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***THE U.S. ARMY
CAMPAIGNS
OF THE WAR
OF 1812
(ILLUSTRATED
EDITION)***

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The U.S. Army Campaigns of the War of 1812 (Illustrated Edition)

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Introduction

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The War of 1812 is perhaps the United States' least known conflict. Other than Andrew Jackson's 1815 victory at New Orleans and Francis Scott Key's poem "The Star-Spangled Banner" written in 1814 during the British attack on Baltimore, most Americans know little about the country's second major war. Its causes are still debated by historians today. Great Britain's impressment of American sailors, its seizure of American ships on the high seas, and suspected British encouragement of Indian opposition to further American settlement on the western frontier all contributed to America's decision to declare war against Great Britain in June 1812.

None of these factors, however, adequately explain why President James Madison called for a war the country was ill-prepared to wage. Moreover, the war was quite unpopular from the start. Many Federalists—chiefly in the New England states—opposed an armed conflict with Great Britain, continued to trade with the British, and even met in convention to propose secession from the Union. Some members of the president's own Republican Party objected to the war's inevitable costs and questionable objectives, such as the conquest of Canada.

To declare war was one thing, but to prosecute it successfully was a different matter. Much of the story of the War of 1812 is about the unpreparedness of America's Army and Navy at the conflict's outset, and the enormous

difficulties the new nation faced in raising troops, finding competent officers, and supplying its forces. Most of America's military leaders were inexperienced and performed poorly, particularly in the first two years of war. Only gradually did better leaders rise to the top to command the more disciplined and well-trained units that America eventually fielded. But despite costly initial setbacks, by the time the fighting stopped American arms had won key victories at Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, and New Orleans under excellent officers such as Winfield Scott, Jacob Brown, and Andrew Jackson. Although the United States achieved few of its political objectives in the War of 1812, its Regular Army emerged more professional, better led, and fit to take its place as the foundation of America's national defenses.

I encourage all Army leaders and soldiers to read this pamphlet and the others in our series of campaign pamphlets in commemoration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812. We can all profit from greater knowledge about the beginnings of our Army: an Army forged in victory and defeat during what has often been called the second war of American independence.

RICHARD W. STEWART
Chief Historian

Defending a New Nation 1783-1811

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Defending a New Nation 1783-1811

From the closing days of the Revolutionary War in 1783 to the beginning of the War of 1812, the United States Army faced one of its most challenging periods. During this era, American soldiers confronted threats from Great Britain, France, and Spain. On the western frontier, hostile warriors from American Indian nations battled U.S. Army and militia troops north of the Ohio River, as white settlers' insatiable demands for land provoked conflict with Indian communities. The Army suppressed civil unrest, built roads, and conducted explorations, including the transcontinental expedition led by Army officers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. The post-revolutionary years also saw the Army in a process of frequent reorganization, from the disbanding of the Continental Army at the end of the Revolutionary War to the establishment of Maj. Gen. Anthony Wayne's Legion of the United States, followed by President Thomas Jefferson's efforts at reforming the Army into a Republican institution. These structural changes increased during James Madison's first presidential term, as Americans prepared for war with Great Britain over maritime rights, free trade, and territorial expansion in a conflict that became known as the War of 1812.

Building on Washington's legacy, 1783-1790

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By early 1783, active campaigning by the British and Continental armies had ceased, and besides a small garrison of redcoats in New York, few enemy soldiers remained on U.S. soil. The American army, consisting of about seven thousand to eight thousand men, camped along the Hudson River at New Windsor, near Newburgh, New York, where General George Washington had moved them following the surrender of British troops at Yorktown, Virginia. Ill-clad, underfed, and rarely paid, the soldiers' morale was unsurprisingly low. Word of a forthcoming peace settlement negotiated at Paris had reached the United States months before American and British representatives signed the treaty on 3 September 1783. With the anticipated withdrawal of enemy forces from America, the Confederation Congress on 24 September 1783 ordered Washington to discharge the Continental Army, keeping only those troops he deemed necessary for the good of the service. After the British evacuated New York City in November, Washington disbanded the Army except for one infantry regiment and a battalion of artillery, six hundred men in total, to guard military property at West Point, New York, and Fort Pitt, Pennsylvania.

