

MILITARY POSTS ON RIO GRANDE FRONTIER.

JANUARY 14, 1880.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. UPSON, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. 53.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to which was referred the bill (H. R. 2186) making appropriation for the erection of suitable posts for the protection of the Rio Grande frontier, and Senate bill 53 making appropriation for the purpose of acquiring sites and erecting thereon such military posts on or near the Rio Grande frontier as may be deemed necessary by the Secretary of War for the adequate protection thereof, respectfully submit the following report:

The bills under consideration are of great national importance, having for their object the maintenance of peace and friendly relations and the promotion of commerce between the Republic of Mexico and of the United States, and the giving of due and necessary protection to our constantly endangered and long suffering citizen frontier people by the spoliations, murders, massacres, and inhuman atrocities of harbored and treaty-sheltering banditti, and of the wild and the more dangerous Reservation Indian savages.

To determine as to the necessity or policy of making the appropriation contemplated by the bills under consideration, it is important to understand the past, present, and probable future condition of the Rio Grande or Mexican and Indian frontiers, where military posts are proposed to be constructed.

While your committee heartily join and concur in the congratulations of the President in his late annual message to Congress as to the improved and encouraging condition of our affairs upon the Mexican border, wherein he says, "It is a gratification to be able to announce that, through the judicious and energetic action of the military commanders of the two nations on each side of the Rio Grande, under the instructions of their respective governments, raids and depredations have greatly decreased," yet, unless the same "judicious and energetic action" is continued, your committee are confident that the troubles with which that border has heretofore been inflicted will be renewed, and may involve the two nations in difficulties which may be destructive of the peaceful relations now existing, and so desirable to be promoted between them.

Although, for a short period, the administration of President Diaz has succeeded, in a commendable degree, to enforce its power and authority, and preserve comparative peace throughout the Mexican Republic, the same disturbing and revolutionary elements, though tempo-

rarily held in abeyance, exist there to-day, to a dangerous extent, which have existed since her independence as a nation. As her next presidential election draws near, her clans of revolt are organizing, her leaders of banditti are mustering their gangs for plunder and murder. The unmistakable mutterings of an approaching general revolution are heard along the Rio Grande. Our watchful and faithful sentinel upon that border warns us that the revolution has already begun. General Ord, in his report of November 28, 1879, to the Adjutant-General, Military Division of the Missouri, says:

The revolution in the frontier States of Mexico has commenced in the State of Chihuahua, and, doubtless, will extend to other States; and raids into the United States, as well as summary demands for troops from this side, to protect American interests on the other, are inevitable. To meet that demand, restrain our reservation Indians, and be prepared to execute orders in regard to raids from Mexico, which Mexican troops, during a revolution, cannot prevent, the troops now in the department are wholly inadequate. I further invite attention to the fact that Victoria's large band has left the Department of the Missouri, and is now roaming in Chihuahua and Coahuila, States immediately on the border of this department. Those Indians doubtless will make their forays, within this command, whenever it suits them to do so.

We are again warned by the very recent news of the breaking out of a revolution in Durango, Mexico.

The fitting language of the President of the United States used towards Mexico in his annual message in 1858 and in 1859, might, ever since then, and now, with slight modification, be appropriately applied to that unfortunate country:

Mexico has been in a state of constant revolution almost ever since it achieved its independence. One military leader after another has usurped the government in rapid succession; and the various constitutions, from time to time adopted, have been set at naught almost as soon as proclaimed. The successive governments have afforded no adequate protection either to Mexican citizens or foreign residents against lawless violence. * * * The truth is that this fine country, blessed with a productive soil and a benign climate, has been reduced by civil dissensions to a condition of almost hopeless anarchy and imbecility. She is entirely destitute of the power to maintain peace upon her own borders or to prevent incursions of banditti into our territory.

As it has been in the past, we have good reason to believe that the change of administration in Mexico will continue, at least in the near future, to be brought about by revolution, and the successful revolutionary leader declared president of the republic.

Mr. Baranda, in discussing a report upon the suspension of certain constitutional guarantees in the Mexican Deputies, in 1868, well said:

Since the independence our unfortunate country has traced a tortuous and bloody road. What is the cause of the present state of our agriculture, our commerce, and our industry? Revolution. What is the reason our country is so unfortunate when it should be so happy? Revolution. What is the pretext of which our enemies at home have availed to beg foreign intervention? Revolution. What is the apparent motive upon which foreign nations have pretended to intervene in our political questions and to subjugate us? Revolution. Always revolution!

