

OPERATIONAL ART IN THE CAMPAIGN OF
STEPHEN WATTS KEARNY TO CONQUER NEW
MEXICO AND CALIFORNIA, 1846-7

A Monograph

by

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ABSTRACT

OPERATIONAL ART IN THE CAMPAIGN OF STEPHEN WATTS KEARNY TO CONQUER NEW MEXICO AND CALIFORNIA, 1846-7, by Lt Col Cory S. Hollon, 57 pages.

From June 1846 through January 1847, the Army of the West, commanded by Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny, marched from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to San Diego, California, annexed New Mexico and Arizona without firing a shot, and gained California for the United States after three engagements. During the campaign, Kearny's command varied in size from 1,700 Missouri volunteers and U.S. Army Dragoons to fewer than two hundred soldiers, sailors, and marines, and California volunteers. Histories of the campaign have focused on the Battle of San Pasqual and General Kearny's orders before and during the battle in an attempt to explain why things went poorly for United States forces. Kearny's campaign provides tremendous insight into the operational level of war, tactical actions linked toward the accomplishment of strategic goals, because he achieved robust territorial gains that facilitated the United States' expansion to the Pacific Ocean with small and diverse forces.

Kearny's defeat at the Battle of San Pasqual, 6-7 December 1847, often overshadows the accomplishments of the overall campaign, but it is worth considering. On the eve of the battle Kearny did not appreciate the significance of his diminished means for accomplishing an attack against the Californios at San Pasqual. Although his available forces had a handful of fresh men from San Diego and his own two artillery pieces, General Kearny decided to attack with only a portion of his dragoons. His men had just spent four days in the cold and rain after having completed the longest march in American military history, some 1,900 miles, and were now riding broken down mules and horses. Kearny's immediate tactical end was to overcome the opposing force in order to gain their horses and remount his men; however, he choose a frontal assault without the benefit of a preparatory artillery barrage, which offered him limited chances for success. Kearny knew the position and disposition of the troops in front of him. Additionally, he was painfully aware of the limitations of his troops and their mounts. Furthermore, a sabre clanging in the early morning hours ruined any element of surprise. The Battle of San Pasqual resulted in the loss of 31 Americans killed or wounded and the loss of one of two mountain howitzers. Given that Kearny had adequate intelligence about the terrain and forces he was facing, his decision to attack was a hasty mistake resulting from an inappropriate appreciation of the tactical situation. After recovering at San Diego, however, Kearny led his men in two additional engagements to conclude the successful annexation of California.

While the Battle of San Pasqual is interesting, the campaign on either side of the battle demonstrates skillful use of operational art to achieve monumental results with an extremely small force. The final engagements in California demonstrate how General Kearny continued his campaign despite the loss of the first battle. Viewing the campaign through the lens of operational art reveals not only what Kearny got right or wrong, but also the lessons that can be learned for deployed operations today.

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INTRODUCTION

On 7 December 1846, the “day dawned on the most tattered and ill-fed detachment of men that ever the United States mustered under her colors.”¹ The day prior, Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny’s Army of the West had engaged in its first battle in California against the Californios at San Pasqual. While Kearny claimed a victory because the enemy left the field, the engagement cost eighteen killed and thirteen wounded from a force of fewer than 160. Kearny himself was wounded so severely he temporarily transferred command to a captain of dragoons.² The Army of the West, which had marched from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in June 1846, was now encircled on a small hill just west of San Pasqual in pursuit of the strategic objective of annexing New Mexico and California. New Mexico had capitulated to Kearny without a shot fired, but initial reports claiming the absence of any resistance to American rule were highly inaccurate. It appeared that, despite having completed the longest march of an army in United States military history, Kearny’s force would fall short of its ultimate goal as “our provisions were exhausted, our horses dead, our mules on their last legs, and our men, now reduced to one third of their number, were worn down by fatigue and emaciated.”³

Kearny’s setback notwithstanding, the campaign to secure New Mexico and California was ultimately successful. On 8 December 1846, Commodore Robert Stockton sent 180 sailors and marines from San Diego to reinforce Kearny’s beleaguered army and escort it to San Diego. From there, after replenishment and refit, Kearny led his force north and won a series of engagements in which the Army of the West defeated the armed force of California and established an American civil government in the state in January of 1847. General Kearny thus

¹ William H. Emory, *Emory Reports: A Reprint of Lt W.H. Emory’s “Notes on a Military Reconnaissance”* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1951), 171.

² *Ibid.*, 169-70.

³ *Ibid.*, 170.

achieved the stated political objectives of the United States nearly two months before General Winfield Scott landed at Vera Cruz.

Kearny's pursuit of the strategic objective of annexation through the arrangement of a series of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose can provide an illustration of the elements of operational art, even though Kearny did not understand his actions in this way.⁴ The Army of the West had marched from Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas to San Diego, annexed New Mexico and Arizona without firing a shot, and gained California for the United States after three engagements. Kearny accomplished all of this within an astounding seven months. During the campaign, Kearny's command varied in size from one thousand seven hundred Missouri volunteers and U.S. Army dragoons to less than two hundred Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines.⁵ After recovering in San Diego from his setback at San Pasqual, Kearny led his men in two additional engagements to conclude the successful annexation of California. Kearny's campaign provides tremendous insight into the operational level of war because he achieved robust territorial gains, which facilitated the United States' expansion to the Pacific Ocean, with small and diverse forces.

Histories of the campaign have tended to focus on the Battle of San Pasqual and General Kearny's orders before and during the battle in an attempt to explain why things went poorly for United States forces. Naturally, there was more to the campaign than this one battle. A review of the major works on the campaign and on Kearny is necessary to understand the foundational scholarship and demonstrate the need for a new examination of the events through the lens of

⁴ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, Unified Land Operations, (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2011), 6.

⁵ The Missouri volunteers, under the command of Colonel Alexander William Doniphan, were troops organized and enlisted for one-year terms. Six of the eight companies in this unit were mounted riflemen. Mounted rifle units primarily fought dismounted. Dragoons, on the other hand, were cavalry intended to fight mounted or dismounted. American dragoons, however, preferred to fight from their mounts.

operational art. James Madison Cutts wrote a nearly contemporary history of Kearny's march; however, his intent was "to sketch the geographical and historical outlines with entire impartiality, and with such fidelity as the records now admit of; so that the Public may have before them an unpretending, yet useful compendium."⁶ Cutts made no real argument in his work, but left the question open for others. Specifically, he did not examine the campaign for the conquest of New Mexico and California from a particular viewpoint or to illustrate a concept. Cutts acknowledged this shortcoming, but provided a wealth of source material and a comprehensive overview of the events during the campaign. Viewing these events through a particular lens, like operational art, was not Cutts' goal.

Unfortunately, historians did not revisit Kearny's entire campaign, choosing only to narrowly focus on a single operation or battle. Owen C. Coy wrote *The Battle of San Pasqual*, which focused on the preceding campaign only inasmuch as it affected the Battle of San Pasqual.⁷ Similarly, Sally Cavell Johns' master's thesis, "The Battle of San Pasqual," argued convincingly that the length of the march preceding the battle limited the effectiveness of the Kearny's forces.⁸ George Hruby of the San Pasqual Battlefield Project has done significant work on the timeline of events leading up to and including the battle. In addition, he persuasively argued about why certain tactics prevailed at the time.⁹ All of these histories focus on the Battle of San Pasqual at the expense of understanding its place in the larger context of the overall campaign.

⁶ James Madison Cutts, *The Conquest of California and New Mexico by the Forces of the United States in the Years 1846 and 1847* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1847), 3-4.

⁷ Owen C. Coy, *The Battle of San Pasqual* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1921).

⁸ Sally Cavell Johns, "The Battle of San Pasqual." (Master's Thesis, University of San Diego, 1975)

⁹ George Hruby, "The Battle of San Pasqual." San Pasqual Battlefield Site Location Project, <http://www.sanpasqual.org/account-0-intro-html> (accessed 14 Aug 2012).

The definitive work on Kearny and the Army of the West is *Stephen Watts Kearny: Soldier of the West* by Dwight L. Clarke.¹⁰ Roughly divided into thirds, this book covers the life of Kearny up to the formation of the Army of the West, the exploits of the Army until the capitulation of California, and the political consternation that occurred after Kearny's conquest. By his own admission, Clarke presents a somewhat biased portrayal of Kearny during the Mexican War; however, his interpretation of events does not so much distort the historical record as attempt to square Kearny's actions with Clarke's understanding of his personality. Clarke documents the campaign well, but his description lacks a coherent framework for explaining the actions taken by Kearny in a way that could be useful for operational planners today.

No one has produced a history of the Army of the West and General Stephen Watts Kearny that looks at the campaign from a perspective of operational art, but such a history would be useful in illustrating how the current elements of operational art were present during the Mexican-American War.¹¹ In order to do that, a brief examination of the army design methodology, the tenets of unified land operations, and the elements of operational art is necessary.

When confronting an unfamiliar problem, contemporary U.S. commanders use design to frame the problem they are facing and develop an operational approach to solve it. The Army design methodology is "a methodology for applying critical and creative thinking to understand, visualize, and describe problems and approaches to solving them."¹² First, commanders attempt

¹⁰ Dwight L. Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny: Soldier of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

¹¹ Michael Matheny has argued in *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011) that modern American operational art can trace its roots to the period between the two World Wars. While it is not the intent of this paper to argue for an early genesis of operational art, it should be understood that elements of operational art, specifically the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose in the pursuit of strategic objectives, have been present since well before that time.

¹² Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 5-0, *The Operations Process*,

to understand the current operational environment. Then, they visualize the desired conditions at the end of military action. When these two states are put into cognitive tension, commanders can begin to frame the problem in order to understand what obstacles or adversaries are preventing the friendly force from making progress toward the visualized environment.¹³ An operational approach to solve the problem will change based upon how commanders and planners frame a problem within the operational environment; therefore, it is necessary for those involved with the formulation of plans to continually reassess the current and desired states to ensure that the correct actions are being taken to bring the two into alignment.¹⁴ Ultimately, “design supports operational art by establishing the analytical structure for framing the problem.”¹⁵ Once commanders and staffs frame the problem, they can use the tenets of unified land operations to assist with the development of an operational approach to solve the problem militarily.

The purpose of unified land operations is to “seize, retain, and exploit the initiative to gain and maintain a position of relative advantage in sustained land operations in order to create the conditions for favorable conflict resolution.”¹⁶ The emphasis from the Army doctrine is on gaining the initiative, or “setting and dictating the terms of action.”¹⁷ In order to do this, Army commanders use doctrine to develop operations that are characterized by the six tenets of unified land operations: flexibility, integration, lethality, adaptability, depth, and synchronization. The terms are mostly self-explanatory, but two sets of them require elaboration. Current Army

(Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 2-4.

¹³ Jeffrey M. Reilly, *Design: Distilling Clarity for Decisive Action*, (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air Command and Staff College, 2011), 19.

¹⁴ ADRP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, 2-11.

¹⁵ Reilly, *Design*, 33.

¹⁶ ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, iii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

doctrine does not do a good job in differentiating between flexibility and adaptability. They are self-reinforcing in that the doctrine claims that “leaders enable adaptive forces through flexible . . . planning” and “adaptation enhances flexibility across the range of military operations.”¹⁸ Leaders require both flexibility and adaptability to meet the challenges of rapidly changing situations and gain little by distinguishing between the two. On the other had, distinguishing between integration and synchronization is useful and well done in doctrine. Integration is the melding of Army capabilities with joint and coalition partners to produce unified action in the land domain. On the other hand, synchronization is “the ability to execute multiple related and mutually supporting tasks in different locations at the same time, producing greater effects than executing each in isolation.”¹⁹ Commanders may integrate action, such as the use of naval gunfire to support a land attack, but this does not demonstrate synchronization because the integration is happening only in one place. Commanders use operational art to create operations that are characterized by these tenets.

Army doctrine defines operational art as “the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”²⁰ While not associated with a particular command level or unit echelon, operational art is a tool used by commanders and their staffs to link tactical actions with strategic objectives to ensure mission accomplishment. Operational art starts, in a manner similar to design, by analyzing the operational environment, the character of the friendly force, and the character of the threat.²¹ Operational variables and mission variables interact in a specific way to shape the operational

¹⁸ ADRP 3-0, Unified Land Operations (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 2-13. The fact that both of these quotations are on the same page makes the differentiation even more difficult.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2-14.

²⁰ ADP 3-0, Unified Land Operations, 9.

²¹ ADP 3-0, Unified Land Operations, 2.

environment in which a commander must operate. The interaction between variables is dynamic and constantly changing requiring commanders to continually assess and be prepared to rapidly transition between types of military operations. The character of friendly forces consist of the number of troops available, the type of training and relatively proficiency of those troops, the amount and type of weaponry, the intelligence gathering and processing skills, and the logistical support capabilities. The character of the threat is multi-faceted and can include anything from organized, state-level armed resistance to individual non-state actors. Commanders must understand this strategic context in order to begin to develop an operational approach that will effectively link tactical action to strategic objectives. In other words, commanders must understand not only where they are operating, but also their own and an adversary's forces in order to begin to employ their operational art.²²

There are ten elements of operational art identified in Army doctrine: end state and conditions; center of gravity; decisive points; lines of operations; operational reach; basing; tempo; phasing and transitions; culmination; and risk. Each of these is covered in detail in ADRP 3-0 chapter 4, so it will not be necessary to detail each one; however, the narrative of the Army of the West's campaign will consistently highlight four of these elements.

