



**Damn the Torpedoes: A Short History of U.S.
Naval Mine Countermeasures, 1777-1991 -
Farragut, Civil War, Minecraft, Wonsan,
Minehunting, Minesweeping, Bushnell, Fulton,
World War II, Vietnam, Iran**

U.S. Government, Department of Defense, U.S. Navy

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This is an authoritative and thorough history of U.S. Navy mine countermeasures. Mine warfare is by definition the strategic and tactical use of sea mines and their countermeasures, including all offensive and defensive mining and protection against mines. Mining and mine countermeasures (MCM) are, however, two distinctly different operations. The primary focus of modern mining operations is to effect sea control, with secondary missions that neutralize or destroy enemy ships by interdicting enemy sea lines of communication, submarine operating areas, and home ports. Offensively, mines attack enemy ships in transit or bottle them up in their own waters; defensively, mines guard national and international waters against enemy intrusion.

Topics and subjects included in this excellent report: mine countermeasures, MINEWARFOR, paravanes, Avenger class, David Farragut, Civil War, Influence Mines, minecraft, Wonsan, AMCM, MCM, degaussing, deperming, minehunting, minesweeping, Cardinal class, David Bushnell, Robert Fulton, Crimean war, Spanish-American War, George Dewey, Manila Bay, Russo-Japanese War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, MacArthur, MINEPAC, MINELANT, Vietnam War, Admiral Zumwalt, Terrorism, Iran, Gulf War, Iraq War.

1. A Matter of Efficacy: Countering Contact Mines, 1777-1919 * 2. A New Menace: The Operational Use of Influence Mines, 1919-1945 * 3. The Wonsan Generation: Lessons Relearned, 1945-1965 * 4. New Lessons Learned: The Impact of Low-Intensity Mine Warfare, 1965-1991

Rear Admiral David Glasgow Farragut's dramatic entrance through the mine line into Mobile Bay in 1864 has become an enduring legend of naval history and an important lesson used in the training of naval officers. The incident is also an object lesson in the history of the Navy's attitude toward the subject of mine countermeasures. The image of Farragut created by the popular press, that of a daring man who risked an unknown mine threat to defeat the enemy and become the most honored officer in the Navy, influenced generations of naval officers. In terms of both Farragut and the mine threat, however, the Navy has remembered the wrong lessons. What actually happened is a lot more interesting than the legend.

Between Mobile's Forts Morgan and Gaines, Confederates had narrowed the deep-water channel approach to the bay with underwater pilings and three staggered rows of approximately 180 moored mines about seventy-five feet apart, leaving a clear passage only under the guns of Fort Morgan. More than two-thirds of these mines were cone-shaped tin Fretwell-Singer mines. These mines, planted in May 1864 by Confederate Army torpedo expert Lieutenant Colonel Viktor von Scheliha, were fired by direct contact between a ship and the mine's cap and trigger device. A few other mines, mainly Brigadier General Gabriel J. Rains's keg-type wooden ones with ultrasensitive primers, had been planted since February. On the bay's floor lay several huge electrically-fired powder tanks that were controlled from shore. Farragut observed Confederate Admiral Franklin Buchanan's men reminding the bay daily, noting that "we can see them distinctly when at work."

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