

Division in the Cabinet: The Impact of the Ideological Clash between John B. Floyd and
Jeremiah S. Black on James Buchanan during the Secession Winter, November 1860-January
1861

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ABSTRACT: The Secession Winter of November 1860-January 1861 represented the most trying time of President James Buchanan's tumultuous administration. Throughout the crisis, Buchanan leaned heavily on Secretary of War John B. Floyd and Attorney General turned Secretary of State Jeremiah S. Black, both of whom had differing views on the issue of secession. While Black remained fervent in his belief that prompt action was required to combat secession, Floyd remained adamant that peace needed to be maintained between the North and South, even if it meant sacrificing the federal Union. To explain the reasons for Buchanan's flawed decision-making during secession, this paper highlights the personal nature of the relationships Buchanan shared with Black and Floyd throughout the crisis, which led Buchanan to pursue policies that weakened the federal presence in Charleston, South Carolina, and ensured that, by January 1861, any efforts to avert a conflict had been rendered impossible to implement.

Keywords: Secession Winter, James Buchanan, John B. Floyd, Jeremiah S. Black, secretary of war, secretary of state, attorney general

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In crafting a cabinet to serve his needs, President James Buchanan took to heart the lessons drawn from President Andrew Jackson's administration, whose Cabinet had divided into factions between Vice President John C. Calhoun and Secretary of State Martin Van Buren over the Petticoat Affair, a political scandal which made enemies of most of the men in Jackson's administration and led the president to demand the resignation of the majority of his Cabinet.¹ Seeking to avoid such turmoil, Buchanan strove to appoint a cabinet unified behind his positions, which were overwhelmingly pro-Southern.² While Buchanan sought a body of counselors that would support his policies, he also based his Cabinet selections on a desire for companionship. A lifelong bachelor, Buchanan in office remained extremely lonely. Seeking to establish personal relationships that would sustain him throughout his presidency, Buchanan appointed individuals whom he had developed, or could develop, close connections with.³ This desire for both unanimity and companionship led to the creation of a Cabinet that, while sectionally divided between North and South, faithfully supported the president's pro-slavery policies throughout the late 1850s, until secession came in late 1860. When that time came, divisions finally emerged in the Cabinet, which inevitably produced conflict among the president's advisors.

¹ The Petticoat Affair involved Peggy Eaton, the wife of Jackson's war secretary, John Eaton. Before marrying John, Peggy had gained a reputation for promiscuity among Washington socialites, including most notably Floride Calhoun, wife of Jackson's vice president John C. Calhoun. Insecure about Peggy's beauty and conscious of their own sexuality, the Cabinet wives, led by Floride, refused to invite Peggy to Washington social gatherings; Secretary of State Martin Van Buren was the only Cabinet member to include Peggy at social events, which kept the vice president on good terms with Jackson, but resulted in a division of the Cabinet into factions between Calhoun and Van Buren. Jackson, who saw much of his late wife Rachel in Peggy, wanted her ostracizing to end and demanded his Cabinet secretaries bring their wives in line or face dismissal. When Peggy's situation failed to improve, Jackson, true to his word, fired the bulk of his Cabinet. Jean Baker, *James Buchanan* (New York: Times Books, 2004), 76-77.

² Baker, *James Buchanan*, 77.

³ Baker, *James Buchanan*, 78.

Throughout the Secession Winter of 1860-61, Buchanan was heavily influenced by the two leaders of the respective viewpoints in his Cabinet: Secretary of War John B. Floyd of Virginia and Attorney General turned Secretary of State Jeremiah S. Black of Pennsylvania. Each had differing opinions regarding secession, with Black strenuously supporting measures to preserve the Union and Floyd supporting measures to avert a war, which could potentially result in disunion because of an unwillingness to aggressively combat secession. Ultimately, through a combination of both secretaries' practical roles in the decision-making process, as well as the close personal relationship each shared with Buchanan, the president's own decision-making regarding events in Charleston, South Carolina, throughout November and December 1860, proved strategically indecisive, strengthening the secessionist position in the South, and ensuring that, by January 1861, any practical efforts at averting conflict had been rendered impossible to implement.

I. John B. Floyd

John Buchanan Floyd was a native of Virginia, born in Montgomery County in June 1806.⁴ His father, John Floyd, served as the twenty-fifth governor of Virginia from 1830-34, during which time he developed a strong states'-rights philosophy that his son, John B. Floyd, would eventually adopt, with some alterations.⁵ Highly intelligent, Floyd pursued a

⁴ Edward A. Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants: Comprising the Early Life, Public Services, and Campaigns of General Robert E. Lee and His Companions in Arms, with a Record of Their Campaigns and Heroic Deeds* (New York: E.B. Treat & Co.; Baltimore, MD: J.S. Morrow, etc., 1867), 786. While Pollard provides sufficient information on Floyd's background before serving as Buchanan's War Secretary, his arguments relating to Floyd's service in the Cabinet, and certainly in his post-administration career as a Confederate general, are disreputable, since they have been coopted by neo-Confederate scholars who have employed his work to advance the "Lost Cause" myth of Confederate history. Therefore, Pollard's works should be read cautiously and with extreme care.

⁵ Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants*, 786; Robert M. Hughes, "John B. Floyd and His Traducers," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 43, no. 4 (1935), 322. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4244675>.

career as a lawyer before following in his father's footsteps and winning election as the thirty-first governor of Virginia in 1848, serving in that role from 1849-53.⁶

A slaveowner like his father, John B. Floyd vigorously championed the Fugitive Slave Act passed by Congress in 1850,⁷ which guaranteed federal support in returning runaway slaves to their masters in the South. A states'-rights advocate, Floyd nevertheless remained a committed unionist, even though his own father had bitterly opposed Andrew Jackson's heavy-handed response to the 1832-33 Nullification Crisis.⁸ During that time, South Carolina had attempted to nullify a series of unpopular federal tariffs and threatened secession from the Union if federal force were used to collect the duties. Jackson, who himself was a states'-rights proponent, nevertheless threatened to use force to preserve the Union, sending General Winfield Scott and a sizeable contingent of federal troops to Charleston to ensure collection of the tariff, while behind the scenes negotiating an end to the crisis that lowered the offensive import duties.⁹ Significantly, during the crisis, Floyd's father, then in the governor's mansion, had offered to provide South Carolina with Virginia state troops to help the South Carolinians resist federal forces sent to coerce the state into remaining in the Union.¹⁰ Floyd Jr.'s attitudes on secession differed sharply from his father's. While serving as governor of Virginia almost two decades later, Floyd remained at odds with the views of men in the state legislature who supported the secessionist theories developed by John C. Calhoun in the 1820s and 1830s on the eve of the Nullification Crisis.¹¹

⁶ Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants*, 787-788.

⁷ Library of Congress, "Secretary of War John B. Floyd." Accessed November 7, 2023. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021670882/>.

⁸ Hughes, "John B. Floyd and His Traducers," 322.

⁹ Thorpe, "Jeremiah S. Black," 127.

¹⁰ Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants*, 786.

¹¹ Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants*, 788; Philip Gerald Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet on the Eve of Secession* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Lancaster Press, 1926), 89, 96.

During the 1856 presidential election, Floyd worked strenuously for Buchanan's election in his contest against Republican nominee John C. Frémont, and was rewarded for his loyalty with the position of secretary of war in the new administration.¹² Fiercely loyal to Buchanan, Floyd faithfully supported the president's pro-Southern policies, especially during the crisis of Bleeding Kansas and backed Buchanan's attempts at bribing the anti-slavery majority of Kansans into accepting the fraudulent pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution as legitimate.¹³ For his loyalty in such matters, Buchanan routinely granted Floyd special favors not bestowed on other Cabinet secretaries. Having nearly died from a malignant fever in 1837, Floyd remained chronically enfeebled for the remainder of his life, and Buchanan frequently, and on multiple occasions, allowed his secretary of war extended periods of leave to recuperate his strength and physical stature.¹⁴ Ultimately, because of his loyalty to Buchanan and his congenial personality, Floyd remained one of the president's most influential and popular Cabinet members.¹⁵

II. Jeremiah S. Black

Jeremiah Sullivan Black was, like James Buchanan, a native of Pennsylvania.¹⁶ Like Floyd and Buchanan, Black pursued a career in law, sitting on the Pennsylvania Supreme

¹² Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants*, 788.

¹³ In 1854, Senator Stephen Douglas introduced the Kansas-Nebraska Act in Congress. The bill organized the territories of Kansas and Nebraska under the banner of popular sovereignty, allowing settlers of the territory, as opposed to the federal government, to decide whether slavery would be permitted there or not. After President Franklin Pierce signed the act into law, pro- and anti-slavery settlers flooded Kansas hoping to pack the territory with enough settlers to ensure the region became either a free or slave state. In 1856, a brutal guerilla-style conflict erupted between both sides that became known as Bleeding Kansas. The crisis persisted into the early years of Buchanan's administration, when he attempted to bribe the majority of anti-slavery Kansans into accepting the fraudulently framed pro-slavery Lecompton constitution as legitimate in order to appease his Southern Democratic base. Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 78-79; Philip Shriver Klein, *President James Buchanan, A Biography* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), 308.

