

**Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, August 9, 1807,  
The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes.  
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Ford.**

**TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE J. MSS. (JAMES MADISON.)**

Monticello, Aug. 9, 07.

Dear Sir, —Yours of yesterday was received in the course of the day. Our post-rider has not yet got to be punctual, arriving here from 2. to 4. hours later than he should do, that is to say from 3 to 5 o'clock instead of 1. I mean to propose to him that being rigorously punctual in his arrival, I will always discharge him the moment he arrives, instead of keeping him till 7 o'clock as the postmaster proposes, taking for myself the forenoon of the succeeding day to answer every mail. I do not exactly recollect who of the heads of departments were present, (but I think every one except Mr. Gallatin,) when, conversing on the bungling conduct of our officers with respect to Erskine's letters, & the more bungling conduct to be expected when the command should devolve on a militia major, Mr. Smith proposed that the whole regulation of flags should be confined to Decatur, which appeared to obtain the immediate assent of all. However, the remedy is easy, & perhaps more proper on the whole. That is, to let the commanding officer by land, as well as the one by water, have equal authority to send & receive flags. I will write accordingly to Governor Cabell. This is the safer, as I believe T. Newton (of Congress) is the Major. Genl. Dearborne has sent me a plan of a war establishment for 15,000 regulars for garrisons & instead of 15,000 others, as a disposable force, to substitute 32,000 twelve-month volunteers, to be exercised & paid 3. months in the year, and consequently costing no more than 8000 permanent, giving us the benefit of 32,000 for any expedition, who

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would be themselves nearly equal to regulars, but could on occasion be put into the garrisons & the regulars employed in the expedition *primâ facie*. I like it well.<sup>1</sup> I salute you affectionately.

<sup>1</sup> On the same day, the President wrote to the Secretary of War:

“ Monticello, August 9, 1807.

“ Dear Sir,—I received yesterday yours of the 7th, with the proposition for substituting 35,000 twelve-month volunteers instead of 15,000 regulars as a disposable force, and I like the idea much. It will of course be a subject of consideration when we all meet again, but I repeat that I like it greatly.

“On some occasion, a little before I left Washington, when we were together (all, I think, except Mr. Gallatin, but I am not quite so sure as to yourself as the others), conversing on the bungling business which had been made by the officers commanding at Norfolk, with Erskine's letters, and the more bungling conduct to be expected when the command should devolve on a militia major, Mr. Smith proposed that the whole business of flags should be committed to Decatur. This appeared to obtain at once the general approbation. Thinking it so settled, on lately receiving a letter from Govt. Cabell, asking full & explicit instructions as to the mode of intercourse, I endeavored to lay down the general rules of intercourse by flag, as well digested as I could to meet all cases, but concluded by informing him that the whole business was committed to Decatur. Mr. Madison now informs me that either not recollecting or not understanding this to have been the arrangement, instructions have been given to the officer commanding by land, relative to intercourse, which may produce collision. The remedy I think is easy, & will on the whole place the matter on more proper ground. That is, to give to the commanding officers by land as well as sea, equal authority to send & receive flags. This is the safer, as I see by the papers that Mr. Newton (of Congress) is the Major. I shall accordingly write to Govr.

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Cabell to-day to correct the error, & to inform him that the two commanders stand on an equal footing in the direction of flags.

“I wrote you yesterday as to the additional company of infantry employed, and shall await your opinion before I say anything on it to the Governor. I salute you affectionately.”

P. S. The record of the blank commission for Marshal of N. Carolina, sent to Govt. Alexander, must be filled up with the name of John S. West, the former Marshal, who has agreed to continue.