

# A re-evaluation of Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson's Trans-Pecos Campaign against Victorio, July-August 1880

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**‘None Having Gone North’<sup>1</sup>:  
A Re-evaluation of Colonel. Benjamin H. Grierson’s Trans-Pecos  
Campaign against Victorio, July-August, 1880.**

**Dr Robert N. Watt.**

**The University of Birmingham.**

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<sup>1</sup> Grierson to Commanding Officer, District of New Mexico, 2 August, 1880, Mail Copies of Telegrams Rec’d 1880-85 (unarranged) in National Archives, Washington D.C. (hereafter referred to as ‘NA’) RG393, Part 3, Entry 440, pp.34-37

**Abstract.**

In July and August of 1880, U.S. troops led by Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson defeated Victorio's Apache guerrillas in Western Texas. However, the Apache point of view is not generally understood. Primary sources show that if the Apache perspective is included, Grierson recognised, and avoided, one part of Victorio's strategy, yet failed to comprehend the Apache leader's clever decoy strategy. As such, Victorio came very close to breaching Grierson's defences and winning this campaign. Nevertheless, Grierson's ignorance of this decoy strategy was offset by his use of small scouting detachments and intelligence received from Mexican troops allowing him to emerge victorious.

## Introduction.

In the summer of 1880, elements of the Tenth U.S. Cavalry regiment and Pueblo Indian scouts, commanded by Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, confronted Chihenne<sup>2</sup> and Mescalero Apaches led by Bi-Du-Ya, better known as Victorio, in the Trans-Pecos region of western Texas. Previous scholarship regarding Grierson's operations and can be summarised as follows: having extensively surveyed the Trans Pecos between 1877 and 1879, Grierson was able to outmanoeuvre Victorio by picketing the known waterholes and passes, fending off Apache probes at Tinaja de las Palmas (30 July) and Rattlesnake Springs (6 August) and preventing the latter's attempt to reach the Mescalero Apache reservation in New Mexico. Grierson's success prevented Victorio from replenishing his munitions and this contributed to Victorio's death at the hands of Chihuahua State troops at Tres Castillos, Mexico on 14/15 October, 1880.<sup>3</sup>

However, this account misses three issues. First, a closer examination of the primary sources reveals that Grierson's defence was not as secure as he subsequently reported to his superiors. Secondly, his survey of the area was not as complete as Grierson (and, indeed, history) would suggest. Finally, both the Indians and the army demonstrated far more flexibility and tactical skill than is generally recognized. Victorio attempted to use a decoy strategy, which had previously confounded the Ninth Cavalry in New Mexico between the fall of 1879 and again in the winter of 1880. That this strategy failed was certainly due to the efforts of Grierson and his forces. In fact, the campaign of July and August 1880 can be likened to the on-going sparring between equally matched opponents. In Victorio and Grierson we have two very talented military leaders attempting to maximise their strengths and minimise their weaknesses in order to achieve victory.

This episode was the last major campaign against American Indians in the Trans-Pecos region by the US army and paved the way for railroad construction<sup>4</sup> and settlement in the region.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Also known as Warm Springs, Ojo Caliente, Mimbres, Mimbreno and Eastern Chiricahua Apaches. The army clearly referred to them as a branch of the Chiricahua Apaches. Chihenne means 'red paint people' and their territory was southwestern New Mexico and northwestern Chihuahua. Their favoured camping areas were in the San Mateo and Black Range Mountains of New Mexico centred on the hot springs at Ojo Caliente. They sometimes allied with the Mescalero Apaches who lived to the east and whose territory was centred on the Sacramento Mountains of New Mexico. The Mescaleros ranged southwards through New Mexico and western Texas into northern Chihuahua.

<sup>3</sup> See for example: Leckie, W.H., 1967, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman); Leckie, W.H. & Leckie, S.A., 1984, *Unlikely Warriors: General Benjamin Grierson and His Family* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman); Leckie, W.H. & Leckie, S.A., 2003, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Black Cavalry in the West - Revised Edition* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman); Thrapp, D.L., 1967, *The Conquest of Apacheria* (University of Oklahoma Press: London); Thrapp, D.L., 1974, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches* (University of Oklahoma Press: London); Matthews, J., "Squarely Fought: Fort Concho and the Campaign against Victorio, 1880," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book*, Vol. 69, (1993), 34-44; McChristian, D.C., "Grierson's Fight at Tinaja de las Palmas: An Episode in the Victoria (sic) Campaign," *Red River Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 7, (Winter 1982), pp.45-63; Temple, F.M., "Federal Military Defense of the Trans-Pecos Region 1850-1880," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book*, Vol. 30, (1954), 40-60; "Colonel Grierson in the Southwest," *Panhandle Plains Historical Review*, Vol. 30, (1957), 27-54; "Colonel B. H. Grierson's Victorio Campaign," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book*, Vol. 35, (1959), 99-111 & "Colonel B.H. Grierson's Administration of the District of the Pecos" *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* Vol. 37, (October 1962), 85-96; Dinges, B.J. "The Victorio Campaign of 1880: Cooperation and Conflict on the United States - Mexico Border," *New Mexico Historical Review*, Vol. 62, No. 1, (Jan 1987), 81-94

<sup>4</sup> It is fairly certain that the last Apache attack in the Trans-Pecos was perpetrated by Chiricahua Apaches, led by Nana, when "Bell and Smith, railroad employees; by unknown parties at water-hole between Quitman and Eagle Springs, Tex, about July 8, 1881." (List of Persons Killed, Wounded, or Captured, by Indians, &c., in the Department of Texas, since October 1, 1880, officially reported by post commanders. NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry

## **The Victorio Campaign 1879-1880.**

Victorio, a Chihenne Apache leader, led the resistance to the closure of their reservation centred around Ojo Caliente, New Mexico in April/May 1877. The closure was part of the Department of the Interior's attempt to concentrate the Apaches upon one reservation at San Carlos in Arizona. The key problem with this policy was that different groups of Apaches did not necessarily maintain good relations with each. Victorio's followers were soon embroiled in just such a dispute with the San Carlos Apaches, which quickly involved deaths on both sides. The fact that the Chihenne Apaches were moved on to the San Carlos reservation after its creation also meant that they were also assigned to poorer land than that already occupied by the resident San Carlos Apaches, leading to high rates of disease-related mortalities. This situation led to the Chihennes fleeing from San Carlos in September 1877.

After two years of attempting to negotiate the return of their Ojo Caliente reservation, Victorio finally lost faith with the U.S. authorities and went to war in August 1879. After his flight from San Carlos in 1877 there had been sporadic skirmishes between the U.S. army and Victorio's Apaches, punctuated by a temporary return to Ojo Caliente<sup>6</sup> (October 1877 to October 1878) and quasi-prisoner<sup>7</sup> of war status at that same place (February to April 1879). The failure to deal with Victorio's desire to return to his reservation can be ascribed to the hostility between the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA - part of the Department of the Interior), and the U.S. army, (controlled by the War Department<sup>8</sup>). The army very quickly came to see the policy of concentration, combined with the corrupt practices of reservation employees nominated by the OIA, as having a disastrous effect upon U.S.-Apache relations. These political battles were fought out in Washington D.C. between the Secretaries of the Department of the Interior and the War Department. The Victorio War was almost certainly

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2546, p.829; The Record of Engagements, p.100). Nana's raiders had killed at least eight persons in Mexico approximately forty to fifty miles to the southwest of Fort Quitman on 28 and 29 of June, 1881. They would launch their next attack in the Sacramento Mountains, New Mexico on 17 July, 1881.

<sup>5</sup> Professor Robert Wooster kindly pointed out to me that Grierson, in early 1881, commented that "a settled feeling of security" and this would hopefully encourage "a rapid and permanent increase of the population and wealth" in the Trans-Pecos. (Grierson's General Orders No.1, Feb. 7, 1881 published in the Army & Navy Journal, Feb. 26, 1881). This ultimately allowed the army to redeploy forces away from the region and by the Geronimo Campaign of 1885-1886 we find the Tenth Cavalry deployed against the Apaches in Arizona.

<sup>6</sup> On his breakout from San Carlos, Victorio and most of his following reached Fort Wingate and attempted to negotiate a return to Ojo Caliente, New Mexico. While this was being considered the Apaches were allowed to return to Ojo Caliente. When this request was refused, Victorio fled with most of the warriors and some of their families, while Loco another of the leaders of the Chihennes agreed to return to San Carlos with the remainder of the Apaches. It would appear that three leaders directed the Chihenne Apaches in the 1870s; Victorio, Loco and Nana. Loco clearly favoured the route of peaceful negotiation but Victorio and Nana clearly favoured negotiation backed by the threat of force.

Apache testimony clearly indicated that Nana acted as Victorio's second-in-command during this period but is rather vague as to his activities while acting in this capacity. The author can only clearly pinpoint Nana as acting as a go-between on the Mescalero reservation between December 1878 and August 1879; leading a raiding party in the Rio Grande valley in March 1880, being with a group of Apaches who managed to hide from a large force of Ninth Cavalry troops in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Hembrillo Canyon (6/7 April, 1880) and acting as the Apache's rear-guard commander whilst on the march just before the Apaches reached Tres Castillos. History has paid far more attention to Nana's role as a leader in the 1881-1886 period after Victorio was killed.

<sup>7</sup> Quasi-prisoner of war refers to the fact that the commander of the Ninth Cavalry detachment then garrisoning Ojo Caliente, when Victorio arrived in February 1879, gave the unintended impression to his superiors that the Apaches had surrendered. When his superiors realised their mistake they instructed him to bring the Apaches under closer supervision and the latter promptly fled.

