

RANALD S. MACKENZIE AND THE FOURTH  
CAVALRY CROSS-BORDER RAID ON THE  
MEXICAN KICKAPOO INDIANS, 17-21 MAY 1873.

A Monograph

By

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author, MAJ Scott M. Sobota, and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

RANALD S. MACKENZIE'S CROSS-BORDER RAID ON THE KICKAPOO INDIANS NEAR REMOLINO, COAHUILA (MEXICO), 17-21 MAY 1873, By MAJ Scott M. Sobota, 60 pages.

The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 forever changed the way in which the United States of America approached the question of border security. President George W. Bush almost immediately reiterated a historically famous political reaction to secure the United States border with Mexico, believing the southwest border to be an easy entry point for radical terrorists looking to do harm upon the United States. Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton, after they took office, also faced menacing border security challenges, and focused hard on securing the border with Mexico. The contention was that United States national security was in jeopardy and that cross-border military force was an option to restore order along the Rio Grande. President Ulysses S. Grant used the same justification to defend the bloody attack on the Mexican Kickapoo Indians in May 1873, by the Fourth Cavalry, under the command of Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie.

Since the Mexican government was both unwilling and incapable of stopping the Kickapoo Indians from conducting attacks in U.S. territory, the Fourth U.S. Cavalry cross-border raid that destroyed the Kickapoo camp near Remolino, Coahuila (Mexico), was a necessary undertaking to restore security along the Rio Grande in Texas.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For my choice of Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie's raid at Remolino, Coahuila as my monograph topic, all credit goes to my Monograph Director, Dr. Ricardo A. Herrera. Despite having previously done a wealth of research and reading on the nineteenth-century U.S. Army, the name "Mackenzie" somehow managed to escape my attention. In fact, when Dr. Herrera first raised the possibility of writing about Mackenzie I looked at him with a puzzling frown, as I was not familiar with that historical name. That same night, I ordered a copy of Charles M. Robinson III's biography of Mackenzie, *Badhand*, and read it the following weekend. I was immediately captivated by the enigmatic Mackenzie and motivated to write about his contributions to the nation.

After reading several scholarly works about this mysterious commander, I kept coming back to an unavoidable contemplation. How could such a brilliant commander, who sacrificed so much for the Union during the Civil War, and accomplished the most of any officer to subdue Indians on the frontier, remain historically overshadowed by such characters as George Armstrong Custer and Philip H. Sheridan? Although I may not have fully answered that question during the research and writing of this monograph, Mackenzie's leadership did teach me more about the realities of being a cavalry commander on the American Frontier than any other officer studied previously. Thus, thanks must go to Dr. Herrera for his recommendation and scholarly management in helping me complete this monograph.

A special thank you also goes out to the family of the late great Texas scholar, Ernest Wallace. Wallace's multiple works on the Texas Frontier and Indian Wars were the vanguard of this monograph. Without them, this work simply was not possible. Additional thanks go to Colonel Michael R. Anderson, Dr. Bruce E. Stanley, Dr. Christopher Marsh, and the National Archives in Washington, DC.

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## ACRONYMS

DSCA Defense Support to Civil Authorities

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## INTRODUCTION

President Barack Obama's 2011 decision to use military force to penetrate Pakistan's borders to kill Osama Bin Laden was not the first such decision by a United States Commander-in-Chief. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan ordered the attack on Muammar Kaddafi's house in Libya by F-111 fighter-bombers in response to the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. In 1916, with complete disregard for that country's sovereignty, Woodrow Wilson directed Brigadier General John J. Pershing to conduct the Punitive Expedition into Mexico. Wilson ordered this expedition in response to Pancho Villa and his *Villistas* attacking small towns in New Mexico and Texas, and killing several United States citizens. Such executive decisions to use military force were made when no better option – or no other option – was available at the time to respond to the situation; or in some cases, no clearer way to “send a message” to an enemy of the United States government.

Sending such a clear message is exactly what the Grant administration had in mind when other methods of coercion against Native American tribes failed to bring about peace on the frontiers of America's Manifest Destiny. Forcing Indians onto reservations hundreds of miles from their ancestral lands and not honoring treaties was not enough to stop the Indian-versus-Anglo violence on the frontier. These acts were especially futile in restoring order along the United States-Mexico border in Reconstruction Texas. Along the Rio Grande River, the Mexican Kickapoo tribes conducted attacks on Texas settlers with uninterrupted and unrestrained brutality as settlers pushed west shortly after the Civil War. After several refusals to public pressure to intervene on the frontier, Grant directed his friend and General-in-Chief of the Army, William Tecumseh Sherman, to do whatever was necessary to eradicate Indian raids in Texas. Sherman then delegated the problem to his subordinate territorial commander, Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan. In Texas, this meant a commander with a short temper and limited

vision would decide how to handle the Indian “problem” on the border.<sup>1</sup> Leaving the Kickapoo Indian problem up to Sheridan implied only one solution, and Sheridan knew just the man for the job.

With limited personnel, no federal frontier police organization, no fence along the border, no counterinsurgency doctrine from which to operate, severely inadequate communications, and harsh terrain, the question arose, how should the United States put a stop to the cross-border raids by Mexican Kickapoo Indians into Texas? In the 1870s, there was no other organization to brave these challenges than the U.S. Army. Only the cavalry, however, possessed the essential component of mobility that was imperative to such a dangerous undertaking. Yet, be it the infantry or cavalry, officers in the U.S. Army twisted the laws of war and the language of humanity to justify violence against Indians to conquer the western frontier.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, officers came out of the War of the Rebellion convinced that the best way to win wars, including guerrilla wars, was to demolish the will of the foundation of resistance of the opponent – the enemy population.<sup>3</sup>

Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie planned and commanded the Fourth Cavalry’s raid into Mexico with the intent of eradicating the Mexican Kickapoo Indian base of operations in May 1873. General Sheridan delegated the task to Mackenzie because he knew Mackenzie’s reputation at fighting Plains Indians. Delegating the responsibility also gave Sheridan plausible deniability, should the raid end in a diplomatic disaster for the United States government. Nonetheless, Sheridan knew that Mackenzie was a battle-hardened, no-nonsense officer, who would carry out his orders under any circumstances. The

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<sup>1</sup> John Fabian Witt, *Lincoln's Code: The Laws of War in American History* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 337. Some historians, as uttering the famous saying, “The only good Indian I ever saw was a dead one,” credit Sheridan. Although the debate continues as to whether Sheridan actually said that, Sheridan did once say, “During the [Civil] war, did any one hesitate to attack a village or town occupied by the enemy because women or children were within its limits? Did we [the Union Army] cease to throw shells into Vicksburg or Atlanta because women or children were there?” This illustrates Sheridan’s propensity to use any means necessary to defeat an enemy in battle.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1998), 60-61.

results-driven Mackenzie, who did not care who received credit for duties performed in uniform, did not disappoint his superiors.

What resulted was a raid by U.S. Army Regulars on a small Kickapoo village that sat on the San Rodrigo River near Remolino, Coahuila, approximately thirty-five miles west of Eagle Pass, Texas. This raid ended in one of the most successful, yet tragic, military endeavors of the American Indian Wars. Yet, few know about this incursion, the man who led it, or what it can teach us in our contemporary efforts to secure the southwest border. Instead, many Indian War historians have chosen to write plentifully about Mackenzie's contemporary, George Armstrong Custer. This may be due to the way in which Mackenzie's abbreviated life ended at the age of 48 – a sudden descent into unexplained insanity, rather than a dramatic death in battle.<sup>4</sup>

While the Mackenzie-led Remolino raid was an overwhelming tactical success, putting an end to Kickapoo attacks in southern Texas as intended, the subsequent political fallout and diplomatic consequences were minimal. As the United States government addresses many of the same fundamental border security challenges that it faced a little over a century ago, Mackenzie's raid offers a wealth of lessons and knowledge. In particular, these lessons from the Remolino raid add valuable insight to the contemporary debate over the utilization of combined American-Mexican military operations as a means of securing the border region.

Since the Mexican government was unwilling and incapable of stopping the Kickapoo Indians from launching attacks into United States territory in the 1870s, Mackenzie's raid on their camp near Remolino was not only necessary; it was the only measure capable of stopping the violence along the Rio Grande in Texas. However, while cross-border raids are a potentially effective option today, they cannot be unilateral and large uniformed military units are not likely to conduct them. Instead, cross-border raids are more effective if executed by unmanned aerial systems, manned aircraft, or small detachments of U.S.

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<sup>4</sup> Charles M. Robinson III, *Bad Hand: a Biography of General Ranald S. Mackenzie* (Austin: State House Press, 2005), xi.

armed forces combined with Mexican authorities, to strike quickly and withdraw to safety, just as Mackenzie's Fourth Cavalry did at Remolino in 1873.

#### DEEP ROOTS OF GALLANTRY

Ranald Slidell Mackenzie was born in New York City on 17 July 1840, to Catherine Alexander Mackenzie and Alexander Mackenzie Slidell. Staunchly Episcopalian, Catherine, and Alexander spelled their son's name "Ranald" in line with the family's Scottish Episcopalian lineage. One of four children, young Ranald was shy and reserved growing up on the family farm near the Hudson River. Shyness and reticence, especially when around women, were traits that Ranald carried with him throughout his abbreviated life. Many have tried to tie Ranald's bashful persona to sunstroke he suffered at age three.<sup>5</sup> Difficult-to-read personality notwithstanding, Mackenzie became an accomplished officer in the Union Army.

Growing up, Ranald did not have the opportunity to see much of his father, a politically connected U.S. Navy officer, Alexander Mackenzie Slidell, Sr., who had reversed his name in the 1830s to become eligible for an inheritance.<sup>6</sup> The elder Mackenzie displayed little tolerance for neglect of duty and failures to follow orders while in command of the U.S.S. *Somers* in 1842. While patrolling waters off West Africa, Mackenzie ordered three sailors hanged for insubordination without a trial. It mattered not to the elder Mackenzie that one of them, Philip Spencer, happened to be the son of Secretary of War, John C. Spencer. In retaliation, the Secretary of War was able to get a court-martial convened against Alexander for not giving his son and the two others due process. The jury found Mackenzie not guilty; however, the elder Mackenzie had his reputation and his military career destroyed beyond repair.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> "Commander Alexander Slidell Mackenzie," Biographies in Naval History. [http://www.history.navy.mil/bios/mackenzie\\_a.htm#bio](http://www.history.navy.mil/bios/mackenzie_a.htm#bio) (accessed 12 February 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 6.

Unfortunately, shortly after returning home from a diplomatic trip to Mexico and greeting Ranald at the front gate to the family farm in New York, Alexander's new-life diplomatic endeavors ended abruptly when he suddenly dropped dead from a heart attack at age forty-five.<sup>8</sup> Before he died, the elder Mackenzie passed on to Ranald staunch loyalty to the nation, an ardent sense of duty, and the expectation of complete obedience from all subordinates.<sup>9</sup> Ranald's mother, who most likely had more influence on Ranald's upbringing, struggled mightily over the next few years to support four children by herself. Eventually, she sold the farm and moved the family to Morristown, New Jersey, in 1849. Ranald would forever consider Morristown his home.

Since his family could not afford an education, Ranald employed a family connection to secure an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, in 1858. Nobody believed that Ranald would succeed at West Point. Young Ranald, however, did not let his family's dismal predictions hold him back. Despite struggles with mathematics, Mackenzie performed well and graduated in 1862, ranking first in his class of forty-two cadets.<sup>10</sup>

Mackenzie did not have to wait long to see action. Twenty-eight days after Ranald was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers, he found himself wounded on the battlefield of Second Manassas, where he nearly bled to death. While leading Union soldiers in the battle, Mackenzie fell after a Minié ball passed through both shoulders. Two Confederates found Mackenzie nearly twenty-four hours later. The two Rebels wanted to honor Mackenzie's request for water but "had none themselves." Eventually, Union stragglers found Mackenzie and carried him off to Centreville to begin the first of six

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<sup>8</sup> Ernest Wallace, *Ranald S. Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1993), 6.

