WAR PLANS AND PREPARATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON U.S. NAVAL OPERATIONS IN THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

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The United States Navy, much like the nation itself, was in a state of transition in 1898. Traditionally the navy embraced a defensive strategy with an emphasis on commerce raiding. In contrast, the navy was asked during the Spanish-American War to gain control of the waters around the Philippine Islands and the Caribbean Sea. After twenty years of rapid decline into obsolescence following the American Civil War, the navy was in the process of re-equipping itself with steel warships of modern design. The implications of these changes for the conduct of war at sea were not lost on America's naval leadership, who had spent the years and months prior to the war with Spain preparing for conflict with a European power. However, the war itself revealed the growing tactical and logistical complexities of modern naval warfare, and the U.S. Navy, like all navies, was in the process of overcoming the challenges presented by the technology of the new steel warships.

The U.S. Navy had in commission over 600 vessels at the close of the American Civil War. Nearly all of the new ships were wartime purchases, hasty constructions, or made from unseasoned timber. After the war, most were sold off or destroyed. In spite of international crises such as the *Virginius* Affair in 1873, contention with Great Britain over the *Alabama* Claims, and problems with France over a projected canal in Panama, the strength of the navy continued to decline. By 1879 only forty-eight of the navy's 142 vessels were available for immediate service, and these were obsolete wooden or old ironclad ships. Naval technology had stagnated in the U.S., illustrated by the fact that there was not a single high-power, long-

range rifled gun in the entire fleet. In 1884 the U.S. Navy's newest ships were wooden-hulled steam sloops built in the previous decade (1).

Modernization began during the administration of President Chester Arthur in the early 1880s. Rapid growth in overseas markets and a foreign policy aimed at U.S. control of communications across the isthmus of Central America drove the country towards naval expansion. President Arthur addressed a receptive Congress in his first annual message when he concluded:

> «I cannot too strongly urge upon you my conviction, that every consideration of national safety, economy, and honor imperatively demands a thorough rehabilitation of the navy» (2).

Two years of debate on the nature of this expansion culminated with the Navy Act of 1883, authorizing the construction of the steel cruisers *Atlanta, Boston,* and *Chicago,* and the dispatch vessel *Dolphin.* Congress continued the process by approving additional steel warships, including the New Navy's first armored ships, USS *Texas* and USS *Maine.* Toward the end of the decade the U.S. Navy still embraced a defensive oriented strategy with cruisers designed for commerce protection and raiding. Even the armored ships under construction were designed to counter the threat of similar vessels in South American navies (3).

It was during the administration of Benjamin Harrison (1889-93) that the navy's strategy and policy began to change. In his inaugural address, President Harrison called for the continued and rapid construction of modern warships, and the acquisition of bases to maintain the U.S. fleet in foreign seas. Later he urged Congress to authorize construction of battleships, giving support to Secretary of the Navy B. F. Tracy's goal of making the U.S. fleet strong enough:

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(1) U.S. Navy Dept. *Register of the Commissioned, Warrant, and Volunteer Officers of the Navy of the United States, Including Officers of the Marine Corps and Others, to January 1, 1865* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), 283-295 (hereinafter Navy Register). JOHN D. LONG. *The New American Navy,* 2 volum. (New York: Arno Press, 1979) 14. GARDINER, R. Ed., *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1860-1905* (New York: Mayflower Books, 1979), 115.

(2) WALTER R. HERRICK, Jr. *The American Naval Revolution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), 23-25. Long, *The New American Navy,* 15-16.

(3) HERRICK. *The American Naval Revolution,* 36-37. JOHN C. REILLY, Jr. and ROBERT L. SCHEINA. *American Battleships 1886-1923, Predreadnought Design and Construction* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Instituted Press, 1980), 20-22.

> «To be able to divert an enemy's force from our coast by threatening his own, for a war, though defensive in principle, may be conducted most effectively by being offensive in its operations» (4).

Tracy proved to be an excellent administrator, and he marshaled allies for his expansionist policies in both Congress and the navy, including Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan. Their work bore fruit with the Navy Bill of 30 June 1890, authorizing construction of three battleships later named *Indiana, Oregón,* and *Massachusetts.* Along with the battleship *Iowa,* authorized in 1892, this force formed the core of a new fleet willing to challenge European navies for control of the waters in the Western Hemisphere.

While civilian leadership and U.S. industry prepared the navy materially for an offensive war, a new institution, the Naval War College, prepared the service intellectually. Founded in 1884 and placed under the direction of Commodore Stephen B. Luce, the War College contributed greatly to the professionalization of the U.S. Naval Officer Corps at the end of the nineteenth century. Explaining to the Senate the reason for creating the institution, Secretary of the Navy William E. Chandler stated that:

> «The constant changes in the methods of conducting naval warfare imposed by the introduction of armored ships, swift cruisers, rams, sea-going torpedo boats, and high-power guns... render imperative the establishment of a school where our officers may be enabled to keep abreast of the improvements going on in every navy in the worl» (5).

By the 1890s the curriculum at the War College included training problems where students drafted plans for operations in the event of war with specific countries under particular circumstances. Beginning in 1894 the War College, and later special boards convened by the Secretary of the Navy, examined the possibility of war with Spain over trouble in Cuba. When Secretary of the Navy John Long formed the Naval War Board in March 1898, the Navy Department and the McKinley administration had the benefit of four years of planning for such a conflict. The first plan to emerge from the Naval War College was a paper prepared in 1894 by Lieutenant Commander Charles J. Train who was assigned to write on «Strategy in the Event of War with Spain». Train believed that the first priority of the U.S.

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(4) HERRICK. *The American Naval Revolution,* 55 and 59.
(5) LONG. *The New American Navy,* 75-76.

Navy was the destruction of the Spanish fleet which should be accomplished at the earliest possible date. The plan called for the seizure of Nipe Bay on Cuba's northeast coast as an anchorage and coaling station to support a blockade of the island's principal ports. It was expected that a Spanish expedition from Cádiz would attempt to relieve Cuba via Puerto Rico, but would be met by a concentrated U.S. fleet ready to defeat it (6).