¹⁴ Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants*, 787; Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 278.

¹⁵ Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants*, 789; Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 89.

¹⁶ David J. Barron, "Confronting Secession," in *Waging War: The Clash Between Presidents and Congress 1776-ISIS* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2016), 109.

Court from 1851-57. Although serving briefly in that position as Chief Justice of the state court, Black had never held office at the national level prior to his selection as Buchanan's attorney general.¹⁷ Much like Floyd, Black shared a deep personal connection with Buchanan. However, Black and Buchanan's relationship differed from the president and Floyd's because the former had known Buchanan for years, as opposed to the latter, who had only formed a bond with the president in the mid-1850s.¹⁸ The president and Black shared a mutual admiration for one another, stemming not just from their backgrounds as native Pennsylvanians, but because of their shared respect for, and reverence of, the law. On this point, Buchanan held Black in particularly high esteem, viewing him as a legal genius.¹⁹ For his part, Black professed to love Buchanan as a brother.²⁰

Like the majority of Buchanan's Cabinet, including Floyd and the president himself, Black was a doughface, or a Northerner who favored pro-Southern policies and who blamed abolitionists for the sectional tensions over slavery that were dividing the country throughout the 1850s.²¹ Black's importance lay not only with his role in later determining Buchanan's legal philosophy towards secession, but in his personal relationship with the president. Indeed, if there was one man who could have penetrated Buchanan's levels of stubbornness and helped shape policy, it was Black.²² Other members of the president's Cabinet confirmed Black's influence, including Secretary of the Treasury Philip Francis Thomas, who remarked

¹⁷ Francis Newton Thorpe, "Jeremiah S. Black," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 50, no. 2 (1926), 126. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20086602>.

¹⁸ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 99.

¹⁹ Barron, "Confronting Secession," 109.

²⁰ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 77.

²¹ Jeremiah Black, "Black to Woodward," November 24, 1860, in *James Buchanan and His Cabinet on the Eve of Secession* by Philip Gerald Auchampaugh (Lancaster Pennsylvania: Lancaster Press, 1926), 107-108.

²² Thorpe, "Jeremiah S. Black," 130.

that, “Judge Black could come nearer managing [Buchanan] than any man I know.”²³ At the same time, Black himself remained headstrong and firm in his convictions, and, according to another of the president’s Cabinet advisors, Interior Secretary Jacob Thompson, “had never... given up an opinion once formed. He was in the habit of acting upon his own convictions unmoved by the influence of anybody whomsoever they might be.”²⁴ Ultimately, Black’s commitment to principle, combined with the respect he garnered from the president and, according to Thompson,²⁵ other members of the Cabinet, both North and South, made him one of the undisputed leaders of the Buchanan Cabinet.

Black’s commitment to principle was shaped by his political background, and as with Floyd, the events of the early 1830s concerning issues of nullification and secession. Politically, Black was a Jacksonian, a states’-rights and limited government advocate but also a fervent and uncompromising unionist.²⁶ His views on the Secession Crisis that would befall the nation in the winter of 1860-61 were colored by Andrew Jackson’s response to the Nullification Crisis from thirty years earlier. Black was heavily influenced by Jackson’s strong stance against secession and his commitment to the federal Union, and, as attorney general, shaped his philosophical outlook in opposition to secession based on Jackson’s own handling of the crisis.²⁷ It is important to note that both Black and Floyd were influenced by the Nullification Crisis, and that regardless of their differing sectional backgrounds, with Black as a Northerner and Floyd as a Southerner, both were opponents of secession. But in the aftermath of Abraham Lincoln’s election in November 1860 and the beginning of a new

²³ *Philadelphia Press*, August 14, 1881, in *James Buchanan and His Cabinet on the Eve of Secession* by Philip Gerald Auchampaugh (Lancaster Pennsylvania: Lancaster Press, 1926), 100.

²⁴ *Philadelphia Press*, August 21-22, 1881, in *James Buchanan and His Cabinet on the Eve of Secession* by Philip Gerald Auchampaugh (Lancaster Pennsylvania: Lancaster Press, 1926), 101.

²⁵ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 101.

²⁶ Thorpe, “Jeremiah S. Black,” 126.

²⁷ Thorpe, “Jeremiah S. Black,” 126-127.

crisis in Charleston, both Cabinet secretaries found their convictions tested over how far they were willing to go to combat secession and to defend their positions in front of the president.

III. The Gardner Incident

On November 6, 1860, Republican Abraham Lincoln was elected as the sixteenth president of the United States in a contentious four-way race between Northern Democratic nominee Stephen Douglas of Illinois, Southern Democratic nominee and vice president John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky, and Constitutional Union Party candidate John Bell of Tennessee. Lincoln, whose anti-slavery stances were well known, was so unpopular among Southerners that his name was not include on the ballot in ten states, ensuring he did not receive a single vote from the region.²⁸ The day after Lincoln's election, secession calls emanated from Charleston, South Carolina.²⁹ The previous month, in October 1860, South Carolinians had warned that Lincoln's election would be grounds for secession, since they viewed the candidate as a threat to the institution of slavery and feared it would be outlawed in any "Black Republican" administration.³⁰ Aware of these views, General-in-Chief of the Army Winfield Scott had urged Buchanan ahead of the election to fortify federal installations throughout the South so as to dissuade against a possible seizure, but the president ignored his commander's request.³¹

²⁸ Baker, *James Buchanan*, 118-119.

²⁹ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 353.

³⁰ The derisive term "Black Republican" was employed by Southerners to describe politicians within the Republican Party who were sympathetic to the abolitionist movement in the North. Baker, *James Buchanan*, 121.

³¹ Abraham Lincoln, *Abraham Lincoln papers: Series 1, General Correspondence, 1833 to 1916: Winfield Scott, Monday, "Views suggested by imminent danger"; with note from Scott to Lincoln, 1860*, Manuscript/Mixed Material, retrieved from Library of Congress. Accessed October 19, 2023. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mal.0418800/?sp=2&st=pdf&r=-0.24%2C-0.074%2C1.479%2C1.479%2C0&pdfPage=1>.

On November 7, the day after Lincoln's election, violence nearly erupted, as Scott feared. The federal presence was confined to three forts in Charleston Harbor – Moultrie, Sumter, and Johnson – with Moultrie the most significant, containing 75 officers and soldiers. Commanding this garrison was Colonel J. L. Gardner, who, in an effort to prevent the seizure of federal arms and ammunition by secessionists, sent several of his soldiers dressed in civilian clothes to secure the guns in the nearby armory, whereupon they were confronted by the owner of a private wharf who threatened to alert local Charlestonians to their actions unless the supplies were returned. The tenuous situation threatened to escalate until the Charleston mayor stepped in and permitted Gardner's troops to secure the supplies, thereby maintaining the peace. In the aftermath of the incident, South Carolinians telegraphed the state assistant secretary of state, William H. Trescot, to determine whether Floyd's War Department had sanctioned Gardner's actions, and when Trescot visited the secretary of war in Washington, Floyd told him that he had not. Even more significantly, Floyd informed Trescot that no orders to reinforce Gardner's position would be given by the War Department.³²

This early action by Floyd established the template he would adhere to over the succeeding two months: he would base his response to secession on a desire to maintain peace, even if it meant sacrificing the safety of the soldiers under his command or the federal presence in Charleston Harbor. Floyd's relaxed response to the unfolding events in Charleston was even more shocking given his prescient realization of the severity of the situation there. In his diary entry of November 7, the day after the election and the same day as the Gardner incident, Floyd showed a keen appreciation for the "daily-occurring events

³² Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 353-354.

[that were] of so much importance... [and of] such momentous consequences to the country.”³³ In this entry, Floyd was referencing the election of Lincoln, which had occurred without the support of any of the slave-holding states. By putting forth Lincoln as their presidential nominee, the Republicans had shown their “uncompromising hostility” toward slavery.³⁴

In the same diary entry, Floyd also acknowledged the tenuous situation in Charleston, in a manner similar to Scott’s views from the previous month.³⁵ He stated that both he and Buchanan “discussed the probabilities of [secession] pretty fully... [and] concurred in the opinion that all indications from the South looked as if disunion was inevitable.”³⁶ In the wake of the Scott letter and this conversation with the president, Floyd, as a committed unionist, should have sanctioned any further actions taken by Gardner as a counter to any attempted Southern efforts at secession. But instead, he delayed action to preserve the peace, remarkably rationalizing to himself, in the same entry in which he had made his thoughts known about the supposed inevitability of disunion, that there “was no danger of such [further efforts] being made to seize property” because this attempt had been quelled.³⁷ Floyd’s justification not only showed his stunningly naïve attitude toward the crisis, but also his desire to maintain peace. He had at his disposal mounting evidence that secession was occurring with haste in Charleston, as well as an abiding belief that disunion appeared inevitable, but he still refused to act. To him, preservation of the peace came second to the

³³ John B. Floyd, “Private Diary of Secretary Floyd,” November 7, 1860, in *Lee and His Lieutenants: Comprising the Early Life, Public Services, and Campaigns of General Robert E. Lee and His Companions in Arms, with a Record of Their Campaigns and Heroic Deeds*, by Edward A. Pollard (New York: E.B. Treat & Co.; Baltimore, MD: J.S. Morrow, etc., 1867), 790.

