

150 Years Ago in *Rebel Raiders on the High Seas*' Civil Naval War History – An Almanac

September 14, 1861 (Saturday)

A cutting-out expedition of 100 sailors from the Union navy's 40-gun screw-frigate *USS Colorado* stole into Pensacola harbor, fought their way onto and destroyed the Rebel blockade runner *Judah*. The Union vessel was the flagship of Commodore William Marvine, then commander of the Gulf Squadron.

For further information (and a picture) of the USS Colorado:

<http://www.usscolorado.org/History/first%20colos.htm>

September 16, 1861 (Monday)

The "timberclad" gunboat *USS Conestoga* engages and captures two Confederate vessels during an action on the Cumberland River.

(*Conestoga* along with the *Lexington* and *Tyler* – which is represented by USN Card 18 in *Rebel Raiders* – were among the first of a group of civilian vessels to be converted to gunboats for the Western River Flotilla.)

For further information (and a picture) of the USS Conestoga: <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-c/conestga.htm>

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October 4, 1861 (Friday)

The Union war cabinet in Washington approves a contract for a controversial new warship design proposed by testy Swedish-American immigrant and naval engineer John Ericson. The vessel, to be built in New York, will be launched in the spring as *USS Monitor* – the Union's first ironclad (USN card 19 in *Rebel Raiders*).

For further information (and pictures) of Ericson and the Monitor: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ericsson

Later that same day two Confederate blockade runners – the *Elizda* and *Joseph H. Toone* – are caught trying to run over 9,000 stands of arms into Orleans by a Union warship named, ironically, for the first Confederate state to secede.

For further information on that Union warship – the *USS South Carolina*:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_South_Carolina_\(1860\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_South_Carolina_(1860))

October 12, 1861 (A Saturday)

The Confederate ironclad ram *CSS Manassas* (CSN card 71 in *Rebel Raiders*) supported by fireships and other vessels attempts to break the Union blockade of New Orleans.

Although two Union warships, *USS Vincennes* and *USS Richmond*

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run aground in an effort to escape the iron monster, both eventually work free and resume the blockade.

For further information (and pictures) of *CSS Manassas*: <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-us-cs/csa-sh/csash-mr/manassas.htm>

Also on this day two Confederate diplomats, John Slidell and James Mason, board the blockade runner *Theodora* in Charleston, the first step of a journey which will see them later taken prisoner on November 8 while aboard the British ship *Trent*.

For further information on what would become known as The Trent Affair (CSN card 83 in *Rebel Raiders*): http://future.state.gov/when/timeline/1861_timeline/trent_affair.html

October 16-17, 1861 (Wednesday)

On October 16 the ever-vigilant *USS South Carolina* runs down and captures the British schooner *Edward Barnard* as she attempts to escape from Mobile with a load of turpentine. The next day, the *USS South Carolina* fired upon and attempt to chased down the blockade runner *Ivy*, but to no avail. The *Ivy* and another Confederate steamer escaped via the Southwest Pass of the Mississippi.

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For further information on the *USS South Carolina*:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_South_Carolina_\(1860\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_South_Carolina_(1860))

October 25, 1861 (Friday)

Workers at John Ericson's shipyard in New York lay the keel of what will be christened *USS Monitor*, the Union's first ironclad. (USN card 19 in *Rebel Raiders*)

For information (and pictures) of the *USS Monitor*:

<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-m/monitor.htm>

October 29, 1861 (Tuesday)

Commodore Samuel DuPont (USN card 54 in *Rebel Raiders*) sets sail from Hampton Roads with a fleet of nearly 80 ships in what will become the largest opposed amphibious operation in U.S. history prior to the Second World War. Braving gales off Cape Hatteras that see much of the fleet scattered and at least one ship lost (*USS Sabine*), DuPont will reach and mount an attack and eventual landing of 12,000 troops to seize the Confederate fort at Port Royal, South Carolina.

For further information (and pictures) on DuPont and the Port Royal expedition see:

http://www.civilwar.si.edu/navies_dupont.html

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And

<http://civilwargazette.wordpress.com/2007/11/01/the-capture-of-port-royal-november-1861-2/>

November 7, 1861 (Thursday)

Starting out just before dawn, thirteen warships of the United States Navy boldly steam into the narrow channel between Hilton Head and St. Philip's Island to exchange fire with rebel gunners in the Forts Beauregard and Walker. By shortly after noon the Stars and Stripes fly from both, earning Commodore Samuel DuPont (USN Card 54) the thanks of a grateful nation – and a base at Port Royal from which to establish a close-in blockade of the South Carolina coast.

In the Rebel Raiders game, such an operation would be assisted through the play not only of USN Card 54 (DuPont) but also that of USN Card 32 (Army-Navy Cooperation).

