

1781
(Circular)
Dear

Wheatcroft 24 May 1781

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In consequence of a conference held between His Excellency the Count De Rochambeau and myself, at this place, the French Army will march, as soon as circumstances will admit, and form a junction with the American upon the North River.

The accomplishment of the object which we have in contemplation, is of the utmost importance to America, and will, in all probability be attained, unless there should be a failure on our part, in the number of men which will be required for the operation, or the Enemy should withdraw a considerable part of their force from the Southward. It is in our own power, by proper exertions to prevent the first, and should the last take place, we shall be amply repaid our expences by liberating the Southern States, where we have found by experience we are only invulnerable.

Upon the Calculations, that I have been able, in concert with some of the most experienced French & American Officers to form

form, the operation in view will require, in addition to the French Army, all the Continental Battalions from New Hampshire to New Jersey inclusive to be completed to their full establishment. You must be sensible that the measures taken for that purpose, in consequence of the last requisition of Congress, have been very far from answering the end, as few recruits, (comparatively speaking) have yet been sent forward, and of those many have been discharged, on account of inability. You must also take into consideration, that a number of those men, who were returned when the requisition was made, have since been taken off by the Canadian incident to an Army - I estimate about one sixth of the number, and therefore provision must be made at this time to replace them.

From what has been premised, you will perceive without my urging further reasons, the necessity I am under of calling upon you, in the most earnest manner, to devise means to send into the field without delay, the number of Men which have been already voted for the completion of the Battalions of your State, & the further deficiency of one sixth just mentioned. The term of three years, or for the war, would undoubtedly be

be preferable to any shorter period, but ²⁵ if they cannot be obtained on those conditions, necessity must oblige us to take them for the campaign only, which ought to be reckoned to the last of December.

I should hope, that by proper exertions in collecting & sending forward the men who have been already raised, and compelling by vigorous & decisive methods the delinquent towns to furnish their quotas, the greater part of the men may be collected by the first of July.

Arguments scarcely cannot be wanting to impress the Legislature with a due sense of the obligation which they are under of furnishing the means now called for. The Enemy counting upon our want of ability, or upon our want of Energy, have, by repeated Detachments to the Southward, reduced themselves in New York to a situation, which invites us to take advantage of it. And should the lucky moment be lost, it is to be feared, that they will, after subduing the Southern States, raise a force in them sufficient to hold them, and return again to the Northward with such a number of men as will render New York secure against
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any force which we can, at this time of day,
raise or maintain —

Our Allies in this Country expect, and
depend upon being supported by us in the attempt
we are about to make, and those in Europe
will be astonished should we neglect the favour-
able opportunity which is now before us.

As it is probable that some Militia,
in addition to the full complement of Continental
Troops, may be necessary to support communications
and for other purposes, you will be pleased to
direct 400 Men to be held in readiness to
march within one week after I shall call for
them, to serve three months after they have
joined the Army. And I would take the li-
berty of request^{ing} that the Executive, may be
vested with full powers, during the recess, to
comply with any further requisition I may make
for Men, Provision, or for the Means of Trans-
portation, which last may be most essential in
the course of our operations, should it become
necessary to bring Provisions or Stores from
a distance.

I shall be glad to be favoured with
an answer as soon as possible, with an ap-
pearance of what I may depend upon, that if I

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do not clearly see a prospect of being support-
ed, I may turn my views to a defensive instead
of an offensive plan, and save the States, and
our allies the Expence which would be need-
lessly incurred by any but an ample and
effectual preparation.

I have the honor to be

With great regard & esteem

Your most Obedt^o & M^t Servant

G. Washington

The Hon^{ble}
Arthur Lee Esquire

Washington 28th May 1791
respecting, Herewith and
a further Defining of our
Sally post &c
And June 1st 1791

to the
Secretary of the
Board of the
City of New York

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