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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

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MAY 5, 1864.—Ordered to be printed, and that 20,000 additional copies be printed for the use of the Senate.

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JOINT RESOLUTION directing the Committee on the Conduct of the War to examine into the recent attack on Fort Pillow.

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War be, and they are hereby, instructed to inquire into the truth of the rumored slaughter of the Union troops, after their surrender, at the recent attack of the rebel forces upon Fort Pillow, Tennessee; as also, whether Fort Pillow could have been sufficiently re-enforced or evacuated, and if so, why it was not done; and that they report the facts to Congress as soon as possible.*

Approved April 21, 1864.

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Mr. WADE submitted the following

REPORT.

*The Joint Committee on the Conduct and Expenditures of the War, to whom was referred the resolution of Congress instructing them to investigate the late massacre at Fort Pillow, designated two members of the committee—Messrs. Wade and Gooch—to proceed forthwith to such places as they might deem necessary, and take testimony. That sub-committee having discharged that duty, returned to this city, and submitted to the joint committee a report, with accompanying papers and testimony. The report was read and adopted by the committee, whose chairman was instructed to submit the same, with the testimony, to the Senate, and ask that the same be printed.*

REPORT OF SUB-COMMITTEE.

Messrs. WADE and GOOCH, the sub-committee appointed by the Joint Committee on the Conduct and Expenditures of the War, with instructions to proceed to such points as they might deem necessary for the purpose of taking testimony in regard to the massacre at Fort Pillow, submitted the following report to the joint committee, together with the accompanying testimony and papers:

In obedience to the instructions of this joint committee adopted on the 18th ultimo, your committee left Washington on the morning of the 19th, taking with them the stenographer of this committee, and proceeded to Cairo and Mound City, Illinois; Columbus, Kentucky; and Fort Pillow and Memphis, Tennessee; at each of which places they proceeded to take testimony.

Although your committee were instructed to inquire only in reference to the attack, capture, and massacre of Fort Pillow, they have deemed it proper to take some testimony in reference to the operations of Forrest and his command immediately preceding and subsequent to that horrible transaction. It will appear, from the testimony thus taken, that the atrocities committed at Fort

Pillow were not the result of passions excited by the heat of conflict, but were the results of a policy deliberately decided upon and unhesitatingly announced. Even if the uncertainty of the fate of those officers and men belonging to colored regiments who have heretofore been taken prisoners by the rebels has failed to convince the authorities of our government of this fact, the testimony herewith submitted must convince even the most skeptical that it is the intention of the rebel authorities not to recognize the officers and men of our colored regiments as entitled to the treatment accorded by all civilized nations to prisoners of war. The declarations of Forrest and his officers, both before and after the capture of Fort Pillow, as testified to by such of our men as have escaped after being taken by him; the threats contained in the various demands for surrender made at Paducah, Columbus, and other places; the renewal of the massacre the morning after the capture of Fort Pillow; the statements made by the rebel officers to the officers of our gunboats who received the few survivors at Fort Pillow—all this proves most conclusively the policy they have determined to adopt.

The first operation of any importance was the attack upon Union city, Tennessee, by a portion of Forrest's command. The attack was made on the 24th of March. The post was occupied by a force of about 500 men under Colonel Hawkins, of the 7th Tennessee Union cavalry. The attacking force was superior in numbers, but was repulsed several times by our forces. For the particulars of the attack, and the circumstances attending the surrender, your committee would refer to the testimony herewith submitted. They would state, however, that it would appear from the testimony that the surrender was opposed by nearly if not quite all the officers of Colonel Hawkins's command. Your committee think that the circumstances connected with the surrender are such that they demand the most searching investigation by the military authorities, as, at the time of the surrender, but one man on our side had been injured.

