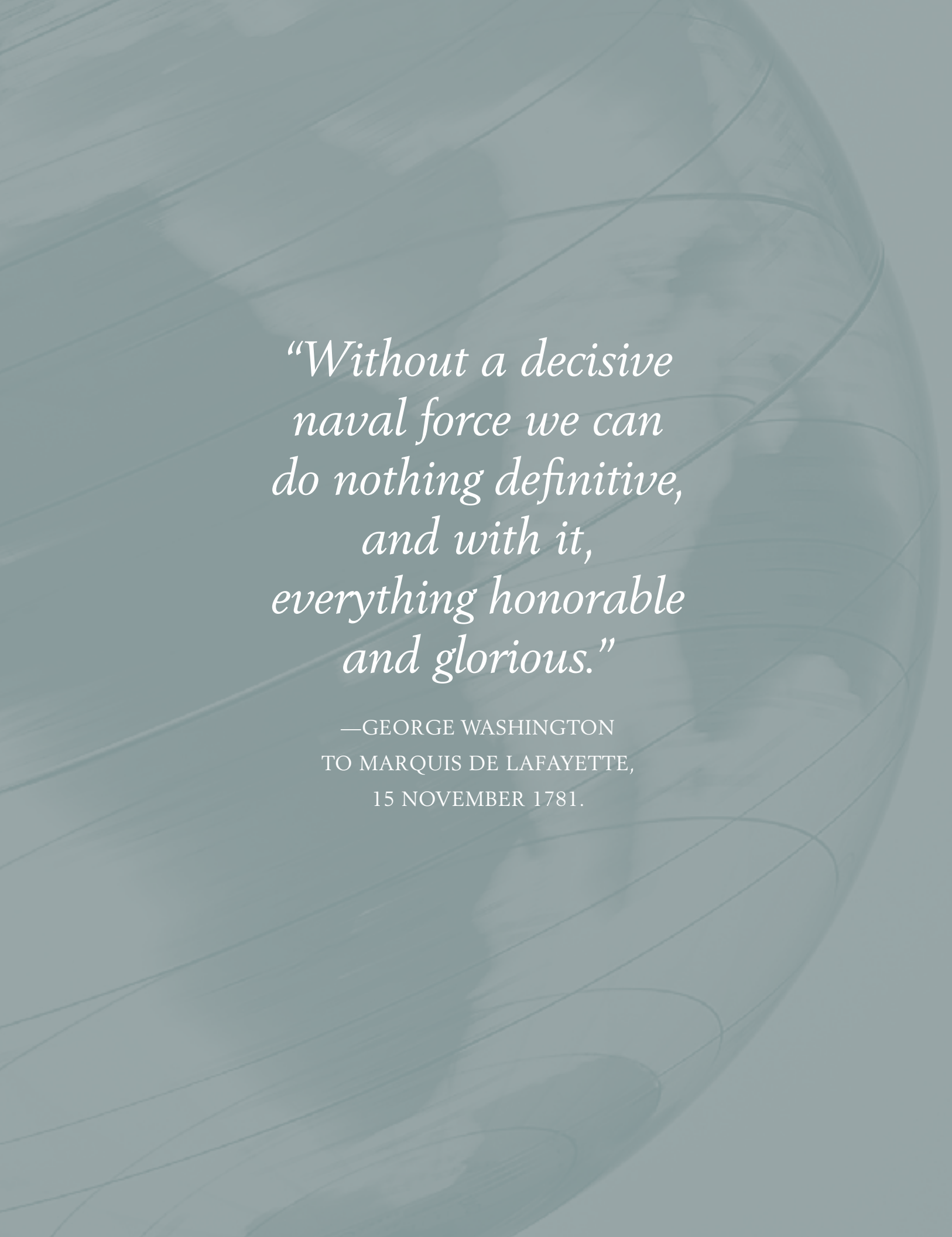


A large U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, likely an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, is shown from a low angle, sailing on the ocean. The ship's deck is visible, with several fighter jets parked on it. The ship is moving forward, creating a large wake in the water. The sky is clear and blue.

