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# SIR JOHN ORDE AND THE TRAFALGAR CAMPAIGN

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## A Failure of Information Sharing

*J. Ross Dancy and Evan Wilson*

What we now call the Trafalgar campaign took place over the spring and summer of 1805. French, Spanish, and British fleets raced back and forth across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Orders flew from London and Madrid, and especially from Boulogne, where Napoléon was camped with 165,000 men preparing to invade Britain. Confusion was the order of the day. French admirals often executed one set of orders, only to learn later that other ad-

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mirals were executing an entirely different set. The Spanish, recently coerced into the war, struggled to catch up with their French allies and prepare their fleets for sea. The British, stretched thin owing to mismanagement during the recent peace and the challenge of fighting two peer competitors at once, desperately searched for the French and Spanish fleets they had failed to blockade in port. Yet by the time Vice Admiral Lord Nelson stepped ashore in England for the last time in August 1805, having crossed the Atlantic twice, the chaos had resolved itself into a large British fleet blockading an even larger Franco-Spanish Combined Fleet in Cádiz. It was, in effect, the end of the Trafalgar campaign. The actual battle, which took place two months later, was something of an anticlimax, strategically speaking.

This article focuses on one little-noticed aspect of the Trafalgar campaign: the role of British vice

admiral Sir John Orde. It is not an obvious point of inquiry, as there is a well-established historical consensus about Orde's actions, which can be summarized as follows. Orde commanded a detached squadron of five ships of the line tasked with blockading a similarly sized force of Spanish ships in Cádiz. On 9 April 1805, Orde was surprised to see a fleet of eleven French ships of the line sail through the Strait of Gibraltar. The Toulon Fleet, commanded by Admiral Pierre-Charles de Villeneuve, had managed to escape Nelson's watching frigates. As the French approached Cádiz, Orde was faced with odds of three to one and caught between the two enemy forces. He sensibly withdrew. Assessing the strategic situation, Orde knew that for Napoléon to launch an invasion flotilla, the French needed to gain control of the English Channel. To do that required the defeat of Britain's largest fleet, which was positioned to guard against that very possibility, in the western approaches to the Channel. Whatever Napoléon's plans were for the French and Spanish ships in Cádiz, the appropriate course of action was for Orde to concentrate British forces on the strategic point. He did so, arriving in the Channel a month later.

By withdrawing to the Channel, Orde had correctly ascertained Napoléon's plans, which indeed did call for a concentration of naval forces in the western approaches. No less a luminary than Sir Julian Corbett claimed that Orde was the first Englishman to understand the pattern of what was to follow. Corbett credited Orde with "penetrating appreciation," arguing that with the ships under his command he "did everything that the means available permitted."<sup>1</sup> Modern historians have followed Corbett's lead. While the incident off Cádiz usually merits just a few lines in the standard narrative, the most recent authoritative works have not seen fit to question Corbett's account. They roundly praise Orde for his sound judgment and strategic insight.<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly, Orde's contemporaries were less impressed with his actions. Corbett's assessment (from 1910) cut against the previously established opinion of Orde and reversed more than a century of criticism and vitriol. The opening salvos were fired as soon as news of Orde's actions reached London. Fellow naval officers were eager to second-guess his decisions. One officer bemoaned that Orde had been timid in the face of the enemy, implying that Orde should have stayed and fought Villeneuve.<sup>3</sup> Others thought he should have sought to join the squadron under Sir Robert Calder off Ferrol, and still more argued that he should have shadowed Villeneuve to the West Indies.<sup>4</sup> Orde was a notoriously unpopular officer, as this article will explore, but his personal qualities do not explain the ferocity of the attacks launched against him in the aftermath of the campaign. One letter to the First Lord of the Admiralty said that Orde should be fired, "and I hope broke, if not *shot*, for his disgraceful and cowardly conduct."<sup>5</sup> The echoes

of Admiral John Byng's execution for cowardice in 1757 are unmistakable. Orde and his contemporaries were operating in an environment in which British officers were expected to lead their forces into heroic battle no matter the odds and no matter the strategic situation.<sup>6</sup>

The nineteenth-century criticism of Orde goes too far, and there is no need to revive it. We should not judge Orde as Byng was judged. However, Corbett's influential argument is overdue for a critical reading. Corbett's main thrust—that Orde was correct to bring his ships back to the Channel—holds up well. Given the balance of numbers and the state of Orde's fleet, attempting to fight likely would have been catastrophic. Orde also demonstrated laudable insight into Napoléon's ultimate purpose. Yet he did not do "everything that the means available permitted." At the moment the French fleet appeared off Cádiz, Orde possessed more information than any other British flag officer. His knowledge of the whereabouts and strength of the Combined Fleet placed immense responsibility on him to share that information as widely and quickly as possible. He failed in this mission, which cost Nelson a good chance of bringing the campaign to a halt six months before Trafalgar.

The preceding is a summary of the initial goal of this article: to speak to naval historians and, by delving deeply into the archival record, revise the standard account of the Trafalgar campaign. But there is more to say. Ironically, the closer we examine a historical event, the more uncertainty we uncover. At some point, we reach the end of the available empirical evidence and enter a realm where individual thought processes are impossible to reconstruct. A fundamental challenge of empirical historical research is to put ourselves in someone else's head: to empathize, while remaining detached; to use judiciously our knowledge of how the story ends; and to describe the known unknowns and retreat in the face of the unknown unknowns.

It is easy to become uncomfortable with these processes, and historians often are quick to step back from considering individual motivations and impose structures that seek to make sense of the human experience. This article attempts to do both: it asks what role human nature plays in the conduct of naval operations, and how we can connect the answer to that question to broader questions of strategy. Taking a microscope to one man's role in a historical event uncovers the tension between organizations and their personnel—their fallible, jealous, self-interested, human personnel. Strategists behind the scenes must plan; commanders on the spot must act. A detailed, intensive examination of one commander's actions raises broader questions of strategy and command structure. Under scrutiny, we find the uncertainties of human emotions and motivations. Stepping back, we see how the organization in which the man operated set him up for failure. Naval

officers are intimately familiar with the human element in naval operations, as they grapple with it daily. What follows provides a case study of strategic and operational failure in one of the most well-known campaigns in naval history.

Readers will be unsurprised to learn that Orde's failure was not solely his own. The Admiralty set him up for failure by breaking with precedent, ignoring obvious sources of political and personal conflict, and creating problematic command boundaries. In today's parlance, the Admiralty created a problem along the seams of areas of responsibility, leading to a failure of information sharing. Revisiting the messy details of the confusing Trafalgar campaign provides an opportunity to reassess the role that Orde played in it, and to call more attention to the role of Admiralty mismanagement in prolonging it. Orde's failure to inform Nelson of the French fleet's disposition is an example of a failure to achieve mission command. Demarcating command responsibilities requires senior commanders to communicate their intent; junior commanders to understand that intent; and everyone, throughout the system, to trust in commanders on the spot. The challenge is to choose the appropriate personnel and provide them with structures and instructions that help them succeed in rapidly changing tactical situations.<sup>7</sup>

### SETTING THE STAGE

John Orde was born in 1751 to a family of landed gentry in Northumberland. His older brother Thomas was a politician who married the natural daughter of the Duke of Bolton. As a result, throughout his career John could rely on extensive connections with the great and the good. He joined the navy in 1766, was commissioned a lieutenant in 1773, and first experienced combat in the American Revolutionary War. His big break came when Lord Howe appointed him first lieutenant of his flagship in 1777. He then gave him command of a sloop, and in May 1778 made him post captain into the frigate *Virginia*.<sup>8</sup>

The date of his promotion to post captain is significant. Post captain was the highest rank to which an officer could be promoted on merit regardless of previous rank, seniority, or experience. From there, promotion proceeded by seniority alone (although employment depended on a mixture of talent and connections). The date of seniority for post captains influenced their seniority for the remainder of their careers. The sooner you were promoted to post captain, the sooner you would be promoted to rear admiral, although most officers had to wait about twenty years.<sup>9</sup> Nelson, despite being seven years younger than Orde, was made post in June 1779.<sup>10</sup> That thirteen-month difference in seniority would prove pivotal in later years.

When peace arrived in 1783, Orde was appointed governor of Dominica, an island newly acquired by the British in the peace settlement. Here he first came into contact with Nelson, who was stationed in Antigua during the peace. At

Dominica, Orde worked to improve the harbor and solidify British rule, and was successful enough to be rewarded with a baronetcy at the end of his tenure in 1790. Yet there were hints of trouble: Orde had clashed with the colonial assembly in Dominica over funding for harbor improvements. Cuthbert Collingwood, who had served with both Nelson and Orde in the West Indies, thought Orde's actions were justified. He wrote to Orde, "Men of honour and strict integrity in a high publick station will ever be obnoxious to a certain description of people. . . . I hope you will never return to them, and that the day will come when they lament your absence."<sup>11</sup>

Collingwood's high opinion of Orde was not widely shared.<sup>12</sup> Although Orde's career up to 1790 had been successful, the clash with the Dominican colonial assembly foreshadowed the problems that would plague him for the rest of his life. An Audit Office investigation of Orde later found that Collingwood's praise was unwarranted: in fact, Orde had mismanaged public funds while governor, costing him £2,420 in penalty fees.<sup>13</sup> Not only did Orde demonstrate repeatedly an unsavory enthusiasm for profiting off his public service, but he also lacked tact and judgment in dealing with fellow officers. The general consensus was that he was arrogant and officious, and few captains who served under him enjoyed the experience.<sup>14</sup> One captain said that he was "a strange high and haughty man to all his Captains, who are all but myself at paper war with him; he has given out some curious regulations and signals; he works them from morning till night with signals."<sup>15</sup>

