

The Navy's Cross— William Walker

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NO single individual has given the United States Navy a more difficult time in regard to both operations and to reputations than did William Walker, the foremost filibuster of the 1850s. Yet, the difficulty was not due to Walker alone but, in large measure, stemmed from the lack of direction and support at the highest administrative levels—the Secretary of the Navy and the Executive.

Walker first came to the Navy's attention in the fall of 1853 in the form of a rumor that an expedition was forming at San Francisco for the invasion of the Hawaiian Islands. Commodore Bladen Dulany, commanding the Pacific Squadron, ordered U.S.S. *Portsmouth* Commander Thomas Dornin, to sail immediately for Hawaii and to:

...communicate with the U.S. Commissioner at that place, and should you find any expedition proceeding against the Government of the Hawaiian Group you will use all lawful means to arrest its progress and prevent its landing....¹

The next thing Dulany knew, he received a letter from the Collector of San Francisco informing him that an expedition was about to sail for Guaymas, Mexico, and requesting the Commodore to send a vessel to the Gulf of California to seize the expedition. But a follow-up letter from the Collector announced his seizing of the brig *Arrow*. Unfortunately, Walker, with 45 of his followers, escaped on 8 October in the brig *Caroline*, owned by the son of the American Consul at Guaymas. Dulany knew nothing of the changed situation until he arrived at Panama.²

With no American warship in the Gulf, Walker was able to move up the coast of Lower California, finally setting up the Republic of Lower California at Ensenada. The presence of a British warship at Guaymas had prevented him from using that port as his headquarters. Walker was eventually defeated, not by the American or the British Navy, but by the arrival of a Mexican revenue cutter which effectively sealed him off from his seaborne supplies and reinforcements. The U.S.S. *Portsmouth*, back from Hawaii, appeared off Ensenada in early 1854, and Commander

Dornin let Walker know he could expect nothing more from San Francisco where the authorities were showing great zeal in enforcing the law. Walker held on for a few more months before making his way back to American territory.³ He was not through.

Early in the spring of 1855, Captain Theodorus Bailey, commanding U.S.S. *St. Mary's*, was preparing to leave San Francisco for a cruise through the South Pacific, when he received orders from the Commandant of the Mare Island Navy Yard to sail immediately for San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua, to answer an urgent request for help from our Minister, John Wheeler. Bailey reached San Juan on 20 May only to find that the matter had been settled. He was invited to the capital, Granada, by Wheeler and there had an interview with President Estrada who surprised Bailey by appealing to him to take his vessel up the coast to Realjo "...to prevent the disembarkation of certain Filibusters said to have left California under Colonel Walker...." Because it was not out of his way, the Captain agreed to sail up the coast to a point just north of Realjo and promised, if he fell in with Walker, that he would prevent his landing. Bailey kept his promise but saw nothing before turning his vessel westward toward Hawaii. Walker's luck had held. Delayed a few days at San Francisco by money problems, he narrowly avoided meeting Bailey. He was loose again.⁴

On 19 October 1855, Commodore William Mervine, then commanding the Pacific Squadron, ordered U.S.S. *Massachusetts* Commander Samuel Swartout, then at Acapulco, to steam to San Juan to investigate:

...the unwarrantable outrage committed on our Flag by Walker in searching the steamer *Sierra Nevada* and other lawless acts at San Juan del Sur in forcibly imposing pecuniary contributions upon the American Consul and American passengers through Nicaragua....⁵

Unknown to Mervine, worse was happening.

The American Consul at San Juan was summoned on 17 October to meet with Minister Wheeler at Virgin Bay. Arriving

there, the Consul found that Wheeler had already left on the lake steamer *La Virgin* with Walker who was about to attack Granada. Upon its return to Virgin Bay, the steamer embarked the passengers going to the Atlantic side and started across Lake Nicaragua. Among the passengers was a group of Walker's men under Parker H. French and a Colonel Fry. At Fort San Carlos, on the other side of the lake, this group made an unsuccessful attempt to capture the fort. *La Virgin* steamed back to Virgin Bay, disembarked its real passengers, then proceeded on to Granada with Walker's party. Back at Fort San Carlos, when the river steamer *San Carlos* came up river from Greytown with the passengers for California, the fort opened fire, killing a woman and her child. But this was not the end of the tragedy. On the evening of the 19th, a party of soldiers suddenly appeared at Virgin Bay and attacked the passengers, killing and wounding many. The unfortunate passengers had been mistaken for Walker's men. Fearing that a general massacre would ensue, an urgent message was sent to Swartout at Acapulco to come immediately. The *Massachusetts* finally arrived on 7 November, after Walker had defeated his opponents and was in control.⁶

Although affairs were then quiet, the United States government was still interested in finding out what had brought on the October tragedies. Commodore Hiram Paulding, commanding the Home Squadron, was ordered to Greytown to investigate. Reaching there on 21 December, Paulding sent Surgeon Thomas Dillard to Granada to obtain the needed information from Minister Wheeler. From the evidence gathered, Paulding concluded that both the employees of the Accessory Transit Company and the aborted attack at Fort San Carlos were responsible for the attack on the *San Carlos* and the massacre at Virgin Bay. The main blame was placed on Walker and his officers who had used the steamers to support their campaign.