³⁴ Floyd, “Private Diary of Secretary Floyd,” November 7, 1860, 790.

³⁵ Floyd, “Private Diary of Secretary Floyd,” November 7, 1860, 790.

³⁶ Floyd, “Private Diary of Secretary Floyd,” November 7, 1860, 791.

³⁷ Floyd, “Private Diary of Secretary Floyd,” November 7, 1860, 790.

Union. Black, meanwhile, showed no such willingness to abandon Gardner or the federal forces to secessionists and the prospect of disunion. In Floyd's diary entry, the secretary of war wrote of Black's position on the Gardner incident: "that an attempt at disunion by a State should be put down by all the power of the government."³⁸ From this early stage then, the day after Lincoln's election, the two opposing views on the Secession Crisis, from the two leading members of Buchanan's Cabinet, had been established through their respective opinions relating to the Gardner incident. Buchanan was also concerned about the situation in Charleston,³⁹ and at this early stage, sided with Black in his belief that the federal government should act decisively to combat secession. As such, in the aftermath of the Gardner clash, the president assured his attorney general that he would have Floyd, who thought the probability of further secessionist attempts against federal property low, to nevertheless reinforce the forts in Charleston.⁴⁰

IV. The Cabinet Meets: November 9-10

On November 9 and 10, 1860, Buchanan met with his Cabinet to discuss the issues emanating from Charleston and to determine a course of action. The president began the session by noting that "the business of the meeting was the most important ever before the Cabinet since his induction into office,"⁴¹ and stated his firm belief that secession was illegal. However illegal it might be, the president also made clear his desire to develop a compromise with the South that would avert a crisis.⁴² The Cabinet quickly divided along philosophical lines over the president's proposed response to the crisis. The pro-union faction, headed by

³⁸ Floyd, "Private Diary of Secretary Floyd," November 7, 1860, 791.

³⁹ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 357.

⁴⁰ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 358.

⁴¹ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 357.

⁴² Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 131.

Black, also included Secretary of State Lewis Cass of Michigan, Postmaster General Joseph Holt of Kentucky, and Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey of Connecticut. Black, who believed that secession was unconstitutional,⁴³ supported coercing South Carolina to remain in the Union and, like Andrew Jackson had done thirty years earlier, “advocated earnestly the propriety of sending at once a strong force into the forts in Charleston Harbor” to deter any potential seizure of federal property. At the same time, however, he did support Buchanan’s call for compromise with the South via a convention of the states, sponsored by the federal government, to resolve the disputes between North and South.⁴⁴ Both Cass and Holt agreed with Black’s opinion regarding the unconstitutionality of secession and commitment to preserving the Union, although Holt did express reservations about a convention, for fear that if such a convention failed, “those States which... [were] opposed to secession, might find themselves inclined from a feeling of honour (*sic*), to back the States resolving on disunion.”⁴⁵ Toucey, meanwhile, advocated any policy that would avert a conflict with the South,⁴⁶ a position that, on the surface, mirrored Floyd’s. However, an important differentiation existed between Toucey and Floyd, in that the former was willing to sacrifice peace in order to preserve the Union while the latter would sacrifice it in the naïve hope of averting a violent conflict.

The pro-Southern faction which included Floyd, also included Secretary of the Treasury Howell Cobb of Georgia and Jacob Thompson of Mississippi. Unlike the Northern faction of the Cabinet, which was generally committed to the Union even if divided on an

⁴³ Barron, “Confronting Secession,” 118.

⁴⁴ John B. Floyd, “Private Diary of Secretary Floyd,” November 9, 1860, in *Lee and His Lieutenants: Comprising the Early Life, Public Services, and Campaigns of General Robert E. Lee and His Companions in Arms, with a Record of Their Campaigns and Heroic Deeds*, by Edward A. Pollard (New York: E.B. Treat & Co.; Baltimore, MD: J.S. Morrow, etc., 1867) 792.

⁴⁵ Floyd, “Private Diary of Secretary Floyd,” November 9, 1860, 792-793.

⁴⁶ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 85.

approach, the Southern, states'-rights wing experienced no such unanimity, at least on the issue of union. Both Cobb and Thompson were outright secessionists, with the former viewing secession as a bygone conclusion owing to Lincoln's election and the latter supporting secession while reluctantly backing Buchanan's stance on compromise.⁴⁷ In this context, Floyd had more in common, at least on the surface, with Black's Northern faction, especially given that he, like the attorney general, supported Buchanan's call for a convention. Additionally, while he blamed the state of affairs in the South on the actions of "Northern fanatics," (a clear reference to abolitionist Republicans), he still opposed secession.⁴⁸ But where he broke with Black and the other Northerners concerned his opposition to any act of coercion, specifically Black's call to send reinforcements to Charleston to avoid any potential seizure of federal forts. To him, this action would have constituted a "rash movement" against the South that could produce a conflict. Instead, he advocated caution, believing "that Lincoln's administration will fail, and be regarded as impotent for good or evil, within four months after his inauguration," an outcome that would nullify Southern concerns over the president-elect's ostensibly radical policies and render secession an unnecessary course of action.⁴⁹ Once again, Floyd's naivete was on full display through his belief that the secession movement would collapse in tandem with Lincoln's administration. At no point was it certain that the incoming administration would fail, and while he placed his hopes for peace and preservation of the Union on an unknown outcome,

⁴⁷ John B. Floyd, "Private Diary of Secretary Floyd," November 10, 1860, in *Lee and His Lieutenants: Comprising the Early Life, Public Services, and Campaigns of General Robert E. Lee and His Companions in Arms, with a Record of Their Campaigns and Heroic Deeds*, by Edward A. Pollard (New York: E.B. Treat & Co.; Baltimore, MD: J.S. Morrow, etc., 1867), 793-794; Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 131.

⁴⁸ Floyd, "Private Diary of Secretary Floyd," November 9, 1860, 793.

⁴⁹ Floyd, "Private Diary of Secretary Floyd," November 9, 1860, 793.

the forts in Charleston continued to remain undefended, a circumstance that only weakened the federal position there by leaving them rife for a secessionist takeover.

With the president's Cabinet split on the legality of secession, Buchanan decided to defer an official announcement on the unfolding crisis and any compromise attempts until his upcoming Fourth Annual Address to Congress, scheduled for early December 1860.⁵⁰ In doing so, he handed Floyd's states'-rights faction a temporary win, while at the same time emboldening the South to potentially seize federal property under the belief that the administration had no plans in place to combat secession. This view was additionally strengthened by practical actions taken in Charleston in early November that emerged out of a Cabinet clash between Black and Floyd.

As noted, during the November 9 Cabinet meeting, Buchanan had also discussed the issue of reinforcing forts in the South to dissuade any potential seizures after Scott again implored him to do so.⁵¹ The Gardner incident was still fresh in the minds of the Cabinet members, and although Buchanan had already privately reassured Black that he intended to have Floyd reinforce the forts, a tense argument still erupted over the issue between the attorney general who supported such an action and the secretary of war who opposed it for fear that such a move would be interpreted by secessionists as an act of aggression and antagonistic toward the South.⁵² Over the course of the heated argument, Black had even insinuated that Floyd was a secessionist who willingly sought to surrender federal property to the South. Regardless, at the end of this sparring session, the attorney general had left the

⁵⁰ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 358.

⁵¹ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 358.

⁵² Barron, "Confronting Secession," 118.

Cabinet meeting believing that Buchanan would continue to follow through on his pledge to reinforce the forts, since the two shared the same point of view on the illegality of secession.

However, over succeeding days, Black became concerned when he learned that no reinforcements had actually been deployed. When he questioned Buchanan on the matter, the president curtly told his secretary that the responsibility for reinforcing the forts resided exclusively with the War Department, and hence Floyd. Black should not worry about the issue or interfere in the business of another Department, Buchanan said.⁵³ In seeking to explain why Buchanan reneged on his initial pledge to reinforce the forts, the president's personal relationship and dependency on both Black and Floyd must be examined. With a Cabinet divided into groups headed by two of his most loyal advisors, Buchanan was forced to choose among his unionist and states'-rights factionists a course of action for the crisis in Charleston. Importantly, Black and Buchanan shared the same views regarding secession, as opposed to Floyd and the president, who did not agree over the speed and severity of reinforcing the forts; indeed, after the Gardner incident, Floyd had told Buchanan that the likelihood of another attempted seizure was low.⁵⁴ Given these differing points of view, it was convenient, if strategically unwise, for Buchanan to side with Floyd in not sending reinforcements by utilizing the excuse of departmental separation of powers. In doing so, he could claim to agree with Black on the severity of the Secession Crisis while not offending Floyd by inserting Black's views into the business of the War Department and ordering reinforcements to Charleston that could provoke a conflict. By charting this course of action, Buchanan was able to keep his official family intact, but at the expense of sacrificing the strength of the federal position in Charleston because of the lack of reinforcements.