Orde was promoted to rear admiral in June 1795. Because of the thirteen-month difference in seniority, Nelson was not high enough on the post captains list to join him, and remained a post captain until February 1797. In 1798, their paths crossed fatefully. Orde was serving as third in command of the Mediterranean Fleet under the Earl of St. Vincent. A large French expedition was known to be preparing at Toulon for an unknown destination, and St. Vincent, stationed at the time off Cádiz, detached a small force to monitor it. Orde was in prime position to receive command of this detachment, which promised the possibility of a glorious battle. Instead, Nelson, fresh off shore leave to recover from the loss of his arm, swooped in and received the plum assignment. The appointment of the junior Nelson over Orde rankled: he wrote to St. Vincent, "I cannot conceal from your Lordship how much I feel hurt."<sup>16</sup>

Orde's pain was compounded by interpersonal clashes with Sir Roger Curtis, who was both marginally senior to Orde and an officer who reasonably might claim to have been at least as disliked in the service.<sup>17</sup> Orde made no friends in his squadron, either. When one of his captains missed or disobeyed his signals, he brought all the captains aboard his flagship and publicly reprimanded them on the quarterdeck. The episode made news in Britain. One captain

requested a court-martial to clear his name—hardly an indication of effective man management by his admiral.<sup>18</sup> Not only was Orde struggling to get along with fellow officers, but the result of Nelson's detachment was in fact a great fleet victory. The Battle of the Nile in August 1798 saw Nelson become the most famous naval officer of his generation, solidified his reputation as a daring tactician, and elevated him to the peerage as Baron Nelson of the Nile. Orde's jealousy was palpable.

St. Vincent eventually became so fed up with Orde that he sent him home, calling him "a vain ignorant supercilious creature."<sup>19</sup> Orde appealed to the Admiralty, requesting that St. Vincent be court-martialed. The Admiralty gently tapped St. Vincent on the wrist instead, so Orde waited until St. Vincent, who was in poor health after two years at sea, returned to England in June 1799. After granting him four months to recover, Orde challenged him to a duel. While dueling had long been essential to the maintenance of a gentleman's honor, it was generally in decline in this period, especially in wartime. Orde—stalking an ailing, sixty-four-year-old man around Essex—looked ridiculous. Lord Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, was flabbergasted at Orde's behavior and asked the king to intervene. St. Vincent was forbidden from fighting, which came as a relief to all, and Orde had to give a surety of £2,000 to keep the peace.<sup>20</sup>

Orde's disgraceful performance should have ended his career. For the next five years, it appeared to have done so. In 1801, St. Vincent became First Lord of the Admiralty under the Addington administration. That same year, Nelson—who nearly had ruined his career in Naples after the Nile—once again justified all the support he had received from St. Vincent and other senior officers by performing admirably at the Battle of Copenhagen. Orde languished ashore unemployed on half pay, secure in the knowledge that St. Vincent would never consider appointing him to an active command.

Two events rescued Orde from discreditable obscurity. First, the brief peace brought about with the 1802 Treaty of Amiens collapsed with the British declaration of war in May 1803. War naturally increased employment chances for officers, although with St. Vincent still at the Admiralty Orde had no prospects. In the spring of 1804, rumors began to circulate that the Addington ministry was in trouble. Orde saw his chance, writing to the secretary of the Admiralty in March to request employment.<sup>21</sup> The rumors were correct, and in May William Pitt returned as prime minister and St. Vincent resigned from the Admiralty. Orde's brother Thomas, now Baron Bolton, had served as the chief secretary for Ireland in the 1780s and worked closely with Pitt on Irish affairs. The new First Lord, Viscount Melville, was a veteran politician and close associate of Pitt's. Bolton had retired, but he still could advocate for his brother's career with his former colleagues. Despite Orde's general unpopularity, he did retain some friends among

naval officers who thought St. Vincent had treated him poorly. Admiral Sir William Cornwallis campaigned heavily on his behalf, keeping Orde informed of his progress throughout the summer of 1804. As commander in chief of the Channel Fleet—the navy’s most important active-duty command—Cornwallis was a powerful ally.<sup>22</sup> In August of that year, Sir John Colpoys, one of the members of the Board of Admiralty, hinted that Melville might be able to find Orde a position.<sup>23</sup> When the good news of his appointment officially arrived in October, Orde received letters of congratulations from a number of prominent officers, including Sir James Saumarez and Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, former comptroller of the Royal Navy.<sup>24</sup> Orde now had a chance to rescue not only his career but also his reputation among his peers.

### ORDE IN COMMAND

Melville gave Orde command of a small squadron off Cádiz. In September 1804, British squadrons were responsible for blockading French squadrons in Toulon, Ferrol, Rochefort, and Brest, not to mention maintaining superiority in the Channel and the North Sea to monitor Napoléon’s invasion preparations. Spain was not a belligerent, but the British admiral blockading the French squadron holed up in Ferrol was convinced that the Spanish would declare war once they received a shipment of treasure from South America. The cabinet acted on this intelligence by ordering four British frigates to seize that treasure in October. In an attack delivered without warning and without a declaration of war, three Spanish ships were captured and the fourth exploded, killing innocent passengers and inflaming international opinion against the British.

War with Spain may well have been inevitable, but the capture of the treasure ships certainly accelerated the timeline and made an already dangerous strategic situation significantly worse. Spain’s declaration of war doubled the number of ships of the line facing the British and necessitated additional blockades of Spanish ports. Nelson, commanding the Mediterranean Fleet, could spare no additional ships to watch Cartagena or Cádiz, so Orde’s squadron was sent from Portsmouth to blockade Cádiz.<sup>25</sup>

A glance at a map will tell readers that Cádiz is on the Atlantic rather than the Mediterranean coast of Spain, and it is reasonable to wonder why the commander in chief of the Mediterranean might be held responsible for enemy forces there. According to the Admiralty, the Mediterranean Sea and the Mediterranean command were two different things. The sea, it was generally agreed, was bounded in the west by the Strait of Gibraltar; British Mediterranean fleets, however, frequently needed to be stationed west of the strait. Some reasons were geostrategic: Cádiz was a major Spanish naval base, and the area between the strait and Cape



Saint Vincent was trafficked heavily by ships transiting between northwestern Europe and the Mediterranean. Other reasons were practical, as British forces could not always depend on well-stocked naval bases in the Mediterranean.

Still, stationing the Mediterranean Fleet outside the Mediterranean was less than ideal. From at least the middle of the seventeenth century, the British had made concerted efforts to obtain secure naval bases in the sea itself, or at least in locations more convenient to the sea than Lisbon. Tangier showed initial promise, even though it is on the Atlantic side of the strait; unfortunately, it lacked a safe harbor and was difficult to protect from land-based attacks. A bold assault was launched against Cádiz in 1702, not only because capturing it would sever the connection between Spain and its Atlantic empire, but also because it would make a suitable base for Mediterranean operations. The attack failed, but it demonstrates that Cádiz long had been thought of as being connected to the Mediterranean. Success finally came with the capture of Gibraltar in 1704, but little changed immediately; like Tangier, Gibraltar had no anchorage and only

limited dockyard facilities. The best port in the western Mediterranean—which, unlike Gibraltar and the Atlantic ports, could be used as a base for blockading Toulon—was Mahón, on Minorca, six hundred miles inside the strait. Captured by the British in 1708, it was robust enough to sustain a fleet in the Mediterranean. It did not remain in British hands for the whole century, though, making it difficult to rely on as a permanent base.

Even when the British did control Minorca, Mediterranean commanders both took responsibility for and relied on Atlantic ports. When the fleet was tasked with monitoring Cádiz, it relied on the combination of major allied facilities at Lisbon, the developing naval base at Gibraltar, and the provisions available for purchase in Tangier. The 1798 dispute between Orde and St. Vincent had arisen in precisely these circumstances. Cádiz was, in Admiralty terms, under the authority of the commander in chief of the Mediterranean—in 1804, Nelson.<sup>26</sup> But, as we have seen, Nelson was junior to Orde; Orde's command, no matter how small, could not be considered subordinate to Nelson's.

This complication was entirely unnecessary. Both Nelson and Orde were high up on the seniority lists as vice admirals, and there were numerous qualified candidates for the Cádiz command who were junior to Nelson. The Admiralty had more admirals than it could employ; finding an eager rear admiral would not have been difficult. Orde's appointment was not the first time Cádiz had been separated from the Mediterranean command, but it was the first time that the admiral off Cádiz had been senior to the commander in chief of the Mediterranean.<sup>27</sup> The political decision to appoint Orde—not only senior to Nelson but with a history of jealous conflict with him—created unnecessary and avoidable seams in the command structure and complicated information sharing across the Strait of Gibraltar.

Melville's decision to give Orde an independent command off Cádiz therefore broke with long-standing precedent. The particular circumstances of the strategic situation in 1804 make the decision even less explicable. Minorca had been returned to the Spanish under the terms of the Treaty of Amiens, meaning there was no base from which to watch Toulon. A promising new base at Malta—captured from the French in 1800—might have counterbalanced Minorca's loss, but it was too far from Toulon to be of use to Nelson. For his blockade, he resorted to a hodgepodge of Sardinian harbors and out-of-the-way anchorages, but none were capable of supporting his fleet logistically. He had to rely, as many British admirals had before him, on long communication and supply lines to North Africa and through Gibraltar to the Atlantic coast.<sup>28</sup>

Orde took responsibility for Cádiz beginning 27 October 1804. The Spanish had six ships of the line preparing for sea, and there was a French ship of the line in port as well. Orde's squadron of five ships of the line was not particularly

powerful. His flagship, *Glory*, was an imposing ninety-eight-gun three-decker, but *Defence* was an elderly seventy-four and the three others—*Ruby*, *Agamemnon*, and *Polyphemus*—were mere sixty-fours, barely worthy of a position in the line of battle. Technically, the Spanish were not yet belligerents, but Orde's orders were clear: he was to prevent French and Spanish ships from leaving port.<sup>29</sup> The uncertainty in the diplomatic situation may have contributed to Melville's failure to communicate his intent to Orde. In a personal note, separate from the official orders, Melville explained that the Admiralty wanted "to have a small cruising squadron outside of the Straits of Gibraltar for the protection of our trade and watching the enemy."<sup>30</sup> It was not immediately apparent at the time that the difference between the official orders (blockade Cádiz) and the personal note (protect trade and watch the enemy) would matter. Yet this seemingly innocuous discrepancy would feature prominently later in the competing stories about what happened when the French appeared in the strait. Melville's letter and orders confused the intended responsibilities of the command.

