

Virginia Votes Against Secession **<http://civilwar150.longwood.edu>**

Following Abraham Lincoln's inauguration on March 4, 1861, political leaders in the Upper South slave states waited anxiously for signs of the new president's policies towards their seceded neighbors to the south. The State Convention in Virginia met in Richmond for a second time in early March, having rejected secession back in January. With Lincoln now inaugurated, the delegates favoring disunion hoped to obtain a majority. Still, many delegates preached caution, or at least cooperation with the remaining slave states that had not seceded. By a vote of 89 to 45, the convention again voted against secession, though the delegates agreed to remain in session to await events in Charleston and elsewhere.

While Virginia's State Convention proved once again reluctant to vote for secession, events in Charleston and Pensacola appeared to be rushing towards a confrontation. By early April, President Lincoln had made his decision, over the objections of some members of his cabinet, to resupply rather than evacuate Fort Sumter. He sent Robert Chew of the State Department to inform South Carolina Governor Francis Pickens that ships would be sent to supply Sumter. Major Anderson also received notification of the upcoming expedition. The president hoped that either southern forces would allow the expedition to complete its mission, or that in the event of a confrontation, it would be the Confederates who would fire the first shot. The Union relief expedition, led by Gustavus Fox, left New York on April 10 for Charleston. In Montgomery, Alabama, meanwhile, Confederate President Jefferson Davis met with his cabinet and determined that the northern expedition must not be allowed to reinforce the fort. He ordered General P.G. T. Beauregard to demand the fort's capitulation and, if refused, to then

commence an artillery bombardment to compel its surrender. In preparation for the latter eventuality, Beauregard began preparing the Confederate positions around the harbor for a bombardment of the fort, and also to repel the relief expedition.

While the situation in South Carolina deteriorated, in Florida, some 5,000 southern troops under General Braxton Bragg occupied a number of fortifications around Pensacola Bay. They faced off against a much smaller Federal force under Lieutenant Adam Slemmer manning Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island. Earlier in March, Lincoln had ordered reinforcements under Captain Israel Vodges to land at Pickens. This seemed to violate an unofficial truce that had existed there since early in the year, in which the Federals would not attempt to reinforce the fort and the Confederate would make no assault on the position. Consequently Captain Henry Adams of the U.S. Navy refused to assist in the landing of Vodges' men. As a result, on April 7, Lincoln sent naval officer John Worden to Pensacola with direct orders for Adams to cooperate in the reinforcement of Pickens. On the Confederate side General Bragg had requested permission to resist any attempt to reinforce Pickens, and Confederate Secretary of War Leroy Pope Walker had warned the general to prepare for a possible Union attack on southern positions around Pensacola.

Worden reached Pensacola on April 11, the same day that Confederate officials demanded the surrender of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, and met with Captain Adams, who agreed to assist in the landing of the additional Federal troops. Later in the month an even larger expedition arrived to strengthen the Union garrison. Consequently, Pickens would remain in northern hands for the remainder of the war, and Confederate forces would evacuate their positions at Pensacola in early 1862. Thus South Carolina, and not Florida, saw the beginning of

combat between north and south. Early on the morning of April 12, the bombardment would commence.