<sup>9</sup> J'Nell L. Pate, *Ranald Slidell Mackenzie: Brave Cavalry Colonel* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1994), 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 9-13.

healing periods from Civil War wounds.<sup>11</sup> While recovering in a Union hospital, Mackenzie made it clear to everyone that, although wounded in the back, he “was not running away.”<sup>12</sup> Mackenzie rejoined the fighting seven weeks after Second Manassas, as he would do multiple times until Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Court House three years later.

Mackenzie’s service in the Civil War was exemplary. He fought and led in such battles as Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Cold Harbor, Winchester, Fisher’s Hill, and Petersburg.<sup>13</sup> As colonel of the Second Connecticut Heavy Artillery, Mackenzie redeployed his unit to Washington to help defend the capital against Jubal Early’s raid in July 1864.<sup>14</sup> Earning several brevet commissions for gallantry, Mackenzie was promoted to brevet major general, and at the youthful age of twenty-four, led a pivotal flanking counterattack that prompted Union victory over Robert E. Lee’s retreating forces at Five Forks, Virginia, in April 1865. Before the firing ceased, Mackenzie suffered six wounds, one of those incidents resulting in temporary paralysis of his arms, and another that took two fingers off his right hand.<sup>15</sup> Although, “No enlisted man ever saw him laugh or smile except in a fight,” Mackenzie’s leadership and exploits in the Civil War led Union General-in-Chief Ulysses S. Grant to dub Mackenzie as “the most

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<sup>11</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Wallace. *Ranald S. Mackenzie’s Official Correspondence Relating to Texas, 1873-1879* (Lubbock, TX: West Texas Museum Association, 1967), 13-17. Wallace reprinted the official military service record of Ranald S. Mackenzie from the Headquarters of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office, dated 03 March 1883.

<sup>14</sup> Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 301-03.

<sup>15</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 10. Indians in Texas gave Mackenzie the nickname “Badhand.” The name “Badhand” was in reference to Mackenzie’s right hand, in which he lost two fingers during the Civil War. Some Indian tribes referred to him as “Three-Fingered-Chief” and “No-Fingered-Chief.” Mackenzie’s soldiers on the frontier would also give him the nickname “Three-Fingered Jack.”

promising young officer”<sup>16</sup> in the Union Army who made his way “upon his own merit and without influence.”<sup>17</sup> His experiences in the Civil War hardened Mackenzie’s aggressive no-nonsense leadership style that would later serve him well in the Indian Wars after being assigned to the Fourth Cavalry on 15 December 1870.”<sup>18</sup>

When the Civil War ended, Mackenzie was in command of the Union cavalry in the Department of Virginia. Soon after the war, Mackenzie returned to the rank of captain in the Corp of Engineers. His first assignment was building harbor defenses in New Hampshire. In 1867, Mackenzie learned of a command position that opened in the Forty-First Infantry Regiment. Other officers, who did not want to command a black regiment, had previously turned down the position. Mackenzie accepted the assignment with enthusiasm, and immediately headed south to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to assume command of the Forty-First. With his assumption of the command, he advanced three ranks and became the second youngest colonel in the U.S. Army. Colonel Mackenzie’s successful command of ex-slaves became the doorway to a prominent career fighting Plains Indians.<sup>19</sup>

## BLEEDING TEXAS

Mexico gained her independence from Spain in 1821, and in 1836 Texas gained its independence from Mexico. From the very beginning, Mexicans and Texans had created a “culture of war” between them. The confrontations began over slavery. Texans wanted to expand slavery in the 1820s to reap the benefits of the booming cotton industry. Mexico, having abolished slavery, did not allow the institution to expand in its northern territories – at least not legally. Texans, however, were determined to use whatever

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<sup>16</sup> Michael D. Pierce, *The Most Promising Young Officer: A Life of Ranald Slidell Mackenzie* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 36-52.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Z. Starr, *The Union Cavalry in the Civil War*, vol. 2, *The War in the East from Gettysburg to Appomattox 1863-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979-1985), 419-20.

<sup>18</sup> Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 301-03.

<sup>19</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 41-44.

means necessary to continue their nation building into the 1840s and fifties, and greatly increased the slave trade in the Lone Star state. Meanwhile, as the Texas economy grew, so too did its population. As Manifest Destiny continued, both Caucasian and indigenous populations grew in Texas. With these migrations, by 1840, the Indian population in Texas grew 10,000 stronger than in the 1820s.<sup>20</sup> Therein lays one seed of the frontier violence in Texas: booming demographics led to a clash of cultures.

Under the provisions outlined in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which ended the Mexican War, the United States annexed Texas and established the Rio Grande as the new international boundary. Americans immediately demanded that the United States government open more lands in Texas to settlement. From its inception, the question of who would handle security for continued expansion into south and west Texas was in dispute. The answer was a foregone conclusion; security on the Texas plains was the responsibility of the local militia regiments and the Texas Rangers. However, the militia proved too old and ill-equipped to fend off mobile marauding Indians, while the Rangers were too few in number to stop the often larger, more mobile, and widely dispersed tribes from attacking white settlements. Although the number of Indian attacks decreased during the last two years of the Civil War, by 1870, attacks became more frequent as the population in Texas boomed to over 800,000, a thirty-five percent increase in population from 1860.<sup>21</sup> The Texas population boom led to increased contact between Texans and Indians, and not surprisingly, more attacks, as native war parties had an ever-increasing number of targets of opportunity to assault and loot.

After the Civil War, the United States government took an increasingly active role in the expansion into the western frontier. With tens of thousands of men returning to their native states, the frontier seemed to possess plentiful opportunities to mine, lay rail lines, survey ground, and farm arable

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<sup>20</sup> Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Ernest Wallace, *Texas in Turmoil: The Saga of Texas: 1849-1875* (Austin: Steck-Vaughn Co, 1965), 228. Wallace broke down the population growth in Texas between 1860 and 1870: in 1860, there were 420,000 whites and 182,921 blacks; by 1870, there were 564,700 whites, and 253,475 blacks.



land. Dually inherent in the government's role in this migration was protecting settlers from Indians who were angry about losing their lands and ways of life as the whites encroached into their domains. In Reconstruction Texas in particular, nearly forty years of Anglo expansion into Indian lands prompted the natives to strike back hard at Texans. One incident on 9 April 1872 outraged especially Texans, who demanded that the United States government retaliate with armed force. Abel Lee, a farmer near Fort Griffin, along with his wife and one daughter were the victims of a gruesome ritualistic death. Three of Lee's other children became captives and were never seen again, along with the family's livestock and other possessions. Postmortem mutilation added to Texan demands for retaliation.<sup>22</sup>

The Texas economy also suffered mightily from the violence on the frontier. A federal grand jury investigation in 1872 concluded that an average of 5,000 head of Texas cattle were disappearing a month.<sup>23</sup> By May 1873, Indian raids had cost Texas an estimated fifty million dollars.<sup>24</sup> Continued Anglo-versus-Indian violence on the frontier angered politicians in Austin who were trying to market Texas as a place of economic opportunity for entrepreneurs. Like Kansas shortly before the Civil War, by 1870, Texas was "bleeding," and something had to be done, quickly.

#### THE QUAKER APPROACH

President Grant initiated his Indian policy by forming the Peace Commission. Formed at the urging of Quakers and largely staffed by Christians, Grant believed that their higher moral standards would elevate the conduct of United States government and Indian relations. In theory, moralistic Indian agents and representatives with would bring peaceful solutions to Indian negotiations and dealings; however, that seldom was the result. Ultimately, the real goal was to get as many Indians as possible onto

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<sup>22</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 116. Some Indian tribes at this time dealt in "white slavery."

<sup>23</sup> Pate, *Ranald Slidell Mackenzie*, 85.

<sup>24</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 128-29.

reservations in Indian Territory (Oklahoma) through peaceful coercion.<sup>25</sup>

Reconstruction Texas is probably the best example of the failure of the Grant administration's Indian policies. Many Americans naively believed that the Indian problem would just go away as Native Americans slowly assimilated into western society. They presumed that the Indians would simply abandon their ways of life and welcome the sedentary, agricultural lives. When entertaining the question of who should serve on the Quaker Commissions and the processes for managing frontier disputes between Texans and natives, Grant's guidance was quite vague, "If you can make Quakers out of the Indians it will take the fight out of them. Let us have peace."<sup>26</sup>

Despite its intentions, the Quaker approach failed to keep the peace, though not entirely of its own shortcomings. There were simply too many whites moving west and intruding on Indian lands in Texas for armed clashes not to result there eventually. Moreover, even if the United States government had come through on its promise of lifetime annuities and cattle to Indians who peacefully relocated to reservations, much of the native population refused. Although some Indians went to the reservations peacefully, many chose to live their traditional lifestyles, or fight to the death trying to preserve the same. In one 1870 Texas case, out of 2,416 Comanche Indians, an estimated 1,500 refused to move to reservations.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, most Indians that did go to the reservation near Fort Sill, Indian Territory, would not stay, except by force. As long as wild game and ammunition were in plentiful supply in Texas, the reservation near Fort Sill, Oklahoma merely served as a sanctuary for marauding Indians.<sup>28</sup> Thus, a

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas C. Battey, *The Life and Adventures of a Quaker Among the Indians* (New York: Ulan Press, 2012), 324-25. Battey's autobiography has many examples of the United States government deceiving Indians and not providing sustenance as promised in exchange for peace or natives moving to reservations.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrie Tatum, *Our Red Brothers and the Peace Policy of President Ulysses S. Grant* (Philadelphia, PA: Nabu Press, 2010), 130-31.

<sup>27</sup> Wallace, *Texas in Turmoil*, 248.

<sup>28</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 26.

new question arose: how to handle Indians who refused to move to, or stay on, reservations as they attacked settlements and communication lines? The U.S. Army was the only answer on the Texas frontier.



Figure 1. Forts in Texas [map].

Source: Matt Matthews, Long War Series Occasional Paper. *The U.S. Army On the Mexican Border: a Historical Perspective*, Vol. 22 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007), 47.

Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan was commander of the U.S. Army’s Division of the Missouri, which included Texas in its area of responsibility.<sup>29</sup> Repeated failures by the Indian Bureau to secure peace led Sheridan to argue that the Bureau should move from the Department of the Interior and

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<sup>29</sup> William Tecumseh Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2000), 785.

operate under the War Department. Although Congress rejected Sheridan's realignment proposal, he succeeded in getting several officers from his Department of the Missouri appointed to duties within the Indian Bureau in Texas. These appointments allowed Sheridan to have a great deal of influence in matters pertaining to Texas Indian policy, and characteristic of Sheridan's leadership throughout his uniformed career, infuriated many politicians.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, the result was that Sheridan had complete control of the Indian problem in Texas from 1870 onward, and he knew it. Sheridan's leadership culminated in the near extinction of the Kickapoo nation three years later.

The principal source of Grant's failed Indian policies was probably his personality more than any other single factor. There is no question the president really did want peace with the Indians. However, some of his subordinates, namely Sheridan, took advantage of Grant's even-tempered personality to push their own agendas within their own military districts. Yet, in all fairness, commanders such as Sheridan and Sherman faced another challenge that made the Plains Indian dilemma more difficult to remedy. The Peace simultaneously directed the War Department to reduce infantry in the Army by fifty-five percent. The law also forced the Army to retire many surplus officers. This made it even more difficult to free up sufficient forces to staff outposts in the West, as most remaining soldiers were staffing Reconstruction assignments in the former Confederate states. From a military standpoint, the Quaker Law put more burdens on the already stretched thin cavalry since a much greater percentage of the remaining infantry was in Reconstruction assignments.<sup>31</sup> Regardless, time was not on the side of senior military leaders as Texas frontier violence was escalating, and the available options to respond to the situation were diminishing.

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Andrew Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 181-86. The Office of Indian Affairs had been under the War Department from its establishment in 1824. The Interior Department assumed control of the Office of Indian Affairs in 1849.

<sup>31</sup> Sherman, 781-84. Congress amended the Quaker Law on 15 July 1870. The amendment vacated the commission of any military officer that accepted or executed the functions of a civil officer in the Indian Bureau. However, the amendment did little to reduce Sheridan's influence over Indian policy on the frontier.