For his part, Orde did not seek clarification. He finally had returned from the wilderness of half pay, and he knew that his new command was ripe with opportunities for glory and enrichment. Whether he was supposed to be protecting British trade or just blockading Cádiz, he was back at sea in an area he knew well.

Melville had succumbed to pressure from Orde's relatives and friends—especially Cornwallis—in agreeing to appoint him, but he also must have thought that Orde's knowledge of the Mediterranean station and Cádiz made him a strong candidate. He was wrong. Orde needed to be managed as Orde himself managed—that is, by the book, and with an unnecessary number of instructions. What was needed off Cádiz was a junior admiral instructed to communicate with Nelson—precisely the arrangement that had been in place in the recent past. In 1801, Admiral Lord Keith had taken the bulk of the Mediterranean Fleet to Egypt, and the Admiralty had sent Vice Admiral Charles Pole to Cádiz. Pole was not only junior to Keith but explicitly instructed to place himself under Keith's command if he had to enter the Mediterranean.<sup>31</sup> In 1804, Orde was senior to Nelson, and he was operating under muddled orders. The Admiralty had set Orde up for failure.

Some of Orde's official orders were clear: he was instructed on arrival to send a frigate to Cartagena to check on Spanish preparations there, but from that point on he was "not thereafter to employ any of the ships or vessels under [his] command within the Mediterranean, except to procure supplies of stores or provisions." The orders were explicit in limiting his ships to travel "occasionally to Tetuan or Tangier to procure fresh beef." Orde reinforced these orders in lengthy regulations issued to his squadron, telling his captains that even Gibraltar was off-limits. This particular regulation had more to do with the presence of

plague in the garrison there in late 1804 than it did with questions about his area of responsibility, but also it indicated that he was cognizant of the demarcation between his area and Nelson's.<sup>32</sup>

### *Seams of Command*

It is easy in retrospect to see how the seam between Orde's and Nelson's commands would create communication problems, but it was readily apparent at the time as well. Orde attempted to placate Nelson immediately on arrival, writing to him in November 1804 and offering to "[seize] every occasion of giving Your Lordship any material information" in the hopes that Nelson would do the same in return. Orde even went so far as to say that Nelson should "command [him] without ceremony," though such an offer probably was never intended seriously.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, Orde ordered all Nelson's ships to withdraw into the strait, away from the vicinity of Cádiz.<sup>34</sup>

Nelson was taken aback by the decision to slice Cádiz from his command, but he does not seem to have held Orde responsible. The personal conflict between Orde and Nelson should not be exaggerated. Nelson had not sought to offend Orde when Nelson was appointed to command the squadron off Toulon in 1798, and he does not seem to have held any animosity toward him. Orde was unquestionably jealous of Nelson, but his anger was directed at St. Vincent and the Admiralty. Orde eventually served as a last-minute replacement pallbearer at Nelson's funeral.<sup>35</sup>

However, the structure of the two commands made friction between them unavoidable. Nelson spent much of his time as commander in chief in the Mediterranean frustrated by slow and inconsistent instructions from London. He complained to the Admiralty that he had not been informed of Orde's appointment until Orde had announced it himself.<sup>36</sup> Placing a senior admiral with a detached squadron squarely on his lines of communication promised to complicate, rather than simplify, matters. In February 1805, fully three months after Orde's arrival, Orde attempted to clarify the boundary between the two commands. He suggested to the Admiralty that a north-south line could be drawn through Cape Spartel, the southwestern edge of the strait. Orde hoped that drawing the boundary on the Atlantic side of the strait would obviate him from being responsible for convoys in the strait. He wrote to Nelson, passive-aggressively: "It will therefore I presume, be incumbent on your Lordship to provide for this important duty."<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, Nelson struggled to work around Orde. In March, Nelson told the Admiralty that "a report"—no details were given, but one suspects Orde—had reached him accusing him of frequently sending his ships out of the Mediterranean. Nelson flatly denied having done so, "except the [frigate] *Amazon* which was sent to Lisbon with my dispatches."<sup>38</sup> Nelson was being disingenuous here.

To receive any communication from London, he had to send ships to Lisbon occasionally. He had given secret orders to *Amazon* to sail well out to the west to avoid Orde's squadron.<sup>39</sup> Orde missed *Amazon* but intercepted another one of Nelson's ships, the sloop *Halcyon*. Orde added his own dispatches to Nelson's and required *Halcyon* to call at his squadron on its return. It was nearly impossible for Nelson to bypass Orde without violating the command structure arrangement or practicing deception.<sup>40</sup>

### *Conflict over Prize Money*

What really frustrated Nelson about Orde's appointment was that Orde's squadron was in perfect position to profit from the declaration of war against Spain. Prize money was the lifeblood of naval warfare, and most officers thought that there was no better time to make a fortune than at the beginning of a war, when the enemy's merchant ships were likely to be at sea. Admirals claimed an eighth of the value of every prize captured by ships under their command, but since Orde did not report to Nelson, Nelson had no claim on prizes captured by Orde's ships. Nelson's friends commiserated with him: "I have never felt more indignant than as Your Lordship's account of the Admiralty's treatment of you," wrote Alexander Ball.<sup>41</sup> Another correspondent expressed similar sentiments, damning Melville ("the Scotch Lord") and writing, "I am very sorry to hear . . . that Sir John Orde is come to skim the cream of the first of the Spanish War off Cadiz."<sup>42</sup>

The cream was very rich, in the end. By mid-December, Orde was already requesting Admiralty instructions about what to do with all the money he had on board the ships in his squadron. The frigate *Lively* captured a single ship worth £180,000, only to be topped by *Polyphemus* capturing a Spanish frigate carrying 1,215,000 Spanish dollars plus bark and cocoa. Collectively, the squadron captured somewhere between 2.5 and 4 million Spanish dollars, which Orde eventually sent back to England in *Lively*.<sup>43</sup> If the command off Cádiz had remained a part of Nelson's Mediterranean Fleet, then a share of the bounty would have been Nelson's; instead, it was Orde's. If Orde congratulated himself on having balanced his karmic ledger with Nelson, the evidence has not survived. We can be certain that he was immensely pleased with the haul, even if there were significant legal battles still to be fought about whether the Spanish ships had been captured before the official declaration of war.<sup>44</sup>

Orde's enthusiasm for prizes soon got the better of him, however. The routine he established while blockading Cádiz was more relaxed than that of his arch-enemy, St. Vincent. In 1798, in the wake of the great mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, St. Vincent had enforced a close blockade to keep his squadron occupied and disciplined. The ships were so close to Cádiz that officers had their laundry done in town and individuals in the city could be discerned easily from the decks.<sup>45</sup> Orde took a more reasonable approach, generally staying ten to fifteen

miles offshore.<sup>46</sup> Such a distance provided flexibility, as he was close enough to monitor enemy preparations from his flagship. Orde deployed most of his frigates and sloops elsewhere, and did so aggressively. *Lively*, *Amphion*, and *Wasp* received regular two-week cruises intended to capture prizes, while *Polyphemus*'s capture of the valuable Spanish frigate suggests that Orde was even willing to detach ships of the line from his squadron. The more ships cruising, the more likely he would be to get an eighth of the value of a prize.<sup>47</sup>

The Admiralty was not impressed. On 11 January 1805, their lordships reminded Orde of his duty. In a public letter, they accused him of being jealous of Nelson's allocation of frigates because they increased his chances at prize money. This was unacceptable: "Their Lordships are unwilling to believe that any officer in His Majesty's Service would consider prize money as an object to which any part of the force under his command be primarily appropriated." They expressed their "dissatisfaction" that Orde had wasted their time with "correspondence in which competition for prize money seems to be the chief if not the only subject of discussion."<sup>48</sup> This was strong language indeed. To reprimand a serving admiral for greed in an official letter was both shocking and exceedingly rare.

Orde clearly was stung. From his perspective, he had behaved exactly as anyone in his situation would have. And furthermore he had not failed in his core mission: the Spanish were still in Cádiz, after all. The prize money dispute was ancillary to that (although he was very disappointed when subsequent rumors reached him that Nelson had been given a prize agent in Gibraltar with permission to lay claim to the prizes captured by Orde's frigates).

But in any case, the real issue was that his orders had been written poorly. While the personal note from Melville had told him that his squadron was intended to protect British trade from Cape Saint Vincent to Gibraltar, his official orders said nothing about that; his mission was to blockade Cádiz. His squadron was big enough to do one mission or the other, but not both.<sup>49</sup>

It is easy to imagine Orde keeping himself awake in the middle of the night by composing bitter, biting replies to the Admiralty. Nevertheless, the fact remained that he once again had managed to annoy his superiors. This time, presumably, he did not contemplate challenging one of them to a duel. Instead, in a letter written in his own hand and dated 27 March 1805, he resigned.<sup>50</sup> The same day, Villeneuve sailed from Toulon.

