

Activity and Determination

Activity and determination were at the forefront of the increasing tensions at Fort Sumter in early March 1861. As President Lincoln's inaugural address set the tone for the nation's future, a noticeable surge in military activity around Charleston Harbor caught the attention of the fort's defenders. The troops stationed at Fort Sumter, unable to access the president's speech for two days, observed heightened movements and preparations around the surrounding Confederate batteries. General Beauregard's arrival further intensified these efforts, as he took command of the defenses, leading to an acceleration of the buildup of forces and artillery. The sense of urgency was palpable, and the fort's leadership, particularly Captain Foster, closely monitored these developments, noting the considerable increase in troop numbers and artillery as critical factors in the looming conflict.

Captain Foster's observations of troop movements and supply landings provided an insight into the growing Confederate preparations. On March 4, three steamers arrived at the Iron Battery at Cummings Point, delivering additional soldiers and crucial supplies. The subsequent night saw even greater movement, with a large force disembarking and nine new cannons, along with portable "hot shot" furnaces, brought to reinforce the position. The presence of so many soldiers in the area indicated a dire lack of shelter, as many were seen huddled around bivouac fires, trying to keep warm amidst a sudden drop in temperature. Foster, sympathetic to their discomfort, conveyed these hardships while also recognizing the escalating readiness of the Confederate forces. Despite the cold and harsh conditions, the momentum of their preparations suggested that the situation was becoming more critical by the hour.

Both Captain Foster and Major Anderson, stationed at Fort Sumter, began to recognize the shift in attitude and resolve of the Confederate forces under Beauregard's leadership. Anderson, familiar with Beauregard from his time as a student,

acknowledged the increased determination and activity surrounding the batteries. This mutual respect between the two men was clear in Anderson's report to Adjutant Cooper, where he highlighted the growing sense of urgency in the area. The Confederate forces, now under more capable leadership, were not just preparing for an eventual attack—they were readying themselves for a prolonged siege if necessary. Anderson's report painted a picture of a Confederate force that was becoming increasingly resolute in its goal to fortify Charleston Harbor and ensure that Fort Sumter remained under their control.

While Foster's observations conveyed a heightened state of readiness on the Confederate side, there was still room for cautious optimism regarding some of the threats. One such threat, the feared "floating battery," appeared less formidable after a closer examination. Foster assessed that the floating battery, despite its intimidating appearance, would not pose a significant threat due to its draft and instability when loaded with artillery. This assessment, which he relayed back to Washington, brought a sense of relief, as it suggested that the anticipated challenge might not be as serious as initially feared. This small victory, however, did little to ease the overall tension, as the larger picture remained grim, and the conflict appeared inevitable.

On the Confederate side, General Beauregard faced significant challenges in preparing his forces for a possible siege. While his troops showed promise, Beauregard was concerned that they were still not fully organized and lacked the experience needed for a prolonged engagement. He recognized the importance of time and resources to build a solid defense, particularly in ensuring that Sumter was well-defended against the anticipated assault. In a bid to address these challenges, local planters offered their enslaved workers to assist in fortifying the defenses, providing a temporary solution to some immediate logistical needs. However, Beauregard's confidence was tempered by the reality that the Confederate forces, while growing in strength, were still inexperienced and untested in battle. This combination of optimism and concern highlighted the precarious balance the South faced, as the potential for conflict loomed large, and the time to prepare was rapidly running out.