# ANCHOR OF RESOLVE

A History of U.S. Naval Forces  
Central Command/Fifth Fleet

Robert J. Schneller Jr.



*“Without a decisive  
naval force we can  
do nothing definitive,  
and with it,  
everything honorable  
and glorious.”*

—GEORGE WASHINGTON  
TO MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE,  
15 NOVEMBER 1781.

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NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER  
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON 2007

*Published by*

Naval Historical Center  
805 Kidder Breese Street SE  
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060  
www.history.navy.mil  
Contact us at 202-433-9785

Book design by Dean Gardei

FRONT COVER: The carrier *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72) slices through the Arabian Sea in support of operations in the Central Command theater, 1 October 1993. *PH3 William F. Duel*

BACK COVER: New chief petty officer selectees perform morning colors on board Naval Support Activity Bahrain, 16 August 2005. *Phillip A. Nickerson Jr.*

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Use of ISBN

This is the Official U.S. Government edition of this publication and is herein identified to certify its authenticity. Use of 978-0-945274-55 is for U.S. Government Printing Office Official Editions only. The Superintendent of Documents of the U.S. Government Printing Office requests that any reprinted edition clearly be labeled as a copy of the authentic work with a new ISBN.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Schneller, Robert John, 1957-

Anchor of resolve : a history of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Fifth Fleet /

Robert J. Schneller Jr.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-945274-55-1 (alk. paper)

1. United States. Navy. Fleet, 5th--History. 2. United States. Naval Forces Central Command--History. 3. Middle East--History, Military. 4. Middle East--History, Naval. 5. Sea-power--Persian Gulf Region--History. 6. Sea-power--Arabian Sea--History. I. Title. VA63.F54S36 2007

359.30973--dc22

2007014381

∞ The paper used in this publication meets the requirements for permanence established by the American National Standard for Information Sciences "Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials" (ANSI Z39.48-1984).

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For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office  
Internet: Bookstore.gpo.gov; Phone: toll free 866-512-1800; DC area 202-512-1800; Fax: 202-512-2104  
Mail: Stop SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-0001

ISBN 978-0-945274-55-1 (alk. paper)

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# AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY









PHAN Tommy Gilligan

*Lieutenant Commander Robert Lacy signals the launch of an F/A-18C Hornet for a mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, 4 September 2004.*



## FOREWORD

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The Naval Historical Center completed this illustrated history of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Fifth Fleet to accompany the exhibit it installed in the headquarters building on board Naval Support Activity Bahrain. In keeping with the Center's mission of supporting the operating forces, the purpose of this book is to inform visitors to the headquarters and American Sailors serving in the Middle East about the Navy's presence in Arabian waters and the variety of missions the Navy has conducted there, in peace and in war.

From the presidency of George Washington through the beginning of the Cold War, Americans have forged and maintained ties with the peoples of the Middle East. These bonds strengthened in 1949 with the establishment of the Middle East Force and a permanent U.S. naval presence in the Arabian Gulf. They grew even stronger when America committed itself to the defense of its friends in the region, establishing Central Command and its naval component, Naval Forces Central Command, in 1983. The United States Navy remains an anchor of resolve in promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the Central Command area of responsibility.

The author, Dr. Robert J. Schneller Jr., is well qualified to present this informative and well-illustrated history. He is co-author of a book on the Navy's role in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and since 9/11 has been researching and writing about the Navy's role in the Global War on Terrorism. As with each of our histories, the views expressed herein are those of the author alone and not those of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Fifth Fleet, the Department of the Navy, or any other U.S. government agency.

