WINFIELD SCOTT AND THE SINews OF WAR: THE
LOGISTICS OF THE MEXICO CITY CAMPAIGN
OCTOBER 1846--SEPTEMBER 1847

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This study analyzes the procedures and operations of the Quartermaster, Ordnance, Commissary, and Medical Departments during Scott's campaign to determine the efficiency of the prevailing logistical system. Unpublished and published government documents, official records, manuscript collections, memoirs, diaries, and newspapers provide the data.

The first chapter describes the logistical departments' interworkings; the remaining chapters detail the operations of the bureaus during the expedition's assembly and campaign against Mexico City.

The evidence revealed organizational deficiencies which caused severe shortages, particularly in transportation, for Scott's army. The shortages severely hampered the expedition. Because of the numerous victories over Mexican forces, however, American leaders ignored the organizational deficiencies. These shortcomings reappeared to impede operations during the Civil War.
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CHAPTER I

THE ARMY'S LOGISTICAL ADMINISTRATION

The war between Mexico and the United States which began in May 1846 and ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in February 1848, was a unique and important American venture. It represented the first offensive campaign conducted by the United States Army, served as a training ground for many of the officers who led both sides during the Civil War, proved the value of the training provided by the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, and included the first full-scale amphibious assault made by American troops. The campaign Major General Winfield Scott conducted against Mexico City in 1847 was characterized by immense distances which placed a premium upon the expedition's logistical support. For six months, Scott's


2Singletary, The Mexican War, pp. 2-4.
force operated deep in enemy territory far from his main bases at New Orleans, Tampico, and Brazos Santiago. The expedition succeeded in capturing Mexico City despite supply and transportation failures which resulted in severe delays to the campaign. Moreover, the rapid succession of American victories served to minimize the administrative problems which resulted in logistical problems.

Logistics may be defined as "that branch of the military art embracing all details for moving and supplying armies." Mobility and maneuverability are as vital an army's weapons as its fire-power. Prior to the development of mechanized forces, an army's speed depended upon how fast and how far its men could march. The military stores necessary to insure an army's success tended to restrict its mobility. The troops had to be fed, provided with the necessities of life, armed with efficient weapons, and nursed when sick or wounded. The basic logistical problems, then, were twofold: to supply the army properly while keeping the amount of cumbersome baggage to a minimum and to provide the amount of transport needed to move the army. General Winfield Scott's campaign against Mexico City in

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1847 makes a unique and ideal study of the problems faced by army logistics. Because the responsibility for an army's well-being is vested in its leader, the commander of the United States Army during the Mexican War, Major General Winfield Scott, must be introduced.

Winfield Scott's military career began in 1807 as a volunteer. Although he received no formal military training, Scott favored the educational program provided by West Point. Throughout his lengthy service, he continuously studied the theory and history of war. Scott trained the regulars who stood against the British at Chippewa and Lundy's Lane in 1814. He emerged from the War of 1812 a brigadier general with a reputation as a fine administrator, drillmaster, and military theorist. After the war, Scott served as the most important member of the board which wrote the first official United States infantry manual. In 1829, he revised and extended the original manual.

Scott was a physically imposing man. Tall, well-built, always wearing an immaculate uniform, he commanded

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5 Ibid., pp. 170-171.
respect by his mere presence. The fine dress was partly a result of his vain and pompous nature. Although a trusting person, Scott took offense easily and proved to be both jealous and cantankerous. These characteristics led to his sobriquet of "Old Fuss and Feathers." Despite his difficult, almost juvenile, personality, he became commanding general in 1841. Only one higher office remained for him after that, and Scott had keen angling for the presidency on a Whig ticket for several years prior to 1847. General Scott rose above these personal handicaps to become a consummate commander, as much for his administrative brilliance as for his tactical and strategic genius, and to become one of the finest military leaders produced by the United States Army. Possibly more important, owing to the distances involved in the coming campaign, Winfield Scott had a great appreciation for and understanding of logistics.

Shortages of food and equipment, lack of transportation facilities, and rough terrain, compounded by the immense distances involved, conspired to make Scott's campaign against Mexico City a logistical nightmare. Although the commander held ultimate responsibility for his army's well-being, he by necessity relegated the day-to-day logistical operations to his staff. The effectiveness of

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logistical arrangements, then, depended upon the smoothness and efficiency of staff procedures and upon the staff officer's abilities.

Prior to 1816, the general staff of the U. S. Army consisted only of the staff department heads. The act of 24 April 1816, which reorganized the general staff, however, recognized that it should include staff officers down to divisional level and authorized the change. By 1836, Congress completed the move toward the bureau system. The regulations for that year stated that the general staff included all officers in administrative positions. The Regulations of 1847 directed the general staff, as the focal point of military administration to provide ordnance stores, accouterments, medical supplies, transportation, clothing, and material to the army through the logistical departments. The Quartermaster, Subsistence, Ordnance, and Medical Departments controlled army logistics. The chief of each of these departments constituted part of the General Headquarters Staff in Washington. Officers from each one received assignments to the various headquarters of the

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9 Hittle, Military Staff, p. 186.
lower echelon units as required.

The duties of the Quartermaster Department made it the most important of the four services. The bureau provided, organized, and disbursed the army's clothing, quarters, equipment, and all supplies not allotted to other departments. The quartermaster's duties included the purchase and distribution of fuel, forage, stationery, all accoutrements, camp and garrison equipment, horses, mules, wagons, carts, and boats. In addition, the department provided or paid for the transportation of military supplies and men.

The Quartermaster Department of 1847 resulted from the act of 14 April 1818 which placed the department under a single Quartermaster General, two deputy quartermaster generals, and four assistant deputy quartermaster generals. This change replaced a system of brigade quartermasters and repealed the positions of forage, barrack, and wagon master which had proved unreliable.

10 War Department, General Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1847 (Washington: J. and G. S. Gideon, 1847), pp. 162-164. Colonel H. L. Scott adds the Paymaster's Department to his definition of logistics. Since that department had no direct effect on army supplies or mobility, it is outside the scope of this paper. H. L. Scott, Military Dictionary, p. 393.

11 Max B. Garber and P. S. Bond, A Modern Military Dictionary, 2d ed. (Washington: P. S. Bond Publishing Co., 1942), p. 150. This is a modern definition made after the Subsistence Department merged with the Quartermaster Department.

12 U. S. Statutes, 9:149-150.

13 Ibid., 3:426.
Secretary of War John C. Calhoun appointed Thomas Sidney Jesup as Quartermaster General on 8 May 1818. An infantry officer during the War of 1812, Jesup rose to colonel in 1815 and became an assistant quartermaster in 1818. He held the post of Quartermaster General until his death on 10 June 1860 and, more than any other man, shaped the role and scope of that department. The young men he trained became the quartermasters for both the Mexican War and the Civil War, and his long tenure gave a desirable continuity and stability to the office.\(^4\)

Through the act of 2 March 1821, Congress ordered that each regiment of the army should have a quartermaster sergeant to handle the regimental duties of the department.\(^5\) Even with the addition of the sergeants, however, accountability for clothing and material used by the troops proved inefficient. In February, 1824, General Jesup submitted several provisions to Secretary Calhoun which Congress incorporated in its legislation of 18 May 1826. This act directed the Quartermaster General to prescribe regulations for the accountability of all clothing and camp equipment.


\(^5\) U. S. Statutes, 3:615.
issued to the army. The regulations and forms General Jesup drew up directed every commander of a unit or detachment to keep an account book which contained a list of the material issued to each soldier of the unit. Duplicate receipts were kept and transmitted to the Treasury Department while the paymaster handled the clothing accounts.¹⁶

Legislation passed on 5 July 1838 provided that the officers who became members of the service would be separated from line positions and promoted within the department as in the regiments. This system, in effect, made the Quartermaster Department a self-contained organization independent of the operational units, although at the same time made them responsible to the unit commanders on whose staff they served. The act also re-authorized the employment of forage-masters and wagon-masters. They were to receive forty dollars per month, three rations per day, and forage for one horse.¹⁷ The final step taken to organize the Quartermaster Department as it existed during the Mexican War was made by the Secretary of War in 1841 when he abolished the old Clothing Bureau and gave its duties to the Quartermaster General.¹⁸

¹⁷U. S. Statutes, 5:257-258.
¹⁸Risch, Quartermaster Support, p. 251.
By 1847, the War Department invested regimental quartermasters with the duties of laying out camp sites, directing the removal of obstructions to the regiment's march, judging the quality of all supplies distributed to the unit, and caring for all equipment and stores in his charge. They also performed the duties of an Assistant Commissary of Subsistence in all units smaller than a regiment. On the march, the quartermaster sergeant conducted the regimental baggage train. The senior quartermaster with the unit assumed overall command of the train, directed the order of march, arranged for parking, and maintained the train's orderly conduct. The most important duty of the officer in charge was to keep the train from impeding the army's line of march.

The American army of 1847 depended almost entirely upon wind and muscle power. During the 1830's, private citizens constructed the first few short railroad lines. As early as 1833 army quartermasters sent military supplies by this new mode of transportation and before 1840 the quartermaster at New Orleans proposed a track from the barracks area to another railroad at New Orleans. The United States, however, contained few tracks and those were too short to be of great value to the army; but the first troops to journey to war by rail may have been three officers and

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19 General Regulations, pp. 20, 123-125.
20 Risch, Quartermaster Support, pp. 206-207.
fifty-eight men who traveled from Baltimore to Washington on 4 June 1846.21

The majority of supplies and men transported to the army's bases at New Orleans, Brazos Santiago, Tampico, and, after its capture, Vera Cruz, went by sea, usually in vessels chartered or purchased by the Quartermaster Department. It had extensive experience in chartering vessels gained during the Seminole War when the army required ships for tactical operations as well as supply purposes. The quartermaster issued a contract that guaranteed the delivery of specified material or troops at the agreed upon destination. For example, on 11 December 1846, Assistant Quartermaster Captain David Hammond Vinton chartered the brig E. L. Walton to transport four officers and two hundred men, with supplies and baggage, from New York to Brazos Santiago. Captain Vinton paid $2,200 for this one trip.22 The government also insured the owner against the loss of his vessel. An act passed on 18 January 1837, and amended on 2 March 1847, provided payment for vessels lost or destroyed while on military service.23


Beyond its immediate base, the army depended upon men and animals to carry or haul its supplies. Each soldier carried his personal equipment, extra ammunition, and rations in a black-painted knapsack strapped to his back and a haversack which hung over one shoulder and rested on his hip. His full complement of equipment weighed anywhere from sixty to ninety pounds. The majority of the army's material, however, traveled by baggage train.

The army's supply train consisted primarily of heavy, covered wagons pulled by teams of horses or mules, or, if necessary, yokes of oxen. These conveyances cost the government $110 each.

The Quartermaster Department also furnished teamsters to handle the wagons. Standard terms at St. Louis in July, 1846, included $25 a month, one army ration daily, and passage home when the teamster left the service. He, in turn, agreed to aid in transporting horses and mules from St. Louis to the army's field of operations and to serve with the army if required. Those hired should have been experienced horsemen, if not professional teamsters; however, Second Lieutenant Ulysses Simpson Grant later

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26 Lt. Col. Stanton to Sec. Marcy, 12 January 1847, Ibid., pp. 150, passim.
reported few of them competent with mule-teams or with any harness animals.27

The Ordnance Department was the second of the general staff's four logistical branches. It administered the procurement, manufacture, storage, and distribution of the ordnance stores. These stores consisted primarily of munitions and the department maintained national armories for the manufacture and storage of artillery pieces, small arms, ammunition, all accouterments, tools, machinery, and house furniture. The arsenals cast their own cannon, fabricated the army's small arms, manufactured gunpowder and ammunition, and contracted for the purchase of needed raw materials and accessories.28

An act of 14 May 1812 established a separate Ordnance Department for the first time. It consisted of a Commissary General of Ordnance, an assistant commissary general, four deputy commissaries, and as many as eight assistant deputy commissaries. It made the Commissary General responsible to the Secretary of War for all aspects of the department's duties. The act also authorized him to hire such blacksmiths, carriage makers, armorers, and other craftsmen as required by the service. During wartime, the


act required him to execute the orders of any general officer with respect to all ordnance supplies.29

The Ordnance Department of the Mexican War dated from a congressional act of 18 February 1815, which followed closely provisions of the 1812 legislation. Instead of a Commissary General of Ordnance, however, the department consisted of one colonel, one lieutenant colonel, two majors, and ten each of captains, first lieutenants, second lieutenants, and third lieutenants. In addition to the supervisory duties already assigned to him, the act allowed the Colonel of Ordnance to make contracts and procure the arms, munitions, and ordnance supplies required by the department. The service also assumed the administration of all armories and the right to establish storage depots where needed.30

An attempt by Secretary of War Calhoun to improve army administration resulted in a rather curious experiment. Under legislation passed on 2 March 1821, the Ordnance Department merged into the artillery with officers from that

29U. S. Statutes, 2:732-734.

30Ibid., 3:203-205. Some of the articles purchased by the Ordnance Department during the year ending 31 December 1846 included: various sized howitzers, mortars, siege guns, and cannon balls (purchased by the ton); cavalry sabres, artillery swords, powder flasks, cartridge boxes, bayonets, gun slings, sword belts, and thousands of sets of infantry accouterments, in either russet or buff; barrels of gunpowder, brimstones, niter, saltpeter; and thousands of feet of timber for gun carriages. Ordnance Department report, Col. Talcott to Sec. Marcy, 16 January 1847. H. Doc. 46, 29th Cong., 2d sess., pp.65-68, passim.
arm administering to ordnance duties. This combination of an administrative service with an operational bureau proved useless and in 1832 the Ordnance Department reappeared with some organizational modification. After 5 April 1832 it consisted of one colonel, one lieutenant colonel, two majors, ten captains, less than two hundred and fifty enlisted men, and such lieutenants as were required. Most important of all, the act provided each military post with an ordnance sergeant to handle departmental duties under the orders of the unit's commanding officer. The ordnance sergeant received and maintained stocks of arms, ammunition, and ordnance stores at the post to which he belonged. He was a member of the non-commissioned staff and wore the uniform markings of the Ordnance Department. During wartime he served as a regimental ordnance sergeant with the same duties. The Quartermaster Department transported all ordnance stores not carried by the artillery regiments or siege train in separate ordnance wagons.

The Ordnance Department's principle transportation problem was the tremendous weight and bulk of artillery ammunition. Each field artillery piece had a caisson which carried a small supply of powder, shot, and shell, and

31 U. S. Statutes, 3:615.
32 Ibid., 4:504.
33 General Regulations, p. 37.
followed the guns. Limbers drawn by teams of horses pulled both the cannon and caisson. The caisson carried two ammu-
nition chests and each limber carried one.\textsuperscript{34} This method supplied the field artillery with its primary ammunition support; however, the majority of its shot and shell and all of the siege artillery's munitions made up a substan-
tial portion of the army's support train.

The Colonel of Ordnance in 1847, like General Jesup, was a veteran of the War of 1812. George Talcott joined the 25th Infantry Regiment as a second lieutenant in 1813 and became a Deputy Commissary of Ordnance two years later. In 1832, he assumed the position of Lieutenant Colonel of Ordnance authorized in the 5 April act. On 25 March 1848 he officially became Colonel of Ordnance, though he had directed the bureau during the Mexican War.\textsuperscript{35}

Although some arrangements for providing food for the army had always existed, an improvement to the system came on 14 April 1818, when Congress created the Subsistence Department. That legislation created the office of Commissary General of Subsistence, and made it responsible for provisioning

\textsuperscript{34}Board of Artillery Officers, \textit{Instructions for Field Artillery, Horse and Foot} (Baltimore; Joseph Robinson, 1845), pp. 74-75.

\textsuperscript{35}Heitman, \textit{Historical Register}, 1:943. According to \textit{Ibid.}, 1:228-229, 943, Talcott became Chief of Ordnance on 25 March 1848 replacing Colonel George Bomford who died on that date; however, correspondence in the National Archives signed by Talcott shows he acted in that capacity during the Mexican War.
the troops. The Subsistence Department began operations in 1819, after the existing subsistence contracts with private individuals had expired. The Commissary General and his various assistants purchased and issued the army's rations under the direction of the President. The act also authorized the chief executive to alter the composition of the rations when warranted.\textsuperscript{36} Congress viewed the Subsistence Department as an experiment and chartered it for only five years. In 1835, after its efficiency had been proven, Congress made it a permanent part of the army.\textsuperscript{37}

The majority of legislation pertaining to the Subsistence Department dealt with the content of the rations. A ration was the prescribed allowance of food for one person for one day as issued by the army.\textsuperscript{38} An 1812 act provided that each ration consist of:

\begin{quote}
... one pound and a quarter of beef, or three-quarters of a pound of pork, eighteen ounces of bread or flour, one gill of rum, whiskey, or brandy, and at the rate of four quarts of vinegar, four pounds of soap, and one pound and a half of candles to every hundred rations.\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

The army had made some improvement in these by 1846. Most important of these improvements, the department increased the amount of vegetables per ration. Peas or beans

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{36}\textit{U. S. Statutes,} 3:426.  \\
\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Risch, Quartermaster Support,} p. 182.  \\
\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Garber and Bond, Military Dictionary,} p. 202.  \\
\textsuperscript{39}\textit{U. S. Statutes,} 2:672.
\end{flushright}
and rice became an integral part of the soldier's diet after 1818. Fresh meat replaced salted ration meats at least twice per week and some unsatisfactory experiments with bacon and cornmeal were made. The latter proved unpalatable to the troops and soon disappeared. Subsistence contracts for 1846 show that the department procured beef on the hoof, flour, salt pork, and pilot or hard bread. On the march, the troops drove herds of cattle with them and butchered a few each evening for fresh meat. In an act passed 5 July 1838, Congress attempted to introduce temperance into the army by providing six pounds of coffee and twelve pounds of sugar per one hundred rations in place of the alcoholic beverages provided for. It is quite doubtful that this legislation significantly altered the army's drinking habits. Saloons and trading stores usually were located within easy distance of army posts and the soldiers of the Mexican War exhibited the same foraging abilities common to all American soldiers.

The army supplied a plain and unvaried fare for its

40 Risch, Quartermaster Support, pp. 202-203.
42 U. S. Statutes, 5:513.
men who eked out their rations with delicacies purchased from the post or regimental sutlers. Regulations allowed one civilian sutler, or storekeeper, to each post or regiment. He sold luxuries and nonessentials above the basic ration supplied by the military. Some of these articles, such as tobacco were, or became, necessities and the sutlers constituted an important supplement to the Subsistence Department.43

The army issued rations to all enlisted men and most of the hired civilians, but only to specified officers. These included the commander of the army, all commanders of military districts, military posts, and depots, and the leaders of all detachments or units in the field.44 Other officers purchased their provisions either on the local market or from the sutler who could supply them with everything they needed. During a campaign, when non-military supplies were unavailable, the officers subsisted on the regular army rations. They formed messes of several officers, usually from the same regiment or unit, pooled their resources, and dined together. This method promoted harmony, provided a means of saving money, and was recommended by the army regulations.45 When their budgets could afford

43 General Regulations, pp. 55-57.
44 U. S. Statutes, 5:513.
it, even on a campaign, many officers indulged in dinners outside of the mess. 46

The last of the four logistical departments of Scott's army was the Medical Department. That service was responsible for the care and treatment of the sick and wounded, furnished all necessary medical supplies, and maintained camp and personal sanitation. 47 Prior to 1818, medical service for the regular army, when it existed at all, consisted of little more than a small number of surgeons and their assistants. No organized bureau for insuring the soldiers' health existed. An act passed on 14 April 1818 created, for the first time, the office of Surgeon General and charged its occupant with the administration of the Medical Department. The act also provided for two assistant surgeon generals, and a regimental surgeon with two assistants for each regiment. It was not until 1821, however, that the department assumed the organization that it retained through the Mexican War. 48 The legislation passed on 2 March 1821, which reduced the army to a peacetime

46 Anderson, Artillery Officer, pp. 16-17.
47 Garber and Bond, Military Dictionary, p. 159.
48 U. S. Statutes, III, 426; Harvey E. Brown, comp., The Medical Department of the United States Army From 1775 to 1873 (Washington: Surgeon General's Office, 1873), pp. 107,126. Though the act provides for only one assistant surgeon general, the army seems to have actually had one for each of its two geographic divisions.
establishment of four artillery and seven infantry regiments, reaffirmed the position of Surgeon General, but abolished the assistant surgeon generals, the Apothecary General, and the regimental surgeons. The bureau then consisted of the Surgeon General, eight surgeons, and forty-five assistant surgeons. Further regulations dealing with the composition of the department, for the most part, either increased or decreased the size of the bureau. Its basic organization remained unchanged.

