



Admiralty Trilogy Seminar

Presented by:

Clash of Arms Games

La Royale

The French Navy

Capability Briefing To Their Lordships,

The Board of the Admiralty

20 April 1939





Outline

- Organization
- Order of Battle
- Capabilities of French ships and systems
 - Major Combatants
 - Aircraft Carriers
 - Minor Combatants
 - Submarines
- Warfare Disciplines - Strengths and Weaknesses
- Assessment vis-à-vis Germany & Italy





Organization

- Commander in Chief (Admiral of the Fleet) based in Maintenon (50 miles SW of Paris)
 - Admiral of the Fleet Francois Darlan
- Naval Minister based in Paris on Rue Royale
 - Honorable Cesar Campinchi
- Administrative Organization
 - Administration (Personnel) {*1st Bureau*}
 - Intelligence {*2nd Bureau*}
 - Operations {*3rd Bureau*}
 - Supply (Materiel) {*4th Bureau*}



Naval Districts

- Admiral South
 - Toulon & Bizerte
- Admiral West
 - Brest
- Admiral North
 - Dunkirk
- Admiral Far East
 - Saigon
- Admiral Antilles
 - Martinique

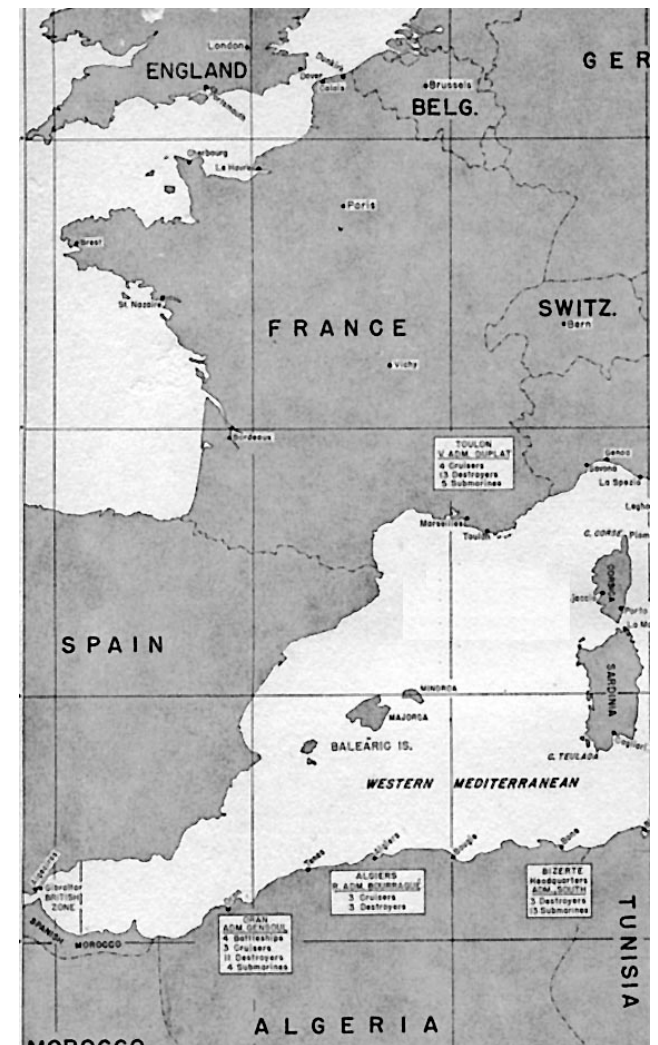


- Admiral Africa
 - Casablanca



Direct Control by CinC

- 1st Squadron (Force de Raid)
 - Brest, France
- 2nd Squadron
 - Oran, Algeria
- 3rd Squadron
 - Toulon, France
- 4th Squadron
 - Dakar, French West Africa





The Fleet Order of Battle

- 1st Squadron
 - *Dunkerque, Strassbourg*
 - *Emile Bertain, Georges Leygues, Gloire, Montcalm*
 - 8 Contre-Torpilleurs
- 2nd Squadron
 - *Lorraine, Bretagne, Provence*
- 3rd Squadron
 - 10,000 tons Cruisers
 - 4 Divisions of Contre-Torpilleurs