...The complicity of the Transit Company at this time with Walker's movements and prospective fortunes is without a doubt in my mind. A complicity has been forced by the circumstances in which it has been placed; and I regard the future exist-

tence of the Company as entirely dependent upon Walker's ability to sustain himself. . . . This is well known to those who direct the affairs of the Company and they will furnish Walker with men or money or both, to the extent that may be needed. . . .⁷

At that time, Walker was in power and his strength was constantly increasing and, if nothing happened to cut him off from his reinforcements, by June 1856 he would have sufficient American personnel to resist any combination brought against him. Paulding left Nicaragua convinced that Walker was there to stay. Actually, he was much more concerned over the situation of Greytown because of the disputed sovereignty there what with the British-supported Mosquito Coast Indian claim, the semi-independent government existing there dominated by the local foreigners, the American interest in the Accessory Transit Company at Punta Arenas across from the town, and the Nicaraguan claim. Paulding tried to arrange for frequent visits to Greytown by American warships to protect American interests, but the scarcity of vessels undermined his effort.⁸

THE end of May 1856 witnessed another problem for Paulding growing out of Walker's activities. The master of the American steamer *Orizaba* complained that the British had illegally interfered with the landing of his passengers (Walker reinforcements) at Greytown and had insulted the American flag. Paulding, using the steamer U.S.S. *Susquehanna*, hurried from Key West to Greytown only to find that it was a tempest in a tea cup, involving a property struggle between the old Transit Company, supporting Walker, and the new Transit Company, controlled by Vanderbilt. The British almost had been caught in the middle of the argument.⁹

The British had gotten involved in the affair because of their suspicions of American activity in the Isthmian area. The British government was especially fearful of Walker's activities in Nicaragua, believing that the American government was secretly behind him or else it would have stopped his reinforcements from leaving the States so openly. An effort was made to get the American Commercial Agent at Greytown, B. Squire Cottrell, to prevent the debarkation of Walker's men at Greytown, but Cottrell had refused his cooperation unless there were specific complaints against the vessels or the passengers. In late July 1856, a British squadron of 10 vessels arrived at Greytown after a voyage direct from England. It was to remain there as a reminder to Walker (and to the United States) of British power until his collapse.¹⁰

Walker sailed smoothly along throughout most of 1856. True, the other Central American countries had banded together

against him, but their initial efforts had been ineffective. That June, Walker reached the peak of his success, being elected President of Nicaragua and being recognized as the legitimate government by the United States.¹¹

But within a few months, his empire began to crumble. Costa Rican troops pushed into Nicaragua, even briefly occupying San Juan. On 23 November, the Costa Rican brig *Eleventh of April* appeared off San Juan and was engaged by Walker's schooner *Granada* which, despite the overwhelming superiority of its opponent, destroyed the Costa Rican vessel. This was Walker's last triumph. Shortly afterwards, he was forced to abandon his capital, Granada, but only after leveling it. On the point of collapse, Walker was saved by the indcision of his opponents. *Granada's* victory had enabled him to get a small reinforcement from San Francisco, and he knew that a new group numbering several hundred was on its way to Greytown from New Orleans under Colonel S.A. Lockridge. Walker's future depended upon Lockridge's ability to force open the transit crossing to restore the flow of reinforcements.¹²

Lockridge, however, delayed at Greytown. On the night of 22 December, a force of Costa Ricans swooped down on Punta Arenas and took possession of all the Transit Company's property, including the river steamers, which were seized on the grounds that Walker had used them in his campaigns. Lockridge was now reduced to one battered river steamer to carry his force up the river and maintain his line of supply. He moved up the river in late January but, before going very far, he settled down to await reinforcements, which proved very slow in coming. After dallying for two months, following the loss of his only steamer, Lockridge withdrew to Greytown. Agent Cottrell then had several hundred destitute and potentially dangerous men on his hands. He had hoped to ship them out on the Transit Company's steamer *Tennessee*, but that vessel deliberately put to sea without notice, carrying Lockridge and his officers and leaving the men footloose in Greytown. Fortunately, the British did not want the men at Greytown either and agreed to take them to Aspinwall (Colon) if Scott, the Transit Company Agent, would agree to pay their passage to the United States. No sooner had Lockridge's men been carried out of the harbor than the entire English squadron left Greytown for the Mexican coast. The British believed that Walker was finished.¹³

Commodore Paulding reached Aspinwall just after Lockridge's men had sailed for the States. He was just in time to learn that a new batch of ex-Walker men, former prisoners of Costa Rica, had reached Greytown. The U.S.S. *Cyane* brought them

to Aspinwall, and, when satisfactory arrangements could not be made with the steamship companies, Paulding decided to carry the men to New York in the flagship *Wabash*.¹⁴