<sup>8</sup> I have seen both 'Department of War' and 'War Department' used interchangeably but if one consults the Annual Reports of the Secretary of War the latter form is used.

precipitated in 1879 as a result of frustrations born of the failure of the Departments of Interior and War to reach a consensus concerning the return of Ojo Caliente to the Chihenne Apaches. Between September 1879 and May 1880, Victorio defeated and outmanoeuvred his U.S. and Mexican opponents and inflicted major damage upon their ability to operate. This was principally achieved by killing horses and pack mules, either directly by shooting them, or indirectly by leading their opponents on prolonged pursuits over very difficult terrain.<sup>9</sup> However, in May 1880, Victorio suffered a major defeat at the hands of an Apache scout company and had retreated into Mexico.<sup>10</sup> During June 1880, Victorio had raided extensively in northern Chihuahua. If he could drive the livestock taken in these attacks to the Mescalero Apache reservation in New Mexico, Victorio could replenish his dwindling stocks of rifles and ammunition. Colonel Edward Hatch, Commander of the District of New Mexico, thought that Victorio would attempt to return to the Mescalero reservation via Western Texas. This would mean that the Apaches would be passing through the Military District of the Pecos commanded by Colonel Grierson.<sup>11</sup>

### **Grierson's Plan of Campaign.**

Grierson had led the Tenth Cavalry since its formation in 1866. Prior to taking this command, Grierson had enjoyed a successful Civil War career, the most notable service being his leadership of the Union cavalry raid in support of General Ulysees S. Grant's Vicksburg campaign in 1863. By the mid-1870s some of his regiment had been transferred to Western Texas and, after a few brushes with Mescalero Apache raiders, who habitually passed through this area to trade and raid in Mexico, a thorough survey of the District of the Pecos was ordered in 1878.<sup>12</sup> By the time Victorio had retreated into Mexico in May 1880, Grierson thus assumed he had a comprehensive survey of the Trans-Pecos region. Meanwhile, in New Mexico, Colonel Hatch had taken charge of the campaign against Victorio in January 1880.<sup>13</sup> By May-June 1880, having failed to get permission from Mexico to pursue Victorio across the border, Hatch had to prepare his forces for any attempt by the Apaches to return to the USA. Hatch proposed that five companies of the Tenth Cavalry be temporarily be transferred to Fort Stanton (in New Mexico), to prevent Apaches trading for munitions on the adjacent Mescalero Apache reservation.<sup>14</sup> While the Tenth Cavalry picketed the Mescalero reservation

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<sup>9</sup> For more details see RN Watt "Horses Worn to Mere Shadows": The Effects of Campaigning against Apaches upon the Ninth U.S. Cavalry Regiment in New Mexico Territory 1879-1881" *New Mexico Historical Review* (Spring 2011) 61-86

<sup>10</sup> This was effectively a continuation of the feud between the San Carlos Apaches which had originated in 1877. In late April/early May some of Victorio's Apaches had targeted and killed a San Carlos leader and at least ten of his followers including women and children. Later that month an Apache scout company with a number of San Carlos Apaches had attacked Victorio's camp killing 55 men, women and children and wounding Victorio. This feud was one of the reasons that Victorio and a number of his followers had to negotiate for a return to Ojo Caliente as they knew that they would be prime targets for retaliation if they returned to San Carlos. This was probably not appreciated by either the OIA or the U.S. army which can only have further reinforced the frustration felt by the Chihenne Apaches.

<sup>11</sup> Both the Tenth Cavalry Regiment and their sister regiment the Ninth were made up of African-American troops who have become popularly known as the 'Buffalo Soldiers'.

<sup>12</sup> Vincent to CO, District of the Pecos, (Hereafter referred to as 'DoP') 30 April, 1878 in Register of Telegrams Rec'd Jan. 23, 1878-Feb. 4, 1881, HQ Records of the District of the Pecos 1878-1881, (Hereafter referred to as 'HQ DoP') M1381, Roll 2, Page.19, Letter No. 40

<sup>13</sup> Pope's Annual Report Year ending September 22 1880, NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, p.612; Report of General John Pope, 22 September 1880 in Annual Reports of the War Department, NA, M997, Roll 35, 1880 Vol. I-II, p.86

<sup>14</sup> Sheridan to Pope, 22 May 1880 in 'Victorio Papers', NA, M666, Roll 527; See also Pope to Whipple, AAG Chicago, 3 June 1880, 'Victorio Campaign, Feb. 1879-Nov. 1880' in 'Victorio Special Files', NA, M1495, Roll 14; Dinges, 1987, p.87; McChristian, 1982, pp.49-50

in New Mexico, additional troops would be deployed along the border to counter any effort made by Victorio to return from Mexico.

Although General Philip H. Sheridan<sup>15</sup>, had endorsed the plan, Grierson staked his reputation upon an alternative strategy. He argued that his troops would be better deployed in defending the District of the Pecos which they had already surveyed. This involved guarding known springs, river crossings and mountain passes along the Rio Grande borderlands.<sup>16</sup> Grierson was also determined that his troops and mounts should not be worn out in similar circumstances to the Ninth Cavalry's experience of campaigning against Victorio between September 1879 and June 1880<sup>17</sup>. In other words, his strategy was to prevent the Apaches from moving through the trans-Pecos region by a process of 'picket and patrol' rather than prolonged pursuit.

In fact, both the Apaches and the U.S. cavalry had key resource vulnerabilities. The Apaches often found themselves chronically short of rifles and ammunition, and had to constantly try to renew their supplies through trading and raiding. On the other hand, the U.S. army had found that the Apache tactics were taking a prohibitively expensive toll upon its horses and mules. The key illustration of this point came in late May 1880 when General William T. Sherman forbade the purchase of additional horses or mules until Congress approved the army's budget for the financial year 1880-1881.<sup>18</sup> Grierson was thus attempting to combat the Apaches in such a way as to minimise the effectiveness of their horse killing tactics while simultaneously putting pressure on the Apache's ability to replenish their munitions.

Grierson's concerns were not without foundation. By June 1880, Victorio's tactic of targeting his opponent's horses and mules had crippled the operational effectiveness of the Ninth Cavalry, which sustained 34.4% of the total number of horses lost by the entire U.S. army between July 1879 and June 1880.<sup>19</sup> Of those Ninth Cavalry horses who had survived, there were more horses judged to be unserviceable than serviceable.<sup>20</sup> Grierson was determined that he would not be drawn into such a fruitless venture on unfamiliar terrain. Moreover, Hatch himself probably provided Grierson with additional grounds for proposing this plan. By 8 June, 1880, Hatch predicted that the Apaches would try to reach the Mescalero Apache reservation by returning through Grierson's District of the Pecos somewhere in the vicinity of Old Fort Quitman, situated on the Rio Grande, approximately sixty miles downstream from El Paso. It is not clear exactly why Hatch reached this conclusion, but he seems to have assumed that the large number of Mescalero Apaches allied

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<sup>15</sup> Sheridan commanded the Military Division of the Missouri, one of three Military Divisions of the U.S. army, the other two being the Divisions of the Atlantic and the Pacific. There were a number of Military Departments within Sheridan's including the Department of the Missouri under General John Pope and the Department of Texas Commanded by General Edward O.C. Ord. Hatch commanded the District of New Mexico reporting to Pope and Grierson commanded the District of the Pecos under General Ord.

<sup>16</sup> Grierson to AAG, San Antonio, Texas, 28 May 1880 in Telegrams Sent April 24, 1879-June 22, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 1, pp.267-268, Letter No.173; Grierson to Col. Hatch 19 July 1880, NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 439, pp.551-53; Grierson to AAG, San Antonio, 24 June 1880 in Telegrams Sent June 23, -November 30, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 1, pp.18-19, Letter No. 249; 'Grierson's Report'; NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644; Dinges, 1987, p.87; Temple, 1957, pp.49-50; Temple, 1959, pp.99-100; Matthews, 1993, p.37; McChristian, 1982, p.50

<sup>17</sup> Grierson to AAG, San Antonio, Texas, 4 June 1880 in Telegrams Sent April 24, 1879-June 22, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 1, pp.277-280, Letter No.190

<sup>18</sup> Sherman to Pope, 29 May 1880, Press Copies of Letters and Endorsements Sent, Military Division of the Missouri, Vol. 13, NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2539, 290-291

<sup>19</sup> See Watt 'Horses Worn to Mere Shadows' p.205

<sup>20</sup> See Watt 'Horses Worn to Mere Shadows' p.202-203

to Victorio would try to return to their reservation by that route having been supposedly thwarted from doing so by Hatch's troops in New Mexico.<sup>21</sup>

By the end of May 1880, Grierson had deployed, or was in the process of deploying, the Tenth Cavalry to that end,<sup>22</sup> though his plan was not endorsed by General Sheridan until 27 June, 1880.<sup>23</sup> He seems not to have shown any interest in recruiting Apache auxiliaries for the campaign, opting instead for a detachment of nineteen<sup>24</sup> Pueblo Indian scouts, stationed at Eagle Springs.<sup>25</sup>

