

# Forbearance

Forbearance marked the period between January 9–12 as Major Anderson and his troops at Fort Sumter witnessed the *Star of the West* depart after being fired upon by Fort Moultrie. Despite the clear provocation, Anderson ordered his gunners not to retaliate, which frustrated Captain Doubleday. Doubleday believed that firing back was their duty, seeing it as a necessary act of defense for the American flag. He argued that the failure to act could have jeopardized their position, which was viewed as shocking by the Southern forces, who expected a more aggressive response. This inaction exemplified the internal struggle Anderson faced in balancing the defense of the fort with the risk of escalating tensions, a decision that would weigh heavily as the conflict continued to build.

Amid the heightened tensions, Anderson convened a meeting with his officers to discuss whether they should use Fort Sumter's artillery to block the harbor. Some, including Doubleday, advocated for immediate bombardment, believing it was the only way to protect their position and show strength. However, Lieutenant Meade warned against such action, emphasizing the importance of keeping defensive conduct to avoid plunging the country into a civil war. Meade's caution reflected the deep concern within the Union ranks about the growing possibility of conflict, and Anderson ultimately decided against launching any offensive. Instead, he chose to send a protest letter to Governor Pickens in Charleston, seeking to understand the motivations behind the attack on the *Star of the West* and attempting to defuse the situation diplomatically.

The protest letter, delivered by Quartermaster Hall to Charleston, was met with cold reception, as rumors of impending violence circulated. Anderson's letter expressed that firing on an unarmed vessel was unjustified and sought clarity from the governor on whether the attack had been authorized. Governor Pickens' response was

defensive, justifying the action based on South Carolina's altered political relationship with the United States. Despite this, Anderson chose to maintain his defensive stance, disregarding the justification for the attack and instead focusing on ensuring that Fort Sumter remained secure. His decision highlighted his dedication to holding firm in the face of growing tensions, even as the situation continued to escalate.

As the pressure mounted, Anderson decided to send Lieutenant Talbot north for consultation with the War Department. This move was seen as a necessary step in gaining further guidance as the situation at the fort became more precarious. Meanwhile, a second communication from Governor Pickens arrived, demanding the fort's surrender, a request that Anderson refused. He remained steadfast in his belief that diplomacy should prevail, despite the increasingly dire circumstances surrounding him. This refusal marked a critical moment of defiance, showing Anderson's commitment to his mission even as he faced mounting pressure to yield to Southern demands.

In anticipation of further negotiations with Governor Pickens, Anderson proposed sending Lieutenant Hall to meet with South Carolina's attorney general, Isaac W. Hayne, and then go on to speak with President Buchanan directly. This decision caused unease among the officers at Fort Sumter, especially Captain Doubleday, who feared the potential consequences of delaying action. As South Carolina continued to strengthen its military forces, the fort remained underprepared, deepening the sense of anxiety among the Union officers. This chapter captures a key moment of restraint, as the officers at Fort Sumter grappled with the weight of their decisions, which were filled with uncertainty, while the impending sense of conflict loomed ever closer. The fear of war was palpable, yet the internal struggle between action and caution continued to define their choices during this critical period in American history.

The political and military situation in Washington added to the tension felt at Fort Sumter. President Buchanan's administration was seen as struggling to maintain control as secession discussions intensified across the South. With many Southern states already preparing to leave the Union, the pressure on Anderson and his men

grew daily. In contrast, the Union forces at Fort Sumter were left in a precarious position, unsure of how the government would respond to the escalating demands from the South. This uncertainty added to the emotional and psychological toll faced by Anderson and his officers, who were torn between adhering to orders and navigating the complex, fast-moving political landscape. The chapter underscores the delicate balance between military action and diplomacy as both sides braced for the inevitable conflict that would soon erupt.