On the other side of the Isthmus, at the beginning of 1857, the Pacific Squadron again took an active role in Walker's career. With Walker's fortunes on the wane in late 1856, the State Department advised Secretary of the Navy James Dobbin that a warship would be needed at San Juan. On Dobbin's instructions, Commodore Mervine ordered U.S.S. *St. Mary's* Commander Charles Henry Davis, scheduled to leave on a cruise in search of a guano island, to San Juan:

. . . where the presence of a Man of War is necessary, in consequence of the unsettled state of public affairs. The precarious and straitened condition of the forces under Gen. Walker may induce him to attempt depredations upon American Citizens in that State, which you will prevent and restrain.

In the event of the expulsion of Walker and his forces from Nicaragua by the Allied armies, and of his departure to adjacent territory in Central America for the purpose of hostile and aggressive operations, you will take such further measures with the force under your Command as circumstances shall require for the adequate protection of American Citizens. . . .¹⁵

At San Juan, in mid-February, Davis found that the Allies had brought Walker to bay but seemed incapable of mounting a final assault against him. Walker was in the greatest danger and, yet, really in no danger. It still seemed possible for fate to smile again on him. Davis reported that the situation was hopeless as far as expecting any quick resolution and that he would be able to leave soon for his guano cruise. But it was not to be.¹⁶

First Davis found himself in the middle of a tug-of-war between the belligerents. The Allied Commander, General Xatruch, appealed to Davis to prevent the landing of Walker's reinforcements coming by steamer to San Juan. The General also informed Davis that San Juan was blockaded, although there was no Allied naval force present—indeed, Walker's *Granada* was the only belligerent vessel there. Davis referred Xatruch to President Pierce's statement classifying the Nicaraguan struggle as a civil war, and that ". . . it is eminently the duty of a neutral to furnish no aid to one party which he is not equally willing to furnish to the other. . . ." Although the United States had attempted to prevent armed expeditions from operating from American territory, Davis maintained that this did not mean that he had similar authority within the waters of a

foreign government. Concerning the supposed blockade, Davis answered that he could recognize the fact that the transit route had been cut by Costa Rica, but that he could not accept the validity of the blockade because it was without due notice and was unenforceable.¹⁷

Having rebuffed Xatruch, Davis found that Walker also was trying to entrap him. C.J. Macdonald, an agent of the Accessory Transit Company, requested Davis to protect the Company's property at Virgin Bay and its river steamers (which were in Costa Rica's hands). Davis did ask Xatruch for permission to station some Marines at Virgin Bay to protect the Company's property but was refused with a guarantee that Costa Rica would protect the property. Right after this, Davis made a brief inspection of the area and met Walker who, along with Macdonald, urged him to unite with them in a joint effort to regain the river steamers which were vital to Walker's success. Davis rejected the suggestion as exceeding the scope of his instructions to protect American property, especially in view of Xatruch's guarantee.

THIS first encounter with Walker turned out to be less than a happy one. Prior to Davis' arrival at San Juan, Walker, still mobile, had borrowed two of the boats of an American merchant ship then at San Juan. Despite Walker's assurances that he would return them quickly, he still had not done so and for the vessel to go to sea without her boats would mean loss of insurance coverage. In his meeting with Walker, Davis had mentioned the boats and found Walker only too happy to return the property. But there was a slight problem—Walker only had one of the boats and the Allies had the other. The Allies were quite agreeable to Davis' taking their boat back to San Juan and even gave permission for Walker's boat to be taken through their lines to the harbor. With everything arranged, Davis sent Lt. John Maury to bring the boats to San Juan. Suddenly Walker balked. Through an intermediary, he informed Davis that there had been a misunderstanding about returning the boat—that he was willing to return it as neutral property but only if all such neutral property, meaning the river steamers, were returned by the Allies. Davis' annoyance with the intrigue showed in his terse note in which he reminded Walker that the boat had been loaned as a friendly gesture, a promise freely given to return it, and that all Davis was doing was to provide Walker with an easy way to keep his promise. He won his point, but the incident must have raised a doubt in the Captain's mind about Walker.¹⁸

A month passed and nothing changed. Walker remained at Rivas, reduced in his commissary but little threatened by the unaggressive Allies.

...Deriving my opinion of Walker's capacity to maintain his position not from consideration of his own resources alone; but also from the inefficiency of the enemy, I have no hesitation in saying that if the external aids he has hitherto relied upon do not fail him, he will repel his enemies if they have the boldness to attack him....¹⁹

To Davis, the situation came down to a question of supply. Once again he made preparations to depart on his guano cruise.