### **Grierson's Campaign against Victorio. (See Map One)**

In mid-July, Mexican authorities informed Grierson that federal and state troops were campaigning against Victorio. Grierson mobilised his forces and leaving his headquarters at Fort Concho, Texas, established a temporary field headquarters at Eagle Springs. From this point he intended to direct operations against Victorio should the Apaches attempt to cross the border. Grierson tried to maintain communications with the Mexican commander, Colonel Adolfo J. Valle<sup>26</sup> However, communications broke down between the U.S. and Mexican forces as they were relying on a system of direct communication by mounted couriers between Valle and Grierson, (the latter using some of his Pueblo scouts). Grierson and Valle also communicated through the offices of Captain Henry R. Brinkerhoff, Fifteenth Infantry, commanding Fort Bliss, Texas, just outside of El Paso.<sup>27</sup> Grierson would communicate by telegraph (whenever possible) with Brinkerhoff, who passed intelligence on to Dr Mariano Samaniego, the political officer based in El Paso Del Norte,<sup>28</sup> Chihuahua,

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<sup>21</sup> Hatch, Fort Craig to Grierson, Fort Concho, 9? June 1880, District of New Mexico General and Special Field Orders, Letters and Telegrams, NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 475, Vol. 7, p.384 & p.385; <sup>21</sup> Loud to AAG Fort Leavenworth, 9 June 1880, Telegrams Sent District of New Mexico, (Hereafter referred to as 'DoNM') Vol.3, Jan. – Nov. 1880, NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 431, p.496; Hatch to AAG, Fort Leavenworth, 8 June 1880, 'Victorio Campaign, Feb. 1879-Nov. 1880' in 'Victorio Special Files', NA, M1495, Roll 14

<sup>22</sup> Grierson to AAG, San Antonio, Texas, 28 May 1880 in Telegrams Sent April 24, 1879-June 22, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 1, pp.267-268, Letter No.173

<sup>23</sup> Vincent citing Sheridan's telegram of the 27 June 1880 to Grierson, 28 June 1880 in Register of Telegrams Rec'd October 11, 1879-October 8, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 2, p.167, Letter No.262; Vincent to Grierson, 28 June 1880 in Telegrams Rec'd, May 18, 1880- Feb. 4, 1881 HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 4; 'Grierson's Report', NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644; Dinges, 1987, p.87; Matthews, 1993, p.37; Temple 1959, p.101; McChristian, 1982, p.50

<sup>24</sup> Woodward to AAAG, Dist. Of the Pecos, 23 March 1880 in Register of Telegrams Rec'd October 11, 1879-October 8, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 2, p.110, Letter No.122

<sup>25</sup> 'Grierson's Report', NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644

<sup>26</sup> Valle commanded the Federal troops stationed in Chihuahua in July 1880. However, this operation also involved Chihuahua state troops though it is not clear whether the federales and state troops operated in mixed units. They had definitely done so when General Geronimo Trevino had taken the field with his federal troops against Victorio in December 1879 and January 1880 where there were at least two columns of federal/state troops pursuing Victorio. Colonel Joaquin Terrazas acted in a subordinate capacity to Trevino in this period. Therefore it is not unlikely that Valle's forces were made up of both federal and state troops though the author can find no evidence that Terrazas was involved with Valle's expedition. The original reason for the presence of Federal Troops in Chihuahua was not to deal with hostile Apaches. It was to bring some political stability to the turbulent border states of Mexico to persuade the USA to rescind the 'Ord Order'. This authorised cross-border pursuits into Mexico by U.S. forces based in Texas without asking the permission of the Mexican authorities. (Best source to consult on this issue would be Dinges, B.J. "The Victorio Campaign of 1880: Cooperation and Conflict on the United States – Mexico Border," *New Mexico Historical Review*, Vol. 62, No. 1, (Jan 1987), 81-94) However, once a measure of stability was established the Mexican Federal army were deployed alongside Chihuahua state troops against the Apaches.

<sup>27</sup> Ord to Pope, 22 July 1880, NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2539, Press Copies of Letters and Endorsements Sent, Military Division of the Missouri, Vol. 13, pp.460-461

<sup>28</sup> Today known as Ciudad Juarez



Key	Date (1880)	Event
1.	Mid July	Mexican State & Federal troops unsuccessfully attempt to trap Victorio in the Sierra El Fierro. This is approximately 25km to the southwest of the arrow point on the map.
2.	21 July	Colonel Valle's forces clash with Victorio at Ojo del Pino in the Sierra del Pino. (Approximate Location)
3.	22 July	Colonel Grierson arrives at Vieja Pass
4.	23 July	Grierson travels from Vieja Pass to Eagle Springs via Van Horns Wells.
5.	25 July	Valle once again fights Victorio in the Sierra Del Pino. (Approximate Location)
6.	27 July	Grierson travels from Eagle Springs to Old Fort Quitman.
7.	28 July	Grierson meets with Col. Valle at Old Fort Quitman
8.	29 July	Travelling back to Eagle Springs from Old Fort Quitman, Griersons encounters an Apache at Tinaja de las Palmas. Reports arriving from scouts out of Old Fort Quitman and Eagle Springs report a large party of Apaches moving towards Grierson from the Rio Grande.
	30 July	Skirmish between Victorio and Grierson at Tinaja del las Palmas.
9.	30 July	Grierson moves his forces back to Eagle Springs from Tinaja de las Palmas.
10.	1 August	Grierson sends scout detachments out to scout to the south of Eagle Springs. One detachment is sent to Alamo Springs. The primary records imply that these detachments are made up of small groups of Tenth Cavalrymen <u>or</u> Pueblo Indian scouts.
11.	1 August	Captain Thomas C. Lebo, scouting the Sierra Diablo with Company K, Tenth Cavalry, captures a camp full of supplies. He pursues the Apaches north out of these mountains. He loses contact with them and returns to the Sierra Diablo to continue his scouting mission.
12.	3 August	The small scouting detachment sent to Alamo Springs engages a large party of Apaches in a running battle moving northeast towards the Van Horn Mts.
13.	3-4 August	The news of the clash between his troops and the Apaches convinces Col. Grierson to move his troops from Eagle Springs to Van Horn Wells and beyond.
14.	4 August	A detachment of the 10 <sup>th</sup> Cavalry is ambushed in the Guadalupe Mts probably by the same Apaches who were attacked by Capt. Lebo on 1 August. This is approximately 30km to the north and slightly east of the arrow point on the map.
15.	5-6 August	Very early on 5 August, Grierson realises that the Apaches have outmanoeuvred him. He gathers his command in the vicinity of Van Horn Wells and by the early hours of the 6 <sup>th</sup> has marched his forces northward to Rattlesnake Springs.
16.	6 August	Inconclusive battle with Victorio at Rattlesnake Springs.
17.	7 August	Grierson sends detachments from Rattlesnake Springs to picket Apache and Sulphur Springs to the north. (Note: the locations of these waterholes are approximate)
18.	8 August	Grierson is joined by a company from the Eighth Cavalry with a small group of Lipan Apache scouts at Rattlesnake Springs. They are sent to scout to the south and later return to confirm that Victorio had withdrawn into the Sierra Diablo after the skirmish at Rattlesnake Springs. A small detachment of Texas Rangers also join Grierson at Rattlesnake Springs.
19.	9 August	The Sierra Diablo is scouted by the Pueblo, Lipan Indian scouts and the Infantry accompanying Grierson's battalion.
20.	10 August	Grierson sends troops under Captain Nicholas Nolan to Fresno Spring to scout the southern end of the Sierra Diablo.
21.	10 August	Grierson travels to Sulphur Spring from Rattlesnake Springs and orders troops under Captain Louis Carpenter to scout southwards along the west side of the Sierra Diablo.
22.	11 August	Victorio's trail is finally discovered by Capt. Carpenter. It goes west towards Fort Bliss then turns south towards the Rio Grande. Carpenter estimates that he is a day and a half behind the Apaches. By the end of the day he has to break off the pursuit as his horses are exhausted. He sends word to Capt Nolan who joins Carpenter at Eagle Springs at around Midnight
23.	12 August	Nolan departs from Eagle Springs and picks up the trail two miles from Tinaja de las Palmas and follows it south to the Rio Grande where it turns east and makes for Ojo Calientes, Texas.
24.	13 August	Nolan finally confirms that the Apaches have crossed back into Mexico in the vicinity of Ojo Calientes

Mexico, who communicated with Valle by mounted courier. This system, while not reliable, was probably the best that could have been arranged.

On 28/29 July, Grierson travelled with a small escort to Old Fort Quitman and managed to make contact with Colonel Valle, the Federal Mexican army commander. On his return journey to Eagle Springs Grierson encountered one of Victorio's scouts and decided to picket the water hole at Tinaja de las Palmas, (also known to the army as 'Eighteen Mile Waterhole'), as it was approximately eighteen miles equi-distant from both Eagle Springs and Old Fort Quitman.<sup>30</sup> The following morning, having received a small reinforcement from Eagle Springs, he found himself confronted by at least sixty Apache warriors. These were only eventually driven off with the arrival of reinforcements from Eagle Springs and Old Fort Quitman.

However the rebuff of the Apaches at Tinaja de las Palmas was less important to the army's ultimate success than the intelligence received by Grierson just before this engagement. At their conference at Old Fort Quitman, Valle had informed Grierson as to the general whereabouts of the 'main body' of the Apaches, and, within 24 hours, Grierson's own scouting parties had confirmed the location of this group. The latter were probably his Pueblo scouts: on being alerted by the Mexicans of their plans to attack Victorio in mid-July, Grierson had sent orders to Eagle Springs that his Pueblo scouts should patrol the Rio Grande in order to detect any crossing by Apaches. The fact that a second Pueblo scout was killed by the Apaches just before the fight at Tinaja de las Palmas also reinforces this point.<sup>31</sup> Finally, Lt. Leighton Finley credits at least some Pueblo scouts as being present at Tinaja de las Palmas, arriving with the troops from Eagle Springs.<sup>32</sup>

A closer examination (see Map One) also raises a couple of anomalies which merit further investigation. First, some Apaches had penetrated Grierson's blockade (see points 11 and 14). Secondly, Grierson's forces lost contact with the Apaches from the end of the clash at Rattlesnake Springs on 6 August until their trail being picked up five days later (see points 17-22). This suggests that there was at least one source of water in the Sierra Diablo which had remained undetected during the Tenth Cavalry's survey work between 1877 and 1879. In other words, both factors suggest that Grierson's campaign did not proceed as smoothly as subsequent historians have suggested.

