

April 24, 1861.---Letter to Reverdy Johnson.

(Confidential.)

Executive Mansion, April 24, 1861.

Hon. Reverdy Johnson.

My dear Sir: Your note of this morning is just received. I forbore to answer yours of the 22d because of my aversion (which I thought you understood) to getting on paper and furnishing new grounds for misunderstanding. I do say the sole purpose of bringing troops here is to defend this capital. I do say I have no purpose to invade Virginia with them or any other troops, as I understand the word invasion. But, suppose Virginia sends her troops, or admits others through her borders, to assail this capital, am I not to repel them even to the crossing of the Potomac, if I can? Suppose Virginia erects, or permits to be erected, batteries on the opposite shore to bombard the city, are we to stand still and see it done? In a word, if Virginia strikes us, are we not to strike back, and as effectively as we can? Again, are we not to hold Fort Monroe (for instance) if we can? I have no objection to declare a thousand times that I have no purpose to invade Virginia or any other State, but I do not mean to let them invade us without striking back.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.