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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

TO THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES—

In answer to the inquiry of the Senate, contained in their resolution of the 17th instant, whether, in my "judgment, any circumstance connected with, or growing out of the foreign relations of this country, require at this time an increase of our naval or military force," and if so, "what those circumstances are," I have to express the opinion that a wise precaution demands such increase.

In my annual message of the 2d December last, I recommended to the favourable consideration of Congress an increase of our naval force, especially of our steam navy, and the raising of an adequate military force to guard and protect such of our citizens as might think proper to emigrate to Oregon. Since that period, I have seen no cause to recall or modify these recommendations. On the contrary, reasons exist which, in my judgment, render it proper not only that they should be promptly carried into effect, but that additional provision should be made for the public defence.

The consideration of such additional provision was brought before appropriate Committees of the two Houses of Congress, in answer to calls made by them in reports prepared, with my sanction, by the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, on the 20th December, and the 8th January last; a mode of communication with Congress not unusual, and under existing circumstances believed to be most eligible. Subsequent events have confirmed me in the opinion that these recommendations were proper and precautionary measures.

It was a wise maxim of the father of his country, that "to be prepared for war, is one of the most efficient means of preserving peace;" and that, "avoiding of occasion of expense by cultivating peace," we should "remember, also, that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it." The general obligation to perform this duty is greatly strengthened by facts known to the whole world. A controversy respecting the Oregon territory now exists between the United States and Great Britain; and while as far as we know, the relations of the latter with all European nations are of the most pacific character, she is making unusual and extraordinary armaments and warlike preparations, naval and military, both at home and in her North American possessions.

It cannot be denied that, however, sincere may be the desire of peace, in the event of a rupture those instruments and preparations would be used against our country. Whatever may have been the original purpose of these preparations, the fact is undoubted that they are now proceeding, in part at least, with a view to the contingent possibility of a war with the United States. The general policy of making additional warlike preparations was distinctly announced, in the Speech from the Throne, as late as January last, and has since been reiterated by the Ministers of the Crown in both Houses of Parliament. Under this aspect of our relations with Great Britain, I cannot doubt the propriety of increasing our means of defence, both by land and sea. This can give Great Britain no cause of offence, nor increase the danger of a rupture. If, on the contrary, we should fold our arms in security, and at last be suddenly involved in hostilities for the maintenance of our just rights, without any adequate preparation, our responsibility to the country would be of the gravest character. Should collision between the two countries be avoided, as I sincerely trust it may be, the additional charge upon the treasury, in making the necessary preparations, will not be lost; while, in the event of such a collision, they would be indispensable for the maintenance of our national rights and national honour.

I have seen no reason to change or modify the recommendations of my annual message in regard to the Oregon question. The notice to abrogate the treaty of the 6th of August, 1827, is authorised by the treaty itself, and cannot be regarded as a warlike measure; and I cannot withhold my strong conviction that it should be promptly given. The other recommendations are in conformity with the existing treaty, and would afford to American citizens in Oregon no more than the same measure of protection which has long been extended to British subjects in that territory.

The state of our relations with Mexico is still in an unsettled condition. Since the meeting of Congress another revolution has taken place in that country, by which the Government has passed into the hands of new rulers. This event has procrastinated, and may possibly defeat, the settlement of the differences between the United States and that country. The Minister of the United States to Mexico, at the date of the last advices, had not been received by the existing authorities. Demonstrations of a character hostile to the United States continue to be made in Mexico, which has rendered it proper, in my judgment, to keep nearly two-thirds of our army on our south-western frontier. In doing this, many of our regular military posts have been reduced to a small force, inadequate to their defence, should an emergency arise.

In view of these "circumstances," it is my "judgment" that "an increase of our naval and military force is at this time required," to place the country in a suitable state of defence. At the same time it is my settled purpose to pursue such a course of policy as may be best calculated to preserve, both with Great Britain and Mexico, an honourable peace; which nothing will so effectually promote, as unanimity in our councils, and a firm maintenance of all our just rights.

JAMES K. POLK.

Washington, March 24, 1846.

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