First, end state is the ultimate situation for which military force is striving. This could be anything from unconditional surrender to territorial acquisition, but the commander is constantly taking actions in order to achieve a particular set of conditions. The end state may change during operations, and commanders must use assessments to determine whether tactical actions are still useful in achieving the desired end state. Second, decisive points are geographical points or key events "that, when acted upon, allows commanders to gain a marked advantage over an adversary or contribute materially to achieving success."²³ Decisive points aid commanders in selecting

²² ADP 3-0, Unified Land Operations, 2 – 4.

²³ ADRP 3-0, Unified Land Operations, 4-4.

objectives and, thus, in deciding which tactical actions are required in pursuit of the strategic objectives. Third, operational reach is “the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities.”²⁴ Reach is the distance or time that a force can operate away from a logistical base because of limitations in lines of supply, intelligence, or protection capabilities. The longer the operational reach of a unit, the more difficult it is to protect and resupply that unit. Finally, risk, while not expressly defined in Army doctrine, assumes a combination of threat and opportunity.²⁵ A risk that an operational commander accepts can help by exposing key weaknesses in the adversary or compensate for limitations in operational elements for friendly forces like basing. As commanders analyze the elements of operational art for utility and adapt them to the operating environment, they begin to develop an overall operational approach and an operational framework within which to organize and direct tactical actions.

Viewed through the modern lenses of operational art, Kearny’s expedition was a four-phase operation using a direct approach and a decisive-shaping-sustaining framework to maximize flexibility and integration while finding the correct measure of lethality in order to annex New Mexico and California and pacify the inhabitants there.²⁶ The Army was to advance along a single line of operation at a long interval to prevent traffic backing up on the trail and

²⁴ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁵ The Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 Joint Operations (Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 11 Aug 2011), p. II-4 definition of risk is makes the term indistinguishable from threat or danger. ADRP 3-0, Unified Land Operations, 4-9, while not defining risk states that “when commanders accept risk, they create opportunities to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative and achieve decisive results.” Risk is, therefore, a combination of danger and opportunity. If a risk is not associated with an opportunity, it is more correctly labeled a threat or danger.

²⁶ “An approach is the manner in which a commander contends with a COG. A direct approach attacks the enemy’s COG or principal strength by applying combat power directly against it.” JP 5-0, Joint Operation Planning (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 11 Aug 2011), III-31. For a further discussion of direct versus indirect approach see JP 5-0, III-31-3 and Reilly, Design.

limit overgrazing the forage until arriving at Bent's Fort to the north of Santa Fe.²⁷ There it would concentrate and make its way toward Santa Fe, occupying towns on the way and giving the current administrators the option of open warfare or capitulation coupled by the swearing of a loyalty oath to the United States. Any enemy fielded forces would be defeated as rapidly as possible in order to not overburden the logistical flow for U.S. forces in Santa Fe. After seizing Santa Fe and establishing a civil government of the United States there, the Army of the West would leave behind as many forces as possible in order to increase its rate of march toward California and comply with directives from President Polk. On arriving in California, Kearny intended to integrate naval and marine ground forces into his army, but he planned essentially to repeat the process of establishing friendly governments in towns and villages in route to the capital while engaging what little enemy forces remained. He understood the end state and conditions required by his directives and visualized the decisive points of local governments along his approach route. Additionally, his actions while on the march demonstrated a consideration of his problem of operational reach and the risk of smaller forces to take advantage of the opportunity of faster operations afforded by that risk. He did not understand risk in the modern sense, but he had latitude to take more or fewer forces as he saw fit. The selection of fewer forces provided him the opportunity to achieve the objective on a shorter timeline. The combat losses at the Battle of San Pasqual often overshadow the success of the overall campaign. Nonetheless, the campaign as a whole demonstrates the skillful use of operational art to achieve monumental results with an extremely diverse and undersized force.

²⁷ "A line of operations is a line that defines the directional orientation of a force in time and space in relation to the enemy and that links the force with its base of operations and objectives." ADRP 3-0, Unified Land Operations, 4-5.

STRATEGIC SETTING

John L. O'Sullivan, an influential newspaper columnist, coined the phrase "Manifest Destiny," but the belief in American exceptionalism and a divine intention for Americans to rule the entirety of the North American continent was not unusual in the 1840s.²⁸ A full treatment of the influence of the belief in Manifest Destiny on the impetus to war with Mexico is not within the scope of this paper; however, many Americans, including President James K. Polk, firmly held that the United States should include all territory between the Atlantic and Pacific.²⁹

Texas won its war of independence in 1836, but the Mexican government refused to ratify the Treaty of Velasco. It continued to insist that Texas was still a northern province of the country whose southern boundary lay at the Nueces River.³⁰ Mexico threatened war if the United States annexed Texas. In spite of this, President John Tyler proposed annexation in 1844, but the Senate refused to ratify the treaty. Mexico severed diplomatic relations with the United States in response, but did not declare war even after annexation passed the following year. The President-elect, Polk, lent political support to the effort, and Congress approved the resolution on 1 March 1845. Texas was formally admitted to the Union on 29 December 1845.³¹

²⁸ Julius W. Pratt, "The Origin of 'Manifest Destiny,'" *The American Historical Review* 32, no. 4 (July, 1927): 795-798, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1837859> (accessed 30 Oct 2012).

²⁹ Robert W. Merry, *A Country of Vast Design: James K. Polk, the Mexican War, and the Conquest of the American Continent* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 452. For a fuller discussion of Manifest Destiny, see Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Frederick Merk and Lois Bannister Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

³⁰ David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *The Mexican War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 37.

³¹ U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, "Milestones, 1830 – 1860," <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/TexasAnnexation>, accessed 25 October 2012.

President Polk, who had won election on a platform of expansionism, desired to gain more than just the area of Texas from Mexico. Polk was working with Britain to settle a dispute over the Oregon territory, but he “weighed with undisguised enthusiasm the commercial and strategic potential of American ports along the coast south of Oregon.”³² With Texas firmly in the Union and acquisition of California the ultimate goal, it was natural that the territory of New Mexico should also become part of the United States simply because it stood between these two. Additionally, because of the concentration on the southwest, some Northerners and abolitionists were concerned that the expansionist tendencies of the President because of their respective economic and moral objections to the expansion of slavery. They believed the conflict with Mexico merely covered the true aim of admitting more slave states to the Union.³³ Ultimately, President Polk saw an opportunity to extend the borders of the country from the western portion of Texas to the Pacific Ocean.

The tension created by the Texas annexation presented President Polk with tremendous obstacles to negotiating the acquisition of New Mexico and California from Mexico. Nevertheless, he sent John Slidell to Mexico City as the American minister to attempt to buy the territories in November of 1845.³⁴ He had authorized Slidell to spend up to \$40 million for the land, but assumed that Mexico would accept less than that because of the debt it owed to the Catholic Church. Mexican President José Joaquín de Herrera, facing domestic trouble, refused to

³² Heidler and Heidler, *The Mexican War*, 47.

³³ *Ibid.*, 75.

³⁴ Slidell’s mission was doomed from the start. Mexico agreed to talk with the United States over the issue of Texas annexation, but the United States misunderstood this as a reopening of diplomatic relations. Mexico did not intend to do that, and, because Slidell had been named a U.S. Minister, could not even speak with him without the presence of diplomatic relations.

receive Slidell based on his designation as a minister.³⁵ The diplomatic rebuff gave President Polk an opening to resort to military force to settle the matter.

From the Mexican perspective, President Herrera was in a difficult position. The Mexican presidency had changed hands nine times from 1840 until Herrera seized power during a revolt in December of 1844.³⁶ In late 1845, even some who had supported him believed his government was unable to provide the necessary leadership for the country.³⁷ Herrera's government did not have sufficient funds to develop an army capable of defeating the United States, but he also had to appease a militant group within Mexico that demanded war with the United States. In attempting to satisfy both groups, President Herrera found himself the target of popular anger and fled Mexico City as Major General Paredes y Arrillaga brought his army there in late December 1845. Paredes y Arrillaga became the acting president in January of 1846, but was soon displaced by the arrival of Santa Anna.³⁸

When he learned that Herrera had refused to receive Slidell, Polk ordered troops under General Zachary Taylor to cross the Nueces river and move into contested territory north of the Rio Grande.³⁹ Mexico saw this as an act of war and responded by sending its own troops to the area. On 24 April 1846, Mexican and United States forces clashed near the Rio Bravo del Norte resulting in the death of sixteen U.S. soldiers. Word reached Polk on the 11th of May. He wrote in his diary that "in further vindication of our rights and defense of our territory, I invoke the prompt

³⁵ Heidler and Heidler, *The Mexican War*, 54.

³⁶ Donald F. Stevens, *Origins of Instability in Early Republican Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 11.

³⁷ Heidler and Heidler, *The Mexican War*, 53.

³⁸ Santa Anna was negotiating with the United States and the Mexican government for his return to power; however, the promises he made to each party were contradictory. Nevertheless, the United States allowed him safe passage into the country. See Heidler and Heidler, *The Mexican War*, 55-6.

³⁹ Heidler and Heidler, *The Mexican War*, 54.

action of Congress to recognize the existence of the war. . . . The most energetic and prompt measures are recommended to Congress as the most certain and efficient means of bringing the existing collision with Mexico to a speedy and successful termination.”⁴⁰ Two days later, while Secretary of War William L. Marcy was drafting orders for Kearny to take command of volunteers and secure New Mexico and California, President Polk signed the declaration of war with Mexico.⁴¹

Secretary Marcy outlined four broad objectives and a timeline in the orders he sent Kearny.⁴² The first order of business was to seize control of Santa Fe and California.⁴³ Mexico had all but abandoned New Mexico because of the prevalence of raiding Indians, its proximity to the rebellious example of Texas, and its distance from the capital city.⁴⁴ However, the real purpose of the expedition was the capture of California preferably in the autumn of 1846. Marcy refrained from making the timeline explicit, but mentioned the President’s “cherished hope” that Kearny “should take military possession of that country as soon as it can be safely done” in four separate instances in the letter of 3 June.⁴⁵ Further, Kearny was to travel to California without the one thousand Missouri volunteers that Marcy had authorized.⁴⁶ After gaining military possession

⁴⁰ Milo Quaife, *The Diary of James K. Polk, during his Presidency* (Chicago, 1910), 33-5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Marcy sent an original set of orders to Kearny on 13 May, but the operational focus of the campaign was provided by orders dated 3 June 1846. “Instructions from the War Department to Colonel S. W. Kearny,” [Marcy to Kearny] Washington, D.C., June 3, 1846, in Dwight L. Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny: Soldier of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 394.

⁴³ Marcy assumed that control of Santa Fe meant control of all of New Mexico. Marcy to Kearny, 395.

⁴⁴ Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 105.

⁴⁵ Marcy to Kearny, in Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 394-8

⁴⁶ Additionally, Kearny was advised that he may even leave some of his regulars in Santa Fe as he saw the need.

of the territories, Marcy directed Kearny to “establish temporary civil governments therein; abolishing all arbitrary restrictions that may exist, so far as it may be done with safety.”⁴⁷ Kearny was not only to occupy the land, but he was also to provide the framework for governments that would bring these conquered provinces into the Union. While he was accomplishing these two positive aims, Marcy specifically directed Kearny not to disrupt trade between the United States citizens and Mexican provinces. Finally, while fulfilling the positive and negative objectives of the government, Kearny was to “act in such a manner as best to conciliate the inhabitants, and render them friendly to the United States.”⁴⁸

It would take substantial effort to achieve these objectives, but fortunately Kearny understood the overall operational environment in which he was working. In addition to expeditions to Colorado and Wyoming as a young officer, Kearny travelled the Oregon Trail in 1845 and returned to Fort Leavenworth via Bent’s Fort and the Santa Fe Trail.⁴⁹ Additionally, Fort Leavenworth’s position just north of the Santa Fe Trail allowed Kearny to gain reports of the conditions all along the trail from the travellers which passed through.⁵⁰ As Cutts remarked, “thus Col. Kearny had acquired such knowledge of the physical features of the country, of the Indian habits, and of the resources of a western life, as amply qualified him to act the pioneer and commanding officer of the expedition which he so successfully conducted to Santa Fe.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ Marcy to Kearny, in Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 396.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 397.

⁴⁹ William H. Wroth, “Stephen Watts Kearny,” New Mexico Office of the State Historian, <http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails.php?fileID=550> (accessed 12 Feb 2013)

⁵⁰ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 105. Saschsen Von Altenburg and Laura Gabiger, *Winning the West: General Stephen Watts Kearny’s Letter Book 1846-1847*. (Boonville, MI: Pekitanoui Publications, 1998), 85

⁵¹ Cutts, *Conquest*, 35

Perhaps the most daunting element of the operational environment for Kearny's force to overcome was the distance between its base and objective (Fig. 1). The straight-line distance from Fort Leavenworth to Bent's Fort to Santa Fe to San Diego is just over 1,350 miles. However, Kearny had to utilize what trails existed, so his task would be to move an army capable of imposing U.S. sovereignty a distance of approximately 1,910 miles.⁵² Further, the topography of the land would make the journey extraordinarily difficult. Lieutenant William H. Emory, a topographical engineer and later adjutant to General Kearny, described the country as rolling prairie, giving way to high desert with limited vegetation as it approached Santa Fe.⁵³ Santa Fe had so little in the way of vegetation or arable land that General Kearny remarked most of his mounted cavalry would become foot soldiers because of their inability to feed their horses.⁵⁴ Between Santa Fe and San Diego, there were at least two routes from which Kearny had to choose. The northern route would not be available if his forces started later than early October because of the danger from winter weather. The southern route was extremely rugged, but it was passable throughout the year and offered more forage for the horses. Within this physical environment, Kearny needed to understand the human element and the potential for hazards. Santa Fe's great square, which was familiar to Kearny, had shops owned mostly by American citizens.⁵⁵ Santa Fe was dependent on trade with the U.S. and in fear of the Indians that surrounded them because Mexico City had all but ignored the needs of its northern territories.