### **Insecure Blockade?**

Grierson categorically stated that no Apaches managed to get through to the north in the immediate aftermath of the fight at Tinaja de las Palmas.<sup>33</sup> He repeated this statement in early

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<sup>30</sup> See Bi-Monthly Company Muster Rolls for Company A, 10th Cavalry, July/Aug 1880 in NA, RG94

<sup>31</sup> 'Grierson's Report', NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644

<sup>32</sup> Friday July 30th – Fight at Rocky Ridge. My first charge (with 10 men G Co.) Troops engaged: - C & G cos 10 Cav., under [Henry D.] Viele and [Samuel R.] Colladay; my detachment G Co; Pueblo Scouts under [Frank H.] Mills, 24 Inf; Gen Grierson, his son Robert, [William H.] Beck a.a.a.g., and Gen Grierson original escort of 3 or 4 men; - Viele, Colladay & Mills arriving after my charge. – That afternoon, A Co 10 Cav, Capt [Nicholas] Nolan, joined us, and later we returned to Eagle Springs. Casualties – Davis, Pvt C Co, Killed; and Lt Colladay wounded – several horses killed & wounded. Indians in force. Victorio's Apaches." Finley Diary; Robert Grierson Diary, 1 August, 1880. Unfortunately, Finley's diary offers a very minimalist account of events in contrast with the diary kept by Robert Grierson, which makes no mention of the Pueblo scouts at this engagement.

<sup>33</sup> Beck to Carpenter, 30 July 1880 in Letters Sent September 19,1879 – August 11, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 1, Letter No.128; Grierson to Hatch Santa Fé 30 July 1880, NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 439, p.583; See slightly tidied up version quoted in Loud to Hatch, 31 July 1880, Telegrams Sent DoNM, Vol.3, Jan. – Nov. 1880, NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 431, pp.680-681; Sheridan to AG Wash. D.C. 2 August 1880 in 'Victorio Papers', NA, M666, Roll 527; Whipple to CO, DoNM, 2 August 1880 in NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 439, pp.46-49; Grierson to HQ District of the Pecos, 31 July 1880, in 'Victorio Special Files', NA, M1495, Roll 14;

August and mid-September, 1880.<sup>34</sup> However, just a day after the battle he sent the following message to Hatch and Colonel George P. Buell in the District of New Mexico<sup>35</sup>:

I recommend that you send troops to the eastward to the Cornudas and the Wind Mountains to hold San Antonio Springs on the south side of the Wind Mountains and the waters at Cornudas they should fortify the positions and have sufficient rations & forage for other troops to be used if necessary infantry would answer the purpose. It would be well to send Cav to the vicinity of the Sacramentos as from pursuit indications the hostile Indians will go either there or to the Guadalupe I intended to occupy the above named places but have not the troops or transportation to do so I should have two companies of Cav at the Guadalupe.<sup>36</sup>

Thus Grierson knew that he had failed to prevent some of the Apaches from moving through the very defences he had personally guaranteed to Sheridan. This was confirmed by three events. First, on 30 July, a stagecoach was ambushed and two people killed between Tinaja de las Palmas and Eagle Springs. The remains of these men were discovered after Grierson returned from his fight at Tinaja de las Palmas to his field headquarters at Eagle Springs.<sup>37</sup> This would certainly have led Grierson to question the effectiveness of his blockade and provides a plausible explanation for the above message to Hatch and Buell. It should also be noted that Grierson was not tempted to send any troops in pursuit of these Apaches; he was not going to be tempted into a horse crippling pursuit but instead chose to alert his colleagues in New Mexico to the potential threat.

Such a conclusion would also have been reinforced by the news of Captain Thomas C. Lebo's discovery of an Apache camp in the Sierra Diablo on 1 August, 1880 and his subsequent pursuit of these Apaches north out of the Sierra Diablo towards the Guadalupe Mountains.<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that Grierson may not have known of this event until Captain Lebo joined him on 7 August.

Finally, these same Apaches were probably the ones responsible for ambushing one of Grierson's patrols in the southern reaches of the Guadalupe Mountains on August 4, 1880.<sup>39</sup> The Apaches then managed to evade a pursuit mounted by elements of the Tenth Cavalry:

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Sheridan to Adjutant General, Washington D.C. 2 August 1880, Press Copies of Letters and Endorsements Sent, Military Division of the Missouri, Vol. 13, NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2539, pp.483-485

<sup>34</sup> Grierson to CO Fort Bliss, 24 September 1880 in Telegrams Sent June 23, -November 30, 1880 HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 1, pp.169-170, Letter No.504

<sup>35</sup> Col. G.P. Buell, commander of the Fifteenth Infantry Regiment, had taken over direction of field operations against Victorio in southern New Mexico from Col. Hatch who remained in overall command of the District of New Mexico. (See Buell (through Capt. Brinkerhoff) to Grierson, 21 July 1880 in Telegrams Rec'd by General Grierson in the Field June 30-Sept. 14, 1880 HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 4)

<sup>36</sup> Brinkerhoff to AAAG SF 31<sup>st</sup> July 1880, NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 439, pp.572-574

<sup>37</sup> Entry for August 1, 1880, Robert Grierson's Diary, (Hereafter referred to as 'Robert Grierson Diary') 10 July to 1 September 1880. Copy courtesy of the Fort Davis Museum Archive. Robert Grierson is clear that it occurred late on the 30 of July 1880.

<sup>38</sup> Bi-Monthly Company Muster Rolls for Company K, 10th Cavalry July/Aug in NA, RG94; Record of Events August 1880 in Returns From U.S. Military Posts 1800-1916 Fort Davis, Texas Jan 1879-June 1891, M617 Roll 298; See also Brinkerhoff to AAAG, Santa Fé, 13 August 1880, Telegrams Sent DoNM, Vol.3, Jan. - Nov. 1880, NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 431, p.737; 'Grierson's Report', NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644

<sup>39</sup> Bi-Monthly Company Muster Rolls for Company F & Company L, 10th Cavalry, July/Aug 1880 in NA, RG94; Brinkerhoff, citing dispatch rec'd from Grierson, Rattlesnake Springs, rec'd 9 August 1880, to Act. Asst. Adjt General Santa Fé NM 10 August 1880, NA, RG393 Part 3 Entry 440 pp.84-88; AAG, Dept of Texas to AG Chicago, 11 August 1880, 'Victorio Campaign, Feb. 1879-Nov. 1880' in 'Victorio Special Files', NA, RG393, M1495, Roll 14; 'Grierson's Report', NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644; Proceedings of a Board of Survey convened at Camp Safford, 21 August 1880 in Unregistered Letters 1878-1881, HQ DoP, NA, M1381,

Capt. Kennedy with part of Co's F & "L"<sup>40</sup> pursued the Indians some five days, but without avail, on Aug 6. 80 encountered while on trail of Indians referred to above, a small party of Indians one squaw of number being shot and Killed in the ?melee? and one pony shot & one captured.<sup>41</sup>

By the time Grierson received news of these incidents he clearly concluded that these were the same Apaches pursued out of the Sierra Diablo by Capt. Lebo's company.<sup>42</sup> However, he would have had every incentive to omit this detail from his subsequent campaign report. After all, he had assured his superiors that by deploying his forces in Western Texas he could prevent the Apaches from reaching the Mescalero reservation in New Mexico.

### **Incomplete Survey?**

In the immediate aftermath of Rattlesnake Springs, between 6 and 11 August, the detachments of troops sent to springs Grierson had chosen to picket did not encounter nor detect signs of Apaches. On 8 August it was established that after Rattlesnake Springs, Victorio's following had sought refuge in the Sierra Diablo. The trail that was discovered on 11 August headed west out of the Sierra Diablo and was estimated as being 36 hours old.<sup>43</sup> The Apaches must have had access to a reliable water source somewhere in those mountains between 6 and 9 August. Moreover, some of Grierson's troops, including his Pueblo scouts, scouted the Sierra Diablo on 9 of August and failed to detect any Apaches. More important, the time spent by the Apaches in the Sierra Diablo means that there must have been a good supply of water for both themselves and their horses.<sup>44</sup> This water had clearly not been discovered by the Tenth Cavalry when they surveyed the region in 1878 and 1879.

### **The Pueblo Scouts.**

Had Grierson been accompanied by an Apache scout company recruited from San Carlos, then Victorio would not have benefitted from over two days respite in the Sierra Diablo after withdrawing from Rattlesnake Springs. Apache scouts did not appear to have any difficulty in operating in unfamiliar terrain in the Southwest. These scouts had managed to penetrate into the heart of Chihenne Apache territory when they had inflicted a serious defeat upon Victorio on the Palomas River in the Black Range Mountains in New Mexico on 24/25 May, 1880. They would also penetrate the depths of the Sierra Madre in 1883 as the main part of General George Crook's expedition against the last independent Chiricahua Apaches in 1883.