The major improvement made in the Medical Department after 1821 was the establishment of examining boards to aid in the selection of qualified assistant surgeons. The army regulations for 1825 provided, for the first time, that no person could become an assistant surgeon unless properly examined. The lack of available medical officers to constitute such a board caused the regulation to be ignored until 1832. On 7 July 1832, General Orders No. 58 reiterated the 1825 directives and the first medical examining board was held in January, 1833. Legislation passed on 30 June 1834 stated that no person could become a surgeon until he had served five years as an assistant surgeon and been examined by a military medical board. These rules

49U. S. Statutes, 3:616.
50Brown, Medical Department, pp. 147-149.
51U. S. Statutes, 4:714.
insured increasingly competent surgeons and improved medical services for the army.

Officers of the Medical Department occupied a rather curious position in the army of the 1840's. Though technically part of officer corps, they held no military rank, did not issue commands, and could not take part in special military functions such as court-martials or boards of inquiry. The act of 30 June 1834 provided that surgeons be paid as majors, assistant surgeons with more than five years service as captains, and those with less than five years service as first lieutenants. This position of being in the army but not considered a part of it seems to have been somewhat galling to the officers of the Medical Department. In 1840, the army received new uniforms. The army board which approved the uniforms at first instructed the medical officers to wear an aiguilette on the coat in lieu of the epaulettes worn by all other officers to show their rank. The officers of the Medical Department objected strongly to what they considered an unwarranted distinction:

As I am a soldier in feeling and somewhat in practice too, I should be gratified with having the privileges of a military man in the way of dress even; but if I am never to wear an epaulette

52 Ibid.
53 Brown, Medical Department, p. 164.
until I ask for it, my shoulders will never be decorated with that badge of distinction. All that I have to ask is, that I shall not be compelled to wear the prescribed uniform, a demi-military dress, alike unsuited to my taste and to my feelings. . . . 54

The new uniform regulations included epaulettes for the Medical Department. This controversy was only symptomatic, however, of the underlying inequality felt by members of that service. Unfortunately, no changes were made to give them the same military standing held by officers of the other departments before the Mexican War. Not until 1878 did the War Department provide the officers of the Medical Department with military rank.

When Winfield Scott's army took to the field in 1847, two surgeons or assistant surgeons marched with each regiment to administer to the sick and wounded. They served directly under the chief surgeons attached to divisional staffs. 55 These regimental doctors and those in charge of hospitals established along the army's route administered

54 Surgeon General Lawson to Maj. Cooper, 5 July 1839, quoted in Ibid., p. 165. Epaulettes were the brushes worn on both shoulders by officers. Scott, Military Dictionary, p. 258.

to the sick and wounded during a campaign. On the march a wagon was attached to the rearguards and the surgeons designated the soldiers who had to ride or have their knapsacks carried. The senior surgeon with the unit accompanied the officer in charge of selecting a suitable camp ground and made recommendations to protect the soldiers' health, such as the proper pitching of the tents on high ground away from swamps and damp, low places. When the regiment established its camp, the surgeon set up a temporary hospital if one were available, or in a tent. The surgeons spent part of their time each day touring the camp, examining the soldiers' quarters, and making certain that they were dry and well aired. The doctors also inspected the preparation of food and quality of the rations and reported any defects found to the commanding officer. Only he could issue orders correcting problems reported to him by his medical staff.

Such then was the basic organization of the army's logistical framework. The army depended upon an uncomplicated, but delicate, organization for its supplies and mobility. The system's greatest advantage was that its

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56 General Regulations, p. 123; Except where noted, the material on surgeon's duties is taken from Regulations of the Medical Department, September, 1818 in Brown, Medical Department, pp. 113-117. Although these were somewhat outdated by changes in department organization, especially in 1821, their general principles remained in effect during the Mexican War.
organization resulted from experience rather than merely from theory. Its greatest disadvantages were the traditional problems posed by time, space, and distance. The success of Scott's Mexico City campaign resulted from his ability to overcome those factors.
CHAPTER II

LOGISTICAL PREPARATIONS

Although the seizure of the Mexican ports of Tampico and Vera Cruz had been under discussion for some time, a possible expedition against those two cities appears to have been only lightly considered until the middle of September, 1846. On 19 September, President James Knox Polk received an answer to his 27 July 1846 proposal to reopen negotiations between the United States and Mexican governments. In the reply, the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs refused to negotiate until after the Mexican Congress met on 6 December 1846. Polk and his advisors viewed the Mexican refusal as a failure of the American war effort. Occupation of California, New Mexico, and the northern provinces of Old Mexico had failed to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion. From this time, Polk's interest in capturing Tampico and Vera Cruz assumed manifestly greater importance.

By 10 October 1846, Commodore David Conner, commander

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2Sec. Marcy, Secretary of War Report, House Executive Documents No. 8, 30th Congress, 1st session (Washington: Ritchie and Heiss, 1847), p. 47.
of the American fleet in the Gulf of Mexico, advised the president that a landing was possible opposite Sacrificios Island three to four miles south of Vera Cruz. To verify this information, Polk summoned the former United States Consul at Vera Cruz, Francis M. Dimond, then at home in Rhode Island. The cabinet favored the invasion, but the decision waited pending further information. On 17 October 1846, Dimond arrived in Washington. He confirmed the possibility of a landing and drew a small diagram illustrating the local topography. Although the cabinet postponed a final decision, it agreed that an assault would be a practical solution to the situation. Finally, on Tuesday, 20 October 1846, the administration determined the future course of the war. The Army of Occupation in northern Mexico would remain in its position at Monterey and would furnish 2,000 men for the attack on Tampico. If possible, the army would move against Vera Cruz after capturing Tampico.

On the same day Secretary of War William L. Marcy notified General Winfield Scott of the proposed expedition. Scott made some initial suggestions to the secretary based on the assumption some 25,000 to 30,000 men would be required to reduce Vera Cruz. Marcy communicated Scott's

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3 Polk, Diary, 2:179-180, 195-197.
4 Ibid., 2:198-200.
ideas to the president along with a message which irritated Polk, that the general would like to be placed in command of the expedition.  

Certainly to promote himself as the commander, but also to provide the President with a logical plan of campaign, General Scott proceeded to incorporate his views in a memorandum somewhat fancifully entitled "Vera Cruz and Its Castle" dated 27 October 1846. The memorandum was a carefully reasoned document evincing mature consideration for the problems inherent in capturing Vera Cruz.  

In his memorandum, Scott agreed the lack of food and water and the length of the line of operations prohibited invasion overland from the Rio Grande. The greatest danger of invading the coast was the prevalence of yellow fever. Possession of Vera Cruz would be pointless unless it was combined with an immediate attack upon Mexico City. Thus, he argued, an attack on Vera Cruz should be followed by an immediate march on Mexico City, which would have the added

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5 Ibid., 2:204.

6 Gen. Scott, "Vera Cruz and Its Castle," 27 October 1846, H. Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1268-1270. The castle referred to was Jan. Juan de Ulloa which dominated the harbor at Vera Cruz. The navy reported San Juan de Ulloa to be extremely difficult to attack and even the public papers were concerned about the navy attempting to capture it. Karl Jack Bauer, Surfboats and Horse Marines, U. S. Naval Operations in the Mexican War, 1846-48 (Annapolis, Md.: United States Naval Institute, 1969), p. 30; New Orleans Daily Picayune, 10 November 1846.
advantage of removing the army from the unhealthy coast.

Scott also apprehended significant problems in capturing San Juan de Ulloa. He recommended the army consist of at least 10,000 men including 2,000 cavalry and 600 artillery men. He required all of the artillery, half of the cavalry, and half of the infantry to consist of regular troops. He also recommended special scows or small boats sufficient to land 2,500 men at one time be constructed. The general believed the army as outlined could assemble and advance on Vera Cruz by the first of 1847 leaving three months to reduce the city since the yellow fever was not expected until early April. By March the expedition should be reinforced to 20,000 men for operations against Mexico City.

On 12 November 1846, Scott submitted a supplemental memorandum entitled "Vera Cruz and Its Castle--New Line of Operations, Thence Upon the Capital." Though the second paper was more carefully written than the first, Scott made few significant changes. He expressed himself willing to see a slightly smaller invasion army if it was assisted by the Navy. He still felt 20,000 men must be utilized to attack Mexico City, but they could wait until May, 1847, and could join the army after it had left the coast. The general included an analysis of where the necessary troops could be obtained. Scott again suggested he should command

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the expedition because of his rank and closed with a plea for haste:

I need scarcely add that all preliminary arrangements should be commenced at once, such as taking up transport vessels for troops and supplies, with, say 1,000 horses for officers, cavalry, and artillery; the purchase and construction of boats for debarkation in the surf, & c., & c.

During the period prior to the selection of the expedition's commander and while his and other proposals were discussed by the government, Winfield Scott continued to plan for the movement and urge haste upon his superiors. In addition to the memoranda previously discussed, he submitted an outline to Secretary Marcy indicating the basic resources required to transport the expedition. In particular, he required fifty chartered ships to move the army to Vera Cruz and 140 specially built flat boats to land it on the Mexican coast. Scott expected to settle on a design for and purchase of the boats on 17 November 1846 while the transport vessels could be chartered later. Thus, by 19 November 1846, when President Polk appointed Winfield Scott commander of the Army of Invasion, the logistics necessary to organize and support that army had already been set in motion.

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8Ibid., p. 1273.
10Marcy, in particular, mentions this. See Sec. Marcy to Gen. Scott, 23 November 1846, H. Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 1276.
The logistical planning, however, was hampered by the same deficiency which had hindered planning at the beginning of the war—an almost complete lack of knowledge of the country about to be invaded. Arms, ammunition, and equipment were available in the United States in reasonable quantities. They only had to be transported to the theatre of operations. The Army of Occupation already in Mexico could furnish enough regular troops to form the nucleus of the invading army. Volunteers from the United States would provide sufficient additional numbers to reduce Vera Cruz. The government had inadequate knowledge, however, whether sufficient forage, subsistence, or transportation to sustain the army would be available in Mexico. Adequate shipping to transport the army could be secured, but were enough vessels available to support the army for a year over the distances involved? Although logistical planning was proceeding, the plans had to be based upon estimates caused by too many imponderables owing to the lack of intelligence. The survival of Scott's army depended on the validity of these estimates.11

Polk's decision to appoint Scott as the expedition's

commander had come after extensive pondering by the administration. For the politically-minded Democratic President, the appointment of a Whig to command an expedition almost certain to create a significant future presidential candidate was an agonizing decision. On 14 and 17 November, Polk and his cabinet carefully discussed the available army generals. They reluctantly concluded no other military leader was acceptable. During the following day, an uncertain president consulted separately with two close advisors, Secretary of War William Learned Marcy, and Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton. Neither could suggest a suitable, logical alternative. With great reservations, President Polk had to appoint as commander of the expedition against Vera


13Polk, Diary, 2:241; Polk pictured the cabinet as reluctant while General Scott believed he had substantial support within the body. See Winfield Scott, Memoirs of Lieutenant General Scott, Written by Himself, 2 vols. (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1864), 2:398. Senator Benton was an exceptionally powerful Democratic Senator. Polk consulted freely with him and Marcy throughout the Mexican War. See for example Bauer, The Mexican War, pp. 66, 86, 128.
Cruz the general he once disparaged as "... scientific and visionary in his views."\textsuperscript{14}

Scott made his requirements for a siege train, pontoon train, small arms, ammunition, and transportation known to the appropriate department heads and, on 21 November 1846, he submitted a further memorandum to Marcy. In this paper, he proposed the entire expedition should be aboard transports and below the Rio Grande by 15 January 1847, or at the latest, by 1 February.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, before departing Washington, Scott's original allowance of three months to capture Vera Cruz was reduced to two.

Two days later, the general received written assurance of support from the administration. The "projet" directed him to take charge of the general direction of the war and to command the expedition against Vera Cruz. Marcy promised that, in the general's absence, the troops, boats, arms, ordnance, stores, and the necessary supplies would be forwarded with all due haste. The directive authorized Scott to organize his expedition from troops already on the Rio Grande and directed him to work closely with Commodore David Conner and the blockading squadron off the Mexican coast.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14}Polk, Diary, 1:401; Read inversely Polk's words seem to indicate he preferred an unscientific commander with a lack of foresight.

\textsuperscript{15}Gen Scott to Sec. Marcy, 21 November 1846, H. Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1274-75; Huston, Sinews of War, pp. 147-148.

On that same day, Scott received his orders.

These orders, written by Marcy, were a classic example of vagueness designed so that should the expedition fail Scott would bear the responsibility. They read in part that "It is not proposed to control your operations by definite and positive instructions, but you are left to prosecute them as your judgement, under a full view of all the circumstances shall dictate." Scott would be on his own.

On 23 November 1846, General Winfield Scott left Washington for New York. He paused in that city only four days to insure preparations for the expedition were progressing. He also wrote to General Zachary Taylor, commanding The Army of Occupation, providing that officer with first notice that a large proportion of his troops, especially the regulars, would be required for the Vera Cruz expedition.

On 27 November 1846, the General and his entourage boarded ship in New York harbor bound for New Orleans. Thanks to the orders from Marcy, Scott left with the full

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17Sec. Marcy to Gen. Scott, 23 November 1846, Ibid., pp. 836-837; The orders were no accident. Despite his occasional friendly meetings, Polk disliked and distrusted Scott. He would have replaced the General at any time it became feasible. The President had done so once, and would do so again. See Bauer, The Mexican War, pp. 70, 71, 73, 74, 235-237, 362, 371-372, 374 for a good outline of Polk-Scott relations.

weight of the campaign resting on his broad shoulders. He also left with the logistical departments busily preparing support for the Vera Cruz expedition.

Both the Ordnance and Quartermaster departments were terribly short of men. Neither could be enlarged to meet the responsibilities imposed by the expanding war without Congressional authorizations. That authorization was not forthcoming. Thus, from the beginning, the two bureaus were handicapped in their attempts to meet Scott's 19 February deadline. The army considered volunteer quartermasters, hired from civil life, to be unacceptable and it was only in January that Congress appointed several additional quartermasters and assistants. 19

The burden of the Quartermaster Department in Washington fell upon the Assistant Quartermaster General, Colonel Henry Stanton. On 26 September, Quartermaster General Thomas Sydney Jesup had requested permission to assume personal control of the department's activities nearer the theatre of operations. Jesup explained an officer of his rank was required to insure the department's efficiency. He stated that he had no desire to assume an active command and expressed his willingness to obey the orders of the generals

in the field even though he outranked most of them. Four
days later President Polk accepted General Jesup's offer.

Jesup and an assistant, Captain Abner Riviere Hetzel,
arrived at New Orleans on 27 October 1846, by way of Cincin-
nati and the Mississippi River. Jesup's reassignment was
an important move. During the months to come, his presence
in the Gulf would greatly assist the support of Scott's
expedition. His absence left Colonel Stanton in charge of
the bureau in Washington, D. C.

Colonel Stanton was initially concerned with preparing
the surfboats required by General Scott. These surfboats
have been described as "... the first specially built
American amphibious craft." The boats were designed by
Lieutenant George M. Totten of the Navy. Colonel Stanton
had hired Captain Richard Loper as a special agent for the
Quartermaster Department and placed Loper in charge of con-
tracting builders for the boats and insuring the completed
craft met the specifications drawn up by Lieutenant Totten.

20Gen. Jesup to Sec. Marcy, 26 September 1846, H. Ex.
Doc. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 562; Polk, Diary, 2:158.

21Polk, Diary, 2:168; Sec. Marcy to Gen. Jesup, 1 Octo-

22New Orleans Daily Picayune, 28 October 1846.

23The surfboats were probably ordered by Scott on 17
November. Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 16 November 1846, H.
Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 1474.

24Bauer, War With Mexico, p. 236.
The surfboats were double-ended, flat-bottomed vessels built in three sizes. This design insured they could be stored and transported in nests of three. Each vessel cost $795 and a nest of three weighed approximately 16,000 pounds. The Quartermaster Department furnished several vessels with modified decks to transport the surfboats to the Gulf of Mexico. Despite Captain Loper's efforts, and a $10 penalty per boat for each day over the one month deadline, only sixty-five of the boats were available for the landings in March 1847.25

With the building of the surfboats initiated, the Quartermaster Department redoubled its efforts to charter transports for the soldiers, ordnance, and stores from the United States. Upon General Jesup's advise that sufficient vessels existed in New Orleans, Marcy cancelled Scott's order for ten empty vessels. Initially, Jesup had little difficulty in securing ships, although he found it easier to purchase the vessels than to charter them. Ultimately, fifty-three vessels from the Atlantic and 163 from the Gulf transported the army and its supplies.26

25 Risch, Quartermaster Support, p. 287; Philip Syng Physick Conner, The Home Squadron Under Commodore Conner in the Mexican War, 1846-47. (Philadelphia: n.p., 1896), pp. 60-62; New Orleans Daily Picayune, 8 January 1847; Bauer states the surfboats were built at Philadelphia, but the above sources indicate that construction took place at several ports on the East Coast including Boston and Newport, Rhode Island. See Bauer, The Mexican War, p. 236.

While the Quartermaster Department built surfboats and secured necessary transport, the Ordnance Department began to assemble the siege train and a rocket and howitzer battery. The siege train was first proposed in September, 1846, and the major component units identified and directed to New York for preparation for shipment to Mexico. By 4 December, the first sections arrived and Lieutenant Colonel George Talcott requested transportation from the Quartermaster Department for the four 24-pounder cannon, ten 8-inch siege howitzers, ten 10-inch mortars, and six smaller coehorn mortars, including all of their equipment, powder, and shells. The shipment totaled some 368 tons of ordnance. Five days later, Lieutenant Colonel Talcott requested transportation for a second shipment of ordnance which had just arrived. 27

Colonel Stanton relayed the Ordnance Department's requisitions to Captain David Hammond Vinton, the Quartermaster at New York, who chartered the ship Tahmaroo. On 18 December, the vessel began loading. The first noticeable delay in Scott's expedition now appeared. Trouble with loading the gunpowder aboard Tahmaroo and a shortage of cranes delayed the ship until 18 January 1847, a full month

after the first cargo came aboard. Sailing time between New York and Mexico could vary as much as three weeks depending on the wind and weather. Although Scott probably had no way of knowing it, the initial portions of the siege train would not arrive in time to meet his projected landing date.

The rest of the siege train, its equipment, shells, and powder arrived at New York only after great difficulty. When Colonel Talcott drew up the initial plans for the train, he expected winter weather conditions to delay transportation from the interior arsenals. His concern was fully justified. Impediments to shipments from the nation's interior became so severe that Lieutenant Josiah Gorgas, busily preparing the siege train, had to abandon his post and journey as far as Bridgeport, Connecticut to push the movement of some components. In particular, the Ordnance Department, experienced trouble with material shipped on the railroads.

