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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR,
ON THE
MILITARY PEACE ESTABLISHMENT.

War Department,
December 12, 1820.

SIR: In obedience to a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 14th May last, "directing that the Secretary of War report to this House, at the commencement of the next session, a plan for the reduction of the army to six thousand non-commissioned officers, musicians, and privates, and preserving such parts of the corps of engineers as, in his opinion, without regard to that number, it may be for the public interest to retain; and, also, what saving of the public revenue will be produced by such arrangement of the army as he may propose in conformity with this resolution," I have the honor to make the following report.

I deem it proper, before a plan is presented in detail for reducing the army, as proposed in the resolution, to state briefly the general principles on which it is conceived our military peace establishment ought to be organized. It will be readily admitted, that the organization of the army ought to have reference to the objects for which it is maintained, and ought to be such as may be best calculated to effect such objects; as it must be obvious, on the slightest reflection, that on considerations connected therewith ought be depend not only its numbers, but also the principles on which it ought to be formed.

The necessity of a standing army in peace is not believed to be involved in the subject under consideration, as the resolution presupposes the propriety of maintaining one; and, in fact, its necessity is so apparent, that even those least friendly to the army have never attempted to abolish it, or even to reduce it, since the late war, much below the number proposed in the resolution. The objects for which a standing army in peace ought to be maintained may be comprized under two classes; those which, though they have reference to a state of war, yet are more immediately connected with its duties in peace, and those which relate immediately and solely to war.——Under the first class may be enumerated, as the leading objects, the garrisoning of the forts along our Atlantic frontier, in order to preserve them, and to cause the sovereignty of the United States to be respected in their immediate neighborhood, and the occupying of certain commanding posts on our inland frontier, to keep in check our savage neighbors, and to protect our newly formed and feeble settlements in that quarter. These are, doubtless, important objects, but are by no means so essential as those which relate immediately and solely to a state of war: and, though not to be neglected wholly, ought not to have any decided influence in the organization of our peace establishment. Without, therefore, making any farther remark on this point of the inquiry, I will proceed to consider the other class, on which, as it comprises the great and leading inducements to maintain in this country a regular army in peace, the prominent features of its organization ought to depend.