The Fleet Order of Battle (cont)

- 4th Squadron
 - 7,000 ton Cruisers
 - *Marseillaise, Jean de Vienne, La Galissonniere*
- PATMOC (Patrouilleurs de la Mediterranee Occidentale) {Western Mediterranean Patrol}
 - 4 Divisions of Torpilleurs d'Escadre/ Torpilleurs
- Toulon
 - 6 x 1st Class Submarines
 - 14 x 2nd Class Submarines



The Fleet Order of Battle (cont)

- Bizerte
 - 9 x 1st Class Submarines
 - 4 x 2nd Class Submarines
 - 4 x Submarine Minelayers
- Oran
 - 8 x 2nd Class Submarines





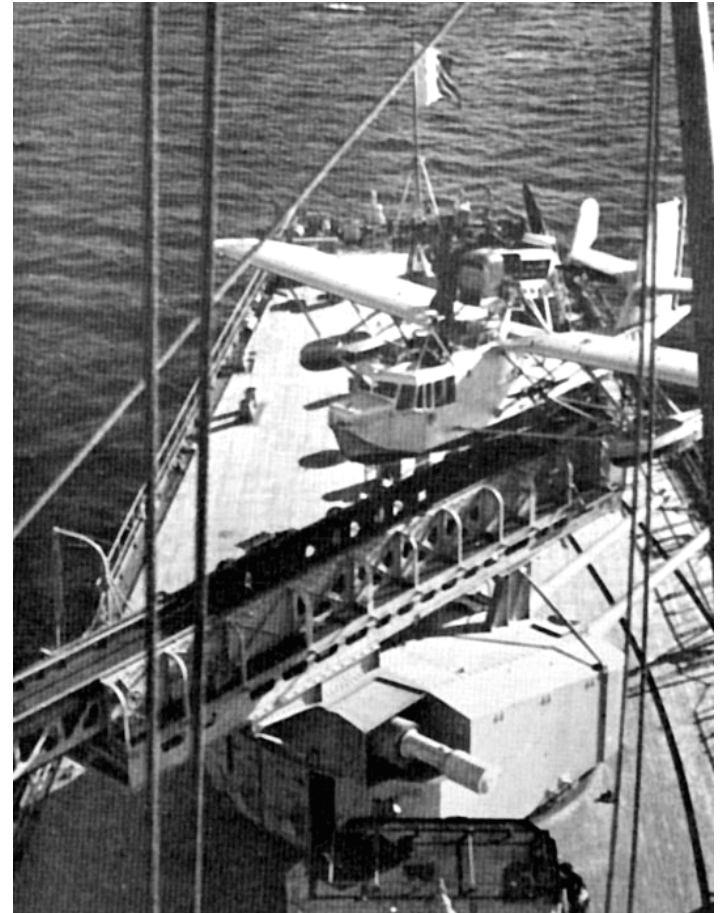
The Fleet Order of Battle (cont)

- Bone
 - 1 Squadron Naval Air Reconnaissance
 - 1 Squadron Naval Air Bombers
 - 1 Squadron Naval Air Torpedo Bombers
- Karouba
 - 2 Squadron Naval Air Reconnaissance
 - 2 Squadron Naval Air Torpedo Bombers
- Arzew
 - 1 Squadron Naval Air Reconnaissance
- Beirut
 - 1 Squadron Naval Air Reconnaissance



