The Blockade
Virtual Walls of Naval Warfare

Admiralty Trilogy Seminar
Presented at
Cold Wars 2007

Outline

◆ This Seminar and the Cold Wars 07 Theme

◆ Why use a Naval Blockade?

◆ What is a Naval Blockade?

◆ Considerations of a Naval Blockade

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This Seminar and Cold Wars 07

◆ Cold Wars 07 Theme: The Road and the Wall

◆ Question to Audience:

  – What is the purpose of a Road?

  – What is the purpose of a Wall?

◆ And how do these function at Sea?

This Seminar and Cold Wars 07

◆ Cold Wars 07 Theme: The Road and the Wall

◆ Question to Audience:

  – What is the purpose of a Road? <u>Facilitate Lines of Communication</u>

  – What is the purpose of a Wall? <u>Defend or prohibit use of Lines of Communication</u>

◆ And how do these function at Sea?

◆ Purpose of a Navy – Command of the Sea

  – Control of the Sea Lanes (i.e., Maritime Lines of Communications or 'Sea Roads')

◆ Naval Blockades are the virtual 'walls' for Command of the Sea

So Let's Examine the Naval Blockade . . .

Why use a Naval Blockade?

◆ The purpose of a Navy in dealing with the enemy is twofold: Battle and Blockade (and sometimes Boat rides for land forces)

◆ Battle is the engagement and hopeful destruction of enemy forces – much has been said about this previously.

◆ A Naval Blockade occurs in two forms: Military and Commercial

◆ Military – Prevent enemy armed forces from leaving port or make certain it is brought to action if it does leave port. Deny the enemy the naval use of the sea lanes of communication

◆ Commercial – Prevent the flow of sea-borne trade, whether in enemy or neutral hulls. Deny the enemy the trade use of the sea lanes of communication

What is a Naval Blockade?

◆ The execution of a Naval Blockade comes in two fashions: Close and Open, also referred to as Close and Distant

◆ Close – Secure local and temporary command. Immediate contact with the enemy for rapid reaction.

◆ Distant – Secure command of a broader area in a more permanent manner. Eventual goal is to afford enemy opportunity to put to sea and settle the matter of Command at Sea in Battle

◆ Impact of Technology on Naval Blockades – Four Developments
  – Steam Propulsion
  – "Infernal Weapons" - Torpedo and Mine
  – Radio Telegraphy
  – Aviation (and Space)

Considerations of a Naval Blockade

◆ **Objectives**

  – Keep someone/something out

    ● Everything?

    ● Contraband Items?

  – Keep someone/something in

◆ **Resources**

  – Ships, Submarines, Aircraft

  – Mines

  – Supplies

  – Communications

◆ **Situation**

  – Geography

  – Weather

British boat crew from WWI blockade inspection of sailing bark

Considerations of a Naval Blockade

◆ **Interested Parties**

- Enemy

- Ally

- Neutral

◆ **Enforcing Tactics**

- Seizure or Capture

- Engaging or Sinking

- Warning Off

◆ **Blockade Runners**

- Ship

- Submarine

- Aircraft

Remains of Confederate blockade runner off
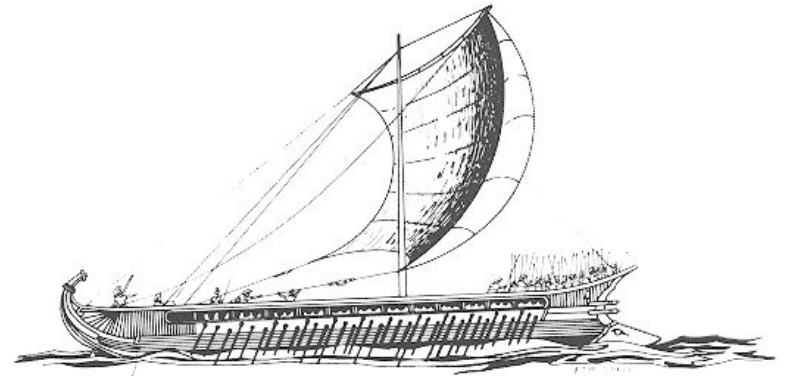South Carolina coast during American Civil War