However remote our situation from the great powers of the world, and however pacific our policy, we are, notwithstanding, liable to be involved in war; and, to resist with success its calamities and dangers, a standing army in peace, in the present improved state of the military science, is an indispensable preparation. The opposite opinion cannot be adopted, without putting to hazard the independence and safety of the country. I am aware that the militia is considered, and in many respects justly, as the great national force; but, to render them effective, every experienced officer must acknowledge, that they require the aid of regular troops. Supported by a suitable corps of trained artillerists, and by a small but well disciplined body of infantry, they may be safely relied on to garrison our forts, and to act in the field as light troops. In these services their zeal, courage, and habit of using fire arms, would be of great importance and would have their full effect. To rely on them beyond this; to suppose our militia capable of meeting in the open field, the regular troops of Europe, would be to resist the most obvious truth, and the whole of our experience as a nation. War is an art, to obtain perfection in which much time and experience, particularly for the officers, are necessary. It is true, that men of great military genius occasionally appear, who, though without experience, may, when an army is already organized and disciplined, lead it to victory: yet I know of no instance, under circumstances nearly equal, in which the greatest talents have been able, with irregular and undisciplined troops, to meet with success those that were regularly trained. Genious, without much experience, may command, but it cannot go much further. It cannot at once organize and discipline an army, and give it that military tone and habit which only, in the midst of imminent danger, can enable it to perform the most complex revolutions with precision and promptitude. Those qualities, which essentially distinguish an army from an equal assemblage of untrained individuals, can only be acquired by the instruction of experienced officers. If they, particularly the company and regimental officers, are inexperienced, the army must remain undisciplined, in which case the genius, and even the experience, of the commander, will be of little avail. The great and leading objects then of a military establishment in peace, ought to be to create and perpetuate military skill and experience; so that at all times the country may have at its command a body of officers, sufficiently numerous, and well instructed in every branch of duty, both of the line and staff; and the organization of the army ought to be such as to enable the government, at the commencement of hostilities, to obtain a regular force, adequate to the emergencies of the country, properly organized and prepared for actual service. It is thus only that we can be in the condition to meet the first shocks of hostilities with unyielding firmness, & to press on an enemy while our resources are yet unexhausted. But if, on the other hand, disregarding the sound dictates of reason and experience, we should in peace neglect our military establishment, we must, with a powerful and skilful enemy be exposed to the most distressing calamities. Not all the zeal, courage, and patriotism of our militia, unsupported by regularly trained and disciplined troops, can avert them. Without such troops, the two or three first campaigns would be worse than lost. The honor of our arms would be tarnished, and the resources of the country uselessly lavished; for, in proportion to the want of efficiency, and a proper organization, must, in actual service, be our military expenditures. When taught by sad experience, we would be compelled to make redoubled efforts, with exhausted means to regain those very advantages which were lost for the want of experience and skill. In addition to the immense expenditure which would then be necessary, exceeding, manifold, what would have been sufficient to put our peace establishment on a respectable footing, a crisis would be thus brought on of the most dangerous character. If our liberty should ever be endangered by the military power gaining the ascendancy it will be from the necessity of making those mighty and irregular efforts to retrieve our affairs after a series of disasters, caused by the want of adequate military knowledge; just as, in our physical system, a state of the most dangerous excitement and paroxysm follows that of the greatest debility and prostration. To avoid these dangerous consequences, and to prepare the country to meet a state of war, particularly at its commencement, with honor and safety, much must depend on the organization of our military peace establishment; and I have, accordingly, in the plan about to be proposed, for the reduction of the army, directed my attention mainly to that point, believing it to be of the greatest importance.

To give such an organization, the leading principle in its formation ought to be, that, at the commencement of hostilities, there should be nothing either to new-model or to create. The only difference, consequently, between the peace & the war formation of the army, ought to be in the increased magnitude of the latter; and the only change, in passing from the former to the latter, should consist in giving to it the augmentation which will then be necessary.

It is thus, and thus only, the dangerous transition from peace to war may be made without confusion or disorder; and the weakness and danger, which otherwise would be inevitable, be avoided. Two consequences result from this principle. First, the organization of the staff in a peace establishment ought to be such that every branch of it should be completely formed, with such extension as the number of troops and posts occupied may render necessary; and secondly, that the organization of the line ought as far as practicable to be such that, in passing from the peace to the war formation, the force may be sufficiently augmented, without adding new regiments or battalions; thus raising the war on the basis of the peace establishment, instead of creating a new army to be added to the old, as at the commencement of the late war. The next principle to be observed, is, the organization ought to be such as to induce, in time of peace, citizens of adequate talents and respectability of character to enter and remain in the military service of the country, so that the government may have officers at its command, who, to the requisite experience, would add the public confidence. The correctness of this principle can scarcely be doubted, for, surely, if it is worth having an army at all, it is worth having it well commanded.

