Headquarters, Department of Kansas,

Fort Leavenworth, Feby 28 1864

His Excy

A. Lincoln

Pres't U States

When in 1861 I had penetrated Western Ark Kansas so as to Command the Indian Country on my right flank, you telegraphed me to give such protection to the loyal portion as I could.— Knowing the attitude taken soon after my movement by John Ross and the Pinn Society; I Carefully avoided entering the Indian Country ~~but~~ because I knew my troops were exasperated after some barbarities committed by the Indians at Pea ridge and because I could not remain and protect them for want of Supplies which I soon exhausted in the Country.—

But I have always borne your injunctions in memory, and in subsequent movements of troops through the Indian Country and beyond, favored by every means in my power the wisdom and humanity of your

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prescribed policy. In a recent reconnaissance which I have made to ascertain the positions of fors and the resources of my Command, I have traversed a large portions of the Indian Country and personally inspected the Indian troops and the refugee Camps of Negroes and Indians that are gathered arounds our ~~Camps~~ Commands; and knowing their interests are still prefered upon you I present to your Excellency such crude ideas as seems important to them and my Command. —

The route traversed by me was from Fort Scott to Fort Gibson, down the Arkansas river to Van Buren, back to Fort Scott and from thence West to Humbolt and south to Loperas. I thus traversed and skirted most of the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw Osage and Sac & Fox territories. All the Country abounds in rich prairie lands, well timbered, watered, and gently rolling meadows. Fine Coal and great salt springs abounds. Cattles and hogs run wild, and my troops killed them for our Subsistance and

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the meat was fat and good at this season of a close hard winter. But the Indians have entirely abandoned their widely scattered farms and there is no other food in the country. From the limit of white settlements about 15 miles below Fort Scott to Fort Gibson 150 miles not a human being was found and hardly a track:— and everywhere, except close by our Posts or in and adjoining white settlements; the Indians have deserted their homes

They are therefore mapped as refugees about Fort Scott, Fort Gibson, and in the Sac & Fox nations about 40 miles South of Topeka.

The Indian Department is furnishing bread stuffs to a Considerable extent, but lower on the Arkansas I found them at their meals generally eating only meat.

These refugees have miserable homes made of barks, old tents, and sometimes hides. Many told me they had left comfortable homes and cultivated farms to which they are exceedingly anxious to return

31063 Vegetation is starting and they want to plant hoping

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thereby to procure breads next year And they eagerly
Enquire as to this probable Protections. — Their
rebel foes, partly indians but led by whites; are
on the Red river where three Brigades under Cooper
were reported. Beyond Coopers forces the
rebel army is in Winter quarters. —

The Sac & Fox indians have sold, and with
the refugees about them, desire to go to their new
lands South. The people of Kansas too are very
anxious they should go: but in view of such a
plan which I understand the How the Commissioner
proposes and every body favors, two matters are specially
Presented 1st The necessity of a large depot of Provisions
at or near Fort Smith. As such a depot
will invite rebel raids, it becomes necessary
for me to look to the Locations of such depot

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Fort Leavenworth, ... 1864.

and its defensive arrangement. Either Fort Gibson or Van Buren on the north side of the Arkansas would be safest; as I have written to the War Department

2d The requisite number of troops to defend the Indians and the depot. The Indians are and will be in ~~my~~ this Department, but as the Department orders are construed, the troops are in another Department. —

Just as you advance the Indians and their supplies further South more forces is needed to defend them and your Excellency will perceive the magnitude of the difficulty by noticing the fact that we have only about 2500 very irregular Indian Home Guards, while all the aggregate Indians and Negroes must amount to fifteen or twenty thousand who at least for the coming year want protection

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and will produce very little. —

Keokuk, the head Chief of the Sac and Fox tribes told me his people do not wish to move till the rebels are Conquered; but I suppose if we have a strong force on the Arkansas below or on the Red river; he would be willing to move down onto the Verdigris where the Osages are collected.

In view of all these Circumstances, your Excellency will see the importance of regulating the Indians movement so as to conform to Military power in this Department, and either strengthen the latter or delay the former, for at present there is not adequate force in this Command to insure safety to the whites and the Indians congregated as they are in the safest positions.

I have written Maj Gen C Halleck and the Hon the Secy of War Concerning arms

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fortifications and forces necessary
to defend the people in this Department,
and I hope your Excellency will
feel an interest and exert an influence
in the premises. I will remember,
at the Commencement of this war,
your Excellency went with me
to the War Department and personally
directed supplies of guns to be furnished
as I requested; and I trust your
zeal has not lessened or my
experience diminished my qualifications
to urge the applications of means to
proper military purposes.

Hoping the President

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that in the great army movements which you have to consider, you will indulge me in anxious petitions in favor of your devoted but much neglected friends in this Department. I have heard much of the troubles of Kansas; but my personal observations during the past four weeks have brought to my notice more of the havoc of war, and savage cruelty, and infamous barbarity on the part of rebel foes than human imagination can compass. — I have returned to Head quarters after 800 miles of travel, a wiser but a sadder soldier in your devoted service. —

I have the honor to be Mr President
Your very obt Servt S. R. Curtis
Maj Genl

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Headquarters, Department of Kansas,
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Gen Curtis

His Exc
Abraham Lincoln
President of the United States
Washington
D.C.

Hon Col N. P. Chipman

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