

REPORT
OF
THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, November 30, 1850.

SIR: I beg leave to submit the following report of the operations of this department during the last year.

The aggregate strength of the army, as at present established by law, and supposing every company to have its complement, is twelve thousand nine hundred and twenty-seven (12,927) officers and men, including all the staff corps. It rarely happens, however, that a company is complete, for, while on the one hand the enlistments can never exceed the limit prescribed by law, deaths, discharges, and desertions must always cause the number of men actually enrolled and in pay to fall far short of it. This is particularly the case in regard to troops stationed at the frontier posts; for, as the men are all enlisted in the older States, considerable time must always intervene between the happening of a vacancy and its being filled. It is estimated by competent judges that owing to these causes, combined with sickness and other casualties of the service, the number of men actually in service and *fit for duty* usually falls short of the legal organization, on an average of from thirty to forty per cent.

The report of the Adjutant General, hereto appended, will show how this force is distributed. By that document it will be seen that out of the twelve thousand nine hundred and twenty-seven (12,927) officers and men composing the army, seven thousand seven hundred and ninety-six (7,796,) or more than one-half, are stationed in, or are under orders for, Texas, New Mexico, California and Oregon.

When it is recollected that large accessions have, within a few years past, been made to our territory; that an extensive seaboard will require fortifications, and an enlarged inland frontier needs protection against the Indians, it will appear manifest that the present military establishment of the country is entirely inadequate to its wants. Allow me to call your attention to the remarks, on this subject, contained in the report of the general-in-chief.

The most important duty which at present devolves on the department, is the protection of Texas and New Mexico against the Indian tribes in their vicinity. This object has engaged the anxious attention of the department, and all the means at its disposal have been employed to effect it.

The recruiting service has been actively prosecuted, with a view to bringing the companies stationed on that frontier to their complement of seventy-four (74) men, as fixed by the act of the 17th of June last. Prompt measures have also been taken to carry into effect the provision of the

same act which authorizes the mounting of a portion of the infantry stationed in Texas.

Early in August last the seventh regiment of infantry was ordered to Santa Fe, and had proceeded on its destination some distance beyond Fort Leavenworth, when a steamboat laden with supplies for the expedition was sunk on her way from St. Louis to that port. In consequence of this accident and the advanced state of the season, it was ordered to return and take up its winter quarters at Jefferson barracks, from which point it will resume its march as early as practicable in the spring. From the reports of the officers in command in Texas and New Mexico, as well as from other reliable sources of information, the department is fully satisfied, however, that the force now stationed on that frontier, with all the reinforcements it will be able to send there in the spring, will be entirely insufficient for its protection.

In order to make the troops as available as possible for the protection of the settlements, they have been separated into small detachments, stationed at various posts along the frontier. But as the frontier is many hundred miles in extent, these posts are necessarily a considerable distance apart, and the utmost vigilance and activity on the part of the officers in command cannot prevent small bands of Indians from passing between them and committing depredations on interior settlements.

The only description of troops that can effectually put a stop to these forays, is cavalry. Unlike those of their race in this part of the continent, the Indians that occupy the vast and open plains from the southern extremity of Texas to Oregon, in all their expeditions, whether for war or for the chase, are invariably mounted, and are well skilled in the management of the horse. In their incursions into the white settlements they are prompted not so much by a feeling of hostility as by a love of plunder, and consequently seldom move in large numbers, prepared to encounter an armed force, but, separating into small parties, watch a favorable opportunity, make sudden and rapid inroads into the settlements, drive off whole herds of cattle, and occasionally commit acts of shocking barbarity.

Emboldened by the impunity with which these incursions have been heretofore too often attended, and encouraged by the success with which they have been rewarded, these bold marauders have of late ventured much further into the settlements, and even within a short distance of our military posts. All the roads leading into the country are infested by them, and cannot safely be travelled without a military escort. They stand in little awe of troops on foot, but a light and active cavalry could pursue and chastise them, or recapture their plunder, whereby their depredations would be rendered more dangerous and less profitable. Several of these tribes have made some progress in civilization, having fixed habitations and considerable property. By pursuing these to their homes and retaliating severely upon them, they would soon be taught that it is their interest to respect the property of the whites. The officers in command in these departments concur in the opinion that to enable them to do this, a larger force, particularly in mounted men, is indispensably necessary. As a temporary means of supplying this deficiency, the commanding officer in Texas called out several companies of volunteers, but the short period for which this description of force can be legally called upon to serve, renders it more expensive and less efficient than it would otherwise be. Doubts are entertained whether the experiment of mount-

ing infantry will prove successful. Little, if anything, is gained by such an arrangement on the score of economy, and soldiers enlisted with no reference to their aptitude for cavalry duty will seldom be able to adapt themselves to a service for which their previous habits may not at all qualify them. It is therefore very much to be desired that Congress will at an early period consider the propriety of increasing the army, and particularly of raising one or more regiments of mounted men.