But April found Davis still at San Juan because the situation had changed. The arrival of Gen. Jose I. Mora, brother of the Costa Rican President, galvanized the Allies into a determined effort to finish off Walker. To cut Walker off from the sea, the Allies took over San Juan. Consul Priest at San Juan was rather roughly handled by the Allied troops, causing Davis to make a sharp protest. Mora apologized immediately, giving his personal guarantee for the future protection of all American citizens and their property.

With the Allies in San Juan, another problem had been created—what was the status of the *Granada*? Any fighting in the harbor would endanger the lives and property of the American residents. Yet, the *Granada* made no attempt to put to sea because she was Walker's safety-valve. If he was forced to abandon Rivas, he planned to flee to the *Granada* to make his getaway. Davis stepped in to guarantee peace at San Juan. The *Granada* was to make no hostile move against the Allies who, for their part, were not to build any shore batteries which would threaten the *Granada*. Until the end, this arrangement worked well. Only once was the peace threatened when the Allies began constructing a battery covering the anchorage of the *Granada*. Davis protested, asking for its removal. When told that the Allies did not think that this violated the agreement, Davis replied that he would accept their reasoning but that any attempt to use the battery against the *Granada* would leave him no choice but to use his own force to remove the battery. Construction ceased.²⁰

As Walker's position worsened, Davis became more concerned over the safety of the American women and children besieged at Rivas. He wrote to Walker offering to bring off the dependents, and the offer was accepted, subject to their being escorted by an American officer from Rivas to San Juan. Davis then approached Mora seeking a safe conduct for one of his officers to journey to Rivas to bring out the non-combatants. After some delay, on 15 April, Mora answered approving the safe conduct, but he asked that Davis himself should go Rivas not only to bring off the women and children but also to rescue those men whom Walker was keeping for-

cibly in his army. The General was sure that if Davis spoke to Walker's men, they would abandon him.

In reply, Davis reminded Mora that he was a neutral and, as a neutral, he could not entice the soldiers of one belligerent to desert. But he did hope that the time would soon come:

...when by another form of intercession or interposition I may hope to make myself useful to you and my countrymen. I am most desirous of doing so and shall spare no lawful exertion or just and honorable means of service, in the cause of my countrymen and of humanity....²¹

Mora withdrew the condition and Lt. Thomas T. Houston was ordered to escort the dependents from Rivas to San Juan.

Within three days Houston was back with his charges and with the information that Walker's position was hopeless. Davis sent Lt. David P. McCorkle to Rivas to confirm Houston's report. He also wrote to Mora seeking further details regarding the reported facts: the destruction of the river steamer *Scott* on the San Juan River, the Allied opening up of that river, and the withdrawal of Lockridge. Because the information came from Allied sources, Walker's supporters claimed they were mere "military strategems." Davis believed that if one of his officers was allowed to cross the Lake to confirm these facts, there would be a basis for mediation to end the war. Mora, however, saw no value in convincing the Walkerites, nor was he willing to consider making a treaty with a man regarded by his government as a pirate.²²

When McCorkle returned on 29 April with confirmation of Houston's information, Davis decided that the time had come to attempt to end the bloodshed in Nicaragua. The following day, accompanied by Surgeon I. Winthrop Taylor, he set out for the Allied camp. Before leaving he had instructed Lt. Maury that, if Walker was expelled from Nicaragua, the *Granada* would have no legal standing as a belligerent but would be "...under the necessity of procuring by violence the indispensable means of subsistence..." and therefore was not to be permitted to put to sea.²³

After a brief conference with Mora, Davis wrote to Walker that he had come to Rivas:

...for the purpose of preventing if possible any further loss of life on the part of my countrymen.... You must do me the justice to believe that I am not now acting without consideration or without every attainable information concerning your own means and situation, and those of the Allies.... I have the honor to say, with authority, that if you will abandon Rivas, I will answer for your personal safety, and for the lives and safe removal of all

others, under your command, without exception or rank or nation. I propose to take you on board the *St. Mary's* and convey you to Panama. General Mora, by my request, consents on his part to a suspension of hostilities²⁴

Walker rejected the offer as too vague but did ask for a personal interview, which the chagrined Davis refused in a second letter that spelled out in detail the disasters that had overtaken Lockridge. This led Walker to agree to a suspension of hostilities while two of his officers, General Henningsen and Colonel Waters, discussed the surrender proposal with Davis. They were really sent to check again on the reported disasters. It was only after three meetings that Walker admitted that the situation was hopeless and, on the morning of 1 May, the Agreement was signed providing for the removal of Walker's men from Nicaragua at Costa Rica's expense. That afternoon, after transferring his troops to Davis' control, Walker, with his staff, was escorted to San Juan. On the following day, the main body of Walker's men, under Dr. Taylor's direction, marched to Virgin Bay where, on the 3rd, Lt. McCorkle took command. His task was to lead the column to Aspinwall by way of Greytown so that the men could be shipped back to the United States.²⁵

