



U.S. Navy and the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922

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Cold Wars 2025

Admiralty Trilogy Seminar

Outline



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- ◆ **Dynamics Impacting the Conferences**
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Lead In



- ◆ **The Washington Naval Treaty.**
- ◆ **Ever hear of it?**

Lead In



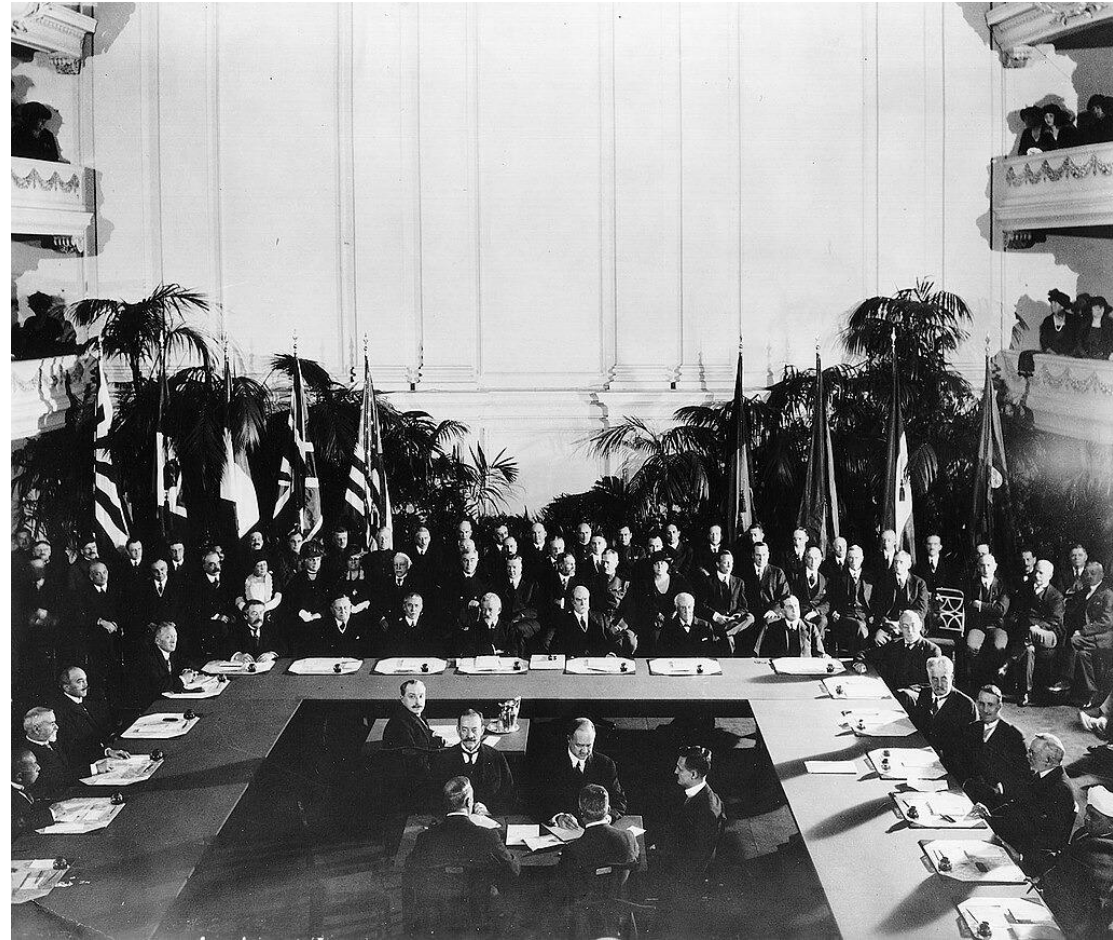
- ◆ **The Washington Naval Treaty.**
- ◆ **Ever hear of it?**
- ◆ **A single, over-arching treaty wasn't what happened.**



Lead In

◆ Washington Naval Treaty.

- Didn't really happened.
- A term that over simplifies the work, during a three-month period, which produced several treaties.





Lead In

So What Did Happen?

◆ Washington Naval Conference, 12 Nov 1922 – 03 Feb 1923.