⁵² Dwight L. Clarke, *The Original Journals of Henry Smith Turner: With Stephen Watts Kearny to New Mexico and California 1846 – 1847* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 76, 124. By way of comparison, this is roughly the same distance one covers on today's interstates going from New York City to St. Louis and back again.

⁵³ Emory, *Emory Reports*, 26-9.

⁵⁴ Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 156.

⁵⁵ Phillip St. George Cooke, *The Conquest of New Mexico and California in 1846 - 1848* (Chicago: The Rio Grande Press, 1878), 43.

Similarly, Californians had more loyalty to their state than to the central government.⁵⁶ Kearny's challenge, then, was to achieve his mission within this operational environment.

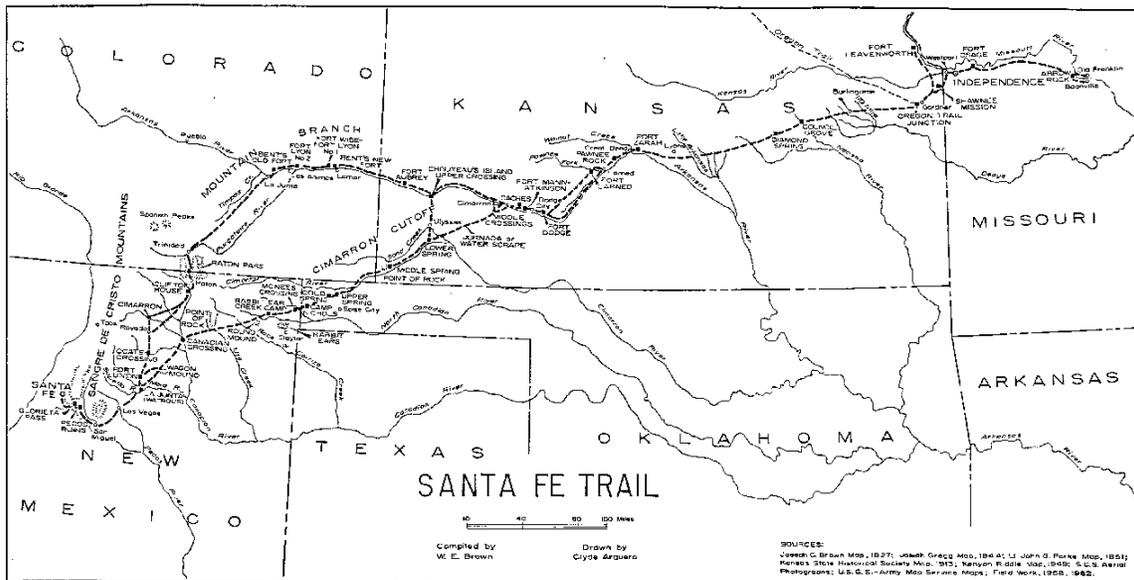


Figure 1: Santa Fe Trail Routes

Source: <http://www.santafetrailresearch.com/mileagecharts/santa-fe-trail-map-03.gif>

In order to accomplish his mission, Kearny had forces from three different sources at the beginning of the march. First, he had the regular Army forces made up primarily of the 1st U.S. Dragoons. The forerunners of the cavalry, dragoons were highly mobile, horse-mounted troops whose decisive action was a charge against the enemy followed by the pursuit of a retreating force.⁵⁷ Each man carried a rifled Hall carbine, a brace of pistols, a cavalry sabre, a bedroll with eating utensils, a blouse, and blanket.⁵⁸ These soldiers were regular Army, experienced in the

⁵⁶ David J. Weber, "The Borderlands on the Eve of War," http://www.pbs.org/kear/usmexicanwar/war/borderlands_on_the_eve.html (accessed 4 Nov 2012).

⁵⁷ United States War Department. Cavalry Tactics 1841, Volume 3 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1862), 121.

⁵⁸ George R. Moore, interview by author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 7 Oct 2012; Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 115.

Indian wars and other long marches in the West. Units from the 1st Dragoons marched separately on the road to Santa Fe with two companies under Captain Benjamin D. Moore in the lead and three companies under Captain William V. Sumner in the rear of the column. A company from the Laclede Rangers, a cavalry unit from St. Louis, was attached to the 1st Dragoons as well. For a full order of battle, see appendix A.

In addition to the regular soldiers in the Army of the West, Kearny had three different types of volunteers from Missouri. First, there were eight hundred mounted soldiers organized into a regiment with eight companies under the leadership of Colonel Alexander William Doniphan. Kearny ordered muskets for all eight hundred of these men, but only enough carbines and sabres for one-fourth of them.⁵⁹ In addition to the different experience levels between the volunteers and the regulars, there was also a difference in fighting styles. Dragoons expected to fight mounted, but the mounted riflemen expected to fight dismounted.⁶⁰ Second, the Army of the West also mustered two companies of light artillery from the Missouri volunteers with twelve six-pound cannons and four twelve-pound mountain howitzers into the Missouri Artillery Battalion under Major Merriweather Lewis Clark.⁶¹ Finally, Missouri volunteers constituted the only infantry to march with Kearny to Santa Fe in the form of two companies.⁶²

The final source of troops for the Army of the West was the Mormon Battalion. Pursued and persecuted because of their religious beliefs, the Mormons found themselves in western Iowa at the outbreak of war with Mexico. An emissary to the President convinced him to allow some of

⁵⁹ Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 152-3

⁶⁰ Moore, interview.

⁶¹ William Elsey Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition and the Conquest of New Mexico and California* (Topeka: William Elsey Connelley, 1907), 134.

⁶² *Ibid.*; Also, California Pioneer Heritage Foundation, "A Unit of Kearny's Army of the West," California Pioneer Heritage Foundation, <http://californiapioneer.org/for-history-buffs/mormon-battalion/15-a-unit-of-kearny%E2%80%99s-army-of-the-west> [accessed 8 Nov 2012]; Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*,

the Mormons to enlist in the Army as an expedient to move them out of the country and gain an occupation force in the process. Captain James M. Allen of the 1st Dragoons was responsible for mustering them into service and capitalized on the Mormons' desire to relocate to the West to persuade men to volunteer.⁶³ Secretary Marcy authorized Kearny to "muster into service such as can be induced to volunteer; not, however, to a number exceeding one-third of your entire force."⁶⁴ Ultimately, four hundred Mormons became the Mormon Battalion and marched from Fort Leavenworth to San Diego.

Upon arrival in California, Kearny expected to work closely with the Navy and take command of the U.S. Army forces that were there. Commodore John D. Sloat was in command of naval and marine forces initially, but Commodore Robert F. Stockton relieved him in July of 1846. Together with Captain John C. Fremont, a brevet captain of topographical engineers in the U.S. Army, Stockton would command forces that Kearny expected to direct upon his arrival in California. Marcy's instructions to Kearny primarily drove this expectation in that it stated that "the naval forces of the United States . . . will be in possession of all the towns on the sea coast, and *will co-operate with you* in the conquest of California."⁶⁵ However, because of the sometimes difficult and often personality-driven nature of what today is called a joint operation, Kearny had to cooperate and influence the naval forces rather than assume command and control. While the size of these forces were unknown at the initiation of the march, Kearny counted on additional forces being present upon his arrival in the territory sufficient at least to secure the ports in California.

⁶³ Cooke, *The Conquest of New Mexico*, vi.

⁶⁴ Marcy to Kearny, in Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 395. Kearny appointed Allen to be the commander and, after Allen died en route to Santa Fe, gave command to Captain Phillip St. George Cooke.

⁶⁵ Marcy to Kearny, in Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 396. Italics added.

Kearny could only speculate as to the character of the enemy force while he was planning his campaign. He had information from sources in and around Santa Fe that Governor Manuel Armijo could field approximately five thousand men for the defense of New Mexico.⁶⁶ The composition and experience of that force was unknown, but there was a rumor that General Jose de Urrea was coming from Mexico with even more troops. Contrasting those rumors were indications that “a year before, the Mexican government had virtually abandoned northern New Mexico.”⁶⁷ In either case, Kearny understood that he would primarily be facing volunteer infantry with minimal combat training or experience. In California, because of the assurances of Secretary Marcy, Kearny anticipated minimal resistance, but there was no evidence to support this presupposition.

Kearny faced a monumental problem. Specifically, he needed to plan a way to conquer and subdue the vast expanses of New Mexico and Alta California while maintaining trade and peaceful relations with the population in order to fulfill the strategic objectives of the war and minimize the potential for future conflict. He had the Army of the West, which included the 1st Dragoons, the 1st Missouri Mounted Rifles, with the 2nd Missouri Mounted Rifles and the the Mormon Battalion as follow-on forces. However, he faced an unknown number of troops with assumed limited skill and a potentially hostile populace. The strategic leaders, while not making it an order, strongly desired the acquisition of the territories to be completed before the end of the year, which gave Kearny only six months with which to march over 1,910 miles. Through all of this, Kearny had to pay careful attention to the terrain and distances he faced, the impact his decisions would have on his mostly unseasoned troops, and the relationships he would have to

⁶⁶ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 111-2. Kearny’s sources were primarily the travellers along the Santa Fe trail who passed near Fort Leavenworth, so their veracity may have been in doubt. The truth of the situation was that Armijo and Mexico City were late to recognize the possibility of invasion and did not start discussing methods of defense until after Kearny had left Ft. Leavenworth.

⁶⁷ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 105.

create and maintain with the local population. Overall, Kearny did a magnificent job in solving this uniquely difficult operational problem.

FROM FORT LEAVENWORTH TO SANTA FE

The conquest of New Mexico and California was a tremendously complicated task. Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny did not systematically develop a plan with decisive points, phases, transitions, and lines of operations as U.S. Army doctrine prescribes today. However, there is evidence that suggests he practiced what is today termed operational art, although calling it that would be anachronistic. Viewing his actions through the lens of operational art, though, allows scholars and soldiers to better understand the logic of Kearny's actions as they developed and provides a framework for the analysis of the campaign. This type of analysis requires an explanation of Kearny's campaign in chronological order with an emphasis placed on the elements of operational art and tenets of unified land operations described in *Army Doctrine Publication 3-0*.

When Kearny received orders from Secretary of War William Marcy, he was the commander of forces at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. His immediate concern was two-fold: consolidate his regular army at Fort Leavenworth and train the new volunteers for service in the Army of the West. Kearny had begun the consolidation process several days before the explicit instructions from the War Department arrived.⁶⁸ In addition to the three companies of dragoons stationed at Ft. Leavenworth, Kearny recalled his troops from Forts Atkinson and Crawford in what is now Iowa and Wisconsin, respectively.⁶⁹ The war, while not popular in New England, caused mass volunteerism in Missouri. Kearny knew that he needed his regulars present at Fort

⁶⁸ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 106.

⁶⁹ Kearny to Brigadier General G.M. Brooke, 31 May 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 134.

Leavenworth as soon as possible to help organize, train, and equip the new soldiers.⁷⁰ The men who reported first became the First Missouri Mounted Volunteer Regiment and elected Alexander Doniphan as their colonel.⁷¹ The initial accumulation of combat force was going well; however, unfortunately for Kearny, events would not allow the force build-up to proceed smoothly.

Kearny had several problems to contend with while mobilizing at Fort Leavenworth and mustering the volunteers, but his solutions demonstrate how he kept the desired end state and conditions in mind. First, Kearny received orders to intercept a shipment of arms and ammunition to Governor Armijo that was on the Santa Fe Trail bound for New Mexico. On 5 June 1846, Kearny dispatched Captain Benjamin Moore with companies C and G of the 1st U.S. Dragoons to overtake the caravan and detain all people and supplies traveling with it until he could arrive.⁷² He sent follow-on orders demanding speed from Moore because an informant, a long-time resident of Santa Fe, “is further of the Opinion, from his knowledge of the Governor’s character, that if we can secure that property, we hold the governor as our friend and ally.”⁷³ While not explicit in the order to Moore, it is reasonable to assume that Kearny considered the possibility of turning the entire government of New Mexico, as it currently stood, to the side of the United States through means other than overt military force. This would have more than fulfilled Secretary Marcy’s order to secure the territory without disrupting trade or inciting popular revolt.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 106.

⁷¹ For a complete history of Doniphan and the 1st Missouri Volunteers see Joseph G. Dawson, *Doniphan’s Epic March: The 1st Missouri Volunteers in the Mexican War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1999).