When the Cuban insurrection broke out the following year, the officers in charge at the Naval War College believed that it was important to undertake a full-scale study of a Spanish-American conflict. They gave the class of 1895 a «special problem» concerning war with Spain where the objective was to secure independence for Cuba. The plan, submitted to the Navy Department in January 1896, called for an early joint operations against Havana. Thirty thousand regulars would be landed near the colonial capital from a staging area in Tampa, Florida, fifteen days after war was declared, followed by 25,000 volunteers two weeks later. The U.S. fleet, based out of Key West, would intercept any Spanish expedition attempting to reinforce the defenders in Cuba. Such a relief attempt was expected thirty days into the conflict (7).

The Office of Naval Intelligence entered the planning effort later in 1896. Lieutenant William Kimball prepared a plan that focussed on a tight naval blockade of Cuba as the primary means of persuading Spain to release control of her colony. Supporting attacks against Manila and the Spanish coast would, it was believed, further induce Spain to negotiate an end to the conflict. According to Kimball's plan, only if these efforts failed to bring about peace, would the army land in Cuba and operate against Havana. The Naval War College criticized the plan on the grounds that it dispersed U.S. naval strength to a dangerous extent, and warned that a blockade alone would be insufficient to bring Spain to the negotiating table. The proposed expedition to Spanish waters was thought to be counter-productive as it might harden Spanish resolve and invite unwanted diplomatic pressure from other European countries. However, Captain Henry Taylor, president of the War College, endorsed the idea to use the Asiatic Squadron

(6) RONALD SPECTOR. *Professors of War; The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession* (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, 1977), 89-90. Trask, D. F. *The War with Spain in 1898* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1981), 73-74.
(7) *Ibídem*, 74. SPECTOR. *Professors of War*, 90-91.

against Spanish forces in the Philippines, and this element would reappear in later plans (8).

Rear Admiral Francis M. Ramsay, chief of the influential Bureau of Navigation, had long been an strong opponent of the Naval War College, and it is likely that he was the one who persuaded Secretary of the Navy Hilary Herbert to convene a board in the summer of 1896 to draft a separate plan for war with Spain. Like the Kimball plan, the Ramsay Board focused on the a naval blockade, but added the deep water ports of Puerto Rico to those of Cuba. The destruction of crops in Cuba by both sides led the Board to believe that the Spanish garrison needed to import food in order to survive. A relief force from Spain would consume most of its coal simply in crossing the Atlantic and thus would be in no position to engage American naval forces. Although the present strength of the U.S. Navy was sufficient to meet and defeat any fleet arriving from Spain, the Board called for the purchase of a number of small fast steamers to enforce the blockade. Finally, the European Squadron should be reinforced by ships from the U.S. and the Asiatic Squadron, and together operate against the Spanish coast after capturing the Canary Islands as an advance base. Captain Taylor strongly dissented from the views of the Board stating that large operations in Spanish waters were too dangerous, and that a naval blockade would not be sufficient to subdue Spanish forces in Cuba (9).

Perhaps confused by the different positions in the existing plans, the new Secretary of the Navy, John Long, convened his own War Planning Board under Commander in Chief of the North Atlantic Station, Rear Admiral Montgomery Sicard, in June 1897. Chief Intelligence Officer Lieutenant Commander Richard Wainwright was the only member who had served on the previous board. The Sicard Board endorsed the War College idea that joint operations against Havana would be necessary to end the war. Therefore, the plan called for the early seizure of Matanzas, sixty miles east of Havana, to serve as a base of operations against the latter, and to deliver arms to the Cuban insurgents. Purchased or chartered merchant steamers were to be armed and sent to the Caribbean to enforce a swift and strong

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(8) *Ibidem*, 91-93. TRASK, D. F. *War with Spain*, 74-76. J. A. S. GRENVILLE. «American Naval Preparations for War with Spain, 1896-98», *Journal of American Studies* (April 1968): 33-47.

(9) Report of the Ramsey Board contained in Grenville, «American Naval Preparations...», 38-41.

blockade. This would also free the heavier ships to intercept a relief force from Spain. The members emphasized the need for colliers to refuel the fleet on blockade rather than forcing vessels to return to coaling stations. Although the Board rejected the idea of trying to capture the Canary Islands, it recommended the formation of a flying squadron consisting of two armored cruisers and two commerce destroyers to operate on the coast of Spain in order to detain Spanish ships in home waters. The plan called for the reduction and garrisoning of the principal ports of Puerto Rico as soon as circumstances permitted. The Board also returned to the idea of using the Asiatic Squadron against Spanish forces in the Philippines. As in the previous plans, the objects of these operations were to tie down or divert enemy ships and to give the United States' a stronger bargaining position at the peace settlement (10).

When war between the United States and Spain appeared unavoidable following the destruction of USS *Maine* in Havana harbor on 15 February 1898, the Navy Department had a solid body of plans and documents honed by four years of debate by its leading officers. Although the realities of war would force several modifications, many of the concepts laid out in the Sicard Plan were implemented: a strong blockade of Cuba; support for the insurgents; operations against Spanish forces in the Philippines and Puerto Rico; and the formation of a squadron to operate in Spanish waters. Perhaps more importantly, nearly every plan called for the purchase or charter of merchant vessels to serve as auxiliary cruisers, colliers, and transports. The data furnished in appended lists and the inspiration to act quickly served as a basis for decision making in those crucial weeks prior to war.

