

# **BASTION ON THE BORDER: FORT BLISS, 1854-1943**

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*ADA 277 735*

Publication of this report was supported by funding from the  
Legacy Resource Management Program  
of the  
Department of Defense

Historical and Natural Resources Report No. 6  
Cultural Resources Management Branch  
Directorate of Environment  
U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center  
Fort Bliss, Texas

1993

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SI #A, AUTH: USAADAC  
 (DR. GLEN DeGARNED - DSN 978-5140)  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two factors, geography and diplomacy, were the principal elements in the decision by the U.S. Army to establish a fort at the "Pass of the North," the site of present-day El Paso. The U.S. government established its international boundary with Mexico after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican War was signed in 1848 and the Gadsden Purchase was completed on 1853.

The first Fort Bliss was built in 1854 near the small settlement of Magoffinsville. The historical development of—and the present-day character of—El Paso owes much to the establishment and duration of Fort Bliss. Initially Fort Bliss served as one of a chain of Southwestern forts that protected Americans heading to California in the 1850s to mine gold.

Unlike most forts in the West, Fort Bliss was an infantry rather than a cavalry post during most of the nineteenth century. The post was abandoned by Union forces when Texas seceded from the Union in February 1861. It was reoccupied by the Confederates in the summer of 1861. The fort was burned and abandoned by Confederate forces in 1862 following their defeat in northern New Mexico and their subsequent evacuation of New Mexico and west Texas.

The post was rebuilt after the Civil War (October 1865), only to be abandoned again two years later when a new Fort Bliss was constructed some 3 miles north of the Rio Grande. In 1877 the new fort also was abandoned when the garrison was transferred out of the El Paso area. One year later the Army moved troops back to El Paso, and another fort was constructed at Hart's Mill, adjacent to the current Hacienda Restaurant, on the banks of the Rio Grande.

The War Department gave serious consideration to abandoning Fort Bliss entirely during the 1880s. It was trying to choose between Fort Bliss and Fort Selden, located some 54 miles north of El Paso in New Mexico, as the region's principal Army fort. In 1882 Fort Bliss was selected and Fort Selden was closed. Following the selection, Army officials moved the post again to another, and its current, location on a mesa east of what was then the city of El Paso. Construction began in 1890.

The post had a small complement of 200-350 troops between 1890 and 1910. A cavalry troop was based permanently at the fort in 1895, but the post was principally an infantry installation.

The 1910 Mexican Revolution established Fort Bliss as the key military post along the 1,950-mile-long border with Mexico. Much of the fighting occurred in the Mexican border states, particularly in Chihuahua, and the border became a very strategic zone during the revolution.

The Army augmented the Fort Bliss garrison to protect the El Paso region after the first battle of Juárez in May 1911. Reinforcements again were sent to Fort Bliss to patrol the border during the Orozco rebellion the following year. In 1913 the War Department concluded that the Mexican Revolution was not likely to end in the near future and that Fort Bliss was central to border defense. As a result, additional troops were assigned to the fort, and new facilities were constructed to support the reinforced garrison. Troop strength at Fort Bliss and the El Paso Patrol District, with command and administrative operations based at the post, increased to almost 6,000 by the late summer of 1915.

Fort Bliss consolidated its position as the premier border military installation during the Punitive Expedition (March 1916 to January 1917). Fort Bliss provided the expedition's commander, Brigadier

General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing; it supplied troop contingents for the expedition; and it played an important role in supporting Pershing's campaign. The crisis with Mexico brought the two nations to the brink of war in June 1916, and the entire U.S. National Guard was mobilized for border service. Fort Bliss served as the principal concentration point for the guardsmen. Full-scale conflict was avoided that summer, but the Guard remained at Fort Bliss for reequipping and intensive training. Three National Guard divisions were in training, and troop strength in and around the post soared to more than 40,000 during this period. The post performed a significant role in preparing the National Guard for World War I. Fort Bliss arguably was the most important U.S. military installation in the world by late summer of 1916.

The post underwent significant institutional growth in 1916 and 1917, and its facilities grew to rival those at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, the headquarters of the Southern Department. Growth slowed during World War I, however, because Fort Bliss was not designated as a divisional training post.

Fort Bliss often is viewed as having been a cavalry installation for much of its history, but the cavalry's reign did not begin until 1917. World War I represented the period of transition during which Fort Bliss evolved from an infantry to a cavalry post. The new military equipment and tactics employed in World War I made horse cavalry virtually useless on the western front. But they could, and did, serve as effective guardians of the Mexican border.

Fort Bliss troops saw action only after World War I ended. In June 1919 they repelled an attack on Ciudad Juárez by Pancho Villa. This engagement marked the last sizable U.S. military incursion into Mexico, and it refocused attention on the border. Airpower was added to Fort Bliss in 1919, and Biggs Field was established in 1925.

The Army increasingly relied upon automotive transport after World War I. But, the effectiveness of cavalry in the desert border zone had been demonstrated, and the Army decided to base a full cavalry division at Fort Bliss. The 1st Cavalry Division was activated at Fort Bliss in 1921. The history of Fort Bliss from 1921 to 1943 essentially is that of this division. Troops of the 1st Cavalry patrolled the Mexican border even during the interwar decades of the 1920s and 1930s, when Mexico moved from revolution to stability. Relations between the United States and Mexico improved during this time.

There no longer was a need to maintain the 1st Cavalry Division on the border when Mexico declared war on the Axis in May 1942. The division was ordered to turn in its horses in February of the following year. By June the division was on its way to the Pacific Theater to fight as infantry. The departure of the horse cavalry in 1943 marked the end of an era in the history of Fort Bliss and the Army. Fort Bliss already had begun a fundamental change in its mission. Border defense no longer was to be its primary concern. Fort Bliss was to become an air-defense training facility. The transition to that new mission had begun even before the United States officially entered World War II and the cavalry era subsequently ended. Today, Fort Bliss is the Army's Air Defense Center, training the Army's soldiers and officers, as well as troops from allied countries, to use the equipment and tactics of modern battlefield air defense.

## FOREWORD

This report builds upon the previous scholarly investigation of the history of Fort Bliss conducted by Dr. Perry Jamieson. The results of Dr. Jamieson's work are provided as Report Number 5 in this publication series under the title, *A Survey History of Fort Bliss, 1890 - 1940*, published in 1993.

Drs. Harris and Sadler are well known for their studies of United States-Mexican border phenomena and for their command of the literature about the Mexican Revolution. They have used their knowledge and expertise to develop the first documented summary of events affecting Fort Bliss between 1911 and 1920 during the Mexican Revolution.

Of particular historical interest during this time is the transition of Fort Bliss from being primarily an infantry post to being the Army's largest horse cavalry installation with a tactical and strategic mission. That Fort Bliss still remained a horse cavalry post through the 1920s and 1930s is an anachronism in the context of changes occurring in the rest of the Army during this period. But in the contexts of the region's environment and the tactical mission of Fort Bliss during this period, horse cavalry at Fort Bliss is understandable.

The role of Fort Bliss in preparing the Army to participate in the fighting in Europe during World War I is clarified in this report. It is known that Pershing's Expedition into Mexico in pursuit of Pancho Villa included use of radios, aircraft, and motorized transportation to support the mobile combat force. However, of significant importance while Pershing was in Mexico were the call up of most of the nation's National Guard forces, the Guard's encampments in and around Fort Bliss, and the reequipping and training of the Guard while at Fort Bliss. This resulted in a much higher state of combat readiness of United States Army forces for World War I than would have been possible in the absence of the Mexican Revolution and Pershing's Expedition.

These two reports leave many topics untouched or undeveloped. It is hoped that these topics can be more fully investigated as the historical resources program at Fort Bliss matures in future years.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to express our thanks to Dr. Glen DeGarmo, staff archaeologist, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Directorate of Environment, Fort Bliss, for his patience in the direction of this study. Dr. Timothy Nenninger, senior archivist, Old Army and Navy Branch, National Archives, Washington, was a fountain of information in acquiring documents for this study.

Perry D. Jamieson, now a historian with the U.S. Air Force, authored a previous study of Fort Bliss's history and laid the groundwork for which this monograph is a successor. Three historians, William Beezley, John Hart, and Garna Loy Christian read an earlier draft of this manuscript and made helpful suggestions for improvement.

We are indebted to Yolanda Alexander, Rose Marie Garcia, and Rosa De La Torre, who typed earlier drafts of the manuscript. Finally, as is customary, the authors are responsible for the contents of this study.

## **Chapter I**

### **THE FIRST SIX DECADES (1846-1910)**

#### **Introduction**

Why is Fort Bliss the Army's most important military post on the United States border with Mexico? To answer that question one must examine the historical backdrop to the present Fort Bliss and its relationship with the city of El Paso. It is, for example, indisputable that the city of El Paso owes much of its historical development to the establishment and presence of the permanent Army post of Fort Bliss.

Two factors, diplomacy and geography, were the key elements in a series of decisions that ensured the continued maintenance of a military post at El Paso. First, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded California and much of the American Southwest to the United States following the Mexican War.<sup>1</sup> Next, the Gadsden Purchase of 1853<sup>2</sup> added portions of southern Arizona and New Mexico to the U.S. Southwest. The size of the southwestern territory over which the United States and the Army had responsibilities was increased substantially by these two acquisitions, and the importance of a military installation at El Paso increased substantially. Fort Bliss first was established officially in 1854.

The post was abandoned by Union forces in February of 1861 when Texas seceded prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. Confederate forces then occupied the fort for almost a year before they burned it in 1862 when they were driven out of New Mexico. The fort was not reoccupied and rebuilt until after the Civil War. Fort Bliss was relocated in and around El Paso several times during the next quarter century (1865-1890), but it was garrisoned continuously with the exception of one brief period in the 1870s.

Frontier expansion and the Indian wars were ending by the 1880s, and the Army was beginning to close western "frontier" forts that no longer were needed. Attention began to be directed to the Southwest and to the border with Mexico. The Army decided that Fort Bliss, not Fort Selden, located north of El Paso in southern New Mexico, was to be the principal Army post along the Texas border with Mexico because of its more strategic location.

Fort Bliss principally was an infantry post throughout the nineteenth century. It became renowned during the 1920s and 1930s as the post where the U.S. Cavalry made its last stand.

#### **The First Six Decades**

The first U.S. Army troops arrived in what is now El Paso on December 26, 1846. The Missouri Mounted Volunteers, commanded by Colonel Alexander W. Doniphan, had clashed briefly upriver with a Mexican Army unit at Brazito before reaching the "Pass of the North." U.S. troops were based in the El Paso area off and on from December 1846 until 1854 when a permanent post was established. The Army has maintained almost a continuous presence in El Paso since 1854.<sup>3</sup>

Doniphan's troops remained in the El Paso area only 42 days in the winter of 1846. By 1849 the demand for a military presence in the region became important partly because of the California gold rush and the need to protect gold seekers en route to California. A survey team reached El Paso in May 1849, mapping potential roads to connect El Paso with San Antonio and points east.

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The first garrison units, under the command of Major Jefferson Van Horne, were setting up a permanent post at what is now downtown El Paso by September 14, 1849. Van Horne was at the end of a very long supply line stretching 600 miles east to San Antonio. The garrison was transferred to Santa Fe in 1851, and the supply problems temporarily were eased.<sup>4</sup>

El Paso at the time consisted of a handful of settlements, and the Army was absent from the area for the next three years. The Army, however, was missed as the Indians committed depredations on area ranchers without fear of retribution. A report in 1853 by Army Inspector General Colonel Joseph F.K. Mansfield recommended reestablishment of a permanent post at El Paso.<sup>5</sup> Brevet Lieutenant Colonel E.P. Alexander arrived with four companies of the 8th Infantry on January 11, 1854, and set up housekeeping at a military post opposite El Paso.<sup>6</sup> Three months later the Army officially named the post Fort Bliss, in honor of Brevet Major William Wallace Smith Bliss, a former Army assistant adjutant general.<sup>7</sup>

The post was located at the small settlement of Magoffinsville. The settlement blossomed with the arrival of the Army that brought a payroll for about 200 officers and enlisted men in addition to a handful of civilian employees; and contracts were available for food, forage, and supplies.<sup>8</sup> The establishment of Fort Bliss and three other military posts between San Antonio and El Paso (forts Lancaster, Davis, and Quitman) opened an important route between the southern United States and California. The gold rushers were quick to take advantage of the new route.<sup>9</sup> El Paso became known as one of the toughest towns on the border during this period, although the presence of the Army at Fort Bliss tended to have a restraining influence on the small community that had begun to grow on the north bank of the Rio Grande.

During the period from 1854 to 1860, the post had its share of officers who went on to distinguish themselves in the Civil War, including J.E.B. Stuart and James Longstreet.<sup>10</sup> Fort Bliss was relatively peaceful compared to other western forts manned by the Army before 1861. With the Army post guarding the town, the resulting stability fostered economic activity in El Paso, and a significant amount of commerce developed, with goods and people moving south along the Rio Grande from the Territory of New Mexico into Chihuahua, moving north from Mexico to Santa Fe, and east to west as a result of settlers pushing westward toward California. El Paso was becoming a regional center of commerce serving southern New Mexico, Arizona, Chihuahua, and West Texas.<sup>11</sup>

The fort was immediately adjacent to the Rio Grande some 3 miles from El Paso. The fort itself was rather modest, with an adobe wall surrounding three sides of a square. The buildings had thatched roofs and dirt floors, but officers' wives described the post as being rather pleasant in comparison with other western forts. Perhaps because of the increasing stability at the post, the civilian employees there had increased by 1860. In the fort's early years the Army hired a lone employee, a herder, but by 1860 four laundresses, three male servants, a hospital steward, a paymaster, and a civilian surgeon were on the Fort Bliss payroll.<sup>12</sup>

The majority of El Paso's residents favored secession when the Civil War loomed. Texas voted to secede from the Union in February of 1861. Fort Bliss became a Confederate outpost when the commander of U.S. troops in Texas, Major General David E. Twiggs, who sympathized with the South, ordered the abandonment of Fort Bliss in late February 1861.<sup>13</sup> Lieutenant Colonel John R. Baylor brought the Confederate's 2nd Regiment, Texas Mounted Rifles, to the fort and raised the Confederate flag in July, less than five months after the fort was abandoned. Confederate Brigadier General Henry Sibley was defeated at the battle of Glorieta Pass near Santa Fe the following year. He and his troops retreated downriver to El Paso and burned the fort before retreating further to San Antonio, ending the Confederacy's attempt to gain control of the Southwest. The Union Army's California Column, commanded by Colonel James H. Carleton, arrived in El Paso shortly thereafter, and Fort Bliss and El Paso lay permanently in the hands of the Union.<sup>14</sup>



Fort Bliss, though substantially damaged, was needed more than ever by the end of the Civil War. The westward movement of Americans virtually had stopped during the Civil War, but it resumed at an increased pace following the war. Three companies of the 5th Infantry arrived in El Paso in October 1865 and began renovating the post<sup>15</sup>, and by the spring of 1866 the fort had been repaired. Its location soon became unsuitable when the Rio Grande began eating away at the banks adjacent to the fort. A flood washed away the fort's storerooms and a portion of the officers' quarters in May of 1867, and it became obvious that the Army must move the post to another site.<sup>16</sup>

About a year later the Army leased land on the Concordia Ranch, located 3 to 4 miles north of the old fort and on higher ground away from the river. The military constructed two large barracks capable of housing 200 men each and officers' quarters consisting of six adobe buildings.<sup>17</sup> Camp Concordia had been renamed Fort Bliss by March 24, 1869.<sup>18</sup>

Fort Bliss remained a haven of tranquility in a region dominated by Apache raids for the next decade (1867 to 1877). But, as early as 1865 the incipient possibility of new problems from Mexico began to develop. That year Mexican President Benito Juárez established his headquarters across the river in the city that later was named for him. His troops and government had been forced to flee northward from the French troops that had imposed Maximilian as the emperor of Mexico. Maximilian ultimately was defeated, and Juárez and his supporters were back in power by 1867. After Juárez's death his principal general, Porfirio Díaz, succeeded in ousting Juárez's successor, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada in 1876.<sup>19</sup>

The earlier widespread belief that Mexico's problems would erupt along the border never became reality.<sup>20</sup> Instead the major problem the Fort Bliss garrison faced during this period was El Paso's emergence as one of the toughest towns in the West. The local troops were forced to intervene frequently to help the community maintain a semblance of law and order. Given that the immediate area around El Paso was relatively quiet and that the Army numerically was stretched to the breaking point, Fort Bliss was closed on January 17, 1877. The garrison, comprised of the 6th Company, 25th Infantry, was transferred to Fort Davis, east of El Paso on the Pecos River.<sup>21</sup>

The so-called Salt War erupted in 1877 near El Paso partly because of the Army's absence.<sup>22</sup> A troop of the famed Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th Cavalry finally restored order to the area on January 1, 1878. They later were augmented by two companies of the 15th Infantry.<sup>23</sup> This time the Army rented warehouses and homes in the downtown El Paso area, and it proceeded to parade through the streets of El Paso to quell the agitators. El Paso now was on the verge of one of the greatest booms in the city's storied history—the railroad was coming.<sup>24</sup>

Congestion in El Paso's downtown area convinced the Army to select a 135-acre site west of the city near Hart's Mill for a new Fort Bliss. Congress passed an appropriation in February 1879 of some \$240,000 for purchase of the site and for construction of the new post. The Army purchased the land for the fort and decided to save some of the remaining \$160,000 by using military personnel, instead of contractors, to construct the new fort. Field duties delayed construction, and the garrison was unable to move into its new quarters until December 1880.<sup>25</sup> The new fort was bounded by some 1,000 yards of riverfront, and was the most modern Army post in the area. The officers' quarters had two stories and shingled roofs instead of one story, earthen floors, and thatched roofs.

The principal reason for the new fort was the arrival of the railroad in 1881, which transformed El Paso into a boom town.<sup>26</sup> The Army was important for western railroads; the railroad companies relied on the

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Army to provide protection for construction crews and, when completed, for the lines themselves. Thus, the Army helped to protect and to foster growing economic development in the West and in El Paso.

The 1880s were relatively peaceful at Fort Bliss. Duties were routine since the post was garrisoned principally with infantry; cavalry units campaigning in the region did often stop at the fort en route to battles against the Apache.<sup>27</sup> There were occasional tensions with Mexico, as in the case of Augustus K. Cutting, an American newsman imprisoned in Ciudad Juárez. A Mexican court finally released Cutting and tensions subsided.<sup>28</sup> The situation reminded the Army that it was prudent to maintain a garrison in El Paso even if the Apaches no longer were an imminent threat to the region.

Indian fighting was beginning to subside in the 1880s, and the Army began to look critically at its small, temporary western forts and to plan for the future. Famed Civil War General Philip H. Sheridan, commander of the Department of the Missouri, toured New Mexico and southwest Texas in 1881. He recommended that Fort Selden, located about 12 miles north of Las Cruces, New Mexico, and 54 miles north of El Paso, be designated as the major fort in the Southwest. Commanding General of the Army William Tecumseh Sherman agreed, as did Secretary of War Robert Lincoln and President Chester A. Arthur; the latter recommended to Congress that funds be made available for additional facilities at Fort Selden.<sup>29</sup>

Congress did not act immediately, and in 1882 Sherman inspected forts Bliss and Selden and decided Fort Bliss (and El Paso) was a superior site. Perry D. Jamieson, the historian who has made the most detailed study of this situation, noted that Sherman "became convinced that Fort Bliss was a superior site to Fort Selden" after touring the area.<sup>30</sup> Jamieson also wrote of Sherman's belief that the El Paso area was strategically important, that Fort Bliss might be expanded to a regimental infantry post, and that the railroads in the area were the key element in the decision to maintain the fort as the principal post in the region.<sup>31</sup> Jamieson also stated, "The forts would rely on the railroads for logistics and in turn the railroads would rely on the Army for their security."<sup>32</sup> Sherman returned to Washington and put forward a plan to abandon Fort Selden and to designate Fort Bliss as the major post in the region. Sherman's recommendation prevailed.<sup>33</sup>

Serious problems with the railroads, however, were occurring at Fort Bliss in the 1880s. The Southern Pacific Railway crossed the east side of the post at Hart's Mill, and the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway cut the parade ground in half. Colonel E.M. Heyl, Division of the Missouri inspector general, toured Fort Bliss and reported in December 1889 that the parade ground was ". . . absolutely dangerous at times" because of passenger trains constantly crisscrossing through the area.<sup>34</sup>

The decision to make Fort Bliss at Hart's Mill the major post in the Southwest posed problems for the Army. First, additional troops would be based at the fort at some point in the future, making Fort Bliss a regimental post, but the existing facilities were too small for more than a few understrength infantry companies. Second, although no documentation is available, it seems apparent that the position of the fort vis-a-vis Ciudad Juárez was considered dangerous. One boundary of the fort was the Rio Grande, and elevation on the Mexican side of the river was higher than Fort Bliss. The tactical implications of the standard military aphorism, "Take the high ground" put the Fort Bliss site in a dangerous location. Although the Díaz administration was friendly to the United States, the Army must have been somewhat uneasy about the fort's location.

Sound military logic and political strength (Congress) came together in 1889. El Paso Congressman S.W.T. Lanham was a member of the House Committee for Military Affairs, and the financial elite in El Paso informed the Army that if a new Fort Bliss were built local citizens would donate the land. Lanham introduced a House resolution providing for the sale of Fort Bliss at Hart's Mill and the construction of a new

post in January 1890. The Committee on Military Affairs report on Fort Bliss stated the case for a new permanent post at El Paso as follows:

*It is believed that El Paso is the most important military point on the Mexican frontier and is the most central and commanding point from which to reach all parts of Western Texas and southern New Mexico and Arizona and therefore that the military post such degree as will make the advantages of this location available in any military emergency that may arise.*

The House passed the resolution; a companion resolution also passed the Senate. The bill was signed into law by President Benjamin Harrison. The resolution stipulated that the post be located within 10 miles of El Paso, and it appropriated \$150,000 for construction of a new Fort Bliss.<sup>35</sup>

The resolution also required that the city of El Paso to provide a minimum of 1,000 acres for the fort. Local businessmen raised the necessary funds to buy land on La Noria Mesa, the site of present-day Fort Bliss, located just east of the city some 5 miles from the courthouse in downtown El Paso. The land was donated to the Army, and construction began on the new Fort Bliss in mid-August 1891. Construction continued throughout 1891 and 1892, and the post was nearly complete by the spring of 1893.<sup>36</sup> In October the fort was ready for occupation, and four companies of the 18th Infantry, with the regimental headquarters and band (some 500 men), moved into their new facilities.<sup>37</sup>

Life at the new post was classical garrison duty with drills, ceremonies, band performances for the townspeople, athletic contests, and even a mock battle carried out for the conventioning Texas Press Association in April 1896.<sup>38</sup> Military actions ended after the Indian population of the West was subdued at Wounded Knee. In 1893 the outbreak of the Tomochi rebellion in the neighboring Mexican state of Chihuahua, however, brought a portent of things to come. Actually the garrison at Fort Bliss was not affected, for troops from Denver were sent some 80 miles west of El Paso to the southern New Mexico town of Deming for a brief period in 1893. It would have been less expensive and more timely if troops had been sent from Fort Bliss. However, the Army's departmental boundaries during this period tended to be rigid; the New Mexico Territory was in the Department of Colorado, and Fort Bliss was in the Department of Texas. So, troops were sent to Deming from Denver, not from Fort Bliss.

By 1895 the Díaz government had crushed the rebellion and quiet prevailed on the Mexican side of the border for another decade. This incident, however, was a harbinger of future events, and during the opening months of the Mexican Revolution similar problems occurred.<sup>39</sup>

Various Army inspectors general were unhappy with Fort Bliss's location and conditions. In May 1894 Major P.D. Vroom stated in an inspection report that the site of the new Fort Bliss was "an insult to the intelligence of the army." Vroom was incensed by the presence of several saloons "within a stone's throw of the officers' quarters." He also complained that post sewage, "causing a foul and offensive stream," poured forth from the reservation onto private land whose owners were complaining and threatening to go to court. Vroom also noted that the post needed additional buildings. But the Army obviously could do nothing unless Congress provided additional funds.<sup>40</sup> The following year weather created additional problems when strong April winds deroofted the staff headquarters building and damaged a barracks. That damage was repaired later that summer.<sup>41</sup>

Uneasiness developed at Fort Bliss after two infantry companies were transferred to Fort Sam Houston, decreasing the size of the garrison. Rumors circulated that the fort would be abandoned because of the poor site selection. The rumors proved to be unfounded, for in the fall of 1895 a cavalry troop was ordered to the

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post and stables were constructed for the horses. Available records indicate this was the first time in some four decades of existence that cavalry was based permanently at the post which later would become the cavalry's last home.<sup>42</sup>

Physical improvements had been made to the post by January of 1898, including planting of 600 trees; and, work began on an improved road from the fort to El Paso proper.<sup>43</sup> The garrison then consisted of three understrength companies of the 18th Infantry, its band, and a troop of the 5th Cavalry. The strength of the garrison was 241 officers and enlisted men. The routine of target practice, drills, and parades generally was typical for an Army post in the West at that time.<sup>44</sup>

The February 1898 sinking of the battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor raised the specter of war with Spain over the island of Cuba. Congress' declaration of war appeared imminent, and members of the 18th Infantry (some 175 officers and enlisted men), under the command of Colonel D.D. Van Valzah, were ordered on April 16 to proceed to New Orleans by train. The 18th Infantry left Fort Bliss three days later. After they left, the post was garrisoned by 68 members of the 5th Cavalry.<sup>45</sup>

Rumors of Spanish plots emanating from Mexico created enough concern in El Paso, given the small number of troops available at Fort Bliss, for local citizens to organize a home guard of 150 men to defend the city.<sup>46</sup> It was at least prudent for the citizens to organize a local militia unit, because on May 11 the Army ordered the last remaining unit at Fort Bliss, Troop A, 5th Cavalry, to proceed to New Orleans. Two days later the troop departed. The post's garrison was reduced to a mere corporal's guard and one lieutenant, the post chaplain, an acting assistant surgeon, and five enlisted men.<sup>47</sup> By June rifles had been issued to the civilian employees at the post . . . three teamsters, one plumber, and two engineers. Troop F, 1st Texas Volunteer Cavalry, with 104 officers and enlisted men and commanded by Major Churchill Towles, arrived at Fort Bliss on the night of July 29, 1898, to relieve the post plumber who had been mounting guard duty.<sup>48</sup>

When the Spanish-American War was over, the Army put regulars back into Fort Bliss, and Company C, 3rd Texas Volunteer Infantry, arrived on September 17, 1898, to relieve the cavalry.<sup>49</sup> Troop J of the fabled black 10th Cavalry, a regular Army unit with 116 officers and enlisted men, arrived to garrison the post on February 2, 1899.<sup>50</sup> Company A, 25th Infantry, with 112 black soldiers, was added to the post in April of the same year.<sup>51</sup>

Black troops based at Fort Bliss had been well received in the community in previous years. However, an incident in 1900 led to racial tension and turmoil. A trooper (McCabe) was charged with stealing a bicycle and arrested at Fort Bliss. A group of enlisted men attempted to prevent his being transported to the El Paso jail after his arrest. Later, several black troopers attempted to free two jailed enlisted men in the predawn hours of February 17. One of the soldiers and a jailer were killed in an ensuing gun battle.

El Paso citizens were outraged over the killing, and they demanded the soldiers be brought to justice. El Paso authorities launched an investigation to learn the identity of the soldiers involved in the jailer's death. Subsequently three black troopers were arrested, and the public clamor died down. The trial and retrial of these enlisted men, however, kept public attention focused on the issue for more than a year. The 25th Infantry was ordered to another post in October 1901, finally putting an end to the controversy. Although the matter was over, the incident left a legacy of bitterness and racism in El Paso for years to come.<sup>52</sup>

Throughout the remainder of the decade a pattern emerged wherein four infantry companies, and sometimes a cavalry troop, constituted the garrison of Fort Bliss. Their activities tended to be routine.

Monthly Post Returns customarily stated, "The troops performed the usual garrison duties during the month."<sup>53</sup> In addition, an infantry company rotation developed: troops would serve a tour of two or three years at Fort Bliss, they then would be rotated to the Philippines, and, often, they would be sent back to Fort Bliss.

Post facilities came under criticism in the early 1900s. A new commander of the Department of Texas, Brigadier General Jesse M. Lee, reported in 1904 that "Fort Bliss is one of the most unattractive posts in the department."<sup>54</sup> One obvious result of Lee's critique was the allocation of funds in 1905-06 to repair buildings, build roads, construct a new post hospital, and install a telephone system.<sup>55</sup>

But in Washington, the Army in 1906 quietly was considering a plan to abandon 18 small forts on the Mexico and Canada borders. These included forts Bliss, Clark, and Brown in Texas, and Fort Huachuca in Arizona. Lieutenant Colonel W.W. Wotherspoon, in a memorandum to the Army chief of staff dated July 7, 1906, suggested the Army close down these installations for health reasons, supply costs, and the strategic value of concentrating troops at a lesser number of forts. However, Lieutenant General Ada Chaffee noted it would be "practically impossible at this time to greatly reduce the number of permanent posts that we have."<sup>56</sup> Political considerations obviously were involved in the decision to retain the border forts. Even if the decision perhaps was made for the wrong reasons, the result was prudent from the standpoint of national defense. The reason? Mexico. In 1906 the aging dictator Díaz was nearing the end of his third decade in power.

Ricardo Flores Magón, founder of the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (PLM), had emerged as the most vocal opponent of Díaz. His movement encompassed the Southwest, and much of his support was in Texas, including El Paso. In both 1906 and 1908 the *Magonistas* planned what can only be called "opera boufee" attempts to capture Ciudad Juárez from El Paso. Both efforts were exercises in futility, but they did focus attention on the fact that the Díaz government was beginning to experience internal and external problems.<sup>57</sup> Army Chief of Staff General Leonard Wood was disturbed enough in 1907 to send a young staff officer to tour the border to investigate conditions.<sup>58</sup> The Díaz government apparently still had the situation in hand in 1908, but the Army prudently was keeping an eye on events in Mexico.

Lee in 1904 prophetically noted the importance of Fort Bliss and the other Army posts on the Texas border, stating, "At the present time the infantry garrisons on the border may be regarded as ample, but should any unforeseen trouble occur (such troubles usually come unexpectedly) cavalry and artillery will be at once needed . . . troops of all arms could soon be concentrated by rail at Fort Bliss, Camp Eagle Pass, Fort McIntosh and Brown. . . ."<sup>59</sup>

However, as historian Jamieson cogently has suggested, "General Lee's remarks were addressed to the future. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Fort Bliss remained a small and quiet post."<sup>60</sup> Physically the post had quarters for 14 officers, four barracks housing 100 enlisted men each, and stables for a single cavalry troop. Four companies of the 19th Infantry, with some 322 officers and enlisted men, comprised the garrison of Fort Bliss in October 1909. That month Fort Bliss was a major participant in one of the most important events in El Paso's history . . . meetings between U.S. President William Howard Taft and Mexico's President Díaz. The meetings took place both in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. The Fort Bliss garrison, reinforced with troops brought by train from forts Sam Houston and Clark, provided security and paraded for the two presidents.<sup>61</sup>

Events at Fort Bliss were routine from the fall of 1909 until the fall of 1910. Four companies of the 23rd Infantry, with a strength of 304 officers and enlisted men under the command of Colonel Alfred Sharpe,

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made up the garrison. There was one new addition to the battalion, a machine-gun platoon equipped with two Maxim machine guns.<sup>62</sup>

It was against this backdrop of routine garrison duty that events in Mexico began to stir; they ultimately would have significant consequences for Fort Bliss. While the Mexican government had focused its attention on the *Magonistas*, a new Mexican exile faction led by Francisco I. Madero was established in late October 1910 in San Antonio. Madero's bid for Mexico's presidency in the 1910 Mexican elections had been thwarted and he had fled to San Antonio to organize a revolution against Díaz.<sup>63</sup>

What next occurred in Mexico was to have a dramatic impact on Fort Bliss. In retrospect what was about to happen seems obvious. El Paso and Ciudad Juárez were the two largest cities along the border in the fall of 1910.<sup>64</sup> Control of the border region and access to the two cities were supremely important to the revolutionaries. The impact of the Mexican Revolution on Fort Bliss and El Paso was predictable.

### **Conclusion**

From the establishment of the first Fort Bliss in 1854, which supported and protected the growing economy of the city of El Paso, until the decision in 1890 to build the present Fort Bliss on La Noria Mesa, the Army's presence was largely uneventful. But the decision to construct the present Fort Bliss enabled the post to grow in an orderly fashion with sufficient room for expansion.

The Army's decision in the 1890s to station a small cavalry unit with an infantry post foreshadowed Fort Bliss's expansion as a cavalry rather than an infantry post. One could hardly have predicted in the fall of 1910 either the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution or the importance of Fort Bliss in defending the border. Suffice it to say the Army's decision in the late nineteenth century to retain Fort Bliss was both prescient and an exercise in eminently sensible geopolitics.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Norman A. Graebner, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: Its Background and Formation*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1949.

<sup>2</sup>Paul N. Garber, *The Gadsden Treaty*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1923.

<sup>3</sup>Garna Loy Christian, *Sword and Plowshare: The Symbiotic Development of Fort Bliss and El Paso, Texas, 1849-1918*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1977, p. 7. Christian's study is by far the best general survey of the first seven decades of Fort Bliss history. Its principal focus is upon the socio-economic impact of Fort Bliss upon El Paso.

<sup>4</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 7-11.

<sup>5</sup>Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1981, pp. 72-74 and footnote 25; also Robert W. Frazier, ed. *Mansfield on the Condition of Western Forts*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1963.

<sup>6</sup>Post Return/Fort Bliss (PR/FB) (cited as El Paso, Texas), January 1854, Returns from U.S. Military Posts, 1800-1916, Microcopy No. 617, Roll 116, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

<sup>7</sup>PR/FB, April 1854, roll 116.

<sup>8</sup>PR/FB, January 1854-February 1856, roll 116.

<sup>9</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 15-19.

<sup>10</sup>PR/FB, October 1856, roll 116; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>11</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup>PR/FB, April 1854 and January 1860, roll 116; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>13</sup>Utley, *Frontiersmen*, pp. 211-212.

<sup>14</sup>For the California Column, see Darlis A. Miller, *A Civil War Legacy: Californians in New Mexico*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1977. A revised version was published by the University of New Mexico Press in November 1982 and is titled, *The California Column in New Mexico*. Also Utley, *Frontiersmen*, pp. 231-233; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 25, 27-29.

<sup>15</sup>PR/FB, October 1865, roll 116.

<sup>16</sup>PR/FB, May 1867, roll 116.

<sup>17</sup>PR/FB, March 1868, roll 116; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup>PR/FB, April 1869, roll 116.

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<sup>19</sup>From 1862 to 1867, El Paso served as a transit point for spies, exiles, and gunrunners, as Mexico sought to expel the French; Robert Ryall Miller, *Arms across the Border: United States Aid to Juárez during the French Intervention in Mexico*, The American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1973, pp. 7, 32, 38.

<sup>20</sup>Perhaps the most noteworthy event that occurred during the 1869-1876 period was the establishment in 1873 of a military telegraph line from Fort Bliss to camps Apache and Verde in Arizona; David J. Marshall, "Adolphus Washington Greely," pp. 90-91, in Lt. Col. Max L. Marshall, USA (Ret.), ed., *The Story of the U.S. Army Signal Corps*, Franklin Watts, Inc., New York, 1965.

<sup>21</sup>The order from the Department of Texas ordering the closure of the fort was dated December 12, 1876, but the four officers, one acting assistant surgeon, and thirty-five enlisted men did not leave the post until January 17, 1878; PR/FB, January 1877, roll 117.

<sup>22</sup>The best account of the Salt War is Walter Prescott Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense*, Boston, 193, pp. 346-367.

<sup>23</sup>PR/FB, January and August 1878, roll 117. Initially E. Troop, 9th Cavalry and Company C, 15th Infantry, arrived in El Paso. E Troop arrived January 1, 1878, and Company C arrived on January 17, 1878. On August 13, 1878, Company A, 15th Infantry arrived in El Paso to reinforce the garrison. A board appointed by President Rutherford B. Hayes and Texas Governor Hubbard to investigate the Salt War, recommended on March 16, 1878, that a permanent military garrison be maintained at El Paso. The recommendation was accepted by the Army and since 1878, Fort Bliss has been garrisoned continuously; Webb, *Texas Rangers*, p. 366.

