

THE HAPLESS ANACONDA:  
UNION BLOCKADE 1861-1865

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With the fall of Fort Sumter on the 13th of April, 1861, America entered the most costly and grueling war it has ever experienced. The Union's original military strategy was designed by the aging General Winfield Scott, who recognized that naval strategy could play a crucial role and that instead of being able to strike down the Confederacy with a quick lethal blow, it was more likely to be a long and grinding war. In his Anaconda plan he proposed a naval blockade of the Confederate ports to isolate the Confederacy and choke its economy and supply lines. This plan was followed when Lincoln proclaimed the naval blockade on April 19, 1861.

While some historians claim the blockade was one of the major causes of the collapse of the Confederacy, others contend that it was hopelessly ineffective. Overall, in terms of closing off ports, capturing ships, and stopping supply lines, the blockade was ineffective. The very concept of closing off shipping on a 3,600 mile coast studded with inlets and inner channels with a numerically insignificant navy was a highly unrealistic goal and the Union could not accomplish it. For the first few years, there was virtually no blockade and the blockade runners entered and cleared

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Southern ports with minimal risks. Only very late in the war was it actually more effectively enforced, but by that time the war had basically been decided. Blockade-running was an extremely profitable trade and lured many enterprising businessmen and ship captains. The Confederacy got most of its military supplies through the blockade. The failure of the Confederacy to supply its armies should not be credited to the Union blockade, but to other factors that did not allow the Confederacy to take full advantage of its blockade-runners.

When the blockade was proclaimed, the U.S. Navy was virtually nonexistent. The Navy had a grand total of 90 vessels, 42 of them commissioned for active service, and only 24 of them steamers. By the end of 1861, 79 steamers had been purchased along with 58 sailing boats (which were worthless unless the blockade-runners were also sailing ships). The blockading force, although it had grown quickly, was still grossly inadequate. Only 160 vessels patrolled the blockade and only a small proportion of them were capable naval vessels.<sup>1</sup> According to Professor Frank Owsley, author of *King Cotton Diplomacy*, this fleet was so poor that “Had the ‘Merrimac’ got loose among these boats, it could have sunk every one ad libitum [sic].”<sup>2</sup> Northeastern newspapers of the time harshly criticized the blockade: the *New York Herald* called Gideon Welles, Lincoln’s Secretary of the Navy, a moron, the *New York Tribune* published its view that the blockade was a “laughing stock,” and the *Philadelphia Enquirer* stated that there was “no blockade at all.”<sup>3</sup> Most Northern papers can be trusted on this subject because they had special correspondents at blockade-running bases.

The effectiveness of the blockade was actually more than just a military and economic matter, it had legal and political implications as well. In the Declaration of Paris in 1856, international law stated that a blockade had to be: formally proclaimed, promptly established, enforced, and, most importantly, effective, to be legal and thus be respected abroad. On August 20, 1861, Confederate agents John Slidell and James Mason, after the *Trent* affair, tried to convince Europe that it was a paper blockade by

showing figures that up to then more than 400 vessels had run the blockade. At the end of the year, James Mason tried again, and together with William Lindsay, a prominent British shipbuilder and Member of Parliament, presented figures that in 1861, 500 to 700 vessels had run the blockade.<sup>4</sup> However, Lord John Russell, the British foreign secretary, recognized the blockade as legal in February of 1862, not because Britain believed the blockade was effective, but because she didn't want to get involved in the war.

Britain's recognition did not imply that she refused to have anything to do with blockade-running. On the contrary, Britain was glad to profit from the business opportunity and British companies owned and controlled a large share of the blockade-runners. The British no doubt realized the blockade's ineffectiveness when, in the words of a U.S. consul at Liverpool, "Members of Parliament, mayors, magistrates, aldermen, merchants, and gentlemen are all daily violating the laws of nations. Nine-tenths of all vessels now engaged in the business were built and fitted out in England by Englishmen and with English capital, and are now (1862) owned by Englishmen."<sup>5</sup> Fast blockade-runners would travel between Confederate ports and the ports of Nassau, Bermuda, and Havana and then ships would sail cargoes between these 'depot' ports and England.

