



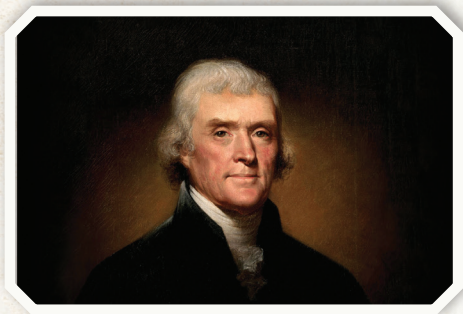
# *The* SHORES of *TRIPOLI*

HISTORICAL SUPPLEMENT & DESIGNER'S NOTES



# THE FIRST BARBARY WAR

After the American Revolution, American merchants lost the protection the British navy gave to their ships on the seas. In 1785, the loss of that protection took on real meaning when the Ottoman regency of Algiers captured two American merchant vessels and took their crews into captivity. Over the next decade, American diplomats tried to establish treaties with the four Barbary states (Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli) so that no more American ships would be captured, though around a dozen more were captured in the intervening time. In the late 1790s, all four states agreed to treaties with the United States, but the demands in those treaties were a steep price for the United States to pay.



The Barbary states had been operating a protection racket in the Mediterranean for hundreds of years; in exchange for leaving a nation's ships alone, the Barbary rulers insisted on being paid money and gifts, sometimes at regular intervals but more often upon the slightest pretext. The United States had neither the resources nor the patience to keep up this system indefinitely. Beginning in 1794, the federal government made halfhearted preparations to send a naval force to the Mediterranean to take care of the problem by force, but undeclared war

with France between 1798 and 1800 got in the way. When the navy finally left for the Mediterranean in 1801, Tripoli had already declared war.

## 1801

When the first 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 Determin to carry on the War against Tripoli it will be highly necessary to keep it closely Blockaded."

When the squadron arrived in July, the commodore, Richard Dale, was surprised to learn that war had been declared. That change meant the plans that had been laid had to change. Given the difficulties of the task, it is not surprising that during Dale's 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.



## ENTERPRIZE V. TRIPOLI

Once all the ships were assigned to a task, only one frigate was left to actually do the blockade of Tripoli. The *President* was meant to maintain the blockade 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 Tripolitans 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.

Because Sterett's 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.

## STALEMATE

Capitalizing on the *Enterprize*'s victory proved impossible. The difficulty of maintaining peace with the other Barbary states, and maintaining a very small squadron far from supplies and manpower, proved barriers too high to overcome.

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.

## 1802

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. Dale himself prepared to head back to the United States, as his term as commodore was up. The Secretary of the Navy prepared to send a new squadron in order to arrive in time to re-engage with Tripoli once the winter weather cleared.

However, back in the United States there were delays in forming the new squadron. When Dale and the *President* returned home, the next commodore had not yet even left the United States. At least there was a new commodore, though: Richard Valentine Morris.

With his confidence in the navy's skill waning, William Eaton, erstwhile consul at Tunis, began to take matters into his own hands. He and James Leander Cathcart, the displaced consul at Tripoli, came up with a plan to reinstate Hamet Karamanli,

the older brother of the reigning bashaw, Yusuf Karamanli. Yusuf had deposed Hamet some years previous, and Hamet had fled to Egypt. Now Eaton and Cathcart wanted to bring him back.

When Richard Valentine Morris finally arrived in the Mediterranean, he found that relations with Morocco were at a breaking point. Several tense weeks resulted, though consul James Simpson at Tangier was able to finally talk the Moroccan sultan into a fragile peace.

In June 1802, an American vessel, the *Franklin* was captured by a Tripolitan cruiser. The crew of the vessel was sent to Algiers, where the Americans had to rely on the good graces of the British consul in Algiers and the Danish consul in Tripoli, Nicholas Nissen. Eventually Algiers took a hand in redeeming the captives, an outcome that only weakened the American position in the Mediterranean.

Since Richard Valentine Morris seemed disinclined to act against any of the Barbary powers with force, other captains in the squadron stepped up. Morris spent almost no time on the blockade of Tripoli. The two who took the lead most frequently were also the most irascible: Alexander Murray and Daniel McNeill. Murray and McNeill made no secret of their disdain for procedure or for their allies.

