

To James Monroe

Hd. Qrs. S. Div.
Nashville 6th. Jany. 1818

Confidential
Sir

A few days since I received a letter from the Secy of War of the 17th. Ult. with enclosures.¹ Your order of the 16th. Ult. through him to Brevet Majr. Genl. Gaines to enter the Territory of Spain & chastise the Ruthless Savages who have been depredating on the property & lives of our citizens, will meet not only the approbation of your country but the approbation of Heaven: Will you however permit me to suggest the catastrophe that might ensue by Genl. Gaines' compliance with the last clause of your order:² Suppose the case that the Indians are beaten, they take refuge either in Pensacola or St. Augustine, which open their gates to them; to profit by his victory General Gaines pursues the fugitives, & has to halt before the Garrison until he can communicate with his Government; in the mean time the Militia grow restless, and he is left to defend himself by the regulars; The enemy, with the aid of their Spanish friends, & Woodbine's British Partizans, or, if you please, with Aury's force, attacks him, what may not be the result? defeat & massacre; Permit me to remark, that the arms of the United States must be carried to any point within the limits of East Florida, where an Enemy is permitted & protected or disgrace attends.

The Executive Government have ordered (and, as I conceive, very properly) Amelia Island to be taken possession of;³ this order ought to be carried into execution at all hazards, and, simultaneously, the whole of East Florida seized & held as an indemnity for the outrages of Spain upon the property of our citizens: this done, it puts all opposition down, secures to our Citizens a compleat indemnity, & saves us from a War with Great Britain, or some of the Continental Powers combined with Spain; this can be done without implicating the Government; let it be signified to me through any channel,⁴ (say Mr. J. Rhea) that the possession of the Floridas would be desirable to the United States, & in sixty days it will be accomplished.

The Order being given for the possession of Amelia Island it ought to be executed, or our enemies, internal and external will use it to the disadvantage of our Government. If our troops enter the Territory of Spain in pursuit of our Indian Enemy all opposition that they meet with must be put down or we will be involved in danger & disgrace I have the honor to be very Respy. Yo. Mo. Obt. St.

Andrew Jackson

LS in James M. Glassell's hand, NN (5-1231); Copy certified by Andrew Jackson, Jr., DLC (23). Published in Bassett, 2:345-46. Monroe's AN filed with the LS reads: "Jany 6. 1818. He objects to last clause in Genl. Gaines's instructions, not to attack spanish posts—

proposes an understanding thro' Mr Rhea—I was sick, when I recd. it, and did not read it, till after rect. of Letters by Mr Hambly Expld. in my letter to him of Decr 21. Hearing afterwards, that such understanding, was imputed to me, I asked Mr Rhea, if any thing, had ever passd between him & me, He declard that he had never heard of the subject before. I knew the suggestion to be false, but having not read the letter, & it being possible, that Mr Rhea might have been written to, & have spoken to me, by distant allusion, to the object, to which I might have innocently given, from a desire to acquire Florida, a reply, from which he might have inferrd, a sanction, not contemplated, I was glad to find, that nothing of the kind, had occurrd."

1. See John C. Calhoun to AJ, December 17, 1817.

2. Calhoun's order to Gaines, December 16 (DLC-23), authorized him to attack Indians within Spanish territory "unless they shelter themselves under a Spanish port. In the last event, you will immediately notify this department."

3. See the correspondence enclosed with George Graham to AJ, November 13.

4. The certified copy in Jackson's papers indicates a marginal notation here: "Mr. J Rhea's letter in answer is burnt this 12th. of April 1818 [1819]. A.J." The notation on the copy is not in Jackson's hand.