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“There should be No Bungling About this Blockade:” The Blockade Board of 1861 and the Making of Union Naval Strategy

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When Abraham Lincoln issued the Proclamation of Blockade days after the attack on Fort Sumter, it seemed clear to many that the president’s first major war measure would reap great dividends.^[1] One navy officer declared, “I am anxious for the blockade to get established; that will squeeze the South more than anything.”^[2] However, the magnitude of the Union Navy’s strategic challenge was enormous and its resources were meager. Of the Navy’s forty-two ships in service in April 1861, Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles had but twelve to call upon to enforce the blockade of a 3,500 mile coastline; the remaining ships were either in ordinary or in overseas squadrons. Welles had also to develop an organizational structure and operational concept to command and control the blockade effectively.^[3]

To solve these and other problems related to the blockade, the Navy established a Blockade Board. This board, deliberating throughout that turbulent summer of 1861, developed a significant portion of the Union’s naval strategy.^[4] Naval and Civil War historians have ascribed varying degrees of significance to the board and its work. Most believe the board was important, but most also have largely ignored the strategic aspects of the naval war. As Gary Gallagher has observed recently: “Beyond perfunctory considerations of Winfield Scott’s Anaconda Plan, most discussions of northern strategy virtually ignore its naval component,” and “no historian has written a specialized study about Union strategists and the navy.”^[5] This study aims to examine the context within which the board was formed, the origins of the board, its proceedings, and its strategic legacy.^[6] I maintain that the Blockade Board – an organization whose origins came from outside the Navy Department – was an early, and largely successful, attempt by the service to produce a comprehensive and enduring naval strategy that was fully coordinated with national strategy and government policies. The board created a roadmap for the Union Navy to conduct a major portion of its strategic responsibilities and stood as the role model for later naval boards and commissions.^[7]

Immediately after the attack on Fort Sumter, Welles, and Chief Clerk of the Navy Department and later Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Gustavus V. Fox, began to take steps to deploy an adequate force to patrol the Rebel coast. First, Welles recalled most of the overseas squadrons to reinforce the blockade. The next step was to procure rapidly ships to augment the blockading force. Welles and Fox issued orders to commandants of

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various naval yards to lease ships that would be suitable for blockade duties.^[8] Welles initially confronted the problem of command and control of the blockade by dividing the responsibility of the awesome task between two squadrons, the Coast (later the Atlantic) and Gulf Blockading Squadrons. The Atlantic Blockading Squadron's area of operations ranged from Alexandria, Virginia to Key West, Florida. The Gulf Blockading Squadron's responsibility extended from Key West to the Mexican border.^[9]

The commanders of these squadrons faced challenges that no amount of additional ships could completely solve. To begin with, the commanders had limited local knowledge of coasts, inlets, harbors, river systems, ports, tides, and water depth. Their quarry usually labored under no such handicaps. Second, the commanders quickly recognized that in order to blockade effectively their assigned coasts, they had to establish bases for refueling and reprovisioning. Initially, the blockading squadrons had but two widely separated bases of operations available to them: Hampton Roads, Virginia, and Key West. As James McPherson has observed, "Some ships spent nearly as much time going to and from these bases for supply and repair as they did on blockade duty."^[10] Thus, the United States Navy faced the strategic challenge that confronts most military forces, the tyranny of logistics. Clearly, the Navy would have to establish additional and more convenient bases for the blockade squadrons. Finally, the commanders of these squadrons found that it was nearly impossible for them to command, control, and communicate adequately with their scattered and overextended forces.^[11] The Navy's lack of local knowledge, command and control problems, and logistical deficiencies became the focus of the Blockade Board's labors

Unfortunately for the Union, in the early days of the war Welles was so overwhelmed by details, that he was unable to address the strategic challenges that had to be surmounted to enforce an effective blockade. Welles personally tackled issues such as promotions, resignations, leaves, recruiting, procurement of equipment, as well as naval operations against the Confederacy. With breathtaking understatement, Welles declared to his wife in April 1861 that, "The rebellion has given me labor and trouble and will make more."^[12] Indeed, in April and May 1861, Welles and Fox, in an attempt to provide better information on local conditions to his blockading squadrons, found themselves personally requesting charts from the Superintendent of the Coastal Survey, Alexander Dallas Bache, on an almost daily basis.^[13] The haphazard nature of these requests and Bache's vigorous support of Union military efforts would lead to the formation of the Blockade Board.

