, British consul at Lisbon
- P. d’Karpow, Russian chargé d’affaires in the Two Sicilies
- Bryan McDonogh, British agent in Tripoli
- Ernest Misset, British resident at Cairo
- Nicholas Nissen, Danish consul at Tripoli
- Joseph Noguera, Spanish consul general at Tunis
- Dubois Thainville, French chargé d’affaires in Algiers
- Peter Wyk, Swedish consul at Tangier

**North African rulers and court**

- Mulay Sulayman, emperor of Morocco
- Mohamet ben Absalem Selawy, secretary of state of Morocco
- Abdashaman Hashash, governor of Tangier
- Bobba Mustafa Pasha, dey of Algiers
- Hamouda Pasha, bey of Tunis
- Yusuf Karamanli, bashaw of Tripoli
- Muhammad Dghies, prime minister of Tripoli
APPENDIX A: CAST OF CHARACTERS

• Hamet Karamanli, brother of Yusuf Karamanli, the protagonist of an attempted coup in Tripoli
• Muhammad Ali, viceroy of Cairo

North African captains

• Ibrahim Lubarez, captain of Mirboka
• Murad Reis (nom de guerre of Peter Lisle), admiral in the Tripolitan navy
• Omar Reis, captain of Meshouda

European officials

• General John Acton, prime minister of Naples
• Sir Alexander Ball, governor of Malta
• Comte Guillaume Brune, French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire
• Major-General Douglas Clephane, governor of Minorca
• Prince Adam Czartoryski, Russian foreign minister
• Marcello de Gregorio, governor of Syracuse
• Maurice de Talleyrand, French minister of foreign affairs
• Thomas Trigge, lieutenant governor of Gibraltar
• Count Alexander Vorontsov, Chancellor of the Russian Empire
• Patrick Wilkie, agent victualler for the British fleet at Malta

European naval officers

• Courtenay Boyle, captain of HMS Amphitrite
• Baron Rudolf de Cederstrom, Swedish admiral
• John Gore, captain of HMS Medusa

3Identified from Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson, with Notes* (Colburn, 1846), 380.
APPENDIX A: CAST OF CHARACTERS

- George Hart, captain of HMS Monmouth
- Lord Keith (George Keith Elphinstone, first viscount Keith), British admiral
- Horatio, Lord Nelson, admiral of the British fleet in the Mediterranean
- John Orde, vice admiral in the British navy
- Cuthbert Collingwood, vice admiral in the British navy
Appendix B: Convention between the United States and Hamet Karamanli

Convention between the United States of America and his Highness, Hamet, Caramanly, Bashaw of Tripoli - God is infinite

Article I. There shall be a firm and perpetual Peace and free intercourse between the Government of the United States of America, and his Highness Hamet Caramanly, Bashaw the legitimate sovereign of the kingdom of Tripoli, and between the citizens of the one and the Subjects of the other.

Article II. The Government of the United States, shall use their utmost exertions, so far as comports with their own honor and interest, their subsisting treaties, and the acknowledged law of Nations to reestablish the said Hamet Bashaw in the possession of his Sovereignty of Tripoli against the pretensions of Joseph Bashaw who obtained said Sovereignty by treason & now holds it by usurpation, and who is engaged in actual war against the United States.

Article III. The United States shall, as circumstances may require, in addition to the operations they are carrying on by Sea, furnish to said Hamet Bashaw on loan, supplies of cash, ammunition and provisions, and if necessity require, deparkations of troops, also to aid and give effect to the operations of said Hamet Bashaw by land against the common Enemy.

Article IV. In consideration of which friendly offices once rendered effectual, his Highness Hamet Caramanly Bashaw, engages on his part, To release to the commander in Chief of the forces of the United States, in the Mediterranean, without ransom, all American prisoners, who

APPENDIX B: CONVENTION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND HAMET KARAMANLI

are, or may hereafter be in the hands of the Usurper, said Joseph Bashaw.

Article V. In order to indemnify the United States against all expence they have or shall incur, in carrying into execution their engagements expressed in the second and third article of this convention the said Hamet Bashaw, transfers and consigns to the United States the Tribute stipulated by the last, treaties of his Majesty the King of Denmark, his Majesty the King of Sweden, and the Batavian Republic, as the condition of a peace with the Regency of Tripoli untill such time as said expence Shall be reembursed. -

Article VI. In order to carry into full effect the stipulation expressed in the preceding article, said Hamet Bashaw pledges his faith and honor faithfully to observe and fulfill the treaties now subsisting between the Regency of Tripoli and their Majesties the Kings of Denmark and Sweden and with the Batavian Republic.

Article VII. In consideration of the friendly dispositions of his Majesty the King of the two Sicilies toward the American Squadrons, his highness Hamet Bashaw, invites his said Sicilian Majesty to renew their ancient friendship; and proffers him a peace on the footing of that to be definitavely concluded with the United States of America, in the fullest extent of its privileges according to the tenor of this convention.

Article VIII. The better to give effect to the operations to be carried on by Land, in the prosecution of the plan and for the attainment of the object pointed out by this convention, William Eaton, a citizen of the United States, now in Egypt, shall be recognized as General, and Commander in Chief of the land forces, which are, or may be called into service against the common Enemy. And his said Highness Hamet Bashaw, engages that his own Subjects shall respect and obey him as such.

Article IX. His Highness said Hamet Bashaw grants full amnesty and perpetual oblivion towards the conduct of all such of his Subjects, as may have been seduced by the usurper to abandon his cause and who are disposed to return to their proper allegiance.