While Lieutenant Gorgas and Captain Vinton assembled the siege train at New York, Captain Benjamin Huger fitted

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28 Capt. D. H. Vinton, Memorandum in Relation to Chartering Vessels With Ordnance, "Correspondence and Reports Re: Mexican War, 1845-1848," Military Records Division, Record Group 92 (Quartermaster Department), National Archives, Washington, D. C., hereafter cited as QDCAR, RG 92.


out the rocket and howitzer battery at Fort Monroe, Virginia. Lieutenant Colonel Talcott proposed to draft men from the many army arsenals, assemble them at Fort Monroe, man a battery of mountain howitzers, and form a brigade of rocketeers. On 27 November 1846, Secretary Marcy endorsed the proposal and directed Captain Huger, Commander at Fort Monroe, to assemble the required men and divide them between the siege train, the rocket and howitzer battery, and the arsenal.31

Huger required approximately 140 soldiers to man both the battery and siege train. The stripping the arsenals of qualified men provided a solid nucleus for the two organizations, while the enrollment of enlistees filled the muster roll. By 4 January 1847, Huger reported the rocket and howitzer company complete and desired that the unit remain at Fort Monroe to perfect its training. Those soldiers assigned to the siege train, however, departed for New York on the same day under Lieutenant Charles Pomroy Stone.32


Although the manning of the siege train and the rocket and howitzer battery caused no inordinate delay, the securing of equipment for the units proved to be a different matter. By 14 January little more than half the required uniforms and accouterments were on hand. Talcott submitted estimates for the remainder to the Quartermaster Department on that date. Other shortages developed. Knapsacks, ordered last, failed to arrive by 12 January, special ammunition chests for the howitzers made a late appearance, and Lieutenant Talcott, trying to make order out of chaos, reported to his superior that he had received no confirmation from Captain Vinton that the necessary pack saddles had even been ordered. When the materials did arrive the typical problems inherent in outfitting a new unit were immediately obvious. The tents, for example, came without tent poles. 33

While Lieutenant Talcott struggled to clothe and equip his unit, the weapons they would use in Mexico began to arrive. He received the initial shipment of rockets during the first week of January, 1847. The Hale's rockets came from the Washington Arsenal where Captain Alfred Mordicai was busily making the two-and three-inch missiles and

experimentally arming some of them with explosive shells.  

The Boston arsenal furnished the mountain howitzers. Six were completed by 31 December 1846, and Major William Wade, Commander of the Arsenal, reported the remaining half dozen would be shipped within a week. The Major was as good as his word and the last mountain howitzers had arrived at Fort Monroe by 15 January 1847.

By middle January, despite the delays, shortages, and transportation problems, the ordnance and ordnance stores for the siege train and the rocket and howitzer battery were assembled at New York and Fort Monroe. The siege train abroad Tahmaroo, as already noted, sailed on 18 January and the rocket and howitzer battery put to sea soon afterward with orders to rendezvous at the Chandelier Islands near the mouth of the Mississippi, there to await orders from General Jesup.

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34 Lt. Col. Talcott to Capt. Mordicai, 12 January 1847; Lt. Talcott to Lt. Col. Talcott, 12 January 1847, ODLR, RG 156. The Ordnance Department also expressed some interest in buying British Congreve rockets; however, available evidence does not show their use in Mexico. See Lt. Col. Talcott to J. Burrows Hyde, Esquire, 23 January 1847, Ibid.


36 Lt. Col. Talcott to Capt. Huger, 13 January 1847, Lt. Col. Talcott to Capt. Huger, 6 February 1847, ODMLS, RG 156; Lt. Talcott to Lt. Col. Talcott, 19 January 1847, ODLR, RG 156; Capt. Vinton to Sec. Marcy, "Statement in Regard to the Ordnance and Ordnance Stores and the Transportation of the Same for the Army of General Scott before Vera Cruz, Made in Obedience to the Order of the Secretary of War of the 8th April 1847," 10 April 1847, QDCAR, RG 92.
Beyond the immediate problem of outfitting the siege train and the rocket and howitzer battery, Scott's army had to be supplied with all the munitions of war necessary for it to fight. In arsenals, private foundries, and factories across the nation the required arms, powder, and shells flowed to the major depots at New York, Fort Monroe, and Baton Rouge, to be loaded aboard ships bound for the Gulf of Mexico.

Before General Scott had departed New York, Lieutenant Colonel Talcott had reported that all necessary munitions and ordnance were in sufficient supply with the exception of ten-inch shells. The Ordnance Department turned its attention to the problem and through January and February, 1847, manufactured several thousand tons of ten-inch shells and forwarded them to the Gulf of Mexico. The shipment of shells continued and despite some manufacturing defects the Department furnished a sufficient quantity of artillery ammunition for Scott's army, provided it could be transported to the theatre of war. 37

The same condition existed for small arms and small arms ammunition. Many of the weapons carried by the

American troops were obsolescent. The well-stocked arsenals contained most adequate quantities of those arms. In the light of the smooth bore, flint lock muskets carried by most American regiments, the arms contracts for 1847 significantly foretold the future. At least 6,250 percussion rifles, 6,000 percussion pistols, 1,500 carbines, and, most important, 1,000 "revolving" pistols were scheduled to be purchased during that year. All of these type of weapons would be used by Scott's army.38

The Baton Rouge Arsenal was filled to overflowing with small arms cartridges and gunpowder. Captain Robert Henry Kirkwood Whiteley, in charge of that operation, reported that since both the old and the new arsenal buildings were full, some of his four million cartridges would have to be stored at nearby Fort Polk to make room for the two million more expected. As in the case of artillery ammunition, the

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38Huston, Sinews of War, p. 131; Lt. Col. Talcott to Major Ripley, 11 January 1847, ODMLS RG 156. The principle flintlock muskets were the .69 caliber U. S. Models 1821 and 1835, also known as the Models 1831 and 1840, respectively. The percussion rifles and carbines were any of several versions of the U. S. Model 1842 weapons which were just coming into use. The percussion pistols were .54 caliber U. S. Models 1842 and 1843. Samuel Colt manufactured the "revolving" pistols. His first revolver factory at Patterson, New Jersey, went bankrupt in 1842. The Texas Rangers had become familiar with the five-shot weapon and, when the Mexican War broke out, Ranger Samuel H. Walker collaborated with Colt to produce a Whitneyville-Walker or Walker-Colt Model 1847. It was the direct predecessor of the Colt .45 "Peacemaker." Charles Edward Chapel, Guns of the Old West (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1961), pp. 64-65, 149-159, 172-174.
Ordnance Department had excellent stocks of small arms cartridges close to the theatre of war.\textsuperscript{39}

Scott's expedition to Mexico placed a lesser burden on the Medical Department than that faced by the Quartermaster or Ordnance departments. Two surgeons or assistant surgeons accompanied each regiment to administer to the sick and wounded. They served directly under the chief surgeons attached to divisional staffs.\textsuperscript{40} Since the majority of Scott's regiments were in Mexico with General Taylor's army, most of the surgeons and their equipment were already at the theatre of operations.

The quality of medical service varied greatly with the individual. Many of the surgeons, especially those assigned to the volunteer units who had received appointments directly from civilian life, possessed dubious capabilities.

For several years, the military had sought to improve medical service in the regular ranks. Beginning in 1821, the Medical Department of the army used examining boards to select qualified surgeons and assistant surgeons. After 1825 no person could secure such a position unless properly examined.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39} Capt. Whiteley to Lt. Col. Talcott, 4 January 1847, ODLR, RG 156.


\textsuperscript{41} Brown, Medical Department, pp. 147-149.
Despite the selection boards, too many of the army's surgeons should never have been sent to Mexico. Some were inexperienced and impractical. One, for example, planned to take iron bedsteads and similar heavy hospital equipment into the field. At least the new doctors could be instructed; worse were those who absented themselves from their units. On 2 February 1847, General Robert Patterson, outfitting part of Scott's army at Tampico, reported only two of fourteen surgeons had reported to their units, and of ten surgeons from other regiments, four reported themselves sick. Patterson suggested, as a remedy, the medical board examine applicants for physical capability as well as professional capacity. Since many of the surgeons who volunteered for what proved to be an arduous war did so because of ill health, the General's complaints seem well taken. 42

For the support of Scott's campaign, the Medical Department followed a policy laid down by Surgeon General Thomas Lawson. In November 1846, he directed the Department to purchase large amounts of necessary items such as quinine to insure adequate backup supplies. When Scott's army landed at Vera Cruz, the medical purchaser at New York was directed to follow that policy while purchasing medicines,

instruments, dressings, hospital stores, and bedding for 10,000 men for six months. The Acting Surgeon General advised the purveyor to divide the medical supplies into two lots, thus providing a backup in case of loss through damage or shipwreck.

Again, as in the case of the Ordnance Department, the basic supplies required by Scott's army existed in adequate supply at the major United States ports. The assemblage of portions of the siege train, however, had already cost the General some of his precious time. Should the problems of transporting the supplies and ordnance to the Mexican coast cause further delay, the descent on Vera Cruz could be postponed further. The invading army's schedule must be maintained to permit the reduction of the city and the exit inland from the coast before the dreaded *vomito* season began. Transportation now became the key to Scott's logistical problem.

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CHAPTER III

DESCENT ON VERA CRUZ

Transportation was on Quartermaster General Thomas S. Jesup's mind at New Orleans. On 26 November 1846, he assured Secretary of War William L. Marcy that a sufficient number of steam transports had been collected to support any government operations. He also had a large supply of camp equipment, wagons, and harness at New Orleans and at Brazos Santiago, near the mouth of the Rio Grande, and suggested mules could be purchased in Mexico. All that was wanting was General Winfield Scott's personal authorization.¹

Scott was on his way. Headwinds delayed his ship, but the general arrived at New Orleans on 19 December 1846 looking robust and in good humor. He packed a prodigious amount of work into four days. Scott first notified General Zachary Taylor of his arrival and, quite tactfully, outlined to "Old Rough and Ready" the units that would be taken from Taylor's army. To Taylor he reaffirmed his plan to assemble the army by 15 January 1847 and land by early February.

On the following day he requested that Secretary Marcy

¹Gen. Jesup to Sec. Marcy, 26 November 1846, H. Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 565; Jesup lacked certain knowledge of the Vera Cruz expedition at this time, but expected something to develop from the Tampico expedition.
order the vessels leaving the East Coast to sail for Brazos Santiago and left the same instructions for the vessels and units departing New Orleans. In addition, Scott directed Brigadier General George M. Brooke, military commander at New Orleans to insure that the transports for the four regiments coming by way of the Mississippi River carry three months subsistence. Information in New Orleans indicated that a good port existed at Lobos Island off the Mexican coast, sixty miles below Tampico. Scott began to consider the island a possible rendezvous for his expedition. In addition to Taylor, Scott also notified Commodore David Conner of his anticipated plans.

On 23 December, Scott completed the necessary arrangements at New Orleans, and, with his entourage, boarded the steamship Alabama bound for Brazos Santiago. With him, he also took Surgeon General Thomas Lawson who was in New Orleans on an inspection trip and received an invitation to join the expedition.²

Brazos Santiago was already the major American supply depot on the Texas coast. As such, extensive storage

buildings, wharfs, workshops, and even a dry dock existed by the time Scott's expedition was in motion.

Quartermaster General Jesup arrived at the port on 19 December aboard the Fashion. He found a tangled mess, caused primarily, he thought, by his department having to perform duties properly belonging to the Ordnance and Topographical departments. In particular, he criticized the Ordnance people for failure to provide sling carts for heavy artillery and an adequate number of enlisted laborers. In turn, the Ordnance Department provided adequate answers to Jesup's complaints; however, petty bickering between the several departments, in the absence of General Scott who traveled to Camargo on 29 December, boded ill for the future.

The complaints about lack of men were well taken. As Jesup pointed out, artificers and laborers would be required by Scott's expedition and they were scarce in the field. Jesup may not have known that 120 men were coming with the siege train and rocket and howitzer battery. The Quartermaster Department's own lack of men engendered much of General Jesup's complaints and the problem was solved only when Captain Abner Riviere Hetzel arrived from New Orleans in late January, 1847, with several gangs of laborers. 3

Figure 1
Theatre of Operations

NEW ORLEANS
BRAZOS SANTIAGO
Gulf of Mexico
TAMPICO
LOBOS ISLAND
MEXICO CITY
PUEBLA
PEROTE
JALAPA
VERA CRUZ
SACRIFICIOS ISLAND
The shortage of labor could lead only to minor delays for the expedition when compared with the effects of the weather. During the months from December to March, while Scott assembled his expedition, the Texas and Mexico coasts suffered from periodic storms known as northers. In a letter to his father, Lieutenant Tom Williams succinctly described the effects of the northers at Brazos Santiago:

Again the difficulties of the Gulf coast by the absence of sufficient and safe harbors for the protection of transports from the terrible Northers (which, at this season, occur at intervals of from 3 to 5 days) and in the same [the] debarkation of troops, bear most seriously upon the already deficient, and important element of time. Vessels coming here with troops, or supplies have to lay off from 4 to 5 miles, and can only be unloaded by lighters making the task almost interminable and equally dangerous. 4

The delays and damages caused by the violent storms began to have their effects on Scott's logistics. During January, 1847, ships could be loaded and unloaded on only two out of sixteen successive days at Brazos Santiago. February was reported by a newspaper correspondent to be nearly as bad. In particular, the weather conditions delayed the embarkation of General William Jenkins Worth's

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division and Colonel William S. Harney's Dragoons. 5

Worse than the delay was the substantial loss of ships and supplies. "If Uncle Sam was a rich man, this would be a pretty place to 'break' him," reported a newspaper correspondent in his description of the small steamer Gopher, that went down with a loss of commissary supplies while crossing the bar. The correspondent further stated: "The beach and bar are strewn with wrecks in all directions." 6 Other reports stressed the continued destruction of ships and supplies by the violent winds and heavy seas at Brazos Santiago. 7

The constant exposure of supplies to the weather resulted in enormous losses beyond that caused by shipwrecks. Most supplies and subsistence were packed in barrels, boxes, and sacks. All too often the containers split during rough handling, came apart at the seams because of shoddy construction, or permitted moisture to enter through the cracks which destroyed the contents. 8 The loss of supplies

5 Correspondent Haile, 22 February 1847, Correspondent G. W. Kendall, 1 March 1847, New Orleans Daily Picayune, 2 March 1847, 14 March 1847.

6 Correspondent F. A. Lumsden, 13 December 1847, Ibid., 20 December 1846. The losses were primarily pork, bread, pickles, and vinegar.


8 Gen. Jesup to Sec. Marcy, 1 January 1847, H. Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 569-570. Jesup recommended rubber or leather be utilized to waterproof 80 to 100 pound packages for protection and convenience.
endangered the mission. The resulting shortages placed strict demands on the available seaborne transports that must now increase their operation to fill the void caused by the unpredicted losses.

Trouble with the shipping first became apparent in the shortage of lighters. The lighters, shallow-draft vessels designed to load and unload deep-water ships, absorbed tremendous punishment. Because all supplies and most troops were transferred from ship to ship by tackle rigged from yardarms, the lighters had to be brought alongside of the bigger ships. Pounding caused by the waves while the vessels were together damaged the lighters. In early January, 1847, General Jesup went to New Orleans to secure replacements, particularly for the special lighters designed to carry water. The lack of these craft made it difficult to insure that all the ships had the necessary seventy-days water supply required by General Scott.\(^9\)

While at Brazos Santiago, Scott directed the Quartermaster Department to assemble a transportation unit of approximately one hundred wagons with mule teams for the initial movements of the army after landing at Vera Cruz. By 2 February 1847, Captain Hetzel decided to take 500 mules

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from the depot at Brazos Santiago to supply these initial demands. He had already directed the assistant quartermaster at Tampico to prepare any extra transport available at that port. Finding mules and wagons for the initial transport presented little problem, although they took almost a month to gather; however, getting the unit afloat was a different matter. Stalls for the animals could not be erected aboard many of the transports damaged by the storms until the vessels could be repaired.10

Most of the horses for Scott's army had to be transported from the United States. Moving horses by ship posed a difficult problem in the best of conditions. Despite padded, specially-built stalls for each horse, losses mounted. The animals were apt to panic in the unfamiliar surroundings of strange noises and madly rolling vessels. The Diadem, for example, arrived at Brazos Santiago from New Orleans with only 72 of 224 horses remaining. Other transports had losses almost as severe.11 Horses were more difficult to find locally and Scott ultimately resorted to dismounting the Regiment of Mounted Rifles and pressing into


service horses belonging to dismounted officers. These animals provided mounts for the dragoons and draw-horses for the artillery. As late as 26 January 1847, despite the losses, shortages, and bad weather, General Scott expressed satisfaction with his Quartermaster Department. Although many of the supplies, ships, surfboats, troops, and, in particular, components of the siege train had not yet appeared off Brazos Santiago, he saw no reason to worry. The general apparently believed that he still could make his attack on Vera Cruz by his original date of 15 February. Already, in keeping with the information developed in New Orleans, Scott had directed his troop and supply ships to rendezvous off the Island of Lobos after speaking Brazos Santiago. Commodore Conner reported the anchorage would safely hold 200 to 300 ships, although probably provide little water. He confirmed that the island was an excellent rendezvous.


Based on General Order No. 1, Scott probably expected to depart Brazos Santiago for Tampico on 28 January 1847; however, the inevitable "ifs" began to upset his plans and a few days later he wrote:

I cannot leave this place for Tampico &c., until some of the cruel uncertainties, in respect to the approach of transports, ordnance and ordnance stores, shall be removed. Sixty odd surf boats, out of one hundred and forty, are already up. I will make the descent near Vera Cruz if not another should arrive.  

The most immediate uncertainty already faced was a lack of available ships. Despite the Quartermaster Department's statements in December about the availability of sufficient transportation, a shortage developed during January. The reason seems primarily to have been a great rise in the price of cotton which increased the demand for shipping and the reluctance of some owners to allow their vessels to sail under sealed orders. Despite this occurrence, the department chartered sufficient ships to transport General Worth's and General Patterson's divisions, but neither had arrived by 9 February. Scott had expected them eight days earlier, but the vessels had been delayed by a lack of water casks.

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and a shortage of sailors. While the New York, South Carolina, Louisiana, and part of the Pennsylvania regiments passed south by 9 February, the majority of troops at Brazos Santiago and Tampico waited. Ultimately, the vessels straggled in, but the last of Worth's troops only embarked from Tampico at the end of February. 17

The absence of the siege train provided a second worry and contributed to the delay. In his reports to Washington, Scott had expressed anxiety about its arrival as late as 4 February; however, he could not know Captain Benjamin Huger, traveling separately, had arrived at New Orleans only the day before. On 10 February, Huger received a letter from Lieutenant Josiah Gorgas, who traveled with part of the train, reporting its arrival at the Chandelier Islands. Huger directed it to Lobos and then left to join Scott at Brazos Santiago, arriving there in time to accompany the general to Tampico. 18

Captain Huger's news of the siege train provided some relief to General Scott and, undoubtedly, contributed to the commander's decision to depart Brazos Santiago on 15 February. The Massachusetts, carrying the general and his
entourage, including Captain Huger, arrived at Tampico four days later. They found Lieutenant Gorgas and the siege train off the bar and in excellent shape. Huger joined the ship on 19 February prior to its sailing for Lobos.  

As at New Orleans, Scott did not tarry at Tampico. He paused long enough to order General Robert Patterson to embark his division at Tampico by brigades, with General David Twiggs's going first. As soon as the last brigade was ready to embark, Patterson was to join Scott at Lobos. On the same day Scott issued General Orders No. 21, which gave detailed instructions on regulation of life aboard the transports. The orders showed a great concern for the troop's health. Scott also feared a shortage of ammunition and took the opportunity to write Brigadier General Brooke at New Orleans requesting a large supply of ten-inch shells and small arms cartridges.

Scott's arrival was a signal for action at Tampico. The troops began boarding the available vessels on 24 February and the first ones sailed by the 27th. Tampico, like

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19 Capt. Huger to Lt. Col. Talcott, 20 February 1847, ODLR, RG 156; Lumsden, 20 February, 1947, New Orleans Daily Picayune, 9 March 1847. Huger probably sailed to Brazos Santiago aboard the Alabama which was maintaining a regular run between New Orleans and the army and was expected by Scott on the 13th or 14th. Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 12 February 1847, H. Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 891.