Whenever those revolutions again occur, as we feel justified in predicting they will, we may look for, and wisdom dictates that we should provide against, renewed troubles upon our Mexican border. Notwithstanding an earnest and honest desire of the principal Mexican authorities to prevent and punish lawlessness and crime, and preserve peace upon their Rio Grande frontier, from the lawless and dangerous character of a large majority of their population residing upon and frequenting that border, and from their internal dissensions and consequent weakness, they have been and will continue to be unable to accomplish that object, without the presence and active co-operation of an effective

military force on the part of the United States, permanently stationed and properly quartered upon our side of that border.

The character of the population on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande does not seem to have materially changed since the same was described by General Ord; commanding the Department of Texas, in his examination before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, in 1876, when he said :

The number of Mexicans who have been driven, by revolution and by their own lawless acts, from Central and Southern Mexico up to the borders of the Rio Grande, probably to escape the result of their offenses, has filled that country with lawless and desperate men. Even the rulers make little or no effort to prevent their committing offenses against the United States, as it would probably destroy their popularity if they did, and would make them odious to the majority of the people. For the same reason—the facility for crossing the river, and for escape to the United States—the Mexican troops, who are generally enlisted just as sailors used to be in England, by a sort of press-gang system, take advantage of the opportunity afforded them when brought north to the Rio Grande border, and desert to the United States. That prevents the central government from maintaining a force on the lower Rio Grande, to control the desperate and lawless people. * * * The local authorities on the Mexican side, being under the influence of this lawless population, which I have described, and being sometimes their leaders, are averse to restoring any property, and I believe they have never yet shown any disposition to do so, no matter how strong the proof of the guilt of the party, or the evidence that the property is within their reach. Under these circumstances, and in view of the powerlessness or inability of the Mexican Government to enforce its own laws, or even to protect its own property, we cannot expect them to protect ours, and I consider it not only justifiable, but the duty of the United States authorities to enforce the security of our own border, and to protect the people from invasion. * * * I will also add that it is a matter of great importance on that frontier that troops of the best sort should be stationed there.

Again, in December, 1877, in his examination before the same committee, he says :

My opinion is, that the bad element of the masses, and not the intelligent element, control Mexican politics, and that the bad element is ready for anything in the shape of war or raiding, or anything that would lead to plunder. * * * The population of the frontier towns is very lawless. The people are more like Arabs in their habits than any other people that I have read of.

Lieutenant-General Sheridan, in his report of October 25, 1878, to the Adjutant-General of the Army, says :

On the Rio Grande border, troubles, until quite lately, have continued about the same as they have been for years past, and are incident to the character of the population on that border. The Rio Grande is about 1,600 miles in length from El Paso to its mouth, and fordable at almost any place; and Mexicans and Indians committing depredations in Texas have every facility for escaping to the Mexican side.

Col. Edward Hatch, in his report of September 6, 1879, says :

Probability of our government obtaining a criminal who has fled to any of the frontier Mexican States is slight, should he be of Mexican descent. Not that the Mexican officials are not inclined to do so; it is beyond their control to produce him when the people or his relatives are inclined to shelter or protect him. * * * If necessary, a volume can be obtained from Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, from settlers of that State and Territories, of similar statements made by the Mexicans, of raids, murders, and robberies upon American soil. The misfortune is that the Indians and robbers are merely common enemies, who take advantage of treaty relations of the two countries, a sparsely populated frontier, on the Mexican side, inadequately protected. Were the United States troops allowed to follow the Indians when in pursuit, or was the Mexican Government strong enough to prevent the occupancy of their mountain regions by Indians, these bands of Indians would be exterminated.