⁷² Kearny to Moore, 5 June 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 139

⁷³ Kearny to Moore, 6 June 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 140

⁷⁴ Marcy to Kearny, 3 June 1846, in Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 395-7

In case the advanced party could not secure the caravan or that the loss of the arms and ammunition did not bring Armijo to the U.S. side, Kearny would need to have an armed force ready to face him. Therefore, Kearny saw to the armament and provisions for the army he was training. As noted before, Kearny ordered arms and ammunition for the volunteer forces, but he was also concerned about feeding and clothing the soldiers. He drafted supply wagons and teamsters to aid in driving the 1,556 wagons, 459 horses, 3,658 draft mules, and 516 pack mules used to transport the Army of the West toward to Santa Fe.⁷⁵ The journey to Santa Fe would be difficult for the Army, but Kearny made sure that his logistics would not unduly limit his operational reach.

In addition to the logistical arrangements for the march, Kearny made two decisions at Fort Leavenworth regarding the composition of his forces that had far reaching effects. First, he secured the services of an interpreter.⁷⁶ Even though the orders from Marcy indicated that he would supply Kearny with a proclamation for the people of New Mexico in Spanish, no such document ever reached him. Instead, Kearny had to carefully construct the proclamation himself and then rely on his interpreter to translate for him. The proclamation served as the opening gambit in the peaceful occupation and acquisition of the territory; therefore, it became vital in achieving the end state. Secondly, Kearny understood that the infantry needed to conduct the majority of the work involved in establishing a civil government in New Mexico. Kearny viewed “infantry, with their bayonets, as the main pillar and strength of an Army.”⁷⁷ On two different occasions, he requested more infantry troops for the Army of the West.⁷⁸ In the last request, he

⁷⁵ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 108.

⁷⁶ Kearny to Robidoux, 4 June 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 136-7.

⁷⁷ Kearny to Edwards, 16 June 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 145;

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*; Kearny to Edwards, 2 July 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 156

lamented the number of mounted riflemen he was taking with him because the scarcity of forage for the animals around Santa Fe would likely result in most of these troops becoming infantry as their mounts died. In both of these decisions, he looked toward the end state and the type of forces and capabilities required to achieve it.

Kearny's final decision at Ft. Leavenworth concerned the route that his forces would take. Three different trails composed the Santa Fe: the Lower, Middle, and Upper Crossings. Where they crossed the Arkansas River distinguished each from the others, but all the routes eventually came together on the Cimarron River near the Cimarron Spring.⁷⁹ Kearny chose to follow the Upper Crossing, also known as the Mountain Pass, because of the scarcity of resources on the other routes (see Fig. 1). As Cooke noted, "there is a shorter route to Santa Fe which passes no mountain, or very bad road; but this one by Bent's

Fort was selected as better meeting the needs of the expedition. The other, the 'Cimarrone Route,' is much more deficient in fuel and has a dreaded *jornada*; while that by Bent's Fort has in the fort on the frontier a *quasi* base."⁸⁰ Additionally, the Upper Crossing route had the advantage of Bent's Fort, which could serve as a forward base and an intermediate staging base (ISB) for the Army of the West. Finally, because Kearny's forces needed to march at an interval that precluded mutual support, the Upper Crossing Route provided additional distance from hostile forces.⁸¹ Even though the crowding of the Upper Crossing strained the forage available along the way, this

⁷⁹ Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 83. Robert Duffus, *The Santa Fe Trail*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972), 93

⁸⁰ Cooke, *Conquest*, 13. The "Cimarrone" route was the middle route. *Jornada de trabajo* means "working day" in Spanish, whereas *jornada* translates into expedition or day's journey.

⁸¹ Kearny to Brigadier General R. Jones, 17 July 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 157. This letter indicates that there were three main concentrations of forces, each separated by thirty miles. The distance between these groups would prohibit any kind of rapid support because the mounted forces could go no more than thirty miles in a day; fighting at the end of such a ride would result in severely limited performance.

route provided distinct advantages in logistics, protection, and potential basing locations, and was the most advantageous choice for the line of operation.

By 30 June 1846, the Army of the West had assembled most of its forces, so Kearny began the march toward Santa Fe and California. The journey from Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe allowed Kearny to further the training and discipline of the volunteers while immune to attacks from the enemy. Kearny's forces marched south by southwest and joined the Santa Fe Trail about sixty-five miles to the west of Independence, Missouri at a place called "The Narrows," which ran nine miles from just east of present day Baldwin City to Willow Springs.⁸² From there, the country was "high rolling prairie, traversed by many streams, the largest of which is the Kansas . . . and all but this river may be forded, except during freshets."⁸³ Lieutenant Emory, the topographical engineer for the Army of the West, described two general types of terrain between Fort Leavenworth and Bent's Fort. From Fort Leavenworth to the Pawnee River "trees are to be seen only along the margins of the streams, and the general appearance of the country is that of vast, rolling fields, enclosed with colossal hedges On the uplands, the grass is luxuriant and occasionally is found the wild tea and pilot weed."⁸⁴ Near the Pawnee River crossing, the Army entered an area where buffalos were still numerous. In this area, to conserve rations, Kearny ordered that his troops were not to kill any cattle, but the men should hunt for game instead.⁸⁵

⁸² Glenn, D. Bradley, *Winning the Southwest: A Story of Conquest* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1912), 149. "There was then no road nor path leading from the fort to this point Since heavy rains had been falling, the army experienced much difficulty in erecting bridges and building roads across this muddy stretch of prairie. The trail was found to be lined with the annual trading caravan from Independence to Santa Fe -- four hundred and fourteen heavily loaded wagons. This train traveled with or near Kearny's army for customary protection." Fort Tours Systems Inc.. "Santa Fe Trail Eastern - The Narrows." Fort Tours Systems Inc. <http://www.forttours.com/pages/sftraileast.asp#narrows> (accessed 5 February 2013).

⁸³ Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 26.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁸⁵ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 119.

Volunteers suffered on the march learning how hard they could push themselves and their mounts after days and weeks of deprivations.⁸⁶ Emory took time “to speak of the excellent understanding which prevailed throughout between regulars and volunteers, and the cheerfulness with which they came to each others assistance whenever the privations and hardships of the march called for the interchange of kindly offices among them.”⁸⁷ The Army of the West completed the 529-mile march to Bent’s Fort in twenty-nine days and suffered only two dead.⁸⁸ As Kearny’s biographer Dwight L. Clarke noted, “grueling lessons were being learned daily that would make soldiers out of these recruits.”⁸⁹ In the end, Kearny built a cohesive and disciplined team out of a hodgepodge of men.

At Bent’s Fort, Kearny consolidated his army, secured the forward base of operations, and took two significant risks. Because the line of operation extended along the Upper Crossing, Bent’s Fort became a decisive point in the campaign for Santa Fe. Even though it was outside of New Mexico, control of Bent’s Fort gave the Army of the West a place to consolidate, reorganize, and recuperate from the long march. The two companies under the command of Captain Moore, who had failed to intercept the ammunition wagons bound for Santa Fe, rejoined the Army, and the men repaired equipment and wagons, consolidated food stores, and allowed the horses to graze.⁹⁰ Additionally, Kearny sent some wagons back to Fort Leavenworth in order to

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 120. Emory also noted that “Horses occasionally fed on grain become very weak feeding on grass alone, and should never in that condition be subjected to quick work. A violation of this precept has cost my volunteers their horses, and entailed trouble without end on many inexperienced travellers ‘westward bound.’” Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 27.

⁸⁷ Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 31.

⁸⁸ Turner, Original Journals, 61 and 67.

⁸⁹ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 117.

⁹⁰ Bradley, *Winning the Southwest*, 150; Turner, Original Journals, 65-6; Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 123. Clarke relays a story of the horses stampeding after being turned out to graze on COL Doniphan’s orders. This event was costly in time and manpower required to deal with it; however, it is not mentioned in any other account of the Army’s time at Bent’s Fort, which makes

begin resupply efforts for follow on operations.⁹¹ Kearny gave every indication that Bent's Fort was to become an ISB to facilitate the continued march toward Santa Fe.

During the three days the army spent at Bent's Fort, Kearny accepted a degree of risk in order to seize an opportunity associated with it and, potentially, achieve the end state more efficiently. In the first case, Captain Moore's men brought three captured Mexican men to meet with Kearny. Two of the men were spies and the third, while probably also a spy, claimed to be looking for his wife, whom Comanches had taken prisoner and sold to William Bent. Kearny could have ordered the execution of the spies and kept the size and composition of his force secret; however, he chose a more dangerous course of action. Captain Henry Smith Turner, adjutant to the Army of the West, relates that "after holding conversation with the Colonel and being permitted to walk through the whole camp, that our strength might be made known to them, they are liberated with permission to return to New Mexico, where doubtless they will make a full report of our strength and operations."⁹² The spies lamented the fate of their republic upon their departure from Bent's Fort and filled Santa Fe with exaggerated stories about the number and might of the U.S. forces.⁹³ To help capitalize on the appearance of overwhelming strength, Kearny wrote in a letter to Governor Armijo, "I come to this part of the United States with a strong military force and a yet stronger one is now following as a reinforcement to us. We have many more troops than sufficient to put down any opposition that you can possibly bring against us, and I therefore for the sake of humanity call upon you to submit to fate."⁹⁴ Here Kearny weighed and accepted the danger of his enemy learning the size and composition of his forces in

the account suspect as to veracity or significance.

⁹¹ Bradley, *Winning the Southwest*, 150.

⁹² Turner, *Original Journals*, 66.

⁹³ Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 124.

⁹⁴ Kearny to Armijo, 1 August 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 158.

order to capitalize on the opportunity of the government and population understanding the futility of resistance in the face of such massed combat power.

The second instance of Kearny accepting risk for the sake of achieving the end state more quickly was when he sent an emissary to Armijo. James Magoffin had persuaded the Secretary of War to attempt to influence and possibly bribe Armijo and his administration into conceding control of New Mexico peacefully.⁹⁵ Magoffin requested an escort of dragoons from Kearny for the attempt. Kearny assigned the task to Captain Cooke and the group departed on 1 August in advance of the army under a flag of truce. The danger to the small band came not only from the Mexicans, but also from Native Americans and the terrain. Kearny could reasonably assume that the Mexicans would respect the flag of truce and no harm would come to his men; however, any attempt at communication across lines is dangerous. Moreover, the territory of New Mexico was ripe for conquest because of the inability by the local governments to protect the people from raids by Native Americans, creating a security void in the area endangering any armed force entering into the area. The escort of dragoons could hold off some aggressors, but the danger of attack was very real. Finally, the terrain between Bent's Fort and Santa Fe features dramatic changes in elevation and its limited vegetation. The emissary and his escort would have to rely on speed to get to Santa Fe before they culminated due to logistical restraints. However, Kearny realized the opportunity of a potential peaceful settlement to the invasion or, barring that, significant intelligence gains from a small, highly mobile group of dragoons seeing the approach to the town and the defensive posture. Kearny accepted the risk to his men, and, although Armijo rebuffed the peace envoy, gained valuable insight into a potential way around the most formidable terrain on the approach to Santa Fe.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 126.

⁹⁶ Cooke, Conquest, 26. Kearny sent a letter with Cooke that read in part, "I come by orders of her [U.S.] Gov't to take possession of the Country, over a part of which you are now presiding as Governor. I come as a friend and with the disposition and intention to consider all

After recuperation, reconsolidation, and reorganization at Bent's Fort, Kearny's Army of the West began its march toward Santa Fe on 2 August 1846.⁹⁷ The line of operation took the force through a series of small towns and villages that, according to the instructions from Secretary of War Marcy, they were instructed to subdue and "conciliate . . . and render them friendly to the United States."⁹⁸ Each town along the route, therefore, became a decisive point. Kearny could not leave a potential enemy in his rear; however, he also did not have sufficient forces to occupy each village along the way without risking culmination against Armijo's reported forces. Kearny's solution was ingenious. He marched into each village at the front of his army and asked for a meeting with the *alcalde* or mayor. While giving a strong show of force, Kearny would explain the benefits of annexation and his intention to leave the *alcalde* in power provided he swore an oath to the United States. After the *alcalde* took the oath, Kearny installed him in his office and pronounced all the people citizens of the United States.⁹⁹ The solution demonstrated significant flexibility and adaptability in meeting the objective of pacifying the population while annexing the territory. Additionally, he understood the utility of violence and, more importantly, the threat of violence. There was no need to do more than show sufficient force in order to coerce the villagers into allegiance with the United States. Further, this took advantage of the limited allegiance the people had to Mexico because of their distance from the capital and

Mexicans and others as friends who will remain quietly and peaceably at their homes and attend to their own affairs. . . . Should you however . . . determine upon resistance . . . the blood which may follow – the suffering + misery which may ensue will rest on your head." Kearny to Armijo, 1 August 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 158.

⁹⁷ The difficulty of the terrain continued throughout this portion of the march; however, for the purposes of the present inquiry, the engineering and technical skill demonstrated in overcoming these obstacles is secondary to the seizure of the villages and defeat of the enemy armed forces.

⁹⁸ Marcy to Kearny, 3 June 1846, in Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 397.

⁹⁹ Cooke, *Conquest*, 34. The mayor of San Miguel flatly refused to take such an oath even after the local priest urged him to do so. Kearny decided to make the *alcalde* go through "the form and semblance of swearing allegiance," and then he proceeded as he had in previous towns.

the lack of support from that government. However, the oaths taken were of questionable legitimacy as nothing had really changed in the day-to-day lives of the villages. Nevertheless, Kearny was able to seize Tecelote, San Miguel, and Las Vegas on the way to Santa Fe without expending valuable combat power in either their acquisition or maintenance.

