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Cavalry in New Mexico and Arizona

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CAVALRY IN NEW MEXICO AND ARIZONA.

FEBRUARY 16, 1886.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 5867.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom were referred House joint resolution No. 41, authorizing the President of the United States to raise not exceeding two regiments of volunteer cavalry in the Territories of New Mexico and Arizona to suppress Indian hostilities therein, and the bill (H. R. 2848) to provide for the organization of a regiment of volunteers in New Mexico and Arizona for the purpose of suppressing outrages on settlers committed by hostile Indians, having considered the same, report back House bill 5867 as a substitute therefor, and recommend that the same do pass.

It appears by the annual report of Brig. Gen. George Crook, U. S. Army, commanding the Department of Arizona, for 1885, that on the 19th of May last certain of the Chiricahua Apaches, under the leadership of Geronimo, Magnus, Nana, Natchez, and Chihuahua, with about fifty bucks and ninety squaws, left the San Carlos Reservation and went on the war path, where they are now and have been ever since that date. In speaking of the cause of this outbreak, General Crook uses this language:

I have been unable to learn the cause which precipitated the outbreak of the Chiricahuas. From the investigation made it would seem that the step was taken hurriedly, without premeditation, for fear of punishment. Geronimo and Magnus had made *tiswin* (a liquor) and been drunk, and Lieutenant Davis informed them that he should report them for my action, and, without warning, as many of them as could be induced by persuasion or intimidated by threats left the reservation.

At another point in his report General Crook says:

These Indians (in leaving the reservation) violated their most sacred promise, given to me under circumstances which make this outbreak of the most heinous nature, and also make it necessary that the most summary punishment should be meted out to them, not only as being just for their own offenses and atrocities, but as an example to the remainder of the Apache tribe.

Your committee do not find in the report of General Crook any statement of the number of settlers in Arizona and New Mexico killed by these Indians during this time. We do find a statement of the number of murders committed by them during this raid, made by Dr. Jesse E. Thompson, author of a book entitled *Los Apaches*, in which a history of these Indians and their outrages is given. Dr. Thompson places the number of persons murdered in this outbreak at 200 (about 50 of this number citizens of old Mexico). All of them, except perhaps

a half dozen of them killed in battle, he claims were foully assassinated, their bodies mutilated, the females always ravaged, the children brained, and their bodies cut to pieces. Dr. Thompson estimates—

That within the past two decades 1,000 citizens of New Mexico and Arizona have been murdered by these Apaches. Out of this number over 100 women have been brutally ravaged, then foully murdered. During Victoria's outbreak (the same Indians, 1879 to 1882) 400 citizens of the counties of Grant, Lincoln, Socorro, and Dona Ana (in the Territory of New Mexico) were murdered.

The same authority puts the amount of property destroyed by Geronimo at hundreds of thousands of dollars, and taking into consideration the consequential results upon the development of the Territory, your committee are of the opinion that his estimate is correct.

Speaking of the result of the campaign of the Army against these Indians, General Crook says:

I may also add, as showing the amount of difficulties with which troops in this country have to contend in the pursuit of Indians, that though there were 20 troops of cavalry and 100 Indian scouts at different times on the trail of the small parties into which the Indians had separated, it is thought that the renegades escaped into Mexico without the loss of one of their number, and this in spite of most earnest and vigorous pursuit.

This was true of the military operations against the hostiles at the date of the report of the general commanding in that department, viz, September 9, 1885.

Your committee are not aware that any of the Indians have been captured or killed by the Army since that time. Several soldiers have been killed by the hostiles, but none of the hostiles have been killed by the soldiers, although, according to the best information at hand, some five or six of the Indians have been wounded and a number of the squaws captured.

The conceded failure of the Army to give adequate protection to the lives and property of the settlers on the frontier does not relieve Congress of its responsibilities. If, after eight months of active operations against the hostiles on the part of the Army, human life in these Territories is still in jeopardy, and not a single one of the fifty murderers of two hundred defenseless men, women, and children, and the destroyers of hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of property, has been killed or captured, it is time something was done by Congress to make good the guarantee of protection, which is the first duty of civilized government.

The failure of the military to suppress this outbreak is the failure of system in a contest with chaos. The Army is an organization adapted to civilized war and not adapted to stealth, treachery, and murder. Military operations are based on science and proceed with mathematical exactness. The tactics of the savage are the product of instinct coupled with all the low cunning and more than the fierceness of the wild beast. It is not a question of the capacity or courage of the officers and men of the Army. No one questions the possession of these qualities. The question is not, will the Army fight, but, can it get a chance to fight? The whole trouble is to get at the enemy. The Apache once caught can be subdued; the trouble is to catch him. No man unacquainted with the country under discussion can comprehend the difficulties surrounding military operations therein, and when you add to the almost inconceivable obstacles offered by nature an enemy as much at home in these mountain fastnesses as the untamed brute whose haunt it is, and who can climb its crags as easily as a spider does its web, and can descend into its cañons almost as swiftly as a hawk diving for its prey, you have a combination that baffles heavy armed and heavily mounted troops.