General Ord, in his report of October 1, 1879, says :

By reason of revolutions the Mexican population along the river is of mongrel character: deserters from the contending forces; Mexican soldiery sent to the border and there disbanded; remnants of bands of wild, raiding, or refugee Indians, who formerly found safety in the deserts and unexplored mountains of Mexico or Texas, and who have gradually learned to trade and mix with the people of its border towns; and smugglers; all go to swell the lawless element

Again, in his report of December 1, 1879, before referred to, General Ord says:

Relative to additional troops, revolutions are likely to occur at any time, in all the Mexican States bordering upon Texas. One has just occurred in Chihuahua. These revolutions turn loose bands of outlaws to plunder the defenseless settlers of either country. Savages whose homes are in the wilds of Mexico, or who may escape from the United States and take refuge there, are continually driving off stock and murdering the people of the Rio Grande Valley, and the immense and thinly-settled country adjacent thereto.

There are but six permanent posts situated directly upon the Rio Grande from Brownsville to El Paso, a distance, following the course of the river, of about 1,500 miles, viz:

	Miles.
Fort Brown, distant by land travel from Ringgold	117
Ringgold, distant by land travel from Fort McIntosh	120
Fort McIntosh, distant by land travel from Fort Duncan	115
Fort Duncan, distant by way of intermediate posts from Fort Quitman	529
And Fort Bliss, distant by land travel from Fort Quitman	84

Col. Edward Hatch, in his report of September 6, 1879, states:

Referring to General Ord's report, it will be also seen that no troops of the Department of Texas are stationed directly on the Rio Grande River from a station not very distant from Fort Clark, though scouts are extended as far as Paso del Norte, leaving nearly 500 miles of river unguarded.

Three (3) posts are recommended to be built by General Ord between Fort Duncan and Fort Quitman. In his report dated December 1, 1879, made under the resolution of the House adopted June 25, 1879, he says:

The following appropriations, needed for the construction of posts, &c., I view as necessary to give security and efficient protection to the lives and property of American citizens on the Texas frontier, * * * the cost of building not to exceed \$200,000.

The particular location of the posts in the bill recommended is properly to be left to the direction of the Secretary of War.

The necessity and importance of the construction of the posts in question have been repeatedly called to the attention of Congress. The President, in his annual message of December 3, 1877, says:

While I do not anticipate an interruption of friendly relations with Mexico, yet I cannot but look with solicitude upon a continuance of border disorders as exposing the two countries to initiations of popular feeling and mischances of action which are naturally unfavorable to complete amity. * * * Disturbances along the Rio Grande, in Texas, to which I have already referred, have rendered necessary the constant employment of a military force in that vicinity. * * * It is believed that this policy (referring to our troops crossing the border) has had the effect to check somewhat these depredations, and that, with a considerable increase of our force upon that frontier, and the establishment of several additional military posts along the Rio Grande, so as more effectually to guard that extensive border, peace may be preserved and the lives and property of our citizens in Texas fully protected.

The Secretary of War, in a letter addressed to the chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, dated December 1, 1877, says:

In my opinion the preservation of peace and order along the boundary between this country and Mexico is a matter of sufficient importance to justify a considerable expenditure of money. Not only is it important to protect the people of the great and rapidly growing State of Texas from depredation, but it is also vastly important that every cause of difficulty between this country and Mexico should be removed, to the end that friendly relations may continue.

The Secretary of War, in a letter to a former chairman of this committee, Hon. H. B. Banning, stated:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, February 19, 1879.

SIR: In reply to your favor of yesterday I have the honor to inclose a report of the General of the Army upon the subject of the establishment of additional military posts

in the vicinity of the Rio Grande border. I am of opinion that at least four additional military posts along the line of the Rio Grande should be constructed, and recommend the appropriation of \$200,000 for that purpose. General Ord estimates that at least that sum will be required, and I concur with him in that opinion.

General Ord, in his report of October 1, 1879, says:

I have eleven additional companies to quarter, and no fit place for that purpose. I need not say that it is very disheartening to the officers to be compelled, through the cold winters and hot summers of western Texas, to keep their wives and children in tents, shanties, or brush huts, or to have them packed in attics. The want of quarters for so many necessarily crowds all the others, and a glance at the amount of service—40,100 miles of scouts and expeditions, 18,700 miles more than last year—performed by the troops in a country like west Texas, ought to secure to them some comfort after a return from their long and dreary marches over trackless wastes. * * * I have, as earnestly as is consistent with propriety, urged the necessity of an appropriation of \$200,000 for four additional posts.