Brazos Santiago, was a difficult post. Steam tugs dragged some smaller transports over the sand bar protecting the harbor, but lighters had to service most of the vessels. The small vessels received the troops at the wharfs by regiment, then sailed for the transports that rode at anchor outside the port. After the baggage and arms were safely aboard, the men clambered up the sides.

The ships immediately weighed anchor and sailed for Lobos. The embarkation proceeded with few problems other than accidents and some dissatisfaction because the regular troops embarked ahead of volunteer units. This feeling abated only when the necessary transport arrived, but some units waited until 7 March before embarking for Vera Cruz. In addition to some men being delayed, the shortage of transports caused part of the army’s ordnance stores, including rockets, powder, ammunition, artillery, and a pontoon train, to be left at Tampico.

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22 Lumsden, 20 February 1847, New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, 9 March 1847. The source of these supplies is obscure. Some of it was certainly brought by Patterson’s army and thus was in Mexico before Scott's expedition. The rockets and pontoon
On 20 February 1847, after spending thirty hours at Tampico and leaving orders that any available craft there and at Brazos Santiago be utilized to take the place of the transports which had not arrived from New Orleans, Scott sailed for Lobos where, as he had heard, smallpox had broken out among the volunteers.

This dreaded disease appeared about 15 February 1847 aboard two transports, the Ocean and General Veasy, carrying several companies of the Second Pennsylvania Volunteers. The healthy troops were landed on the Island of Lobos, leaving those afflicted aboard. The transports flew yellow warning flags while General Scott assembled a board of medical officers to examine the cases of smallpox and determine procedures to keep the disease from spreading. Isolating the patients and fumigating and ventilating the transports at first seemed successful and the volunteers reimbarked on 29 February. Unfortunately, the disease quickly reappeared aboard the General Veasy. Scott issued orders disembarking the troops once more and directed the vessel to remain at Lobos until entirely free of the disease.

train, however, suggest some had been off-loaded ships from the United States. Probably much of the ordnance was not for Scott's army since Tampico still had to be defended.


24 Anonymous, 15 February 1847, New Orleans Daily Picayune, 2 March 1847; General Orders No. 23, 21 February 1847, General Orders No. 37, 28 February 1847, Special
Significantly, sickness primarily struck the volunteer regiments because they lacked the discipline and experience of the regulars. Although the smallpox killed no one, dysentery did. Men were buried in the sea daily, dead as a result of crowded conditions and poor sanitary facilities aboard ship. To reduce the sickness aboard the transports, the volunteer regiments were landed on the island during the stay at Lobos.  

The harbor at Lobos proved satisfactory protection against the northerns and while the troops occupied their time with fishing, cleaning, cooking, smoking, and recovering from sickness, General Scott completed preparations for


Ulysses S. Grant, The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, edited by John Y. Simon, 2 vols. (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), 1:127; "Colonel Thomas Claiborne's Memoirs, Written When He Was About Seventy Years of Age," Documents and Notes, Justin H. Smith, 15:202; J. Jacob Oswandel, Notes of the Mexican War, 1846-47-48: Comprising Incidents, Adventures and Everyday Proceedings and Letters While With the United States Army in the Mexican War; Also Extracts from Ancient Histories of Mexico, Giving an Accurate Account of the First and Original Settlers of Mexico, etc.; Also the Names and Numbers of the Different Rulers of Mexico; Also Influence of the Church (Philadelphia: n.p., 1885), p. 58.
the landing near Vera Cruz. Scott felt he was in an unenviable position. On 28 February, he wrote Secretary Marcy that his army could only wait forty-eight hours for General Worth's troops. Any further delay would make the landing too close to the normal yellow fever season. Problems abounded. Although the troops from Brazos Santiago had arrived, the units from Tampico had not. Only two-thirds of the ordnance and ordnance stores and half the surfboats were on hand. General Scott, characteristically allowed himself a few words of complaint and self justification:

Perhaps no expedition was ever so unaccountably delayed—by no want of foresight, arrangement, or energy on my part, as I dare affirm—under circumstances the most critical to this entire army; for everybody relied upon, knew from the first, as well as I knew, that it would be fatal to us to attempt military operations on the coast after, probably, the first week in April, and here we are at the end of February.

Scott's vitriolic comments could be interpreted as an attempt to avoid the blame should his army fail, but his


next comments sounded a positive note:

Nevertheless, this army is in heart; and crippled as I am in the means required and promised, I shall go forward, and expect to take Vera Cruz and its castle in time to escape, by pursuing the enemy, the pestilence of the coast.

Despite his personal faults, Scott was an indefatigable worker. He might attempt to pass the blame to others, but he also would do everything within his means to insure the expedition's success.

Good news came quickly. The missing troops arrived during the first two days of March, and on 2 March, the Massachusetts hoisted anchor and led the fleet to Anton Lizardo, the major anchorage some twelve miles south of Vera Cruz. On the fifth they arrived, meeting some of the units which sailed directly to Anton Lizardo from Tampico.

Logistical preparations for the landing began at Lobos and continued during the voyage to and after arrival at Anton Lizardo. An unequitable distribution of ammunition which existed among the regiments caused Scott to order the First Pennsylvania to turn over 48,000 cartridges to General Worth for the Fourth and Eighth Infantry regiments. The Second Pennsylvania provided 44,000 cartridges to the New York volunteers. Scott already had directed Captain Huger

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29 Bauer, The Mexican War, pp. 110, 240; General Orders No. 40, 2 March 1847, AGGO, RG 94.

30 Meade, Life and Letters, 1:187.
to order two million cartridges each month while the army was in Mexico. 31

The officers were directed to insure that their troops carry two days' provisions, full canteens, a great coat or blanket, and forty cartridges. Knapsacks would be left aboard the ships and each soldier's arms and ammunition would be inspected each morning and evening by the company officers. Commodore Conner provided cooked rations. 32

For medical care during the landing, Scott first directed each of the five brigades to provide one surgeon who would remain with the sick aboard the transports until a hospital was established on shore. By 7 March however, Scott found it easier to gather the non-effectives aboard one vessel with three surgeons, freeing two additional doctors for duty with the invasion forces. 33

Supplies and heavy ordnance would land only after the three divisions of troops had secured the landing beach. With the troops ashore, the surfboats would be placed in charge of the Quartermaster Department which would supervise the landing of all supplies. Initially, subsistence for

31 Special Orders No. 42, 3 March 1847, AGGO, RG 94, Capt. Huger to Lt. Col. Talcott, 27 February 1847, ODLR, RG 156.

32 Ballentine, Autobiography, p. 144; Conner, Home Squadron, p. 77; General Orders No. 45, 7 March 1847, AGGO, RG 94.

33 General Orders No. 43, 5 March 1847, No. 45, 7 March 1847, No. 48, 7 March 1847, AGGO, RG 94.
five days and the tools necessary to create the trenches and abatements for the siege had to be disembarked. Detailed instructions for a depot established in conjunction with the Engineers, but managed by the Quartermaster were also issued.  

With signal flags agreed upon and the army divided into three lines under Worth, Twiggs, and Patterson, Scott ordered the troops redistributed into their proper vessels and planned the landing for 8 March 1846. Unfortunately, bad weather delayed the expedition once again, and on Commodore Conner's suggestion, the attack was postponed one day.  

Though this delay was only for one day, the expedition had already lost a great deal of that precious commodity, time. Winfield Scott bitterly realized his logistical support had proven inadequate. A sufficient portion of the army and its supplies were at Anton Lizardo for Scott to attempt the assault, but enough shortages existed to cause, despite his brave words, some doubt about the success of the invasion. Most important, the logistical support had not proven efficient enough to allow the army to assemble with sufficient time to insure the capture of Vera Cruz.

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34 General Orders No. 34, 26 February 1847, No. 41, 26 February 1847; No. 45, 7 March 1847, Ibid.

before the yellow fever season arrived. The 9 March landing date was fully three weeks past Scott's 15 February date set in November of the previous year.

As we have seen, although the Ordnance Department had some difficulties assembling the Ordnance, siege train, and men, the real delay lay in loading and shipping the train, a function of the Quartermaster Department. Throughout the months Scott's expedition concentrated, delays in transportation remained the basic problem. With few exceptions the army was well supplied, but, because of a shortage of vessels, some lack of planning, gulf storms, and the poor port facilities at Brazos Santiago and Tampico, it proved impossible to move those supplies and troops to Lobos in time to meet Scott's projected landing date. Additional evidence of the Quartermaster Department's failure was less than half the 140 surfboats ordered in November had arrived on time. Less clear is the situation with the siege train. Lieutenant Gorgas with most of the siege train arrived at least two weeks late and caused Scott considerable worry. Even when Gorgas did appear off Tampico, the siege train and ordnance stores were incomplete. At the time Scott prepared to disembark, he had no information on one third of his ordnance and ordnance stores. Although the records are not specific, the relative ease experienced in assembling the siege train and munitions, excluding ten-inch shells, indicate the delay came in transporting the materials to Mexico.
At a later time, Scott blamed much of his problems on the Polk administration. In particular, he complained about ten empty transports he ordered sent from the East Coast in November, which never arrived. Later he found that Secretary Marcy had canceled the order for the vessels based on General Jesup's assurances that sufficient ships were available at New Orleans. Scott also blamed the administration for allowing Congress to delay passage of a bill creating ten new regiments, then misdirecting the units when they were formed to the Rio Grande, instead of to Vera Cruz where they were required. Scott further castigated Secretary Marcy for allowing him too little time in Washington to complete necessary preparations before he had to depart for the Gulf of Mexico. 36

Although an element of truth exists in each of Scott's charges, the problems he cites are really the manifestations, not the causes, of poor logistical support. To move 10,000 men, their supplies, and ordnance over long distances from several points thousands of miles apart and assemble them successfully at one location by a specified date requires exceptional coordination. Quite simply, Scott's difficulties were primarily the result of no coordination by a

36 Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 24 February 1848, Sec. Marcy to Gen. Scott, 21 April 1848, H. Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1219-1222, 1228. Scott's comments are written after the war was terminated and were deeply colored by the events which took place after he captured Mexico City. See his statements in Scott, Memoirs, 2:415-416, which accurately portray the General's feelings.
central army control. Once Winfield Scott departed Washington, no one took his place. The chief-of-staff position would not exist until 1864. Conceivably, Secretary Marcy could have coordinated the bureaus, but Marcy was, at best, a poor administrator. President Polk had been forced to involve himself in army business because Marcy was overworked, but the lack of coordination could not help but impress itself on the chief executive when it even popped up in cabinet meetings.37

With no single person or bureau coordinating the activities between the army and navy and the inner workings of the army departments, the problems Scott's expedition faced were inevitable. However, prepared or not, Winfield Scott's "Army of Invasion" now was poised to undertake the first amphibious assault in American military history.

The morning of 9 March 1847 dawned bright and calm and the men and officers detailed for the duty launched the surfboats early. To prevent crowding, the soldiers transferred from their transports to the larger ships of the naval squadron and the steamers Spitfire, Vixen, Endora, Petrita, and Princeton took the surfboats in tow. Shortly before noon the fleet hove short its anchors and, with the Massachusetts and Raritan leading, set sail for the beach due west of Sacrificios Island just below Vera Cruz. During

37 See, for an excellent example, Polk, Diary, 2:150-157, 388.
the short voyage the fleet was joined by some stragglers bearing troops from Tampico.

Late that afternoon the fleet anchored off the landing site and, watched by foreign vessels, immediately began transferring the troops to their assigned surfboats. While they disembarked, the shallow draft steamers Vixen and Spitfire took positions close in shore to provide covering fire. The Princeton anchored abreast of the landing site. The surfboats, now loaded with General Worth's division, formed a double file parallel to the shore. The leading boats of each file held on to either quarter of the Princeton. The moment had finally arrived. A messenger from General Worth reported to General Scott that the division was ready. A simple red and white flag ascended the main mast of the Massachusetts. With that signal the files formed into two lines, the sailors dug their oars in, and, together, the boats rowed toward the sandy beach.38

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CHAPTER IV

THE CAPTURE OF VERA CRUZ

By midnight on 9 March 1847, General Winfield Scott had landed his ten-thousand-man army unopposed on the Mexican coast. As his men prepared for their first night on shore, they ate a salt pork and ship's biscuit supper furnished by Commodore David Conner, with nothing but lukewarm water to wash down the food. Most of the troops had waded ashore. Still wet, they wrapped themselves in their greatcoats and settled down on the sand for an uncomfortable night.¹

On the following day, the navy began the difficult job of unloading supplies, subsistence, ordnance, and transport. Until the port at Vera Cruz could be captured, everything the army required had to be landed on the open, unprotected beaches.² In practice this meant utilizing the surfboats to transfer all materials from the supply ships to land depots.

The supply ships were brought up from the rendezvous point of Anton Lizardo and anchored about a mile from shore.

¹Oswandel, Notes, p. 70; George Ballentine, Autobiography, p. 150; Smith, War With Mexico, 2:26-27.

Sailors offloaded the cargo onto surfboats which ferried the materials to the beach where gangs of men emptied the small vessels. Each surfboat had the responsibility for landing specific items, such as horses, ordnance or food. This arrangement allowed each group of sailors to develop an expertise in handling one type of cargo. A naval officer stationed on shore coordinated the landing activities. At first sailors unloaded the craft on the beaches, but their habit of wandering away and returning drunk caused Commodore Conner to request army replacements.3

Landing the quantities of subsistence, shells, and equipment required by the army presented little difficulty other than the backbreaking labor of transferring several hundred tons of dead weight to and from small boats. Two items, horses and artillery posed a serious problem.

The horses which survived the sea voyage were unloaded by the simple expedience of shoving them overboard and letting them swim ashore. Men stationed up and down the beach caught them as they reached the beach. The army suffered some losses in both draft and cavalry animals during the

unloading, and many of those that survived were in poor condition.  

The weight, bulk, and unwieldiness of the artillery pieces made landing the field and siege guns difficult. Initially, the navy lashed two surfboats together with boards onto which the men placed two complete field pieces with their limbers and caissons. Trials proved this method to be unsatisfactory. Sailors then loaded the cannon aboard individual surfboats with planks laid across the bottom to prevent damage. Once ashore, the men wheeled the pieces off the boats and through the surf. Tripods built at the water edge lifted the siege guns clear of the boats and large timber wheels rolled them ashore.

The greatest handicap the Americans faced in landing the supplies was again the northers that had dogged the expedition through the Gulf. The first north blast after the landing arrived during the night of 11-12 March and blew all the following day. The strong winds and heavy surf prevented the landing of artillery which was to have begun that day. A break in the weather allowed the landing of the army's tents and some artillery, but bad weather returned

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4 Conner, Home Squadron, p. 68; Col. Claiborne, "Memoirs," Documents and Notes, Justin H. Smith, 15:200; Furber, Twelve Months Volunteer, p. 510; Capt. E. Kirby Smith to wife, 22 March 1847, in Smith, To Mexico With Scott, pp. 122-123.

5 Conner, Home Squadron, p. 69.
in two days and again cut the troops off from the transports. The worst blows were yet to come.6

Between 21 and 26 March, northerns drove thirty-one transports aground with a great loss of life and total destruction of cargo that included some of the remaining horses. The United States government recouped part of its loss by selling salvage from the destroyed ships to unidentified purchasers, but the resulting shortages caused additional hardship on the troops ashore. In particular, the reduced supply of munitions caused an interruption in the bombardment of Vera Cruz several times.7

To assist his siege train, now weakened by the absence of many guns and ordnance stores, Scott arranged with the navy to borrow several heavy guns and personnel to man them. The navy landed three 32-pounders and three 8-inch Paixhans.


shell guns on 22 March, the date the army began firing on the city. These guns joined in the bombardment on the following day. Within a short time the naval battery had fired all of its ammunition. Replenishment overnight allowed the battery to engage the city on the twenty-fourth, but constant firing exhausted the available ammunition on that day and again on the twenty-fifth. Although the size and weight of the shells used by the naval battery limited the number that could be carried ashore quickly, the intermittent northerners primarily prevented the squadron from supplying the guns properly.  

While the struggle to land the army's supplies and ordnance continued, the army invested the city and began siege operations. After spending the night of 9-10 March bedded down in their damp clothes on the beach, the troops rose to a poor breakfast of their remaining salt pork and ship's biscuit washed down with the last of the water carried ashore. After breakfast the regiments formed into columns and began taking up positions around the city. The march through the deep sand in the hot sun proved difficult.

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Numbers of the soldiers, particularly the volunteers, fell out because of the heat and lack of water. During the afternoon, they arrived at their assigned positions and began building breastworks and defensive positions to cut off Vera Cruz from outside aid.  

The terrain around Vera Cruz consisted of innumerable small, sandy hills broken by fields of chaparral which made movement difficult. The siege lines eventually reached over five miles long and the shortage of wagons and draft animals meant that most of the army's supplies had to be distributed by the troops, a system likely to result in severe shortages for those units farthest from the beaches.  

Each man had struggled ashore with four days' rations of salt pork or boiled beef and ship's biscuit, which he soon consumed. As additional provisions landed, they had to be carried by hand three to four miles from the beach to the troops. Bread, tied up in blankets slung from poles carried on the men's shoulders, and pork, pierced by poles and borne in the same manner, eventually reached the men. Although the duties of porter were rotated, the deep sand and hot sun caused excessive hardship for many and death by sunstroke for several. The rations carried up from the beaches were

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9 Oswandel, *Notes*, pp. 71, 75.

supplemented by Mexican cattle which were found near the camps. Foraging parties, however, were subject to attack by the prevalent guerrillas and Mexican irregulars.  

Thirst plagued the operation. Many troops secured water by digging deep holes in the sand and drinking the questionable liquid that seeped into the pit. An additional source of water was secured on 12 March when army engineers tapped the queduct supplying Vera Cruz. Other makeshifts helped to quench ravishing thirsts. Some soldiers squeezed the juice from lemons and limes found near the city into the brackish water to create an interesting if unpalatable drink and General Twiggs's troops captured several casks of wine which the general wisely distributed among the men.  

As more transports arrived and discharged their cargos, the army's logistical support improved. Two major quarter-master and subsistence depots were established--one to the south of Vera Cruz near the original landing site and another at Vergara, a town seven miles north of the city, for the commands of Twiggs, Quitman, and  


12 Ballentine, Autobiography, pp. 158-159; Anderson, Artillery Officer, p. 75; Collins "Journal of Francis Collins," p. 52; Oswandel, Notes, p. 85.
By 22 March the landing areas and roads leading to the American positions presented a bustling, but well-organized appearance. On that date a young private in the Tennessee volunteers reported that the beach area was crowded with sailors and soldiers loading supplies, assembling the wagons which had been dismantled for transport aboard the vessels, and fitting new harness to the mules. The road leading to the siege lines was lined by quartermaster and commissary tents and large stacks of corn, oats, bread, pork, and other necessities assembled to feed the troops and animals. Some luxuries had also appeared. Sutters began arriving on 20 March and had numerous delicacies available for those who could afford to pay for them.

Despite the alternating extremes of heat and cold, the swirling sand storms that penetrated every crack and cranny, and the voracious Vera Cruz sand fleas, the troops bore the hardships of the siege well. Although logistical shortages hurt initially, the support services accomplished

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14 Furber, Twelve Months Volunteer, pp. 512-514; Oswandel, Notes, pp. 84-85.

their job reasonably well in spite of transportation problems and weather conditions.

On 18 March, the army began work on the positions for the siege batteries. Work parties of two hundred to three hundred men from various regiments labored in relays while the Ordnance Department stockpiled equipment and munitions for the upcoming siege. Sailors and laborers rolled cannon balls down planks from the surf boats and stacked them on shore. Copper boxes full of powder were also placed on the beach in magazines made of planks. The men used heavy wagon beds to transfer the mortars to the battery positions, and then established a reserve ordnance depot nearby to provide replacements when needed for damaged guns.  