Although most American leaders recognized the necessity for a postwar army, few agreed on the size and type of force best suited to the needs and ideals of the young nation. With the end of hostilities and the British

evacuation of New York in November 1783, the key military question facing the United States was the kind of military establishment it required. Congress recognized that some troops were needed to counter Indian threats and to occupy America's western forts. Adequate armed forces would also be needed to guard arsenals and other important sites.

Some congressmen, notably Elbridge T. Gerry of Massachusetts, objected to the creation of any standing army. He and others warned of the dangers and costs of a permanent army and preferred to rely on state militias to safeguard American independence and liberty. Professional armies and despotism went hand in hand, they argued, as ambitious or corrupt rulers could use an army to amass power and oppress the people. Other critics pointed to the several battlefield successes of militia forces during the Revolutionary War to demonstrate that American liberties could be defended by citizens in arms. More moderate political leaders argued instead that external threats and domestic disorders required a competent, regular military establishment in order to survive. Among them was General Washington, who advised in 1783 that "a few [regular] Troops, under certain circumstances, are not only safe, but indisputably necessary."

As this debate was unfolding, three events occurred that gave credence to the arguments of those who opposed a standing army. The first occurred at the encampment around Newburgh, where many Continental officers were disgruntled. Having gone without pay for years, they feared that if Congress did not pay them or provide for their annuities they would face a bleak future of poverty. They

had agreed in 1781 to a pension of half-pay for life, but as Congress grappled with a shortage of funds, the prospect for receiving any money seemed remote. In December 1782, a delegation of these discontented officers delivered a petition to Congress in Philadelphia, demanding overdue pay and “a one-time lump-sum payment.” The officers warned of a general mutiny against civilian authority if a satisfactory resolution to the financial issues did not emerge. Congress considered the petition in January 1783, but failed to act. In March, a group of officers called for a meeting of the Army’s leaders, to consider threatening Congress with force to redress their grievances. Upon learning of the intrigues, Washington confronted the officers and urged them to remain loyal. Two weeks later, the arrival of news that a peace treaty had been negotiated in Paris reduced some of the tension, but the disturbing incident vexed many Confederation delegates in Philadelphia.

Shortly after Washington defused the crisis at Newburgh, numerous Continental officers took a more subtle tack by forming the Society of the Cincinnati. Founded by General Henry Knox and other senior Army leaders in May 1783, the society was a fraternal organization, intended to preserve the bonds of shared wartime service and sacrifice, and to preserve the memory of the struggle for independence. The officer corps’ desperate financial predicament and its pronounced feeling of resentment against Congress also formed a compelling impetus for the society’s creation. Citing the sacrifices they had made while leading the Army to victory, the society’s members advocated financial relief and postwar pensions for Continental officers. Some

government officials came to regard the new organization as a dangerous political threat to the nascent American government. Moreover, the organization allowed for inclusion into the society of the eldest male children of officers who served during the Revolutionary War, with membership to pass to the “eldest male posterity.” This provision appeared to many Americans as a conspiratorial threat to Republican principals for which the struggle for independence had been waged.

A final potential danger arose in June 1783, when several hundred unpaid Pennsylvania troops rioted in Philadelphia. They surrounded and threatened legislators meeting at the Pennsylvania state house, demanding to be paid. Although unharmed, the anxious delegates relocated to Princeton, New Jersey, without taking action to mollify the rebellious troops. The experience provided the delegates with a firsthand insight of the potential dangers of an irate army.

While these developments alarmed the Confederation government, Congress proceeded to study the matter of a future military establishment. In June 1783, a congressional committee led by Alexander Hamilton of New York and advised by George Washington recommended reliance on a trained force of professional soldiers to provide for the common defense, with the state militias playing an auxiliary role. By this time, however, sentiments within the Confederation government seemed to be leaning away from maintaining a permanent army, and the recent soldier riots in Pennsylvania did little to recommend it. Congress rejected the plan as being too expensive and complex. When

Congress moved to Annapolis, Maryland, in November, efforts to provide for military defense ceased altogether.