Alexander Bache was a frightened man in early 1861. The Union was not only in peril, but he also viewed the national crisis as a direct threat to the Coastal Survey, an organization he had led for almost twenty years. The political dislocation of secession, and the loss of access to thousands of miles of coastline, threatened the very existence of the Coastal Survey. Bache revealed his fears in a letter to a friend as early as January 1861 when he lamented that "the terrible disruption of our country . . . will sweep our

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organization away entirely, or sadly cripple it.”^[14] In this respect, Bache was no different from any other government bureaucrat; he was determined to protect his agency from any threat, or barring that, to do anything to prove that his organization was indispensable. During his tenure as superintendent, Bache interpreted the mission of the Coast Survey very broadly and was able to forge an international reputation for outstanding scientific accomplishments. Despite this, Bache could wrest only paltry appropriations from Congress; thus, he relied heavily on the temporary assignment of Army engineers and naval officers to augment his own scientists and surveyors. Bache’s associations and friendships with these talented military officers would help ensure not only the survival but also the prosperity of the Coastal Survey during and after the Civil War.^[15]

Thus, in May 1861, Gideon Welles and Gustavus Fox were overwhelmed with details and the blockading squadrons were poorly organized, inefficient, ineffective, and ignorant of basic information. In addition, the harassed superintendent of the Coastal Survey feared for the very existence of his agency. It was within this context that Bache first conceived the idea for the Blockade Board.

The first mention of the Blockade Board in the written record appears in a May 22, 1861 letter from Fox to Captain Samuel F. Du Pont, Commandant of the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

It is proposed to have a board of persons, say General Totten, Professor Bache, and Captain Du Pont, meet here and condense all the vast information in the Engineers Department, Coast Survey, and Navy, for the use of the blockading squadron. Professor Bache suggested it in answer to the numerous inquiries I have made of him. . . . Will you give up the [Philadelphia Navy] Yard and come with us to the bitter end?^[16]

Bache was a close friend and professional colleague of Brigadier General Joseph G. Totten, Chief of Engineers, United States Army, and Captain Du Pont. Indeed, they had served on the Lighthouse Board together in the early 1850s; therefore, it was probably Bache and not Fox or Welles who recommended the composition of the board.^[17] The timing of this letter also makes sense. The number of requests for information to the Coastal Survey reached their zenith in May, overwhelming Bache and his meager organization. Any attempt to streamline and consolidate all of the critical information for the Navy would be welcome. In addition, the formation of a Board composed of such eminent men as General Totten and Captain Du Pont and supported and sponsored by Secretary Welles himself, could go a long way toward ensuring the continued importance of the Coastal Survey

Du Pont’s reply to Fox has not surfaced, but in a letter to Bache several days later, Du Pont enthusiastically endorsed his old friend’s idea,

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There was some talk of a blockade board suggested by you and which I told Mr. Fox I would be ready to serve on at any moment, and that moreover I deemed the suggestion a most important one . . . it is greatly wanted and I flatter myself that you and General Totten with my very small aid could turn out something that would be of infinite value.^[18]

Clearly, the creation of such a board appealed to Du Pont – one of the few officers in the United States Navy with blockading experience gained during the Mexican War -- who had very strong ideas indeed about how to run a blockade. Du Pont wrote his friend Henry Winter Davis the next day that: “I replied to Mr. Fox (who asked me what I thought of it) that I deemed it one of the wisest suggestions that could be made on the subject. . . . There should be no bungling about this blockade, and there is some just now.”^[19]

Bache revealed his proposal for the board another friend, Commander Charles Henry Davis, a future member of the board then stationed in Washington, DC. On May 22, 1861 (the same day Fox was writing to Du Pont), Davis wrote to his wife that,

I found that Bache has a plan of his own to carry out . . . He wishes to establish a military commission, or advisory council, to determine military proceedings and operations along the coast. The coast survey is to furnish the requisite information of the hydrographical and topographical nature. I am to be junior member and secretary of this board. . . . General Totten is to be the military member.^[20]

Davis’s letter is revealing. The board that Davis describes is considerably wider in scope than that portrayed by Fox to Du Pont. Davis suggests that Bache wanted the board to plan military operations and not merely act as a clearinghouse for information. In other words, Bache’s vision for the board included strategic planning.