Naval Air

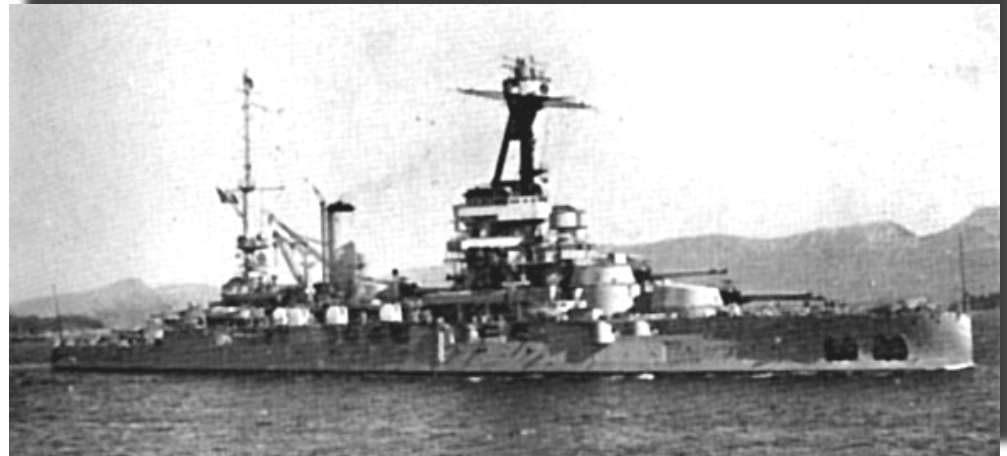
- Dive Bombers
 - Chance Vought 156 (40 aircraft)
 - Loire-Nieuport 411 (41 aircraft)
- Torpedo Bombers
 - Latecoere 298 (40 aircraft)
- Fighters
 - Potez 631 (26 aircraft)
- Reconnaissance
 - Loire-Nieuport 130 Flying Boat (65 aircraft)
 - Breguet-Bizerte Float Plane (31 aircraft)





Composition of the Fleet

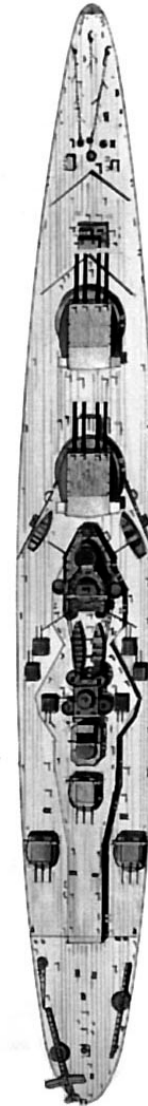
- 555,000 tons of Combatants
 - 2 Battle Cruisers
 - 3 Modernized Battleships
 - 2 Older Battleships
 - 1 Aircraft Carrier
 - 1 Aircraft Tender
 - 7 Heavy Cruisers
 - 12 Light Cruisers
 - 32 Contre Torpilleurs
 - 26 Torpilleur d'Escadres
 - 12 Torpilleurs
 - 1 Corsair Submarine
 - 37 First Class Submarines
 - 32 Second Class Submarines
 - 6 Submarine Minelayers
- 350 Naval Aircraft
- 126 Naval Auxiliaries