Beginning on 22 March, when the first batteries opened fire on Vera Cruz, the bombardment continued for four days when Scott suspended action pending the outcome of negotiations for the city's surrender. Vera Cruz capitulated on


29 March 1847. In a ceremony that featured a 21-gun salute to their descending colors, the Mexican army stacked their arms and marched out of the city. 18

During the bombardment the shore batteries fired approximately 5,500 shells which weighed approximately 200 tons. The performance of the Ordnance Department personnel supporting the bombardment was highly satisfactory. The siege brought about the surrender of Vera Cruz, but the incessant and damaging artillery fire played a secondary role to the Vera Cruz commander’s lack of determination to repel the invaders. Scott had less than a fifth of the siege cannon that should have been on hand, which probably would have prevented him from battering the city into submission. Even if all of the required siege guns were available, a successful bombardment was by no means certain. 19

Even those guns actually emplaced could not be fired continuously since frequent northerners interrupted the supply of ammunition several times. These interruptions caused the batteries to fire at a slower than normal rate and,


several times, halted the bombardment completely. The shortages of surfboats and land transports also limited the American army's ability to supply its guns. Scott's capability to support all of the weapons he expected to be on hand without the arrival of all requisitioned transport and surfboats must be questioned. Despite the bombardment's success, logistics must be considered a limiting factor at the siege of Vera Cruz. Mexican lack of steadfastness saved Scott's army from its own shortages.

Vera Cruz now belonged to the Americans. The importance of Scott's acquisition must not be underestimated.

The possession of Vera Cruz, with its castle and harbor was of immense importance to us. . . . With such a base of easy operations, affording us ample shelter for our troops, and spacious storehouses for our supplies, and, by the aid of steam[ships] brought within three or four days of New Orleans, it would be an easy matter for us to take possession of the enemy's capital. . . .

Vera Cruz, because of its harbor and highway linking it to Mexico City, represented an ideal base for an army operating against the Mexican capital. Scott now faced two major tasks. First, a support base complete with storage depots had to be constructed at Vera Cruz and, second, the army and its transportation had to be organized for the march into the interior of Mexico.
With the capitulation of Vera Cruz the army seized large quantities of small arms and ordnance stores. The city and castle also contained between 350 and 400 cannon. Included in the artillery captured were numerous old Spanish guns, some English iron cannon, and twenty pieces recently cast in the United States. Although Scott failed to include any of these in his siege train, the confiscated munitions and artillery provided protection against possible attempts by Mexican forces to retake the city.  

The most pressing requirement was preparing the Vera Cruz ports for use by the military vessels. The navy marked the channels leading into the port and established forges and workshops on the waterfront. The reef where San Juan de Ulloa stood became a coal depot for resupplying the steamships. Meanwhile, the army engineers and quartermasters superintended the landing of the pontoon train and dismantled the batteries and magazines used to bombard the city. The quartermaster's headquarters was established in a two story building on the Gulf.  

As always the shadow of yellow fever hovered over Scott's expedition. Army surgeons expected Vera Cruz to be

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22 Sec. of War Report, 2 December 1847, H. Ex. Docs. 8, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 49; Hitchcock, Fifty Years, p. 248; Anderson, Artillery Officer, p. 106; Smith, War With Mexico 2:333-334 fn.

23 Semmes, Campaign of General Scott, p. 37; McClellan, Mexican War Diary, p. 73; New Orleans Daily Picayune, 31 July 1847.
especially vulnerable. Secretary of War William L. Marcy cautioned General Scott to take every possible measure to minimize the danger of infection to the large number of men who would necessarily be exposed to the dreaded disease. The northerners, Scott believed, had kept the vomito from appearing. This situation, however, would not last long and Scott had to take such measures as he could to prepare the city for the coming sickly season.24

Scott's plans for prevention of the vomito among the garrison at Vera Cruz depended primarily upon cleaning the city and stationing the Americans near the waterfront in better ventilated buildings exposed to the sea breezes. The commanding general believed the greatest source of disease came from the filthliness of the city which was so bad that some of the officers moved to the suburbs to escape the stench. Scott directed that the city be scoured and the inhabitants taught proper sanitary precautions. He also established a medical board to supervise the preventive

24Sec. Marcy to Gen. Scott, 13 March 1847, H. Ex. Docs. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 904; Scott, Memoirs, 2:431. Marcy's letter was the result of Polk's concern over the disease. See Polk, Diary, 2:421.
measures and proposed, if necessary, to pull down some of the city's walls to increase ventilation. 25

The Medical Department established a major hospital at Vera Cruz. The army's limited transportation meant leaving the sick and wounded in the city when it marched inland. After Vera Cruz surrendered, the central hospital was established first at a monastery, then moved to General Worth's former headquarters on the waterfront. Scott directed Surgeon John B. Porter to employ such nurses and medical attendants as needed to care for the troops. With these orders, the surgeon expressed confidence that he could return many of the sick to the army. 26

Despite these measures, sickness prevailed in Vera Cruz and some units suffered a number of deaths. Several soldiers of the First Pennsylvania Volunteers died from what a soldier on the scene termed "brain fever," and others became sick with the same ailment of an undetermined cause.

Common diarrhea, however, was the greatest health

25 Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 5 April 1847, H. Ex. Docs. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 910; Hitchcock, Fifty Years, p. 248. Tennery, Mexican War Diary, p. 77. While greatly feared, yellow fever was considered curable if the patient had a strong constitution, but was nearly always fatal to the weak. The standard treatment was administering large doses of quinine to the ill. McSherry, El Puchero, p. 23.

26 Brown, Medical Department, p. 184; Anderson, Artillery Officer, p. 127; General Orders No. 107, 11 April 1847, AGGO, RG 92.
hazard. At the time Scott's army march inland, no cases of the much feared yellow fever had appeared. 27

Beyond these immediate results, Scott's preventive measures succeeded to a major degree. Within a month the health of the troops stationed at Vera Cruz improved. The yellow fever season arrived in May, and by the end of July thirty-three soldiers lay dead from the disease. A total of 144 died from other causes during that same period. Based on the army's experience with yellow fever in Vera Cruz, the Board of Health Report by Dr. E. H. Barton stated that the disease had been overrated and could have been further reduced had hospital conditions equaled those in the United States. 28

Meanwhile, preparations for the advance on Mexico City went forward. The logistical problems faced by Scott were enormous. Early in February, General Thomas Sidney Jesup estimated that a 25,000 man force would require 2,893,950 pounds of supplies, 9,303 wagons, and 17,413 mules. Although projected for a force more than two and one-half times the size of Scott's, these estimates illustrate the amount of supplies and transport required by even a small army. 29

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27 Anderson, Artillery Officer, p. 127; New Orleans Daily Picayune, 23 April 1847; Oswandel, Notes, pp. 104-105.
28 New Orleans Daily Picayune, 3 May 1847, 2 July 1847, 8 August 1847.
29 Bauer, Mexican War, p. 259.
On 19 March, General Scott furnished the Quartermaster General with requirements more attuned to the size of his ten-thousand-man force. The general estimated his army required from eight hundred to one thousand wagons and between two and three thousand mules for transport. The siege train needed an additional three to five hundred animals. Scott hoped to gather two-thirds of the horses and mules in Mexico, but he stressed that all of the wagons had to come from Tampico, Brazos Santiago, and New Orleans. The general also expected to secure his forage, bread, and meat on the line of march. He planned to carry hardtack, bacon, coffee, salt, tents, ammunition, and medicines with the army. 30

While Scott legitimately could expect to buy or capture some supplies on his line of operations, ammunition had to be brought with the army and the Ordnance Department stockpiled large amounts at Vera Cruz. The siege train was well-supplied. The 10-inch shells, which had been in short supply before the campaign, now presented a burden. Captain Benjamin Huger estimated that only 3,000 of the original 66,000 shells delivered to Scott's army had been used during the siege. Since the army planned to carry approximately 3,000 of the 10-inch projectiles with it, the remaining 60,000 shells had to be returned to the United States. In the meantime, the Ordnance Department sent out ten 8-inch

mortars and 5,000 rounds of accompanying ammunition. Lieutenant Colonel George Talcott felt these smaller weapons would be more mobile than the heavier 10-inch mortars.  

To supply the field guns, Lieutenant Colonel Talcott, at Scott's directions, ordered Captain Robert Henry Kirkwood Whiteley at Baton Rouge to furnish 8,000 rounds for the 6-pounder cannon, 1,312 rounds for the 12-pounder cannon, 3,216 rounds for the 12-pounder howitzers, and 584 rounds for the 24-pounder howitzers. 

The army was also well-supplied with small arms ammunition. Supplementing Scott's original requisitions to General George M. Brooke at New Orleans, Captain Huger directed Captain Whiteley to furnish three million small arms cartridges to the army prior to the siege. Preparatory to the move inland, Scott now required an additional two million cartridges each month. These munitions were ordered proportionally according to the types of weapons carried by the troops. This figure was broken down into 1,500,000 flintlock musket cartridges, 250,000 percussion ignition musket cartridges, and 250,000 rifle percussion ignition cartridges. To fill Huger's requisitions, Whiteley requested that the inland arsenals furnish Baton Rouge with

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31 Capt. Huger to Lt. Col. Talcott, 12 April 1847, ODLR, RG 156; Lt. Col. Talcott to Capt. Huger, 2 April 1847, ODMLS, RG 156.

32 Lt. Col. Talcott to Capt. Whiteley, 3 April 1847, ODMLS, RG 156.
approximately five million assorted rounds each month. Lieutenant Colonel Talcott provided further support by directing the Waterliet Arsenal to provide an additional two million cartridges monthly directly to Vera Cruz. The Ordnance Department thus provided excellent support for Scott's expedition.

Inadequate transportation caused the greatest delay to the expedition's movement against Mexico City. Scott had planned to make a continuous march to Mexico City with only short halts where necessary; however, by 5 April only 180 wagons and teams were prepared to depart. An additional 300 wagons without teams lay aboard ships in the harbor. Timely requisitions had been placed on the Quartermaster's Department; however, General Jesup explained large numbers of both had been lost in the heavy storms and Scott was disposed to believe him. Contrary to the commander's expectations, few animals were available locally and Scott stated part of the reason for his first movements against Mexico City was the hope of securing draft animals near Jalapa. He also fitted out an expedition to the nearby village of Alvarado to secure horses reported to be in that area.


34 Scott, Memoirs, 2:431; Scott to Marcy, 5 April 1847, 8 April 1847, H. Ex. Docs. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 908, 920; Smith, War With Mexico, 2:37-38; Huston, Sinews of War, pp. 149-150.
The Alvarado expedition was a joint army-navy operation, with the land force commanded by General John A. Quitman. Quitman's men began the eighteen-mile trip on 30 March arriving on 1 April. They captured some artillery pieces which they turned over to the navy. In addition, the town's representative promised to furnish the invaders five hundred horses. Quartermaster Captain James R. Irwin, who accompanied the expedition, reported that he found few animals in the area. A second expedition under Lieutenant Colonel Martin Scott secured additional mules and horses, but hardly the number expected or required by Winfield Scott's expedition. 35

With the specter of the yellow fever season hanging over Scott's shoulder and his own desire to hurry driving him forward, the expedition's commander determined to advance with the transportation on hand. Preparatory to the movement, he detailed the First Infantry and two volunteer companies to garrison Vera Cruz. To conserve on transport, Scott directed all public vehicles, draft animals, and

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equipment in the hands of units or individuals be surrendered to the Quartermaster's Department. Regimental baggage was reduced to a minimum and one wagon was authorized for two companies.

On 8 April, Scott directed that the 2nd Division under Brigadier General David Twiggs would march to Jalapa and that Major General Robert Patterson would follow one day later with two brigades of the Volunteer Division. Forty-five wagons were assigned to the 2nd Division and fifty-five to the volunteers for their baggage. The commissary and ordnance train consisted of 110 vehicles divided between the two divisions for small arms ammunition and subsistence. Additional wagons carried four days' forage for the artillery and cavalry horses while each wagon carried four days supply of grain for its own teams. Scott also provided one wagon to the medical director of each division for his supplies. Each soldier carried forty cartridges, four days rations of hard bread and two days rations of cooked pork or beef. Live cattle provided fresh meat. Officers of the Quartermaster and Commissary departments also received directions to purchase any available forage and food to supplement that carried with the army.  

36 Scott, Memoirs, 2:430-431; General Orders No. 91, 3 April 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Capt. Irwin to Capt. Hetzel, 11 April 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92; Anderson, Artillery Officer, p. 121; Thomas D. Tenny, Mexican War Diary, p. 76.

37 General Orders No. 94, 6 April 1847, AGGO, RG 94.
In answer to these orders the Quartermaster Department assembled and organized enough vehicles and provisions to support the forward movement. On 8 April, General David Twiggs mustered his two brigades, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William S. Harney and Colonel Bennett Riley, and a light battery under Lieutenant George H. Talcott, and began the march into the interior of Mexico. General Robert Patterson followed on the following day with two volunteer brigades under Brigadier Generals Gideon J. Pillow and James Shields. Brigadier General John A. Quitman's brigade of Patterson's division and General William J. Worth's command remained pending arrival of further transportation. 38

With part of the expedition in motion the quartermasters at Vera Cruz continued "driving and driving to get the army in motion." 39 On the day after Patterson's troops departed Captain Hetzel reported seventy-five wagons and teams ready and a further 174 horses and 128 mules had come ashore though many were unfit. To assemble enough transport, the quartermasters had to ignore special requisitions by various officers which would have negated their efforts to assemble the trains. Even member of the department occasionally seemed unaware of the problems. On the day after


39 Capt. Irwin to Lt. Ogden, 10 April 1847, QDLS (IRWIN), RG 92.
Patterson's division marched, the quartermaster with his command sent twenty-one wagons back to Vera Cruz to obtain replacements for their inferior teams. Captain James R. Irwin, chief of the Quartermaster Department with Scott's army, promptly returned the same teams and advised he had none better on hand. If the loads were too heavy, he stated, a portion could be offloaded and left under guard.

On 16 April a one-hundred-wagon convoy loaded with commissary, forage, and quartermaster stores departed Vera Cruz. The next hundred wagons provided transport for Brigadier General Quitman's brigade and enabled that unit to join Scott.

By the above date, the major body of Scott's transport had been assembled, though much more was required. Captain Irwin directed Captain Abraham C. Myers, who supervised the supply train with Scott's army, to send back empty wagons.

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41 Capt. Lovell to Capt. Irwin, 15 April 1847, Captain James B. Irwin, Letters Received and Retained Reports, 1844-1851, Military Records Division, Record Group 92 (Quartermaster Department), National Archives, Washington, D. C., hereafter cited as QDLRRR (IRWIN), RG 92; Capt. Irwin to Capt. H. L. Scott, 16 April 1847, QDLS (IRWIN), RG 92.
as fast as possible. They were required to continue forwarding the supplies rapidly gathering in the depots at Vera Cruz to Scott's army. 42

On the same day, Captain Irwin directed the reorganization of the department in Mexico preparatory to joining Scott. With him he took Captain Joseph Daniels to supervise the ordnance train and Captain Henry L. Wayne to act as the disbursing officer for the department with Scott's army. Irwin ordered Wayne to carry $25,000 for immediate use. Captain Abner Riviere Hetzel remained at Vera Cruz as the depot quartermaster. 43

With Captain Hetzel, Irwin left orders to continue outfitting wagon and pack trains. This duty took precedence over all other activities and Hetzel was directed to forward supplies as quickly as he prepared trains to transport them. 44

By 14 April the department had prepared and forwarded 487 wagons and teams. Enough wagons and horses remained to make some sixty more units. More animals continued to arrive as ships Palmetto and New Orleans ferried them down from New Orleans and Tampico. Unfortunately, the quality

42 Capt. Irwin to Capt. Myers, 16 April 1847, QDLS (IRWIN), RG 92.
43 Capt. Irwin, Orders to Quartermasters with Scott's Army, 16 April 1847, Ibid.
44 Ibid.
received was, at best, indifferent. Many came ashore too crippled to work. To supplement the wagons the department also purchased local carts which carried only fifty-pound loads, but at least these carts would help move the army's supplies. 45

CHAPTER V

FROM VERA CRUZ TO PUEBLA

The first day's march by General David Twiggs's division was dogged with difficulty because of unfit troops, poor discipline, and the deficient condition of the road between Vera Cruz and his destination, Jalapa. For the first few miles, the troops waded through ankle-deep sand. The road sloped steadily upward. As the sun rose, the heat increasingly affected the heavily-burdened troops who soon began lightening their loads by throwing away blankets, extra clothes, equipment, and personal belongings. Some kept only their overcoats and weapons.¹

Many of the troops suffered from dysentery and the heat took a steady toll of the men. Several hundred fell out of the ranks and many died of sunstroke. Some of the prostrate troops were carried in the baggage wagons. Only a small number could be transported, however, because of the limited amount of conveyances with each unit.²


The army's condition was further aggravated by Twigg's failure to maintain proper discipline on the march. He neglected to keep his units closed up and allowed the head of his column to march faster than the units following behind could travel. This uneven rate meant the rear formations had to march at an irregular pace as they alternately speeded up to catch the leaders or dropped behind. When the army halted that night at Santa Fe, about eighteen miles from Vera Cruz, a large proportion of the division had fallen out.3

Many of the men who had been unable to keep up on the first day rejoined their units that night, although between three and four hundred men were still missing the next morning. On 9 April, the soldiers awoke to warm coffee, cold biscuits, and indifferent beef. On the second day out conditions improved when General Twiggs set a slower pace and allowed numerous short halts throughout the day. The weather remained hot, but palm trees lining the route provided some shade.4

The troops found numerous amounts of livestock along their line of march. Some of the men secured chickens by promising the owners payment when the troops returned on their way home. Many cattle roaming free near the road

were shot out of hand by troops desiring the heart, tongue, or liver.\(^5\)

The cattle also furnished food for those soldiers who lagged behind the columns in order to plunder the habitations along the way. These troops roamed the road in small groups, stealing anything of value. One victim reported Twiggs's regulars treated him well, but several groups of volunteers assaulted him. They stole his horses, mules, clothes and money. When a captain attempted to intervene, the volunteers struck the officer and then bayoneted another soldier who tried to prevent the assault.\(^6\)

These depradations violated General Scott's orders on the treatment of Mexican nationals. The American government expected Scott to exercise the prerogatives of a belligerent and make the Mexican people help pay for the expedition through forced requisitions and the seizure of supplies. Scott, however, felt that such methods of procurement would alienate the population and have a disastrous effect upon his army's ability to support itself in Mexico.\(^7\)

\(^5\)Oswandel, Notes, pp. 109-110.


Consequently, before leaving Vera Cruz the commander-in-chief issued a proclamation to the citizens of Mexico promising, in part, good treatment and fair prices for those who would sell their livestock and produce to the American army. He issued orders to his own troops to respect the person and property of the local inhabitants and directed that all supplies would be purchased at a fair price.  

At the outset of the movement inland, then, the actions of a small number of Scott’s troops threatened to limit or destroy the trust Scott, in his role as a "benevolent conquerer," hoped to develop with the population. Should illegal activities against private citizens continue, local sources of forage, food, and animals could potentially become unavailable to the American army.

On 11 April, the 2nd Division arrived at Plan del Rio near a narrow pass called Cerro Gordo. The improved arrangements for the march, the winnowing away of weaker troops, the easier terrain, and the gradual adjustment of the troops to active campaigning helped reduce straggling. Twiggs reported that he had only seventy-five men absent from his ranks, most of whom rejoined during the night.

Major General Robert Patterson’s Volunteer Division

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joined Twiggs on the next day after a difficult march over a road strewn with knapsacks, clothing, and equipment discarded by the 2nd Division. The volunteers were extremely worn down and had also abandoned much of their burdens. Colonel Francis M. Wynkoop, of Pillow's brigade, reviewed his men after their arrival and found many of the troops barefoot, hatless, coatless, and some with little more than the shirt and pants they stood in.  