Bache’s reasons for suggesting the board may not have been obvious to Fox or Welles, but his friends were more perceptive. Commander Davis shrewdly observed on June 14, 1861, that

Bache is wonderful in his way. The general expectation has been that the Coast Survey, being deprived of a large part of its field of usefulness, would decline in power and be reduced in occupation. Some of those kindhearted people, whose happiness is impaired by too much success and prosperity on the part of their neighbors, have remarked to Mr. Bache in a tone of condolence, but with a smile of satisfaction, that they supposed the coast survey would be stopped now. Bache’s ingenuity had been exercised in discovering methods of making the coast survey cooperative in the great movement of the day.^[21]

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Du Pont shared Commander Davis's opinion of Bache's motives and noted after the board's first meeting that "[the board] has been instigated by Professor Bache to bring forward the Coast Survey element" and it "is mainly got up to give notoriety to the Coast Survey."^[22] Bache clearly proposed the idea of a Blockade Board to Welles and Fox to highlight the contributions of the Coast Survey; but it would be a mistake to assume that Bache's motives were purely self-serving. He also desperately wanted to contribute to the war effort. Bache would write, "This War has . . . interest[ed] me to such an extent that I would rather die than not do all that opportunity gives me to do and that my education makes me feel that I can do."^[23] The Blockade Board would enable Bache to achieve that goal.

Du Pont remained at his post in Philadelphia until June 20, 1861, when he finally received a letter from Welles ordering him to Washington, DC to chair the board. Because General Totten's duties prevented him from participating, Secretary of War Simon Cameron nominated Major John G. Barnard, the son of another Bache friend and the officer whom one historian would describe as the "true 'father' of the defenses of Washington," as the Corps of Engineer's representative to the Board. Welles designated Commander Charles Henry Davis, no stranger to naval boards in the pre-war period, as a member and secretary of the board. Finally, Bache himself rounded out the board's membership. Although the board's membership has Bache's fingerprints all over it – every member of the board was a friend or professional acquaintance of the Superintendent's – Welles could not have appointed a more competent or an abler group.^[24]

With the membership of the Blockade Board established, Secretary Welles provided his guidance for the Board's deliberations. It is useful to examine Welles's directive to Du Pont in detail.

The Navy Department is desirous to condense all the information in the archives of the Government which may be considered useful to the Blockading Squadrons; and the Board are therefore requested to prepare such matters as in their judgment may seem necessary: first, extending from the Chesapeake to Key West; second, from Key West to the extreme Southern point of Texas. It is imperative that two or more points should be taken possession of on the Atlantic Coast, and Fernandina and Port Royal are spoken of. Perhaps others will occur to the board. All facts bearing on such a contemplated movement are desired at an early moment. Subsequently, similar points in the Gulf of Mexico will be considered.^[25]

Welles expanded the original scope of the board as described by Fox in his first letter to Du Pont in May. Not only was the board to gather all pertinent information that might prove "useful" to the blockade, but Welles also wanted its members to plan the seizure of

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two additional bases of operations on the Atlantic Coast, and lodgments on the Gulf Coast. Therefore, the board was to address two of the key challenges facing the squadrons: lack of local information and logistical installations.

The board met for the first time on June 27, 1861 in Bache's office at the Smithsonian castle. Davis, in the minutes, wrote that Du Pont read -- and the board discussed -- the Secretary's directive.^[26] Although the minutes do not elaborate, Du Pont described the board's first meeting in a letter to his wife. He noted that Welles's order did

not cover the whole ground of the question, though it sets forth the two most important points in it: the selection of two ports, one in South Carolina, another in the confines of Georgia and Florida (Atlantic coast) for coal deposits; these will have to be taken and five to ten thousand men landed, to fortify and entrench. It seems impossible to supply the blockading fleet without these depots. This is about what the Department had in its head -- but the Professor has an eye to what the French would call a 'memoire,' covering the whole question of blockade, which would be a sort of 'manual' for blockading.^[27]

Once again, Bache wanted the board to go beyond the letter of their instructions. Not only did he want to write a "manual" for blockading, but also in their first meeting, before addressing the blockade itself, the board discussed troops required to seize and hold key logistical bases. The board therefore, had laid the groundwork for providing essential operational and strategic direction for the blockade and joint operations.