These are the general principles upon which I propose to form the organization of the army as proposed to be reduced under the resolution. By reference to tables A and B, which contain the proposed and present organizations, it will be seen that the principal difference between them is in the reduction of the rank and file. The present organization of the staff, with its branches, is retained with slight alterations. The principal changes in it are, in that of the commissary general of purchases, and the judge advocates, by which it is intended that they should conform more exactly to the principles on which the other branches are now formed. It is believed that the true principle of its organization is, that every distinct branch of the staff should terminate in a chief, to be stationed at least in peace, near the seat of government, and to be made responsible for its condition. It is thus that the government may at all times obtain correct knowledge of the condition of the army in every particular, and be enabled to introduce method, order, and economy, in its disbursements. It is, at present, with slight exceptions, thus organized, and the beneficial effects of it have already been strikingly exemplified by experience. Since the passage of the act of the 14th of April, 1818, which gave the present organization to the staff, the expense of the army has been greatly reduced, while, at the same time, the various articles supplied have been improved in quality, and the punctuality with which they have been issued; and while the movements of the army have, at least for the present, been rendered more expensive by occupying the distant frontier posts at the mouth of the St. Peter's and at the Council Bluffs. By a statement from the adjutant and inspector general, and the books of the second auditor, marked C, containing the army disbursements from 1818 to 1820 inclusive, it appears that the expense of the army in 1818, the year in which the present organization commenced, amounted to three millions seven hundred and forty eight thousand four hundred and forty-five dollars and one cent, while the amount of warrants issued for current disbursements to the first of November this year has amounted only to two millions six hundred and sixteen thousand five hundred and twenty-six dollars and eleven cents, and the disbursements of the whole year will, probably, not exceed two millions seven hundred thousand dollars. In the year 1818, the aggregate average number of the military establishment, including the cadets, amounted to eight thousand one hundred and ninety-nine, and that of this year to nine thousand six hundred and eleven. It is admitted, that, during the same period, a considerable reduction has taken place in many of the articles which constitute the supplies of the army, the effect of which has been to reduce its expense; but, on examination, it will appear that the diminution on this account is much less than what on the first impression might be supposed. Many of the more considerable items, which constitute the expenses of the army, are fixed by law, and do not fluctuate with the change of prices, such as the pay of the officers and men, the subsistence of the former, and the allowance to them for servants, forage, transportation of baggage, &c. All of the items estimated for, by the paymaster general, excepting clothing for servants, which is of small amount, partake of this character; to which, if we add those in the quartermaster general's estimates, which, although the price of some of them have in the period under consideration been reduced, yet that has been at least balanced in the increased expenditure of that department for the two last years, by the extension and increased number of the military posts; it will result, that the reduction in the expense of the army by the diminution of prices is substantially confined to the clothing, medical, and subsistence departments. Some pains have been taken to ascertain this diminution, in the various articles supplied by them, and it has resulted in the belief, that the average of those supplied by the clothing and medical departments were, in the year 1818, about seven per cent. higher than in this, and in the subsistence about forty per cent. With these data, it is ascertained, that the expense of the army this year, had no diminution in price since 1818 taken place, would have amounted, deducting for the difference of the average number of the two years, and allowing for the expenditure of the Seminole war in 1818, to about two millions seven hundred and ninety-one thousand and thirty-eight dollars and fifty five cents. This sum deducted from three millions seven hundred and forty eight thousand four hundred & forty-five dollars and one cent, the expense of the army in 1818, gives for the actual saving, after allowing for the diminution of prices, the sum of nine hundred and fifty seven thousand three hundred and fifty-six dollars and forty-six cents, (see table D,) which has been effected through the organization of the present staff, by enabling the department to superintend, in its minute details, as well the various disbursements of the army, as the measures taken to prevent the waste of public property. The amount of saving may appear to be very great, but it is confidently believed, that it cannot be materially reduced by any just mode of calculation of which the subject is susceptible.

As great as this result is, it is only in war that the benefits of a proper organization of the staff can be fully realized. With a complete organization, and experienced officers, trained in time of peace to an exact and punctual discharge of their duty, the saving in war (not to insist on an increased energy and success in our military movements) would be of incalculable advantage to the country. The number of deputies and assistants in each branch ought to be regulated by the exigency of the service, and this most obviously depend much more on the number of posts than on the number of troops; and as no material change can, consistently with the public interest, be made as to the posts, under the proposed reduction, little diminution can be made in the number of subordinate officers belonging to the staff.