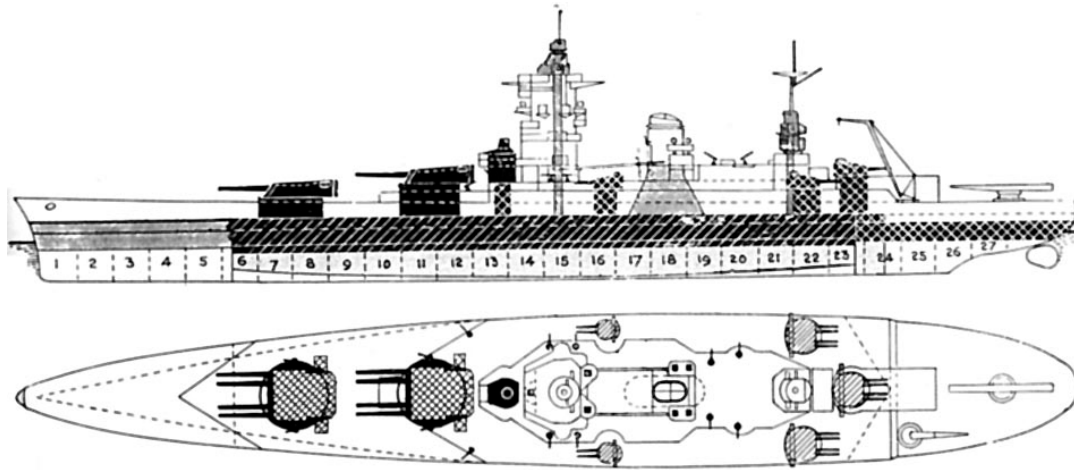
The Fleet Under Construction

- 271,500,000 tons of Combatants
 - 4 Modern Battleships
 - 2 Fast Aircraft Carriers
 - 3 Light Cruisers
 - 4 Contre-Torpilleurs (Super-Destroyers)
 - 12 Torpilleurs d'Escadre (Destroyers)
 - 8 First Class Submarines
 - 28 Second Class Submarines
 - 4 Submarine Minelayers





Examples of Major Combatants

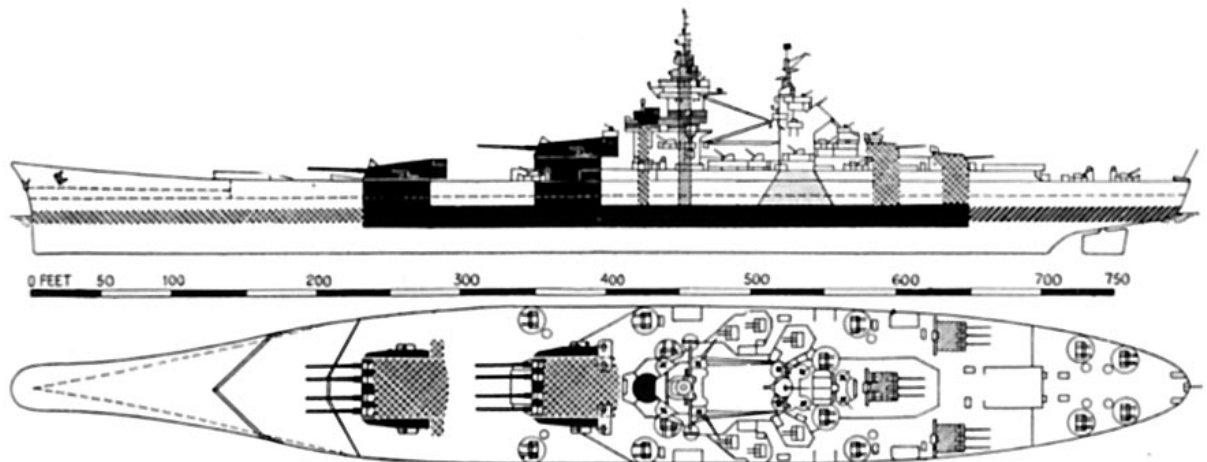


Dunkerque Class

- Battleship
- IOC: 1937
- 26,500 tons (std)
- Max Speed: 30 kts
- 8 - 13in/50 guns
- 16 - 5.1in/45 guns
- *Dunkerque, Strasbourg*

