

United States Frigate Chesapeake  
Chesapeak Bay June 23rd 1807

Sir

Yesterday at 6 A.M. the wind became favorable and knowing your anxiety that the ship should sail with all possible despatch, we weighed from our station in Hampton Roads and stood to sea in Lin Haven Bay we pass'd two British Men of War, one of them the Bellona, the other the Melampus, their Colours flying and their appearance friendly some time afterwards we observ'd one of the two line of Battle Ships that lay off Cape Henry to get under way and stand to sea, at this time the wind became light and it was not untill near four in afternoon that the ship underway came within hail. Cape Henry then bearing N.W. by W. distance three leagues. the communication which appeared to be her Commanders object for speaking the Chesapeak, he said he would send on board on which I ordered the Chesapeak to be hove'd too for his convenience. on the arrival of the officer he presented me with the enclosed paper No.1 from the Captain of the Leopard and a copy of an order from Admiral Berkley which another officer afterwards took back to which I gave the enclosed answer No.2 and was waiting for his reply about this time I observ'd some appearance of an hostile nature and said to Captain Gordon that it was possible they were serious and requested him to have his Men sent to their quarters with as little noise as possible not using those ceremonies which we shou'd have done with an avowed enemy as I fully supposed their arrangements were more menace than anything serious. Capt'n Gordon immediately gave the orders to the officers and men to go to quarters and have all things in readiness but before a match cou'd be lighted or the quarter Bill of any division examined or the Lumber on the Gun Deck such as sails Cables &c cou'd be clear'd the Commander of the Leopard hail'd. I cou'd not hear what he said and was talking to him as I supposed when she commenc'd a heavy fire which did great execution it is distressing to me to acknowledge that I found from the advantage they had gain'd over our unprepared and unsuspecting state did not Warrant a longer opposition nor shou'd I have exposed this ship and crew to so galling a fire had it not been with a hope of getting the Gun Deck clear so as to have made a more formidable defence consequently our resistance was but feeble - in about 20 minutes after I ordered the Colours to be struck and sent Lieut. Smith on board the Leopard to inform her Commander that I considered the Chesapeak his prize, to this message I received no answer the Leopard's Boat soon after came on board and the officer who came in her demanded the Muster Book. I reply'd the ship and Books were theirs and if he expected to see the men he must find them. they called on the Purser who delivered his Book and the men were examined and the three men demanded at Washington and one man more were taken away. on their departure from the ship I wrote the Commander of the Leopard the enclosed No.3 to which I received the answer No.4 on finding that the men were his only object and that he refused to consider the ship his prize and the officers and crew his prisoners I call'd a Council of our officers and requested their opinion relative to the conduct it was now our duty to pursue the result was that the ship

shou'd return to Hampton Roads and their wait your further orders.

Enclosed you have a list of the unfortunate Kill'd and Wounded as also a statement of the damage sustained in the Hull Spars and Rigging of the Ship.

I have sent this letter to you by Captn Gordon in order that you may have an opportunity of getting such information as you may wish.

With great respect  
I have the Honor to be Sir  
Your Obedient Servt

James Barron

Honbl Robt Smith  
Secretary of the Navy  
Washington.

Copied from Captains Letters, Vol.2, 1807.