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THE ROLE OF THE US NAVY BLACK SEA FLOTILLA IN THE BOMBARDMENT OF SAMSUN BY THE GREEK NAVY IN 1922

Introduction

In the past period, the passage of US warships from the Turkish Straits to the Black Sea within the framework of 1936 Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits, the duration of their stay in the Black Sea, and their participation in various naval exercises have been frequently discussed in the media and the public. Moreover, the military deployments of the US armed forces in the Greek port of Alexandroupoli (*Dedeğaç*) in the Aegean Sea right next to the Turkish-Greek border in Thrace, and the military exercises with Greece in the region covering also Western Thrace (*Bati Trakya*) where historically a substantive Turkish minority lives, were followed by the Turkish public opinion with keen interest.¹ Recent news regarding the

¹ Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun, "Military Use of Inland Waterways in the Black Sea Region," *Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM)* 2021, no. 15 (April 16, 2021): 5; Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun, "Consequences of Material Breach of the Lausanne Peace Treaty," *Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM)* 2020, no. 28 (October 7, 2021): 8.

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additional military deployments made in Greece through the Alexandroupoli port has increased interest in this issue.

In this vein, according to announcement made by the US Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS), “The 839th Transportation Battalion Surface Deployment and Distribution Command offloaded more than 300 pieces of equipment, including 10 helicopters, from the Liberty Promise commercial vessel, at the Port of Alexandroupoli, Greece, on May 5, 2021.”² In a more recent report posted on the US Army website, the following is stated:

“The 598th Transportation Brigade, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command and the 21st Theater Sustainment Command began offloading nearly 400 vehicles and containers at Alexandroupoli to include tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles and a variety of support equipment, Tuesday, July 20. The equipment belongs to the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kansas... ‘The current operation represents the culmination of all the efforts that the U.S. Army, along with our interagency partners at the U.S. Embassy, our allies in Greece and our industry partners, have put in place to leverage the capabilities of this tremendous port,’ said Col. Joshua D. Hirsch, Commander, 598th TBDE. ‘In the last two weeks alone, we have redeployed equipment from DEFENDER-Europe 21 and uploaded equipment from the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division as it heads home following the completion of its own Atlantic Resolve rotation. It’s not only the amount of equipment we are now able to move through Alexandroupoli, it is also the type of equipment. For example, this is the very first time we have used the port to support the arrival and departure of M1s, Bradleys and other armoured and tracked vehicles. That is an incredible milestone for the entire team here.’”³

The fact that the Black Sea region was brought to the top of the international agenda with the emergence of an extremely tense environment in the region due to Russia’s annexation of Crimea and oft-repeated naval exercises by naval forces in the region remind us of the developments regarding the bombardment of some of the Turkish ports in the Black Sea by the Greek navy during the establishment period of the Republic of Turkey following the end of the First World War. In this context, Greek warships made extensive bombardments on Ereğli on the Black Sea coast on 6 June, İnebolu on 30 June, and Trabzon on 20 July in the summer of 1921.⁴ As to Samsun, the bombardment took place in the summer of 1922.

According to Greek scholar Dimitris Michalopoulos, a squadron of the Greek Royal Navy composed of five warships bombarded Samsun on “May 25, 1922”. Since there is a 13-day difference between the Georgian and Julian calendars this date is actually 7 June 1922. The mentioned source cites that the squadron was composed of five warships, namely “Averof”, “Panthēr” (Panther), “Ierax” (Hawk), “Adriatikos” (Adriatic) and “Naxos” (Island of Naxos).⁵ There are a number of references in academic sources that the Greek battleship *Kilkis* (the US made Mississippi class battleship) was also included in the Greek fleet.⁶ Michalopoulos provides the information about the names of the war vessels in the Greek fleet with reference to the news published in the newspaper *Kathimerini* dated 28 May 1922.

2 “Alexandroupoli,” Information site, The Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS), accessed August 30, 2021, <https://www.dvidshub.net/search?q=Alexandroupoli+&view=grid>.

