



## **My Drift**

**Title: Pirates of the Barbary Coast**

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**Have you heard of the “Pirates of the Barbary Coast”?**

**Do you know where the Barbary Coast is located?**

**Did you know that these pirates were Muslims?**

**Do you know what violent acts these pirates committed?**

**Did you know that these pirates controlled the Barbary Coast for centuries?**

Well, I have heard of the “Pirates of the Barbary Coast” but that’s about it. I can’t remember any details! I either missed this information in my school world history classes or else it was not taught or maybe I lost those memory brain cells somewhere over the years. Regardless, the primary reason I research and write these articles is to learn new things or re-learn things I used to know and try to keep my brain functioning.

### **Early History**

The Barbary pirates were Ottoman and Maghrebi pirates and privateers who operated from North Africa, based primarily in the ports of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. This area was known in Europe as the Barbary Coast, a term derived from the name of its ethnically Berber inhabitants. Their predation extended throughout the Mediterranean, south along West Africa's Atlantic seaboard and into

the North Atlantic as far north as Iceland, but they primarily operated in the western Mediterranean. In addition to seizing merchant ships, they engaged in raids on European coastal towns and villages, mainly in Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal. The main purpose of their attacks was to capture Christian slaves for the Ottoman slave trade as well as the general Arab slavery market in North Africa and the Middle East.



**The Barbary Coast (North Africa)**

Barbary pirates captured thousands of merchant ships and repeatedly raided coastal towns. As a result, residents abandoned their former villages of long stretches of coast in Spain and Italy. About 200,000 Iberians were enslaved by these raids. The raids were such a problem that coastal settlements were seldom undertaken until the 19th century. From 1530 to 1780, more than one million people were enslaved.



**Christian Slaves**

While such raids had occurred since the Muslim conquest of the Christian Iberian Peninsula (modern day Spain and Portugal) in 711AD, the term "Barbary pirates" is normally applied to the raiders active from the 16th century (the 1500s) through the early 19th century (1800s).

**Turkish pirates brought advanced sailing and shipbuilding techniques they learned in Europe to the Barbary Coast around 1600, which enabled the pirates to extend their activities into the Atlantic Ocean. The effects of the Barbary raids peaked in the mid-17th century. Up to this time, the pirates used oar-powered ships.**



**Oar-Powered Pirate Ship**

### **Early 19th Century**

**The Barbary pirates, who had been marauding off the coast of Africa for centuries, encountered a new enemy in the early 19th century: the young United States Navy and Marines (sea going soldiers). Here is the story:**

**The North African pirates had been a menace for so long that by the late 1700s most nations including the United States paid tribute to ensure that merchant shipping could proceed through the Mediterranean Sea without being violently attacked. At the height of the 18th century, Muslim Barbary Pirates were the terror of the Mediterranean and a large area of the North Atlantic. They attacked every ship in sight and held the crews for exorbitant ransoms. Those taken hostage were subjected to barbaric treatment and wrote heart-breaking letters home, begging their governments and families to pay whatever their Islamic captors demanded.**

**These extortionists of the high seas represented the North African Islamic nations of Tripoli, Tunis, Morocco, and Algiers - collectively referred to as the Barbary Coast - and presented a dangerous and unprovoked threat to the new American Republic.**



**Before the Revolutionary War, U.S. merchant ships had been under the protection of Great Britain. When the U.S. declared its independence and entered into war, the ships of the United States were protected by France. However, once the war was won, America had to protect its own fleets. Thus, the birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines. Beginning in 1784, 17 years before he would become president, Thomas Jefferson became America's Minister to France. That same year, the U.S. Congress sought to appease its Muslim adversaries by following in the footsteps of European nations who paid bribes to the Barbary States rather than engaging them in war.**



**In July of 1785, Algerian pirates captured American ships, and the Dye of Algiers demanded an unheard-of ransom of \$60,000. It was a plain and simple case of extortion, and Thomas Jefferson was vehemently opposed to any further payments. Instead, he proposed to Congress the formation of a coalition of allied nations who together could force the Islamic states into peace. A disinterested Congress decided to pay the ransom.**