At the beginning of 1898 the fleet of the United States Navy consisted of six battleships, two armored cruisers, thirteen protected cruisers, six steel monitors, eight old iron monitors, thirty-three unprotected cruisers and gunboats, six torpedo boats, and twelve tugs (11). Noticeably absent from this list are colliers, supply vessels, transports, hospital ships, repair ships, and the large number of small vessels necessary for maintaining an effective blockade of Cuba's numerous ports. As the Navy Department's war plans clearly indicated, the government would need to purchase or contract for scores of ships in the event of war with a naval power. The destruction of

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(10) Report of the Sicard Board contained in Grenville, «American Naval Preparations...», 41-47.
(11) *Navy Register, January 1,* 1898, 131-133.

the *Maine* propelled the department into action. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt organized a Board of Auxiliary Vessels which, utilizing material in the department's war plans, prepared a list of suitable private craft that would meet the Navy's expanded needs. On 9 March Congress passed a $50 million emergency defense appropriation bill, and the Navy Department began to acquire vessels. By the end of the war, the navy had purchased or leased 103 warships and auxiliaries. Another twenty-eight vessels were added from existing government organizations including revenue cutters, lighthouse tenders, and the vessels of the Fish Commission. After the war auxiliary vessels such as colliers, refrigerator ships, and distilling ships became a permanent part of the fleet (12).

The availability of coal was the single most important factor in determining naval operations in 1898. A lack of coal severely limited Admiral Cervera's options upon arriving in the Caribbean with his Spanish squadron in the middle of May, and American concerns over coaling nearly allowed him to escape from Santiago de Cuba near the end of the month. There were essentially three sources of fuel available for naval squadrons: coaling stations at friendly bases, neutral ports, and other ships (usually colliers). Key West served as the base for U.S. naval operations in the Caribbean. International law permitted, but did not require, neutrals to provide visiting ships of belligerents just enough coal to allow them to make it to the nearest friendly port, but this was an option of last resort. Colliers were the most common source of fuel for vessels of the fleet blockading Cuba. Six were available to the U.S. fleet early in the war, and an additional eleven were purchased by the end.

The endurance of a ship depended on a number of circumstances, such as bunker capacity, the amount of coal stored on deck, the quality of coal, how many boilers were lit, and the ship's speed while under way. Most major warships of the U.S. fleet had an operational range in the neighborhood of 4000 nautical miles, or just over two weeks of continuous steaming at ten knots (13). Naturally, ships' commanding officers were reluctant to allow their bunkers to get anywhere near empty, and they availed themselves of nearly every opportunity to add to their supply of coal.

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(12) TRASK, D. F. *War with Spain,* 82 and 86. JOHN D. ALDEN. *The American Steel Navy* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1972), 123-124, 382-383.

(13) Calculated by taking a vessel's coal capacity and dividing it by average consumption rates found in U.S. Navy Dept., Bureau of Equipment, *Reports of the Efficiency of Various Coals, 1896 to 1898* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 15-79.

Coaling from open lighters in port was the quickest and most efficient means of refueling a ship. Winches set up on the warships hauled the coal on board in bags, where small carts carried them to the coal chutes leading from the upper deck directly to the bunkers. When coaling from colliers it was best to find a sheltered anchorage safe from the effects of rough seas. Coaling in the open sea with a ship alongside was always considered a dangerous evolution. Colliers were equipped with cotton-bale fenders to protect the ships when the motion was slight. However, any situation where the swell was sufficient to cause either ship to roll more than three or four degrees or rise more than one or two feet was considered too dangerous to attempt. There were many occasions when coaling at sea was simply not possible, and perhaps many more where it was considered problematic. The speed with which coal could be taken on board varied widely, most often dependent on the weather. On 31 May USS *Brooklyn* took on coal at a rate of eighteen tons per hour, while eight days later she achieved a rate of nearly fifty-seven tons per hour. The weather rarely cooperated long enough for more than a few hundred tons to be loaded on board before rising seas called a halt to the operation (14). It is important to have an appreciation of the problems inherent in refueling warships of the day for a proper perspective on strategic and operational decisions made during the war.

Secretary Long formally organized the Naval War Board in March 1898 to advise him on strategy and operations. Initial members were Assistant Secretary Theodore Roosevelt, Rear Admiral Montgomery Sicard (who had just arrived from command of the North Atlantic Station), Captain Arent S. Crowninshield, and Captain Albert S. Barker. By May, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan joined the organization. Roosevelt left to become a lieutenant colonel in the First Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, and the Navy Department reassigned Captain Barker to command USS *Newark.* Although it had no executive authority, the Board exerted considerable influence on operations through its advisory capacity. In particular, Mahan's views often dominated. Following earlier war plans, the Board recommended concentrating on Spain's outlying possessions with a close blockade of Cuba, giving the army time to mobilize sufficient strength for land campaigns in Cuba and Puerto Rico (15).

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(14) ALDEN. *American Steel Navy,* 224. U.S. Navy Dept., Office of Naval Intelligence, *Notes on Coaling War Ships* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), 7-27.

(15) TRASK, D. F. *War with Spain,* 88-89. U.S. Navy Dept., Bureau of Navigation, *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1898), 33.

As the Navy Department worked with the president and the War Department in developing strategy, Secretary Long began repositioning naval units in preparation of the opening of hostilities. Since January, much of the North Atlantic Squadron had been concentrated for winter exercises at Key West, Florida. The first colliers did not reach the fleet until 3 May, nearly two weeks after the blockade began. On 17 March the battleships *Massachusetts* and *Texas* were ordered to join the armored cruiser *Brooklyn* at Hampton Roads, Virginia, to form the Flying Squadron under Commodore Winfield Scott Schley. The protected cruisers *Minneapolis* and *Columbia* joined Schley's force prior to the outbreak of hostilities. The squadron was organized to protect the U.S. coast against a sudden descent by the Spanish armored cruisers of Pascual Cervera's squadron, known to be concentrating in the Cape Verde Islands. The Navy Department recalled the protected cruiser USS *San Francisco* and Commodore John A. Howell from Europe. On 20 April Howell assumed command of the newly formed Northern Patrol Squadron, which was responsible for the protection of the coast and coastal trade from the Delaware capes to Bar Harbor, Maine. Rear Admiral Henry Erben commanded the Auxiliary Naval Force with his headquarters on shore at New York City. This command consisted primarily of eight old iron monitors stationed at several U.S. ports (16).