Back at San Juan, Davis persuaded Walker to turn the *Granada* over to him, but only after having given orders for the forcible seizure of the vessel. A few days later, Davis surrendered the vessel to the Allies who had laid claim to it as a Nicaraguan ship.²⁶

ARRIVAL at Panama with his special cargo ended neither Davis' problems nor the Navy's. Walker had to be taken by railroad across the Isthmus to Aspinwall to catch the New York-bound steamer. The news of Walker's presence on board the *St. Mary's* created a sensation. Commodore Mervine, fearing that Walker's appearance at the railroad station would touch off a riot, endangering the California-bound passengers, offered the Governor of Panama to provide guards at the station. The Governor declined the offer. But having no confidence in the Governor's small guard, Mervine decided to take no chance. On the day that Walker was taken to the station, the Marine Guard of the U.S.S. *Independence* was put into the boats, ready to land at the first sign of trouble. By happy coincidence, the Marine Guard of the U.S.S. *Decatur*, having been relieved, was returning to the United States. They were landed at the same time as was Walker, and both groups proceeded separately, but together, to the station where they took seats in the same car. All went well, with Walker crossing in safety. But the Governor lodged an official com-

plaint against Mervine for violating New Granada's sovereignty. Mervine defended himself to the Navy Department, explaining that no insult had been intended nor one given, as no opportunity had been given for an anti-American demonstration.²⁷

But Davis was not yet free of the baneful influence of Walker who complained bitterly, once back in the safety of the United States, that Davis had taken the side of "foreigners" against fellow Americans, which prevented Walker from gaining his deserved triumph. The Navy Department (and later the President) mildly censured Davis for his action in taking and in disposing of the *Granada*, although upholding the manner in which he ended the war. As for the Pacific Squadron, it had seen the last of Walker, although it would still hear much of him. The Home Squadron was not to be so fortunate.²⁸

Shortly after Paulding had left for New York in mid-June with the Walker men from Greytown, McCorkle's group reached Aspinwall. The Lieutenant had a very trying six weeks but had managed to bring 309 survivors to Panama (although originally having started for Greytown). Costa Rica, having paid for their passage to Panama, washed its hands of them despite the Agreement. Mervine had no specific authority to pay their transportation across the Isthmus and back to the United States, but on his own responsibility, he approved the payment of their expenses to Aspinwall. There he found that none of the steamship companies would carry the refugees to the States. Fortunately, U.S.S. *Roanoke* Capt. John B. Montgomery had just arrived and offered to carry the men to New York. For the next few months, the main task of the Home Squadron was to be the care of Walker's destitutes who seemed to appear magically everywhere. It was not until August that the last identifiable group of Walker's men was cleared from Central America.²⁹

Paulding returned to Aspinwall that August to carry through a survey of a possible canal route. Having completed that task, he attempted to organize his Squadron to handle normal duties only to find that several of his vessels were unavailable. The *Fulton* had been ordered to Chiriqui by the Navy Department because, unknown to Paulding, Walker was back.³⁰

Reaching New York in June, he had gone south to New Orleans. By September, it was clear that another attempt against Nicaragua was in the offing. Because of this, *Fulton* Lt. John J. Almy was ordered to proceed to Chiriqui or Bocas del Toro on the coast of Costa Rica to prevent any expeditions aimed at Mexico, Nicaragua, or Costa Rica from using that area. Interestingly, in view of what was to happen, Almy requested specific guidelines from the Secretary of the Navy:

. . . These directions to preserve the neutrality of the country are very plain for the government or officers where they are required to act in the ports of, or in the jurisdiction of the United States; but I must confess that I find myself embarrassed when required to act in a foreign and neutral port

Did he have the right to seize a vessel in a foreign port if he believed it carried filibusterers? Or did he have the right to prevent them from landing in that situation? Because Americans have the right to travel, what should be done if they claim to be passing through?

The answer received hardly clarified things:

. . . You will not seize an American vessel, or bring her into port, or use the force under your command to prevent her landing her passengers upon mere suspicion. You will be careful not to interfere with lawful commerce But where you find that an American vessel is manifestly engaged in carrying on an expedition or enterprise from the territories or jurisdiction of the United States against the territories of Mexico, Nicaragua, or Costa Rica . . . you will use the force under your command to prevent it, and will not permit the men or arms engaged in it, or destined for it to be landed in any port of Mexico or Central America³¹

Taken at face value, it meant that only by chance could the Navy prevent the landing of any expedition that succeeded in leaving the States. Yet, if the government was to be believed, it wanted Walker stopped.