The board produced six major reports and four supplementary reports -- or memoirs. Davis's sparse minutes show that Du Pont's penchant for stern discipline affected the board's deliberations. The board stuck to one major topic per meeting, and members were encouraged to submit relevant material and opinions in writing.^[28] The Board prepared a "Memoir of Topics" that established the key questions the board had to address during their deliberations. The outline included such subjects as: Atlantic; Gulf; places to be blockaded; how to be blockaded; water depots; coal depots; operations in rivers; harbors of refuge; naval and military considerations of a blockade; what is an effective blockade; law of nations; defenses; and related topics. Essentially the board began their deliberations by preparing what an officer today would call an estimate of the situation.^[29]

The board presented its first two reports to Secretary Welles on July 5 and 13, 1861. Getting right to the point, the board began the first report by confirming the need for extra bases along the Atlantic coast. As with all the board's reports, the bulk of the first memoir included exhaustive and detailed geographical data on various harbors, approaches, water depths, tides, availability of fresh water, and key transportation facilities such as railroad links. The board's criteria (many of which can be found in the

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“topic memoir”) for a suitable base included: easy approaches, surmountable defenses, fresh water, anchorages, shelter, shore-based facilities, and the ability of an occupying force to hold the base.^[30] Two days before the Union debacle at the First Battle of Bull Run, the board submitted its third memoir, followed ten days later with the fourth. The board made several recommendations, one of which had a profound impact on the blockade. They proposed that the current Atlantic Blockading Squadron be broken into two separate and independent squadrons. The members argued that “if this plan is adopted . . . the commander in chief [of each squadron] while at sea within the limits of his command could, so short is the distance, communicate with the whole line of his blockading squadron, either in person or by his tender, every day, or every two days during ordinary weather.” Here the board addressed the issue of the commander’s span of control and his ability to effectively communicate and direct the blockading squadron. By dividing the responsibility for the Atlantic blockade between two squadrons, Du Pont was advocating a streamlined command and control arrangement that would ease the burdens of the commanders while increasing the blockade’s efficiency.^[31]

Confederate victory at Bull Run lent a sense of urgency to the board’s proceedings. Welles must have kept Lincoln acquainted with the Board’s progress, because the president, in his “Memoranda of Military Policy Suggested by the Bull Run Defeat,” issued on July 23, 1861, declared: “Let the plan for making the Blockade effective be pushed forward with all possible dispatch.” Four days later, after receiving Welles’s approval, Du Pont presented the first three reports to a group of senior officers including General Winfield Scott. After anxiously awaiting the chairman’s return, Davis proudly informed his wife that Du Pont had “just been in to tell me that the general pronounced them [the board’s reports] to possess high ability, and he said he endorsed every word of them.” In a display of his dry wit, Du Pont wrote his wife that the senior Union leaders had “agreed to occupy two of the points recommended, Fernandina and Bull’s Bay . . . I hope it will not be made a ‘Bull Run.’”^[32]

Welles had already presented the Board’s reports to Lincoln and the rest of the cabinet for their study on July 26. Fox must have been present on this occasion because Du Pont reported “The President has been told up and down by Mr. Fox . . . that the blockading squadron cannot keep at sea in winter without depots for coal, etc.” Did Fox convince the President to act, were the board’s reports sufficient, or did General Scott report favorably to the President? We will probably never know; but we do know that Lincoln approved what were the most important recommendations of all: the proposed expeditions to seize two Atlantic coast bases of operations. This was the essence of military strategy; Lincoln saw that the board’s recommendations for the conduct of the blockade campaign well supported his national strategy and war aims. In the summer of 1861, Lincoln had precious few tools with which to take the fight to the Confederacy. The blockade was one of these tools, and the board’s proposals promised to make the blockade work.^[33]

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Over the next six weeks, the board produced additional memoirs covering the Gulf coast and others that elaborated on areas of concern to the blockading squadrons.^[34] Days before the board finished its first Gulf coast memoir, Welles ordered Du Pont to command the joint expedition that would ultimately result in the capture of Port Royal, South Carolina in November 1861. To his good friend, Henry Winter Davis, Du Pont wrote, “The labors of my board produced their effect and I have been selected to carry out the projects.”^[35] With Du Pont’s attention divided between his position on the board and his new seagoing command, the board did not complete its labors until September 19, 1861 when they submitted their last memoir to the secretary.^[36]