On 2 June 1784, Congress directed General Knox, the senior officer in the Army, to disband the last remaining infantry regiment and artillery battalion, except for eighty soldiers to guard military stores at West Point and Fort Pitt. No officers above the rank of captain were to be retained in the service. Nevertheless, congressmen recognized that some type of military establishment had to be fashioned to counter Britain's continued presence in North America and Indian threats against settlements in the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes area. Spain also appeared as a potential enemy in the South. Consequently, on 3 June Congress passed a measure to recruit eight new companies of infantry and two companies of artillery, seven hundred men in total, for one year's service. Congress asked Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey to provide the new troops from their militias. This force was not a national establishment of regulars dreaded by many congressmen, nor was it solely a militia or state formation. Josiah Harmar of Pennsylvania, a Revolutionary War veteran, received the appointment to command the hybrid force, known as the Regiment of Infantry, and later, as the First American Regiment, with the rank of lieutenant colonel commandant. He reported to both Congress and the state of Pennsylvania, and when Henry Knox resigned from the service later that year, Harmar became the senior officer in the Army. Recruitment for the unit was slow, so that by the early fall, only New Jersey and Pennsylvania had provided their quota of men. Harmar stationed these troops in northern New York and in the lands

west of the Appalachian Mountains. Each of the small detachments was led by a junior officer, many of whom were Revolutionary War veterans.

In April 1785, when the enlistments of the First American Regiment's soldiers were about to expire, Congress called for seven hundred recruits for three-year terms of enlistment. These new men were not to be detached from state militias but enlisted directly into national service, so that the regiment would be strictly a regular formation of the Confederation government. Congress directed that the regiment "show the flag" to the British still occupying forts in western territory ceded by Britain to America in the Treaty of Paris, and to protect settlers and American peace negotiators from Indian attacks on the northwestern frontiers. The troops were also expected to drive off white squatters from land in Indian country, destroying their homes and farms in the process, as some of this territory was intended by the Confederation government to reward Revolutionary veterans and to raise much-needed revenue through land sales. Despite these objectives, the regiment never effectively carried out its mission against Indians, squatters, or British troops, primarily due to its small size.



Josiah Harmar,
by Raphaelle Peale
(U.S. Department of State)

While frontier duties occupied the First American Regiment in the years following its formation, a disquieting event in the eastern United States came to have a profound effect on the American military establishment. Just as the Newburgh intrigues and the Philadelphia soldiers' riots alerted congressmen to the dangers of a standing army, a New England revolt led many American leaders to conclude that a permanent force of regulars was required to guard against violent political unrest. The uprising, known as Shays' Rebellion, had a significant impact on the men who

would meet in Philadelphia in 1787 to draft a new system of government, including its military institutions.

Shays' Rebellion was an armed uprising of Massachusetts back-country farmers over debts, burdensome taxes, a lack of circulating currency, and oppressive court practices during the economic depression that followed the end of the Revolutionary War. Many of the rebels had served in the Revolution, including one of their leaders, Daniel Shays. They disrupted courts, assaulted lawyers and state officials, and threatened the national arsenal at Springfield. Local militia companies called up to disperse the rioters were often sympathetic to their fellow farmers' cause, and could not be relied upon to quell the disturbances. These chaotic events alarmed conservatives in all the states and frustrated those who looked for a swift, effective military response. Lacking troops, in late October 1786, Congress asked New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maryland, and Virginia to raise a force of 1,340 men for three years to put down the Massachusetts rebels, although the announced purpose for the mobilization was to send more troops to the frontier to thwart Indian hostilities. Only two companies of artillery were raised, but before any of these men could reach Massachusetts, local volunteers successfully defended the Springfield Arsenal from an attack in February 1787. The rebellion ended in defeat, but it demonstrated that the Confederation government could not act effectively to put down internal unrest.