"What will constitute an efficient blockade? The present definition is, that it is such as to constitute a manifest danger to a vessel seeking to enter or leave the port." Alfred Thayer Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History (1890)

Examples of Blockades from History

◆ 405 BC - Spartan blockade of Athens following the Battle of Aegospotami, cutting off grain imports and communications

◆ The Dutch Republic's blockade of the Scheldt between 1585 and 1792, denying Spanish-ruled Antwerp's access to international trade and shifting much of that trade to Amsterdam

◆ 1756 – Blockade of French Navy by England during Seven Years War ('First' instance of cutting off enemy forces by blockade)

Greek Warship – The Bireme

Examples of Blockades from History

◆ British blockade of France and its allies during the French Revolutionary War and Napoleonic War

◆ British blockade of eastern United States during the War of 1812

◆ American Civil War - the Union blockading the coasts of the Confederacy

HMS Agamemnon opens fire as French try to break the British blockade of Toulon, 13 Mar 1795

Examples of Blockades from History

◆ 1879 – War of the Pacific – Chile vs Peru (Battle of Iquique)

◆ 1898 – Spanish-American War – Blockade of Santiago Bay

◆ 1904-05 – Russo-Japanese War – Blockade of Port Arthur

◆ World War I - First Battle of the Atlantic with German U-boat blockade of Britain & British blockade of Germany in the North Sea (*which continued after the Armistice and into 1919 in order to force Germany to sign the Treaty of Versailles*)
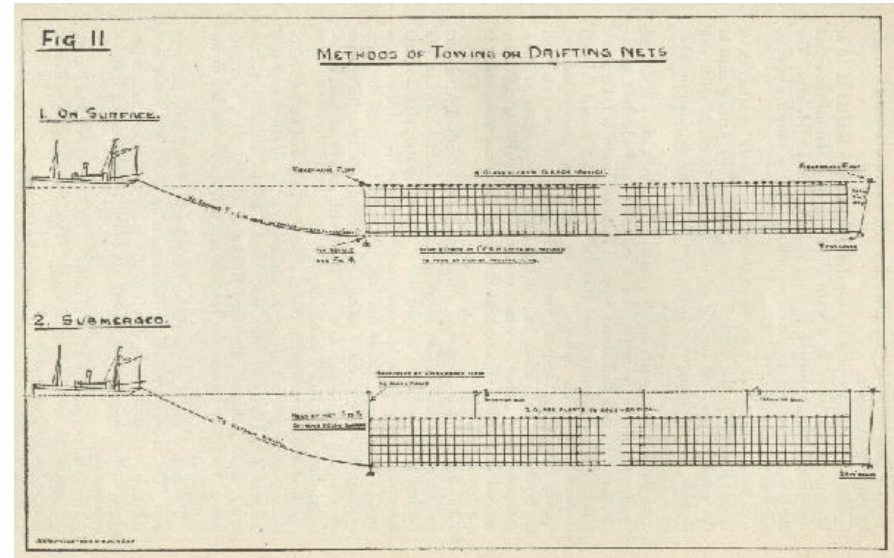

US Battleship *Iowa* during Battle of Santiago Bay

Examples of Blockades from History

◆ World War I - Adriatic by Italian & Allies of Austria at Straits of Otranto

◆ World War II – The Second Battle of the Atlantic with British surface blockade of Germany & German U-boat blockade of Britain

◆ World War II – United States submarine blockade of Japan (actually more akin to commerce raiding than formal blockade)

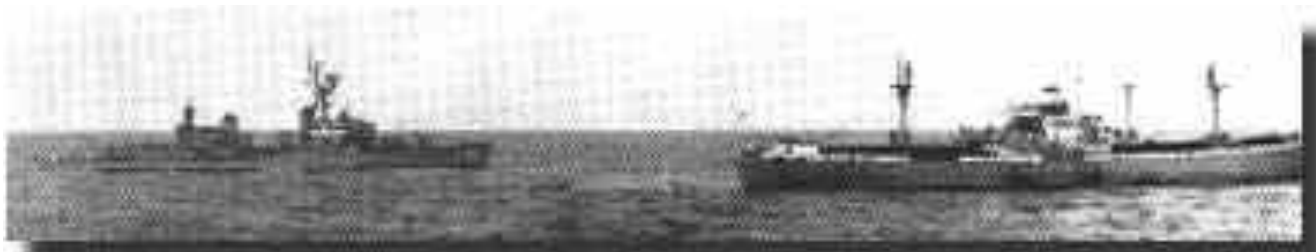Type of drifting or 'indicator net' used at Otranto Blockade in WWI

