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Letter from Admiral Montagu to Governor Wanton, April 1772

Lieutenant Dudingston escalated matters by forwarding the letters he received from Governor Wanton to his commanding officer, Admiral Montagu. Admiral Montagu writes to Governor Wanton, questioning his loyalty as one of "His Majesty's" governors and threatening to hang "as pirates" any colonists interfering with Lieutenant Dudingston's pursuit of illicit cargo.

Boston 8th April 1772

Sir

Lieutenant Dudingston, commander of his Majesty's armed schooner and a part of the squadron under my command, has sent me two letters he received from you of such a nature I am at a loss what answer to give them, and ashamed to find they come from one of his Majesty's Governors. He informs me that he waited upon you and showed you the admiralty and my orders for his proceedings, which, agreeable to his instructions, he is to do, that you may be acquainted that he is on that station to protect your province from pirates, and to give the trade all the assistance he can, and to endeavor as much as lays in his power to protect the revenue officers and prevent (if possible) the illicit trade that is carrying on at Rhode Island.

He, Sir, has done his duty, and behaved like an officer, and it is your duty as a governor, to give him your assistance, and not endeavor to distress the King's officers for strictly complying with my orders. I shall give them directions that in case they receive any molestation in the execution of their duty they shall send every man so taken in molesting them, to me.

I am also informed the people of Newport talk of fitting out an armed vessel to rescue any vessel the King's schooner may take carrying on an illicit trade. Let them be cautious what they do; for as sure as they attempt it, and any of them are taken, I will hang them as pirates.

I shall report your two insolent letters to my officer, to his Majesty's Secretaries of State, and leave them to determine what right you have to demand a sight of all orders I shall give to all officers of my squadron, and I would advise you not to send your Sheriff on board the King's ships again on such ridiculous errands. The Captain and Lieutenants have all my orders to give you assistance whenever you demand it, but further you have no business with them, and be assured it is not their duty to show you any part of my orders or instructions to them.

I am, sir, your most humble servant.

J. Montagu

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