As the year 1802 came to a close, relations with both enemies and allies were more fragile than ever before. Morris's apathy did not go unnoticed. In 1803, the commodore was ordered home to face a court-martial for dereliction of duty.

## 1803

1803 was a year of considerable diplomatic turmoil



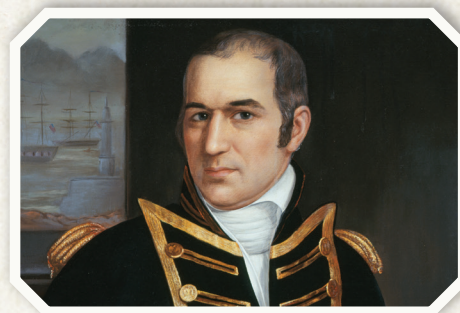
in the other Barbary states as well as Tripoli. From the very beginning of the year, Commodore Morris could not keep up a show of strength in relations with Algiers and Tunis, capitulating to their demands or putting them off as best he could. Consul James Simpson believed that Morocco was colluding with Tripoli to break the American blockade, and subsequent events gave rather more credence to that belief.

After an abortive attempt to negotiate with Tripoli, Morris returned to Malta (where his wife and new baby were residing). He would not leave Malta again for any significant length of time during his tenure. Meanwhile, James Simpson tried desperately to keep the peace in Morocco.

Commodore Morris's replacement, Edward Preble, arrived in Gibraltar on September 13, one day after Morris received his recall papers from one of the advance ships in Preble's squadron. Morris returned home to face a court-martial for his apathetic leadership, while Preble had to begin to try to patch things back together. His first task was to deal with the Morocco problem. It was increasingly clear that Morocco was helping Tripoli, and Preble had to find a way to stop it. It took Preble nearly a month to restore peace with the emperor.

## CAPTURE OF THE PHILADELPHIA

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 William Bainbridge that he could not hope to defeat them. Around sunset, the *Philadelphia* struck its colors and the ship's crew were taken prisoner.

Though several European nations rallied to the aid of the American prisoners, there was little Commodore Preble could do. Without diplomatic representation in the Tripolitan court, he had to rely on the generosity of others, particularly the Danish consul Nicholas Nissen, to provide for the captives. Any retaliatory action would have to wait until spring when the weather improved. As the year ended, Preble did get some good news: the *Enterprise* and the *Constitution* had captured a small Tripolitan ketch named the *Mastico*. They renamed the ketch the *Intrepid* and began to make plans for it.

1804

Throughout the war, certain consuls became convinced that a naval war was not going to end the war on favorable terms for the United States. In 1804, William Eaton increased his work to find a different solution: reinstate the deposed brother of the reigning bashaw, and negotiate a more favorable treaty with him.

Hamet, the deposed older brother of Yusuf Karamanli, liked Eaton's plan in principle, but Eaton found Hamet extremely challenging to work





with. Reports were that Yusuf's hold on Tripoli was loosening, so the time was ripe to bring Hamet forward. But Hamet, despite requesting money and supplies repeatedly, could not be convinced to begin the journey toward Tripoli.

While Eaton worked with Hamet, Commodore Preble re-evaluated the navy's strategy. He concluded that blockading was not sufficient, so he began to make plans to also bombard the city of Tripoli. But first he had to take care of the *Philadelphia* problem.

On February 16, 1804, a handpicked group of men under the command of Stephen Decatur took the ketch *Intrepid* to Tripoli harbor, accompanied by the *Syren*. The *Intrepid* slipped into the harbor and up to the side of the *Philadelphia*. As quietly and quickly as possible, the sailors boarded the *Philadelphia*, set charges and then got off. The ship burned to a hulk, so brightly that *Syren's* crew, miles away, could see the flames.

This action did little tactically or strategically, but it improved morale tremendously for the American sailors in the Mediterranean. But the next course of action was simply to resume the blockade, a task Preble intended to perform with much more stringency than his predecessors. After preparations for months, Preble was finally ready to take the full squadron to Tripoli.

On August 3, the squadron engaged the Tripolitans

off the port of Tripoli. The Americans lost no ships and only one officer, and they took many prisoners. After the battle, Preble stayed off Tripoli for a month waiting for the bashaw to communicate with him. When nothing was forthcoming, Preble decided to try yet another approach.

The *Intrepid* once again proved its worth, as Preble ordered it converted into a fireship, which Lt. Richard Somers volunteered to pilot into the harbor and then detonate near the Tripolitan ships. 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.