For Almy, the problem was academic, because Walker was not headed for Chiriqui. On 12 November, with the cooperation of the federal officials at Mobile, he put to sea with more than 200 men in the steamer *Fashion*, bound for Greytown. Anchored at that port for the past few months was U.S.S. *Saratoga* Commander Frederick Chatard. The Commander's position was very difficult. He knew that his task was to prevent the landing of any expedition, but he was unsure of his status at Greytown. Early on the afternoon of 24 November, a steamer was sighted running by the mouth of the harbor. Chatard, therefore, was on the alert the next morning when the same steamer was seen coming into the harbor. His suspicions were lulled when he noted only a handful of passengers on deck. The usual inspecting boat was manned to meet the steamer when it anchored, but the *Fashion* steamed quickly by the *Saratoga* straight to the landing dock where Walker's men, who had been carefully hidden below, hurried ashore. Chatard was mortified, but he believed that his instructions prohibited him from interfering with the men now camped ashore in plain sight. He did notify

Walker that any interference with the property of American or British citizens would bring prompt retaliation. Chatard wrote to Paulding officially, informing him of Walker's landing, and he wrote unofficially to the Commodore begging him to come to Greytown to take command. Chatard had heard that more of Walker's force was on its way to Greytown, and he feared that he could not prevent their landing unless the *Wabash* came to cruise outside the harbor.³²

UPON receipt of the bad news, Paulding sailed for Greytown after dashing off a dispatch to the Navy Department that he was going to "...take such measures as may seem best under the circumstances that exist there..." Upon receipt of Paulding's letter, Secretary Toucey, on 18 December, sent instructions to the Commodore to suspend Chatard from command of the *Saratoga* and order him home. The letter went on to repeat almost verbatim the instructions given to Almy. Unfortunately for Paulding, the guidelines reached him only much later—after he had already acted.³³

Reaching Greytown, Paulding conferred with Chatard and then wrote to Walker:

...you and your followers are here in violation of the laws of the United States and greatly to its dishonor; making war upon a people with whom we are at peace...I command you and the people associated here with you to surrender your arms without delay and embark in such vessels as I may provide for that purpose....

On 8 December the surrender demand was served by the landing force of the *Wabash*, covered by the broadside of the *Saratoga*. Walker had no choice but to surrender. Walker's men were loaded onto the *Saratoga* which sailed for Norfolk, while Paulding returned to Aspinwall with Walker as his "guest." From there, under parole, Walker went north again to New York. Meanwhile, the Commodore wrote out his report for the Department, giving his reasons for his actions:

...I could not regard Walker and his followers in any other light than as outlaws who had escaped from the vigilance of the government and left our shores for the purpose of rapine and murder, and I saw no other way to vindicate the law and redeem the honor of our country than by disarming and sending them home.

In doing so I am sensible of the responsibility that I have incurred and

confidently look to the Government for my justification....³⁴

These captives were sent to Aspinwall where they were picked up by Paulding and carried to Key West. Paulding waited a few days at Key West expecting word from Washington, but none came. He did see a copy of the *New York Herald* which contained a copy of Toucey's unreceived letter of 18 December. He must have realized that he would not be supported by the Administration.³⁵

When Walker slipped away that previous November, the Buchanan Administration claimed that it had done its best to prevent his escape and claimed that Walker still would be caught by the Navy, which was positioned to stop him. On 14 December came the report of the landing, followed on the 28th by the news that Paulding had arrested Walker. The *Times* correspondent reported:

...Commodore Paulding I have good reason to believe, in taking the extreme measures he did acted on his personal responsibility.... The Administration at Washington has always professed to be opposed to filibusterism, and the Commodore has merely taken it at its word.... He has shown himself worthy of the name he bears, and has proved that the Navy has at least one man who does not fear to shoulder any responsibility....³⁶

That same day, Secretary of State Lewis Cass was quoted as denouncing Paulding's actions as illegal and unauthorized. It was reported that Paulding was to be brought home for trial. The first few days of the new year saw a moderating of the rumors which now held that Paulding would be let off with a mild censure and no court-martial. Walker helped the storm along by publishing his letter to the President in which he claimed that he had attempted to return to Nicaragua to regain "...all we had lost by Captain Davis' interference..." and now "...the Nicaraguan flag was a second time hauled down on Nicaraguan soil by the orders of the United States Navy...."³⁷

The President sent a special message to Congress on 7 January in which he held that Paulding had made a grave error in arresting Walker on Nicaraguan soil, although the mistake was made from "pure and patriotic motives and in sincere conviction that he was promoting the interests and vindicating the honor of his country..." But only Nicaragua had a right to complain of the action, and Buchanan believed that there was little likelihood that she would

exercise this right.³⁸

The news of Sands' capture of the Walkerites started a new round of controversy with one side denouncing the officers while the other proposed awarding them medals. Paulding arrived home as this storm died down. He had received two notices of recall—the first an abrupt recall indicating that the Administration was taking a hard line, and the second stating that his term of command had expired. He was being let down easy. Paulding desired a clear-cut approval or disapproval of his actions but was unable to get the Administration to give him a direct answer. At the end of the year, however, after really making a semi-scapegoat out of Paulding over the affair, the Administration could claim that the Navy had been given orders to prevent unlawful expeditions from acting against Nicaragua and "...these orders and the successful action of Flag-Officer Paulding in breaking up the expedition...were fully communicated to Congress...."³⁹

The year 1858 passed with new filibustering scares on both sides of the Isthmus—the most serious coming at the turn of the year—and the Commanding Officers of both the Pacific and the Home Squadrons requested clarification from the Navy Department regarding the questions of the interception of an expedition at sea and that of an expedition which reached a foreign port. The fate of Paulding was having a deadening effect.⁴⁰ But the Department's guidelines remained as vague as earlier.

