

PROTECTION OF CITIZENS OF COLORADO AGAINST THE
INDIANS.

L E T T E R

FROM

T H E S E C R E T A R Y O F W A R ,

IN RESPONSE TO

*A resolution of the House of Representatives concerning the protection of
the residents of Western Colorado against the Indians.*

MAY 23, 1878.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and ordered to be
printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, May 21, 1878.

The Secretary of War, in response to the resolution of the House of Representatives of March 26, 1878, requesting him to communicate to the House what steps, if any, have been taken to protect residents of the western part of Colorado from any threatened outbreak on the part of the Ute Indians; and also whether or not the present military post known as Fort Garland is located so as to afford the best protection from such Indians; and, if not, at what point such a post should be established to afford such protection; also whether or not, with the establishment of a new post for protection against the Utes, the maintenance of Fort Garland would be longer necessary; with such other information possessed by the department as is pertinent to the subject, has the honor to report as follows:

On the 5th of May, 1876, the Secretary of the Interior transmitted to the Secretary of War copy of a communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and certain letters from citizens of La Plata County, Colorado, upon the subject of anticipated troubles with the Ute Indians in that vicinity, arising from the dissatisfaction of said Indians at the failure of Congress to meet the stipulations of certain agreements made with the Utes in 1873 (18 Stat., 36-41), and asking that troops be sent to that vicinity to protect them, upon which the General of the Army reported as follows:

I understand that the object of this paper is to move Fort Garland westward to the Ute reservation. There is no doubt that Fort Garland, as a protection to the frontier, has ceased to be of use, because miners have filled up the country and mountains to the north and west for more than a hundred miles. Fort Garland is built of adobe, and cannot be moved. To change its location will simply result in abandonment and building a new post. Under existing laws this requires an act of Congress and a spe-

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cific appropriation. To build a four-company post anywhere near Southwestern Colorado will cost near \$100,000. After such an appropriation is made there will be no trouble to locate it properly, so as to afford the best protection both to the Ute Indians and the settlers of Colorado.

These views were communicated to the Secretary of the Interior on the 24th of May, 1876, and on the same date the Secretary of War transmitted a copy of the indorsement to the House of Representatives, for the Committee on Military Affairs, in response to a letter from said committee asking his opinion on House bill 3347 (44th Cong., 1st Sess.) "making an appropriation for the construction of a military post, near the Ute Indian reservation, in Colorado Territory."

On the 12th February, 1877, the Colorado delegation in Congress requested that Fort Garland be moved to some point farther west, near the Ute reservation, which was approved by the General of the Army, with remark as follows:

Fort Garland was established in 1857; is an old military post, built chiefly of adobe, and therefore cannot be moved, but will sell as the nucleus of a town. The fort has fulfilled its destiny as a forerunner of civilization. The next step is to the west and north, near Cochetopa, or the Uncompahgre. Forty thousand dollars would make a good beginning.

A copy of this correspondence was transmitted to Congress on the 21st February, 1877, and an appropriation of \$40,000 requested. (See Senate Ex. Doc. 42, 44th Cong., 2d Sess.)

November 14, 1877, the commanding general Department of the Missouri (General Pope) forwarded a map and report concerning the Ute Indian agencies in Colorado, and suggested that the three agencies be consolidated. He states:

The difficulty of locating one military post (and we can only hope to establish one) so as to protect Indians and whites so widely scattered and separated by such difficult country will be seen at a glance. * * * I trust that the question of consolidating the agencies and the reservations, as suggested, will be considered by the Interior Department at an early day. It will be difficult, if not quite impossible under present circumstances, to establish any military post to accomplish what could be easily done if consolidation is determined on.

A copy of the correspondence and map was furnished the Secretary of the Interior December 3, 1877; and on the 18th of February, 1878, the Secretary of War transmitted copies of the papers to the Senate and House of Representatives, and again requested an appropriation of \$40,000, as recommended by the General of the Army, to begin the construction of a post in the San Juan country to replace old Fort Garland.

On February 8th last, the Secretary of the Interior transmitted a request of Hon. J. B. Belford, of Central City, Colo., with a petition of citizens of Owray, Colo., for a military force to be stationed at that place. This letter was referred to General Pope. In returning the same that officer suggested that the Ute reservation be consolidated at once into one agency, and recommended the valley of West Fork of the Chama River be taken for that purpose. A copy of his report is inclosed; also a copy of a letter from the Secretary of War transmitting reports on lines of communication between Colorado and New Mexico. (See H. Ex. Doc. 66, 2d Sess. 45th Congress.)