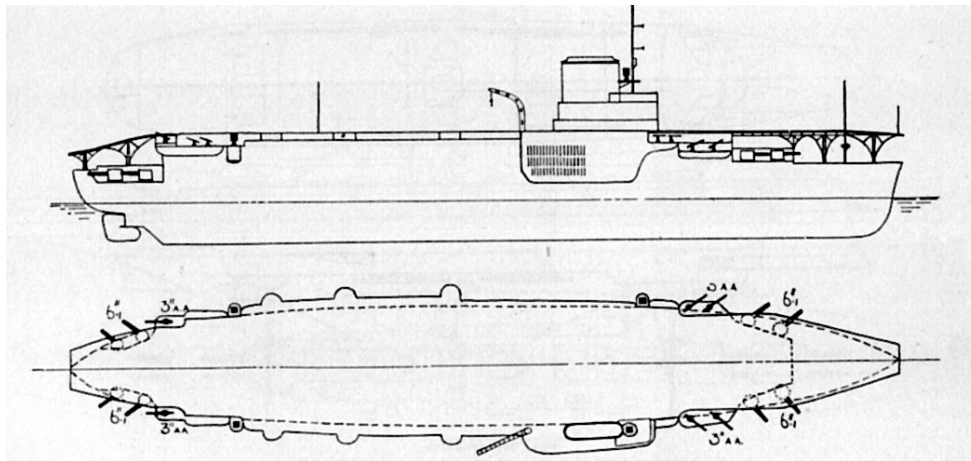
Richelieu Class

- Battleship
- IOC: Under Construction
- 35,000 tons (std)
- Max Speed: 33 kts
- 8 - 15in/45 guns
- 9 - 6in/55 guns
- *Richelieu, Jean Bart, Clemenceau, Gascoigne*





Examples of Aircraft Carriers

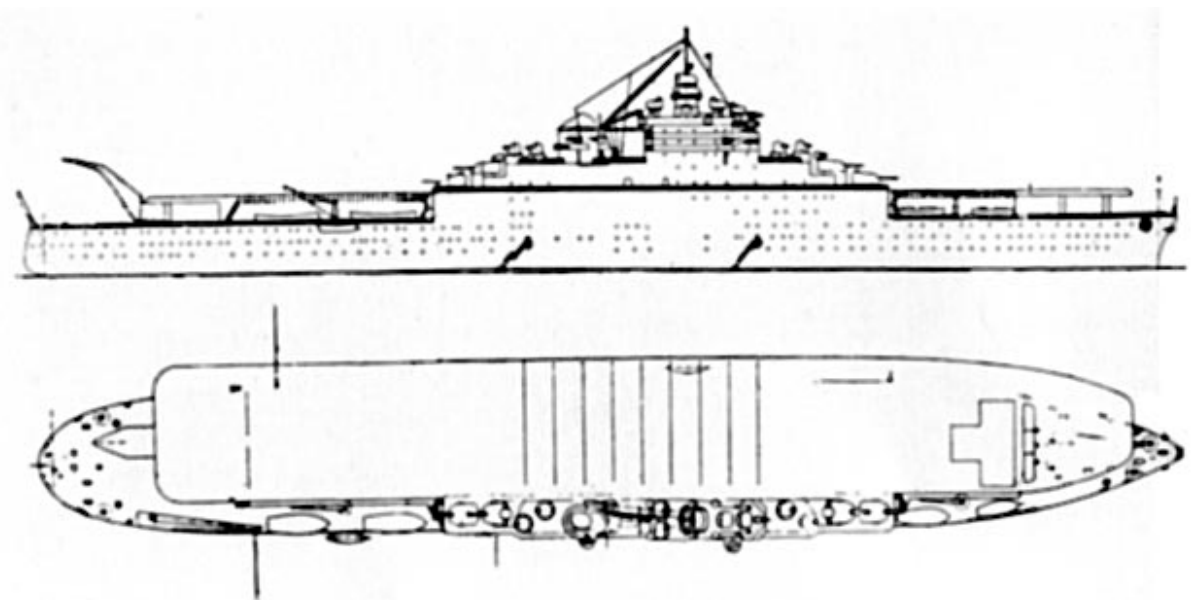


Bearn Class

- IOC: 1927
- 22,146 tons (std)
- Max Speed: 22 kts
- 40 aircraft
- 8 - 6.1in/50
- Single unit

