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Letter of the Secretary of War, communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of February 5, 1867, information in relation to an order issued by Lieutenant General Sherman in regard to the protection of trains on the overland route.

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LETTER
OF
THE SECRETARY OF WAR,
COMMUNICATING,

In compliance with a resolution of the Senate of February 5, 1867, information in relation to an order issued by Lieutenant General Sherman in regard to the protection of trains on the overland route.

MARCH 8, 1867.—Read, ordered to lie on the table and be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, March 6, 1867.

SIR: In further compliance with the Senate's resolution of February 5, 1867, asking to be informed "whether any order has been issued by Lieutenant General Sherman in regard to the protection of trains on the overland route, so called," I have now the honor to transmit herewith a copy of General Sherman's report of the 16th February, on the subject, which was not received in season for transmission to the Senate at its last past session.

Very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

Hon. B. F. WADE,
President of the Senate.

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,
St. Louis, Mo., February 16, 1867.

SIR: In compliance with the provisions of the resolution made in the Senate of the United States, under date of February 5, 1867, and transmitted from your headquarters, I have the honor to enclose herewith copies of my General Orders No. 2, of March 26, 1866, ratifying and approving those of Major General Pope, No. 27, of February 28, 1866, "regulating travel across the plains."

These orders were in force during the past year, and, with some modifications, will be enforced for the present year, (1867.) Under the provisions of these orders a vast amount of merchandise and great numbers of people passed safely to their destinations in our remote and exposed Territories. For the general safety it is deemed best to define and limit the roads by which this overland commerce is carried on, as it enables us to collect our military forces along them.

For the year 1867, I propose to apply the general rules laid down in General Pope's General Orders No. 27, to four principal routes:

1. From Minnesota to Montana, via Forts Abercrombie, Wadsworth, Rice, Berthold, Buford, and Judith and Sun rivers, with a couple of new stations between Wadsworth and Rice.

2. The great Platte route, by which full ninety per cent. of the travel to Montana, Utah, California, and Colorado have hitherto gone. In this connection I also propose to give increased force and protection to the shorter line to Virginia City from Laramie, via Forts Reno, Philip Kearney, and C. F. Smith.

3. The Smoky Hill route to Colorado, via Forts Riley, Harker, Hays, Wallace, &c., to Denver City.

4. The Arkansas route from Kansas and Arkansas, via Forts Zara, Larned, Dodge, Lyon, the Purgatoire, &c., to Fort Union and New Mexico.

I also propose to leave the post commanders along the routes a little more latitude of judgment as to the strength of trains passing out, as sometimes cost and delay have resulted from holding trains until the requisite number had accumulated.

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

W. T. SHERMAN,

Lieutenant General Commanding.

Major GEORGE K. LEET,

*Assistant Adjutant General, Headquarters Armies
of the United States, Washington, D. C.*

[General Order No. 27.]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE MISSOURI,
St. Louis, Missouri, February 28, 1866.

For the security of trains and travellers crossing the great plains during the coming season, the following rules are published and will be enforced by all commanders of military posts in that region:

I. Fort Ridgley and Fort Abercrombie are designated as points of rendezvous for all trains or travellers pursuing the routes from Minnesota to the mining regions of Montana, by way of Fort Berthold, Fort Union, and the valley of the Upper Missouri and Yellowstone rivers; and to the same region by way of Sioux falls, Fort Pierre, the Black Hills, and Powder river. This latter route is believed to be safe to travel as far as Fort Pierre or Crow creek, on the Missouri river, even for small parties. Beyond the Missouri river all precautions herein indicated must be taken.

In like manner, Fort Kearny is designated as the point of rendezvous for all trains destined for Denver City or Fort Laramie, by way of the Platte River route; and Fort Riley and Fort Larned as the rendezvous for trains for New Mexico and for Denver City or other points in Colorado, by the Smoky Hill or Arkansas River routes. These points can be reached from the Missouri river without danger.

II. At the posts above designated all trains will be organized for defence by electing a captain and other officers, and organizing the teamsters, employes, and any other persons travelling with or belonging to the train, into one or more companies. Every person who accompanies a train must be properly armed for defence, and must submit himself during the journey to such regulations as the captain of the train shall lay down, and perform such duties, as guards, sentinels, herdsman, &c., as may be designated by the same authority. No train consisting of less than twenty wagons and thirty armed men, organized as above indicated, will be permitted to pass into the Indian country; and during the transit across the plains these trains will be held responsible for the faithful observance of the rules and regulations laid down and the treaties with the Indian tribes through whose country they are passing.

III. The commanding officer of each military post on any of the routes west of the posts herein indicated as rendezvous is directed to inspect each train

which passes his post, sufficiently to assure himself that the military organization herein specified has been made, and that the usual precautions against Indian attacks or surprises have been carefully observed. When it is found that the provisions of this order have not been complied with, the train in which such neglect occurs will not be permitted to pass beyond the military post where it is discovered until it is made manifest to the commanding officer that such neglect will not occur again. The commanding officer who discovers this neglect will also report the facts to the commander of the next post on the route, in order that careful examination of the train may again be made at that post.