Rear Admiral P. E. Tobin, U.S. Navy (Ret.)  
*Director of Naval History*



U.S. Naval Historical Center

*Crown Prince Saud bin Abdul Aziz presents a gift to Captain R. W. Ruble during the visit of Valley Forge (CV 45) to the Arabian Gulf, March 1948. The ship was the first U.S. carrier to enter the gulf.*



PH2 Summer M. Anderson

*The oiler USNS Supply (T-AOE 6) conducts an underway replenishment in the Arabian Gulf with the cruiser Vella Gulf (CG 72), 30 June 2004. The carrier George Washington (CVN 73) steams in the background.*



Saudi Aramco World/PADIA

*Aramco's refinery at Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia, December 1952. That year the refinery produced 170,000 barrels of petroleum per day.*

# CHRONOLOGY

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1833, September 21	United States and Muscat sign treaty of amity and commerce.
1945, February 14	President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud meet on board cruiser <i>Quincy</i> .
1949, August 16	Navy establishes Middle East Force.
1968, July 17	Baath party seizes power in Iraq in a coup.
1971, December 23	The U.S. Navy takes over part of the former British naval base at Juffair, naming the facility Administrative Support Unit Bahrain.
1979, July 16	Saddam Hussein becomes president of Iraq.
1979, November 4	Iranian fundamentalist revolutionaries seize the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and hold its staff hostage for 444 days.
1979, December 27	Soviet Union invades Afghanistan.
1980, January 23	President Carter enunciates doctrine that commits American military forces to the defense of the Arabian Gulf region.
1980, March 1	Department of Defense establishes the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force.
1980, September 22	Iraq invades Iran, launching an eight-year war.
1983, January 1	Department of Defense establishes U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and its naval component, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT).
1987, March 7	U.S. government authorizes Kuwaiti tankers to sail under U.S. registry, and Operation Earnest Will escort missions begin.
1987, May 17	Iraqi Mirage jet fires two Exocet missiles at the frigate <i>Stark</i> , nearly sinking the ship.
1987, July 1	Department of Defense establishes U.S. Transportation Command.
1987, August 21	Department of Defense establishes Joint Task Force Middle East.
1988, April 14	Frigate <i>Samuel B. Roberts</i> hits an Iranian mine in the Arabian Gulf.
1988, April 18	Navy launches Operation Praying Mantis and destroys half of Iran's operational navy.
1990, August 2	Iraq invades Kuwait.
1990, August 6	United States launches Operation Desert Shield.
1991, January 5	Following a coup in Somalia, NAVCENT forces conduct Operation Eastern Exit, evacuating 281 people from the U.S. Embassy in the capital, Mogadishu.
1991, January 17	Coalition forces launch Operation Desert Storm air and naval campaigns.
1991, February 24	Coalition forces launch Desert Storm ground campaign to drive Iraqi forces from Kuwait.
1991, February 28	Coalition forces cease offensive operations against Iraqi forces.



1991, April 5	Coalition forces launch Operation Provide Comfort and establish a “no-fly” zone over northern Iraq.
1992, June 25	Administrative Support Unit Bahrain is renamed Administrative Support Unit Southwest Asia.
1992, August 26	The United States, Great Britain, and France establish a no-fly zone over southern Iraq and U.S. forces launch Operation Southern Watch the next day; the CENTCOM commander establishes Joint Task Force Southwest Asia to manage Operation Southern Watch and to plan for other contingencies.
1992, August 28	CENTCOM launches Operation Provide Relief to deliver humanitarian aid to Somalia.
1992, December 4	Department of Defense launches Operation Restore Hope to facilitate U.N. peacekeeping efforts in Somalia.
1993, January 13	U.S., British, and French aircraft attack Iraqi air defense system in southern no-fly zone in response to Iraqi attacks on aircraft engaged in Operation Southern Watch.
1993, January 17	U.S. surface ships launch Tomahawk missiles against the Zaafaraniyah factory complex near Baghdad in response to Iraqi attacks on coalition aircraft patrolling the northern no-fly zone.
1993, April 10	COMUSNAVCENT flagship <i>La Salle</i> departs area of responsibility and COMUSNAVCENT staff move ashore to quarters in Bahrain.
1993, June 26	U.S. surface ships launch Tomahawk missiles against an Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad in response to an Iraqi assassination attempt on former President George H.W. Bush.
1993, October 3	Task Force Ranger launches its seventh operation in Mogadishu against warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed, during which two U.S. helicopters are shot down and 18 American soldiers killed.
1994, March 25	U.S. forces complete withdrawal from Somalia.
1994, October 7	U.S. forces begin surging to CENTCOM area of responsibility in response to buildup of Iraqi forces on the border with Kuwait.
1995, March 3	U.S. forces complete Operation United Shield, covering the withdrawal of U.N. peacekeepers from Somalia.
1995, July 1	Navy stands up U.S. Fifth Fleet.
1995, November 13	Al-Qaeda-associated terrorist car bomb explodes in Riyadh outside the Office of Program Management of the American-trained Saudi Arabian National Guard, killing seven people.
1996, January 1	Department of Defense adds to the CENTCOM area of responsibility the entire Arabian Sea and a portion of the Indian Ocean.
1996, June 26	Al-Qaeda terrorists bomb the Khobar Towers housing complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