#### THE FRENCH ARE OUT

Nelson anticipated that, when Villeneuve sortied, he would head east toward Egypt. Setting up a long-range blockade, Nelson kept his frigates off Toulon to keep an eye on French movements and deployed his fleet in the close waters among Sicily, Sardinia, and Tunisia. If the French went east, they would have to

pass through these waters, and Nelson hoped to bring them to battle. From 27 to 30 March, Nelson was south of Sardinia.

Villeneuve left Toulon and initially made his way south to avoid the British, who he thought were off Barcelona.<sup>51</sup> On 31 March, the French fleet was observed at sea by two frigates under Nelson's command. *Active* remained to shadow Villeneuve, while *Phoebe* sailed south in search of Nelson. *Active*, however, lost contact with the French that night, and so also went in search of Nelson in the morning.<sup>52</sup> For Villeneuve the timing was perfect. On 1 April, he learned from a Sicilian merchantman that Nelson was not waiting off Barcelona, and he decided to turn west.

News that the French fleet was out reached Nelson on 3 April, first from *Phoebe* and a few hours later from *Active*, but the frigates told him the French were sailing south-southwest, indicating a likely destination to the east.<sup>53</sup> Nelson spent the next two weeks sailing between the south coast of Sardinia and the northwest coast of Sicily, waiting to pounce on the French fleet. He spread his frigates across the area, hoping to renew contact with Villeneuve.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, on 7 April, Villeneuve stopped briefly at Cartagena to collect the six Spanish ships of the line anchored there. However, on learning that they would not be able to sail for thirty-six to forty-eight hours, and probably expecting the British to be close behind him, he raised anchor late on the night of 7 April and set a course for the Strait of Gibraltar.<sup>55</sup>

At Gibraltar, the early morning of 9 April did not appear to be much different from any other. *Fisgard*, a frigate from Nelson's fleet, was anchored behind the protective mole where it had been for almost four weeks making major repairs. *Fisgard's* captain, Lord Mark Kerr, busied his crew loading provisions.<sup>56</sup> Twenty-four hours earlier, a convoy of forty-six merchant ships had left Gibraltar for England, escorted by one of Orde's frigates, *Mercury*, and a sloop. A seventy-four-gun ship of the line from Nelson's fleet, *Renown*, commanded by Sir Richard Strachan, also was refitting at Gibraltar. Strachan sailed with the convoy to provide extra protection through the Strait of Gibraltar, known as the Gut.<sup>57</sup> Spanish gunboats and privateers often took advantage of the fourteen-mile-wide choke point, picking off merchantmen that strayed too far from Royal Navy protection. Strachan parted with the westbound convoy just off Cape Trafalgar at noon on 8 April, and by first light on 9 April he had positioned *Renown* at the southwestern end of the Gut, about five or six miles northeast of Cape Spartel, preparing to fight the fresh easterly headwind and beat his way back to Gibraltar. Strachan could see the Rock rising slowly above the horizon in the early morning light, as *Renown* made headway back through the Gut.

The calmness of the morning was shattered when sails began to appear over the eastern horizon. By 10 AM, it was clear that these sails belonged to a large fleet.

Kerr signaled Strachan about the strange fleet, then hastily set about making his ship ready for sea.<sup>58</sup> Strachan also had spotted the ships and was using the fresh easterly wind to make all possible speed to the northwest to warn Orde's squadron off Cádiz, collecting the sloop *Sophie* en route. By 11 AM, Kerr, still making ready for sea at Gibraltar, counted eleven French ships of the line, five or six frigates, and two brigs passing through the Gut—no doubt an impressive sight. Kerr quickly issued orders to send a recently captured brig east with dispatches to warn Nelson.<sup>59</sup> By 2 PM, *Fisgard's* crew had completed the herculean effort of readying their ship for sea. Kerr gave orders to haul *Fisgard* out of the mole at Gibraltar, making all sail westward to take advantage of the easterly wind to pass well south of the last known French position. Kerr raced back to England to notify the Admiralty that the French were out, but all he knew was that they had passed through the strait—nothing more.<sup>60</sup>

At 2 PM, Orde and his flag captain both observed a strange ship of the line approaching, firing guns, but it was 2:20 PM before they could make out the signal for "enemy approaching," and 2:45 PM before they could identify the ship as *Renown*. Orde's squadron was in a precarious position at anchor nine miles off Cádiz. Included in the convoy that had sailed through the Strait of Gibraltar on the previous day were six transport ships filled with supplies, and Orde's ships were badly in need of water and provisions. The transports were currently alongside, and the ships' yards were employed hoisting provisions on board. When *Renown* made contact, decks were littered with supplies waiting to be lowered into the hold, and the squadron was not in a position to set sail quickly, much less clear the decks and prepare for action.<sup>61</sup>

At that time, Orde could not have known Villeneuve's mission. There was a very real possibility that it was to catch and overpower Orde's squadron off Cádiz, and since the wind was coming from the east, Villeneuve had the weather gauge. Accordingly, Orde's squadron began casting off the transports, throwing overboard the casks and staves that had yet to be stored in the hold, and clearing for action. Orde busied himself sending dozens of signals, annoying his captains. Even working at a frantic pace, it was 4 PM before the ships of the squadron were ready to weigh anchor, which they did in company with the transports, and made sail to the west, joined by *Renown* and *Sophie*. At this point, Villeneuve's squadron was within sight of Orde's flagship and was observed to be sailing along the coast toward Cádiz. By 7 PM, Orde's squadron had lost sight of the French fleet in the fading light. The immediate threat of action with a superior enemy force to windward had passed.<sup>62</sup>

After recognizing that his squadron was outnumbered, Orde quickly decided to sail west and retreat to the Channel. Whatever plans the Combined Fleet might have, Orde could not force it into Cádiz, fight it on equal terms, or (as he later

claimed) shadow it without risking disastrous battle. It was also at this time—on the evening of 9 April—that Orde first had an opportunity to relay information of the French presence to the surrounding British forces and the Admiralty. Orde had no way of knowing that Kerr had sent a ship in search of Nelson, nor that he had sailed to England. Regardless, Kerr's intelligence did not include what the French had done once they passed through the strait. At that moment, Orde knew more about the French disposition and intentions than any other officer in the Royal Navy. It was essential to share that information with the Admiralty and the commanding officers of other British fleets. Only hours after getting his squadron safely under way, Orde gave dispatches to Commander Philip Rosenhagen aboard *Sophie* and ordered him to “inform [the Channel Fleet] of the Convoy sailing and of the French Fleet having passed the Gutt, also the Spaniards having 9 or 10 sail of the line ready for Sea.”<sup>63</sup> Orde also stated that he did not know the Combined Fleet's intentions, but he was “of opinion it *must be westward*.”<sup>64</sup>

Orde correctly gauged that his first action should be to inform the Admiralty. However, once *Sophie* had departed, Orde also had responsibility to spread this information across the seams of the surrounding commands. One problem he immediately faced was that the wind changed. The easterly wind, which had been favorable to his quick departure from the waters off Cádiz and the French fleet's push through the strait, shifted over the course of 10 April to a strong wind blowing from the west-southwest. Orde's squadron therefore made little progress toward the west over the next two days, not arriving off Cape Saint Vincent until late on 12 April, when the wind shifted again and blew strongly from the north-northwest. This prevented the squadron from making any northern progress until the 19th.<sup>65</sup>

During his slow passage, Orde had plenty of opportunities to think carefully about how to arrange his forces and communicate his intelligence. On 11 April, he ordered the frigate *Amphion* and two sloops, *Wasp* and *Beagle*, to cruise off Cape Saint Vincent until they received further orders. Captain Sutton of *Amphion* was directed to inform any British ships passing of the presence of the French fleet and to order warships to return to the Channel or, if the French returned through the strait, to head to the Mediterranean. Along with these orders were dispatches that Sutton was to have delivered to Lisbon.<sup>66</sup> On 12 April, Orde dispatched the frigate *Mercury* to Barbados and Jamaica, warning that the Combined Fleet was at large and possibly sailing for the West Indies.<sup>67</sup> Orde ordered *Mercury* to call at Madeira en route, “without anchoring,” and forward a letter to the East Indies with similar information.<sup>68</sup>

At no point after making contact with the French fleet did Orde attempt to send any information east to Nelson; instead, he left a letter for Nelson at Lisbon, where the chances of Nelson receiving it were low. The Mediterranean is,

admittedly, large, and Nelson's fleet could have been anywhere from Egypt to Spain; furthermore, the areas of responsibility as laid out by the Admiralty clearly separated Orde from the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, given that his ships were allowed to resupply at Gibraltar, it would have been reasonable to leave a letter for Nelson there.