This additional force will, at first, be attended with a proportional addition of expenditure; but it is believed that in the end economy will be promoted by it. The supplies necessary for the troops stationed in that country are now nearly all taken from the other States. These supplies have to be carried a great distance by land, and owing to the badness of the roads, the scarcity of provisions and provender, and the exorbitant prices demanded for labor, the cost of transportation is enormous. The following is the actual cost of transporting pork and flour (the two most important items of supply) to several of the military posts in Texas and New Mexico, viz:

	For pork.	For flour.
To the nearer interior posts in Texas, per barrel	- \$8 00	\$5 30
To Santa Fe and Las Vegas, New Mexico	- 32 00	21 30
To Taos, Socorro, Abique and Savoyette	- 41 60	27 56
To Paso del Norte, Texas, and to San Elizario and Gona Aua	- 48 00	31 80

The above sums are paid for transporting bread and meat to a country, a large portion of which is susceptible of producing abundant crops of grain, and nearly all of which is well adapted to grazing; and these sums will continue to be paid so long as the incursions of the Indians continue to prevent the settlement and cultivation of the country. It is confidently believed, on the other hand, that if adequate protection were afforded to the country, in a few years its population and resources would both increase, a smaller number of troops would suffice for its defence, and supplies might be furnished at a much less cost than they now are.

It has been suggested by persons well acquainted with the country that the inhabitants (including the Pueblo Indians) might, if properly armed and organized into a kind of militia, under the direction of officers of the army, render essential aid in protecting it against the sudden inroads of the more savage tribes. The experiment is well worth making; and if authority were vested in the department to distribute arms and ammunition among them, it might be so exercised that no ill consequence could, at all events, result from it.

These, however, are only temporary expedients. It is obvious that some other means besides the terror of our arms must ultimately be employed to restrain the Indians. Hemmed in, as they are, on all sides by the United States, by Mexico and the Rocky mountains, as our settlements advance, the scarcity of game will compel them to fall back on our weaker neighbors, whom, by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, we are bound to protect against their incursions. Both policy and humanity would therefore seem to dictate that some system should be adopted whereby the whole of this unfortunate race might be induced, as a portion of them were by the Spaniards, to abandon their wandering life, to live in villages, and resort to agricultural pursuits.

The regiment of mounted riflemen, which, when the last report was

made by this department, was on its march to Oregon, reached its destination in safety—having, in accordance with the act of 19th May, 1846, established a line of military stations along the route to Oregon. In consequence of the scarcity of forage and provisions at one of these posts, (Fort Hall,) it was subsequently abandoned; and the troops stationed there were transferred to another post near the Dalles, and to Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia river.

Since the conference held with their chiefs in September, 1849, by Major General Twiggs, the small remnant of the Seminole tribe remaining in Florida have abstained from all acts of hostility against the whites. In one of the frontier counties, the sudden disappearance of a youth recently caused some alarm among the inhabitants. Orders, however, were given to the agent residing among them to institute a rigid inquiry into the matter, and the result of the investigation has been the conviction on his part that the Indians had no agency in this matter. Every information, on the contrary, that has reached the department, leads to the belief that this feeble band are at length satisfied of the utter futility of prolonging a contest with the whites. Under these circumstances a portion of the troops stationed in Florida have been recently withdrawn. A few companies, however, have been left to guard against the possibility of another outbreak.

The Indians remaining in Florida, although their number does not exceed one hundred (100) men, are a source of terror and annoyance to the whites in their neighborhood, and, no doubt, tend very much to retard the settlement of that part of the State. So long as they remain in the country, collisions will continually occur, and will only end with the extinction of the race. No efforts, therefore, have been or will be spared to induce them to migrate and join the great body of their nation in the west; and it is confidently believed that this desirable result will sooner be attained by peaceable means than by the employment of force.