<sup>24</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>25</sup>PR/FB, August-December 1880, Roll 117; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 36.

<sup>26</sup>Oscar Martinez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848*, University of Texas Press, 1978, pp. 21-23; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>27</sup>For example, PR/FB, October 1881, roll 117.

<sup>28</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 38-41.

<sup>29</sup>The question of whether to abandon Fort Bliss or to make Fort Selden the major post in the Southwest is examined in detail in Perry D. Jamieson, *A Survey History of Fort Bliss: 1890-1940*, Directorate of Environment, USAADCENFB, Fort Bliss, Texas, 1993, pp. 1-3.

<sup>30</sup>Jamieson, *A Survey History*, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*



<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 68-71; also, a detailed examination of the building of the new Fort Bliss is in Jamieson, *A Survey History*, pp. 7-13.

<sup>37</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 74.

<sup>38</sup>An excellent survey of the fort's relation with El Paso is in Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 79-86.

<sup>39</sup>The best account of the 1893 Chihuahua insurrection is Francisco Almada, *La Rebelión de Tomochi*, Chihuahua, 1938; also *El Paso Times*, November 16, 22, 25, 26, 28-30 1983.

<sup>40</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>42</sup>PR/FB, December 1895, roll 118.

<sup>43</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 115.

<sup>44</sup>PR/FB, January-March 1898, roll 119.

<sup>45</sup>PR/FB, April 1898, roll 119.

<sup>46</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 130-133.

<sup>47</sup>PR/FB, May 1898, roll 119.

<sup>48</sup>PR/FB, June-July 1898, roll 119; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 141.

<sup>49</sup>PR/FB, September 1898, roll 119.

<sup>50</sup>PR/FB, February 1899, roll 119.

<sup>51</sup>PR/FB, April 1899, roll 119.

<sup>52</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 172-218.

<sup>53</sup>For example, PR/FB, July 1902, roll 119.

<sup>54</sup>Jamieson, *A Survey History*, p. 26.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 221-222.

<sup>56</sup>Wotherspoon to Army chief of staff, and Chaffee to secretary of war, January 9, 1906, in Third

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Division, War Department General Staff Journals, Record Group (RG) 165, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>57</sup>Richard Estrada, *Border Revolution: The Mexican Revolution in the Ciudad Juárez/El Paso Area, 1906-1916*, (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 1975, pp. 38-44. For a general study of the *Magonistas* see Ellen Howell Myers, *The Mexican Liberal Party, 1903-1910*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1970)

<sup>58</sup>A report of this survey, which included a stop at Fort Bliss and El Paso, can be found in Numerical and Minor Files of the Department of State, National Archives, Microcopy M-862, file nos. 5026 and 5028, roll 429.

<sup>59</sup>Jamieson, *A Survey History*, p. 27.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>61</sup>PR/FB, October 16, 1909, roll 120; also *El Paso Morning Times (EPMT)*, October 17, 1909.

<sup>62</sup>PR/FB, January-November 1910, roll 120.

<sup>63</sup>The best account is David N. Johnson, *Exiles and Intrigue: Francisco I. Madero and the Mexican Revolutionary Junta in San Antonio*, unpublished M.A. thesis, Trinity University, 1975.

<sup>64</sup>Martinez, *Border Boom Town*, pp. 38, 45.

## Chapter II

### THE MADERO REVOLUTION: THE OPENING PHASE (1910-1911)

#### Introduction

The outbreak of the Mexican Revolution on November 20, 1910, initially seemed to be a case of more sound than the fury of battle.<sup>1</sup> But in retrospect, as early as 1906 the U.S. government had become concerned over political opposition, particularly in northern Mexico, to the administration of the aging Díaz. The emergence of the PLM, led by the Mexican exile Magón, provided a focus for Mexican opponents of the Díaz dictatorship.

As a result, Secretary of State Elihu Root requested the secretary of war in June 1907 to dispatch a competent Army officer to the border to quietly survey conditions and report his findings to the State Department. Captain William S. Scott, 1st Cavalry, based at Fort Sam Houston, carried out his confidential mission during the late summer. He prophetically reported on August 26, 1907, ". . . there exists, particularly in the northern states of Mexico, much discontent with present conditions, and a strong leader would receive a strong following in case of a revolutionary outbreak."<sup>2</sup> Scott suggested a U.S. postal inspector be stationed at the El Paso Post Office to examine mail emanating from Mexican revolutionary groups based along the U.S. border. Scott also noted that at that time, ". . . no special vigilance was necessary in El Paso."<sup>3</sup> Following receipt of Scott's report, the adjutant general of the Army advised the commanding general of the Department of Texas on September 28, 1907, that his troops had the authority, with recourse to civil authorities, to enforce the neutrality statutes if Mexican revolutionaries in the United States attempted to launch raids into Mexico.<sup>4</sup>

PLM exiles for the next nine months remained quiescent, planning their next move . . . a bloody raid from Del Rio, Texas, across the Rio Grande to Las Vacas (now Ciudad Acuña). The attack occurred on June 26, 1908, but it was repelled by a small detachment of Mexican troops.<sup>5</sup> The raid resulted in the establishment of a secret intelligence unit on the U.S. border. Its mission was to penetrate the PLM and to prevent its use of American territory as a base for raids into Mexico. This unit, under U.S. Consul Luther Ellsworth of Ciudad Porfirio Díaz, cooperated with Mexican secret agents and succeeded in thwarting a foray from El Paso designed to capture Ciudad Juárez in July 1908. This operation never got off the ground, but it resulted in the arrest of PLM activists in El Paso.<sup>6</sup> The majority of the so-called raiders proved to be U.S. and Mexican secret agents.

By September of 1908, Brigadier General Albert L. Meyer, the commanding general of the Department of Texas, personally had surveyed the area around Del Rio, where the greatest threat seemed to exist. The El Paso region remained quiet, although a few *Magonistas* were operating north of the city in Doña Ana County, New Mexico. By January 1909, the arrest and conviction of a number of the PLM conspirators in Texas, Arizona, and California, drove the *Magonistas* underground. At Fort Bliss and El Paso, relative quiet temporarily prevailed.<sup>7</sup>

Ellsworth prophetically warned in a dispatch dated April 17, 1909, that continued vigilance was necessary and that, ". . . El Paso, Texas, will be the future headquarters of the Mexicans who are interested in overthrowing the present officials of the Mexican government."<sup>8</sup> For the next 17 months, however, there was little indication of impending trouble at Fort Bliss.

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Both Mexican and U.S. authorities were concentrating on the wrong target when focusing on the *Magonistas*. Madero, the son of one of Mexico's wealthiest men, eventually would lead the revolution.<sup>9</sup> Madero had attempted to run against Díaz in the presidential election of 1910, but he was arrested. He managed to escape and reached San Antonio on October 7, 1910. In only six weeks Madero acquired arms in San Antonio and he went to the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass of Laredo, where he expected to meet a large group of compatriots and launch his revolution. Instead he found only a handful of men, and he secretly returned to San Antonio where he went into hiding.<sup>10</sup>

Unknown to Madero, his associates in the state of Chihuahua (Abraham González, Pascual Orozco, Jr., and Doroteo Arango, better known as Pancho Villa) had launched a series of attacks in the southern and western portions of Chihuahua beginning in late November. The Department of Texas headquarters at Fort Sam Houston reacted to reports of Madero's revolutionary activities and ordered cavalry units to the area around Laredo and Del Rio, where most of the activity seemed to be centered.<sup>11</sup>

The revolutionists were concentrating their forces in Chihuahua by mid-December, particularly along the Mexico Northwestern Railway, which ran from Ciudad Juárez in a southwesterly direction toward the state's western boundary before turning east to the city of Chihuahua, the state capital. Troops commanded by Orozco, one of Madero's allies, preyed on the railroad there and began a guerrilla campaign against both the Mexican Federal Army and the famed rural constabulary, the *Rurales*.<sup>12</sup>

The garrison at Fort Bliss soon would begin to react to what was going to become the first great social revolution of the twentieth century—the Mexican Revolution.

### The Madero Revolution: The Opening Phase

Officers and enlisted men at Fort Bliss read the newspapers at the outbreak of the revolution and noted that some of their colleagues at Fort Sam Houston had been sent to the border. Fort Bliss's Commander Sharpe, however, noted simply in November's Monthly Post Return dated December 2, "The command performed the usual garrison duties during the month." Indeed, the most important event during November was a post inspection on November 2-5, 1910, by Major Clarence E. Dentler.<sup>13</sup>

Sharpe and the garrison probably believed they would not be involved if minor disturbances broke out on the border. One reason was the fact that the Fort Bliss garrison was composed of four companies and a machine-gun platoon of the 23rd infantry. There was not a single cavalryman based at the fort; although, the post had some 87 horses and mules that provided the garrison a limited amount of transport.<sup>14</sup> It was generally understood that cavalry, not infantry, would be the principal arm the Army would use to patrol the border. Furthermore, it seemed initial revolutionary action would be in the Laredo-Del Rio area and not in Chihuahua; thus, the Fort Bliss troops probably would remain on the sidelines. Finally, at the outbreak of the revolution few American officials believed Madero would be successful. Díaz had been in power for a third of a century, and the overall sentiment in the State Department and in the Army, was that the rebellion would be crushed in a very short time. But it was not to be.

Scott's and Ellsworth's prophetic words were accurate, and by late December 1910 sentiment among knowledgeable American officials had begun to change. It soon became obvious the Madero revolutionaries were not going to be defeated quickly. The U.S. government suddenly was faced with the problem of patrolling a 1,950-mile-long border. Sentiment in the administration of President Taft, who had met with

Díaz in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez 14 months earlier, was to assist the Mexican government. But implementing this policy was to prove difficult, because the border probably was the most critical geographical area in the revolution:

*The Mexican Revolution was predominantly a Northern movement. In part this was a logical continuation of what had occurred during the Díaz regime, namely, the rapid development of the northern tier of the Mexican states. But in large measure the rise to prominence of leaders such as Francisco Madero, Pascual Orozco, Francisco Villa, Venustiano Carranza, Alvaro Obregón, and Pablo González reflected the advantage they enjoyed over revolutionaries in other parts of Mexico—access to the American border. Arms and ammunition could be imported, loot to pay for these munitions could be exported, U.S. Territory could be used as a base of operations, and the United States provided a sanctuary for the members of defeated factions. Moreover, since the majority of the population along the border were of Mexican extraction, they inevitably became caught up in the factional struggle, as, for that matter, did many of the Anglos, either out of sympathy or because the Revolution became a lucrative business.<sup>15</sup>*

El Paso and Ciudad Juárez in 1910 were the two largest cities along the border. Both cities were key rail centers, and their importance hardly could be underestimated. Although little activity beyond arms smuggling occurred throughout the El Paso region, the problems Sharpe faced with only four understrength infantry companies and a machine-gun platoon (22 officers and 285 enlisted men) could only have begun to cause him sleepless nights, because fighting intensified in southern Chihuahua throughout the month of December.<sup>16</sup>

The problems the Taft administration faced in assisting the Díaz government fundamentally were border problems. Civil authorities were in no position to enforce the neutrality laws—smuggling was an ancient and quasi-honorable profession along the border and the U.S. government had only a handful of customs line riders to patrol the 1,950 miles of border in the fall of 1910. For example, only eight Custom Service men guarded the border from Sanderson in west Texas to the El Paso County line, a river frontage of some 400 miles on the Rio Grande. There also were a handful of Deputy U.S. Marshals, a few Bureau of Investigation and U.S. Secret Service agents. There probably were less than 150 U.S. law-enforcement officers for the entire Texas and New Mexico borders, including the total strength of 14 Texas Rangers.<sup>17</sup>

The U.S. Army also was not in a very good position to patrol the border in December of 1910. The Army's administrative unit for Texas was the Department of Texas. The Army maintained small posts at forts McIntosh, Clark, and Bliss. The only military post in New Mexico that could be called a border garrison was Fort Bayard, located near Silver City, some 80 miles north of the border. An even more serious predicament for the Army was the overall requirement to garrison posts throughout the United States, in Puerto Rico, the Panama Canal Zone, and Alaska. And there were continuing problems with guerrillas in the Philippine Islands. The Army was stretched so thinly it would be difficult to respond to a major emergency along the Mexico border.

Sharpe and his officers watched the evolving Madero revolution in Chihuahua. By the end of December Orozco and Villa had continued to recruit additional manpower, to cut rail lines, and to capture small towns in western Chihuahua. There had been little activity, however, along the border in the El Paso region.<sup>18</sup> By late January 1911 guerrilla armies in Chihuahua continued to grow numerically, and the Mexican government's attempts to stamp out the insurgency were beginning to verge on desperation.

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The U.S. government's efforts to prevent arms and ammunition smuggling in the El Paso region were unsuccessful, although additional Customs line riders and special Deputy U.S. Marshals were employed on an emergency basis. Finally, on January 23, 1911, the Department of Texas ordered the first deployment of troops from Fort Bliss to patrol the area around Polvo, Texas, a tiny community downriver from El Paso. Three officers and forty-five enlisted men spent eight days at Polvo before returning to Fort Bliss. The patrol duty netted no revolutionaries attempting to cross the river or gunrunners crossing arms. But the pace picked up on January 29 even before the first detachment returned to post. A sergeant and seven enlisted men of the machine-gun platoon were sent 19 miles downriver to Clint, Texas, to prevent arms smuggling.<sup>19</sup>

The first major deployment from Fort Bliss occurred on February 1. Orozco, Madero's principal field commander, had assembled a force of some 800 men and advanced north to the outskirts of Ciudad Juárez. Sharpe immediately ordered "all available men" to guard the Stanton and Santa Fe bridges, and he sent a small contingent to the Washington Park area along the river.<sup>20</sup> While Orozco debated whether to attack the federal garrison at Ciudad Juárez, the Army ordered the reinforcement of Fort Bliss. Some 248 officers and enlisted men of the 4th Cavalry from Fort Meade, South Dakota, were rushed to Fort Bliss by train, arriving on February 8. The 4th Cavalry was deployed immediately to patrol the area from Ysleta, Texas, to Pelea, New Mexico.<sup>21</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The pattern of activity was set at Fort Bliss in the opening years of the Mexican Revolution. The Army initially did not have sufficient troops to maintain a large garrison at Fort Bliss. But, troops could be rushed quickly to reinforce the post whenever an attack on Ciudad Juárez seemed imminent. It was relatively easy to ship troops in by train from most military installations in the United States because El Paso was the key rail center in the Southwest. Troop movements could be carried out quickly if necessary, often in 24 hours.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>For example, *EPMT*, November 18-30, 1910.

<sup>2</sup>Captain Scott's report and other correspondence related to his mission are found in National Archives, Numerical and Minor Files of the Department of State, Microcopy M-862, file nos. 5026 and 5028. See specifically Root to secretary of war, June 7, 1907, Adjutant General McCain to Commanding General, Department of Texas (CGDT), "Confidential," June 12, 1907, and Scott to McCain, "Confidential," August 26, 1907.

<sup>3</sup>Scott to Adjutant General (AG), August 26, 1907, Numerical File No. 5026, Department of State, National Archives (DS/NA).

<sup>4</sup>AG to CGDT, September 28, 1907, in Numerical File No. 5026, DS/NA.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. v. Calixto Guerra et al., District Court, Del Rio, No. 20; also U.S. District Court, Del Rio, Nos. 15, 21, 23, 28, 19, 26, 16, 17, 18, 37, 24, 25, and U.S. District Court, San Antonio, nos. 1994, 1995, and 2007—all of the above found in the Federal Records Center, Fort Worth (FRC/FW). General studies of the *Magonistas* that deal with this episode are Myers, *The Mexican Liberal Party*; and Ward Albro III, *Ricardo Flores Magon and the Liberal Party: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Mexican Revolution of 1910*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arizona, 1967.

<sup>6</sup>Richard Estrada, *Border Revolution*, pp. 38-44.

<sup>7</sup>Brigadier General Albert L. Myer, commander Department of Texas, to AG, "Confidential," August 18, 1908, in Numerical File 5208, NA/SD; also Martinez to Magón, Anthony, New Mexico, July 28, 1908, in Charles A. Boynton, U.S. Attorney, Western District of Texas, to the AG, August 18, 1908, Numerical File 5208, NA/SD; also Myer to AG, "Confidential," September 19, 1908, in Numerical File 5208, NA/SD.

<sup>8</sup>Luther Ellsworth, American consul, Ciudad Porfirio Díaz, to the assistant secretary of state, April 17, 1909, Numerical File 5208, NA/SD.

<sup>9</sup>Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, "The Reyes Conspiracy: The Texas Side," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly (SWHQ)*, April 1980, p. 326.

<sup>10</sup>Johnson, *Exiles and Intrigue*.

<sup>11</sup>Record Group 393, Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Department of Texas, Adjutant, Fort Sam Houston to AG, No. 35632.

<sup>12</sup>Michael C. Meyer, *Mexican Rebel: Pascual Orozco and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1915*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1967, pp. 21-24.

<sup>13</sup>PR/FB, November 1910, roll 120.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

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<sup>15</sup>Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, "The Underside of the Mexican Revolution: El Paso, 1912," *The Americas*, July 1982, p. 69.

<sup>16</sup>PR/FB, December 1910, roll 120; also *EPMT*, December 1-31, 1910.

<sup>17</sup>Harris and Sadler, "The Underside," p. 72.

<sup>18</sup>William H. Beezley, *Insurgent Governor: Abraham Gonzalez and the Mexican Revolution in Chihuahua*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1973, p. 48.

<sup>19</sup>PR/FB, January 1911, roll 120.

<sup>20</sup>PR/FB, February 1911, roll 120; also Meyer, *Mexican Rebel*.

<sup>21</sup>Field Return, 4th Cavalry, February 8, 1911, attached to PR/FB, February 1911, roll 120.



## **Chapter III**

# **THE LAST 100 DAYS OF DÍAZ, MADERO'S RISE, AND THE OROZCO REVOLUTION (1911-1912)**

### **Introduction**

The problems that Sharpe and the Fort Bliss garrison faced as the Mexican Revolution gathered force in Chihuahua were enormous, and they revolved around the city of El Paso. An estimated 70 percent of the El Paso population was Hispanic. Thousands of Mexican exiles from the revolution resided in and around the city. A majority of the population was sympathetic to Madero. A significant percentage of the business elite was pro-Madero, either for financial or ideological reasons.<sup>1</sup>

In early 1911 and thereafter, the El Paso business community had good reason to sell weapons and anything else the revolutionists needed. Orozco's troops repeatedly cut rail lines of the Mexico Central and the Mexico Northwest railways south of Ciudad Juárez beginning in December 1910. By January 1911 they virtually had stopped the flow of goods from El Paso into Mexico. A number of El Paso businesses had subsidiaries in Mexico, particularly in the State of Chihuahua, and sales of windmills, plows, and other types of farm machinery were a mainstay of the El Paso economy. Imports of cattle and ore from Chihuahua were the principal source of raw materials for El Paso packing houses and smelters. The impact of the revolution hardly could have been more substantial.<sup>2</sup>

Important segments of the El Paso business community quickly adjusted to changing market conditions and began to change their stocks. They began to sell quantities of arms, ammunition, foodstuffs, and clothing to the revolutionists, who constituted the most promising market available.

The task given Fort Bliss was to seal the border in the El Paso region and to prevent arms from being smuggled to the rebels. The task virtually was impossible to accomplish, for the great majority of El Paso's citizens, Anglo and Hispanic alike, was enthusiastic in support of the Madero revolution as, indeed, were a number of city, state, and federal officials. To their credit, Sharpe and his men did their best with the manpower available.

### **The Last 100 Days of Díaz, Madero's Rise, and the Orozco Rebellion**

The arrival of the 4th Cavalry at Fort Bliss on February 8, 1911, marked the beginning of the last 100 days of the Díaz regime in Mexico. The arrival also symbolized a growing recognition by the War Department in Washington that El Paso was a key American border city and that Fort Bliss was critical for border defense and surveillance. The reinforcement of the fort almost doubled the number of troops available for Sharpe to defend El Paso and to suppress munitions smuggling across the isolated region of southwest Texas and southern New Mexico.

Sharpe's command in February consisted of a total of only 336 officers and enlisted men, a small increase over the 307 men available at the outbreak of the revolution some three months earlier. Sharpe probably breathed a bit easier with the arrival of the 4th Cavalry's additional 248 officers and troopers from the Dakotas.<sup>3</sup>

The difficulties Sharpe faced were formidable, even with the cavalry reinforcements well suited to patrolling the border. It was possible that a battle for Ciudad Juárez would spill over into El Paso. Sharpe knew that even with 538 men, the task of patrolling approximately 91 miles of border, maintaining normal garrison operations and a reserve at Fort Bliss, and protecting the city of El Paso would stretch his manpower to the breaking point. Further complicating the situation was an outbreak of mumps throughout the garrison that sent as many as two dozen cavalymen to the post hospital in early February, further depleting the strength at Fort Bliss.<sup>4</sup>

Sharpe had requested a cavalry troop as early as February 2, but General Hoyt, commander of the Department of Texas, informed him that no cavalry were available and that a company of infantry from Fort Clark would be sent.<sup>5</sup> The following day, however, Sharpe reported that 500 of Orozco's troops were only 12 miles south of Ciudad Juárez. The War Department ordered four troops of the 4th Cavalry to Fort Bliss.<sup>6</sup> Sharpe warned his superiors at Fort Sam Houston on February 4, "Every available man of my command now is along river front," and added information from the U.S. consul in Ciudad Juárez that Orozco had informed him he would attack that day. Orozco apparently thought better of his announced intention and perhaps was playing a bit of psychological warfare with the Mexican federal commander in Ciudad Juárez. Orozco did not attack the city, but during the next 48 hours small engagements between Mexican federal troops and the revolutionists occurred downriver and south of Ciudad Juárez. At the same time Sharpe's patrols began to pick up contingents of revolutionists. They arrested some nine armed *Maderistas* just west of El Paso.<sup>7</sup>

Fort Bliss patrols forced the revolutionists to move either downriver from El Paso or west into New Mexico. Sharpe reported, "The line west of Pelea, especially about Noria, is infested with outlaws and smugglers."<sup>8</sup> The 4th Cavalry began to have an affect on events by February 12. A 4th Cavalry patrol at Ysleta, led by Sergeant Bert Hart, arrested Martín Casillas, one of Madero's "generals," as he attempted to join his command of 150 men across the river. Casillas earlier had captured 10 small towns downriver from Ciudad Juárez, and he had reported to Madero's revolutionary junta in El Paso prior to his capture.<sup>9</sup>

The realities of enforcing the neutrality statutes began to have an impact on the Fort Bliss garrison after February 9, when a small detachment arrested eight wounded revolutionaries who had been brought across the river.<sup>10</sup> The Army turned the wounded men over to the U.S. attorney in El Paso who referred the case to the attorney general in Washington. The attorney general ordered Madero's men released because he thought there was no case against them.<sup>11</sup> The troops from Fort Bliss were to encounter this kind of situation again and again as were other Army troops stationed throughout the border region. Gunrunners and revolutionaries would be arrested, turned over to the Department of Justice, then released, sometimes almost immediately, by federal officials. One part of the problem lay in the law itself, which required cast-iron evidence that was difficult to obtain.

Orozco's forces remained in the vicinity of Ciudad Juárez and the 4th Cavalry continued to carry out its mission of patrolling the area southeast of El Paso along the north bank of the Rio Grande. Their vigilance paid off on February 14 with the arrest of eight revolutionists and the confiscation of two express wagons containing 13 boxes of ammunition and 12 rifles.<sup>12</sup> Washington officials had little perception of the difficulties involved in utilizing a handful of troops to patrol a largely isolated border region. But the pressure on the Fort Bliss garrison was alleviated somewhat by February 17 when federal troops from Chihuahua City arrived at Ciudad Juárez. Orozco prudently ordered his troops to retreat southwestward toward Casas Grandes.<sup>13</sup>

Fort Bliss soldiers continued their seemingly endless patrols of the border throughout February; but, changes were in the offing. Federal officials in Washington began to doubt the Díaz government could

survive, and additional troops were ordered to the border. Fort Bliss received its share when an additional 165 officers and troopers of the 4th Cavalry, commanded by the veteran Colonel Edgar G. Steever, arrived in early March.<sup>14</sup>

The growing sense of crisis caused the Army to implement a major change in its approach to protecting the border: Patrol districts were established along the 1,951 miles of international boundary. Steever was given command of the El Paso Patrol District, which included 91 border miles, on March, 4, 1911.<sup>15</sup> Sharpe remained Fort Bliss's commander. Creation of the El Paso Patrol District was a milestone in the evolution of the command structure governing Fort Bliss. Henceforth, the most important military figure in the El Paso area was the commander of the patrol district, to whom the Fort Bliss garrison commander reported. The commander of the patrol district, in turn, reported to the commanding general of the Department of Texas. On occasion, however, the same individual would serve in a dual capacity as the commander of both Fort Bliss and the patrol district. A case in point is Steever, who also was named Fort Bliss's post commander on January 2, 1912. The new command structure lasted for the remainder of the decade. Fort Bliss's commander essentially was responsible for housekeeping duties while the commander of the patrol district retained tactical control of the troops patrolling the border.

El Paso Patrol District troops made an occasional capture of arms and rebels in early March, but it was an order by President Taft on March 6 to assemble an entire division of U.S. troops, the so-called "Maneuver Division" that galvanized the Army. The mobilization of the Maneuver Division at Fort Sam Houston pointed up shortcomings in mobilization, logistics, and the operations of the general staff in Washington. Congressional pressure had forced the Army to maintain a large number of small military posts throughout the country. These small, scattered forces made it extremely difficult to assemble a war-strength division in a short time.<sup>16</sup> Still, the formation of the Maneuver Division meant reinforcements now were available for Fort Bliss only 600 miles away at San Antonio, one day's train ride.

It appeared in mid-March that the momentum of the revolution had shifted away from the insurgents. Madero, who had entered Mexico in mid-February after hiding in El Paso, now had taken command of the revolution. Madero was not a competent military commander. The revolutionists faced a sizeable contingent of the Mexican Federal Army the first time on March 6 at Casas Grandes in one of the few set-piece battles of this phase of the revolution. Madero and his troops were defeated soundly, and they suffered significant casualties before retreating from the battlefield in disarray. Thereafter, Madero only nominally commanded his army in the field, leaving tactics to the more proficient Orozco and Villa.<sup>17</sup>

Madero's defeat at Casas Grandes proved to be illusory because Orozco reverted to his previously successful tactics of cutting rail lines and capturing small towns in northern and western Chihuahua defended by small contingents of Rurales, Díaz's paramilitary constabulary. The rebels had regained their military momentum by early April, again raising the specter of more problems for the Fort Bliss garrison.<sup>18</sup>

The daily grind of patrolling 91 miles of border, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, must have been wearing down the garrison by early April. An estimate of the troops required to handle the task adequately would have to have been in the 5,000 range; Steever had only 700 men.<sup>19</sup> In addition, an epidemic of mumps, measles, and unspecified throat ailments among Fort Bliss cavalymen further diminished the available troops.<sup>20</sup> On March 22 Steever wired his superiors that because so many of his troops were newly enlisted recruits and because of sickness among the cavalymen, he could only muster a single troop of cavalry for patrol duty.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile Madero and Orozco were carrying out a deception operation to convince Mexican Federal Army commanders that rebels planned to attack the city of Chihuahua. In reality they were planning a major attack on Ciudad Juárez. Additional munitions and recruits would have to be acquired before the attack could be launched. The fact that there was an increased movement of munitions across the border was readily apparent to Steever. Lieutenant F.B. Edwards, commanding a 4th Cavalry detachment at Columbus, New Mexico, reported on April 2 that 17,000 rounds of ammunition had crossed the port of entry located there.<sup>22</sup> The same day Steever learned from U.S. Customs at Eagle Pass that two cases of ammunition were en route to an El Paso hardware store.<sup>23</sup> Steever reported to the Department of Texas that both arms shipments, and a number of earlier ones, have "unquestionably gone into insurrecto hands." He also noted, "Military authorities are helpless to prevent such sales."<sup>24</sup>

The problem Steever and the Fort Bliss garrison faced principally was based on federal statutes dealing with neutrality violations. For example, it was not illegal for hardware stores in El Paso to sell 30-30 rifles and ammunition to Mexican citizens. The only illegal act under federal law was crossing the munitions into Mexico for illegal purposes. Therefore, the Army was constrained legally to catch rebels in the very act of crossing the border with arms before they could be arrested. It was a task of considerable difficulty.<sup>25</sup>

In any case, Madero's troops had carried out their deception to pin down federal troops at Chihuahua City, and munitions had been crossed for the rebel army despite Steever's troops' best efforts. Madero's army began to deploy northward toward Ciudad Juárez on April 11. The following day Steever promptly forwarded to the Department of Texas a report from two Mexican sources that revolutionary troops would be in the vicinity of Ciudad Juárez during the next 48 hours. Steever, however, had been successfully deceived by Madero's ploy and wrote his own conclusion to the report, stating "[I] personally do not believe Madero will attempt to attack Ciudad Juárez so soon."<sup>26</sup>

Possibly a little chagrined, Steever reported 24 hours later (April 13) that Madero's troops *had* reached the vicinity of Ciudad Juárez.<sup>27</sup> Steever was a veteran and an able cavalry commander, but his incorrect prediction pointed up yet another problem the Army faced on the border, the lack of good intelligence information.

For all intents and purposes the general staff of the Army did not have a G-2 intelligence section in early 1911. Army intelligence consisted of a handful of military attachés and a committee in the Army War College in Washington. Occasionally Army officers would take leave or be ordered to carry out confidential missions abroad, but these usually were one-time operations. The lack of information at the tactical and strategic level was a constant problem for commanders on the border. As a result, Steever was forced to act both as intelligence collector and analyst, a daunting challenge to this most capable commander.<sup>28</sup>

The first fighting for Ciudad Juárez began on April 15 with a skirmish at Bauche, 8 miles south of the city. The scene was repeated two days later in the same area.<sup>29</sup> Only a few rebel and federal troops were wounded in the initial fighting, but the worst was yet to come. The deception plan clearly had worked, because the majority of federal troops deployed in the state of Chihuahua were awaiting Madero's attack on Chihuahua City. Rebel troops also had ensured that reinforcements for the federal garrison could reach Ciudad Juárez only on foot or horseback by conducting a systematic program of destruction. They burned railroad bridges and tore up rails on both of the railroads that came into the city.

The rebels had completely surrounded the city by April 18, and Madero called on the garrison to surrender.<sup>30</sup> Forty-eight hours later Steever wired his superiors that an attack could come anytime after high noon, because his outposts at old Fort Bliss at Hart's Mill on the river reported that the main body of

Madero's forces could be seen approaching from the west.<sup>31</sup> The attack did not come on April 20, but there was a crescendo of activity by arms smugglers supplying the rebel army. This period was extremely frustrating for Steever as he received a number of telegrams from the Army's adjutant general advising him to increase vigilance to prevent munitions smuggling.<sup>32</sup>

Steever's response to the Washington admonitions was to request permission from the Department of Texas to seize arms and ammunition in El Paso hardware stores "without waiting for attempt to send same into Mexico."<sup>33</sup> Steever's hope for a relaxation of his standing orders on arms seizure was dashed by a return telegram that stated, "Arms and ammunition can only be seized when attempt is being made to cross it to Mexico."<sup>34</sup> But Steever, having reminded his headquarters that preventing arms shipments across the border was difficult if not impossible, was now more worried about the impending battle just across the river from El Paso. He began to move troops from outlying areas into the city of El Paso itself.

By April 23 Madero had named a group of representatives to negotiate with Díaz government emissaries, and a five-day truce at Ciudad Juárez was declared to await the outcome of the talks.<sup>35</sup> Steever and his officers, however, now were forced to play both a diplomatic and a military role. The armistice agreement between the representatives of Madero and Díaz contained a clause that stated Madero's forces could receive provisions but no weapons and that they could pass customs in Ciudad Juárez without paying duties. The *Maderistas*, however, requested that Steever allow them to take articles across the river at the El Paso smelter north of old Fort Bliss at Hart's Mill. This location would allow them to evade customs and smuggle ammunition to their troops. Steever, after consulting higher headquarters, informed the rebels he could not allow them to pass anything across the river at the smelter area.<sup>36</sup>

Steever and his troops were forced to walk a tightrope between rebel and federal forces in Ciudad Juárez. A five-day extension of the truce was agreed to by Madero and Federal Commander General Navarro on April 29, and talks continued at the so-called "Peace Grove" across from the smelter west of Ciudad Juárez. At the same time, Fort Bliss troops daily were arresting rebels crossing the river, and they were seizing munitions Madero was attempting to obtain for his forces.<sup>38</sup> Officials agreed to an additional three-day extension to the truce. Then it was learned that two cases of smallpox had been discovered among the rebels, and the Army had to consider making preparations for mass inoculations and a quarantine program.<sup>39</sup>

Pressures on both Madero and Navarro were building by May 6 as the peace talks dragged on, and Steever's troops continued to seize smuggled arms and to arrest armed rebels caught in U.S. territory.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, Steever was frustrated by the federal courts in El Paso and in Las Cruces, which continued the practice of immediately releasing Madero's troops the Army arrested.<sup>41</sup>

The armistice evaporated into battle on May 8. Orozco's and Villa's troops began the long-awaited attack on Ciudad Juárez in defiance of Madero's orders. What Steever had long feared, a long, bloody engagement for possession of the largest and most important Mexican border city, began at approximately 10 a.m.<sup>42</sup> When fighting started, the citizens of El Paso immediately flocked to the riverbank to observe the battle rather than prudently remain in their residences and businesses. Steever and his troops faced a geography problem. The proximity of the two cities to each other meant an attack on Ciudad Juárez inevitably caused bullets from rifle and machine-gun fire to fall into El Paso.

Within a matter of hours Steever was reporting that at least four American citizens had been killed while his troops had been attempting unsuccessfully to keep local residents back from the river.<sup>43</sup> In one case, a baby lying in a crib hundreds of yards north of the river was killed by a wild shot. By nightfall some six Americans had been killed by bullets falling into El Paso.<sup>44</sup>

Fierce fighting resumed at daybreak on May 9 when Orozco's and Villa's troops began entering the city, fighting from house to house. In a hasty dispatch to Fort Sam Houston, Steever reported that Navarro and his troops were fighting "heroically," and he noted that more El Pasoans had been killed and wounded as rifle fire continued to fall into the city.<sup>45</sup> Troops from Fort Bliss continued to patrol the river bank, watching the fighting as much of Ciudad Juárez fell into the hands of Madero's troops, buildings burned, and wounded rebel troops crossed the river to be hospitalized at an impromptu hospital set up in El Paso.<sup>46</sup>

The events in Ciudad Juárez caused a stir at the War Department in Washington. The adjutant general wired Steever and asked him to investigate reports of firing from El Paso into Ciudad Juárez during the course of the battle.<sup>47</sup> Diplomats at the Department of State wondered about the ultimate outcome of the revolution. Steever reported on the morning of May 10 that the battle of Ciudad Juárez finally was over and that Navarro had surrendered with some 450 troops.<sup>48</sup> Steever also prodded his superiors in a telegram asking, "What shall the character of my relations, if any, be with the insurrectos if they are in de-facto control of Ciudad Juárez?"<sup>49</sup> There apparently was no response to the colonel's request for instructions. Order gradually was restored as Fort Bliss troops maintained their patrol of the river and bridges, although Steever did report that some revolutionists had become drunk after the battle and had killed two persons in Ciudad Juárez.<sup>50</sup> By nightfall Steever was able to inform his superiors, "All quiet in Ciudad Juárez and peaceful in El Paso."<sup>51</sup>

Madero was now in control of a major border port of entry, and the War Department had to conclude that the Mexican rebel leader probably would emerge triumphant over Díaz. Therefore, the department ordered Steever to allow shipments of munitions to the *Maderistas*.<sup>52</sup> There was one cloud on the horizon, however, when Steever learned that Madero perhaps was not in complete control of his subordinates. Navarro, the federal commander who had surrendered, was in danger of being executed by Orozco and Villa on the afternoon of May 10. He allegedly had ordered the execution of rebel prisoners during earlier campaigns in Chihuahua. But Madero succeeded in arranging Navarro's escape, and he reached El Paso uninjured.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, the fall of the Díaz government in Mexico City was approaching. Steever reported another armistice was in the making for the next five days and, "prospects for peace seem brighter."<sup>54</sup> Steever also was grappling with his anomalous position as both a military commander and diplomat. He reported that his troops had seized one of Orozco's cannon breech blocks that had been sent to El Paso for repair. Apparently the War Department's permission to sell munitions to Madero did not extend to artillery repair.<sup>55</sup>

Steever was one of the "old breed" of officers, and he had shown he could handle situations that were quite literally without precedent in practice or in international law. He could take satisfaction from the fact that the troops under his command at Fort Bliss and throughout the El Paso Patrol District had performed very well under extremely trying circumstances.