Although the Pueblo scouts appear to have done very well until Tinaja de las Palmas, the Tenth Cavalry's final verdict on their performance was quite negative. Captain Nicholas

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Roll 2; *The Grant County Herald*, 14 August 1880; 'Indian Affairs', *Army & Navy Journal*, Vol. 18, 14 August 1880, p.30

<sup>40</sup> Captain Kennedy, Company F, Tenth Cavalry appears to have placed any mention of other companies of the Tenth Cavalry within inverted commas when completing the bi-monthly muster roll for his own company.

<sup>41</sup> Bi-Monthly Company Muster Rolls for Company F, 10th Cavalry July/Aug 1880 in NA, RG94

<sup>42</sup> Beck to Kennedy, 11 August 1880 in Letters Sent September 19, 1879 – August 11, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 1, Letter No.137; 'Grierson's Report', NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644

<sup>43</sup> Carpenter to Beck, AAAG, 16 August 1880 in Unregistered Letters 1878-1881, HQ DoP, NA, RG393, M1381, Roll 2

<sup>44</sup> On their withdrawal to Mexico, the Apaches ambushed a stagecoach in Quitman Canyon on 10 August, 1880, and killed an ex-Civil War General, J.J. Byrne. The driver stated that the Apaches, seventy in number, **mounted their horses** and pursued the coach for some distance before giving up the chase. ('The Driver's Account of how Gen. J.J. Byrne was Killed', *The Grant County Herald*, 9 October 1880)

Nolan, Tenth Cavalry reported on 19 August, 1880, that he had sent some Pueblo scouts into Mexico to shadow the retreating Apaches, but that they had returned within two days because their horses were worn out. The Captain clearly did not believe their account.<sup>45</sup> At the end of the Pueblo scouts six month service on 22 September, 1880, Grierson stated that they “could not be induced to re-enlist again for either love or money.”<sup>46</sup> He also noted that some of these scouts were, in his opinion, “worthless.”<sup>47</sup> This judgement would seem to be particularly unfair, especially in the light of the contribution these scouts made to the early transmitting of accurate intelligence to Grierson. However, they had failed to detect the enemy in the Sierra Diablo, and by the time the trail was discovered, Victorio had been given a sufficient enough start to be able to keep ahead of the pursuit until reaching Mexico. It is doubtful that an Apache scout company would have failed to spot them.

These issues considerably undermine the overall impression that Grierson, barring his epic 65 mile march to cut off the Apaches at Rattlesnake Springs<sup>48</sup>, was firmly in control of events during his campaign against Victorio. Indeed, the combination of a less than secure picket line, an incomplete survey and the disputed performance of his Pueblo scouts suggest that there is more to this campaign than meets the eye. They provide glimpses of a deeper problem with historical accounts of this conflict. Grierson had difficulties in winning this campaign because Victorio was pursuing an operational strategy that had previously worked perfectly against the Ninth Cavalry in New Mexico and which came very close to working against Grierson. If this aspect of the campaign is illuminated, this should lead to greater appreciation of the efforts made by Grierson and his forces to win the campaign. In other words, no account of this campaign is complete without an investigation of the stratagems employed by the Apaches.

### **Victorio’s Strategy.**

In June and early July of 1880, Victorio’s warriors had been raiding in northern Chihuahua and taken a large number of horses, cattle and other plunder.<sup>49</sup> The probable purpose of the raiding was twofold: to remount his following on fresh horses, and to move the balance of the loot taken in Mexico to the Mescalero Apache reservation to trade for fresh guns and ammunition. Moreover, he was also accompanied by a large number of women and children. When Victorio was later trapped and killed at Tres Castillos on 14/15 October, 1880,

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<sup>45</sup> Nolan to AAG, Dist. of the Pecos, 19 August 1880 in Telegrams Rec’d by General Grierson in the Field June 30-Sept. 14, 1880 HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 4

<sup>46</sup> Grierson to AAG, Dept of Texas, 31 December 1880 in Letters Sent August 23-December 31 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 1, Letter No.168;

<sup>47</sup> “The term of service of the Pueblo Scouts expired yesterday. Will you grant authority to re-enlist them or other scouts in their place, some of those discharged are worthless but it is probable that good scouts can be obtained.” (Grierson to AAG, Dept Texas, 23 September 1880 in Telegrams Sent June 23, -November 30, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 1, p.165, Letter No.495)

<sup>48</sup> See Map 1, Note 15.

<sup>49</sup> Hatch to AAG Fort Leavenworth quoted in ‘Indian Affairs’, *Army & Navy Journal*, Vol. 17, 24 July 1880, p.1048; Loud to Morrow, Fort Bayard, 30 June 1880 (p.571) & Hatch to AAG Fort Leavenworth, 13 July 1880, Telegrams Sent DoNM, Vol.3, Jan. – Nov. 1880, NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 431, pp.605-606; Pope to AAG HQ Division of the Missouri, 2 July 1880, & Hatch to AAG Fort Leavenworth, 13 July 1880, in ‘Victorio Special Files’, NA, M1495, Roll 14; Hatch to AAG Ft Leavenworth, 13 July 1880 in ‘Victorio Papers’, NA, M666, Roll 527; Hatch to Grierson, 14 July 1880 in Register of Telegrams Rec’d October 11, 1879-October 8, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 2, p.193, Letter No.329; ‘By Telegraph’, *The Grant County Herald*, 3 July 1880; Thrapp, 1974, pp.285-286; Thrapp, 1967, p.203

eighteen women and children were killed and sixty-eight women and children captured.<sup>50</sup> Apache testimony also records that among the dead (classed by the Mexicans as warriors) were a number of adolescent boys who were not old enough to be warriors, but seen as too old to either enslave or assimilate into Mexican society.<sup>51</sup> Such a large group of captured stock, women and children would be quite vulnerable. If spotted it would be virtually impossible to pass this group through Grierson's defences to the Mescalero reservation.

Despite the dangers, Victorio had successfully accomplished this same task in January 1880 when he penetrated U.S. army picket lines in New Mexico. To accomplish this goal, he had divided his following into two groups. The first consisted of warriors, whose task was to attract the attention of the U.S. army and draw them into pursuing a group of heavily armed, well mounted Apaches unencumbered by loot and dependents. Once the army had taken the bait, the second group, made up of a small number of warriors, escorted their dependents and plunder ahead of Mexican troops through the area vacated by the U.S. army and made its way unmolested to the Mescalero Reservation.<sup>52</sup> Victorio appears to have employed the same technique when he was confronted by Grierson in July 1880. He had to get his following past Grierson without his plunder and families being detected by the Tenth Cavalry. Thus, the events of 30 July: the skirmish at Tinaja de las Palmas, and the attack on the stagecoach between that point and Eagle Springs, take on a very different meaning.

The 'luck' of Grierson's small party spotting one of Victorio's scouts at Tinaja de las Palmas is curiously fortuitous considering the ability of individual Apaches to remain undetected should they so wish. The battle at Tinaja de las Palmas also appears anomalous. The approximately sixty warriors, had they intended passing that way, would have had little difficulty in pinning Grierson's small force down, infiltrating their force around from south to north and then disengaging. Grierson's small picket would have been able to do little to prevent them. However, if Victorio's purpose was to decoy the garrison at Eagle Springs to the west to allow the second group of Apaches to pass through, the prolonged skirmishing with the Tenth Cavalry at Tinaja de las Palmas makes far more sense. This succeeded in drawing in two companies of cavalry westwards from Eagle Springs, and a third company eastwards from Old Fort Quitman. As noted earlier, the attack upon the stagecoach, travelling between Tinaja de las Palmas and Eagle Springs, killed two people, yet a third man 'miraculously' escaped<sup>53</sup>, undoubtedly because the Apaches wanted the Tenth Cavalry to react to reports of attacks west of Eagle Springs. Movement west away from Eagle Springs (see Map Two) might open a gap between Eagle Springs and Van Horn Wells<sup>54</sup> through which Victorio's plunder and dependents could pass without detection.

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<sup>50</sup> Samaniego cited in Buell to AAAG Santa Fé 19 October 1880, NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 439, p.271; Brinkerhoff to AAAG Santa Fé 20 October 1880, NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 439, pp.275-276; Hatch to Pope, 21 October 1880, Telegrams Sent DoNM, Vol.3, Jan. – Nov. 1880 NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 431, p.969; Terrazas cited in Scott to Hunter, 2nd Assistant Secretary of State, Washington D.C., 22 October 1880 in Consular Despatches Chihuahua Mexico 1830-1906, NA, M289, Roll 2; See also Thrapp, 1974, p.303; Haley, 1981, p.331; Henry Parker, Chief of Scouts cited in 'Town and County', *The Grant County Herald*, 23 October 1880