3 Jeff Jurgensen, “Atlantic Resolve Rotation Demonstrates Strategic Importance of Seaport in Alexandroupoli, Greece,” *U.S. Army*, July 22, 2021, https://www.army.mil/article/248667/atlantic_resolve_rotation_demonstrates_strategic_importance_of_seaport_in_alexandroupoli_greece.

4 Hayati Aktaş, “İngiliz ve Amerikan Belgelerinde Samsun’un Bombalanması Olayı ve Pontus Meselesi (The Bombardment of Samsun in English and American Documents and Pontus Issue),” *History Studies* 11, no. 3 (June 2019): 830–31, <https://doi.org/10.9737/hist.2019.742>.

5 Dimitris Michalopoulos, “The 1922 Samsun Bombardment (1922 Samsun Bombardımanı),” *Studies of Ottoman Domain* 5, no. 9 (August 2015), <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/237625>.

6 Rahmi Doğanay, “İstiklal Harbinde Samsun’daki Amerikan Filosu,” *Geçmişten Geleceğe Samsun*, 2006, 163.

The point that draws attention in this historical event is that, at the time when the Greek navy bombarded Samsun, the destroyers belonging to the US navy were also present in the port of Samsun. According to the information provided in various publications regarding this bombardment, including academic ones, these US navy warships were Clamsen class destroyers of USS Sands (DD-243), USS McFarland (DD-237), and USS Sturtevant (DD-240).⁷ In fact the names of these three destroyers are mentioned in the Administrative Reference Service Report No. 2 published in the US Naval History and Heritage Command website along with the other US destroyers which served in patrolling activities in Turkish waters up until July 1922. These destroyers were the Childs, Fox, McFarland, Overton, Reuben James, Sands, Sturtevant, and Williamson.⁸ It should be noted that these US warships were stationed in Turkish waters on rotational basis, at least forty destroyers served in the fleet between 1919-1922.⁹

In the light of the foregoing, the following questions arise: Why were these warships of the US Navy in the port of Samsun on 7 June 1922, and did these ships take part in the bombardment by the Greek warships? To answer these questions, there is a need to briefly remember the reasons of the presence of the US naval flotilla in the Black Sea in 1922.

Deployment of the US Naval Detachment in Turkish Waters from 1919 to 1924

As per the information provided in a recently published semi-academic US source, as well as in the US Naval History and Heritage Command research papers regarding the presence of US naval detachment in the Turkish waters from 1919 to 1922, the US, following the First World War, sent a flotilla of warships to the Turkish waters with a homeport based in İstanbul.¹⁰ This flotilla sent by the then US President Woodrow Wilson under the name of “Detachment Protecting Americans and American Interests in Turkish Waters” was formed around the heavy cruiser USS St. Louis as flagship.¹¹ The flotilla, at the beginning, included a number of light navy vessels such as the USS Scorpion, a converted steam yacht which had been used as the American stationary at İstanbul for a number of years as the ambassador’s yacht/yacht office and occasionally as a gunboat.¹²

Although the US and Ottoman Empire were on different warring camps in the First World War, they did not declare war on each other, and the US did not take part in the occupation of the Ottoman Empire territories. However, upon the outbreak of war between the US and Germany, diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the US were severed in April 1917.¹³ In this regard, the cable dated 23 April 1917 and numbered 912 sent by the US Charge d’affaires G. Cornell Tarler in Istanbul at that time to the US Secretary of State conveys the following:

“I have the honor to transmit herewith copy and translation of a note from the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated April 20, 1917, informing the Embassy that in view of the state of war existing between the United States and the German Empire, as the ally of the latter country the Ottoman Government was obliged to break off diplomatic relations with the Government of the United States, beginning from April 20.”¹⁴

7 “Saumsun 1922,” *World Armed Forces Forum*, April 30, 2021, <https://www.tapatalk.com/groups/worldarmedforcesforum/samsun-1922-t287480.html>; Hulki Cevizoğlu, *1919’un Şifresi (Gizli ABD İşgalinin Belge ve Fotoğrafları)*, 1st ed. (Ankara: Ceviz Kabuğu Yayınları, 2007).

8 Henry P. Beers, “United States Naval Detachment in Turkish Waters, 1919–24,” *Military Affairs* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1943): 218, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1982570>.