1996, September 4	In Operation Desert Strike, U.S. ships and aircraft launch cruise missiles against surface-to-air missile and command and control facilities in southern Iraq, in response to an Iraqi attacks on the Kurdish city of Irbil and coalition aircraft in the southern no-fly zone; the United States and the United Kingdom also expand the southern no-fly zone from the 32nd to the 33rd parallel and promise a disproportionate response if the Iraqis repair the damaged air defense sites.
1998, January 18	CENTCOM launches Operation Desert Thunder, a large-scale deployment of U.S. and coalition forces to pressure Iraq into compliance with U.N. weapons inspectors.
1998, August 7	Al-Qaeda terrorists detonate truck bombs nearly simultaneously outside the U.S. embassies in the East African capitals of Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing more than 200 people.
1998, August 20	U.S. ships launch Operation Infinite Response, a simultaneous cruise missile strike against the Zhawar Kili al-Badr terrorist facilities in Afghanistan, and the al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Sudan, thought to be producing a precursor for the deadly VX nerve gas for al-Qaeda, in retaliation for the 7 August embassy attacks.
1998, December 16	In response to Iraqi noncompliance with U.N. weapons inspectors, CENTCOM launches Operation Desert Fox, a four-day punitive air campaign against Iraqi installations thought to be associated with developing weapons of mass destruction, units providing security to such programs, and Iraq's national command and control and air defense networks.
1999, August 5	Administrative Support Unit Southwest Asia is redesignated Naval Support Activity Bahrain.
2000, October 12	Al-Qaeda suicide operatives detonate boat bomb alongside the U.S. destroyer <i>Cole</i> during a brief refueling stop in Aden, Yemen, killing 17 Sailors and wounding 40.
2001, September 11	Al-Qaeda suicide operatives crashed hijacked passenger airliners into the World Trade Center towers in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, and a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, killing nearly 3,000 people.
2001, October 7	U.S. forces launch Operation Enduring Freedom to remove the Taliban regime and destroy al-Qaeda forces and infrastructure in Afghanistan.
2001, December 7	Kandahar, the last major Taliban stronghold in Afghanistan, surrendered to Northern Alliance forces under the command of future Afghan President Hamid Karzai.
2003, March 19	Coalition forces launch Operation Iraqi Freedom to remove the Saddam Hussein regime from Iraq.
2003, April 9	Organized Iraqi resistance in Baghdad collapses.
2003, May 1	President George W. Bush announces the end of major combat operations in Iraq; Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declares the end of major combat operations in Afghanistan.



PH1 Brian Alvo

*Electrician's Mate 2nd Class Chris Graham stands ready to embark on a mission to clear shipping lanes for humanitarian relief operations in the Arabian Gulf, 17 March 2003.*



# INTRODUCTION

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**A**MERICA'S INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, Southwest Asia, and eastern Africa date almost to the founding of the nation. Since World War II, the United States Navy has been the first line of defense for these interests. From the establishment of the Middle East Force in 1949 through the beginning of the twenty-first century, the U.S. Navy served as a force for stability and peace in the region. The Navy's presence helped prevent regional crises from escalating into wars, enforce international sanctions, and minimize damage done by regional conflicts to American and allied interests. When there has been no other alternative, the Navy has gone to war by sea, air, and land to defend these interests. The Navy's presence also resulted in peaceful operations such as humanitarian assistance, maritime rescue, and military exercises with regional allies.

