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Letter from John Sibley to John Armstrong, February 12, 1813

John Sibley

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Natchitoches Feby. 12th 1813——

Sir

On the Sixth Instant I received a visit from the great Caddo Chief who has Just Returned from a long Journey made at my Request, & Reports that “he has visited all the Indian Tribes occupying that extensive tract of Country laying between Red River & the Road Leading from this place Towards Mexico & as far to the Westward as the River Grand & that they had all Received my talk & tokens in the most friendly manner, the Substance of which was to Inform them of the War between the United States & England. Its grounds progress etc, & likewise Relative to the Revolution in Spanish America & to advise them to keep their hands Clean & have Nothing to do in the quarrels of white people. In a former letter I Informed you that the Caddo Chief had told me that applications had been made to all those Tribes he Visited by the Royal Spanish Governors of Taxus [Texas], Coahuila, & Chihuahua, to afford [the Royalists’] all the aid in their power Against the Revolutionists. The Chief [manuscript torn] is difficult for him to express to me the very great Respect with which he was Received by all the Tribes he Visited, he says the President of the United States Could not have been treated with more respect, he was Regarded as a Messenger of Peace sent from heaven; before he Arrived Amongst the Hietans a Considerable party of that Nation had been Persuaded by Governor Salcedo of St Antonio to Come into that place & were then in Arms Against the Revolutionary party, after he had had a talk with the Nation they proposed Sending a Strong party to St Antonio & putting to death all those of their Nation who had joined Salcedo, to this the Caddo Chief Objected & proposed to them that a friendly invitation should be sent them & they Invited to withdraw from the service they were then Engaged in, this he informed me was agreed to & he had the pleasure while he Remain’d Amongst them to witness their Return. (I have been informed of the Same by Some deserters from St. Antonio).

The Chief Assures me that in future not one of any of those Nations will have Any thing to do in the affairs of the Revolution in that Country: but the Chief Says they told him to tell me If the U. States Should be Attacked & we Requested it they would all Come & fight for us as long as there was one Warrior Remaining.——

While the Chief was here he was very hardly press’d by Some Very Influential Characters, to join the Revolutionary party now at Labardie to take with him an hundred or more of his own Nation & raise two or Three hundred in the Other Tribes & Eticing offers were made him. I did not interfere, though I knew all that was going on for I knew the Chief’s firmness & that he would do nothing without Consulting me,——he gave a prompt refusal, & Said should he comply with the request he would be doing what he had Advised others not to do, & nothing should Induce him to Act so Inconsistent a part.—I have Since been informed that that Major Ross a Virginia Gentleman who hapened here last fall & went into the Spanish Country with the Army of Bernardo & Magee in the Capacity of Quarter Master General has Collected & Rendezvoused at the River Trinity Between 4 & 600 Indians Mostly of those Called Allibamis & Conchattas (Descendants from the Creeks) who live on or near the Coast Along the Bay of St Bernard with a few Choctaws, Nabadaches & Nacogdochettas. ——

It is my present Opinion that Should Any Occasion Justify our Government in Calling Upon the Indians in this quarter the Caddo Chief with what Assistance I Could afford him Could bring into the field from three to five Thousand as Brave Indian Warriors as under any heaven.

[No signature]

NOTE:

The envelope is addressed to
The Honorable Secretary of War

[This is copied from a typed transcription published in the Southwestern Historical Quarterly. Spelling errors and oddities have been reproduced as they appear in that transcription. All spelling corrections or other clarifications, including those appearing within square brackets [] (save for this one) are copied as such directly from this source and are not added by me.]