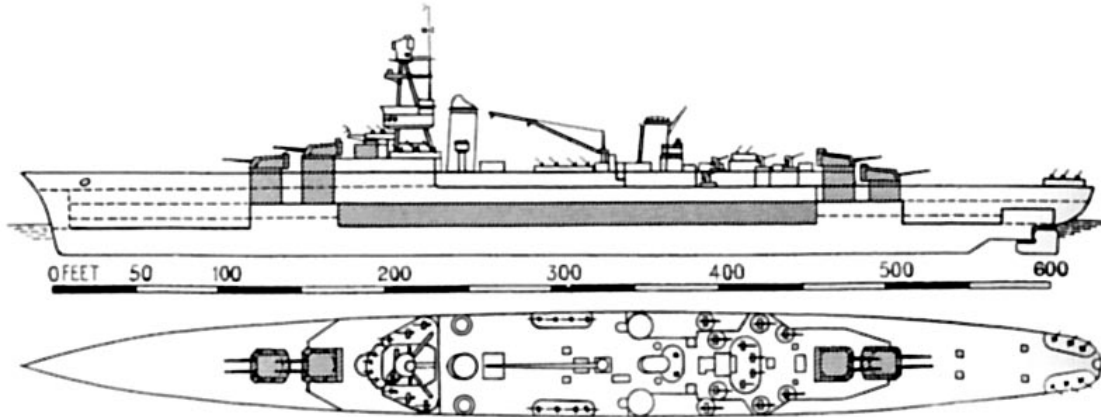
Joffre Class

- IOC: Under Construction
- 18,000 tons (std)
- Max Speed: 33 kts
- 40 aircraft
- 8 - 5.1in/45
- *Joffre, Painlevé*





Examples of Minor Combatants



Suffren Class

- Heavy Cruiser
- IOC: 1930
- 9,938 tons (std)
- Max Speed: 33 kts
- 8 - 8in/50 guns
- *Suffren, Colbert, Foch, Duplex*

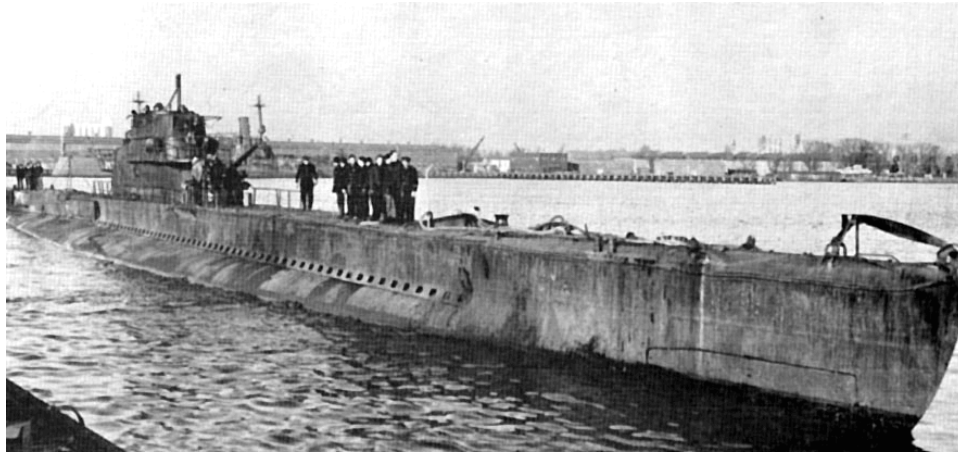
Mogador Class

- Super Destroyer
- IOC: 1938
- 2,884 tons (std)
- Max Speed: 39 kts
- 8 - 5.5in/50 guns
- 10 - 21.7in torpedo tubes
- *Mogador, Volta*
- *Kleber, Desaix, Marcheau, Hoche* under construction





Examples of Submarines



Redoubtable Class

- 1st class submarine
- IOC: 1924
- 1,441 tons (subm)
- Max Speed: 19 kts/10 kts
- 10 - 21.7in torpedo tubes
- 1 - 3.9in/45 guns
- 29 ships in the class

Schneider-Laubuef Type

- 2nd class submarine
- IOC: 1932
- 807 tons (subm)
- Max Speed: 14 kts/9 kts
- 6 - 21.7in torpedo tubes
- 2 - 17.3in trainable TT
- 1 - 3.0in/35 guns
- 5 ships in the class





Surface Warfare



- Excellent guns
 - Major caliber guns among the best
 - Only Italian 15in/50 has greater range
- Fire Control
 - Good optical range finders (26 ft)
 - No gun fire control radar (GFC)
 - Director firing & computed gun laying
- Torpedoes
 - Good reliable weapons
 - Similar to Mk VIII in performance
 - French DDs have large # of tubes

Overall Assessment:

Very Good to Excellent - A French Navy strength. With the exception of GFC radar, equal to, or better, than most European navies.



