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Difficulties between the people of Texas and Mexico. Letter from the Secretary of War, furnishing information in relation to difficulties between the people of Texas and the people of Mexico.

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DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS AND
MEXICO.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

FURNISHING

*Information in relation to difficulties between the people of Texas and
the people of Mexico.*

MARCH 23, 1860.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and ordered to be
printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
March 23, 1860.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22d instant, asking for information in relation to difficulties between the government or people of the State of Texas and the people of Mexico, and, in reply, transmit to you herewith the latest information which has been received at this department on the subject.

The answer to the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 1st instant, to which you refer, will be communicated to the House on Monday next.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.

Hon. B. STANTON,
*Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs,
House of Representatives.*

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS,
San Antonio, March 6, 1860.

COLONEL: Reports from the posts in the northern part of Texas give frequent information of depredations upon the settlements. These have become more numerous and daring since the necessity has arisen

for withdrawing a portion of the force on that line, to place it on the Rio Grande. During the last months outrages have occurred in the immediate neighborhood of many of the posts, several of which are occupied by cavalry. In some instances Indians have been overtaken and punished; in others they have escaped, from the nature of the ground, the obliteration of the trail, or other causes beyond the control of the pursuing party.

The horses of the 2d cavalry have become so reduced by constant service, exposure, and scarcity of food and grass, that they fail in the pursuit, and sometimes perish. The marauders are generally in small parties, and sometimes on foot.

On the night of February 3 the animals of residents in the immediate vicinity of Camp Colorado were driven off. On the night of February 17 the mule yard at Camp Cooper, over which a sentinel was posted, was broken in, and the whole herd driven off. Twenty-three of the animals were recovered by a party sent at daylight in pursuit; but the remainder, forty mules and three horses, were not overtaken. The force at the post was so much reduced by scouts then out that the detachment sent under Lieutenant Lowe, adjutant of the regiment, was principally composed of the band.

The following night all the animals from the Indian agency, two or three miles distant from Camp Cooper, were stolen, and Major Thomas, you will perceive in his report, which is herewith forwarded, is under the impression that the thieves were not Comanches. Bent's Fort, where it is conjectured the stolen animals have been sold, is above Fort Atkinson, on the Arkansas.

On the same evening on which the animals from the Indian agency were stolen, February 18, a citizen residing within two miles of Fort Mason was shot, within 100 yards of his house, by three Indians on foot. The commanding officer did not hear of the attack till next morning, when he endeavored for three days to discover the trail of the assassins, but without effect.

I have noticed these cases as the most recent, and to show the audacity of the marauders. There is but one company at Camp Cooper, which is too small a force, in my opinion, for the position; but, until some of the companies can be withdrawn from the Rio Grande, I see no prospect of reinforcing it, unless the commanding general of the army should think that the two companies of the 1st cavalry at Fort Washita could be used for that purpose. There are two companies of 1st cavalry and one of infantry at Fort Arbuckle, and I have no means of judging of the importance of the troops at Fort Washita, and am therefore unwilling to remove them. On the Rio Grande there are three companies 2d cavalry, three companies 8th infantry, and three companies 1st artillery. Should the quiet of that region be again disturbed, it will be necessary, in my opinion, to send there another company of cavalry. The troops in the department are posted over a long line of frontier, and yet, from the paucity of their numbers, are unable to protect the settlements. The best method of preventing the inroads of the Indians is to send a strong body of troops into their country, which would have the effect

of recalling them to their women and children; but there is not at this time within the department a force available for the purpose.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. E. LEE,

Brevet Colonel, Commanding Department.

Colonel L. THOMAS,

*Adjutant General, Headquarters of the Army,
New York, N. Y.*

An officer, Colonel Brown, has just arrived here from Fort Brown, who brings later news from the lower Rio Grande than Colonel Lee possessed at the date of this report. Major Heintzleman reported to Colonel Lee, early in this month, that the disturbances in that quarter had ceased, and that Cortinas had fled to the interior of Mexico. Colonel Brown concurs in these impressions, as did all the officers under Major Heintzleman. The latter, therefore, needs no reinforcement. The recent disturbances on our side of the lower Rio Grande were commenced by Texans and carried on (vainly) by and between them. Cortinas himself and most of his brigands are natives of Texas. A brother horse-thief burned a house belonging to the mother of Cortinas, living in Texas, consequent on a quarrel about dividing the stolen property. Cortinas retaliated, and hence our side of the river for many miles has been devastated. But few, if any, Mexicans from the opposite side took part in the disturbances. There was no attack from the Mexican side upon our boat, the *Ranchero*, loaded with provisions. Her colors were not rent by bullets, &c.

Respectfully submitted to the Secretary of War.