By May 22nd he was able to inform his superiors that a "Peace Pact" between Madero and the Mexican federal government had been approved. The pact called for (1) President Díaz to step down, (2) an interim president to be named, and (3) elections to take place in the fall.<sup>56</sup> This appeared to be a prelude for the restoration of peace in Mexico, but events would prove differently.

Steever was ordered to return the seized cannon breech block (presumably because the War Department finally had concluded that Madero indeed had won the revolution). He had permission and time by the first week in June to inspect the 91 miles of his patrol district.<sup>57</sup> On June 10 Steever arranged what was to become a familiar job for the Fort Bliss garrison, the escort and transport of about 450 Mexican federal prisoners who

had surrendered when Ciudad Juárez fell. Steever was to take the Mexican soldiers to Laredo by railroad for their release. He had to provide a Spanish-speaking officer, a small escort for the trip, and to negotiate with the Mexican consul in El Paso concerning the operation. Simultaneously he also had to make similar plans for transporting another contingent of Mexican troops from Chihuahua to Tijuana via the railroads in El Paso.<sup>58</sup>

Normality appeared to have returned to the El Paso region by the end of June. The size of the units of the 23rd Infantry on guard duty at the Santa Fe and Stanton Street bridges was reduced. A "monthly" fire drill took place on Fort Bliss on June 20 for the first time in months.<sup>59</sup> By the first week of June, the Department of Texas ordered a reduction in the continuous patrols that had been conducted since March all along the Texas border. This gave the troopers of the 3rd and 4th cavalries at Fort Bliss and throughout the El Paso Patrol District a chance to relax.<sup>60</sup>

The summer remained quiet with the exception of one administrative change. Colonel Edwin F. Glenn, formerly commander of Fort McIntosh during the Madero rebellion, arrived to assume command of Fort Bliss on August 6. The new commander initiated a rigorous routine of three-day practice marches, coupled with instruction in topics such as map reading for each company in the garrison.<sup>61</sup> Glenn had been in command only a month when Department Commander Brigadier General J.W. Duncan inspected Fort Bliss and went on maneuvers with the garrison.<sup>62</sup> Inspections and practice marches were routine in peacetime, but now they were underlain with the suspicion that perhaps the revolution in Mexico was not over and that the troops at Fort Bliss would have to be ready in case of an emergency.

Fort Bliss had barely gotten over the inspection when Glenn was notified that Secretary of War Henry Stimson and U.S. Army Chief of Staff Wood would arrive October 18 to inspect the 23rd Infantry and to tour the post. Glenn must have wondered what he was doing right or wrong to justify two back-to-back inspections. The visit by Stimson and Wood was a symbol that Fort Bliss and the city of El Paso finally had begun to be recognized . . . the city as a key point on the border and the fort as the most important Army post on the border.<sup>63</sup>

Glenn took virtually his entire command on a six-day practice march about a week after the visits.<sup>64</sup> A rigorous taskmaster and veteran of the Philippine Insurrection, Glenn was aware that unrest bubbled just beneath the surface in Mexico where Madero had been elected president and had assumed office on November 1. Two major insurgencies plagued the new Mexican government in the fall of 1911: the guerrilla campaign of Emiliano Zapata south of Mexico City and an attempt by former Mexican Minister of War, General Bernardo Reyes, to overthrow the Madero government. The Reyes conspiracy had tentacles in El Paso, but this apparently did not create any major problems for Fort Bliss.<sup>65</sup>

The Army high command's uneasiness about the situation in Mexico inevitably was reflected at Fort Bliss. This discomfort probably was partly the reason for the frequent inspections. The visits unquestionably helped speed up what, in retrospect, was inevitable: the conversion of Fort Bliss from an infantry to a cavalry post for the blindingly simple reason that cavalry could patrol the border much more effectively than could men on foot.

The conversion of Fort Bliss began on January 22, 1912, with the 4th Cavalry moving from its temporary camp (appropriately named Camp Steever in honor of its commander) near the fort into the post itself. The 23rd Infantry simultaneously boarded trains in El Paso for its transfer to Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana. The merchants in El Paso were delighted with the changeover, because the payroll and upkeep of a cavalry

unit was about four times that of a infantry unit of similar size.<sup>66</sup> However, the loss of the 23rd Infantry was a net loss in the total strength of troops assigned to the El Paso Patrol District since they were not replaced. Steever was confident, though, that the 4th Cavalry, with its 15 officers and 334 troopers, was capable of handling most situations.<sup>67</sup> What Steever did not know was that a rebellion was brewing in the Mexican army garrison in Ciudad Juárez.

Why this occurred is complicated, at best, and attempts by historians to unravel the outbreak of the *Orozquista* rebellion have been plagued with obfuscation and evasion. In short, no one is really quite sure what happened, although they generally can explain why it happened. Since Madero's overthrow of Díaz and his subsequent election in the fall of 1911, the War Department had been uneasy about the Madero government's future. As a result they had dispatched three undercover officers (two in one team and a third separately) to Mexico to report on the stability, or lack thereof, of the Madero regime. Their reports (at least those extant) were prophetic. They predicted that Madero would be unable to remain in power and that he would be overthrown in the not-too-distant future.<sup>68</sup>

What seems most apparent is the celebrated quotation by Porfirio Díaz, upon leaving Mexico for exile, directed toward Madero, "You have unleashed the tiger, now let us see if you can ride him." Following the takeover by Madero and the failure of the so-called Reyes rebellion, the "outs" in Mexico (the *Científicos*, who were Díaz's elite advisors), the wealthy *hacendados* in Chihuahua and elsewhere, and the discontented former Madero revolutionaries (like Orozco, Jr.) came together. They were united not by ideology, but by the potential promise of money and power. The key element in the equation was Orozco.<sup>69</sup>

Orozco's motivation was varied at best. He had been principally responsible for making Madero's revolution a military success,; but he was consigned to oblivion by being named to a relatively minor post as the commander of the *Rurales* in the state of Chihuahua. Evidence indicates Orozco fell under the sway of the "outs" in the fall of 1911, but he did not fully commit himself until February 1912 while he was in the process of putting down a rebellion in the garrison at Ciudad Juárez. But we simply do not have a complete answer to Orozco's motivations or timetable. What we do know is Orozco apparently had links with the Reyes conspiracy, and when it collapsed he joined the next conspiracy and became its leader.<sup>70</sup>

Suffice it to say that none of this mattered to Steever or the men of the Fort Bliss garrison. What they did know was that their mission was to protect the El Paso region. By contrast with the events of May 1911, they had to contend with a much larger task should another revolution break out. They must prevent deaths like those that occurred during the capture of Ciudad Juárez when more than a dozen El Pasoans were killed or wounded by stray rifle fire. This part of the equation could only have caused consternation for Steever, because a new factor had come into play—the state of Texas.

Texas has always been different from many of the states since the nineteenth century when it established its independence prior to joining the United States in the 1840s. The Lone Star State always had been characterized by independence and a type of quasi sovereignty. The state's unique law-enforcement agency, the Texas Rangers, historically had been used as a paramilitary arm of state government. Various Texas governors had taken the position that if the federal government could not protect its citizens from raids across its borders by Mexican rebels or by Indians, then the state of Texas would. The governor of Texas in 1912 was Oscar Branch Colquitt, and he took the idea of his responsibility for the safety of Texans and their property even further than many of his predecessors.<sup>71</sup>

Colquitt, for example, had ordered his 14-man Ranger force to arrest Madero in early 1911, and he had asked the federal government if he could send the Rangers into Mexico to capture Madero. The federal



government hastily refused the request. The governor also had been outraged by the death of El Paso citizens during the first battle of Ciudad Juárez. By January 1912, Colquitt had made it plain he never again would allow Texans to be killed by Mexicans on Texas soil.<sup>72</sup> It was against this backdrop of events that Steever and the 4th Cavalry moved into Fort Bliss.

The 4th Cavalry had just moved into its quarters when fighting broke out in Ciudad Juárez on January 31.<sup>73</sup> At 7:30 p.m. the garrison in Ciudad Juárez revolted. Steever quickly rushed three cavalry troops and the machine-gun platoon to El Paso to guard the bridges.<sup>74</sup> For some hours the garrison in Ciudad Juárez went on a rampage, looting the city before Orozco arrived ostensibly to put down the rebellion. In 24 hours the revolt had ended. Steever's troops returned to their barracks by nightfall on February 1.<sup>75</sup> It proved to be a short-lived respite.

It soon was evident the Madero government's authority did not extend to Chihuahua. By February 12, Steever was forwarding information that an unidentified rebel band had been reported near Columbus and that local citizens were calling for troops. Steever pointed out in a telegram that "Columbus is 86 miles from here and would require three days to march through sand." He was instructed to send only an officer to investigate and to keep his command concentrated at Fort Bliss.<sup>76</sup>

Two problems for both Madero and Steever were the uncertainty of Orozco's loyalty to the Mexican government and the apparent disloyalty both of the Ciudad Juárez garrison and most of the Mexican troops stationed in Chihuahua. The Mexican government realized reliable troops were needed at Ciudad Juárez, but it was afraid that sending them by train through Chihuahua might precipitate a full-scale rebellion. The government requested U.S. permission to send troops to Eagle Pass and then across Texas by train to El Paso where they would pass into Ciudad Juárez. Although the U.S. government had set up such a contingency plan earlier, the plan died this time because of the intransigence of Colquitt, who was not about to allow Mexican troops to cross Texas soil.<sup>77</sup>

The situation in Chihuahua continued to deteriorate, and the U.S. consul in Ciudad Juárez, Thomas Edwards, reported that most of western Chihuahua lay in rebel hands.<sup>78</sup> The question in the minds of Steever and his superiors was, who led the rebels and what was their ideological stance? Some days would pass before this could be answered.

On the morning of February 15 a regrettable incident occurred. A Lieutenant Field, commanding 19 men of the 18th Infantry, sent to El Paso to relieve the Fort Bliss garrison, was ordered to the Santa Fe Street bridge to relieve the detachment on duty. Field did not understand the street railway route, and he and his soldiers unknowingly entered Ciudad Juárez en route to the bridge. The streetcar quickly was surrounded by angry Mexican citizens protesting what they believed was an invasion. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed among the Mexican officers who escorted the troops back across the bridge to El Paso. Steever apologized to the Mexican consul in El Paso for the incident and placed the lieutenant under arrest.<sup>79</sup> The incident, however, heightened the already tense feelings in the Mexican border city.

Reports reaching the Fort Bliss commander in succeeding days made the situation seem even more ominous as rebels strengthened their hold on western Chihuahua. By February 23 it had become apparent that Orozco, who had resigned his post with the Madero government effective March 1, now appeared to be the rebel leader.<sup>80</sup> The new revolutionary groups appeared to be moving on Ciudad Juárez from the southwest. Furthermore, Steever noted that many Juárez residents had moved to El Paso, and he noted, "Much unrest and scheming among Mexican population El Paso against U.S. government. Twenty thousand residing here augmented largely recently from Juárez."<sup>81</sup>

Steever constantly had to look over his shoulder. As early as February 2 Colquitt had sent a wire to President Taft that said in part, "I ask that you give directions to the war department to protect citizens of Texas from firing of Mexican bandits across the border. I ask that you give notice to the mutineers and Mexican government that they must not shoot into El Paso as they did at the last battle of Juárez. If necessary will take drastic steps to prevent this reoccurrence."<sup>82</sup> Three weeks later, on February 25, El Paso County Sheriff Peyton Edwards had published in the *El Paso Morning Times*, a "Notice to all Citizens Having Arms: As Sheriff of El Paso country I will issue commissions to all responsible citizens to carry arms as members of posse comitatus in the event that it becomes necessary to protect the lives and property of citizens of El Paso . . . A number of citizens have already enrolled, and I will be in my office from 9 a.m. for the purpose of issuing commissions to all citizens having arms who may desire to enlist. . ."<sup>83</sup>

Against this background, combined with Colquitt's vehement statements about his citizens being injured, Taft ordered the Department of State to take action. He stipulated that the department notify the Mexican government, "The President feels that his duty and public opinion absolutely forbid toleration of any repetition of injury to Americans on American soil, as now threatened at Juárez, and he is disposed to give public warning that in such emergency he would be obliged to order troops to cross the line, as a police measure, and to disarm or drive away from Juárez any fighting forces threatening life in El Paso, thereafter returning."<sup>84</sup>

With rebels closing in on Ciudad Juárez from the south and using the president's words as a threat, Steever issued orders on February 26 for three cavalry troops and the machine-gun platoon to guard the bridges and the riverfront.<sup>85</sup> By that afternoon Edwards reported that the rebel general Emilio Campa had informed him, "All foreigners in Ciudad Juárez should seek a place of safety, as his command will attack the city without delay."<sup>86</sup> By late afternoon Steever reported that he had detachments at both bridges and cavalry on the flanks of the bridges guarding the river. He reminded his superiors, "No troops have yet arrived from San Antonio except wagon train and machine gun platoon."<sup>87</sup>

Steever's peace of mind must have improved significantly when three batteries of the 3rd Field Artillery and the entire 22nd Infantry, comprising some 1,400 troops, arrived on February 27. On the morning of February 27 Steever reported he could see the rebels advancing on Ciudad Juárez. From an outpost at the Santa Fe street bridge, he reported later that firing had broken out and that troops of the Mexican government's garrison had surrendered at 10:15 a.m. after giving only token resistance.<sup>88</sup> Steever put a familiar question to his superiors: What would the U.S. government's attitude be toward this latest rebellion?

As Fort Bliss troopers patrolled the river, an undercurrent of anti-Americanism became evident. It probably was a result of pronouncements by U.S., Texas, and El Paso officials warning that the U.S. Army would invade Ciudad Juárez to prevent U.S. citizens from being threatened by revolutionary gunfire. By mid-March the situation remained confused, although it appeared Orozco, who had assumed leadership of the revolutionaries, had the initiative at least in Chihuahua. In El Paso, the Fort Bliss garrison's role was one of watchful waiting. But there was one major complication. On March 14 Taft issued a proclamation from the White House banning shipments of munitions to Mexico. The proclamation was modified later to allow guns and ammunition to be purchased by the Madero government.<sup>89</sup>

The Fort Bliss garrison would have to provide the manpower to patrol the 90 or so miles of border and prevent munitions from being shipped illegally across the Rio Grande or across the desert to the west of El Paso, where the border was marked only by stone monuments. Steever and his officers were keenly aware that public sentiment toward Madero's administration had shifted drastically in the past six months.

Previously, the Mexican leader was a hero to the great majority of his countrymen and to thousands of Hispanic-Americans who now lived in El Paso. Although there were no Gallup polls in early 1912, it appears that by March most Hispanics in El Paso had become less than enthusiastic about Madero, and many had become actively hostile toward him.

It appeared that Orozco was winning the revolution, and many wished to climb on his bandwagon. The Mexican Revolution also had become big business in El Paso. A number of local merchants were selling everything from hay to munitions, and they wanted Orozco's business, because their normal Chihuahua markets had been depressed by this latest revolutionary outburst.<sup>90</sup>

There never were enough troops to cover the El Paso Patrol District. And with much of both the Anglo and Hispanic populations in El Paso and throughout the area in sympathy with the *Orozquistas*, Steever's task was doubly difficult. A telegram from Steever, dated March 8, forwarded from the secretary of war to the secretary of state, explained the nature of the problem faced by the Fort Bliss and El Paso District commander:

*Large shipments arms and ammunition being exported through El Paso to Juárez, undoubtedly intended for Mexican rebels. Am holding up consignment temporarily until I can further investigate; called on deputy collector customs officers, Bureau Investigation, Department of Justice, and the United States Commissioner for assistance to prevent exportation but could get none. Deputy collector states that under that portion of letter instructions, Treasury Department, May 15, 1911, which says, "the mere sale, however, of supplies in El Paso to Mexicans, whether insurrectos or supporters of the Government, and their delivery across the border, without more, is not a violation of international law or the neutrality statutes," he is obliged to pass material if shipper signs manifest. . . . Twenty cases rifles, 34 cases ammunition, shipped by one arms dealer known here and name probably fictitious. Under above circumstances little likelihood of attempted smuggling when arms can be carried across bridges by wagon load. Request instructions.*<sup>91</sup>

President Taft's proclamation of March 14 was a response to Steever's dilemma. Madero dispatched Enrique C. Llorente from Mexico to El Paso with virtually unlimited funds to thwart the Mexican president's former military commander. Llorente, who had a flair for intrigue, expended between \$500,000 and \$700,000 in El Paso to hire dozens of secret agents and mercenaries and to suborn his opponents. Cooperating with Bureau of Investigation Agent L.E. Ross, Llorente kept his agents clustered like vultures around the offices of the principal arms dealers in El Paso. His efforts substantially curtailed the flow of arms to the rebels.<sup>92</sup> Even with the proclamation and an efficient Mexican consul, however, it was the Fort Bliss garrison and the other troops deployed by Steever in the El Paso Patrol District that would have to provide the figurative glue to seal the area from large-scale arms shipments.<sup>93</sup>

For the next six months the Fort Bliss garrison mounted a ceaseless patrol as the first line of defense against munitions smuggling, the literal lifeblood of the *Orozquista* armies. Initially Orozco believed the presidential proclamation against exporting guns and ammunition could be breached. Smuggling was, after all, an established profession in El Paso, and many firms did a booming business supplying the rebels.<sup>94</sup>

One of the problems the Army faced was a series of ingenious schemes utilized by the *Orozquistas* to thwart the arms embargo. For example, a number of freelance smugglers operated in El Paso and employed a variety of techniques. One of the most common was for people, including children, simply to conceal small amounts of ammunition on their persons and either walk across the bridge or ride the streetcar over the

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border. Several smuggling rings even made canvas vests for their runners to wear so they could carry more cartridges per trip. There was no lack of runners, especially among destitute Mexican refugees eager to earn a few cents per cartridge for carrying ammunition. They knew that if they were caught they would receive only a short sentence in the county jail. But obviously the amount of munitions an individual could carry at one time was limited. Persons typically were arrested with only 50 to 100 rounds on their person. Rarely was someone caught with as many as 500 rounds.<sup>95</sup>

Perhaps the most inventive method utilized for smuggling was one devised by El Paso's chief *Orozquista* operative, Victor Ochoa. Ochoa devised a large, black rubber bladder in which several thousand rounds of ammunition could be placed. Swimmers, or waders when the Rio Grande was low, towed the loaded bladders across the river. Although we do not know with any accuracy how much ammunition was moved past Army patrols on the river, it is apparent that thousands of rounds were transported by this method.<sup>96</sup>

Bribing soldiers who patrolled the river had some degree of success. An Army private at Fort Bliss was paid \$15 per month, and the temptation of earning up to \$100 from the smugglers sometimes was irresistible. A Bureau of Investigation operative in El Paso reported instances of enlisted men spending \$100 in the city's red-light district after going off guard duty.

The combination of the Mexican government's secret agents operating in El Paso and the vigilance of the American authorities did prevent Orozco from receiving ammunition in the quantities he had hoped. This particularly was true with regard to vital artillery ammunition.<sup>97</sup> The Army's efficiency in patrolling the El Paso area forced the *Orozquistas* to move their major smuggling operations further west.

One of Ochoa's arms smugglers traveled to Albuquerque, New Mexico, in late May, purchased some 49,000 rounds of ammunition, and shipped them by express to Deming. Ochoa's brother, using an alias, had wagons waiting at the express depot and succeeded in crossing the cartridges on June 1, despite Army patrols in the area. Two months later, one of Orozco's generals, the infamous Josa a Inez Salazar, purchased 120,000 rifle cartridges at an El Paso hardware business and sent 50,000 cartridges by rail to Columbus under the pseudonym of Frank Jenkins. The ammunition was taken by wagon from the Southern Pacific depot at Columbus to a point a half mile from the border. On August 12 the *Orozquistas* attempted to cross the cartridges. A 3rd Cavalry detachment, stationed at Columbus and attached to the El Paso Patrol District, had been alerted of the proposed shipment and prevented the munitions from being crossed. In a brief gun battle between the cavalry and the *Orozquistas*, one U.S. Army trooper was wounded seriously, and one rebel was shot and captured.<sup>98</sup>

A variety of administrative changes were carried out at Fort Bliss and in the El Paso Patrol District during this period of unrest. These adjustments were made to facilitate the task of preventing illegal munitions shipments and to protect El Paso and other border towns in southwest Texas and southern New Mexico in the event of an attack. Veteran 4th Cavalry commander Steever, who had commanded both Fort Bliss and the El Paso Patrol District since February 1912, was promoted to brigadier general on May 11 and was given command of the Department of Texas.

Steever wanted to ensure that his successor, Colonel Frank West, had sufficient resources to handle any situation. Through the month of May the 337 officers and troopers of the 4th Cavalry had been principally responsible for the area downriver from El Paso, manning outposts at Ysleta, Fabens, and Fort Hancock to prevent arms from being crossed to the *Orozquistas*.<sup>99</sup> On June 13 the 2nd Cavalry arrived from the Philippines at Fort Bliss, and the 4th Cavalry rotated to Fort Huachuca, Arizona. The 2nd Cavalry had

almost 400 officers and enlisted men. Soon, 347 more recruits reported to the post to begin training in late June. These apprentice cavalymen obviously would not be trained well enough to handle most assignments for several months. After only a few weeks training, however, they could assist in the defense of Fort Bliss or even of El Paso should an assault occur. By June 24 Fort Bliss had a garrison of some 792 officers and cavalry troopers . . . not a small force.<sup>100</sup>

During March and April the *Orozquista* rebellion seemed to have real potential for overthrowing the Madero government. The *Orozquista* army seemed unbeatable. It captured Ciudad Juárez in early February, Chihuahua City in early March, and defeated the Mexican Federal Army at the first battle of Rellano. Much depended, however, on whether a continuing supply of ammunition was available. Some five million rounds of ammunition had been issued to the *Orozquista* troops for their battle at first Rellano. Most of this supply had been seized when Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua were captured.<sup>101</sup> But the supply of ammunition purchased in the U.S. declined sharply from March onward, partly because the Fort Bliss garrison had maintained a vigilant watch on the El Paso border.

The *Orozquistas* lost the battles of second Rellano and Bachimba in the following months, not because they were lacking in courage, but because they were so badly outgunned by the federal army. At second Rellano, for example, the federals expended 1,500,000 cartridges and 2,500 artillery shells. The *Orozquistas* were not capable of matching this amount of fire. They were able to fire only an estimated 50,000-100,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and a mere 40 to 60 artillery shells at the subsequent battle of Bachimba.<sup>102</sup> The *Orozquista* army began retreating north to Ciudad Juárez, and the Fort Bliss garrison prepared for the worst.

### Conclusion

The onslaught of the Mexican Revolution during the winter of 1910-1911 focused attention on the importance of El Paso and Fort Bliss, particularly during the first battle of Ciudad Juárez in May 1911. This was indicated clearly again later that year by the inspections of Stimson and Wood. With the outbreak of the *Orozquista* rebellion in February 1912, the U.S. Army began to make administrative changes needed to defend the border.

Patrol districts along the border were deemed necessary, and El Paso became the hub for the El Paso Patrol District. The district initially covered some 91 miles east and west of the city. Beginning in 1912 the commander of Fort Bliss reported to the commander of the patrol district, who in turn reported to the commanding general of the Department of Texas.

Fort Bliss correctly is thought of as the last stronghold of the U.S. Cavalry, and the fact that the post principally was an infantry post for the first six decades of its existence tends to fade into the background. The infantry post was a major contributor to the stability and economic growth of the city of El Paso. Infantry, however, began to decline in importance with the Madero revolution. The decline accelerated with the following Orozco rebellion. It became obvious that while infantry certainly was useful in a static defense mode for protecting El Paso, infantry was not nearly as valuable as cavalry in covering the El Paso District's 91 miles of the border for which it was responsible.<sup>103</sup> The ability of cavalry to move quickly to trouble spots in the sandy desert environment caused it to evolve into the historical role it was to play along the border and for El Paso in the first half of the twentieth century.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Martinez, *Border Boomtown*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>2</sup>Harris and Sadler, "El Paso," *The Americas*, pp. 69, 72.

<sup>3</sup>PR/FB, February 1911, roll 120.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, March 1911, roll 120; also Commanding Officer, Fort Bliss (CO/FB) to CGDT, February 7, 1911.

<sup>5</sup>Telegram, Sharpe to CGDT, February 2, 1911, No. 36387/A; also telegram, Sharpe to CGDT/B, all in RG 393, DT.

<sup>6</sup>Telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, February 3, 1911, No. 36412, RG 393, DT; also telegram, AG to CGDT, February 4, 1911, RG 393, DT.

<sup>7</sup>Telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, February 4, 1911, No. 36417, RG 393, DT; also telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, February 8, 1911, No. 36718, RG 393, DT.

<sup>8</sup>Telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, No. 36530, RG 393, DT; also telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, No. 36721.

<sup>9</sup>*EPMT*, February 13, 1911.

<sup>10</sup>Telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, February 9, 1911, No. 36522/A; also CO/FB to CGDT, February 9, 1911, RG 393, DT.

<sup>11</sup>Telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, February 14, 1911, RG 393, DT.

<sup>12</sup>Telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, February 15, 1911, No. 36727, RG 393, DT.

<sup>13</sup>Telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, February 15, 1911, No. 36632, RG 393, DT.

<sup>14</sup>PR/FB, March 1911, roll 120.

<sup>15</sup>For the El Paso Patrol District (EPPD) see telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, March 4, 1911, No. 36776/A, RG 393, DT.

<sup>16</sup>Clarence Clendenen, *Blood on the Border: The United States Army and the Mexican Irregulars*, (New York, 1969), p. 146-150.

<sup>17</sup>Meyer, *Mexican Rebel*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup>PR/FB, April 1911, roll 120.

<sup>20</sup>For example, telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, March 5, 1911, No. 36898, RG 393, DT.

<sup>21</sup>Telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, March 22, 1911, No. 37268, RG 393, DT; also PR/FB, April 1911, roll 120.

<sup>22</sup>Telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, April 2, 1911, No. 37459, RG 393, DT.

<sup>23</sup>Telegram, headquarters, Department of Texas to CO/FB, April 2, 1911, No. 37406, repeating telegram from collector of Customs, Eagle Pass to CGDT, April 2, 1911, RG 393, DT.

<sup>24</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, April 2, 1911, No. 37408/A RG 393, DT.

<sup>25</sup>Harris and Sadler, "El Paso," pp. 76-78.

<sup>26</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, April 12, 1911, No. 37617, RG 393, DT.

<sup>27</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, April 13, 1911, No. 37649, RG 393, DT.

<sup>28</sup>Thomas F. Troy, *Donovan and the CIA: A History of the Establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency*, Frederick, Maryland, 1981, pp. 8-9.

<sup>29</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, April 17, 1911, No. 37682, RG 393, DT.

<sup>30</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, April 20, 1911, No. 37694, RG 393, DT.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>For example, telegram, AG to CO/EPPD, April 20, 1911, No 37700, RG 393, DT.

<sup>33</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, April 21, 1911, No. 37697/A, RG 393, DT.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, April 23, 1911, No. 37727, RG 393, DT.

<sup>36</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, April 24, 1911, No. 37761; also telegram, AG to CO/EPPD, telegram/A, RG 393, DT.

<sup>37</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, April 29, 1911, No. 37826, RG 393, DT.

<sup>38</sup>For example, telegrams CO/EPPD to CGDT, April 30, 1911, Nos. 37837 and 37830, RG 393, DT.

<sup>39</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 3, 1911, No. 37905, RG 393, DT.

<sup>40</sup>Telegram, CO/FB to CGDT, May 5, 1911, No. 37886; also telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 6, 1911, No. 37910, both in RG 393, DT.

<sup>41</sup>For example, telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 3, 1911, No. 37837/B; also telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 6, 1911, No. 37826/F, both in RG 393, DT.

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<sup>42</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 8, 1911, No. 37932, RG 393, DT.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Additional A.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Additional C/D.

<sup>45</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 9, 1911, No. 37932/F, RG 393, DT.

<sup>46</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 9, 1911, No. 37952; also telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 9, 1911, No. 37953, RG 393, DT.

<sup>47</sup>Telegram, AG to CO/EPPD, May 10, 1911, No. 37950, RG 393, DT.

<sup>48</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 10, 1911, No. 37959, RG 393, DT.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., No. 37964, RG 393, DT.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 10, 1911, No. 38018, RG 393, DT.

<sup>52</sup>Telegram, AG to CO/EPPD, May 12, 1911, No. 37997, RG 393, DT.

<sup>53</sup>Telegrams, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 13, 1911, Nos. 38008, 38107, 38012, RG 393, DT.

<sup>54</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to CGDT, May 18, 1911, No. 38075, RG 393, DT.

<sup>55</sup>Telegrams, CO/EPPD to Adjutant General Department of Texas (AGDT), May 18, 25, 1911, Nos. 38079, 38168, RG 393, DT.

<sup>56</sup>Telegram, CO/EPPD to AGDT, May 21, 1911, No. 38107, RG 393, DT.

<sup>57</sup>Telegrams, CO/EPPD to AGDT, June 6, 8, 10, 1911, Nos. 38079/D-D, 38294/A, RG 393, DT.

<sup>58</sup>Telegrams, AG to CGDT, June 10, 1911, No. 38406; June 10, 1911, No. 38403; CO/EPPD to AGDT, June 11, 1911, No. 38403/A, all in RG 393, DT.

<sup>59</sup>PR/FB, June 1911, roll 120.

<sup>60</sup>Telegram, CSDT to AGDT, undated but approximately June 8, 1911, No. 38369, RG 393, DT.

<sup>61</sup>PR/FB, July and August, 1911, roll 120.

<sup>62</sup>PR/FB, September 1911, roll 120.

<sup>63</sup>PR/FB, October 1911, roll 120; also *EPMT*, October 18-19, 1911.

<sup>64</sup>PR/FB, October 1911, roll 120.



<sup>65</sup>Harris and Sadler, "The Reyes Conspiracy," April, 1980, pp. 325-348.

<sup>66</sup>PR/FB, January 1912, roll 120; Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 271.

<sup>67</sup>PR/FB, January 1912, roll 120.

<sup>68</sup>Captains Charles D. Rhodes and Paul Y. Malone to the chief of staff, U.S. Army, "Confidential," October 27, 1911, RG 165, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Military Intelligence division (MID), 5761-308. Rhodes and Malone state, ". . . it seems improbable that Madero can long continue peaceably as President." They also suggest, "Intervention by the United States in from one to five years is a logical deduction . . ." They further recommend, "It is therefore important that the General Staff should at once begin a most careful, detailed study of the future occupation of Mexican territory, to include not only the military campaign whose objective must be the Mexican capital, but the subsequent occupation by merely temporary as in the case of Cuba or more less permanent as in the case of the Philippines." Also Colonel John Biddle, Chief, War College Division, to Lieutenant William E.W. Mackinlay, December 15, 1911, in MID, Army War College, General Correspondence, 6939-1-30, National Archives, "Confidential." Biddle reminded Mackinlay in true "Mission Impossible" style, "It is needless to remind you that the Department would have to disclaim all knowledge of your mission in case any question arose."

<sup>69</sup>The best study of this phase of the Mexican Revolution is Meyer, *Mexican Rebel*, pp. 53-67.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>71</sup>George P. Huckaby, *Oscar Branch Colquitt: A Political Biography*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1946, pp. 267-273, 384.

<sup>72</sup>Harris and Sadler, "The Reyes Conspiracy," p. 328.

<sup>73</sup>PR/FB, January 1912, roll 120.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup>Meyer, *Mexican Rebel*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>76</sup>Secretary of state to secretary of war, February 14, 1912, RG 165, MID, 5761-418.

<sup>77</sup>Thomas D. Edwards, U.S. consul, Ciudad Juárez, to secretary of state, February 15, 1912, RG 165, MID, 5761-418.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*; also secretary of war to secretary of state, February 16, 1912, RG 165, MID, 5761-418.

<sup>80</sup>Secretary of war to secretary of state, February 23, 1912, RG 165, MID, 5761-418.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, quoting telegram from Steever, EPPD commander, dated February 22, 1912.

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<sup>82</sup>Telegram, Colquitt to Taft, February 2, 1912, in O.B. Colquitt Governor's Papers, telegrams, Texas State Archive, Austin, Texas.

<sup>83</sup>*EPMT*, February 3, 1912.

<sup>84</sup>Acting secretary of state to Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson, U.S. Embassy, Mexico City, RG 165, MID, 5761-418.

<sup>85</sup>PR/FB, February 1912, roll 120; also secretary of war to secretary of state, February 26, 1912, enclosing telegrams from Steever and CGDT, RG 165, MID, 5761-418.

<sup>86</sup>Consul Edwards to secretary of state, February 26, 1912, RG 165, MID, 5761-418.

<sup>87</sup>Secretary of war to secretary of state, February 27, 1912, enclosing telegram, dated February 26, 1912, from Steever, RG 165, MID, 5761-418.

<sup>88</sup>Secretary of war to secretary of state, February 27, 1912, enclosing telegram, dated February 27, 1912, from Steever, RG 165, MID, 5761-418; also *EPMT*, February 27, 1912.

<sup>89</sup>Presidential Proclamation and joint resolution of the U.S. Congress, Washington, D.C., March 14, 1912, RG 165, MID, 5761-418; also Harris and Sadler, "El Paso," p. 71.

<sup>90</sup>Harris and Sadler, "El Paso," pp. 72, 76.

<sup>91</sup>Found in RG 165, MID, 5761-148.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 72-73, 76-78.

<sup>93</sup>Harris and Sadler, "El Paso," p. 78.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>96</sup>El Paso reports, March-May 1912, National Archives, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RG 65, Reel 2.

<sup>97</sup>Harris and Sadler, "El Paso," pp. 77-78.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>99</sup>PR/FB, May 1912, roll 120.

<sup>100</sup>PR/FB, June 1912, roll 120.

<sup>101</sup>Harris and Sadler, "El Paso," p. 82.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>103</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 271.

## Chapter IV

### THE DEFEAT OF THE OROZQUISTAS (1912-1913)

#### Introduction

The Orozco rebellion was in decline by the end of July 1912, and what remained of the rebel army retreated northward toward the border. The Mexican Federal Army was delayed little by the destruction of the Mexican Central Railway; General Victoriano Huerta's column was rebuilding it rapidly as it pushed north toward Ciudad Juárez. By August 1 all that remained of the territory formerly controlled by Orozco was Ciudad Juárez and a portion of northwestern Chihuahua.<sup>1</sup>

But Steever, the new commander of the Department of Texas, saw the situation in the El Paso Patrol District as critical. Steever and his troops were responsible for the safety of El Paso and a number of small settlements covering about 91 miles of border. The U.S. government's refusal to allow munitions to be exported to Orozco was one of the principal reasons his rebellion was at the point of being extinguished. Steever thought desperation and anger might cause Orozco to attack El Paso or another border community.

Steever believed his presence at Fort Bliss was necessary given the potential for trouble with Orozco retreating toward the border. He remained at Fort Bliss for several months following his promotion instead of moving to his headquarters at Fort Sam Houston, an action virtually without precedent for a commanding general of the Department of Texas.

