

DEFENCE OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA.

DOCUMENTS

Submitted to the House of Representatives, relating to the defence of the State of Georgia against the Indians in Florida, by the Hon. Mark A. Cooper.

MAY 18, 1842.

Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

Milledgeville, May 10, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, and the document printed by order of the House of Representatives, relative to depredations by Indians and United States troops, in the State of Georgia. I herewith transmit to you the copy of a letter written by me, in reply to Colonel Worth's of the 10th April, and also copies of all the orders issued from this department, either directly or indirectly, since my request to the Secretary of War to have the Federal troops removed from the limits of this State. By a comparison of these orders with Colonel Riley's statements in his letter of the 28th March, to Major Cooper, you will perceive how incautious that gentleman has been in alleging, without qualification, that the Governor of Georgia has authorized the mustering of three companies of volunteers into the State service, under Captains Jernigan, Johnson, and North. To entitle his allegation to the greater appearance of truth, he says they were mustered in while he was on the frontier. Few officers are entitled, from character and standing, to higher credit than Colonel Riley; and yet he has ventured to make a communication that has but a shadow to support it. Sixty men are all that were ordered out. If the other statements of himself and his brother officers are made with as little particularity, it is to be presumed that the evidence of respectable citizens of Georgia is entitled to as much consideration, at least.

It has been a matter of much surprise to me that officers, having as high claim to military character as many of those in Florida, have not seen the necessity, during the whole Seminole war, of guarding, vigilantly and efficiently, the immense swamps in the vicinity of the Georgia and Florida settlements. It must have arisen either from a want of due consideration, that when an enemy is driven from one place of concealment he will take refuge in the next that offers him the best chances of safety, or from an unaccountable apathy for the security of the people of the Georgia frontier.

I also transmit to you the copy of a letter received from General Knight, and the copy of one addressed to the President, communicating a copy of General Knight's letter.

You ask me to send such other evidence as may be in my possession, in reference to the subject of the printed document. I cannot conceive that any thing further is requisite, to ensure the appropriation asked for. I was informed of the outrages committed by the United States soldiers on the persons and property of the people of Georgia, and notified the Secretary of War of them. I received from him no notice whatever of this communication. I asked that the militia force of Georgia might be retained in the service, which had always afforded protection to the people. This was refused; and I was furnished with statements of the officers of the regular army, giving it as their opinion this force was not needed. I exhibited to the Secretary of War a correspondence with one of his predecessors, in which it was proven how mistaken these officers had been on a former occasion, and how unwise it was to rely on the appearances cited by them as indications of the safety of the people. I warned him that the militia would be out of the service but a few days before hostilities would be renewed. This was verified by the murder of Mrs. Oglesby, but a few days after the discharge of the detachments under Captains Morgan and Johnson. Congress must decide that the Governor of a State has no authority to call out the militia in case of an invasion, or the appropriation must be made.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

CHARLES J. McDONALD.

Hon. M. A. COOPER, *Washington City.*

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

Milledgeville, April 18, 1842.

SIR: I had the honor to-day to receive your letter of the 10th instant, informing me of your accidental compliance with the wishes of the Executive of Georgia, in withdrawing the garrison at Trader's Hill to a point within the limits of Florida; and assuring me, that had you been aware of the published correspondence of this department with the Secretary of War, (which contained a request that the regular troops should be removed from the limits of this State,) no consideration of convenience or expediency could have induced you to have adopted the measure. Your explanation was wholly unnecessary, as it brought me the first intelligence of the important military movements which gave rise to it. It is proper, however, for me to say that your ignorance of my wishes is accepted as a sufficient apology for your execution of them.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

CHARLES J. McDONALD.

Col. W. J. WORTH,

Commanding Army of Florida.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

Milledgeville, March 9, 1842.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th, communicating the unfortunate intelligence of the murder of Mrs. Oglesby by the Indians, and of the prompt measures adopted by the citizens to pursue them.

You will order out a force of thirty men for the protection of the section of country in which these depredations were committed, and place them under the command of either Captain Morgan or Captain Johnson, who will thoroughly scour the country, and co-operate with Captain Jernigan, whom I shall order out with a similar force, and who will have the command of the entire detachment. These two forces will constitute the quota of men which you deem sufficient for the protection of the country. From all the accounts I have received, the regular force is a nuisance, doing more damage to the property than the Indians. I shall request the Secretary of War to order their removal, and have their places substituted by militia, who have an interest and would take a pride in protecting the country and chastising the Indians.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

CHARLES J. McDONALD.