On the 25th of March, the enemy, under the rebel Generals Forrest, Buford, Harris, and Thompson, estimated at over 6,000 men, made an attack on Paducah, Kentucky, which post was occupied by Colonel S. G. Hicks, 40th Illinois regiment, with 655 men. Our forces retired into Fort Anderson, and there made their stand—assisted by some gunboats belonging to the command of Captain Shirk of the navy—successfully repelling the attacks of the enemy. Failing to make any impression upon our forces, Forrest then demanded an unconditional surrender, closing his communication to Colonel Hicks in these words: "If you surrender you shall be treated as prisoners of war, but if I have to storm your works you may expect no quarter." This demand and threat was met by a refusal on the part of Colonel Hicks to surrender, he stating that he had been placed there by his government to defend that post, and he should do so. The rebels made three other assaults that same day, but were repulsed with heavy loss each time, the rebel General Thompson being killed in the last assault. The enemy retired the next day, having suffered a loss estimated at three hundred killed, and from 1,000 to 1,200 wounded. The loss on our side was 14 killed and 46 wounded.

The operations of the enemy at Paducah were characterized by the same bad faith and treachery that seem to have become the settled policy of Forrest and his command. The flag of truce was taken advantage of there, as elsewhere, to secure desirable positions which the rebels were unable to obtain by fair and honorable means; and also to afford opportunities for plundering private stores as well as government property. At Paducah the rebels were guilty of acts more cowardly, if possible, than any they have practiced elsewhere. When the attack was made the officers of the fort and of the gunboats advised the women and children to go down to the river for the purpose of being taken across out of danger. As they were leaving the town for that purpose, the rebel sharpshooters mingled with them, and, shielded by their presence, advanced and fired upon the gunboats, wounding some of our officers and men.

Our forces could not return the fire without endangering the lives of the women and children. The rebels also placed women in front of their lines as they moved on the fort, or were proceeding to take positions while the flag of truce was at the fort, in order to compel our men to withhold their fire, out of regard for the lives of the women who were made use of in this most cowardly manner. For more full details of the attack, and the treacherous and cowardly practices of the rebels there, your committee refer to the testimony herewith submitted.

On the 13th of April, the day after the capture of Fort Pillow, the rebel General Buford appeared before Columbus, Kentucky, and demanded its unconditional surrender. He coupled with that demand a threat that if the place was not surrendered, and he should be compelled to attack it, "no quarter whatever should be shown to the negro troops." To this Colonel Lawrence, in command of the post, replied, that "surrender was out of the question," as he had been placed there by his government to hold and defend the place, and should do so. No attack was made, but the enemy retired, having taken advantage of the flag of truce to seize some horses of Union citizens which had been brought in there for security.

It was at Fort Pillow, however, that the brutality and cruelty of the rebels were most fearfully exhibited. The garrison there, according to the last returns received at headquarters, amounted to 19 officers and 538 enlisted men, of whom 262 were colored troops, comprising one battalion of the 6th United States heavy artillery, (formerly called the 1st Alabama artillery,) of colored troops, under command of Major L. F. Booth; one section of the 2d United States light artillery, colored, and one battalion of the 13th Tennessee cavalry, white, commanded by Major W. F. Bradford. Major Booth was the ranking officer, and was in command of the post.

On Tuesday, the 12th of April, (the anniversary of the attack on Fort Sumter, in April, 1861,) the pickets of the garrison were driven in just before sunrise, that being the first intimation our forces there had of any intention on the part of the enemy to attack that place. Fighting soon became general, and about 9 o'clock Major Booth was killed. Major Bradford succeeded to the command, and withdrew all the forces within the fort. They had previously occupied some intrenchments at some distance from the fort, and further from the river.

This fort was situated on a high bluff, which descended precipitately to the river's edge, the side of the bluff on the river side being covered with trees, bushes, and fallen timber. Extending back from the river, on either side of the fort, was a ravine or hollow—the one below the fort containing several private stores and some dwellings, constituting what was called the town. At the mouth of that ravine, and on the river bank, were some government buildings containing commissary and quartermaster's stores. The ravine above the fort was known as Cold Creek ravine, the sides being covered with trees and bushes. To the right, or below and a little to the front of the fort, was a level piece of ground, not quite so elevated as the fort itself, on which had been erected some log huts or shanties, which were occupied by the white troops, and also used for hospital and other purposes. Within the fort tents had been erected, with board floors, for the use of the colored troops. There were six pieces of artillery in the fort, consisting of two 6-pounders, two 12-pounder howitzers, and two 10-pounder Parrots.

