



President Madison Encrypted Letter Contest

AFIO is sponsoring a contest to decrypt a coded letter sent by U.S Secretary of War, John Armstrong, to U.S. President James Madison in the early 1800s. Secretary Armstrong communicated with President Madison through a series of encrypted letters. The James Madison Estate has recently discovered an encrypted letter that was sent on Feb 20, 1808, but has not yet been decrypted. We invite our codebreaking enthusiasts to try their hands at decrypting the letter located below and sending the results to the AFIO by **December 31, 2025**. The winners will receive a commemorative AFIO 50th Anniversary coin and bragging rights.



Below is some additional information that may help you:

- Examples of previous letters sent by Armstrong to Madison:
 1. [To James Madison from John Armstrong, 7 June 1806.](#)
 2. [To James Madison from John Armstrong, 15 July 1804](#)
- [Additional information on Secretary Armstrong](#)

Submit your questions or results to feedback@afio.com. Good luck!

73. 14. 1160. 1376. 1740. 18. 38. 764. 364. 1240.
 1160. 1401. 176. 671. 604. 4. 560. 38. 1207. 160.
 380. 87. 768. 14. 870. 462. 47. 648. 140. 1207. 90.
 5. 760. 47. 38. 580. 170.

I have the honor to be, Sir, with very high consideration

your more obedient

Every service to command

Wm Pitt Rivers

M. Matheson Secretary of State or the United States Westbury.

Paris 21 February 1808

5/2

Mr. Patterson offers 20 good reasons, that I cannot but employ, in
 nothing has occurred here since the date of my public dispatches (the 17th inst)
 longer to our business as yet more favorable than it then was; but on the
 other hand, I have come at the knowledge of two facts, which, I think, sufficiently
 show the decided character of the Emperor's policy with regard to us. These are
 1st that in a council of administration held a few days past, when it was
 proposed to modify the operation of the Decree of November 1807 and December
 1807 (through the proposition was supported by the whole weight of the Council)
 he became highly indignant, and declared, that these Decrees should suffer no
 change, and that the Americans should be compelled to take the positive
 character, either of allies or of enemies. 2^d that on the 27th of January last,
 having days after Mr. Champagny's written assurances, that these Decrees
 should work no change in the promises requested until our discussions
 with England were brought to a close, and even days before his reported
 to me, verbally these very assurances, the Emperor had, by a special Decree,
 confiscated two of our ships and their cargoes (the John Henry & Junonia)
 for want merely of documents, not required by any law or usage, of the
 commerce in which they had been engaged. This act was taken, as far as
 is known, on a general report of requested cases amounting to one hundred
 and sixty, and which, at present prices, with paid expenses of one hundred
 millions of francs in sum, whose magnitude alone renders it itself all
 attempts at saving it. France, Portugal, & America will be the principal
 sufferers.

If you might in supposing that the Emperor had definitively taken
 his ground, I cannot be wrong in concluding that you will immediately
 take your's. In doing this a short sketch of what is going on in Europe of
 a public nature, may not be useful.

1774 1794 1799 1834 1846 1853 1858 1859 1878 1891 1897 1901.
 Russia is to large portion, while France & Germany take possession of Sweden.
 176 1760 1787 1810 1869 1880 1878 1880 1890 1898 1899 1894 1893. And it is
 certainly amongst the most cruel circumstances of the British attack on Hong Kong.