

# 1846: The Mexican-American War

## Context

After Mexico's revolution in 1821, Americans demanded about \$3 million in compensation for their losses.<sup>1</sup> Mexico abolished slavery in 1829 and then prohibited further U.S. immigration into Texas, a Mexican state. In 1835, Mexico tried to enforce its authority over Texas. Texans, rallying under the slogan "Remember the Alamo!", drove Mexican troops out of Texas and proclaimed independence. For nine years, many Texans lobbied for U.S. annexation. This was delayed by northerners that opposed adding more slave territories to the U.S. and feared a war with Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

In 1844, Democratic presidential candidate, James Polk, declared his support for annexing Texas. The next year, under President John Tyler, Texas was annexed and Mexico broke off diplomatic relations with the U.S. Later that year, when Polk became president, winning with the thinnest margin ever,<sup>3</sup> he sent John Slidell to Mexico offering \$25 million for New Mexico, California and an agreement accepting the Rio Grande boundary. Mexican government officials flatly refused to even meet the U.S. envoy.<sup>4</sup>

## Pretext Incident

John Stockwell, a Texan who led the CIA's covert 1970s war in Angola, summed up the start of Mexican-American war by saying "they offered two dollars-a-head to every soldier who would enlist. They didn't get enough takers, so they offered a hundred acres to anyone who would be a veteran of that war. They still didn't get enough takers, so [General] Zachary Taylor was sent down to parade up and down the border – the disputed border – until the Mexicans fired on him.... And the nation rose up, and we fought the war."<sup>5</sup>

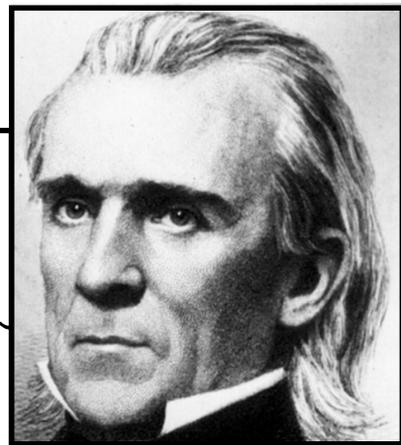
President Polk hoped that sending General Taylor's 3,500 soldiers into Mexico territory, would provoke an attack against U.S. troops.<sup>6</sup> "On May 8, 1846, Polk met with his Cabinet at the White House and told them that if the Mexican army attacked the U.S. forces, he was going to send a message to Congress asking for a declaration of war. It was decided that war should be declared in three days even if there was no attack."<sup>7</sup>

When news of a skirmish arrived, Polk sent a message to Congress on May 11: "Mexico has passed the boundary of the U.S. and shed American blood on American soil."<sup>8</sup> Two days later Congress declared war on Mexico.<sup>9</sup>

## Follow Up

Newspapers helped the push for war with headlines like: "Mexicans Killing our Boys in Texas."<sup>10</sup>

With public support secured, U.S. forces occupied New Mexico and California. U.S. troops fought battles across northern Mexico and stormed their capital. A new more U.S.-friendly government quickly emerged there. In



**President James Polk**  
(1845-1849)

Polk provoked the pretext incident that triggered war with Mexico. The war added one million square miles to U.S. territory.

1847, with Mexico City and much of northern half of the country occupied by the U.S. military, the new Mexican leaders had little choice but to concede defeat. In early 1847, as part of the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty, Mexico agreed to "sell" about half of their territory to the U.S. for \$15 million. The treaty also forced Mexico to recognize the U.S. annexation of Texas by making the Rio Grande their new border with the U.S.<sup>11</sup>

As a direct result of his exploits, General Taylor, by then a wealthy slave-owner, became an American war hero. He used this status to ride his victory straight into the White House by succeeding Polk as president in 1849.

## Real Reasons

The U.S. secured over a million square miles from Mexico, including Texas, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, California and parts of Colorado, Kansas and Wyoming.

The war was a boon to U.S. nationalism, it boosted popular support for a very weak president and added vast new territories to the U.S. where slavery was allowed.

## Footnotes:

1. "History of Mexico, Empire and Early Republic, 1821-55," *Area Handbook*, U.S. Library of Congress, June 1996.
2. Shayne M. Cokerdem, "Unit Plan: Manifest Destiny and the Road to the Civil War."
3. P.B.Kunhardt, Jr., P.B.Kunhardt III, P.W.Kunhardt, "James Polk," *The American President*, 2000.
4. "Diplomatic Approaches: U.S. Relations with Mexico: 1844-1846," LearnCalifornia.org, 2000.
5. John Stockwell, "CIA & the Gulf War," Speech, Santa Cruz, CA, Feb.20, 1991, aired by J. DiNardo, Pacifica Radio.
6. Betsy Powers, "The U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-48," War, Reconstruction and Recovery in Brazoria County.
7. "The White House and Western Expansion," Learning Center, White House Historical Association.
8. Powers
9. White House Historical Association
10. Stockwell
11. *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, 1847.

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# Lincoln Exposed Polk's War Pretext

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By Anton Chaitkin, co-author, *George Bush: Unauthorized Biography* (1992).

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**A**braham Lincoln risked his career when he laid bare the false pretexts for the Mexican War. By resisted deluded, war-mad public opinion, he lost public office and favor, but laid the basis for his nation's survival under his future Presidency.

