

= French ironclad Colbert =

The French ironclad Colbert was the lead ship of the Colbert class ironclads that were built for the French Navy in the 1870s . The ship was the flagship of the Mediterranean Squadron for most of her career . She took part in the French conquest of Tunisia , notably shelling and landing troops in Sfax on 15 ? 16 July 1881 . Colbert was paid off in 1895 and condemned in 1900 . The ship was finally sold for scrap in 1909 .

= Design and description =

The Colbert class ships were designed by Constructor Sabattier as improved versions of the ironclad Richelieu . As a central battery ironclad , Colbert had her armament concentrated amidships . Like most ironclads of her era she was equipped with a plough shaped ram . Her crew numbered 774 officers and men . The metacentric height of the ship was low , a little above 2 feet (0 . 6 m) .

The ship measured 101 . 1 meters (331 ft 8 in) overall , with a beam of 17 . 4 meters (57 ft 1 in) . Colbert had a maximum draft of 8 . 5 meters (27 ft 11 in) and displaced 8 , 617 metric tons (8 , 481 long tons) .

= = Propulsion = =

Colbert reverted to a single propeller shaft to improve her sailing qualities . She had one Wolf 3 cylinder horizontal return connecting rod compound steam engine . The engine was powered by eight oval boilers and was designed for a capacity of 4 , 600 indicated horsepower (3 , 400 kW) . On sea trials the engine produced 4 , 652 indicated horsepower (3 , 469 kW) and Colbert reached 14 . 75 knots (27 . 32 km / h ; 16 . 97 mph) . She carried a maximum of 620 metric tons (610 long tons) of coal which allowed her to steam for approximately 3 , 300 nautical miles (6 , 100 km ; 3 , 800 mi) at a speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) . Colbert was ship rigged with three masts and had a sail area around 2 , 100 square meters (23 , 000 sq ft) .

= = Armament = =

Colbert had two 274 millimeter (10 . 8 in) guns mounted in barbettes on the upper deck , one gun at the forward corners of the battery , with six additional guns on the battery deck below the barbettes . The side of the upper deck were cut away to improve the ability of the barbette guns to bear fore and aft . One 240 millimeter (9 . 4 in) was mounted in the forecastle as a chase gun . The ship 's secondary armament consisted of six 138 millimeter (5 . 4 in) guns , four forward of the battery and two aft . These latter two guns were replaced in 1878 by another 240 millimeter gun as a stern chaser . The ship also mounted four above water 356 millimeter (14 . 0 in) torpedo tubes .

All of the ship 's guns could fire both solid shot and explosive shells . The 274 millimeter Modèle 1870 gun was credited with the ability to penetrate a maximum of 14 . 3 inches (360 mm) of wrought iron armor while the 240 millimeter Modèle 1870 gun could penetrate 14 . 4 inches (366 mm) of armor .

At some point the ship received fourteen to eighteen 37 millimeter (1 . 5 in) Hotchkiss 5 barrel revolving guns . The gun had a range of about 3 , 200 meters (3 , 500 yd) and a rate of fire of about 30 rounds per minute .

= = Armor = =

The Colbert class ships had a complete wrought iron waterline belt that was 220 millimeters (8 . 7 in) thick amidships and tapered to 180 millimeters (7 . 1 in) at the stern . It was

backed by 89 millimeters (3 @. @ 5 in) of wood . The sides of the battery itself were armored with 160 millimeters (6 @. @ 3 in) of wrought iron , backed by 62 millimeters (2 @. @ 4 in) of wood , and the ends of the battery were closed by transverse armored bulkheads 120 millimeters (4 @. @ 7 in) thick , backed by 480 millimeters (18 @. @ 9 in) of wood . The barbets were unarmored , but the deck was 15 millimeters (0 @. @ 59 in) thick .

= = Service = =

Colbert was named in honor of Jean @-@ Baptiste Colbert , Controller @-@ General of Finances from 1665 to 1683 under King Louis XIV . She was laid down at Brest on 4 July 1870 and launched on 16 September 1875 . While the exact reason for such prolonged construction time is not known , it is believed that reduction of the French Navy 's budget after the Franco @-@ Prussian War of 1870 ? 71 and out @-@ of @-@ date work practices in French dockyards were likely causes . The ship began her sea trials on 23 May 1877 , but became flagship of the Reserve Squadron on 31 August 1878 . On 1 October 1879 she became the flagship of the Mediterranean Squadron ; which post she would hold until 14 January 1890 when she was placed in reserve . Colbert bombarded the Tunisian port of Sfax on 15 ? 16 July 1881 as the French occupied Tunisia . She became flagship of the Reserve Squadron again on 12 April 1892 until she was disarmed and paid off in 1895 . She was condemned on 11 August 1900 , before being sold for scrap in 1909 .