General Sheridan, in his report of October 25, 1878, referring to the services of the Army under his command, says:

No other army in the world has such a difficult line to keep in order, and no army in modern times has had such an amount of work put upon the same number of men.

Under date of March 31, 1879, General Sherman says:

I certainly will favor any proposition to build suitable posts along the Rio Grande frontier, because it forms a national boundary and is likely to be permanent.

A bill to appropriate the same amount and for the erection of the posts in question was reported favorably by the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, December 11, 1877, and passed the Senate without division, January 31, 1878. A like bill was favorably reported again on the 9th of December, 1879, from the same committee, and was passed without opposition, December 11, 1879, after being amended by making the appropriation for the acquiring of sites and the erection thereon of military posts, &c., with a proviso as to title and taxes.

The report of General Ord of December 1, 1879, hereinbefore referred to, presents another question bearing upon the bills, considered of grave importance. He says:

Connected with the "*peace and safety of the frontier*," the incursions into Mexico, by Indians from the United States, should receive the prompt and serious attention of the government. General Trevino, commanding division of the north, army of Mexico, by letter of June 11, 1879, invited my attention to the subject. * * * *

If these Indians are so detrimental to the interest of settlers in West Texas, it is not to be expected that they will have more respect for the unprotected settlements on the Mexican frontier. I venture to suggest, they are now not in the same unrestrained condition in which they were when the XI article of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was abrogated,—when they had a country from which to get food. On the contrary, they have been gathered on reservations, so called, and the United States has assumed the responsibility of restraining and providing for them.

If the government fails to provide for them, it becomes a question how far it may be responsible for the consequences of a failure which compels the Indians to depredate upon the nearest neighbors, including those in Mexico, for the necessaries of life.

I believe a careful scrutiny as to the ration of food, issued to each Indian on the Forts Stanton and Sill reservations, will establish that it is not enough to sustain life.

Claimants aggregating their demands by the millions, and constantly increasing, for losses of property by reason of the alleged failure of the United States to give protection to her people upon the Indian and Mexican frontiers, are day by day, session by session, and year by year, loudly and persistently knocking at the Halls of Congress for payment.

Who can question the soundness or the applicability, to the well-founded claims indicated, of the principle announced by the President in his annual message of 1859 that "*the life and property of every American citizen ought to be sacredly protected in every quarter of the world*";

and as declared by the Secretary of State, Mr. Evarts, in his letter to Mr. Foster, of August 13, 1878, when, speaking of the inability of Mexico to prevent marauding attacks upon our people, he says :

This inability may be pleaded as a reason for the failure to check the crimes complained of, but that only makes the stronger the duty of the United States to protect the lives and property of its citizens, for assuredly, if the Government of Mexico cannot do it that of the United States must, so far as it can.

The first duty of a government is to protect life and property. This is a paramount obligation. For this, governments are instituted, and governments neglecting or failing to perform it become worse than useless. This duty the Government of the United States has determined to perform to the the extent of its power toward its citizens on the borders. * * * Protection *in fact* to American lives and property is the sole point upon which the United States is tenacious.

The bill reported is to provide in part the means necessary to enable the government, by its strong arm, to perform the sacred duty of protecting the lives and property of its citizens upon its borders. Can the House, under the plea of carrying out a rigid policy of retrenchment and economy, justify itself in refusing to unite with the other branches of the government in providing these means and in thereby assuming the fearful responsibility of leaving our frontier settlers without adequate security and protection and our troops without shelter, which may result in the loss of much valuable property, in the destruction of many precious lives, in retarding for years the rapid settlement, development, and growth of our vast frontier domain, which would be certain under protection, and in adding to the already alarming amount of "Mexican and Indian depredation claims" other, and perchance still greater, demands of like character, which may eventually ripen into an allowed indebtedness, compared with which the cost of protection will be insignificant ?

A due regard for our relations with Mexico also demand protection upon that frontier. By timely and efficient protection only can we expect to preserve friendly relations and a lasting peace between the two republics.

As it is a sacred duty and a solemn obligation, it should be the recognized, determined, publicly declared, and exercised policy of the American Government *that the life and property of every American citizen shall be protected.*

As a duty owing to our citizens and soldiers and on the grounds of a wise, economical, commercial, and international policy your committee report back Senate bill 53 without amendment and recommend its passage.