⁵³ Barron, "Confronting Secession," 118-119.

⁵⁴ Floyd, "Private Diary of Secretary Floyd," November 7, 1860, 790.

Although Buchanan had sided with Floyd on the issue to retain harmony in his Cabinet and peace in Charleston, the concerns he and Black shared over the situation in South Carolina still persisted. To satisfy these concerns, at the Cabinet meeting of November 10, the president agreed to alter the federal command structure in Charleston. At Floyd's recommendation, Buchanan replaced Gardner with a another federal officer, one who, as a native of Charleston, would hopefully command the respect of the town's fellow citizens: Major Robert Anderson.⁵⁵ Anderson's appointment represented a middle path between Black and Floyd's views, in that a new and competent commander had been appointed who could more accurately judge the situation in Charleston and understand the natives' views, while at the same time, practical numbers of federal troop reinforcements had been delayed so as not to intimidate secessionist forces.

V. Devising an Argument: Black's Justification Against Secession

While Buchanan acceded to Floyd throughout early November on the issue of reinforcing the Charleston forts, he turned to Black for legal advice on the crisis in South Carolina, ordering him to draft an official paper concerning the measures the federal government had at its disposal to confront secession.⁵⁶ Black's views were delivered to the president in a legal paper on November 20, in which he continued to argue that secession was both unconstitutional and illegal. Black labeled the events unfolding in Charleston a domestic insurrection against the government of the United States, and argued that "the chief executive magistrate of the Union is confided the solemn duty of seeing the laws faithfully executed."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 358.

⁵⁶ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 359.

⁵⁷ Jeremiah S. Black, *Official Opinions of the Attorneys General of the United States Advising the President and Heads of Department in Relation to Their Official Duties: Volume IX, Containing the Opinions of Hon. Jeremiah S. Black of Pennsylvania*, edited by J. Hubley Ashton (Washington, D.C.: W. H. & O. H. Morrison, 1866), 518.

In this instance, with federal property under threat of seizure in the South, the president had “a [very clear] right to take such measures as may be necessary for the protection of [such] property.”⁵⁸ In emphasizing this point, Black appealed to Buchanan’s own successful efforts at retaking the federal armory at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, seized by the militant abolitionist John Brown in an October 1859 raid, noting that “every one acknowledged the legal justice” of his decisive actions then, and would do so now.⁵⁹ Indeed, many Northern Americans throughout the Secession Winter yearned for and recalled other presidents who had acted decisively to combat domestic insurrections, like George Washington during the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 and Jackson during the Nullification Crisis of 1832-33.⁶⁰ After justifying Buchanan’s right to defend or recapture any “forts, arsenals, magazines, dock yards, navy yards, customs houses, public ships, and other property which the United States have bought, built, and paid for,” Black provided the president with a legal pathway to accomplish those means, via Buchanan’s invocation of the Milita Act of 1795 or the Insurrection Act of 1807, which would allow the president to call up state militias to suppress a domestic insurrection much like one of the nature unfolding in Charleston.⁶¹

Ultimately, the attorney general’s November 20 paper cemented his influence as Buchanan’s most important Northern Cabinet officer during secession, since Black had

⁵⁸ Black, *Official Opinions*, 520.

⁵⁹ Black, *Official Opinions*, 521.

⁶⁰ In 1791, the newly established federal government, as part of a measure to subsidize debt assumption, imposed a 25% excise tax on whiskey and other distilled spirits. The tax was widely unpopular among western farmers, who routinely distilled their crops into whiskey to more easily transport their product to market. Three years later, Pennsylvania farmers rebelled against the federal government, refusing to pay the tax. President George Washington responded to the crisis by raising a 15,000-man army, which he personally led into the field, to suppress the rebellion; with this immense show of force, the whiskey rebels peacefully disbanded. Baker, *James Buchanan*, 125-126.

⁶¹ The Milita Act of 1795, an extension of the 1792 Milita Act, permitted the president, in a time of insurrection, to take command of a state’s militia forces to quell a rebellion. The Insurrection Act of 1807 similarly allowed the president to deploy military forces within the borders of the United States to combat domestic insurrections. Black, *Official Opinions*, 520-522.

provided both a tightly wound legal denunciation of secessionist principles and a practical way to combat them and the unfolding crisis. In fact, Black's arguments proved so persuasive to the president that Buchanan decided to publicly tie himself to his attorney general's views by including Black's recommendations in his Fourth Annual Address to Congress, scheduled for early December 1860. Since Buchanan had decided not to make any public announcements about the crisis in light of the Cabinet disagreements in early November, his December 3 address would act as his first public comments on, and denunciation toward, the topic of secession.

Although Black's paper had philosophically reinforced Buchanan's views on secession, the president still remained in thrall to the views of Floyd on a strategic level. During the last week of November, in the period after Black delivered his paper to the president, Buchanan journeyed to the State Department to meet with Floyd, who was present there. During his brief meeting with the war secretary, Buchanan again reiterated his concerns over securing the Charleston forts, noting that he "would rather have my throat cut, sir, than have [the forts] seized by South Carolina," and asking Floyd to provide Anderson the necessary troop reinforcements he sought.⁶² But although Buchanan had entered the meeting adamant about acquiring the reinforcements, he left it having weakened the Union's position even further. During the meeting, Floyd again reiterated his unfounded belief that there would be no molestation of the forts by secessionists in the harbor, and urged Buchanan to again delay sending the troops until both he and the president could get a better appraisal of the strategic situation from General Scott.⁶³ Foolishly, Buchanan adhered to his war

⁶² "Barlow to Butterworth, Dec. 3, 1860," in *President James Buchanan, A Biography* by Philip Shriver Klein (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), 368.

⁶³ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 368.

secretary's advice, even though Scott had already made his views on the situation apparent in October 1860, during the lead-up to the presidential election, when he had urged reinforcing Gardner's position. It is highly unlikely that Scott's views and concerns about a potential rebel seizure would have changed in this single month-long period, especially since the situation in Charleston had deteriorated much more rapidly in the weeks after Lincoln's election than in the period before. Ultimately, it appears that Floyd's attempt to convince Buchanan to delay sending Anderson reinforcements was yet again an effort to maintain the peace, and to convince Buchanan that he was taking reasonably cautious steps to avert a crisis which would endanger that peace. At the same time, Buchanan's unwise delay allowed Floyd to implement an even more radical approach to the situation in Charleston that would strengthen the secessionists' bargaining position.

Again adhering to Floyd's advice, Buchanan decided to welcome South Carolina state commissioners to Washington to negotiate an amicable agreement to the crisis.⁶⁴ Just like with his recommendation to appoint Anderson as commander in Charleston, Floyd's proposal regarding the commissioners was an attempt at preserving the peace, yet one that strengthened the secessionist outlook because it lent legitimacy to their movement. By agreeing to meet with the South Carolina commissioners, Buchanan, as a representative of the federal government, had betrayed his presidential oath to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."⁶⁵ Secession was clearly unconstitutional, according to Black's legal paper, but the president had now cast aside that notion and foolishly lent legitimacy to the secessionists who were trying to break apart the Union by recognizing both

⁶⁴ *New York Herald*, January 17, 1861, in *James Buchanan and His Cabinet on the Eve of Secession* by Philip Gerald Auchampaugh (Lancaster Pennsylvania: Lancaster Press, 1926), 150.

⁶⁵ Baker, *James Buchanan*, 125.

their status as negotiators and as legitimate their calls for disunion. In addition to convincing Buchanan to meet with the commissioners, Floyd also made his opposition to any attempt at coercion through force apparent, declaring that if the president pursued any aggressive actions against the South akin to Black's recommendations in his November 20 paper, such as deploying state militias, he would resign his position as war secretary.⁶⁶ For Floyd, negotiations were as far as Buchanan could go in his dealings with the South, since preserving the peace was of paramount concern.

In the same way that Black had made his influence felt through the November 20 paper, Floyd's actions in the last week of November and his recommendations to the president highlighted his persuasive abilities and significance throughout the crisis. He had succeeded at pushing for compromise with the South, while nullifying Black's recommendations throughout the entire month of November to reinforce first Gardner, and then Anderson's, positions in Charleston, thereby retaining the status quo in the harbor. But while peace had been preserved, the federal position continued to remain imperiled, and the secretary of war had convinced Buchanan to give the secessionists greater influence than they had in early November by conferring on them bargaining powers with the United States government. During the Nullification Crisis, Andrew Jackson had made it clear he was unafraid to use force both to preserve the Union and ensure that the laws of the United States were executed. It was only after he had signed a Force Bill in early 1833 reaffirming this point that he then considered negotiating tariff reductions with the disaffected citizens of South Carolina.⁶⁷ The same could not be said of Buchanan, who, in thrall to the opinions of his war secretary and determined to keep his Cabinet family intact, had refused to supply any

⁶⁶ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 150-151.

⁶⁷ Baker, *James Buchanan*, 127.

measure of practical reinforcement in the South. Small wonder then, that many Northern Americans throughout the Secession Winter of 1860-61, had cried out, “Oh, for one hour of Jackson!”⁶⁸ Indeed, had Buchanan adhered to Black’s recommendations for reinforcing the forts, his negotiations with the commissioners could have been somewhat justified.

