The American Civil War was a proving ground for innovative military tactics and deadly new instruments of destruction. Ironclad warships made their first appearance along with steel-turreted monitors. But the ultimate diabolical naval weapon was developed by Confederate Army officer Capt. Francis D. Lee.

From the very opening of the Civil War, the harbor at Charleston, South Carolina, was a scene of constant naval conflict.

In the spring of 1863, a fleet of Federal ironclads and monitors joined Adm. Samuel Du Pont's Atlantic blockade force.

Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy, was determined to reduce the port defenses at Charleston, and ordered Du Pont to attack the fortifications.

Confederate Army Capt. Francis D. Lee began developing a revolutionary type torpedo that could be activated by a chemical fuse.

The ungainly ironclad USS New Ironsides.

Confederate gunners that defended Charleston Harbor.

The fury of the American Civil War created a host of radical new weapons with one of the strangest being a steam-powered cigar-shaped metal tube fitted with a chemical torpedo. The crude vessel would strike terror into the heart of the Union Fleet and mark history's first use of what was to become the motor torpedo boat.