Manifestly what the Army needs in its operations against the mountain Indians of these Territories is a light armed body of men who shall approximate to the Indian in skill and endurance and equipment. Let the Indian be met with his own methods and he will be speedily subdued.

The troops proposed to be raised by the bill under consideration are, in the opinion of your committee, necessary to the efficiency of the Army. These volunteers, under their own officers, acting with the Regular Army as scouts and trailers, will give speedy peace to these Territories, and although disbanded and no expense to the General Government, their readiness to come together at the call of the President will become a standing guarantee of protection to the now defenseless frontier.

The bill proposed is based on the experience of the most enlightened men in the country where these outrages have been and are being committed. The passage of this act by Congress will, in their opinion, bring relief to their country. Your committee select from the numerous letters and memorials before them bearing on this subject the following:

Extract from a letter from Hon. E. G. Ross, governor of the Territory of New Mexico, dated Santa Fé, N. Mex., December 5, 1885.

The Territorial government is already largely in debt for the maintenance of militia in the field, till it is about impossible to go any farther. The Army has failed to give us relief, and the Territory is financially unable to keep troops in the field. The secret of all this failure, in my judgment, is due to the system, or rather lack of system, that has been pursued * * * There is, in my judgment, great danger of a general Indian war in the West in the spring, unless decisive and effective steps are taken by the Government to prevent it, and now is the time to take those steps. Ninety days from now it may be too late.

The Utes on the northwest are becoming dissatisfied and turbulent. They can put in the field 3,000 warriors, and they are good fighters. The young men of the Navajoes on the west are also becoming restless and can muster 2,000 warriors, while the successful raids of the Chiricahuas is exciting the other Apache bands in the southwest to similar ventures. These tribes combined, once out on the warpath, would occupy the undivided attention of the entire United States Army, and force an outlay of tens of millions of money before they could be suppressed. It would be a war of extermination on both sides.

The Government should immediately send its entire available force to the West. There are thousands of troops now doing "dress-parade" duty at the Eastern military stations who might just as well be here as there, and doing some good, not in wearing out themselves and horses, but in maintaining cantonments at all the haunts, runways, and watering-places of the Indians, leaving the trailing and scouting to the frontiersmen in sufficient numbers to thoroughly scour the country—to "beat the bush" as it were—and drive in or locate the game. This would be my plan. Between the Utes, the Navajoes, and the Apaches there would be a frontier of about 600 miles to cover. Locate the Regular Army troops as suggested, and then employ two or three thousand frontiersmen as trailers and scouts, and there will be no further apprehension of Indian depredations.

Also, the following:

Extract from letter of Jesse E. Thompson, major, New Mexico Volunteer Cavalry, dated Lake Valley, N. Mex., December 24, 1885.

I have the honor to suggest as a remedy for our present Indian trouble in New Mexico and Arizona that Congress should speedily call out a volunteer force of 500 or 1,000 men through the governors of New Mexico and Arizona. One or two thousand mountaineers and Mexicans in these Territories, well mounted, armed, equipped, and offered by tried men, would do more toward settling this war than any other step that could be taken. New Mexico has not the funds to keep 50 men in the field. In this respect we are powerless. * * * The people are getting sick over the action of United States field commanders. * * * They march by daylight with all the notoriety possible and encamp at night, build large fires, seemingly to notify the hostiles to keep out of sight, and when a fight occurs the enemy invariably ambush the

troops, as they did Lieutenant Fountain, Troop C, Eighth Cavalry, on the 15th of December, 1885, near White House Ranch, on the Rio Gila, Grant County, New Mexico. If a force of volunteers were called out with equal facilities as to pay and supplies, I am sure these Indians would soon be killed or run out of our country. Night marching is the only way to come up with these wily savages. By this means their camps can be surprised, their stock captured, and the warriors killed. * * * I have been out for over two months with from ten to thirty men, acting with United States troops; did all their trailing and scenting by daylight only, and not one Indian has been killed. I have lost four of my men killed and two wounded. The Territory is unable to pay my men or to furnish rations for man and horse, and consequently I have quit the field in disgust, knowing that under the present system of organization and system of campaigning I could accomplish nothing towards getting rid of these hostiles.

Also, the following :

Extract from letter of A. J. Fountain, colonel First Regiment New Mexico Cavalry, dated Las Cruces, N. Mex., January 3, 1886.

