

#7 - Kansas is Ready

An article which ran in the March 8, 1917 edition of the *Kinsley Mercury* had the headline **“Ready to Back President. Kansas Troops in Splendid Condition for Active Service, Says Adjutant General Martin.”** The article states that 2000 Kansas men, just out of service with 6 or 7 months of training could be turned over to the federal government on short notice.

“Kansas is in excellent shape, no matter what turn affairs take,” said General Martin. “The national guard...have had service on the border, and while they have had no actual fighting, they have had training and discipline.”

The words “on the border” sent me off reviewing history again. The Mexican Revolution ran from 1910-1920. In March, 1916, Pancho Villa’s attack on the United States threatened to draw the United States into all-out war with Mexico. Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing led a horse-mounted column of Regular Army Soldiers on a punitive expedition across the U.S. border into Mexico less than a week after the attack. Villa avoided capture at this time.

More border attacks followed in early May, so President Wilson used the newly enacted National Defense Act of 1916 to activate the National Guard in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico to assume protection of the border. These units could only raise about 5,000 soldiers, primarily infantrymen. Cavalrymen were badly needed. By mid-June, Wilson mobilized an additional 110,000 National Guard soldiers from every state except Nevada which had no Guard.

The fast military action and the subsequent deployment of the National Guard would be instrumental in shifting the initiative, tactically and diplomatically, back to the Americans. In January 1917, Gen. Pershing’s regular Army troops returned from Mexico. The border crisis was, for the most part, over. On Feb. 17, 1917, the War Department ordered all National Guard units to return home.

The *Mercury* article continues to say that Kansas was ready to support President Wilson even though they had voted for him because “he had kept us out of war”. Since the U.S. government had broken diplomatic relations with the imperial government of Germany over their submarine policy, the Kansas House of Representatives adopted the following resolution:

“Resolved, By the house of representative of Kansas, this third day of February, 1917, the senate not in session, that the speaker of the house be directed to send a message to the President of the United States and to the president of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives, expressing confidence in the President and congress and pledging support of the state to the full extent it may be necessary to call upon it in this grave crisis.”