Article X. In case of future war between the contracting parties captives on each side, shall be treated as Prisoners of war, and not as Slaves, and shall be entitled to reciprocal and equal
APPENDIX B: CONVENTION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND HAMET KARAMANLI

exchange, man for man, and grade for grade and in no case, shall a ransom be demanded for
prisoners of war, nor a tribute required as the condition of peace, neither on the one part nor the
other. All prisoners on both sides shall be given up at the conclusion of Peace.

Article XI. The American Consular Flag in Tripoli shall forever be a sacred asylum to all
persons who shall desire to take refuge under it except for the crimes of Treason and murder.

Article XII. In case of the faithful observance and fulfillment, on the part of his Highness
said Hamet Bashaw, of the agreements and obligations herein stipulated - the said commander
in chief of the american forces in the Mediterranean, engages to leave said Hamet Bashaw, in the
peacable possession of the City and Regency of Tripoli without dismantling its Batteries.

Article XIII. Any article suitable to be introduced in a definitive treaty of Peace between
the contracting parties, which may not be comprized in this convention, shall be reciprocally on
the footing of the treaties subsisting with the most favored Nations.

Article XIV. This convention shall be submitted to the President of the United States for
his ratification in the mean Time there shall be no suspence in its operations.

Signed by HAMET.

and witnessed by WILLIAM EATON
Lt. O'BANNON
Dr. FRANCESCO MENDRICI
PASCAL PAOLI PECK

Done at Alexandria in Egypt Feb 23rd 1805 and signed by Hamet Bashaw for himself and
successors and by William Eaton on the part of the United States

Additional Article. Secret

His Highness Hamet Bashaw will use his utmost exertions to cause to surrender to the
Commander in chief of the American Forces in the Mediterranean, the Usurper Joseph Bashaw
together with his family and Chief Admiral called Mamad Rais, alias Peter Lisle, to be held by
the Government of the United States as hostages, and as a guarantee of the faithfull observance
of the Stipulations entered into by convention of the 23d February, 1805 with the United States,
provided they do not escape by flight.

A Copy, Verbatim of this Convention between the United States of America and His Highness Hamet Caramanly Bashaw of Tripoli, in the English, Arabic, & Italian Languages, has been Deposited in the British Consular Office at Alexandria, in Egypt, by desire of William Eaton Esqr Agent General for the United States of America, at the Several Barbary Regencies -

Quod Attestor

Alexandria 1st March 1805 - BARTHw Gm MUTTI, Cancellier

We Samuel Briggs British Consul in Alexandria of Egypt, & it's Dependencies Certify that the above mentioned M: Barthw Gm Mutti is Cancellier of this Office, & that to all his Deeds, & Writings so Signed, Full faith, & Credit is & ought to be given in Court, & without Given under our hand, & Seal of Office at Alexandria this first day of March 1805 -

SAMI BRIGGS

British Consul.
Appendix C: Digital Map of the American Navy’s Movements

One of the perennial problems of writing naval history is the difficulty of representing its spatial aspects. Unlike cities or battlefields, ships are always moving, and their locations cannot be easily pinned down to one particular spot. Working with groups of ships presents an additional difficulty—keeping track of all of the ships at once. In the First Barbary War, the American navy’s ships travelled throughout the Mediterranean, sometimes in groups but often alone.

Nevertheless, considering the spatial aspects of the First Barbary War gives us a lens on some of the themes of the war. It shows the divided focus of the squadrons, as well as the many locations the ships had to visit in order to accomplish its aims.

This digital map is a model based on the locations recorded by the squadrons’ crews, collected in the six volumes of Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1939). I collected location data in many forms and then assigned each location a latitude and longitude. On days where there is no observed data, this map interpolates a probable path between the observed points from days before and after.

The map, built in Leaflet and coded in R, is available at http://abbymullen.org/projects/barbary/.

The data on which the map is based is available as supplementary material to this dissertation. The latitudes and longitudes are either observed (recorded from an entry in the Naval Documents collection) or estimated (judgment calls about ships’ locations based on the necessity of ships traveling on the water). Observed locations are calculated either from logbooks or corre-
APPENDIX C: DIGITAL MAP OF THE AMERICAN NAVY’S MOVEMENTS

spendence. In the digital map, locations in between points in the dataset are interpolated; these interpolated points are not represented in the dataset.
Works Cited

Primary Sources (Unpublished)


Primary Sources (Published in Print or Online)

17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers. Gale Cengage.


America’s Historical Newspapers. Readex.


Eaton, William. The Life of the Late Gen. William Eaton: Several Years an Officer in the United States’ Army, Consul at the Regency of Tunis on the Coast of Barbary, and Commander of the Christian and Other Forces That Marched from Egypt Through the Desert of Barca, in 1805 . . . Principally Collected from His Correspondence and Other Manuscripts. E. Merriam & Company, 1813.


WORKS CITED

Humphreys, David. *The Miscellaneous Works of David Humphreys, Late Minister Plenipotentiary . . .: To the Court of Madrid.* T. and J. Swords, 1804.


Martin, Maria. *History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin: Who Was Six Years a Slave in Algiers, Two of Which She Was Confined in a Dark and Dismal Dungeon, Loaded with Irons for Refusing to Comply with the Brutal Request of a Turkish Officer.* Printed for W. Crary, 1807.


Secondary Sources


WORKS CITED


284
WORKS CITED

Wang, 2005.


Rojas, Martha Elena. “‘Insults Unpunished’: Barbary Captives, American Slaves, and the Negotiation of Liberty.” Early American Studies 1, no. 2 (October 1, 2003): 159–86.


WORKS CITED


287