#### The Defeat of the Orozquistas

A number of precautionary moves were taken at Fort Bliss as the Mexican Federal Army pursued the *Orozquistas* northward toward Ciudad Juárez. Leaves were cancelled and patrols were increased along the border. Steever, still at Fort Bliss, was warning his superiors on July 31, ". . . Disturbances in northern Mexico more widespread now than six weeks ago. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Eight days later the Fort Bliss garrison maintained its watch on Orozco in Juárez. Steever moved part of his cavalry downriver from El Paso in an effort to prevent munitions smuggling to the *Orozquistas*. The following day (August 9) a small 3rd Cavalry unit was ordered to Fabens, where rebel soldiers were crossing into the United States in an attempt to steal horses.<sup>3</sup> By August 12 Steever was reporting that Orozco was now concentrating his forces in Juárez and that there were "more rebels on or near International Boundary now than before."<sup>4</sup>

Twenty-four hours later Steever's subordinate commander in Columbus appealed for reinforcements from Fort Bliss, noting that some 1,100 rebels were assembled across the border at Palomas. Steever sent half a troop of the 3rd Cavalry, "all the mounted force I have on hand," and reported to the War Department that although he did not believe the unit at Columbus would be attacked, "desperate men sometimes do desperate things."<sup>5</sup> He then ordered three more troops of the 3rd Cavalry at Fort Sam Houston to proceed to Fort Bliss by rail to serve as a reserve for the El Paso Patrol District.<sup>6</sup> He still believed the situation would not get out of hand when he explained the dilemma in an August 14 telegram, "To prevent smuggling requires excessive dispersion, to meet aggravated conditions requires concentration, both have to be continually kept in mind."<sup>7</sup>

On August 15 Steever was notified that Orozco's subordinates at Palomas might raid the New Mexico border for horses and food. As the *Orozquistas* left Juárez, Fort Bliss troops manned the bridges as reinforcements of cavalry arrived from San Antonio.<sup>8</sup> It probably was with some relief that Steever reported on the night of August 20 that some 2,500 Mexican federal troops finally had arrived in Ciudad Juárez, ending another tense period for the Fort Bliss garrison.<sup>9</sup>

Following their evacuation of Ciudad Juárez the rebels broke up into smaller units southeast and west of that city, a tactic that continued to concern Steever. In late August Steever deployed troops to the same general areas southeast of El Paso along the river and westward along the New Mexico-Chihuahua border. On September 6 he wired the War Department that a small Army detachment in the New Mexico "bootheel" had clashed twice with *Orozquista* Salazar's troops that had crossed the boundary to steal cattle. Exasperated over these incidents, Steever requested permission to cross the border in hot pursuit, explaining that this was the sixth incident in the past few months and that he was rushing a cavalry troop and all Fort Bliss pack mules to southwestern New Mexico. He also requested that additional cavalry reinforcements be sent to Fort Bliss.<sup>10</sup>

As the Army continued to monitor Salazar on the New Mexico border, the remaining garrison at Fort Bliss was able to relax its vigilance on Ciudad Juárez, which now was controlled by the Mexican Federal Army. Steever continued to operate his headquarters at Fort Bliss instead of moving to Fort Sam Houston so he could keep a close eye on the *Orozquistas*. In a message to the War Department, Steever summed up the tactical dilemma the Army faced at Fort Bliss and along the entire 1,951-mile border.

*It is impracticable to cover every point with troops available and in my judgement poor policy to attempt it. Scouts to gather and carry information to central bodies preferable to many small detachments. International boundary is for us an impenetrable screen behind which the rebels can move in security and without detection. Until they suddenly cross the line at some unexpected point. Personally do not believe Salazar will attempt to come across in force, but hungry men must have food at any cost and incursions to this side for cattle and other supplies quite probable. Renew my former recommendation for enlisted company Apache Indian scouts for duty in Mexico. They know the country well and could quickly bring information.*<sup>11</sup>

Steever's recommendation for Apache scouts was not acted upon. On September 10 a detachment from Fort Bliss began a task that took place with some frequency. The troops escorted some 1,200 Mexican soldiers being transported by train from El Paso to southern Arizona to reinforce the Mexican Army garrisons of northern Sonora.<sup>12</sup> By September 14 the U.S. Army's focus had shifted to the Arizona-Sonora border and to the area downriver from El Paso where the *Orozquistas* captured Ojinaga and then lost it to the Mexican Federal Army a few days later. In the process Orozco's father and members of the rebel commander's staff were arrested by the U.S. Cavalry when Ojinaga was recaptured. Troops from Fort Bliss were sent to protect the Fort Hancock and Fabens areas as remnants of the *Orozquistas* moved upriver from Ojinaga.<sup>13</sup>

By September 23 Steever was reporting that he had dispatched I Troop, 3rd Cavalry, from Fort Bliss downriver to Pílares and stated, "I now have continuous patrol from southwest corner New Mexico to thirty miles below Ojinaga. . . ."<sup>14</sup> As the *Orozquistas* continued to disperse into smaller and smaller bands, it was obvious by late September that the principal danger the Army faced was raids by small guerilla bands in search of food and horses. These small bands of rebels were thought to pose no serious danger to the immediate vicinity of El Paso, and the troops actually at Fort Bliss declined to some 550 officers and enlisted men as the Army maintained dispersed units at small, temporary outposts along the border.<sup>15</sup>

By October Fort Bliss's principal emphasis was the capture of Orozco, Jr., who had not been heard from following the recapture of Ojinaga and his father's arrest in mid-September.<sup>16</sup> Army troops at Fort Bliss and along the border continually were faced with a grey area in federal law, the arrest and detention of Mexican rebels who crossed peacefully into the United States. As a general practice, the various U.S. attorneys, U.S. marshals, and the handful of Bureau of Investigation agents were more than willing to let the Army handle the problem. Exceptions to this were cases involving some of the more notorious rebel leaders such as Orozco, Sr. Detention of Mexican troops from various factions had begun in early 1911, but the problem surfaced in a serious way in 1912 and continued throughout the decade.<sup>17</sup> Indeed the Fort Bliss garrison would be forced to devote a significant amount of effort to this problem in succeeding years.

Fort Bliss had returned to a semblance of normalcy by the latter part of October 1912. Training activities were resumed while a wary eye was kept upon the erstwhile *Orozquista*, Salazar. The general conducted a series of raids in northwestern Chihuahua with an estimated force of some 300 men. Steever reported from Fort Bliss on November 9, "Mexican insurrecto activities this section lately increased. Renewal of attempts smuggle war munitions over border. Agitators in El Paso believed to have received large amount funds last few days from Mexico City. Will thicken up border patrol from my reserve."<sup>18</sup> The following week reports reached Fort Bliss that Ciudad Juárez was to be attacked (which did not happen); rebel bands carried out raids below that city, and munitions were shipped into El Paso in increasing amounts.<sup>19</sup>

By November 19 the situation appeared to have become more serious when several *Orozquista* bands seemed to be converging on towns in northern Chihuahua below Columbus. The following day Steever suggested Salazar might move on Palomas and "if he takes Palomas he will then probably move on Juárez."<sup>20</sup> Twenty-four hours later Fort Bliss reported that Palomas indeed had been attacked and had fallen to Salazar, who now had some 350 men in his command.<sup>21</sup> On November 22 Steever concluded from his Columbus subordinate's reports, "His next move will be on Juárez but will remain at Palomas a few days."<sup>22</sup> Salazar, however, chose not to attack Ciudad Juárez and moved southwest of that city to destroy bridges. *Orozquista* groups continued to raid small settlements southeast of El Paso.<sup>23</sup> By late December the situation in the state of Chihuahua appeared to be getting worse.

The Fort Bliss garrison had remained relatively stable through the latter part of 1912, with the 2nd Cavalry of some 864 officers and enlisted men manning the fort. Steever had turned over command of the post to West in May 1912. Through the late summer and fall a pattern was established in which three or four troops of the 2nd Cavalry would patrol the riverfront and downriver from El Paso and then rotate back to Fort Bliss after a month's patrol duty. In December the garrison at Fort Bliss was augmented by a quartermaster detachment of some 80 officers and enlisted men for the newly established Fort Bliss supply depot.<sup>24</sup>

The *Orozquista* rebellion had demonstrated to the War Department in Washington that Fort Bliss was the key Army installation on the entire border and El Paso was the key city along the boundary. Steever, who now commanded a newly enlarged Southern Department, had reacted to Fort Bliss's importance when choosing his station. He almost continuously remained at Fort Bliss throughout this period.

That he did so simply was good judgment on his part, because the El Paso region was the location of the most intense revolutionary activity. Luckily for Steever, the War Department changed its opinion of Fort Bliss's importance. Secretary of War Henry Stimson stated why funds were necessary to expand Fort Bliss to a regimental post in a January 6, 1913, letter to Congressman James Hay, Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, ". . . there is no project of construction in the United States proper which is now more pressing than this one."<sup>25</sup> Stimson added, "The accommodations now at Fort Bliss are for a battalion of infantry, but other troops

are stationed there . . . and a comparatively small sum of money is now being expended in the erection of temporary shelter for a part of these additional troops. In the plans of the War Department . . . it is contemplated that a regiment of cavalry shall be stationed at Fort Bliss, as being a railroad center and probable future center of population for the region along the Mexican border between San Antonio and the Pacific Coast."<sup>26</sup>

Bids for new construction at Fort Bliss had not even been let when the Mexican Revolution took a cataclysmic turn. Throughout the month of January 1913, *Orozquista* bands attacked small towns in northern Chihuahua and succeeded in almost isolating Ciudad Juárez by early February. Mexican Army reinforcements had been sent north to suppress the *Orozquista* guerrilla units. But, a coup d'etat was unfolding in Mexico City. During a confusing 10 days of fighting in the Mexican capital, General Victoriano Huerta succeeded in taking advantage of the situation. He overthrew President Madero (who was executed a few days later) and assumed the presidency.

A number of revolutionaries rose in the north (including Villa, Carranza, and Obregón) after Huerta's takeover of the presidency. While the fighting was going on in Mexico City and the revolutionaries were becoming more active in the north, President Taft in Washington ordered that an expedition be prepared at Galveston, Texas, for an invasion of Mexico if necessary. The 22nd Infantry regiment at Fort Bliss, with a strength of about 786, was loaded hastily onto trains in El Paso for a possible descent on Mexico.<sup>27</sup> But Taft was nearing the end of his term—Woodrow Wilson was about to be sworn in as president—and Taft left the Mexican problem to his successor.

Fort Bliss was now a part of the Southern Department, and it found itself with a new department commander when Steever retired and General Tasker H. Bliss took charge. Bliss toured his new department in early March where he found the 13th Cavalry covering the western portion of the El Paso Patrol District and the 2nd Cavalry at Fort Bliss.<sup>28</sup> In the following months, units of the 2nd Cavalry were rotated from Fort Bliss to outposts downriver from El Paso to prevent munitions smuggling to either side as the revolutionists opposing Huerta gathered strength throughout northern Mexico.<sup>29</sup> The cavalry's job probably seemed futile—duty at Fort Bliss was monotonous, cavalry numbers at the outposts were inadequate to prevent smuggling, and, both Anglos and Hispanics generally were sympathetic to the rebels, who called themselves "Constitutionalists."

The Fort Bliss garrison faced several problems in patrolling the border. Newly elected President Wilson had reestablished the embargo on arms exportation to Mexico originally issued by Taft in 1912. Unlike Taft, Wilson wanted to maintain the embargo both against the Huerta government and the Constitutionalists. This dual embargo created problems. Wilson favored the Constitutionalists, but to some degree he apparently also aided supporters of Villa, Carranza, and Obregón in evading the embargo by simply not providing the Department of Justice or the U.S. Army with the resources necessary to enforce the embargo. Thus, the Fort Bliss garrison was given the unenviable task of enforcing a presidential proclamation that the president himself did not wish to be enforced stringently.<sup>30</sup>

Not surprisingly, troops operating out of Fort Bliss were not able to stem the flow of munitions either to Huerta or to the Constitutionalists. Although El Paso was not the principal arms and ammunition way station during the period of February to September of 1913, the 2nd Cavalry did make a number of seizures of small arms during this period. In November of 1913, however, Fort Bliss again began to get involved in the Mexican Revolution in a major way.

Villa, in perhaps his most spectacular victory of the entire revolution, captured the city of Juárez virtually without a fight on the night of November 15, 1913. He previously had captured the north-central Mexican city of

Torreón. He then moved north to besiege Chihuahua City and seized a coal train heading south from Juárez on the Mexican Central Railway. In a brilliant *ruse de guerre* he ordered the train conductor to wire the dispatch office in Ciudad Juárez that he could not reach Chihuahua City because of the fighting that had broken out near the state capital. Villa loaded his troops on the train and ordered the conductor to return the train to Juárez. Villa reached the border city in the predawn hours and captured the unsuspecting city in one hour early on the morning of November 16.<sup>31</sup>

A routine rotation of the 15th Cavalry Regiment to Fort Bliss occurred on November 14, providing ample troops to patrol the border. The 2nd Cavalry did not depart for its new station at Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont, until December. The 15th Cavalry, with a strength of some 760 officers and enlisted men and commanded by Colonel Joseph Garrard, comprised the Fort Bliss garrison.<sup>32</sup> Before West and the 2nd Cavalry left the post, it was obvious the Huerta government would attempt to retake Ciudad Juárez. It also was obvious Villa would attempt to acquire munitions in El Paso so his troops could defeat the federal troops advancing north from Chihuahua City.

On November 22 Villa moved some 12 miles south of Ciudad Juárez, and decisively defeated a 6,000-man federal force in three days of fighting at the battle of Tierra Blanca. After their defeat at Tierra Blanca, federal forces, under the command of Huerta, retreated eastward to Ojinaga in an epic march across the Chihuahua Desert. By early January 1914 the *Huertistas* were entrenched at Ojinaga. They managed to hold off a besieging *Villista* army until Villa himself arrived on the scene. In 65 minutes on January 14, Villa's troops captured Ojinaga and sent some 5,325 *Huertista* troops and civilians fleeing across the Rio Grande to sanctuary in the United States at the town of Presidio.<sup>33</sup>

With the arrival of more than 5,000 Mexicans on U.S. soil (principally *Huertista* soldiers), the U.S. faced a familiar problem . . . what to do with an influx of Mexican federal troops and civilian refugees on U.S. soil. There were no easy legal or humanitarian solutions to the refugee situation. Previously the departments of state and justice had thrown the problem to the Army, because only it had the medical personnel, facilities, and manpower to deal with refugees. The January 1914 episode at Ojinaga provided the largest and most difficult internment situation Fort Bliss faced during the entire revolution.

The Army had the responsibility of providing transport, medical care, and housing to the refugees. Presidio had no railroad, so refugees had to walk to Marfa before they could board trains to El Paso. When they arrived at Fort Bliss a detention camp, covering some 60 acres, was constructed. Many of the soldiers and civilians were in poor physical condition; smallpox broke out in the camp at one point. The refugees required extensive medical care from a garrison that already had limited medical facilities. There also was the problem of guarding the refugees. Soldiers who fled into the United States earlier in the revolution often had been quietly released to return to Mexico. President Wilson, however, wanted Huerta removed from office, and the Army was required to keep the Huerta troops in detention. The detainees made a number of escape attempts, some successful, including digging a tunnel out of the camp, which almost succeeded. In May of 1914 the Huerta troops were transported to Fort Wingate, New Mexico, where they could be interned away from the border.<sup>34</sup>

President Wilson revoked his arms embargo on the Constitutionalists on February 3, 1914. Within hours Villa's agents had purchased all the available ammunition in El Paso. By early 1914 the Constitutionalists clearly were winning.<sup>35</sup> Villa's armies seemingly were invincible as they advanced south from Chihuahua. While Villa was advancing south, Huerta's agents in El Paso attempted to create problems for the *Villistas*. In February 1914 there was one attempt to launch a raid from Ysleta, south of El Paso, against the rear of Villa's forces. The 15th Cavalry foiled the raid by seizing all the horses that had been assembled for the attack.<sup>36</sup>

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Villa and General Hugh Scott, commander of the Southern Department, had become good friends. By early 1914 all of the area covered by the El Paso Patrol District was in the hands of the Constitutionalists. Relative quiet returned to the region.<sup>37</sup> However, an incident on the Gulf Coast of Mexico on April 9, 1914, threatened to create yet another major crisis between the United States and Mexico.

Eight U.S. Navy sailors were arrested by Mexican authorities in the port of Tampico while they were loading supplies to be taken to a naval vessel offshore. The sailors quickly were released, but American Admiral Henry T. Mayo demanded an apology, which was not forthcoming. President Wilson backed Mayo partly because he thought he could use the incident to prevent 200 machine guns and 15 million rounds of ammunition, scheduled for landing from a German vessel at Veracruz, from getting into the hands of Huerta's forces. The deadline for the apology passed, and Wilson ordered the Navy to occupy Veracruz on April 21. Nineteen American sailors and Marines and some 300 Mexican troops and civilians were killed in the ensuing fighting. Although the arms later were landed down the coast, the U.S. occupation of Veracruz lasted seven months. Fears that Mexicans of all political persuasions now would join with Huerta against the United States did not materialize, partly because Villa refused to become overly concerned about the incident.<sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless Colonel C.A.P. Hatfield, commander of the 2nd Cavalry still based at Fort Bliss, cancelled passes, and cavalry troopers slept beside their horses. Reinforcements now poured into Fort Bliss. Both the 6th and 16th Infantry Regiments of the 8th Infantry Brigade arrived in late April. By May 1 there were some 7,000 troops in the El Paso area. This expansion of troop strength in the El Paso Patrol District stretched the ability of Fort Bliss to provide supplies, communications, and medical care. The need for additional facilities at Fort Bliss again was emphasized.<sup>39</sup>

The crisis ebbed in the following months as the Constitutionalists continued their southward progress toward Mexico City, defeating Huerta's armies in battle after battle. At Fort Bliss Scott was given a big sendoff as he left for Washington to become assistant chief of staff, and Pershing arrived in El Paso to become commander of the El Paso Patrol District.<sup>40</sup>

By July 1914 Huerta finally accepted the inevitable and left Mexico as Villa's and Obregón's armies neared the Mexican capital. It must have seemed to the Fort Bliss garrison that the Mexican Revolution was nearing its end by late summer. However, Villa and Carranza now were to clash, and by the fall of 1914 they would be at war with each other. The worst was yet to come for Fort Bliss and the El Paso Patrol District.

### Conclusion

The *Orozquista* rebellion finally convinced the War Department that the Fort Bliss garrison would have to be augmented significantly. In addition the 1912-1914 period was the time frame in which Army officials in Washington decided to assign a significant cavalry detachment to the post in order to patrol the border more effectively. More importantly Fort Bliss, by the summer of 1912, had emerged as the most important Army installation on the border.



Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Meyer, *Mexican Rebel*, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Secretary of war to the AG, quoting Steever telegram, July 31, 1912, in National Archives, RG 60, Department of Justice (DJ), file No. 90755-1657.

<sup>3</sup>Telegram, Steever, August 9, 1912, quoted in DG 90755-1678, RG 60.

<sup>4</sup>Telegram, Steever, August 12, 1912, quoted in DG 90755-1678, RG 60.

<sup>5</sup>Telegram, Steever, August 13, 1912, quoted in secretary of war to AG, August 14, 1912, DG 90755-1689, RG 60.

<sup>6</sup>Telegrams, Steever, August 14, 1912, in DJ 90755-1696, RG 60.

<sup>7</sup>Steever's pungent and accurate quote is in his telegram dated August 14, 1912, DJ 90755-1697, RG 60.

<sup>8</sup>Telegram, Steever, August, 15, 1912, in DJ 90755-1695, RG 60.

<sup>9</sup>Telegram, CO/FB, August 20, 1912, quoted in secretary of war to AG, August 21, 1912, DJ 90755-1704, RG 60.

<sup>10</sup>Telegram, Steever, September 6, 1912, in DJ 90755-1742, RG 60.

<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>CGDT telegram, September 14, 1912, in DJ 90755-1778, RG 60.

<sup>14</sup>CGDT telegram to War Department, September 23, 1912, unnumbered, DJ 90755.

<sup>15</sup>PR/FB, September 1912, roll 120.

<sup>16</sup>Steever to AG, Fort Sam Houston, October 5, 1912, RG 393, No. 42292, DT.

<sup>17</sup>For War Department instructions on this subject, see Scott, AG, DT, transmitting orders to Steever, at Fort Bliss, telegram, October 7, 1912, RG 393, No. 42293, DT.

<sup>18</sup>Telegram, CGDT to AG, November 9, 1912, RG 393, No. 42240, DT.

<sup>19</sup>Telegrams, Steever to AG, November 11, 12, 1912, Nos. 42240, DT, RG 393.

<sup>20</sup>Telegram, CGDT to Commander, U.S. Troops, Columbus, New Mexico, November 20, 1912, RG 393, No. 42601, DT.

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<sup>21</sup>Telegram, CGDT to AG, November 21, 1912, RG 393, No. 42601, DT.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, November 22, 1912, RG 393, No. 42601, DT.

<sup>23</sup>Telegram, CGDT to AG, December 18, 1912, RG 393, No. 42601, DT.

<sup>24</sup>Derived from Post Returns, Fort Bliss, May-December 1912, roll 120.

<sup>25</sup>RG 165, Army War College, General Correspondence 7514-1.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>PR/FB, February 1913, roll 120.

<sup>28</sup>PR/FB, March 1913, roll 120.

<sup>29</sup>See PR/FB, March-October 1913, roll 120.

<sup>30</sup>The policy on the embargo of arms exportation to Mexico during President Wilson's first year in office is a murky topic. For example, William Weber Johnson, *Heroic Mexico: The Violent Emergence of a Modern Nation*, New York, 1968, p. 139-140.

<sup>31</sup>Charles C. Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution: The Constitutionalist Years*, Austin, 1974, p. 50.

<sup>32</sup>PR/FB, November-December 1913, roll 120.

<sup>33</sup>Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution*, p. 113.

<sup>34</sup>Jamieson, *A Survey History*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>35</sup>EPMT, February 4, 1914.

<sup>36</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 291.

<sup>37</sup>Clendenen, *Blood on the Border*, New York, 1969, pp. 177-178.

<sup>38</sup>The best account of the Veracruz incident is Robert E. Quirk, *An Affair of Honor: Woodrow Wilson and the Occupation of Veracruz*, Lexington, 1962.

<sup>39</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 316.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 314-319. PA.

## Chapter V

### THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS (1913-1915)

#### Introduction

Huerta resigned as president of Mexico on July 15, 1914, and left the country to go into exile in Spain. Carranza, "the first chief" of the Constitutionalists by his own declaration, and his principal general, Obregón, were preparing to capture Mexico City. Villa was north of the Mexican capital with some 40,000 troops of his *División del Norte*; Zapata was triumphant in the state of Morelos, south of Mexico City; and the Mexican Revolution appeared to be in the process of coming to a conclusion of a few months.

It was not to be. The revolution now was entering its most confusing and bloody phase that the late historian of the Mexican Revolution, Charles Cumberland, called "the war of the winners."<sup>1</sup> Since March 1913 when Villa, Carranza, Obregón, Pablo González, and others had rebelled against Madero's overthrow and subsequent execution, two of the major revolutionary factions, Villa in the north and Zapata in the south, had maintained their adherence to Carranza only nominally. This adherence was held together principally by a mutual hatred of Huerta. With Huerta gone the winners began an even more violent struggle among themselves.<sup>2</sup>

The late summer of 1914 was a confusing time for the garrison at Fort Bliss and its superiors in the War Department and the White House. They all sought to adapt to this the latest turn in the perplexing revolution.

#### The Constitutionalists

By the end of July 1914 Fort Bliss was commanded by Colonel George H. Morgan, who also was commander of the 15th Cavalry stationed at the post. There were some 330 officers and enlisted men at Fort Bliss. The remaining 724 members of the regiment were deployed along the Rio Grande from El Paso downriver to the Big Bend.<sup>3</sup> The Southern Department also had effected yet another administrative change in the command structure for the border by decreeing that two separate patrol districts would be established for the region from El Paso to the Big Bend. One district stretched from El Paso downriver to Fort Hancock, and the other district extended farther on to encompass the Big Bend region itself. Fort Bliss served as kind of subheadquarters of the Southern Department, responsible for both patrol districts. All troops stationed in both districts officially were assigned to Fort Bliss and "detached" to the districts. Troops remaining at the post served as the reserve and post garrison for both patrol districts.<sup>4</sup>

Additional troops had been based at Fort Bliss since April 1914, when the United States captured the Mexican port city of Veracruz. By late April Fort Bliss and El Paso boasted an entire division of troops, although it was understrength with some 7,000 men. The division included the 6th and 16th infantry regiments as well as artillery and cavalry units.<sup>5</sup> Because of a lack of adequate facilities, the two infantry regiments were not housed on Fort Bliss; they were kept within the city of El Paso proper. At the same time the fort welcomed Pershing, not as post commander but as the commander of the El Paso District. Pershing was based and housed at the post.<sup>6</sup>

To reassure the El Paso citizens frightened by the possibility of a Mexican attack on the city because of the capture of Veracruz, Pershing paraded his command through the streets of the city displaying nine troops

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of the 13th Cavalry; seven troops of the 15th Cavalry; four troops of the 12th Cavalry; two regiments of the 6th Infantry (the 16th and 20th); Battery B of the 3rd Field Artillery; Batteries A, B, and C of the 6th Field Artillery; and seven Army bands.<sup>7</sup> Tensions subsided during May. Three months later Villa stopped in El Paso, where he toured Fort Bliss as Pershing's guest while the garrison watched and waited for the outcome of negotiations between Carranza, Villa, and Zapata.<sup>8</sup>

The events in the early months of 1914 once again confirmed the importance of El Paso as the key strategic spot on the border. Congress passed an appropriation to begin a massive construction effort. Some \$350,000-\$400,000 was provided to more than triple troop housing and to provide facilities for a full regiment of cavalry. The construction included 19 captains' quarters; 9 barracks, housing one company each; 6 lieutenant's quarters; 4 double mess halls, capable of feeding one company each; 1 mess hall for one half company; and 9 stables, with a total capacity of 720 horses. By the late summer of 1914 Fort Bliss had become the largest and best equipped military post along the entire 1,952-mile-long border.<sup>9</sup> Fort Bliss's importance during 1914 as a major supply depot also continued to grow, and the Quartermaster Corps strength increased to some 130 officers and enlisted men.<sup>10</sup>

By the early fall of 1914 a routine had settled upon Fort Bliss. Units of the 15th Cavalry rotated between patrolling downriver, garrison duty at the post, and back again to the river. Target practice was resumed to sharpen the cavalrymen's marksmanship, and mounted practice marches were thrown in occasionally to break the monotony.<sup>11</sup>

One reason Post Commander Morgan was able to spare enough troops to send to the target range was an order received in September 1914 ending the previous orders prohibiting export of munitions into Mexico.<sup>12</sup> Thus, in the early fall of 1914 the Fort Bliss garrison no longer guarded the bridges connecting El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. Neither did they search the terrain along the Rio Grande in pursuit of ubiquitous El Paso and Big Bend arms smugglers. Arms and ammunition now crossed legally as legitimate commerce items. Although Villa and Zapata were at the brink of war with Carranza and Obregón by October, most of the sparring by the two competing factions was relatively far away in south-central Mexico. Still, troops were pulled out of the El Paso Patrol District and sent to the Arizona-Sonora border in late 1914 to guard that portion of the border because of conflict between the *Villistas* and the *Carrancistas*.<sup>13</sup> A final effort to compromise the differences between the *Villistas* and the *Zapatistas* on one hand and the *Carrancistas* on the other, took place in early October outside Mexico City at the so-called Aguascalientes Convention, which ended in dispute on November 10, 1914.<sup>14</sup>

Fort Bliss's role as a key supply center continued to grow during this period of relative calm. By the fall of 1914 the fort's Quartermaster Depot was virtually equal in size to the one at Fort Sam Houston. The post's demand for water had grown so much the Army was forced to hook its mains to the city of El Paso's water supply system. Throughout the fall a variety of repair jobs to the post heating system, barracks and officers' quarters, ice plant, post exchange, target range, and hospital were accomplished in an effort to keep the post in good repair. In early 1915 Fort Bliss had grown so much the Signal Corps constructed a telephone system on post to provide internal communication. Finally, during the winter of 1914-1915 Fort Bliss entered the mechanized era and acquired six trucks (principally Mack) and one automobile. All were utilized by the Quartermaster Depot.<sup>15</sup>

At this time events in central Mexico were moving toward an inevitable climax between the principal protagonists. In late November 1914 Carranza and Obregón left Mexico City and moved their headquarters to Veracruz, evacuated by American troops only days earlier. Tactically the Constitutionalists held the area

around Veracruz, the Yucatan Peninsula, and the east coast of Mexico up to Matamoros, along with some territory on the west coast up to the state of Sonora on the Mexican border. Villa and Zapata now called themselves Conventionists (for the Aguascalientes Convention) and held the central spine of the country from Chihuahua south to the state of Morelos, south of Mexico City. Several areas, like Baja California, remained neutral. Villa and Zapata commanded the largest number of troops (an estimated 60,000 by December 1914) and the most important territory (including Mexico City).<sup>16</sup>

Obregón, Carranza's principal general, also held some cards in the forthcoming showdown. To name only one, most of the Mexican Navy was in Carranza's hands, and his troops could be deployed by sea up and down the east coast of Mexico as needed. In addition Obregón had sizable quantities of munitions, and his control of Veracruz, Mexico's most important port, made it easy to bring in additional arms and ammunition by steamship from New York and elsewhere.<sup>17</sup>

By contrast Villa had to bring in munitions on a long and vulnerable railroad route from El Paso/Ciudad Juárez, through Chihuahua City and Torreón, and southward to Mexico City. With more secure and shorter supply lines and a greater strategic vision, Obregón proceeded to recruit thousands of additional troops from the ranks of Mexican labor organizations in central Mexico. He also studied press reports from Europe on World War I, which had been raging since August. Villa, on the other hand, did not have this advantage. He was more or less illiterate, although he had learned to read and write somewhat during his imprisonment in Mexico City in 1912.

The U.S. government floundered under President Wilson as it sought to develop a coherent policy toward Mexico. The Wilson administration had recognized neither Villa nor Carranza since Madero's execution in February 1913. It had utilized a series of special agents, more or less accredited to both major revolutionary factions, attempting to decide which faction would be the recipient of diplomatic recognition. As events unfolded in Mexico hundreds of miles south of El Paso, Morgan and his troops at Fort Bliss could only watch and await developments that might bring the action north.

Through the fall of 1914 and the early months of 1915, Fort Bliss was responsible for the area along the west Texas and New Mexico border—*Villista* country for hundreds of miles. During this period Villa and Zapata entered Mexico City in a triumphal procession with their troops, posed for photographers in the presidential palace, and planned how to eliminate Carranza and Obregón's army. Evidence indicates both men believed Carranza's and Obregón's troops would melt away, as in fact they were doing. When Obregón evacuated Mexico City in November 1914, he had only 4,000 soldiers who had remained loyal to him. Various circumstances prevented Villa and Zapata from attacking Obregón and finishing his army, and they opted to wait for a more opportune moment.<sup>18</sup>

Through the early months of 1915, quiet prevailed in the El Paso region. Morgan's 15th Cavalry continued to patrol the border and rotate back to Fort Bliss after serving tours at Fort Hancock, Ysleta, Fabens, and the Big Bend.<sup>19</sup> But on April 6, 1915, some 750 miles south of El Paso, the single most important battle of the revolution was taking place. Villa's and Carranza's troops, personally commanded by Obregón, were fighting over possession of the town of Celaya. By the evening of April 7 Villa's army had been driven from Celaya. He attacked again on April 13 and was even more decisively defeated (an estimated 4,000 *Villistas* killed and 8,000 captured). The Division of the North was shattered. It was the beginning of the end for Villa as a major figure in the Mexican Revolution.<sup>20</sup>

Ciudad Juárez served as Villa's principal supply base, and the Fort Bliss garrison watched as arms and ammunition were crossed to resupply the *Villistas*. By April 1915 Villa no longer had the necessary funds to

purchase an adequate resupply of ammunition for his beleaguered troops, retreating northward after their defeat at Celaya. Villa had more or less stripped north-central Mexico of anything (cattle, cotton, ores) that could be sold to American arms merchants during the previous 18 months in an effort to buy sufficient munitions and supplies to equip his army, the largest ever assembled in Mexico during the revolution.<sup>21</sup> As Villa became more desperate, Morgan's troops at Fort Bliss were beginning to experience additional activity along the border, including occasional thefts of ammunition from the Fort Bliss rifle range and recruitment of Mexican exiles in El Paso by the *Carrancistas*. Patrols of the 15th Cavalry downriver also were beginning to arrest Mexicans who had been recruited by Carranza's agents and were en route to join his forces.<sup>22</sup>

Villa, after his defeat at Celaya, fought for 40 days at León and lost the town and another 8,000 men. His retreat northward continued throughout the summer.<sup>23</sup> He began to have other problems that could not have occurred at a worse time. These problems revolved around the ubiquitous Huerta, who had fled in exile to Spain in July 1914.

Huerta arrived in New York in April 1915 and began to plot a counterrevolution. World War I played a major part in Huerta's comeback plans. By the late fall of 1915 the German government realized the United States, although officially neutral, was leaning toward support of the British, French, and Russians, who were purchasing munitions in the United States. The Kaiser's government believed the United States would enter the war on the side of the British and French. To deter this eventuality, the German government negotiated with Huerta and promised him sufficient funds to purchase arms and to recruit soldiers if he would attempt a comeback in Mexico and harass the Americans and British in the process.<sup>24</sup>

Between April and June 1915 Huerta set his strategy in motion and picked El Paso as his headquarters. In June he left New York by train, stating that he planned to travel to the West Coast, while actually planning to slip away unnoticed to Kansas City. There he hoped he would be able to change trains and head south to El Paso. However, Huerta was under surveillance, and his movements were tracked. He had notified Orozco, Jr., who had been in exile in the United States following the defeat of the *Huertistas* in 1914, to meet him at the small town of Newman, New Mexico, about 20 miles from El Paso. He planned to leave the train there.<sup>25</sup>

Things did not go as he planned. El Paso's U.S. Collector of Customs, Zach Cobb, had learned of Huerta's plans. He was waiting at Newman with a squad of troops from the El Paso Patrol District when Huerta's train arrived on the evening of June 27. He arrested both Huerta and Orozco, Jr. for violating the neutrality statutes.<sup>26</sup>

The role of the Fort Bliss garrison in these events is confused. Morgan's 15th Cavalry had been based at Fort Bliss for some two years, and it was time to rotate the unit to the Philippines as the War Department had decreed. Orders from Washington provided that the regiment would leave Fort Bliss at the end of May, going by train to the West Coast, where it would board ship for the Philippines. The 13th Cavalry, based at Columbus, was scheduled to replace the 15th at Fort Bliss. As reports of Huerta's planned counterrevolution began to filter into the War Department, however, the orders for the 15th Cavalry's move to the coast were countermanded. Morgan's troops stayed in place at Fort Bliss and the 13th Cavalry remained at Columbus.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout May and June 1915 literally hundreds of Huerta supporters in the United States began to arrive in El Paso. Morgan's troops at Fort Bliss and other units in the El Paso Patrol District again were alerted to the seemingly impossible task of enforcing the neutrality statutes.

In late June Morgan was informed by telephone of Huerta's imminent appearance by train at Newman and that the *Huertistas* would attack Ciudad Juárez from the El Paso area within the next 48 hours. After

Cobb arrested Huerta and Orozco at Newman, he took the two revolutionary leaders to the Federal Building in El Paso to be arraigned. When Huerta's supporters learned of his arrest they immediately congregated outside the Federal Building. Federal officials feared Huerta might be released by his supporters, and orders were given to take both Orozco and Huerta to Fort Bliss for safekeeping. El Paso Mayor Tom Lea was Huerta's attorney and secured his release. By nightfall both men had been released on bail and had returned to family residences in El Paso.<sup>28</sup>

By June 27 the situation in El Paso was volatile. Hundreds of Huerta adherents were in the city with huge sums of money. An estimated \$12,000,000 had been supplied to Huerta by German agents. Huerta's supporters had cached at least 5 machine guns, 520 rifles, and 100,000 rounds of ammunition in a warehouse in El Paso.<sup>29</sup> The Fort Bliss garrison had to undertake the difficult role of maintaining peace in El Paso without resorting to martial law.