Shortly after the *Intrepid* disaster, Commodore Preble had to return home. Though the loss of the ship had been a morale blow, Preble had at least ratcheted up the pressure on Tripoli. His successor would have to try to capitalize on some of that success.



The new commodore who arrived at the end of 1804 was in no condition to capitalize on Edward Preble's success. The commodore, Samuel Barron, was so sick he could barely sail, and the American ships were scattered throughout the Mediterranean to make much-needed repairs and find supplies.

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. 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. While the *Essex*, *Constitution*, and *President* prepared for the cruise in Malta, they were met by the *Nautilus*, who brought in a Tripolitan brig.

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. But 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.

## WILLIAM EATON AND THE SHORES OF TRIPOLI

On December 1, 1804, William Eaton and a small American force of marines arrived in Rosetta, Egypt, preparing to find Hamet. Successfully navigating the political landscape in Egypt proved complicated for Eaton, but eventually he was able to find Hamet and rendezvous with him outside Alexandria on February 5. It wasn't until February 23 that the two came to an agreement about the plan for the coup and the promised results.

On March 4, Hamet and Eaton's company, now numbering about 400 since some local warriors had joined them, began the march across the desert to Derna in Tripoli. Derna wasn't the capital of Tripoli, but Eaton hoped a victory at Derna would put enough pressure on Yusuf to turn the tide.



As they marched, the numbers of men waxed and waned, as various group became disgruntled and left, or heard about the coup and wanted to join. After meeting up with the *Argus* on April 16, the men were resupplied and began to plan the attack on Derna.

Eaton's forces started the attack on Derna around 2:00pm on April 26. By 4:00pm, they had taken the fort. It was a significant victory for a largely unorganized and uncooperative group. However, 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, so he felt obliged to stay and see the operation through. The navy felt no such compunction. Barron and Lear had concluded that Hamet Karamanli now should be left to his own fate, and the newly appointed Commodore John Rodgers agreed.

## PEACE

Even before the news of Derna's fall came, Yusuf Karamanli was putting out feelers for peace. On May 29, he sent a messenger to negotiator Tobias Lear with an opening offer. On June 10, the peace treaty was officially drawn up. 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.

—Dr. Abby Mullen



## DESIGNER'S

## NOTES

**T**he *Shores of Tripoli* is my first game design. I never expected to be a game designer, but in 2016 I received a copy of *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates* (by Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger) and became fascinated by the First Barbary War. I was shocked that there was not a game on this episode of Early American history. I did a little more research and realized that this topic would make an excellent game.

*The Shores of Tripoli* was destined to be a card-driven game. From the classic *We the People*, to heavier titles like *Sword of Rome* and *Here I Stand*, to two of my all-time favorites, *Twilight Struggle* and *1960: The Making of the President*, I have been enamored with how card-driven games can convey so much history and yet be so fun to play. I knew that I wanted *The Shores of Tripoli* to be educational—that after two or three plays, a player would have a good grasp of not only the history but the choices and challenges for both the United States and Tripolitania. The best way to do that was with small individual decks for each nation—unlike in a game with a shared deck, where a side may not see some of its most interesting cards, with individual decks each player will see their best cards and the crunch is when and how to best use those cards.

The victory conditions for the United States were easy to determine. After three years of frustration, the United States stepped up its blockade and hatched a plan to replace Yusuf Qaramanli, the Tripolitan bashaw, with his pro-American brother Hamet Qaramanli. The pressure convinced Yusuf

to sign a treaty favorable to the United States. Thus, the *Treaty of Peace and Amity* and *Assault on Tripoli* cards. For Tripolitania, the goal was to have the American price in blood or treasure too high so the Americans would capitulate and start paying tribute again. Thus, the winning conditions for Tripolitania. With only a maximum of twenty-four turns, the tension in Tripoli comes from each side having too much to do and not enough time to do it. I am very pleased with the excitement near the end of the game, when Tripolitania is racing to get its twelfth gold or sink the fourth American frigate before the U.S. can play its *Treaty* card or its *Assault* card.

