

Conflict

In early April, Major Anderson, known for his composure, expressed growing frustration with Washington's inaction regarding Fort Sumter. The catalyst for his discontent was learning of a telegram from Confederate Commissioner Crawford to General Beauregard, warning that President Lincoln might not order an evacuation, instead leaving the decision to Anderson, effectively letting him be “starved out.” Upon receiving the news three days later, Anderson felt compelled to voice his concerns in a letter to Adjutant General Thomas, questioning whether the government would truly abandon him without guidance.

Anderson was anxious about the public perception of him unilaterally deciding to leave the fort; he found it staggering that such a critical decision would rest on his shoulders amid rising tensions and the prospect of war. He asserted in his communication that after over thirty years of service, he would not allow the narrative to depict him as having treasonously abandoned his post without proper direction. He emphasized the need for immediate answers regarding the fate of the public property under his command and where to take his forces.

While a letter from Washington was en route to provide some answers, it would not be the guidance he desired. With his warnings about impending food shortages for his troops alarming Lincoln, the President had come to believe the garrison could endure until April 15 without severe issues, only to now learn the situation was more dire.

Lincoln took charge, drafting a directive for Anderson, which was dispatched through War Secretary Cameron without explicitly mentioning Lincoln's involvement. The message conveyed a sense of urgency, indicating that Anderson's previous correspondence had caused concern. It detailed plans for a maritime expedition meant to resupply Sumter and confirmed Captain Fox as the mission's leader.

Lincoln urged Anderson to hold out until the expedition's arrival, reducing risks to a minimum, but indicated that he trusted Anderson would make prudent decisions as a soldier. Importantly, Lincoln granted Anderson the authority to surrender his command if necessary for the safety of his troops, reinforcing the weight of his responsibility during this critical juncture .