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Duke of Richmond

My Lord

I have laid before the King
your Grace's Letter of the 30th of last
Month; to which I could not return
an earlier answer, as His Majesty
judged it proper for His Servants to
give the Matter therein stated the
fullest Consideration.

I am now Commanded to
acquaint your Grace, that the King
thinks it unnecessary to refer to a
Board of General Officers the Question
whether your Grace has a Right, if
your Commission of Lieut General
makes you eldest Officer, to take upon
you the Command of the Troops that
happen to be Incamped with your
Regiment.

It is obvious that the Public
Service would be subjected to the
greatest Inconveniencies, if a General
Officer without a Letter of Service
could by joining His Regiment,
assume the Command over a Body
of Troops with whom that Regi-
ment happens to serve, superior
to

to the General Officer acting under a Letter of Service, and specially appointed to such Command.

Whatever Claim in this respect it may be possible to deduce from the Articles of War referred to by your Grace, a Command founded thereon has never been exercised in any Army to which a Staff has been specially appointed; and His Majesty cannot now think of establishing a Precedent wholly new, and which must be productive of the greatest Embarrassment to His Service.

I am at the same time Commanded to acquaint your Grace, that though it is contrary to the usual practice of the Army for Colonels of Regiments who have attained the Rank of General Officers to do Duty with their Corps; yet His Majesty consents, that your Grace serving with your Regiment of Militia when joined with other Corps should take Rank according to your first Commission of Colonel in the Army.

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But least it should not be
agreeable to your Grace to serve in
that rank only, His Majesty has
for that reason commanded me to
send you the inclosed Leave of
Absence, that your Grace may in
such case make use of it, and have
it in your power to avoid a situation
which may be unpleasant to you.

I have the honor to be Sir.

Draft of a letter from the
Secretary at War to the
Duke of Richmond

Sept 1779