VI. Negotiations Commence

On December 3, 1860, Buchanan finally made public his administration’s stance on secession in his Fourth Annual Address before Congress, even though his rhetoric, or rather, Black’s rhetoric (which formed the basis of his address, having been drafted in accordance with the November 20 paper), did not match with the practical actions he was taking in Charleston. In the address, Buchanan denied the Southern outlook that Lincoln’s election constituted grounds for a “revolutionary resistance to the federal government.”⁶⁹ He held that no action could justify secession as a “constitutional remedy” to the alleged crisis of Lincoln’s election,⁷⁰ and that he was bound by oath as commander-in-chief to ensure that the laws of the United States were faithfully executed.⁷¹ Still, he extended an olive branch to disaffected Southerners, calling for a new constitutional convention that would protect slavery and “remedy... [the] existing evils which the Constitution has itself provided for its own preservation.”⁷² With this address, Buchanan had finally tied himself to Black’s policies, and the attorney general was satisfied that his views, at the very least, had been publicly acknowledged. The same could not be said for Howell Cobb, however, Buchanan’s treasury

⁶⁸ *Republican* (Springfield, Illinois), Dec. 17, 1860, in *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* by Sean Wilentz (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 780.

⁶⁹ James Buchanan, “Fourth Annual Message, December 3, 1860,” in *The Works of James Buchanan: Comprising his Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence, Vol. XI, 1860-1868*, collected and edited by John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia & London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1910), 9.

⁷⁰ Buchanan, “Fourth Annual Message,” 12.

⁷¹ Buchanan, “Fourth Annual Message,” 17.

⁷² Buchanan, “Fourth Annual Message,” 22-23.

secretary and an ardent secessionist, who, days after learning of the president's speech, resigned his post because of Buchanan's stated opposition to secession.⁷³ The president's official family had finally begun to break up, only a month after Lincoln's election. With the treasury secretary's resignation, Buchanan came to rely on Floyd even more as a substitute to Cobb, whom the president had known for far longer than his war secretary and who had shared an even deeper bond with Buchanan.⁷⁴ In addition, because of the dwindling number of states'-rights secretaries in the Cabinet following Cobb's resignation, Buchanan, who was obsessed with maintaining harmony in the Cabinet, was more likely to continue taking into account the opinions of his war secretary as he navigated the crisis, in order to avoid future break-ups.

Perhaps realizing the reality of his elevated influence, only three days after Buchanan's address was delivered to Congress, Floyd backtracked on the uncharacteristically forceful order he had delivered to Anderson on December 1, concerning the major's tenuous position in Charleston Harbor. In his December 1 War Department memo, Floyd had sanctioned defensive action on Anderson's part if attacked by secessionists, although he still did not expect such an attack to occur. In an important caveat, however, he made clear that any retaliatory response "must be such as to be free from the charge of initiating collision."⁷⁵ On the surface, this order adequately expressed Buchanan's concerns over the security of the Charleston forts and sanctioned a retaliatory response against the secessionists should a preemptive strike occur on their part. But underlying that, Floyd's December 1 memo also remained consistent with the war secretary's own desire for peace, and was more than likely

⁷³ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 370-371.

⁷⁴ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 276.

⁷⁵ "War Department to Anderson," December 1, 1860, in *James Buchanan and His Cabinet on the Eve of Secession* by Philip Gerald Auchampaugh (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Lancaster Press, 1926), 96.

only issued to provide political cover for the president should an attack occur. Indeed, when faced with the crisis of reinforcing the installations during the last week of November, Buchanan had fretted to Floyd that if “these forts in Charleston should fall into the hands of those who intend to take them... it will destroy me sir.”⁷⁶ By issuing the order, Floyd was protecting Buchanan from recriminations by political opponents that the administration had not taken sufficient steps to combat secession. In reality though, Floyd, given his consistent opposition to any action that could disturb the status quo in Charleston or bring upon war, would more than likely have contested the circumstances behind an attack even had one occurred.

Regardless, throughout late November and early December, Anderson asked the War Department to supply more troops to Castle Pinkney, a small fortification in Charleston that commanded excellent sight lines over the other federal forts in the harbor. Coming on the heels of his December 1 memo, which had sanctioned, at least on paper, a stronger response to secession, provided that the North did not act preemptively, Floyd backtracked by refusing Anderson’s request for more troops, noting that such an “increase of force under your command... would... lead to serious results.”⁷⁷ Consistent with his views of November, then, Floyd had continued to defer any practical action to reinforce the forts, instead of relying on carefully worded memos which would sanction purely defensive actions as opposed to anything that could be viewed as offensive or aggressive. In this way, the federal position continued to remain imperiled, since Anderson did not receive the troops he had requested. If

⁷⁶ *New York Herald*, January 17, 1861, in *James Buchanan and His Cabinet on the Eve of Secession* by Philip Gerald Auchampaugh (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Lancaster Press, 1926), 150.

⁷⁷ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 369.

an attack was to occur, the major would be forced to fend it off with the limited troops at his disposal.

On the same day Floyd rejected Anderson's request of troops for Castle Pinkney, the South Carolina commissioners he had urged the president to meet with finally arrived in Washington. At their initial meeting with the president two days later, on December 8, the commissioners made their goals clear. Their first objective was to avoid the outbreak of a conflict between South Carolina and the federal government that could lead to bloodshed. On this point, Buchanan and Floyd agreed wholeheartedly, since the entire purpose of the meeting had been to work out an amicable compromise. However, from there, the commissioners' goals diverged sharply from the federal position. The South Carolinians sought to peacefully secede from the Union and to establish a framework for future relations with the United States.⁷⁸ Buchanan and Floyd did not seek to engineer the break-up of the Union, and as such did not accede to the commissioners' second and third points regarding secession, but even so, they had still undermined Black's position. The attorney general had been calling for a carrot-and-stick approach to coercion, building up the federal troop numbers in Charleston to negotiate from a position of strength as opposed to ceding the strategic negotiating ground to the commissioners. By not first deploying more troops, which Floyd opposed because he believed it would portray the North as the aggressor, the commissioners were emboldened to continue to push for secession in their initial meeting with the president and, even more outrageously, to establish themselves as an independent nation. After hearing the commissioners' demands, Buchanan ended the meeting, reaffirming

⁷⁸ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 370.

his “determination to obey the laws” of the United States while echoing Floyd’s sentiments by stating that he was “no warrior – I am a man of peace.”⁷⁹

Two days later, on December 10, the commissioners returned to the White House pledging not to molest the forts in Charleston in exchange for a promise by the federal government to abstain from sending any reinforcements to the harbor. Buchanan, who conveyed uneasiness about placing limitations on his ability to act in any manner he saw fit to combat secession, nevertheless accepted the commissioners’ demands.⁸⁰ Floyd’s approach had worked perfectly. He had succeeded at retaining the status quo in Charleston, placing a cap on the number of troops at Anderson’s disposal and ensuring that no reinforcements would be provided to strengthen the federal position there. The peace would be maintained, but so would the secessionists’ strategic position, since the delay in federal reinforcements had given the South valuable time to continue laying the groundwork for its ultimate secession from the Union.

Buchanan’s adherence to Floyd’s policies in agreeing to meet with the commissioners and ceding to them the strategic advantage in the harbor proved too much for another member of Buchanan’s Cabinet, Secretary of State Lewis Cass, who resigned his position on December 12, two days after the president issued what he deemed to be too conciliatory of a response to the South Carolinians.⁸¹ Black, no doubt worried about the loss of a strong pro-unionist like Cass, attempted to intervene to mend the breach between the president and his departing secretary of state by urging Cass to withdraw his resignation letter and return to the

⁷⁹ *Philadelphia Press*, Dec. 8, 1860, in *President James Buchanan: A Biography* by Philip Shriver Klein (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), 370.

⁸⁰ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 371.

⁸¹ Lewis Cass, “From General Cass,” December 12, 1860, in *The Works of James Buchanan: Comprising his Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence, Vol. XI, 1860-1868*, collected and edited by John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia & London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1910), 58.

Cabinet.⁸² Even though the secretary of state showed a willingness to do so, his overtures were rejected by Buchanan, who regarded Cass's resignation not "as a calamity, but rather as a good riddance."⁸³ In seeking to explain why Buchanan rejected Cass's overtures, the personal relationship between the president and his war secretary Floyd must again be examined. Buchanan was never personally close to Cass in the same way he was to Floyd, and Cass and Floyd had sparred over Floyd's refusal to provide reinforcements in Charleston. Given this disagreement between Buchanan's two secretaries, one distant and the other close, it is unsurprising that Buchanan would not make an effort to keep Cass, a secretary he personally disliked and whom he had picked for the position to provide sectional balance in the Cabinet and out of recognition for Cass's immense stature within the Democratic Party.⁸⁴

Much in the same way that Cobb's resignation had elevated Floyd's influence from a personal standpoint, Cass's resignation elevated Black's position and influence in the Cabinet, but on a strategic level. Buchanan replaced his departed secretary of state with Black, who in turn brought in his assistant attorney general, Edwin M. Stanton, to take his original position as attorney general.⁸⁵ Not only would Black have an elevated position from which to influence Buchanan's decisions on secession, since the post of secretary of state commanded greater national attention than that of attorney general, but he would now find a close ally in the Cabinet to back him as well. Stanton, like Cass and Black, was an ardent unionist, who had helped Black draft his November 20 paper which had denounced secession

⁸² Lewis Cass, "Memorandum," December 17, 1860, in *The Works of James Buchanan: Comprising his Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence, Vol. XI, 1860-1868*, collected and edited by John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia & London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1910), 67.