- Two Key Naval Treaties:
 - Limitation of Naval Armament.
 - Relating to the Use of Submarines and Noxious Gases in Warfare.

◆ Far Eastern Affairs Conference, 12 Nov 1922 – 03 Feb 1923.

- Two Key Treaties on China:
 - Nine-Power Treaty on the Open Door in China.
 - Chinese Tariff Treaty.

◆ Between-Conference Negotiation.

- Key Treaty on Far East Relations.





Why Conferences Were Needed

- ◆ **Situation in Far East was deteriorating between US and Japan in direct opposition on status and future of China.**
- ◆ **A Far East conflict would be a naval conflict and a naval arms race was blamed as the catalyst for the recent Great War.**
- ◆ **United States and Japan were building ships in expectation of war, United Kingdom building ships to maintain biggest fleet.**
- ◆ **Globally, most people wanted no more war, no naval race.**
- ◆ **Globally, most economies could not support another war.**
- ◆ **New American President Harding elected on 'Return to Normalcy' took lead to resolve both problems.**



Dynamics Impacting the Conferences

- ◆ **Great Powers wanted to maintain dominance in their spheres of influence.**
- ◆ **Conflicting international alignments.**
 - **1902 Mutual Defense Treaty between Japan and United Kingdom (Due for renewal).**
 - **United States had become a very close ally to United Kingdom during the Great War.**
 - **Treaty of Versailles was not ratified by the United States.**
 - **United States was not member of the League of Nations.**
- ◆ **Japan was on expansion roll from Sino-Japanese War 1894-95, Russo-Japanese War 1904-05, and the Great War with new possessions of Manchuria, Korea, Formosa, Liaotung Peninsula, Fukien, Marshall Islands . . . and wanted more.**