The task on hand for the Union Navy was made nearly impossible by the size and geography of the Southern coast. It spans 3,600 miles and has almost 200 river mouths, inlets, bays and harbors. In addition it is basically a double coastline because it is filled with interior channels. Small ships didn't have to leave directly from a port; instead they could take an inner channel and pop out into the open sea from almost anywhere they wanted. The Navy did not have the ships to guard every inlet so they had to concentrate on putting a cordon of ships around the major ports, like Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, and the big ports in the Gulf. Even this was hard because those ports were often protected by forts and thus blockading ships had to keep their distance.<sup>6</sup> The result was that many hundreds of miles of coast were left unguarded and small or shallow-draft ships could escape through the

protected waterways. Since much of this trade was done in secret by small sailing ships of which there are no records, the possibility exists that blockade-running took place on a significantly larger scale than is apparent from the official harbor records of the major ports.

Even when ships were guarding ports, their blockades were too lax and easily penetrable. In December of 1861, the British warship *Desperate* came to test for blockaders at Galveston by making its presence known with smoke. When nothing happened, its commander wrote, "Having seen no United States man-of-war here, I concluded that the port was not effectively blockaded and it will be my duty to report the same to my superior officer."<sup>7</sup> Still disappointed by the blockade of Galveston as late as May 1864, Gideon Welles wrote to Read Admiral Farragut that "It can not but be looked upon as a miserable business when six good steamers, professing to blockade a harbor, suffer four vessels to run out in one night."<sup>8</sup> This sort of poor enforcement was by no means restricted to Galveston; it was characteristic of most blockade enforcement.

In August of 1861, Charles Prioleau of Fraser, Trenholm & Co., of Liverpool (one of the largest blockade-running companies and also the Confederate fiscal agency in England) tested the Savannah blockade by sending a boat through. The boat went through with no interference or encounters with any blockaders and came back with a cargo full of cotton.<sup>9</sup> In addition to proving the blockade ineffective, this was an extremely profitable voyage and prompted the company to buy a fleet of blockade-runners and it encouraged many other enterprising people to jump into such a lucrative business. Throughout 1861, Consul Mure at New Orleans also reported continuous foreign trade between Mobile and New Orleans and Havana, Cuba. In early 1862, he sent reports of ships like the *Vanderbilt* having easy rides back and forth, loaded with more than 90,000 pounds of powder, prompting other merchants to charter their own blockade-runners.<sup>10</sup>

On August 12, 1861, Allen Fullerton, the British consul at Savannah, wrote that "The blockade of such ports is not effective,

being maintained by the United States Government not by vessels of war permanently stationed off the mouth of each harbour...but merely by a few vessels cruising up and down the coast, appearing off a port one day and leaving...the next."<sup>11</sup> Throughout 1862 and 1863, although Savannah was more frequently guarded well at the main entrance, the side and inner passages were left open. There are also numerous letters from Consuls Bunch and Walker at Charleston saying that its blockade was equally ineffective. Up to 1864 British consuls at Savannah and Charleston continued to report every-increasing numbers of blockade-runners. On August 6, 1861, Bunch wrote: "So far as I believe, not a single ship of war is at present to be found on the entire coast of the state." Two weeks later, Bunch wrote that vessels came and went without interference and stated that "the blockade is the laughing stock of the Southern Merchant Marine."<sup>12</sup> Even as late as April 7, 1862, Consul Bunch wrote that "The blockade runners are doing a great business. Everything is brought in abundance. Not a day passes without an arrival or departure. Passengers come and go freely, and no one seems to think there is the slightest risk, and indeed there is not."<sup>13</sup> These reports continued through 1862 and 1863 as Bunch kept reporting a steady stream of blockade-runners coming in with arms and powder and general supplies and leaving with cotton. The next British consul at Charleston, Walker, wrote on April 22, 1863, that from July 1861 to April 1863 trade was booming at Wilmington and cotton exports and customs receipts were high.<sup>14</sup>