Assistant Secretary Roosevelt sent a telegraphic order to Commodore George Dewey on 25 February commanding him to concentrate the ships of the Asiatic Station at Hong Kong. In the event of war he was to take his squadron and destroy the Spanish ships in Philippine waters. Dewey's command at Hong Kong consisted of the protected cruisers *Olympia, Boston,* and *Raleigh,* and the gunboats *Concord* and *Petrel.* The Revenue Cutter *McCulloch* joined the force on 17 April, and the protected cruiser *Baltimore* arrived on 22 April. Dewey also prepared for future operations in a region without friendly bases by purchasing the British steamers *Nanshan* and *Zafiro* to carry coal and supplies for his squadron (17).

Anticipating a showdown with Spanish fleet in the Atlantic theater, Secretary Long ordered the battleship USS *Oregón* to depart from its home port

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(16) For a detailed examination of U.S. ship movements prior to hostilities with Spain see FRENCH ENSOR CHADWICK. *The Relations of the United States and Spain, The Spanish-American War,* 2 volum. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 1, 3-2, 401, and *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation,* 21-29, 37-43.

(17) CHADWICK. *Spanish-American War,* 1, 27. *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation,* 65-66. TRASK, D. F. *War with Spain,* 91-92.

at Bremerton, Washington, for San Francisco, California, on 7 March, to begin the first leg of a 14,700 nautical mile journey to Key West. The gunboat USS *Marietta* made the battleship's voyage quicker and easier by arranging for coal and supplies in South American ports along the way. The *Oregón* left San Francisco on 19 March, under the command of Captain Charles E. Clark, and arrived at Callao, Peru, on 4 April, traveling 4800 miles in just sixteen days. The battleship departed Callao on 7 April, and arrived at Sandy Point at the southern tip of the continent ten days later. Rendezvousing with the *Marietta* on 21 April, the *Oregón* headed north, putting into Río de Janeiro on 30 April, where Secretary Long warned Captain Clark that Admiral Cervera's squadron was at sea. Departing Rio on 5 May, the American battleship arrived at Bahia, Brazil, three days later. Not wishing to submerge his ship's armor belt in case of an encounter with the Spanish squadron, Clark ordered on board only enough coal to reach Barbados, where he arrived on 18 May. The *Oregón* steamed into the American base at Key West on 26 May in efficient condition and ready for operations against the Spanish fleet (18).

Although President McKinley continued to press for a diplomatic settlement to the Cuban problem, he accelerated military preparations begun in January when an impasse appeared likely. McKinley asked Congress on 11 April for permission to intervene in Cuba. On 21 April, the President ordered the Navy to begin the blockade of Cuba, and Spain followed with a declaration of war on 23 April. Congress responded with a formal declaration of war on 25 April, made retroactive to the start of the blockade.

International law required a blockade to be effective in order to be legal. With the absence of colliers and the Atlantic fleet divided between Key West and Hampton Roads, the American effort was initially limited to the north coast of Cuba between Cardenas and Bahia Honda, and Cienfuegos on the south coast. The U.S. fleet at Key West at the beginning of hostilities consisted of three armored ships, three monitors, one protected cruiser, two unprotected cruisers, seven gunboats, one armed yacht, six torpedo boats, and five armed tugs. In the early light of 22 April, Sampson's fleet deployed from Key West to steam across the Florida Straits and begin the blockade. Sampson believed he could reduce the defenses of Havana by rolling up the Spanish fortifications from the west. However, Secretary

(18) CHADWICK. *Spanish-American War,* 1, 12-16. *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation,* 47-56.

Long, following the advice of the Naval War Board, ordered him not to risk his armored ships unnecessarily against land fortifications in light of Cervera's potential deployment to the Caribbean. The Navy Department was considering occupying the port of Matanzas, garrisoning it with a large military force, and opening communications with the insurgents. Long wanted Sampson to keep his most powerful ships ready to escort the transports if McKinley should decide on an early landing in Cuba (19).

By the morning of 23 April the advance ships of the blockading fleet were off their assigned ports. Additional vessels reinforced them over the next several days. The U.S. Navy struggled during the first weeks of the war to assemble the logistical apparatus necessary to support the blockade. Ships had to keep steam up in their boilers to pursue unknown vessels as they came into sight. Until colliers were fitted out and sent south, most of the blockading ships were forced to return to Key West to coal. Fresh water and food were also in short supply during the early days of the war.

The blockade was monotonous duty broken only by the rare capture of a Spanish vessel or an exchange of gunfire with gunboats and batteries. Although the Navy Department prohibited Sampson's vessels from engaging heavy batteries, like those around Havana, they allowed the bombardment of smaller field works. On 27 April the *New York, Puritán,* and *Cincinnati* shelled Point Gorda at Matanzas to prevent the completion of new batteries (20). Most encounters were only skirmishes resulting in few if any casualties.

A few actions were intense, such as the one at Cardenas on 11 May when the U.S. Navy gunboat *Wilmington,* the torpedo boat *Winslow,* and the Revenue Cutter *Hudson* were drawn deep into the harbor by Spanish gunboats. Hidden Spanish batteries ambushed the *Winslow,* severely damaging her, killing ten and wounding twenty-one of her crew. While under heavy fire the *Hudson* towed the torpedo boat out of the harbor as the *Wilmington* covered the withdrawal with rapid fire against the Spanish guns (21).

The U.S. blockading forces also undertook operations to isolate Cuba from telegraphic communications to Madrid via Cienfuegos, Santiago, and

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(19) CHADWICK. *Spanish-American War,* 1, 127-132. *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation,* 168, 171-72, 174-75.

(20) *Ibídem,* 181-82.

(21) *Ibídem,* 200-208. A. B. FEUER. *The Spanish-American War at Sea; Naval Action in the Atlantic* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995), 65-73.

Guantanamo. The most celebrated action of this type occurred on 11 May off Cienfuegos. Commander Bowman McCalla of the cruiser *Marblehead* organized the party and planned the operation to cut the underwater cables leaving the city. Marine sharpshooters and machine guns in steam cutters poured a continuous fire into Spanish positions on shore, along with gunfire support from the Marblehead and the gunboat *Nashville,* while sailors in launches dragged the sea floor with grapelling hooks for the cables. The launch and cutter crews endured heavy Spanish fire for three hours and cut the two main telegraph cables (leaving a third, local line), and dragged the ends out to sea. Every member of this expedition was awarded the Medal of Honor (22).

