

CAPTURE OF THE SLAVER "WILLIAM."

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MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

*Correspondence relative to the capture of the slaver "William," near the Isle of Pines, with five hundred and fifty African negroes on board.*

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MAY 22, 1860.—Read and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

*To the Senate and House of Representatives :*

I transmit herewith the copy of a letter dated yesterday, from the Secretary of the Interior, communicating the copy of a letter addressed to him, on the 13th instant, by Fernando J. Moreno, marshal of the southern district of Florida. From this it appears that Lieutenant Stanley, of the United States steamer Wyandotte, captured the bark William, with about five hundred and fifty African negroes on board, on the south side of Cuba, near the Isle of Pines, and brought her into Key West on the 12th instant. These negroes have doubtless been delivered to the marshal, and, with those captured on board the Wildfire, will make the number in his custody about one thousand. More may be daily expected at Key West, which, both on account of a deficiency of water and provisions, and its exposure to the yellow fever, is one of the worst spots for an African negro depot which could be found on the coast of the United States.

JAMES BUCHANAN.

WASHINGTON, *May 22*, 1860.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, *May 21*, 1860.

SIR: On the 16th instant I had the honor to forward to you a copy of a letter received at this department, from the United States marshal of the southern district of Florida, in relation to the capture of the slaver "Wildfire," having on board five hundred and seven Africans; and I now enclose herewith a copy of another letter just received from Marshal Moreno, informing me of the capture of the bark

“William,” with five hundred and fifty Africans, by the United States steamer “Wyandotte.”

I have respectfully to suggest that, inasmuch as it will be most difficult and expensive to provide for the accommodation and safe-keeping of so large a number of Africans, it is of the highest importance that early measures be taken for their removal from Key West.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
J. THOMPSON, *Secretary.*

U. S. MARSHAL'S OFFICE, SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA,  
*Key West, May 13, 1860.*

SIR: I had the honor on the 10th instant of communicating to the department the capture of the bark Wildfire, with 507 Africans on board, by the United States steamer Mohawk, Lieutenant Commanding Craven, and of the arrival of the bark and recaptives at this port. I have made every provision that the limited means at my command will permit me for their safe-keeping and comfort, and am pleased to say that only twenty deaths have occurred since they were landed.

I have now to inform the department that the United States steamer Wyandotte, Lieutenant Commanding Fabius Stanley, with the prize bark William, with about 550 Africans on board, arrived here last night.

The bark was captured on the south side of Cuba, near the Isle of Pines. I shall endeavor to relieve Captain Stanley of his charge as soon as I can complete the additions to the temporary quarters put up by me for the accommodation of the Wildfire's cargo.

I must call the attention of the department to the great necessity of removing these Africans from here at the earliest possible moment. Their continuance here for a period of two or three months will exhaust the supply of water on the island, and will render it necessary for me to charter a vessel, and send to Havana, the nearest port to this, for a supply. The supply of provisions is also small, and with this unexpected addition to our population will soon be consumed. I have ordered a supply of stores to be sent to me from Charleston, but it is extremely doubtful if they will reach here by the 21st instant, owing to injuries sustained by the steamer Isabel to her machinery on her last voyage from Havana to this port on the 10th instant.

I would respectfully suggest to the department (if it is the design of the government to make Key West the depot for recaptured Africans) that authority be given me to build such quarters, storehouses, cisterns, &c., as may be deemed necessary for the accommodation of the same; also that a full supply of stores and clothing be sent me at the earliest moment.

I avail myself of the departure of the United States steamer Seminole, (Commander Prentiss, United States navy, to sail to-day for Norfolk,) to forward this hastily-written despatch.

When recently in Washington I made application to the President for the use of Fort Taylor for the accommodation of recaptured

Africans, which he declined granting. I have the honor to again renew my application for the use of the fort and the buildings adjacent thereto which are not at present occupied, for the accommodation of such recaptives as may be brought here during the summer.

I trust that the requisition for funds forwarded to the department will be granted at an early day.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

FERNANDO J. MORENO,

*United States Marshal Southern District of Florida.*

Hon. J. THOMPSON,

*Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D. C.*