It is clear that the blockade was ineffective in the early stages of the war, but it did eventually tighten as more ships were added to the blockading fleet, although not in proportion to the increased fleet of blockade-runners. By April 7, 1862, the Navy had 226 ships at their disposal for blockade duty and by the end of the war Gideon Welles had gathered up a fleet of over 600 vessels.<sup>15</sup> One of the men responsible for the tightening was Rear Admiral Samuel Phillips Lee, who commanded the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron from 1862 to 1864, whose most important port to block was Wilmington, North Carolina, a famous haven for blockade-runners. When Lee arrived in September 1862, he had 48

ships and during 1864 his fleet fluctuated from 84 to 119 vessels.<sup>16</sup> With this enlarged fleet he developed a blockading tactic of using two rows: a first row with slow ships would warn the faster outer row of any blockade-runners to chase with rocket signals.<sup>17</sup> This plan increased the number of captures being made; by 1864, Lee reported that the rebels were losing a steamer about every eight days.<sup>18</sup> However, this wasn't quite a brick wall, since Wilmington alone averaged 1.5 attempts per day to run the blockade.<sup>19</sup>

For most of 1861, one in fourteen ships was captured or destroyed, but the final ratio for the year was one in ten. In 1862, the capture (including destroyed ships) rate rose to one in eight, and the average blockade-runner still had a "life expectancy" of seven voyages. In 1863, the blockade finally started to tighten as the capture rate rose to one in four. In 1864, the capture rate climbed to one in three and in 1865 (when only several Gulf Ports remained open) the capture rate rose to one in two. The total for the whole war is that one in six attempts to run the blockade failed.<sup>20</sup> Below, these general figures will be broken down by geographic location and type of ship (sail or steam). These odds were good enough to make blockade-running a lucrative opportunity, enticing enough people into the trade. Cotton prices were high and profits on cotton were phenomenal; it could be bought in the Confederacy for six to eight cents per pound and sold at \$.25–\$1.00 per pound in England.<sup>21</sup> Other statistics show that it was bought at three cents per pound and sold at fifty, and this made a quarter of a million dollar profit on each voyage (one way) common, and a firm could then easily afford to lose a ship after just two successful voyages.<sup>22</sup> Often just one successful voyage would be sufficient. Although operating costs were very high (\$80,000 per runner per month), often two trips would pay \$170,000 and any additional trips would be pure profit for the English companies involved.<sup>23</sup> These companies saw profits soar as never before. Throughout the war, companies paid from 500–1,000 percent on their stocks. In the spring of 1864, stock bought at \$3,200 was sold six months later at \$6,000 and had also paid a \$500 dividend.<sup>24</sup> That the financial odds were so favorable for blockade-runners is testimony to the blockade's ineffectiveness.

There were also other factors that lured men into this trade. Daring and adventurous skippers enjoyed the excitement, and have described it as “rollicking good fun.”<sup>25</sup> William Watson, a blockade-runner in the Gulf, remarked, “On the whole (it is) a rather enjoyable occupation, with something of the zest of yacht-racing—a kind of exciting sport of the highest order.”<sup>26</sup>