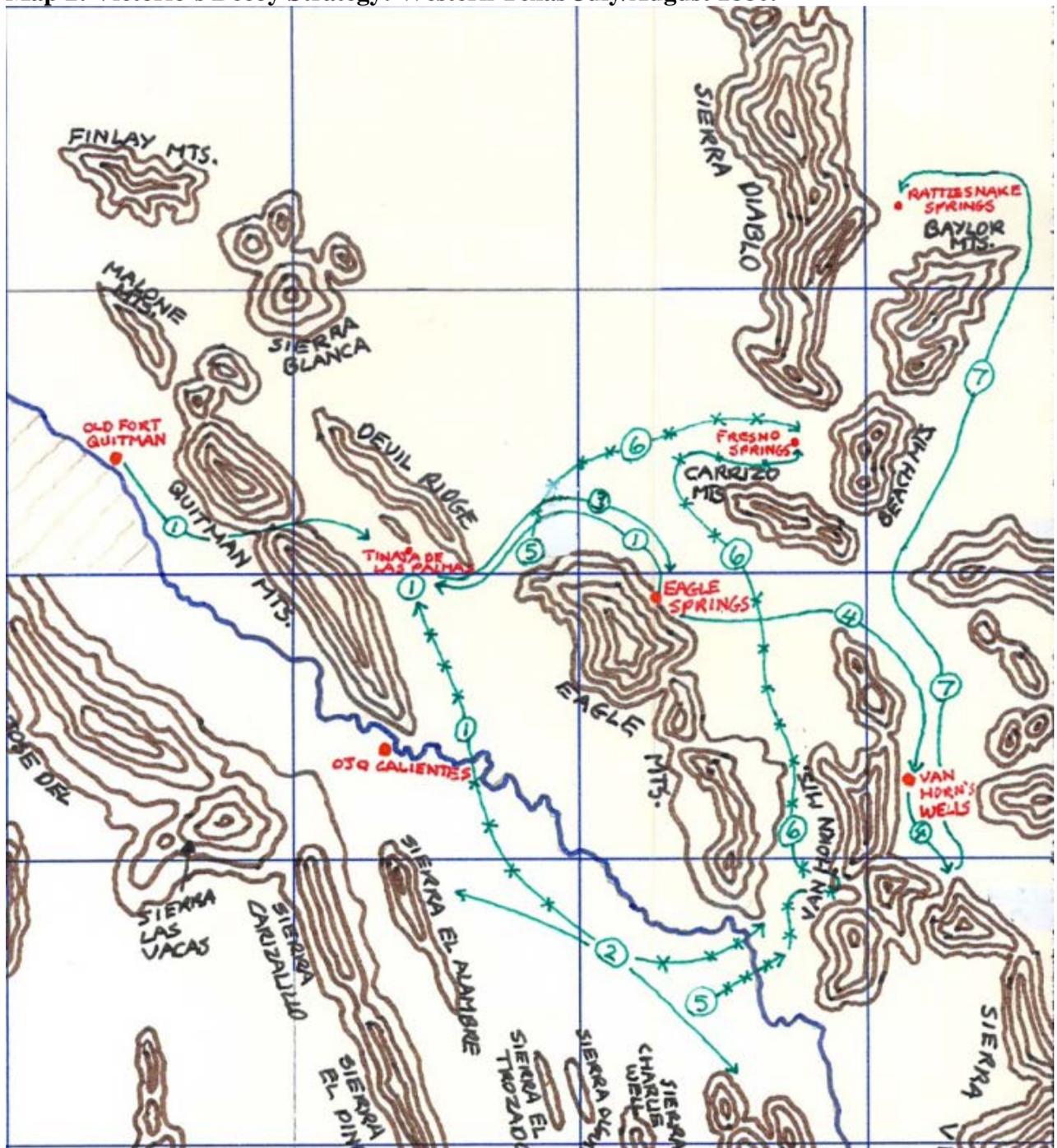
<sup>51</sup> See Kaywaykla, as told to Eve Ball. "Nana's People," *True West*, Vol X No. 6 (July-August, 1963), p.21; Eve Ball, 1970, *In the Days of Victorio: Recollections of a Warm Springs Apache* (University of Arizona Press: Tucson) pp.169-170; Eve Ball, with Nora Henn and Lynda A. Sánchez, 1980, *Indeh: An Apache Odyssey* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman) p.79 p.83

<sup>52</sup> For more detail of Victorio's decoy strategy in January-February 1880 see Watt, R.N., "Victorio's Military & Political Leadership of the Warm Springs Apaches" *War in History* Vol. 18, Issue 4, (November 2011) pp.468-471

<sup>53</sup> Baylor, G.W., 1996, *Into the Far Wild Country: True Tales of the Old Southwest* (Texas Western Press, The University of Texas at El Paso: El Paso) p.257

<sup>54</sup> At the TSHA Meeting, San Antonio, Texas, 7 March, 2014, Col. (Ret.), Thomas 'Ty' Smith, U.S. Army, pointed out that the original name was Van Horne's Wells, named after Bvt. Maj. Jefferson Van Horne, Third Infantry and not after Lt. James Judson Van Horn, Eighth Infantry. (See Smith, T.T., Thompson, J.D., Wooster,

Map 2: Victorio's Decoy Strategy: Western Texas July/August 1880.<sup>55</sup>



R. & Pingent, B.E. (Ed), 2008, *The Reminiscences of Major General Zenas R. Bliss, 1854-1876: From the Texas Frontier to the Civil War and Back Again* (Texas State Historical Association, Denton) p. 89

<sup>55</sup> As noted earlier the grid squares measure 27.5km by 27.5km apart from the eastern border of the map where it measures 27.5km by 16.5km

<b>Key</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
<b>1.</b>	29-30 July, 1880.	Victorio splits his force into two groups. He takes the first group made up exclusively of warriors across the Rio Grande in an attempt to decoy Grierson's troops away from Eagle Springs. By attacking Grierson at Tinaja de las Palmas he attracts the attention of the forces stationed at Eagle Springs and Old Fort Quitman.
<b>2.</b>	29-31 July, 1880.	If Victorio and his group of warriors are successful in drawing the forces at Eagle Springs westwards then this should give the second group made up of Victorio's dependents and plunder, escorted by a few warriors, the opportunity to pass northwards towards New Mexico by passing between the Eagle and Van Horn Mountains. This group is camping somewhere between the Sierra El Alambre and the Sierra Los Pilares.
<b>Failure No.1</b>		Victorio fails to move Grierson west as the latter is already aware, through information received from both the Mexican army's scouts and then his own scouts that there is a large group of Apaches just across the border between the Sierra El Alambre and the Sierra Los Pilares.
<b>3.</b>	30 July, 1880.	Grierson quickly moves his forces back to Eagle Springs. This point is relatively high on the northern slope of the Eagle Mountains and affords a good view of the the valley between the Eagle & Van Horn Mountains and north to the Carrizo Mountains. From Eagle Springs Grierson sent out small scouting patrols southwards to monitor the movements of the Apaches camped at 2.
<b>4.</b>	2-4 August, 1880.	Grierson, based on knowledge of the location of the second group of Apaches', decides that the next likely spot for a border incursion is to the east of Eagle Springs and moves some of his troops to Van Horn Wells and beyond. Later news of the clash between the patrol sent to Alamo Springs convinced the Colonel to move the rest of his force to Van Horn Wells and beyond in an effort to head off the Apaches.
<b>5.</b>	4 August, 1880.	The telegraph line between Old Fort Quitman and Eagle Springs is cut. Once again this appears to be an attempt to draw Grierson westwards to allow the second group of Apaches an unimpeded passage north to the New Mexico.
<b>Failure No.2</b>		The scouting party which encountered the second group of Apaches near Alamo Springs manages to alert Grierson. By the time the telegraph line is cut Grierson is already aware of the approximate location of the second group and has moved east in an attempt to intercept them.
<b>6.</b>	3-5 August, 1880.	The Apaches hold off the scouting party and move to the north and east towards the Van Horn Mountains. Once they have escaped from the patrol, they change their line of march to the northwest and make for Fresno Springs. Here they probably rendezvous with Victorio's party of warriors.
<b>Failure No.3</b>		Grierson's scout patrol and stagecoach employees warn the colonel that he has probably been outmanoeuvred in sufficient time for him to redeploy his forces and move north.
<b>7.</b>	5-6 August, 1880.	Grierson manages to get his forces to Rattlesnake Springs in advance of Victorio and forces the Apaches to retreat back to the south. Despite losing track of Victorio between 7 and 11 August, this manoeuvre wins the campaign for Grierson as Victorio is forced to return to Mexico with his plunder.

Victorio's strategy depended upon the second group remaining undetected until the leading column drew attention to themselves. Yet, as noted earlier, when the first group of Apaches attacked at Tinaja de las Palmas, Grierson had already located the second group of Apaches. Thus, on 29 July, Colonel Valle's scout reports gave a broad but first hand indication to Grierson that the main body of the Apaches were to the east roughly opposite Alamo Springs<sup>56</sup>. (See Map One, Note 12) The broad location was quickly confirmed by Grierson's own scouts on the same day<sup>57</sup> and the exact location; approximately fifty miles to the southeast of Old Fort Quitman, was pinpointed by his scouts on 31 July, 1880.<sup>58</sup> In the light of this information, Grierson assumed that he had blocked an attempt to pass through his picket lines and that the Apaches had returned to where the main group was camped.

Grierson's assumption was erroneous in assuming that the Apaches who had engaged him at Tinaja de las Palmas had returned across the Rio Grande to their main encampment. A small detachment of Texas Rangers<sup>59</sup> had joined the campaign from their base at Ysleta, Texas which is situated to the north west of Old Fort Quitman along the Rio Grande. They arrived at Old Fort Quitman on 4 August to find that the telegraph wire had been cut and they could not contact Eagle Springs. They rode on to Tinaja de las Palmas and tracked the Apaches, finding that some of these warriors had also been responsible for the attack on the stagecoach discovered by Grierson as he returned to Eagle Springs on 30 July. The Rangers continued tracking the Apaches, following the trail to the south, then east to where the Apaches had completely destroyed almost one quarter of a mile of telegraph line near the Eagle Mountains.<sup>60</sup> The comprehensive damage suggests the work of a large body of warriors. This certainly supports the idea that Victorio was trying to attract the attention of Grierson to the west between 30 July and 4 August, 1880. This group had probably stationed themselves in the Eagle Mountains during this time, which would have allowed them to monitor the activity of the five companies of Tenth Cavalry that Grierson had by then mustered at Eagle Springs.