⁸³ Jeremiah Black, "Judge Black to George Ticknor Curtis," Sept. 26, 1881, in *The Works of James Buchanan: Comprising his Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence, Vol. XI, 1860-1868*, collected and edited by John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia & London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1910), 64.

⁸⁴ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 275-276.

⁸⁵ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 74.

as unconstitutional and established a number of legal remedies to combat it.⁸⁶ Together, this newly configured, pro-unionist coalition would shift the balance of power in the Cabinet, undermining the dominancy Floyd had commanded throughout November and early December 1860, and right at the time that a new and even more tenuous crisis was about to unfold.

VII. The Crisis Point: Anderson's Movement

On December 20, 1860, the crisis in Charleston reached a new tipping point, when South Carolina voted to secede from the Union.⁸⁷ The decision came as a shock to Buchanan and his Cabinet, since the president had been under the impression, given by the South Carolina commissioners on December 10, that the state would take no action to alter the status quo in Charleston, provided no federal reinforcements were deployed. Although secession had been one of the commissioners' original goals, South Carolina's departure from the Union had clearly altered the state of relations between the commissioners and the president. What prompted South Carolina to secede was a letter from the state's governor, Francis Pickens, written on December 17, but presented to Buchanan on the 20th, the day of secession, that had called on the president to authorize South Carolina "to take possession of Fort Sumter immediately," thereby surrendering federal property to the state.⁸⁸ Buchanan had not received the letter before South Carolina had moved to secede, and thus had not acted on it, but there is little reason to assume he would have done so given his perceived understanding of the status quo agreement then in place between the commissioners and the federal government. The fact that the situation had come to this, however, was evidence that

⁸⁶ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 75.

⁸⁷ Barron, "Confronting Secession," 123.

⁸⁸ "Governor Pickens to President Buchanan," December 17, 1860, in *The Genesis of the Civil War: The Story of Sumter, 1860-1861* by Samuel Wylie Crawford (New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1887), 82.

Floyd's conciliatory approach to the South had failed and had even accelerated the march to war between both sections of the country. Indeed, because of his adherence to Floyd's policies and his naïve faith that the commissioners would continue to honor the status quo, Buchanan now found himself in a strategically-limited position. He had denied Anderson's request for further troops, and now, any efforts at deploying them had been immensely complicated by the fact that they would have to travel through enemy territory.

While Buchanan remained hamstrung over how best to strategically approach the new state of affairs in Charleston, Anderson took decisive action to prevent his forces from falling into secessionist hands. Prior to secession, Anderson was situated in Fort Moultrie, one of several forts in the harbor. Moultrie, however, remained indefensible because of the high sand dunes surrounding it, which left Anderson's forces vulnerable to any attack by secessionists who commanded the higher ground.⁸⁹ Taking this into account, on the night of December 26, Anderson repositioned his forces at Moultrie to the more defensible Fort Sumter, located at the mouth of Charleston Harbor.⁹⁰ Anderson's actions bought time for the commander-in-chief to potentially devise a plan to reinforce the forts, but instead of seizing the initiative, Buchanan's Cabinet, and specifically Black and Floyd, became bogged down in another internal disagreement, this time concerning the major's movement.

The day after Anderson's re-location, Buchanan's Cabinet convened to deliberate their next course of action. At the start of the Cabinet session, Stanton informed Black of Anderson's movement, which the secretary of state labeled a "bold and patriotic act."⁹¹ He further commended Anderson by noting that the major's actions were "in precise accordance

⁸⁹ Baker, *James Buchanan*, 129.

⁹⁰ Barron, "Confronting Secession," 123.

⁹¹ Thorpe, "Jeremiah S. Black," 132.

with his orders.”⁹² At this remark, an intense shouting match erupted between Black and Floyd over the issue of Anderson’s exact orders, with Floyd countering Black’s defense by noting that Anderson’s movements were not in concurrence with any orders given him by the War Department. Still refusing to back down, Black challenged Floyd by arguing that he “recollect[ed] [Anderson’s] orders distinctly word for word.”⁹³

What Black was referring too was indeed a War Department memo issued weeks earlier, on December 11, which had supposedly, according to Floyd, prohibited Anderson from taking any such action. In the wake of Black’s failed endeavor to convince Buchanan to speedily reinforce the forts throughout mid-November, the former attorney general had sought to craft a policy, to be transcribed to the War Department, sanctioning any type of defensive action Anderson required in order to protect his forces in Charleston. Black had insisted on drafting the memo in writing, perhaps anticipating that Buchanan would either forget about the policy or expecting Floyd to challenge it at some point.⁹⁴ In condemning Anderson’s movement, Floyd noted the part of the memo which stated that the major was, “carefully to avoid every act which would needlessly tend to provoke aggression and for that reason you are not, without evident and imminent necessity, to take up any position which could be construed into the assumption of a hostile attitude.”⁹⁵ The memo further went on to state that Anderson was “to hold possession of the forts in this harbor, and, if attacked, you are to defend yourself to the last extremity.”⁹⁶ Based on his reading of the memo, Floyd believed that, absent an outright attack, which had not yet occurred, or the perceived threat of

⁹² Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 158.

⁹³ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 158.

⁹⁴ Barron, “Confronting Secession,” 125.

⁹⁵ James Buchanan, “To the South Carolina Commissioners,” December 31, 1860, in *The Works of James Buchanan: Comprising his Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence, Vol. XI, 1860-1868*, collected and edited by John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia & London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1910), 82.

⁹⁶ Buchanan, “To the South Carolina Commissioners,” 82.

one, Anderson had acted impetuously by moving his forces to Sumter, which threatened to provoke a conflict.⁹⁷

Here, Black's savviness in transcribing the president's order in writing as opposed to relying on Buchanan's oral approval, benefitted the pro-Unionist faction. During the Cabinet argument between Black and Floyd, the new secretary of state turned Buchanan's attention to the final line of the memo, which Floyd had carelessly overlooked, that stated Anderson was "also authorized to take similar defensive steps whenever you have tangible evidence of a design to proceed to a hostile act."⁹⁸ With this line, Black was able to successfully argue that South Carolina's secession only days before Anderson's movement, in conjunction with the steady buildup of arms by secessionist forces in the harbor and the lax federal response to reinforcing the forts in Charleston, had led Anderson to the conclusion that "tangible evidence of a design to proceed to a hostile act" was imminent.⁹⁹ Amidst this revelation, Buchanan was forced to concede that Anderson had acted justifiably in moving, thereby siding with Black over Floyd in one of the major policy decisions of the crisis.

But although Black's defense was unimpeachable and carefully considered, Buchanan still had other practical issues to assess, especially regarding the opinions of the new set of commissioners, now representatives of the independent nation of South Carolina, who had arrived in Washington on the same day Anderson had repositioned to Sumter. The post-secessionist commissioners had learned of the major's actions the same day that Buchanan's Cabinet had heard of it, on the morning of the 27th, but waited until the following day, December 28, to demand answers from the administration regarding this ostensibly hostile

⁹⁷ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 379.

⁹⁸ Buchanan, "To the South Carolina Commissioners," 82.

⁹⁹ Barron, "Confronting Secession," 124.

act. The commissioners were infuriated over Anderson's actions, and claimed that Buchanan had violated his pledge not to take any action in Charleston that would upset the status quo.¹⁰⁰ Conveniently lost in their rationale was the fact that South Carolina had already violated its end of the pledge by seceding on December 20, but nevertheless, Buchanan weakly refused to contest their claim, as the secessionists harassed him for nearly two hours.¹⁰¹

With Buchanan lacking any level of fortitude to withstand the South Carolinian commissioners' verbal assaults, and yet again fearful of alienating Floyd, he decided on another half-measure to appease his war secretary and the disaffected commissioners, or at the very least, continue to delay an outbreak of violence in Charleston. Although acknowledging that Anderson had a right to move initially, the president left open the question of whether or not he would permit the major and his troops to remain at Sumter. While this question was being deliberated by the Cabinet, Buchanan foolishly agreed to continue to negotiate with the very commissioners calling for the fort's surrender.¹⁰² Buchanan's decision was yet another example of his indecisiveness and paralyzed leadership in the crisis. Black had at his disposal an official War Department memo affixed with Buchanan's signature sanctioning Anderson's defensive movement to Sumter.¹⁰³ Yet, in an attempt to appease Floyd, he had still refused to come down firmly on the issue of whether or not to hold the forts in Charleston. Black and Stanton had provided Buchanan with a potential remedy to combat secession via the 1795 Militia and 1807 Insurrection Acts, yet Buchanan refused to invoke them, and had likewise refused to continue to support a purely

¹⁰⁰ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 159.