9 Robert Shenk, *America’s Black Sea Fleet: The U.S. Navy Amidst War and Revolution, 1919-1923* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 179.

10 Savvas “Sam” Koktzoglou and Robert Shenk, eds., “The Greek Genocide in American Naval War Diaries: Naval Commanders Report and Protest Death Marches and Massacres in Turkey’s Pontus Region, 1921-1922” (New Orleans: The University of New Orleans Press, 2021), 393.

11 “Far Seas: The U.S. Naval Detachment in Turkish Waters, 1920-1922,” Information site, Naval History and Heritage Command, accessed August 30, 2021, <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/archives/Collections/transferred-collections/navy-library-transfer/far-seas.html>.

12 Shenk, *America’s Black Sea Fleet: The U.S. Navy Amidst War and Revolution, 1919-1923*, 1.

13 Nur Bilge Criss, “By Shades Of Diplomatic Recognition: American Encounters With Turkey (1923–1937),” in *Studies In Atatürk’s Turkey: The American Dimension*, ed. George S. Harris and Nur Bilge Criss (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 104.

14 G. Cornell Tarler, “Papers Relating To The Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1917, Supplement 1, The World War” (United States Department of State, April 23, 1917), 763.72/5428, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1917Supp01v01/d833>.

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Following the severing of diplomatic relations, the above-mentioned US navy vessel Scorpion was interned by Ottoman authorities in İstanbul Haliç (Golden Horn) with its skeleton staff.¹⁵ After the armistice of Mudanya (Mondros) on 30 October 1918, the US decided to re-establish diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire. The US Embassy was re-opened in İstanbul, and in connection with opening of the US Embassy, the Scorpion was permitted to raise its flag and began to receive military equipment on 9 November 1918 upon the permission of Ottoman authorities. Meanwhile, a veteran navy personnel, Rear Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol, was nominated as the Senior U. S. Naval Officer on 8 January 1919 in command of not only the Navy Attachment in Turkish Waters but of the east of longitude 21°, which included all of Greece, except Corfu, and the region to the east. He travelled to the Ottoman Empire on the board of USS Schley and arrived in İstanbul on 24 January 1919, and the U. S. Naval Detachment in Turkish waters came into existence on 28 January 1919, when Rear Admiral Bristol raised his flag on the Scorpion.¹⁶ Thereafter, Admiral Bristol was named as High Commissioner on 12 August 1919, thereby also assumed the position of highest US diplomatic representative in İstanbul. His instructions from then on were to be communicated from the State Department through the Navy Department.¹⁷ According to US academic sources, the dual title of commanding the US Naval Detachment and heading the US diplomatic mission enabled Admiral Bristol to control the US warships in the Turkish waters and also through the American consuls at İzmir (Smyrna,) Bagdad, Beirut, Jerusalem, Damascus, Aleppo, and Samsun, and through other official and unofficial Americans stationed or travelling in the region, to keep himself well informed of occurrences in the interior of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸

US academic literature about the tasks and activities of the US Naval Detachment in Turkish Waters in the mentioned period, in general, refers to the importance, influence, and activities of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East (shortly Near East Relief-NER), and the American Protestant missionary schools in the Ottoman Empire before, during and the immediate afterwards of the First World War. While mentioning the activities of NER and the importance of the missionary schools, reference is generally made to the protection of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, and the education of Armenian children in missionary schools.¹⁹ In this context, it is not surprising to see that the semi-academic US source referred to in footnote 11 explains the purpose of sending this flotilla to the Turkish Waters in the following way: “This small detachment’s mission was to speed teams of investigators and relief personnel in response to the reports of great atrocities being committed through out Turkey, particularly against the Armenian people.”²⁰

In this conjunction, it is worth mentioning that American Protestant missionary schools in the Ottoman Empire founded under the patronage of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) which was formed in Boston by members of the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches in 1810 with the aim of “evangelization of the whole World”.²¹ It is stated in this respect that the American missionary work mainly focused on evangelization, medical work, and especially education.²² According to academic sources, missionary work in the Ottoman Empire was carried out and spread through the mission stations and missionary schools. After the establishment of a mission in İstanbul as the center of all missionary activities, following mission stations were established in the Ottoman

15 “Post-War: Humanitarian Aid and Relief,” Information site, Naval History and Heritage Command, accessed August 30, 2021, <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/publications/documentary-histories/wwi/post-war-humanitaria.html>.