By 15 August, Kearny's force had arrived at Las Vegas, New Mexico and received an intelligence report that Armijo had assembled a force of two thousand men in a canyon on the approach to Santa Fe.¹⁰⁰ Armijo had brought an army to a nearly impregnable position approximately six miles south of Las Vegas, but the Mexicans' will faded quickly. By the time Kearny formed his men into a line of battle and advanced toward the canyon, the entire Mexican force had dispersed. Armijo and other leaders were quarreling over command of the army, and "since the common people were peaceably disposed toward the invaders, they had used this squabble as a pretext for deserting, and Armijo was thus left without soldiers."¹⁰¹ Armijo fled south toward El Paso, Texas and was no longer a factor in New Mexico's history. Cooke hints at a prevalent racism, which may have been a factor in later stages of the campaign, by noting "they became panic-stricken at once on the approach of such and imposing array of horsemen of a superior race, and, it appeared, over-estimated our numbers, which the reports of ignorance and fear had vastly magnified."¹⁰² Regardless, there were no enemy forces between Kearny and Santa Fe, and he seized the city without firing a shot, and proclaimed all of New Mexico annexed to the United States on the 22nd of August 1846.¹⁰³ The first operation of his campaign was complete.

¹⁰⁰ Bradley, *Winning the Southwest*, 152.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁰² Cooke, *Conquest*, 37-8.

¹⁰³ Kearny Proclamation to Citizens of New Mexico, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 159.

The seizure of Santa Fe only fulfilled half of Kearny's objective for the area; he needed to establish a civil government. Marcy had identified Santa Fe as the center of gravity for the territory of New Mexico in his 3 July letter to Kearny.¹⁰⁴ He stated that it was not only the seat of the government, but it was also a thriving economic center for the territory. The bloodless seizure of Santa Fe and immediate annexation of the New Mexico territory, although questionable in constitutionality and presenting additional logistical difficulties, added approximately one hundred sixty thousand people and two hundred fifty thousand square miles to the United States.¹⁰⁵ In order to establish a civil government and transition to the next phase of his operation, Kearny had to provide for the sustainment and protection of the force he would leave behind and set up a legal system for civilian governance. He was able to accomplish all of this in a period of six weeks.

In a strictly legal sense Kearny did not have the authority to annex New Mexico (only the U.S. Congress could approve annexation), nor the right to declare its inhabitants U.S. citizens. By doing so, Kearny created logistical problems for his Army as they could no longer seize personal property for military use with the simple issuance of a writ for government repayment as the people they would be taking from were now American citizens. Had Kearny waited, his men might have fared better in regards to provisions.

Kearny's first order of business after the seizure of the New Mexico was to consolidate the gains and ensure the Army's ability to hold them by establishing a fort. Kearny's engineers selected a low hilltop on the northeast outskirts of Santa Fe on which to build the fort. The hill commanded the city but was beyond the range of small arms from the hills surrounding the town. Within a week, more than one hundred people were working on what Kearny christened as Fort

¹⁰⁴ Marcy to Kearny, in Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 395.

¹⁰⁵ Bradley, *Winning the Southwest*, 159; Cooke, *Conquest*, 39-40.

Marcy.¹⁰⁶ On the 19th of September, Kearny reported Fort Marcy completed and capable of garrisoning one thousand soldiers.¹⁰⁷ Kearny saw this base as necessary to facilitate follow-on operations in New Mexico and to extend his operational reach considerably. In addition to creating the infrastructure necessary to make a military base for the territory in Santa Fe, Kearny also visited several towns to the south of Santa Fe in order to secure the peaceful transition of sovereignty from Mexico to the United States.¹⁰⁸ Kearny took a diplomatic approach to these places and brought them into the fold of the U.S. in the same way he had the towns north of Santa Fe. While there were some issues with the volunteers, Kearny's trip from the 2nd to the 11th of September really serves to demonstrate the skillful use of diplomacy and the efficacy of withholding lethal force in subduing a population.¹⁰⁹

Kearny established a civil-military government by drawing on the talents of Colonel Doniphan to establish a code of laws and by installing government officials to carry on his work once he left. Kearny charged Doniphan, an attorney in civil life in Missouri, with studying the current laws of New Mexico and making suggestions on how he could modify them to conform to the American system and the Constitution. Doniphan and another lawyer, Private Willard P. Hall, worked on the laws together and submitted their suggestions to Kearny. Kearny proclaimed the laws to be in effect on 22 September 1846.¹¹⁰ Also on that day, Kearny appointed Charles Bent as the territorial governor as well as installing a secretary, a U.S. Marshal, as well as the U.S. district

¹⁰⁶ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 146-7; Bradley, *Winning the Southwest*, 164-5. Emory, *Lieutenant Emory Reports*, 57.

¹⁰⁷ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 157.

¹⁰⁸ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 154-6 Emory, *Lieutenant Emory Reports*, 63-75.

¹⁰⁹ For the timing of the excursion, see Turner, *Original Journals*, 75 – 76 and Emory, *Lieutenant Emory Reports*, 74. The trouble with the volunteers is recounted in Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 154-5.

¹¹⁰ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 148-9. The Kearny Code is still in effect as the basis of the New Mexico Bill of Rights.

attorney, a treasurer, an auditor, and three superior court justices.¹¹¹ With these individuals established in their offices, Kearny reported “everything is peaceful and the future commander of U.S. troops here should only concern himself with protection of the people from Indians.” With the first phase complete, Kearny achieved his desired end state and conditions.

From the moment that Kearny arrived in Santa Fe, he began preparing for his follow-on march to California. He first assigned the route selection to his aide, Captain A.R. Johnston.¹¹² The northern route, also known as the Spanish Route, and the one recommended by Secretary Marcy, presented problems in terms of force sustainability and weather. Johnston knew that the route was subject to harsh snows and, although it was easily traversed by wagons, offered little for horses to eat. The southern route, which went along the Gila River, was too rocky for wagons, but contained better vegetation.¹¹³ Therefore, the selection of the route depended on logistics and when Kearny could start from Santa Fe.

Sustainment became the primary concern for Kearny. On the march to Santa Fe, a lack of food for the horses forced the men to help pull many of the supply wagons up the mountain trails; moreover, the difficulties of the quartermaster and commissary forced the men to live on half rations.¹¹⁴ Kearny had begun sending supplies from Ft. Leavenworth to Santa Fe before the main body had departed, but the supply train was not always reliable, which led to much grumbling from the volunteers.¹¹⁵ Richard Smith Elliot, a Lieutenant in the Laclede Rangers from Saint Louis and regular correspondent of the St. Louis *Reveille*, wrote of the uncertainty of food

¹¹¹ Cooke, *Conquest*, 66.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 45.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Bradley, *Winning the Southwest*, 158

¹¹⁵ George Rutledge Gibson, *Journal of Soldier Under Kearny and Doniphan: 1846 – 1847* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1935), 40-1.

deliveries during the march and in the first part of the occupation.¹¹⁶ In Santa Fe, things did not improve much as the quartermaster could not secure fresh mounts and the commissary was limited to Taos flour and salt pork, which “required a good appetite to relish.”¹¹⁷ The Army of the West was going to begin the march to California already run down. Cooke noted on 25 September, that “tomorrow three hundred wilderness-worn dragoons, in shabby and patched clothing, who have long been on short allowance of food, set forth to conquer or ‘annex’ a Pacific empire.”¹¹⁸ Not only were the men in poor shape, but also most of the 1st Dragoons now rode mules or recently acquired horses. Mules ate only twenty-three pounds of fodder per day; horses required twenty-six. Also, mules were more sure-footed and aware of events around them, which would be beneficial on the rocky trail west.¹¹⁹ Because the horses ridden from Fort Leavenworth would not survive the trip to California, Kearny ordered them “cast adrift as useless servants, to take a desperate journey of eight hundred miles, with grass for food, and much of that destroyed by frost.”¹²⁰ Kearny favored the southern route because his mounts could eat even though the trail was inaccessible to wagons.

Nevertheless, the final determining factor for the route was the timing of the march. As late as 16 September, Kearny reported that he did not know when the Mormon Battalion would arrive in Santa Fe.¹²¹ His orders were to proceed, if at all possible, and take California in the fall.

¹¹⁶ Richard Smith Elliott, *The Mexican War Correspondence of Richard Smith Elliott*, ed. Mark L. Gardner and Marc Simmons (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1997), 76-9, 83.

¹¹⁷ Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 157. There were fine mules in Santa Fe, but they were too expensive for the quartermaster to purchase and, because Kearny had proclaimed all the population were U.S. citizens, the army could not seize them.

¹¹⁸ Cooke, *Conquest*, 69.

¹¹⁹ Homer D. Wilkes, *Kearny on the Gila* (Scottsdale: By author, 1990), 19.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹²¹ Kearny to Brigadier General R. Jones, 16 Sep 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 165.

The northern route presented an additional danger of inclement weather, which could delay Kearny from reaching California until the spring.¹²² Ultimately, Kearny was willing to accept the risk of exposing the troops and their mounts to the environment as well as the uncertainty of the terrain on the southern route in order to seize opportunity of speed to complete mission in fall.

Now a Brigadier General, Kearny's next decision was what forces he would take with him to subdue California. He assumed that California would be mostly subdued and in the hands of the Navy's forces in accordance with the instructions from Secretary Marcy he received in May.¹²³ Accordingly, he would not need his entire force to make the march, but rather they could stay in New Mexico to further secure the peace. An additional force of one thousand volunteers under Colonel Sterling Price was en route to Santa Fe, having left Fort Leavenworth several weeks behind Kearny. Kearny decided to take the 1st U.S. Dragoons and leave for California on the 25th of September.¹²⁴ Colonel Doniphan's regiment, stationed south of Albuquerque, would march south to join Brigadier General John E. Wool in Chihuahua after Colonel Price's regiment of Missourians relieved them. The battalion of artillery would remain in Santa Fe and, along with Colonel Price, would provide protection for the new government from the threat of Navajo violence and serve as an occupation force until the resumption of peace.¹²⁵ The Mormon Battalion, which had been under its own leadership since Captain Allen died from illness in the first days of the expedition, would have the new leadership of Captain Cooke and follow Kearny on the southern route.¹²⁶

¹²² Cooke, Conquest, 62. Cooke actually claims that the northern route was not an option because of the late arrival of the Mormons.

¹²³ Marcy to Kearny, 3 June 1846, in Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 396.

¹²⁴ Kearny to Brigadier General R. Jones, 16 Sep 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 165.

¹²⁵ Cutts, Conquest, 66. Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 77.

¹²⁶ Kearny to Brigadier General R. Jones, 16 Sep 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger,

Kearny's eagerness to get to California may explain why he sent Colonel Doniphan's regiment to Mexico to join with Brigadier General Wool, although other reasons could have influenced his decision. First, New Mexico appeared to be pacified, so Colonel Price's troops would be sufficient to maintain the peace.¹²⁷ Second, Kearny knew that the trail to California was difficult and lacked good forage for the horses. Spacing out the column as he did on the way to Bent's Fort was not possible because of the threat from hostile Native Americans. Furthermore, speed was of the essence to security, and a large body of troops would be inherently slower and more risky. Third, Kearny assumed that the operation in California would be similar to that in New Mexico since the Navy would be in control of the ports and seaside cities. Even if that assumption proved false, the Mormon Battalion would arrive shortly after Kearny and there were other forces scheduled to be in California to support Kearny early in the next year.¹²⁸ Fourth, there was some friction between Kearny and the volunteers. Although the new recruits held up well under the ordeal of the march to Santa Fe, this portion of the campaign would be much longer with more difficult terrain and a scarcity of food and water. In addition, some of the volunteers were rankled by Kearny's discipline, and he may not have wanted to place them in a position to grow more resentful of their service.¹²⁹ Finally, Kearny's sense of American racial superiority might have led him to dismiss the ability of the enemy to put up a strong resistance in

Winning the West, 165; Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 165.

¹²⁷ Kearny was not satisfied with Price as the latter had not kept him informed of his progress from Ft. Leavenworth other than to plead for supplies once. The march and subsequent occupation of New Mexico had trained and disciplined Doniphan's troops. Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 161.

¹²⁸ A regiment of New York volunteers and a company of regular artillery were en route to California already. Valentine Mott Porter, General Stephen Watts Kearny and Conquest of California (Los Angeles: Historical Society of Southern California, 1911), 11.

¹²⁹ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 155. Clarke dismisses claims that Kearny was a disciplinarian and argues that the complaints written about Kearny were either normal soldierly gripes or an isolated incident not representative of the general mood of the volunteers.

the face of the 1st U.S. Dragoons. Regardless of the reason, Kearny left Santa Fe on the morning of the 26th of September with three hundred dragoons, two mountain howitzers, and a handful of officers to begin the arduous trek to California.