These blockade-runners entered the trade with visions of great success, and most often that was the case. In part this was due to the difficulty of blockade duty for the Union sailors. While it may have been “rollicking good fun” for blockade-runners, it remained “perfect hell” for blockaders.<sup>27</sup> Blockade duty was boring and monotonous. It was also very hard because blockade-running ships were often superior to the blockaders. The blockaders most often had inadequate speed and poor seagoing qualities and many of them were sailing ships, which were worthless unless the blockade-runners were sailing ships too. While blockaders were mostly poor, sluggish ships, blockade-runners were often some of the best ships ever made. They had speeds the Union couldn’t match; most sailed at 10 to 14 knots, some could attain speeds of 17 knots fully loaded, which was incredible for the time, and by the end of the war a few had broken 18 knots.<sup>28</sup> Stunned by the superior speeds of blockade-runners, the commander of the blockader *USS Dacotah* remarked that “The speed of these contraband steamers is beyond all precedent of late. I have never experienced anything like it.”<sup>29</sup> Blockade-runners also had the advantage of virtual invisibility. After 1862, most had become fast iron steamers without sails, with light drafts, low silhouettes, and they were often painted a foggy gray color. They burned a smokeless anthracite coal and they liked to run on moonless nights.<sup>30</sup> Thus, a custom-built blockade-runner was “absolutely indiscernible at a cable’s length” on a dark night.<sup>31</sup> An officer of the blockader *USS Vandalia* stationed at Charleston wrote, “We could not see a single vessel going in or out... We have but little doubt that these vessels elude our vigilance at night as the nature of the coast precludes the possibility of our anchoring within at least four miles of the shore—hence a vessel of a few hundred tons... can easily escape by hugging the shore until out of our sight.”<sup>32</sup> Since

the blockade-runners were so hard to distinguish, blockading vessels often spent hours chasing each other by accident.<sup>33</sup>

The blockading fleet was of such poor quality that it was often in shambles. The blockaders frequently suffered breakdowns in machinery and had to leave their stations for long periods of time while the Navy had no replacements to send. In fact, over the course of the war, repair time kept one-third to two-fifths of the vessels constantly away from their stations.<sup>34</sup> This made statistics of the number of blockaders somewhat inflated, and although 600 ships were in the blockading fleet at the end, probably less than 400 were actually on station. At one time, the Wilmington blockade was missing ten of its vessels due to repair time.<sup>35</sup> The whole fleet was riddled with broken pumps, leaky boilers, and worn-out machinery, and in 1863, an officer remarked, "We are all getting into lame condition."<sup>36</sup> Another problem plaguing the blockaders was the shortage of coal. In 1862, the four blockading squadrons required 3,000 tons of coal per week, and the amount kept growing. The Union supply depots at Beaufort, North Carolina, Port Royal, South Carolina, and Pensacola, Florida frequently ran out of coal and long delays were endured before ships there could return to their stations. The need to conserve coal prompted Rear Admiral Samuel Phillips Lee, the commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, to write the force commander in Wilmington in September, 1863: "You may find it expedient not to keep more than one of the little vessels moving about at a time, even at night."<sup>37</sup> The coal shortages and maintenance problems seriously limited the blockading fleet and were major reasons why the Union couldn't establish a tighter blockade.

In terms of blockade-running, Charleston and Wilmington were the busiest and most famous ports of the war. After the fall of New Orleans on April 25, 1862, they were the best ports left open to the Confederates. Of all Confederate ports, Wilmington had the best geography and was ideally suited for blockade-running (even with big steamers). It was located 25 miles up the Cape Fear River and had two main outlet channels, the eastern one, the New



Inlet, guarded by Fort Fisher, and the Western Bar Channel, guarded by Fort Caswell. Thus, Wilmington required two separate blockading fleets 50 miles apart and each one needed to keep its distance from the channel because of the forts. In addition, the double coastline opened other outlets such as the Shallotte Inlet and the New Topsail Inlet. The Carolina blockade was more stringent starting in 1863, but of 590 attempts from January 1863 to April 1864, 498 (about five in six) were successful.<sup>38</sup>