16 “Far Seas: The U.S. Naval Detachment in Turkish Waters, 1920-1922,” 210.

17 Criss, “By Shades Of Diplomatic Recognition: American Encounters With Turkey (1923–1937),” 105–6.

18 Beers, “United States Naval Detachment in Turkish Waters, 1919–24,” 213–14.

19 Sarah Miglio, “America’s Sacred Duty: Near East Relief and the Armenian Crisis, 1915-1930” (New York: Rockefeller Archive Center, 2009), 1, <https://rockarch.issuelab.org/resources/27766/27766.pdf>.

20 Koptzoglou and Shenk, “The Greek Genocide in American Naval War Diaries: Naval Commanders Report and Protest Death Marches and Massacres in Turkey’s Pontus Region, 1921-1922,” 1.

21 Erhan Çağrı, “Ottoman Official Attitudes Towards American Missionaries,” *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 2000, 192, https://doi.org/10.1501/Intrel_0000000017.

22 Devrim Ümit, “The American Protestant Missionary Network in Ottoman Turkey, 1876-1914,” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 4, no. 6(1) (April 2014): 17.

Empire: Trabzon (1835), Erzurum (1839), Antep (1849), Maraş (1855), Adana, Aleppo, Tarsus, Iskenderun, Kilis and Thessaloniki (1850), Izmir (1859).²³ Each station became a settlement, in which “the Christian home was the center and from which wholesome Christian influences were exerted upon all with whom the missionaries came in contact.”²⁴

Alongside the missionary churches and stations, missionary schools were established widely in various parts of the Empire. The Syrian Protestant College (later, the American University of Beirut), İstanbul Robert College (RC), and İstanbul American College for Girls-ACG (Arnavutköy Amerikan Kız Koleji)²⁵ were the precursors for the Protestant missionary schools within the Ottoman Empire.²⁶ According to US scholar Joseph L. Gravill (see footnote 27), the example of the three US based institutions at İstanbul and Beirut inspired the ABCFM during the period from 1878 to 1903 to open more colleges in the Ottoman Empires like Euphrates College (including seminary) at Harput; American College at Van; Central Turkey College (including seminary) with campuses for men and women at Antep (Aintab) and Maraş (Marash); St. Paul College at Tarsus; Anatolia College at Merzifon; International College at İzmir (Smyrna); the Collegiate and Theological Institute at Samokov (Bulgaria) and Agricultural and Industrial Institute at Salonica (Selanik). Gravill states that “The development of Anatolia, Central Turkey, and International colleges exemplified American Board schools. *Anatolia* emerged out of a high school in 1886 and served primarily youth of Armenian Protestant adults in the vicinity of Merzifon.”²⁷ In this context, we should underline that the presence of the US missionary school in Merzifon was one of the important reasons for the close interest of the US to Samsun and Samsun port at that time.

The impact of Near East Relief on US policies towards Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1922

Per US academic sources, NER was founded for the sole purpose of serving the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. In this regard, under the title of “relief work”, the Protestant missionaries ceased their proselytizing activities in the Ottoman Empire and engaged in “rescuing the Armenians” in the Empire. For this purpose, American missionaries such as James Barton and philanthropists such as Charles Crane and Cleveland Dodge formed a committee in 1915 called the American Committee for Relief in the Near East. It is stated in these sources that the first initiative on this subject was initiated by Henry Morgenthau, the US Ambassador in Istanbul in 1915.²⁸ Morgenthau, a staunch supporter of US President Woodrow Wilson, was appointed as Ambassador to Istanbul in 1913 and remained in that post until 1916. Morgenthau, in a cable he dispatched to US Secretary of State on 3 September 1915, proposes the formation of a committee for raising funds for Armenians as follows: “Destruction of Armenian race in Turkey is progressing rapidly. Massacre reported at Angora and Brusa. Will you suggest to Cleveland Dodge, Charles Crane, John R. Mott, Stephen Wise, and others to form committee to raise funds and provide means to save some of the Armenians and assist the poorer ones to emigrate, and perhaps to enlist California, Oregon, and Washington to transport some of these people direct to their shores via Panama Canal?”²⁹ The State Department on September 9 advised Cleveland

23 James L. Barton, *Daybreak in Turkey*, 2nd ed. (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1908), 139, <https://archive.org/details/daybreakinturkey00bart/page/138/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater>.