Gen. LEVI J. KNIGHT, *Troupville.*

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

Milledgeville, March 9, 1842.

SIR: I have this day directed Major General Knight to order out a detachment of thirty men, and to place them under the command of either Capt. Morgan or Capt. Johnson; and have informed him that I would order you out with a detachment of the like number, and that you would be authorized to take command of the whole. You will therefore, without delay, raise a detachment of thirty men to co-operate with the detachment which Gen. Knight will order into the service, assume the command, and so dispose the entire force as to afford the most efficient protection to the country. The Indians have now left a sign that the Government will regard, perhaps, as evidence of the presence of the Indians. I rely on your prompt and energetic execution of this order. You will remain in the service until you receive orders from this department to disband your force.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

CHARLES J. McDONALD.

Capt. AARON JERNIGAN.

LOWNDES COUNTY, *April 16, 1842.*

DEAR SIR: I have just returned from below here, in the fork; my business was to look for Indian signs. Six of us set out yesterday, but it rained very hard, so that we could not discover tracks; but on the other side of Withlacoochee two Indians shot at Mr. Berry, and killed his mule from under him, but did not hurt him. I do think that we would be safer to have a company stationed in this vicinity and search the swamps below. The people on Withlacoochee are all gathered up for their protection.

Respectfully yours, &c.

SAMUEL E. SWILLEY.

APRIL 19, 1842.

SIR: A considerable alarm has prevailed in this country for some time, on account of the Indians attacking Newtown, and coming off towards the Withlacoochee. About thirty of us frontier fellows assembled and went to search the swamps down to the fork of Withlacoochee and Suwannee. We set out on Monday last. It rained on Sunday, and we found signs in three places since the rain. From the tracks, there must have been four of them. Mr. McNeil informs me that on the west side of Withlacoochee there are abundant signs. The people are imbodied for their own protection. Without protection, the inhabitants on the frontier will be broken up, and compelled to leave their homes. I can assure you the people are in great dread; they cannot work their farms, nor can they stay at home. Sir, we wish you to send us orders to protect the country and our homes. The company has appointed me to command them, and any order you may send shall be strictly obeyed.

I am, respectfully, your obedient servant,

MOSES PRESCUTT.

Gen. LEVI J. KNIGHT.

P. S. Newtown is now Madisonville, about 10 miles from Withlacoochee river, the nearest place; about 18 miles from the fork of Withlacoochee and Suwannee; I suppose about southwest from the fork. Mr. Prescott lives in the 16th district, about 10 miles from Alappaha, near the Florida line.

LOWNDES COUNTY, *April 22, 1842.*

SIR: The enclosed copies of letters from Moses Prescott and Samuel E. Swilley, inform me of the approach of Indians upon our settlements; and my cousin, (Thomas Knight,) who lives near the Florida line, is now with me, and informs me that on Saturday last a party of Indians drove off above twenty head of cattle belonging to Mr. Bryant, who lives on the Georgia line, or one of the fractions in Florida. The citizens assembled, and pursued the Indians about thirty miles. The cattle they drove down the Suwannee river. Considerable signs of Indians are to be found in the swamps near the fifteenth district of this county. On the 15th instant the Indians attacked Mr. Smith, who lives five miles below the line, near where the Indians took the cattle. Mr. Smith was in his field when they made the attack; they killed three of his negroes, and wounded him in two places slightly. Thomas Knight informs me that, from the signs, a considerable body of Indians are supposed to have taken refuge in the Oscilla swamp, about three or four miles below the Georgia line. The Oscilla swamp is very large there—about six or eight miles wide. Just below the line considerable alarm justly prevails among the inhabitants, on the frontier of this county. From the letters of Captain Samuel E. Swilley and Mr. Prescott, the Indians are prowling about in the swamps and hammocks of Withlacoochee and Alappaha, from the Oscilla to the fork of the Withlacoochee to Suwannee, or rather from the fifteenth district of this county to the fork on both sides of the river. No Indians have ever done any mischief in that vicinity since the commencement of the war, until last winter and spring. If these Indians are not driven from their swamps, the inhabitants will be constantly annoyed by them. No regular forces are in that neighborhood, nor has any regular force ever as yet visited the place