The Charleston blockade changed drastically in 1863 when Admiral Dahlgren moved ironclads in, and conducted nightly patrols of the harbor.<sup>39</sup> Although some historians have claimed that this practically put a halt to its trade, Charleston still managed to conduct a foreign trade of \$21,000,000 that year, over \$2,500,000 more than the trade of the entire state of South Carolina in 1858.<sup>40</sup> Even as late as September through December 1864, 20 vessels were able to clear the Charleston blockade. From November to the beginning of December, while Wilmington was under siege, 43 blockade-runners entered its port.<sup>41</sup> An amazing sign of the ineffectiveness of this blockade is that the trade and shipping of these two ports greatly increased over pre-war levels while they were being blockaded.<sup>42</sup> Wilmington's total foreign commerce in 1863 was four times that of all of North Carolina in 1858.<sup>43</sup> In its last year of trade (mostly 1864), it did \$66 million worth of business in gold and exported \$65 million worth of cotton.<sup>44</sup> Although it is hard to measure its impact on the war, one thing is certain: blockade-running at Wilmington was General Lee's chief source of food and ammunition. On January 12, 1865, Lee wired Colonel Lamb, the Confederate commander at Fort Fisher, that "If Fort Fisher falls, I shall have to evacuate Richmond."<sup>45</sup>

The most complete records of blockade-running have been compiled by Marcus W. Price. According to his data, 2,054 attempts were made to run the Carolina blockade, a daily average of 1.5 attempts. Of these attempts, 1,735 were successful, an 84 percent success rate. Eighty-seven percent of the 1,093 attempts by steamers were successful and 81 percent of the 961 attempts by sailing vessels were successful.<sup>46</sup>

Blockade-running in the Gulf of Mexico was of a different nature than that of the Atlantic Coast. The trade in the Gulf was mostly conducted by small, independent sailing ships, not like the large-scale steamboat operations running between the Atlantic ports and Bermuda and Nassau.<sup>47</sup> The reasons steamers never dominated in the Gulf were mainly geographic, and the early capture of New Orleans also played a role. The Gulf coast was filled with sand bars and narrow, shallow channels through which steamers couldn't fit. Overall, blockade-running wasn't as effective on the Gulf coast as it was on the East coast. Obtaining cotton was harder due to the relative lack of railroads, the ships used were smaller, and the British traders preferred using the British-held ports of Bermuda and the Bahamas over Havana, Cuba, where the bulk of the Gulf trade was centered.<sup>48</sup> The majority of the ships involved in the Gulf were small center-board schooners which, with their high maneuverability and extremely shallow draft, could cross sand bars and shoals impossible for large vessels. However, these ships lacked the speed required to outrun Federal steamers and profits weren't as good because voyages were long and cargo space was small; a trip between Havana and Galveston, Texas, took up to three weeks because they relied on wind. None of the ten schooners captured off Galveston, from July 4 through July 7, 1861, exceeded 100 tons.<sup>49</sup> The low speed and small cargoes of these blockade-runners made the Gulf blockade more effective than the Carolina blockade.

In the first year of the war, the Gulf was bustling with smuggling activity. The port of New Orleans led the way with 300 violations in the first 10 months of the war.<sup>50</sup> However, the situation changed drastically when New Orleans was captured on April 25, 1862. This was a major loss to the blockade-runners because New Orleans was without a doubt the Confederacy's most important port. In pre-war years, New Orleans was the largest cotton port in the world, and it had exported 1,738,678 out of the 3,133,200 bales exported by the South from September 1860 to August 1861. New Orleans had also accounted for over half of the South's total foreign commerce: it had done \$128 million out of \$217 million of the South's total foreign commerce from June