The strength of the North Atlantic Fleet and the effectiveness of the blockade grew as U.S. Navy vessels concentrated in the Caribbean and yards converted and armed vessels purchased by the Congressional Bill of 9 March. From the start of the blockade until the capitulation of Santiago de Cuba in mid-July, the North Atlantic Fleet added to its strength three battleships, one armored cruiser, one monitor, five protected cruisers, one unprotected cruiser, seven auxiliary cruisers, four gunboats, two torpedo boats, five armed tugs, six revenue cutters, nine armed yachts, two supply ships, a hospital ship, a repair ship, a distilling ship, and thirteen colliers (23).

Secretary Long telegraphed Commodore Dewey at Hong Kong on 21 April informing him that the U.S. blockade of Cuba had begun and that war was expected at any moment. On 24 April, British authorities informed the commodore that war had been declared and he must leave the neutral port within twenty-four hours. Dewey also received a telegram from the Navy Department, instructing him to proceed immediately to the Philippine Islands and begin operations against the Spanish fleet. However, Dewey wanted to receive the latest intelligence from the American consul at Manila, Oscar Williams, who was expected daily. The American squadron moved to Mirs Bay on the Chinese coast thirty miles east of Hong Kong to await a circulating pump for the *Raleigh* and the arrival of Williams. They spent two days drilling, distributing ammunition, and stripping the ships of all wooden articles (which could add to the damage of fires on board ship caused by enemy gunfire). Almost immediately after Williams arrived on 27 April, the American squadron departed for the Philippines, in search of the

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(22) *Ibídem,* 75-82. *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation,* 186-99.
(23) *Ibídem,* 38-41.

ships of the Spanish squadron. The consul correctly informed Dewey that Rear Admiral Patricio Montojo y Pasaron intended to take his ships to Subic Bay. What Williams did not know is that Montojo returned to Manila after taking his squadron to Subic Bay only to discover that the defenses he had hoped to fight under were far from complete (24).

Dewey sent two of his cruisers to reconnoiter Subic Bay on 30 April. Finding it empty, and in defiance of the reports of mines in the channel, the Americans pressed on into Manila Bay and discovered the Spanish squadron near Cavite. Leaving his two auxiliaries in the bay guarded by the *McCulloch,* Dewey formed his remaining ships into a line and steamed in a oval pattern along the five-fathom curve, pouring a heavy fire into the outgunned Spanish force. Montojo's gunners replied from their ships and two 5.9 inch guns on Sangley Point, but with little effect. The Americans scored critical hits on the larger Spanish warships, setting them ablaze. After nearly two hours of fire, Dewey ordered his captains to withdraw, acting on reports that his ships were running low on ammunition (25).

Dewey took his squadron five miles off Sangley Point and signaled his captains to come on board and report their condition. The commodore discovered that his squadron had sustained very little damage and that he had plenty of ammunition to continue the battle. After allowing the crewmen of his ships to enjoy a light meal, Dewey ordered his ships to reengage the remnants of Montojo's shattered squadron. The Spanish admiral had pulled his surviving vessels behind Cavite into the shallow waters of Bacoor Bay to make a final stand. Hitting the Spanish ships in their new anchorage proved difficult, and Dewey ordered the gunboats *Concord* and *Petrel,* with their shallow draft, to destroy them at close range. The garrison at Cavite raised a white flag at about 12:15, and the firing ended shortly thereafter.

Montojo's fleet was destroyed, suffering 371 casualties compared to only nine Americans wounded. When official word on the magnitude of the Navy's victory reached the United States, nearly a week later, the American public heaped enthusiastic praises on Dewey as wild celebrations erupted throughout the country. Meanwhile, the U.S. squadron took control of the arsenal and navy yard at Cavite. However, 26,000 Spanish regulars and

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(24) *Ibídem,* 65-70. CHADWICK. *Spanish-American War,* 1, 154-158, 166-168.

(25) Reports of the Battle of Manila Bay from commanding officers are found in *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation,* 69-93. For a detailed secondary account see CHADWICK. *Spanish-American War,* 1, 154-213.

14,000 militia garrisoned various points in the Philippine Islands including 9000 at Manila. Dewey cabled Washington stating that, although he controlled Manila Bay and could probably induce the city to surrender, he requested 5000 men to seize Manila (26).

Admiral Cervera had repeatedly warned the Spanish Ministry of Marine that his squadron would face certain destruction if sent to the Caribbean. Even so, he departed the Cape Verde Islands under orders on 29 April with his squadron of four armored cruisers, towing three torpedo-boat destroyers, intending to steam for Puerto Rico. To look for the Spanish squadron, the U.S. Navy Department had three fast former mail steamers, *Harvard, Yale,* and *St. Louis,* establish a patrol line stretching from Puerto Rico and along the Leeward and Windward Islands. As long as Cervera's location remained uncertain, the strength of the U.S. fleet would be divided between Rear Admiral Sampson's North Atlantic Fleet based in Key West and Commodore Schley's Flying Squadron based in Hampton Roads; the former to maintain the blockade of Cuba and the latter to guard the east coast of the United States from a sudden descent by the Spanish cruisers (27).

Sampson correctly deduced that Cervera intended to make for San Juan, Puerto Rico, and he determined to deprive the Spanish fleet of the benefits of that port. Leaving his smaller ships to maintain the blockade of Cuba's northern ports, the American admiral embarked on an eight-day journey, plagued by the slow speed and mechanical unreliability of his two monitors. The American force arrived off San Juan early on 12 May. After a nearly four-hour bombardment of the Spanish works, Sampson broke off the engagement and returned to Key West, satisfied that Cervera's ships were not in San Juan (28).

The Spanish squadron's crossing of the Atlantic had been slowed by the need to tow the fragile destroyers. As he approached the West Indies, the Spanish admiral dispatched two of these vessels to the French island of Martinique to gain information on American movements and the availability of coal. On 12 May Cervera learned that Sampson was at San Juan. The Spanish admiral also discovered that the French had refused to sell him

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(26) TRASK, D. F. *War with Spain,* 371.