It is also proposed to retain the two major and four brigadier generals. Although it is not probable that there will be concentrated in time of peace, at any one point, a force equal to the command of a single major or even a brigadier general, yet it is conceived that it is important to the service that they should be retained. As two regiments with a proper proportion of artillery and light troops, constitute, in our service, one brigade, and two brigades a division, the command of a major general, the number of regiments and battalions, under the proposed organization, thus gives a command equal to that of two major and four brigadier generals. But a more weighty, and, in my opinion, decisive reason, why they should be retained, may be found in the principle already stated, that the organization of the peace establishment ought to be such as to induce persons of talent and respectability to enter and continue in the military service. To give to the officers of the army the necessary skill and acquirements, the military academy is an invaluable part of our establishment: but that alone will be inadequate. For this purpose, respectability of rank and compensation must be given to the officers of the army, in due proportion to the other pursuits of life. Every prudent individual, in selecting his course of life, must be governed, making some allowance for natural disposition, essentially by the rewards which attend the various pursuits open to him. Under our free institutions, every one is left free to make his selection; and most of the pursuits of life followed with industry and skill, lead to opulence and respectability. The profession of arms, in the well established state of things which exist among us, has no reward but what is attached to it by law; and if that should be inferior to other professions, it would be idle to suppose individuals, possessed of the necessary talents and character, would be induced to enter it. A mere sense of duty ought not and cannot, be safely relied on. It supposes that individuals would be actuated by a stronger sense of duty towards the government than the latter towards them.

If we may judge from experience, it would seem that the army, even with these important commands, which, from their rank and compensation, must operate strongly on those who have a military inclination, does not present inducements to remain in it, stronger than, nor even as strong as, those of most of the other respectable pursuits of life.

The number of resignations has been very great, of which many are among the most valuable officers. Should the number of generals be reduced, the motive for entering or continuing in service must also be greatly reduced; for, like the high prizes in a lottery, though they can be obtained by a few only, yet they operate on all those who adventure: so those important stations which they occupy are, with those the best qualified to serve their country, the principal motive to enter or remain in the army. To retain them is, in fact, the cheapest mode of commanding such talents; for, to pursue the metaphor, if the high prizes were distributed among all of the tickets, there would be but few adventurers; so, if the compensation attached to the general officers were distributed proportionably among the other officers, the inducement which the army now holds out for a military profession, to individuals of suitable character, would be almost wholly lost. If the generals were reduced to one major & two brigadiers, the saving would not exceed $14,432 annually, which, distributed among the officers in proportion to their pay, would give to a lieutenant but $25 59 additional pay, and to a captain $30 87 annually, a sum too inconsiderable to have much effect.

I will proceed next to make a few remarks on that portion of the organization which proposes to reduce the rank and file, without a correspondent reduction of the battalions and regiments. By a reference to statement A, it will be seen that it is proposed to add the rifle regiment to those of the infantry, and unite the ordnance and light and heavy artillery into one corps of artillery, which, when thus blended, to form nine regiments of infantry, and five battalions of artillery, from the latter of which the corps of ordnance is to be taken, to consist of one colonel, one lieut. colonel, two majors, seven captains, and as many lieutenants as the President may judge necessary. This organization will require all the officers of the line of the present army to be retained.