IV. All persons travelling across the plains, except those belonging to the military service of the United States and such as are transported in the mail coaches or other conveyances on the overland routes, must join themselves together in a military organization, consisting of not less than thirty armed men, or must connect themselves with some train.

V. No persons will be permitted to enter the Indian country unless they comply with the provisions of this order; and commanding officers of the military posts, as far west as Washington Territory, the State of Nevada, and the Territory of Arizona, will arrest and hold all persons attempting to cross the plains in any other manner than that herein specified.

VI. Whenever a military escort is thought necessary, the commanding officer of the military post beyond which such escort may be required will notify the captains of trains of the fact, and will furnish a sufficient escort in addition to the force with the train to protect it to the next military post, when, if necessary, another escort will be furnished; and these escorts will be supplied from one post to another in this manner until the point of danger is passed.

VII. Whenever an attack is made by Indians upon any train pursuing the overland routes, or travelling elsewhere on the plains, the commanding officer of the nearest military post will furnish prompt assistance, and will immediately report the facts in the case to these headquarters, specifying particularly whether the party attacked had complied with these rules, and had made as good defence as could be expected.

VIII. These regulations will be enforced in like manner upon all returning trains, which will be organized in conformity thereto at the military post nearest to their points of departure from the settlements.

IX. All commanding officers of military posts on the plains are charged with and will be held responsible for the faithful execution of this order; and on no pretext should they fail carefully to inspect every train or party of travellers which passes through or within reach of the posts under their command. While every assistance at their command will be furnished by the commanders of military posts which may facilitate or render secure the transit of emigrants or supply trains across the great plains, these officers are also charged with the responsibility of exacting from these parties a strict observance of all proper precautions against Indians, and of requiring that such parties be prepared to protect themselves as far as may be in their power.

X. It is not practicable, with the military forces within this department, to render every foot of the overland routes entirely secure against Indian hostilities; and, whilst the military forces will be disposed and used in the manner which seems best adapted to protect parties of travellers, such parties must, between the military posts, rely much upon their own organization and means of defence. As the government provides such protection for emigrants and trains as it is practicable to do without ruinous expense, and as the military forces are held largely responsible for any misfortunes which may befall such parties from Indian attacks, they claim and will exercise the right to lay down rules for such journeys, made within the Indian country and the jurisdiction of the military authorities, as may be considered necessary to provide against danger, and at the same time not be oppressive or embarrassing to emigration or travel.

PROTECTION TO TRAINS ON THE OVERLAND ROUTE.

The above regulations are thought reasonable and easy to observe, and, if complied with, are considered sufficient, with the presence and aid of the troops at important points, to render travel across the plains reasonably secure. They are therefore published for the information of all concerned, and will be strictly enforced.

By command of Major General Pope :

J. P. SHERBURNE,
Assistant Adjutant General.

[General Orders No. 2.]

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSISSIPPI,
St. Louis, Mo., March 26, 1866.

I. In compliance with the 2d paragraph of General Orders No. 12, from the Adjutant General's office, of March 5, 1866, the department of the Platte will be composed of the States of Minnesota and Iowa, the Territory of Montana and so much of the Territories of Dakota and Nebraska as lies north of the Platte and Sweetwater rivers, excepting Fort Casper, which is left in the department of the Missouri.

II. The following troops will be transferred from the department of the Missouri to that of the Platte, viz: the 10th United States infantry, the 13th United States infantry, and the 2d battalion 18th United States infantry, the commanding officers of which will be instructed to report to Brigadier General P. St. George Cooke, commanding department of the Platte, headquarters at Omaha.

III. General Orders Nos. 27 and 33, made by Major General Pope, commanding the department of the Missouri, under dates February 28, 1866, and March 10, 1866, are hereby ratified and confirmed, and the disposition of troops and arrangements for protecting travel across the plains will be carried out, as far as the case will admit of, to be modified only by orders of the department commander.

IV. In case of the pursuit of mischievous Indians or whites infesting the border line, the troops will act without regard to the department line, simply reporting their action through their own commanding officers to the commanding general of the department invaded.

V. Whenever new posts are required, or the enlargement of posts already established, careful estimates must be submitted to these headquarters before work involving an outlay of money is commenced.

The troops and garrisons must, as far as possible, construct their own quarters and buildings needed to shelter their own stores, using, as far as possible, the most permanent materials at hand; and commanding generals of departments are advised to use patrols or detachments in temporary camps and bivouacs during the summer and fall months, and to call them in to the permanent posts for winter.

By order of Major General W. T. Sherman :

JNO. G. TELFORD,
Assistant Adjutant General.