In designing the game, I wanted to emphasize that Tripolitania was a rational actor and that the First Barbary War was not “the first war on terror.” It was a state versus state conflict like so many others of that time. There were some key episodes in the war that I knew I wanted to communicate. The initial arrival of the American fleet into Gibraltar with the Americans not knowing if they were at war or peace, the rather dismal partnership with Sweden in blockading Tripoli, the threat of entry into the war by Algiers, Morocco and Tunis, the capture and subsequent burning of the *Philadelphia*, and the capture of Derne. I also wanted to make sure the key figures made their appearance—Qaramanli and Reis for Tripolitania and O'Bannon, Eaton, Sterett, Preble, Decatur and Bainbridge for the United States. I would have liked to have included a card for Richard Somers, who died while commanding the *Intrepid*, but the 27-card limit did not allow.



In addition to being educational, I also wanted the game to be approachable. Nothing pleased me more during in-person play testing than to see a couple play against each other or a parent play with an older child—and everyone having fun. I knew that the game needed to play in an hour or less and have simple mechanics. The presentation also needed to be outstanding—hence, the solid wood pieces and beautiful map and cards. But at the same time, the game also needed complex decision-making and solid replayability. The perfect blend of simplicity and complexity is a difficult needle to thread, but I hope we succeeded.

I did have to make some trade-offs between historical accuracy and playability. For example, the American fleet consisted of frigates, brigs and schooners but I treat all the American ships as frigates. The main Tripolitan fleet was a hodgepodge of vessels that I standardized as “corsairs.” Sweden had already declared war on Tripoli in 1800 and exited the war in 1802, while in the game the earliest they leave is 1803. I also had to create some alternate history cards for the potential assault on Tripoli. *General Eaton Attacks Benghazi*, *Assault on Tripoli*, *Marine Sharpshooters*, and *Send in the Marines*, as well as *Constantinople Sends Aid* are all cards from that alternate history. Similarly, the Algerine, Moroccan, and Tunisian cards represent the threat that Tripoli’s allies posed to the United States, but their allies did very little during the actual war. Finally, to allow each player a bit more freedom to explore their options and strategies, the game can go until the end of 1806, whereas the war itself ended in June of 1805.

Thank you so much for buying *The Shores of Tripoli*. I am very grateful for the assistance provided by the U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command, the Marine Corps History Division, the Mariners Museum in Newport News and the U.S. Naval Academy Museum. I am also extremely grateful

for the hundreds of play testers who took the time and effort to take the print and play files and build the game and provide amazing feedback. Finally, I really appreciate all of the Kickstarter backers who put their money and faith in our project. Thank you everyone!

## SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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In addition to *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates*, ABC Whipple’s *To the Shores of Tripoli: The Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines* and Joshua London’s *Victory in Tripoli: How America’s War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation* both provide good overviews of the conflict. I am also a fan of Osprey Publishing’s “Essential Histories” series and their *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates* by Gregory Fremont-Barnes does not disappoint.

For more in-depth reading, Chipp Reid’s pair of books *Intrepid Sailors: The Legacy of Preble’s Boys and the Tripoli Campaign* and *To the Walls of Derne: William Eaton, the Tripoli Coup, and the End of the First Barbary War* are both outstanding. Ian Toll’s *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy* is a masterpiece on the early history of the U.S. Navy. Benjamin Armstrong’s *Small Boats and Daring Men: Maritime Raiding, Irregular Warfare, and the Early American Navy* is an excellent survey of maritime raids and irregular warfare from the first fifty years of American naval history. There are plenty of biographies to choose from but the two I recommend are *Edward Preble: A Naval Biography 1761-1807* by Christopher McKee and *A Call to the Sea: Captain Charles Stewart of the USS Constitution* by Claude Berube and John Rodgaard.

Finally, watch for Abby Mullen’s *A Difficult Undertaking: Conflict and Cooperation in the First Barbary War, 1801-1805*, coming in 2022.



If you are interested in podcasts, “Sea Control” by the Center for International Maritime Security ([www.cimsec.org](http://www.cimsec.org)) and “Preble Hall” by the United States Naval Academy Museum ([www.usna.edu/museum/](http://www.usna.edu/museum/)) are both fantastic. “Sea Control” has some excellent episodes on both naval history and war gaming. “Preble Hall” has a number of outstanding episodes, but my favorite is EP3: The Tripoli War with Dr. Abby Mullen. The two-episode special collaboration between “Sea Control” and “Preble Hall” is also not to be missed.

—Kevin Bertram

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