

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

In compliance with a resolution of the Senate, in relation to the strength and expense of the squadron to be employed on the coast of Africa.

DECEMBER 30, 1842.

Read, referred to the Committee on Naval Affairs, and motion to print referred to the Committee on Printing.

JANUARY 3, 1843.

Ordered to be printed.

To the Senate of the United States :

In reply to the resolution of the Senate of the 14th December, I transmit, herewith, the accompanying letter from the Secretary of the Navy, and a statement, thereto appended, from the Bureau of Equipment and Construction.

JOHN TYLER.

WASHINGTON, *December 30, 1842.*

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
December 29, 1842.

SIR: On the subject of the resolution of the Senate of the 14th December, which you have referred to me, I have the honor to report :

The annexed paper (marked A) shows—

1. "The value of the vessels which will be required for the African squadron, under the late British treaty."
2. "The probable annual cost of repairing said vessels."
3. "The number of men and officers which the equipment of the squadron will require."
4. "The probable annual expense of said squadron, under all the heads of expenditure incident to the service."
5. "The calibre of the guns to be used," and the "other arms."
6. "The whole number of guns which it is expected to have afloat in the United States navy during the year 1843, and the estimated expense of the naval establishment for the year, including all expenses incident to keeping up a navy."

It is to be remarked, that the obligation assumed by the Government, to keep a squadron on the coast of Africa, does not create any absolute necessity for an increase to that amount of our present naval force. Vessels already in the navy will be selected for that service. Of course "the annual

cost of repairing said vessels" is but a part of the usual and necessary expenditure for the naval service. It is not proposed to *increase* the navy, with the particular view of supplying this squadron; nor would it be proposed to *reduce* the navy, if this squadron were not necessary. It is merely a part of the customary and *useful employment of our vessels of war.*

It is also to be remarked, that the calibre of the guns, and the general armament and equipment of the vessels, can not, in the nature of things, be the same at all times. The vessels will be changed as the convenience of the service may require, and will not consist, at all times, of the same number in each class. The estimate presented, is for sloops-of-war, brigs, and schooners, which, it is supposed, will be most proper for that service.

In regard to the "probable annual loss of men from deaths, disabilities, and other casualties, on board said squadron," it is impossible to give a definite answer. The coast of Africa is considered very unhealthy, and probably not without reason, if we are to judge from the mortality which has often prevailed there among European visitors. This mortality, however, is easily accounted for. Our trading vessels often ascend the rivers, and necessarily pass much of their time in ports. Their crews are exposed to hard labor under the burning heats of the day, and to the noxious exhalations from swamps and morasses at night. Hence, they suffer with what is usually called the African or coast fever, and hence the frightful stories which render that climate so formidable in the eyes of strangers. At a time when the character of the climate was not understood, the crews of vessels-of-war, neglecting or not knowing the precautions which it requires, suffered scarcely less than those of trading vessels. At this day, however, the African coast has lost its terrors, so far as cruising vessels are concerned. The climate is found to be unhealthy to Europeans, *only on shore and in the night-time.* There is, on most parts of the coast, good and safe anchorage for ships-of-war, within a quarter of a mile of the shore, so that there is no necessity that the crews should expose themselves in unhealthy ports. It is found that by keeping at this distance from the land at night, and by protecting the crews, by awnings, from the intense heat of noon, and the floods of rain which fall at particular seasons, they enjoy, as good health as in any other part of the world. The *Vandalia*, recently returned from that coast, lost but two men in a cruise of seven months; one of these died of consumption, the other of chronic dysentery.

The few simple precautions necessary to preserve the health of our crews are now well understood, and easily taken. With an ordinary degree of prudence, it may be safely asserted that the coast of Africa will be found *less* unhealthy to our cruisers than the East India seas, and not *more* unhealthy than many ports of the West Indies, the Gulf of Mexico, and South America.

To the question, "whether it is intended to make the squadron consist of more than eighty guns," I can only say that no such intention is entertained at this time. In the estimates which were presented with my annual report, provision was contemplated for no larger force than this for service on the western coast of Africa. Independent of any treaty stipulation, I should have considered it necessary to keep at least eighty guns distributed among a number of small vessels on that coast. Our commerce is carried on through the whole range of seaboard country, from Goree to the Bight of Biaffrar, a distance of about two thousand miles. Our commerce along this coast may now be estimated at one million of dollars, employing from four to five thou-