¹⁰¹ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 159.

¹⁰² Barron, "Confronting Secession," 125.

¹⁰³ Barron, "Confronting Secession," 125.

defensive action on the part of his commander in Charleston designed to avert a conflict while still maintaining a federal presence in the harbor.

Even more troubling was the fact that during the time of the Cabinet debate between Black and Floyd over Anderson's actions, Floyd was enveloped in an unrelated political scandal involving his embezzlement of funds from the sale of Indian bonds held by Jacob Thompson's Interior Department, to be used to pay civilian contractors who had done work for the U.S. Army.¹⁰⁴ The scandal broke only days before Anderson's movement to Sumter, no doubt adding to Buchanan's growing anxiety over the crisis in Charleston. But instead of immediately firing Floyd for his culpability in the scandal, the president dithered, allowing his war secretary to resign on his own timetable.¹⁰⁵ For Buchanan, who shared a close personal relationship with Floyd, it was not unrealistic to suggest that he hoped to spare his war secretary the embarrassment of being outright fired.

Regardless of his motives, Buchanan's decision to retain Floyd in the Cabinet during the critical meetings of December 27-29, as opposed to firing him immediately upon learning of the scandal, only served to strengthen the secessionist cause. Floyd had challenged the validity of Anderson's movement to Sumter, and had Black's written legal memo not existed, it is likely Buchanan would have ordered Anderson to return to Moultrie, thereby leaving him vulnerable to an attack by secessionist forces. Additionally, Floyd's continued presence in the Cabinet helped him advance his view that the forts should be surrendered. This emboldened the secessionist cause by giving the impression that the government was still unwilling to take a strong stance on holding federal property in the South at the risk of provoking a

¹⁰⁴ Baker, *James Buchanan*, 131.

¹⁰⁵ Baker, *James Buchanan*, 131.

conflict, which could potentially leave the forts ripe for a takeover, should the right time or opportunity present itself.

Floyd officially resigned on December 29, 1860. While ultimately doing so to avoid the embarrassment associated with the abstracted Indian bonds scandal, the departing secretary argued that his resignation was in opposition to Anderson's movement and continued occupation of Sumter, which he feared would provoke a conflict with the South.¹⁰⁶ Floyd's resignation shifted the balance of power in the Cabinet toward the unionists, leaving Jeremiah Black and Edwin Stanton with greater positions of influence. With this shift in power, and absent Floyd's consistent opposition to any aggressively coercive acts, the Cabinet would re-establish itself in favor of a stronger stance against secession.

VIII. The Continuing Question of Anderson's Position

While Floyd's physical absence in the Cabinet following his resignation allowed Black more breathing room to implement his policies, the departed secretary's influence was still felt throughout early January 1861. The question of Anderson's position at Sumter was still being debated at this point, and remained increasingly troublesome for Buchanan, to the point that he drafted a new order, not yet delivered to Anderson, which would have forced the major to vacate the fort. The order was written on the day Floyd submitted his resignation letter, but there is little evidence to suggest that the secretary of war was actually aware of Buchanan's memo, considering he had already vacated his post earlier in the day,¹⁰⁷ and at any rate, he had already made up his mind to resign his position. Although the actual draft response of December 29 has been lost to history,¹⁰⁸ Buchanan, according to Black,

¹⁰⁶ Barron, "Confronting Secession," 126; Baker, *James Buchanan*, 131.

¹⁰⁷ Auchampaugh, *James Buchanan and His Cabinet*, 161.

¹⁰⁸ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 380.

apparently offered to restore Anderson to his former position at Moultrie in exchange for a pledge by South Carolina not to attack the federal installations in the harbor.¹⁰⁹

Buchanan's proposed response to the commissioners proved too much for his pro-unionist Cabinet secretaries, especially Black, who questioned why the federal government should yield to the South Carolinians' views "that our United States troops must remain in the weakest position they can find in the harbor,"¹¹⁰ a clear reference to the secessionists' demands that Anderson return to Moultrie. He further went on to justify Anderson's actions as a manner of "simple self-defense,"¹¹¹ and wanted to reassure the major "that his Government will not desert him."¹¹² Convinced that Buchanan's draft memo would not accomplish this goal and in fact weaken the federal position, the following day, on December 30, Black informed Buchanan that he, Stanton, and Holt would all resign if the proposed response were delivered to the commissioners, with the secretary of state arguing that the president's proposal had "swept the ground from our feet" and placed Buchanan "where no man can stand with you."¹¹³

Fearful of losing yet another close Cabinet secretary because of disagreements over his decision-making, Buchanan finally relented and cast his lot with the unionists, in the process returning to his original stated positions against secession. The president permitted Black and Stanton to draft a more forceful alternative response to the commissioners stating that the administration would not conduct any further negotiations with the South Carolinians

¹⁰⁹ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 380-381.

¹¹⁰ Francis Newton Thorpe, "Jeremiah S. Black (Continued)," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 50, no. 3 (1926), 274.

¹¹¹ Thorpe, "Jeremiah S. Black (Continued)," 274.

¹¹² Thorpe, "Jeremiah S. Black (Continued)," 275.

¹¹³ F. A. Burr, *Philadelphia Press*, September 10, 1883, in *Jeremiah Sullivan Black: A Defender of the Constitution and the Ten Commandments* by William Norwood Brigance (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), 98.

and that Anderson would remain at Sumter. Should South Carolina try to remove Anderson, it would have to do so by force, which would constitute an act of aggression by the South against the North.¹¹⁴ Responding to this new policy, the South Carolina commissioners angrily departed Washington.¹¹⁵

Here again, the personal relationship Buchanan had with Black trumped all other considerations. The concession he made to Black at the expense of the remaining states'-rightists in the Cabinet, which at this point only included Jacob Thompson, who advocated returning Anderson to Sumter, was reminiscent of his handling of Lewis Cass's resignation in mid-December 1860, but amidst opposite circumstances. While Buchanan showed no concern over losing Cass in his disagreement with Floyd, whom he shared a close personal relationship with as opposed to his former secretary of state, now the president acceded to Black's pro-unionist positions because he feared losing another close friend, certainly his closest to still remain in the Cabinet. Indeed, when confronted by Black's potential resignation should he continue to appease the South Carolina secessionists, Buchanan remarked to his secretary of state, "I cannot part with you. If you go, Stanton and Holt will leave."¹¹⁶ This comment not only reflected Buchanan's desire for companionship in the troubled final days of his administration, but also highlighted Black's immense influence in the Cabinet, since Buchanan recognized that Black commanded the respect of the majority of his remaining Cabinet, who were clearly more loyal to Black both personally and in principle than they were to the president's policies. In the end, it was Buchanan's close bond to and

¹¹⁴ Barron, "Confronting Secession," 126.

¹¹⁵ Baker, *James Buchanan*, 136.

¹¹⁶ F. A. Burr, *Philadelphia Press*, September 10, 1883, in *Jeremiah Sullivan Black: A Defender of the Constitution and the Ten Commandments* by William Norwood Brigance (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), 98.

admiration for Black, minus the presence of Floyd in the Cabinet, that convinced him to take a more forceful stance against secession, albeit too late to accomplish much.

IX. A Final, Futile Effort: The *Star of the West*

By early January 1861, the federal strategic position in Charleston Harbor had been significantly diminished, in no small part thanks to John Floyd's influence over Buchanan. The secretary of war had convinced Buchanan to disregard Jeremiah Black's calls for coercing South Carolina into remaining in the Union. Although Buchanan had finally decided to blend some of Black's policy prescriptions into his handling of the crisis, especially through the revised note he had permitted his new secretary of state to draft to the commissioners defiantly proclaiming that Anderson would remain at Sumter, his actions came too late to have any strategic impact on the state of affairs in the harbor because his delays had afforded secessionists time to increase their numbers and organize a strategy of resistance.¹¹⁷

In the meantime, Buchanan, perhaps trying to remain within Black's good graces, publicly, and vigorously, announced his intentions to combat secession in a special address to Congress on January 8, 1861. In it, the president noted that in light of the recent events in Charleston, the "prospect of a bloodless settlement [had] fade[d] away," and that he intended, as Black had argued earlier, for the federal government "to collect the public revenues and protect the public property."¹¹⁸ "We are in the midst of a great revolution," he argued, and the "present is no time for palliations; action, prompt action, is required."¹¹⁹ Buchanan's statements were significant, since he had publicly abandoned any efforts at compromise,

¹¹⁷ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 388.

¹¹⁸ James Buchanan, "Special Message," January 8, 1861, *The American Presidency Project*, UC Santa Barbara. Accessed October 30, 2023. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-2771>.

¹¹⁹ Buchanan, "Special Message."

which had been his and Black's preferred manner of approach to the crisis since early November, and especially throughout December during his meetings with the commissioners. By acknowledging that compromise was no longer possible, and aggressively defending the right of the federal government to protect its property (a direct reference to Fort Sumter), Buchanan had indirectly acknowledged the failure of Floyd's policies. Because he had delayed reinforcing the forts, especially before the commissioners had arrived and even more so after South Carolina officially seceded, he had left both Anderson and federal property in the harbor in a tenuous position, with the possibility of attack all too likely. Now, absent Floyd's influence, and with Black his closest Cabinet advisor left, Buchanan had completely, and very publicly, reversed course.