The rebels continued their attack, but, up to two or three o'clock in the afternoon, they had not gained any decisive success. Our troops, both white and black, fought most bravely, and were in good spirits. The gunboat No. 7, (New Era,) Captain Marshall, took part in the conflict, shelling the enemy as opportunity offered. Signals had been agreed upon by which the officers in the fort could indicate where the guns of the boat could be most effective. There being but one gunboat there, no permanent impression appears to have been produced upon the enemy; for as they were shelled out of one ravine, they would make

their appearance in the other. They would thus appear and retire as the gunboat moved from one point to the other. About one o'clock the fire on both sides slackened somewhat, and the gunboat moved out in the river, to cool and clean its guns, having fired 282 rounds of shell, shrapnell, and canister, which nearly exhausted its supply of ammunition.

The rebels having thus far failed in their attack, now resorted to their customary use of flags of truce. The first flag of truce conveyed a demand from Forrest for the unconditional surrender of the fort. To this Major Bradford replied, asking to be allowed one hour to consult with his officers and the officers of the gunboat. In a short time a second flag of truce appeared, with a communication from Forrest, that he would allow Major Bradford twenty minutes in which to move his troops out of the fort, and if it was not done within that time an assault would be ordered. To this Major Bradford returned the reply that he would not surrender.

During the time these flags of truce were flying, the rebels were moving down the ravine and taking positions from which the more readily to charge upon the fort. Parties of them were also engaged in plundering the government buildings of commissary and quartermaster's stores, in full view of the gunboat. Captain Marshall states that he refrained from firing upon the rebels, although they were thus violating the flag of truce, for fear that, should they finally succeed in capturing the fort, they would justify any atrocities they might commit by saying that they were in retaliation for his firing while the flag of truce was flying. He says, however, that when he saw the rebels coming down the ravine above the fort, and taking positions there, he got under way and stood for the fort, determined to use what little ammunition he had left in shelling them out of the ravine; but he did not get up within effective range before the final assault was made.

Immediately after the second flag of truce retired, the rebels made a rush from the positions they had so treacherously gained and obtained possession of the fort, raising the cry of "No quarter!" But little opportunity was allowed for resistance. Our troops, black and white, threw down their arms, and sought to escape by running down the steep bluff near the fort, and secreting themselves behind trees and logs, in the bushes, and under the brush—some even jumping into the river, leaving only their heads above the water, as they crouched down under the bank.

Then followed a scene of cruelty and murder without a parallel in civilized warfare, which needed but the tomahawk and scalping-knife to exceed the worst atrocities ever committed by savages. The rebels commenced an indiscriminate slaughter, sparing neither age nor sex, white or black, soldier or civilian. The officers and men seemed to vie with each other in the devilish work; men, women, and even children, wherever found, were deliberately shot down, beaten, and hacked with sabres; some of the children not more than ten years old were forced to stand up and face their murderers while being shot; the sick and the wounded were butchered without mercy, the rebels even entering the hospital building and dragging them out to be shot, or killing them as they lay there unable to offer the least resistance. All over the hillside the work of murder was going on; numbers of our men were collected together in lines or groups and deliberately shot; some were shot while in the river, while others on the bank were shot and their bodies kicked into the water, many of them still living but unable to make any exertions to save themselves from drowning. Some of the rebels stood on the top of the hill or a short distance down its side, and called to our soldiers to come up to them, and as they approached, shot them down in cold blood; if their guns or pistols missed fire, forcing them to stand there until they were again prepared to fire. All around were heard cries of "No quarter!" "No quarter!" "Kill the damned niggers; shoot them down!" All who asked for mercy were answered by the

