



JEFFERSON DAVIS

and his Confederate generals

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Portrait Photos National Archives

At the outbreak of Civil War in April 1861, the officers of the Confederacy knew they faced severe **disadvantages** in manpower and **resources** in comparison to the Union. Regardless, the Confederacy still fully expected to win the war.

Southerners believed they were fighting for a **righteous** cause and that their citizens had more **fortitude** than their enemies. Most of



Jefferson Davis

all, they believed in the **superior** strength of their military, which was led by a gifted group of officers. The success of the Confederate military, more than any other factor, would determine victory or defeat for the South. Key to this issue was the relationship between the Confederate generals and their Commander in Chief, President Jefferson Davis.

Davis, of Mississippi, had military experience that promised to serve him well in the war. He was a **veteran** of the Mexican War and had also served as secretary of war for President Franklin Pierce. Due to these **credentials**, many Southerners viewed Davis as a modern-day George Washington. They hoped he would have similar success as the father of a new nation. Instead, Davis developed **contentious** relationships with his generals that complicated the war effort.

Among the most damaging was his relationship with General Joseph Johnston. A hero of the Mexican War, Johnston was also the highest ranking officer of the United States Army to **resign** and join the Confederacy. During the early months of the Civil War, he was appointed commander of the Army

of Northern Virginia but was dissatisfied with his rank of fourth in the Confederate Army. Johnston wrote a letter to Davis expressing his displeasure, which Davis took personally.

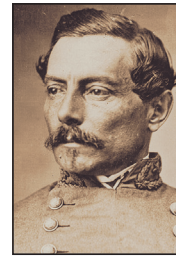


Joseph Johnston

For the rest of the war, the two leaders disagreed continuously. Johnston consistently refused to write Davis with news from the battlefield and Davis became angry at being left uninformed. The men also disagreed on basic **strategy**. Davis argued that the army should defend every area of the Confederacy to keep the state governors happy. Johnston, however, believed that strength should be concentrated in a few areas and politics ignored.

When Johnston was severely wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines in 1862, Davis replaced him with General Robert E. Lee. Johnston was then **consigned** to commands in the Western **Theater** of the war.

Davis' dislike for Johnston became a pattern with his other generals, as well.



Pierre Beauregard

Among those who clashed with Davis was early war hero Pierre Beauregard who had commanded the attack on Fort Sumter and gained much of the credit for the first big Confederate victory at Manassas, Va. After the battle at Manassas, however, Beauregard wrote a report **criticizing** Davis for the army's failure to pursue the retreating Union forces. Davis publicly **reprimanded** Beauregard and the two did not get along for the rest of the war.

Late in the war, Beauregard was appointed only as an advisor to the Army of Tennessee in the West.

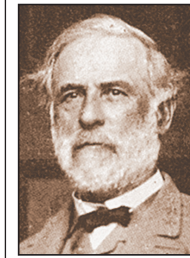


John Bell Hood

The command of that army stayed with General John Bell Hood, a personal friend of Davis'. Few doubted Hood's bravery, but his talents as

a commander were questioned by some.

One of the few commanders who consistently got along with Davis was General Robert E. Lee. The men disagreed over matters of strategy, with Lee preferring more **offense**



Robert E. Lee

than Davis, but they overcame those differences. Lee became Davis' most effective general. The great hopes of the Confederacy

rested with the Army of Northern Virginia with each victory it achieved. Even so, Lee could not continue his impressive string of victories as his army **disintegrated** from **casualties** and **desertion**. When Lee surrendered at Appomattox in April 1865, the Confederacy's war effort was doomed.

The failure of Davis and his commanders to get along weakened the Confederacy's greatest resource, which was its **military prowess**.

Did You Know?

Both Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis suffered personal tragedies while holding office during the Civil War. Lincoln's 11-year-old son, Willie, died of what historians believe to be typhoid fever. Davis' 6-year-old son, Joseph, was killed when he fell from the balcony of the Confederate White House.



TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1854

The Kansas-Nebraska Act leads to the "Bleeding Kansas" border war and the formation of the Republican Party.

1859

John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry increases tensions between the North and the South.

1860

Abraham Lincoln is elected President. South Carolina secedes from the Union.

1861

The Confederate States of America is formed. Fort Sumter is captured and the Civil War begins.

1862

Missouri is successfully defended by the Union at Pea Ridge, Ark. Union victory at Antietam leads Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

1863

Victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg turn the war in favor of the Union.

1865

Lee surrenders at Appomattox. Lincoln is assassinated at Ford's Theater.

1867

Radical Reconstruction begins in the South.

1877

The Compromise of 1877 ends Reconstruction. Without military support, Reconstruction governments collapse in the South.

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