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**Letter of the Secretary of War, communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 11th instant, further information respecting armed expeditions against the western Indians.**

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LETTER

OF

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

COMMUNICATING,

*In compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 11th instant, further information respecting armed expeditions against the western Indians.*

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MARCH 21, 1867.—Read; ordered to lie on the table and be printed.

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Washington City, March 20, 1867.

Sir: Since the report of the 11th instant from this department, in reply to the Senate's resolution of March 8 respecting armed expeditions against the western Indians, was transmitted, a report of Lieutenant General Sherman has been received, and a copy thereof is now sent herewith, in further compliance with the resolution named.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

EDWIN M. STANTON,  
*Secretary of War*

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

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HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,  
St. Louis, Missouri, March 13, 1867.

COLONEL: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the communication of the honorable the Secretary of War, addressed to General Grant, dated March 8, instant, and indorsed to me from your office on the 9th instant, requesting "early information of military operations in progress or in contemplation in the Indian territory, or against Indians in the west," and in answer thereto beg to state that:

All the troops in the departments of Dakota, Platte, and Missouri, embracing the Indian country, have been and are now being placed in position to afford the best protection to the telegraph and mail routes across the plains, as well as to protect the four principal roads by which the emigrants travel, or merchants send their goods destined to the mountain territories. These troops will occupy posts, readily built, but designed for defence by a fraction of the garrison, while the balance can operate as escorts or expeditions between the posts. Commanding officers of these posts or stations will act against all people who

violate the laws of Congress, or who endanger the lives or property of our people, be they white, black, or copper-colored. When there are no courts or civil authorities to hold and punish such malefactors, we must of necessity use the market pretty freely; the only weapon with which the soldier ought to deal. Peaceful people, whites, blacks, or Indians, will be left to be dealt with by the civil authorities and agents.

General Hancock, in the department of the Missouri, has organized a special force of about fifteen hundred (1,500) men, mostly of the seventh cavalry (a new regiment) and some infantry drawn from the inner posts, with which he will proceed in person to the country of the Cheyennes and Kioways, below the Arkansas, and will then confer with them to ascertain if they want to fight, in which case he will indulge them. If, however, they will assure him that they will remain at peace, subject to their treaties and agents, he will not disturb them, but impress on them the imprudence of assuming an insolent manner and tone when they visit our posts, and he will impress on them that it is to their interest to keep their hunting parties and their young warriors off our main lines of travel, where their presence gives the occasion for the many rumors which so distract our people. After he has done this, he will distribute this force so as to be again easily assembled if the occasion calls for it. His final orders are not yet made out, but will be in a few days, and I will endeavor to make them so as to leave him free to act, but not to create any trouble which should be avoided.

In like manner, General Augur, in the department of the Platte, has prepared a force of about two thousand (2,000) men, composed of the second United States cavalry and of infantry grouped about Fort Laramie, to be sent under a competent commander, General Gibbon, to the region of country on the head of Powder and Yellowstone rivers, to punish the bands of hostile Sioux who have infested that road for the past year; have killed many people, and are at open war. No mercy should be shown these Indians, for they grant no quarter nor ask for it. General Augur was instructed, if possible, by means of runners, to notify all Sioux who wished to avoid the fate of their hostile fellows, to come in to some one of our military posts on the Platte, where we would feed them temporarily and turn them over to the care of their proper agents. But inasmuch as Congress has lately provided for a commission to visit these Indians, and as these commissioners have reached Omaha, the headquarters of General Augur, I have instructed him to delay actual hostilities until these commissioners have exhausted their efforts and reported to him their inability to influence the conduct of the hostile Sioux by pacific measures. I have not yet made final orders for this movement, and will delay them till we learn by telegraph at Fort Laramie that the country about forts Phil. Kearney and C. F. Smith is practicable for military operations.

In reference to these two expeditions, which are all we can undertake with our present force, I will remark that defensive measures will not answer against Indians. We are tied down to long routes, and our detachments are necessarily small, hardly enough to build shelters and gather firewood, the materials for which have to be hauled two and three hundred miles, while the Indians move hundreds and thousands of miles, taking along with them their ponies, lodges, wives and children. They are thus enabled at one time to attack or molest our roads at one point, and in a month or so make their appearance at another, hundreds of miles distant. Our troops must get among them, and must kill enough of them to inspire fear, and then must conduct the remainder to places where Indian agents can and will reside among them, and be held responsible for their conduct.

There may be Indian agents duly commissioned for these Indians that we

know to be hostile, but they do not reside with the Indians, and they are not as competent to judge of their hostile character as our military officers who come into constant contact with them.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

W. T. SHERMAN,

*Lieutenant General, Commanding.*

Lieut. Colonel GEO. K. LEET,

*Ass't Adj't Gen., Headquarters of the Army,*

*Washington, D. C.*

[Indorsement.]

Respectfully forwarded to the Secretary of War.

U. S. GRANT, *General.*

MARCH 18, 1867.