most cruel taunts and sneers. Some were spared for a time, only to be murdered under circumstances of greater cruelty. No cruelty which the most fiendish malignity could devise was omitted by these murderers. One white soldier who was wounded in one leg so as to be unable to walk, was made to stand up while his tormentors shot him; others who were wounded and unable to stand were held up and again shot. One negro who had been ordered by a rebel officer to hold his horse, was killed by him when he remounted; another, a mere child, whom an officer had taken up behind him on his horse, was seen by Chalmers, who at once ordered the officer to put him down and shoot him, which was done. The huts and tents in which many of the wounded had sought shelter were set on fire, both that night and the next morning, while the wounded were still in them—those only escaping who were able to get themselves out, or who could prevail on others less injured than themselves to help them out; and even some of those thus seeking to escape the flames were met by those ruffians and brutally shot down, or had their brains beaten out. One man was deliberately fastened down to the floor of a tent, face upwards, by means of nails driven through his clothing and into the boards under him, so that he could not possibly escape, and then the tent set on fire; another was nailed to the side of a building outside of the fort, and then the building set on fire and burned. The charred remains of five or six bodies were afterwards found, all but one so much disfigured and consumed by the flames that they could not be identified, and the identification of that one is not absolutely certain, although there can hardly be a doubt that it was the body of Lieutenant Akerstrom, quartermaster of the 13th Tennessee cavalry, and a native Tennessean; several witnesses who saw the remains, and who were personally acquainted with him while living, have testified that it is their firm belief that it was his body that was thus treated.

These deeds of murder and cruelty ceased when night came on, only to be renewed the next morning, when the demons carefully sought among the dead lying about in all directions for any of the wounded yet alive, and those they found were deliberately shot. Scores of the dead and wounded were found there the day after the massacre by the men from some of our gunboats who were permitted to go on shore and collect the wounded and bury the dead. The rebels themselves had made a pretence of burying a great many of their victims, but they had merely thrown them, without the least regard to care or decency, into the trenches and ditches about the fort, or the little hollows and ravines on the hill-side, covering them but partially with earth. Portions of heads and faces, hands and feet, were found protruding through the earth in every direction. The testimony also establishes the fact that the rebels buried some of the living with the dead, a few of whom succeeded afterwards in digging themselves out, or were dug out by others, one of whom your committee found in Mound City hospital, and there examined. And even when your committee visited the spot, two weeks afterwards, although parties of men had been sent on shore from time to time to bury the bodies unburied and rebury the others, and were even then engaged in the same work, we found the evidences of this murder and cruelty still most painfully apparent; we saw bodies still unburied (at some distance from the fort) of some sick men who had been met fleeing from the hospital and beaten down and brutally murdered, and their bodies left where they had fallen. We could still see the faces, hands, and feet of men, white and black, protruding out of the ground, whose graves had not been reached by those engaged in re-interring the victims of the massacre; and although a great deal of rain had fallen within the preceding two weeks, the ground, more especially on the side and at the foot of the bluff where the most of the murders had been committed, was still discolored by the blood of our brave but unfortunate men, and the logs and trees showed but too plainly the evidences of the atrocities perpetrated there.

Many other instances of equally atrocious cruelty might be enumerated, but

your committee feel compelled to refrain from giving here more of the heart-sickening details, and refer to the statements contained in the voluminous testimony herewith submitted. Those statements were obtained by them from eye-witnesses and sufferers; many of them, as they were examined by your committee, were lying upon beds of pain and suffering, some so feeble that their lips could with difficulty frame the words by which they endeavored to convey some idea of the cruelties which had been inflicted on them, and which they had seen inflicted on others.

How many of our troops thus fell victims to the malignity and barbarity of Forrest and his followers cannot yet be definitely ascertained. Two officers belonging to the garrison were absent at the time of the capture and massacre. Of the remaining officers but two are known to be living, and they are wounded and now in the hospital at Mound City. One of them, Captain Potter, may even now be dead, as the surgeons, when your committee were there, expressed no hope of his recovery. Of the men, from 300 to 400 are known to have been killed at Fort Pillow, of whom, at least, 300 were murdered in cold blood after the post was in possession of the rebels, and our men had thrown down their arms and ceased to offer resistance. Of the survivors, except the wounded in the hospital at Mound City, and the few who succeeded in making their escape unhurt, nothing definite is known; and it is to be feared that many have been murdered after being taken away from the fort.

In reference to the fate of Major Bradford, who was in command of the fort when it was captured, and who had up to that time received no injury, there seems to be no doubt. The general understanding everywhere seemed to be that he had been brutally murdered the day after he was taken prisoner.

