

# DEFENSE OF FLORIDA

Don Manuel de Montiano, Governor of East Florida, to  
Don Juan Francisco de Guemes y Horcasitas, Captain-General of Cuba

Florida, 11 November 1737

The news which I dispatched by Pedro de Alcantara in his schooner to apply for your assistance, and to inform you how much is required here, which no doubt Don Manuel de Justis has told to you. You will please grant what is necessary to put this place in a state of defense against the premeditated intentions of the English to make themselves masters of it and its provinces, which has been submitted to the king of Great Britain in his Parliament by My Lord Oglethorpe, a member of the same, who impressed on it how more useful and convenient to Great Britain would be this place—Apalache and its provinces—than the other colonies and islands which she holds in America. Once secured in its possession, not one of our vessels could pass through the channel, and consequently we could not export the treasures rendered by Peru and New Spain without their consent. And having heard with approval this proposition, they gave him the general command of all the colonies, islands of Jamaica, and the others they possess in America, both of the sea and the land, appropriating \$125,000 for fortifications, and 480 regular soldiers to operate against these provinces. And although the Parliament was opposed to making any irruption during the peace, they agreed to these reports which have reached me; likewise in Apalache the Cacique Sacafaca of the Pueblo Chalacarlliche, who came expressly and voluntarily from those remote provinces to warn us that the Indians friendly to the English will descend in small bodies to harass these coasts, and that the caciques have been ordered by the English to unite and hold council on different subjects. It is left to you what to infer, nor should we lose sight of what they have at other times attempted, and now they would strive with greater power to accomplish on account of the pride of Lord Oglethorpe, who is entrusted with the defense of the kingdom, and had the sole view to acquire glory in these conquests; it is not to be doubted that he will make the greatest efforts by sea and by land; and to our disgrace, with the least he could employ he will effect his object; for here we have nothing with which we could resist a moderate force, and the entrance to the bar occupied by one or two frigates, they would cut off all communications from this place and deprive us of the provisions on which we depend for subsistence; they would likewise pursue their plans, not ignorant of the deplorable condition of this place, nor of the few troops it possesses to oppose them, for which I hope that having submitted these reasons to you, and seeing that the preservation of this place is of the greatest importance for the preservation of the whole of America, you will favor me by giving the most prompt succor which I leave to the discretion and will of yourself, who with the professional intelligence acquired by large and signal services will discern what is required here. Without explaining it, it is sufficient to inform you that this castle, (a single defense) is without bomb-proof vaults to protect the people nor the elevation requisite for the counter-scarp nor a covered entrance, nor ravelins in the curtains, nor other outer works that could make a long defense; but it is so denuded that it has no means within, for it has no cannon that can fire for 24 hours, and if it had any, there are no artillery-men to manage them.

I have ordered 4000 stakes to be cut for the purpose of forming a covered causeway, although I know it will be an imperfect work from not having a corresponding elevation with the counter-scarp; but as it will be an expensive and laborious work to make it conform with the latter, on account of the quantity of earth required, I will apply myself to make those repairs most-easily and least-expensively done, for I do not hold more funds than the small quantity of silver taken from Don Francisco del Moral, and besides I wish to run the wall to the castle of Cubo and elevate there a Baluarte; for it would now invite an attack which could take from that quarter the castle; I have found it impossible to do all, as much from want of means as from the absence of workmen, galley-slaves, and negro slaves who could assist. When you resolve, which I hope, to send a body of operatives, some money, slaves or convicts, and engineer to direct the necessary works, arrange it that they bring a sufficient supply of food, because there is no doubt that the English will close the port against flour with whatever news that may arrive; neither will this satisfy the pride and expectations of my lord Oglethorpe, but give us time to make repairs and we could deprive him of all hope.

The two confidential messengers agree in this news and recommend strongly not to neglect preparations, for we must expect my lord Oglethorpe all October, and that his intrepidity hurries him everywhere.

*Official letters from Don Manuel de Montiano, Governor of East Florida, to Don Juan Francisco de Guemes y Horcasitas, Captain-General of the Island of Cuba, September 30<sup>th</sup> 1737 to January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1741. (1846).*