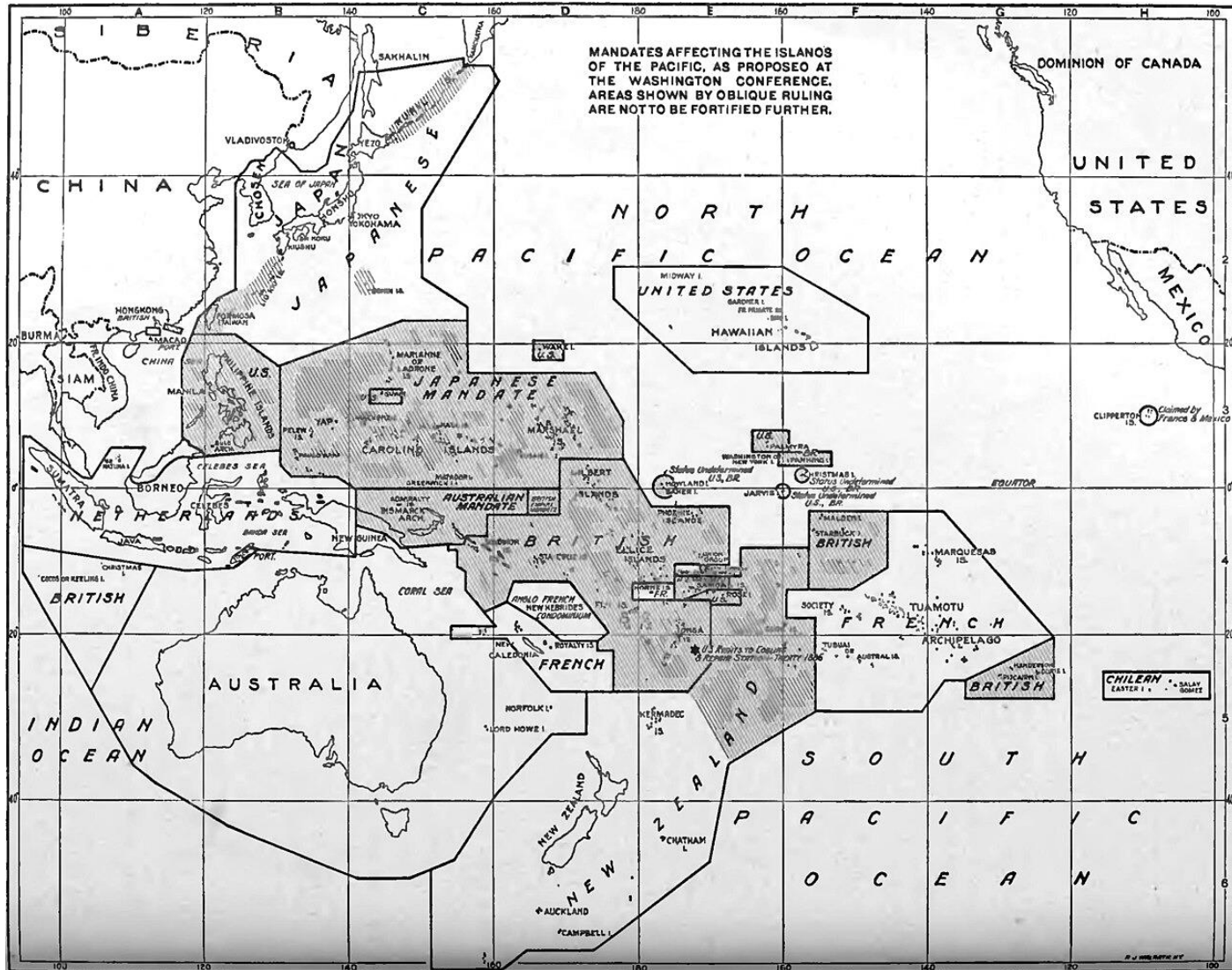


Between-Conference Negotiation

- ◆ **Who: United States, United Kingdom, Japan and France.**
- ◆ **Purpose: Provide a non-confrontation framework that formalized relations, provided a limited form of mutual protection, recognized areas of control . . . and replaced the two-power alliance between United Kingdom and Japan.**
- ◆ **Result: Insular Possessions and Dominions in the Pacific (Four-Power Treaty).**
- ◆ **Impact: Japan had guarantee limiting US action in Far East, the UK was not tied to Japan in a war between the US and Japan, Japan and US agree to consult over issues.**



Geography of Between Conference Talks





Far Eastern Affairs Conference

- ◆ **Who: United States, United Kingdom, Japan, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, and China.**
- ◆ **Purpose: Resolve China's domestic challenges and international status.**
- ◆ **Result: Two treaties**
 - (1) **Nine-Power Treaty on the Open Door in China**
 - (2) **Chinese Tariff Treaty**
- ◆ **Impact: Establish equal field for international commerce in China and fix China's internal and external tariffs. Kept China's political ambitions constrained.**



Washington Naval Conference

- ◆ **Who: United States, United Kingdom, Japan, France, and Italy.**
- ◆ **Purpose: To restrain the naval offensive capability between the signatories and create naval balance of power to support great power global influence that no single power could challenge another for dominion for the next decade. To limit build up of naval bases in Far East.**
- ◆ **Results: Two Five-Power Treaties.**
 - (1) **Limitation of Naval Armament Treaty**
 - (2) **Treaty Relating to the Use of Submarines and Noxious Gases in Warfare**



Washington Naval Conference

◆ Impact:

- **Tonnage limitation ratio on capital ships: US and UK 500,000 tons, Japan 300,000 tons, France and Italy 175,000 tons.**
- **Tonnage restriction called for scrapping of over 1,600,000 tons of capital ships (old and new) from all Five Powers.**
- **The building of super-dreadnoughts was limited in number.**
- **The building of cruisers with the power to challenge a battleship was restricted by tonnage and gun size.**
- **The size of aircraft carriers (experimental) was restricted.**
- **The use of submarines in war was specifically delineated, including holding the captain/crew liable for the ship's action.**
- **The use of poisonous gases by warships was restricted.**



Washington Naval Conference

◆ Impact:

- No new battleship could be greater than 35,000 tons or carry guns in excess of 16 inches.
- Aircraft carrier total tonnage could grow to 135,000 tons, but not exceed 27,000 tons or carry greater than 8-inch guns.
- Nothing said about actual aircraft.
- Cruisers could not be greater than 10,000 tons nor carry greater than 8-inch guns.
- No build up of naval bases or fortifications in specified Far East possessions of the signatories.

