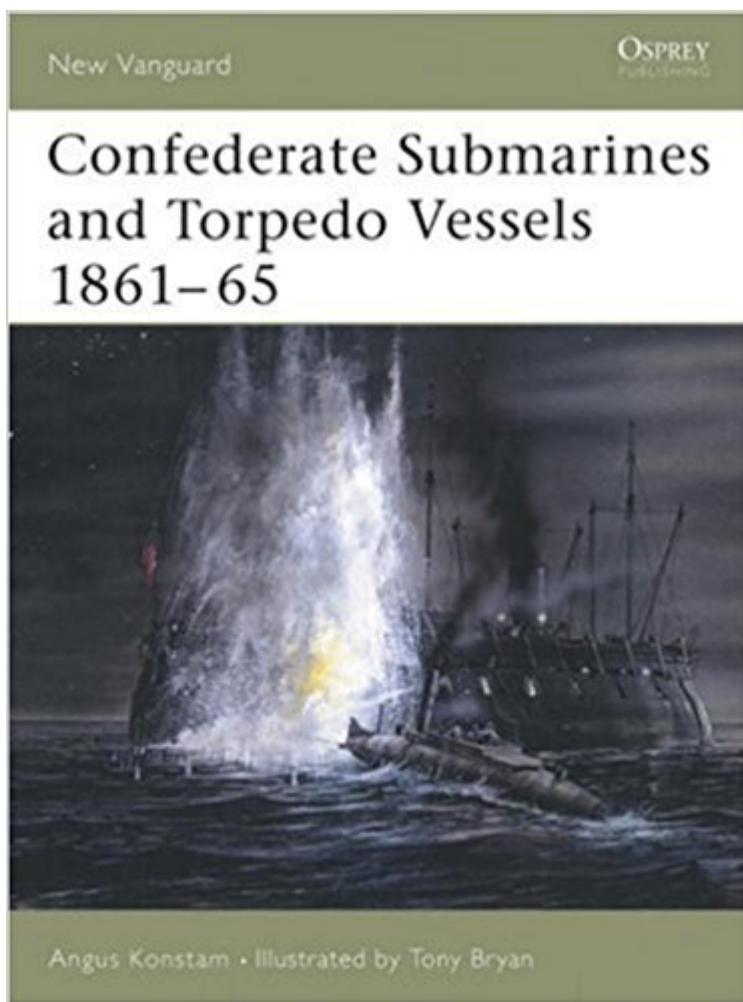


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# Confederate Submarines And Torpedo Vessels 1861â€“65 (New Vanguard)



## Synopsis

The primary Union strategy during the American Civil War was a massive naval blockade of the entire Southern coastline of the Confederacy, and it was in the effort to counter this blockade that the Confederates developed their first submarines and torpedo boats. This book traces the development of these new technologies, including the CSS 'Little David' and 'Hunley' - respectively the first torpedo boat and submarine to sink an enemy warship. The wreck of the 'Hunley' was raised in 2000, and this is the first book ever to integrate details of its recovery with an account of Confederate submarines in action.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The unrivalled illustrated reference on fighting vehicles, transport and artillery through the ages. Each volume is illustrated throughout, making these books uniquely accessible to history enthusiasts of all ages.

Angus Konstam was formerly the Curator of Weapons in the Royal Armouries at the Tower of London, and has also served as the Chief Curator of the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum in Key West, Florida. He is currently based in Edinburgh, where he pursues a full-time career as a historian. He is the author of over 50 books, many of which are for Osprey.

Osprey goes into some interesting detail in the CSN's war efforts. There was more to it than the

## VIRGINIA nee MERIMACK.

An excellent resource for those interested or researching the submersibles and torpedo boats of the US Civil War.

There are only a few books that cover these vessels so if you want basic information to get started this is not a bad one to have. Some of the illustrations I felt were not as accurate as they could have been, but overall a good starting point for further explorations.

This book contains much interesting information and many excellent illustrations. It addresses the David class torpedo boats (and related classes) and the Hunley (and its predecessors), as well as Union examples such as the Alligator and the Spuyten Duyvil. Regrettably, it also contains a considerable amount of information that is either wrong or misleading, particularly with respect to developments in the time prior to the American Civil War.<sup>1</sup> The author begins his history of the submarine with a reference to Alexander the Great (c. 330 BC) using a diving bell, a claim first attested in a medieval European work 1500 years later and not supported by any ancient sources (including Aristotle, who has been cited as a source). Next he mentions Bushnell's Turtle in 1775 (and includes an illustration that shows it as an oar-powered craft, which is not accurate; the Turtle was propeller-driven), Robert Fulton's efforts during the Napoleonic wars, and one of the submarines used the Americans during the War of 1812. This is misleading, other prior efforts include: Cornelius Drebbel (1620-1624) Two other American submarines during the War of 1812 Wilhelm Bauer (1850-1875) Ross Winans' cigar boats (from 1858 and given the similarities to the Confederate Davids and extensive coverage in Scientific American magazine, a surprising oversight) Plus numerous other civilian submersibles.<sup>2</sup> The book states that Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory "took the idea (of the naval mine) one stage further and sought ways to use this torpedo technology in an offensive way." Later in the book, this development is attributed to Robert Fulton. Indeed, offensive torpedoes were not a new idea by 1861. Prior examples include: Drifting torpedoes: China (mid-1300s), Frederico Gianbelli (1585), Cornelius Drebbel (1626-1627), David Bushnell (1777-1778), Robert Fulton (1800-1814) Limpet mines: David Bushnell (1775-1776), Robert Fulton (1800-1814), Wilhelm Bauer (1850-1875) Towed torpedoes: Robert Fulton (1800-1814) Spar Torpedoes: Cornelius Drebbel (1626-1627) and Robert Fulton (1800-1814, proposed for his "Block Ship")<sup>3</sup>. The book attributes the use of electricity to fire black powder charges to Michael Faraday (born 1791), without stating what exact advancement he contributed to

this. In fact in 1751, Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia wrote to a colleague in the Royal Academy in London that he had "been able to fire Gunpowder by the Electric Flame." Alessandro Volta (1745-1827), Bavarian Samuel Sommering (around 1812), and Baron Pavel L'vovich Shilling von Cannstadt also made significant contributions to electrically fired torpedoes. Indeed around 1811, Robert Fulton wrote, "I investigated the mode and practicability of firing by electricity under water," with the Americans having designs for electrically fired torpedoes to defend Alexandria, Virginia from the British invaders in 1814.4. The book also mentions that some mines in the American Revolution were fired "by hand-operated lanyards from a boat or the shore." This claim is not supported by a reference. All of the mines known to have been designed and used by David Bushnell had either clockwork or contact fuzes.

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