Strachan clearly thought that was the correct course of action. In the week after joining Orde's squadron, he sent him five letters, first suggesting, and then pleading, that contact needed to be made with Nelson. On 9 April, Strachan told Orde that he thought *Fisgard* was still fitting out at Gibraltar and unlikely to sail until the next day, with unknown intentions, but possibly east to find Nelson. He also stressed that he did not know where Nelson was, and feared he had gone east to Egypt. The following day, seemingly aware that Orde had no intentions of going east or sending news east, Strachan claimed that he may have misspoken about Nelson's location. Nelson was probably somewhere between Sardinia and Malta, and would not sail toward Egypt if the French were out with an easterly wind. He also said that he thought it likely that Nelson was in pursuit of the French, possibly a couple of days behind. In his third letter, Strachan reinforced this guess, and also stressed that *Renown* was critically low on water—a clear hint that he thought Orde should let him return to Gibraltar. In his fourth and fifth letters, written as Orde's squadron struggled to make northern progress, he doubled down on the poor condition of *Renown*, which he said was leaking more every day, and with masts and rigging in such poor condition that he feared they would be carried away in a strong wind. From his tone, it is clear that Strachan did not wish to leave the vicinity of the strait or to be detached from Nelson's fleet. He grew increasingly desperate to return to Gibraltar, although once the squadron began making progress north he resigned himself to his fate.<sup>69</sup>

In a personal letter to Nelson written two weeks later, Strachan expressed his frustration with Orde's decision-making. Strachan said he had planned to return to Gibraltar once he had warned Orde of the French fleet, but Orde forced him to join his squadron. Moreover, Orde had taken "*Renown* from her station at a time he had determined to leave Cadiz without entertaining whether the enemy proceeded from Cadiz to the westward, or returned up the Mediterranean, or whether your Lordship followed them."<sup>70</sup> Strachan and Orde had a fraught relationship even before the incident off Cádiz. In December, Orde had accused Strachan of lingering in the strait in pursuit of a prize, disobeying direct orders from Orde to return to the Mediterranean—here again, the seams of the area of responsibility created unnecessary conflicts. Orde had taken his complaint all the way to the Admiralty, which responded (the day after rebuking him for pursuing prizes) that it hoped "from the character which Sir Richard holds in the Service, that he will be able to assign such reasons as will remove any unfavorable

impression which may have been formed.<sup>71</sup> The Admiralty agreed to investigate the complaint, but said in so many words that they highly doubted Strachan had misbehaved. Orde's greed and grating personality compounded the confusion of communicating among commands.

Meanwhile, on 16 April, as Orde fought adverse winds off Cape Saint Vincent, Nelson first learned the French fleet had been seen off Cartagena. Two days later, stationed off Sardinia, he learned that the French had passed the strait—but not from Orde or Kerr. Instead, *Amazon* arrived with intelligence from a Ragusan brig, which had seen the French in transit. Nelson had a hard time believing it was not a feint, convinced as he was that the Toulon Fleet was destined for Egypt. He detached his frigates and smaller vessels to cover the Barbary Coast in case the French sent a secondary expedition east.<sup>72</sup> On 19 April, he reluctantly decided to sail west, into the teeth of the wind. It was a long and slow fifteen-day passage to Gibraltar.<sup>73</sup>

Back in London, the Admiralty was in crisis. On 8 April, Melville had been forced to resign following a financial mismanagement scandal dating from his time as treasurer of the Royal Navy. His replacement, Admiral Charles Middleton, now ennobled as Baron Barham, did not assume office until 29 April. It was not a moment too soon: on his first day news arrived from *Fisgard* of the French escape from Toulon and passage through the Strait of Gibraltar. Pitt came to Barham's office at 2 AM on the 30th to find him hard at work at his desk. They ordered Collingwood to take fourteen ships of the line from the Channel Fleet and sail to Cádiz.<sup>74</sup>

On 4 May, Nelson finally reached Tétouan bay, at the eastern approaches to the strait, and took on water and provisions.<sup>75</sup> He was surprised to have no new news of the French. In a letter to the Admiralty, he expressed his frustration with the situation: "I believe my ill luck is to go on for a longer time, and I now much fear that Sir John Orde has not sent his small ships to watch the Enemy's fleet, and ordered them to return to the Straits' mouth, to give me information, that I might know how to direct my proceedings." The key question for Nelson was whether to try to guess Villeneuve's destination. The West Indies seemed likely, but, as Nelson put it, he could not sail the Mediterranean Fleet to the West Indies "without something beyond mere surmise." In any case, the Combined Fleet had a month's head start.<sup>76</sup> Clearly, Nelson expected up-to-date information, primarily from Orde, when he arrived at the strait. The news that he received—that the French had passed Gibraltar and had not returned—was almost four weeks old. Ideally, what he needed was word from ships that had shadowed the French and determined their destination. Orde had not dispatched any of his frigates or cruisers in this capacity. Like Nelson, Orde thought the West Indies were a likely destination, and had told the Admiralty and the commanders in the West Indies were a likely destination, and had told the Admiralty and the commanders in

the West Indies as much. But he had not told Nelson, the admiral most directly concerned with the Toulon Fleet.<sup>77</sup>

Without fresh information, Nelson passed through the Strait of Gibraltar on 6 May and arrived at Lagos Bay two days later, where Orde's supply ships were anchored.<sup>78</sup> *Amphion*, *Wasp*, and *Beagle* were nearby off Cape Saint Vincent, but they had no new information. The only intelligence Nelson gathered was that the French had not sailed north and had not been seen in over three weeks.<sup>79</sup> That increased the chances that the French had gone west, but it was only after he met Rear Admiral George Campbell, a Scot in Portuguese service, that he had any positive intelligence to support that guess.<sup>80</sup> On 11 May, a week after he had arrived in the strait, he finally made the decision to commit to the West Indies—thirty-two days behind Villeneuve.<sup>81</sup> Orde's failure to leave any information for Nelson cost valuable time and confused the intelligence situation.

Nelson arrived at Barbados on the evening of 4 June, after a twenty-six-day passage. This was fast by fleet standards, and certainly better than the thirty-five-day passage Villeneuve had made a few weeks earlier.<sup>82</sup> Nelson immediately met with Lieutenant General Sir William Myers, the commanding officer in Barbados and the Leeward Islands, and Rear Admiral Alexander Cochrane, who had arrived two months earlier in pursuit of a French squadron out of Rochefort. Myers had received a letter the day before from the commanding officer at Saint Lucia reporting that the Combined Fleet had been spotted sailing south toward Barbados or Trinidad. It obviously was not Barbados, so Myers offered Nelson two thousand troops from Barbados to help defend, or possibly retake, Trinidad. Nelson harbored doubts about the intelligence, but the added need to take additional troops to Trinidad convinced him to go south.

The following morning at 9:30 AM, Nelson's fleet was making sail to the south. As Nelson approached Tobago, he received news from a brig sent ahead that an American merchantman had reported being boarded by the French off the island of Saint Vincent, and that they were sailing south. On the morning of 7 June, Nelson's fleet prepared for battle, expecting the Combined Fleet to be in the channel between Trinidad and mainland South America. However, on arriving, Nelson found only empty sea. The lookouts who had spotted the French from Saint Lucia had mistaken three French frigates for the Combined Fleet, and the information the American merchant had provided was deliberately false. As Nelson pondered his next move, news arrived that the Combined Fleet had taken *Diamond Rock*, a small, fortified British outpost situated on a tiny rocky island (and commissioned as a sloop) about a mile and a half off the southwestern coast of Martinique.<sup>83</sup>

Villeneuve had been at Martinique all along—only 140 miles away from Nelson when he arrived in Barbados. Only a couple of hours before Nelson sailed south toward Trinidad, Villeneuve had sailed north to Guadeloupe, where he



embarked troops, and then continued north past Antigua. On 8 June, he captured fifteen of the sixteen merchant ships in a homeward-bound British convoy, worth five million francs. After interrogating the prisoners, Villeneuve learned of Nelson's presence in the West Indies and decided to return across the Atlantic. On 11 June, the Combined Fleet set sail for Ferrol.<sup>84</sup>

On 8 June, Nelson frantically sailed north from Trinidad, frustrated that he had turned the wrong way. At Dominica, he learned that the Combined Fleet was heading north, and at Antigua on 12 June he learned that it was returning to Europe, although among his captains opinion on its destination was divided. Nelson thought Cádiz or Toulon was the likely destination, in part because he still thought that the true target was Egypt.<sup>85</sup> He set a more southerly course for the Strait of Gibraltar—only two days behind his adversary. A few days later, he sent a frigate and a sloop ahead to Ferrol to warn the British squadron there in

case Villeneuve appeared. Both fleets crossed the Atlantic, initially only a couple of hundred miles apart but sailing courses for different destinations. Nelson arrived at Gibraltar on 19 July, where he was disappointed at receiving no news of the French.<sup>86</sup>

Villeneuve's luck ran out when he arrived back in European waters. *Curieux*, the brig Nelson had sent ahead, had spotted the Combined Fleet at sea on the passage and realized that its course would take it north of the Azores, toward Ferrol. This news reached the Admiralty in the early hours of 9 July, and Barham dispatched immediate orders for the Rochefort squadron of five ships of the line to combine with the ten ships of the line off Cape Finisterre under the command of Vice Admiral Sir Robert Calder. Calder's fifteen ships of the line intercepted the Combined Fleet of twenty ships of the line on 22 July in light winds with a heavy swell and patchy fog. After an indecisive battle that evening, both fleets spent several days maneuvering for position before Villeneuve, demoralized, sailed southeast for the port of Vigo. Although Calder was later court-martialed for not bringing the Combined Fleet to battle on the 23rd or 24th, his actions proved to be the strategic victory that thwarted Napoléon's plans for combining the naval power of France and Spain in the Channel to cover an invasion of England.<sup>87</sup>

It is impossible to say whether Nelson would have caught Villeneuve in the West Indies had he received proper intelligence from Orde. However, we can say that the near miss was a matter of hours. Had Nelson departed European waters a few days earlier, it is unlikely that he would have sailed to Trinidad after arriving at Barbados. The bad intelligence that caused him to do so was received in Barbados only a few hours before his fleet arrived on 4 June. Rather, Nelson would have considered Martinique, France's stronghold in the Windward Islands, a logical point to have begun his search. Nelson also might have been able to prevent the French capture of the West India convoy. While this is all speculation, we can say that the margins in the Trafalgar campaign were small—matters of hours and days. Orde leaving Nelson in the dark was significant, even if the alternative outcomes are impossible to know.

#### ORDE'S DEFENSE

Nelson's near miss in the West Indies, combined with Calder's action, resulted in the Combined Fleet being shut up, ironically, back in Cádiz, now watched by the entire Mediterranean Fleet under Collingwood. Orde had returned to England, but his passage had been slow and ridden with angst. After arriving at Spithead on 11 May, he was sent into quarantine, stemming from his squadron's proximity to the plague-ridden Gibraltar garrison.<sup>88</sup> While awaiting release, he received letters (one of which was quoted earlier in this article) that questioned his actions and attacked his character.