The day after his address, the attack that had lain dormant for months because of Buchanan's adherence to Floyd's policies finally occurred, when the merchant steamer *Star of the West* was fired upon by secessionist shore batteries as it entered Charleston Harbor.¹²⁰ Buchanan had sent the vessel after a meeting with his remaining Cabinet members on January 2, during which Black, Holt, and Stanton again dominated. General Scott was also present, and recommended loading the *Star* with 150 federal troops and sufficient food reserves to both strengthen Anderson's position and allow him to remain in Sumter for an extended period of time.¹²¹ Thompson, the last of the three original states'-rightists in the Cabinet, claimed not to have heard of Buchanan's order to send the *Star* during the session, and after learning of it days later, resigned in opposition to the president's actions.¹²² Lost in

¹²⁰ Baker, *James Buchanan*, 138.

¹²¹ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 388.

¹²² Jacob Thompson, "From Mr. Thompson," January 8, 1861, in *The Works of James Buchanan: Comprising his Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence, Vol. XI, 1860-1868*, collected and edited by John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia & London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1910), 100.

the policy disagreement between Thompson and the president, however, was that the *Star's* deployment had marked the first, and only, decisive action Buchanan had taken to reinforce the forts in Charleston. Prior to January 2, he had not seriously considered the option of sending additional troops to Charleston, based on Floyd's outlook that doing would disturb the peace. He had made a handful of public statements about acting decisively to combat secession, but until Buchanan was surrounded by a group of pro-Unionist individuals, headed by Black, who threatened to resign rather than submit to further Northern humiliation at the hands of contemptuous Southern secessionists who brazenly thought they could take themselves out of the Union without disturbing the status quo, he had decided to take no action at all. As a result, the secession movement gained ground in the South, and the final effects of the Black-Floyd split had placed the North in a strategically tenuous position.

X. Afterward: Evaluating Buchanan Amidst the Black-Floyd Split

In the wake of Thompson's resignation in early January 1861, which was followed by Treasury Secretary Philip Francis Thomas's departure one week later, again over issues concerning Southern states' rights,¹²³ Buchanan's Cabinet had become the most unified it had been prior to November 1860, when secession began. Black had emerged victorious, at least policy-wise, because he had outlasted Floyd and had commanded the greatest personal and professional respect among the remaining members of the Cabinet and the president himself. But his policy victory, in terms of acting decisively to reinforce Sumter, remained hollow, given that the resupply mission had failed and that another one would not be attempted for the remainder of Buchanan's time in office. Throughout early January and February 1861, the situation worsened considerably, as six more Deep Southern states joined

¹²³ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 390.

South Carolina in seceding from the Union, and on February 8, founded the Confederate States of America, in Montgomery, Alabama.¹²⁴ By the time Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated almost a month later, on March 4, 1861,¹²⁵ the outgoing Buchanan had left a tenuous situation for the new president to face regarding the reprovisioning of Anderson at Sumter.

Throughout the Secession Winter of 1860-61, fundamental differences over the nature of the federal response to secession and the government's strategic goals characterized the at-times acrimonious debates between Secretary of War John B. Floyd, Attorney General and Secretary of State Jeremiah S. Black, and President James Buchanan. From November 1860 to January 1861, the disagreements boiled down to the issue of coercing South Carolina to remain in the Union at the potential expense of peace, as Black favored, or pursuing any policy with the disaffected Southerners that would avert a war at the potential expense of Union, as Floyd sought. Both secretaries occupied powerful positions from which to influence Buchanan's decision-making during the crisis, with Black devising a sound legal approach to combat secession and Floyd logistically slowing down or all-together undermining the implementation of those policies. While Buchanan during the early days of the crisis identified with Black's views that secession was illegal and needed to be strenuously combated, throughout mid-November and December of 1860, he consistently and from a practical standpoint implemented Floyd's policies in Charleston, all in order to preserve the break-up of his official family, which he relied on heavily for companionship.

Adhering to Black's aggressive and uncompromising policies to preserve the Union stood the likelihood of provoking a conflict with the South, which Buchanan, absent his

¹²⁴ Baker, *James Buchanan*, 121.

¹²⁵ Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 402.

personal desire to retain Floyd in the Cabinet, might have been willing to withstand. Indeed, he had publicly tied himself to Black's uncompromising stances on secession in his Fourth Annual Address to Congress in early December 1860, a move that no-doubt must have made Floyd anxious. But because of the personal relationship he shared with Floyd, Buchanan was unwilling to pursue policies that would alienate him. At the same time, it is likely that Buchanan, who held views similar to Black from the start, and who was closer with Black than any other Cabinet secretary, was more concerned with appeasing Floyd by delaying reinforcements than he was in alienating a member of his Cabinet who he was certain would not abandon him.

However intense their disagreements during the crisis, the fact remains that Black and Floyd did share similar views, namely through their opposition to secession and their desire, if possible, to preserve the Union. The two secretaries did vehemently disagree in policy debates over how far they were willing to go to preserve the Union at the expense of peace, but regardless of that fault line, the fact remains that Floyd and Black philosophically had more in common with each other on the illegality of secession than Floyd did with his other states'-rights colleagues in the Cabinet, like Howell Cobb or Jacob Thompson, who openly flaunted their secessionist inclinations in response to Lincoln's election. Regardless of their similarities, it was Buchanan's personal relationship with his Cabinet secretaries that undermined his actions during the crisis. Had he been able to separate his personal feelings from his official presidential duties, the disagreements between Black and Floyd would not have had as great of an impact on Buchanan, and he could have rationally dealt with the crisis based on Black's concrete legal recommendations from mid-November.

With Floyd's resignation in late-December, Black was elevated to the highest position of prominence, at least from a personal standpoint, in the Cabinet. Fearful of losing him, Buchanan finally, albeit reluctantly, implemented more forceful policies designed to keep the remainder of his Cabinet, and specifically the pro-Unionist faction, intact. Concrete steps were imposed, with the president stepping up his rhetoric against the secessionists and showing a willingness to finally, after months of delay, provide Anderson with necessary reinforcements. But these actions should have been taken in early November or mid-December at latest, certainly before December 20, when South Carolina officially seceded. By acceding to Floyd and delaying practical reinforcements, Buchanan had afforded South Carolina the most valuable of commodities: time. Through his strategically indecisive decision-making, the secessionists were able to assemble their forces, plan and implement their exit from the Union, and eventually repel a re-supply ship sent to reinforce the forts in the harbor. The federal position had been severely weakened, and any logistical hopes of averting conflict were impossible to implement because the secessionists had organized an effective and entrenched opposition against the national government. When Buchanan turned the reins of power over to Lincoln in March 1861, then, the Union which he had sworn to constitutionally uphold upon taking office, had been completely torn asunder.

Appendix I

Chronology of Events: November 1860-March 1861

November 6, 1860	Republican Abraham Lincoln is elected the sixteenth president of the United States in a four-party race between Northern Democrat Stephen Douglas, Southern Democrat John C. Breckenridge, and Constitutional Union Party candidate John Bell
November 7, 1860	The Gardner incident threatens to provoke a clash between Charleston natives and federal forces under Col. J. L. Gardner, commander of Fort Moultrie
November 10, 1860	Buchanan appoints Maj. Robert Anderson to replace Gardner as the federal commander in Charleston
December 3, 1860	Buchanan transmits his Fourth Annual Address to Congress, marking his first public comments, almost a month after Lincoln's election, on the crisis unfolding in Charleston
December 8, 1860	Treasury Secretary Howell Cobb becomes to first Cabinet advisor to resign his post, in opposition to the policies outlined in Buchanan's Fourth Annual Address
December 8, 1860	On the same day Cobb resigns, South Carolinian state commissioners arrive in Washington to meet with Buchanan to negotiate a break-up of the Union
December 12, 1860	Secretary of State Lewis Cass resigns his post in opposition to Buchanan's refusal to reinforce the Charleston forts and his adherence to Floyd's policies; Black becomes secretary of state and Edwin M. Stanton becomes attorney general
December 20, 1860	South Carolina officially secedes from the Union
December 26, 1860	Anderson repositions his forces from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter
December 29, 1860	Floyd resigns amidst charges of fraud in the abstracted Indian bonds scandal and out of opposition to Buchanan's refusal to order Anderson back to Moultrie
January 2, 1861	Buchanan, surrounded by Unionists, sends the <i>Star of the West</i> to reprovision Anderson's forces at Sumter

January 8, 1861	Buchanan transmits a special address to Congress, vowing to aggressively combat secession
January 9, 1861	The <i>Star</i> is fired upon by Charleston shore batteries and driven off, leaving Anderson without reinforcements
Early January-February, 1861	Six more states of the Deep South join South Carolina in seceding from the Union
February 8, 1861	The Confederate States of America (CSA) are founded in Montgomery, Alabama
March 4, 1861	Abraham Lincoln is inaugurated as president

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