The board’s impact was significant. First, Professor Bache stopped agonizing over the future of the Coastal Survey. On October 2, 1861, Du Pont and Davis, painstakingly assembling the Port Royal expedition, wrote Bache informing him that

On closing for the present the labors of the Mixed Conference . . . [we] cannot but express the high opinion [we] have been led to entertain of the usefulness of the Coast Survey to our knowledge of the sea coasts, sounds, and bays of the Atlantic and Gulf borders of the United States, without which the deliberations of the Conference could not have been successfully conducted.^[37]

Bache modestly claimed in his Annual Report to Congress that the “usefulness” of the Coast Survey “has been rather increased than diminished” by the exigencies of war.^[38] More importantly, the Navy Department adopted many of the board’s recommendations. Welles moved rapidly to split the Atlantic Blockade Squadron into the North and South Atlantic Blockade Squadrons under Flag Officers Louis M. Goldsborough and Du Pont respectively. Second, Lincoln and the War and Navy Departments immediately began to prepare joint expeditions based on the board’s detailed analysis and operational recommendations – Cape Hatteras in August 1861, Port Royal and Ship Island in November 1861, and Fernandina in March 1862. Third, the success of the Blockade Board led Welles to establish other commissions and boards; many of these boards made significant contributions to the naval war.^[39] Finally, the commanders of the blockading squadrons now had at their disposal a thorough, ready-made, and timesaving analysis of their areas of operations along with all applicable charts. The Administration did not adopt all of the board’s recommendations, and the board addressed only one part of a multifaceted strategic naval problem; however, the Civil War saw no comparable organization, staff, or agency that systematically formulated naval or military strategy. The board’s most important contribution was to determine where and how the Union Navy would conduct the blockade campaign. In the pressure cooker atmosphere of wartime Washington, DC, the members of the Blockade Board forged close personal bonds while accomplishing what no other military body would achieve throughout the war: the thoughtful and deliberate gathering and analysis of information to develop a viable, coordinated, and attainable military strategy.

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There is plenty of credit to go around for the successes of the Blockade Board. To Bache goes the honor of the initial idea and for selecting the board's membership. Welles' vision and administrative abilities allowed him to see the value of Bache's idea and to act upon it, despite the competing demands for his attention. Welles provided guidance that was clear, concise, and coordinated with Lincoln's national strategic concept. Lincoln and Scott recognized the excellence of the board's work and without exception endorsed its reports. Du Pont and Welles both instinctively grasped Clausewitz's admonition that both statesmen and commanders must understand the "kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something alien to its nature."⁴⁰ Although Du Pont's pre-war writings advocated a Mahanian-like naval strategy dominated by the decisive battle and a blue water fleet, a viable strategy for the early blockade posed an entirely different set of problems. In the absence of a significant naval threat, Du Pont directed the board to develop a set of strategic recommendations to identify and seize key bases of operations, the occupation of which would give the Union a decisive advantage. Du Pont's strategic insight, experience, and leadership ensured that the board would create a quality product that defined the Union blockade for the remainder of the war; no other element of Union military strategy was formulated as early and lasted as long as the Blockade Board's strategic recommendations. It is one of the most interesting historical ironies of the war that the Union Army, with a well-developed bureaucracy, a body of strategic writing and theory, close ties to the national executive, and a general-in-chief, was unable to formulate a coherent military strategy until the war was almost three years old. On the other hand, the United States Navy, with none of the Army's advantages, and using an ad hoc board convened in an atmosphere of fear and shaped by close personal relationships, developed a superb strategic concept in less than three months that lasted, with few changes, until the end of the war.

^[1] Abraham Lincoln, "Proclamation of Blockade," April 19 and 27, 1861, in Roy Hassler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, vol. 4., (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 338 – 339, 346.

^[2] Du Pont to William Whetten, May 3, 1861, Samuel F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Library, Greenville, DE.

^[3] For commentary on the challenges faced by the United States Navy in the early days of the Civil War and in particular the blockade, see James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, The Civil War Era, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 313 – 14, 369; Browning, 1.; and Gideon Welles, "The Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, December 1861", Senate Executive Documents, Firestone Library, Princeton University Microfilm Collections, 9 – 12.

