

## **A Week of Both Politics and Fighting**

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The week of April 27 through May 3 brought many changes in the Civil War. Winter had officially come to an end, which meant old campaigns and expeditions would continue, and new campaigns would start. Both Governments' Congress would be in session.

Political changes began to take place in the Confederacy. On April 27th, President Jefferson Davis sent Jacob Thompson to Canada to meet with Union officials to discuss a peace agreement or truce. While Thompson was in Canada, Davis ordered all captured slaves to be returned to slavery. The first session of the Second Confederate Congress convened. During the opening statement, President Jefferson Davis condemned the harsh treatment that the North was afflicting upon the South. He announced that there would be no foreign intervention at the time but remained optimistic about winning the war. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Davis's son, Joseph Evan Davis, died due to a fall from the Confederate White House in Richmond.

The North was doing the exact opposite when it came to slavery. Due to the Emancipation Proclamation, various states started changing their laws on slavery. In Maryland, a Constitutional convention convened on the 27<sup>th</sup> in Annapolis to work on their third constitution to abolish slavery in the state. The U.S. Congress, already in session by a joint resolution, raised all taxes fifty cents for sixty days. President Lincoln and his cabinet discussed the atrocities committed by the rebels during the battle of Fort Pillow, Tennessee, early in April.

On the battlefield, Grant ordered his co-coordinated spring offensive attacks including the Overland campaign and the Atlanta campaign to begin. This plan included the Army of the Potomac attacking the Army of Northern Virginia head on and the Army of the James attacking

Richmond from the South. Grant believed this plan would end the war. Union forces bombarded Fort Sumter for seven days. The fort did not give. On the 30<sup>th</sup>, the battle of Jenkins Ferry took place involving retreating Federal troops of the Camden Expedition and Confederates that followed. The soldiers were retreating to Little Rock, Arkansas. Due to heavy rain, they were stopped at the Saline River. This allowed the rebels to attack under the command of General Kirby Smith. The Union troops were able to hold off the assault and cross the river to safety. General Frederick Steele was in command of the Union forces. General William Reed Scurry of the Confederate died at this engagement.

May continued with heavy skirmishes in the Red River Campaign in Alexander, Louisiana, that began in early March. The skirmishes included Well's Plantation, Wilson's Landings, Bayou Pierre, the Confederate capture of the US Transport *Emma*, and a four day engagement at Gov. Moore's plantation. In southwestern Virginia, Federal troops launched an expedition to cut off Confederate supply lines at the Tennessee Railroad. General Grant ordered General Meade to move the Army of the Potomac across the Rapidan River in order to go around Lee's army to head to Richmond. The Union troops were beginning their Wilderness Campaign. In Georgia, Sherman began to move his men which included The Army of the Ohio, The Army of the Tennessee and The Army of Cumberland. As his men moved south to Atlanta, they began to engage in skirmishes with General Johnston's Army at Tunnel Hill and Ringgold Gap, Georgia. By May 3, the skirmishes had increased and become livelier.

This week of the war laid the foundation for the major campaigns of 1864. Minor skirmishes continued throughout Arkansas and Louisiana as a result of the Red River Campaign and the Camden Expedition. Sherman continued to move on Atlanta pushing Johnston back.