

Civil War 150 Years Ago July 1864

July 1864 was a curious month in the American Civil War. While it should have been clear that the South was in dire straits militarily, a rumor went round Washington that the capital was about to be attacked. The source of this rumor and subsequent panic was CSA Gen Early's raid on Washington. The panic in the city served Lee well as Grant sent troops to defend the capital, thus reducing the pressure on Lee. Meanwhile, Sherman continued his relentless march to Atlanta.

July 1 President Lincoln appointed Senator William Pitt Fessenden as Secretary of the Treasury. Though Fessenden was reluctant to take up the position, he soon proved to be a very good choice.

July 2 Early's Raid: Lee ordered that Confederate troops destroy the Baltimore & Ohio railway. If successful, this would greatly hinder the movement of Union troops should they be required to defend the capital.

July 4 Lincoln vetoed the Wade-Davis Bill that would have introduced harsh settlements for rebel states. He was still convinced that a policy of reconciliation was required, not retribution. Atlanta Campaign: Having outflanked his opponents, Sherman's force was actually nearer to Atlanta than Southern troops. This forced Johnston to make a hasty withdrawal to better protect Atlanta. Johnston set up his line of defense along the Chattahoochee River.

July 5 Early's Raid: Panic ensued in Washington DC. Lincoln suspended habeas corpus in Kentucky, as he believed that the South was receiving too much help from the state's citizens. Martial law was introduced throughout the state.

July 6 Thousands of Union troops were rushed to Washington.

July 7 Atlanta Campaign: Johnston received a letter from Jefferson Davis that criticized his decision to withdraw to the Chattahoochee and also informing him that he would receive no more reinforcements.

July 8 Part of Sherman's army outflanked the Chattahoochee defenses and Johnston decided to withdraw to Atlanta.

July 9 Early's Raid: Battle of River Monocacy. A hastily assembled Union force of 6,000 delayed Early's 10,000 battle hardened troops for a day allowing for reinforcement of the defenses of Washington.

July 10 Atlanta Campaign: Sherman decided to lay siege to Atlanta.

July 11 Early's Raid: Confederate troops commanded by General Early arrived on the outskirts of the capital. Scouts informed Early that he faced over 20,000 defenders. He decided to withdraw.

July 12 Lincoln observed the withdrawal of Early's troops from Fort Stevens.

July 14 Early's Raid: Pursued by Union troops, Early's men withdrew to the Shenandoah Valley. Lincoln expressed his belief that the pursuit had not been vigorous enough.

July 17 Atlanta Campaign: Jefferson Davis relieved Johnston of his command and appointed John B Hood in his place. At 33, Hood was the youngest commander of an army in the war. He lost his left arm at the Battle of Gettysburg and his right leg at the Battle of Chickamauga. Davis hoped that his fighting spirit and undoubted bravery would rub off on the men tasked with the defense of Atlanta.

July 18 Lincoln rejected tentative peace talks with the South as they based their proposals on the basis that there would be an independent South.

July 19 Atlanta Campaign: Sherman spread out his army in an attempt to surround Atlanta. Three separate Union armies faced the defenders in Atlanta - the Armies of the Tennessee led by McPherson, Cumberland led by Thomas and Ohio led by Schofield. Hood determined that his best approach was to attack one and inflict overwhelming damage on it before moving on to the next. Hood resolved to attack the Army of the Cumberland.