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^[4] Historians have often erroneously referred to this panel as the Strategy Board. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles called it a “Commission of Conference,” or “Mixed Conference,” and the board members themselves variously referred to their undertaking as a “board,” “conference,” “Commission of Conference”, and “Blockade Board.” Gideon Welles to Charles Henry Davis, June 26 and 29, 1861, Navy Subject File, National Archives, Record Group #45 and Samuel F. Du Pont to Alexander D. Bache, and Charles H. Davis, October 2, 1861, Records of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, National Archives, Record Group #23. Only much later did historians and the navy describe this board as the “Strategy Board.” For the purposes of this paper, I will refer to these proceedings as either the Blockade Board or simply the board.

^[5] Gary W. Gallagher, “Blueprint for Victory,” in James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper, Jr. eds., Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 32.

^[6] The Blockade Board has been briefly noted in most military histories of the Civil War and in virtually all major works on the naval history of the war. For the best, albeit much too brief, assessment of the board’s importance see Bern Anderson, By Sea and By River: The Naval History of the Civil War. (New York: Knopf, 1961), 40. For another excellent discussion of the board and its accomplishments, see Douglas B. Dodds, “Strategic Purpose in the United States Navy During the Civil War, 1861 – 1862.” (Ph.D. Dissertation: Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, 1985), 30 – 33. For the exaggerated characterization of the board as an early example of a joint staff, see United States Naval History Division, Civil War Chronology, 1861 – 1865. (Navy Department: United States Government Printing Office, 1971) p iii, 17., and Richard Fillmore Selcer, Jr., “The Friendly Sea, the Hostile Shore: A Strategic Study.” (PhD Dissertation: Texas Christian University, 1980), 41. Several authors overstate the importance of the board by claiming that its purpose and product devised an overall strategic plan for the conduct of the entire war. See Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 135 (Surprisingly, Hattaway and Jones are in noting that Secretary of War Stanton established the board and that it continued in existence throughout the war), James M. Merrill, Du Pont: The Making of an Admiral, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1986), ix., and the excellent Robert M. Browning, Jr., From Cape Charles to Cape Fear: The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron During the Civil War. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1993), 8 – 9. Many historians misstate aspects of the board. Rowena Reed in her groundbreaking but flawed Combined Operations in the Civil War, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1978), 7 – 10, provides what is probably the most comprehensive although misleading account of the board, but states that Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Chase first devised the idea for the board; an assertion for which there is no supporting evidence. The biographer of Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, claims that Professor Bache was the chairman of the board; Du Pont actually assumed that role, see John Niven, Gideon Welles: Lincoln’s Secretary of the Navy. (New York: Oxford University Press,

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1973), 358. Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., Why the South Lost the Civil War. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 134 – 5, claim that the board concerned itself with purely naval matters when in reality the board examined extensive joint operations. Finally, still other naval historians fail to even mention the board, such as Virgil Carrington Jones, The Civil War at Sea: The Blockaders, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

[7] Unlike the Union Army, the Navy never established positions such as “Admiral in Chief” or ‘Chief of Staff’ during the Civil War. Consequently, responsibility for the formulation of Union naval strategy fell to Secretary of the Navy Welles, his senior officers, and these ad hoc boards.

[8] Welles to Du Pont, 25 May 1861, 1 June 1861, June 3, 1861, June 8, 1861, and June 12, 1861. Correspondence of the Secretary of the Navy, National Archives, Records Group #45.

[9] Browning, 6 – 7.

[10] McPherson, 369.

[11] The commander of the Atlantic Blockading Squadron, Flag Officer Silas Horton Stringham, initially believed that he would need only fifteen ships – an estimate he would quickly revise – to shut down maritime commerce over 1,000 miles of coastline. Weeks later he bitterly complained that he needed more ships for the Hatteras operation in August 1861. Browning, 7.

[12] Welles to Mrs. Welles, April 14, 1861, Gideon Welles Papers, Library of Congress.