where Mr. Langford (who I informed you in a former communication) was wounded. Mr. Smith's place has not been visited as yet by the regulars. The whole western line, from Suwannee to the fifteenth district of Lowndes, is threatened with constant attacks. The forces under Captains Jernigan and Johnson cannot more than guard the frontier in the vicinity of Suwannee river. Some forces are necessary to guard the frontier between Alappaha and Withlacoochee, and on the west side of Withlacoochee, near Oscilla. I have issued an order to Major Matthew M. Deas, to place thirty men in the vicinity of where the Indians took the cattle, to search the swamps and hammocks, and guard the frontier until I can hear from you. It seems to me that the whole movement of the regular forces is to drive the Indians into Georgia. The settlements they are making under the protection of their troops in the nation, and the Georgia line exposed, causes the Indians to take refuge in the swamps of and near this State. Sir, at such a crisis as this, it will take two or three full companies vigilantly employed to keep the Indians out of this State. In fact, I hear that Captain Johnson finds considerable signs in the vicinity of where Mrs. Oglesby was killed in this State. If a regular force is not sent immediately, it will be necessary to take a force sufficient and search the Oscilla swamp; as the swamp is very large, it will require a full company to search it effectually. Were it within the State, I would go immediately, and thoroughly scour it, as I think I could find Indians in that swamp. The swamp could be searched in ten days, and all the Indians taken, killed, or driven from the country. I could get volunteers to go and search that swamp, if required, for the time it would take to destroy them.

I have the honor to be, sir, your excellency's most obedient and very humble servant,

LEVI J. KNIGHT.

His Excellency CHARLES J. McDONALD.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

Milledgeville, May 10, 1842.

SIR: I have the honor to enclose to you the copy of a letter from General Knight, informing me of the outrages committed by the Indians in Florida, near the limits of Georgia, and of the state of alarm existing among our citizens. The regular forces have been withdrawn from Georgia, and her exposed frontier is now under the protection of the militia, who will doubtless be adequate to the performance of the service required of them. It will be seen, however, from the communication of General Knight, that the regular troops, instead of affording that protection to the older settlements in Florida, which they had a right to expect, have been withdrawn to cover the operations of new emigrants settling the territory hitherto occupied by the Indians, under what authority I know not. The effect of this disposition of the United States troops is to drive the Indians into Georgia, whose efficient protection has long since been abandoned by the officer at the head of the War Department, and whose disregard of my representations, and his formal announcement that the service of troops ordered out by me prior to an order from Colonel Worth could not be recognised, coupled with information to me, from respectable citizens of this State, of the outrages com-

mitted by the regular troops on the person and property of the people of Georgia, determined me to notify that officer that I had taken the defence of the State into my own hands, and request the removal of the Federal forces. My request has been complied with, but I am notified that it was not because of my requirement, but from other considerations. That I did not misconceive the purpose of the Secretary of War not to recognise any militia troops ordered out by me, even if called out to avenge the murder of the citizens of Georgia or repel an invasion, and that he would not upon any application from me order such a force into the service, is proved by his communication to the House of Representatives of the 20th ultimo, in which it is said that he would yield his own opinion of the necessity of such a force to that of the *delegation in Congress*. It is the first time in the history of the Government that a State, when its condition has been fairly represented by its Executive, has in this way been thrown out of the pale of its protection, and the Federal forces employed to force a savage enemy upon its exposed inhabitants.

Now, my object in addressing your excellency is to ask you, that inasmuch as Georgia has been thrown upon her own defence, you will cause the swamps in *Florida* described by General Knight to be guarded by a sufficient military force. These swamps are used by the Indians as avenues into Georgia. It is to be hoped that, since the surrender of Halleck Tustenuggee, there will be less difficulty on the Georgia frontier. But, as long as a savage warrior is left in Florida, the Government should not remit its vigilance in guarding against his secret and insidious attacks.

With every confidence that you will cause the necessary measures to be adopted, to prevent an incursion of Indians into Georgia, I have the honor to subscribe myself your obedient servant,

CHARLES J. McDONALD.

His Excellency JOHN TYLER,
President United States.