British cruiser on Otranto Blockade patrol

Examples of Blockades from History

◆ World War II (Sept 1944 and Nov 1944) - German blockade of the Scheldt, denying Allied shipping use of the port of Antwerp

◆ 1962 - United States blockade of Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis

◆ Egyptian blockades of the Straits of Tiran prior to the 1956 Suez War and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War

US Navy Warship during naval 'quarantine' of Cuba during Cuban Missile Crisis

Examples of Blockades from History

◆ 1993–1996 - NATO blockade of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during Operation SHARP GUARD

Danish corvette *Niel Juel* during NATO operation SHARP GUARD (naval blockade in the Adriatic Sea against former Yugoslavia)

◆ Israeli blockades along shores of Lebanon at various times during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), the 1982 Lebanon War, and the 1982-2000 South Lebanon conflict - resumed during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict

An Israeli man fishes as an Israeli naval boat patrols near border crossing with Israel at Rosh Hanikra during blockade of Lebanon

A Detailed Look at a Blockade

◆ Oct 2, 1914 Britain publishes warning about necessity of minefield at entrance of Channel into North Sea – only clear channel is near England; in British territorial waters

◆ Nov 2, 1914 Britain declares all of North Sea to be in a War Zone – cut off at Channel and gap between Scotland and Norway

◆ Feb 4, 1915 Germany declares a War Zone around England

◆ British pre-war strategy was for a commercial distant blockade – prompted by the goal to both cut off supplies from German ports and to avoid danger of close blockade from mines and torpedoes

◆ German pre-war strategy was anti-blockade, anticipating a close blockade and made several plans for mine and submarine attacks

◆ British Home Fleet in north controlled the sea lanes of communications - able to respond to German 'fleet in being' and still support commercial blockade – effective sea power in action

A Detailed Look at a Blockade

US ships on patrol along the North Sea Mine Barrage

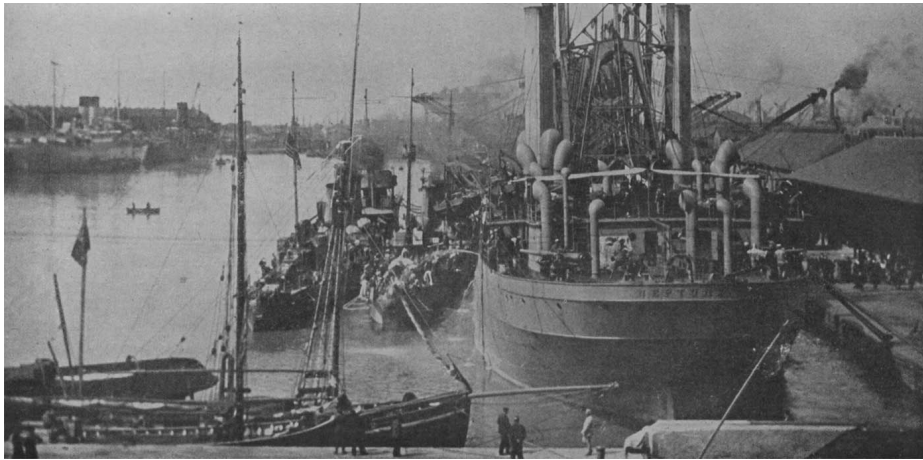Map of the North Sea and North Sea Mine Barrage

A Detailed Look at a Blockade

◆ British blockade angers many (most) Neutrals in handling of ships and seizure of goods – Britain did NOT abide by accepted norms of blockade conduct (Paris Declaration of 1856 and London Declaration of 1909)

◆ Initial U-boat attacks on merchants were begun with warning from U-Boat on surface. Allied Q-ships which fired from disguise on surfaced submarines led to submerged torpedo attacks instead