While Massachusetts dispersed the rebels in early 1787, recruiting for the new congressional force was slow, so that by April, only 550 men had enlisted. With the rebellion

quelled, Congress directed that the troops be dismissed, in part due to the expense of keeping them in the field. Only the soldiers in two artillery companies were retained to guard the Springfield Arsenal and West Point. In October 1787, Congress renewed the authorization for seven hundred men for the First American Regiment that had initially been made in 1785, and organized the troops into an infantry regiment of eight companies and an artillery battalion of four companies. These troops were intended to protect settlers and public land surveyors on the frontier from Indian attacks. At the same time, national and state political leaders began to reconsider not only the kind of military establishment needed, but also whether the government itself needed to be restructured. This movement eventually led to the meeting of the Constitutional Convention in May 1787.

Just as the Confederation government had struggled in the Revolution's wake with differing views about a standing army, so too did the delegates to the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia. On this issue, the representatives were polarized along philosophical lines. Many who favored a new governmental structure—known as Federalists—argued in favor of a permanent force, denying that standing armies represented a threat to the public. They argued that an established regular force was needed to defend the country against a foreign invasion since militia troops could not be prepared in time to counter such a threat. They also pointed to the need to protect “against the ravages and depredations of the Indians.”

On the other side of the debate, traditional Whig fears of standing armies, their costs, and the potential threat they posed to liberty were arrayed. To radical Whigs (later called Anti-Federalists), it was axiomatic that standing armies were dangerous to the liberties of the people, typical of monarchies and not republics. Patrick Henry of Virginia warned that “Congress by the power of taxation, by that of raising an army, and by their control of the militia, have sword in one hand and the purse in the other. Shall we be safe without either?” Others noted that the power given the new national government over the army was at the expense of the states, which only retained their prerogative in appointing militia officers. Congress, in the proposed Constitution, would have the power to raise an army even in peacetime, and could also control the state militia organizations. Although such concerns were heard frequently during the debates, the convention delegates did not seriously consider rejecting provisions for creating and maintaining a standing army within the framework of the new constitution. The Constitution was ratified on 21 June 1788 and replaced the Articles of Confederation.

Within the new constitutional system, the central government was responsible for raising and maintaining the Army, not the states, and the power to tax (previously denied to the Confederation government) meant that Congress could now do so. The Constitution gave the president the role of commander in chief, with the right to take command of the military in the field. Congress reserved for itself the power to declare war and to appropriate money for military spending. Army appropriations were limited to

two years, so that the maintenance of a standing army could be reviewed—and controlled, if need be—by a watchful Congress. Congress could call out the states' militias to execute federal laws, to suppress insurrections, and to defend the country against foreign invasions. The national legislature also had the power to organize, arm, and discipline the states' militias, although as a compromise to federalism, the states retained the right to appoint officers and train the militias.

The initial army under the Constitution hardly seemed to pose a serious military threat to liberty. Congress authorized a strength of 840 men, but only 672 were actually in service, in addition to artillery detachments at Springfield and West Point. Harmar, a brigadier general since 1787, retained his command. Not until 1790 would Congress authorize an expansion, adding four infantry companies to the Army's authorized strength, which brought it to 1,273 officers and men, with soldiers to serve three-year enlistments. By early the next year, the force actually numbered eight hundred men, most of whom garrisoned several newly constructed western forts in the Ohio River Valley.

Meanwhile, in August 1789, Congress created the Department of War under the executive branch to oversee the administration of the nascent force. The secretary at war (soon changed to secretary of war) also assumed responsibility for supervising federal Indian affairs. Former Continental Army general Henry Knox led the new department, with only a handful of clerks and one messenger to assist with his routine duties. The

administration of the Army included a civilian-controlled military supply system under the secretary of war, responsible for keeping and distributing supplies, while a board of the Treasury Department looked after procurement of military necessities, including uniforms and food. In 1794, Congress created the Office of the Purveyor of Public Supplies within the Treasury Department and a Superintendent of Military Stores, part of the War Department. Most of the procurement process was handled through a contract system for reasons of economy and efficiency, but this method failed to live up to congressional expectations or meet the soldiers' needs. For its weapons, the War Department maintained several armories and magazines for storing and repairing arms, many of which were left over from the Revolutionary War. Although Congress established national armories at Springfield, Massachusetts, and Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in the mid-1790s to produce and repair weapons, the Army relied on foreign suppliers for most of its armaments.