WINFIELD SCOTT.

MARCH 19, 1860.

CAMP COOPER, TEXAS, *February 21, 1860.*

SIR: I have the honor to report that, in obedience to your instructions, I left this camp, on the morning of the 18th instant, with a party consisting of one non-commissioned officer and nine privates of the regimental band, and six privates of company "D," to pursue a party of depredators who had stolen some government animals on the night of the 17th.

After a search of two hours I struck the trail about 12 o'clock, and followed it at a brisk trot until dark. The next morning I again started at a rapid gait, but, after going some twelve miles, (I had then followed it nearly sixty miles,) buffaloes became so numerous that the trail was completely obliterated, and I found it impossible to go further with any possibility of overtaking them. The trail, in its general direction, bore N.N.E.

I found two mules that had been killed, and one alive, which I brought back. Neither of the three had any of the marks or brands usually found upon animals belonging to Comanches; and from this

fact I am led to believe that the thieves must belong to some other tribe. I would take occasion to state, from reports which seem to be well authenticated, that the prevailing impression in this part of the country is, that most of the animals taken from Texas are driven to Bent's Fort for sale.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

W. W. LOWE,

First Lieutenant and Adjutant 2d Cavalry.

Major G. H. THOMAS,

Second Cavalry, Commanding Post.

HEADQUARTERS CAMP COOPER, TEXAS,
February 22, 1860.

SIR: I have to report, for the information of the department commander, that on the night of the 17th instant the sentinel on post, over the public mules at this post permitted, by criminal neglect of his duty, some person or persons to pull up a number of the pickets on one side of the yard, cut the bell from the neck of the bell-mule, and drive off the whole herd, and gave no alarm for fifteen or twenty minutes afterwards. Immediately after daylight I sent a party in pursuit, and twenty-one mules and two condemned horses, which had strayed from the herd, were recovered. At 9 a. m. another party, under Lieutenant Lowe, adjutant 2d cavalry, was sent with instructions to pursue them as far as possible. I enclose Lieutenant Lowe's report herewith, and will also state, in confirmation of the opinion expressed in the last paragraph, that the depredations this winter all appear to have been committed on a systematic plan, and with such an evident understanding among the parties committing them, that I am inclined to think there is some foundation for the opinion referred to by Lieutenant Lowe. The night after the mules were stolen from the post, all the animals at the agency, except those locked up in the stable, were carried off. This party was pursued by four Mexicans living with Colonel Leper, on mules which I loaned them for the occasion. On the Little Wichita, some distance above the crossing of the Radzinski road, they came upon a couple of Indians who had with them six horses, four of which were taken by the Mexicans, the Indians making their escape on the other two. Mr. B. Harden, a citizen from one of the lower counties, had left a private horse in charge of the quartermaster until his return with the scout under Lieutenant Cunningham, which scout he had accompanied to show the trail made by the party from Erath and Palo Pinto counties; this horse was carried off by the persons who broke into the mule yard. I also enclose Lieutenant Cunningham's report.

I am sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEORGE H. THOMAS,

Major 2d Cavalry.

The ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL,

Headquarters Department of Texas, San Antonio, Texas.

HEADQUARTERS BROWNSVILLE EXPEDITION,
Fort Brown, Texas, February 29, 1860.

SIR: I have the honor to report that Cortinas and his followers have dispersed, and I do not believe that another effort will be made by him to collect a force.

After the affair of the 4th of February, at the Bolsa, he retired to La Mesa, six miles back from the river, and there remained with a small force, until within a few days, when he left with five men, and is reported to be at Camargo, or further back in the interior. Immediately after he left, a body of troops from Matamoras were seen in the vicinity of his abandoned camp. As his mother and a brother are desirous to return to this side of the river and to occupy their ranches, I am strengthened in the belief that Cortinas has left permanently.

The cavalry rangers are actively employed in guarding the river, but it will be impossible to entirely prevent the incursions of robbers so long as they have the protection of the Mexican side of the river.

By occupying this post with two companies, and one each at Ringgold barracks and Fort McIntosh, and with two companies of cavalry in the field, I think quiet can be maintained on the lower Rio Grande.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. P. HEINTZLEMAN,

Major 1st Infantry, Com'g Brownsville Expedition.

Captain JOHN WIHERS,

*Assistant Adjutant General, U. S. Army,
 San Antonio, Texas.*

P. S.—Captains Lee's and Jordan's companies of 8th infantry arrived here on the 27th. The latter will return to Ringgold barracks in a few days, and the former await here further instructions.

Their march and arrival here have had a salutary effect.

S. P. H.

HEADQUARTERS BROWNSVILLE EXPEDITION,
Fort Brown, Texas, March 7, 1860.