THE CONQUEST OF CALIFORNIA

Leaving Santa Fe with three hundred dragoons, Kearny marched south along the “Rio Del Norte” and began the third phase of his operation (see Figure 2).¹³⁰ The first part of the route was familiar to the troops as they had marched south to Tomé less than a month earlier.¹³¹ Their march paralleled the Del Norte for approximately 225 miles and then deviated from the river heading west. Their route passed by the Copper Mines and joined the Gila River after about one hundred and fifty miles and crossing over the Continental Divide.¹³² After a five hundred-mile march along the Gila, the dragoons stayed near water for another forty miles and then faced a sixty-mile journey across the desert before arriving in California.¹³³ San Diego, which Kearny assumed the U.S. naval forces controlled, was only another ninety miles from there. Thus was the plan for “the leap in the dark of a thousand miles of wild plains and mountains, only known in vague reports as unwatered [sic], and with several deserts of two and three marches where a camel might starve if not perish of thirst.”¹³⁴

¹³⁰ The present day Rio Grande was referred to in journals and letters as the Rio Del Norte.

¹³¹ Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 78. Tome is approximately 25 miles south of present day Albuquerque.

¹³² Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 86-102; Turner, Original Journals, 77-87; Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 180-184.

¹³³ Kearny, Report to the War Department, 12 Dec 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 167.

¹³⁴ Cooke, *Conquest*, 69.

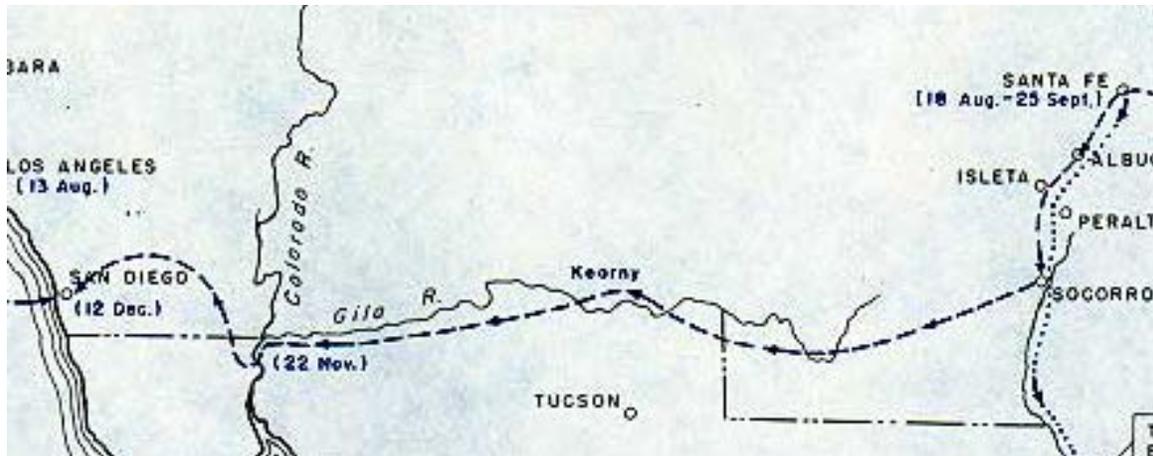


Figure 2: Kearny's Route to California

Source: United States Military Academy Department of History Atlases, http://www.westpoint.edu/history/SiteAssets/SitePages/Mexican%20War/mexican%20war%20map_SummaryOps.jpg

The march itself was rigorous as well as monotonous. As Clarke points out, “only the details differed from mile to mile: rough, rocky trail, scant grass of poor quality, frequent dusty stretches in the powdery soil resembling cold ashes rather than earth.”¹³⁵ During the trek, three instances stand out for what would be considered today a demonstration of the tenets of unified land operations, the impact on later events, and the exposition of operational art elements: synchronized action against raiding Navajos, meeting Christopher Houston “Kit” Carson at Socorro, and the transition from wagons to pack mules.

Lieutenant Emory remarked, “the Army of the West divided into three columns, to operate in regions remote from each other, and never to unite again in one body.”¹³⁶ General

¹³⁵ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 184. Kit Carson had joined the expedition by this point and was the epitome of cheerfulness as he reminded these weary soldiers that the terrain ahead was worse and “every party which made the trip through the Gila’s canyons had emerged in a starving condition.”

¹³⁶ Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 77. This is somewhat misleading as the Army of the West had never been together. The Mormon Battalion lagged behind the main body by several weeks, and Colonel Price’s regiment was similarly delayed; nevertheless, the sentiment is understandable as Kearny split off the volunteers from his regulars and marched to California

Kearny retained command of the geographically separated forces. He had given orders to Colonel Doniphan to remain in Santa Fe until properly relieved and assigned enough troops to keep the peace in the territory of New Mexico.¹³⁷ When Kearny received information on 3 October 1846 that Apaches had attacked a village twelve miles south of his location on the Rio Del Norte, he sent a small detachment of dragoons to deal with the problem.¹³⁸ Additionally, he authorized local Pueblo Indians to embark on a punitive expedition and sent orders to Colonel Doniphan to delay his embarkation for Chihuahua until he could complete a march through the Navajo country.¹³⁹ The coordination of tactical actions in different locations demonstrates what today is called synchronization because Kearny had coordinated the actions toward a common objective.

On 6 October 1846, shortly after ordering Doniphan's march against the Navajo, Kearny met Kit Carson near Socorro on the Rio Del Norte. Carson was returning from California with correspondence from Commodore Stockton reporting the conquest of California after a ten-day fight with the Mexican forces.¹⁴⁰ Because of this new intelligence, Kearny had to decide whether

with only the ad hoc squadron of the 1st Dragoons.

¹³⁷ Kearny to Brigadier General R. Jones, 24 Sept 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 168-9. The forces were Colonel Price's Regiment of mounted volunteers, two companies of infantry, Two companies of artillery, part of the company of Laclede Rangers. Kearny believed that "these will be more than sufficient to preserve quiet thro'out the Territory and to protect the inhabitants from the Navajoe, Eutaw and Apache Indians, who have hitherto caused them so much trouble by killing their People and stealing their flocks and cattle."

¹³⁸ Turner, *Original Journals*, 78; Homer D. Wilkes, *Kearny on the Gila*, 2; Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 163.

¹³⁹ William Elsey Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition and the Conquest of New Mexico and California* (Topeka, by author, 1907), 266; Cutts, *Conquest of California and New Mexico by the Forces of the United States in the years 1846 & 1847* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1847), 76; Clarke, *Soldier of the West*, 163. Doniphan's march through the region is detailed in Connelley, *Doniphan's Expedition*, 298-307.

¹⁴⁰ Kearny Report, 12 Dec 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 175; Wilkes, *Kearny on the Gila*, 3; Clarke, *Soldier of the West*, 166-8. Clarke asserts that "few chance meetings in history have proved more fateful." Wilkes contends that this was the "greatest surprise" in the lives of the men. While these claims may be exaggerations, there is little doubt that the meeting between Carson and Kearny had significant effects on the campaign, specifically

to continue with his original plan or alter it. The Navajo problem appeared to be escalating in New Mexico and he was taking his best cavalry toward what was now a conquered territory. Furthermore, a smaller party could move faster and required less sustainment.¹⁴¹ Kearny decided he should alter the plan, so he sent two hundred of the 1st Dragoons back to Santa Fe.¹⁴² Carson had garnered a commission as a Lieutenant of U.S. Mounted Volunteers, so he had no recourse when Kearny ordered him, despite his objection, to join Kearny's troops and serve as a guide on the trail. The remaining troops were to be no more than an escort for General Kearny to get to California and fulfill his orders.¹⁴³

Four days after Carson joined the dragoons heading West, Kearny decided to abandon the wagons and switch to pack mules. Carson had been complaining about the slow pace that resulted from the wagons.¹⁴⁴ The route had been extraordinarily difficult on the men and equipment, and reports were that conditions worsened farther on the trail.¹⁴⁵ Kearny ordered the march to halt and wait for pack animals, which the quartermaster sent.¹⁴⁶ Even though the initial reports had detailed the impassibility of the route to wagons, Kearny was addressing his concerns about operational reach by attempting the passage with wagons. The wagons could transport more

the political wrangling that was to happen between Kearny, Stockton, and Lieutenant John C. Fremont.

¹⁴¹ Turner, *Original Journals*, 80. Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 167.

¹⁴² Kearny Report, 12 Dec 1846 in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 176.

¹⁴³ Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 169. Clarke also recounts the later criticism of Kearny for reading the dispatches of Carson and not turning back to Santa Fe once he had done so. The critique is that Stockton had accomplished Kearny's mission, so there was no reason for him to go there. This is nonsensical because Kearny's orders were to first go to California, and then subdue it, and then establish a civil government. He could not disobey the first order simply because the later to appeared to be fiat accompli. Clarke essentially makes the same argument.

¹⁴⁴ Turner, *Original Journals*, 80.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 81; Wilkes, *Kearny on the Gila*, 1-4; Emory, *Lieutenant Emory Reports*, 90.

¹⁴⁶ Kearny Report, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 172.

supplies with fewer animals, but the potential for early culmination from exhaustion persuaded the general to make the switch. The only wheeled vehicles that Kearny kept were dedicated to the transport of the mountain howitzers.¹⁴⁷ Interestingly, his aide, Captain Henry Smith Turner, assumed that the howitzers were going back with the rest of the wagons.¹⁴⁸ At some point, though, the decision was made to bring the howitzers along despite the difficulties wagons had already faced. William Perkins argued that “the backbreaking toil and the expenditure of mules involved in getting these guns down the Gila River sealed the fate of the 1st Dragoons and contributed heavily to their losses at San Pasqual.”¹⁴⁹ While it is impossible to judge how much transporting the mountain howitzers contributed to the casualties of San Pasqual, it can be concluded that the extra effort expended to get them there took a toll on an already worn out unit.

It took nearly two more months for Kearny and his escort to get to California, and he encountered a significantly different environment than he expected once he arrived. During the march, there were various encounters with Indians, traders, and Mexicans.¹⁵⁰ The recurrent theme of these events was Kearny’s attempt to get fresh mounts for his troops. On 22 November, Emory reported that most of the men in the column were on foot, and even General Kearny resorted to

¹⁴⁷ William L. Perkins, “Those Accursed Howitzers,” *The Journal of San Diego History* 10, no. 3 (July 1964), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/64july/howitzers.htm> (accessed 8 December 2012).

¹⁴⁸ Turner to Sumner, 9 Oct 1846 in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 172.

¹⁴⁹ Perkins, “Those Accursed Howitzers”

¹⁵⁰ Emory, *Lieutenant Emory Reports*, 91-164; Turner, *Original Journals*, 82-124. Both of these first-person accounts of the trip are interesting reads; however, very little is gained from viewing these events through the lens of operational art. That is not to discount or minimize the difficulties of the march or the suffering of the men, but the march went essentially as planned.

use of his mule because his horse could no longer stand.¹⁵¹ Some news was reaching Kearny from California that indicated the declaration of peaceful annexation was premature.¹⁵²

Commodore Stockton had accomplished the initial conquest of California easily because the civil governor of Alta California, Pío Pico, and the military commander of Mexican forces in Alta California, José Castro, decided they could not successfully defend the land.¹⁵³ However, his inept and cruel administration of the territory incited a revolt against the American occupation within a few weeks.¹⁵⁴ Ironically, the Californios forced the Americans out of Los Angeles the same week that Kearny left Santa Fe. When Kearny reached Warner's Ranch on 2 December and requested that Stockton send a party to open up communication with him, he learned that the American forces only held the ports of San Diego, Monterey, and San Francisco.¹⁵⁵ Kearny remained at Warner's Ranch for a day to rest his forces then resumed the march to San Diego on 4 December.¹⁵⁶

On the 5th of December, in the midst of a driving rain, Kearny's men made contact with Captain Archibald Gillespie of the United States Marine Corps. Gillespie was still a lieutenant in the Marine Corps, but Stockton had commissioned him a captain in the California Battalion. On

¹⁵¹ Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 148.

¹⁵² Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 187-8.

¹⁵³ Sally Cavell Johns, "¡Viva[n] Los Californios!: The Battle of San Pasqual," *The Journal of San Diego History* 19, no. 4 (Fall 1973), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/73fall/sanpasqual.htm> (accessed 14 December 2012).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 190. Also, Kearny heard a rumor about a band of Mexican horses and mules was nearby. He sent his weary dragoons to obtain them, but they were unsuccessful.

¹⁵⁶ Turner, *Original Journals*, 124. Turner reports Lieutenant Davidson had captured about 75 mules and mares, but only 30 were usable for the dragoons. This provides further evidence of Kearny's fixation on properly equipping his soldiers.

that day, he was commanding a party of thirty-five men and one four-pound artillery piece.¹⁵⁷

While the additional men were a welcome sight, Gillespie brought much needed intelligence about the operating environment into which Kearny now entered. The Californios had a force of approximately one hundred fifty troops about nine miles from where Kearny was. In a letter, Stockton urged Kearny, “if you see fit, endeavor to surprise them.”¹⁵⁸ Subsequently, Kearny sent out a scouting party that found the enemy, however, the Californians discovered Kearny’s forces and went on alert.¹⁵⁹ Upon the scouting party’s return at around 0200 on 6 December, Kearny decided to attack. This began the fourth and final phase of his operation: the pacification and establishment of civil authority for the territory of California.

Much ink has been spilled over Kearny’s decision to give battle at this time and place, and the subsequent decision made once in battle. A detailed recount of the battle is neither necessary nor reasonable given the scope of the present inquiry; however, before an evaluation of the battle can take place, it is necessary to provide at least an overview of the events of that day.

