By Jim Bradshaw

In the fall of 1861 rumors reached Washington that French Emperor Louis Napoleon, whose troops held most of Mexico, was making plans to invade Louisiana. It was suspected that French forces might try to capture New Orleans, which would give France control of the Mississippi River.

The French Navy had been experimenting with new ships and wanted to test them in a war. The French government decided to send a fleet of warships to the United States to challenge the Union Navy. The French government also wanted to challenge the Union government's control of the Mississippi River.

The French Navy planned to send a force of about 20,000 troops to New Orleans. The French force would then move up the Mississippi River to challenge the Union Army.


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In December 1861, the French fleet arrived in New Orleans. The French fleet consisted of three ships: the France, the L'Heureux, and the La Galisonnière.

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