SIR: I have the honor to enclose herewith a copy of my letter to the department headquarters, dated the 29th of February. Since then I have heard of but one small party on this side of the river. They were engaged in removing the body of a man shot by the rangers the evening before, and were under the protection of an armed party "on the south bank of the river."

I have to-day heard that Cortinas is at the rancho of "Reyotano," a few leagues above, collecting men to cross over; also, that he slept last night in Matamoras. It is now said that the report of his having gone to Monterey was only circulated to throw us off our guard. I have not had time to verify these reports.

The telegraphic reports in the newspapers of orders to cross after Cortinas, and the arrival to-day of company "G," second cavalry, one officer and sixty-three men, have created much alarm in Matamoras,

and may induce the authorities to act more efficiently. They know that we can starve them out in a fortnight. There is not a grain of corn in this part of the country. All the corn and flour they use goes from this side.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. P. HEINTZLEMAN,

Major 1st Infantry, Com'g Brownsville Expedition.

Col. S. COOPER,

Adjutant General U. S. A., Washington, D. C.

[Telegram.]

WAR DEPARTMENT, *February 28, 1860.*

SIR: Your despatch was received and promptly submitted to the President, when action was immediately had to carry out your wishes.

Such measures as the means and the power of this department could command have been taken for the defence of the Texan frontier on the Mexican border. An officer of great discretion and ability has been despatched to take command of the department of Texas, and has no doubt arrived at the scene of action before this date.

Strong additional reinforcements will be sent into Texas as soon as the season of the year will render a movement of troops possible.

JOHN B. FLOYD,

Secretary of War.

Hon. SAM HOUSTON,

Governor of Texas.

[Telegraphic despatch.]

AUSTIN, *March 8, 1860.*

SIR: Judging from the tenor of despatches from your department to me, of the 28th ultimo, that the government has not at command sufficient troops to afford the immediate protection to Texas desired, I herewith tender the services of five thousand (5,000) Texas volunteers.

Texas is ready for the emergency, and will act at a moment's warning. Texas needs, to repel invasions both from the Indians and Mexico, an immediate supply of arms.

In view of the atrocities committed on our people, I hope the department will send, without delay, by steamer or railroad conveyance, to care of Messrs. Perkins & Co., New Orleans, Forbes & McKee, Port Lavacca, and J. M. Sweenson, Austin, Texas, two thousand (2,000) percussion rifles and appendages, one thousand (1,000) breech-loading ditto and appendages, three thousand (3,000) Colt's revolvers with appendages, and one thousand (1,000) cavalry accoutrements.

Texas has always been deficient in arms, and has drawn but few.
 Danger is upon her now, and she needs them at once.

Be pleased to reply by telegraph without delay.

SAM HOUSTON.

HON. JOHN B. FLOYD.

[Telegraphic despatch.]

WAR DEPARTMENT, *March 14, 1860.*

SIR: Your despatch of the 8th instant has been received and submitted to the President.

He directs me to say that he declines your tender of volunteers, inasmuch as a despatch has this day been received by the adjutant general of the army from Brevet Colonel Harvey Brown, 2d artillery, dated New Orleans, March 13, 1860, in which he says:

“I left Brownsville on the 8th instant. All was quiet on the frontier. The disturbances were believed to be over, and Cortinas to have given up the contest, and to have retired into the interior of Mexico. Major Heintzleman has officially reported the war to be ended.”

This information being so much later and more direct from the scene of the late difficulties than you could have received at Austin at the date of your despatch, leads the President to believe that you are mistaken, or have been misinformed.

Besides, there are now in Texas, ready for active service, two thousand six hundred and fifty-one troops, which force will soon be increased by the addition of ten companies, comprising eight hundred and forty-two men, now under orders to proceed there from New Mexico. Of these last, five companies are to be stationed at Ringgold barracks, and five at Fort Clark.

The quota of arms now due to the State of Texas under the law amounts to one hundred and sixty-nine muskets, which, in an emergency, may be doubled by anticipating the quota for the next year, and which will be promptly delivered upon your requisition. As the money value of the arms for the two quotas does not amount to five thousand dollars, you will readily perceive that it is entirely impracticable to meet the requisition for arms, appendages, and accoutrements made in your despatch, the cost of which, at the lowest estimate, is within a fraction of one hundred thousand dollars.

The President further directs me to say that, with a sincere desire, in every practicable way, to meet the wishes of the governor and people of Texas, he conceives he has already performed his whole duty in the premises under the circumstances.

Very respectfully,

W. R. DRINKARD,

Acting Secretary of War.

His excellency SAM HOUSTON,
Governor of Texas, Austin, Texas.