
Columbia, 17th December, 1860.

Strictly confidential.

My dear Sir,

With a sincere desire to prevent a collision of force, I have thought proper to address you directly and truthfully on points of deep and immediate interest.

I am authoritatively informed that the forts in Charleston Harbor are now being thoroughly prepared to turn, with effect, their guns upon the interior and the city. Interection was ceded by this State expressly for the purpose of external defence from foreign invasion, and not with any view that they should be turned upon the State.

In an ordinary case of most rebellion, perhaps
it might be proper to prepare them for such an outbreak, but when the people of the State, in their constitutional Convention assembled, determine to assume their separate and independent powers of sovereignty, the whole question is changed and it is no longer an Act of rebellion. I therefore most respectfully urge that all work on the forts be put on hold to for the present, and that no more force may be ordered there.

The regular Convention of the people of the State of South Carolina, legally and properly called under our Constitution, is now in session, deliberating upon the gravest and most momentous questions, and the excitement of the great mass of the people is intense, under a sense of deep wrongs, and a profound necessity of doing something to preserve the peace and safety of the country. To spare the effusion of blood, which no human power may be able to prevent
I earnestly beg your immediate consideration of the
points I call your attention to. It is not unproba-
ble, that, under orders, either from the Comman-
dant, or perhaps from the Commander in Chief
of the army, the alteration and defence of those
forts are progressing without the knowledge of your-
self or the Secretary of War.

The attack on the city of Charleston with
the public arms, I am informed, was very properly
trusted to the keeping and defence of a State
force, at the urgent request of the Governor of
South Carolina. I would most respectfully, and
from a sincere devotion to the public peace,
request that you would allow me to send a
small force, not exceeding twenty-five men
and one officer, to take possession of Fort Sumter
immediately, in order to give a feeling of safety
to the community. There are no United States troops  
in that fort whatever, or perhaps only four or  
five at present, besides some additional workmen  
or laborers, lately employed, to keep the guns in  
order. The United States troops are stationed at Fort  
Moultrie. If Fort Sumter could be given to me  
as Governor, under a permission similar to that  
which gave the Governor permission to keep the  
arms, with the United States arms in the city  
of Charleston, then, I think, the public mind  
could be quieted, under a feeling of safety, and  
as the Convention is now in full authority, I  
strike me it could be done with perfect propriety.  
I need not go into particulars; for urgent rea-  
sons will force themselves readily upon your con-  
cideration.

If something is not done,  
I cannot answer for the consequences. I send  
this by a private and confidential gentleman

who is authorized to confer fully with Mr. Freret to
and to receive, through him, any answer you
may think proper to give to this.

I have the honor to be—
much respectfully,

 yours truly,

Signed, F. W. Pickens.

To the President
of the United States.