The U.S. president and the departments of state and justice had wanted Huerta in jail. But both he and Orozco were out on bond, and both men were kept under surveillance by military and Justice Department personnel.<sup>30</sup> Six days later, Orozco slipped out of his house, evaded Bureau of Investigation agents, and fled the city. Morgan immediately was ordered to seal the border with his troops, but Orozco managed to get by them.<sup>31</sup> The U.S. District Court subsequently placed Huerta under a higher bail, which he could not make. Morgan telegraphed his superiors and recommended Huerta be placed "wholly in my power as I fear that his presence in the city is disturbing, making him a popular hero here and thereby increasing the prestige of the party of which he is the only leader of ability."<sup>32</sup> Morgan was given charge of the former president, who he housed at Fort Bliss on the second floor of the old Bachelor Officers' Quarters, with a bath, sleeping porch, and servant.<sup>33</sup>

The immediate problem was solved with Huerta in the hands of the Fort Bliss garrison. Huerta soon fell ill while at Fort Bliss, apparently with a liver problem brought on by years of heavy drinking. The Army did not wish Huerta to die while in its custody, so he was allowed to return to his family, which then was living in El Paso. He recovered briefly and was returned to Fort Bliss under guard. When he again became seriously ill he was sent back to his residence.<sup>34</sup>

The abortive Huerta counterrevolution was nearly forgotten after July 1915, as more pressing matters confronted the Fort Bliss garrison. One matter concerned U.S. Army machine guns and ammunition. In 1915 privates at Fort Bliss and elsewhere were paid only \$15 a month. Mexican revolutionaries were willing to pay \$1,500 to buy a machine gun. The temptation for a private to sell a machine gun for one hundred times his monthly pay sometimes apparently was irresistible. In late July three privates were convicted by a court martial of conspiring to steal a machine gun to be sold to Mexican officers. The soldiers were sentenced to terms from eight to fifteen years at hard labor.<sup>35</sup> The following month a large quantity of ammunition from the supplies of the 16th Infantry turned up missing, and troops were implicated in selling it to revolutionaries.<sup>36</sup>

In early August Fort Bliss and the El Paso Patrol District were reinforced when the 5th Field Artillery from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, was ordered to El Paso and three troops of the 13th Cavalry were moved from Columbus and arrived at the fort.<sup>37</sup> In late August there was a flurry of activity as reports of a possible attempt to free Huerta reached Pershing. He immediately ordered all troops to return to their units, placed sentries at the international bridges in El Paso, and stationed extra guards around Huerta at Fort Bliss. Nothing happened.<sup>38</sup> Finally in September the delayed movement of the 15th Cavalry to the Philippines took place with the 8th Cavalry moving in to garrison Fort Bliss. The War Department also moved the 4th Field

Artillery and the 7th Infantry Regiment to Fort Bliss in anticipation of trouble in El Paso in the near future. The garrison at Fort Bliss and El Paso was increased from 4,000 to 6,000.<sup>39</sup>

Events further south underscored the need to reinforce Fort Bliss. Villa evacuated Torreón in September, and by mid-October he only controlled portions of Chihuahua and Sonora. Furthermore, President Wilson's decision to give *de facto* diplomatic recognition to Carranza was announced on October 19, 1915. This act by the U.S. government, combined with the banning of the sale and export of munitions to Villa, were to create enormous problems for the U.S. Army generally and for Fort Bliss specifically in the coming months.<sup>40</sup>

The Southern Department initiated yet another administrative change of patrol districts just prior to the announcement of Carranza's recognition. The El Paso Patrol District boundary was extended from Fabens in Texas to Noria, New Mexico, a distance of approximately 50 miles. Pershing would serve concurrently as the commander of the 8th Brigade and as commander of the new patrol district.

Meanwhile, Villa was enraged at the recognition of Carranza, and he claimed he stood ready to take on the U.S. Army. He gathered remnants of his once mighty *Division-del-Norte* in late October. He planned to launch a campaign to destroy a *Carrancista* enclave at Agua Prieta, in what remained of his own territory in Sonora.<sup>41</sup> Obregón's commander at Agua Prieta, General Plutarco Elías Calles, who later would become a president of Mexico, dug in awaiting Villa's assault. The U.S. government allowed *Carrancista* troops to be transported by railroad through Texas and New Mexico into Douglas, Arizona, where they crossed the border into Agua Prieta. Calles slaughtered Villa's troops when they attacked in November 1914. Villa abandoned the attack, furious because the U.S. government had allowed Carranza to reinforce the isolated *Carrancista* garrison. He then moved southward for an assault on the Sonoran capital of Hermosillo. His troops easily were defeated there as well. Villa abandoned his artillery and headed back across the mountains into Chihuahua. Casualties and desertions reduced Villa's army to an estimated 2,000 men by late December. It seemed Villa was finished and destined either to flee into exile in the United States or to conduct a guerrilla campaign in western Chihuahua.<sup>42</sup>

While these events were taking place, Colonel Charles W. Taylor, commander of the 8th Cavalry, assumed command of Fort Bliss on September 24, 1915, when he replaced Morgan.<sup>43</sup> The 8th Cavalry formed the core of the garrison with some 1,169 enlisted men and 61 officers, approximately the same strength as the 15th Cavalry. The 7th U.S. Infantry Regiment, with some 822 enlisted men and 30 officers, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Tredwell W. Moore, also augmented the garrison as did two artillery units that had arrived in August and September 1915.<sup>44</sup> There was anticipation of an assault from Villa throughout the fall and into December of 1915. But the 6,000 troops at Fort Bliss and in the El Paso Patrol District and the considerable quantity of artillery at Fort Bliss apparently prevented a major assault on the area. Indeed, El Paso in the fall of 1915 probably had the largest Army garrison in the entire nation.

By January 1916 the business elite of El Paso began to pressure their congressional delegation to elevate Fort Bliss to brigade status.<sup>45</sup> The El Paso community was pleased by the massive inflow of funds from the Army payroll for 6,000 army personnel, the major contracts for construction and repairs at Fort Bliss, and the installation's growth from an infantry post of only a few hundred men to a regimental garrison. Since quiet had prevailed on the border for several months, however, there seemingly would be no need for a larger troop contingent at Fort Bliss.



### Conclusion

During the 18-month period from July 1914 to January 1916, Fort Bliss continued to grow as additional troops moved in to garrison the post and the El Paso Patrol District. The fort also experienced a dramatic increase in physical facilities, with construction of a hospital, new barracks, a post exchange, and a post telephone exchange.

This growth was the direct result of the acknowledged importance of El Paso as the central strategic point along the entire border. The Mexican Revolution still had to run its course and the threat to the U.S. border region continued to increase, justifying the growth of the Fort Bliss garrison and the construction of more facilities to support the growing number of troops at the post.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution*, pp. 151, 140-143.

<sup>2</sup>Johnson, *Heroic Mexico*, pp. 226-230.

<sup>3</sup>PR/FB, July 1914, roll 120.

<sup>4</sup>The question of patrol district boundaries, along the U.S.-Mexico border generally, and in the El Paso area specifically, during the Mexican Revolution could be the subject of an extensive administrative history. Suffice it to say that the changes occurred often and are a source of considerable confusion for historians dealing with the U.S. Army and its activities during the period from 1910 to 1920. In the case of Fort Bliss, which was the pivot of Army activities for west Texas and New Mexico, it would appear that the various commanders of both the Department of Texas and later the Southern Department had great difficulty in prescribing patrol district boundaries and they changed their minds with great frequency. For example, CGSD to the AGI, March 15, 1913, RG 165, MID, No. 4761-727; also PR/FB, January-December 1914, roll 120.

<sup>5</sup>PR/FB, April 1915, roll 120; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 328-329.

<sup>6</sup>The view that Pershing served as post commander of Fort Bliss is widely held by historians of El Paso and Fort Bliss. For example, Christian's otherwise excellent study of El Paso and Fort Bliss, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 330. However, Pershing never served as post commander. For example, PR/FB, April 1914, passim, roll 120.

<sup>7</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 331.

<sup>8</sup>Johnson, *Heroic Mexico*, p. 236.

<sup>9</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 338; also the *EPMT*, May 19, 1914.

<sup>10</sup>Department Quartermaster to CGSD, July 20, 1915, Annual Reports, 1915, Southern Department, RG 393.

<sup>11</sup>See PR/FB, September-December 1914, Roll 120.

<sup>12</sup>The best available study of this subject is Harold Holcombe, *United States Arms Control and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1924*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 1968.

<sup>13</sup>See PR/FB, September-December 1914, Roll 120; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 341-343.

<sup>14</sup>The standard work on the Aguascalientes Convention is Robert Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution, 1914-1915: the Convention of Aguascalientes*, University of Indiana Press, Bloomington, 1960.

<sup>15</sup>Department signal officer and department quartermaster to CGSD, July 12 and 20, 1915, Annual Reports, 1915, Southern Department, RG 393.

<sup>16</sup>The classic survey of this period is Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution*, pp. 122-140.

<sup>17</sup>Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution*, pp. 150-151. Quirk's account, written a quarter century ago, remains the best account of this period of the revolution.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 150, *passim*.

<sup>19</sup>Johnson, *Heroic Mexico*, pp. 261-269.

<sup>20</sup>PR/FB, January-April 1915, roll 120.

<sup>21</sup>Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution*, pp. 219-226.

<sup>22</sup>For example, U.S. vs. Sabino Guaderrama, U.S. Commissioner, No. 1376, El Paso, FRC/FW; U.S. vs. Vicente Ramos, U.S. Commissioner, Marfa, No. 228, in FRC/FW; also U.A. vs. P. Elías Calles, et. al, U.S. Commissioner, El Paso, no number, in FRC/FW; also U.S. District Court, El Paso, Nos. 1813 and 1781, FRC/FW.

<sup>23</sup>Johnson, *Heroic Mexico*, pp. 290-291.

<sup>24</sup>The standard biography of Huerta is Michael C. Meyer, *Huerta: a Political Portrait*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1972, pp. 210-226; also Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981, pp. 327-332.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 344-345.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 344; also PR/FB, May-June 1915, Roll 120.

<sup>28</sup>Meyer, *Huerta*, pp. 221-222; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 345.

<sup>29</sup>Meyer, *Mexican Rebel*, p. 127.

<sup>30</sup>Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Zimmermann Telegram*, Viking Press, New York, 1958, pp. 78-79; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 345-348.

<sup>31</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 346; also Meyer, *Mexican Rebel*, p. 130; also Meyer, *Huerta*, pp. 222-223; also *EPMT*, July 5, 1915.

<sup>32</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 348.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>Meyer, *Huerta*, pp. 227-229; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 349.

<sup>35</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 349-350.

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<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 350.

<sup>37</sup>PR/FB, August 1915; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 350-351.

<sup>38</sup>*EPMT*, August 26, 1915; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 351-352.

<sup>39</sup>PR/FB, September 1915, roll 120; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 352-353.

<sup>40</sup>Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution*, p. 209.

<sup>41</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 354.

<sup>42</sup>Captain C.F. Leonard, "Villa Invasion of Sonora, Mexico," Oct.-Dec., 1915, Inc 1 to Major E. Pierce to the AG, MID 5761-1067, NA.

<sup>43</sup>PR/FB, September 1915, roll 120.

<sup>44</sup>PR/FB, August-September 1915, roll 120.

<sup>45</sup>Brigadier General M.M. Macomb, chief, War College Division, to AG of the Army, April 13, 1916, War College Division, 7514-7515, AGO 2386696, RG 165; copies of House Resolution 13712, 64th Congress, 1st Session, and Senate Bill 5272, which provided for the enlargement of Fort Bliss to a brigade sized post, are attached to the memorandum.

## Chapter VI

### THE PUNITIVE EXPEDITION (1916-1917)

#### Introduction

The year 1916 would bring the United States and Mexico literally to the brink of war, even though it opened on a deceptively tranquil note. Villa apparently had been crushed in the climactic battles in central Mexico and Sonora, and the Carranza regime was consolidating its control over the country. Like Zapata to the south, Villa was thought to have been reduced to a regional nuisance incapable of mounting a serious challenge to the central government's authority. The Carranza administration was basking in the glow of its improving relations with the United States. It secured *de facto* recognition on October 19, 1915, and with this recognition had come important practical benefits, including an American arms embargo against all other Mexican factions and the privilege of transporting thousands of troops on American railroads from the lower Texas border through El Paso to reinforce its Sonora garrisons. This cooperation by the United States had been instrumental in the defeat of Villa's Sonora campaign.

Taking advantage of the cooperation with Washington, a Carranza force of 2,000 troops and their camp followers were shipped in boxcars from Agua Prieta to Pelea, New Mexico, located 12 miles west of El Paso. After detraining on January 1, 1916, they crossed the border and marched overland to Ciudad Juárez to reinforce the garrison.<sup>1</sup> They presumably avoided El Paso itself in order not to irritate Texas authorities, who traditionally were reluctant to have armed Mexican troops passing through that city.

Besides the augmented Ciudad Juárez garrison, other evidence indicated the *Carrancistas* were consolidating their hold on the state of Chihuahua. On January 9 the 400-man *Villista* garrison at Palomas surrendered to the Carranza forces, which promptly occupied the town.<sup>2</sup> Villa lost his last port of entry with the fall of Palomas, and the Carranza garrison could now deny him access to the New Mexico border. The Carranza government, confident of the improving conditions, guaranteed protection to Americans traveling in Chihuahua. As a result, the American-owned Cusi Mining Company decided to reopen its mines at Cusihiuriachic, 60 miles outside the state capital.

The company's general manager and 17 other American personnel left El Paso by rail in early January and proceeded without incident to the city of Chihuahua, where they changed trains. They got as far as the Santa Isabel way station on January 10, where their train was stopped by a band of *Villistas* under Pablo López. López and his followers began shooting down the unarmed Americans, one of whom survived to recount the atrocity.<sup>3</sup> The Santa Isabel massacre was a major embarrassment for the Carranza government, because it demonstrated that while Villa might be down, he certainly was not out, and he still was very capable of causing considerable trouble.

Many of the Santa Isabel victims were well known in El Paso, and the reaction there also was one of considerable nastiness. Racial tensions between Mexicans and Anglos had been rising in that city, and the news of the killings at Santa Isabel produced an explosion. Mobs of Anglos, both civilians and soldiers, surged through the downtown area indiscriminately attacking Mexicans. The demonstrators numbered an estimated 1,500 at the height of the disorders, and civil authorities were on the verge of losing control of the situation.

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Pershing acted decisively in this crisis. He ordered all soldiers to report to their camps immediately and offered the authorities assistance from his troops to quell the disorders. El Paso's harassed 65-man police force gratefully accepted the offer, and a battalion of 16th Infantry troops from Fort Bliss arrived at the central police station within a half hour. Companies C and D remained in reserve while companies A and B established a cordon along Broadway Avenue to prohibit Anglos from proceeding into Chihuahuita. The local National Guard company also was mobilized. The Army kept the Anglos and Hispanics separated and managed to restore order within 24 hours.<sup>4</sup> El Paso was spared a bloody race riot.

The disorders overshadowed a noteworthy event. Huerta, the former Mexican strongman, died on January 13. Huerta had been released from confinement at Fort Bliss shortly after Christmas because of his failing health. After an unsuccessful operation he died at his home at 415 West Boulevard in El Paso.<sup>5</sup>

The Santa Isabel massacre and its aftermath strained diplomatic and race relations, but the Carranza government seemed to be making an energetic effort to defeat the *Villistas*. Not only did Carranza assure the United States that the perpetrators at Santa Isabel would be punished, he also moved additional troops into Chihuahua to operate against Villa. There was one problem, Villa's whereabouts were a mystery.<sup>6</sup>

The United States began to relax when a month passed without further incident. On February 19 the Southern Department announced the first reduction in the 12,000 troops guarding the border. The 1st Squadron of the 12th Cavalry was assembling at Mercedes, Texas, in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, for reassignment to the Canal Zone. As soon as the cavalrymen had been delivered to their new station, the troop transport would return for the 2nd Battalion of the 4th Field Artillery, which also was being sent from Fort Bliss to the Canal Zone.<sup>7</sup> Expectations that this was the beginning of a major troop reduction along the border soon were dashed.

On March 9, 1916, the mystery of Villa's whereabouts was solved; he attacked Columbus, New Mexico. Villa's motives for attacking this border hamlet remain obscure. Among the theories explaining his raid are (1) his desire to retaliate against the United States for having supported Carranza and his hope to provoke American intervention in Mexico, creating a situation on which he might capitalize; (2) his intention to loot the town and the nearby 13th Cavalry encampment for badly needed weapons, horses, and provisions; (3) his desire for revenge against certain Columbus merchants who allegedly had cheated him; and (4) the most provocative thesis, that German agents manipulated Villa into attacking Columbus in order to plunge the United States into war with Mexico, preventing American participation in World War I on the Allied side.<sup>8</sup>

Numerous accounts describe in detail Villa's raid on Columbus.<sup>8</sup> The following text summarizes the secretary of war's official report.

*On the night of March 8-9, the Mexican outlaw, Francisco Villa, with a force variously estimated at from 500 to 1,000 men, crossed the international border from Mexico to the United States at a point about 3 miles west of the border line gate and concentrated his force for an attack on the town of Columbus, N. Mex. The attack was made during hours of extreme darkness and was for the purpose, according to information subsequently obtained by the military authorities, of looting the town after disposing of the garrison. A fight ensued in which 7 American soldiers were killed and 2 officers and 5 soldiers were wounded, and 8 civilians killed and 2 wounded. The Mexican bandits killed in the town, the camp, and on the border line numbered 67, while the wounded and captured numbered 7. Immediately after the raid one troop of cavalry crossed the border and pursued the*

*Mexicans. An additional troop, stationed at the border line gate, also mounted and struck the retreating Mexicans in the flank; the two troops . . . discontinued the pursuit only when their ammunition was exhausted and the horses and men, without water and almost exhausted, could continue no longer. The bandits in the meantime retreated in a southeasterly direction. During this running fight a number of Mexicans, estimated to be between 70 and 100, were killed, but no accurate estimate of the wounded can be made. Much property and many animals were abandoned by the Mexicans in their flight.<sup>10</sup>*

Contrary to popular belief, Villa suffered a tactical defeat at Columbus. His forces suffered much heavier casualties than the defenders, lost most of their loot, and fled in considerable disarray, despite having achieved almost total surprise when launching the attack.<sup>11</sup>

The Columbus raid, however, generally was viewed as an American disaster. The Army was mortified, and President Wilson had no alternative in the face of public outrage but to order a retaliatory strike against Villa in Mexico. On March 10 General Frederick Funston was directed to organize sufficient forces under Pershing's command to proceed promptly across the border after the raiders.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. Army was about to embark on one of the most difficult campaigns in its history.

Military rail traffic increased dramatically as the Army scrambled to assemble the Punitive Expedition and to plug the resulting gaps in border defense (see Table VI-1).

Table VI-1. Assignments During the Time of the Punitive Expedition

| UNIT            | PREVIOUS STATION                            | NEW STATION                   | ASSIGNED TO PUNIVITE EXPEDITION |
|-----------------|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 7th Cavalry     | Douglas, AZ                                 | Hachita, NM                   | X                               |
| 10th Cavalry    | Fort Huachuca, AZ                           | Hachita, NM                   | X                               |
| 13th Cavalry    | Columbus, NM<br>(1st Squadron at Marfa, TX) | Unchanged                     | X                               |
|                 |   | Columbus, NM                  | X                               |
| 12th Infantry   | Nogales, AZ                                 | Unchanged                     |                                 |
| 11th Infantry   | Douglas, AZ                                 | Hachita, NM                   |                                 |
| 18th Infantey   | Douglas, AZ                                 | Unchanged                     |                                 |
| 22nd Infantry   | Douglas, AZ                                 | Unchanged                     |                                 |
| 6th Fld Arty    | Douglas, AZ                                 | Columbus, NM<br>(2 batteries) | X                               |
| 1st Aero Sqdrn  | Ft. Sam Houston, TX                         | Columbus, NM                  | X                               |
| 2nd Btn Eng     | Ft. Sam Houston, TX                         | Columbus, NM                  | X                               |
| Field Hosp No.7 | Ft. Sam Houston, TX                         | Comumbus, NM                  | X                               |
| Ambi. Co. No.7  | Ft. Sam Houston, TX                         | Columbus, NM                  | X                               |

Table VI-1, continued

| UNIT                | PREVIOUS STATION  | NEW STATION                | ASSIGNED TO PUNITIVE EXPEDITION |
|---------------------|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Signal Co. H        | Ft. Sam Houston, TX   | Columbus, NM               | X                               |
| 1st Cavalry         | Monterey, CA<br>(1 squadron at San Diego)   | Douglas, AZ<br>Douglas, AZ |                                 |
| 11th Cavalry        | Ft. Oglethorpe, GA  | Columbus, NM               | X                               |
| 12th Cavalry        | Ft. Robinson, NB  | Hachita, NM                | X                               |
|                     | (2 troops at Ft. D.A. Russell, WY; 3rd Squadron at Ft. Meade, SD, left post ungarrisoned) | Hachita, NM                | X                               |
| 5th Cavalry         | Ft. Myer, VA  | Columbus, NM               | X                               |
| Ft. Leavenworth, KA | Columbus, NM  | X                          |                                 |
| Ft. Sheridan, IL    | Columbus, NM  | X                          |                                 |
| 24th Infantry       | Ft. D.A. Russel, WY   | Del Rio, TX                | X                               |

Put another way, by the end of March the combat units in the United States *not* in the Southern Department or assigned to the Punitive Expedition are listed below.<sup>13</sup>

|                                      |                         |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2nd Cavalry                          | Ft. Ethan Allen, VT     |
| 3rd Infantry                         | Madison Barracks, NY    |
| 13th Infantry                        | Plattsburg Barracks, NY |
| 14th Infantry (1 battalion)          | Ft. Lawton, WA          |
| 21st Infantry                        | Vancouver Barracks, WA  |
| 3rd Field Artillery (3 batteries)    | Ft. Meyer, VA           |
| 5th Field Artillery (less 1 battery) | Ft. Sill, OK            |

The Punitive Expedition got underway on the afternoon of March 15, 1916, when one column of troops crossed the border at Columbus. The second column, commanded personally by Pershing, crossed to the west at Culberson's Ranch about midnight on March 16. Pershing's provisional division consisted of 4,800 men and 4,175 animals. Periodic reinforcements considerably augmented this force as the campaign progressed. The Punitive Expedition numbered 10,690 men when it crossed the border and came back into the United States on February 5, 1917.<sup>14</sup>

### The Punitive Expedition

News of the Columbus raid threw El Paso into an uproar. The immediate concern at Fort Bliss was to protect the city from Mexican attack and to reinforce the 13th Cavalry at Columbus. The 1st Battalion of the 20th Infantry left by rail for Columbus on the night of March 9 and arrived early the next morning. Strong measures also were taken to safeguard El Paso during that same night: Five infantry companies in battle gear,



a doubled provost guard, and doubled police patrols were deployed along the river and in south El Paso. Troops also guarded the El Paso Electric Company's power plant and, at Pershing's suggestion, streetcar service to Ciudad Juárez was suspended.<sup>15</sup> When it became evident there was no serious threat to El Paso, Fort Bliss's attention increasingly turned to supporting the Punitive Expedition.

The Punitive Expedition marked a major step in Fort Bliss's emergence as the most important border installation. The post's initial involvement with the expedition was threefold. First, and most importantly, it provided Pershing himself, who had commanded the 8th Infantry Brigade and the El Paso Patrol District. Pershing organized the Punitive Expedition as a provisional division of two cavalry and one infantry brigade. Fort Bliss provided the two infantry brigade units, the 6th and 16th. The post also provided two companies of the 20th Infantry and two batteries of the 4th Field Artillery to serve at the expedition's base camp at Columbus.<sup>16</sup> Third, as the largest military installation in the area, Fort Bliss was the expedition's natural support base. Funston stated as much on March 12, adding that supplies would come to El Paso through Fort Sam Houston.<sup>17</sup>

Fort Bliss badly needed reinforcements to support the expedition while performing its principal mission of protecting the border in the El Paso area. The garrison had been reduced by more than half as the following units were reassigned.

|                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2nd Battalion 4th Field Artillery | sent to the Canal Zone on March 8   |
| 1st Battalion 20th Infantry       | sent to Columbus                    |
| 6th Infantry                      | assigned to the Punitive Expedition |
| 16th Infantry                     | assigned to the Punitive Expedition |

The units remaining at Fort Bliss were only the 7th Infantry, 8th Cavalry, and Battery A, 5th Field Artillery.

From a tactical standpoint the situation was even worse, because Headquarters and nine troops of the 8th Cavalry were the only men actually at Fort Bliss. The other three troops of cavalry were stationed downriver at Fabens, Fort Hancock, and Sierra Blanca.<sup>18</sup>

Some relief came on March 13, when the 23rd Infantry at Galveston was ordered to entrain for Fort Bliss. Their arrival increased the garrison to 2,700 men. Perhaps more important than the additional troop regiment was Funston's announcement on March 14 that Brigadier General George Bell, Jr., commanding the 5th Brigade at Fort Sam Houston, would replace Pershing as commander of the El Paso El Paso Patrol District.<sup>19</sup> Bell arrived in El Paso the following day.

The Punitive Expedition, the nature of Pershing's campaign, and Fort Bliss's role in supporting this campaign were affected profoundly by the fact that the expedition was based on a false assumption. President Wilson and his advisors had assumed Carranza would cooperate with the expedition in eliminating Villa, the common enemy. They believed that at the very least Carranza would not impede Pershing's efforts. Washington's assumptions proved to be incorrect. Further, the expedition failed to crush Villa quickly,<sup>20</sup> and its presence in Mexico soon would bring the two countries to the brink of war.

Carranza was staunchly nationalistic, and he could be as self-righteous and stubborn as Wilson ever thought of being. While admitting Villa was a problem, Carranza insisted he was a *Mexican* problem. He decreed the Punitive Expedition was a violation of Mexican sovereignty and must be withdrawn immediately.

The Mexican leader maintained this position inflexibly during the difficult months that followed. Carranza endeavored to negotiate the expedition out of Mexico while laying down conditions circumscribing Pershing's activities. The expedition, for example, was forbidden to occupy Mexican towns. Anxious to avoid any clash with Carranza, Washington agreed. Further, Carranza refused to permit American forces use of Mexican railroads. The United States had extended this privilege to Carranza on several occasions, but he was in no mood to reciprocate under the present circumstances.

Restrictions on the use of Mexican railway significantly altered Pershing's campaign and Fort Bliss's part in the expedition. Two rail lines were involved: the Mexican Central and the Mexico Northwestern. The former was the trunk line extending from Ciudad Juárez through Chihuahua and on to Mexico City; the latter ran to Casas Grandes, through the mountains, and then southeasterly to the state capital. Ideally Pershing's supplies and reinforcements could have been sent by rail from Fort Bliss, along the Mexico Northwestern in particular. The supply route through Columbus then would become of secondary importance. At the onset of the expedition many speculated that logistical activity at Columbus would decline sharply once rail traffic got under way.

Pershing initially counted on utilizing the vital Mexico Northwestern. On March 12 he invited the railroad's general manager to confer with him at Fort Bliss on the matter, and the line's current condition was discussed.<sup>21</sup> Four days later the manager met with an engineering officer to prepare a memorandum detailing the supplies and equipment necessary to put the railroad in shape for heavy traffic expected from the Punitive Expedition. The railroad's management also offered to place all their facilities, including several company towns, at Pershing's disposal. The Mexico Northwestern had been struggling to remain in business, having suffered horrendous losses because of the revolution. The prospect of having the railroad rehabilitated and protected by the U.S. military was a godsend, to say nothing of the revenues the Punitive Expedition would generate.<sup>22</sup> When, for example, Pershing urgently requested on March 18 that he be sent a train to Casas Grandes to transport troops, the Mexico Northwestern complied immediately.<sup>23</sup>

Carranza's hostility wrecked this accommodation. Pershing was so frustrated by the Mexican president's action he wired Funston, stating it was necessary for him to seize the railroad.<sup>24</sup> Washington refused permission for the measure that Carranza undoubtedly would have regarded an act of war.

The best the United States could secure from Carranza was grudging permission to ship supplies on the Mexico Northwestern consigned to merchants who had contracts to supply the expedition.<sup>25</sup> But the expedition was prohibited from furnishing guards for the shipments and from protecting the rail line itself. From Pershing's point of view this arrangement was better than nothing, but it meant his rail supply line was under Mexican control.

The Army began shipping some supplies from El Paso to Casas Grandes via the Mexico Northwestern, making the best of an unsatisfactory situation. Prudence dictated that nothing of a critical military nature be sent by this route, since the items could be seized at Carranza's whim. Accordingly the shipments consisted of bulky commodities having relatively little military value. For example, on March 30 three carloads of oats, flour, corn, and hay were dispatched; on April 7 fourteen carloads of hay, gasoline, oats, automobile parts, and dry goods were sent, followed by two cars of gasoline, one of pharmaceuticals and automobile accessories, and one of provisions; on May 3 ten carloads of hay and two of gasoline went to Casas Grandes.<sup>26</sup> As of May shipments down the Mexico Northwestern were averaging 70 carloads a week.<sup>27</sup> This rate was manifestly inadequate to support the Punitive Expedition.

The supply route through Columbus originally was envisioned to be only a supplement to the railroads, but it became the expedition's lifeline because of the inability to use the railroads. El Paso facilities proved invaluable in establishing Columbus as the expedition's logistical base. Fortuitously, in late February the Quartermaster Depot had occupied the new four-story Mulligan Building in El Paso, which already contained some 1,800,000 pounds of supplies when Pershing was ordered into Mexico. The structure became the scene of feverish activity, and by March 14 the quartermaster had dispatched to Columbus enough supplies to last the expedition a month.<sup>28</sup>

The buildup at Columbus continued as supplies arrived both from El Paso and directly from the East. By May, the base camp at Columbus covered a square mile and had a railroad spur running through its center. Warehouses and barracks lined the railroad siding. To the west stretched the tents of the garrison, the civilian truck drivers, and the casual laborers. The cantonment hospital and the quartermaster offices were across an irrigation ditch. The camp also included vehicle-repair facilities, a large corral complex, and a prison compound. A mile away the 1st Aero Squadron had established its encampment and airstrip. One of the heretofore unseen features of any U.S. military base camp was a continual procession of truck convoys transporting men and supplies to Pershing's advance bases at Casas Grandes and Namiquipa.<sup>29</sup>

Of necessity the Army truck came into its own during the Punitive Expedition. Pershing's logistical problems were staggering. For instance, just feeding the expedition's 6,000 horses required a daily minimum of 30 tons of grain and 42 tons of hay.<sup>30</sup> Given Carranza's prohibition on using the railroads, the expedition had to be supplied mainly by truck convoy. The Army at that time, however, had few trucks available. Its resources were strained severely when it provided 162 White and Jefferay Quad trucks for duty between Columbus and Namiquipa. This number did not begin to meet Pershing's needs. Chief of Staff Scott, in a breathtaking display of initiative, slashed bureaucratic red tape and instructed the quartermaster general to procure the necessary vehicles, portable garages, and a complement of mechanics. He was instructed to dispatch them to Columbus forthwith. Scott's daring expenditure of \$450,000 had not been authorized by Congress, but it greatly alleviated Pershing's plight and raised the total number of 1-1/2-ton trucks to 270. The Army continued acquiring motor vehicles at an impressive rate.<sup>31</sup>

Relations with Mexico continued to deteriorate as Pershing struggled to conduct a military campaign under crippling political constraints. On April 12 a clash occurred between a squadron of the 13th Cavalry and the hostile citizenry of the town of Parral in southern Chihuahua. The cavalymen engaged in a running fight with Carranza troops as they retreated. Generals Scott and Funston were appointed to meet in Ciudad Juárez with Carranza's minister of war, Obregón, in an effort to avert a real crisis. The negotiations finally ended in stalemate because of Carranza's inflexible demand that the Punitive Expedition be withdrawn before the other issues could be settled. Diplomacy was at a standstill. Funston and Scott on May 7 urged Washington to strengthen border defense immediately. They thought that only a show of force would overawe the Mexican high command, who interpreted the United State's military unpreparedness to mean Mexico would stand a good chance of winning a war.<sup>32</sup>

As if to underscore Scott and Funston's warnings, a force of Mexican irregulars raided the hamlets of Glenn Springs and Boquillas in the Big Bend region of Texas on May 5. The U.S. reaction was threefold: An arms embargo on shipments to Mexico was imposed; on May 9 President Wilson mobilized the National Guards of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, and American troops were ordered across the border in pursuit of the raiders.

These developments had their impact on Fort Bliss. Theoretically, the calling up of the New Mexico National Guard for duty at Columbus would free the 20th Infantry Battalion to return to Fort Bliss.

However, the mobilization of the New Mexicans made little military difference. They had only one decent unit, a field artillery battery from Roswell. The remainder of the guard, the 1st New Mexico Infantry, was mediocre at best. Although mobilized on May 9, the regiment had only 9 officers and 196 enlisted men in federal service as of June 19. It took until July 14 for the unit to be recruited up to a level permitting the mustering in of the regiment as a unit. The base commander at Columbus was not impressed.<sup>33</sup>

Fort Bliss derived scant benefit from the presence of the New Mexico National Guard, and post resources were strained further by having to provide troops to pursue the Glenn Springs raiders. The mission went to Major George T. Langhorne, commanding troops A and B of the 8th Cavalry. Langhorne was a colorful and competent soldier; he led the advance element of this smaller punitive expedition from his chauffeur-driven Cadillac touring car. Crossing the border on May 11, he remained in Mexico 16 days. His force suffered no casualties, freed the two American captives taken in the Boquillas raid, recovered most of the loot taken at Boquillas and Glen Springs, and inflicted some casualties on the Mexican irregulars.<sup>34</sup> The Glenn Springs raid and Langhorne's retaliatory incursion brought the United States and Mexico another step closer to war.

The 1916 crisis with Mexico gave enormous impetus to the development of American intelligence, especially in the area of cryptography. The Army proved adept at tapping Mexican telegraph lines for military and diplomatic traffic. When Mexican forces under General Plutarco E. Calles in the state of Sonora moved eastward menacing Pershing's communication lines, the interception of Calles's communications enabled Pershing to block the Mexican advance.<sup>35</sup> The Signal Corps unit assigned to the Punitive Expedition also tapped Mexican lines in Chihuahua.<sup>36</sup> Intercepted Mexican traffic was crypto-analyzed on a timely basis by Riverbank Laboratories, a private think tank funded by George Fabyan, who patriotically put his facility at the disposal of the War Department.<sup>37</sup>

Tension along the border reached a critical level in May 1916 after Carranza resurrected the Plan of San Diego. This visionary manifesto had come to light in 1915. It called for a Mexican-American insurrection in the Southwest and the establishment of a separate republic. Carranza had made skillful use of the plan, sponsoring raids into south Texas, as a way of applying pressure on the United States to recognize his regime. Carranza achieved that objective and now was using the plan as a counter to the Punitive Expedition: Rebellion would break out in Texas unless the expedition was withdrawn. The United States gave no inclination to recall the expedition, and the Carranza regime implemented its plans. The projected date for the Mexican Army's rebellion was May 10.<sup>38</sup>

American intelligence had been monitoring Carranza's preparations and took them seriously. Because the border population was overwhelmingly Mexican-American, the Army took what precautions it could. On May 10 extraordinary security measures were underway at Columbus: Entrenchments were dug around the military reservation, the troops were confined to quarters at night, guards were increased around the supply depots, and civilians were urged to remain in their houses. Two companies of the 20th Infantry and a machine-gun platoon were rushed from Fort Bliss and encamped on the courthouse lawn in El Paso. These troops reinforced a contingent of 100 soldiers who had been quartered at the courthouse at night.<sup>39</sup> Although no outbreaks occurred, Fort Bliss authorities were improving their capability of responding to trouble. An experimental 75-man motorcycle company was formed to conduct patrols and to respond to emergencies at a brisk 30 miles an hour.<sup>40</sup>

The feared Mexican-American insurrection did not materialize, in part because American authorities smashed the conspiracy in south Texas. But the border situation remained threatening. The Carranza government continued to support partisans of the Plan of San Diego, who were gathering in the vicinity of

Matamoros. By June a more grandiose strategy had emerged: A brigade of irregulars would be formed to invade Texas in support of the would-be rebels. The Mexican Army also would attack Laredo.<sup>41</sup> Large Mexican troop reinforcements were being deployed along the border.

The American Army also was making itself visible along the border. On June 4 Battery E of the 5th Field Artillery arrived in El Paso by rail from Fort Sill, Oklahoma. This unit was equipped with 4.7-inch howitzers.<sup>42</sup> To ensure the Mexicans got the message, the largest parade in El Paso's history was held on June 7. Bell reviewed 3,000 troops and their equipment, including artillery, as they wound through the streets of El Paso. The next day the troops conducted a sham battle in Washington Park.<sup>43</sup> The Mexicans may have been impressed, but they were not intimidated. A few days later they reinforced the garrison at Ciudad Juárez with 600 cavalry and additional machine guns. To offset this development, Funston ordered the 1st Battalion of the 20th Infantry at Columbus to entrain for El Paso to rejoin the rest of that regiment. The battery of New Mexico field artillery at Columbus also was ordered to Fort Bliss.<sup>44</sup>

The rapid military buildup in the El Paso-Juárez region evidenced the explosive situation that had developed in the area between Laredo and Brownsville. Carranza had unleashed Plan of San Diego guerrillas in a series of raids into Texas, determined to continue exerting pressure on the United States. On June 12 a band struck near Laredo; on June 15 another contingent attacked an Army encampment at San Ignacio; and on June 16 a group attempted to ambush an Army patrol near Brownsville. The Army retaliated by sending a force of several hundred troops across the river near the city of Matamoros. A major battle was averted, but there was skirmishing with the Mexican Army before the Americans withdrew.<sup>45</sup> This encounter on June 17 appeared to make war inevitable.

