Navy Department, Sept. 17, 1863

Sir:

I have the honor to present for your consideration a subject of great importance, connected with the maintaining possession of the Sounds of North Carolina.

Information received from time to time places it beyond doubt that the rebels are constructing and have nearly completed, at Edward's Ferry, near Melvin, on the Roanoke River, a ram and an iron clad floating battery. It is represented that these vessels will be formidable and will be completed in the course of from six or eight weeks. It is further represented that an attack by land and water on Plymouth...
Newport is contemplated.

One force of wooden vessels in the Sound, necessary of light draught and lightly armed, will by no means be adequate to contend against the rebel war vessels should they succeed in getting down the Roanoke, and in that event an prosecution of the Sounders would be jeopardized.

It is impracticable for our vessels to ascend the Roanoke to any great distance in consequence of the shallow ness of the water, their exposed situation from the fire of war vessels, and the earthworks represented to be located at different points—particularly at Rainbow bluff.

Now our iron clads have completed available for service in the Sound, they could not be sent there as they draw too much water to enter the bulkhead at Hatteras. Our lighter draft ones will not be completed for some time to come.

In view of all these facts it deemed proper to suggest the importance of an effort in the part of the army to surprise and destroy the rebel ram and battery referred to, or of obstructing the river by torpedoes and piles or otherwise, so as to prevent their descent. Permit me to urge some measure of this sort.

This Department will be happy to cooperate so far as it may be able in adopting such steps as may seem practicable and adequate to secure us against threatening disaster.