

7-7-1852

Report : Mr. Shields

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

JULY 7, 1852.

Ordered to be printed.

Mr. SHIELDS made the following

REPORT:

[To accompany act H. R. No. 259.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred House bill No. 259, entitled "An act to provide for the protection of the Territories of New Mexico, Oregon and the States of Texas and California," have had the same under consideration, together with the memorial of Samuel A. Belden and others, citizens of Texas, praying an increase of military force on the frontier of that State for the protection of its citizens against Mexican and Indian incursions, and report :

That the state of affairs on the Rio Grande frontier appears to be of the most deplorable character. Pillage, robbery and murder are of such frequent occurrence as to render life and property altogether insecure; and unless immediate steps be taken to arrest the evil, there is reason to apprehend that it will end in an atrocious and vindictive border warfare in that region of our country.

Your committee will not, at this time, inquire into the causes which have produced these outrages, nor is it deemed material to specify particulars; but it is a matter of public notoriety, that the present condition of the Texan frontier is such as to require the immediate attention of the government.

The mixed character of the population on the Rio Grande frontier, differing in habits, manners and language, would naturally lead to dissensions; add to this that the American settlements on the Rio Grande are sparse and defenceless, and it will be readily conceded that adequate protection cannot be furnished by the civil authorities, backed by a small and insufficient regular force along such a vast extent of country.

Protection, such as the exigency of the case requires, can, in the opinion of the committee, be afforded only by a strong force of mounted riflemen, such as was used, in a similar case, by the republic of Texas.

An equal necessity seems to exist for the employment of a similar force in California. A large portion of the population of this State, from the nature and variety of their pursuits, are scattered over the frontier and exposed to Indian hostilities. It is not to be expected that a small regular military force could furnish adequate protection throughout the whole extent of the California frontier; and besides, experience shows that the temptation to desertion is so great, that the regular military force cannot

be relied on for adequate frontier protection in that State. Mounted rangers seem to be best calculated for such irregular and anomalous border service, until such time as a change in the condition of things in these States may render a small regular force sufficient for their protection.

The measure here recommended will enable the President to call out this force as circumstances may render it necessary; and if, upon full trial, it be found efficient, he will be able to withdraw, at his discretion, a large portion of the regular force from California and Texas, and concentrate the same in New Mexico and Utah, and on the great lines of travel between the Mississippi valley and Pacific coast.

This disposition of the military force of the country will afford additional, and it is to be hoped, adequate protection to the inhabitants of these Territories, and to immigrants crossing the continent; and will, besides, contribute to diminish the enormous expense of maintaining a multitude of small military posts—*policed* rather than garrisoned by military detachments, wholly insufficient to overawe the Indians or to protect the inhabitants.

With a view, therefore, to preserve peace with a neighboring republic—to prevent a lawless border warfare—and to afford such protection to our frontier settlers as their present defenceless situation so urgently requires, your committee report back the bill with an amendment, which it is to be hoped will accomplish these desirable objects.