After saddling up at 0200, the 1st U.S. Dragoons marched the nine miles toward the enemy camp (see Figure 3).¹⁶⁰ Kearny stopped at the top of San Pasqual hill, which was about a

¹⁵⁷ Emory, Lt. Emory Reports, 168; Clarke, *Soldier of the West*, 192. Turner’s journals do not contain any entries between 4 December and the return trip in May of 1847. Additionally, it is worth noting that Gillespie was the incompetent commander of the garrison force at Los Angeles, and his absurd and abusive policies were principally responsible for the revolt there. See Johns, “Viva Los Californios.”

¹⁵⁸ Stockton to Kearny, in Valentine Mott Porter, *General Stephen W. Kearny and the Conquest of California 1846-1847* (Los Angeles: Historical Society of Southern California, 1911), 12-13

¹⁵⁹ Emory, *Lieutenant Emory Reports*, 168.

¹⁶⁰ The following account is a distillation of the following sources. Emory, *Lieutenant Emory Reports*, 169-173; Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 195-232. Report of General Kearny on Battle of San Pasqual, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 177-9; Cutts, *Conquest*, 197-202; George Hruby, *Account of the Battle of San Pasqual*, San Pasqual Battlefield Site Location Project, <http://www.sanpasqual.org/battleaccount.html> (accessed 16 December 2012); Owen C. Coy, *The Battle of San Pasqual* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1921), 7-12; George Walcott Ames, Jr. and John S. Griffin, “A Doctor Comes to California: The Diary of John

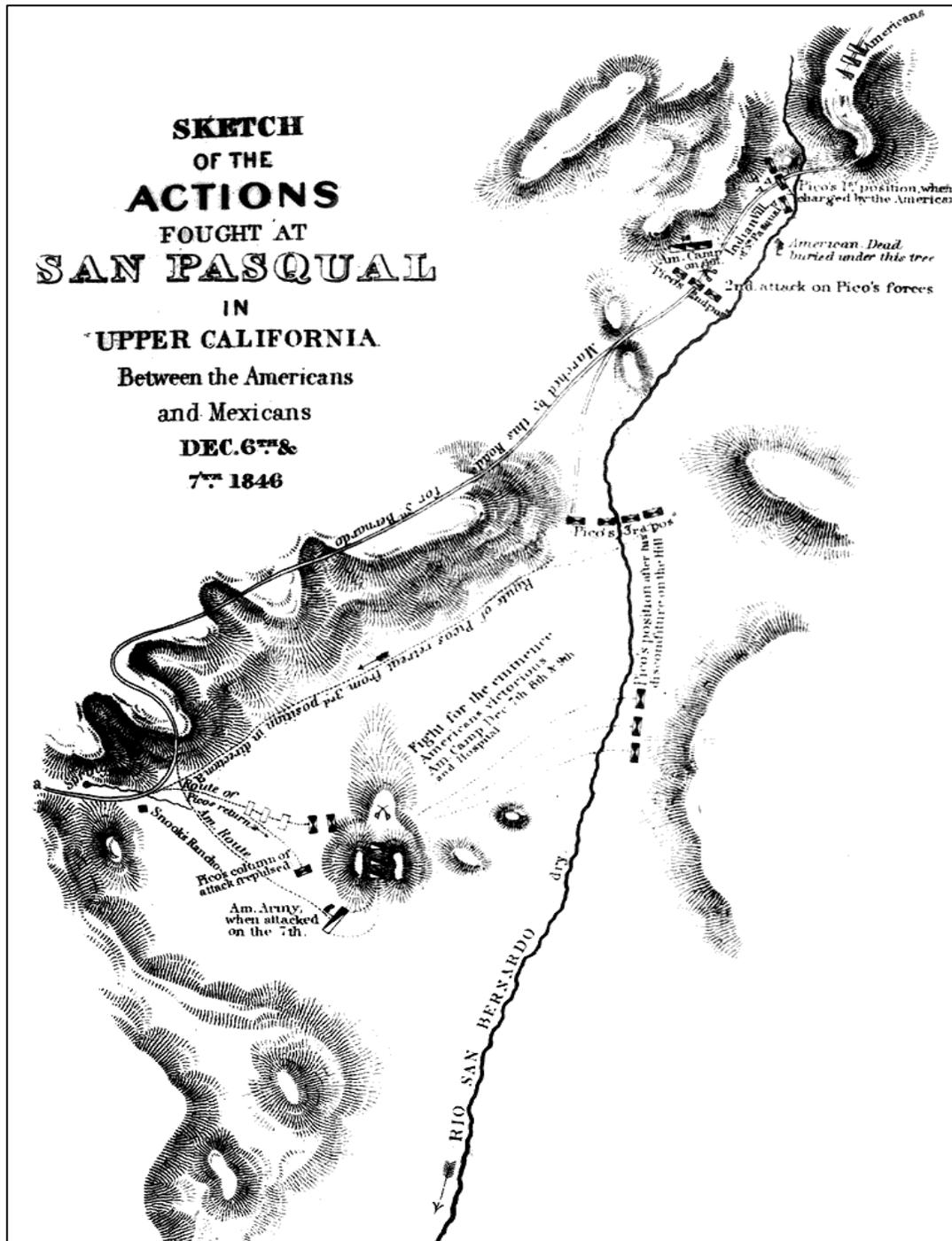


Figure 3: Lieutenant Emory's Map of the Battle of San Pasqual

Source: *Lieutenant Emory Reports*, <http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/enlarge/24534>

S. Griffin, Assistant Surgeon with Kearny's Dragoons, 1846-47 (Continued)," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (December 1942), 333-338.

mile and a half away from the camp of the Californios. It had been raining for several days, but a fog covered the valley in the pre-dawn hours. Captain Johnson was in the lead with twelve dragoons on the best horses available. Kearny followed in the second line with about fifty dragoons under the command of Captain Moore. These men were on the mules that had survived the march from Santa Fe. Behind that second line of dragoons, Captain Gillespie led his troops. Kearny placed the two mountain howitzers and the men to operate them next, deploying his entire command in depth. The remainder of the men and the baggage stayed in the rear. Kearny and his men could see the Californios, commanded by General Andrés Pico, mounted and prepared to receive a charge.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, Kearny ordered an advance.

After descending the hill, the riders deployed into combat formation and began their advance. When the dragoons got about a mile away from the camp, they encountered two advanced guards from the Californios about a mile away from the camp. Here, the historical record becomes less clear. Some reports claim that Kearny ordered a trot, but Captain Johnson misunderstood and ordered a charge. The Cavalry Tactics Manual of 1841 gave very specific instruction on how to execute a charge. About one hundred and eighty paces from the enemy, the commander gave the order to trot, followed sixty paces later by the order to gallop, and the order to charge was given after another eighty paces. In the end, the commander would order charge after two previous, incremental increases in the rate of advance and then only forty paces from the enemy.¹⁶² The Manual clearly stated that “the charge in line . . . should be as short as possible, so as to arrive in good order, and without fatiguing the horses.”¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Andrés was the brother of Governor Pío Pico.

¹⁶² United States War Department. *Cavalry Tactics 1841, Volume 2* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1862), 188-9.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 247.

Others argue that Johnston ordered the charge in response to the advanced guard of the enemy retreating to alert the Californios. This seems nonsensical as tactics at the time directed “as soon as any confusion is observed, it is necessary to have and recommence the movement.”¹⁶⁴ Johnston’s decision to charge violated tactical doctrine without sufficient justification to do so. Regardless of motivation, the first line of the U.S. force began a charge approximately one mile from the enemy. As was the case on the Santa Fe Trail, this was a tactical error.

The advanced line of dragoons arrived well in advance of their support and on tired horses. Further, the Californios carried lances, which had a significant reach advantage over the cavalry sabre carried by the dragoons. The U.S. forces suffered heavy casualties, but were able to drive the Californios from the field after the four-pound artillery piece fired canister into the battle. After collecting their dead and wounded, which numbered nearly a third of their total force and included a severely wounded General Kearny, the remnants of the Army of the West camped near the battlefield. On the 7th of December, the dragoons fought in a minor skirmish with no American casualties against the Californios. After taking a hill south of San Pasqual, Kearny had to transition to the defense because of his weakened forces and the wounded, who were in no condition to travel. On the night of the 10th, after three days deployed in the defense of the hill they had taken on the 7th, a two hundred man force from San Diego relieved Kearny. The Battle of San Pasqual ended early the next day when the Californios, realizing the Americans had received reinforcements, withdrew, and Kearny led his forces into San Diego.

While the question about the tactics used in the battle continue to inspire debate among historians, the decision to progress to the battle raises interesting questions regarding what would today be termed Kearny’s operational art.¹⁶⁵ Kearny chose to transition between phases by

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ It should be noted again that the application of operational art terms to this time is anachronistic. Nevertheless, this particular engagement, and its placement within the larger context of the campaign, illustrates elements of what is today termed operational art.

fighting with the Californian forces on 6 December 1846. The decision to transition appears to be reasonable given the situation for five reasons. First, Kearny's decision to engage in battle makes sense in light of the desired end state. Secretary of War Marcy had ordered Kearny "to conquer and take possession of . . . Upper California."¹⁶⁶ The defeat of General Andres Pico and his men would substantially assist in achieving that objective. Moreover, Stockton's letter advising attack also encouraged him to make quick work of the Californios. Second, the defeat of this section of the enemy would be a decisive point in the campaign. The force of Californios represented a significant strength for the enemy both materially and psychologically. If Kearny could defeat them at the end of a rigorous march from Santa Fe, he may have gained a significant advantage in reputation in addition to reducing the size of his opposition. Third, by choosing to engage the enemy here, Kearny would be dictating the tempo of the campaign. Rather than waiting for the enemy to move forward and set the pace of engagements, Kearny could attempt to seize the initiative by bold action. Fourth, Kearny had, for some time, been in search of better mounts for his troops. With the possibility that he could obtain the enemy's horses in front of him, Kearny reasoned that this presented his best option for extending his operational reach.¹⁶⁷ Finally, Kearny may have believed that seizing the initiative here was an opportunity to disguise how weak his forces really were. A successful engagement could decrease the risk of having to face larger forces in the coming days. Given the reasons Kearny had for giving battle to the Californios, it may appear that a simple case of bad luck caused the battlefield misfortune of the 1st Dragoons.; however, a further examination of the situation reveals that Kearny could have anticipated with greater accuracy what would happen in battle.

¹⁶⁶ Marcy to Kearny, in Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 396.

¹⁶⁷ Kearny Report in Cutts, Conquest, 199.

Some of the reasoning Kearny gave in his report seems to operate from the assumption that the battle was unavoidable.¹⁶⁸ A map of the area drawn by Lieutenant Emory showed only one road between the American forces and San Diego.¹⁶⁹ However, Emory also noted that “we were now on the main road to San Diego, all the ‘by-ways’ being in our rear.”¹⁷⁰ Kearny might have retraced his steps and sought a detour around Pico’s force, but that would have risked leaving the enemy behind him.¹⁷¹ Moreover, now that Kearny faced a hostile country, obtaining fresh and able mounts became a decisive point for his forces.¹⁷² Although Clarke dismisses the possibility, it may have been that Kearny was also eager to engage in a battle after a long march, and both Carson and his own experience in New Mexico reinforced his low estimation of his enemy.¹⁷³ Ultimately, Kearny may have been able to avoid the battle, but given his tendencies and training, he was very unlikely to pursue such a course.

Kearny’s decisions and subsequent events demonstrated some errors of judgment in his arrangement of tactical actions and their place in his pursuit of strategic objectives. His poor situational awareness regarding events in California compounded Kearny’s erroneous estimation of the fluid strategic context during his campaign. The general’s misjudgments resulted in nearly disastrous consequences for the Army of the West and the United States’ war for empire. First, as seen above, the battle was arguably unnecessary. Second, the operating environment

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.; Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 169.

¹⁶⁹ Cutts, Conquest, 197.

¹⁷⁰ Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 168.

¹⁷¹ Clarke makes the argument that Kearny intended to bypass the Californios, but Carson and Gillespie persuaded him to attack on the premises that the enemy would not withstand an attack and fresh horses were available. Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 204-5.

¹⁷² Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 206. The seizure of fresh horses would give Kearny a decided advantage in the anticipated fight ahead.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 204.

disadvantaged Kearny. The wet weather of the past several days rendered their carbines were nearly useless as water had fouled the cartridges. The carbine was not their primary weapon during a horse charge, but Kearny was also attacking in the dark over unfamiliar terrain without any prior reconnaissance, which gave the advantage to the enemy. Third, he was unaware or possibly misinformed about the character of the threat. The Californios were on fine horses and were quite skilled riders.¹⁷⁴ Further, they carried lances that had significantly greater reach than his cavalry sabres. Also, the element of surprise was lost as Pico's men were already mounted and prepared. Fourth, Kearny overestimated or misused his friendly forces. Unfamiliar with Captain Gillespie and his men, Kearny chose to employ them as flank protection in the fourth line of his attacking force. In addition, he did not use the mountain howitzers or the Sutter gun to prepare the battlefield and potentially scatter the enemy before his charge. Moreover, the march had exhausted Kearny's men and their mounts. Finally, Kearny culminated at San Pasqual because he out ran his supply chain one thousand miles earlier in Santa Fe. Two weeks after he left Santa Fe, supply wagons crowded the streets of the city. Had Kearny waited to start the march, he might have been in better shape when he transitioned. His prioritization of speed and tempo over reach and culmination resulted in a poorly prepared friendly force facing an underestimated enemy in a disadvantageous operational environment.