1858 to June 1859.<sup>51</sup> After New Orleans was eliminated from the trade, Mobile, Alabama, became the center of rebel traffic. Mobile had also done well in the early stages of the war, and from April to June 1861 entrances and clearances were matters of daily occurrence.<sup>52</sup> With the largest port in the South captured, in 1862 and 1863 the Union blockade in the Gulf was greatly tightened and after the fall of Vicksburg in July 1863, more blockaders were available to bottle up Mobile.<sup>53</sup> Then the blockade-running switched mainly to the Texas ports, primarily Galveston. In the summer of 1864, Mobile was put under siege and its trade virtually stopped as the ships moved to Galveston. In January and February of 1865, fleets of fast iron steamers moved from the collapsed Carolina trade (after Wilmington's capture) to run between Galveston and Havana, proving the inefficiency of the enforcement even at such a late day, since just the steamers there had a 94 percent success rate.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, the blockade-running wasn't very beneficial to the South because Texas had poor railroad and road conditions with the East so that cargoes usually ended up staying around Texas and weren't sent to Virginia's great armies as Wilmington's cargoes had been.<sup>55</sup> By the time Galveston was captured on June 5, 1865, thus closing the last Confederate blockade-running port, the war had already been decided. According to Marcus Price's study, a total of 2,960 attempts were made to run the Gulf blockade and 83 percent were successful. There were 156 steamers and 987 sailing ships involved in the trade and the success rate was 91 percent for steamers and 81 percent for sailing ships.<sup>56</sup>

The blockade of Georgia and East Florida, although more effective, was insignificant. Due to their dearth of railroad facilities and major ports, Confederates and speculators never attempted much blockade-running there. Only 225 total vessels ever participated in blockade-running and only 35 of those were steamers.<sup>57</sup> Blockade-running numbers plummeted when the only important port, Savannah, was virtually shut off by capture of nearby Port Royal, South Carolina, by Union forces on April 10, 1862. They used it as the base for the blockade fleet. Savannah was thus effectively blockaded for the remainder of the war.

Adding up all Marcus Price's figures, a total of 6,316 attempts were made to violate the blockade, and 5,389 or 85 percent succeeded. The steamers succeeded 2,525 times, a 92 percent success rate, and 2,864 or 80 percent of the 3,573 attempts by sailing vessels succeeded. However, these figures are somewhat inflated because they include Price's figures for Georgia and East Florida, which account for nearly one thousand runs by several small regular packet steamers involved in coastal trade. Other authorities have argued even higher figures, including estimates of small sailing ships and "phantom craft" which did their business in secret and were never put on port records. In his book *King Cotton Diplomacy*, Frank Owsley estimates a total of about 8,250 violations and concludes that the blockade was strictly a paper blockade, and it was "a leaky and ramshackle affair."<sup>58</sup> Daniel O'Flaherty, author of the article "The Blockade that Failed," estimates about 8,000 *round trips* by 1,650 vessels.<sup>59</sup> These figures are just guesses, but it is important to note that since Price's statistics are compilations of records, he did not include in his estimate ships that didn't officially enter and clear ports. Another historian, Stephen Wise, has estimated that only 1,300 of the attempts by steamers involved foreign trade, and about 1,000 were successful.<sup>60</sup>

Although there was obviously much shipping, many people have argued over the value of this trade to the Confederates. The ineffectiveness of the blockade provided a great opportunity for the Confederates to trade their cotton for military supplies, but they didn't take advantage of it. Their failure to exploit the weaknesses of the blockade started with their cotton embargo, a dismal diplomatic and economic blunder. The intention of the cotton embargo was to take advantage of England's dependence on Southern cotton by stopping cotton exports to draw England into the war on the Southern side, but this backfired. Thanks to the South's overabundant cotton crops of 1859 and 1860, England was left ready and well stocked for some hibernation. At the closing of 1861, despite no new American shipments, Britain still had a surplus stock of 702,840 bales, 200,000 bales over their usual stock at the closing of a year.<sup>61</sup> In the spring of 1862, the failed cotton

embargo slowly relaxed until it completely ceased. The Confederacy had lost an opportunity to raise ample money and import enough arms and ammunition to supply its armies. Over all the war years, the South only exported about 1,000,000 bales of cotton, roughly half of its wartime crop.<sup>62</sup> In the year leading up to the war, over three million bales were exported; thus each war year carried about 10 percent of a pre-war year's export.<sup>63</sup>