Most of the recruits who enlisted during the years following the American Revolution served on the frontier, in log forts built in the Ohio country. These were typically isolated posts, where the soldiers' duties were dull and laborious. Due to the logistical difficulties the Army and its contractors faced, and the challenges inherent in organizing and running a new organization, soldiers were often unpaid, poorly supplied, and ill-fed. Discipline was rigid and punishments severe, especially in light of the soldiers' frequent abuse of alcohol. In these conditions, morale was low and desertion rampant. Soldiers had a poor reputation

among the general populace of America, particularly in places where posts were located. Many recruits were of foreign birth, primarily Irish, since native-born Americans were not usually drawn to the military's low pay. Given the costs associated with a permanent army and the small size of the force Congress authorized, frontier military operations also involved militia troops. It was with this mixed force of regulars and militiamen that the new government would confront the military challenges of the early 1790s.

Securing The Frontier

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During the decades that followed the American independence, the new federal Army found itself confronted with an array of diverse challenges. Warfare with Native Americans in the trans-Appalachian West was the Army's first major concern, and it severely tested the new nation's ability to wage war successfully.

Challenges in the Northwest Territory

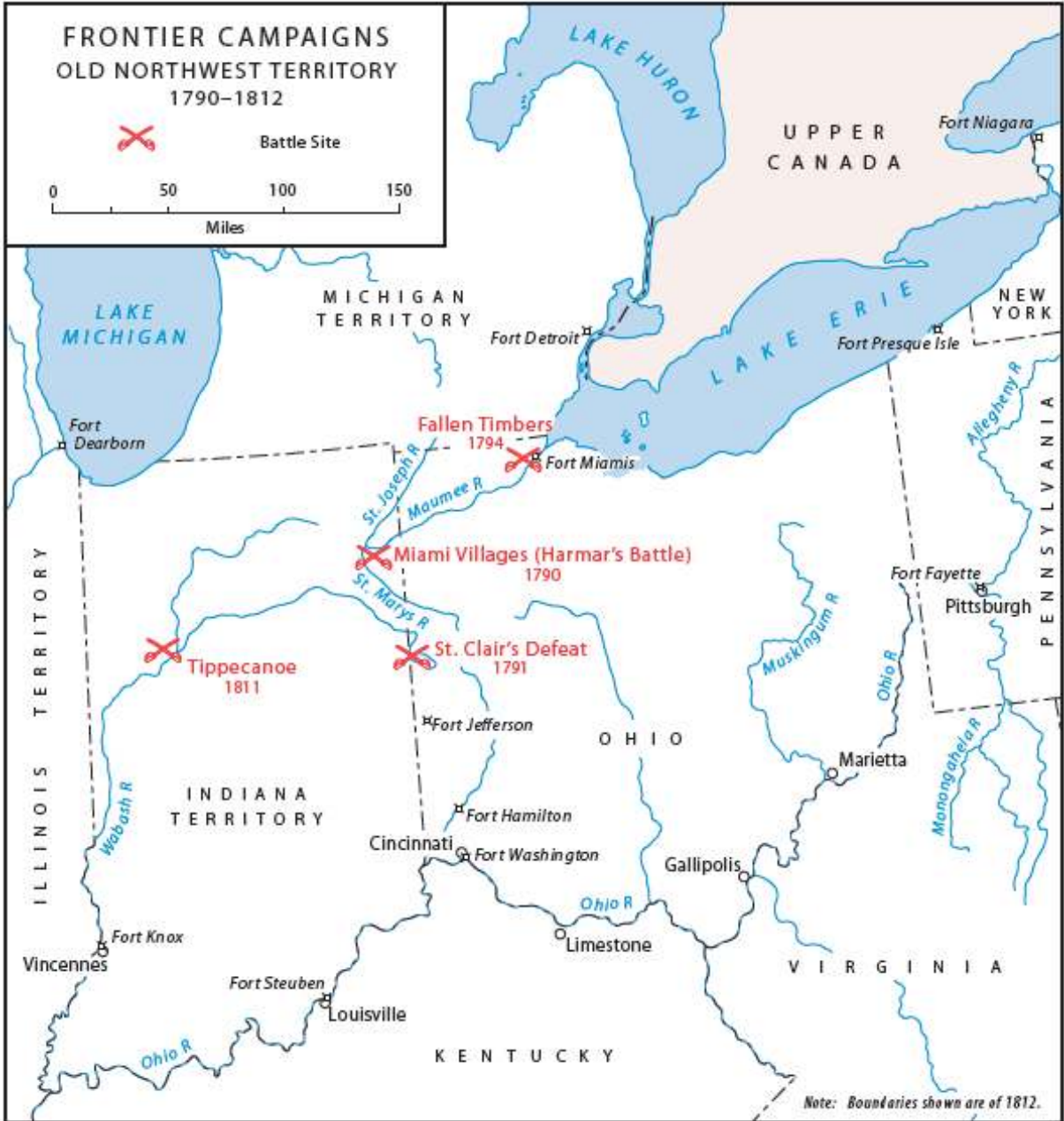
The lure of fertile lands, opportunities for land speculation, and the lucrative Indian trade drew thousands of Americans across the Appalachian Mountains after the American Revolution. Congress also had a financial interest in developing the West, both to reduce its wartime debt through land sales and to reward military veterans for their past service. Establishing a buffer between the eastern states and the British and Spanish in the west also had the benefit of securing the territory for Congress. By the mid-1780s, a flood of settlers had entered the area north of the Ohio River to claim property, including many squatters who cared little for government titles or the Indians they displaced.

