

Confederates Invade Maryland and Kentucky

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After the victory at Second Bull Run, Robert E. Lee began to set his sights on Union territory. Despite the carnage of the summer of 1862, including the recent battle and earlier battles around Richmond, Lee felt his remaining forces were up to an invasion of the North. He hoped to make it as far as Pennsylvania and with luck to be able to harass Washington, D.C. or Baltimore.

Taking the war north of Virginia would open up vast new areas for food and supplies to Lee's troops. The fields of Virginia were already being rapidly depleted. Lee also hoped that an invasion of the North would turn the tide of Northern public opinion against the war and with fall Congressional elections being held soon, perhaps Abraham Lincoln would be forced to negotiate peace with the Confederates. With many Southern sympathizers, perhaps there might even be an uprising within that state that would quickly lead Lincoln to make a move. Finally, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his cabinet felt that an aggressive campaign in the North would go a long way toward bringing England or France onto the Southern side of the war.

On September 4, the Army of Northern Virginia began to cross into Maryland from Loudon County. Expecting a friendly reception by the locals, some of the men sang "Maryland My Maryland" as they crossed into the border state. While some Maryland residents cheered their arrival, most residents hid in their homes as the troops in gray passed. By September 7, Lee had amassed about 55,000 men near Frederick, Maryland. On that same day, George B. McClellan moved out of Washington D.C. toward Lee with his Army of the Potomac, about

86,000 strong. The two armies would clash ten days later in the cataclysmic battle of Antietam near Sharpsburg, Maryland.

Simultaneous with Lee's invasion of Maryland, Confederate troops under Braxton Bragg and Kirby Smith began to penetrate into Kentucky. Their intention was similar to Lee's, hoping to inspire the many Southern supporters in Kentucky into action. The invasion was complicated from the start. Though Bragg technically outranked Smith, the latter had been given an independent command and reported directly to Richmond. This caused a series of issues during the campaign as the men disagreed on both strategy and who was in charge.

Smith's men entered Kentucky first, leaving Knoxville on August 14. It took Bragg some time to gather all his men and equipment at Chattanooga, but they finally left for Kentucky on August 28. They met with early success, capturing 4,000 Union soldiers on September 17, the same day as Lee's furious fight at Antietam. By October 4, Bragg had moved as far north as Bardstown, only miles from, where he participated in a ceremony inaugurating Richard Hawes as Confederate governor of Kentucky. Meanwhile Union forces under Don Carlos Buell were on the trail of the two Confederate invading forces. Bragg and Smith reunited and would finally confront Buell's army on the battlefield at Perryville.

Though both Lee and the Confederates in Kentucky entered Union territory with high aspirations, both invasions would ultimately fail. Lee would make more progress into the North the next year, only to be defeated at Gettysburg. After the fall of 1862, the Confederates would not attempt another large-scale invasion of Kentucky and that state would remain firmly in Union hands for the remainder of the war. The foreign intervention and shift in Northern morale that Jefferson Davis sought so desperately would not come to pass.