sand tons of shipping. If this trade were stationary, it could not be considered fairly entitled to the protection of so large a squadron as one of eighty guns; only in the *quantities* of the commodities hitherto entering into it, but it is not stationary. On the contrary, it is rapidly on the increase, not in new commodities presenting themselves from time to time. We now send to this part of Africa, tobacco, cotton fabrics of various kinds, brown drills, rum, whiskey, muskets, gunpowder, beef, pork, flour, bread, bacon, lard, butter, cheese, salted and dried fish, soap, candles, iron and tin ware, and other articles of American production and manufacture; and we import, in return, palm oil, dyewoods, ivory, gold dust, hides and skins, guns, pepper, and similar articles. The trade in palm oil is of recent date, and is so rapidly increasing in value and extent, as to claim an important place in our import trade. The cultivation of coffee, also, is rapidly extending itself, and from the specimens already sent to our country, the African coffee bids fair to rival the best which is now imported. The information which I have received from the most intelligent men, well acquainted with the African coast, fully authorizes the belief, not only that our commerce with that country is becoming more and more worthy of attention from year to year, but that it holds out at this time greater inducements to commercial enterprise than any other part of the world. The statistical tables furnished by the Treasury Department afford but an imperfect view of it. A successful voyage to the African coast can scarcely be completed in less than twelve or fifteen months. The articles carried out are of comparatively small value, but the various exchanges which are made in the course of a long voyage among different tribes generally yields a profit of from fifty to one hundred per cent. The *returns* are not always in the commodities of the country, subject to entry at our custom-houses. A very large proportion of them—not less, probably, than one third—is received in gold, and in bills on London and the United States. Hence, our statistical tables do not show its full value. It is not, however, so much its present as its prospective value that demands the presence of a naval force. The want of such a force heretofore has enabled the English to exclude us from the most valuable part of the trade of the Gambia and Sierra Leone, and the French to exclude us entirely from the Senegal. The trade in palm oil, already very valuable, and rapidly increasing from year to year, is so conducted that the articles with which it is purchased must be landed and placed in the hands of native chiefs and trade agents. The American trader has nothing to rely on but the integrity and honor of these people; a precarious dependance, which renders the trade of very little value to him. The English, on the contrary, keep a sufficient naval force constantly on the coast, and being thus in a condition to enforce their contracts, the natives do not venture to break them. Hence, this trade is nearly engrossed by the English, and is very valuable to them, although most of the articles necessary to carry it on can be more cheaply furnished by the United States than by them. It is in vain to hope that our commerce with Africa can be maintained even its present condition, and still more vain to hope that it can be greatly extended, unless we offer it the protection which it would derive from the constant presence of our ships of war. Instead of trading with us, the native chiefs think only of plundering our vessels and murdering their crews. The *Mary Carver*, alluded to in my annual report, is not the only case of this sort which has already occurred, nor will it be the last, unless the native chiefs shall be taught to respect and fear us, by proper exhibitions of our naval flag. A less force than that contemplated in our

treaty with England would be wholly unavailing along a coast of two thousand miles in extent.

It is worthy of consideration, that the colony of Liberia, an object of great interest to the American people, would derive great confidence and support from the more frequent presence of our ships of war. But the suppression of the slave-trade, to which this country is so deeply pledged, requires the full force of eighty guns, distributed among not fewer than five vessels. The coast through which that trade is prosecuted, is not less than twelve hundred miles in extent. The persons engaged in it are adroit, watchful, and daring; their vessels are generally constructed to sail rapidly; they are also well armed, and their crews, when they are detected, have no alternative but victory or death. Hence it is not only necessary that they should be closely watched, but that the vessels sent against them should be strong enough to contend with them. Certainly, the squadron now contemplated is as small as this service would require under any circumstances. The treaty stipulation, therefore, does not, in effect, impose any new obligations, nor exact any expenditure which would not otherwise have been necessary and proper. The pledge given to England, is but the pledge given to all nations in the treaty of Ghent, and in the general course of our policy with reference to the slave-trade. We keep our faith to the civilized world, upon this interesting point, by simply preserving our own consistency, and rendering due protection to the interests of our people.

Entertaining these views of the subject, I can not undertake to say that I shall not, at any future time, consider it proper to increase the African squadron. This must depend on considerations, such as control all similar arrangements for other parts of the world. In the administration of this Department, I feel it to be my duty to afford *adequate* protection, so far as the means at my command will admit of it, to American interests wheresoever they may be found, and to vindicate, as far as I can, the good faith of our country in the eyes of other nations. Whatever naval force these objects may require, in Africa or elsewhere, it is my intention to furnish, if I shall be permitted to do so.

A. P. UPSHUR.

To the *PRESIDENT of the United States.*

BUREAU OF CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPMENT,
December 21, 1842.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit a statement containing the information called for by the resolution of the Senate of the 14th instant, so far as the same can be furnished by this Bureau.

I am, with great respect, sir, your obedient servant,

L. WARRINGTON,
For Captain D. CONNOR.

Hon. SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

Statement showing the number, class, and value of vessels composing a squadron, to be employed on the coast of Africa, together with the annual cost of their repairs; the number of officers, seamen, and marines; the probable annual expense of keeping said vessels in commission; also, the number of guns which it is expected to have afloat in the navy for the year 1843; and the entire estimated expense of the naval establishment for the same period: prepared in answer to a resolution of the Senate of the 14th December, 1842.

Number and class of vessels.	Cost of the vessels.	Annual cost of repairs, and wear and tear.	Number of officers.	Number of petty officers, seamen, and marines.	Annual expense under all the heads of expenditures, except wear and tear.	Number of guns for the vessels, estimated for 1843.	Total estimated expense of the naval establishment for the year 1843.
Two sloops of 1st class -	\$257,655	\$20,000	42	366	\$133,986	946	\$6,983,245
Four brigs or schooners -	166,587	20,000	40	260	107,196		
Total - -	424,242	40,000	82	626	241,182	946	6,983,245

N. B. The armament of a sloop of war of the 1st class is as follows, viz: 2 8-inch Paixhan guns, 20 32-lb. medium guns, 80 muskets, 80 pistols, 150 cutlasses, 110 boarding-pikes.

The armament of a brig or schooner is as follows, viz: 10 32-lb. carronades, 40 muskets, 40 pistols, 60 boarding-pikes, 80 cutlasses.