In 1871, after repeated pleas for military intervention from Texans, General Sherman went to Texas to see for himself what was happening and was nearly the victim of an Indian raid near Fort Richardson. Sherman's wagon train was the original target of a Kiowa war party, which instead passed Sherman and attacked another wagon train en route to Fort Richardson on the same trail a few hours later. It did not take Sherman long to learn that five of his soldiers in that squad had their heads split open with axes. Still, others in the squad met an even more gruesome fate. The post surgeon who went out to the attack site with the recovery party, reported

All the bodies were riddled with bullets, covered with gashes, and the skulls crushed...some of the bodies...having been stabbed with arrows. One of the bodies was even more mutilated than others, it having been found fastened with a chain to the pole of a wagon lying over a fire with the face to the ground, the tongue being cut out...it was impossible to determine whether the man was burned before or after his death. The scalps of all but one were taken.<sup>32</sup>

Sherman, who prior to this incident believed Texans were exaggerating the violence, immediately went into a fit of rage, and demanded the perpetrators face justice.<sup>33</sup> In response, Sheridan sent Colonel Mackenzie and his Fourth Cavalry to hunt down the Kiowas who had attacked the train. After burying the victims, Mackenzie did just that. For the next several days, Mackenzie fought bad weather all the way to Fort Sill, killing and capturing some of the Kiowa perpetrators headed there for safe haven. While in route to stand trial in Texas, one of the three native chiefs apprehended by Mackenzie, Satank, died after a struggle with soldiers during an escape attempt.<sup>34</sup> The two other chiefs, Satanta and Big Tree, stood trial for their roles in the attack and were convicted and incarcerated.<sup>35</sup> In Texas, patience and judiciousness were rare virtues on either side, and the perception in Washington was that time and options had run out.

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<sup>32</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 80.

<sup>33</sup> Compounding the problem was that the majority of officers on the frontier never divorced themselves from the tactics and approaches to conventional warfare that they had learned during the Civil War.

<sup>34</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 80-83.

<sup>35</sup> Maurice Matloff, *American Military History* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 310.

## BLOOD RIVALRY

With little means to stop Indians from raiding north of the Rio Grande, Texans could only watch as violence escalated from the late 1830s to the 1870s. On 8 September 1838, a Kickapoo hunting party happened upon a Texan land survey team seventy miles south of Dallas and attacked. The Kickapoos killed seventeen Texans and severely injured five. The following month the Mexican Kickapoos attacked the Texas village of Killough in the “Battle Creek Massacre,” looting and killing many of the residents. Texans responded by attacking and slaughtering a Kickapoo camp not far from Killough on 25 October.<sup>36</sup> These back-and-forth clashes between the Kickapoos and Texans continued unabated for four decades. During this time, Texan anger grew at the Mexican government’s refusal and inability to prevent Kickapoo attacks from its territory.

The Mexican government’s inability to intervene and stop Kickapoo raids into Texas centered on the great distance of the border from Mexico City. Remolino sat approximately 225 straight-line miles from the Mexican capital, and was thus beyond the concern of Mexican officialdom. To most Mexican politicians, the violence in Texas was simply not a Mexican problem; the fact that the Kickapoo raids in Texas were coming from and seeking asylum at camps located within Mexican territory mattered not. However, even if the Mexican government had wanted to intervene, Mexico could not have done so effectively. The Mexican government struggled mightily to provide security within its own borders. Furthermore, Mexican officials claimed the Kickapoos were a peaceful tribe campaigning against the Comanche Indians in the region at the request of the Mexican government.<sup>37</sup>

During the 1860s, the vast Texas landscape was sparsely populated and poorly policed. Since no coherent strategy or planning was in place to counter the Indian violence in Texas, settlers resorted to a

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<sup>36</sup> Felipe A. Latorre and Dolores L. Latorre, *The Mexican Kickapoo Indians* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991), 10-11.

<sup>37</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 95. Exacerbating the violence in Texas were the Comanche Indians who were attacking settlements in Texas and Mexico without regard for the nationality of their victims.

series of punitive expeditions. In October 1864, for example, 200 Kiowa and Comanche warriors attacked a Confederate outpost near Fort Belknap in Young County. The war party killed five Rebel soldiers and pillaged a nearby ranch. In response, local residents formed their own war party of about 125 under the command of Captain Henry Fosset. Fosset's militia attacked a 1,400 strong caravan of Kickapoo Indians making its way from Fort Sill to Mexico. This attack took place near San Angelo and was a disaster for the Texans. Fosset lost thirty-six killed and sixty wounded. The Kickapoos lost only eleven killed and thirty-one wounded.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the fact that the Texans initiated the assault that ended in their defeat, this latest "barbaric act" by Indians further fueled white demands that Texas Governor Francis Richard Lubbock retaliate against the natives. Lubbock appointed James Throckmorton to raise a new Texas Frontier Regiment to strike back at the Indians, but failed to develop any rational strategy. Even if there had been a strategy, the Frontier Regiment was never big enough, properly organized, or mobile enough to make a difference. Indeed, throughout the Civil War and beyond, the increasing presence of Texas militiamen from the Red River to the Rio Grande was ineffective at stopping Indian raids in south and west Texas.<sup>39</sup>

The tipping point for intervention by the U.S. Army came in 1871 after the Salt Creek Massacre of Henry Warren's logistical train. Warren was under contract with the United States government to deliver provisions from Fort Sill to settlements in Texas. On 18 May 1871, approximately 150 Kiowa Indians attacked Warren's convoy. The attack resulted in seven of the twelve whites dead and one severely wounded. Four other contractors, who managed to escape to Jacksboro to report the incident, were the lucky ones.<sup>40</sup> The subsequent theft of provisions and burning of wagons fueled Texan outrage

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<sup>38</sup> Wallace, *Texas in Turmoil*, 241.

<sup>39</sup> Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 344-45.

<sup>40</sup> J. W. Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations in Texas: Original Narratives of Texas History and Adventure*, *Original Narratives of Texas History and Adventure* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1985), 555-56.

and demands for retaliation by Washington. Since Secretary of the Interior, Columbus Delano, refused to acknowledge the state of affairs on the Texas frontier, Sherman and Sheridan stepped in and took control of the Texas security situation.<sup>41</sup>

By 1870, the state of affairs in Texas was dire. Grant ordered Sherman to meet with Texas settlers, hear their grievances, and see the situation with his own eyes. After Sherman reported to the president that military intervention was necessary, Grant directed him to take necessary action to stop the violence in Texas. Grant made it clear that Mexico was now going to be accountable for Mexican Indian “depredations” in Texas.<sup>42</sup>

On 5 February 1873, when all courses of action seemed to be exhausted without suppressing the Indian raids in southern Texas, Sherman telegraphed Brigadier General C.C. Augur, commander of the Military Department of Texas, and Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie’s first line supervisor

The President wishes you to give great attention to the affairs on the Rio Grande Frontier, especially to prevent the raids of Indians and Mexicans upon the people and property of Southern and Western Texas.

To this end he wishes the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry to be moved to that Frontier.

In naming the 4<sup>th</sup> to the Rio Grande the President is doubtless influenced by the fact that Col. Mackenzie is young and enterprising, and that he will impact to his regiment his own active character.<sup>43</sup>

Mackenzie would live up to his reputation.

Sherman’s specification that the Fourth Cavalry secure the Texas Rio Grande region spoke to the reputation of its commander, Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie. Under Mackenzie’s leadership, the Fourth Cavalry had accomplished far more to date than any other regiment in subduing Indians in Texas.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the Fourth Cavalry’s success in defeating Kiowa warriors at McClellan Creek in September 1872

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<sup>41</sup> Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas*, 355.

<sup>42</sup> Ernest Wallace. *Ranald S. Mackenzie’s Official Correspondence Relating to Texas, 1871-1873*. (Lubbock, TX: West Texas Museum Association, 1967), 161-62.

<sup>43</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie’s Official Correspondence*, 161-62.

<sup>44</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 88-89.



resulted in nine of its enlisted men receiving Medals of Honor for gallantry.<sup>45</sup> The War Department reassigned the Fourth Cavalry to Fort Clark, Texas.

Fort Clark was located approximately 120 miles southwest of San Antonio and less than one mile south of Brackettville. Mackenzie's Fourth Cavalry replaced the Ninth Cavalry. Augmenting the Fourth was Lieutenant John Bullis and his Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts. After arriving at Fort Clark, Mackenzie and Bullis put the skills of the Seminole-Negros to effective use campaigning against the Indians in south Texas. The scouts also served Mackenzie as go-betweens when he engaged in unofficial negotiations with tribal leaders.<sup>46</sup> At this point, however, the overwhelming majority of American leaders were no longer interested in negotiating.

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<sup>45</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 123.

<sup>46</sup> Grady E. McCright, *The Whirlwind: John L. Bullis and His Seminole-Negro Scouts* (Washington, DC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 195.

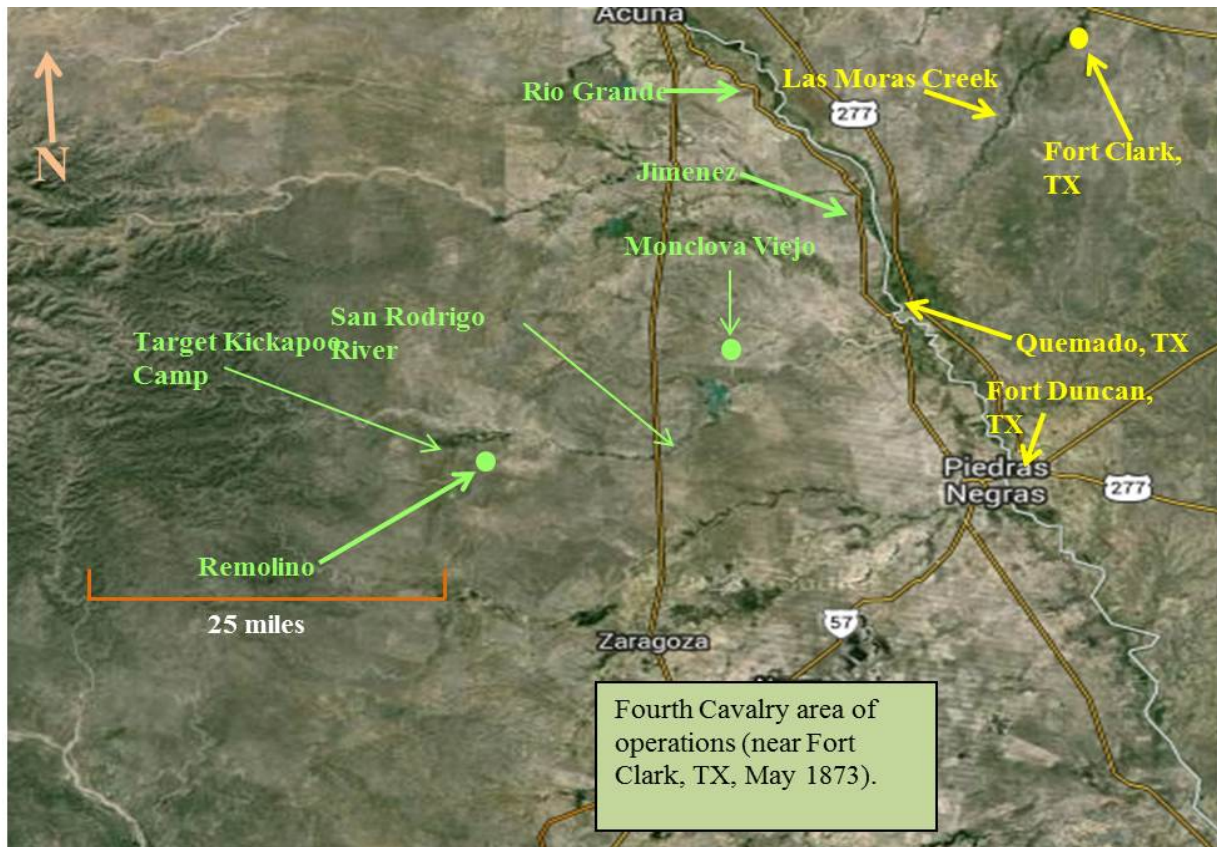


Figure 2

Source: Created by author.