The discarding of personal effects caused most of the shortages, but some of the volunteers began the expedition poorly clothed or had their apparel deteriorate during the advance.

After the arrival of Patterson's troops and despite information indicating the Mexican Army occupied Cerro Gordo in force, General Twiggs marched his division into the fortified pass. Premature fire by the Mexican forces warned the general, who extricated his force before it was drawn into a general engagement. After a reconnaissance determined the position's strength, Twiggs ordered a frontal assault for the following day. The attack was first delayed, then cancelled by General Patterson, who outranked Twiggs and assumed command in order to prevent the almost suicidal movement.

General Winfield Scott arrived on 14 April and

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developed a plan to turn the Mexican flank by widening a small path, discovered by Captain Robert Edward Lee, which bypassed the fortifications and led directly to the rear of the Mexican position. The plan was excellent, its execution faulty. On 17 April, Twiggs mistakenly assaulted the main Mexican position on El Telégrafo hill, thereby failing to cut the Mexican route of retreat and warning General Antonio López de Santa Anna what was afoot. The Mexican commander, however, failed to divine Scott's intentions and only strengthened his existing positions.

The main American attack took place on 18 April with limited success. General Gideon Pillow's diversionary movement was a complete failure owing to that officer's incompetence. Colonel William S. Harney's main assault on El Telégrafo succeeded brilliantly, but most of the Mexican army escaped before Brigadier General James Shields's brigade blocked the Jalapa road.

American logistical preparations for the battle were simple. While the army remained at Plan del Rio, General Twiggs wisely sent eighty empty wagons back to Vera Cruz for additional provisions and ammunition, and dispatched foragers into the nearby countryside. Most returned well-laden, but some units failed to achieve their objectives.

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because guerrilla ambuscades limited their ranging ability. The army also began to exhaust the supply of hard biscuit and, therefore, issued the men a pint of flour apiece before the planned assault. The soldiers mixed the flour with water and toasted the unleavened cakes in their campfires.\(^{12}\)

The army established a temporary general hospital at Plan del Rio and there detained during the battle those unable to march. Upon his arrival, Scott directed that a wagon for each battery and regiment follow the movement of the units and collect the wounded. Those disabled during the battle would be brought back to the hospital for treatment.\(^{13}\)

Anticipating victory, General Scott also decided the army would continue its advance toward Jalapa rather than return to the encampment at Plan del Rio. He directed the weaker officers and men to load the army's baggage trains and set them in motion after the battle. The soldiers going into the fight carried two days' rations and left their haversacks with the baggage wagons.\(^{14}\)

\(^{12}\)Oswandel, Notes, p. 113; New Orleans Daily Picayune, 3 May 1847; Ballentine, Autobiography, pp. 175-176.

\(^{13}\)Brown, Medical Department, p. 185; General Orders No. 111, 17 April 1847, H. Ex. Docs., 8, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 259.

As a result of the battle, the Mexican Army left 3,000 prisoners and over 1,000 dead on the field. The army captured over 5,000 small arms and some forty-three artillery pieces. American losses were trifling. Although an incomplete victory since most of the Mexican forces escaped, Cerro Gordo opened up Jalapa and Mexico's second most important city, Puebla, to Scott's expedition.  

While the army advanced toward Jalapa, some troops remained to clean up the battlefield. The medical officers labored long hours during and after the engagement treating in the field those soldiers wounded too badly to be moved. Parties of troops brought other wounded to central clearing stations where treatment was rough and ready. When necessity required, the surgeons amputated the patient's arm or leg. For less dangerous wounds, a simple poultice occasionally made of bread and milk or water was applied to the affected area. Colonel James Shields, critically wounded through the lungs, credited his survival to an Irish surgeon in Mexican service who drew a silk scarf through the hole

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to clean out the dirt. The Mexican surgeons were an experienced and welcome group. According to an eyewitness, George Ballantine of the First Artillery,

These Mexican surgeons are reputed to be very skillful in the treatment of wounds, which seems likely enough; as there is no country in the world, if we except Texas, or California, where as large an account of practice may be found in curing wounds of all the shooting and stabbing varieties.

While the army's surgeons plied their trade, other departments attended to the paraphernalia abandoned by the Mexican forces. The captured small arms turned out to be obsolete British muskets which the Ordnance Department subsequently destroyed. That bureau also determined that most of the captured Mexican cannon was useless. Except for one field battery taken into American service, the ordnance men disabled the guns and left them on the field.

In addition, the army captured a huge amount of

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16 Brown, Medical Department, p. 185; Ballentine, Autobiography, pp. 182, 184, Anderson, Artillery Officer, pp. 140, 313, Bauer, Mexican War, p. 276fn. The wounded were brought to Jalapa from Plan del Rio on 27 April 1847. Oswandel, Notes, p. 147; Tennery, Mexican War Diary, p. 81, 91. Ether was used as an anestheisa at least once during Scott's campaign, but was not in general use with the army. Vera Cruz American Eagle, quoted in Smith and Judah, Chronicles, pp. 349-350.

17 Ballentine, Autobiography, p. 192.

Mexican clothing which proved valuable. Many of the men who had abandoned portions of their apparel during the march from Vera Cruz took what they needed. The garments, unfortunately, were well furnished with lice, which plagued the men until they reached Jalapa and obtained soap. 19

The captured Mexican troops posed something of a problem to Scott. Since the general lacked the subsistence to care for them in addition to his own troops, he paroled the prisoners of war. To act otherwise would have strained the United States Army's slender means to its own survival. 20

While portions of the army remained to clean up the battlefield, the main body of the force pushed forward after the retreating Mexican forces. The road to Jalapa ascended constantly from Cerro Gordo to the city. In the following days, the temperature became cooler in the higher altitude and the army's advance became routine, save for the occasional dead bodies of men and animals and shattered wagons that littered the way. As the troops approached the town they found pleasant, cultivated fields dominated by the snow-covered peak of Mount Orizaba that stood out in vivid relief on the horizon. The men settled in buildings in the

19Ballentine, Autobiography, p. 201.
20Bauer, Mexican War, p. 268; Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 19 April 1847, H. Ex. Docs. 8, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 257.
town or encamped in nearby fields where they suffered from a lack of their tents, left behind owing to the lack of transport.

General William Jenkins Worth's lst Division, which had not been heavily engaged at Cerro Gordo, marched further inland. On 22 April, Worth's command captured a potentially key defensive point, the castle at Perote. Perote had been abandoned by the panic stricken Mexican forces who failed to carry away or destroy any of the military stores cached there. Thus, the lst Division captured fifty-four guns, eleven thousand cannon balls, fourteen thousand shells, and five hundred old muskets. Worth reported to General Scott that the fortress could provide quarters, store-houses, hospitals, and adequate water for a strong garrison. Potentially, Perote could provide an excellent defensive post for Scott's line of communications to the coast.

General Worth also began to purchase corn and flour from the local farmers. He dispatched detachments into the countryside and advanced part of his force fifteen miles beyond Perote to secure additional amounts of forage and

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21 Smith, To Mexico With Scott, p. 135; New Orleans Daily Picayune, 7 May 1847; Grant, Papers, 1:132. Oswandel, Notes, pp. 140, 142.


Gulf of Mexico

JALAPA
CERRO GORDO
VERA CRUZ

PEROTE
PUEBLA
MEXICO CITY

Main Route to Mexico City

figure 3
subsistence, large quantities of which, he informed Scott, were available. The general also hoped to secure quantities of mules from the region.\textsuperscript{24}

While Worth occupied Perote, General Scott remained at Jalapa with his main forces. The commanding general knew that the now defunct Mexican army offered no resistance to a swift advance on Mexico City, yet he felt unable to move forward because of problems in his rear. His reasons included the heat, humidity, and the potential for disease near the coast which made his line of communications tenuous and prevented the establishment of intermediate bases between Vera Cruz and Cerro Gordo. His army lacked sufficient supplies. The supply line to Vera Cruz was vulnerable to attack by guerillas. The wagon trains, therefore, had to be escorted by Scott's few cavalry units and the constant activity wore out the limited number of horses.\textsuperscript{25}

An additional problem, which had haunted the expedition from its beginning, arose—the lack of transportation.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., pp. 300-301; Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 28 April 1847, \textit{H. Ex. Docs.} 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 945. Confirmation on the availability of forage and subsistence may be found in Capt. O'Hara to Capt. Irwin, 9 May 1847, QDLLRRR (Irwin), RG 92; Capt. Irwin to Gen. Jesup, 11 May 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92; Blackwood, \textit{To Mexico With Scott}, pp. 154-155; Anderson, \textit{Artillery Officer}, p. 157.

Scott simply did not have the means of insuring that his army could march safely to Mexico City.  

Scott proposed, therefore, to remain at Jalapa while he assembled the necessary supplies and transportation. To provide escorts without further weakening his small army, Scott ordered that the reinforcements he knew to be coming would escort each supply train from Vera Cruz.

The general directed the chiefs of his logistical bureaus and the military governor at Vera Cruz to devote all their attention to insuring medicine, clothing, ammunition, knapsacks, blankets, hard bread, bacon, and other necessities, and to forward the supplies to him as quickly as possible. These instructions included directions to hold arriving troops aboard ship, land them by surfboat on the beaches, and then march them quickly out of the sea coast area to avoid yellow fever.

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26 Lt. Grant to J. W. Lowe, 3 May 1847, Grant, Papers, 1:36; Lt. Semmes to Com. Perry, 3 May 1847, Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 28 April 1847, H. Ex. Docs. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 944, 986. New Orleans Daily Picayune, 6, 11, 19 May 1847. Scott was later blamed by many for his failure to capture Mexico City at this time. See for example J. H. Steele to Sec. Marcy, 7 May 1848, Marcy Papers, Documents and Notes, Justin H. Smith, 16:156-157; Semmes, Campaign of General Scott, pp. 95-96.


Acting on Scott's instructions, Captain James R. Irwin began analyzing his needs and requirements. An estimated five hundred wagons were in service between the inland army and Vera Cruz. The road to Jalapa, however, once past the sandy area near the coast, was constructed with large rocks. The wear and tear of the army's passage and a lack of repairs caused the surface to deteriorate, resulting in constant attrition of the limited number of wagons.²⁹

Captain Irwin directed Captain Abner R. Hetzel at Vera Cruz to devote some of the precious transport space to wagon parts, including wheel hubs, axletrees, and wagon tongues. Additionally, Irwin required six hundred sets of harness and five sets of wheelwright's tools. To use the latter, Irwin also requested that Hetzel find six to eight wheelwrights. Captain Benjamin Huger assisted by donating two blacksmith forges and Irwin hoped to recruit blacksmiths from the army. With these measures, Captain Irwin planned to create wagon repair facilities at Jalapa; however, the quartermaster's failure to anticipate the need for such a repair station reflects a lack of planning by the department.³⁰

The bad roads also wore down the army's teams. Irwin,


³⁰Capt. Irwin to Capt. Hetzel, 28 April 1847, 30 April 1847, 1 May 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92.
therefore, directed Hetzel to insure that every animal leaving Vera Cruz was well shod and to provide every train with extra sets of shoes and nails. Additionally, Irwin ordered Captain Hetzel to send three thousand mule shoes and two thousand horse shoes for animals already at Jalapa.\footnote{31}  

By the time he arrived at Jalapa, Captain Irwin recognized that the army would be unable to obtain satisfactory transportation in Mexico. Horses and mules presented a problem in quality as well as quantity. Most of the mules collected locally were small and unbroken. The Mexican horses were also small, but worked well once they were reasonably experienced. The few animals captured as a result of Cerro Gordo did not even replace those which had broken down during the advance.\footnote{32}

Irwin estimated a total of twenty-thousand mules and a large quantity of horses for the cavalry and artillery would ultimately be required by the army, almost all from the United States. As a stop-gap measure, he began purchasing the animals belonging to the soon-to-depart volunteers.\footnote{33}

\footnote{31} Capt. Irwin to Capt. Hetzel, 25 April 1847, Ibid.  
\footnote{33} Capt. Irwin to Col. Thomas, 25 April 1847, Capt. Irwin to Lt. Col. Thomas, 26 April 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92.
The problem with animals at Vera Cruz; however, soon improved according to Captain Hetzel. On 27 April, Hetzel reported over a thousand head had arrived from Tampico and he expected another five hundred within a week. Most of these were horses. Three weeks later the problem of insufficient animals had been solved to the extent that the Quartermaster Department no longer had to depend on every animal. The inferior quality mules and horses could be culled and left behind. 34

With the number of teams increasing, a shortage of trained men to handle the wagons developed. The Quartermaster Department sent back to New Orleans for recruits and attempted to hire some of the volunteers. General Scott himself issued an appeal to his men for volunteers to become drivers and assigned regulars the job as an extra duty. None of these measures succeeded completely and the lack of teamsters remained a problem. 35

Those drivers who served with the wagons were, by and large, of disreputable character. Some were dishonest and

34 Capt. Hetzel to Capt. Irwin, 27 April 1847, QDRMTF (Irwin), RG 92; Capt. Irwin to Capt. Hetzel, 16 May 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92.

35 Capt. Irwin to Capt. Hetzel, 25 April 1847, Capt. Irwin to Gen. Patterson, 25 April 1847, QDLS (Irwin) RG 92; Capt. Hetzel to Capt. Irwin, 27 April 1847, QDRMTF (Irwin), RG 92; General Orders No. 130, 1 May 1847, AGGO, RG 94.
others outright thieves. Such items as brandy from the medical stores and other delicacies disappeared. Unscrupulous sutlers and others hoping to turn a profit by selling stores to the troops bribed the wagonmasters and teamsters to carry the unauthorized goods in their wagons. The amount of contraband goods thus transported is undeterminable, although Captain Irwin estimated that in one train at least ten of one hundred and fifty wagons carried unauthorized supplies.

As a result of their experience with this train, Irwin directed Hetzel to provide an invoice for each wagon in subsequent convoys. He also notified Scott of the problem and recommended severe penalties for the culprits. The problem of illegal goods carried in public wagons remained, however, despite the quartermaster's measures. 36

Of the public supplies forwarded from Vera Cruz to Jalapa, clothes must have been one of the most welcome. By 28 April, the weather began to turn cooler and the men who had lost or thrown away their blankets and coats suffered greatly. Although Captain Hetzel had anticipated the problem and forwarded over two thousand suits of clothing including boots and jackets, Scott still required an

36 Surg., Wright to Capt. Irwin, 7 May 1847, QDLRRR (Irwin), RG 92; Capt. Irwin to Capt. Hetzel, 15 May 1847, Capt. Irwin to Capt. H. L. Scott, 19 May 1847, Capt. Irwin to Capt. Daniels, 15 May 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92; Semmes, Campaign of General Scott, pp. 50-51.
additional six hundred blankets and coats, and five thousand uniforms. For the moment, the problem appeared to be unsolvable. The clothing depot at Vera Cruz was empty and uniforms were unavailable at Jalapa. 37

Another area of potential concern, although not yet a problem, was the state of small arms ammunition. By the end of April, Scott reported it difficult to find ten wagon loads of cartridges with the army. At Vera Cruz, Lieutenant Josiah Gorgas indicated his supply of small arms cartridges was good, although imperfect. He had substantial quantities of musket ammunition, but lacked rifle and carbine cartridges and percussion caps, although he had supplied all requisitions. The lack of ammunition with the army, thus, resulted from a lack of transportation with which to move the ammunition to Jalapa. There is also a hint of communications failure since Lieutenant Gorgas believed the army to be well supplied. 38

The condition of the army at Jalapa, therefore, was miserable. The cold nights and lack of proper clothes and

37 Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 28 April 1847, H. Ex. Docs. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 945; Capt. Hetzel to Capt. Irwin, 27 April 1847, QDRMTF (Irwin), RG 92; Capt. Irwin to Capt. Hetzel, 1 May 1847, QDLs (Irwin), RG 92.

38 General Orders No. 128, 30 April 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Lt. Gorgas to Col. Talcott, 17 May 1847, ODLR, RG 156. Gorgas had already begun to ship the stores of extra powder and artillery shells at Vera Cruz back to the United States anticipating Colonel Talcott's instructions, Ibid.
shelter led to a substantial increase in sickness and death from fever, dysentery, and pneumonia. The sick and wounded were verminous, dirty, and poorly fed. The hospital established at Jalapa was in a stone building where the men lay on thin blankets spread on the cold floor. The general rule on hospital attendants was for each regiment to detail a number of men based upon the surgeon's requirements. Usually the ambulatory sick or wounded were first chosen for this duty, then, probably, the least reliable men of the unit. This method virtually insured the sick would be poorly cared for.39

By the end of April, Scott had assembled sufficient transport and adequate quantities of provisions and forage to resume the expedition's advance.40 On 30 April, therefore, he issued orders directing his force, led by General Robert Patterson's division, to march to Puebla. These orders were revoked, however, before the movement began because of the rapidly approaching date when seven volunteer regiments were scheduled to be discharged.41

The loss of his volunteers had been pending for

39Ballentine, Autobiography, pp. 206-207; Owsandel, Notes, p. 143; General Orders No. 128, 30 April 1847, AGGO, RG 94.

40Blackwood, To Mexico With Scott, p. 148; Semmes, Campaign of General Scott, p. 96.

41General Orders No. 128, 30 April 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Smith, War With Mexico, 2:63.
some time. General Scott hoped enough of the volunteers would reenlist or agree to serve for the duration of the expedition and, therefore, prevent a substantial manpower loss. Despite a bounty recommended by President James K. Polk and passed by Congress, the volunteers disappointed their leaders. Few reenlisted.

For substantial reasons, Winfield Scott determined that he could not afford to keep the volunteers with his army. To delay their departure until their discharge dates, primarily in June, meant the departing regiments would return to Vera Cruz during the height of the yellow fever season. Should Scott capture Mexico City, then have a substantial body of his troops leave, both the command returning to Vera Cruz and the weakened garrison remaining behind would be subject to attack by Mexican forces, able to concentrate against a divided force. To capture Mexico City and then retreat would be an admission of weakness likely to turn the population against the American Army. In addition, Scott could expect discipline to become an increasing problem. The general, therefore, determined to leave the volunteers behind. This decision reduced his force to 7,113 men, and ultimately meant Scott had to wait for reinforcements before advancing to Mexico City.42

The volunteers began departing Jalapa on 6 May. Captain Irwin directed that Hetzel at Vera Cruz provide shipping for the three thousand men. The volunteers traveled light with only their arms, personal effects, ten rounds of ammunition, and four days provisions. The surgeons and most medical supplies were left at Jalapa. When the first units departed, they escorted an empty wagon train to be refilled at Vera Cruz.

With his decision to dispense with the volunteers made, Scott wasted little time in advancing his much weakened force to Puebla. The spare small arms belonging to the sick and wounded were collected at Perote to be reissued. The obsolete captured weapons were broken up and the captured powder was collected and forwarded with the army.

General John A. Quitman provided a regiment to garrison Jalapa and a second to occupy Perote. Colonel Thomas Childs became military governor at Jalapa and six surgeons and assistant surgeons under Surgeon Henry A. McLaren remained to care for the wounded.

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43 Capt. Irwin to Capt. Hetzel, 4 May 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92; General Orders No. 135, 4 May 1847, General Orders No. 136, 5 May 1847, General Orders No. 137, 8 May 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Oswaldel, Notes, pp. 157-158.

44 General Orders No. 131, 1 May 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Anderson, Artillery Officer, p. 155.

General Quitman and his brigade departed for Perote on 7 May 1847 and joined General Worth at that point. At the same time Worth was directed by Scott to advance with his division and Quitman's brigade toward Puebla. General Worth was directed to capture that city, but not to advance his units any farther. Scott himself planned to march for Puebla on the 16th or 17th with General Twiggs's division. On 15 May 1847, after a five day march enlivened by an ineffective demonstration on the part of Mexican forces under General Santa Anna, the American troops entered Puebla. When the city surrendered without opposition, General Worth found himself in charge of the second most important city of Mexico.