Naval Treaty Ratified, 74-1; Submarines, Gas Outlawed

Compact Establishing the 5-5-3 Ratio for "Big Five" Is Opposed by France, of Maryland.

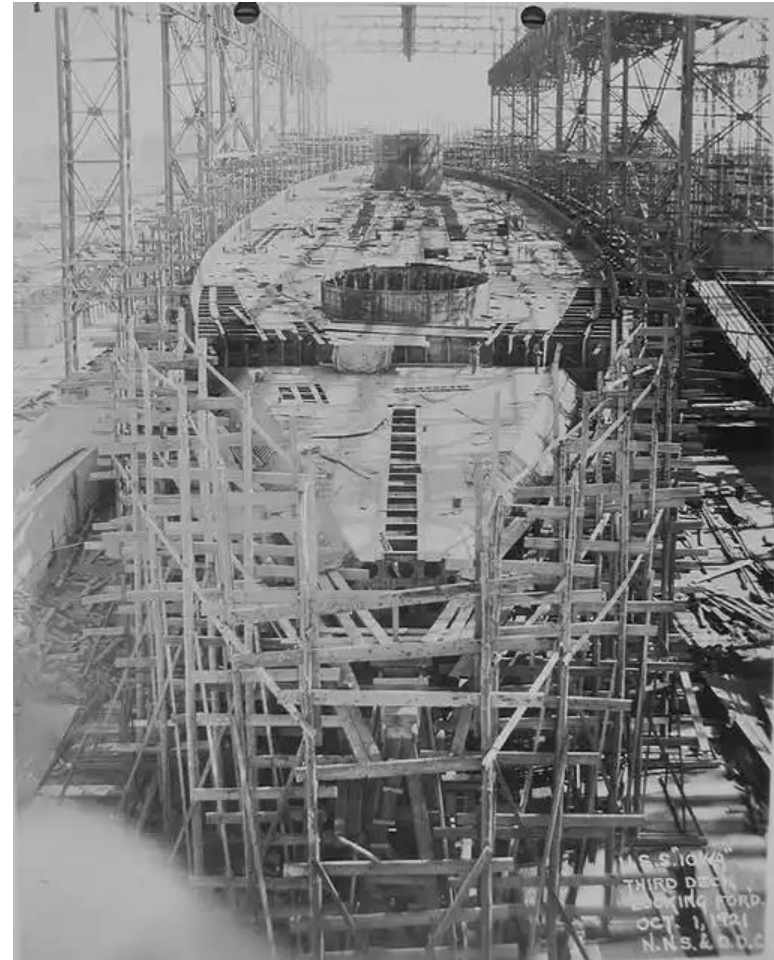
"Only Beginning," Declares Borah

Ban on Inhumane Methods of Warfare Voted 71 to 0; Lodge to Bring Up Chinese Pact To-day



