

During the year 1874 the northern portion of the division, the Department of Dakota, enjoyed comparative quiet. In that department were located the majority of the hostile bands of Sioux, some of them on reservations along the Missouri River, some on Milk River farther north, near the British boundary, and others roaming over the valleys of the Big Horn, Yellowstone, and Powder Rivers, occasionally coming into Red Cloud's or Spotted Tail's Agencies to draw rations and other supplies. Occasionally they made a dash about Fort Lincoln to steal stock, or a raid into Montana, with attacks once in a while upon weak bands of friendly Indians such as the Mandans and Rees. This condition of affairs was possibly owing to the limited extent of exposed frontier in the Department of Dakota, which compelled the Indians there to seek for plunder and scalps in the Department of the Platte, south of them, where the frontier settlements were much more progressed and exposed.

In order to better control the Indians making these raids, for two or three years it was recommended to establish a large military post in the country known as the Black Hills, so that by holding an interior point in the heart of the Indian country, the troops could threaten the villages and stock of the Indian if the latter raided the settlements. With the consent of the President, the honorable Secretary of the Interior, the latter having exclusive control of Indian affairs, the division commander was authorized to make a military reconnaissance into the country about which only dreamy stories had hitherto been told. Fort Taramie, Wyo., about one hundred miles from the Black Hills, was first selected as the point from which to fit out the expedition, but after two visits in person to that post the division commander found the temper of the Indians in that vicinity such that an expedition from there would probably