

Themistocles - an Athenian leader in 480 B.C. - knew the Persians had a military weakness. A country used to winning battles on land, Persia did not have a strong navy.

Taking advantage of this perceived weakness, Themistocles ordered the Athenians to build-up their own navy. At the time, their greatest ship - called a trireme - was able to travel between 8-9 knots. Powered by rowing men, triremes were also able to ram with their bows.

In a way, they were like guided missiles of the ancient world.

Drawing the Persians into the narrow Straits of Salamis, Themistocles and his navy were well-positioned to decisively defeat their greatest enemy.

Their ultimate victory meant that Greece was safe - at least, for a time.

Credits:

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