### DOWN ON THE RIO GRANDE

A string of frontier military posts from the Texas Panhandle to the Rio Grande had failed to provide protection from Native American attacks on Texans. By spring 1873, after the theft of tens of thousands of Texas livestock, the Mexican government was still unwilling to help stop native attacks because Mexican citizens were trading with Indians for Texas loot. Making matters worse, the Mexican government was paying the Kickapoos for “border defense.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 95. The Mexican government hired the Kickapoos to fight off Comanche Indians that they claimed were attacking Mexicans south of the Rio Grande.

The Kickapoo Indians were responsible for nearly all the native attacks on Texans in the Upper Rio Grande border region from 1871 through 1873.<sup>48</sup> In 1872, false rumors spread throughout Texas that the U.S. Army was massing troops on the border to invade Mexico in retaliation. Simultaneously, some United States politicians were calling for the “military annexation” of portions of northern Mexico to force the Mexican government to take action against the Kickapoos.<sup>49</sup> When border negotiations between the United States and Mexico broke down completely in 1872; another measure was required to establish peace in the Texas border region.<sup>50</sup>

Most of Mackenzie’s Fourth Cavalry had consolidated at Fort Clark by the end of April 1873, and immediately began preparing to campaign against the Indians in the border region. A few weeks prior, Mackenzie had met with Secretary of War, William W. Belknap, and Lieutenant General Sheridan in San Antonio to discuss courses of action that could stop the Kickapoo raids.<sup>51</sup> Sheridan and Belknap gave little, if any, consideration as to the possibility of a diplomatic solution to the border security problem. Sheridan made it clear that Mackenzie had only one course of action to pursue. Mackenzie probably did not consider diplomacy either since he left the meeting with no authorization to engage in official diplomatic negotiations with the Mexican government or Indian tribal leaders. Mackenzie was limited to military solutions for the complicated Indian problem in south Texas, and a military solution is exactly what he employed.

General Sheridan’s orders to Mackenzie could not have been clearer. According to Mackenzie’s Adjutant, Lieutenant Robert G. Carter, Sheridan told Mackenzie

You have been ordered down here to relieve Gen. Merritt and the Ninth Cavalry because I want something done to stop these conditions of banditry, killing...by these people across the river. I

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<sup>48</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie’s Official Correspondence*, 161.

<sup>49</sup> Wallace, *Texas in Turmoil*, 143.

<sup>50</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 128.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 130-32.

want you to control and hold down the situation, and to do it your own way...I want you to be bold, enterprising, and at all times full of energy. When you begin, let it be a campaign of annihilation, obliteration, and complete destruction, as you have always done to all the Indians you have dealt with...you understand what I want done, and the way you should employ your force.<sup>52</sup>

Mackenzie was to attack the Indians in Mexico to bring about a quick solution to the Kickapoo attacks.<sup>53</sup>

Knowing such a move could precipitate a war with Mexico, Mackenzie asked for written authorization to raid across an international boundary. In response, Sheridan pounded the table and said

Damn the orders! Damn the authority... Your authority and backing shall be General Grant and myself. With us behind you in whatever you do to clean up this situation; you can rest assured of the fullest support. You must assume the risk. We [Grant and Sheridan] will assume the final responsibility should any result.<sup>54</sup>

The next day, Mackenzie headed for Fort Clark, where he spent the next few weeks planning the riskiest expedition of the Indian Wars.

After divulging the content of the meeting in San Antonio to his Adjutant, Lieutenant Carter, Mackenzie began drilling his troopers harder than ever. Although Mackenzie's subordinates knew a mounted trek of some sort was on the horizon, they did not have an inkling of where or exactly when, nor did the Fourth's troopers consider the possibility that Mackenzie was going to lead them into Mexican territory. Because of the potential political fallout with such a risky endeavor, Mackenzie did not tell anyone, except Carter, of the Fourth's next operation. Mackenzie informed Carter only because he needed someone to acquire the requisite supplies for the upcoming foreign incursion.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 130-32.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Robinson concluded that the decision to attack Indians in Mexico must have been in the highest circles in Washington, DC. Otherwise, Robinson argued, Mackenzie would not have received all the supplies and requisitions he did in such a short time.

<sup>54</sup> Robert G. Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie; Or, Winning West Texas from the Comanches*, (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2011), 422-23.

<sup>55</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 132-33.

Mackenzie's intelligence on the location of the Kickapoo camp came from the Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts working for the Fourth Cavalry under Lieutenant John Bullis. The Seminole-Negros had migrated to the border region in the 1850s and become bitter enemies of the Kickapoos, who were stealing their cattle and horses. Therefore, the scouts were more than happy to assist in helping Mackenzie punish their enemies.<sup>56</sup> Ike Cox, Green Van, Art McLain, and other scouts went south and identified the location of the main Kickapoo camp near Remolino, Coahuila, about thirty-five miles west of Eagle Pass, Texas. The Seminoles marked the best route that a large cavalry force and its supply train would have to take in order to reach the Kickapoo camp. Whatever the route taken, it would be in hostile territory, with little water for horses, and little rest for the troopers. The Fourth Cavalry had to cross south of the Rio Grande, march to the Kickapoo camp, attack, and march back to the border as quickly as possible to avoid detection.

The same night that Mackenzie swore Lieutenant Carter to secrecy, the scouts informed Mackenzie that Indians recently attacked the Delores Ranch near Fort Clark. The Kickapoos had taken livestock and other plunder south from the attack location. The scouts immediately got on the trail of the attackers and followed them. The trail led them straight to a crossing point on the Rio Grande where they found a water keg and a lariat used by Kickapoos during the Delores Ranch attack.<sup>57</sup> Mackenzie finalized his plan for an attack on the natives in Mexico.

On 22 April 1873, Colonel Mackenzie telegraphed Brigadier General C.C. Augur

thirty-six horses had been taken from the Delorus Ranche by a party supposed to have come from Mexico...Seminole Negro Indian Scouts under [Colonel Merritt]...picked up a small water keg painted and a rawhide Lariat such as is used by the Kickapoos and two [Delorus] horses broken down from hard riding. The [Kickapoo] party taking the horses is supposed to have consisted of about six Mexicans and Kickapoos from the Mexican side of the river. None of the horses taken from the Dolorus Ranche have been returned and it is supposed they

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<sup>56</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 98.

<sup>57</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 133. Not even Carter was aware that the Seminole-Negro scouts were sent over the border by Mackenzie to reconnoiter the Kickapoo camp near Remolino; more indication of the level of clandestineness that Mackenzie wanted to maintain for the forthcoming raid.

were crossed to Mexico.<sup>58</sup>

C.C. Augur forwarded the message to Sheridan, who forwarded it to Sherman and Belknap, writing that “There is in my opinion only one way left to settle the Mexican Frontier difficulty, that is, to cross the Rio Grande and recover our property, and punish the thieves.”<sup>59</sup>

#### OPENING THE BALL

Knowing this expedition would have to be a quick strike, with a fast withdrawal to the safety of American soil, Mackenzie issued a series of preparation directives to his troopers regarding what was, and was not, authorized for this expedition. He ordered that all sabers be sharpened to a “razor edge.”<sup>60</sup> This puzzled the troopers of the Fourth because they had never carried sabers on any previous operation.<sup>61</sup> Mackenzie also instructed carbine practice to take place daily, despite ammunition being at a premium in remote locations. He simultaneously ordered training to include extensive dismounted clearing. By mid-May, Mackenzie believed his regiment was ready.<sup>62</sup>

On 15 May 1873, the companies of the Fourth Cavalry moved down the Las Moras Creek to occupy a forward staging base a few miles from the Rio Grande. At approximately 2:00 a.m. on 16 May, a small detachment of troopers led by Major Clarence Mauck galloped into the camp and awakened the Fourth to the orders of “pack up” and “saddle up.” Lieutenant-Colonel Eugene B. Beaumont, who was the senior officer at the camp and second in command of the regiment, demanded to know under whose authority Mauck was riding. When Mauck informed Beaumont he was relaying orders from Colonel

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<sup>58</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie's Official Correspondence*, 161.

<sup>59</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie's Official Correspondence*, 161. Sheridan did not know at the time he forwarded this telegraph that Mackenzie had already crossed into Mexico and attacked the Kickapoo camp at Remolino.

<sup>60</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 97.

<sup>61</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 427.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 425.

Mackenzie, they began breaking camp. “Pack and mount” were the orders for strict silence and no bugle calls for the duration of the coming expedition.<sup>63</sup> Once the camp had packed and mounted, Seminole-Negro Indian Scout Ike Cox led the Fourth on a southerly route to a rendezvous point near the Rio Grande at the mouth of the Las Moras Creek, where they arrived at approximately 8:30 a.m. An impatient Mackenzie was there waiting for the column. However, Mackenzie still could not cross the Rio Grande until Lieutenant Bullis and six other scouts arrived with two additional cavalry companies from Fort Duncan, Texas. These additional forces finally arrived at 1:00 p.m. on 16 May 1873.<sup>64</sup>

The crossing point selected was approximately halfway between the mouth of Las Moras Creek on the Rio Grande and the town of Quemado, Texas. Once the Fourth reached the north bank of the Rio Grande at the crossing point, Mackenzie called a meeting with all officers in the regiment. Mackenzie informed them where they were going and why. In the course of the dialogue that ensued, Mackenzie told his officers that it would be a dangerous mission and they were to inform their troopers that, if caught, they would die by Indian torture or Mexican firing squad. Mackenzie also told his men that failure in this endeavor would likely mean one of two things: either Mackenzie’s court martial and subsequent dismissal from the service; or a state of war would exist between Mexico and the United States.<sup>65</sup>

Like Mackenzie, many of the Fourth Cavalry’s officers were experienced fighters on the frontier and veterans of the Civil War. Their experiences caused them to question the legality of this raid. Lieutenant-Colonel Beaumont was especially bewildered at the operation that Mackenzie briefed.

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<sup>63</sup> Orders that bugles remain silenced were uncommon in the U.S. Army at this time, more indication to the Fourth Cavalry that an atypical campaign was impending.

<sup>64</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 429.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 430. Carter annotated in his memoirs that it is highly unlikely that Grant and Sheridan would have made a scapegoat of Mackenzie had the raid ended in military or political disaster. Carter’s argument was that Mackenzie and Grant were too good of friends for the latter not to come to Mackenzie’s defense, regardless of how the raid turned out. Thus, these words chosen by Mackenzie in this last meeting with his officers were probably inaccurate by design, with the intent of easing the anxiety of his subordinates to ensure they went along on the expedition.

Surprised by the idea, Beaumont asked Mackenzie if he possessed the proper authorization to take the Fourth Cavalry into Mexico. Mackenzie responded that he indeed did have authorization, but the assumption by Beaumont and other concerned subordinates was that the authorization Mackenzie had was in writing from the War Department or personally from President Grant. Mackenzie deliberately left out that his approval for this risky maneuver was only a verbal order from Lieutenant General Sheridan. With no reason to question their commander, the officers of the Fourth Cavalry dispersed to get their units ready to move into a foreign land under the strictest orders of silence and secrecy.<sup>66</sup>

Mackenzie did not want to cross the Rio Grande in daylight. He wanted to move as far into Coahuila as possible under cover of darkness. Nighttime would be safer and cooler, and the night sky would allow his raiding force the best chance of penetration deep into Mexican territory before identification by Mexican citizens, who were sure to report an American presence. For these reasons, Mackenzie waited until just before sunset on 16 May when he gave the order for his troopers to begin crossing the Rio Grande. When that time arrived, Mackenzie guided the column as they splashed into the five-foot deep waters that divided Mexico from the United States.<sup>67</sup>

Riding in columns of four, the Fourth's horses climbed up the south bank of the Rio Grande. Even at night, the Mexican heat was stifling. In order to preserve their energy, troopers put wet sponges on the inside of hats for the cooling effects. Up front with Mackenzie was Lieutenant Carter, the Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts Cox, Van, and McLain, Lieutenant Bullis, and a handful of other scouts that Bullis brought with him from Fort Duncan. Behind them was a several mile-long column of 317 enlisted men, 17 officers, 4 civilians, and hundreds of horses and pack mules.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 430.