Accused of cowardice, and of failing to do as Nelson would have done, Orde proceeded as soon as he could to the Admiralty for an interview with Barham. Orde asked whether the Admiralty approved of his bringing his fleet back to the Channel; Barham said yes, and then asked whether Orde was interested in being employed again. Orde, who clearly had expected to have to defend his actions and was eager to do so, was taken aback. He said he would consider employment again, but could he please explain his actions anyway? Barham pointed to a stack of unopened letters on his desk; Orde got the hint and left.<sup>89</sup> Orde never was employed again. Barham likely asked the question as a courtesy and to avoid being accused of treating Orde unfairly. He probably did legitimately approve of Orde's decision to bring his squadron back, but Orde's behavior in the months—and years—prior had disqualified him from future consideration.

Even as early as his retreat from Cádiz, Orde seems to have become increasingly uncomfortable with his own actions. While on the passage from Cádiz to Spithead he had written nearly daily to the Admiralty, and each letter contained a new justification. In early January 1806, Orde participated in Nelson's funeral, but he was still frustrated by how his active career had ended. Sometime after the funeral, he wrote a four-thousand-word defense of his actions, followed by a second, six-thousand-word additional defense. Neither is dated, and he claimed later that the documents were written confidentially for his friends. Their tone is that of a proud, wounded animal. When combined with the letters he wrote in April 1805, they create a comprehensive but internally incoherent picture of Orde's thinking.<sup>90</sup>

His best defense, as laid out primarily in the letters written on his way back to the Channel, comes in his reasonable assessment of the likely plans of the French and Spanish. In January 1805, he noted, the Toulon Fleet had sortied and attempted to link up with the Rochefort squadron before being forced back by poor weather. Orde suggested that the French would not squander the chance presented by freedom of movement in the Atlantic. It seemed reasonably unlikely that they would return to the Mediterranean if they had the chance to leave.<sup>91</sup> This is the analysis that Corbett rightly praises as insightful, and Orde deserves credit for having guessed the outline of Napoléon's invasion plans—even if Orde's guesses conveniently justified his decision to desert Cádiz.

Less persuasively, Orde claimed he could not have given the Admiralty or Nelson any more information about the destination of the Combined Fleet because he could not track it at sea. He gave many reasons why this was impossible, each of varying degrees of legitimacy. Initially, he claimed that his squadron was too weak to shadow the Combined Fleet. *Glory*, *Agamemnon*, and *Renown* were poor sailors, and Orde correctly pointed out that if he had tried to stay in contact with the Combined Fleet he might have been forced into a disadvantageous

battle. At the very least, deploying his full squadron in such a way would have cost the Admiralty the use of his ships of the line for an extended period. Tracking an enemy fleet with an unknown destination was indeed challenging, and in his later defense Orde pointed to Nelson's own difficulties in having his frigates track the Toulon Fleet in the last days of March.

Orde also argued, strangely, that it was impossible to know an enemy's destination. He noted that the expedition led by General Lazare Hoche had left Brest in 1796 and "proceeded for the sake of deception so far to the westward as to strike soundings in the Banks of Newfoundland, before they steered for Ireland."<sup>92</sup> Not only did targeting the West Indies fit the pattern of Napoléon's deployments that Orde had identified, but there were well-known routes from Cádiz to the West Indies, and it beggars belief that a frigate trailing Villeneuve's ships could not have made an educated guess about their destination after a few days at sea. *Curieux* did precisely this when encountering Villeneuve in the middle of the Atlantic in June on the return leg.<sup>93</sup>

Another strand of Orde's defense is that Nelson would have been, or perhaps should have been, in a better position to act than Orde. Guessing that Villeneuve had gone west conveniently made Orde's decision to go north the correct one. Had Villeneuve gone east, he wrote, "I should not have hesitated one moment to risk passing the Strait." How he would have known that Villeneuve had done so is not clear, since he had sailed well to the west by the time Villeneuve departed Cádiz. He did not let such practicalities impede spinning out hypotheticals. He worried in the same letter that entering the Mediterranean would have been met with disapproval—recall that his orders strictly prohibited him from doing so. In that scenario, as the senior officer, he would have had to assume command of the Mediterranean station. He was quick to say that he had no desire to be in high command.<sup>94</sup> It was Nelson's burden to bear, and Orde was happy to let him carry it. While on the passage back from Cádiz, he expressed confidence that, if the French had gone east, "Nelson will be found in condition, with his 12 ships of the line and numerous frigates, to act on the defensive without loss, and even to hang heavily on the skirts of the enemy's fleet."<sup>95</sup> Orde wanted it both ways—to claim to have been willing to enter the Mediterranean in pursuit of Villeneuve, but without having to determine Villeneuve's course. He went on to argue that the Toulon Fleet was Nelson's responsibility, not his, so he need not have tracked it when it appeared off Cádiz.<sup>96</sup> Nelson's fleet was stronger than Orde's, and the Toulon Fleet had been Nelson's responsibility originally, but the stakes were too high to abdicate responsibility in this way, on a technicality.

Orde defended his failure to communicate with Nelson on the grounds that he could not have known where Nelson was, nor predict where Nelson might go. Yet he simultaneously claimed that he and Strachan worked out where Nelson was

likely to be, and where he was likely to go: “Lord Nelson on being informed of [the Toulon Fleet’s] escape from Port, even were it reported as steering westward, would proceed with his Squadron to the Coast of Egypt, or at least to some position whence he might interrupt an attack on that Country, the Morea at Naples.”<sup>97</sup> Why not give that educated guess to an intrepid frigate captain, or at least to a ship at Gibraltar, with instructions to attempt to find Nelson? Strachan clearly thought this was the correct course of action. The Admiralty’s poor command design is partly to blame, but Orde’s lack of imagination and confidence contributed significantly. Orde also knew that Nelson was likely to come west as quickly as possible once news of the French transit of the strait reached him, but Orde downplayed the significance of this move by claiming that Nelson might be stuck in the Mediterranean for “five or six weeks, nay more,” while waiting for a favorable wind.<sup>98</sup> In other words, Nelson was too far away and too unlikely to influence events in the Atlantic to be worth any effort to contact him—yet Orde thought it was worthwhile to send news to the East Indies Station, six months’ sail away.

On 1 May, Orde expressed surprise that his letters with news of Villeneuve’s escape were “unaccountably . . . preceded by account from Lord Mark Kerr who I trusted had gone in quest of Lord Nelson.”<sup>99</sup> It was unaccountable because of the seam along the areas of responsibility at Gibraltar. Orde later claimed that both he and Kerr had intelligence that the Spanish ships were not prepared for a long voyage. Furthermore, “so confident were they at Gibraltar that the Toulon Fleet when seen passing the Straits were bound to Ireland” that Kerr sailed directly for Ireland, “instead of apprising Lord Nelson or Sir John Orde, as it would have been his duty in case of uncertainty.”<sup>100</sup> We know that Kerr did attempt to apprise Nelson, and we also know that Kerr did not sail directly for Ireland. Instead, he landed at Portsmouth, and it was his news that first informed the Admiralty of the French passage of the strait.<sup>101</sup> Orde knew more than Kerr—he knew that the French had combined with the Spanish in Cádiz, and he guessed that they were headed west. Orde’s strategic insight and educated guesses justified his own actions, but in failing to share those insights with Nelson he wasted much of their potency.

Among the more curious decisions that Orde made was to station *Amphion*, *Wasp*, and *Beagle* together off Cape Saint Vincent, rather than scattering them. One of the three should have gone to Gibraltar with the latest intelligence and to await Nelson. It did not require more than one cruiser to warn British shipping in the area about the presence of the French fleet. In his defense, Orde claimed that he left them “on [his] Station” with orders “to ascertain and counteract . . . the movements of the enemy.”<sup>102</sup> They did no such thing, in the end, except for one nearly disastrous investigation of Cádiz’s harbor. A lieutenant from *Wasp* took a Portuguese fishing boat to Cádiz and reported that the entire Combined

Fleet was still there on 22 April—almost two weeks after it had left for the West Indies.<sup>103</sup> Rather than relay this intelligence to Gibraltar, the senior captain sent it to Lisbon, where the British consul forwarded it on to the foreign secretary.<sup>104</sup> If a frigate or sloop had been stationed off Cádiz, such a mistake would not have been made; Orde's claim that the frigates were "on [his] Station" may be technically true—his station included Cape Saint Vincent—but they were not optimally placed for intelligence-gathering purposes, nor were they given instructions about communicating with Nelson. Why this curious deployment? The archival record provides hints, but nothing definitive. By stationing three small ships on the western fringe of his station, Orde could claim that he had not abandoned it entirely; perhaps he thought they might capture prizes. We cannot know for sure, but Orde's orders to his cruisers stand alongside his botched communication with Nelson as significant failures.

Orde also claimed that standing and fighting Villeneuve, or even hanging on his skirts as he thought Nelson might do, "would have led to the gratification of every wish of my heart, to superior command, to increased patronage and emolument, and possibly to great distinction." Orde wanted credit for, in his words, "the sacrifice I have made" in forgoing the chance of bringing about a fleet action.<sup>105</sup> Even before he reached Spithead, he realized that running from the Combined Fleet exposed him to accusations of cowardice. This article's analysis does not seek to accuse Orde of cowardice—he faced odds of three to one—but his pleading is an indication of the pressure he and other British naval officers were under to fight no matter the odds.