[13] Both the Navy and the War Departments for months inundated Bache and the Coastal Survey with requests for charts and maps. Bache to Lincoln, April 26, 1861, Records of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, National Archives, Records Group #23, Correspondence of A.D. Bache, Superintendent of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, 1843 – 1865; Bache to Welles, May 3, 1861; Lieutenant W. Palmer [Deputy to Bache] to Welles, May 17, 1861; Welles to Bache, May 18, 1861; Bache to Welles, May 20, 1861; Welles to Bache, May 21, 1861; Bache to Fox, May 21, 1861; Bache to Fox, May 21, 1861; Bache to Welles, June 5, 1861; and Bache to Fox, June 19, 1861. Correspondence of the Secretary of the Navy, National Archives, Records Group #45.

[14] Bache to C. Boutelle, January 3, 1861, as quoted in Robert V. Bruce, The Launching of American Science, 1846 – 1876, (New York: Knopf, 1987), 298.

[15] For Bache’s role as superintendent of the Coastal Survey see, Bruce, 297 – 299, A. Hunter Dupree, Science in the Federal Government: A History of Policies and Activities

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to 1940, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 100 – 105, and Nathan Ringold, “Alexander Dallas Bache: Science and Technology in the American Idiom,” Technology and Culture: The International Quarterly of the Society for the History of Technology, 11(April 1970), p 165 – 173.

[16] Fox to Du Pont, May 22, 1861, Samuel F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Library.

[17] Although Du Pont was relatively close to Washington, D.C. as the Commandant of the Philadelphia Navy Yard, there were other senior officers stationed in the Washington, D.C. area who could have been chosen to sit on the board. It is significant that Du Pont was pulled away from this critical position; this clearly demonstrates the importance that Welles and Fox placed on the board’s activities.

[18] Du Pont to Bache, May 30, 1861, Du Pont Papers, Hagley Library.

[19] Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, May 30, 1861, Du Pont Papers, Hagley Library.

[20] Charles Henry Davis to Mrs. Davis, May 22, 1861, in Charles H. Davis, Jr., ed., Life of Charles Henry Davis, Rear Admiral, 1807 – 1877, (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899), 121 – 122.

[21] Davis to Mrs. Davis, June 14, 1861, in Davis, ed., 124.

[22] Du Pont to Mrs. Du Pont, June 28 and 30, 1861, Du Pont Papers, Hagley Library.

[23] Bache to Wolcott Gibbs, September 26, 1863, as quoted in Bruce, 299.

[24] Commander Davis was appointed to the Board on 25 June 1861 and Major Barnard on June 26, 1861. Bache was officially released by Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Chase for duty on the board on June 24, 1861. Welles to Chase, June 24, 1861, and Welles to Davis, June 25, 1861, Correspondence of the Secretary of the Navy, National Archives, Records Group #45. Barnard received his notification of his new duty on June 26, 1861. Welles to Barnard, June 26, 1861, in Navy Department, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1927), Series I, Vol. 12, 195. (hereinafter cited as ORN). For Barnard’s early Civil War career see, Benjamin Franklin Cooling III, Symbol, Sword and Shield: Defending Washington During the Civil War, 2d Ed., (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company, 1991), 37, 57 – 62.

[25] Welles to Du Pont, Bache, Davis and Barnard, June 25, 1861, Confidential Letter Book of the Secretary of the Navy, Correspondence of the Secretary of the Navy, National Archives, Records Group #45.

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^[26] Charles Henry Davis, Minutes of the Strategy Board, June 27, 1861, Navy Subject File, Operations of Navy Ships and Fleet Units/Strategy and Tactics, National Archives, Records Group #45. They also informally discussed the organization of the board (unfortunately, Davis's minutes do not indicate the nature of this organization). Bache also produced the appropriate maps and charts for the board's use. They did not meet on June 28, 1861 as originally scheduled due to Du Pont's unspecified duties.

^[27] Du Pont to Mrs. Du Pont, June 28, 1861, Du Pont Papers, Hagley Library.

^[28] Davis, Minutes of the Strategy Board, June 27 and 29 and July 15, 1861, Navy Subject File, National Archives, Records Group #45. The papers of Davis and Bache are replete with references to the board members dining and socializing together. For a description of the long hours endured by the board, see Du Pont to Mrs. Du Pont, July 4, 1861, Du Pont Papers, Hagley Library.

^[29] Surprisingly the board did not address (it was crossed out in the copy at the National Archives) the issue of what force of vessels and what type was required for an effective blockade. Several of the memoirs did address ship numbers and types such as "a small number of shallow drafted vessels are required to patrol this area." However, there is no systematic recommendation for force requirements. This was a missed opportunity to address a critical strategic requirement. Unsigned and undated topic outline, Navy Subject File, National Archives, Records Group #45.