<sup>67</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 99.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*



The Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts under Lieutenant John Bullis turned out to be pivotal to the success of this operation. Mackenzie did not know the exact route to take to the Kickapoo camp after the regiment reached the vicinity of Monclova Viejo. From that point, the scouts would have to lead Mackenzie's force to the target. Despite the fact that other scouts, such as Cox and Van, had recently followed the trail of Kickapoo war parties and surveyed the campsite, they had done so mostly in the dark, and frontier experience dictated that the memory of a native scout was seldom of unquestionable reliability.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Mackenzie did not know if his troopers would run into an Indian ambush or Mexican Army patrol that would force him to alter the route of march. For these reasons, Mackenzie needed experienced scouts familiar with this foreign terrain. Lieutenant Bullis and his scouts provided this critical resource. In fact, this raid would not have been possible without the Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts assisting the Fourth Cavalry.

On the sultry night of 17 May the column tramped along to the south in Terreno Desconocido ("Unknown Lands"), kicking up a fog of Mexican dust that made even the most experienced cavalry troopers choke.<sup>70</sup> The plan was for the column to march southwest from the Rio Grande approximately ten miles southwest to Monclova Viejo. Then, the Fourth would turn westerly and trek roughly thirty miles down the San Rodrigo River to the target location where the Kickapoos camped. After the attack, Mackenzie, with the assistance of the scouts, would determine an alternate route back to the safety of Texan soil.

The noncommissioned officers in the Fourth Cavalry struggled mightily to keep the column in tight formation, something that was normally an easy task. This was the result of the darkness and miles of long heavy dust clouds kicked up by horses and pack mules. After a few hours, it became impossible to keep order amongst the entire column. The Fourth's column broke up in several locations, which

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<sup>69</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 431-32.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

heightened Mackenzie's concern for security.

Mackenzie planned to attack at dawn on 18 May to achieve complete surprise over the sleeping Kickapoo warriors. A reduced gait shattered Mackenzie's confidence that this could happen, and significantly increased the risk to portions of the Fourth's column further separated from the main column. All of this came to a boiling point when Major Mauck and Lieutenant-Colonel Beaumont approached Lieutenant Carter to see if he would ask Mackenzie for a short halt. After a short deliberation, Carter reluctantly agreed to do so, knowing the response that was sure to come from Mackenzie. Carter galloped to the head of the column to inform Mackenzie that the formation had broken up and stretched out a few miles to the rear, and for the ranks to close; the commander would have to order a short halt, and to cut the packs off mules. Expectedly, Mackenzie lashed out in a profanity-ridden tirade, but ultimately agreed to Carter's requests. The supply column did catch up and the entire column regained its integrity. However, the halt that was supposed to be five minutes took much longer. Dawn was just over the horizon, and the Kickapoo camp the Fourth was looking to destroy was nowhere in sight. Mackenzie's planned dawn attack was not going to happen, and this served to agitate the commander even more.<sup>71</sup>

As day was breaking, the scouts knew the Fourth was getting close to the target when the column reached the village of Remolino near the headwaters of the San Rodrigo River. This was the vicinity the scouts had recently spotted Lipan, Mescalero, and most importantly, the Kickapoo camps. The scouts went forward and identified the exact camps that belonged to the Kickapoos among a long stretch of different tribal encampments through the valley below. Meanwhile, Mackenzie took advantage of the short break to allow the horses and men to rest, get some water, tighten their girths, and take in fresh mountain air coming from the high country to the west of Remolino. Non-commissioned officers quickly inspected all weapons as Mackenzie ordered all troopers to put handfuls of pistol and rifle cartridges in their pockets. This was in anticipation that some of the Fourth's troopers would be thrown from their

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<sup>71</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 435-36.

mounts, dismount to clear lodges, or detain Indians that would be accompanying the Fourth back to United States soil. While dismounted, it was possible for the horses to be spooked and run away unexpectedly; taking with them the packed ammunition that the troopers would need to conduct the attack.<sup>72</sup>

Speed, mass, and surprise were the factors the outnumbered troopers would depend on for this raid to be successful. Mackenzie could not afford for his tired regiment to become pinned-down, surrounded, or in some way isolated in drawn-out engagements in terrain the Kickapoos knew well and his men did not. For these reasons, dividing his command was out of the question. All troopers would charge head-on with orders to destroy everything they encountered in the Kickapoo village.<sup>73</sup>

With the temporary rest concluded, the Fourth's troopers began to align in attack formation. Mackenzie led the column to the top of the slope overlooking the Kickapoo camp below. With his unit already behind schedule and having missed the planned dawn attack time, Mackenzie reasoned that several direct assaults with total surprise would be enough to achieve the desired end state of this raid –the extermination of the Kickapoo base of operations in Mexico. Thus, Mackenzie kept all his forces consolidated. The time was now close to 7:00 a.m., 18 May 1873.<sup>74</sup>

At the top of the hill, the Seminole-Negro scouts identified the Kickapoo camps and pointed them out to Mackenzie. From the low saddle, Mackenzie surveyed the line of Kickapoo lodges and tee-pees strung out along the San Rodrigo River and finalized his attack plan. The plan was nothing more than a series of frontal assaults to overwhelm the entire Kickapoo camp before the Indians could rally their war parties. Although Mackenzie did not know if all the Indian war parties had returned from their latest

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<sup>72</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 100. Directing ammunition carried in pockets proved a decisive move by Mackenzie.

<sup>73</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 139. The Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts strongly recommended to Mackenzie that he launch a three-pronged attack that would simultaneously engulf the entire string of native camps from the west, east, and north, but Mackenzie refused.

<sup>74</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 439-48.

raiding ventures to the north, he did not take any chances in dividing his forces for envelopment or flanking maneuvers.<sup>75</sup>

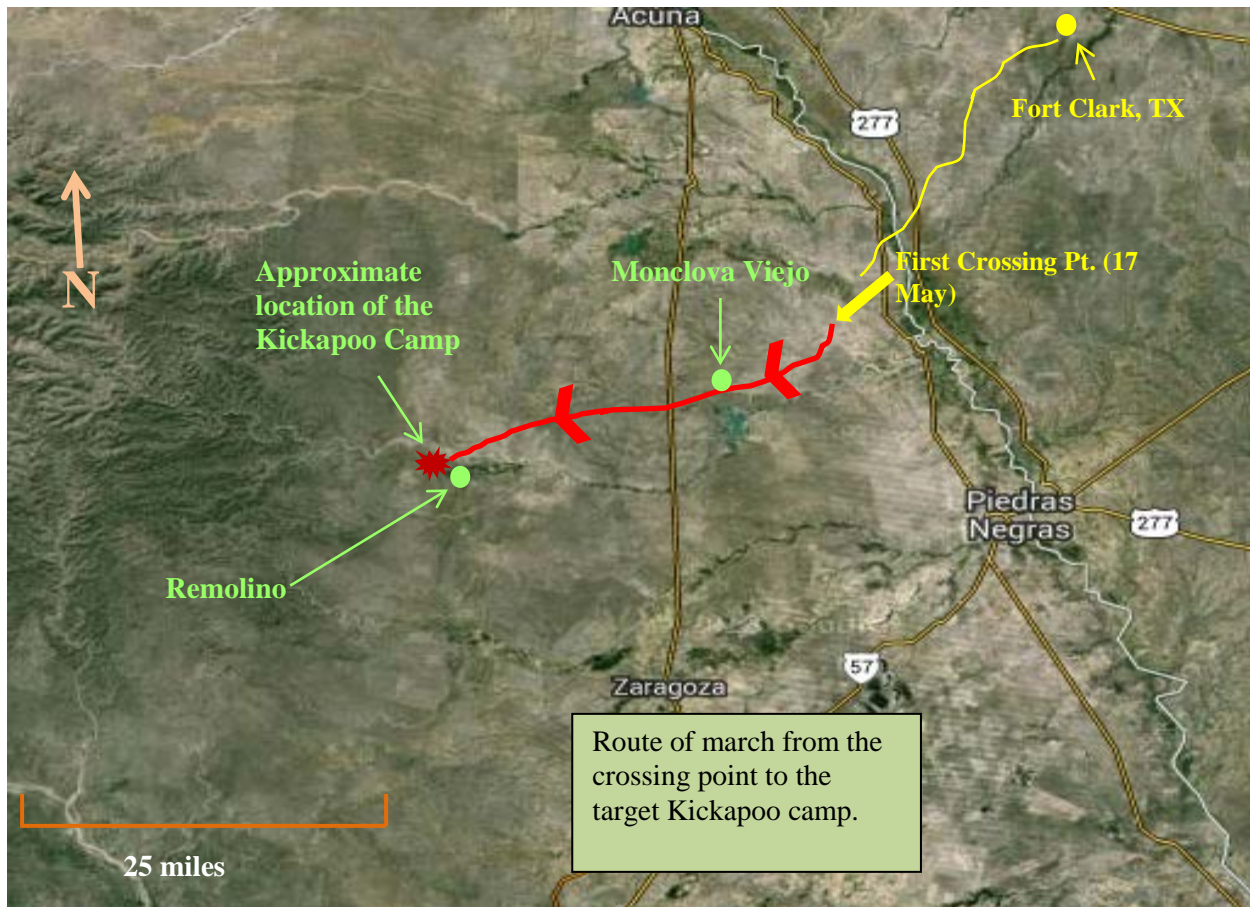


Figure 3

Source: Created by author.

The approximate mile-long route to the village was slightly downhill with some patches of mesquite, a thistle, and some desert grass, but no major natural barriers to slow down a cavalry charge of this magnitude. Mackenzie gave the honors of “opening the ball” for the attack to Captain N.B.

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<sup>75</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 439-48.

McLaughlin, commander of Company I.<sup>76</sup> Due to the dispersed nature of the Kickapoo camp, the remainder of the Fourth would charge to destroy in platoon-sized formations. Mackenzie reasoned that, if McLaughlin could quickly destroy the main camp of about fifty or so lodges with his company, where he believed most of the fighting men and tribal leadership were staying, it would be much easier for the remainder of the mounted platoons to destroy the smaller pockets of huts and Kickapoos fleeing the onslaught. These platoon formations were to charge in a wheeling maneuver from east to west, attack the village with volleys of fire, obliterate everything in sight, and then return to the base location to reload and prepare for another charge. These wheeling attacks were to continue until the Fourth destroyed the Kickapoo camp.<sup>77</sup> Detaining prisoners would take place after the destruction of the camp was complete.

Mackenzie gave the nod, and three single shots followed by a front rank volley rang out.<sup>78</sup>

McLaughlin's troopers stampeded and hit the Kickapoo camp like a freight train. The platoon surges that followed the initial company charge added to the hopeless plight of the Kickapoos. Wave after wave of charging troopers struck the Kickapoo camp with unrestrained fury. Troopers galloped, hooting and hollering, and destroyed everything in the camp. Once one platoon was far enough through the dust and smoke of the melee, Mackenzie signaled for the next platoon to begin its charge. Gray smoke from burning grass and dust filled the air as the troopers shot at anything moving.<sup>79</sup>

Carbines were banging, rifles were cracking. The men were incessantly cheering and scattering in pursuit. The warriors were yelling and flying in every direction, many half naked, from their huts. It was a grand and impressive sight. Sharp and imperative commands alone held the men in ranks, or kept them from dashing individually into the villages. Over mesquite bushes, rocks, prickly-

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<sup>76</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 439-48. The phrase "opening the ball" was slang for beginning an attack.

<sup>77</sup> Pate, *Ranald Slidell Mackenzie*, 91-92.

<sup>78</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 440. Cavalry attack commands in the nineteenth century were often by firing pistols or carbines into the air. This was in order to ensure all troopers in the charging formation could hear, or if not, see the commands. The first shot signaled, "Left front into line," the second, "gallop," and the third, "march." The final front line volley was the signal for "charge."

<sup>79</sup> Pate, *Ranald Slidell Mackenzie*, 91-92.

pear, and the long, dagger-like points of the Spanish bayonet, dashed the mad, impetuous column of troopers. Here could be seen a horse gone nearly crazy and unmanageable with fright, and running off with its rider, who was almost or wholly powerless to control him. Small, mesquite trees had to be avoided, and what with controlling the men, dodging obstacles over rough ground, and handling our horses, a more reckless, dare-devil ride we never had. Soon the rear companies struck the villages, and, dismounting and “fighting on foot” were closely engaged. It was short work.<sup>80</sup>

Although it was difficult to see into the melee, it was clear that the Fourth had the advantage.