If asked to devise a plan to drive the hostiles out of Southern New Mexico, and keep them out, I would suggest—

(1) Station a detachment, say 15 to 20 regular troops (infantry) at the several watering places on the Mexican line and between the line and the mountains, these detachments simply to hold the water and prevent hostiles from getting any. They should intrench; hold a troop of *irregular* native cavalry at, say, Hillsborough, Deming, Lordsburg, and Palomas Lake, the horses to be kept in good order and readiness for immediate pursuit of fugitive Indians over the plains between the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Mexican line. Stock cars for the horses should be kept on a side track at Lordsburg and Deming, so that the troops could be moved promptly to points on the railroad. Then take, say, 500 native volunteer militia, *dismounted*; let every man carry ten days' rations in his blanket, the rations to consist of *pinola* and dried beef *only*. Start these men on foot at the head of the Mogollon Mountains; furnish them with a supply of blood-hounds; let them scout the mountains south, driving the hostiles before them; when they get them *out* of the mountains, the mounted men to take up the pursuit. You have then got the enemy out on the plains, all the watering places are guarded, and if he is not annihilated it will be the fault of the officers in charge of the movement.

(2) The men should be uniformed in olive-green canvas duck, such a dress as is worn by miners and ranchmen, the most sensible and serviceable uniform that can be devised.

(3) The men should be well paid, say \$30 per month for footmen and \$45 per month for cavalry.

(4) Supply depots should be established at the principal towns, mining camps, and the several watering places. Packages of rations containing the proper proportions of hard bread, dried beef, ground coffee, sugar and salt, not to exceed 60 pounds in weight, securely packed in *rawhide covers*, should be kept at the supply depots ready for instantaneous issue. Two of these packages would be a load for one pack mule. Common-sense paniers, such as are used by prospectors, made of rawhide, should be furnished for pack mules whenever pack mules are used. Every cavalryman should have five pounds of *pinola* and two and a half pounds of finely-ground dried beef mixed. This should be carried in a strong canvas sack behind his saddle. He might also be allowed to carry a small sack of ground coffee in his pocket. This ration should last him five days.

These are the opinions of practical men who have been forced by events to reflect on the subject under consideration. Colonel Fountain's suggestions are particularly valuable from the fact that he has been fighting these very Indians from time to time for the last twenty-five years, having served some time under Col. Kit Carson. Major Thompson and Colonel Fountain have been called out several times since this outbreak to defend their fellow-citizens, and have demonstrated by the vigor of their operations the value of troops of the kind provided for in this bill. Neither the views of these gentlemen, or the pertinent and intelligent statements of Governor Ross, are derived from Cooper's novels, nor are they dulled or distorted by two thousand miles of distance. With them it is a problem of life and death, and they have measured it as such, and their face to face judgment is of great value.

Your committee believe that no one will contest the necessity for prompt action in this matter, nor will any be found to deny but what this measure promises practical relief. The precedents for such action by Congress are numerous. It called out volunteers in the Creek war, 1813-'14; the Seminole war, 1817-'18; the Black Hawk war, 1831-'32; the Cherokee disturbances, 1838-'39; the Creek war of 1836-'37; the Florida Indian war, 1835-'43; the Apache, Navajo, and Utah wars of 1846-'56; the Comanche war, 1854; the Seminole war of 1856-'58; the Apache and Navajo, in these Territories, in 1861-'63, and the wars with Indians on the Pacific slope.

In fixing the pay of the troops provided for in this bill, your committee has been actuated by a desire to secure for this service not only men who were well qualified, but the best men, men who have families and property at stake. Unless men of this class, who are commonly dependent on their labor for the support of themselves and families, can receive enough to support their families in their absence, the result would probably be that the ranks of these regiments would be filled with a reckless and turbulent class of men, by no means as reliable as the sober and industrious class first mentioned, and who compose the vast majority of the people of these Territories. While the pay of the privates and non-commissioned officers is in excess of that of the Regular Army, it is not thought by your committee to be in excess of what the circumstances warrant.

As to the extra horse per man provided in the bill, the cost of this extra mount is not to be considered against its necessity, and in any event the cost of two such horses (Mexican or Indian ponies) as are provided for will not equal the cost of the one American cavalry horse used by the regular cavalryman, which horse has to be kept in grain, and generally in hay, at great expense for transportation, while the native pony will live on native grasses and at no cost to the Government.

While your committee recognize that it is no part of their duty to argue the case for this bill in their report, they cannot refrain from answering here a question which presents the only objection we have heard raised to this bill, namely, Will not these troops provided for by this bill be too savage, and degrade the service of the United States to the level of private vengeance? We will answer that question with another: Does any man deny to the settler on the frontier the right to defend himself, his wife, child, and home against the stealth and cunning of a diabolical murderer? Self-preservation has the sanction of God and man alike, and unless the opponents of this measure can show that these settlers are not entitled to the benefit, as against savages, of the *first law*, then we submit that they should borrow no trouble about extermination. These settlers want the blood of the savage only upon one condition, and that is when it is necessary to shed his blood in order to save the life and honor of wife or child. If the Indian will not submit, and cease from pillage and murder, then his blood is upon his own head. If the savage brings on a war of extermination, it is not the fault of the defenseless white men of the frontier. What these Territories ask is protection. That protection it is one of the ends and duties of Government to give, and we recommend the passage of this bill as a means to that end.