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Missouri volunteers.

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MISSOURI VOLUNTEERS.

[To accompany bill S. No. 209.]

MAY 31, 1838.

Read, and, with the bill, committed to a Committee of the Whole House to-morrow.

Mr. E. WHITTLESEY, from the Committee of Claims, made the following

REPORT:

The Committee of Claims, to which was referred the bill from the Senate (No. 209) to authorize payment to be made to the Missouri volunteers whose horses were lost or cast away on the voyage to Tampa Bay, report:

That the bill provides "that payments be made, under the direction of the Third Auditor, to the Missouri volunteers whose horses were lost or cast away at sea, or which perished or died in consequence of sufferings at sea in the voyage from New Orleans to Tampa Bay, in the month of November last; and that the sum of thirty-five thousand dollars, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, be appropriated to make said payments."

The bill is accompanied by document No. 177, which is composed of the resolution directing the Committee on Military Affairs to inquire into the expediency of making provision for paying for said horses; Mr. Poinsett's letter to Mr. Benton, enclosing a report from Major Cross, acting Quartermaster General; a letter from Mr. Hagner, Third Auditor, to Mr. Benton, on the subject of these losses; and an extract of a letter from Colonel Z. Taylor to Major General Jesup, dated November 26, 1837.

Colonel Taylor says: "Out of 450 horses belonging to the Missouri volunteers, shipped at New Orleans for this place, 300 of them have been cast away or lost, in consequence of the severe gales which have prevailed in the gulf since they left the mouth of the Mississippi; and a portion of what few have arrived, have been rendered unfit for service; so that a great portion of the regiment must act on foot, if they act at all; as I have this moment been informed, by the colonel and lieutenant colonel commanding them, that there was great discontent among them in consequence of the loss of their horses, and as the order had been given for them to take the field, it was doubtful whether a portion of them would do so, alleging that they had been engaged to act as mounted men."

To ascertain whether those who lost their horses were remounted at the expense of the United States, or whether they refused to do duty on foot, as it was suggested they might by Colonel Taylor, the committee addressed a letter to the Secretary of War, and desired information on the points mentioned. Major Cross, acting Quartermaster General, reported it did not appear that the men were remounted at the expense of the United States.

A detailed report was made by Mr. Hagner, under date of May 3, 1838, to the Secretary of War, which was sent to the committee, to which reference is made. It appears from that report that the Missouri volunteer regiment of cavalry was commanded by Col. Gentry, and mustered four hundred and fifteen men, including field and staff officers. Transportation was paid for 417 men; and in the calculation of expense hereafter mentioned, that number is taken as a divisor. That said regiment of men, with their horses, equipage, accoutrements, forage, &c., were put on board of two steamboats, chartered at St. Louis by the United States, and transported to New Orleans; that, at New Orleans, five vessels were chartered to transport the said regiment to Tampa Bay; and that it arrived at the latter place before the end of November, (from Colonel Taylor's letter, on or about the 26th of that month;) that, on the last day of November, and on the first day of December, 1837, one hundred and eighty-three of said volunteers were discharged.

The committee addressed a letter to Mr. Hagner on the 7th of May, eliciting such further information as they thought necessary to enable them to present to the House a statement of the expense incurred in mustering in and out of service the men thus dismissed. Other inquiries were made, to which his answer is responsive.

The committee refer to his letter, under date of the 23d of May, and to the documents that accompany it. It appears from that letter and the documents, that the regiment volunteered for six months; that the men rendezvoused at St. Louis from the 5th to the 15th of October, 1837; and that the following sums were expended:

For transporting said regiment to New Orleans from St. Louis, and for supplies furnished	\$20,051 51
The same from New Orleans to Tampa Bay	20,832 94
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Transportation and supplies for 417 men, and their horses, from St. Louis to Tampa Bay	\$40,884 45
<hr/>	
For 183 men and their horses, is	\$17,942 09
For each man	\$97 88
These 183 men were paid at Tampa Bay, where they were dismissed	19,259 16
Being an average to each man of	105 24
The horses lost on the passage, owned by 175 of the men so dismissed, amount to	12,060 00
Not shown to have so died, but were rendered useless or turned over to the United States	8,758 00
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	\$20,818 00
Average price per man for horses for 175 men, (servants had no horses,) is	119 00
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Average expenses for each man, except transportation to New Orleans, or to St. Louis	\$322 12
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Whole amount of expenses for 183 men, except for transportation to New Orleans, is	\$58,019 25
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In addition to this sum, is the expense of transportation for these troops from Tampa Bay to New Orleans, or to St. Louis. This amount has not been returned. They performed no service; were honorably discharged; were transported to New Orleans, if not to St. Louis, at the public expense, in vessels and steamboats; and were allowed pay for eighty-five days in returning from Tampa Bay; and were conveyed as fast as wind and steam could carry them.

This statement is not presented to criminate any one, but to show the waste of public money in carrying on this war.

The system of calling out so many mounted men may be radically wrong, and perhaps the fault rests with Congress; but, wherever it is, it should be corrected.

It appears, from the copy of a letter from Mr. Poinsett to General Atkinson, dated September 8, 1837, that a regiment of Missouri volunteers would be accepted for the campaign in Florida, if it could arrive at Tampa Bay by the middle of October. General Atkinson was informed that he was at liberty to use the dragoon horses for the purpose of aiding the corps, if he deemed it necessary to mount the men. The number of horses at the Jefferson barracks was stated to be about three hundred.

In a letter of the same date, from Mr. Poinsett to Colonel Gentry, the latter is informed that six hundred volunteers from the State of Missouri would be accepted for the next campaign in Florida, provided they could be raised in season to reach Tampa Bay by the middle of October, or by the 1st of November at the latest.

It appears, from these letters, that the Secretary of War did not anticipate that the men were to be mounted, further than they could be supplied with the dragoon horses then at Jefferson barracks, the property of the United States.

The marching of the regiment must have been greatly delayed, in the time taken to procure horses for a regiment of men, and its movement must have been retarded by the encumbrance of so many horses.

It appears, by the copy of an order from Adjutant General Jones to Brigadier General Armistead, under date of January 18, 1838, that the 1st regiment of Missouri volunteers was to be discharged from the service.

The committee have not been able to ascertain by whose order this regiment was sent more than 1,700 miles by water; but however disastrous the passage was, the order must have emanated from an officer, and, in the opinion of the committee, the men should not be the sufferers in a case where no fault is traced to them.