Orde's defense collapses amid internal inconsistencies and obscures his true motives. He was fed up with his station off Cádiz, from which he had just requested to be allowed to resign. The rebuke by the Admiralty in January, coupled with the ongoing friction between his command and Nelson's, had shattered his morale. Personal disputes with respected officers such as Strachan undermined his authority. He had made money from prizes, but those winnings were now under threat from the appointment of Nelson's prize agent in Gibraltar and the legal battles over the legitimacy of Spanish prizes taken before the declaration of war. He thought his responsibilities were to blockade the Spanish (and capture prizes); the Admiralty thought he was there to blockade the Spanish (and protect British trade). When the French appeared, he was caught in a precarious situation with transports alongside and decks covered in stores. Outnumbered three to one, he sensibly retreated, but in doing so he neglected his most important duty: to put aside personal history and communicate across the boundaries of his area of responsibility. Orde's failure cost Nelson a good chance of bringing the Combined Fleet to action in the West Indies.

What-if history has limited value; of more importance, both for our understanding of the Trafalgar campaign and for navies today, are the preventable mistakes that both the Admiralty and Orde made. Some of the contributing factors are beyond the scope of this article: St. Vincent's disastrously timed dockyard reforms had destroyed the fleet's readiness during the recent peace, and the decision to strike the Spanish preemptively was morally dubious and strategically disastrous.<sup>106</sup> But once a squadron was needed off Cádiz, there was no reason to appoint Orde to that post. He was senior to Nelson, with a history of conflict between them well-known to the public and certainly to Melville. Compounding this mistake were Orde's strict instructions not to encroach on Nelson's territory, even though Gibraltar is one of the world's great choke points—all information in and out of the Mediterranean must pass through it. Drawing a line across it was only likely to result in confusion and delay. Today, the United States organizes its combatant commands geographically. If it continues to operate this way, it is important to understand how geopolitics can warp traditional boundaries. For the British in the age of sail, bases in the Mediterranean itself were unreliable, poorly located, or underequipped; adverse winds easily could make the Strait of Gibraltar impassable; and the Spanish had major bases on both sides of the strait. Cádiz therefore should not have been separated from the Mediterranean command by placing it under a senior admiral.

The Admiralty bears responsibility for this mistake, although that is not sufficient to explain what happened off Cádiz. It is easy to play armchair admiral about Orde's actions in the face of an overwhelming enemy force. Orde handled the surprise on the afternoon of 9 April well, all things considered. He protected his transports, organized his forces, and prepared for action. Corbett's assessment of Orde's subsequent retreat is sound. Orde helped concentrate British naval forces (which otherwise were spread dangerously thinly) on the Channel, lessening the chances of Napoléon's fleets gaining control of the invasion route. Orde did not know much about Calder's squadron off Finisterre, so subsequent accusations that he should have joined Calder do not stand up to scrutiny.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, it raises further questions about the Admiralty's ability to coordinate its various commands.

Orde also communicated efficiently to the West Indies and the Admiralty. His failure was to the east, to Nelson. The actions of the officers on the spot support this judgment: Kerr tried to communicate with Nelson; Strachan tried to convince Orde to communicate with Nelson; and Nelson complained that Orde had not communicated with him. The Lords of the Admiralty had demarcated the command areas poorly and had given conflicting orders to their chosen commander. Even if they did not grasp fully the problem presented by stationing a senior admiral off Cádiz, they trusted that such an experienced officer, familiar

with the responsibilities of the station and the intent of the Admiralty, would set aside personal jealousies and the annoyances of minor differences in seniority in the face of a crisis. Their trust was misplaced, demonstrating the importance of the human element in what we now refer to as *mission command*. It would be unfair to say that any other admiral would have behaved differently, but it does seem as if Orde was uniquely unsuited for his command. Tempted by rich prizes, he neglected the protection of trade; jealous of Nelson, he treated the seams of his command too literally; sensitive to questions of character, he reacted badly when reprimanded. Only by understanding the interaction between the human failings of commanders and the challenges presented by command boundaries can senior leaders deploy naval forces effectively. The incident off Cádiz is an example of poor mission command: the Admiralty chose the wrong man for an ill-defined mission.

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 NOTES

1. Sir Julian Corbett, *The Campaign of Trafalgar* (London: Longman, 1910), pp. 57–68.
2. N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1815* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), p. 534; Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory: The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), p. 486; James Davey, *In Nelson's Wake: The Navy and the Napoleonic Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2015), p. 80. The rest of the literature varies in quality and depth of coverage of Orde's role in the campaign. For a detailed account emphasizing Nelson's frustration with Orde, see Mark Adkin, *The Trafalgar Companion: A Guide to History's Most Famous Sea Battle and the Life of Admiral Lord Nelson* (London: Aurum, 2005), pp. 47–49. Some accounts mistakenly credit Orde with shadowing Villeneuve's fleet: Andrew Lambert, *Nelson: Britannia's God of War* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), p. 265. The only modern critic of Orde's actions ("panic-stricken") is Alan Schom, *Trafalgar: Countdown to Battle, 1803–1805* (New York: Atheneum, 1990), p. 211. A sketch of the faulty command structure from Nelson's perspective can be found in both John Sugden, *Nelson: The Sword of Albion* (London: Bodley Head, 2012), pp. 723–24, and Edgar Vincent, *Nelson: Love and Fame* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2003), p. 542.
3. Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 80.
4. Corbett, *Campaign of Trafalgar*, pp. 57–68.
5. Sir John Orde to Lord Barham, 12 May 1805, enclosing a letter from H. Thompson to Orde, 9 May 1805, OSB MSS 133, series 2, box 9, f. 165, Sir John Orde Papers, James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale Univ., New Haven, CT [hereafter Orde Papers, Beinecke]. Emphasis original.
6. Evan Wilson, "Britain: Practicing Aggression," in *Eighteenth-Century Naval Officers: A Transnational Perspective*, ed. Evan Wilson, AnnaSara Hammar, and Jakob Seerup (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).
7. These points are echoed in Martin E. Dempsey, *Mission Command White Paper* (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 3 April 2012).
8. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter ODNB], s.v. "Orde, Sir John, First Baronet (1751–1824)."
9. Evan Wilson, *A Social History of British Naval Officers, 1775–1815* (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell, 2017), pp. 1–7, 105–29.

10. ODNB, s.v. "Nelson, Horatio, Viscount Nelson (1758–1805)."
11. Cuthbert Collingwood to Orde, 29 May 1793, OSB MSS 133, series 1, box 1, f. 31, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
12. Collingwood later revised his own opinion of Orde, writing that he "is proud and carries himself very high"; Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 660.
13. Audit Office investigation of Orde, 1810, OSB MSS 133, series 2, box 13, f. 170, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
14. Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, pp. 660–61.
15. G. E. Hamond to A. S. Hamond, 6–23 December 1804, Hamond Papers, Add. MSS 9394, Cambridge Univ. Library, Cambridge, U.K.
16. H. W. Richmond, ed., *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1794–1801* (London: Navy Records Society, 1913–24), vol. 2, p. 451.
17. Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, pp. 630–31, 660.
18. Newspaper clipping, 1798, OSB MSS 133, series 2, box 13, f. 180, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
19. Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 660.
20. ODNB, s.v. "Orde, Sir John, First Baronet (1751–1824)"; Brian Lavery, *Nelson and the Nile: The Naval War against Bonaparte, 1798* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998), p. 105. On dueling, see Wilson, *Social History*, pp. 196–202.
21. Orde to William Marsden, 20 March 1804, Admiralty: Letters from Admirals Unemployed, ADM 1/580, The National Archives, Kew, U.K. [hereafter TNA].
22. Sir William Cornwallis to Orde, letters of 1804, OSB MSS 133, series 1, box 1, f. 34, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
23. Sir John Colpoys to Orde, 24 August 1804, OSB MSS 133, series 1, box 1, f. 32, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
24. Sir Andrew Snape Hamond to Orde, Sir James Saumarez to Orde, and Sir Thomas Louis to Orde, 20–24 October 1804, OSB MSS 133, series 1, boxes 1–3, ff. 66, 86, and 131, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
25. Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, pp. 530–32.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 90, 164–80.
27. Cádiz was occasionally a subordinate command to the Mediterranean, as in 1799 when Vice Adm. Lord Keith commanded more than a dozen warships off Cádiz while St. Vincent, the commander in chief of the Mediterranean, remained ashore at Gibraltar in overall command. Even more common was for the detachment off Cádiz to be commanded by a rear admiral, as in 1800. Kevin D. McCranie, *Admiral Lord Keith and the Naval War against Napoleon* (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 2006), pp. 65–66, 93.
28. Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, pp. 527–28.
29. Orde reproduced his official orders in his defense. Cadiz Incident: statements by Orde defending his actions at Cadiz and his request for recall to England, circa 1805, OSB MSS 133, series 2, box 13, f. 171, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
30. Viscount Melville to Orde, 27 October 1804, OSB MSS 133, series 1, box 2, f. 91, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
31. Secretary of the Admiralty to Keith, 13 August 1801, in *Keith Papers*, ed. Christopher Lloyd, vol. 2 (London: Navy Records Society, 1950), pp. 382–83.
32. Lords of the Admiralty to Orde, and Orde's Regulations to His Squadron, 27 October 1804, OSB MSS 133, series 2, box 13, f. 179, Orde Papers, Beinecke. Orde's regulations give a good sense of his meddlesome command style. Running to more than six pages closely written, they provide detailed instructions for even the most minor and obvious points: forcing marine subalterns to stand watches, making sure his officers wear their uniforms, telling the admiral about any sick men on board, and more.
33. Orde to Nelson, 17 November 1804, Add. MSS 34927, f. 5, Nelson Papers, British Library, London.
34. Cadiz Incident, circa 1805.
35. Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 661.
36. Nelson to Marsden, 30 March 1805, Admiralty: Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Mediterranean, ADM 1/410, TNA. This was a recurring problem. Nelson also learned about General Craig's expedition to the Mediterranean by chance, rather than from