24 Barton, 142.

25 According to İstanbul Robert College web site, “Although separate entities, these two schools in İstanbul developed close ties through the years. In 1932, RC and ACG came under the administration of a single President, and in 1959, a single Board of Trustees. In 1971, Robert Academy (the high school division on the Bebek campus) and ACG merged as a co-ed high school on the Arnavutköy campus as Robert College. The same year, the university division at the Bebek campus was given to the Turkish government, and was established as Boğaziçi University”. “History of RC,” Information site, Robert College, May 2019, <https://website.robcol.k12.tr/en/about-rc/history>.

26 Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 25.

27 Grabill, 25–26.

28 Miglio, “America’s Sacred Duty: Near East Relief and the Armenian Crisis, 1915-1930,” 2.

29 Henry Morgenthau Sr., “The Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau) to the Secretary of State” (United States Department of State, September 3, 1915), 867.4016/117, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1915Supp/d1410>.

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H. Dodge³⁰, vice-president of the Phelps Dodge Corporation and father of two missionary educators in Turkey, of Morgenthau's message and asked him to set up a committee. An appropriation of \$100,000,000 was made by an act of Congress approved 24 February 1919 for the relief of the non-enemy countries of Europe but not excluding the Armenians, Syrians, Greeks, and other Christian and Jewish population of Asia Minor. Under the terms of this act the US President appointed Herbert Hoover (the 31st US President from 1929 to 1933) as Director General of the American Relief Administration (ARA) and authorized the employment of the Food Administration Grain Corporation to purchase, transport, and distribute foodstuffs and supplies to countries requiring relief. Under the directorship of İstanbul office of the ARA, hundreds of agents of these organizations began working throughout the Near East.³¹ By 6 August 1919, Congress incorporated the committee as the Near East Relief.

As the above explanations reveal, NER enjoyed the strong support of US President Woodrow Wilson. Wilson encouraged the US federal government to donate relief supplies to NER and urged Americans to donate money to NER and the Red Cross in multiple open letters to the American public. It is asserted that President Wilson and Congress' approval signaled the "cultural and political support behind the first modern, national humanitarian effort of the United States, while NER and its missionary leadership provided a compelling narrative to motivate Americans to give."³²

Wilson's strong support for Armenians and his role in the preparation of Treaty of Sèvres will be remembered. In fact, Wilson asked the US Congress for the authority to establish US mandate for Armenia on May 24, 1920, but the Senate rejected his request by a vote of 52 to 23 on June 1 of the same year.³³

As will be remembered, Wilson presented herself as the apostle of peace and the savior of all the oppressed in the 1920s. In this connection, we would like to remind our readers that on 27 June 2020, Christopher L. Eisgruber, the President of Princeton University announced the decision of the university's board of trustees that the names of both Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and Wilson College would be renamed without reference to Wilson. The reason cited by the board of trustees for the decision was that "Woodrow Wilson's **racist thinking and policies** make him an inappropriate namesake for a school or college whose scholars, students, and alumni must stand firmly against racism in all its forms."³⁴ (bold emphasis added).

