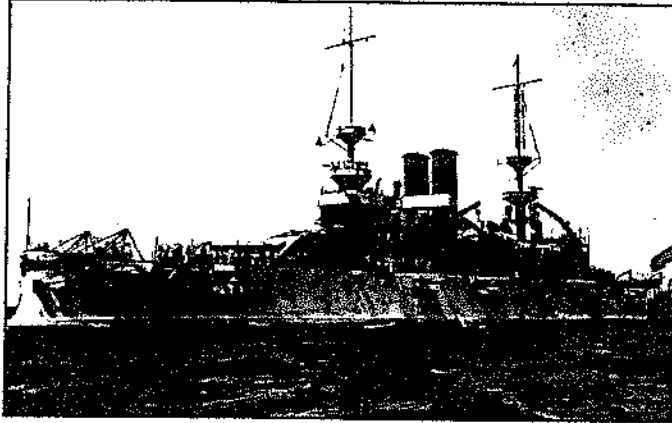


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*Brooklyn* (ACR-3), for example, was put on alert to keep watch over six German steam liners currently docked in Boston. Somewhat to Daniels' embarrassment, the Reserve Fleet had to pool the crews of all four battleships on to the Great White Fleet-veteran USS *Alabama* (BB-8) due to a chronic shortage of sailors. Her captain reported that they would



Secretary Daniels instructed that all four battleships of the Navy's Reserve Fleet steam from Philadelphia to Hampton Roads to act as a peacekeeping force. Due to a chronic sailor shortage, the four battleships had to pool their crews on to USS *Alabama* (BB-8) which arrived in the region in late March. (HRNM photo)

not get underway for another two weeks.

Thierichens was quite smug about the whole turn of events. He told local papers that he planned to break out of Hampton Roads with the assistance of the battlecruiser *SMS Von Der Tan* and a U-boat nearby once his ship was repaired and refueled. For Thierichens, this was wishful thinking as *Von Der Tan* was still in Germany and later fought at the Battle of Jutland.

As for the officers and crews of the ships sunk by *Friedrich*, the reaction differed from officers and the enlisted personnel. The officers were quite appreciative of how well they were treated by Capt. Thierichens. The sailors however told newspaper reporters that the Germans forced them to eat spoiled food, drink salty water, provided no heat in colder climates, and denied them fresh air while in the Tropics. They did later admit that the German sailors were working under the same conditions as they were living.

On March 15, Thierichens revised his repair request to Newport News Shipbuilding. Instead of the putting his ship into dry-dock for three weeks, he asked the shipyard only for spare parts for his ship's boilers and other machines. He would have his crew do the necessary repairs instead. The shipyard denied his request, removed the vessel from dry-dock, and placed her alongside one of the yard's piers. U.S. Custom authorities

asked Thierichens for his intentions. While he did not give any direct response to them, he remained as definite as ever to the newspapers. "Despite the changes of weather and the hazards of the cruise, we have not lost a single life and the crew we have today is the same to a man as that which left Tsing Tau many months ago and ready to take another chance," he commented to the *Virginian-Pilot*.

While British and French rotated their ships off the Virginia Capes and maintained their blockade, events in Hampton Roads got back to normal. *Friedrich's* crew began repairs to the hull and the ship's machinery for a week and caused little commotion. The Navy began to get a better handle on the situation when *Alabama* finally arrived in Hampton Roads on March 20. Welcome reinforcements in the form of six submarines arrived from their base in Connecticut soon after *Alabama's* arrival. They took station off the coast of Ft. Wool and in the Chesapeake Bay.

Troops from Ft. Monroe and sailors from the Navy Yard were placed on a 24-hour guard of *Friedrich* to ensure that no intruders would disturb the Germans. This included newspaper reporters. There was at least one incident where sailors spotted a photographer trying to snap a shot for the *Virginian-Pilot*. The sailors roughed the photographer up a bit, seized his camera, pulled out the plate, and threw it into the river.

Among foreign circles, the Navy was not winning any friends either. In an attempt to keep things under control, Navy and Customs officials instructed that no foreign ships could leave Hampton Roads and any ships coming in had to stop and be boarded. Any ship found violating the rules would be fired on. Twenty-five British ships, most loaded with horses and supplies for the French army, were held up, much to the annoyance of the British consulate and local exporters.

The consulate's attempts to remedy the situation only met with frustration. Local merchants took their case up with Virginia's congressional delegation, but with little effect. One of the reasons the British ships were kept

under lock and key was that a few of them had been caught sneaking coal and supplies out to the Allied blockade. This act violated American neutrality laws.

As the month of April rolled around, Allied cruisers maintained their blockade despite several gale force rain storms. Speculation on whether or not *Friedrich* was going to make a dash to freedom continued to circulate. Newspaper articles frequently prepped their readers for the possible battle by publishing every rumor heard and with information like water depths of the Chesapeake Bay and ship statistics.

Finally, on April 4, the State Department told *Friedrich* she had until April 6 at 4 a.m. to leave Hampton Roads. But it was still not clear whether or not the Germans would take advantage of the situation. They had passed up several opportunities to leave, particularly when the weather was bad or during moonless nights. Nonetheless, on April 6, the *Ledger-Star* reported that it looked like *Friedrich* was about to leave port and the showdown was about to begin.

It soon became clear that Thierichens and *Friedrich* were not going to make a great dash to freedom. The German captain was well aware that his ship was in no condition to sail and that his potential opponents were too strong. His talk about a battlecruiser and U-boat coming to save him was nothing more than delusory thinking.

"I inform you I intend to intern SMS *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*. The relief I expected appeared not to arrive in time so the number and force of enemy cruisers guarding the entrance to the bay makes to me impossible the dash for the open sea with any hope of success," a depressed Thierichens wrote, in broken English, to the Collector of Customs for Hampton Roads and Rear Adm. Helm, commandant of the Naval Shipyard and the senior officer in the region.

U.S. Customs officials impounded the ship on April 7. The Customs Service in turn handed the ship and her crew over to the Navy who took them both down to the Naval Shipyard.

There were still a few loose ends to tie up. The German government agreed to compensate Capt. Kiehne for the loss of *William P. Frye* as an interpretation of the treaty of friendship signed between the United States and Prussia during the American Revolution. Local papers suggested

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