Information has been communicated to this department, that, through the instrumentality and persuasion of the governor of Minnesota and our agent stationed among them, the Chippewa tribe of Indians had been prevailed upon to make a treaty of peace with the Sioux, with whom they were at war, and who had been the aggressors; that shortly after the treaty was concluded, it was broken by the Sioux, who had made an unprovoked attack on the Chippewas. As the treaty had been made at the earnest solicitation and almost command of the governor and the agent, and the most solemn assurances had been given by them both to the Chippewas that if it were violated the United States would interfere to protect them and redress their wrongs, the department has been invoked to make good these pledges. It is highly important that these people should respect the authority and confide in the promises of the agents of the government. It is deemed advisable, therefore, that a small force be sent against the Sioux. No doubt is entertained that the mere appearance of this force among them will suffice to intimidate them, and prevent what might otherwise be a protracted and sanguinary war.

The board of military and naval officers appointed to examine the Pacific coast of the United States and to designate such points thereon as are suitable for fortifications and naval depots, have concluded their labors. Only preliminary reports have, as yet, been made; but the department is informed that certain positions have been designated as well

adapted to military and naval purposes. Measures have been taken to reserve these sites from sale, but more detailed surveys will be necessary before the works can be commenced. The delay which this operation will cause is the less to be regretted as the high prices of both labor and materials in all that region would render it inexpedient to commence the construction of any important works on that coast at present.

In virtue of an act passed in March, 1849, making an appropriation for military and geographical surveys west of the Mississippi, a party under the direction of Captain Stansbury was despatched in that year with orders to explore and survey the region in the vicinity of the Great Salt lake. It is understood that the party have completed their labors, and are now on their way home. As soon as their report is made, it shall be laid before you.

Under a similar appropriation, made at the last session of Congress, a party has been organized under the command of Captain Sitgreaves, with directions to explore the river Zuni from its headwaters to its junction with the Colorado, and the latter river from that point to the gulf of California.

An appropriation was made at the last session of Congress to survey the delta of the Mississippi river, with a view to the deepening of the channel at its mouth and the prevention of overflows. The execution of this work, so important to a large portion of the Mississippi valley, has been confided to Major Long and Captain Humphreys, two accomplished officers of the corps of topographical engineers. In addition to which, Mr. Charles Ellet, jr., a distinguished civil engineer, has been employed to examine this interesting subject, and report the result of his observations to this department. These two parties will act independently of each other; and yet will co-operate whenever it may be found advantageous to do so.

Prior to the passage of the law establishing a Territorial government in New Mexico, the inhabitants of that country had held a convention, adopted a State constitution, and proceeded to put it in operation. On the other hand, the officer in command of that military department refused to recognise the government thus established. To put an end to a conflict of authorities which might be productive of unpleasant consequences, as soon as the above-mentioned law was passed, instructions were despatched to the officer in command to abstain from all further interference in the civil and political affairs of the country.

The Military Academy continues, by its excellent discipline and admirable course of instruction, to afford ample guarantees that it will realize the expectations of the country, and sustain the high reputation it has hitherto enjoyed.

I beg leave to renew the recommendation of my immediate predecessor, of the formation of a retired list of officers of the army. There are many officers who, in consequence of their advanced age, of wounds, or of disease contracted in the service, are entirely disabled, but who, nevertheless, receive full pay. It would be more in accordance with justice, and no doubt with the feelings of the officers themselves, that they should receive less pay and be legally exempted from duty. By this means, justice to the officers would be reconciled with economy and the efficiency of the service.

In connexion with this subject, I beg leave to call your attention to

the remarks contained in the report of the general-in-chief, relative to the establishment of an asylum for disabled and destitute soldiers.

The Quartermaster's department employs in its service about five hundred (500) teamsters, who are hired men, and have recently exacted enormous wages. Besides, not being subject to the restraints of military discipline, they are sometimes very turbulent and ungovernable. To obviate both these difficulties, it is recommended that authority be given to enlist such number of them as may be required by the exigencies of the service, and that a higher rate of pay be allowed them than to the privates in the army.

