

USE OF SEARCHLIGHTS AT SANTIAGO

Rear-Admiral W.T. Sampson

US FLAGSHIP NEW YORK, First Rate, Off Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, 8 June 1898

During the dark hours of the night searchlights will be used as follows:

The IOWA, OREGON and the MASSACHUSETTS will take turns of two hours each, i.e., from dark to 8 PM, and from 8 PM to 10 PM, etc., keeping one searchlight directly on the harbor entrance, maintaining carefully during that time their blockading positions. Should a vessel's lights fail the next in order will at once take up the duty.

The picket launch and vidette, stationed south of the Morro, will move to one side or the other sufficiently to get clear of the beam of light.

The vessels on each flank, the BROOKLYN and the TEXAS on the western side, the NEW YORK and NEW ORLEANS on the eastern side will take two hour turns in using one searchlight from time to time on the coast line, swinging it toward the Morro, but avoiding the illumination of the flanking videttes on the inside line. The light should never be turned off more than five minutes at a time. From time to time the horizon outside will be swept.

Attention is called to bad and careless handling of searchlights. Last night some of the lights were kept high in the air and were again swept rapidly from side to side. Under such circumstances a searchlight is worse than useless.

The beams must be directed to the horizon and must be moved very steadily and slowly. Not less than three minutes should be employed in sweeping through an arc of 90 degrees.

The best way to discover a torpedo boat is by its smoke, and even this will not be seen unless the light is very well handled.

Brooklyn Eagle (27 July 1898), page 3.