There was another Walker scare in 1859, which made life difficult for the Home Squadron which was put on special alert for some four months. Finally, in 1860, Walker did sail again and reached Honduras before the Navy could react. But Walker's luck had run out, and he was executed by the Hondurans.⁴¹

Walker's career was brief but spectacular. For the Navy, it proved to be an exceptionally difficult time. The conditions that existed—slow communication, sympathetic port officials, smallness of squadrons—made containing Walker a difficult task. But when the political factor was added—the vague guidelines from the Department and the political vacillation in Washington, the problem became impossible. The politician was able to sit on the fence from where he could point with pride and view with alarm. But the naval officer had only one course—to do his duty to the best of his knowledge and ability, and hope for the approval of his government. And, if that was not forthcoming, then all he had was his own consciousness of doing his duty.

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2. *Ibid.*, Dulany to the Secretary of the Navy, 22 Oct. 1853; Dulany to Dornin, 17 Nov. 1853, and 20 Jan. 1854; Microcopy 284, reel 1, Dispatches from United States Consul at Guaymas, 108-126.

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5. Squadron Letters, Pacific, Mervine to Dobbin, 19 Oct. 1855 and 19 Nov. 1855; Mervine to Swartout, 19 Oct. 1855; Dispatches San Juan, Priest to Marcy (Secretary of State), 11 Sept. 1855.

6. Dispatches San Juan, Priest to Marcy, 19 Oct. 1855; 31 Oct. 1855; and 16 Nov. 1855; Carr, 144. Greytown is used consistently to avoid confusion between the two San Juans.

7. Squadron Letters, Home Squadron, Commodore Hiram Paulding to Minister Wheeler, 21 Dec. 1855; Paulding to Cushing, 24 Dec. 1855; Paulding to Dobbin, 2 Jan. 1856; 7 Jan. 1856; 22 Jan. 1856.

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10. Dispatches from San Juan del Norte, Microcopy T-348, reel 1, Cottrell to State Department, 29 Nov. 1855; Captain Tarleton to Cottrell, 6 May 1856; Cottrell to Tarleton, 8 May 1856; Cottrell to Marcy, 4 Aug. 1856.

11. Carr, 189-194.

12. Dispatches San Juan del Sur, Priest to Marcy, 29 Nov. 1856; 31 Jan. 1857; Carr, 210-214.

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derbilt; Cottrell to Marcy, 8 Jan. 1857, 10 Feb. 1857; 6 Mar. 1857; 14 Apr. 1857; Carr, 215.

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15. Area File of the Naval Records Collection, Area 9, Dobbin to Mervine, 2 Jan. 1857; Squadron Letters, Pacific, Mervine to Charles Henry Davis, 19 Jan. 1857.

16. *Ibid.*, Mervine to Toucey, 18 Mar. 1857.

17. *Ibid.*, Davis to Gen. F. Xatruch, 3 Mar. 1857; Xatruch to Davis, 22 Feb. 1857.

18. *Ibid.*, Davis to Mervine, 4 Mar. 1857; Davis-Macdonald correspondence, 23 Feb. 1857; Davis-Fitzgerald correspondence, 25 Feb. 1857.

19. *Ibid.*, Davis to Mervine, 4 Mar. 1857.

20. *Ibid.*, Davis to Mora, 26 Apr. 1857; Mora to Davis 27 Apr. 1857; Davis to Mora, 28 Apr. 1857; Davis to Mora, 1 Apr. 1857; Mora to Davis, 4 Apr. 1857.

21. *Ibid.*, Davis to Mervine, 15 Apr. 1857 (continued on 28 Apr.); Davis to Mora, 29 Mar. 1857; Davis to Col. Philip H. Thompson, 29 Mar. 1857; Davis to Mora, 12 Apr. 1857; Mora to Davis, 14 Apr. 1857; Davis to Mora, 16 Apr. 1857.

22. *Ibid.*, Davis to Lt. T.T. Houston, 22 Apr. 1857; Davis to Mora, 25 Apr. 1857; Mora to Davis, 26 Apr. 1857.

23. *Ibid.*, Davis to Mervine, 13 May 1857; Davis to Lt. J.S. Maury, 29 Apr. 1857.

24. *Ibid.*, Davis to Mervine, 13 May 1857; Davis to William Walker, 30 Apr. 1857.