The usual annual estimates have been furnished to the Secretary of the Treasury, to be by him submitted to Congress. They embrace detailed reports, from the heads of the bureaus of this department, of the sums that will be required by them respectively during the year commencing on the 1st of July, 1851, and exceed in the aggregate the estimates for the current year. This excess is owing chiefly to the following causes: 1st. No appropriation was required by the subsistence department during the current year, there being a balance on hand resulting from overestimates during the war, sales of subsistence stores, &c., sufficient for the service of the year. 2d. By an act passed at the last session of Congress, the rank and file of all the companies serving on the western frontier was greatly increased. 3d. By another act passed towards the close of the same session, the pay of all the officers and men serving in California and Oregon was nearly doubled. 4th. An increased expenditure in the Quartermaster's department.

Prior to 1845, our frontier posts were all established either on the Gulf of Mexico, on Lake Superior, or on the headwaters of the Mississippi and its tributaries. They were all, therefore, accessible by water, and many of them situated in the midst of a fertile and cultivated country. Now, on the contrary, they are either on the Pacific coast, on the route to Oregon, or far in the interior of Texas and New Mexico, remote from navigable streams and from the States where enlistments are made and whence all the supplies are drawn. The distance of land carriage to many of these posts is, as has already been mentioned, very great, and numerous trains of wagons are constantly employed in conveying supplies to them as well as in accompanying the troops in their marches. The exorbitant cost of furnishing supplies to the troops in Texas and New Mexico has already been stated. On the Pacific, owing to the high price of labor, water transportation is proportionally expensive.

The consequence of all this is an immense increase in the expenditures of the Quartermaster's department. In the year ending June 30, 1844, the expenditures of that department amounted to only \$870,999 73. In the year ending June 30, 1850, they were \$4,295,298 60. In the year ending June 30, 1851, appropriated \$3,915,954.*

In the year ending June 30, 1852, estimated \$4,950,000.

In the year 1844, the cost of transportation for the army was less

* The amount stated for the year ending June 30, 1851, is that of the appropriations only, which were based upon a supposed increase of the army of fifteen hundred (1,500) men; instead of three thousand, (3,000,) as provided by law. It is believed, therefore, that the expenditures will exceed the appropriations, though they will not equal those of the year ending June 30, 1852, in consequence of the delay which necessarily intervened, after the passage of the act of June, 1850, before the augmentation authorized by it could be effected.

than \$120,000. In the year ending 30th of June last, it amounted to about \$1,900,000, showing an increase of about fifteen hundred per cent.

It is hoped that as settlements increase and cultivation extends in Texas and New Mexico, and as mining becomes less profitable and labor more diversified in California, these enormous expenditures will diminish. In the mean time every effort will be made by this department to curtail them. It is possible that at points so remote from the supervision of its chief, defects of administration in the Quartermaster's department may exist, to remedy which some changes in the organization of that department may become necessary.

No economy can, however, be effected by reducing the estimates, which are based upon positive data and cannot safely be curtailed. The only consequence which has heretofore resulted from such reductions of estimates, *without diminishing the objects of expense*, has been the accumulation of arrearages. An arrearage which has existed in the Quartermaster's department since the year 1848, amounting to the sum of \$1,290,860 32, is said to have originated in that way. The practice of allowing disbursements to exceed the appropriations is dangerous in the extreme; but if estimates, carefully prepared by the proper officers, are reduced without diminishing the objects of expenditure, this irregularity may sometimes be unavoidable.

I hereto annex such portions of the correspondence of this department as relate to the subjects mentioned in this report, together with the reports of the general-in-chief and of the several heads of bureaus of this department, to all which I refer you for more ample information in regard to its operations.

Respectfully submitted:

C. M. CONRAD,
Secretary of War.

To the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

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DOCUMENTS

ACCOMPANYING THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR TO THE PRESIDENT,
NOVEMBER 30, 1850.

1. *Correspondence on the subject of—*
 - I. Indian hostilities in Texas, New Mexico, and California.
 - II. Indian difficulties in Florida.
 - III. Civil affairs in New Mexico.
 - IV. Expenses in the Western department.
2. Report of the General-in-Chief, with returns of the Adjutant General.
3. Report of the Quartermaster General.
4. Report of the Paymaster General.
5. Report of the Commissary General.
6. Report of the Surgeon General.
7. Report of the Chief Engineer.
8. Report of the Chief of the Topographical Engineers.
9. Report of the Chief of Ordnance.
10. Report of the Third Auditor.

No. 1.

List of correspondence on the subject of Indian hostilities in Texas, New Mexico, and California.

TEXAS.