The Indian tribes looked on this encroachment with alarm. Although they had sided with Great Britain during the American Revolution, the Indians of the Ohio country were largely undefeated by the time of the Treaty of Paris in 1783. They naturally did not believe that they needed to surrender their territory to the new American nation—a

sentiment the British openly encouraged. Not only did the British refuse to evacuate posts in land they had ceded to America in the Treaty of Paris, most notably at Detroit, Michilimackinac, and Niagara, but they supplied Indian warriors with weapons, ammunition, and supplies in order, Washington wrote, to “inflame the Indian mind, with a view to keep it at variance with these States, for the purpose of retarding our settlements to the Westward.” The situation was ripe for conflict.

In response to settler demands and numerous reports of growing violence on the frontier, American authorities looked to the Army. Initially, the American government sought to restrain white settlers from occupying Indian lands, both to avoid hostilities and to permit the territory to be properly surveyed prior to sale. Secretary Knox prohibited the Army’s senior officer, Lt. Col. Josiah Harmar, from engaging in offensive operations with his small command, which he moved in late 1784 to Fort McIntosh, Pennsylvania, on the north bank of the Ohio River. The Army thus tried to maintain peace along the frontier during the 1780s, although many military officers had little sympathy for the Indians. In addition to defending government surveyors as they marked off land in the Ohio wilderness, the Army evicted hundreds of squatters from land they illegally occupied. Beginning in 1785, Harmar sent troops to remove unlawful settlers, tear down their cabins, and destroy their crops. These draconian measures, executed in hopes of avoiding a war between whites and Indians, did little to endear the Army to western settlers. In order to increase the Army’s military presence in the northwest and

to keep an eye on Indians and settlers alike, soldiers built several log forts along the Ohio River and its tributaries in the mid-1780s. Ironically, the construction of these forts encouraged rather than deterred white settlement since the garrisons offered at least some protection from Indian attacks (*Map 1*).



Map 1

Desirous of avoiding a full-scale war with the Indians in the northwest for which the Army was ill-prepared, the United States attempted to negotiate with native tribes in the 1780s. Government authorities reckoned that it was more advantageous and cheaper to purchase land from the Indians than to fight them. Despite these aims, most of these diplomatic efforts were unsuccessful. Attempts at peace were doomed by the American position that the Indians had forfeited the lands of the Ohio country by their alliance with the British during the Revolutionary War. Negotiations went nowhere with the Indians, primarily the Miami, Shawnee, and Kickapoo, who refused to sell or trade away their lands and declined to recognize the legitimacy of prior treaties with the Americans. They insisted that the boundary between Indian and white territory was the Ohio River, despite treaties signed at Fort McIntosh in 1785 and Fort Finney in 1786, where Indians unauthorized to negotiate for all tribes relinquished tens of thousands of acres north of the river.