Grierson was correct, however, in concluding that there was a large Apache grouping to the southeast, not the west, and he rightly assumed that he should focus his efforts here. Accordingly he sent out several small scouting parties, fanning them out southwards towards the last known location of the second group of Apaches camped just over the Rio Grande in New Mexico. So, when the decoy group of Apache warriors cut the telegraph line to the west on 3/4 August, 1880, Grierson again ignored their efforts to lure him to the west. Scouting reports confirmed that, what Grierson thought to be the main group of Apaches, had crossed the border. (See Map Two) The Tenth Cavalrymen encountered by the Apaches at Alamo Springs on 3 August 1880, were a "small" scouting party led by Corporal Asa Weaver with members drawn from several companies of the regiment.<sup>61</sup> The patrol's size notwithstanding they engaged an estimated 125-150<sup>62</sup> Apaches in a fifteen mile running fight.<sup>63</sup> If we factor in

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<sup>56</sup> Brinkerhoff to Act. Asst. Adj. General Santa Fé 31<sup>st</sup> July 1880, NA, RG 393, Pt.3, Entry 440, pp.96-97

<sup>57</sup> Gilmore, Eagle Springs to AAAG., DoP, Fort Quitman 12:15pm, 29 July 1880 in Telegrams Rec'd by General Grierson in the Field June 30-Sept. 14, 1880 HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 4; See also Robert Grierson Diary, 29 July 1880.

<sup>58</sup> Grierson to CO Mexican Troops opposite Quitman, 31 July 1880 in Telegrams Sent June 23, -November 30, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, M1381, Roll 1, p.85, Letter No.360

<sup>59</sup> These Rangers were from a small company of Texas Rangers based at Ysleta commanded by George W. Baylor. On 2 August, 1880, Grierson had requested that they scout east towards Eagle Springs. (Baylor, 1996, p.253) Baylor and fourteen Rangers duly set out and while they did not encounter any Apaches, the account left by Baylor provides possible insight as to what Victorio might have been trying to achieve.

<sup>60</sup> Baylor, 1996, p.253; See also Whipple to Sheridan, 11 August 1880, NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2538, p.359

<sup>61</sup> Bi-Monthly Returns for Company H, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry July/Aug 1880 in RG94, Bi-Monthly Muster Rolls; Returns From U.S. Military Posts 1800-1916 Fort Davis, Texas Jan 1879-June 1891, M617 Roll 298- from Record Groups 393

<sup>62</sup> Robert Grierson Diary, 4 August 1880; 'Grierson's Report', NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644

the broad numbers of women, children and adolescents later present at Tres Castillos in October 1880, then most of the group encountered by Weaver's detachment were probably not warriors. If those Apaches who had engaged Grierson at Tinaja de las Palmas had returned to this group, there would have been more than enough warriors to block Corporal Weaver's pursuit. Indeed, several times during their previous encounters with the Ninth Cavalry in 1879-80, Victorio's warriors, if they had sufficient numbers, were more than willing to stand their ground against relatively large units of troops. The fact that the Apaches tried to evade Weaver's small detachment suggests that there were not many warriors present.

Victorio's decoy strategy was undermined because Grierson had received clear intelligence as to the location of the second and more vulnerable group of Apaches **before** the first group of warriors tried to tempt the Tenth Cavalry westwards from Eagle Springs. His second attempt to decoy Grierson away from Eagle Springs by cutting the telegraph line was doomed for Grierson had focused his scouting parties upon what he assumed was the main party of Apaches. One of these scout detachments had quickly detected the second group of Apaches shortly after it crossed the Rio Grande.

However, this was not the end of the campaign; to continue their resistance to the U.S. and Mexico, the Apaches **had** to replenish their stocks of arms and ammunition and secure forage and water. The most reliable source of munitions was from the illicit trade networks on the Mescalero Reservation in New Mexico. The decoy strategy having failed, the second group of Apaches had the stark choice of retreating back into Mexico; staying where they were and hoping that the Mexican armed forces did not track them down; or breaking through Grierson's thin lines to rendezvous with Victorio at Fresno Springs. That they chose the latter option should not be surprising. The key determinant here was the need for fresh supplies of rifles and ammunition and fresh sources of water and forage. Another determining factor has to be speculative, but is worth considering: it was standard practice for Apaches, when separating, to set the time and location for rendezvous. Victorio had probably set a number of days to be allocated to allow sufficient time for the decoy attempt. If everything had worked to plan and both groups joined at Fresno Springs, then there was a clear line of water sources running north into New Mexico. Even if pursued, there would be sufficient warriors to hold off their pursuers. Victorio's warriors were past masters of the delaying action, as the Ninth Cavalry could attest from their earlier experiences in New Mexico. They also still had sufficient stocks of ammunition, as the vigorous skirmishing that did occur around Rattlesnake Springs on 6 August attests. Therefore, on balance, an attempt to break through Grierson's defences was still worth the risk.

Thus, when this group encountered Weaver's scouting party, they now knew that it was their responsibility to outmanoeuvre their enemies. As Weaver turned back to Eagle Springs to alert Grierson, the Apaches were seen to be heading to the northeast.<sup>64</sup> On receipt of this information, Grierson moved his forces to the east to cut off the Apaches, whom he suspected to be making for Van Horn Wells.<sup>65</sup> Once the second group of Apaches were convinced that they had escaped from Weaver, they turned to the northwest and managed to pass behind Grierson en route to the rendezvous at Fresno Spring. As they crossed the stage line between Eagle Springs and Van Horn Wells, they were spotted by an eastbound stagecoach which beat a hasty retreat to Eagle Springs. When the stagecoach tried the same

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<sup>63</sup> Bi-Monthly Returns for Company H, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry July/Aug 1880 in RG94, Bi-Monthly Muster Rolls; Returns From U.S. Military Posts 1800-1916 Fort Davis, Texas Jan 1879-June 1891, NA, M617 Roll 298

<sup>64</sup> 'Grierson's Report', NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644; Robert Grierson Diary, 4 August 1880.

<sup>65</sup> 'Grierson's Report', NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644; Bi-Monthly Company Muster Rolls for Company A & B, 10th Cavalry July/Aug 1880 in NA, RG94; Record of Events August 1880 in Returns From U.S. Military Posts 1800-1916, Fort Davis, Texas Jan 1879-June 1891, NA, M617, Roll 298

route later in the day, it was found that the Apaches had wrecked another section of the telegraph line between Eagle Springs and Van Horn Wells.<sup>66</sup> The Apaches' intent in cutting the telegraph line was to delay, for as long as possible, the news that they had passed between Eagle Springs and Van Horn Wells, from reaching Grierson. Nevertheless, one of Grierson's small scouting detachments independently confirmed the information that the Apaches had, for the moment, outmanoeuvred the Tenth Cavalry.<sup>67</sup> Now knowing the broad direction taken by the Apaches, Grierson was able to use the knowledge gathered by the Tenth Cavalry surveys to guess their probable destination. Grierson gathered his troops and force-marched them approximately 65 miles north to Rattlesnake Springs in sufficient time to prevent the majority of Victorio's following from reaching New Mexico and fresh supplies of munitions.

This part of the campaign shows the adaptability of **both** sides in this campaign in Western Texas. When the second group of Apaches realised that they had been discovered, they led their pursuers into believing that they were making in one direction. Once the immediate pursuit was thrown off, they changed direction and slipped behind Grierson. There was an element of fortune in the discovery of the Apaches by the stage driver, but Grierson's own scouting patrols also confirmed this information in sufficient time for him to react and successfully counter this move. Once he knew that he had been deceived, Grierson did not try to pursue the Apaches; he had seen the results of such practices upon the Ninth Cavalry. He immediately sought to get ahead of the Apaches. Thus, on approaching Rattlesnake Springs around midday of 6 August 1880, Victorio found himself confronted by four companies (B, C, G, & H) of the Tenth Cavalry. (See Table One) Moreover, Grierson had independently sent orders to Company K, Tenth Cavalry, tasking them with scouring these same mountains, and had detached another company from Rattlesnake Springs to scout into the Sierra Diablo. Thus, by the time he confronted Victorio at Rattlesnake Springs, four out of the eight companies of the Tenth Cavalry deployed for this campaign were present. A fifth was within easy recall and the sixth was within a day's march and would join Grierson the following day at Rattlesnake Springs. The Apaches did not have the strength, nor more importantly, the inclination, to force their way through Grierson's forces as the fight at Rattlesnake Springs clearly demonstrated. An attempt to force their way through the Tenth Cavalry would have almost certainly have resulted in unacceptable losses for the Apaches, breaching their most fundamental principle of war: that of sustaining minimal losses, for maximum gain.

At no point during this campaign did Grierson opt to pursue an Apache trail. The lesson learned by Grierson from observing the Ninth Cavalry's punishing experience against Victorio in New Mexico was one of the reasons for Grierson's success in western Texas in July/August, 1880. In other words, had Grierson decided to pursue rather than block Victorio, he would have lost the campaign.