The Army's war plans called for invading Mexico through Laredo, Eagle Pass, and El Paso. The plan was to first seize the international bridges, then secure the Mexican rail lines, and finally occupy the area south to a line running from Monterrey to Torreón. Units based at Fort Bliss were to attack from El Paso, south along the railroad from Ciudad Juárez to Torreón, a mission "of primary importance in any campaign for the control of Northern Mexico because of the great extent of the territory which its possession will enable us to control."<sup>46</sup> In addition at least 2,500 troops from the El Paso Patrol District would secure the Mexico Northwestern Railway and link up with Pershing at Casas Grandes.<sup>47</sup>

Unfortunately the Army already was stretched to the limit. The situation was so serious that coast artillery companies had been deployed for static defense along the border. Even the Army's service schools had been closed to enable the cadre and students to join their units.<sup>48</sup> To free the regulars, Wilson on June 18 took the drastic step of mobilizing the entire National Guard for border service. The military picture would change decisively before the more than 100,000 reinforcements began arriving.

On June 21 the Punitive Expedition and Carranza forces clashed. Pershing had dispatched a 76-man cavalry detachment on a reconnaissance mission, and the commanding captain provoked an engagement with a larger Mexican force at the village of Carrizal, between Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua. The Americans were routed.<sup>49</sup> For some hours the two countries literally were poised on the brink of war.

Emotions were at a fever pitch in El Paso. Bell put Fort Bliss on a state of alert, at the same time issuing guarantees to the peaceful Mexican-American population. The burning question was when would war actually be declared? The Mexican garrison at Ciudad Juárez prepared to abandon the city and take up defensive positions to the south, a tactic the Mexican Army was adopting along much of the border.<sup>50</sup>

War was averted when Carranza acceded to Wilson's ultimatum that he immediately return the American prisoners taken at Carrizal or face the consequences. Thereafter, although relations between the two countries remained tense, both nations turned toward negotiation rather than war as the means of settling their differences. Mexico remained anxious to secure the Punitive Expedition's withdrawal, while the United States emphasized that security of the American border was the paramount issue. The mobilization and deployment of more than 100,000 National Guardsmen on the border lent considerable force to the American position.

As the threat of war receded, the Army could focus on improving its combat readiness and on correcting deficiencies evidenced by the Punitive Expedition, such as inadequate communications, wretched aircraft, and the lack of motor transport. It could also supervise the National Guard mobilization and concentrate on training the guard. Unsettled conditions in Mexico, especially a resurgence of *Villista* strength in the state of Chihuahua, kept complacency from taking hold.

One of the first priorities was the expansion of the regular Army. At Fort Bliss three new regiments were formed, including the 8th Field Artillery, the 34th Infantry, and the 17th Cavalry.<sup>51</sup> The 8th Field Artillery was created by transfers from the 5th and 6th field artilleries. The new unit was quartered in tents on the mesa adjoining Fort Bliss. Its armament consisted of six batteries of an experimental gun, the 3.8-inch howitzer.

The commander of the 8th, Colonel Peyton C. March, assumed his duties on October 5, 1916. His subsequent career was meteoric. In 1918 he would become chief of staff of the Army.<sup>52</sup>

The two other regiments also filled out rapidly. By late July the 34th Infantry at Camp Cotton and the 17th Cavalry at Fort Bliss had about 800 men each.<sup>53</sup> In addition, Fort Bliss received two more batteries of the 5th Field Artillery, plus a field hospital, an ambulance company, and a signal company. By October the Signal Corps contingent had grown to battalion size, the 1st Field Battalion<sup>54</sup>

Expansion of post facilities was even more important than the increase in troop strength at Fort Bliss. The general pattern was to duplicate, though sometimes on a smaller scale, the facilities at Fort Sam Houston. For instance, in March 1916 auxiliary remount depots were created at San Antonio and El Paso to support the border army. Between July 1 and August 19, 1916, the remount depot at Fort Bliss received 12,318 horses and 6,107 mules. Fort Sam Houston received 10,702 horses and 10,495 mules.<sup>55</sup>

The Fort Bliss hospital was designated a base hospital, like that at Fort Sam Houston. The hospital at Fort Bliss was the principal medical facility supporting the Punitive Expedition. An annex was constructed to expand its patient capacity from 500 to 1,000, and 26 Army nurses were assigned.<sup>56</sup> Field medical supply depots were established at both San Antonio and El Paso. A reserve medical supply depot also was built at Columbus, but it later was eliminated, and all medical supplies for the Punitive Expedition were issued from El Paso.<sup>57</sup>

The Quartermaster Depot at El Paso became a general depot, second only to the Department Quartermaster Depot at Fort Sam Houston.<sup>58</sup> General signal supply depots also were established at San Antonio and El Paso.<sup>59</sup> And Fort Bliss became the site of a large radio station, patterned after the one at Fort Sam Houston.<sup>60</sup> A key component in the Army's evolving network of border radio stations, Fort Bliss linked the Punitive Expedition's base camp at Columbus with the headquarters of the Southern Department in San Antonio.

Perhaps the best indication of the increased importance of Fort Bliss as an installation was the expansion of its vehicle-repair capability. This reflected the Army's crash program of mechanization resulting from the Punitive Expedition, as well as a new policy of equipping every regiment with a company of 27 trucks. To meet the enormous demand for maintenance that developed almost literally overnight, the Army established three major repair facilities in the Southern Department, at Brownsville, San Antonio, and El Paso. The Brownsville shops had a capacity for maintaining 500 vehicles, while those at San Antonio could handle 1,000. The facilities built at El Paso, however, equaled both, with the capability of servicing 1,500 vehicles.<sup>61</sup> This repair complex serviced vehicles used by units stationed in the vicinity of Fort Bliss, and it supported the Punitive Expedition, performing heavy repairs beyond the capabilities of the Columbus shops, even rebuilding trucks when necessary. Fort Bliss thus was in the forefront of the new trend toward mechanization, boasting the largest truck-repair complex in the entire Southern Department.

The number of military trucks in the El Paso district had reached impressive numbers by January 1917. Besides the company of 27 trucks authorized for each regiment, 12 transport companies had 33 trucks each. Bell was so enthusiastic about the motorized capability of his command that in case of war he "entertained the idea that he could launch an expedition carried by motor trucks, and seize the City of Chihuahua."<sup>62</sup>

Bell's proposal was academic because, by this time, the Wilson administration had decided to withdraw the Punitive Expedition. The first week of February marked the beginning of the redeployment of the border army. On February 3 the 34th Infantry left Fort Bliss to take over defense of the Big Bend, with the regiment's headquarters at Marfa.<sup>63</sup> Two days later the rear guard of the Punitive Expedition arrived in Columbus. El Paso prepared to welcome Pershing and his men. The general arrived on February 6 with the 8th Cavalry providing the honor guard. The next day Pershing, who had made his reputation with the Punitive Expedition and had been promoted to major general, resumed command of the El Paso Patrol District, relieving Bell. This arrangement proved short lived. Funston died suddenly in San Antonio on February 19, and Pershing was appointed Southern Department commander. Bell then resumed command of the El Paso District.<sup>64</sup>

Punitive Expedition contingents were arriving in a steady procession. The 5th, 7th, 11th, and 13th cavalry regiments marched overland from Columbus. The 6th and 16th infantries were transported by truck convoy. These units were added to those already at Fort Bliss including the 7th, 20, and 23rd infantries, the 8th and 17th cavalry regiments, and the 5th and 8th field artilleries. The arrival of the Punitive Expedition meant the post contained a very formidable concentration of military power on the eve of the United States' entry into World War I.

### Conclusion

Fort Bliss consolidated its position as the preeminent military installation on the Mexican border during the period of the Punitive Expedition, March 1916 to January 1917. The logistical and communications requirements of Pershing's campaign, combined with the real threat of war with Mexico, brought about an unprecedented concentration of regular Army and National Guard units at Fort Bliss. During this time Fort Bliss underwent a major transformation in terms of garrison composition. At the time of the Columbus raid Fort Bliss essentially was an infantry post with four regiments (the 6th, 7th, 16th, and 20th infantries), and only a single cavalry unit (the 8th Cavalry Regiment). With the arrival of the Punitive Expedition in January 1917, more cavalry units were assigned to Fort Bliss (the 5th, 7th, 8th, 11th, 13th, and 17th cavalries) than infantry (the 6th, 7th, 16th, 20th, and 23rd infantries) for the first time in post history. This development was

a turning point in Fort Bliss evolution. It was the beginning of Fort Bliss's cavalry tradition. Fort Bliss often is thought of as having been a cavalry post during much of its existence, but the cavalry's reign there was relatively brief, spanning only the years from 1917 to 1943.

Even more important than the transition from an infantry to a cavalry post was the growth of Fort Bliss as an installation. The period of the Punitive Expedition represents a shift in the institutional center of gravity away from Fort Sam Houston and toward Fort Bliss. The Columbus raid and its aftermath finally convinced the Army that if trouble occurred on the border it would be useful to have the resources to deal with such a crisis in place on the border. The institutional momentum that Fort Bliss had been building as a result of the Mexican Revolution was greatly accelerated. The mobilization of thousands of National Guardsmen resulted in a ring of satellite camps springing up around Fort Bliss. At the post itself the thrust of expansion was to duplicate many of the facilities existing at Fort Sam Houston, including creation of an auxiliary remount depot; expansion of the post hospital, the quartermaster, the signal, and the medical supply depots; the building of a radio station; and the establishment of a huge vehicle-repair facility.

The one area in which Fort Bliss did not benefit was in the field of aviation. The closest the post got to aircraft was when the 1st Aero Squadron rolled through El Paso by train in March 1916 on its way from Fort Sam Houston to Columbus. The unit passed through again on its return journey in January 1917. Given Fort Bliss's mission of border defense and the potential of air power in accomplishing that mission, El Paso was a logical location for a military airfield. World War I intervened; however, and it was not until the postwar period that aircraft were based at Fort Bliss.

The period of the Punitive Expedition demonstrated that Fort Bliss was the key to border defense. The Columbus base camp was a function of the Punitive Expedition, and many of the facilities at Columbus were dismantled when the expedition ended. Fort Bliss, however, grew at an impressive rate, both in terms of troop strength and permanent facilities. Fort Bliss would play a vital role in protecting the border as long as Mexico remained a source of concern to the United States. As the 1916 war crisis illustrated, the location and facilities at Fort Bliss could be used to stage and support any future need for a military thrust into Mexico.



Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>*EPMT*, January 2, 1916.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, January 10, 1916.

<sup>3</sup>Herbert Molloy Mason, Jr., *The Great Pursuit*, New York: Random House, 1970, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>*EPMT*, January 14 and 15, 1916.

<sup>5</sup>Meyer, *Huerta*, pp. 227-229; also Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, p. 349.

<sup>6</sup>*EPMT*, January 8, 9, 11, February 16, 1916.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, February 20, 1916; *War Department Annual Reports, 1916*. Vol. I., Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1916, p. 240.

<sup>8</sup>Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, "Pancho Villa and the Columbus Raid: The Missing Documents," *New Mexico Historical Review*, L:4 (Fall 1975), p. 343 and the works there cited; also E. Bruce White, "The Muddied Waters of Columbus, New Mexico," *The Americas*, 32, No. 1 (July 1975), pp. 72-98; also Friedrich Katz, "Pancho Villa and the Attack on Columbus, New Mexico," *The American Historical Review*, 83, No. 1 (February 1978), pp. 101-130; also Michael C. Meyer, "Villa, Sommerfeld, Columbus y Los Alemanes," *Historia Mexicana*, XXVIII, Número 4 (Abril-Junio 1979), pp. 546-566.

<sup>9</sup>Mason, *The Great Pursuit*, pp. 3-20; also Clendenen, *Blood on the Border*, pp. 200-210; also Frank Tompkins, *Chasing Villa: The Story Behind the Story of Pershing's Expedition into Mexico*, Harrisburg, Pa.: Military Service Publishing Co., 193, pp. 41-64; also Alberto Salinas Carranza, *La expedicion punitiva*, Mexico City Ediciones Botas, 1936, pp. 89-111; also *Investigation of Mexican Affairs*, Senate Document 285, 66th Cong., 2d sess. 2 vols., Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920; also Isidro Fabela et al., eds., *Expedicion Punitiva*, Vol. XII of *Documentos historicos de la Revolucion Mexicana*. 27 vols., Mexico City: Editorial Jus, 1964-1973.

<sup>10</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>11</sup>Clendenen, *Blood on the Border*, p. 210.

<sup>12</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup>*EPMT*, March 15 and 16, 1916; also *War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, pp. 434-437.

<sup>14</sup>Mason, *The Great Pursuit*, pp. 85, 231.

<sup>15</sup>*EPMT*, March 10, 1916.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, March 13, 1916.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, March 12, 1916, "Strength Return, Mexican Border, April 29, 1916," Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Army War College, General Correspondence, No. 6474-378, RG 165, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>19</sup>*EPMT*, March 15 and 16, 1916.

<sup>20</sup>Douglas W. Richmond, *Venustiano Carranza's Nationalist Struggle, 1893-1920*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983, pp. 196-197.

<sup>21</sup>J.O. Crockett to R. Home Smith, March 14, 1916, Mexico Northwestern Archive, No. 2439, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>22</sup>J.O. Crockett to Capt. G.E. Edgerton, March 16, 1915, Mexico Northwestern Archive, No. 2458, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin; also same to R. Home Smith, March 17, 1916, Mexico Northwestern Archive, No. 2460, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>23</sup>Pershing to Crockett, March 18, 1916, and Crockett to Pershing March 18, 1916, Mexico Northwestern Archive, No. 2463, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>24</sup>T.P. Littlepage to R. Home Smith, March 28, 1916, Mexico Northwestern Archive, No. 2508, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>25</sup>Littlepage to Smith, March 29, 1916, No. 2512; also Smith to Crockett, March 29, 1916, No. 2514; also same to Littlepage, March 29, 1916, No. 2513; all Mexico Northwestern Archive, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>26</sup>*EPMT*, March 30, April 8, May 4, 1916.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, May 6, 1916; also *ibid.*, May 20, 1916.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, March 14, 1916.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, May 7, 1916; James Hopper, "New Columbus and the Expedition," *Collier's*, LVII (August 5, 1916), pp. 10-11. For a comprehensive report of the buildup at Columbus see Lt. Col. C.S. Farnsworth, Base Commander, "Report of Operations Base of Communications Mexican Punitive Expedition, From June 19th 1916 to February 5th 1917," Columbus, New Mexico, February 12, 1917, Farnsworth Collection, Museum Historical Archives, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

<sup>30</sup>Mason, *The Great Pursuit*, p. 143.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 143-144; *War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, pp. 440-455.

<sup>32</sup>Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, "The Plan of San Diego and the Mexican-United States War Crisis of 1916: A Reexamination," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 58, No. 3, August 1978, p. 393.

<sup>33</sup>Farnsworth, "Report of Operations," pp. 6-7.

<sup>34</sup>Ronnie C. Tyler, *The Big Bend: A History of the Last Texas Frontier*, Washington, D.C. U.S. Department of the Interior, 1975, pp. 169-174; also Ronnie C. Tyler, "The Little Punitive Expedition in the Big Bend," *SWHQ*, 78, January 1975, pp. 271-291.

<sup>35</sup>For example, telegrams, Funston to AG, June 24 and July 11, 1916, RG 393, Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, SD Telegrams Sent (Telegrams Sent/SD) National Archives, Washington, D.C.; also Sidney Forrester Mashbir, *I Was an American Spy*, New York, 1953, p. 38. A typical telegram intercepted and cryptanalyzed during the 1916 war crisis reads: "Following translation of telegram from Chief of Staff at Mexico City to Calles dated twenty-second May intercepted this afternoon. Quote: Your cipher message yesterday telegram to which you refer were answered with approval of Obregón in view of very favorable aspect which international relations were presenting but not in view of the new invasion of American troops from Boquillas the situation is gravely complicated in view of this Obregón orders that you must not make any movement of forces toward the south. End quote;" also telegram, Sage, Nogales, to commanding general, Fort Sam Houston, May 22, 1916, Telegrams Sent/SD.

<sup>36</sup>Farnsworth, "Report of Operations," p. 13; also telegram, Funston to AG, June 24, 1916, quoting Pershing telegram of June 23, 1916, from Colonia Dublan, Telegrams Sent/Sd.

<sup>37</sup>William F. Friedman, *Six Lectures on Cryptology*, April 1963, SRH 004, RG 457, Records of the National Security Agency, Modern Military Records, National Archives, Washington, D.C., publication declassified in December 1975; also "Historical Background of the Signal Security Agency," Army Security Agency, 1946, Vol. II, pp. 2-8, RG 457, Records of the National Security Agency.

<sup>38</sup>Harris and Sadler, "The Plan of San Diego," p. 394.

<sup>39</sup>*EPMT*, May 10 and 11, 1916.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, May 25, June 18, 1916.

<sup>41</sup>Harris and Sadler, "The Plan of San Diego," pp. 395-396.

<sup>42</sup>*EPMT*, June 5 and 6, 1916.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, June 5-7, 1916.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, June 13, 15, 17, 1916.

<sup>45</sup>Harris and Sadler, "The Plan of San Diego," pp. 399-400.

<sup>46</sup>Memorandum for the chief of staff: "Plan for the occupation and pacification of Northern Mexico," March 25, 1916, RG 165, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Army War College, General Correspondence, No. 6474-376, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, pp. 177, 180, 185, 189.

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<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 279-280; also Clendenen, *Blood on the Border*, pp. 303-313.

<sup>50</sup>*EPMT*, June 17-25, 1916.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, July 3, 1916.

<sup>52</sup>Edward M. Coffman, *The Hilt of the Sword: The Career of Peyton C. March*, Madison, Milwaukee, and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966, pp. 37-38, 52.

<sup>53</sup>*EPMT*, July 15, 18, 21, August 8, 1916. The 34th Infantry occupied the camp of the 7th Infantry, which was moved to Fort Bliss. The 8th Field Artillery was encamped north of the fort.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, June 18, 24, 27, October 6, 1916.

<sup>55</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, pp. 179, 390.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 197, 357, 473, 651, 663.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 667.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 404.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 872.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 420, 879.

<sup>61</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1917*, Vol. I, Washington, D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1918, p. 316.

<sup>62</sup>(Confidential) Memorandum from chief of staff: "Use of motor trucks for quick movement of troops south of the border," January 12, 1917, RG 165, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Army War College, General Correspondence, No. 6474-402, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>63</sup>*EPMT*, February 3, 1917.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, February 7, 8, 20-23, 1917. PA.

## Chapter VII

### THE NATIONAL GUARD MOBILIZATION (1916-1917)

#### Introduction

On June 18, 1916, President Wilson called the National Guard into federal service on the Mexican border. It was the largest mobilization the United States had experienced since the Spanish-American War. The immediate cause of the callup was the urgent need to reinforce the regular Army whose resources were stretched dangerously thin by the Punitive Expedition's requirements and the mission of protecting the international boundary. Wilson already had conducted a partial mobilization on May 9 when he ordered the National Guards of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas into federal service because of rising tension with Mexico. As relations with Mexico continued to deteriorate and war became a distinct possibility, the administration mobilized the remainder of the National Guard on June 18. Deployment of the guard would strengthen border defense, and it would free the regular Army for operations in Mexico.

The 1916 mobilization was the first test of the National Guard's military capabilities in the twentieth century. It also highlighted the guard's new role in the American military establishment as exemplified by the National Defense Act of 1916. With the pressure of events in Mexico and World War I in Europe, the government had been concerned about the state of military preparedness, and on June 13, 1916, the National Defense Act was signed into law. This act was the most comprehensive piece of military legislation passed by Congress. It incorporated the concept of a citizen army as the foundation of the military establishment. The National Guard was to be the nucleus of the citizen army. The guard would be expanded more than fourfold, to a strength exceeding 400,000, and would be subject to the call of the president. Furthermore, the National Guard would receive increased federal funding and would have to meet federal organization and training standards.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the Mexican border mobilization came at the very time the Organized Militia of the states was undergoing a transformation into the National Guard, as prescribed by the National Defense Act.<sup>2</sup>

This ongoing reorganization was but one element in a host of difficulties accompanying the mobilization. The Army was utterly dependent on the railroads, which constituted the only feasible method of transporting masses of troops and supplying them once they were in place. The movement of the National Guard to the border was disrupted by the threat of a nationwide railroad strike. The Quartermaster Depots at San Antonio, El Paso, and Columbus had ample rations for 60 days, but the probability of a railroad strike caused great concern to military planners.<sup>3</sup> In desperation the Army canvassed National Guard units on active duty for railroad employees who could keep at least some of the trains running.<sup>4</sup> However, the strike was averted and the deployment proceeded. Nevertheless, a critical weakness in the capability of the United States to mobilize now had been identified clearly.

Some 112,000 guardsmen eventually were transported by rail to border stations,<sup>5</sup> with Brownsville and El Paso in Texas and Douglas in Arizona being designated as the principal concentration centers. Many units arrived on the border with serious deficiencies. They were understrength, lacked essential equipment, and were poorly trained. In fact, 43 percent of the guardsmen had no prior service.<sup>6</sup> The mobilization afforded the Army a splendid opportunity to improve the country's preparedness by overseeing modernization of the National Guard while conducting an extensive intensive training program for the guardsmen. The emphasis on training increased as the danger of war with Mexico receded. The crisis passed in June when Carranza

acceded to Wilson's ultimatum. By July 22 the Senate deleted \$36,000,000 from the Army appropriation because the money no longer would be needed to finance a campaign in Mexico.<sup>7</sup>

The movement of guardsmen to the border continued despite the easing of tension between the two countries and even though the policy caused considerable protest from some politicians. Senator C.E. Townsend of Michigan, for one, stated there was no more reason to station guardsmen on the border than there would be to station them in Greenland. But the administration's position, as expressed by Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, was that by their very presence the guardsmen were protecting American lives and property. They would remain on the border until there was no further threat of incursions from Mexico. He also touched upon another significant reason for the government's decision. Emphasizing the beneficial effect of the extensive training the Guard was receiving under the Army's supervision, he stressed the Guard was becoming a much greater asset to national preparedness in the event of war.<sup>8</sup>

The Army organized the National Guard on the border into tactical units that included separate brigades and divisions. Six separate brigades were designated:<sup>9</sup>

- 1st San Benito, Texas
- 2nd Brownsville, Texas
- 3rd Laredo, Texas
- 4th Douglas, Arizona
- 5th Nogales, Arizona
- 6th Harlingen, Texas

The organization created a command problem at the division level. A division was supposed to be commanded by a major general, but the only two National Guard officers of that rank were commanding the New York and Pennsylvania divisions. Each of the provisional divisions presumably would be led by the senior brigadier general. The Army originally assigned nine general staff officers to the Southern Department to serve as chiefs of staff for the provisional National Guard divisions being formed, considering it advisable to have professionals in this capacity.<sup>10</sup> Upon reflection it was decided that the provisional divisions would not be commanded by National Guard officers after all, but by brigadier generals from the regular Army, most of whom already were serving on the border. This move significantly increased the Army's control over the guard. The divisions were to be based as follows:

- 6th (New York) McAllen, Texas
- 12th (Provisional) San Antonio, Texas
- 13th (Provisional) Llano Grande, Texas
- 14th (Provisional) Deming, New Mexico<sup>11</sup>
- 15th (Provisional) Laredo, Texas
- 16th (Provisional) Nogales, Arizona

By far the greatest troop concentration would be at El Paso, where the remaining four divisions would be stationed:<sup>12</sup>

- |                    |                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 7th (Pennsylvania) | Maj. Gen. Charles M. Clement  |
| 9th (Provisional)  | Brig. Gen. William L. Siebert |
| 10th (Provisional) | Brig. Gen. Charles G. Morton  |
| 11th (Provisional) | Brig. Gen. George Bell, Jr.   |

## The National Guard Mobilization

The flood of National Guardsmen reached El Paso in two waves. Battery A of the New Mexico Field Artillery from Columbus was the first unit to reach Fort Bliss; it arrived on June 18. But the real influx was set in motion by the Army's order on June 25 for 15,000 National Guardsmen to entrain immediately for the border.<sup>13</sup> On July 1 a steady procession of trains arrived in El Paso with the vanguard of some 10,000 troops from Massachusetts and New Jersey. The Army decided, however, to divert the New Jersey guard from El Paso to Douglas, Arizona. A New Jersey battery, which had already encamped in El Paso, was ordered the next morning to entrain for their new destination, while arriving New Jersey contingents continued through El Paso to Douglas.<sup>14</sup>

The largest, and probably the best, of the militia organizations coming to El Paso was the 7th (Pennsylvania) Division. Pennsylvania and New York were the only states boasting National Guard divisions, albeit understrength. When the war crisis erupted, the 6th (New York) Division was ordered to McAllen to anchor the buildup in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, while the 7th Division performed the same mission at El Paso. The advance elements of the nearly 13,000 Pennsylvanians began arriving on July 4. By July 9 all of Pennsylvania's 12,711 guardsmen were either in or en route to El Paso. By the end of July, 29,000 soldiers were stationed in and around El Paso.<sup>15</sup>

The Army proceeded with the mobilization in a more orderly manner as tensions with Mexico eased. Rather than having to deploy as many guardsmen as possible as rapidly as possible, the Army now ordered National Guard units to assemble at their home stations, recruit up to strength, draw their equipment, and standby to entrain for the border.<sup>16</sup> This new policy of phasing guard units into their designated stations greatly relieved the pressure on major mobilization centers such as Fort Bliss.

The second influx of guardsmen began on August 12 with the arrival of the 1st South Carolina Infantry. Within two days the remainder of the South Carolina guard rolled into camp. The movement got into high gear during September, when the National Guards of Ohio, Kentucky, and part of those of Tennessee and North Carolina arrived. In October the remainder of the North Carolina militia detrained, as did the entire Georgia guard. The mobilization was substantially completed by the arrival of a battalion of Colorado field artillery on November 3. The National Guards of Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi, originally scheduled to go to El Paso, were sent to other border posts. Even without these troops Fort Bliss had become the largest military installation in the United States, with some 40,000 troops stationed in and around the post.<sup>17</sup>

The National Guard also poured into Deming, 30 miles north of Columbus. The Army took over Camp Brooks, a New Mexico National Guard facility, and began enlarging it by constructing a large warehouse and a hospital to accommodate a substantial number of troops. Camp Deming, as it was renamed, soon housed the 4th Separate Brigade composed of the 1st and 2nd Arkansas infantries, the 1st Delaware Infantry, the 1st Wyoming Infantry, batteries B and C of the Colorado Field Artillery, and a New Hampshire field hospital, all of which totaled 8,000 troops.<sup>18</sup>

A striking feature of the Fort Bliss experience, in contrast to that at towns like Brownsville or Laredo, was the comparative smoothness with which militia units were received and quartered. A committee composed of city officials, Chamber of Commerce personnel, and Army officers inspected all the possible sites for National Guard encampments and selected three. One was located between Camp Cotton and the Rio Grande (today bounded by East Paisano, Cotton, and Park streets).<sup>19</sup> Supplementing this Camp Cotton extension was the second site in Morningside Heights between Fort Bliss and Mount Franklin (today

bounded by Dyer, Pierce, and Van Buren streets). This site was named Camp Pershing, and it soon became the principal satellite of Fort Bliss.<sup>20</sup> The third cantonment, Camp Stewart, was built 3 miles farther out on the road to Alamogordo (today bounded by Dyer Street, Fred Wilson Road, and Hondo Pass Avenue). This bivouac stretched along the west side of the railroad track north of Fort Bliss for almost 2 miles. Its principal shortcoming was an inadequate water supply.<sup>21</sup> In preparation for the second wave of National Guardsmen in August, a fourth camp was constructed some 2 miles northeast of Fort Bliss, across the railroad tracks from Camp Stewart (today bounded by Fred Wilson Road, Marshall Street, and Airport Road).<sup>22</sup> It was named Camp Owen Bieme, after a regular Army sergeant killed by a drunken Texas Ranger.<sup>23</sup>

As the militia units arrived in El Paso, Army officers met each train and escorted the guardsmen to their assigned camps, which already were supplied with firewood, refuse pits, sanitary facilities, and a network of pipes carrying fresh water. All the militia had to do was pitch their tents and begin cooking their evening meals.<sup>24</sup>

Logistical demands on Fort Bliss were enormous. Supplies for the satellite camps springing up around the installation were handled through the main post.<sup>25</sup> By August Funston was complaining that acceptable storage space no longer could be rented in El Paso to supplement the overburdened storage facilities at Fort Bliss.<sup>26</sup> To cope with the increased demand, sidings were built into Camp Stewart, and some 40 boxcar loads of supplies a month were delivered to that encampment alone.<sup>27</sup> In addition, there was the problem of providing water to the outlying camps. By the end of August, a total of 130,000 feet of pipe had been laid, and the troops were using more than a million gallons of water a day. They also consumed more than 11,000 loaves of bread daily, most of it produced by the post bakery.<sup>28</sup> Building materials were much in demand as the guardsmen began transforming their camps into permanent installations. At Camp Cotton, for instance, guardsmen constructed chapels, wooden mess halls, and officers' clubs.<sup>29</sup>

The auxiliary remount station at Fort Bliss also played a key role in supporting the National Guard. Many militia units had come to the border without the horses and mules called for in their tables of organization.<sup>30</sup> Mechanization might be the wave of the future, but the National Guard still was heavily dependent on animal transport in the field. Located out on the mesa beyond camps Pershing and Stewart (today bounded by Fred Wilson Road, Sheridan Road, and Dyer Street) the remount station evolved into an impressive complex. In keeping with Fort Bliss's enhanced stature, the remount station quickly grew into the principal horse supply depot on the border.<sup>31</sup>

A certain amount of redeployment did occur as the troop population continued to swell. The 7th Infantry was moved to Fort Bliss from Camp Cotton, and Cotton was occupied by the Massachusetts and Michigan brigades. The Pennsylvanians originally were billeted at Camp Pershing but were relocated to Camp Stewart. Many of the units arriving during August and later were assigned to Camp Bieme.

The arrival of Pennsylvania Commander Major General Charles M. Clement created an interesting problem. Clement outranked Bell, the Paso Patrol District commander. To avoid any conflict it was decided that Clement would head the 7th Division as a separate command, while Bell would be in charge of the remainder of the troops in the El Paso Patrol District. The organization of the 7th Division in mid-July 1916 was made up of the following units.<sup>3</sup>

#### **7th (Pennsylvania) Division**

Commander: Major General Charles M. Clement  
1st Pennsylvania Brigade



1st Pennsylvania Infantry  
2nd Pennsylvania Infantry  
3rd Pennsylvania Infantry  
2nd Pennsylvania Brigade  
4th Pennsylvania Infantry  
6th Pennsylvania Infantry  
8th Pennsylvania Infantry  
4th Pennsylvania Brigade  
10th Pennsylvania Infantry  
16th Pennsylvania Infantry  
18th Pennsylvania Infantry  
1st Pennsylvania Cavalry  
1st Pennsylvania Field Artillery  
Pennsylvania Signal Corps Battalion  
Two companies, Pennsylvania Engineers  
Two companies, Pennsylvania Field Hospital  
Two companies, Pennsylvania Ambulance

A Provisional Infantry Division also was formed. The units comprising this division were:

**Provisional Infantry Division**

Commander: Brigadier General George Bell, Jr.<sup>33</sup>

Provisional Infantry Brigade  
7th Infantry  
20th Infantry  
23rd Infantry  
34th Infantry  
Provisional Motorcycle Company (attached)  
2nd Massachusetts Infantry Brigade  
5th Massachusetts Infantry  
8th Massachusetts Infantry  
9th Massachusetts Infantry  
Michigan Infantry Brigade  
31st Michigan Infantry  
32nd Michigan Infantry  
33rd Michigan Infantry<sup>34</sup>  
Provisional Cavalry Brigade  
8th Cavalry  
17th Cavalry  
Provisional Cavalry Regiment  
1st Squadron Massachusetts Cavalry  
1st Squadron Rhode Island Cavalry  
Two Troops, Michigan Cavalry  
Provisional Field Artillery Brigade  
5th Field Artillery  
8th Field Artillery (less Batteries D and F)

- 1st Massachusetts Field Artillery
- Battery A, New Mexico Field Artillery
- Two Batteries, Michigan Field Artillery
- Signal Corps<sup>35</sup>
  - Company B (detachment)
  - Company I (detachment)
  - Massachusetts Signal Company
- Sanitary Trains
- Ambulance Companies
  - 1st Ambulance Company
  - Massachusetts Ambulance Company
  - Two Companies, Michigan Ambulance
- Field Hospitals
  - 1st Field Hospital
  - Massachusetts Field Hospital
  - Michigan Field Hospital
- Motor Truck Train
  - Companies 4, 16, 19, 20

The strain of command was particularly hard on Bell, who was in charge of both the El Paso Patrol District and a provisional division. To a lesser degree the same was true of Taylor, who commanded both the 8th Cavalry and Fort Bliss.<sup>36</sup> On October 18, 1916, the latter was succeeded in this dual capacity by Colonel John W. Heard, an experienced staff officer from the headquarters of the Southern Department.<sup>37</sup>

The Army's decision to station fewer National Guardsmen at El Paso than originally planned alleviated the problems of command to some extent. Since the Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi Guards were sent elsewhere, only three instead of four National Guard divisions actually were based in El Paso. Still, as of October 1916, Fort Bliss was the headquarters of what amounted to a National Guard army corps that included the following units and organization.<sup>38</sup>

**7th Division**

Commander: Major General Charles M. Clement

- 1st Infantry Brigade
  - 1st North Carolina Infantry
  - 2nd North Carolina Infantry
  - 3rd North Carolina Infantry
- 2nd Infantry Brigad :
  - 13th Pennsylvania Infantry
  - 16th Pennsylvania Infantry
  - 18th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 3rd Infantry Brigade
  - 4th Pennsylvania Infantry
  - 6th Pennsylvania Infantry
  - 8th Pennsylvania Infantry
- Artillery Brigade
  - 1st Pennsylvania Field Artillery
  - 2nd Pennsylvania Field Artillery

3rd Pennsylvania Field Artillery  
Cavalry  
1st Pennsylvania Cavalry  
Engineers  
Two Companies, Pennsylvania Engineers  
Ambulance  
Pennsylvania Ambulance Company No. 1  
Pennsylvania Ambulance Company No. 2  
Field Hospital  
Pennsylvania Field Hospital Company No. 1  
Pennsylvania Field Hospital Company No. 2

**10th Division (Provisional)**

Commander: Brigadier General Charles G. Morton

1st Infantry Brigade  
1st Kentucky Infantry  
2nd Kentucky Infantry  
3rd Kentucky Infantry  
2nd Infantry Brigade  
5th Massachusetts Infantry  
8th Massachusetts Infantry  
9th Massachusetts Infantry  
3rd Infantry Brigade  
1st South Carolina Infantry  
2nd South Carolina Infantry  
Engineers  
Company A South Carolina Engineers  
Cavalry  
1st Squadron Massachusetts Cavalry  
Troop A South Carolina Cavalry  
Troop A Tennessee Cavalry  
Artillery  
Battery A, New Mexico Field Artillery  
1st Massachusetts Field Artillery  
Signal  
1st Massachusetts Field Battalion  
Ambulance  
Massachusetts Ambulance Company No. 2  
Kentucky Ambulance Company No. 1  
Field Hospital  
Massachusetts Field Hospital Company No. 1  
Kentucky Field Hospital Company No. 1  
South Carolina Field Hospital Company No. 1  
Tennessee Field Hospital Company No. 1  
Trains  
Pack Train No. 22

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**11th Division (Provisional)**

Commander: Brigadier General George Bell, Jr.