The flow of blockade-running proves that the Confederates had an opportunity, but they didn't capitalize on it. The Confederate government only had eleven of its own blockade-runners, the most famous of which was the *Robert E. Lee*.<sup>64</sup> The Confederate government started to pass regulations in the fall of 1863 to reserve one-third to one-half of blockade-running cargo space, but it wasn't until February 1864 that the government passed stricter regulations securing themselves one-half of the cargo space, and outlawing importation of a number of luxury goods.<sup>65</sup> However, this was apparently not sufficiently enforced, because over the war, the Confederate government had only shipped out 50,000 bales of cotton to its own account.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, for the most part, blockade-running was almost completely in the hands of private ventures. Unfortunately, it was most often conducted by the "Rhett Butlers" of this world, who, instead of bringing vital supplies for the Confederate war effort, chose to bring cargoes full of silks, perfumes, and liquors which fetched higher profits. Thomas Taylor, a blockade-runner, commented that since "It did not pay merchants to ship heavy goods, the charge for freight per ton at Nassau being £80 to £100 in gold, a great portion of the cargo generally consisted of light goods, such as silks, linens, quinine, etc., on which immense profits were made."<sup>67</sup> Even as late as November 1864, after the ban on luxury goods, an official of a Wilmington blockade-running firm wrote to the agent in Nassau not to send any more chloroform, but to send perfume and "Essence of Cognac" because it would sell "quite high."<sup>68</sup> As a result, "Wealthy ladies of the South were provided with dresses and bonnets, while soldiers went without food, clothing, and ammunition."<sup>69</sup> This was not so much the result of the blockade as it was the fault of the Confederate government.

The Confederates were, however, able to survive for a long time while dependent on blockade-running for most of their supplies, and this is in itself a proof of the ineffectiveness of the blockade. During the war, 330,000 stands of arms (mostly Enfield rifles, and some Austrian and Brunswick rifles) came in through the Gulf blockade on the Confederate government account. Together with the arms shipped on state accounts in the East coast and private shipments, about 600,000 arms were imported.<sup>70</sup> This means that over 60 percent of the South's modern arms were imported through the blockade. The South also imported 3 million pounds of lead (one-third of the army's needs), 2,500,000 lbs. of saltpeter (two-thirds of the army's needs), three-fourths of the total powder ingredients, and the great majority of cloth and leather for uniforms through the blockade.<sup>71</sup> The shortages of the Confederate armies were due to the South's lack of industry, not the strangling effects of the blockade.

On the whole, the blockade was under-enforced. After an exceptionally slow start, the blockade was never able to seal off Southern shipping. Thousands of superior blockade-runners passed through the ramshackle blockade and made incredible profits with relatively low risks.

There are many misconceptions that the blockade was responsible for the horrible economic situation and lack of supplies, but this was due more to the Confederate inability to take advantage of the weakness of the blockade. Through their cotton embargo and lack of government-controlled blockade-running, they did not work to give themselves a large portion of the profits and bring in the supplies the Confederacy needed. As it turned out, private enterprises kept the rich Southerners supplied with all the silks and wines they needed, while the Confederate troops were without shoes and the Confederate government without money.

<sup>1</sup> Frank L. Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959) pp. 229, 231

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 239-240

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 205, 231

<sup>5</sup> Marcus W. Price, "Ships That Tested the Blockade of the Carolina Ports" American Neptune Volume 8 (July 1948) p. 201

<sup>6</sup> Daniel O'Flaherty, "The Blockade That Failed" American Heritage Volume 6 (August 1955) p. 104

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140

<sup>8</sup> Marcus W. Price, "Ships That Tested the Blockade of the Gulf Ports, 1861-1865" American Neptune Volume 11 (October 1951) p. 275

<sup>9</sup> Bern Anderson, By Sea and By River: The Naval History of the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962) p. 216

<sup>10</sup> Owsley, p. 238

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 234-235

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234, 242

<sup>13</sup> O'Flaherty, p. 40

<sup>14</sup> Owsley, p. 238

<sup>15</sup> O'Flaherty, p. 41; E. Merton Coulter, The Confederate States of America 1861-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950) p. 294