For further information (and pictures) on DuPont and the Port Royal expedition see:

http://www.civilwar.si.edu/navies_dupont.html

And

<http://civilwargazette.wordpress.com/2007/11/01/the-capture-of-port-royal-november-1861-2/>

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November 8, 1861 (Friday)

Captain Charles Wilkes of the USS *San Jacinto* stops and boards the British packet *Trent* in the Old Bahamas Channel. He arrests two Confederate diplomats, John Slidell and James Mason, and makes steam for the Union naval base in Hampton Roads (from where Wilkes will later take them and their secretaries, also taken from the *Trent*, to Fort Warren in Massachusetts). The *Trent* continues on to England, the families of the Rebel officials still aboard.

For further information on what would become known as The Trent Affair (CSN card 83 in *Rebel Raiders*):

http://future.state.gov/when/timeline/1861_timeline/trent_affair.html

November 18, 1861 (Monday)

David Dixon Porter (USN Card 2 -David Dixon Porter & His Little Mortar Boats) is named commodore and authorized to assemble and requisition naval forces to attack New Orleans. Among the ships he will collect are a number of boats equipped with large mortars designed to silence Forts Jackson and St. Phillip, which guard the main passage to the southern port. (Porter will be named commander of the

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West Gulf Blockading Squadron in January and will assault New Orleans in April).

For his flagship he will choose the USS *Hartford* (USN 37)

For further information (and a portrait) of Porter see <http://militaryhistory.about.com/od/naval/p/American-Civil-War-Admiral-David-Dixon-Porter.htm>

For further information on Porter's campaign and the composition of his fleet see <http://americancivilwar.com/statepic/la/la001.html>

For Porter's memoirs (which are not in copyright) see <http://www.archive.org/details/memoircomm00portrich>

For a picture and report on the USS *Hartford* see <http://militaryhistory.about.com/od/navalbattles1800s/ig/Civil-War-Navies/USS-Hartford.htm>

November 22, 1861 (Friday)

Commodore (later Admiral) William Winster McKean leads three ships of the East Gulf Blockading Squadron to silence the guns of Fort McRea, thus sparing Fort Pickens from further bombardment - and frustrating the plans of Confederate General Braxton Bragg to capture the massive pre-war fortress at Pensacola.

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For information on Fort Pickens (which never fell to the Rebels) see <http://www.nps.gov/guis/planyourvisit/fort-pickens.htm>

November 23, 1861 (Saturday)

Commander Raphael Semmes, with assistance from French colonial authorities, escapes from USS *Iroquois* (obviously by rolling a "6" as noted on USN Card 12 USS *Iroquois*). Union Captain J.S. Palmer believed he had trapped Semmes and his little 431-ton raider CSS *Sumter* while it was taking on coal in Martinique.

For further information on the USS *Iroquois* see <http://www.historycentral.com/navy/CWNavy/iroquois.html>

November 24, 1861 (Sunday)

Union troops seize Tybee Island in the mouth of the Savannah River, and begin emplacing heavy batteries of rifled cannon that will later be used in the successful siege of Fort Pulaski, the main fortification guarding the water approaches to Savannah (a key port for Rebel blockade runners in the game, Rebel Raiders).

For information on Tybee Island, its role in the battle for Fort Pulaski AND the effort to save the sites of

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those Union batteries see

<http://old.savannahnow.com/stories/071405/3161550.shtml>

November 25, 1861 (Monday)

The CSS *Sumter* takes the first of six prizes it will capture in its second and final cruise, which will take the raider from the Caribbean to Gibraltar, where she will be sold rather than face the guns of the six Union warships lying offshore.

For further information and drawings of the CSS *Sumter* see <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-us-cs/csa-sh/csash-sz/sumter.htm>

And <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-us-cs/csa-sh/csash-sz/sumter-k.htm>

Semmes will later go on to captain the CSS Alabama (CSN Card 63), arguably the most famous and one of the most effective of the 11 ships for whom Rebel Raiders the board game is named. For more on Semmes, later a rear admiral, and the CSS Alabama see

<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/pers-us/uspers-s/r-semmes.htm>

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November 27, 1861 (Wednesday)

Union forces seize Ship Island, a small sandbank in the mouth of the Mississippi and rare source of fresh water for the squadron blockading the passages in and out of New Orleans. New Orleans is a major port for blockade runners in the board game, Rebel Raiders.

For more on Ship Island and its importance in the Civil War see

http://www.mshipisland.com/Ship_Island_History.html

November 29, 1861 (Friday)

The captured hull and engines of the USS Merrimack are impressed into Confederate service at Norfolk Navy Yard. The ground-breaking vessel to be constructed from these remains is christened CSS Virginia (CSN Card 70), the first steam-powered ironclad in the Confederate Navy.