1st Infantry Brigade

31st Michigan Infantry

32nd Michigan Infantry

33rd Michigan Infantry

2nd Infantry Brigade

2nd Ohio Infantry

3rd Ohio Infantry

6th Ohio Infantry

3rd Infantry Brigade

4th Ohio Infantry

5th Ohio Infantry

8th Ohio Infantry

Engineers

1st Battalion Ohio Engineers

Company D Ohio Engineers

Cavalry

1st Squadron Ohio Cavalry

Artillery

1st Battalion Ohio Artillery Field

Signal

1st Ohio Field Battalion

Ambulance

Ohio Ambulance Company No. 1

Ohio Ambulance Company No. 2

Field Hospital

Ohio Field Hospital Company No. 1

Ohio Field Hospital Company No. 2

Ohio Field Hospital Company No. 3

Trains

Pack Train No. 23

The last reorganization of the troops in the El Paso Patrol District occurred early in 1917. On January 9 the following structure was announced as a result of the reduction in strength caused by departing National Guard units, many of them from the 7th Division.<sup>39</sup>

**10th Division (Provisional)**

Commander: Brigadier General Charles G. Morton

1st Infantry Brigade

1st Kentucky Infantry

2nd Kentucky Infantry

3rd Kentucky Infantry

2nd South Carolina Infantry

2nd Infantry Brigade

1st Georgia Infantry

2nd Georgia Infantry  
5th Georgia Infantry  
3rd Infantry Brigade  
1st North Carolina Infantry  
2nd North Carolina Infantry  
3rd North Carolina Infantry  
Engineers  
Company A, South Carolina  
Company C, Pennsylvania  
Companies A and B, North Carolina  
Signal Corps  
Company A, Kentucky  
Company A, Colorado  
Cavalry  
Troop A, South Carolina  
Troops B, C, and D, Tennessee  
2nd Squadron and Troop A, Georgia  
Troops A and B, North Carolina  
Field Artillery  
1st Battalion, Georgia  
Battery A, New Mexico  
Batteries D and F, Connecticut  
Batteries A and B, Colorado  
2nd Pennsylvania Field Artillery  
Ambulance  
North Carolina Ambulance Company No. 1  
Tennessee Ambulance Company No. 1  
Kentucky Ambulance Company No. 1  
Massachusetts Ambulance Company No. 2  
Field Hospitals  
North Carolina Company No. 1  
Tennessee Company No. 1  
Kentucky Company No. 1  
South Carolina Company No. 1  
Georgia Company No. 1  
Massachusetts Company No. 2  
Trains  
Pack Train No. 22

**11th Division (Provisional)**

Commander: Brigadier General George Bell, Jr.

1st Infantry Brigade  
2nd Ohio Infantry  
3rd Ohio Infantry  
6th Ohio Infantry  
2nd Infantry Brigade  
4th Ohio Infantry

5th Ohio Infantry  
8th Ohio Infantry  
3rd Infantry Brigade  
6th Pennsylvania Infantry  
8th Pennsylvania Infantry  
13th Pennsylvania Infantry  
Provisional Infantry Brigade  
32nd Michigan Infantry  
33rd Michigan Infantry<sup>40</sup>  
Engineers  
1st Battalion and Company D, Ohio  
Company A, Michigan  
Cavalry  
1st Squadron, Ohio  
Troops A and B, Michigan  
Field Artillery  
1st Battalion, Ohio  
Batteries A and B, Michigan  
Battery A, District of Columbia  
3rd Pennsylvania Field Artillery  
Ambulance  
Ohio Companies No. 1 and No. 2  
Michigan Company No. 2  
Field Hospitals  
Ohio Companies No. 1 and No. 2  
Michigan Company No. 1  
Trains  
Pack Train No. 23

**Regular Organizations**

Provisional Infantry Brigade  
7th Infantry  
20th Infantry  
23rd Infantry  
34th Infantry  
Provisional Cavalry Brigade  
8th Cavalry  
17th Cavalry  
Provisional Field Artillery Brigade  
5th Field Artillery (less Batteries D and F)  
8th Field Artillery  
Signal Corps  
Headquarters, 1st Field Battalion  
Company A  
Ambulance  
Company No. 1  
Field Hospital

Company No. 1  
Truck Companies  
Nos. 16, 20, 24, 46, 47, 48, 65, and 67  
Trains  
Pack Trains Nos. 1 and 21  
Provisional Motorcycle Company

Few of these thousands of troops ever heard a shot fired in anger. Occasional clashes with Mexicans occurred, such as brisk but bloodless firefights on July 18 and 23 between Massachusetts infantry outposts and Mexican snipers.<sup>41</sup> The biggest skirmish took place on December 24, 1916, when a detachment of the 3rd Kentucky Infantry, on outpost duty at Hart's Mill, exchanged fire with Mexican troops across the Rio Grande.<sup>42</sup> The closest most guardsmen came to seeing action was when they spent two weeks of patrol duty in the sector between Las Cruces and Fort Hancock.<sup>43</sup> Still there existed enough of an element of danger to make the troops take their training seriously.

It was one thing to group units into large tactical formations on paper; it was another to make these formations function with reasonable efficiency. This was the overriding goal of the unprecedented training program devised for the National Guard.

The training schedule instituted at Fort Bliss in July was the same as that for guardsmen stationed elsewhere on the border. Troops would undergo a thorough field-training course lasting a minimum of three months. Besides the rudiments of drill, marksmanship, and hygiene, the program entailed extensive maneuvers. From August 1 to September 1, company, troop, and battery drills would take place. From September 1 to September 15, battalion drills would be conducted for the infantry and artillery with squadron drills for the cavalry. From September 15 to September 30, the schedule called for daily regimental drills. The month of October would be devoted to practical field work and maneuvers at the brigade level. All officers in the El Paso Patrol District also would have to take a series of proficiency tests.<sup>44</sup> Contributing to the effectiveness of the training program was the fact that Army surgeons administered rigorous physical examinations to the guardsmen and recommended discharges for those who failed.<sup>45</sup>

Now that guardsmen knew what to expect, they performed their duties with greater enthusiasm, and their complaints about not getting to fight Mexicans decreased. Guard units first concentrated on intensive drilling and practice marches. As a result, Camp Cotton's daytime population, for instance, dropped to about 100 men; everyone else was in the field.<sup>46</sup> The Guard units that began arriving in August already had spent time practicing the fundamentals at their home stations, and it was relatively easy to phase them into the ongoing field-training program. Most of these units arrived with the majority of their equipment, and they were ready for the field when they had made camp and drawn their horses and mules from the remount station.<sup>47</sup> To toughen the troops, the program emphasized route marches of progressively longer distances. Being newcomers, the Ohio contingents began by marching from their camp to the base of Mount Franklin, while the Massachusetts brigade, which had been at Fort Bliss since early July, got to take a 10-mile hike down the Ysleta road with full field equipment. They made the journey in four and one-half hours; only 18 out of 4,310 men fell out along the way.<sup>48</sup>

By late September the emphasis was on exercises involving masses of troops. The entire 7th Division made a four-day march up the Mesilla Valley; their column extended for 10 miles.<sup>49</sup> On the whole the division performed adequately, although about 1,000 men had to drop out of the march temporarily because

of exhaustion and sore feet. The honors went to the division's 1st Brigade, which lost only 58 men in the course of the march. One of its units, the 1st Pennsylvania Infantry, did not lose a single man.<sup>50</sup> A few days later it was the 10th Division's turn. Two of its infantry brigades, those of Kentucky and South Carolina, fought a mock battle on the mesa 4 miles east of Fort Bliss under the supervision of regular Army umpires. Both sides claimed victory.<sup>51</sup> No sooner had this exercise ended than it was announced that the entire 10th Division plus some attached units, 15 regiments in all, would march up the Mesilla Valley to Fort Selden. This 58-mile march involved some 18,000 troops, who advanced as though they were pursuing an imaginary enemy division.<sup>52</sup> As matters developed, the 10th Division marched only as far as Las Cruces, where it encamped and went through several days of maneuvers before returning.

The training program encompassed more than marching and maneuvering. One of the most important objectives was to enhance the National Guard's firepower and mobility. Since the 7th Division was the largest militia contingent at Fort Bliss, the Pennsylvanians generally had first priority. The most innovative measure undertaken was to convert two infantry regiments, the 2nd and 9th Pennsylvania, into artillery regiments. This reorganization gave the division a full brigade of field artillery, something unprecedented in the National Guard.<sup>53</sup>

The Army's increased emphasis on artillery presumably reflected the evolution of warfare on Europe's Western Front. The same observation applied to another land weapon coming into its own during World War I, the machine gun. Progress in equipping the National Guard with this weapon was limited by a nationwide shortage and because the regular Army had first priority. Nevertheless, the plan was to establish a machine-gun company with four guns in each regiment. When a shipment of 52 new British Lewis guns arrived at Fort Bliss, most of them were issued to the Pennsylvania division. Its machine-gun companies also were mechanized, with five Ford trucks being allotted to each company. The same procedure would be followed in the other guard organizations as the shortage of weapons and vehicles was overcome.<sup>54</sup>

The Punitive Expedition demonstrated the value of motor transport, and the trend now was toward phasing out animals wherever feasible, excluding those in the field artillery and the cavalry. The goal was to equip each regiment with a company of 27 trucks. In addition, the National Guard's horse-drawn ambulances were to be replaced by the motorized version. The Pennsylvania division was among the first guard organizations to receive truck companies, and staff cars also began to be distributed to some militia headquarters.

The trucks performed well enough but the drivers left something to be desired. Civilian drivers proved to be an unruly lot, so trucks were withdrawn from those units to which they had been issued. They then were massed into a provisional regiment where tighter control could be exercised over the drivers. The regiment, commanded by a 7th Infantry major, provided transportation to those units requesting it through proper channels.<sup>55</sup> This state of affairs underscored the fact that it was not enough merely to issue motorized vehicles; the Army and the National Guard had to train their own drivers and mechanics in order to obtain the full benefits of increased mechanization.

Truck transportation was increasing not only at Fort Bliss but along the entire border. When five companies of the 32nd Michigan Infantry left for a two-week stint of outpost duty on the river southeast of El Paso, for example, they were transported by truck convoy.<sup>56</sup> One test planned at Fort Bliss was to load a National Guard regiment, the 31st Michigan, and its equipment on trucks and take a 24-hour drive out into the desert. A similar test was conducted in Arizona, where a battalion of the 18th Infantry was transported from Douglas to Phoenix.<sup>57</sup> In Texas two Kansas infantry regiments were driven from Eagle Pass to San Antonio, covering the 185 miles in less than three days. This was a much shorter time than the minimum 15



days required for an overland march.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps the most ambitious exercise was conducted in September when 175 trucks supplied the 12th Division on a march from San Antonio to Austin.<sup>59</sup>

A high point in the training program at Fort Bliss came on September 21, 1916. The largest military review in El Paso's history was held to advertise what had been accomplished with the National Guard. It involved some 27,000 Guardsmen and regular soldiers, the equivalent of a war-strength division. The spectacle constituted the largest review of troops ever held in the United States since the Union Army's historic parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington at the close of the Civil War.<sup>60</sup>

El Paso's city fathers went all out to celebrate the event. Mayor Lea declared a holiday, banned vehicles from the downtown area, and urged El Pasoans to turn out for the parade. Downtown merchants outdid each other decorating their establishments in honor of the National Guard. Even the courts suspended business for "Army Day."<sup>61</sup>

The townspeople certainly were not disappointed. The division marched through the center of the city in a 20-mile-long column. After completing the parade route through El Paso, the column, commanded by Brigadier General Charles G. Morton, marched out to Fort Bliss for the review. The reviewing stand was located on the mesa northeast of Fort Bliss, where a square mile of ground had been cleared of cactus and mesquite for the ceremony. The visual impact of a full division at war strength on parade became apparent as the troops massed. They covered an area 12,000 yards long by 400 yards deep. It took them five and one-half hours to pass the reviewing stand, where Bell had designated Clement as the reviewing officer.<sup>62</sup>

The review was a fitting climax to the National Guard experience in El Paso. Within a few days a war-strength division review also was held in San Antonio, and 15,000 more guardsmen paraded before Funston in Austin. The review in San Antonio in no way dimmed the historic significance of the occasion at El Paso.<sup>63</sup> The Army could justifiably take pride in what had been accomplished in El Paso. As the long column of troops and equipment wound its way through the city, one of the most frequent comments made by the spectators was how favorably the guardsmen compared with the regulars in the parade.<sup>64</sup>

The review also was a turning point in that it marked the beginning of the National Guard's departure from Fort Bliss. The decision to start returning guard units to their home stations was made despite concern about Villa's resurgence in Chihuahua.<sup>65</sup> The Army decided that new Guard units arriving on the border would be enough to replace those going home and to maintain an adequate deterrent along the international boundary.<sup>66</sup> Another consideration was the growing clamor among state politicians demanding their boys be allowed to come home.

Three small units left El Paso in late September but the movement began in earnest during October. Among the first to depart were troops that had been on the border the longest, the contingents from Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Three Pennsylvania infantry regiments also departed during the month. Their places were taken by new units, principally from North Carolina and Georgia. The pace of activity at Fort Bliss slowed somewhat during November and December. Only four Guard regiments and one ambulance company departed from the post during this period; however, on December 18 orders were received for an additional four regiments to move out as soon as rail transportation became available.<sup>67</sup>

Further evidence that the National Guard mobilization was winding down came when Funston announced on January 17, 1917, that the menace of border raids had diminished to the point that the regular Army could handle the task of protection.<sup>68</sup> Accordingly the War Department ordered that a substantial number of

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additional guardsmen be sent home, Funston being empowered to select the units. These Guard units, however, were to remain intact at their home stations, and no discharges were to be granted except for cause.<sup>69</sup>

The reason, of course, was the imminence of war with Germany. It made no sense to retain thousands of trained guardsmen along the Mexican border. With war looming, the departure of Guard units from Fort Bliss reached a torrent in February and March. The last unit to leave the post, on March 23, was Battery A, New Mexico Field Artillery, whose arrival on June 18, 1916, had initiated the National Guard mobilization. Fort Bliss once again belonged to the regulars.

### Conclusion

The 1916 mobilization of the National Guard usually has been viewed in terms of border protection and support of the Punitive Expedition. These indeed were the immediate objectives, and they were achieved. The arrival of the National Guard was beneficial to Fort Bliss from a tactical standpoint: Bell could deploy the guardsmen to protect the border in the El Paso Patrol District and concentrate the regular units at Fort Bliss as a readily available reserve for the Punitive Expedition.

As the mobilization proceeded, the probability of war with Mexico lessened. Fighting Mexico was one thing, but fighting a major European power was a very different proposition. Despite Wilson's policy of neutrality, it was evident the United States gradually was being drawn into World War I. Given the status of the military establishment in 1916, this was a prospect that caused the Army high command grave concern. The Mexican crisis in this respect was fortuitous, for it provided the opportunity not only to test the level of readiness but, more importantly, to publicize this country's low level of military unpreparedness.

The real significance of the 1916 mobilization was in terms of preparation for World War I. It was the closest the United States came to the traditional large-scale military maneuvers of European powers.<sup>70</sup> Conditions along the border provided the justification for deploying 112,000 guardsmen and putting them through a program of intensive training lasting for months after the threat from Mexico had receded. The Army ensured that the benefits of field training reached as many National Guard units as possible by its policy of rotating units to the border. Not only was the proficiency of the individual guardsman improved, but for the first time the National Guard functioned on a tactical basis, holding maneuvers at the brigade and division level.

The National Guard also underwent substantial modernization centered around upgrading its firepower and mobility.<sup>71</sup> The mobilization demonstrated that in the event of national emergency it was imperative for the government to control the railroad network. The United States Railroad Administration would be created during World War I as a result. Lessons learned from the 1916 experience proved invaluable when mobilization for World War I occurred the following year.<sup>72</sup> The National Defense Act of 1916 envisioned the National Guard as the nucleus of a citizen army. When war did come, it was a vastly improved National Guard that constituted that nucleus.

The 1916 mobilization represented a high point in Fort Bliss history. What had been a 350-man post in 1910 was the headquarters for some 40,000 troops by the summer of 1916. Fort Bliss was by far the largest post on the border, and never before had it been so well equipped to perform its strategic mission of protecting the international boundary. Moreover, by virtue of its role in border defense and in training three

National Guard divisions, for a time Fort Bliss arguably was the most important military installation in the United States.

**National Guard Arrivals**

| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Unit</b>  |
|--------------|--|
| 18 June 1916 | Battery A, New Mexico Field Artillery  |
| 1 July       | 1st Massachusetts Field Hospital Company<br>2nd Massachusetts Infantry Brigade,<br>5th Massachusetts Infantry<br>8th Massachusetts Infantry<br>9th Massachusetts Infantry<br>1st Massachusetts Signal Battalion<br>1st Massachusetts Field Artillery |
| 3 July       | 1st Massachusetts Cavalry Squadron   |
| 4 July       | Pennsylvania Field Hospital Company No. 2<br>1st Pennsylvania Signal Battalion<br>1st Pennsylvania Engineer Battalion<br>Pennsylvania Ambulance Company No. 2  |
| 5 July       | 1st Pennsylvania Infantry  |
| 6 July       | Battery A, Rhode Island Field Artillery<br>2nd Pennsylvania Infantry   |
| 7 July       | 3rd Pennsylvania Infantry  |
| 8 July       | 2nd Pennsylvania Infantry Brigade<br>10th Pennsylvania Infantry<br>16th Pennsylvania Infantry<br>18th Pennsylvania Infantry  |
| 10 July      | Headquarters, 7th Division<br>1st Pennsylvania Field Artillery   |
| 11 July      | 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry   |
| 12 July      | 6th Pennsylvania Infantry  |
| 13 July      | 31st Michigan Infantry<br>4th Pennsylvania Infantry<br>Pennsylvania Field Hospital Company<br>Pennsylvania Ambulance Company   |

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|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 14 July      | Rhode Island Ambulance Company<br>Rhode Island Cavalry Squadron  |
| 18 July      | 32nd Michigan Infantry   |
| 12 August    | 1st South Carolina Infantry  |
| 14 August    | 2nd South Carolina Infantry<br>Troop A, South Carolina Cavalry<br>South Carolina Field Hospital Company<br>South Carolina Ambulance Company<br>South Carolina Engineer Company |
| 3 September  | 4th Ohio Infantry<br>5th Ohio Infantry   |
| 4 September  | 2nd Kentucky Infantry<br>3rd Kentucky Infantry<br>Kentucky Field Hospital Company<br>Kentucky Ambulance Company<br>Kentucky Signal Company                                     |
| 5 September  | 8th Ohio Infantry<br>1st Kentucky Infantry   |
| 6 September  | Ohio Cavalry Squadron<br>2nd Ohio Field Hospital Company<br>2nd Ohio Ambulance Company<br>Ohio Field Artillery Battalion   |
| 10 September | 2nd Ohio Infantry<br>6th Ohio Infantry   |
| 12 September | 3rd Ohio Infantry<br>Ohio Engineer Battalion   |
| 13 September | 1st Ohio Field Hospital Company<br>1st Ohio Ambulance Company<br>Ohio Signal Company   |
| 19 September | Troop B, 10th Tennessee Cavalry<br>Tennessee Ambulance Company No. 1<br>Tennessee Field Hospital Company No. 1   |
| 28 September | Troops A and B, North Carolina Cavalry<br>North Carolina Field Hospital Company<br>North Carolina Ambulance Company  |

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 30 September | 1st North Carolina Infantry   |
| 1 October    | 2nd North Carolina Infantry   |
| 2 October    | 3rd North Carolina Infantry   |
| 5 October    | 3rd Pennsylvania Field Artillery<br>Batteries A and B, Michigan Field Artillery |
| 7 October    | 33rd Michigan Infantry<br>1st Georgia Artillery Battalion                       |
| 10 October   | 13th Pennsylvania Infantry  |
| 14 October   | Colorado Signal Company A<br>Michigan Field Hospital Company                    |
| 23 October   | Two Companies, North Carolina Engineers   |
| 27 October   | 2nd Georgia Infantry  |
| 28 October   | 1st Georgia Infantry<br>5th Georgia Infantry                                    |
| 29 October   | Georgia Cavalry Squadron  |
| 3 November   | 1st Colorado Field Artillery Battalion  |
| 20 November  | North Carolina Field Hospital Company   |

#### National Guard Departures

| Date         | Unit  |
|--------------|---|
| 20 Sept 1916 | Massachusetts Field Hospital Company No. 1<br>Rhode Island Ambulance Company<br>Troop B, Rhode Island Cavalry |
| 3 October    | 1st Pennsylvania Infantry<br>3rd Pennsylvania Infantry  |
| 5 October    | 10th Pennsylvania Infantry  |
| 7 October    | Troops A, C, D, Rhode Island Cavalry  |
| 14 October   | 5th Massachusetts Infantry  |
| 18 October   | Massachusetts Signal Company  |
| 25 October   | 2nd Battalion, 1st Massachusetts Field Artillery  |

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|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 29 October     | 8th Massachusetts Infantry   |
| 31 October     | 9th Massachusetts Infantry   |
| 2 November     | Massachusetts Cavalry Squadron   |
| ca. 9 November | 1st Pennsylvania Field Artillery   |
| 23 November    | 1st South Carolina Infantry  |
| 12 December    | Massachusetts Ambulance Company No. 1  |
| 18 December    | 18th Pennsylvania Infantry   |
| 31 December    | 31st Michigan Infantry   |
| 3 Jan 1917     | 16th Pennsylvania Infantry<br>2nd Pennsylvania Brigade Headquarters  |
| 5 January      | Pennsylvania Signal Battalion  |
| ca. 8 January  | 7th Division Headquarters  |
| 10 January     | 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry   |
| 11 January     | Pennsylvania Field Bakery Company<br>Pennsylvania Field Hospital Company<br>Pennsylvania Ambulance Company   |
| 18 January     | 32nd Michigan Infantry   |
| 21 January     | Co. A, 1st Kentucky Infantry<br>Co. L, 2nd Kentucky Infantry<br>Co. D, 3rd Kentucky Infantry                 |
| 31 January     | 2nd Kentucky Infantry  |
| 1 February     | 1st North Carolina Infantry  |
| 4 February     | 2nd Pennsylvania Field Artillery   |
| 5 February     | Tennessee Ambulance Company No. 1  |
| 10 February    | Troop A, South Carolina Cavalry<br>South Carolina Field Hospital Company<br>South Carolina Ambulance Company |
| 12 February    | 6th Pennsylvania Infantry  |

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 15 February | 4th Ohio Infantry  |
| 16 February | Ohio Cavalry Squadron  |
| 20 February | 8th Pennsylvania Infantry  |
| 25 February | Battery A, District of Columbia Artillery  |
| 26 February | Battery B, Colorado Field Artillery  |
| 27 February | 5th Ohio Infantry  |
| 2 March     | 3rd Kentucky Infantry<br>Kentucky Field Hospital   |
| 5 March     | Georgia Field Artillery Battalion  |
| 8 March     | 2nd Ohio Infantry  |
| 9 March     | 8th Ohio Infantry  |
| 10 March    | 2nd South Carolina Infantry  |
| 11 March    | Michigan Engineer Companies A and B<br>Michigan Signal Company A<br>Michigan Cavalry Troops A and B  |
| 11 March    | Michigan Ambulance Company No. 1<br>Michigan Ambulance Company No. 2<br>Michigan Field Hospital Company No. 1  |
| 13 March    | Ohio Field Hospital Company No. 1<br>Ohio Field Hospital Company No. 2<br>Ohio Field Hospital Company No. 3<br>Ohio Ambulance Company No. 1<br>Ohio Ambulance Company No. 2<br>Ohio Engineer Battalion |
| 14 March    | 3rd Pennsylvania Field Artillery<br>Troops A and B, North Carolina Cavalry<br>North Carolina Ambulance Company No. 1<br>North Carolina Field Hospital Company No. 1                                    |
| 15 March    | 3rd North Carolina Infantry<br>Colorado Signal Company   |
| 16 March    | Kentucky Ambulance Company No. 1<br>Kentucky Signal Company  |

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|          |   |
|----------|---|
| 19 March | 1st Kentucky Infantry<br>6th Ohio Infantry  |
| 21 March | 3rd Ohio Infantry<br>13th Pennsylvania Infantry<br>2nd North Carolina Infantry<br>Companies A and B, North Carolina Engineers             |
| 22 March | 1st Georgia Infantry<br>2nd Georgia Infantry<br>5th Georgia Infantry<br>Georgia Cavalry Squadron<br>1st Georgia Field Artillery Battalion |
| 23 March | 33rd Michigan Infantry<br>Battery A, New Mexico Field Artillery   |



### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Maurice Matloff, ed. *American Military History*, Army Historical Series, Washington, D.C., United States Army, 1969, p. 367.

<sup>2</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, Vol. I, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1916, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>*EPMT*, August 19 and 21, 1916; also *War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, pp. 17-18, 193 ff. For example, 350 trains had been required to transport the first 100,000 guardsmen to the border; also, *War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, p. 379.

<sup>4</sup>*EPMT*, August 31, September 1, 1916.

<sup>5</sup>Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, New York and London, Free Press, 1984, p. 320.

<sup>6</sup>Marvin A. Kreidberg and Merton G. Henry, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army, 1775-1945*, Washington, D.C., Department of the Army, 1955, p. 200.

<sup>7</sup>*EPMT*, July 23, 1916.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, August 22, 1916.

<sup>9</sup>Memorandum for the chief of staff, August 16, 1916, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Army War College, General Correspondence, No. 9497-22, RG 165, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>10</sup>*EPMT*, August 2, 1916.

<sup>11</sup>The troops at Deming were redesignated as the 4th Separate Brigade. *EPMT*, September 21, 1916.

<sup>12</sup>Memorandum for the chief of staff, August 16, 1916, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Army War College, General Correspondence, No. 9497-22, RG 165, National Archives.

<sup>13</sup>*EPMT*, June 26, 1916.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, July 2 and 3, 1916.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, July 30, 1916.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, July 26, 1916.

<sup>17</sup>Leon C. Metz, *Fort Bliss: An Illustrated History*, El Paso, Mangan Books, 1981, p. 71.

<sup>18</sup>*EPMT*, July 20, 25, 30, 1916.

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<sup>19</sup>Metz, *Fort Bliss*, p. 172.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*; *EPMT*, July 3 and 4, 1916.

<sup>21</sup>*EPMT*, July 13-15, 1916; also Metz, *Fort Bliss*, p. 172.

<sup>22</sup>*EPMT*, August 25, 1916; also Metz, *Fort Bliss*, p. 172.

<sup>23</sup>*EPMT*, September 22 and 26, 1916. For a description of the 11th Division's cantonment, see *War Department Annual Reports, 1917*, Vol. I, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1918, p. 470.

<sup>24</sup>*EPMT*, July 2, 1916.

<sup>25</sup>Jamieson, *A Survey History*, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 41; also *EPMT*, July 30 and August 30, 1916.

<sup>29</sup>*EPMT*, July 17, 30, 1916; also Albion Smith, "Recollections of Camp Cotton," *Password*, VI, No. 1, Winter 1961, pp. 5-23.

<sup>30</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, p. 181.

<sup>31</sup>*EPMT*, July 23, 1916; also *War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, pp. 179, 390; also *War Department Annual Reports, 1917*, pp. 318-319; also Metz, *Fort Bliss*, p. 91.

<sup>32</sup>"Stations and strength of troops on the Mexican border from latest returns received," July 15, 1916, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Army War College, General Correspondence, No. 9497-18), RG 165, National Archives.

<sup>33</sup>*EPMT*, July 15, 1916.

<sup>34</sup>The 33rd Michigan Infantry did not arrive until October 7, 1916.

<sup>35</sup>In addition, Company E arrived on July 17, 1916.

<sup>36</sup>*EPMT*, September 7, 1916.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, October 19, 1916.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, October 11, 1916.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, January 12, 1917.

<sup>40</sup>On the 32nd Michigan's departure the 33rd Michigan was transferred to the 1st Infantry Brigade.

<sup>41</sup>*EPMT*, July 19, 24, 25, 28, 1916.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, December 25, 28, 29, 1916.

<sup>43</sup>For example, *EPMT*, July 27, 1916. A battalion of the 10th Pennsylvania Infantry and one from the 2nd Pennsylvania Infantry helped to patrol the Big Bend from July 13 to September 4, 1916.

<sup>44</sup>*EPMT*, July 28, August 5, 1916.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, August 7, 10, 11, 1916.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, August 3 and 4, 1916.

<sup>47</sup>For example, *EPMT*, September 7, 12, 18, 1916.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, September 14, 1916.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, September 26-28, 1916.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, September 29, 1916.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, September 26 and 30, 1916.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, September 28 and 30, October 1-3, 1916.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, September 10, 1916.

<sup>54</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, pp. 60-61, 164; also *EPMT*, August 3, 16, 18, 1916.

<sup>55</sup>*EPMT*, August 28, 1916.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, August 31, 1916.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, September 9 and 19, 1916.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, September 9, 1916.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, September 14, 1916.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, September 18, 1916.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, September 19-21, 1916.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, September 22, 1916.

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<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, September 22 and 23, 1916. The 4th Separate Brigade at Deming also held a review; also *Ibid.*, September 28, 1916.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, September 22, 1916.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, September 25, 1916.

<sup>66</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, p. 13; also *EPMT*, September 29, 1916.

<sup>67</sup>*EPMT*, December 19, 1916.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, January 18, 1917.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, January 21, 1917.

<sup>70</sup>Brig. Gen. Henry J. Reilly, "The National Guard on the Mexican Border," in Tompkins, *Chasing Villa*, pp. 221-230; also *War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, pp. 157-158, 379.

<sup>71</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1916*, p. 301; also *War Department Annual Reports, 1917*, pp. 10, 141.

<sup>72</sup>Kreidberg and Henry, *History of Military Mobilization*, pp. 199-201; also *War Department Annual Reports, 1917*, p. 10.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **WORLD WAR I AND ITS AFTERMATH (1917-1919)**

#### **Introduction**

The First World War marked the emergence of the United States as a major power in world affairs. This country's entry into the conflict in April 1917 produced a monumental national war effort, one which was shaped necessarily by the nature of warfare on the Western Front. The outcome of the struggle ultimately was decided not only by sheer numbers of troops but by weapons: the airplane, field artillery, the machine gun, and the tank. With trench warfare being the order of the day, the cavalry's role as a combat arm went into eclipse.

Ironically the National Defense Act of 1916 had authorized a substantial increase in cavalry, increasing the cavalry arm from the existing 15 regiments to 25; each regiment to have 12 troops and a machine gun troop. But, by the time the United States entered World War I, only two additional regiments had come into existence. These 17 regiments of cavalry suffered a severe blow on October 23, 1917, when President Wilson ordered that 7 regiments be reorganized as field artillery. Only four of the remaining ten regiments were sent to France as part of the American Expeditionary Force. Their contribution to Allied victory was modest. They found themselves relegated to the dull task of operating veterinary and remount stations behind the front lines. Only one of these units ever engaged in mounted action, though on a limited scale. In August 1918 a provisional squadron of the 2nd Cavalry was mounted and sent into combat against the retreating Germans.<sup>1</sup>

Although the cavalry virtually was useless on the Western Front, it still was capable of defending the Mexican border. Border defense, however, was now a secondary problem for the United States. Relations with Mexico had occupied much of Washington's attention since 1910 but had been overshadowed by America's entry into World War I. In addition, the Mexican Revolution was running its course. Carranza consolidated his control, and in 1917 was elected constitutional president of Mexico. His rivals, such as Villa and Zapata, were reduced to being regional nuisances.

Mexico, nevertheless, remained a matter of some concern to Washington, largely because of German intrigues in that country. Germany's policy was aimed at curtailing American military participation in Europe by embroiling the United States in a war with Mexico. To implement this policy Germany, on January 16, 1917, offered Mexico a military alliance embodied in the notorious Zimmermann Telegram. The Germans urged Carranza to declare war on the United States, promising not only aid in such a conflict but also the restoration to Mexico of the American Southwest upon its victorious conclusion.<sup>2</sup> Carranza realized war with the United States would be disastrous and declined this transparent German ploy.

Carranza did cooperate with Germany on a less provocative level. In 1917 Carranza proclaimed Mexico's neutrality in World War I, but this proved to be an openly pro-German neutrality. The Carranza administration permitted German agents and propagandists to operate freely in Mexico. Their activities represented at least a potential threat to the U.S. border.

### World War I and Its Aftermath

Compared with the momentous events of 1916, World War I proved to be an anticlimax for Fort Bliss. In the spring of 1917 the post seemed destined for even greater expansion: the government allocated \$850,000 for improvements necessitated by the augmented garrison, and the Quartermaster Corps was planning a \$100,000 upgrade of the water and sewer system. It also seemed certain that a divisional training center would be located at Fort Bliss.<sup>3</sup> The post was eminently suited for such an undertaking, because the camps recently evacuated by the National Guard easily could accommodate a division of trainees.

The divisional training cantonment never materialized, because El Paso had incurred the wrath of Secretary of War Newton D. Baker. Baker was a man of firm convictions who believed in strict morals. He abhorred having liquor and prostitution available to the troops. He disapproved on moral grounds, and he thought that vice lowered the Army's effectiveness.

Baker had included a provision in the Selective Service Act prohibiting the sale of alcohol to military personnel and establishing a dry zone around Army installations. The secretary also announced that only those localities that actively protected soldiers from vice would be designated as training centers.<sup>4</sup> He took a dim view of El Paso's well-deserved reputation as a town where a soldier could have a good time. In fact he publicly stated that "El Paso must clean up."<sup>5</sup> Faced with the prospect of losing the millions of dollars that a training center represented, El Paso city fathers launched what proved to be a half-hearted campaign against vice.

Their efforts failed to satisfy Baker. The divisional training center was awarded to Deming, where the town's small size and relative isolation would provide the troops with less temptation. El Pasoans could only observe wistfully as Camp Cody blossomed in Deming. The 23,000 troops eventually stationed at Camp Cody were supplied from the Quartermaster Depot in El Paso, but this was of little consolation.<sup>6</sup> The loss of the divisional training center was a blow to Fort Bliss, for it lessened the institutional growth of previous years.

Nonetheless, Fort Bliss remained the major border military installation. The history of the post during the First World War centered around a series of administrative reorganizations. On March 16, 1917, the regular units in the Southern Department were regrouped into three provisional cavalry brigades. Fort Bliss also was the headquarters of the Second Provisional Infantry Division, whose commander was Bell. The following units were assigned to this new organization.

- 1st Infantry Brigade
  - 7th Infantry
  - 17th Infantry
  - 23rd Infantry
- 2nd Infantry Brigade
  - 6th Infantry
  - 16th Infantry
  - 20th Infantry
- 3rd Infantry Brigade (at Columbus)
- Divisional cavalry (headquarters at Marfa)
- Artillery Brigade
  - 4th Field Artillery (less 2nd Battalion)

5th Field Artillery (less Batteries D and F)  
8th Field Artillery  
2nd Engineers (less Companies E and F)

Besides being the headquarters of an infantry division, Fort Bliss also housed the First Provisional Cavalry Division, whose commander was Brigadier General Eben Swift:

1st Cavalry Brigade  
    8th Cavalry  
    17th Cavalry  
2nd Cavalry Brigade  
    7th Cavalry  
    13th Cavalry (less one troop)  
3rd Cavalry Brigade  
    5th Cavalry  
    11th Cavalry

Fort Bliss now was the headquarters for two of the four divisions in the Southern Department.<sup>7</sup>

The Second Provisional Division was responsible for patrolling the region from Arizona to the Big Bend, comprising what had been the districts of Big Bend, El Paso, and New Mexico. On May 5, 1917, the units in the Southern Department were grouped into a paper organization, the I Provisional Army Corps. But, the provisional corps, divisions, and brigades were abolished on June 1, 1917, because large numbers of troops had been transferred out of the Southern Department.