<sup>16</sup> Virginia Jeans Laas, "'Sleepless Sentinels': The North Atlantic Blocking Squadron, 1862-1864" Civil War History Volume 31 (March 1985) p. 26

<sup>17</sup> James M. Merrill, "Notes on the Yankee Blockade of the South Atlantic Seaboard 1861-1865" Civil War History Volume 4 (December 1958) pp. 389-390

<sup>18</sup> Laas, p. 33

<sup>19</sup> Richard E. Beringer, et al., Why the South Lost the Civil War (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986) p. 56

<sup>20</sup> Owsley, p. 261; O'Flaherty, p. 104

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, p. 219

<sup>22</sup> O'Flaherty, p. 105; Coulter, p. 289

<sup>23</sup> Anderson, p. 222

<sup>24</sup> Coulter, p. 289

<sup>25</sup> Merrill, p. 386

<sup>26</sup> Linda and John Pelzer, "Running the Gulf Blockade: A Different Sort of Trade, A Different Sort of Sport" Civil War Times Illustrated Volume 21 (December 1982) p. 11

<sup>27</sup> Merrill, p. 389

- <sup>28</sup> Anderson, p. 220; O’Flaherty, p. 41
- <sup>29</sup> Laas, p. 37
- <sup>30</sup> Robert B. Ekelund and Mark Thornton, “The Union Blockade and Demoralization of the South: Relative Prices in the Confederacy” Social Science Quarterly Volume 73 (December 1992) p. 893; O’Flaherty, p. 41
- <sup>31</sup> O’Flaherty, p. 41
- <sup>32</sup> Price, “Carolina,” p. 197
- <sup>33</sup> Laas, p. 29
- <sup>34</sup> Beringer, p. 62
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 62
- <sup>36</sup> Laas, p. 31
- <sup>37</sup> Beringer, pp. 61-62
- <sup>38</sup> Owsley, p. 250
- <sup>39</sup> Anderson, p. 227
- <sup>40</sup> Owsley, p. 248
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 243, 251
- <sup>42</sup> Coulter, p. 295
- <sup>43</sup> Owsley, p. 248
- <sup>44</sup> O’Flaherty, p. 39
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 40
- <sup>46</sup> Price, “Carolina,” pp. 222-237
- <sup>47</sup> Pelzer, pp. 11-12
- <sup>48</sup> Stephen R. Wise, Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988) p. 167; Owsley, p. 260
- <sup>49</sup> Pelzer, pp. 12, 17
- <sup>50</sup> Owsley, p. 239
- <sup>51</sup> Wise, pp. 227, 229
- <sup>52</sup> Price, p. 267
- <sup>53</sup> Pelzer, p. 16
- <sup>54</sup> Owsley, p. 256; Pelzer, p. 17; Price, “Gulf,” p. 236
- <sup>55</sup> Pelzer, p. 220
- <sup>56</sup> Price, pp. 236-290
- <sup>57</sup> Marcus W. Price, “Ships That Tested the Blockade of the Georgia and East Florida Ports, 1861-1865” American Neptune Volume 15 (April 1955) pp. 97-98
- <sup>58</sup> Owsley, pp. 241, 262
- <sup>59</sup> O’Flaherty, p. 41
- <sup>60</sup> Wise, p. 221
- <sup>61</sup> Owsley, p. 135
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 263
- <sup>63</sup> Wise, p. 229; Anderson, p. 230



- <sup>64</sup> Beringer, p. 62; Coulter, p. 290  
<sup>65</sup> Anderson, pp. 224-225; Coulter, pp. 291-292  
<sup>66</sup> Wise, p. 221  
<sup>67</sup> Ekelund, p. 895  
<sup>68</sup> Beringer, p. 60  
<sup>69</sup> Ekelund, p. 890  
<sup>70</sup> Owsley, pp. 266-267  
<sup>71</sup> Wise, pp. 7, 226

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