

Johnson

HEADQUARTERS PUNITIVE EXPEDITION, U.S. ARMY,
Somewhere in Mexico, June 15, 1916.

General E. H. Crowder,
Judge Advocate General of the Army,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Crowder:

I have your letter regarding Lieutenant Johnson. Without knowing Lieutenant Johnson's record, I have been very much impressed with the clearness with which he discusses legal questions. His briefs on various matters submitted to me are well drawn and show a very accurate knowledge of law. I shall be glad to write to The Adjutant General of the Army regarding his ability as judge advocate and to recommend him for appointment in your corps. I think this would be the best way to get at it, as it would then appear to have been submitted unsolicited.

I thank you very much for your congratulations, but feel just a little bit like a man looking for a needle in a hay stack with an armed guard standing over the stack forbidding you to look in the hay. We had the whole thing in our own hands, as I thought at the time, and as later information has proved. After the Parral incident we had to stop all further movements south and the diplomatic end of the government took charge, making it necessary for us to retire north of the section where the quarry was to be found.

I have felt at times as though these facts were not clearly understood in Washington, as press dispatches have quoted Washington as saying that the pursuit of Villa was still on. It must be apparent to anyone that a limit to the distance we could go would nullify any effort to capture any of this outlaw band, as they would merely step across the line, put their thumbs to their nose and laugh at us. Our being stopped at Parral and withdrawing to a tactical position has had practically that effect as far as some of the leading outlaws are concerned.

As to Villa himself, there is some question as to whether he is alive or dead. Many of my officers who are entirely familiar with the evidence in the case are firmly convinced that Villa is dead. I do not share this view, although I believe he was pretty badly wounded and driven by our troops to the extremity of separating himself from his main command and hiding away in the mountains.

The original mission of this expedition, however, is, to my mind of small importance as compared with with the question which now confronts us--that of intervention. From my own observation I do not believe these people can ever establish

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a government among themselves that will stand. Carranza has no more control over local commanders or of states or municipalities than if he lived in London. The best people have as little confidence in him as they have in Villa, and many of them would welcome our occupation of the country.

The whole situation is pathetic, and one cannot help but feel sorry for the individual better class of pacifico Mexican, and also feel a desire to help him to realize his hopes and aspirations. To my mind, there is only one way to accomplish this, and that is by intervention. Nor do I think the number of troops necessary would be as large as some think. I have heard the estimate put as high as five hundred thousand, but I believe this number is at least double the number that would actually be required.

I wish by some hook or crook you could at once add a second increment to the army bill, as this might include me. While not perfect in all respects, I consider the army bill as much more than was dreamed of a year ago. It is a start in the right direction and I believe that in a few years we will have an army worth talking about.

With warmest personal regards, I remain as ever,

Yours very sincerely,

John J. Pershing