- the Admiralty, in May 1805. Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 486.
37. Orde to Nelson, 7 February 1805, Add. MSS 34927, f. 209, Nelson Papers, British Library, London.
  38. Nelson to Marsden, 30 March 1805.
  39. Vincent, *Nelson*, pp. 530–31; Sugden, *Nelson*, p. 724.
  40. Orde to H. W. Pearse, 27 March 1805, OSB MSS 133, series 2, box 10, f. 98, Orde Papers, Beinecke. There is some suggestion that *Amazon* was under orders to fly a quarantine flag to avoid Orde. Vincent, *Nelson*, p. 531.
  41. Alexander Ball to Nelson, 12 December 1804, Phillipps-Croker Collection, CRK/1/158, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, U.K. [hereafter NMM].
  42. George Campbell to Nelson, 15 December 1804, Phillipps-Croker Collection, CRK/3/18, NMM.
  43. *Lively's* captain wrote in a letter to his father that he had 2.5 million dollars on board, but Orde's orders to him said he should carry 4 million dollars back to England. Presumably the difference arises from the difficulty in counting so much money and challenges in currency conversions. G. E. Hamond to A. S. Hamond, 29 March 1805, Hamond Papers, Add. MSS 9394, Cambridge Univ. Library, Cambridge, U.K.; Orde to G. E. Hamond, 28 March 1805, OSB MSS 133, series 2, box 10, ff. 98–99, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
  44. G. E. Hamond to A. S. Hamond, letters of 6–23 December 1804, 13–20 January 1805, and 4 March 1805, Hamond Papers, Add. MSS 9394, Cambridge Univ. Library, Cambridge, U.K.
  45. Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 454.
  46. Journal of Sir John Orde, March 1805, Admiralty: Admirals' Journals, ADM 50/43, TNA.
  47. G. E. Hamond to A. S. Hamond, letters of 6–23 December 1804 and 22 March–7 April 1805, Hamond Papers, Add. MSS 9394, Cambridge Univ. Library, Cambridge, U.K.
  48. Marsden to Orde, 11 January 1805, OSB MSS 133, series 1, box 2, f. 89, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
  49. Cadiz Incident, circa 1805.
  50. Orde to Melville, 27 March 1805, ADM 1/410, TNA.
  51. Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 47; Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 80; Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 483; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 534.
  52. Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 48.
  53. Journal of Lord Horatio Nelson, 3 April 1805, ADM 50/38, TNA; Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, pp. 47–48.
  54. Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, pp. 483–85.
  55. Édouard Desbrière, *The Naval Campaign of 1805: Trafalgar*, ed. and trans. Constance Eastwick, vol. 1 (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1933), p. 6.
  56. Captain's Log: HMS *Fisgard*, 9–10 April 1805, Admiralty: Captains' Logs, ADM 51/1549, TNA.
  57. Captain's Log: HMS *Renown*, 8–10 April 1805, ADM 51/1500, TNA.
  58. Captain's Log: HMS *Fisgard*, 9–10 April 1805.
  59. Kerr to Marsden, 23 April 1805, Letters from Captains, Surnames K, K-55, ADM 1/2021, TNA. A copy of the letter is in a packet Kerr sent to the Admiralty. The brig dispatched from Gibraltar never reached Nelson.
  60. Captain's Log: HMS *Fisgard*, 9–10 April 1805. Because Kerr had observed Strachan sailing northwest to warn Orde's squadron, Kerr had no reason to report to Orde after passing the strait in the fading light of 9 April. He knew that the winds in the Gulf of Cádiz could be adverse and were only likely to delay him. He brought the first news of the French escape to the British squadron off Finisterre on 15 April and to the Channel Fleet on 28 April.
  61. Journal of Sir John Orde, 8–9 April 1805; Captain's Log: HMS *Glory*, 9–10 April 1805, ADM 51/1503, TNA.
  62. Journal of Sir John Orde, 8–9 April 1805; Captain's Log: HMS *Glory*, 9–10 April 1805; Captain's Log: HMS *Mercury*, 9–10 April 1805, ADM 51/1494, TNA; Captain's Log: HMS *Sophie*, 9–10 April 1805, ADM 51/1483, TNA.
  63. Captain's Log: HMS *Sophie*, 10 April 1805.

64. Orde to Marsden, 10 April 1805, Letterbook, OSB MSS 133, series 2, box 9, ff. 169–71, Orde Papers, Beinecke. Emphasis in original. Although the letter is dated 10 April, it likely was written on the evening of 9 April, before *Sophie* departed Orde's squadron. *Sophie's* passage to England was not easy. Chased by a large frigate on the afternoon and through the night of 10 April, to get away Rosenhagen was forced to throw overboard his best bower anchor, the ship's boats, and almost anything that was not considered essential. The strange ship chased *Sophie* by moonlight until 4 AM on the following morning. *Sophie* reached British forces off Finisterre and Portsmouth on 22 April and 5 May, respectively, about a week after *Fisgard* had delivered the first news of Villeneuve's passage through the Strait of Gibraltar. Captain's Log: HMS *Sophie*, 9 April–5 May 1805.
65. Captain's Log: HMS *Glory*, 12–13 April 1805.
66. Orde to Sutton, 11 April 1805, OSB MSS 133, series 2, box 10, ff. 102–104, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
67. Those dispatches arrived on 3 and 9 May, respectively. Captain's Log: HMS *Mercury*, 3–10 May 1805.
68. Orde to Bouverie, 12 April 1805, OSB MSS 113, series 2, box 10, ff. 101–102, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
69. Strachan to Orde, 9–16 April 1805, Letterbook, OSB MSS 133, series 2, box 8, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
70. Strachan to Nelson, 30 April 1805, Add. MSS 34929, ff. 192–93, Nelson Papers, British Library, London.
71. Marsden to Orde, 12 January 1805, series 1, box 2, f. 289, Orde Papers, Beinecke.
72. Parker to Nelson, 10 and 18 April 1805, Add. MSS 34929, ff. 169–70, Nelson Papers, British Library, London; Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 48; Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 486.
73. Captain's Log: HMS *Victory*, 19–20 April 1805, ADM 51/1482, TNA; Journal of Lord Horatio Nelson, 19 April 1805; Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 48.
74. Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 81; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, pp. 534–35.
75. Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 49; Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 488.
76. Nelson to Commissioner Otway, 4 May 1805, in *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, ed. Nicholas Harris Nicolas (London: Henry Colburn, 1844–46), vol. 6, p. 419.
77. Orde had left a letter for Nelson in Lisbon, as previously noted, but Nelson was unlikely to receive it.
78. Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 49; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 534.
79. Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 49; Desbrière, *Naval Campaign of 1805*, vol. 1, p. 23.
80. James Stanier Clarke and John M'Arthur, *The Life of Admiral Lord Nelson, K. B., from His Lordship's Manuscripts* (London: T. Bensley, 1809), vol. 2, p. 406.
81. Nelson was delayed slightly by the arrival, on 10 May, of a convoy carrying Gen. Sir James Craig's forces for an attempted Anglo-Russian invasion of Naples. After taking on provisions from the convoy for his own fleet, Nelson detached *Royal Sovereign* as additional protection for the convoy. Journal of Lord Horatio Nelson, 9–12 May 1805; Captain's Log: HMS *Victory*, 9–12 May 1805; Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 49; Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 83; Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 489; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 534.
82. Journal of Lord Horatio Nelson, 4 June 1805; Captain's Log: HMS *Victory*, 4–5 June 1805; Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 52.
83. Journal of Lord Horatio Nelson, 7–8 June 1805; Captain's Log: HMS *Victory*, 7–9 June 1805; Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 52; Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 492.
84. Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 51; Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 84; Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 492; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 535.
85. Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 493.
86. Corbett, *Campaign of Trafalgar*, pp. 162–67; Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, p. 53–54; Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, p. 493; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 535.
87. Corbett, *Campaign of Trafalgar*, pp. 193–207; Adkin, *Trafalgar Companion*, pp. 54–57;

- Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, pp. 84–85; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 536.
88. The decision to quarantine Orde and his squadron seems overly cautious, as Gibraltar had been free from plague since mid-January 1805. Orde's squadron had had limited contact with Gibraltar and had been at sea for the past month. Jason Musteen, *Nelson's Refuge: Gibraltar in the Age of Napoleon* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), pp. 67–71.
89. Cadiz Incident, circa 1805. It is likely that both defenses were written in 1806 rather than 1805.
90. Ibid.
91. Orde to Marsden, 17 April 1805, ADM 1/410, TNA.
92. Cadiz Incident, circa 1805.
93. Orde to Marsden, 12 April 1805, ADM 1/410, TNA.
94. Ibid.
95. Orde to Marsden, 17 April 1805.
96. Cadiz Incident, circa 1805.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
99. Orde to Marsden, 1 May 1805, Admiralty: Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Mediterranean, ADM 1/411, TNA.
100. Cadiz Incident, circa 1805.
101. Kerr to Marsden, 23 April 1805.
102. Cadiz Incident, circa 1805.
103. Eastwick, in an editorial note, suggests that in Cádiz, "it was known that [the lieutenant] was on board and that deceptive appearances were arranged accordingly." Desbrière, *Naval Campaign of 1805*, pp. 20–21, note 3.
104. Lord Robert Fitzgerald, Consul in Lisbon, to Lord Mulgrave, 3 May 1805, Foreign Office and Predecessor: General Correspondence before 1906, Portugal, FO 63/47, TNA.
105. Orde to Marsden, 17 April 1805.
106. Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, pp. 528–35.
107. Corbett, *Campaign of Trafalgar*, pp. 57–68; Cadiz Incident, circa 1805.