

Welcoming Speech

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Civil War at Sea Symposium

Navy Memorial

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Welcome ladies and gentlemen. I would like to express my thanks to the U.S. Navy Memorial for organizing and co-hosting this symposium. I'm here today as the Director of the Naval History & Heritage Command as well as to today's co-host to bring you this distinguished group of historians, museum specialists, and underwater archaeologists as they discuss the roles that the Union and Confederate navies played in the Civil War as we begin to commemorate its 150th anniversary.

From the start, the United States Navy has been a force for good. During the Civil War, the U.S. Navy was a Continental Force for Good. The Union Navy went on the offensive quickly, operated from forward points along southern coasts and rivers, held the initiative for most of the

war, and made a decisive impact on its outcome. It retained command of the sea in most places for most of the war, enabling it to project power ashore almost at will along the Confederate coastline and deep inland along its rivers.

At this very moment the U.S. Navy is involved in two wars while also conducting two major contingency operations overseas. One contingency operation is called Odyssey Dawn - the NATO support of Libyans rebelling against dictator Muammar Qaddafi, a longtime supporter of international terrorism. The other contingency operation is Operation Tomodachi - Japanese for “friendship”— this operation is a humanitarian relief effort to aid victims of the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan last month. Today, America’s Navy is a *global* force for good.

[SLIDE 1: THE CIVIL WAR AT SEA]

The images on the slide projected up on the screen reflect the kinds of missions U.S. naval forces conducted during the Civil War. On the top left is the steam sloop *Hartford*, designed for operations on the high seas and deep rivers, representing sea control—the ability to retain

command of the sea and to deny its use to the enemy. The image on the top right from *Harper's Weekly*, depicts joint operations at Bull's Bay, South Carolina in February 1865 and it represents power projection—the ability to launch military might ashore from the sea.

On the lower right is a picture of David G. Farragut, America's first admiral, whom you're going to hear a lot about today, and, by the way, happened to be of Hispanic descent, Admiral Farragut represents leadership—the product of a seasoned, well trained, professional officer corps. On the lower left is an image of the hospital ship *Red Rover*, a steamer built in 1859 for commercial use, operated by the Confederates on the Mississippi River until captured in April 1862, placed into service as a hospital ship for the U.S. Army until the Union Navy purchased it in September 1862, and served for the rest of the war as the Navy's first hospital ship. The crew included 47 officers and men, and its medical department numbered more than 30 men and women. Historians consider the women who served on *Red Rover*—four Sisters of the Order of the Holy Cross and a number of nurses' aides including five African American women—to be forerunners of the Navy Nurse Corps.

During the war *Red Rover*'s medical team treated nearly 4,000 sick and wounded military men and civilians from both sides—another example of Navy humanitarian operations during the Civil War.

At the center of the slide is a picture taken by Mathew Brady of U.S. Sailors and officers aboard USS *Hunchback* in the James River, Virginia, in 1864 or 1865. The Sailors represent the core of the Union Navy, for it was they who manned the guns and provided the labor to run the ships.

And now I have a couple of special treats for all of you. Naval History & Heritage Command recently acquired a very special logbook.

- During the early 1850s, Commander David Farragut received the assignment to conduct a variety of tests on the all the Navy's heavy ordnance, including the first experimental piece designed by then Commander John Dahlgren.
- This is the original, official logbook—the official record—of those tests. Many of the models of the cannons tested would later be used during the Civil War.

- If I could have Mark Mueller and his wife please stand up and be recognized for your generous donation of this wonderful primary source of history. Thank you so very much!
- The next treat I have is this poster that came to us when the Marine Corps Historical Center began to purge its collections of all things not Marine...thanks Dr. Neimeyer!
- Of note, it does not have any of the usual official Navy recruiting poster printing on the bottom that would read Government Printing Office or Recruiting Aids Division.
- It also lacks any information about the printer, so it's likely a regional printing job, not a U.S. Government printer.
- But it does tie the Civil War to the Navy of the day, which the Virginia Historical Society believes to be vintage World War II.

[SLIDE 2: TODAY'S NAVY]

And now I will link the U.S. Navy of the Civil War to our Navy today. Next slide please. The images on this slide reflect the kinds of missions American naval forces are conducting today. Notice how these

missions parallel those the Navy conducted during the Civil War. On the upper left is the nuclear attack submarine *Virginia* (SSN 774) as it returns to the General Dynamics Electric Boat shipyard on 30 July 2004 following completion of its first voyage in open seas. *Virginia* is capable of dominating both the brown-water littoral and deep blue-water undersea environments—in short, sea control. As anyone familiar with the history of World War II knows, submarines make excellent commerce raiders, too.

On the upper right is the image of Marine CH-53E Sea Stallion helicopters and amphibious attack vehicles during Exercise Cobra Gold in 2002 and represents power projection. Cobra Gold 2002 was the twenty-first such exercise conducted in Thailand by the U.S. Pacific Command to practice and demonstrate the ability of American naval forces to deploy rapidly and conduct combined operations with forces from Thailand and Singapore.

On the lower left corner is the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* steaming alongside the hospital ship USNS *Mercy* after arriving on station off Sumatra on 3 February 2005. Both ships participated in

Operation Unified Assistance, the humanitarian relief effort to aid victims of the tsunami that struck Southeast Asia on 26 December 2004. During Unified Assistance naval forces delivered more than 422,000 gallons of water, 2,100 tons of food, and 2,900 tons of supplies to the people of Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, as well as providing medical treatment to more than 2,200 patients from those places.

On the lower right corner is my boss and current Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Gary Roughead speaking with local academics, business leaders, and government officials during a “Conversation with the Country” meeting in Denver on 27 March 2008. Admiral Roughead led the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard in developing our current maritime strategy, and members of his staff received input from citizens at similar meetings around the nation.

At the center is Lieutenant Constance Denmond conducting a weapons safety check for members of the boarding team from the guided missile destroyer USS *Porter*, operating in the Atlantic in March 2009. This image reflects the core of our Navy—our Sailors—whose honor,

courage, and commitment make each and every one of these missions possible.

Today's Maritime Strategy articulates six core capabilities of maritime power—forward presence, deterrence, sea control, power projection, maritime security, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response. These missions are nothing new. As you have already seen, and as you will see in detail throughout the day, the United States Navy demonstrated these capabilities during the Civil War, just as it does today.

During this symposium, you're going to hear about paddle-wheelers and screw-steamers, ironclads and sailing ships, blockaders and commerce raiders, submarines and mines, Her Majesty's Navy and the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, Yanks and Rebs, white Sailors and black Sailors, and various means by which the memory of the war is preserved.

As you listen to our speakers, I invite you to think about the value of the U.S. Navy to the Union, as well as the tremendous problems the Confederacy faced because it failed to field an effective navy. I also

invite you to think about the Civil War at sea in its broader historical and strategic context, as well as in the context of those events unfolding on the global stage today.

And now I will close with a quote from Abraham Lincoln about the importance of the Navy but before I do I must get into character with my Union Navy re-enactor's cap that I bought at the National Civil War Naval Museum down in Columbus, Georgia last month during their 10th anniversary celebration.

Now I'm ready. President Lincoln said: "Uncle Sam's Web-feet [must never] be forgotten. At all the watery margins they have been present. Not only on the deep sea, the broad bay, and the rapid river, but also up the narrow muddy bayou, and wherever the ground was a little damp, they have been, and made their tracks."

Thank you ladies and gentlemen. I hope you enjoy the symposium.