◆ Feb 2, 1917 – Germany returns to unrestricted submarine warfare after shortages become critical and suspicions that United States was already supporting England with goods and supplies (Germany had ceased unrestricted submarine attacks following *Lusitania* incident in 1915)
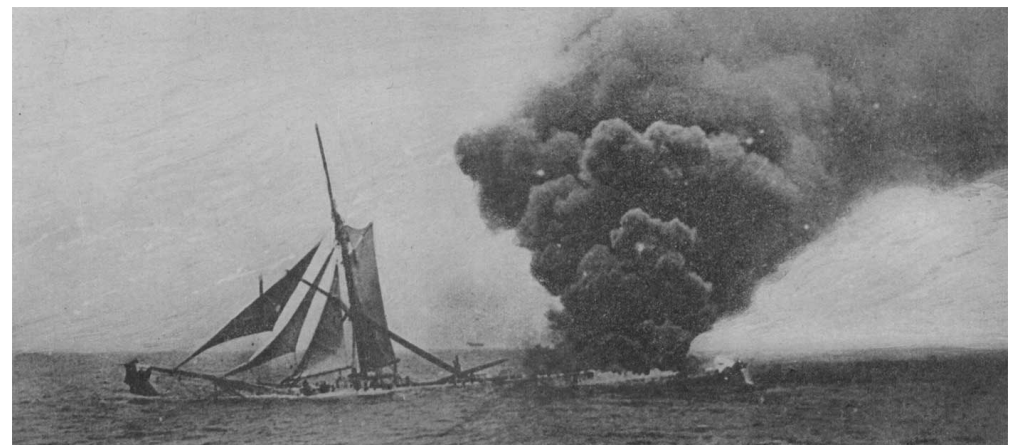
A Detailed Look at a Blockade

◆ British blockade almost completely cuts off all supplies to Germany

◆ German U-boat campaign has devastating effects and forces Allies to adopt concept of convoy, despite passionate resistance by RN

◆ Convoys prove effective answer to U-boat threat: Result is success in breaking the undersea blockade of England

◆ Battle of Jutland is only major engagement in North Sea and Germany fails to wrest control of sea from British: Result is failure to break the blockade of Germany

◆ Ultimately England is resupplied and American troops arrive safely in Europe to turn the tide on Western Front; meanwhile Germany starves and loses the war.

◆ Sea Power is major factor in determining outcome of war; Impact of the Blockade is significant part of the role played by Sea Power

A Detailed Look at a Blockade

Success!

Failure!

Using Blockades in A3 Games

◆ Blockades are usually a strategic choice that the scenario is acting out tactically – make sure to reflect the 'why and wherefore' in the Operation Situation and Tactical Situation remarks.

◆ Reflect the intent of the blockade in the Orders

◆ Match Victory Conditions to the objective and the Orders

◆ Keep it fun!

The never-ending battle for the Island of Oz continues!

A successful wargame must be entertaining as well as educational!

Using Blockades in A3 Games

◆ **Example:**

Operational Situation: Fascist forces led by the Spanish Nationalists have declared a blockade around the island port of Oz. "Neutrality forces" are being sent to support 'freedom of the seas' and aid Spanish Republican forces in the area if forces other than Spanish Nationalist are engaged.

Tactical Situation: There is a 10 nm blockade zone around the island of Oz. A mixed force of cruisers and destroyers have been sent by all parties involved to enforce government positions. Exact positions were lost during the night as both sides pulled to a safe distance to avoid submarine threats. Intelligence reports indicates two Ozian ships will attempt to break the blockade.

Orders: Enforce the blockade. Do not initiate hostilities with Neutrality warships unless necessary to enforce the blockade or defend own or allied forces.

Victory Conditions: Decisive: Both Ozian ships fail to break the blockade and no own forces are lost. Tactical: One Ozian ship fails to break blockade and enemy forces suffer greater losses than own forces.

Conclusion

◆ Throughout history, blockades have been an effective strategy for overall war and tactic for naval warfare

◆ Multiple considerations must be taken into account for the successful execution of a blockade

◆ Size and scope of a blockade may differ with technology and geography, but purpose and intent remain constant

◆ Blockades make for a very interesting background in establishing a wargaming scenario

"Thus is the question plain set forth: immediate battle and blockade, in the broad sense in which it has just been defined, but unchangeable in its principles, are the two efficient means which assure command of the sea." Captain Gabriel Darrieus, War on the Sea (1908)