

## The War with the Barbary Pirates

When Thomas Jefferson began his term as president, he faced a demand from the Pasha of Tripoli for an immediate payment of \$225,000 and \$25,000 per year. Jefferson refused to pay, so the Pasha declared war on the United States. The other Barbary States formed an alliance with Tripoli, hoping to cash in on a Barbary victory. Determined not to pay the tribute, Jefferson sent a naval squadron to the Mediterranean to intimidate the Barbary States.

The American naval presence in the Mediterranean had mixed results. The American warships were larger and carried more guns than the Barbary ships. This size difference convinced Tunis, Algeria, and Morocco to end their alliance with Tripoli. Unfortunately, it also resulted in the capture of the *Philadelphia* and her crew after the vessel ran aground while chasing a smaller Barbary ship.

Fearing Tripoli would use the *Philadelphia* to attack the other American ships in the Mediterranean, the United States decided to destroy the captured vessel. On February 16, 1804 Lieutenant Stephen Decatur and a small group of sailors managed to sneak aboard the *Philadelphia* and set her on fire. The fire destroyed the warship, preventing the Tripolitans from adding it to their navy.

Despite the loss of his allies and the presence of the American Navy, the Pasha of Tripoli refused to give in. Wishing to end the war, President Jefferson approved a plan for William Eaton to raise a mercenary army in Egypt and use it to capture key cities in Tripoli. In May of 1805 Eaton's mercenary army captured the port city of Derna before heading for the capital.

Facing a naval blockade and an advancing army, the Pasha of Tripoli finally agreed to negotiate with the United States. The Treaty of Peace and Amity was signed in 1805, officially ending the war. In addition, the treaty also required the United States to pay the Pasha \$60,000 for the return of the crew of the *Philadelphia*. The U.S. also agreed to return 89 Tripolitans captured during the war.

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