Anti-Submarine Warfare

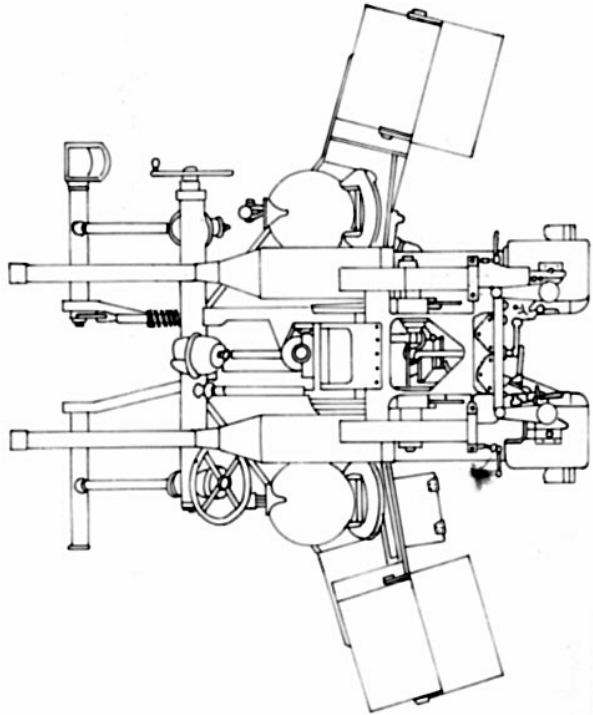
- No operational ASDIC
 - H-6 system a failure
 - Negotiating for purchase of Type 128 ASDIC
 - Reasonable passive systems for submarines
- ASW Weapons
 - Large depth charges, 33% larger than Mk VII
 - Few DC projectors (M1928 Thornycroft)
 - Still employing towed ASW paravanes

Overall Assessment:

Poor - Lack of a reliable ASDIC leaves the French Navy very vulnerable to submarine attacks. Probably the French Navy's weakest naval discipline.



Anti-Air Warfare



- No operational radar
 - Early stages of research & development
 - Visual detection significantly reduces warning time
- AA Guns
 - Most AA guns have a lower performance than RN weapons
 - Low rates of fire - particularly the 37mm
 - Most light AA are 13.2mm machine guns
- No at sea fighter cover
 - *Bearn* only carries bomber aircraft
 - *Joffre* class will carry 15 fighters

Overall Assessment:

Fair to Poor - Lack of radar and inefficient AA guns make this warfare discipline a significant weakness for the French Navy.



Warfare Summary Points

- Weak Areas:
 - Anti-Submarine Warfare/No operational ASDIC
 - Anti-Air Warfare/No operational radar/Poor AA guns
 - No fast carrier in service, *Bearn* too slow, and no fighters
- Strong Areas:
 - Fast and modern Fleet, few ships over 13 years
 - Surface Warfare, Excellent guns and torpedoes
 - Force de Raid, Unique 30+ knot strike force
 - Strong Mine and Anti-Mine Warfare capabilities
- Overall Assessment:
 - Largely an effective coastal defense navy
 - Limited open ocean strike capability



Assessment vis-à-vis Germany & Italy

- France vs Germany:
 - Significant quantitative advantage
 - Slight qualitative advantage in guns, but Germany will have GFC radar in service soon
 - Vulnerable to U-boat and air attacks
- Assessment: France would likely win a major naval engagement, provided Germany did not have land-based air support
- France vs Italy:
 - Virtually equal fleets
 - Italy has a very small advantage in major caliber guns
 - Neither side has radar
 - Both are vulnerable to submarine and air attacks
- Assessment: A major naval engagement would likely result in stalemate, barring land-based air support or tactical surprise