Impact on US Navy

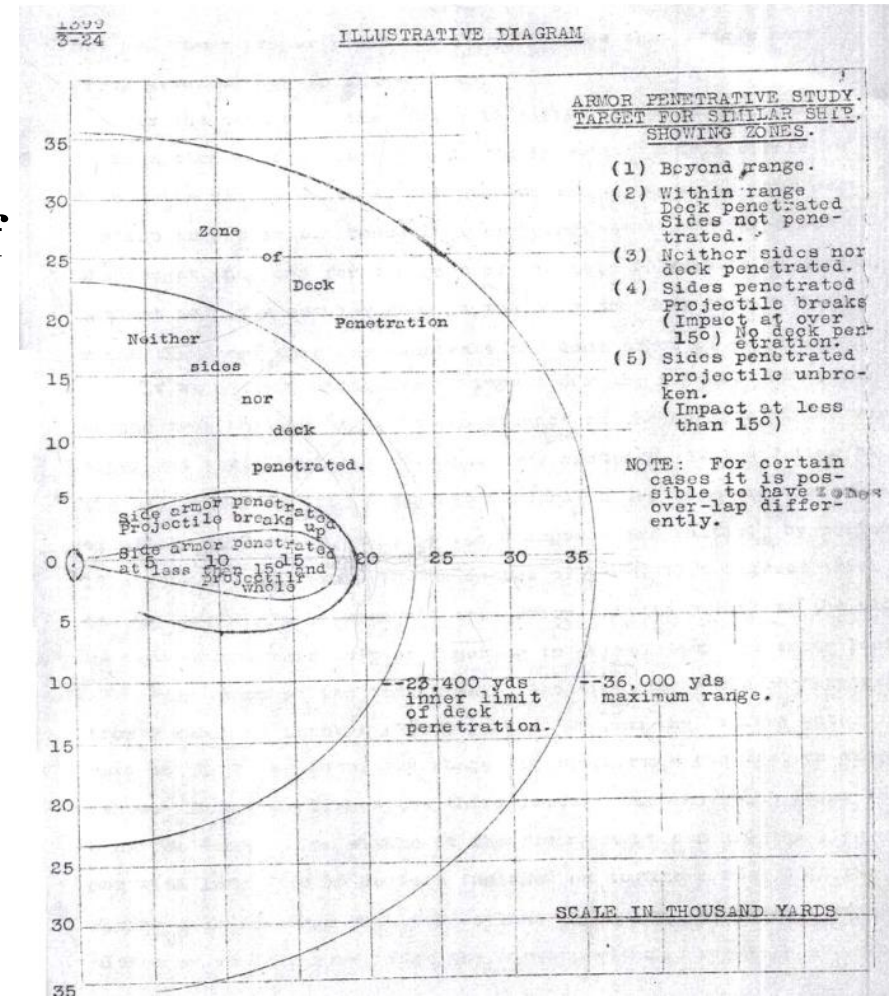
- ◆ **15 existing battleships to be scrapped, 13 battleships / battlecruisers in construction to be scrapped.**
- ◆ **Remaining would be 15 pre-Jutland battleships and 3 post-Jutland battleships.**
- ◆ **New naval facilities planned for Guam, Philippines, and Aleutians were cancelled.**
 - **However** –





Impact on US Navy

- ◆ US naval tactics had already embraced a post-Jutland shift.
- ◆ Long range gunnery and speed of action were key elements; older battleships limited fleet action.
- ◆ Emphasis is on maneuver and aggressive offensive actions to control the course of battle.
- ◆ Aerial spotting enhanced accuracy of long-range gunnery.
- ◆ Combined air and gunnery attack compromised enemy ships.