^[30] ORN, Series I, Vol. 12, 195 – 198. War Department, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion, (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1898), Series I, Vol. 53, 67 – 73. (hereafter cited as ORA). The board's reports are located in several locations in both the ORN and ORA; this has led to some confusion. In the ORN, Series I, Vol. 12, the third report is incorrectly listed as the second report. The actual second report is located in the ORA. Barnard also submitted a long, undated memorandum in which he advocated the use of a standing amphibious force to threaten the entire right (Atlantic) flank of the Confederacy. Barnard wrote: "Though not strictly concerned with the subject of blockading...[at the beginning of the war] I recommended the immediate organization of an expeditionary force at New York with transports – surf boats – to be drilled at embarking and disembarking. If such a force was initiated it could be used with incalculable advantage." Apparently, Du Pont felt that Barnard's memo was beyond the scope of the board's charter. See Barnard, undated memorandum to the Blockade Board, Navy Subject File, Records Group #45, National Archives.

^[31] ORN, Series I, Vol. 12, 198 – 201 and 201 – 206. The Board also recommended that the Gulf Squadron be broken into two separate commands.

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^[32] Although the board recommended Bull's Bay, the Union ultimately seized Port Royal, South Carolina instead. Du Pont, as commander of the Port Royal Expedition, received discretionary orders from Welles that allowed him to choose between Port Royal and Bull's Bay. The board had rejected the former due to its formidable defenses, although Port Royal's infrastructure and anchorage was clearly superior. Du Pont ultimate choice was Port Royal. Davis to Mrs. Davis, July 27, 1861, in Davis, 127., Du Pont to Mrs. Du Pont, July 26, 1861, and October 17, 1861, Du Pont Papers, Hagley Library. Du Pont Letters, Hayes, ed., lxx, 169 – 171.

^[33] Lincoln, "Memoranda of Military Policy Suggested by the Bull Run Defeat, July 23, 1861," in Bassler, Vol. IV, 457. There is nothing in the written record of Welles, Fox, Lincoln, Nicolay, or the members of the board to suggest that Lincoln was aware of the Board's progress. However, given the text of the president's July 23 memoranda, Welles must have kept Lincoln well informed.

^[34] The first Gulf Coast memoir illuminated the difficulties inherent in seizing New Orleans and recommended the capture of Ship Island (a barrier island located midway between the ports of Mobile and New Orleans), as both a logistical base and as a staging base for future offensive operations. ORN, Series I, Vol. 16, 618 – 630.

^[35] Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, August 5, 1861, Du Pont Papers, Hagley Library.

^[36] ORN, Series I, Vol. 16, 651 – 655 and ORN, Series I, Vol. 16, 680 – 681.

^[37] Du Pont and Davis to Bache, October 2, 1861; Bache to Davis and Du Pont, October 16, 1861. Bache also wrote to recently promoted General Barnard of the affectionate bonds that had developed among the four men who formed "our quadrilateral." Bache to Barnard, October 16, 1861, Records of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, Records Group #23, National Archives.

^[38] Bache, "Annual Report of the Coast Survey," November 5, 1861, 1 – 2, Records of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, Records Group #23, National Archives.

^[39] Flag Officer Stringham, resigned in September 1861. Welles seized the opportunity and the next day appointed Du Pont and Goldsborough to their new commands. Welles to Stringham, September 18, 1861; Welles to Goldsborough, September 18, 1861; and Welles to Du Pont, September 18, 1861, Confidential Letter Book of the Secretary of the Navy, Records Group #45, National Archives. For other Civil War era naval boards including the Board of Naval Examiners, the Board on Ironclad Vessels, the Permanent Commission, and the Board on Claims, see Kenneth W. Munden and Henry Putney Beers, The Union: A Guide to Federal Archives Relating to the Civil War, (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, 1998), 476 – 481.

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^[40] For Jomini's discussion of the strategic importance of bases of operations, see Antoine Henri de Jomini, The Art of War, (Novato: Presidio Press, 1992), 77 – 84. For the significance of defining the nature of war, see Carl von Clausewitz, On War, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, trans., and eds., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 88 – 89.