25. *Ibid.*, Walker to Davis, 30 Apr. 1857; Davis to Walker, 30 Apr. 1857; Walker to Davis, 30 Apr. 1857; Walker to Davis, 30 Apr. 1857; *Agreement*, 1 May 1857; Mora to Davis 1 May 1857; Davis to Gen. Canas, 1 May 1857; Davis to Lt. D.P. McCorkle, 2 May 1857.

26. *Ibid.*, Davis to Maury, 2 May 1857; Walker to Fayssoux, 2 May 1857; Davis to Mora, 3 May 1857; Davis to Maury, 3 May 1857.

27. *Ibid.*, Mervine to Toucey, 2 June 1857; Mervine to Gov. B. Calvo, 17 May 1857; Calvo to Mervine, 17 May 1857; Mervine to Calvo, 18 May 1857; Calvo to Mervine, 18 May 1857; Calvo to Mervine, 19 May 1857; Mervine to Calvo, 20 May 1857. There had been an attack on the railroad passengers about one year earlier resulting in many deaths.

28. *New York Times*, 8 June 1857; Squadron Letters, Pacific, Mervine to Davis, 12 June 1857, congratulating Davis; Mervine to Toucey, 20 October 1857, informing Toucey that the captain of the French frigate *L'Ambuscade* had planned to take the *Granada* but desisted when Davis assured him that he would not allow it to go to sea.

The French claimed that the *Granada* had no nationality; Area Files, Area 9, Toucey to Mervine, 3 Aug. 1857; Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 3 Dec. 1857.

29. Squadron Letters, Pacific, Mervine to Toucey, 18 June 1857; McCorkle to Davis, 30 May 1857; Mervine to Toucey, 19 June 1857; 30 June 1857; draft for \$7475 for transporting 299 American citizens; Mervine to Toucey, 3 July 1857; McCorkle to Mervine, 18 June 1857. Because Walker had destroyed his equipment, Costa Rica claimed he had broken the Agreement and refused to pay the passage money to the States.

30. *Ibid.*, Paulding to Toucey, 18 Aug. 1857; 3 Sept. 1857; 20 Oct. 1857; *New York Times*, 18 and 19 Sept. 1857, 11 Jan. 1858, containing a copy of orders to the *Fulton*, 3 Oct. 1857.

31. *New York Times*, 11 Jan. 1858, containing correspondence between Almy and Department; Almy to Department, 7 Oct. 1857; Department to Almy, 12 Oct. 1857; Almy to Department, 29 Oct. 1857.

32. *New York Times*, 13 Nov. 1857; 9 Dec. 1857; Squadron Letters, Home, Paulding to Toucey, 4 Nov. 1857; 20 Nov. 1857; Chatard to Paulding, 17 Nov. 1857; Paulding to Toucey, 3 Dec. 1857; Chatard to Paulding, 27 Nov. 1857; 1 Dec. 1857 (unofficial).

33. *Ibid.*, Paulding to Toucey, 3 Dec. 1857; *New York Times*, 11 Jan. 1858, containing copy of dispatch of 18 Dec. 1857.

34. Squadron Letters Home, Wood to Paulding, 30 Nov. 1857; Paulding to Toucey, 11 Dec. 1857; Paulding-Walker correspondence, 2 Dec. 1857; 7 Dec. 1857, 11 Dec. 1857; Paulding to Toucey, 14 Dec. 1857; 15 Dec. 1857; 18 Dec. 1857.

35. *Ibid.*, Paulding to Sands, 12 Dec. 1857; Sands to Paulding, 28 Dec. 1857; Paulding to Toucey, 2 Jan. 1858; 15 Jan. 1858; 21 Jan. 1858; 25 Jan. 1858; 18 Feb. 1858.

36. *New York Times*, 13 Nov., 14 Nov., 9 Dec., 14 Dec., 28 Dec., and 29 Dec. 1857.

37. *Ibid.*, 1 Jan., 4 Jan., 7 Jan. 1858.

38. *Ibid.*, 8 Jan. 1858.

39. *Ibid.*, 14 Jan. 1858; Squadron Letters, Home, Paulding to Toucey, 20 Feb. 1858; 17 Mar. 1858; 19 Mar. 1858; Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1858, 6 Dec. 1858.

40. Squadron Letters, Pacific, Long to Toucey, 30 Dec. 1858; Long to Thatcher, 24 Jan. 1859; Home Squadron, McIntosh to Toucey, 7 May 1858; McIntosh to T. Turner, 22 July 1858; McIntosh to Toucey, 24 Sept. 1858; 20 Dec. 1858; 4 Jan. 1859.

41. *Ibid.*, Home Squadron, W.J. McCluney to Toucey, 19 Feb. 1859; 18 Mar. 1859; 4 July 1859; Dispatches San Juan del Norte, T. Bell to State Department, 31 Oct. 1859; Area Files, Area 9, Long to Toucey, 24 June 1859; Pacific Squadron, Long to Toucey, 3 May 1859; 5 May 1859; Carr, ch. xxi.