Activities of the US Black Sea Fleet in the Black Sea Ports of Turkey

According to Dr. Henry F. Beers, the US Navy Detachment rendered various kinds of assistance to the relief agencies. In that respect, High Commissioner Admiral Bristol made all necessary arrangements with the Allied authorities in İstanbul. He designated naval officers to serve as port officers at İzmir, Derince (Derindje), and Constanta/Romania to handle relief cargoes. In some cases, transportation was furnished by navy vessels. They also carried mail for all American interests and supplied radio communication. The same assistance was given to American business concerns operating in the Near East. The most active of these was apparently the Standard Oil Company of New York, which had an

30 As per Boğaziçi University web site, Mr. Cleveland Dodge in 1914 donated to Robert College one of the five most famous organs of the world which is currently placed in the Albert Long Hall building in the university's main campus. Dodge Gymnasium in the university campus was also financed by Cleveland H. Dodge, Chairman of the Board of Trustees from 1909 until 1926, and his father, William E. Dodge. Washburn Hall or the present-day Economics and Administrative Sciences Building was financed by Mrs. William E. Dodge, the widow of Mr. William E. Dodge. "History of Boğaziçi University," Information site, Boğaziçi University, accessed August 30, 2021, http://www.boun.edu.tr/en-US/Content/About_BU/History.

31 Joseph L. Gravill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 70.

32 Miglio, "America's Sacred Duty: Near East Relief and the Armenian Crisis, 1915-1930," 3.

33 "Senate Rejects Mandate, 52 To 23; Thirteen Democrats Vote with Republicans Against Action For Armenia.," *The New York Times*, June 2, 1920, 23, <https://www.nytimes.com/1920/06/02/archives/senate-rejects-mandate-52-to-23-thirteen-democrats-vote-with.html>.

34 AVİM, "Woodrow Wilson, Armenia, and the Tackling of a Long-Standing Hypocrisy," AVİM Commentary, 2020, no. 29 (September 24, 2020), <https://avim.org.tr/en/Yorum/WOODROW-WILSON-ARMENIA-AND-THE-TACKLING-OF-A-LONG-STANDING-HYPOCRISY>.

office in İstanbul and branches in the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan states.³⁵ Before the First World War, the US tobacco companies were operating in and around Samsun. The region around Samsun and Bafra had the reputation for producing a high-quality tobacco desirable to American cigarette manufacturers.³⁶ The Alston Tobacco Company was a subsidiary of P. Lorillard Tobacco Company of New Jersey, which was among the US companies importing tobacco from the region to US.³⁷ Another US tobacco firm was Jonathan H. Holmes of American Tobacco. This company in 1922 expressed the concern to US Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes that “the Turks would requisition a million pounds of tobacco stored by the company in the Samsun region”.³⁸ It should be noted that the commercial activities of American tobacco companies were an important factor in the frequent deployment of US navy vessels in Samsun port and the fact that the US had always kept at least one warship in this port.³⁹

As mentioned before, on June 7, 1922, during the bombardment of Samsun by the Greek warships, US warships were in the Samsun port. According to the information provided by the Turkish academic sources with reference to information compiled from the diaries of Robert Ghormley, who was the commander of the USS Sands (DD-243) destroyer and the most senior officer in the US flotilla at that time, the following events took place on the day of bombardment. It should be noted that Robert Ghormley gained naval fame and public attention during the Second World War and become the vice chief of Naval Operations of the US in the war and commanded to all operations in the Southwest Pacific as Vice-Admiral.⁴⁰

As per his diaries, Ghormley came ashore at 9:00 am on June 7 and went to the office of Johnson, one of the representatives of US firms in the city. There, he learned from someone that Greek ships were waiting outside the port. He tells Johnson to notify all Americans. He then contacts the senior officer of the Greek fleet by radio and requests a meeting. Following this, he goes aboard the Naxos warship in the Greek fleet and speaks with the Greek officer. The Greek officer demands that the Italian and French-flagged merchant ships in the port be withdrawn from the line of fire. Gormley, on the other hand, asks for time to get the Americans out of the city. He says that there are many foreigners and several thousand Greek women in the city, and they should not be put at risk. The Greek officer says that they wrote a letter to the governor of the city, that he can read this letter if he takes it to his addressees, and if he does not, they will send the letter to the shore themselves. Ghormley agrees to take the letter for immediate contact with the Americans in the city. Going ashore, he meets with the Governor (Faik Bey) and the military governor (Commander of the Division Cemil Cahit Bey) at the telegraph office and delivers the letter to his addressees.⁴¹ The letter provided in Turkish in the aforementioned source is as follows⁴²:

“On Board of Naxos

To the Governor of Samsun City,

The existence of the Greek fleet, which was acting legally, cannot be a reason for the Turks to apply pressure and persecution on the Christians. If this situation continues, the Greek fleet will exercise seriously the right of retaliation along the entire coast which is under the control of Mustafa Kemal. We forewarn you.