The border was divided into four districts, with the El Paso District extending from Mofeta, Texas, to the Arizona-New Mexico state line. It included the former Big Bend, El Paso, and New Mexico districts. Simultaneously, a provisional cavalry brigade (the 2nd), under Swift at Fort Bliss, was formed from the 5th, 7th, and 8th cavalries. The 5th, 13th, and 18th field artilleries were formed into a provisional artillery brigade. The brigades were stationed in the El Paso District but were designated for war service. Protection of the border remained the El Paso District commander's responsibility. Further reorganization occurred on November 18, 1917, when the El Paso Patrol District was subdivided into the Big Bend District and the El Paso District, the latter now included the area from Polvo, Texas, to the Arizona-New Mexico line.<sup>8</sup>

The next important development occurred on November 27, 1917, when the War Department ordered the formation of the 15th Cavalry Division along the border. Division headquarters were at Fort Bliss, as were the headquarters of the division's 2nd Brigade. The 1st Brigade's headquarters were at Fort Sam Houston, and the 3rd Brigade's were at Douglas. Major General George W. Read assumed command of the division on December 10, 1917. But on May 6, 1918, the Southern Department's commanding general recommended disbanding the division on the grounds that the border could be patrolled more effectively if the divisional organization was discontinued. The 15th Cavalry Division ceased to exist on May 12, its components to patrol the border from their respective stations.<sup>9</sup>

The border was relatively calm during World War I. Mexicans made occasional minor raids into the United States, but only one major clash occurred between the Army and the Mexicans. On August 27, 1918, a brief but intense firefight took place at Nogales between American and Mexican troops.<sup>10</sup>

Much of the Army's efforts had centered on improving its intelligence capability on the border. In 1917 the border was divided into four intelligence districts: Brownsville, Laredo, El Paso, and Arizona. The El Paso District was headquartered in the Mills Building in downtown El Paso, and its reports were incorporated into a weekly borderwide intelligence summary. In addition, Colonel Ralph H. Van Deman, chief of Military Intelligence, was instrumental in establishing a chain of 14 mobile radio intercept stations stretching from McAllen, Texas, to the California state line. When this network was put in place in the late spring of 1918, one of the stations was located at Fort Bliss.<sup>11</sup>

The Army's enhanced intelligence apparatus was aimed not merely at monitoring Mexican activities but also at neutralizing the subversive activities of German agents. The network's success may be measured by the fact the most serious German plot, a conspiracy to subvert Black cavalry regiments in Arizona and to incite a popular insurrection in that state, was smashed.<sup>12</sup>

Fort Bliss was not in the limelight again until World War I ended. The garrison finally got to see action against its old adversary Villa. Though broken as a national figure, Villa had continued to operate in the state of Chihuahua. In May 1917 he attacked the Carranza garrison at Ojinaga across from Presidio and forced it to flee across the river into the United States. He held the town briefly. He repeated this exploit in November 1917. Through 1918 Villa built his forces and extended his operations in Chihuahua. By the summer of 1919 he was ready for a more ambitious undertaking, the capture of Ciudad Juárez.<sup>13</sup>

The Army prepared countermeasures as it became more certain Villa was massing his followers to seize this vital port of entry. On June 10, 1919, the Army's chief of staff transmitted an order from the secretary of war to the Southern Department's commanding general: If Villa succeeded in capturing Juárez, then the border would be closed immediately. Further, if the *Villistas* fired into El Paso, American troops would cross the border and disperse them. When Villa's forces were dispersed and the safety of El Pasoans assured, the troops were to withdraw back across the Rio Grande.<sup>14</sup> The 24th Infantry was rushed to El Paso from Columbus, and El Paso District Commander Brigadier General James B. Erwin placed his troops on a state of alert. The following units were available to Erwin.

2nd Cavalry Brigade  
     7th Cavalry  
     5th Cavalry (two squadrons)  
 24th Infantry  
 82nd Field Artillery  
 8th Engineers  
 9th Engineers  
 7th Field Signal Battalion

The anticipated *Villista* onslaught against Ciudad Juárez began with a determined thrust aimed at the center of the city shortly after midnight on June 15, 1919. The Carranza garrison counterattacked but was unable to drive the adversaries out of Juárez. The tide of battle fluctuated wildly throughout the day. During the battle a number of rounds landed in El Paso, inflicting casualties on both civilians and soldiers.

Erwin decided to implement his contingency plans and drive the *Villistas* out of the city. Four batteries of the 82nd Field Artillery pounded *Villista* concentrations, especially those at the Juárez racetrack. The 24th Infantry attacked across the Santa Fe Street bridge into downtown Juárez, and the 2nd Cavalry Brigade crossed the Rio Grande at three fords downriver from Juárez. This pincer movement failed, because the



cavalry found it difficult to maneuver in a maze of irrigation ditches. Accordingly the *Villistas* were not crushed, but they were completely routed, and they abandoned much of their weaponry and equipment. By nightfall on June 16 the American troops were back across the river, having accomplished their mission. Carranza's authorities formally protested the American incursion, even though it had enabled the Mexican government to retain control of its largest border city.<sup>15</sup>

The battle of Juárez involved some 3,600 American troops and marked the end of an era; it was the last time the United States sent a sizable military contingent into Mexico. The battle also marked the last time the horse cavalry went into combat.

The battle of Juárez also marked the beginning of an era for Fort Bliss, the advent of aircraft. On June 16, 1919, while the Fort Bliss garrison was attacking Juárez, the Army ordered aircraft rushed to El Paso. Eighteen aircraft with their personnel and equipment were dispatched from Kelly Field in San Antonio and Ellington Field near Houston. The equipment and support personnel moved by rail while the airplanes flew to El Paso. Four of them crashed along the way. The remainder began arriving at Fort Bliss on June 17, after the battle of Juárez had ended.<sup>16</sup>

Despite this unfortunate beginning, it was obvious air power could play a crucial role in protecting the border. As the largest military post on the international boundary, Fort Bliss was the logical headquarters for an aerial surveillance network. On July 7, 1919, Fort Bliss became the headquarters for the 1st Bombardment Group, consisting of the 11th, 12th, 20th, 96th, and 104th aero squadrons and a photographic section. Satellite airfields were built at Douglas and Marfa. The 1st Bombardment Group had the responsibility of patrolling the border by air from Nogales, Arizona, to Boquillas, Texas, in the Big Bend. In keeping with the organization's mission, its title was changed to the 1st Surveillance Group on November 5, 1919. By 1920 the entire border had been organized into aerial patrol districts at Brownsville, Laredo, Eagle Pass, Big Bend, El Paso, Arizona, and California.<sup>17</sup>

### Conclusion

World War I was a period of stagnation for Fort Bliss. The secretary of war's decision not to locate a divisional training center in El Paso curtailed the process of expansion that had characterized Fort Bliss for the previous five years. It also meant the post would be able to make only a negligible contribution to the national war effort. Most of the troops stationed at Fort Bliss eventually were withdrawn for service elsewhere, either in Europe or at other border installations. Yet even at this reduced level, the transition of Fort Bliss from an infantry to a cavalry post continued. Because of their unsuitability for service on the Western Front, cavalry regiments were left to safeguard the Mexican border. The Army, though, still was in the process of formulating a policy for the most effective cavalry deployment. It was trying to decide whether to mass them at a strategic point, such as El Paso, or to distribute them more evenly along the entire boundary. This issue underlay some of the administrative reorganizations that affected Fort Bliss.

The degree to which Fort Bliss's fortunes were a function of developments in Mexico was illustrated strikingly by the battle of Juárez in 1919. Villa's attack on that city produced a significant American military response. Once again the attention of Washington was focused on the border situation, and Fort Bliss benefited as a result. Stationing aircraft at the post evolved into a borderwide aerial surveillance network in which Fort Bliss was the key component. In addition, the cavalry's role in the battle of Juárez provided some justification for retaining horse cavalry as a combat arm of the Army, and it also demonstrated the advisability of stationing a strong cavalry force at Fort Bliss to deal with possible, future border crises.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Randy Steffen, *The Horse Soldier, 1776-1943*, 4 vols., University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1977-1979, IV, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>For an excellent treatment of this affair see Tuchman, *The Zimmermann Telegram*.

<sup>3</sup>Christian, *Sword and Plowshare*, pp. 425-430.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 433-439, 445, 457.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 442.

<sup>6</sup>*War Department Annual Reports, 1918*. Vol. I, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1919, pp. 313, 315; for a discussion of Fort Bliss's modest contribution to the war effort see Jamieson, *A Survey History*, pp. 53-55.

<sup>7</sup>*Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War (1917-19), Zone of the Interior*, Vol. III, Par 1, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1949, pp. 602-603.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 604-605, 609; On December 9, 1918, the El Paso district's eastern boundary was moved from Polvo to Arroyo Macho, 6 miles west of Fort Quitman; also *Ibid.*, p. 606.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 605-606, 671-674.

<sup>10</sup>Clendenen, *Blood on the Border*, pp. 346-349.

<sup>11</sup>Ketcham, acting chief of War College Division, to chief of staff, February 12, 1918, No. 65-2B-10, 3 RG 165, Records of the War Department General and Special staffs, Military Intelligence Division, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>12</sup>Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, "The Witzke Affair: German Intrigue on the Mexican Border, 1917-1918," *Military Review*, LIX, No. 2, February 1979, pp. 36-50

<sup>13</sup>Clendenen, *Blood on the Border*, p. 251.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 351-352.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 352-356.

<sup>16</sup>Stacy C. Hinkle, *Wings Over the Border: The Army Air Service Armed Patrol of the United States-Mexico Border 1919-1921*, El Paso, Texas Western Press, 1970, pp. 6-8.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

## Chapter IX

### THE TWILIGHT OF THE CAVALRY (1919-1943)

#### Introduction

The history of Fort Bliss from 1921 to World War II essentially is the history of the 1st Cavalry Division. But in a larger sense, the fortunes of the post reflected the interplay of three factors. First, and most importantly, the revolution and resultant instability in Mexico determined the degree to which the border needed protection. Second, the interwar years were characterized by a severe curtailment of the Army's budget, a situation that did not begin to improve until the military buildup of the late 1930s. Last, the role of the horse cavalry as a combat arm in modern warfare continued to decline.

In retrospect the 1919 battle of Ciudad Juárez was the final gasp of the Mexican Revolution on the border. The year 1920 was pivotal, for it marked the last time the Mexican government was toppled by a rebellion. The issue in 1920, as it had been a decade earlier, was the presidential election. Carranza was barred by the constitution from succeeding himself, but he attempted to retain power by engineering the election of a puppet. Obregón, however, had developed presidential ambitions of his own, and when Carranza tried to suppress Obregón's candidacy, the latter's partisans in Sonora rebelled in April 1920. The rebellion quickly became a triumphal march to Mexico City as Carranza's erstwhile supporters abandoned him. Carranza fled to the coast and exile. He was assassinated in May 1920. Obregón was duly elected as the new president and began to restore stability to Mexico. One step in this policy had been effected in the summer of 1920 when the new regime bought off Villa. The government offered Villa a deal whereby if he laid down his arms he would not only be granted amnesty but also would receive a cash settlement and a large ranch in the state of Durango. Villa accepted with alacrity. He kept his part of the bargain until he too was assassinated in the summer of 1923. The elimination of Villa did much to restore peace along the border.

Beginning with Obregón's administration, 1920-1924, Mexico slowly and painfully moved toward stability and economic development. There were sporadic attempts to overthrow the government, notably a serious uprising in 1923, but neither this movement nor rebellions in 1926 and 1929 succeeded. The decade of the 1930s was considerably more tranquil, and by the early 1940s the antagonism between the United States and Mexico rapidly was being replaced by a new spirit of cooperation in the face of the Axis menace. In May 1942 Mexico declared war on the Axis and was a steadfast U.S. ally throughout World War II. As a result, the Army's need to maintain thousands of troops for border protection disappeared.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the Army struggled to perform its mission in the face of general apathy regarding military preparedness. Appropriations declined steadily from 1921 on, to the point that

*Army maneuvers were restricted to participation by one division in 1927; there were no maneuvers at all in 1928. The next year military exercises were restricted to practice marches for troops and command post exercises for officers. Congress had failed to appropriate enough money to warrant anything more comprehensive.<sup>1</sup>*

The 1929 Stock Market crash and the resulting Depression only made a frustrating situation even worse. For example, the military budget was reduced substantially in 1932<sup>2</sup> Not until 1935 did the picture gradually

begin to improve. It took the outbreak of World War II to drive home to the public and to Congress the degree to which the United States lagged behind in military preparedness.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the interwar decades the horse cavalry's fortunes continued to decline. Although Pershing stated, "There is not in the world today, an officer of distinction, recognized as an authority on military matters in a broad way, who does not declare with emphasis that cavalry is as important today as it ever has been,"<sup>3</sup> cavalry was on its way out. One of the postwar economies in the Army was to inactivate three cavalry regiments. In 1921 the remaining regiments were cut to half strength by inactivating certain troops and squadrons.<sup>4</sup> Despite the formation of the 1st Cavalry Division in 1921 and the 2nd Cavalry Division in 1923, the tide continued to ebb.

A major blow to the horse cavalry came in January 1933. The Army's policy had become one of emphasizing mechanization and, accordingly, the cavalry began to be dismounted. The 1st Cavalry was mechanized, as was the 13th Cavalry. The two regiments were formed into a mechanized brigade. Thereafter, the 4th and 6th cavalries were reorganized as Horse-Mechanized Corps Reconnaissance Regiments.<sup>5</sup> On April 18, 1934, the War Department declared the cavalry saber an obsolete weapon in modern warfare. The saber, a symbol of the glamour traditionally associated with the cavalry, was discontinued.<sup>6</sup>

The horse cavalry made its last appearance as a combat arm during the Louisiana Maneuvers in 1940-1941, when the two cavalry divisions and a brigade of the Texas National Guard performed creditably. Some hoped this exploit might win the cavalry a reprieve, but it was not to be. In March 1942 the office of chief of cavalry was abolished. In February 1943 the 1st Cavalry Division was dismounted, trained as infantry for jungle fighting, and shipped to the Pacific Theater. The other mounted regiments were reorganized as mechanized reconnaissance units.<sup>7</sup> All that remained of the horse cavalry was tradition.

### **The Twilight of the Cavalry**

The battle of Ciudad Juárez had underlined the importance of Fort Bliss as the key border post. As of August 1, 1919, the Fort Bliss garrison had a strength of 108 officers and 1,519 enlisted men, plus several hundred civilian employees, and a large contingent at the base hospital. Appropriately, the commander of the 5th Cavalry, Colonel James J. Hornbrook, was the post commander, and the 5th Cavalry was the principal unit in the post's garrison. About 4,000 additional men were based in the patrol district, including field artillery, infantry, truck companies (called the motor transport corps), additional cavalry, and quartermaster units.<sup>8</sup>

The 8th Cavalry, under Langhorne's command, replaced the 5th Cavalry as the garrison at the fort in early October 1919. The strength of the fort itself had declined to 920 enlisted men and 38 officers, although several thousand troops still were based in and around Fort Bliss itself.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the year, the post was back up to a strength of 1,300 officers and enlisted men.<sup>10</sup>

It would have heartened the regulars at the post had they been able to read a letter from Baker to the chairman of the House's Committee on Military Affairs. In his December 26, 1919, letter Baker recommended that an additional 2,000 acres be purchased to add to the Fort Bliss military reservation. Baker noted that at that time two cavalry regiments, a field artillery regiment, etc., were based in El Paso, and there was little room available for drilling purposes at the fort itself. More importantly, he commented, "Due to

existing conditions on the Mexican border, it is not deemed advisable to reduce the strength of the garrison as maintained at this place."<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the early months of 1920, the size of the garrison proper remained relatively stable and events there were routine. The only apparently notable happening that year took place on February 1 when Pershing, then general of the armies, returned to Fort Bliss and reviewed the 8th Cavalry, the principal garrison at the post.<sup>12</sup> Ancillary activities associated with the Fort (the hospital, Cavalry Remount Depot, Quartermaster Depot, an ordnance detachment, motor transport service detachment, etc.) helped ensure the post would remain a major installation despite the ongoing demobilization process.

For example, in February 1920 some 25 doctors, 37 nurses, and 171 enlisted personnel worked at the base hospital. The hospital itself ultimately would become one of the major U.S. Army medical facilities in the country.<sup>13</sup> At the remount depot there were 4 officers, 89 enlisted personnel, and 214 civilian employees in mid-January 1920.<sup>14</sup> The Quartermaster Corps detachment in mid-February boasted a full colonel commanding 298 enlisted men and 146 civilian employees.<sup>15</sup> Two ordnance detachments also were based at the post reporting a strength of 3 officers and 95 enlisted personnel in the summer of 1920.<sup>16</sup>

With relative peace on the border and at least the prospect of this situation continuing for some months, the Southern Department finally reconciled what had been a persistent problem for Fort Bliss for almost a decade. On August 14, 1920, the Southern Department issued General Orders Number 45, which disbanded the El Paso Patrol District headquarters and placed all units in the district under Fort Bliss.<sup>17</sup>

This step was to have a twofold impact on Fort Bliss. On one hand, it locked in place the reality of Fort Bliss as a permanent installation and indeed a major post for the foreseeable future. On the other hand, it corrected a serious administrative situation for the Southern Department and Fort Bliss itself. The establishment of the El Paso Patrol District, in retrospect, created an unneeded layer of Army bureaucracy in border defense. Throughout the decade 1910-1920, Fort Bliss, in reality, had been responsible for the area from the Big Bend to the New Mexico-Arizona border. El Paso Patrol District commanders during the decade had maintained their residence on Fort Bliss. The post also, at least from 1913 on, had served as the principal supply depot for the district. Most of the troops (particularly the cavalry) had rotated from the fort to the border and back to Fort Bliss.

The fact that Fort Bliss and commanders of the patrol district operated in the same area caused confusion on several occasions. Just who had authority over what was difficult to determine at times. Periodically one officer commanded both entities, thus providing some consistency and clarity to the region's military operations. Finally, the fort had served both as the key point in the region's communications network and almost always provided the chief reserve for backing up troops in the region.

The situation was resolved when Brigadier General Robert L. Howze took command of both the fort and troops in the region. Fort Bliss now had administratively resumed its place as the center of the action (see Table IX-1).

In addition, other installations added to the troop strength under Fort Bliss: Camp Chigas, downriver from El Paso where the 19th Infantry was based; the 8th Cavalry at Ysleta; troops at Fabens and Fort Hancock; and, portions of the 7th and 8th cavalries based in southern New Mexico. A grand total of 235 officers and 5,581 enlisted men were under Fort Bliss's control in September.<sup>18</sup>

Table IX-1. El Paso Region Troops Commanded by Howze

| TROOP   | OFFICERS | ENLISTED MEN | TOTAL |
|---|----------|--------------|-------|
| 7th Cavalry                                     | 34       | 1,029        | 1,063 |
| 8th Cavalry                                     | 19       | 583          | 602   |
| 82nd Field Artillery                            | 13       | 253          | 266   |
| 8th Mounted Engineers                           | 11       | 180          | 191   |
| 8th Train Engineers                             | 2        | 53           | 55    |
| 1st Surveillance Group                          | 2        | 24           | 26    |
| 104th Aero Squadron                             | 9        | 39           | 48    |
| 1st Photo Squadron                              |          | 2            | 2     |
| Station Hospital                                | 21       | 145          | 166   |
| Station Veterinary Detachment                   | 1        | 6            | 7     |
| Hospital Company No. 10                         | 1        | 62           | 63    |
| Remount Squadron No. 8                          | 10       | 118          | 128   |
| Ordnance Depot No. 9                            | 1        | 34           | 35    |
| 1st Provisional Ordnance Detachment             | 1        | 26           | 27    |
| 2nd Provisional Ordnance Detachment             | 1        | 38           | 39    |
| 3rd Provisional Ordnance Detachment             | 1        | 49           | 50    |
| 2nd Heavy Mobile Ordnance Repair                | 2        | 73           | 75    |
| Detachment, 7th Service Company, Signal Corps   |          | 22           | 22    |
| Detachment, Seventh Signal Battalion            | 1        | 5            | 6     |
| Post and Camp Quartermaster                     | 6        | 277          | 283   |
| Motor Command No. 30                            | 4        | 5            | 9     |
| Motor Train Companies 5, 42, 49, 52, 57, 58, 70 | 4        | 168          | 172   |
| 9th Airship Company                             | 4        | 73           | 77    |

By far the most significant development of the immediate postwar period was the activation of the 1st Cavalry Division on September 21, 1921. This decision originated, it has been written, in a January 30, 1917, memorandum from Colonel Robert L. Michie to Army Chief of Staff Scott. The immediate result of

Michie's recommendation was the formation of the short-lived 15th Cavalry Division during World War I, but it was not until the creation of the 1st Cavalry Division in 1921 that Fort Bliss became the principal cavalry installation in the United States.

The order creating the 1st Cavalry Division stipulated it would be organized as follows:

Commanding General, Major General Robert L. Howze  
Division Headquarters  
1st Cavalry Brigade  
1st Cavalry  
5th Cavalry  
2nd Cavalry Brigade  
7th Cavalry  
8th Cavalry  
82nd Field Artillery Battalion (Horse)  
8th Mounted Engineers  
1st Medical Squadron  
1st Signal Troop  
Division Trains

Two of the cavalry regiments were not based at Fort Bliss; the 1st Cavalry was stationed at Camp Marfa and the 5th Cavalry was garrisoned at Fort Clark.<sup>19</sup>

The Division barely had been established when a major force reduction was decreed by the War Department. As one history of the 7th Cavalry states, "Due to the numerous discharges at this time the regiment was reduced to barely enough men to keep the post and animals in proper condition."<sup>20</sup> The Warren G. Harding administration was slashing the strength of the Army from 227,800 to approximately 146,500. Because of these reductions the 1st Cavalry Division became a division in name only, its strength far below the authorized peacetime level. Nevertheless, it was one of only two divisions being maintained at anything even approaching peacetime strength. The other division was the 2nd at Fort Sam Houston. It was no accident that these two divisions were stationed where they could defend the border.<sup>21</sup>

Border patrols continued on a regular basis but increasingly Fort Bliss settled into a peacetime routine. Polo became a principal feature of this routine, particularly among the 7th Cavalry, which won the post tournament in December.<sup>22</sup> In the spring of 1922 Cavalry Chief Major General Willard J. Holbrook inspected the post, and Pershing reviewed the entire 1st Cavalry Division that fall.<sup>23</sup> By early 1923 the division was engaged in maneuvers, marching from Fort Bliss to Marfa, a distance of some 438 miles.<sup>24</sup>

The peacetime routine at Fort Bliss was not disrupted until the end of the decade when unrest again sprang up in Mexico. Obregón was assassinated in 1928, and his successor was General Plutarco Elías Calles, who ruled through a succession of puppets. Calles's authoritarian rule inevitably produced opposition, and a rebellion began to take shape. General José Gonzalo Escobar, who had commanded the *Carrancista* garrison during the battle of Ciudad Juárez in 1919, was the opposition leader. Escobar enjoyed considerable support in the northern tier of Mexican states, particularly in Chihuahua and Sonora. A rebellion centered along the Mexican border inevitably would affect Fort Bliss.<sup>25</sup>

Fighting broke out on March 5, 1929, in northern Mexico in the state capital of Monterrey, which soon fell to the rebels. Simultaneously the small garrison at Ojinaga, downriver from El Paso, announced its

adherence to Escobar. Several days later fighting broke out across the river from Presidio. Troops of the 1st Cavalry Division based at Camp Marfa were rushed to Presidio. At the same time, Washington announced an embargo on the shipment of arms to the *Escobaristas* and that President Herbert Hoover's administration would support the Calles government. This support included the sale of considerable quantities of war materiel, including combat aircraft, bombs, machine guns, small arms, and ammunition.<sup>26</sup>

Enforcement of the embargo fell principally to the Fort Bliss garrison and its commander, Brigadier General George Van Horn Moseley. The Mexican garrison in Ciudad Juárez remained loyal to the Calles administration, but it was isolated, and the surrounding territory largely was in the hands of Escobar's forces. With an attack on Juárez imminent, Moseley deployed the 7th Cavalry on the river and placed two French 75mm artillery pieces near the international bridges. In the early morning hours of March 8, 1929, Escobar's forces attacked, and the inevitable happened . . . rifle fire began to rain down on El Paso from across the river. Moseley, realizing the danger to El Paso citizens and seeing that Juárez inevitably would fall, crossed the river and convinced Calles's commander to surrender and allow his troops to be interned at Fort Bliss. More than 300 Mexican officers and enlisted men with their wives and children were quartered at Fort Bliss.<sup>27</sup>

A few days later, the state capital of Chihuahua City fell to Escobar's forces. As the rebellion spread, it appeared the Calles government might be in real danger of being overthrown. Escobar utilized Ciudad Juárez as a major supply base, while the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Bliss patrolled the area from the Big Bend to the Arizona-Sonora border. By March 20 Calles finally had reacted to the capture of a number of state capitals. His army began to retake cities like Veracruz and Monterrey, and it was advancing northward toward Chihuahua. Between March 30 and April 2 the Mexican Federal Army defeated Escobar's forces in southern Chihuahua in the battle of Jiménez, the most important single engagement of the revolution. By April 6 Escobar's army was shattered, and he took the remnants westward toward Agua Prieta. A token Escobar force was left in Juárez, but it surrendered on April 9 to a government column advancing northward from Chihuahua City.<sup>28</sup>

During this period, the Fort Bliss garrison kept a watchful eye on the border, and with the 1st Cavalry Division understrength, they were stretched thinly. When Escobar evacuated Ciudad Juárez, his forces retreated to Agua Prieta. As a result, most of the 7th Cavalry on April 9 was ordered westward to keep peace along the border. By April 15, the 7th Cavalry was stretched out from Fort Bliss to Naco, Arizona, where the Escobar rebels made their last stand. Three weeks later the rebels fled to the United States.<sup>29</sup> The Escobar rebellion was over.

The uprising again had emphasized why Fort Bliss was important and why the Army found it necessary to maintain a large contingent of troops in the Southwest. The Escobar rebellion also illustrated the value of air power in modern warfare. Mexican federal troops used aircraft in a tactical support role. The federal troops were well supported by aircraft that strafed and bombed the Escobar army with considerable effectiveness.<sup>30</sup> In any case, by the middle of May in 1929 the border had returned to normal, and the Fort Bliss garrison was back to its peacetime routine. For example, in October the 1st and 2nd cavalry brigades carried out a six-day war game around the fort.<sup>31</sup>

In the 1920s, while Mexico gradually was settling down, Fort Bliss continued to grow. Development of an airbase at Fort Bliss began with the establishment of a Border Air Patrol in 1919. As early as November 1919 Howze had recommended the acquisition of additional land for an airfield to accommodate the approximately 40 aircraft based at Fort Bliss.<sup>32</sup>



Yet the prospects for further aviation development at the post seemed bleak in June 1921, when the Border Air Patrol was disbanded and all but six aircraft were transferred to Kelly Field. The remaining aircraft were based at the Fort Bliss Air Terminal, which consisted principally of a couple of hangars. A then unknown Captain Claire L. Chennault was based at the airfield during the 1922-24 period. Chennault later would become famous in World War II as commander of the Flying Tigers in China.<sup>33</sup>

The Fort Bliss airfield was named Biggs Field on January 5, 1925, in honor of Lieutenant James Barteau Biggs who had died in a plane crash in France in October 1918. One year later the field was moved to a larger site west of present-day Biggs Field.<sup>34</sup> War games took place in the summer of 1927 on the back mesa near the fort to demonstrate air-cavalry coordination. Some 40 aircraft from Kelly Field flew to Biggs Field to demonstrate how aircraft could be used to locate and attack enemy cavalry. The war games were marred when a low-flying aircraft hit a cavalryman and killed him.<sup>35</sup>

Another large building project took place at Fort Bliss during the 1920s. Construction began on a general hospital at the Fort in 1920. On July 1, 1921, William Beaumont Hospital, named for one of the U.S. Army's distinguished surgeons, opened its doors. This modern hospital, initially consisting of 41 buildings with 403 beds, was a significant addition to Fort Bliss.<sup>36</sup>

Not only were the facilities being improved at Fort Bliss, the post itself was expanding physically. This process began in 1919, but it was not until 1925 that Congress appropriated \$366,000 that enabled the Army to purchase an additional 1,059 acres. The following year 3,520 acres (Castner Range) were added to the post boundaries.<sup>37</sup>

Fort Bliss continued to expand even in the midst of the Great Depression. In 1930 Congress passed, and Hoover signed, a House resolution that designated \$281,305.70 to purchase more land for Fort Bliss. During testimony before the House Military Affairs Committee, Moseley explained that Fort Bliss "is important because of the Mexican situation and the border situation." He added that El Paso "is a most important railroad center." In debate on the House floor Congressman Thomas L. Blanton, a Democrat from Texas, declared, "A large cavalry force at Fort Bliss [is] the only thing that puts respect into the hearts of revolutionary Mexicans and the Mexican outlaws."<sup>38</sup>

The debate also focused on the relative importance of the cavalry. Critics asserted that the day of the horse cavalry had passed, with tanks, trucks, and airplanes replacing that traditional combat arm. Thus, they implicitly suggested Fort Bliss did not need to be expanded. Congressman J. Mayhew Wainwright, a member of the House Military Affairs Committee, however, declared the committee had decided, "so far as the defense of the border and military needs of that border was concerned, that the time has by no means arrived when we could dispense with cavalry." He further explained, "The number of cavalry now available on the border is little enough in view of the tremendous lines of that border that they have to cover."<sup>39</sup>

Defending the value of cavalry, Moseley had testified earlier that "in that section of the country it would be utterly impossible and foolish to abandon the cavalry because there are times and there are places where the motors cannot go and where you would have to have cavalry." Moseley recounted one example, "We had some maneuvers down there and the motors did well, but, unfortunately, one of those Texas rains came up and where it had been perfectly dry before there stood a lake for a number of days and we were stuck in the mud."<sup>40</sup> Congress passed the resolution.

As part of the fort's expansion, quarters to house noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and their families were constructed. As early as 1924, commanders at Fort Bliss were arguing their case for additional

construction for their NCOs, pointing out that some 60 NCOs and their families were living in "temporary frame shacks." As a result of the housing shortage, a board of officers, called the Gaujot Board for its president, Lieutenant Colonel J.E. Gaujot, was convened in 1926. The board gave a high priority to building additional NCO housing, noting that some \$50,000 was spent per year at Fort Bliss for off-post housing because quarters were not available on post. The board pointed out that permanent NCO housing would "terminate this continuous expense."<sup>41</sup>

As a result of the Gaujot Board report and subsequent action by Congress, which appropriated funds (\$258,475) for NCO housing at Fort Bliss, construction of 50 sets of NCO quarters began in 1929. By the spring of 1930 the first set of quarters had been completed, with an additional 20 completed later in the year.<sup>42</sup>

Completion of the NCO quarters during 1929-1930 did not end the need for additional NCO housing. Even in 1932, in the depths of the Depression, \$45,000 was appropriated to build seven more quarters. The following year, with the passage of the New Deal's National Industrial Recovery Act, some \$84,947 was utilized to build 12 more NCO buildings.<sup>43</sup> Finally, in 1939, a fourth set of NCO housing, consisting of 15 buildings, was completed, satisfying Fort Bliss's need for NCO housing. This construction added significantly to the post's livability for its senior enlisted men, made the Fort more attractive, and helped ensure that the post would not be closed in the future.<sup>44</sup>

Much of the impetus for construction projects, such as NCO quarters at Fort Bliss, came from the deliberate policy of the New Deal to create jobs during the Depression. Furthermore, with the passage of legislation creating the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Bliss became responsible for establishing and operating CCC camps in both Arizona and New Mexico. At one point some 62,500 men were employed at these camps throughout the two states.<sup>45</sup>

During the Depression some organizational changes took place within the 1st Cavalry Division. In 1932 the 82nd Field Artillery was enlarged into a regiment, while the 12th Cavalry, previously based at Fort Ringgold (Rio Grande City) and Fort Brown (Brownsville), was moved to Fort Bliss. The 12th Cavalry replaced the 1st Cavalry, which had been transferred from Fort Bliss to be mechanized.<sup>46</sup> Mechanization posed an increasing threat to the horse cavalry. At Fort Bliss the onset of mechanization had begun on November 8, 1928, when eight medium armored cars, three light armored cars (LaSalle and Franklin models), two motorcycles, and two trucks arrived. These vehicles and their personnel, designated as the 1st Armored Car Troop, were assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division and were based at the post.<sup>47</sup>

The presence of armored cars presumably convinced post officers that the cavalry would have to adapt in order to survive. One effort in this direction was the 1st Cavalry Division's first-time use of horse trailers to transport horses from the fort to the Big Bend in 1933.<sup>48</sup>

By the mid-1930s even the most diehard cavalrymen at Fort Bliss could not have been overly optimistic about the cavalry's future. But the 1st Cavalry Division was determined not to go out of existence with a whimper. From 1937 to 1940 Fort Bliss cavalrymen carried out extensive annual maneuvers in southwest Texas.<sup>49</sup>

The German invasion of Poland, beginning on September 1, 1939, however, demonstrated that horse cavalry constituted a military anachronism. The crack Polish cavalry regiments made gallant but disastrous mounted charges against the advancing German armored Panzer formations.<sup>50</sup> The slaughter of the Polish cavalry did not escape the attention of the War Department in Washington.

The 1st Cavalry Division's last stand occurred between April and May of 1940, during the first phase of the so-called Louisiana Maneuvers, and between August and December of 1941 during the second phase of those exercises. The division performed creditably but to no avail;<sup>51</sup> the horse cavalry already was doomed.

The 1940 declaration of a national emergency, the callup of the National Guard, and the initiation of a national draft had a profound impact on Fort Bliss. The post entered a period of transition. Although still the home of the 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Bliss now had a new mission—to train 20,000 troops assigned to anti-aircraft units. Further, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor resulted in Fort Bliss becoming a basic training facility.<sup>52</sup>

The 1st Cavalry Division continued to perform its mission of patrolling the Mexican border for the first few months after the United States entered World War II.<sup>53</sup> However, after Mexico declared war on the Axis in May 1942, there no longer was a sound military reason for maintaining an obsolete cavalry division on the border. To utilize the well-trained regulars who composed the division, the Army decided to convert them into infantry. In February 1943 the 1st Cavalry Division was ordered to turn in its horses and to prepare to depart from Fort Bliss. The former cavalymen left the post in June to distinguish themselves in the Pacific Theater of Operations.<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusion

The quarter century between the end of World War I and 1943 indeed was the twilight of the cavalry. Fort Bliss countered trends within the U.S. Army during this period, expanding substantially during the interwar years. Until the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, Fort Bliss was a relatively small fort on the border. However, as thousands of troops, particularly cavalry, were moved to the post during the course of the revolution, there was substantial expansion of fort facilities. Beginning in 1919 a construction program added a permanent airfield and a new base hospital, and the post boundaries were enlarged greatly.

Fort Bliss thus remained a major installation as the United States entered World War II. But the mission of the post changed dramatically. No longer was border defense the paramount concern, hence the dismounting and departure of the 1st Cavalry Division in 1943. From the early 1940s on, Fort Bliss primarily would be a training facility. All that remained of the horse cavalry was a glorious tradition.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Steffen, *The Horse Soldier*, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>3</sup>John K. Herr and Edward S. Wallace, *The Story of the U.S. Cavalry, 1775-1942*, Boston Little, Brown, 1953, p. 244.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, Steffen, *The Horse Soldier*, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup>Steffen, *The Horse Soldier*, pp. 75, 76.

<sup>7</sup>Herr and Wallace, *The Story of the U.S. Cavalry*, pp. 250-252.

<sup>8</sup>PR/FB, July 31, 1919, RG 407; also Personnel Report, Detachment, Quartermaster Corps, August, 1919; also Motor Transport Corps Return, Command No. 30, Fort Bliss, September, 1919; both found in Fort Bliss, Post Returns, RG 407, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>9</sup>PR/FB, October 30, 1919, RG 407.

<sup>10</sup>PR/FB, December 31, 1919, RG 407.

<sup>11</sup>Baker to chairman, Committee on Military Affairs, House of Representatives, RG 165, Army War College, General Correspondence, No. 7514-19.

<sup>12</sup>PR/FB, February 1920, RG 407.

<sup>13</sup>PR/Base Hospital, Fort Bliss, January 31, 1920, RG 407.

<sup>14</sup>Remount Depot, Detachment Quartermaster Corps, Fort Bliss, January 15, 1920, RG 407.

<sup>15</sup>Semi-Monthly Personnel Report, Detachment Quartermaster Corps, Fort Bliss, February 15, 1920, RG 407.

<sup>16</sup>Special Ordnance Detachment Strength Return, 2nd and 3rd Provisional Ordnance Detachments, August 6, 1920, Fort Bliss, RG 407.

<sup>17</sup>PR/FB, August 1920, quoting General Orders No. 45, RG 407. The administrative confusion caused by the separation between Fort Bliss and other units stationed around the post in early 1920 even caused confusion in the adjutant general's office in Washington. Hay, the El Paso district commander replying to a query from the AG's office responded, "Fort Bliss proper consists of the 8th Cavalry [garrison troops] and the Post Supply Office, and the commanding officer of the 8th Cavalry is the post commander. He submits monthly post return (*sic*) for Fort Bliss. However, several organizations, including troops of the 7th Cavalry, 82nd Field Artillery, motor transport organizations, ordnance organizations, etc., are stationed in territory

adjacent to Fort Bliss proper and the territory so occupied by these organizations is designated as Camp Fort Bliss in order to distinguish same from Fort Bliss." Hay to AG, April 19, 1920, RG 407.



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