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<sup>66</sup> Loud to Buell, 7<sup>th</sup> August 1880, Telegrams Sent DoNM, Vol.3, Jan. – Nov. 1880 NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 431, pp.713-714; Hatch to AAG Fort Leavenworth, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1880, Telegrams Sent DoNM, Vol.3, Jan. – Nov. 1880 NA, RG393, Part 3, Entry 431, p.724

<sup>67</sup> Grierson to AAG, Dept. Texas, 8 August 1880 in Telegrams Sent June 23, -November 30, 1880, HQ DoP, NA, RG393, M1381, Roll 1, pp.99-101, Letter No.384; Brinkerhoff, citing dispatch rec'd from Grierson, Rattlesnake Springs, rec'd 9 August 1880, to AAAG, Santa Fé NM 10 August 1880, NA, RG393 Part 3 Entry 440 pp.84-88; AAG, Dept of Texas to AG Chicago, 11 August 1880, 'Victorio Campaign, Feb. 1879-Nov. 1880' in 'Victorio Special Files', NA, M1495, Roll 14; 'Grierson's Report', NA, RG393, Part 1, Entry 2546, pp.639-644

**Table One: Tenth Cavalry Deployments July/August 1880.**<sup>68</sup>

(Please note that entries highlighted in **Bold Type** indicate when these companies were under the direct command of Colonel Grierson)

Co.	Officer	Date	Record of Event July/August 1880
<b>A</b>	Captain Nicholas Nolan	28 July 30 July  2 Aug 3 Aug. 4 to 6 Aug 7 to 9 Aug 10 Aug 11 Aug 12 Aug	Arrived at Fort Quitman. <b>Marched to 18 Mile Waterhole (Tinaja de las Palmas) to relieve Col. Grierson thence to Eagle Springs.</b> <b>Left Eagle Springs to Van Horns Wells.</b> <b>Marched to Devils Race Course.</b> <b>Marched to Rattlesnake Springs.</b> Scouted Sierra Diablo and picket passes. Marched to Ash (Fresno) Springs. Picked up Victorio's trail 8pm. 11.45am Confirmed Victorio back in Mexico.
<b>B</b>	Lieutenant Thaddeus W. Jones	27 July 29 July  3 Aug 5-6 Aug 7 Aug 11-12 Aug 12 Aug 21-22 Aug	Marched to Viejo Pass <b>Left with battalion under Capt. Carpenter for Eagle Springs arrived 30 July and joined Grierson's command.</b> <b>Left Eagle Springs 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug. to Devil's Race Track<sup>69</sup></b> <b>Marched to Rattlesnake Springs.</b> Moved from Rattlesnake Spring to Sulphur Springs Marched from Sulphur Springs to Eagle Spring 12 <sup>th</sup> – Left Eagle Springs down Quitman road and returned to Eagle Springs. Left Eagle Springs to Ojo Caliente.
<b>C</b>	Captain Charles D. Viele	25 July 29 July 30 July  6 Aug 7 Aug	Left Fort Davis Arrived Eagle Springs <b>Engaged hostile Apaches at Tinaja de las Palmas lost one man and five horses killed in action, one horse and one mule wounded in action.</b> <b>In action Rattlesnake Springs.</b> Moved from Rattlesnake Springs to Sulphur Springs.
<b>F</b>	Captain William B. Kennedy	26 July onwards	Arrived at Camp Safford, Guadalupe Mountains (See 14 on Map 1) Pvt. Wm Taylor killed in action with detachment under Sgt. Richardson. Also lost five horses fully equipped etc.
<b>G</b>	Lieutenant Samuel R. Colladay	24 July 30 July  3 Aug 4-5 Aug 6 Aug 7 Aug	Arrived at Eagle Springs <b>Engaged hostile Apaches. One Officer and one enlisted man wounded in action and 5 horses killed/wounded in action.</b> <b>Eagle Spring to Van Horns Wells</b> <b>Aug marched to Rattlesnake Springs.</b> <b>Engaged Apaches. No Casualties.</b> Marched to Sulphur Springs
<b>H</b>	Captain Louis H. Carpenter	27 July 29 July 3 Aug 5-6 Aug 6 Aug 7 Aug 11-12 Aug 21-22 Aug	Marched to Viejo Pass Left for Eagle Springs arrived 30 July <b>Company left Eagle Springs for Van Horns Wells on to the Devils Race Track then on to Rattlesnake Spring.</b> <b>Engaged Victorio</b> Marched to Sulphur Springs Marched to Eagle Springs then with Co's B & K to the Rio Grande at Hot Springs.
<b>I</b>	Captain Theodore A. Baldwin	27 July 14-15 Aug	Arrived at Viejo Pass 27th July Patrolled between Viejo Pass & Quitman returned to Viejo Pass 15 August.
<b>K</b>	Captain Thomas C. Lebo	20 July 21-31 July 31 July- 7 Aug 7 Aug 13 Aug 21-22 Aug	Left Fort Davis Scouted the region around the Carrizo Mountains and on to Fresno Scouted in and about the Sierra Diablo. On 1 Aug captured an Apache camp in these mountains. <b>Joined Grierson at Rattlesnake Springs.</b> Marched from Rattlesnake Spring to Eagle Springs Left Eagle Springs and proceeded to Ojo Caliente, Texas.

<sup>68</sup> This table is derived from the Record of Events July & August 1880 in Returns From Regular Army Cavalry Regiments 1833-1916, 10th Cavalry Regimental Returns 1873 to 1880, NA, M744, Roll 96; Bi-Monthly Company Muster Rolls for Companies A, B C, F, G, H, I & K, 10th Cavalry, July/Aug 1880 in NA, RG94; Return for June 1880 in Returns From U.S. Military Posts 1800-1916, Fort Concho, Texas Jan 1879-June 1889, NA, M617, Roll 242

<sup>69</sup> This probably refers to the terrain to the southeast of Van Horn Wells. On visiting Eagle Springs, Van Horn Wells and Fort Davis in 2006 it struck me that this was an appropriate name for this area (the ground was flat and the temperature was hot) but the title does not appear to have survived long enough to be used on modern maps.

## Conclusion.

When Grierson's campaign against Victorio in July-August is examined, an immediate conclusion is that his technique of picketing passes, river crossings and passes was broadly correct. Grierson also deployed a screen of small patrols in an effort to detect Apaches and did his best to maintain effective communication and coordination with Mexican forces. Yet this can only be fully appreciated if we understand the skill of his opponents. Victorio was trying to outmanoeuvre him using a very clever decoy stratagem and, when that failed, attempted to draw Grierson into a horse-killing pursuit. Whether Grierson fully appreciated the decoy stratagem is open to question but he was never going to allow himself to be deceived into chasing Victorio.

Had Grierson only been contending with Apache warriors, unencumbered with plunder and/or dependents, one suspects that they would have penetrated his defences with little difficulty. It was the early discovery of Victorio's dependents and plunder that is one of the two key factors as to why Grierson won. The other critical factor in Grierson's victory was his refusal to be drawn into a pursuit of the trail of Apaches. Instead, the colonel opted to move his forces parallel to, and then ahead of, his opponents.

Finally, Grierson was one of the few U.S. Commanders who defeated Chiricahua and Mescalero Apaches **without** the assistance of Apache scouts, which makes his victory all the more remarkable. His Pueblo scouts played a significant part in helping Grierson pinpoint the location of the second group of Apaches before Victorio could deploy his decoy party. However, they did not locate Victorio in the Sierra Diablo when Grierson had six companies of the Tenth Cavalry in or around those mountains. Had there been an Apache scout company assigned to Grierson, it is highly unlikely that Victorio would have found a secure refuge for more than two days in the Sierra Diablo. Had an Apache scout company been present Victorio might have been able to effect a retreat back into Mexico. Yet the Apaches would almost certainly have found themselves in an even more perilous position than that which they actually found themselves at the end of their campaign against Grierson.

From the Apache point of view, Victorio must have quickly appreciated the calibre of his opponent, but he had little choice but to engage Grierson. His main challenge was to maintain a steady supply of rifles and ammunition to prosecute a long-drawn campaign. Victorio had to reach the Mescalero reservation in New Mexico, as this was the most reliable source of such munitions.<sup>70</sup> Subsequent events would show that the failure of his campaign against Grierson left his following critically short of ammunition. It was that shortage of ammunition which finished Victorio. When he was caught by Mexican state troops under Colonel Joaquin Terrazas on the 14/15 October, 1880, half his warriors were absent looking for fresh stocks of ammunition. The trapped Apaches were thus relatively easy prey for Terrazas' troops.

If we remove Victorio from an account of the campaign in Western Texas against the Tenth Cavalry, we obscure his status as one of the great Chihenne/Chiricahua Apache leaders. In doing so, we also fail to fully appreciate Grierson's leadership. His scouting and survey work

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<sup>70</sup> While the U.S. army had effectively closed down the Mescalero reservation in April 1880 it does not necessarily follow that they had closed down the illicit trade of stolen stock and other plunder for rifles and ammunition. One suspects that the Mescalero Apaches involved in these transactions were probably middlemen between those U.S. citizens willing to engage in such trade. There were a number of Mescalero Apaches with Victorio who could have fulfilled this role. In addition, Nana, one of Victorio's key lieutenants, had been engaging in this activity on the Mescalero reservation since late 1878 and would probably have made his own trading contacts.

may not have been as perfect as is sometimes portrayed and his situation reports to his superiors were not as honest as they could have been. Nevertheless, this knowledge of the terrain, combined with his use of active scouting, sufficient understanding of his opponent and cooperation with Mexican forces, enabled him to pinpoint Victorio's key vulnerability. In the short term, the colonel explicitly refused to engage in fruitless pursuits of the Apaches, but predicted their line of march and blocked their passage north into New Mexico. In the long term, by denying Victorio access to the Mescalero Apache reservation, Grierson prevented the Apaches from gaining fresh supplies of rifles and ammunition. As such, Grierson inflicted a crippling wound in August 1880 which ultimately allowed Terrazas to administer the coup-de-grâce in October 1880.

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