After storming through the camp, troopers galloped their mounts back to the starting location, rested for a few minutes, reloaded, and charged again. The Kickapoos never had a chance. The natives thought they were safe from American reprisal in Mexican territory.<sup>81</sup> They did not think that the Americans would cross the Rio Grande, travel over fifty miles into Mexican territory, and attack them on their Mexican base of operations. Despite delays and unforeseen setbacks that always occur in martial endeavors, Mackenzie achieved total surprise over the Kickapoos, and quickly destroyed their camp.

After the Kickapoos finally realized what was happening, they did all they could to defend themselves, including throwing stones from irrigation ditches, but all to no avail. A few Kickapoos managed to escape to the high country west of Remolino as the Seminole-Negro Indian scouts had predicted, but it was a small number. A few of the elderly, women, and children made it to hiding places down in ditches nearby, but most did not get far and were quickly rounded up.<sup>82</sup> The Fourth Cavalry’s achievement of total surprise cannot be overstated.<sup>83</sup> Collectively, mass, speed, and surprise permitted

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<sup>80</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 441-42.

<sup>81</sup> Pate, *Ranald Slidell Mackenzie*, 91-92.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 441. Lieutenant Carter, Mackenzie’s acting adjutant, who fought in the Civil War in the Gettysburg Campaign and charged with the Fourth at Remolino, would later say, “I never saw such a magnificent charge such as that made by those six troops of the Fourth Cavalry on the morning of 18 May 1873, at Rey Molina [Remolino], Mexico.” On 27 February 1890, Carter received two brevet promotions, one to First Lieutenant, and one to Captain; both awarded for gallantry at Brazos River in 1871 and Remolino in 1873, respectively, while serving in the Fourth Cavalry.

quick and total destruction of the Kickapoo base of operations in Mexico.<sup>84</sup>

Nevertheless, at the same time, the scene was tragic. Lieutenant Carter titled it a “Sad Spectacle” in his memoirs.<sup>85</sup> His vivid recap says it all:

Turning quickly, I saw, under a large, overhanging bunch of flags and long grass, what appeared to be the form of a large Indian in the act of pointing a weapon. It was about 30 yards...I was the only officer who had brought a carbine...Raising it and firing immediately, the Indian fell. The men then opened fire which was replied to from the bushes. Dismounting shortly after and ordering, “Cease firing,” I approached the bushes and, parting them, witnessed one of those most singular and pitiable spectacles incident to Indian warfare...at the entrance of what appeared to be a small cave...lay stretched the dead body of a gigantic Indian, and behind him...more bodies...the men reaching in, then drew forth two small children...badly shot through their bodies. One was dead, the other nearly so...We thought this was all, but almost covered up under the immense flags, we found still a third child, a girl of about twelve, badly wounded. It was one of those cruel, unforeseen and unavoidable accidents of grim-visaged war.<sup>86</sup>

The aftershock of the raid was just the way Lieutenant General Sheridan wanted it – total annihilation. Three separate Indian villages along the San Rodrigo River were burning. No less than nineteen Kickapoos were dead, with dozens more wounded. The Fourth detained over forty women and children, and a Seminole-Negro Indian scout apprehended a Lipan Chief, One Buck, after lassoing him. Lieutenant Carter, who rode with one of the charging platoons, reported sixty-five ponies seized. The captured horses, many of which had Texas ranch brands, became the property of the scouts as payment for gathering intelligence for the raid and directing the expedition to the target.<sup>87</sup> Still, Mackenzie did not leave anything that other Indians might use in future raids. After rounding up the prisoners, Mackenzie ordered all remaining huts and lodges burned. Before burning the camp, the troopers searched it thoroughly. Soldiers found bills of sale for Texas cattle and other items from Indian raids, proving that the Kickapoos had stolen Texas property and brought it south of the border for bartering. From the Texan

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<sup>84</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 141.

<sup>85</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 442-43.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 101.

point of view, these findings vindicated the raid.<sup>88</sup>

Achieving total surprise allowed the Fourth Cavalry to suffer little during the raid. Mackenzie's official report annotated only one trooper killed, one suffered a serious arm wound (that resulted in a field amputation just below the shoulder), and one trooper received a superficial slash to the face. Only four horses in the Fourth Cavalry died, two killed in action, and two succumbed of exhaustion.<sup>89</sup> In spite of the result, the battle could have turned out differently had all the Indian war parties, most of which were off hunting during the raid, been present to help defend the camp. What is certain, had all the native war parties been present, or sufficient early warning provided to the Kickapoos, the official casualty numbers for both sides would have likely been higher.

After the Fourth consolidated, Mackenzie allowed the troopers to get water and prepare for the long march back to Fort Clark with no sleep and exhausted mounts. Selecting a new route was imperative since the previous route could have Mexicans or Indians hungry for revenge. Additionally, the Mexican Army could get orders to try to hunt down Mackenzie's troopers for their incursion into Mexican. Mackenzie again turned to the Seminole-Negro Indian scouts to resolve this dilemma. The scouts initially took the Fourth straight back to the east down the San Rodrigo River through the town of Remolino where they turned slightly southeast, and then east again after getting a short distance through the town. It did not take long for the weary troopers to run into groups of angry Mexicans scowling and shouting obscenities at them. However, the locals did not attempt to interfere with the mounted column.<sup>90</sup>

After marching about ten miles to the east of Remolino Mackenzie steered the column northeast where the San Rodrigo River bends northerly toward the village of Monclova Viejo. After trotting northeast for approximately forty miles, Mackenzie turned slightly more northeast and marched straight

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<sup>88</sup> Pate, *Ranald Slidell Mackenzie*, 92.

<sup>89</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie's Official Correspondence*, 170.

<sup>90</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 102.



for the Rio Grande. This route took the Fourth a few miles to the west of the path they took immediately after crossing into Mexico the previous day. The new route took them west of the towns of El Moral and Monclova Viejo, and through terrain much less inhabited by Mexicans or Indians. Mackenzie took this route under the assumption the Mexican authorities were, by now, aware of what had taken place near Remolino, and might be calling on the Mexican Army to retaliate. Moreover, Monclova Viejo and El Moral, and the terrain leading out of those two towns to the south, were favorable to any ambushing element.<sup>91</sup> Making the same route as the day before even more dangerous was the town of Zaragoza on its path, where many Mexican ranchers lived nearby. If the ranchers learned of the incursion, they might be angered over missing future business the Kickapoos would bring them from Texas ranch raids, and attack the column in revenge.<sup>92</sup> However, despite Mackenzie's actions taken to prepare for such reprisals, there is no evidence to suggest the Mexican Army or militia received official orders from the Mexican government to retaliate.

The Fourth's route back to the Rio Grande was more barren than the route they took to Remolino. The route was safer, but in extremely desolate country, and with the scorching Mexican sun overhead, the column was less likely to find badly needed water for their burning throats or parched horses. However, even if they had found a sufficient water supply, it is not likely that Mackenzie would have given his troopers much time to rest and recuperate. Mackenzie assumed that if the Indians or Mexicans could muster a good-sized force, they probably could inflict heavy losses on his beleaguered force given their tired and expended state.<sup>93</sup>

Nightfall on 18 May brought little relief to the Fourth Cavalry. The fatigue, sultry air, and choking dust were unbearable. In some instances, leaders, to keep their men awake and alert in their

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<sup>91</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 102.

<sup>92</sup> Pate, *Ronald Slidell Mackenzie*, 93.

<sup>93</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 141-42.

saddles, applied jabs from fists and boot heels. As the column got farther north, it had to slow down multiple times to allow gaps in the column to close. Adding to the frustration was the Kickapoo detainees that the Fourth was escorting to prisons at Fort Gibson. The captives were tired and falling off mules, driving many troopers to engage in lashing to get them to keep pace. Even Mackenzie lost his trademark intensity due to his fatigue.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, the Fourth Cavalry demonstrated its endurance during the Remolino raid that would match any other mounted endeavor by the U.S. Army during the Indian Wars.

Mackenzie did all he could within his power to mitigate the risk to his regiment. Now it was simply a matter of pushing the troopers to splash up the north bank of the Rio Grande and rest in Texas. The Fourth reached the Rio Grande at the mouth of the Sycamore Creek about ten miles below Del Rio, Texas. It was now 19 May, and Mackenzie ordered the Fourth to dismount and go into camp. For the first time in forty-nine hours, their spent horses had their saddles removed.<sup>95</sup> The Fourth had just ridden over 140 miles through hostile territory, executed a successful attack, and had ridden back to the safety of Texas in just over two days. As troopers jumped with joy into the Rio Grande, “Men and horses” wrote Carter “seemed to draw new strength from the refreshing waters.”<sup>96</sup> More importantly, the United States and Mexican governments were finally going to engage in diplomatic negotiations to resolve the Kickapoo “problem” for the last time.

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<sup>94</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 450-51.

<sup>95</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 142.

<sup>96</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 455. For a detailed breakdown of the time and distances covered during the raid, see Carter pages 465-66.



Colonel Ranald Slidell Mackenzie (pictured as a Brevet Brigadier General), circa 1864.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, ii. Original photograph taken from the U.S. Army Signal Corps, Brady Collection, National Archives. Notice Mackenzie's right hand hidden. After losing fingers, he never let his right hand be photographed.

## A GRANDE PEACE RESTORED

A few hours before the Fourth Cavalry crossed back to the north bank of the Rio Grande, word spread through Coahuila that “600 gringos” were rampaging all over northern Mexico, looting, raping, and killing Mexican women and children. Coahuila exploded into a temporary state of fury. Many Americans residing in Coahuila began leaving to go north to San Antonio to evade reprisal. Those who stayed risked their lives and property. In the Coahuila capital of Saltillo, the call to arms sounded. However, when confirmation circulated that the invaders were not Texas Rangers, Texan Militia, or cowboys, but rather U.S. Army Regulars, Mexican motivation for revenge quickly dissipated. Since it was the U.S. Army, Mexicans assumed that punitive action was likely to result in another bloody incursion by American forces.<sup>98</sup>

A small detachment of Mexicans gathered across the Rio Grande from the Fourth and dared the Americans to come back to the Mexican side, but when they realized the Fourth Cavalry outmanned and outgunned them, they resorted to shouting obscenities at the Fourth’s troopers. Although picket lines were set and sharpshooters emplaced to provide security for the camp, none of the troopers or their officers took the bait. Their minds focused on the six wagons of rations, jerky, and clean drinking water waiting for them when they arrived in Texas.<sup>99</sup> The thirsty troopers wanted to indulge in the homemade mezcal that Green Van brought out from his nearby farm; however, Mackenzie did not allow the troopers to have a drop.<sup>100</sup> Mackenzie ensured iron discipline be maintained until the entire Fourth Cavalry was back within the safe confines of Fort Clark.

On 20 May, Major J. K. Mizner, who stayed behind in command at Fort Clark in Mackenzie’s absence, sent a telegraph to headquarters at the Military Department of Texas. Minzer noted, “A dispatch

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<sup>98</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 144-46.

<sup>99</sup> Pate, *Mackenzie*, 94.

