

**Andrew Jackson to John Armstrong, March 15, 1813,
from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by
John Spencer Bassett.**

TO JOHN ARMSTRONG.1

1 Copy.

Camp of Volunteers near Washington, M. T. March 15, 1813

Sir: By this days mail I recd. yr. letter bearing date of the 5th. Jany. war department 1813. This was previous to yr. being in office at the head of that department which induces me to believe, that their must be a mistake in the date, otherwise it must be an unofficial act, as the official acct. of yr. taking possession of that office appears to be of date the 3rd. Feby. 1813.² Allways obedient to the orders of my superiors and the will of the government when made known through a proper organ, I shall in persuance of the above advice, immediately deliver over to the Q. Master of this department all public property in my hands that can be spared from the convenience and health of my troops on their return to Nashville, it being the place where they were rendexvouzed by the orders of the president of the United States, and to which place I shall march them, so soon as the necessary supplies can be had for that purpose. If it is intended by yr. letter or order which runs thus "The causes for embodying and marching the corps under yr. command to New Orleans having ceased to exist, you'll on receipt of this letter consider it dismissed from public service and have delivered over to Majr. Genl. Wilkinson all articles of public property that have been put into its possession. If it was intended by this order that we should be dismissed eight hundred miles from home, deprived of arms, tents and supplies for the sick, of our arms and supplies for the well, it appears that these brave men, who certainly deserve a better fate and return from

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2 Armstrong was nominated for the office of secretary of war Jan. 8, 1813, confirmed and commissioned Jan. 13, 1813, and entered the duties of the office Feb. 5, 1813. The dispatch to which Jackson referred was dated erroneously. A duplicate in his papers has the correct date of Feb. 5, the day Armstrong entered upon the duties of his office.

their government was intended by this order to be sacrificed. Those that could escape from the insalubrious climate, are to be deprived of the necessary support and meet death by famine. The remaining few to be deprived of their arms pass through the savage land, where our women children and defenceless citizens are daily murdered. Yet thro that barbarous clime, must our band of citizen soldiers wander and fall a sacrifice to the Tomhawk and scalping knife of the wilderness our sick left naked in the open field and remain without supplies without nourishment or any earthly cumfort. Was this the language of the act calling on the citizens to rally round the government of their choice, which brought this band of heroes the best citizens and wealth of our country into the field, and whose attention to order discipline and harmony forbode ample services to their country, who tendered their services to march and support the Eagles of their country to the hights of Abraham on the North, or to the burning and unwholesome climate of the South. These men had no constitutional bounderies but that of their insulted Government, its rights privaliges and its laws. Yet this order is given by a friend of the war measures, an old revolutionary officer, who knows the privations of a soldier who exercised his talents (not at a very prudent moment) in their behalf at the close of the last war. The same hand Yes, the same hand writes an order to consign to distruction a well organised detachment of near two thousand men, well disciplined for the time (I say none better) fit for the service, willing to march anywhere and that too Eight hundred miles from home. I animated those brave men to take the field. I thank my God they are entitled to their arms to defend them from the Indian scalping knife and believing as I do that it is by such patriots as I have the honor to command that our country and its liberties are to be saved and defended, that a well organized militia is the bulwark of our Nation, I have no hesitation in giving the lie to the modern doctrine that it is inefficent to defend the liberties of our country, and

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that standing armies are necessary in time of peace. I mean to commence my march to Nashville in a few days at which place I expect the troops to be paid and the necessary supplies furnished by the agents of Government while payment is making, after which I will dismiss them to their homes and their families.³

³ In the copy the letter ends here abruptly.