By 1786, backcountry warfare had broken out in the northwest between aggressive settlers and enraged Indians, especially those on the Wabash, Miami, and Maumee Rivers. There was much unity among the Indians of the Ohio country due to shared opposition to the encroaching Americans. Attacks on settlers and isolated detachments of American soldiers increased. In July 1788, for instance, Indians attacked a detachment of thirty troops near the mouth of the Wabash in a skirmish that left eight soldiers dead and ten wounded. That same month, a small party of soldiers preparing a treaty council site at the Falls of the

Muskingum suffered an unexpected attack by a Chippewa war party and withdrew to Fort Harmar after the sharp skirmish. After significant violence between Indians and Kentucky militia forces, particularly in the Wabash River area around Fort Knox, a small contingent of regulars led by Maj. John F. Hamtramck occupied the old French settlement at Vincennes in 1787, to keep the peace and to establish civil authority in the region. There were, however, too few soldiers in Hamtramck's force to do more than watch the escalating violence. Much of the bloodshed stemmed from periodic raids north of the Ohio River launched by mounted Kentucky militiamen, who took matters into their own hands rather than rely on the small national Army.

In 1787, Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance to establish a workable process for governing these unruly territories. By August 1789, the first president of the United States of America under the Constitution, George Washington, determined that frontier violence required the "immediate intervention of the General Government," and in September Congress empowered him to call on state militia forces to help protect the frontier. Peace efforts during 1789 and 1790 by Arthur St. Clair, the first governor of the Northwest Territory, were unsuccessful, which led the former Revolutionary War general to advise Washington that a punitive expedition against the Indians would likely be needed. Under additional pressure from Harmar (since 1787, a brevet brigadier general), frightened settlers, land speculators, and militia authorities in Kentucky and Ohio, Secretary of War Knox ordered a foray against the hostile

Indians on the upper Wabash in June 1790, to “extirpate, utterly, if possible,” the Indian “banditti.”

Harmar’s Expedition, 1790

Governor St. Clair and General Harmar met in July 1790 at Fort Washington on the Ohio River (present site of Cincinnati) to plan the campaign. This post was garrisoned by seventy-five soldiers, soon to be joined by almost three hundred men of the First American Regiment. St. Clair and Harmar decided on a twopronged advance against the Indian villages on the upper reaches of the Wabash and Maumee Rivers, the location of several hostile tribes unwilling to negotiate with American representatives. Harmar was to lead a march to Kekionga on the headwaters of the Maumee River, where over one thousand warriors were supposed to have gathered. Kekionga was a major fur trading post, where British agents supplied Indians with muskets and ammunition. Harmar intended to destroy the enemy’s villages, corn stocks, and Indian traders’ supplies, to reduce the Indians to poverty, and prevent their continued war-making capabilities.

While General Harmar would lead the main thrust of the Army’s campaign against Kekionga, a second force led by Major Hamtramck would provide a diversion farther west with a simultaneous march against the Indian towns via the Wabash River. Hamtramck, a former Continental Army officer, set out northward on 30 September from Fort Knox at Vincennes with about three hundred troops, of which only sixty were regulars, including several artillerymen and a brass 3-pounder cannon. The remainder of his command

consisted of Kentucky militiamen of poor quality and low morale. Upon reaching Vermillion eleven days later, Hamtramck found the Indian village there evacuated. On 14 October, Hamtramck returned to Vincennes due to the unwillingness of the disgruntled militia to proceed farther and to supply deficiencies. While Hamtramck's diversion may have drawn hundreds of enemy warriors away from Harmar's larger operation to the east, the Fort Knox soldiers accomplished little else during their brief foray and returned to their post on 26 October.



