Mr. Stevens to Mr. Blaine.

No. 48.

 UNITED STATES LEGATION,
Honolulu, March 8, 1892.

Sir: In view of possible contingencies in these islands, I ask for the instructions of the Department of State on the following, viz:

If the Government here should be surprised and overturned by an orderly and peaceful revolutionary movement, largely of native Hawaiians and a provisional or republican government organized and proclaimed, would the United States minister and naval commander here be justified in responding affirmatively to the call of the members of the removed Government to restore them to power or replace them in possession of the Government buildings? Or should the United States minister and naval commander confine themselves exclusively to the preservation of American property, the protection of American citizens, and the prevention of anarchy? Should a revolutionary attempt of the character indicated be made, there are strong reasons to presume that it would begin with the seizure of the police station, with its arms and ammunition, and this accomplished, the Royal Palace and the Government building, containing the cabinet offices and archives, would very soon be captured, the latter building being situated about one-third of a mile from the police station. In such contingencies would it be justifiable to use the United States forces here to restore the Government buildings to the possession of the displaced officials? Ordinarily in like circumstances the rule seems to be to limit the landing and movement of the United States forces in foreign waters and dominion exclusively to the protection of the United States legation, and of the lives and property of American citizens. But as the relations of the United States to Hawaii are exceptional, and in former years the United States officials here took somewhat exceptional action in circumstances of disorder, I desire to know how far the present minister and naval commander may deviate from established international rules and precedents in the contingencies indicated in the first part of this dispatch.

I have information which I deem reliable that there is an organized revolutionary party on the islands, composed largely of native Hawaiians and a considerable number of whites and half whites, led chiefly by individuals of the latter two classes. This party is hostile to the Queen and to her chief confidants, especially opposed to the coming to the throne of the half-English heir apparent, now being educated in England, and means to gain its object either by forcing the Queen to select her cabinet from its own members, or else to overthrow the monarchy and establish a republic with the ultimate view of annexation to the United States of the whole islands. A portion of this party mean only the former, and the other portion intend the latter. Failing to accomplish the former, the most of the party would seek the latter alternative. I have little doubt the revolutionary attempt would have been made were this but for the presence here of the United States ship-of-war. I still incline to the opinion that the revolutionary attempt will not be made so long as there is a United States force in the harbor of Honolulu, but it would be rash to assume or assert this positively. Therefore I deem it my official duty to ask for instructions in view of possible contingencies.

I may add that the annexation sentiment is increasing, quite as much among the white residents and native Hawaiians, and other workingmen who own no sugar stock, as with the sugar planters.

I am, sir, etc.,

JOHN S. STEVENS.