(27) *Ibídem,* 113-114. CHADWICK. *Spanish-American War,* 1, 151. Jefferery Michael Dorwart, «A Mongrel Fleet: America Buys a Navy to Fight Spain, 1898», *Warship International,* 2. 1980.

(28) TRASK, D. F. *War with Spain,* 114-119. CHADWICK. *Spanish-American War,* 214-249.

any coal. Driven by the need to refuel his ships and the desire to avoid combat with a superior American squadron, Cervera steamed for the Dutch harbor of Curaçao. He arrived there on 14 May only to be further disappointed when the expected Spanish collier failed to arrive, and the Dutch governor authorized the purchase of only 600 tons of coal. After considering his options, Cervera chose to take his fleet to Santiago de Cuba where he arrived on the morning of 19 May (29).

With Sampson out of touch for long periods during his return from Puerto Rico, the Navy Department on 13 May ordered Commodore Schley's Flying Squadron to Charleston, South Carolina, in preparation to intercept the Spanish fleet. Further orders directed Schley to Key West and a meeting with Rear Admiral Sampson. The Navy Department believed that Cervera's most likely objective was Cienfuegos because of its rail connection to Havana. Therefore, after arriving in Key West on 18 May, Schley received orders to take his squadron, reinforced by the battleship *Iowa* and several small vessels, and proceed to Cienfuegos. On 19 May, after Schley left on his mission, the White House received a report that the Spanish ships had run into Santiago de Cuba. The source of this information was Domingo Villaverde, an agent working as a telegraph operator in the governor-general's palace in Havana. This connection was a closely guarded secret, so when the information reached the Navy Department as an unconfirmed report, Long's telegram to Sampson sounded less than certain (30).

Sampson forwarded Long's notice to Schley along with his own decision to maintain the Flying Squadron off Cienfuegos, believing that even if Cervera had put into Santiago, he would have to bring his squadron west to deliver the munitions thought to be an essential part of his mission. USS *Minneapolis* and the *St. Paul* were sent to Santiago to confirm the presence of the Spanish squadron, and Sampson instructed Schley to keep in communication with them. On 20 May Sampson received a report from the assistant chief of staff at Key West confirming the previous report from Washington that the Spanish squadron had put into Santiago. He then sent orders instructing Schley to proceed to Santiago if he was satisfied that Cervera was not in Cienfuegos. On 21 May Sampson sent the collier *Merrimac* with 4500

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(29) TRASK, D. F. *War with Spain,* 115-118.

(30) *Ibídem,* 121-22. CHADWICK. *Spanish-American War,* 265-268. TRASK, D. F. «American Intelligence During the Spanish-American War», en *Crucible of Empire; The Spanish-American War and Its Aftermath,* JAMES C. BRADFORD. Ed. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 33.

tons of coal to Schley's support. Two days later the rear admiral departed Key West and cruised in the Bahama Channel with a force of thirteen ships to block any attempt by Cervera to enter Havana from the north side of the island. As additional information arrived at the Navy Department confirming Cervera's presence at Santiago, Long and Sampson dispatched several messages encouraging Schley to proceed to that port and prevent the Spanish squadron from escaping (31).

The Flying Squadron arrived off Cienfuegos early on the morning of 22 May when Schley received the first notice that the Spanish squadron might be at Santiago. The following day he received the second. However, the initial uncertainty of the Spanish squadron's whereabouts and the difficulty of observing ships in Cienfuegos led Schley to remain where he was. Finally, on 24 May, the commodore learned through Cuban insurgents that Cervera's ships were not in port. That evening the American squadron headed east, two days later than Sampson expected (32).

In his message informing Sampson of his departure Schley stated that he was concerned about having a sufficient supply of coal in his warships. The *Iowa* had arrived off Cienfuegos with half her capacity, and on 23 May she took on just 255 tons more. The *Texas* was also short of coal, and her projecting sponsons made coaling at sea almost impossible. The one collier then with the squadron was insufficient to coal enough ships when the weather afforded an opportunity. Schley informed Sampson that these concerns and his desire to coal his ships at a protected anchorage led him to choose Môle St. Nicolas, Haiti, as his next destination (33).

The Flying Squadron arrived at the longitude of Santiago on 26 May, and Schley communicated with the American cruisers watching the port. Engine problems on the collier *Merrimac* caused the squadron to average only seven knots in its journey from Cienfuegos. The weather had been too rough to allow coaling at sea and several of his smaller vessels in addition to the Texas were running low on fuel. Rather than remaining on station with his larger ships and trusting Sampson to supply him what he needed, Schley ordered his squadron to head west for Key West to refuel. Samp-

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(31) CHADWICK. *Spanish-American War,* 268-273, 276, 285.
(32) *Ibídem,* 286-93.
(33) *Ibídem* 292-93. H. W. WILSON. *The Downfall of Spain, Naval History of the Spanish-American War* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1900), 229-230. *Notes on Coaling War Ships,* 27.

son, who had since returned to Key West, and Secretary Long were shocked when they learned of Schley's intentions on 28 May. Making it clear that he and the Navy Department expected the Flying Squadron to remain on station, Sampson assembled his squadron and departed for Santiago. On 27 May the weather off the south coast of Cuba improved, and Schley reversed course once again, finally establishing a blockade at Santiago de Cuba on 29 May (34).

