

XI GOVERNMENT AT WAR

An act of this kind would relieve the considerate Officer from the disagreeable necessity in which he is often involved, of submitting to a grievance destructive of every military principle, or undertaking to punish a Citizen by virtue of his own authority, and it will point out a mode of redress to others too willing perhaps to exercise military power when they have an opportunity or excuse for so doing. I congratulate you upon your late escape from Elizabeth Town,⁴ as I am very sincerely, Dear Sir Your etc. . . .

GO. WASHINGTON

1. Major Richard Call, First Continental Dragoons.
2. Captain Bartholomew von Heer, Continental army.
3. James Skinner, acting assistant quartermaster to the Seventh Maryland Regiment, Continental army.
4. On February 4, a British raiding party seized Livingston's home near Elizabethtown.

13 Colonel John Taylor to Governor William Livingston

[*Executive Correspondence*, pp. 177-81.]

If for all its bureaucratic organization the Congress was unable adequately to equip and provision the Continental army, then how much more difficult it was for the government of New Jersey to maintain its state troops. Since the state militia, comprised of volunteers drawn on a proportional basis from the various county units, was organized at irregular intervals, there was no ongoing administrative hierarchy to superintend the needs of the troops. Each soldier was to provide at his own expense such basic equipment as a musket and bayonet, cartridge box, blanket, canteen, knapsack, and, of course, a "uniform." Although the state troops performed well at times, the ad hoc mode of organization made the Jersey militia an inefficient, fragile fighting force. The problems confronting Colonel John Taylor of the Hunterdon County Militia when the legislature on June 2, 1779, issued a call for the muster of 1,000 men to serve until December 15, are typical of the difficulties faced repeatedly by the officers of the state militia.

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

North Branch of Raritan, Sept. 25, 1779

Sir,

It was my intention to have inclosed a return of the number of officers who have joined the State Regiment from each county; and also the deficiencies of each, but not having been able to get the reports of the several companies soon enough, owing to their separate stations, and the necessity of my attending the examination of the students of Queen's College,¹ I have at present omitted making such a return, but shall transmit it, together with the state of the regiment, as soon as possible. Enclosed is an account of Doctor Winans,² who has faithfully attended the troops, and also an account of my own, for lodging, &c., which his Excellency the Governor, and his honorable Privy Council gave Col. Frelinghuysen³ and myself reason to believe should be answered when we accepted the command of the regiment.⁴ We have not been able to enlist any light-horsemen upon the plan proposed by act of Assembly. There are ten horsemen at Elizabethtown, raised from the infantry in service at that place. There ought to be at least twelve at that post, and twelve more at the other different stations. We have one piece of artillery, the men to work it also taken from the musketry stationed at that place. The season will soon be too far advanced for tents, or I should again make application for them. The houses in which the troops are quartered, having been long made use of for lodging soldiers, are become very dirty, and of consequence unhealthy. This doubtless is one reason that our men are so sickly, that not above one-third of them are capable of doing duty. This part of the regiment have, and do still labor under many inconveniences, on account of no sufficient provision having been made for the sick. In the first place, no medicine has been provided for them; and in the next place I found it impossible to prevail upon the neighboring surgeon to attend them, and make use of their own medicine which they had purchased for private practice, being fearful that their bills would not be paid. Many of the soldiers growing very sick, I at last persuaded Doctor Winans to attend them, and supply them with medicine as far as he should think necessary, by giving my word that his accounts should be paid, for which, as enclosed, I stand answerable. The Doctor's medicine is now expended, and at present there is no surgeon to administer advice or medicine to the troops, who continue very sickly.

Many of the men being rendered very weak by severe sickness, I thought it imprudent to keep them in quarters, both on account of its not being possible to secure necessaries for them, and that attendance which men in their situation require; and also on account of our being exposed to the sudden invasion of the enemy, when many of the men would inevitably fall a sacrifice. I then procured a house for a hospital at a considerable distance from the town which answered the purpose for some time, but sickness increasing rapidly, our hospital was found insufficient to contain one half of them. I then sent an officer to Springfield, Westfield, and Connecticut Farms,⁵ and to every adjacent place where I thought there was a probability of success, to endeavor to provide quarters for the sick, but all my attempts proved abortive. After finding it impossible to secure the sick, to render their situation in any degree comfortable, I permitted them to return home until they should recover their health. I need not mention to your excellency the many disadvantages attending this step. I however feel satisfied from a consciousness of having discharged my duty to my country, and the regiment under my command.

Two or three boats are much wanted at Elizabeth-town as guard boats. They

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would be a great security to the Post and lessen the fatigue of the soldiers. A number of men have been sent into service from each county, who are not armed and accoutred as the act requires. Also many men and boys have been enlisted in the regiment, who are by no means fit for soldiers. We have stood in great want of a muster-master⁶. . . .

I shall be much obliged to your Excellency to lay this before the Assembly as soon as you shall think proper.

I remain, with great respect, your very humble servant,
JOHN TAYLOR

1. Taylor, a 1770 graduate of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), joined his classmate Frederick Frelinghuysen on the faculty of Queen's College (now Rutgers University) in 1771 as tutor of the grammar school. When Frelinghuysen resigned to pursue legal studies, Taylor became tutor of the college in 1773 and with few interruptions held the post until 1790.

2. William Winants.

3. Frederick Frelinghuysen. See Sec. XII, Doc. 5, note 2.

4. Taylor was technically still colonel of the Fourth Regiment, Hunterdon County Militia; he was commissioned a colonel in the state militia on October 9, 1779.

5. Now Union.

6. The muster-master was in charge of mustering the militia, supervising the drills, and collecting fines from absentees and improperly equipped soldiers.

14 Abraham Skinner to Governor William Livingston

[*Executive Correspondence*, pp. 260-61.]

The question of prisoners of war was one of the most complicated and confused issues of the revolutionary war. To begin with, the jurisdictional divisions of authority between the Congress and the states on the one hand and the army and civil government on the other were not clearly defined. Then, too, there were different categories of prisoners requiring different standards of detention—military personnel and civilians, regulars and militia, soldiers and sailors, officers and enlisted men. Moreover, there was no agreement between the British and Americans over the conditions and procedures of prisoner exchange. Finally, administrative machinery at both the national and state levels was inadequate to supply prisoners with provisions and supplies. It fell to New Jersey's Abraham Skinner as Continental commissary general of prisoners to superintend the care and treatment of Americans in British hands from