Fort Washington
(Library of Congress)

Meanwhile, Harmar organized the main thrust of the campaign from Fort Washington, from which he intended to march directly northward to reach the Maumee towns. Given the paucity of trained soldiers, Congress authorized calling militia and volunteers to increase Harmar's force. In the

end, the 37-year-old general was able to gather approximately three hundred regulars and one thousand militiamen. The army also brought along two 6-pounder guns.

At Fort Washington and during the campaign, the Army struggled with the two primary challenges that characterized all frontier operations during the era: logistical difficulties and undisciplined soldiery. Due to the vast distances from eastern supply sources and problems with military contractors, Harmar's forces were poorly fed, supplied, and equipped. The Army had difficulty procuring required munitions too, especially musket cartridges for the troops. Much of what did reach the posts on the Ohio River was of poor quality, or had been spoiled or damaged during water transportation to the frontier. A congressional report of 1792 noted "fatal mismanagements and neglects" in supplying Harmar's command, "particularly as to tents, knapsacks, camp kettles, cartridge boxes, packsaddles, etc., all of which were deficient in quantity and bad in quality." While supplies and provisions trickled into Fort Washington during the summer, militiamen began to arrive in September. About eight hundred men came from Kentucky, with an additional three hundred from Pennsylvania. Most of these troops were inadequately armed, and many had little or no experience with firearms or frontier campaigning. A number of these recruits were too old or infirm for the rigors of war, and some were young boys or paid substitutes with little desire to fight. Harmar despaired at the untested troops with which he had to conduct the campaign, but he had no time to train them before the army set off.

The militia, led by Col. John Hardin of Kentucky, began the northward advance on 26 September 1790. As they proceeded, they cleared a military road through the wilderness for the artillery and wagons. The regulars left Fort Washington on 30 September, accompanied by the wagon trains, and by 3 October they joined the militia at Turkey Creek (near modern Xenia, Ohio). The combined force numbered 320 regulars and 1,133 militiamen. As the army moved toward the Maumee towns, scouts ranged on the flanks and in the van of the column to guard against surprise, while militia units protected the rear. At night when the army camped, the troops cautiously formed a protective square for defense, with artillery, wagons, packhorses, cattle, and baggage positioned in the center. Initially there was little sign of enemy Indians, but by 10 October when the army reached the Big Miami River, scouts sensed that the column was being observed. On 13 October, they approached within two days' march of the Miami towns and captured an Indian warrior who informed the Americans that the Indians intended to burn their towns and avoid the approaching American army. With this intelligence, Harmar ordered a mounted column to strike the Indians before they could escape. This detachment included six hundred Kentucky militiamen under Colonel Hardin, supported by fifty regulars led by Capt. David Ziegler. These horsemen set out the next morning, many of the men excited to finally strike a blow at the elusive enemy. The rest of the army followed in their path.

The intelligence garnered from the captured Indian was correct. About six hundred warriors had gathered at

Kekionga under the leadership of chiefs Little Turtle of the Miamis and Blue Jacket of the Shawnees. After deciding they could not defend their villages against the approaching Americans, the warriors set fire to the towns on 15 October, buried their supplies of corn nearby, and removed as much of their trade goods as possible. That same afternoon, Hardin's mounted detachment rode into Kekionga without opposition. The men plundered what structures had not been burned by the Indians, as well as those in other nearby villages. The main army arrived on 17 October and spent three days destroying cabins, crops, and stores. During this destruction, the militia became unruly, as they searched around the vicinity for additional caches of hidden Indian goods and provisions to loot. Harmar considered pushing on to other villages along the Wabash, but on the night of 17 October, Indians drove off dozens of the army's packhorses, which placed Harmar's command in danger of being short of supplies.

On 18 October, Harmar sent out a reconnaissance of three hundred militiamen and federal troops, "to make some discovery of the enemy" nearby. This detachment, commanded by Lt. Col. James Trotter of the Kentucky militia, planned to scout for three days, but soon after leaving camp, the militia soldiers killed two Indians, and later that day a few of Trotter's men encountered a force of fifty mounted warriors. With his militia unnerved by these encounters, Trotter returned to the main army camp with his detachment that day. His early return and his failure to secure much information about the Indians' whereabouts angered and annoyed both Hardin and Harmar. Hardin