Upon reference of the resolution to the General of the Army, he reports as follows:

The settlements of Southern and Western Colorado have passed Fort Garland, so that post has ceased to be a protection to the more advanced settlements. The problem of protecting the scattered settlements and miners of Western Colorado (who pay no attention to Indian reservations or anything else) is a most difficult one. We have already asked of Congress an appropriation to build a new post in Southwestern Colorado, but nothing has been or can be done until the men and means are provided by law.

The foregoing shows the protective measures instituted, and the views entertained by the department in the premises.

If an appropriation for building a new post is made, it is suggested that authority be granted to transfer the Fort Garland military reservation to the custody of the Secretary of the Interior for disposition under the public-land laws, it appearing that if a new post is built this one will no longer be needed for military purposes.

GEO. W. McCURARY,
Secretary of War.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE MISSOURI,
Fort Leavenworth, Kans., February 21, 1878.

GENERAL: In reply to the indorsement of the General of the Army dated February 13, 1878, covering papers referred to the War Department by the Secretary of the Interior, I have the honor to return the papers referred to with the following report and sketch:

The Utes are distributed at three agencies widely separated and with very difficult communication with each other or with any accessible points near the railroad. The location of these agencies is shown in maps forwarded from here on the 2d and on the 11th instant.

The inclosed sketch shows with accuracy the immediate region to which the inclosed papers refer.

From Fort Garland to the Indian agency in question is a distance of two hundred and eight miles, part of which is over mountain ranges very rough and difficult. A post at that agency would no doubt effect the specific purpose set forth in the letter of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, but its usefulness would be restricted to that reservation alone.

The small military force available now anywhere makes it impracticable with the forces assigned to this department to establish more than one post in Southwestern Colorado, and to make this post effective, the Ute reservations ought to be consolidated into one, to be located in some agricultural valley easily accessible from Garland.

I believe that this consolidation ought to be made at once. In my annual report and since, I have urged this action without assuming to indicate the location of the consolidated agency.

I now recommend, as things seem to be approaching a crisis in that section, that the valley of the West Fork of the Chama River be taken for the purpose.

The Chama puts into the Rio Grande from the west, below the mouth of the Conejos River, and is shown on the map forwarded to division headquarters several weeks since, in connection with the reports of explorations by Lieutenants Ruffner and McCawley.

It has a large area of cultivable land; is well protected by mountain ranges north and west; is a fine grazing region, well watered, and with much game. It is also a desirable place, from the fact that few, if any, ranchmen have yet intruded upon it.

To the west of it, over a gentle divide, is reached the valley of the Navajo, the choice of the Southern Utes of all the rivers and streams of the Lower San Juan, a magnificent region, abounding in game.

In my opinion, the consolidation of all the Utes on one reservation located in these valleys is extremely desirable, and in the present or prospective condition of the military forces, it is a necessity to the protection of both whites and Indians.

With the great emigration to Southwestern Colorado, the relations between the whites and Indians at all three of the Ute agencies are becoming more and more critical every day, while the agencies are so widely separated and so difficult of access from each other that it is wholly impracticable, with the insufficient military force at our disposal, to give anything like effective protection.

The papers referred here from Washington, and the reports received direct, all indicate the greatest uneasiness on all sides, both from whites and Indians; and papers setting forth the apprehensions of each side are received here from the same sources.

I have ordered the concentration of four companies of the Ninth Cavalry at Garland immediately, to make an expedition into that region as soon as they can cross the mountains, and to visit each of the Ute agencies, and do what can be done to keep the peace by using, to the full extent, the very limited authority possessed by the Army over Indian affairs.

No post can be established in that region for the present; first, because it has not been authorized and appropriated for by Congress; and, second, because no one post will fulfill the necessary conditions of protection while the Indian reservations are so widely separated.

The point recommended for the location of a consolidated Ute agency is easily reached from the end of the railroad at Fort Garland, and will become more and more accessible as the road progresses. It is admirably fitted for a military post, which being established there, and the Indian reservations consolidated at the same place, all further troubles between whites and Indians of a serious character would be practically at an end.

The great bulk of the emigration to Southwestern Colorado tends north of this proposed site, and the emigrants and settlers would be out of the way of intruding or being intruded upon.

In the mean time the companies of cavalry above referred to will be put in motion for the different agencies and disturbed sections with the least practicable delay.

It is proper to state in this connection that the company of the Ninth Cavalry stationed at Fort Garland (the only cavalry in that section of the country) is now *en route* to the late Jicarilla reservation in the Lower San Juan, to settle, if possible, difficulties of the same kind there, and there is, therefore, no force immediately available for the Uncompahgre agency.

I am, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JNO. POPE,

Brevet Major-General, U. S. A., Commanding.

General E. D. TOWNSEND,

Adjutant-General United States Army.