For information and pictures on the famous Confederate ironclad <http://cssvirginia.org/>

November 30, 1861 (Saturday)

British Foreign Secretary Lord John Russell writes instructions to Her Majesty's Ambassador in Washington to demand the release of the Confederate envoys seized from the Trent. An ultimatum is drafted to break off diplomatic

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relations with the United States and The Royal Navy is placed on alert, with warships and reinforcements, including the Regiment of Guards, ordered to make ready for departure for Halifax.

For how this could have affected the play of the game, Rebel Raiders, see CSN Card 62 (The Royal Navy). For more on Lord Russell and the Trent Affair see

<http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1862/february/resolution-trent-affair.htm>

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(December 2011 Edition)

December 1, 1861 (Sunday)

Confederate blockade runner *Albion* is intercepted and captured by USS *Penguin* off Charleston, S.C.

The Union player in Rebel Raiders is wise to deploy his gunboats for the close-in blockade of Charleston and other key ports to make it more difficult for his Confederate opponent to bring in war supplies (such as the \$100,000 in cargo the *Albion* was transporting).

For more information (and a small picture as part of a squadron) on the screw-steam gunboat USS *Penguin*, see <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-p/penguin.htm>

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December 2, 1861 (Monday)

Confederate side-wheel gunboat CSS *Patrick Henry* bravely sallies forth to engage one, two, three and finally four Union gunboats off Newport News, Virginia. Although badly damaged, the gallant little warship of Commander James Randolph Tucker's James River Squadron fights its way back to port to live to fight another day.

The *Patrick Henry* and other Confederate gunboats in **Rebel Raiders** play a key role in defending ports and can sally forth to challenge and often drive off Union gunboats from the close-in blockade stations, thus opening the way for blockade runners to dash in, unload vital cargo, and run back out to sea – and safety.

For more information on the CSS *Patrick Henry* see <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-us-cs/csa-sh/csash-mr/pat-hnry.htm>

December 5, 1861 (Thursday)

Union army strength swells to over 660,000 men, reports Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Ninety-five percent of those are volunteers, he adds, who have now extended their term of enlistment to three years service or the duration, whichever comes first.

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(This surge in manpower and long-term commitment is represented in **Rebel Raiders** by Union Card 34 - "Loose the Fateful Lightning" - which allows the Union one additional land attack free of charge each turn for the remainder of the game).

December 7, 1861 (Saturday)

In a decision that only makes worse an already deteriorating situation between Washington and London, the captain of the USS *Santiago de Cuba* stops and boards the British merchant vessel *Eugenia Smith* and removes one of its passengers, Confederate government official J.W. Zacharie.

For a photo and additional information on the wooden side-wheeler, which in December also captured the blockade runner *Victoria*, see:

<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-s/s-d-cuba.htm>

December 8, 1861 (Sunday)

Confederate raider *CSS Sumter* sinks the Yankee whaler *Eben Dodge*. Such actions are represented in the raiding combat mechanic in **Rebel Raiders**, which unless dealt with

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by the dispatch of warships to hunt down the raiders will greatly buoy the Confederate war effort.

For more information on as well as a picture of the raider CSS *Sumter* see

<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-us-cs/csa-sh/csash-sz/sumter.htm>

December 19, 1861 (Thursday)

Secretary of State Seward meets with Lord Lyons who delivers an ultimatum on behalf of Her Majesty's government demanding the release of Confederate diplomats Mason and Slidell, who were removed from the English mail steamer *Trent* in November.

The next day two Royal Navy warships arrive in Canada, sent there as the forerunners of a build up of land and naval forces dispatched to North America in response to English ire over the still unsettled Trent affair.

(This dispatch of British warships and the subsequent concern caused in Washington is represented in the game by the play of CSN Card 62 - aptly named, The Royal Navy).

December 26, 1861 (Thursday)

In an effort to defuse the growing danger of war with Great Britain, President Abraham Lincoln directs Secretary

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of State Seward to order the release of Confederate diplomats Mason and Slidell, and to allow them to board a British vessel in Boston to take them on to England. In addition, a formal statement is issued that Captain Wilkes, the commander of the ship that seized the diplomats, acted "without the authority or knowledge of the government, which had neither meditated, nor practiced, nor approved any deliberate wrong."

This defusing of the crisis is depicted in the **Rebel Raiders** game by the play of Union Card 55 - Diplomatic Pressure, which forces the discard of the Trent and Royal Navy cards, thus greatly easing the mind and worry of the Union player, much as it eased at least one of the many worries plaguing Lincoln.