

Head Quarters Department of Virginia,
ARMY OF THE JAMES.
In the field, February 19th 1865

Brig. Genl, Geo. F. Shepley
U.S. Vols

Sir

Your letter of the 16th inst. is received, in which letter, you request that if the Commission now in session at "Norfolk," Genl Gordon, President, is to act as a Court of inquiry, into your Official conduct, you be permitted to Cross examine and interrogate the witnesses, so as to innstigate the circumstances in the question

In answer, I have to state that the Commission was not intended for the trial of any officers, it was to investigate and report upon the nature and extent of a certain illicit trade.

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MMN # 76621

Date: February 19, 1865

Description: E.O.C. Ord wrote to George F. Shepley to defend a military commission inquiry into activities of officers in the area.

This investigation includes a wide scope.
The manner of conducting ^{the investigation} may not have been the same as prescribed by the Articles of War, for "Courts of Enquiry." I cannot question the manner, simply because "Military Commissions, are not so much creations of law, as of customs, and of the war power ~~in the enemy's country~~." I can assure you, however, Genl that you were not relieved from the Command at Norfolk, from, or owing to, any action or investigating of this Commission. The Order for your relief and to put you in the field, for the spring campaign, Genl "Butler," informed me before he left the Department; he intended to issue; and after some conversation with you, on the subject of Colored troops and their management, held before the Commission was thought of, or the illicit trade reported to exist, I made up my mind to Order you to the field, with a view of giving you

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ARMY OF THE JAMES.

In the field, Feby-19th 1865

the Command of a Division of Colored Troops,
which I still think you can command well, and
in saying this I mean to rate you, in point of
intelligence and a disposition to do your duty,
higher than many Brigadier Generals of
this Army

But General, there is no need,
or propriety, in your placing yourself upon your
defence before this Military Commission; for, so
far as I could learn in a conversation with the
President, no evidence was before the Com-
mission inculpating you as interested in illicit
trade, and should the investigations involve you as
a party by evidence of any sort, I promise you,
you shall have a copy of all such evidence;
I cannot promise you a copy of all the

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the proceedings of the Commission as they
may be very voluminous, and of a
Confidential nature.

I am Sir

Very respectfully

Your Obt. Servt

E.O.C. Ord

Maj. Genl Vols.
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