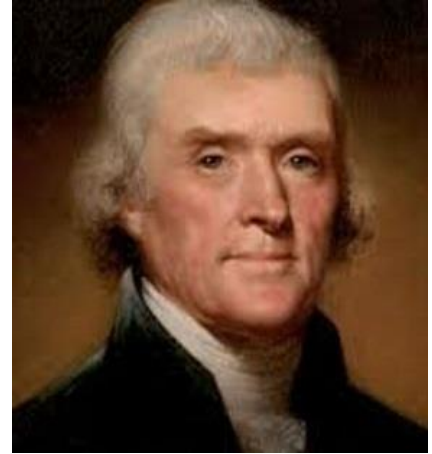
**In 1786, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams met with Tripoli's ambassador to Great Britain to ask by what right his nation attacked American ships and enslaved American citizens, and why Muslims held so much hostility towards America, a nation with which they had no previous contacts. The two future presidents reported that Ambassador Sidi Haji Abdul Rahman Adja had answered that Islam "was founded on the Laws of their Prophet, that it was written in their Quran that all nations who would not acknowledge their authority were sinners, that it was their right and duty to make war upon them wherever they could be found, and to make slaves of all they could take as prisoners, and that every Muslim who should be slain in battle was sure to go to Paradise."**

**Despite this stunning admission of premeditated violence on non-Muslim nations, as well as the objections of many notable American leaders, including George Washington, who warned that caving in was both wrong and would only further embolden the enemy, for the following fifteen years, the American government paid the Muslims millions of dollars for the safe passage of American ships or the return of American hostages. The payments in ransom and tribute amounted to over 20 percent of the United States government annual revenues in 1800.**

**By the early 19th century, the pirates were essentially sponsored by the Arab rulers of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli.**

**Thomas Jefferson was disgusted. Shortly after his being sworn in as the third President of the United States in 1801, the Pasha of Tripoli sent him a note demanding the immediate payment of \$225,000 plus \$25,000 a year for every year forthcoming.**

**That changed everything! Jefferson let the Pasha know, in no uncertain terms, what he could do with his demand. The Pasha responded by cutting down the flagpole at the American consulate and declared war on the United States. Tunis, Morocco, and Algiers immediately followed suit.**



**Thomas Jefferson**

**Jefferson, until now, had been against America raising a naval force for anything beyond coastal defense, but, having watched his nation be cowed by Islamic thuggery long enough, decided that it was finally time to meet force with force.**

**The young U.S. Navy was preparing to deal with the problem by building a few ships destined to fight the pirates off Africa. The frigate Philadelphia was launched in 1800 and saw service in the Caribbean before becoming involved in a pivotal incident in the first war against the Barbary pirates.**

**In 1801, Jefferson dispatched a squadron of Navy frigates to the Mediterranean to teach the Muslim nations of the Barbary Coast a lesson he hoped they would never forget. Congress authorized Jefferson to empower U.S. ships to seize all vessels and goods of the Pasha of Tripoli and to "cause to be done all other acts of precaution or hostility as the state of war would justify".**

**When Algiers and Tunis, who were both accustomed to American cowardice and acquiescence, saw the newly independent United States had both the will and the right to strike back, they quickly abandoned their allegiance to Tripoli. The war with Tripoli lasted for four more years and raged up again in 1815. The bravery of the U.S. Marine Corps in these wars led to the line "to the shores of Tripoli" in the Marine Hymn, and they would forever be known as "leathernecks" for the leather collars of their uniforms, designed to prevent their heads from being cut off by the Muslim pirates when boarding enemy ships.**



**US Marines Fighting the Pirates**

## **The Barbary Coast Wars**

### **1801-1805: The First Barbary War**

The American Navy's show of force quickly calmed the situation. There were many battles, but the U.S. ships were superior and won most of them. Some pirate ships were captured, and the Americans established successful blockades.



**US Navy Ships Destroyed Many Pirate Ships**

But the tide turned against the United States when the frigate Philadelphia ran aground in the harbor of Tripoli (in present day Libya) and the captain and crew were captured. The capture of the Philadelphia was a victory for the pirates, but the triumph was short-lived.

In February 1804, Lieutenant Stephen Decatur of the U.S. Navy, sailing a captured pirate ship, managed to sail into the harbor at Tripoli and recapture the Philadelphia. He burned the ship so it couldn't be used by the pirates. The daring action became a naval legend and Stephen Decatur became a national hero in the United States and he was promoted to captain.

The captain of the Philadelphia, who was eventually released, was William Bainbridge. He later went on to greatness in the U.S. Navy.