Meanwhile, back in Jalapa, General Scott with the main force faced a delay in departure because an expected wagon train from Vera Cruz failed to appear on schedule. When the train finally arrived on 20 May, it contained only a portion of the supplies of medicine, ammunition, clothing, salt, and other items needed by the army. Scott discovered that Captain Hetzel had underestimated the number of animals and wagons available at Vera Cruz and had failed to

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47 Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 20 May 1847, 4 June 1847, H. Ex. Docs., 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 964; Bauer, Mexican War, p. 271; Oswandel, Notes, p. 171.
allow for the reduced loads necessitated by the weak animals, heat, and condition of the roads. The shortage of expected ammunition was especially galling. Despite this deficiency, Scott departed Jalapa with Twiggs's division and arrived on 28 May 1847 by riding ahead with an escort of dragoons.

The army at Puebla was a severely reduced force compared with the one that had landed at Vera Cruz less than three months earlier. Scott reported the army had left one thousand sick at Vera Cruz, the same number at Jalapa, two hundred at Perote, and over one thousand at Puebla. After all deductions were made for garrisons, discharged volunteers, dead, sick, and wounded, Scott's effective force consisted of 5,820 men. The general attributed his losses primarily to the contrasts in temperature, the lack of clothing, and the inadequate supply of salted meat. The latter two resulted to a large degree from the shortage of transportation.

The losses of men shaped Scott's policy. He now had an insufficient force to garrison safely Puebla, much less capture and hold Mexico City. In addition, he could not expect substantial reinforcements in the immediate future. He determined, therefore, to add the troops at Jalapa and

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part of those at Perote to the command at Puebla. This move effectively isolated the small army deep in Mexico. For supplies, the expedition would live off the country surrounding Puebla and rely upon escorted convoys from Vera Cruz to provide necessities unavailable locally. Scott could stockpile ammunition, forage, and provisions, and with the advent of reinforcements from the United States, continue his campaign at a later date. 49

CHAPTER VI

TO MEXICO CITY

At Puebla, Major General Winfield Scott's army occupied a position only ninety-three miles from Mexico City, but some two hundred miles from Vera Cruz. The expedition was virtually cut off from its main supply depots and, except for the limited amounts of material carried over the long road in heavily guarded wagon trains, was dependent upon the immediate vicinity around Puebla for food and forage.¹

During the enforced stay at Puebla, Scott kept the troops busy preparing for the final movement against Mexico City. The army drilled morning and afternoon and received close inspection from its commanders. Scott's engineers carefully mapped the country between Puebla and the capital, and the general utilized the evening meals to develop a feeling of camaraderie between his officers.²

The troops found Puebla reasonably comfortable. For the first time since the army had left Vera Cruz, most of the troops received sheltered quarters. The Quartermaster

¹Ballentine, Autobiography, p. 231.

²Capt. Irwin to Capt. O'Hara, 9 June 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92; Smith, War With Mexico, 2:72-73; McSherry, El Puchero, p. 56; Anderson, Artillery Officer, p. 200.
Department billeted the men in public buildings, convents, and private homes throughout the city. These shelters, however, varied in quality. Most were damp and poorly ventilated, others drafty. The men slept on the floors with nothing but a mat and a blanket for comfort. These unsatisfactory conditions facilitated the spread of disease. Additionally, once a soldier became sick, his recovery was abnormally slow, according to Surgeon Charles S. Tripler, Medical Director of the 2nd Division.

Ordinarily men when relieved of disease rapidly recover strength and flesh, and are able to return to duty. Here is not the case, convalescence is astonishingly slow, and an improvement scarcely perceptible is made from day to day in men who do not want any further medical treatment.

The troops, thus, were far from healthy. The sickness which had already afflicted hundreds of soldiers remained with the army. The hospitals at Puebla were soon filled to capacity with cases of dysentery and diarrhea. The South Carolina regiment with the army was reported by one soldier to have lost almost half its strength and the "soldier's

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3 Capt. Irwin to Capt. Wayne, 3 July 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92; Capt. Daniels to Capt., QDRMTF (Irwin), RG 92; McSherry, El Puchero, p. 29; Ballentine, Autobiography, p. 233.


funeral procession" may have been the most commonly heard tune in the streets of Puebla.6

The reasons for sickness were both long-term and immediate. The deficiency of tents, clothes, and blankets had meant the troops suffered from a lack of protection from inclement weather. The effects of these shortages were intensified by the extreme changes in climate between the heat of the coast and the frequent cold rain at Puebla. The soldier's rations varied greatly and the surgeons believed this variety also contributed to ill health. The foods ranged from salt pork and hard bread to fresh meat, vegetables, and fruits. Most of the rations were of indifferent quality and usually poorly cooked.7

The constitution of the troops also contributed to the army's ill health. Even the regular regiments contained a high number of recruits, many of whom were unable to stand the rigors of the campaign. They were filthy and indolent. Army surgeons reported those who entered the hospitals had not bathed or changed clothes for several months.8

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6Ballentine, Autobiography, p. 233; Oswandel, Notes, p. 212, Tennery, Mexican War Diary, p. 92; The army's commanders maintained an interest in their sick and wounded. Scott, for example, visited the hospitals several times. Tennery, Mexican War Diary, p. 87.


8Ibid., pp. 187-188.
While the surgeons with the army at Puebla struggled to maintain the troops' health, preparations for evacuating the sick from Vera Cruz were made. The steamships Massachusetts and Galveston began transporting sick and wounded to New Orleans in early June. A month later, the overcrowded conditions of the hospitals prompted Acting Surgeon General Henry L. Heiskell to suggest that the overflow be transported up river to the hospital at Baton Rouge. A large amount of medical supplies were available at Baton Rouge, and, if required, additional room could be quickly prepared by utilizing some of the barracks now all but deserted since the troops normally stationed there were in Mexico.9

At the time preparations for evacuating the convalescents began, Scott's army received nine new surgeons to provide additional care. In April and June, the Medical Department also sent to Vera Cruz enough supplies of medicine, hospital stores, and bedding for ten thousand men. Dr. Heiskell assumed these large quantities were adequate since as late as July he had received only one requisition from the medical officers with Scott's army.10 Although the last instance is an example of the difficulty faced by the


Washington bureaus in providing support to the expedition in Mexico, Heiskell appears to have been correct in his assumption. Complaints about medical shortages refer to the problem of transporting the supplies from Vera Cruz to the army. The Medical Department provided adequate and timely shipments of medical stores to Scott's army.

The major shortage still faced by the army was the continued lack of clothes, coats, and blankets. To remedy this deficiency, Scott and his officers turned to the local economy. Puebla was one of Mexico's great cotton and cloth producing centers. When the army first entered the city, Major General William Jenkins Worth directed the manufacture and purchase of enough blankets, caps, canteens, and haversacks to supply the shortages in his command.\footnote{Semmes, 	extit{Campaign of General Scott}, pp. 129-130; Capt. Irwin to Capt. H. L. Scott, 9 June 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92.}

Following Worth's lead, General Scott ordered the purchase of several thousand pairs of pants and shoes at rather exorbitant local prices. By the middle of July, it became apparent that not only would Scott's army receive little more than two fifths of its clothing needs from the United States, but, the general complained to Secretary William L. Marcy, the new regiments just arriving had been promised that supplies would be available for them at New Orleans, Vera Cruz, and Puebla. Unfortunately, none were. Scott,
therefore, convened a board of five officers to examine the
purchase of additional clothes. After studying several sam-
ples of Mexican cloth, the board decided the Quartermaster
Department had to purchase enough uniforms to supply the
complete needs of the army. The board, however, judged the
material to be inferior to American cloth and expected it
to deteriorate quickly.  

The Quartermaster Department largely concerned itself
with stockpiling forage and food from the region between
Perote and Puebla. The fields of grain, principally corn,
barley, and wheat, were ripe and abundant. Each day the
heavily escorted wagon trains and pack mules traveled to
nearby plantations where the forage was purchased. This
system led to some difficulties because the practice of
journeying to the haciendas instead of insisting upon deliv-
ery to the army at Puebla imposed an additional burden on
the army's barely adequate wagon trains. Once established,
however, the system was difficult to change.  

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12 General Orders No. 228, 21 July 1847, General Orders
No. 230, 22 July 1847, AGGO, RG 94. The implication in
Scott's complaint was that the War Department made the prom-
ises and failed to keep them. Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 25
The American Army in Mexico hardly received the best equip-
ment from manufacturers in the United States who wished to
make more money by selling inferior products to the military.
See, for example, Lt. Col. Mackay to Col. Stanton, 22 May
1847, in Smith and Judah, Chronicles of the Gringos, p. 361.

13 Capt. Irwin, Orders No. 9, 11 July 1847, QDL (Irwin),
RG 92; Capt. Lowry to Capt. Irwin, 26 June 1847, QDLRRR
(Irwin), RG 92; Semmes, Campaign of General Scott, p. 124;
The additional burden was irritating because, although a sufficient supply of transportation was on hand to collect the supplies and to support the army during its projected movement against Mexico City, the extra work added to the Quartermaster Department's workload. The department replaced the animals destroyed by overwork and untrained teamsters between Vera Cruz and Puebla, and hired local laborers to shoe the mules. By the middle of July, Captain Irwin reported the wagon train well prepared.

By mid-summer, ammunition and ordnance presented a unique problem for Scott's expedition, an overabundance of supplies. Lieutenant Colonel George Talcott, from his desk in Washington, had repeatedly urged Lieutenant Josiah Gorgas at Vera Cruz to forward ordnance supplies to Scott even if the general failed to requisition them:

It would be a most severe reflection upon the Ordnance [Department], if the Army should be ill supplied, when there is such an abundance under your charge--therefore whenever a train passes up, with a suitable escort--you will

Kendall to Ed., 22 May 1847 in New Orleans Daily Picayune, 15 June 1847; Oswandel, Notes, p. 203; Grant, Memoirs, 1:104-105.

14 Capt. Daniels to Capt. Irwin, 24 June 1847, QDLRRR (Irwin), RG 92; Capt. Irwin to Gen. Jesup, 18 July 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92. Irwin failed to explain the origin of the animals, but Captain Hetzel at Vera Cruz, at the same time, was complaining that none of the trains he sent to Puebla were being returned. See Capt. Hetzel to Gen. Jesup, 6 June 1847, QDLSR (Hetzel), RG 92.
push forward, a full supply of ammunition of all kinds.\textsuperscript{15}

Worried about insuring proper support for Scott’s army, Talcott sent more than instructions. He directed the arsenals to forward huge quantities of ammunition and supplies to Vera Cruz. Lieutenant Gorgas’s problem, therefore, became excessive supplies and a lack of storage space. On 26 June, the lieutenant requested that no more small arms ammunition be forwarded to him. He had over four million cartridges and an ample supply of ordnance and powder on hand. A temporary shortage of percussion caps was alleviated by a shipment from Baton Rouge. With storage space unavailable, Gorgas finally requested permission to send the excess back to the United States. Afraid of seeing a shortage develop, Talcott refused and increased amounts of supplies built up at Vera Cruz.\textsuperscript{16}

Lieutenant Colonel Talcott worried needlessly about Lieutenant Gorgas supplying the expedition with adequate amounts of ammunition. The reports of shortages made by

\textsuperscript{15}Lt. Col. Talcott to Lt. Gorgas, 6 August 1847, ODMLS, RG 156.

\textsuperscript{16}Lt. Col. Talcott to Lt. Gorgas, 9 June 1847, 30 August 1847, Ibid.; Lt. Gorgas to Capt. Maynadier, 26 June 1847, Lt. Gorgas to Lt. Col. Talcott, 14 August 1847, ODLR, RG 156. Part of the shortage of percussion caps may have been due to damage from moisture. Experience indicated a stronger, harder varnish to be necessary for proper waterproofing. Lt. Col. Talcott to Capt. Huger, 24 May 1847, ODMLS, RG 156.
Scott while at Jalapa were not repeated at Puebla. Also the lists of supplies forwarded to Scott's army indicate up to one third of each wagon train consisted of ammunition and ordnance stores. 17

With Scott depending on local resources for his clothes, food, and forage, the wagon trains from Vera Cruz concentrated on carrying items unavailable at Puebla. For instance, a train which departed Vera Cruz on 4 June consisted of forty-eight wagons of ordnance stores, fifteen with quartermaster stores, primarily harness and iron, eight with medical stores, three ambulances, one with sutlers goods, and thirty-four containing personal baggage belonging to the escort. The composition of each train varied, but this example appears to be a normal type load. 18

Infantry escorts protected each train against attacks by Mexican guerrillas. Although almost every convoy suffered from depredations by the irregulars, few of the attempts to halt or destroy any of the columns were successful. Two attacks which did result in substantial American losses are worth examining.

On 4 June 1847, a train consisting of 132 wagons and

17 See for example Capt. Hetzel to Capt. Irwin, 3 June 1847, QDLRRR (Irwin), RG 92; Lt. Gorgas to Lt. Col. Talcott, 20 August 1847, ODMLS, RG 156.

18 Capt. Hetzel to Capt. Irwin, 3 June 1847, QDLRRR (Irwin) RG 92.
approximately 500 pack mules left Vera Cruz escorted by
170 dragoons and some 450 infantry under Lieutenant Colo-
nel James S. McIntosh of the Fifth Infantry. The teams con-
sisted primarily of small, half-broken mustangs and mules.
The teamsters were, for the most part, inexperienced
foreigners who spoke little English. Not surprisingly,
the train stretched out to almost four miles in length on
the march which made the job of protecting the column al-
most impossible for the advance and rear guards of infan-
try. On 6 June, Mexican irregulars hit the train's flank
and rear. The teamsters panicked and ran. The guerrillas
captured many of the pack mules and destroyed some forty
wagons before the infantry recovered sufficiently to repel
their attackers.\(^1\)

Another train that suffered from guerrilla activity
departed Vera Cruz for Puebla on 6 August. It consisted
of some seventy wagons escorted by a small number of infan-
try. Mexican guerrillas attacked only twenty-four miles
from Vera Cruz. The convoy's escort repulsed the Mexicans,
but not before the American commander sent a message to
Vera Cruz for reinforcements. Some two hundred men and
ten wagons marched to join the first train which, in the
meantime, managed to move to Jalapa. Mexican guerrillas

\(^{1}\)Capt. Hetzel to Gen. Jesup, 6 June 1847, QDLSR (Hetzel), RG 92; General Orders No. 231, 22 July 1847,
General Orders No. 250, 4 August 1847, AGGO, RG 94.
then attacked the reinforcing command several times, destroying all but one of its wagons.  

Both of these episodes illustrate the terrible vulnerability of Scott's supply lines. The inexperienced teamsters and half-trained teams resulted in poor march discipline which increased the difficulty in controlling and protecting the column. As the attacks increased, the trains required heavier escorts. The escorting troops' baggage either added to the number of wagons requiring protection or reduced the amount of supplies the train could carry. Additionally, the shortage of mounted troops meant that the slow moving infantry did most of the escort duty. This situation increased the vulnerability of the trains to attack.

Scott spent some effort providing security for his communications through punitive expeditions against guerrilla strongholds, the employment of Texas Rangers at strategic points on the road, and the hiring of local bandits.

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for use as guides, couriers, and spies. These steps resulted in some improvement, but guerrilla bands continued to harrass the wagon trains throughout the campaign.

Although these incessant attacks galled the Americans, they continued their preparations to move against Mexico City. By early June, Scott's reinforcements began arriving at Vera Cruz; soon other units joined them. The army's strength grew gradually to approximately 14,000 men which the general subsequently organized into four divisions.

The general at first planned to advance against Mexico City late in July; however, information that Brigadier General Franklin Pierce was on his way with 2,200 additional troops caused Scott to wait for that command. Pierce, delaying his departure from Vera Cruz until he could assemble adequate transportation, left the coast on 10 July and marched by easy stages to Puebla where he arrived without loss on 6 August despite six attacks by guerrillas. His army now complete, Scott marched some 10,739 rank and file troops with him and left behind at Puebla a garrison and those too ill to travel.

21 Bauer, Mexican War, pp. 272, 274.
23 General Orders No. 211, 12 July 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Hitchcock, Fifty Years, pp. 266-267; Gen. Pierce to his brother, 24 August 1847, MacWhinney, To Mexico With Taylor and Scott, pp. 183-184; Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 18 September 1847, in Scott, Memoirs, 2:529-530. Pierce stated that he was detained at Vera Cruz contrary to his orders; however,
Preparatory to the movement, Captain James R. Irwin received reports from his assistant quartermasters detailing the condition of all the wagons with the army. The captain then ordered that the more than eight hundred vehicles reported to be in good repair be distributed among the four divisions. In particular, Irwin wanted the teams allocated according to quality to insure that none of the divisions would be handicapped by having poorer animals than the other commands. Additionally, Irwin prepared an ambulance train of about forty vehicles under Captain Henry Constantine Wayne.24

Scott, meanwhile, directed his medical department to assign sufficient surgeons to care for the twenty-five hundred sick at the general hospital in Puebla. An additional six hundred convalescent soldiers too weak to march, and an equal number of healthy troops comprised the garrison

Secretary Marcy advised Scott that the various units were being held there so they could be concentrated for the march to Puebla. See Sec. Marcy to Gen. Scott, 19 July 1847, H. Ex. Docs. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess., p. 1003.

commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Childs. Scott, thus, completely abandoned his line of communications and Puebla became the single American position between the army and Vera Cruz.\(^{25}\)

At seven o'clock on the morning of 7 August, Brevet Major General David Twiggs and the three thousand men of his 2nd Division, the cavalry brigade commanded by Colonel William Harney, and the siege train marched out of Puebla on the road to Mexico. The 2nd Division was followed on successive days by the divisions of Major General John A. Quitman, Brevet Major General William J. Worth, and Major General Gideon J. Pillow. General Scott marched on 8 August and joined General Twiggs's command.\(^ {26}\) The march began auspiciously with, as one participant wrote,

\[\ldots\] all the 'pomp and circumstance' that bands of music, floating banners, flashing bayonets, and rolling drums can produce; the street windows were lined to see the pageant, thousands of spectators, citizens and soldiers, occupied the sidewalks, and the scene was really imposing, and not without solemnity.\(^ {27}\)

At first the separate divisions marched for only half of each day; thus, although they were several miles apart, the commands could easily reinforce each other in case of

\(^{25}\)General Orders No. 246, 5 August 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Scott, Memoirs, 2:460.

\(^{26}\)General Orders No. 246, 5 August 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Scott, Memoirs, 2:465, 468; Hitchcock, Fifty Years, p. 271.

\(^{27}\)McSherry, El Puchero, p. 57.
an emergency. By 10 August, the leading elements of the army descended the long slopes into the valley of Mexico with their objective in view amidst its surrounding lakes. As the army reached the valley, the divisions closed together and, at times, almost the whole force could be seen at one time. The large number of wagons made the force appear much larger and more imposing than its numbers warranted.28

Once in the valley of Mexico, the lakes, marshes, and raised causeways limited the American troops to four possible routes of march from Ayotla. The army could advance directly west which meant attacking a heavily fortified position at El Peñón. This position could be bypassed by marching south over a rough track which followed the north shore of Lake Xochimilco through Mexicalzingo. Two alternate route were much longer. One led north around Lake Texcoco and approached Mexico City from that direction, the other would require part of the army to retrace its steps, turn south, and march around Lake Chalco and Lake Xochimilco to San Augustín, thus flanking the city to the south.

