

## **The First Attempt at Annexation: Provisional Government Declares itself the Republic of Hawai'i, on July 4, 1894**

Two days after the overthrow, members of the self-declared provisional government went to Washington, D.C. On February 14, 1893, they secured the signature of the U.S. Secretary of State on what would become the first proposed treaty of annexation. On February 15, 1893, the treaty was submitted to the U.S. Senate for ratification. But newly elected President Grover Cleveland had received the Queen's protest and request for a fact finding; therefore, he withdrew the treaty from the Senate and dispatched former U.S. Congressman James H. Blount as special commissioner to Hawai'i to investigate and report findings.

On December 18, 1893, the President delivered to Congress Blount's report, wherein Blount described the actions of the committee of safety and Minister Stevens on and around January 17, 1893, as "act[s] of war, committed with the participation of a diplomatic representative of the United States and without authority of Congress." The President further reported: "[I]t appears that Hawaii was taken possession of by the United States forces without the consent or wish of the government of the islands, or of anybody else so far as shown, except the United States Minister. Therefore the military occupation of Honolulu by the United States on the day mentioned was wholly without justification, either as an occupation by consent or as an occupation necessitated by dangers threatening American life and property."

The President reminded Congress of the special nature of the Queen's surrender of Hawai'i's sovereignty. She "... surrendered not to the provisional government, but to the United States. She surrendered not absolutely and permanently, but temporarily and conditionally until such time as the facts could be considered by the United States." Having now considered the facts as reported by Blount, the President concluded that "when our Minister recognized the provisional government . . . it was neither a government de facto nor de jure" and that a "substantial wrong has thus been done which a due regard for our national character as well as the rights of the injured people requires we should endeavor to repair."

The President called for restoration of the Kingdom: "Believing, therefore, that the United States could not, under the circumstances disclosed, annex the islands without justly incurring the imputation of acquiring them by unjustifiable methods, I shall not again submit the treaty of annexation to the Senate for its consideration." Instead of resubmitting the treaty, the President, "instructed Minister Willis to advise the Queen and her supporters of my desire to aid in the restoration of the status existing before the lawless landing of the United States forces at Honolulu". He concluded that "the past should be buried, and that the restored Government should reassume its authority as if its continuity had not been interrupted."

Back in Hawai'i, undaunted by its inability to succeed at annexation, and refusing to restore the Kingdom, the provisional government, at a constitutional convention in 1894, declared itself the Republic of Hawai'i. On July 4, 1894, the Republic of Hawai'i was officially proclaimed and Sanford B. Dole, a son of a missionary and early advocate of abolishing the monarchy, became President.



President Dole proclaiming the Republic of Hawai'i, July 4, 1894.