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### Report : Mr. Davis, of Mississippi

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IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

JANUARY 31, 1849.

Submitted, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. DAVIS, of Mississippi, made the following

REPORT:

[To accompany joint resolution S. No. 54.]

*The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas, recommending the survey of a route and the construction of a national road to the territory recently acquired from Mexico, and suggesting as the most eligible line of location that which shall commence at Fort Smith, on the western border of said State, and pass through the valley of the Canadian river to Santa Fe, and thence to California, have considered the same and report:*

That the committee recognize in the proposition of the memorialists a work fully warranted by its necessity as connected with the military defence of the frontier, and the efficient regulation of intercourse with the Indian tribes. Successfully to execute these proper duties of the government, military roads and posts and Indian agencies are requisite; and scarcely less so that intimate knowledge of the topography of the country essential in the conduct of all military operations. In no case could such knowledge be more indispensable than that which is presented by the duty to control the nomadic tribes who roam over the plains of the "great prairie," and through the mountain fastnesses which lie beyond it. Familiar with the defiles, these Indian tribes could elude the pursuit of the best troops, who should, without proper reconnoissance having been previously made, attempt to check or chastise depredators on remote settlements or emigrating parties.

To maintain civil government in our transmontane possessions; to promote their early occupation by emigrants from these States, and to perpetuate the political union of the Atlantic and Pacific slopes by continuous lines of settlement from ocean to ocean, it is deemed necessary to open the shortest and best routes from the valley of the Mississippi to the Pacific, and to give the greatest possible security to the transit of persons and property. It is believed that a speedy commercial route is not more required by the financial, than by the political interests of our country. In this view the

committee cannot be indifferent to speculations which involve such great results, but recommend nothing except as connected with the military defence.

The route suggested by the memorialists, like that from Independence, Mo., has been explored. Both are considered practicable; both, though not in an equal degree, are obstructed by winter snows and pass over a desert prairie. The Red river on the east, and the Gila on the west of the valley of the Rio Grande, rising in the mountain ridges nearly opposite to each other, and running thence to the Mississippi and the Gulf of California, suggest the idea of a route being found through the valleys of these rivers to connect the opposite sides of the continent together, and which would pass through a country capable of supporting the requisite population to maintain a thoroughfare of such importance. Much of the Rio Grande below the town of El Paso is unexplored; its examination could be made in executing the boundary survey, and this, with the survey of the mountain range on the east side of the Rio Grande, and south of Santa Fé, would furnish data upon which to locate roads, posts and agencies, for the protection of that frontier, and the regulation of intercourse with the Indian tribes who inhabit it.

These explorations will have to be made to a great extent in a desert region, among savages with whom the government has not established friendly intercourse, and therefore must be protected by strong escorts, and furnished with transportation for the conveyance of a large part of their subsistence. The escorts may, it is believed, be principally furnished by the army, and it is hoped that expeditions properly conducted, and penetrating regions heretofore unknown to civilized man, will be, in an eminent degree, productive of an amicable disposition on the part of the aborigines thus visited towards the citizens of the United States. If this hope should be fulfilled, the troops so employed will have been engaged in their highest function, the preservation of peace.

The estimate of the chief of the topographical engineers, in his report of this year, is taken as a guide, and the appropriation asked for in the resolution of the committee corresponds generally with the statement of that officer, viz:

For military surveys in Nebraska, .....	\$10,000
“ “ “ “ California, .....	10,000
“ “ “ “ New Mexico, .....	10,000
“ “ “ “ Texas, .....	15,000
Contingent expenses, .....	5,000
	<hr/>
	\$50,000
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In the first item Nebraska is substituted for Oregon. No estimate is made for the exploration of the lower Rio Grande, because it is considered as appropriately belonging to the survey and establishment of the boundary between the United States and the republic of Mexico.

It being no part of their duty, so it is not the purpose of the committee to recommend measures of civil policy, but only to refer to political considerations as recommending the military measures proposed. The establishment of posts must be preceded by the construction of military roads, and these roads and posts, giving facility, inducement and protection to emigrants, will be followed by settlements, which will remove the necessity for the maintenance of garrisons; unite the regions on opposite sides of the mountain ridge which divides the continent, by successive links of farms and villages, lead to the construction of commercial roads, and bind the whole country by constant intercourse and common interest durably together. The dangers, the difficulties, the privations and delays, which have attended transit by the overland route, have produced an anomaly in the history of our settlements. Emigration, instead of steadily advancing, has passed around our territory through a foreign country, to locate on the shores of the Pacific, leaving an unpeopled desert between their new homes and the country they have left. If any thing could, this might alienate American citizens from the government of the United States. These considerations, it is hoped, will illustrate and enforce the propriety of the measures recommended; as the first step in the execution of which the committee report the accompanying resolution.