Schley's coaling problems impressed on Sampson and the Navy Department the need to seize a sheltered anchorage on the south coast of Cuba, and Guantánamo Bay had already been considered. Shortly after Schley established the blockade of Santiago Sampson ordered the First Marine Battalion at Key West to embark on their transports and prepare to land in Cuba. At the same time he sent Commander Bowman McCalla and USS *Marblehead* to reconnoiter Guantánamo Bay as a possible anchorage. McCalla's report was favorable, and on 10 June the Marine battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Robert Huntington landed, establishing a position on the east side of the outer harbor that served to protect the fleet during its coaling operations throughout the campaign (35). Having a reliable location to refuel so close to Santiago proved invaluable to the blockading fleet. It allowed American captains to keep steam up in their ships' boilers ready to pursue Cervera's squadron when it attempted to break out. On the morning of 3 July, the battleship *Oregón* had all four boilers lit, giving her the speed necessary to catch the *Cristóbal Colón* in the running fight during the final stage of the Battle of Santiago de Cuba. This high rate of coal consumption could be maintained because the *Oregón* was able to refuel four times from 1 June to 3 July, once at sea and three times at Guantánamo Bay (36).

Although McKinley and his advisors had intended to wait until the end of the rainy season to send a major land expedition to Cuba, they believed that the bottling up of the Spanish squadron at Santiago afforded the U.S. an opportunity to strike a damaging blow to the enemy's military capability in the Caribbean. On 1 June Sampson received a report from Secretary Long that 25,000 men under Major General William Shafter were preparing

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(34) CHADWICK. *Spanish-American War,* 302-307, 321-327.

(35) JACK SHULIMSON. «Marines in the Spanish-American War», in *Crucible of Empire; The Spanish-American War and Its Aftermath,* JAMES C. BRADFORD. Ed. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 141-142.

(36) WILSON. *The Downfall of Spain,* 299.

to embark for Cuba from Tampa, Florida, and that the North Atlantic Fleet should convoy the troops and assist the landing near Santiago. As the navy prepared to carry the troops, Sampson took steps to tighten the blockade of Cervera's squadron.

At the onset of the campaign Sampson seized on the idea to sink a vessel in the narrow channel leading to the harbor of Santiago. His intention was to keep the Spanish ships from escaping until the army could capture the city or assist the navy in passing the forts and mines at the harbor entrance. The Naval War Board in Washington approved, and Sampson selected the collier *Merrimac* under naval constructor Richard Pearson Hobson for the operation. Hobson and seven volunteers took the ship into the channel during the early morning hours of 3 June. Spanish gunfire from shore batteries shot away the vessel's steering gear and anchor chains making it impossible for the Americans to sink the vessel in the proper location. Only two of the ten prepared scuttling charges went off, and the *Merrimac* came to rest too far up the channel to pose a serious obstacle. Hobson and his men were captured by the Spanish (37).

Major General Shafter's troop transports departed Tampa on 14 June, rendezvousing with their navy escorts the following day. The expedition arrived off Santiago on 20 June and began to disembark east of the city at Daiquiri two days later. In addition to providing escort for the convoy, Sampson's ships furnished fifty-two steam launches, sailing launches, whaleboats, lifeboats, and cutters to help the army and its equipment ashore. Shafter expressed deep appreciation for the navy's assistance in this matter, as the boats on the army's transports were too few in number to disembark the expedition in any reasonable length of time (38).

Sampson's armored ships maintained a tight blockade of Santiago de Cuba, coaling from colliers in open water when the seas were calm and from colliers at Guantánamo Bay when the weather required it. On the morning of 3 July, Admiral Cervera attempted to break out of the American blockade thus precipitating the Battle of Santiago de Cuba. Off the entrance to the bay that morning were the battleships *Texas, Oregón, Iowa,* and

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(37) FEUER. *The Spanish-American War at Sea,* 95-111. For a first hand account of this operation see RICHARD P. HOBSON. *The Sinking of the Merrimac* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1988).

(38) *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation,* 676, 683-691.

Indiana, the armored cruiser *Brooklyn,* and the armed yachts *Vixen* and *Gloucester.* Most of the battle was a running fight as the blockading vessels attempted to get enough steam up to keep up with their quarry. Foul bottoms and poor quality coal reduced the speeds of the usually swift Spanish cruisers. Ranges were often in excess of 4000 yards: greater than the crews trained for and longer than the new rangefinders could handle. In addition, radical turns in the early stages of the battle further complicated the gunnery problem for the Americans. Smoke from the weapons' brown powder and frequent mechanical failures further reduced the effectiveness of the U.S. Navy's gunfire. The battleships and the *Brooklyn* generally registered hits when they achieved a parallel or near parallel course with the Spanish cruisers and maintained it for several minutes. Although only 1.29 percent of American shots hit their targets, the volume of fire was sufficient to destroy or run aground each one of Cervera's vessels (39). The defeat of this squadron freed President McKinley and the Navy Department to pursue other plans.

In the years prior to the war, U.S. planning boards had never reached a consensus on the issue of deploying a squadron of warships to European waters. Although the Naval War Board had not ordinally planned such a deployment, the formation of the Spanish Navy's Reserve Squadron resurrected the debate. Following the departure of Cervera's squadron to the Caribbean, the Ministry of Marine began to organize a second squadron under Rear Admiral Manuel de la Cámara y Libermoore centered around the battleship *Pelayo* and the armored cruiser *Emperator Carlos V.* Although it was believed by the Navy Department that this force would reinforce Cervera, it held out the possibility that the Spanish ships would head for the Philippines. Consequently, the monitors *Monterey* and *Monadnock* were prepared to undertake a slow and hazardous voyage across the Pacific to reinforce Dewey's command at Manila. On 16 June the Reserve Squadron departed Cádiz and steamed into the Mediterranean bound for the Philippine Islands (40).

The Navy Department responded to the news of Cámara's deployment by ordering Rear Admiral Sampson to detail two battleships, an armored crui-

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(39) FEUER. *The Spanish-American War at Sea,* pp. 169-79. CHRISTOPHER B. HAVERN, Mr. *A Gunnery Revolution Manqué: William S. Sims and the Adoption of Continuous-aim in the United States Navy, 1898-1910* (unpublished master's thesis, University of Maryland), 11-19.