<sup>100</sup> Robinson, *Badhand*, 142. Mezcal is a distilled alcoholic beverage made from the maguey plant.

received at this Post last evening [19 May], brings information of a brilliant success in a[n] attack made upon two villages of Kickapoo and Lapan Indians by General Mackenzie and the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry under his command.”<sup>101</sup> When Sheridan read Mizner’s telegraph and other traffic that indicated Mackenzie did cross the border, he telegraphed Secretary of War Belknap on 22 May: “It is more than probable that Mackenzie crossed into Mexico, and had his fight on that side of the Rio Grande. We must back him.”<sup>102</sup>

Word of the raid spread over the United States. As usual, several versions of the story circulated, including some that said Colonel Mackenzie died in the raid and others that alleged the Americans slaughtered their “peaceful” Mexican neighbors, but such rumors were common.<sup>103</sup> While American leaders were eager to hear from Mackenzie personally to get his official account of the raid, they knew not to rush to conclusions. Both generals Sheridan and Sherman were especially anxious to read Mackenzie’s report and the situation in the aftermath of the raid. They waited two more days for the telegraphed report to arrive.<sup>104</sup>

The night of 19 May through early morning 20 May, the Fourth Cavalry’s relieved troopers took turns with security until dawn. At daybreak on 20 May, Mackenzie moved the camp a few miles north of the Rio Grande where they again stopped to rest before the final trek to Fort Clark. At dusk on 20 May, some the officers of the Fourth gathered around a campfire Mackenzie started next to his horse. They congregated around the commander to discuss all that had taken place over the past three days. Colonel Beaumont had a specific concern that he immediately brought up to Mackenzie. Beaumont renewed the question of whether or not Mackenzie had legal authorization to cross into Mexico. This time, Mackenzie

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<sup>101</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie’s Official Correspondence*, 165-66. Although Mackenzie wore the rank of Colonel, officers who had previously received brevet promotions to general officer during the Civil War were often addressed or referred to as “General.”

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Pate, *Ranald Slidell Mackenzie*, 95.

<sup>104</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie’s Official Correspondence*, 167.

admitted that he did not, and that he had only verbal permission from Lieutenant General Sheridan for the punitive expedition. Beaumont responded furiously, “Then it was illegal to expose not only the lives of your officers and men...but, in the event of their being wounded and compelled upon our withdrawal, through force of circumstances, to be left over there, probably be hung or shot by a merciless horde of savage Indians and Mexicans.” Calmly, Mackenzie replied, “I considered all that.” Beaumont, not relieved by Mackenzie’s response, added, “Your officers and men would have been justified in refusing to obey your orders, which you now admit as being illegal, and exposing themselves to such peril.” Captain McLaughlin, whose company led the charge on the Kickapoo camp, chimed in, “Beaumont is right! And had I known that you had no orders to take us over the river, I would not have gone!” Mackenzie stood up, and replied, “Any officer or man who had refused to follow me across the river I would have shot!” Captain Wirt Davis, renowned as the best pistol shot in the Fourth Cavalry, fired back at Mackenzie with disrespectful sarcasm, “That would depend, Sir, on who shot first!”<sup>105</sup> After hearing enough insubordination, Mackenzie ended the conversation by dismissing his angry subordinates. The Fourth’s troopers bedded down for the final day’s march back to Fort Clark, where they arrived at approximately noon on 21 May.

#### DIPLOMATIC AMMUNITION

Two months prior to Mackenzie’s raid at Remolino, the United States Indian Bureau appointed Colonel Thomas G. Williams and Henry M. Atkinson to serve as special envoys to negotiate the expulsion of the Kickapoos from Mexico.<sup>106</sup> Removal, in the diplomatic sense, meant the Kickapoos were to leave Mexico to live on reservations in the United States, where they were more easily controlled. However, even if this diplomatic endeavor achieved success on its own, there were no guarantees that all the violence in Texas would have stopped (or even a large percentage of it reduced). By now, multiple

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<sup>105</sup> Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie*, 457-59.

<sup>106</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie’s Official Correspondence*, 19.

Comanche and Kiowa tribes in Texas went to reservations both peacefully and by force of arms, only to leave after the United States government did not provide the conditions and provisions it promised. Furthermore, most natives did not like their sedentary lives on reservations. Therefore, any extradition strategy required motivation for the Kickapoos to leave Mexico willingly. Mackenzie's raid served as this impetus.

Coincidentally, on the same day that Mackenzie's Fourth Cavalry attacked the Kickapoo camp at Remolino, Williams and Atkinson were in Santa Rosa, Coahuila, negotiating the eviction of the Kickapoos with Mexican Commissioner Antonio Madero. Atkinson and Williams delighted to hear of the results of the Fourth Cavalry's attack on the Kickapoos. Convinced that this show of force was diplomatic ammunition to persuade the Mexicans to concede to American pressure to expel the Mexican Kickapoos, Atkinson and Williams sent Mackenzie their congratulations on a job well done. Mackenzie, not aware until he received the congratulatory message of this ambassadorial mission in Mexico, was gravely concerned for their safety. Mackenzie immediately asked Brigadier General C.C. Augur for permission to cross the border again with his regiment and a Texas Militia regiment if the Mexicans, in retaliation for the raid, arrested the American emissaries. Augur responded that he could not authorize such an action in foreign territory. However, Augur agreed with Mackenzie's contention that if the American delegates in Mexico got "adequate military support" they would succeed in getting the Kickapoos removed from Mexico.<sup>107</sup> It is unclear exactly what Augur meant by his expression of "adequate military support," but he was most likely referring to a show of force to deceive the Mexicans into believing another American raid into Mexico was imminent if the Mexicans did not agree to American terms or held the American envoys for diplomatic ransom.

Unbeknownst to Williams and Atkinson at the time, the Mexican government did not want the situation to become a highly publicized international affair. Upon learning of the raid, the Mexican

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<sup>107</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier*, 107-10.

Minister to the United States, Ignacio Mariscal, expressed his confidence to American leaders in settling this state of affairs without further bloodshed. Although many Mexicans were angry and demanded retaliation, word soon spread that the only victims of Mackenzie's raid were Indians, not Mexican nationals. Then, the retaliatory fervor quickly subsided and relative calm swept through Coahuila. Eight months later, on New Year's Day, 1874, Mariscal wired U.S. Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, to convey Mexico's promise that the Mexican government would not sanction any Mexican troops, Mexican militia, or Indians to retaliate against the Americans for Mackenzie's raid at Remolino. Additionally, Mariscal offered terms that included the removal of the Kickapoos from Coahuila and turning them over to the United States government.<sup>108</sup>

In addition to the violent attack they had just suffered, the starving Kickapoos were simultaneously enticed to leave Mexico peaceably when offered rations by Atkinson and Williams. Still, the Kickapoos had one condition of their own. They wanted all their women and children detained by the Fourth Cavalry returned immediately. Atkinson, not having the authority to direct the release of military prisoners, wired Brigadier General Augur to introduce the possibility of their return in exchange for an agreement that the citizens of Santa Rosa stop demanding reprisal for the lost economic benefits of Indian raids in United States territory.<sup>109</sup> Augur did not want to make the decision, so he telegraphed Lieutenant General Sheridan in Chicago to ask for his guidance. The request met uncompromising disapproval from both Sheridan and Colonel Mackenzie. In anger at the mere proposal, Mackenzie telegraphed Augur on 6 June.

The cause of the bad conduct of these [Mexican] Citizens is that they have been for years reaping the fruits of the robbers, committed by the Kickapoos & Lepans. It is very important that the General Government of Mexico at once regard the Crossing of the River, by our Troops, in the proper light.

The same thing [cross-border raids] had been done over and over again by their own [Mexican] Troops.

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<sup>108</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie's Official Correspondence*, 165.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, 21-22.



[It] is very important just at this time that the General Government of Mexico as well as that of the Neighboring State [Chihuahua] use every exertion to cause these [Kickapoo] Indians to recross [the Rio Grande into the United States] and if they not at hand the necessary force, that our troops be used to that end.

[It] is very important that they [Mexican authorities] immediately cause the Principal Citizens of Santa Rosa and other Mexican Frontier Towns to understand that they must cease inciting the Indians [in Mexico] to plunder and annoy our [American] Citizens – And that the sure means of procuring the return of the Indians is to agree to mutual co-operation in the suppression of the Frontier disorders.

I think in a few months the Kickapoos will be willing to come out [willingly].<sup>110</sup>

After Sheridan read Mackenzie's assessment of the situation, he telegraphed Sherman, who was deeply concerned for the safety of the commissioners in Mexico. "Respectfully forwarded [Mackenzie's above telegraph from 6 June]," wrote Sheridan, "Mackenzie has done very well; hope he will not spoil it by corresponding too much with Tom, Dick and Harry, on the subject."<sup>111</sup> Then, after deliberating a few more days, on 10 June, Sheridan gave Sherman his recommendation for the Kickapoo captives, stating

I think it would be a great misfortune to make the slightest concession [in the diplomatic negotiations]. There is no probability of the success of the commissioners in inducing the Kickapoos to go to the Indian Territory [Oklahoma]. The threat of detaining the commissioners is mere buncumbo [bunkum]. The detention of the women and children at [Fort] Gibson, would do more to bring the tribe back [to the United States] than half a dozen commissioners.<sup>112</sup>

Sheridan was right. There is no evidence to indicate Mexican officials planned to arrest Williams and Atkinson or detain them for diplomatic ransom. In their minds, the United States government demonstrated its willingness to utilize military force to compel the Mexican government to take action against violent non-state actors operating from its territory.

Secretary Belknap agreed with Sheridan that not releasing the Kickapoo women and children was, for now, the best course of action. However, the politically embattled war secretary did not want to be the one to make the final decision, as war with Mexico could be the result of the wrong decree.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Wallace, *Mackenzie's Official Correspondence*, 21-22.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Belknap was under scrutiny for alleged involvement in financial scandals in Washington, D.C.

Eventually, President Grant himself decided the Kickapoo prisoners would not go free until both the Kickapoos and the Mexican government met all American demands. Both conceded and agreed to all United States diplomatic ultimatums concerning the expulsion of the Kickapoos from Mexico.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR MODERN BORDER SECURITY

The intent of this monograph is not to laud or denigrate Mackenzie for attacking the Kickapoo camp at Remolino. Nor is the intent to place blame on either the Native Americans or Texans for the violence on the Texas frontier. The purpose herein is to demonstrate that when the Mexican and United States civilian authorities do not have the capability of quelling non-state actor induced violence that originates south of the Rio Grande, the use of United States-Mexican combined military raids and Defense Support to Civilian Agencies (DSCA) are feasible and sometimes necessary options in prosecuting a successful international border security strategy. Since all other combined efforts by the United States and Mexico have failed to provide security along the southwest border, the question arises, what feasible options do United States leaders have to assist Mexico in the international fight against transnational criminal organizations?

For those who argue Mackenzie's raid on the Kickapoos at Remolino was unnecessary, the question begs, what other alternative was available to stop the Kickapoos from raiding white settlements in south Texas? Over the course of several decades, no other agency, including the Indian Bureau, accomplished anything in stopping native attacks on in Texas. The frontier Indian "problem" was too complex for any one agency to solve peacefully in a short time span, if ever. Moreover, the Kickapoos were non-state actors who did not recognize international borders, except for their own benefit. Therefore, the only way to secure the Texas border region quickly was to demonstrate a willingness to apply military force upon those insurgents or criminals who were the source of frontier violence and thievery in the Rio Grande region. Although unilateral United States military strikes in Mexico are not an option, if all else fails, United States and Mexican leaders should not rule out the possibility of combined military raids on transnational criminal organizations as a means to secure the southwest border region and assist Mexico

in stabilizing its northern frontier.

The utilization of U.S. Armed Forces to assist law enforcement with border security is hardly a new concept. Throughout American history, the Department of War (Defense) intervened to resolve border security problems on numerous occasions. Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie's raid at Remolino is one of many historical examples of military intervention as means to secure the border, but one of the few cases that quickly restored peace to an entire region of the southwest border. Mackenzie's raid, however, was in 1873. In the twenty-first century, the debate continues as to what amount of United States military assistance to Mexican authorities and DSCA is feasible and acceptable in regards to border security.

Recent American political pressure to "regain control" of the border essentially implies the border was once secure in a past era. The reality is that the United States border with Mexico has never been fully secure, and it never will be.<sup>114</sup> This is primarily for three reasons. First, most people, policymakers included, cannot define or visualize a "secure border" for United States agencies to collectively pursue as a strategic objective. Second, some actually benefit from instability along the border. Third, the vast landscape and scope of the border security problem requires a commitment of resources unavailable in a fiscally constrained operating environment. Therefore, putting together a comprehensive strategy to secure the border remains a bipartisan dream. While elected officials are understandably sensitive to their respective electorates' calls to ratchet up border enforcement, recent American policy maker actions in response to American outcry over border violence have actually served to make the problem worse.<sup>115</sup> Historically, the most common response to United States public uproar over border violence is an escalation of border security personnel, but such has proven, in and of itself, to be a failed course of action.