**Frigate Philadelphia Burning**

### **To the Shores of Tripoli**

In April 1805 the U.S. Navy, with U.S. Marines, launched an operation against the port of Tripoli. The objective was to install a new ruler. The detachment of Marines, under the command of Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon, led a frontal assault on a harbor fort at the Battle of Derna. O'Bannon and his small force captured the fort.

Marking the first American victory on foreign soil, O'Bannon raised an American flag over the fortress. The mention of the "shores of Tripoli" in the "Marine's Hymn" refers to this triumph.

A new pasha was installed in Tripoli, and he presented O'Bannon with a curved "Mameluke" sword, which is named for North African warriors. To this day Marine dress swords replicate the sword given to O'Bannon.



**Marine "Mameluke" Sword**

### **A Treaty Ended the First Barbary War**

After the American victory at Tripoli, a treaty was arranged which, while not entirely satisfactory for the United States, effectively ended the First Barbary War. Jefferson reported to the Congress in 1806, in the written equivalent of the president's State of the Union Address, where he said the Barbary States would now respect American commerce.



The issue of piracy off Africa faded into the background for about a decade. Problems with Britain interfering with American commerce took precedence, and eventually led to the War of 1812.

### **1815: The Second Barbary War**

During the War of 1812 American merchant ships were kept out of the Mediterranean by Britain's Royal Navy. But problems arose again with the war's end in 1815.

Feeling that the Americans had been seriously weakened, a leader with the title of the Dey of Algiers declared war on the United States. The U.S. Navy responded with a fleet of ten ships, which were commanded by Stephen Decatur and William Bainbridge, both veterans of the earlier Barbary war.

By July 1815 Decatur's ships had captured several Algerian ships and forced the Dey of Algiers to commit to a treaty. Pirate attacks on American merchant ships were effectively ended at that point.

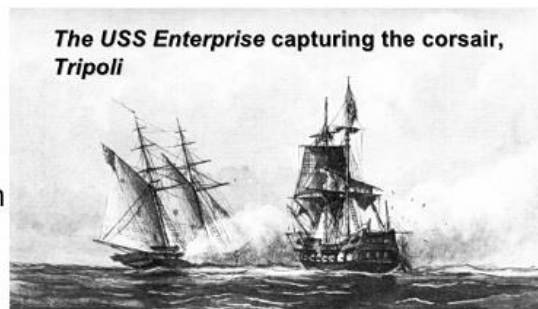
### **Legacy of the Wars Against the Barbary Pirates**

The threat of the Barbary pirates faded into history, especially as the age of imperialism meant the African states supporting piracy came under the control of European powers. And pirates were mainly found in adventure tales until incidents off the coast of Somalia made headlines in the spring of 2009.

## **The Forgotten Wars**

The **Barbary Wars** were two wars between the United States of America and Barbary States in North Africa in the early 19th century. At issue was the pirates' demand of tribute from American merchant vessels in the Mediterranean Sea.

American naval power attacked the pirate cities and extracted concessions of fair passage from their rulers.



*The USS Enterprise capturing the corsair, Tripoli*



**The Barbary Wars were relatively minor engagements, especially when compared to European wars of the period. Yet they provided heroes and thrilling tales of patriotism to the United States as a young nation. Most Americans (like me) know very little about the Barbary Coast Wars.**

### **Thomas Jefferson's Greatest Fear**

**His greatest fear was that someday this brand of Islam would return and pose an even greater threat to the United States of America.**

**This should concern every American. That Muslims have brought about women-only classes and swimming times in America at taxpayer-funded universities and public pools; that Christians, Jews, and Hindus have been banned from serving on juries where Muslim defendants are being judged; Piggy banks and Porky Pig tissue dispensers have been banned from workplaces because they offend Islamist sensibilities; ice cream has been discontinued at certain Burger King locations because the picture on the wrapper looks similar to the Arabic script for Allah; public schools are pulling pork from their menus; on and on and on and on..**

**It's death by a thousand cuts, or inch-by-inch as some refer to it, and most Americans have no idea that this battle is being waged every day across America. By not fighting back, by allowing groups to obfuscate what is really happening, and not insisting that the Islamists adapt to our culture, the United States is cutting its own throat with a politically correct knife and helping to further the Islamists' agenda.**

**Sadly, it appears that today America's leaders would rather be politically correct than victorious!**

**IF YOU DO NOT REMEMBER THE PAST, YOU ARE DOOMED TO REPEAT IT.**

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