(40) WILLIAM J. HOURIHAN. «The Fleet That Never Was: Commodore John Crittenden Watson and the Eastern Squadron», *American Neptune* (April 1981): 93-97.

ser, and three auxiliary cruisers to be ready to depart for Europe if the strong Spanish force passed into the Red Sea. When the Reserve Squadron arrived at Port Said on 26 June, Washington decided to organize formally a force entitled the Eastern Squadron. The command was activated on 7 July under the leadership of Commodore John C. Watson, and consisted of the battleship *Oregón,* the protected cruiser *Newark,* and the auxiliary cruisers *Yosemite* and *Dixie.* The battleship *Massachusetts* was added on 9 July, the auxiliary cruiser *Badger* on 12 July, and the protected cruiser *New Orleans* on 17 July. The navy also assembled six colliers and a refrigerator ship at Hampton Roads, Virginia, to support the Eastern Squadron's deployment. The Navy Department allowed news of the squadron's formation and its intended target to be widely circulated. It was hoped that such news would force Spain to recall the Reserve Squadron to Spanish waters (41).

Cámara ran into difficulty attempting to refuel his ships at Port Said. The Egyptian government refused to sell him coal, nor would it allow the Spanish squadron to take on coal from its own colliers while in port. Cámara was forced to take his ships out to sea where bad weather prevented any attempt at coaling. The Spanish admiral took his squadron through the Suez Canal, into the Red Sea and began to refuel on 7 July. The delay gave the Spanish government an opportunity to reconsider Cámara's mission in light of the near certainty that American ships would enter Spanish waters. The Sagasta government made the decision to recall the Reserve Squadron to Cádiz, and Watson's deployment was held in abeyance for the time being (42).

Even though Spain no longer threatened Dewey's control of the situation at Manila, the Navy Department was still concerned about German intentions, especially in the Philippines where it was thought Germany might try to take advantage of the situation to increase her colonial possessions in the Pacific. Rear Admiral Sicard and Captain Crowninshield of the Naval War Board still wanted to send Watson to reinforce Dewey. Captain Mahan dissented from this view. In the mean time, Watson's ships were needed to support the expedition to Puerto Rico. By the time the Eastern Squadron was free

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(41) *Ibídem,* 98-100. *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation,* 37-38.
(42) HOURIHAN. «The Fleet That Never Was», 101-102.

to depart the Caribbean peace negotiations were under way and Watson's deployment was held back for good (43).

One overlooked role in the story of the Eastern Squadron is that played by the repair ship *Vulcán.* She was fully equipped with lathes, jacks, and small foundries for brass and iron castings. The *Vulcán* reported for duty off Santiago on 1 July and was stationed at Guantánamo Bay for the remainder of the war. During that time she filled 528 orders for repairs and 256 requisitions for supplies. This work included making extensive repairs of boilers, engines, and pumps, much of it fitting out the ships of the Eastern Squadron as it prepared for its trans-Atlantic voyage (44). It is thought that the pressure put on the Spanish government by the possible deployment of the Eastern Squadron was an important factor in starting peace negotiations in August 1898. If so, the repair ship *Vulcán* played a significant role in bringing about an end to the war.

The U.S. Navy provided escort and support for the army's final two campaigns of the war. On the afternoon of 21 July the lead forces for the invasion of Puerto Rico got under way from Guantánamo Bay. Thirty-five hundred men embarked in nine transports were escorted by the battleship *Massachusetts* as well as the *Dixie, Gloucester, Columbia,* and *Yale,* all under the command of Capt. F. J. Higginson. Originally planning to land east of San Juan at Playa de Fajardo, the expedition's commander Major General Nelson A. Miles directed the Navy to land his force on the island's south coast. The expedition arrived off Port Guanica on the morning of 25 July. Lieutenant Commander Richard Wainwright of the *Gloucester* requested and received permission to send a landing party ashore. They soon came under fire from the small Spanish garrison, but held their position until the first army troops arrived and secured the landing place. Wainwright also assisted the amphibious landing at Port Ponce three days later by sneaking into the inner harbor the night before, gathering up a number of barges for the army to use (45). In Manila Bay, Dewey's squadron maintained a foothold at Cavite, opened communications with the insurgents, and provided naval gunfire support during the army's assault on Manila on 13 August.

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(43) *Ibídem,* 102-109. TRASK. *War with Spain,* 284-285.
(44) WILSON. *The Downfall of Spain,* 437-438.
(45) TRASK, D. F. *War with Spain,* 353-357. FEUER. *The Spanish-American War at Sea,* 201-214.

Pre-war plans and preparations by the U.S. Navy contributed substantially to the American victory. Most major strategic decisions were anticipated by the Naval War College studies and the secretary's war planning boards. Information appended to the boards' reports on merchant ships available for purchase or charter provided a strong background for Roosevelt's Board of Auxiliary Vessels as it sought to provide the U.S. fleet with ships such as colliers, auxiliary cruisers, and repair ships, indispensable for conducting war. In particular, the early procurement of colliers gave the U.S. Navy the strategic mobility to extend the blockade to Cuba's southern ports, keep Cervera's squadron bottled up in Santiago de Cuba, and threaten to send a major force to European waters. In addition Dewey's purchase of *Nanshan* and its cargo of coal permitted him to hold Manila Bay until an American expedition arrived from across the Pacific Ocean. Secretary Long's pre-war orders preparing and concentrating U.S. warships in the Atlantic theater ensured material superiority over any expedition Spain might send to the Caribbean.

There are several areas where more extensive preparations would have enhanced the navy's effectiveness even further. If the U.S. had constructed specialized colliers with their own winches, like those in the British Navy, these vessels could have refueled Schley's ships at sea more rapidly during the brief times that the weather allowed. If the navy had had plans to seize Guantánamo Bay, the Isle of Pines, or some other sheltered anchorage on the south coast of Cuba at the beginning of the war, the U.S. Navy would have been in a much better position to prevent Cervera from entering any port in Cuba. Stronger coastal defenses might have prevented the public cry for warships to defend the major harbors of the United States, thus negating the need to divide the fleet between the North Atlantic and Flying Squadrons.

The overall success of U.S. naval operations during the Spanish-American War demonstrated the value of extensive peace-time preparations. In the technological warfare of the last one hundred years, the most important preparations have not always been the construction of major warships, but also planning for adequate logistical support and vigorous intellectual debate.