There is some discrepancy in the testimony, but your committee do not see how the one who professed to have been an eye-witness of his death could have been mistaken. There may be some uncertainty in regard to his fate.

When your committee arrived at Memphis, Tennessee, they found and examined a man (Mr. McLagan) who had been conscripted by some of Forrest's forces, but who, with other conscripts, had succeeded in making his escape. He testifies that while two companies of rebel troops, with Major Bradford and many other prisoners, were on their march from Brownsville to Jackson, Tennessee, Major Bradford was taken by five rebels—one an officer—led about fifty yards from the line of march, and deliberately murdered in view of all there assembled. He fell—killed instantly by three musket balls, even while asking that his life might be spared, as he had fought them manfully, and was deserving of a better fate. The motive for the murder of Major Bradford seems to have been the simple fact that, although a native of the south, he remained loyal to his government. The testimony herewith submitted contains many statements made by the rebels that they did not intend to treat "home-made Yankees," as they termed loyal southerners, any better than negro troops.

There is one circumstance connected with the events herein narrated which your committee cannot permit to pass unnoticed. The testimony herewith submitted discloses this most astounding and shameful fact: On the morning of the day succeeding the capture of Fort Pillow, the gunboat Silver Cloud, (No. 28,) the transport Platte Valley, and the gunboat New Era, (No. 7,) landed at Fort Pillow under flag of truce, for the purpose of receiving the few wounded there and burying the dead. While they were lying there, the rebel General Chalmers and other rebel officers came down to the landing, and some of them went on the boats. Notwithstanding the evidences of rebel atrocity and barbarity with which the ground was covered, there were some of our army officers on board the Platte Valley so lost to every feeling of decency, honor, and self-respect, as to make themselves disgracefully conspicuous in bestowing civilities and attention upon the rebel officers, even while they were boasting of the murders they had there committed. Your committee were unable to ascertain the names of

the officers who have thus inflicted so foul a stain upon the honor of our army. They are assured, however, by the military authorities that every effort will be made to ascertain their names and bring them to the punishment they so richly merit.

In relation to the re-enforcement or evacuation of Fort Pillow, it would appear from the testimony that the troops there stationed were withdrawn on the 25th of January last, in order to accompany the Meridian expedition under General Sherman. General Hurlbut testifies that he never received any instructions to permanently vacate the post, and deeming it important to occupy it, so that the rebels should not interrupt the navigation of the Mississippi by planting artillery there, he sent some troops there about the middle of February, increasing their number afterwards until the garrison amounted to nearly 600 men. He also states that as soon as he learned that the place was attacked, he immediately took measures to send up re-enforcements from Memphis, and they were actually embarking when he received information of the capture of the fort.

Your committee cannot close this report without expressing their obligations to the officers of the army and navy, with whom they were brought in contact, for the assistance they rendered. It is true your committee were furnished by the Secretary of War with the fullest authority to call upon any one in the army for such services as they might require, to enable them to make the investigation devolved upon them by Congress, but they found that no such authority was needed. The army and navy officers at every point they visited evinced a desire to aid the committee in every way in their power; and all expressed the highest satisfaction that Congress had so promptly taken steps to ascertain the facts connected with this fearful and bloody transaction, and the hope that the investigation would lead to prompt and decisive measures on the part of the government. Your committee would mention more particularly the names of General Mason Brayman, military commandant at Cairo; Captain J. H. Odlin, his chief of staff; Captain Alexander M. Pennock, United States navy, fleet captain of Mississippi squadron; Captain James W. Shirk, United States navy, commanding 7th district Mississippi squadron; Surgeon Horace Wardner, in charge of Mound City general hospital; Captain Thomas M. Farrell, United States navy, in command of gunboat Hastings, (furnished by Captain Pennock to convey the committee to Fort Pillow and Memphis;) Captain Thomas Pattison, naval commandant at Memphis; General C. C. Washburne, and the officers of their commands, as among those to whom they are indebted for assistance and attention.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

B. F. WADE.  
D. W. GOOCH.

Adopted by the committee as their report.

B. F. WADE, *Chairman.*