

## **Fort Sumter Primary Document- Beauregard Demands Anderson Surrender; Civil War Begins**

Introduction: The election of Abraham Lincoln in November, 1860 brought to a head the issue of slavery in the United States. Seven southern states seceded from the Union rather than continue negotiation and compromise with a government they felt would be hostile to their rights as states. The first to secede was South Carolina on December 20, 1860. By February 1861, six more states had joined the new Confederate States of America. With their secession declarations came the demands that all United States property be turned over to those states, including military property. The new Lincoln administration sought not to provoke armed conflict, but refused to surrender Federal installations to the Confederates. Instead, Lincoln chose to resupply Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor and other forts when required. One attempt to resupply Sumter took place in January but the ship was turned away by Rebel guns. Negotiations continued in Charleston with Confederate Gen. Pierre G.T. Beauregard, in command of the Confederate forces there and Maj. Robert Anderson, the Sumter garrison commander. The talks failed to resolve tensions, forcing Beauregard to action. Early in the morning of April 12, 1861, Confederate guns around the harbor opened fire on Fort Sumter. At 2:30pm on April 13th, Major Robert Anderson, garrison commander, surrendered the fort and was evacuated the next day. The Union would not recapture Fort Sumter for nearly four years.

4/11/1861

*The following series of communiques document Gen. Beauregard's formal demands for the surrender of Fort Sumter; and Maj. Anderson's replies.*

**April 11, 1861**

**HEADQUARTERS PROVISIONAL ARMY, C.S.A.,**

SIR: The Government of the Confederate States has until now refrained from any hostile demonstration against Fort Sumter, in the hope that the Government of the United States, with a view to the a friendly response of all questions between the two Governments, and to avert the calamities of war, would voluntarily evacuate it.

There was reason at one time to believe that such would be the course pursued by the Government of the United States, and under that impression my Government has refrained from making any demand for the surrender of the fort. But the Confederate

States can no longer delay assuming actual possession of a fortification commanding the entrance of one of their harbors, and necessary to its defense and security.

I am ordered by the Government of the Confederate States to demand the evacuation of Fort Sumter. My aides, Colonel Chestnut and Captain Lee, are authorized to make such demand of you. All proper facilities will be afforded for the removal of yourself and command, together with company arms and property, and all private property, to any post in the United States which you may select. The flag which you have upheld so long and with so much fortitude, under the most trying circumstances, may be saluted by you by taking it down.

Colonel Chestnut and Captain Lee will, for a reasonable time, await your answer.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant

G. T. BEAUREGARD

*Brigadier-General, Commanding.*

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FORT SUMTER, S.C.,

GENERAL: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication demanding the evacuation of this fort, and to say, in reply, that it is a demand with which I regret that my sense of honor, and of my obligations to my Government, prevent my compliance. Thanking you for the fair, manly, and courteous terms proposed, and for the high compliment paid me,

I am, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ROBERT ANDERSON

*Major, First Artillery, Commanding.*

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HEADQUARTERS PROVISIONAL ARMY, C.S.A.,

MAJOR: In consequence of the verbal observation made by you to my aides, Messrs. Chestnut and Lee, in relation to the condition of your supplies, and that you would in a few days be starved out if our guns did not batter you to pieces, or words to that effect, and desiring no useless effusion of blood, I communicated both the verbal observations and your written answer to my communications to my Government.

If you will state the time at which you will evacuate Fort Sumter, and agree that in the meantime you will not use your guns against us unless ours shall be employed against Fort Sumter, we will abstain from opening fire upon you. Colonel Chestnut and Captain

Lee are authorized by me to enter such an agreement with you. You are, therefore, requested to communicate to them an open answer

I remain, major, very respectfully, your obedient servant

G. T. BEAUREGARD

*Brigadier-General, Commanding.*

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**April 12, 1861**

FORT SUMTER, S.C.,

GENERAL: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt by Colonel Chestnut of your second communication of the 11th instant, and to state in reply that, cordially uniting with you in the desire to avoid the useless effusion of blood, I will, if provided with the proper and necessary means of transportation, evacuate Fort Sumter by noon on the 15th instant, and that I will not in the meantime open my fires upon your forces unless compelled to do so by some hostile act against this fort or the flag of my Government by the forces under your command, or by some portion of them, or by the perpetration of some act showing a hostile intention on your part against this fort or the flag it bears, should I not receive prior to that time controlling instructions from my Government or additional supplies.

I am, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant

ROBERT ANDERSON

*Major, First Artillery, Commanding.*

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**April 12, 1861 -- 3.20 a.m.**

FORT SUMTER, S.C.,

SIR: By authority of Brigadier-General Beauregard, commanding the Provisional Forces of the Confederate States, we have the honor to notify you that he will open the fire of his batteries on Fort Sumter in one hour from this time.

We have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servants,

JAMES CHESTNUT, Jr.

*Aide-de-Camp*

STEPHEN D. LEE