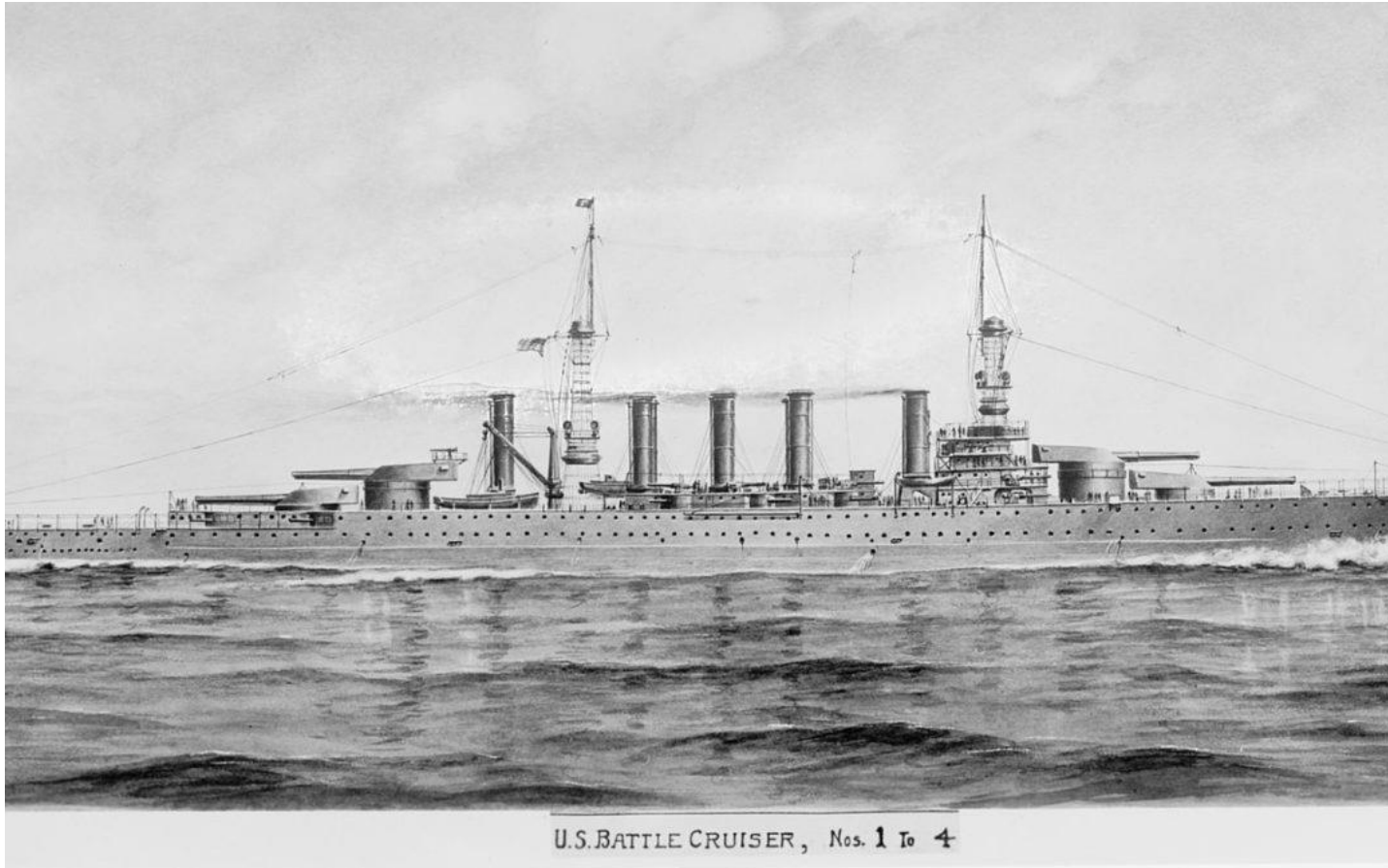


US Navy if NO Naval Treaty

- ◆ **Continue to build the battleships and battlecruisers already in production, but would not see most until 1925-26.**
- ◆ **Focus would remain on aggressive action and long-range gunnery to win battles.**
- ◆ **Aerial spotting would remain important, but the development of aircraft carriers would have been very different.**
 - **More of a hybrid ship design as envisioned by Bywater vice focus on aircraft first and warship second.**
- ◆ **Forward naval support facilities in Guam and Philippines.**
- ◆ *Possible tactical opportunity in 1923 with the Tokyo Earthquake that damaged many Japanese ships and naval infrastructure?*
- ◆ *Would the British have renewed the 1902 treaty with Japan?*



Questions?



U.S. BATTLE CRUISER, Nos. 1 To 4



Backup

Tonnage limitations		
Country	Capital ships	Aircraft carriers
British Empire	525,000 tons (533,000 tonnes)	135,000 tons (137,000 tonnes)
United States	525,000 tons (533,000 tonnes)	135,000 tons (137,000 tonnes)
Empire of Japan	315,000 tons (320,000 tonnes)	81,000 tons (82,000 tonnes)
France	175,000 tons (178,000 tonnes)	60,000 tons (61,000 tonnes)
Italy	175,000 tons (178,000 tonnes)	60,000 tons (61,000 tonnes)



Impact on US Navy

Range (Yards)	Percentage of Hits	
	Top Spot	Plane Spot
12,000	12.3	---
14,000	8.9	---
16,000	6.2	---
18,000	4.2	---
20,000	2.6	4.3
22,000	1.5	3.4
24,000	0.7	2.7
26,000	0.1	2.2
28,000	---	1.8
30,000	---	1.5

The significance of these increasing capabilities was not lost on the Navy's leadership. As early as 1922, the Bureau of Aeronautics was advocating increased elevation for battleship guns because of the increased accuracy aerial spotting made possible at longer ranges.



Significant Reduction in Construction