35 Beers, “United States Naval Detachment in Turkish Waters, 1919–24,” 212.

36 Robert Carey Goodman, “The Role of the Tobacco Trade in Turkish-American Relations, 1923-29” (Master Thesis, Richmond, University of Richmond, 1988), 29–30, <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1524&context=masters-theses>.

37 Goodman, 23.

38 Goodman, 21–22.

39 Doğanay, “İstiklal Harbinde Samsun’daki Amerikan Filosu,” 164.

40 Shenk, *America’s Black Sea Fleet: The U.S. Navy Amidst War and Revolution, 1919-1923*, 282.

41 Doğanay, “İstiklal Harbinde Samsun’daki Amerikan Filosu,” 168.

42 Doğanay, 168–69.

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On the orders of the Admiral, who commands the Greek fleet, we invite you to destruct all your weapons, ammuniton, mines, and other war materials before a delegation of Greek officers appointed by us. The destruction must begin before 13.15 today. If you do not comply with this request, from this time on, we will exercise the exemption granted in Article 2 of the Convention of the Second Hague Conference.⁴³ We're sending you a copy of it. After receiving this note, contact the representatives of neutral states and consulates regarding what is reported in it, to have their nationals evacuated from the city before the specified time. In the same way, evacuate the non-combatants in the city. If you delay the execution of this order or resort to resistance, we will not be held responsible.

Variacos, Captain, Royal Greek Fleet”

Samsun Governor Faik Bey's response to the Greek navy's ultimatum was conveyed through Gormley. The response is as follows:

“We have received the letter you sent us through the American destroyer. In response to this letter, we state that the city of Samsun is an open city and that it would be illegal to bombard it. We would also like to point out the following: The terms you propose are not acceptable, therefore we reject them. Consuls, foreigners and people of other nationalities and religions live in the city. If disorder arises, all the inhabitants of the city will remain where they are. They will not leave the city. In such a situation, the responsibility will fall on you. The alleged persecution of Christians is an illusion. Therefore, I protest every act you can do against the city.”⁴⁴

The Greek commander, after reading the answer, announces that they will bombard Samsun and asks the American destroyer to withdraw from the line of fire. Ghormley, first, protests this behavior for the sake of humanity and requests 24 hours respite for the withdrawal of foreigners in accordance with international rules. However, the Greek navy commander claims that the Turks violated Samsun's open city status and declares that they will carry out the bombing. Thereupon, Ghormley informs the Greeks in which house the Americans are gathered and asks the area not to be bombarded. He then returns to his warship and withdraws the US warships out of firing range. The bombardment begins at 15:02 with the fire of one of the Greek destroyers. The customs house, the Government House, warehouses, marine vessels, oil tanks, tobacco warehouses, most of which belong to the American and Dutch owners, become targets of bombardment. The bombardment, having caused great destruction and loss of life in the city, ends at 18:00 and the Greek warships withdraw at 19:30.⁴⁵ In response to the claims of the Greek authorities that there was not much damage and loss of life in the city due to bombardment, the New York

43 Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Hague, 18 October 1907: Art. 2. The provisions contained in the Regulations referred to in Article 1, as well as in the present Convention, do not apply except between Contracting powers, and then only if all the belligerents are parties to the Convention.

According to the Union of Turkish Bar Associations publication entitled “Uluslararası İnsancıl Hukuk Açısından Savaş Ve Barış Hukuku” (2015) by Av. Dr. Özden SAV, footnote 10, page.20, “Although the Ottoman Empire participated in the 1907 Hague Conference and signed the aforementioned Conventions, these 1907 Conventions, which were later ratified neither by the Ottoman Empire nor by the Republic of Turkey. Turkey has never been a party to the Conventions.” Moreover, according to the website of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Greece signed the Convention on 18.10.1907 but did not ratify it. “Convention (IV) Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and Its Annex: Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Hague,” (International Committee Of The Red Cross, October 18, 1907), https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/States.xsp?xp_viewStates=XPages_NORMStatesSign&xp_treatySelected=195.

