**Union Blockade of the Georgia Coast**

The Union blockade of the Georgia coast was part of a military strategy, known as the Anaconda plan put into operation against the Confederacy. The entire coastline of the Southern states was subjected to a naval blockade to prevent the South from importing the necessary war supplies and provisions or exporting their cotton, tobacco and other cash crops to European markets.

Confederate defensive strategy evolved with the Union blockade. After the fall of Port Royal, South Carolina, in November 1861, Confederate president Jefferson Davis appointed General Robert E. Lee to reorganize Confederate coastal defenses. Lee quickly realized the impossibility of defending the entire coastline and decided to consolidate limited Confederate forces and materiel at key strategic points. He countered Union naval superiority by ensuring easy reinforcement of Confederate coastal positions along [railroad](http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/business-economy/railroads) lines. Lee minimized reliance upon the very weak Confederate navy and maximized the use of Confederate military forces in coastal areas, including both Georgia's Sea Islands and mainland ports with railroad connections.

Savannah was the most significant port in Georgia, and the Union strategy centered on securing bases around outlying islands to deny access to private merchants and mercenary ships. A small fleet of seven Confederate gunboats, three ironclad, were no match for the Union Navy. Despite unique weapons, like the torpedo, Union forces maintained a stranglehold on the Savannah coast. A small victory came in June 1864 with the capture of the U.S.S. Water Witch while it was docked.

Georgians could only hold out for a limited amount of time. Union Gen. William T. Sherman's troops attacked in December 1864 and captured Savannah Dec. 22, 1864, thereby linking up with the Union Navy and ending the blockade. The blockade strategy was hugely successful and played a significant role in defeating the Confederate States of America.