General Kearny arrived in San Diego on 12 December 1846, but fulfilling his orders would not be a simple task. The first problem Kearny encountered was a question of command authority. Stockton was the commander of the naval and marine forces in California. There were no provisions for what would today be considered a joint operation as the navy and army recognized different chains of command terminating in the President. Collaboration and cooperation between naval and army forces tended to depend greatly on the personalities of the

¹⁷⁴ Kearny Report, in Cutts, *Conquest*, 199. It is odd that Kearny included this in his report inasmuch as it seems he ignored it in formulating his battleplan.

commanders, and Stockton was flamboyant, cavalier, and self-serving.¹⁷⁵ Kearny refused the command Stockton offered to him upon his arrival, but soon afterward would regret that decision as Stockton made some questionable planning decisions for the further conquest of California.¹⁷⁶ Correspondence between the two became heated with Kearny sending Stockton copies of his orders showing his authority to assume military command and governorship of the territory.¹⁷⁷ Stockton argued that because Kearny's orders read "should you conquer" California, his authority to become military commander and governor were nullified when Stockton conquered it. The subsequent loss of all but three cities was merely a minor setback which had no bearing on the matter.¹⁷⁸ The conflict between the two carried on for over a month. In the end, Kearny wrote to Stockton that to prevent conflict he would "remain silent for the present, leaving with you the great responsibility of doing that for which you have no authority and preventing me from complying with the President's order."¹⁷⁹ Fortunately, the march to Los Angeles went extremely well although it suffered from a confusing command structure between Kearny as commander of the expedition and Stockton as the commander-in-chief.¹⁸⁰

Los Angeles, as the capital of California, was the objective of the expedition for two reasons. First, it was a decisive point in the campaign for the conquest of the territory because it

¹⁷⁵ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 236-7, 262.

¹⁷⁶ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 238-41.

¹⁷⁷ Kearny to Stockton, 16 December 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 181-2.

¹⁷⁸ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 259-61.

¹⁷⁹ Kearny to Stockton, 17 January 1847, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 182.

¹⁸⁰ Clarke, Stephen Watts Kearny, 240. The command chain was even more muddled because Kearny outranked Stockton, Stockton had transferred command of the marines and sailors in San Diego to Kearny, and both of them were present on the march. Little is known about the confusion of couriers and others looking for the man in charge

served as the base for the enemy forces under General José María Flores.¹⁸¹ Second, Lieutenant Colonel John C. Frémont was in command of a force of Californian volunteers somewhere to the north of Los Angeles, and they were making their way south toward the city.¹⁸² Neither Kearny nor Stockton knew the size or location of Fremont's forces; therefore, Flores in Los Angeles represented a threat to that force unless Kearny could rendezvous with them.¹⁸³ To effect this concentration of forces, Kearny would have to move against Los Angeles.

Kearny assembled his force to begin the march to Los Angeles on 28 December 1846. Kearny reported that he "left San Diego with about five hundred men, consisting of sixty dismounted Dragoons under Captain Turner, fifty California Volunteers and the remainder of Marines and Sailors, with a Battery of Artillery."¹⁸⁴ The march was about one hundred thirty-five miles and would cross several rivers on the way. Flores calculated that his best chance to stop the Americans would be during these river crossings.¹⁸⁵ The first opportunity for an engagement came eleven days after Kearny left San Diego, 8 January 1847.

Kearny faced a portion of the San Gabriel River that ran roughly east to west.¹⁸⁶ The Californios arranged their forces on the west side of the river with "a bank fifty feet high, ranged

¹⁸¹ Ames and Griffin, "A Doctor Comes to California," 344; Heidler and Heidler, *The Mexican War*, 102. In correspondence, the objective is alternately referred to as Los Angeles and the Pueblos. The full name for the settlement was el Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles, but it will be called Los Angeles for ease of identification in this paper. Gillespie's inept command at Los Angeles had sparked the uprising led by Flores.

¹⁸² Kearny to Stockton, 22 December 1846, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 180.

¹⁸³ Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 239

¹⁸⁴ Kearny Report on Los Angeles, in Altenburg and Gabiger, *Winning the West*, 181

¹⁸⁵ Heidler and Heidler, *The Mexican War*, 104.

¹⁸⁶ The present day Rio Hondo was the approximate waterway for the Rio San Gabriel in 1847. Clarke notes "only one certain landmark remains: the steep bluffs along the westerly bank of the present Rio Hondo. Undoubtedly these are the heights up which the Americans charged at the Battle of the San Gabriel." Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 245.

parallel with the river, at point blank cannon distance, upon which he posted his artillery.”¹⁸⁷ Kearny formed his men into a line of battle and, despite artillery fire, crossed the river.¹⁸⁸ The American artillery battery crossed the river and silenced the Californio’s artillery quickly.¹⁸⁹ While the artillery dueled, the infantry crossed the river and then charged the enemy’s position. Almost simultaneously, the Californios charged the American left flank, but the sailors and marines repelled them easily. As the enemy retreated, Kearny was unable to pursue because he lacked cavalry. So, the two forces camped within sight of each other, but Flores withdrew under the cover of darkness.

The next morning, Kearny reinitiated his advance. Because the Californios had the advantage of mobility with their cavalry, Kearny arranged the forces essentially in a square, which the sailors and marines called a Yankee corral, with the front and rear ranks in line of battle, the two wings in column, and the baggage and wagons in the middle. Leaving the San Gabriel River, the troops marched across a wide mesa toward the Los Angeles River.¹⁹⁰ After five to six miles, Flores’ troops, which were on a hill to the north and west of the direction of march, opened artillery fire on the Americans. Kearny directed his forces to “incline a little to the left to

¹⁸⁷ Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 185.

¹⁸⁸ In addition to the sources for the Battle of San Pasqual, the following sources have been used to reconstruct the next engagements. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Volume 5 (San Francisco: The History Publishers, 1886).

¹⁸⁹ This is one instance where the confusing chain of command almost cost the American force dearly. Kearny ordered the guns unlimbered on the left bank, but Stockton countermanded this order and told the artillery to cross. Halfway across the river, the guns began to sink into the quicksand. Kearny sent word to Stockton of this, and the latter came to the scene and personally led a team of artillerymen and mules in dragging the gun out of the river. All of this under fire from the enemy. The Californios poor powder and shot prevented them from making the most of this opportunity, and Stockton was convinced he made the correct decision after the first shot blew apart the carriage of the enemy’s largest gun. Kearny watched this wordlessly until the guns were in position. Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 246.

¹⁹⁰ Emory calls it the San Fernando River, but on modern maps, it is the Los Angeles River.

avoid giving Flores the advantage of the ground to post his artillery.”¹⁹¹ The fire had little effect. The Californios mounted an attack on the American left flank, but several shots from American artillery fire dispersed the charge. Emory noted that the enemy made an orderly retreat, which gave the indication that the resistance would continue. However, the next morning, representatives of the city came forth with an offer of surrender for the city. General Flores fled to the north, but turned his command over to Andres Pico who negotiated a peace with John Fremont on 13 January 1847.

The losses at the Battles of Rio San Gabriel and La Mesa signaled the end of an organized resistance to American occupation of California. Kearny’s march ended in victory and the annexation of California. With the exception of San Pasqual, Kearny had arranged his tactical actions in pursuit of the strategic directives articulated by the U.S. Secretary of War. Kearny would have a much publicized feud with Fremont and Stockton, but this merely distracted from governing the new territory. Less than five months later, Kearny began the long trip back to Fort Leavenworth with a small party, which included John Fremont, who was on the way to his court martial trial for mutiny against Kearny.

When viewed through the lenses of modern doctrine, the march and battles between San Diego and Los Angeles are textbook examples of operational art. While keeping the end state and conditions in mind, Kearny selected the forces of Flores at Los Angeles as the center of gravity for his operation. The battles along the way were decisive points leading to the ultimate seizure of the city and defeat of the enemy. There was a single line of operation, but Kearny ensured he had sufficient reach to prevent culmination prior to arriving at Los Angeles. Further, he kept the wagons and supplies with him even after he was sure of making the city in case Flores burned the supplies and food there. He was deliberate in choosing when to transition from a marching formation to battle formation, and did not take unnecessary risk. His campaign showed the

¹⁹¹ Emory, Lieutenant Emory Reports, 186-7.

hallmarks of what is today termed a unified land operation. While adapting to the terrain and the enemy forces, he integrated his dragoons into the larger joint force. The minimal casualties Kearny took demonstrated the mismatch in lethality he was able to bring to bear on the situation.

CONCLUSION

Kearny led the Army of the West from Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas to San Diego, annexed New Mexico without firing a shot, and gained the territory of California for the United States. During the seven months of the campaign, Kearny commanded formations ranging in size from several thousand to only one hundred. The first battle of the war for Kearny was a Pyrrhic victory at San Pasqual, but Kearny recovered and led a large force in a successful operation against a prepared force of Californios. Looking at these achievements through the lens of operational art delivers new insights into the campaign itself and the utility of the concept of operational art for explaining and planning military activities. Specifically, Kearny's campaign provides tremendous illumination into the operational level of war because he achieved tremendous territorial gains with small and diverse forces.

Kearny's expedition was a four-phase operation that acted directly against the strongpoints of the enemy while shaping the operational environment through non-combat actions and providing for the sustainment of his troops. He arranged tactical actions on the approach to Santa Fe and California while integrating with other service forces in order to apply the correct level of lethality for the annexation and pacification of the territories. The Army advanced on a single line of operation at a long interval to not deplete the sustainment capability of the Santa Fe Trail between Leavenworth and Bent's Fort. After concentrating there, Kearny sought to pacify the towns on the way to Santa Fe with minimal lethality while leaving the administrators in office. Faced with the massive U.S. force, Governor Armijo and his men chose to flee rather than fight, and Kearny was able to complete the annexation of New Mexico without confrontation. After establishing a civil government of the United States in the territory, Kearny split his force.

He sent one thousand volunteers under Colonel Doniphan south to Chihuahua to support General Wool, ordered another thousand volunteers under Colonel Price to remain in New Mexico as an occupation force, and led three hundred regulars toward California. As he gained intelligence about the situation in California and in New Mexico, Kearny sent two-thirds of his regular force back to Santa Fe and proceeded to California with only one hundred men. On arriving in California, Kearny fought an extremely costly battle at San Pasqual, and required reinforcements from the Navy to rescue his force. He then reconstituted, integrated his troops with the naval land forces, led a joint force in two more battles, and defeated the enemy force in California. Kearny understood the end state and conditions required by his directives, visualized the decisive points of local governments along his approach route. Additionally, his actions while on the march demonstrated a consideration of his problem of operational reach and accepting the risk of smaller forces to take advantage of the opportunity of faster operations afforded by that risk. The combat losses at the Battle of San Pasqual often overshadow the success of the overall campaign. Kearny made a poor decision to engage the Californios at San Pasqual, but the operations on either side of the battle demonstrated a brilliant military mind coordinating complex actions across the expanse of a continent. Kearny's pursuit of the strategic objective of annexation through the arrangement of a series of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose is an excellent example of operational art.

Any examination of a military campaign of such size and importance will be necessarily incomplete. There are certain events and perspectives that have been omitted in the interest of time or clarity; however, the investigation of the elements of operational art presented in the campaign of the Army of the West highlights the importance of those elements in planning and executing campaigns. Further, the investigation of military disasters like the Battle of San Pasqual illustrates the need for commanders and planners to balance the employment of operational art with the requirements of the strategic setting as understood in ADP 3-0. Nevertheless, Kearny's

campaign as a whole demonstrates the skillful use of what is now called operational art to achieve effective and efficient results with an extremely diverse and undersized force.

APPENDIX A: ARMY OF THE WEST ORDER OF BATTLE, JUNE 1846

1st U.S. Dragoons Col Stephen Watts Kearny

Company B Captain John H. K. Burgwin
Company C Captain Benjamin Daviess Moore
Company G Captain Phillip St. George Cooke
Company I Captain William V. Sumner
Company K Captain Thomas C. Hammond

1st Missouri Mounted Volunteers Colonel Alexander William Doniphan

Company A Captain David Waldo
Company B Captain William Parr Walton
Company C Captain Oliver Perry Moss
Company D Captain John W. Reid
Company E Captain John Dunlap Stephenson
Company F Captain Mosby Monroe Parsons
Company G Captain Congrove Jackson
Company H Captain Charles B. Rodgers

Missouri Volunteer Battalion Major Merriweather Lewis Clark

Artillery Company A Captain Richard Hanson Weightman
Artillery Company B Captain Woldemar Fischer
Infantry Company A Captain William Z. Angney
Infantry Company B Captain William S. Murphy
LaCleve Rangers Captain Thomas B. Hudson

U.S. Topographical Engineers Lieutenant William H. Emory

Second Missouri Mounted Volunteer Colonel Sterling Price

Company A Captain Samuel H. McMillan
Company B Captain William Y. Slack
Company C Captain Hancock Jackson
Company D Captain John Houoway
Company E Captain Thomas M. Horine
Company F Captain William C. Halley
Company G Captain Thomas Barbee
Company H Captain John C. Dent

Mormon Battalion Captain James Allen, Lieutenant Colonel Phillip St. George Cooke

Company A Captain Jefferson Hunt
Company B Captain Jesse D. Hunter
Company C Captain James Brown
Company D Captain Nelson Higgius
Company E Captain Daniel C. Davis

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