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Report : Claim of Nebraska

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 10, 1892.—Ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany S. 2476, to reimburse the State of Nebraska the expenses incurred by that State in repelling a threatened invasion and raid by the Sioux in 1890-'91.]

The committee report in favor of the passage of this bill, with certain amendments indicated in the following print of the bill as proposed to be passed:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Treasury is hereby directed, through the proper accounting officers of the Treasury, to audit and pay the actual and necessary expenses incurred by and for the national guard of the State of Nebraska, called into the service of that State by Governor Thayer in the year eighteen hundred and ninety and eighteen hundred and ninety-one, to repel a threatened invasion and raid, then imminent, by the Sioux, on presentation by the governor or other proper authorities of said State of statements of the actual and necessary expenses incurred by said State for said purpose, accompanied, so far as possible, with the proper vouchers and satisfactory proof of the correctness thereof; and that the sum of forty-two thousand dollars be, and the same is hereby, appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, or so much thereof as may be necessary, to carry out the provisions of this act: *Provided,* That the pay and allowances to the officers and enlisted men of said national guard shall not exceed the pay and allowances of the Army of the United States.

The Sioux Reservation, with its 18,000 square miles, occupied by about 22,000 Sioux Indians, is located in great part in South Dakota, along the northern border of Nebraska, and in part in the last-named State. Brave and warlike, and retaining much of their original savagery, they are a foe to be feared, and their outbreak or threat of war causes dreadful anticipation among all settlers in their vicinity. The events of the winter of 1890-'91 are too notorious and of too recent a date to need more than the faintest reference to them. Trouble threatened during all of the summer and fall of 1890, and in November, was so imminent and a threat of such magnitude that, with Gen. Miles in command, a large body of United States troops was placed within striking distance of the hostile Indians.

The whole border was greatly alarmed and many settlers fled from their farms, taking refuge in the towns in northwestern Nebraska. Indeed such action was recommended by the officers of the Government and the War Department distributed arms among the frontiersmen for their better protection. The latter part of December, 1890, after the battle of Wounded Knee and the retreat of about 4,000 hostile Indians to the Bad Lands along White River, about 15 miles from the Nebraska

line, a general Indian war involving all the tribes of the powerful Sioux Nation seemed unavoidable and danger to life and property was great. On January 2, 1891 the governor of Nebraska ordered the First Brigade of the Nebraska National Guard to the frontier to coöperate with the United States troops under Gen. Miles. The First and Second Regiments responded promptly and under the command of Gen. L. W. Colby took positions as indicated in the following plan.

These troops were moved by rail from different parts of the State, and Company A, light artillery, and Troop A, of cavalry, were placed and held in readiness to move. The headquarters of the brigade were established at Rushville, Nebr., and the danger was threatening for a distance of 150 miles east and west and for 30 miles north and south. Hundreds of settlers had fled from their homes, leaving their stock and property uncared for. At Chadron alone there were 130 families of settlers gathered in from the neighborhood, dependent upon the public for shelter and food, and much the same condition obtained in all the frontier towns. Gen. Colby established a line of fortified posts or camps north of the line of towns on the Elkhorn Valley Railroad, with a reserve force at each important town.

The appearance of the State troops gave encouragement and confidence to the people, and the National Guard was a valuable adjunct to the troops of the Government stationed on the Indian reservation. Gen. Miles approved of the disposition of the State troops. Many of the settlers returned to their homes. Strict military discipline was maintained in all the camps, and the National Guard of Nebraska won additional credit by prompt, cheerful, and able performance of their duties. On January 12, 1891, Gen. Miles communicated with Gen. Colby that the Indians showed every disposition to comply with the orders of the authorities. He said:

I feel that the State troops can now be withdrawn with safety, and desire, through you, to express to them my thanks for the confidence they have given your people in their isolated homes.

On January 13, Gen. Victor Vifquain, adjutant-general of Nebraska, wired Gen. Colby:

Your command will remain at the front until the lives and property of citizens are perfectly secured. Be more vigilant than ever; advise me daily. You will withdraw your command when every thing is safe, not before.

On January 14, with the approval of Gen. Miles, Gen. Colby moved the troops to their homes. The campaign was made in the depth of winter in a country affording the severest of weather, and officers and soldiers vied with each other in the performance of their duty.

The following letter, lately received from the adjutant-general of Nebraska, is self explanatory:

STATE OF NEBRASKA, OFFICE OF ADJUTANT-GENERAL,
Lincoln, March 5, 1892.

DEAR SENATOR: I mail you this day the report of the Indian campaign of 1890-'91, as submitted to the legislature, duly certified to by the governor. The legislature loaned the money, so to speak, until the Federal Government should refund the same. I call your attention to pages 17 and 19 for dispatches of Gen. Miles, especially page 17, the last sentence of which commences: "I feel that the State troops can now be withdrawn with safety, etc." This shows that the State troops were needed, that they did not go to a picnic in midwinter. The truth is that the position occupied by the Nebraska National Guards cut off the last chance for the escape of the Indians west of the Black Hills.

The legislature appropriated \$37,200; I asked for \$40,000. They thought they knew better than I did and they were mistaken; it will certainly take \$42,000 to settle everything.

I do not think that you wish to be burdened with one thousand different vouchers. The appropriation clause can read "\$42,000, or as much thereof as necessary, the same to be at the disposal of the Secretary of War, to be paid to the State after the vouchers have been submitted to that official," or words to that effect. We will then take steps to present the vouchers which I am now compiling for the purpose. Do you not think this the best way?

I am, Senator, yours respectfully,

VICTOR VIFQUAIN,
Adjutant-General.

Senator CHAS. F. MANDERSON,
Washington, D. C.

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