

Dread

Dread fills the air as Washington braces for the electoral count and certification of President Lincoln's election, set for February 13. The city is on edge, with General Scott's troops and artillery strategically positioned throughout, signaling the Army's commitment to protecting the integrity of the electoral process from any potential disturbances. Rumors of six thousand armed men assembling in Baltimore circulate, sparking fears that these forces could disrupt the peaceful transition of power in Washington. In light of these concerns, additional support is brought in, with one hundred police officers from New York and Philadelphia arriving to strengthen the security of the city and ensure the proper conduct of the electoral proceedings.

Washington's precarious position below the Mason-Dixon Line, bordering Maryland and Virginia, adds to the tension. Both states harbor strong Southern sympathies, which further fuels the unrest. The situation is exacerbated by a growing number of defections from the government, which stokes anxieties among officials. Senator Seward expresses his alarm, noting that nearly half of the 4,470 civil and military employees in Washington hail from states that openly support the rebellion. This widespread dissatisfaction stretches across all sectors, from government departments to diplomatic missions worldwide, amplifying the sense of instability that hangs over the capital.

Jeremiah Black, the Secretary of State, communicates with President Buchanan about the situation in Washington. Although no direct evidence suggests a plot to seize the city, Black emphasizes the importance of maintaining control over Washington, as it holds strategic value for the secessionist movement. His statement reflects a broader sentiment of vulnerability, suggesting that any attempt to take the city would be a critical error for the secessionists if they intended to achieve their goals. The anxiety in Washington is palpable, with every decision weighed carefully as leaders face the

reality of a nation divided and on the edge of war. This unease captures the atmosphere of a country teetering on the brink of monumental change, where distrust and fear influence every action.

This sense of dread was not just limited to the political leaders but permeated through the general population as well. The realization that the United States was at the precipice of civil conflict was impossible to ignore. Many citizens, particularly those in Washington, felt torn between their regional loyalties and the larger national identity. This divide, fueled by deep-rooted political, economic, and cultural differences, left the capital vulnerable to both external and internal pressures. As the days counted down to the certification of Lincoln's election, the stakes grew higher, with every passing hour making it increasingly likely that the peaceful transition of power would be challenged.

In addition to the military tensions, the atmosphere in Washington was filled with the uncertainty of what the future held for the Union. The looming question of whether the Southern states would secede from the Union hung over every discussion. Politicians struggled to navigate the complex web of loyalty to their states, personal ideologies, and the demands of national unity. As Washington prepared for what seemed like an inevitable clash, there was a general sense of helplessness, as if the course of history had already been set in motion, and the options for avoiding conflict were rapidly dwindling. This feeling of dread and impending doom was not just a political sentiment but a deeply personal experience for many, particularly those living in the heart of the nation's capital.

The dread of potential violence was compounded by the widespread belief that the South was unified in its resolve to leave the Union. This was a time of deep division, where the South's resolve to preserve its way of life was met with resistance from the North, which sought to maintain the Union at all costs. The simmering tensions between the two regions had been building for years, with the issue of slavery at its core. In Washington, those who supported the Union viewed the secessionist movement as a direct challenge to the nation's stability and its core values. As a

result, the impending electoral count became not just a formality but a symbolic act, representing the culmination of years of political and social strife.

With the arrival of additional police and military forces in Washington, it became clear that the government was preparing for the worst. The streets of the capital were filled with soldiers and officers, ready to respond to any signs of unrest. Despite the lack of direct threats, the presence of so many armed individuals underscored the gravity of the situation. The events leading up to the certification of Lincoln's election were marked by uncertainty, and the actions of both the federal government and the secessionist movement showed just how fragile the Union had become. In this climate of fear and mistrust, the political and military landscape was shifting, and Washington's future was uncertain. The dread of impending conflict loomed large, shaping the actions and attitudes of those who were part of the nation's pivotal moment in history.