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<sup>114</sup> Peter Andreas, *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 8-9.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

Today, like in the past, increased border police is a natural policy response to a proliferation in border violence.<sup>116</sup> Yet, escalation of policing failed in Mackenzie's time and it is failing today. On the Texas frontier, there was a steadily growing number of security outposts, and significantly increased numbers of soldiers and militia operating from them that yielded no diminishing results in border violence. Historical evidence indicates that Texas border violence increased drastically during the period from the building of the 1830s frontier posts to May 1873. Mackenzie's border problem required more than throwing additional manpower at the problem. American leaders needed to apply a new measure, to change the dynamics of the battlefield and paralyze the non-state actors who were the culprits of Texas frontier violence. This is where Mackenzie and his Fourth Cavalry became the game changer.

Immediately after Mackenzie's raid, Indian attacks in the Rio Grande region of Texas nearly ceased.<sup>117</sup>

The same failures in police escalation centric strategies are evident today. During the 1990s, Congress funded a massive increase in the number of border enforcement officers for security efforts along the southern border, from 3,000 to 9,000 federal agents.<sup>118</sup> Since that escalation effort failed, in 2008, Michael Chertoff, United States Secretary of Homeland Security, pledged massive increases in border security personnel and resource allocation for southwest border security operations. Chertoff said, "Until Congress chooses to act" he was going to take "energetic steps of his own" to double the number of border agents to 18,000, add 370 miles of border fence, and quadruple the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents hunting down illegal immigrants.<sup>119</sup> Although he met stern resistance from both houses of the legislature on Capitol Hill and did not succeed in doing all he said he would, Chertoff did succeed in getting thousands more federal agents enforcing his manpower intensive strategy for

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<sup>116</sup> Andreas, *Border Games*, 7.

<sup>117</sup> Wallace, *Texas in Turmoil*, 255.

<sup>118</sup> Edward H. Alden, *The Closing of the American Border: Terrorism, Immigration, and Security Since 911*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 260.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 275.

southern border security. However, Chertoff's strategy failed as more personnel achieved mainly displacement effects. Criminals easily maneuvered themselves to crossing locations on the Rio Grande where there was not a large presence of Border Patrol Agents.<sup>120</sup> Like the political appointees before him, Chertoff treated one of the symptoms of the border security problem, but did not get to the heart of the problem itself – transnational criminal organizations operating with impunity from bases in Mexico.

Building a 1,500 mile, “Great Wall of America” along the border from Brownsville, Texas, to San Diego, California, is another anxiety-easing myth planted in the heads of many Americans by contemporary politicians desirous of their votes. Not only is such an elongated barrier too expensive, it likely would do little to reduce border violence or reduce illegal immigration. There is no evidence to suggest that building a border barricade would do anything to reduce the violence that transnational criminal organizations are inciting on Mexican soil, and is subsequently spilling north of the Rio Grande. Criminal organizations in Mexico have reverted to an ancient tactic to avoid the inconveniences that putting up walls has imposed throughout human history, simply digging under them. As recently as 5 November 2013, United States authorities discovered one of the most sophisticated underground smuggling tunnels yet from Tijuana to San Diego. This thirty-five foot deep, 600 yard underpass was equipped with lighting, electric ventilation, and an electric rail system. United States law enforcement filled this tunnel in on the United States side, as it frequently does. However, border security experts say it will not curtail the underground river of drugs and illegal immigrants gushing into the United States.<sup>121</sup> In the end, a border fence only feeds a false sense of security on the United States side, and ruins the view of those looking to come to America illegally on the Mexican side.

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<sup>120</sup> Alden, 272-74.

<sup>121</sup> Joseph J. Kolb, “Sophisticated tunnels show border security driving criminals underground,” *Foxnews.com*, 05 November 2013, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/11/05/sophisticated-tunnels-show-border-security-driving-criminals-underground/> (accessed 11 November 2013).

As might be expected, the United States government recently turned to technology in attempt to secure the southwest border by creating a “virtual fence.” This hi-tech effort intended to promote the bipartisan “Smart Borders” proposal, but also produced disappointing returns. In 2004, the *American Shield Initiative* undertaken by Customs and Border Protection Chief, Robert Bonner, sought to use new gadgets such as movable ground sensors, spy drones, electronic motion detectors, and other innovations to gain and maintain operational control of the southern border. When this technologically-focused initiative failed due to a shortage of gadgets and defective equipment that was difficult to maintain and incredibly expensive, Michael Chertoff seized the opportunity and introduced the largest effort in United States history to secure the United States -Mexico border, the *Secure Border Initiative*.<sup>122</sup>

The *Secure Border Initiative* was a much larger version of the *American Shield Initiative*. The only difference between the two was that the private sector played a much larger role. Department of Homeland Security agents emplaced radar and cameras along hundreds of miles of the border where intelligence indicated most illegal border crossings were taking place. Meanwhile, unmanned aerial vehicles, such as Predator drones, monitored more remote areas of the border. However, the *Secure Border Initiative* also called for the traditional tactic of throwing more border police at the problem and added new agents to conduct only interior raids, while simultaneously claiming to end the long practice of “catch and release.” The *Secure Border Initiative*, like its predecessor, failed, and with it failed the over-reliance on technological innovations, or “virtual fences,” as a means to secure the southwest border.<sup>123</sup> However, technology remains a copious portion of border security operations to date.

Many argue that using the U.S. armed forces to help secure the border with Mexico is unethical, inappropriate, and in some cases, illegal. Citing, among other legislation, the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, which restricted military efforts at enforcing civilian law following Reconstruction, the opposition

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<sup>122</sup> Alden, 272-74.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. “Interior” referred to raids only within United States borders.

to military involvement in border security contends that such actions would result only in the counterproductive militarization of the southwest. This is an ill-founded argument given the fact that Posse Comitatus only applies to military policing actions on United States soil, and evidence indicates that recent militarization of the border has only taken place on the Mexican side.<sup>124</sup> Posse Comitatus does not pertain to the international application of combined military force to secure the American homeland. Moreover, the Patriot Act, and Chapter 18, Title 10, U.S. Code, titled, “Military Support for Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies,” changed the legalities surrounding the use of combined international military force to secure the United States homeland.<sup>125</sup> Recognizing the changing nature of the threat to the United States, Congress enacted this post-9/11 legislation to allow the military to step in and provide necessary support and action when civilian agencies did not possess the necessitous capability to enforce law and order both on and off United States territory. Although the military should not be the lead in modern border security, it does possess many capabilities that civilian law enforcement does not have but frequently needs in prosecuting a successful border security strategy.<sup>126</sup>

The same individuals that oppose U.S. armed forces assistance with border security also exploit individual circumstances in attempt to illustrate how military involvement will only lead to bad results. One such isolated case was the Ezequiel Hernandez, Jr. incident in 1997. Hernandez was an American citizen and high school student near Redford, Texas. While herding goats, he was carrying a twenty-two caliber rifle for protection against predators, and for unknown reasons, fired in the direction of a U.S. Marine Corps border security team assisting U.S. Border Patrol Agents. The Marines fired back, killing

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<sup>124</sup> Andreas, *Border Games*, 65.

<sup>125</sup> Chapter 18, Title 10, United States Code, forbids “...direct participation by a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps in a search, seizure, arrest, or other similar activity *unless* participation in such activity by such member is otherwise authorized by law.”

<sup>126</sup> Robert D. Schroeder, “Department of Defense On the Southwest Border”, in “Southwest Border Security,” ed. Raymond D. Barrett Jr., special issue, *Interagency Journal (The Journal of the Simmons Center)* 3, no. 4 (November 2012): 32-33.

the eighteen-year-old Hernandez, fueling an outcry by critics of military involvement in border security. While these unfortunate isolated tragedies have taken place, they are an extreme rarity. Opponents of United States military assistance with border security assert that these isolated and tragic incidents demonstrate that greater United States military participation in border security operations will only result in unwarranted deaths.<sup>127</sup>

## CONCLUSION

After the Cold War, the nature of the threat to all nations changed and diversified. Since 1991, the diminishing power of the state – due to globalization – has resulted in a significant number of non-state actors, such as Al Qaeda and many transnational criminal organizations, challenging the legitimacy of recognized nation-states.<sup>128</sup> In the process, their crimes and violence have undermined peace and stability around the globe. If modern nation-states lose (or refuse to demonstrate) the power to hold these non-state actors responsible for their profit or ideologically-driven violence, then those nation-states are in effect surrendering their own sovereignty.<sup>129</sup> When circumstances require, United States military assistance to Mexican authorities and DSCA can be justified as a necessary application of national power to deter or defeat those non-state actors and defend the sovereignty of both the United States and Mexico.

Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies alone cannot counteract all the multifaceted threats to modern state national security,<sup>130</sup> especially those threats posed by non-state actors operating out of foreign countries. All elements of national power must be available in order to combat the threat transnational criminal organizations pose to the United States and Mexico. To achieve a more secure

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<sup>127</sup> Schroeder, “Department of Defense On the Southwest Border”, 32-33.

<sup>128</sup> Steve Brackin, “Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations: Sources of Hemispheric Instability,” *Interagency Journal: The Journal of the Simmons Center* 3, no. 4 (November 2012): 8.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>130</sup> Lieutenant General William B. Caldwell, IV, “Enhancing North American Security – A Military Perspective,” in “Southwest Border Security,” *Interagency Journal: (The Journal of the Simmons Center* 3, no. 4 (November 2012): 3.



environment along the southwest border in the future, the United States and Mexico should consider bringing both countries' military power together and execute combined raids on transnational criminal organizations. If these non-state actors know that the United States and Mexico are willing to conduct combined military operations with Mexican authorities to deter, or if need be destroy, their networks and capabilities on Mexican soil, such is likely to have a positive impact on border security. International military cooperation of this type is also likely to enhance the border security relationship between the United States and Mexico in other areas as well.

Although border violence has slightly declined since 2009, the unique threats that drug cartels and other transnational criminal organizations pose to the United States and Mexico will continue to force civilian agencies to request military support in combating them.<sup>131</sup> While the nature of the threat may be different today from what Mackenzie faced in 1873, the same operational and strategic effects on non-state actors by means of combined military operations are achievable. However, the targets of combined raids should be restricted to human smuggling rings, drug cartels, and other violent transnational criminal organizations. Combined military raids should not be an option in counter-illegal immigration operations as the political risks far outweigh the potential benefits. The target of combined military raids should be only those violent transnational criminal organizations whose violence is bleeding north over the Rio Grande, having negative repercussions on the border economy, hurting American and Mexican citizens, and directly challenging the security and sovereignty of the Mexican and American governments.

Maintaining the overwhelming presence of border police brought about by years of escalation can be a part of an effective strategy, but cannot solve the complex border security problem alone. To assist civilian border security operations, United States and Mexican leaders should consider the option of combined military raids to target transnational criminal organizations in Mexico in order to have a

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<sup>131</sup> Kristin M. Finklea, "Southwest Border Violence: Issues in Identifying and Measuring Spillover Violence," *Congressional Research Service* (28 February 2013): 21-2, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/R41075.pdf> (accessed 11 November 2013). Finklea illustrates how it is difficult to measure border "spillover" violence.

positive impact on border security.<sup>132</sup> Yet combined cross-border raids cannot secure the border alone either. Instead, a hybrid approach that includes combined military raids, new technological development, training and equipping international partners, intelligence collection (and sharing), anti-corruption activities, and immigration reform are collectively necessary to secure the southwest border. American-Mexican combined military raids should be one of several means available to leaders in the international effort to secure the United States-Mexico border.

This monograph has argued that United States and Mexican leaders today should consider combined raids by the U.S. armed forces and Mexican authorities, to assist United States civilian authorities and the Mexican government with border security along the Rio Grande. However, in today's intricate and unpredictable diplomatic environment, it would be prudent for a commander chosen to lead such a raid to be sure that he carries with him the proper authorization to cross an international border and strike with military force. If not, he assumes all the risk, *and* responsibility.

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<sup>132</sup> Justin Cole, "Disrupting Transnational Criminal Organizations: Logical Methods for Target Identification." *Interagency Journal (The Journal of the Simmons Center)* 3, no. 4 (November 2012): 52.

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