44 Doğanay, “İstiklal Harbinde Samsun'daki Amerikan Filosu,” 170.

45 Doğanay, 171.

Times newspaper reported on June 21, 1921, that 90 people lost their lives in the city based on the information given by the American commanders in the region.⁴⁶

Futile efforts to revive the fabricated “Pontic Genocide” narrative through the diaries of the US officers who served in 1920s in the US Black Sea Flotilla

A summary has been given above about the formation and activities of the US Navy detachment in Turkish territorial waters in 1920s, the activities of the American Protestant missionary schools and relief organizations in the Ottoman Empire, and the connection between the formation of this detachment and missionary activities at that time. One scholar coins the term “The American Protestant Missionary Network” for explaining the true nature of activities of American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire. She states that the mentioned term indicates “the intermingled nature of the American missionary-philanthropic enterprise in Ottoman Turkey, which included a wide range of individuals from Presidents and Congressmen, businessmen and diplomats, to educators and journalists.”⁴⁷ We see nowadays that retired members of the US Navy are also joining this network that seeks to undermine Turkey and denigrate Turks.

As AVİM, we observe that in connection with the historical background of the US naval activities in Turkish territorial waters in the 1920s, the fabricated “Pontus genocide” narrative, claims and assertions are sought to be circulated through the diaries of US naval officers. An example of these efforts is a semi-academic book mentioned above that was recently published in the US.⁴⁸ It is possible to say that the book, which brings to fore the stale “Pontic Genocide” claims, starting from its title and the Preface, ultimately constitutes defamation against Turks and Turkey. One of the most interesting aspects of the book for Turkish readers is that its Foreword was written by retired US Admiral James Stavridis, who served as NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) from July 2009 until his retirement in 2013. Stavridis claims in the Preface, inter alia, that;

“...multiple atrocities that were then inflicted upon the men and women of Greek heritage in Turkey. These included the burning of hundreds of Greek villages, the murders of many of the villagers, some of them being burned alive; the sending of Greek males to hard labor camps with impossibly insufficient food and no shelter so that their deaths were virtually inevitable; the terrible death marches of women, children, and elderly, along with incidental rapes, murders, and abductions of young Greek woman, as well as the repeated robberies of all those people along the way...”.

In this context, the following should be reminded to those who unilaterally describe the conditions of the First World War pursuant to their political priorities, ambitions, and ethnical prejudices and insist on defaming Turks and Turkey through unfounded claims: Thousands of people from all ethnicities and religions perished before, during, and after the First World War in Anatolia. It is an indisputable fact that during and following the First World War period, most of the Pontic Greeks tried to dismember the state they lived in, collaborated with the invading forces of Anatolia, fought against the people they lived together for centuries, aggressively disrupted the inter-communal relations. Despite all these destructive deeds, they ultimately lost.⁴⁹ It seems that the authors who wrote the novel about fictional wars to be fought in 2034 still do not understand what happened in the First World War in Anatolia.⁵⁰

46 “90 CASUALTIES IN SAMSUN.; American Officer’s Report Differs From Greek Account of Bombardment,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1921, <https://www.nytimes.com/1922/06/12/archives/90-casualties-in-samsun-american-officers-report-differs-from-greek.html>.

47 Ümit, “The American Protestant Missionary Network in Ottoman Turkey, 1876-1914,” 16.

48 Koktzoglou and Shenk, “The Greek Genocide in American Naval War Diaries: Naval Commanders Report and Protest Death Marches and Massacres in Turkey’s Pontus Region, 1921-1922.”

49 Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun, “The Pontus Narrative And Hate Speech” (Ankara: Center For Eurasian Studies, May 2017), 17.

50 Eliot Ackerman and Admiral John Stavridis, *2034: A Novel of the Next World War*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2021).

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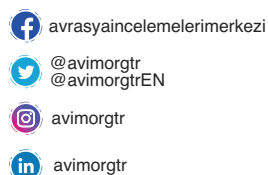
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