Early in the twenty-first century, the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Fifth Fleet area of responsibility encompassed about 7.5 million square miles of the earth's surface, including the Arabian Gulf, North Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and parts of the Indian Ocean. This expanse comprised 27 countries and three critical chokepoints at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, and the Bab al-Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.

The Navy owes its success in this region to the patriotism, professionalism, pride, hard work, and self-sacrifice of the officers and enlisted men and women assigned to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Fifth Fleet. This is their story.



U.S. Naval Historical Center

*The screw sloop Ticonderoga at Venice, Italy, circa 1866–1869. When this ship passed through the Strait of Hormuz in 1879, it became the first American man-of-war to sail in the gulf.*

## GROWING AMERICAN INTERESTS

---

**A**FTER THE UNITED STATES WON INDEPENDENCE in 1783, American merchants sought broader opportunities in every corner of the globe. Although Great Britain remained the predominant naval power in the Indian Ocean throughout the nineteenth century, enterprising Americans soon reached markets on the subcontinent of India, along the east coast of Africa, on the Arabian Peninsula, and in the Arabian Gulf. Because the fundamental mission of the United States Navy has always been to protect American interests around the world, U.S. warships followed the flag of merchant sailors who pursued dreams of riches in Asia. With Great Britain's Royal Navy and maritime law protecting free trade in the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, and Arabian Gulf, the Navy only occasionally showed the flag in those waters during the nineteenth century.

The first U.S. warship to enter the Indian Ocean was the frigate *Essex*, which twice rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1800 to escort a convoy of merchant ships returning from the Dutch East Indies. The Navy conducted its first operation off the Arabian Peninsula in 1833, when the sloop-of-war *Peacock* and the schooner *Boxer* carried an American diplomatic mission to Oman, an important hub for Indian Ocean trade. The mission culminated in a treaty of amity and commerce with Sultan Saiyid Said of Muscat.

The steam sloop *Ticonderoga* became the first American warship to sail into the Arabian Gulf after transiting the Strait of Hormuz in December 1879. Her presence constituted a long-delayed response to an invitation from the Shah of Persia, with whom the United States had signed a trade treaty in 1856. Under Commodore Robert Wilson Shufeldt, who was en route to Asia on an ultimately successful mission to open Korea to American commerce, *Ticonderoga* stopped at Bushehr and Basra and steamed 70 miles up the Shatt-al-Arab. Shufeldt found that American commercial interests constituted two-thirds of Muscat's trade. He also discovered that Arabs, Turks, and Persians liked the idea of another power helping to ameliorate the effects of "aggressive" British policy in the gulf,

which Great Britain had developed in the context of its "great game" with Russia for imperial hegemony in the region to protect trade routes to India.

Western interest in the Middle East increased significantly during the twentieth century, when petroleum supplanted coal as the fuel of choice for industrial nations. In 1901, British financier William Knox D'Arcy gained an oil concession covering nearly all of Persia. The first major strike seven years later at Masjid-i-Suleiman in western Persia heralded the beginning of the oil age in the Arabian Gulf. The British government's interest in the region heightened on the eve of World War I, when Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, decided to base the country's "naval supremacy upon oil." Thereafter the Royal Navy began replacing coal-burning engines in its warships with more efficient and economical oil-burning engines. With no known oil reserves of its own, Britain's naval power came to rest on Middle East petroleum.

Although the United States produced most of the world's oil between the world wars, American companies invested in British petroleum concessions in Iran and Kuwait, took over the concession in Bahrain, and established an all-American concession in Saudi Arabia. Oil production in the region increased 900 percent between 1920 and 1939, as



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