No position connected with the organization of the peace establishment is susceptible of being more rigidly proved, than that the proportion of its offices to the rank and file ought to be greater than in a war establishment. It results immediately from a position, the truth of which I have attempted to illustrate in the preliminary remarks, that the leading object of a regular army in time of peace ought to be, to enable the country to meet, with honor and safety, particularly at the commencement of war the dangers incident to that state; to effect this object, as far as practicable, the peace organization ought, as has been shown, to be such, that in passing to a state of war, there should be nothing either to new-model or to create; and that the difference between that and the war organization ought to be simply in the greater magnitude of the latter. The application of this principle has governed in that proportion of the formation of the proposed military establishment now under consideration. The companies, both of the artillery and infantry, are proposed to be reduced to their minimum peace formation, the former to consist of sixty-four privates and non-commissioned officers, and the latter of thirty-seven, which will give to the aggregate of both corps, thus formed, six thousand three hundred and sixteen non-commissioned officers, musicians, and privates. Without adding a single officer or single company, they may be augmented, should a just precaution, growing out of our foreign relations, render it necessary, to eleven thousand five hundred and fifty-eight; and, pending hostilities, by adding two hundred and eighty-eight officers, the two corps, on the maximum of the war formation, may be raised to the respectable force of 4,545 of the artillery, and 14,490 of the infantry, making in the aggregate 19,035 officers, non-commissioned officers, & privates. The war organization, thus raised on the basis of the peace establishment, will bring into effective operation the whole of the experience and skill of the latter, which, with attention, would, in a short period, be communicated to the new recruits, and the officers recently appointed, so as to constitute a well disciplined force. Should the organization of full companies, on the contrary, be adopted for the peace establishment, this process could be carried to a very limited extent. Six thousand men so organized can be augmented on the full war establishment only to 9,115 by doubling the battalions. Any additional force, beyond that, must be obtained by adding new regiments and battalions, with all the disadvantage of inexperience in the officers and men, without the means of immediate instruction. This was the fatal error at the commencement of the late war, which cost the country so much treasure and blood. The peace establishment which preceded it was very imperfectly organized and did not admit of the necessary augmentation; nor did the government avail itself of even its limited capacity in that respect. The forces raised were organized into new corps, in which, consequently, every branch of military duty was to be learned by the officers as well as men. But, with all these disadvantages, the experience and discipline of the old establishment was of immense use, and has not been duly appreciated. The officers belonging to it gradually diffused their military knowledge through the army and contributed much to the brilliant results of the campaign of 1814. For the truth of this assertion, I might with confidence appeal to those officers who then acquired so much glory for themselves and their country.

Another reason remains to be urged, why, in the peace establishment, the number of officers ought to be great compared with the actual force. At the commencement of war an adequate number of experienced officers is of greater importance than that of disciplined troops, even were it possible to have the latter without the former; for it is not difficult to form in a short time well disciplined troops by experienced officers, but the reverse is impossible. The qualifications of the officers are essentially superior to those of the soldiers, and are more difficult to be acquired. The progress of military science has not added much to the difficulty of performing the duty of the soldier, or of training him, but it has greatly to that of the officer. No government can, in the present improved state of military science, neglect with impunity to instruct a sufficient number of its citizens in a science indispensable to its independence and safety, and to perfect which instruction, it is necessary that some portion of them (the number to be regulated by the resources of the country and its relation with other governments) should make arms their profession.

I have thus presented an organization which I deem the most effective, and which, in the future exigencies of the country, may be of the utmost importance. A different one, requiring for the present an expenditure something less than that proposed, might, in some respects, be more agreeable at this moment; but, believing that nothing in our situation or in our relation with other powers, however pacific at this time, can give a certain assurance of uninterrupted peace, a state which may exist in the imagination of the poet, but which no nation has yet had the good fortune to enjoy, I have deemed it my duty to present that organization which will most effectually protect the country against the calamities and dangers of any future contest in which it may be our misfortune to be involved.

Economy is certainly a very high political virtue, intimately connected with the power and the public virtue of the community. In military operations, which, under the best management, are so expensive, it is of the utmost importance; but, by no propriety of language can that arrangement be called economical, which, in order that our military establishment in peace should be rather less expensive, would regardless of the purposes for which it ought to be maintained, render it unfit to meet the dangers incident to a state of war.

With a single observation, which was omitted in its proper place, I will conclude my remarks. The plan proposed for the reduction of the army gives six thousand three hundred and sixteen non-commissioned officers, musicians, and privates, instead of six thousand, the number fixed in the resolution. It was found difficult to form an organization on proper principles, which would give that precise number, and as the difference was not deemed very material, I have ventured to deviate to that extent from the terms of the resolution.

I have the honor to be,
Your obedient servant,
J. C. CALHOUN.

The Hon. JOHN W. TAYLOR,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

[We have not room at present for the publication of the appendices to this report. A few of the leading facts are extracted from them below.

