

## **Plans in Virginia, Activities in the Border States**

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In late June and early July, 1861, minor operations took place along the Potomac River and in the Chesapeake Bay, as Federal forces tried to relieve Confederate pressure on Washington, D.C. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, a Union force attempted to land at Mathias Point, where the Confederates had established an artillery battery, but was driven off. The following day a small band of Confederates led by George Hollins captured a civilian vessel on the Chesapeake, which they then used to capture three additional vessels.

A larger military operation commenced in early July, when Union General Robert Paterson moved his command across the Potomac River from Maryland into Virginia. His orders were to occupy a position in the Lower Shenandoah Valley to keep Confederate forces under Joseph E. Johnston from reinforcing the rebel positions near Manassas. This was to be an important part of General Irvin McDowell's upcoming plan to attack the Confederate force under P.G.T. Beauregard at Manassas.

On Saturday, June 29, President Lincoln had presided over a special cabinet meeting to discuss upcoming operations. Several prominent generals, including Winfield Scott and Irvin McDowell, outlined their plans to subdue the rebellion, including the former's call for an expedition to gain control of the Mississippi River. This was part of his so-called Anaconda Plan, consisting of a blockade of southern ports, the raising of a large volunteer army, and cutting the Confederacy in two by retaking the Mississippi. McDowell, meanwhile, detailed to the cabinet his proposal to capture the rebel position at Manassas, southwest of Washington. Despite the largely untrained nature of his command, the political climate as well as the short,

ninety-day enlistment terms of many of his troops, made a quick campaign necessary. Following approval by the cabinet, McDowell began final preparations for the operation, which would begin in mid-July.

In addition to military activities, the Lincoln administration dealt with several legal and constitutional matters during this period. In the Spring and early Summer of 1861, Baltimore, Maryland had experienced a series of incidents between Unionists and secessionists, most notably the attack upon the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment in April, which left a number dead on each side. This particularly concerned the administration, since rebel control of Baltimore would leave Washington isolated and vulnerable. Consequently in late June and early July, the Federals took several steps to contain secessionist sentiment in Baltimore. This began when commanding General Winfield Scott ordered General Nathaniel Banks to arrest George P. Kane, Marshal of the City Police. Kane had openly called for resistance to Federal authority during the April riot and Banks, in explaining Kane's arrest, referred to him as "the head of an armed force hostile to [the government's] authority and acting in concert with its avowed enemies." A few days later, President Lincoln authorized Scott to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, in the words of historian E.B. Long, "on or near any military line between the city of New York and Washington." It was the first example of employing this controversial measure, which both Lincoln and Confederate President Jefferson Davis would implement further during the course of the war.

A final concern of the Federal government relating to the Border States occurred this week in Dover, Delaware where a convention of some 5,000 met in hopes of finding a peaceful settlement between north and south. Unfortunately for those desiring peace, the first major battle of the Civil War was now only a few weeks away.