The U.S. launched an unprovoked attack against Mexico in 1846. Tens of thousands of Mexicans died, many in artillery bombardments of residential areas; 13,000 U.S. soldiers died as well. When the U.S. occupied Mexico City and the war faction demanded the annexation of all Mexico for the spread of slavery, 38-year-old freshman Congressman Lincoln, decisively embarrassed and exposed President James Polk as a corrupt liar.

Just after invading Mexico, Polk asked Congress not to declare war, but "to recognize the existence of the war," which he claimed had started when "Mexico...passed the boundary of the U.S....invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil." Sen. John Calhoun said that when Polk's war bill was rammed through Congress, "We had not a particle of evidence that Mexico had made war against the U.S."

A few days after he took his House seat, Lincoln introduced eight resolutions asking Polk about the "spot" on which "the blood of our citizens was shed." Wasn't it first Spanish, then Mexican territory, always occupied by Mexican farmers and never by Texans? Didn't U.S. soldiers invade after General Taylor repeatedly said "no such movement was necessary to the defense...of Texas"?

Four days after Lincoln's "'Spot' Resolutions," former President John Adams, wrote: the "design and purpose to dismember Mexico...has been...a 'fixed fact' since 1830."

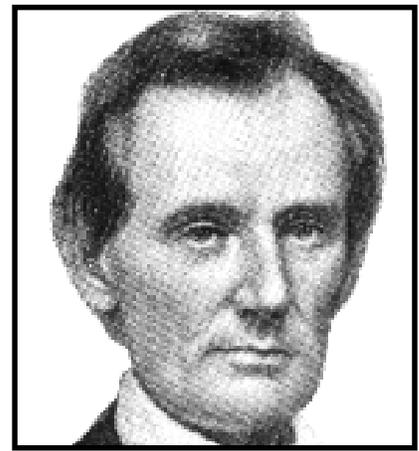
Lincoln knew that Polk's presidency and this design on Mexico, was planned by Britain. In the 1844 election, Lincoln's Whig party issued a pamphlet showing that the British financed Polk's "free-trade" campaign, against the protectionist, nationalist

Henry Clay. Lincoln's party asked "whether British gold shall buy what British valor could not conquer" in America's Revolution and the War of 1812. The pamphlet quoted British newspapers and Prime Minister Peel's free-trade movement, documenting the British transfer of at least \$440,000 (equivalent to hundreds of millions today) to Polk's election campaign.

A British underground political machine put Polk into the Presidency and pulled the strings to start the war against Mexico. The British pointman was George Bancroft, the Washington operative of Massachusetts opium-trading Tory families still bitter at losing the American Revolution. Bancroft, who claimed to oppose slavery, contrived the surprise Democratic Party's presidential candidacy of Polk, a degenerate, mediocre Tennessee slaveowner. Polk asserted that "a slave dreads the punishment of stripes [lashing] more than imprisonment, and [such whipping] has, besides, a beneficial effect on his fellow slaves."

Bancroft pushed provocative actions against Mexico. On June 6, 1845, as head of the War Department, he ordered the U.S. Army's first movement beyond the line of Texas settlement. Debate revolved around the Oregon Territory between Mexican-owned California and Russian-owned Alaska (contested by the U.S. and Britain); and Texas, which a revolution had taken from Mexico, and which the U.S. had just annexed. The strategic question was, should America risk a war with Britain by kicking them out of the Oregon territory, or, accommodate Britain's expansion of Canada, and point Anglo-Saxon guns south, using tense Mexico-Texas relations as a trigger and pretext for a war to steal California – instead of buying it?

U.S. nationalists bluntly said, take the Pacific northwest and fight Britain, not Mexico. John Adams warned Congress that Britain was sending warships to Canada. He called for U.S. preparations to drive the British Empire from North America. Texas independence leader, Democrat Sam Houston, told Polk to maintain peace with Mexico and called for a showdown against the British.



**President Abraham Lincoln  
(1861-1865)**

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Polk's 1844 election slogan, "54-40 or Fight!," pledged to exclude the British from all of the contested Pacific northwest, up to the southern border of Alaska at latitude 54°40'.

After repeated diplomatic and military provocations, U.S. troops finally got into a small skirmish with Mexicans. On May 11, 1846, Polk told Congress to "recognize" that Mexico's invasion of the U.S. had started a war.

Polk appointed Bancroft ambassador to Britain. He wrote to Polk in May 1847, to say the British were deeply pleased with "our war with Mexico, our [free-trade] finances, and...the immense superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race as displayed in our great number of victories over the Mexicans." On June 6, 1846, the U.S. Secretary of State and the British Ambassador agreed to give Britain what is now British Columbia. The [Oregon] treaty was signed nine days later.

Lincoln's autobiography, summed up the hoax of the Mexican War. He said the war was unnecessary because "Mexico was in no way molesting, or menacing the U.S...and it was unconstitutional, because the power of levying war is vested in Congress, and not the President. He thought the principal motive for the act, was to divert public attention from the surrender of '54-40 or Fight!' to Great Britain, on the Oregon boundary question."

**Source:** Excerpt, "Abraham Lincoln Rips Samuel Huntington's Lies," *Executive Intelligence Review*, March 8, 2002. <[www.larouchepub.com/other/2002/2909lincoln\\_iraq.html](http://www.larouchepub.com/other/2002/2909lincoln_iraq.html)>

See Lincoln's "Spot Resolutions" Dec. 22, 1847. <[members.tripod.com/~american\\_almanac/lincspot.htm](http://members.tripod.com/~american_almanac/lincspot.htm)>