The average aggregate strength of the Army for the year 1820, is estimated at 9,611:—the number of recruits for this year is rated at 3,211.

The annual expenses of the army proper, during the three years past, are stated as follows:—

For the year 1818	$3,748,445 01
1819	3,351,363 12
1820	2,616,526 11

Taking the year 1818 for an example, and comparing it with the present year, the annual saving in the expenditures of the army "in consequence of the improved organization," is estimated at $957,356.

The present organization of the army, the proposed organization at its minimum force, the proposed organization at its maximum, and the proposed organization, (doubling the battalions and augmenting the officers of infantry) embrace, respectively, the following numbers:

	OFFICERS.	PRIVATES.
Present organization	572	12,036
Minimum of proposed organization	544	6,391
Maximum of proposed organization	544	11,261
With doubled battalions, &c.	832	18,200

The annual saving by the proposed organization of the army, on the basis of the expenditure of 1820, and supposing the ranks not to be full in either case by one-sixth, is estimated at $903,204.] *Nat. Intel.*

FROM THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

No. 3.

TO THE EDITORS.

Gentlemen: In my last I suggested the rough outlines of a plan for the re-organization of the Ordnance Department, which I think, upon examination, will be discovered to combine the two most essential objects to be accomplished by such an establishment; namely, economy and utility. The next important point to be considered, is the locality of the several branches of this department: two considerations here present themselves to view—safety and convenience. By safety, I mean not only security from the attacks of foreign enemies, but also from any sudden eruption of domestic foes. It may, and no doubt will be said, that a fortress or garrison would of all other places, be most likely to afford this desirable object. But, I think, upon more close examination, the idea will be found incorrect. Besides the objections which I have before attempted to point out, it cannot have escaped the observation of every one in the least acquainted with the materials which compose an army, that there are frequently found within the limits of a garrison unprincipled desperadoes, wretches who would not hesitate to sacrifice their own lives to accomplish their diabolical and baneful purposes. Whereas, by placing the ordnance depots and magazines in separate situations, such incendiaries are not so much to be dreaded; as the force required will not be numerous, more caution may be used in selecting the men. All species of ammunition manufactured at, and sent from the principal laboritories, are subject to damage from transportation, and are frequently rendered useless, unless restored by some scientific process, which requires shops, mechanics, and such facilities as the nature of the operations may render necessary; and if these shops are placed within the compass of a fortification, in which troops of the line are stationed, it will subject the ordnance officer to a multiplicity of inconveniencies, and the government to considerable loss in various ways. The restoration of damaged powder is an object of primary importance; and the necessity of such operations is not unfrequent; it would, to say the least of it, be impolitic to hazard the lives of a whole garrison by having a building in which such operations are to be performed, placed in a situation where the ordnance officer would be completely deprived of the precautionary powers necessary to prevent accidents which too frequently occur in such establishments. The necessity of having at least one ordnance depot in each of our most exposed states and territories will appear obvious to every intelligent mind; but they should be so situated as to be remote from the immediate scene of action, in case of an attack on any particular point. The capture of a single fort or garrison would be trifling in comparison with the loss of an arsenal containing perhaps every kind of supplies for a whole section of country, or a division of an army. This idea is by no means a novel one; it seems to have been properly understood in the location of the arsenals near Boston, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, &c. Indeed I know of one important section of the Union which seems to have been overlooked in the arrangement of the principal ordnance depots and arsenals: the section to which I allude is the State of Louisiana. If, as I have already attempted to shew, the facilities for repulsing an enemy should always be kept subject to the exclusive control of the general government, and should, as far as practicable, be disseminated throughout every part of the country exposed to attack, I think that something more is necessary than a simple warehouse and magazine, placed within the limits of a contracted fortification, and calculated only for the *reception* (not the *manufacture or preservation*) of the munitions of war, to ensure this object. I am at a loss to understand how the State of Louisiana and the adjacent country have so long escaped observation. I am by no means disposed to attribute this apparent neglect to design or

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