



THE BARBARY WARS

The [Barbary Wars](#) were a series of conflicts that culminated in two wars fought at different times over the same reasons between the United States, Sweden, and the Barbary states of North Africa in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. At issue was the Barbary pirates' demand for tribute from American merchant vessels in the Mediterranean Sea. If ships failed to pay, pirates would attack the ship and take their goods, and often enslave crew members or hold them for ransom. When Thomas Jefferson became President of the United States in March 1801, he refused to pay tribute and sent a United States Naval fleet to the Mediterranean, ultimately extracting concessions of fair passage. James Madison, Jefferson's successor, directed military forces for the second war in 1815.