- December 14, 1849—The governor of Texas to the Secretary of War, presenting views and considerations connected with the protection and defence of the frontier.
- January 19, 1850—The Secretary of War to the governor of Texas, respecting the measures taken for the defence of the country.
- August 30, 1850—Governor Wood to the Secretary of War, respecting the best mode of providing for the defence of the country.
- Reports of General G. M. Brooke, commanding 8th department—
- January 10, 1850—Enclosing copies of letters and reports, viz:
Major Van Horne, 8th November, 1849.
General Trias, of Chihuahua, October 10, 1849.
Colonel Langberg's letter to Major Van Horne, October 23, 1849.
General Brooke to governor of Texas, January 10, 1850.
- January 20, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General.
- January 31, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing one to the governor of Texas, January 30, 1850.
- March 7, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing reports from Brevet Lieutenant Colonel W. J. Hardie, March 3, 1850;
from Brevet Major J. M. Scott, February 22, 1850;
from Captain John H. King, February 28, 1850;
from Lieutenant W. W. Hudson, February 27, 1850;
from General Brooke to governor of Texas, March 5, 1850.
- March 17, 1850—General Brooke to Adjutant General, enclosing reports from Brevet Lieutenant Colonel W. J. Hardie, March 13, 1850;
from Juan Manuel Maldonado to Major J. M. Scott, in Spanish, with translation, March 10, 1850.
- April 18, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing report from Captain John H. King, April 10, 1850.
- May 29, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, transmitting copy of a letter to the General-in-Chief, dated May 28, 1850, and enclosing reports from Captain John S. Ford, Texas mounted volunteers, May 21, 1850;
from Captain John S. Ford, extract for Adjutant General, May 21, 1850;
from Captain John H. King, May 16, 1850;
from Lieutenant S. B. Holabird to Captain John H. King, May 16, 1850.
- June 2, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General.
- June 8, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing a report from Captain John S. Ford, Texas volunteers, May 30, 1850.
- June 9, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing reports from Brevet Major G. A. H. Blake, 2d dragoons, June 2, 1850;
from Lieutenant Thomas J. Wood, 2d dragoons, May 26, 1850.
- July 3, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing communication from Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery, 8th infantry, June 27, 1850.

- July 5, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing reports from Captain S. M. Plummer, 1st infantry, June 30, 1850; from Lieutenant A. J. Walker, Texas volunteers, June 19, 1850.
- July 25, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing reports from Captain Ford, July 4, 1850; from Lieutenant M. B. Highsmith, July 3, 1850.
- July 28, 1850—General Brooke to Brevet Lieutenant Colonel W. G. Freeman, Assistant Adjutant General, enclosing resolutions passed at a public meeting of the citizens of San Antonio.
- August 15, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing a petition of the citizens of Corpus Christi.
- September 20, 1850—Adjutant General to General Brooke.
- September 17, 1850—General Brooke to the General in Chief, enclosing reports from Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Hardie, September 14, 1850; from Major Blake, August 23, 1850; order No. 39, relative to scouting parties, September 17, 1850.
- October 10, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing communication of P. W. Humphreys, October 4, 1850; communication of Captain S. M. Plummer, October 6, 1850; and of H. W. Smith, regarding the abduction of the young girls.
- October 15, 1850—General Brooke to the Adjutant General, enclosing copy of paper printed at Victoria, relative to certain horrid transactions.
- November 7, 1850—Assistant Adjutant General L. Thomas to General Brooke.

NEW MEXICO.

- March 2, 1850—Brevet Colonel John Munroe to the Adjutant General, enclosing report of Major Stein, February 5, 1850.
- April 15, 1850—Brevet Colonel John Munroe to the Adjutant General, enclosing reports from Brevet Major William N. Grier, April 12, 1850; from Sergeant W. C. Holbrook, April 7, 1850; from Major Stein, March 24, 1850.
- August 22, 1850—Brevet Colonel John Munroe to Captain Irvin McDowell, Assistant Adjutant General, enclosing reports from—
Major E. Stein, July 1, 1850;
Captain W. N. Grier, July 31, 1850.

CALIFORNIA.

- May 22, 1850—Brevet Captain N. Lyon to Major E. R. S. Canby, Assistant Adjutant General.
- May 25, 1850—General Persifer F. Smith to Captain Irvin McDowell, Assistant Adjutant General.