Reconnaissance of the routes revealed that the northern road lacked water, the Mexicalzingo route lacked proper security in transit, and an assault on El Peñón would probably entail prohibitive losses. Before he left Puebla, Scott

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28 Scott, Memoirs, 2:465, 467; McSherry, El Puchero, p. 62; Anonymous Officer, 31 August 1847, in Mexico City, American Star, 23 November 1847.
had considered the route south around Lake Chalco the most practicable; however, information from his spies that the road would not support artillery and wagons dictated another approach. More recent examinations by the army engineers soon revealed the road could carry the army's transportation. On 15 April, therefore, Scott ordered General Worth's division and the cavalry brigade to lead the way to San Ausustin by the southern road. 29

The trail the army followed was only some twenty-five miles in length; however, it was narrow and at times almost impassable. At points, a wagon could barely fit between the lake on one side and the precipitous banks on the other. Other sections were muddy or, occasionally, completely under water and much of the route was covered with rocks and boulders over which the wagons had to be dragged by gangs of mules and men. Although, the entire road was open to attack, the single Mexican attempt to intervene with Scott's movement was easily repelled. 30

29 General Orders No. 257, 15 August 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Capt. Lee to Maj. Smith, 12 August 1847, in Smith and Judah, Chronicles of the Gringos, pp. 236-237; Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 19 August 1847, H. Ex. Docs. 1, 30th Cong., 1st sess. pp. 303-315; McWhinney, To Mexico With Taylor and Scott, pp. 191-192, Hitchcock, Fifty Years, p. 274; Smith, War With Mexico, 2:95-96; Bauer, Mexican War, pp. 288-290. The early information on the viability of the southern route probably came from an American officer who had been a prisoner in Mexico City and was released to Scott. See Kendall, 3 July 1847, New Orleans Daily Picayune, 2 September 1847.

30 Anonymous Officer, 31 August 1847, in Mexico City, American Star, 23 November 1847; McSherry, El Puchero, p. 69;
By 18 August the American army camped south of Mexico City with its headquarters at San Augustín. On the road north to the city, they faced extensive fortifications at San Antonio. A second road to the west bypassed that position, but led to a second Mexican force stationed at Contreras. After careful reconnaissance, Scott determined to cut a road across the Pedregal, a lava bed west of San Antonio which the Mexicans considered impassable. Instead, then, of assaulting the works at San Antonio, Scott shifted the bulk of his forces west to seize the San Angel road. This action was accomplished during the evening of 19 August when a small force crossed the Pedregal and occupied a small village thereby effectively isolating the Mexican force stationed at Contreras. 31

The army, about to be involved in the twin actions of Contreras and Churubusco, was in an insecure position. It had consumed all of its forage and much of its rations during the march from Puebla. Each division had marched with

31 Except where noted the accounts of Contreras and Churubusco are based upon the reports published in H. Ex. Docs. 1, 30th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 303-354; Smith, War With Mexico, 2:99-119; Bauer, Mexican War, pp. 292-301.
five wagons of ammunition, which provided a somewhat limited reserve for the battles which lay ahead. The march around Lake Chalco had been wearing on both man and beast.  

Preparatory to the battle, the soldiers were issued two days rations of bread and beef which they carried in their haversacks. They looped their blankets over their shoulders and stowed their heavy knapsacks in the wagons which they then left at San Augustín. The sick were also left in a general hospital established at that city.

The troops spent the night of 19-20 August in misery. Without tents or shelter of any sort they suffered immensely in a cold rain which, after midnight, turned into a downpour making sleep impossible. Many of those who crossed the Pedregal lost their rations and went hungry.

On the morning of 20 August, the American forces that had crossed the Pedregal struck the rear and shattered the Mexican force at Contreras. At a cost of less than one hundred casualties, the invaders crushed the Mexican force and captured several generals, hundreds of prisoners.

32 Hitchcock, Fifty Years, p. 275.
33 General Orders No. 258, 19 August 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Anonymous Officer, 31 August 1847, in Mexico City, American Star, 23 November 1847.
twenty-two pieces of artillery, and large amounts of ammu-
nition. This victory turned the Mexican position at San
Antonio and forced its evacuation.

While the divisions of Pillow and Twiggs forced the
Mexican left, General Worth's command demonstrated in front
of San Antonio. When the Mexican force retired, a covering
force of about two thousand men manned a fortified position
at Churubusco one mile north of San Antonio. Worth fol-
lowed closely and Scott debouched toward Churubusco. See-
ing the retreating Mexican forces and, through over-hasty
reconnaissance, mistaking the strength of the position,
Scott and Worth ordered a series of poorly coordinated
attacks.

Late in the afternoon, Scott regained control of the
fight and directed an envelopment which, although poorly
executed, resulted in the surrender of Churubusco and the
scattering of the Mexican forces. The American cavalry
pursued the retreating army to the gates of Mexico City.

The results of the twin victories were substantial.
The total Mexican loss included over three thousand pris-
oners and four thousand killed and wounded. Scott reported
the American loss as a little over one thousand men with
less than one hundred and fifty killed. For all extent
and purposes the Mexican forces were completely demoralized.
Although the American casualties were relatively light, those lost were among the finest officers and men in the army.  

After the battles, the dreary business of attending to the wounded commenced. A hospital already existed at San Augustin, but most of the wounded went to a more convenient hospital established at Tucabaya after spending the first night either on the battlefield or in nearby houses. The army established additional hospitals at San Antonio, San Angel, and Mixcoac where soldiers of both armies received treatment.

As a result of the two victories, the American army captured twenty-pieces of artillery which almost tripled the size of Scott's siege train. Included in this haul were two six-pounder field guns originally captured by the Mexican army at Buena Vista. Even more important, the Mexicans lost large quantities of ammunition which replaced that consumed during the fight and supplemented the army's scanty reserves. The captured cannon were hauled into position by captured mules which were then turned over to

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36 Brown, Medical Department, pp. 189-190; Semmes, Campaign of General Scott, pp. 295-296.
the Quartermaster Department for use with the trains. Many, however, turned out to be weak and in poor shape.37

Transportation, as ever, occupied Captain Irwin's attention. On 26 August he requested that the divisional quartermasters provide complete reports on the wagons and animals of each unit. The information received indicated that few wagons had been lost since the army marched from Puebla. Those which had been left behind were stripped of their gear to repair others. The army owned some 787 American wagons and 12 Mexican wagons.

While the wagons were in good shape, the mules and horses were not. They had seen hard service with inadequate forage. Most were listed as serviceable, but a high percentage were listed in poor shape.38

The Mexicans also provided the means to satisfy most of Scott's other shortages. On 23 August, General Scott and the Mexican government signed an armistice which terminated hostilities during negotiations and, among other

37 McSherry, El Puchero, p. 82; Anonymous Officer, 31 August 1847, in Mexico City, American Star, 23 November 1847; Capt. Myers to Capt. Irwin, 27 August 1847, Capt. Allen to Capt. Irwin, 27 August 1847, QDRMTF (Irwin), RG 92.

38 Capt. Irwin, General Orders No. 15, 26 August 1847, Capt. Irwin to Capt. H. L. Scott, 31 August 1847, QDLS (Irwin), RG 92; Capt. Allen to Capt. Irwin, 27 August 1847, Capt. Daniels to Capt. Irwin, 27 August 1847, Capt. O'Hara to Capt. Irwin, 27 August 1847, Capt. Myers to Capt. Irwin, 27 August 1847, QDRMTF (Irwin), RG 92,
terms, allowed Scott's army to purchase provisions in Mexico City. 39

The army quartermasters were already purchasing wheat and corn for forage, some still unharvested. Quickly the wagon trains began entering Mexico City. The purchasing trips proved to be frustrating when, on 26 August, the Mexicans refused to allow the Americans to enter because Captain Henry Wayne, the train's quartermaster, wore his army uniform. On the following day, Wayne entered the city, but a civilian mob attacked the unit and stoned the men accompanying the wagons. Several men were injured and some, reportedly, were killed during the riot. The Americans received handsome apologies on each occasion.

Reports on the amount of supplies and money secured in Mexico City during the armistice differ, but the army served enough provisions to forestall starvation. Throughout the armistice, however, the wagon trains and purchasing agents received constant interference during the performance of their duties in the city. Outside the city, the forage parties sent out by the Mexican commander, Antonio López de Santa Anna, reportedly spent more time attempting to prevent the Americans from securing supplies than collecting their own. 40

39Bauer, Mexican War, p. 307.

40Capt. Daniels to Capt. Irwin, 27 August 1847, QDRMTF (Irwin), RG 92; Lt. Stevens to Wife, 23 August 1847, in McWhinney, To Mexico With Taylor and Scott, p. 202; Lt.
Scott had approved the armistice in the hope that the negotiations conducted at the same time might end the war without further bloodshed. In this purpose, he was disappointed. By early September, it became abundantly evident that the Mexican government planned to break the armistice.

On 6 September 1847, Scott assembled his staff to consider the best method of assaulting the city. When the American officers examined the situation before them, they learned that the fortified city could be approached only through a limited number of well defended gates. The army's leaders estimated the Mexican army to be about three times the size of their own; and, based upon previous experience, they expected the enemy to have a substantial amount of artillery.41

The consensus favored an attack on the southern approaches rather than the southwest because the latter would necessitate assaulting a strong fortress called Chapultepec. Information developed on the following day, however, caused

Beauregard, Diary, in Smith and Judah, Chronicles of the Gringos, p. 251; Hitchcock, Fifty Years, p. 292; McSherry, El Puchero, p. 100. Col. F. S. Belton to Wife, 26 September 1847, in Captain Lucien Bonaparte Webster Papers, United States Army Artillery and Missile Center, Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Scott to plan an attack on a group of buildings known as Molino del Rey, located to the west of Chapultepec. 42

Preparatory to the attack, Scott set up his support depots in the small towns south of Mexico City. San Augustin served as the army's main depot. General headquarters was established at Tucabaya. The Archbishop's palace at Tucabaya became the general hospital for General Worth's division, although the majority of the wounded were sent there after the attack on Molino del Rey. The other three divisions had a hospital at Mixcoac and also left their extra stores, and transportation at the same town. 43

The army opened its assault on the morning of 8 September and this attack began the actions which ultimately led to the capture of Mexico City. A separate force demonstrated against the southern approaches to the capital, but while this activity drew off a portion of the defenders, those that remained turned Molino del Rey into one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Despite severe losses,

42 Except where noted the accounts of Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, and the capture of Mexico City are based upon the reports published in H. Ex. Docs. 1, 30th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 354-471; Smith, War With Mexico, 2:140-164; Bauer, Mexican War, pp. 308-322.

43 General Orders No. 279, 7 September 1847, AGGO, RG 94; Beauregard, With Beauregard in Mexico, pp, 65-66; Brown, Medical Department, p. 191; Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 18 September 1847, in Scott, Memoirs, 2:530.
the invaders took the position by seven o'clock in the morning.

Scott then studied the possible approaches to Mexico City and, after considerable discussion, determined to capture Chapultepec and approach the city from the west. On the morning of 13 September, three American divisions assaulted the citadel from the south and west. Despite stiff fighting and numerous American errors, such as the failure to provide scaling ladders for the assaulting columns, Chapultepec surrendered by mid-morning.

The victorious American troops scarcely halted. General John Quitman's men moved immediately down the causeway leading to the Garita del Belén, while a large force under General William J. Worth attacked the Garita de San Cosme. Both assaults succeeded in capturing the gates, and by evening Worth's command had secured positions within the city itself. That night, Santa Anna acceded to the wishes of the municipal authorities and abandoned Mexico City to the Americans.

On 14 September 1847, Major General Winfield Scott entered the capital city of Mexico to the cheers of his small army and to the waving of white handkerchiefs by the populace. In the general orders published on that occasion, he wrote an accurate and fitting assessment of his expedition's success:
Under the favor of God, the valor of this Army after many glorious victories, has hoisted the colors of our country in the Capital of Mexico, and on the Palace of its government.\textsuperscript{44}

During the next several days Scott organized the city and prepared for the possible resumption of hostilities since the capture of Mexico City failed to end the war immediately. The army had suffered some 2,703 casualties, thus leaving less than 8,000 effectives to garrison the city. He quartered his divisions in the city and directed that adequate guards be posted at major approaches to the city. In addition, Scott cautioned his troops to maintain their discipline and to behave in the same manner as they did in Puebla.\textsuperscript{45}

Details brought the sick and wounded at Mixcoac and Tucabaya into the city and placed them in divisional hospitals. The frequent movements of the convalescent troops, often in springless army wagons, added to the burden of their wounds. The buildings in Mexico City that the victors used as hospitals turned out to be damp, dark, and unventilated. These factors lead to a high mortality rate despite the efforts of Scott's surgeons.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} General Orders No. 284, 14 September 1847, AGGO, RG 94.


\textsuperscript{46} Brown, Medical Department, pp. 194-195.
The army's supplies and transportation were also brought into the city. Captain Irwin immediately set up a quartermaster's depot and directed the officer in charge to assemble a complete supply of forage, horseshoes, and other stores. The army made many of these horseshoes by melting down the barrels of captured muskets. Irwin also established a second depot for clothing. Meanwhile, the army wagons, except those being used in the city, were gathered at Chapultepec and were refitted for the return to Vera Cruz.

The quartermasters quickly found out that Mexico City contained everything the army required, but at such exorbitant prices that they could save money by transporting supplies from the coast. Because of the shortage of troops, the first train of some four hundred wagons did not leave for the coast until 1 November. Scott ordered that two hundred and fifty wagons of this train would return immediately, loaded with clothing, medical stores, and certain types of ammunition.

The capture of Mexico City failed to end the war, although it made possible the negotiations which ultimately terminated the conflict. Winfield Scott's army remained

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47 Capt. Irwin, General Orders No. 17, 15 September 1847, QDLS (Irwin); RG 92, Gen. Scott to Sec. Marcy, 18 September 1847, in Scott, Memoirs, 2:531-532; Risch, Quartermaster Support, p. 295.

48 Risch, Quartermaster Support, p. 296.
in the capital for several months and, during most of that period, remained isolated from its base at Vera Cruz, dependent, as usual, upon local resources and materials hauled up by wagon trains. Scott, however, had attained his military objective and, with his expedition safely esconced in Mexico City, had ended his campaign.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Winfield Scott's campaign against Mexico City was a tremendous success for several reasons. His expedition accomplished an amphibious landing, one of the most hazardous of military endeavors, without loss. The small force quickly isolated, bombarded, and captured Vera Cruz, a major fortified city. During the advance inland, it defeated a large Mexican army entrenched at Cerro Gordo, then maintained itself for three months while isolated deep in hostile territory. Reinforced with troops from the United States, the expedition marched into the enemy capital after winning successive victories over superior enemy forces at Contreras, Churubusco, Molino del Rey, and Chapultepec.

While Scott's army did not dictate surrender terms to the Mexican government, the capture of the capital made possible the negotiations which resulted in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed on 2 February 1848. This treaty finally ended the conflict.¹

The campaign's brilliant success, however, served to hide the numerous deficiencies which existed in the United States Army. In the area of logistics, these inadequacies

¹Smith, War With Mexico, 2:240.
caused severe shortages which delayed Scott's expedition several times and resulted in severe hardship to the troops of his command.

Before his expedition departed from the United States, Winfield Scott presented his material requirements for the campaign to the logistical departments. He took this action in sufficient time for the bureaus to assemble adequate support and still allow Scott's force to land at Vera Cruz by late January or early February. The shortages and delays the general suffered resulted more from poor execution by the bureaus, particularly the Quartermaster Department, than from a want of promptitude or planning.

From the beginning, transportation shortages proved to be the greatest handicap to Scott's logistics. Several deficiencies experienced during the campaign are directly attributable to the failure of the Quartermaster Department to ship necessities on a timely basis. The Ordnance Department failed to deliver all of the required siege guns and munitions to New York City on time and must, therefore, suffer some blame for Scott's lack of artillery at Vera Cruz. The Quartermaster Department, however, was unable to provide shipping at New York or to load the vessels quickly. The department's inability to transport the siege train to Vera Cruz not only delayed the American landing for several weeks, but meant Scott attacked that city with an insufficiency of artillery.
Had all of the cannon requisitioned by Scott in November, 1846, been on hand at Vera Cruz, the army probably could not have supplied the guns adequately since less than half of the 140 surfboats required by Scott were available during the siege. It is doubtful that the small number of boats could have landed enough ammunition to support the guns adequately. The most glaring transportation problems occurred after the capture of Vera Cruz. The army lacked enough teams and wagons to enable it to advance immediately against Mexico City. Some of these shortages resulted from losses caused by the weather in the Gulf of Mexico; however, the major reason was the assumption by the Quartermaster General and army high command, based on inadequate intelligence, that mules and horses were available in Mexico. The problem with wagons is less clear, but probably resulted from shipping difficulties.

The Quartermaster Department can also be censured for underestimating clothing requirements, for failing to provide adequate wagon repair facilities, and for lack of teamsters. These last three deficiencies resulted primarily from insufficient planning and, possibly, poor supervision within the department.

Within their spheres of responsibility the other three logistical bureaus performed satisfactorily. The few reports of food shortages primarily resulted from the inadequate transportation with the army. The Medical Department
provided the army with enough supplies. Care of the wounded, however, was rudimentary at best. Within the limitations of contemporary medical science and the often poorly trained surgeons, the troops received reasonable, but crude, medical care. Because of the communication problems between Washington and Vera Cruz, the Ordnance Department provided Scott's army with an overabundance of munitions and ammunition at Vera Cruz. Limited transportation resulted at least once in too little supplies with the army after it marched inland. Under the existing condition of communication and transportation this result was probably inevitable, given a nervous bureau chief in Washington and a relatively inexperienced lieutenant at Vera Cruz.

The burden of logistical problems must be attributed to the Quartermaster Department. The delays that bureau's difficulties caused Scott's expedition directly contravene the conclusion of the department's official historian who later wrote: "So effectively did the Department contribute to the support of the armies in the field that the commanding generals achieved a series of brilliant victories."\(^2\)

The problem, however, went far deeper than the limitations imposed by one logistical bureau. Although several factors, such as the weather, bandits, and road conditions, were beyond the military's control, much of the logistical

\(^2\)Risch, *Quartermaster Department*, p. 237.
delays resulted from the army's inadequate administrative organization. The logistical bureaus were little more than a set of autonomous, uncoordinated bureaus. The system lacked an intelligence gathering unit, a section to analyze and plan military requirements, and a central controlling entity under the commander-in-chief. The last was particularly important. When Scott departed from Washington, coordination between the departments and a certain amount of initiative disappeared.

Instead of being an exceptional part of his expedition's success, Scott's logistics could be considered better than adequate only when compared with previous American efforts or with the logistical capabilities of the Mexican army. The official historian of United States Army logistics provided a negative but accurate assessment when he wrote that the outstanding results of the Mexican War "were attained with never a shortage of men or matériel that was serious enough to cost a major battle."

Unfortunately, the numerous victories served to obscure the army's deficiencies. President James K. Polk later stated:

The war with Mexico has demonstrated not only the ability of the government to organize a

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5 Ibid.
numerous army upon a sudden call, but also to provide it with all the munitions and necessary supplies with dispatch, convenience, and ease, and to direct its operations with efficiency. 6

The army followed the President's lead. In reference to General Scott's grievances about the lack of support, Quartermaster General Thomas S. Jesup wrote that "the glorious results of his campaign are a sufficient answer to all his complaints." 7

Rejoicing in the aura of victory, American government and military leaders failed to recognize that significant problems existed within the army's administrative structure. The organizational deficiencies of the military remained uncorrected and plagued the assembly and organization of the American Army when the movement of troops on a large scale became necessary again, this time during the American Civil War. 8


7 Gen. Jesup to Sec. Marcy, 17 April 1848, "Drafts of Letters Sent and Received, Jessup [sic], 1828-1856," Military Records Division, Record Group 92 (Quartermaster Department), National Archives, Washington, D. C.

8 Hittle, Military Staff, p. 187. The Prussian Army developed a highly improved general staff system prior to the American Civil War. In 1855, then Secretary of War Jefferson Davis sent a commission of army officers to Europe to observe the Crimean War. In their concentration on French methodology, this Delafield Commission ignored German developments. Ibid., p. 188.
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