

**Remarks delivered on behalf of Mrs. Sandra Pershing on the
occasion of the centennial of the raid on
Columbus, New Mexico. 9 and 12 March, 2016**

**MAYOR SKINNER, MRS. PATTON, MR. DEAN, MR. READ,
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:**

**ALTHOUGH I AM UNABLE TO BE WITH YOU TODAY, I AM
HONORED TO HAVE BEEN ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE IN A
SMALL WAY TO COMMEMORATING AN EVENT THAT,
WHILE FOREVER SEARED INTO THIS COMMUNITY'S
MEMORY, HAS LARGELY FADED FROM THE NATIONAL
CONSCIOUSNESS.**

**YET, WHAT HAPPENED HERE 100 YEARS AGO REMAINS A
SEMINAL MOMENT IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY – A
MOMENT THAT ULTIMATELY GALVANIZED AND
TRANSFORMED OUR ARMY IN WAYS THAT WOULD
ULTIMATELY BE FELT IN EUROPE, THE PACIFIC, AND
OTHER PLACES FAR FROM COLUMBUS.**

**WHILE ALL OF US GATHERED HERE ARE WELL AWARE OF
THE EXPEDITION THAT WAS FORMED IN THE IMMEDIATE
AFTERMATH OF THE EVENT WE COMMEMORATE TODAY,**

SOME OF THE DECISIONS MADE AND INNOVATIONS INTRODUCED BY GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING, THE EXPEDITION COMMANDER, IN THE WEEKS AND MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED WERE LITTLE NOTED AT THE TIME BUT CARRIED DEEP AND LASTING IMPLICATIONS.

IT IS FREQUENTLY SAID THAT THE PROBLEM WITH GENERALS IS THAT THEY ALWAYS FIGHT THE LAST WAR. BUT GENERAL PERSHING SHOWED HIMSELF TO BE WHAT TODAY MIGHT BE CALLED AN “EARLY ADAPTOR” OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGY.

WITH AERIAL FLIGHT STILL IN ITS INFANCY AND THE AIRPLANE STILL WIDELY REGARDED AS UNRELIABLE AND EVEN DANGEROUS, GENERAL PERSHING PREVAILED ON THE ARMY TO SEND EIGHT CURTIS-JENNY AIRCRAFT TO SUPPORT HIS OPERATION AND BUILT THE FIRST U.S. MILITARY AIRFIELD—THE PRECECESSOR OF THE MODERN AIR FORCE BASE—JUST NORTH OF COLUMBUS.

MOBILITY IN THE 13TH CAVALRY, WHICH HEROICALLY AND RESOLUTELY DEFENDED COLUMBUS ON THAT FATEFUL EARLY MORNING A CENTURY AGO, CONSISTED ENTIRELY OF HORSES AND MEN. MOTORIZED VEHICLES, ALTHOUGH COMING INTO THEIR OWN IN THE CITIES, WERE ALMOST

UNIVERSALLY REGARDED AS UNSUITED TO DIRT TRAILS AND UNFORGIVING TERRAIN OF THE SOUTHWEST.

BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP GENERAL PERSHING FROM OBTAINING AND EMPLOYING HERETOFORE UNPROVEN TRUCKS, AUTOMOBILES, AND MOTORCYCLES DURING THE EXPEDITION, MANY OF WHICH WERE STAGED HERE.

AND SO, IT CAN BE SAID THAT AMERICAN AERIAL AND MECHANIZED WARFARE HAD ITS BIRTH IN COLUMBUS.

GENERAL PERSHING FOUND MASS CONFUSION WHEN HE ARRIVED IN COLUMBUS. NOT ONLY WAS THE SHOCK OF THE RAID WAS STILL FRESH, BUT A STEADY STREAM OF TROOPS, TRUCKS, TRAINS, AND SUPPLIES WAS PRODUCING THE 1916 VERSION OF GRIDLOCK.

JUST AS A YOUNG CHILD HAS TO CRAWL BEFORE IT CAN WALK AND WALK BEFORE IT CAN RUN, DOING THINGS THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN DONE IN THE MILITARY MEANS SETBACKS AND FAILURES BEFORE THINGS CAN BE MADE RIGHT.

BUT GENERAL PERSHING DIDN'T FOCUS ON FAILURE. INSTEAD, HE SAW THE POTENTIAL BROUGHT BY THE MECHANICAL AGE AND SAW TO IT THAT A NUCLEUS OF BRIGHT YOUNG OFFICERS WHO COULD SEE THE FUTURE

KNEW HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS WAS ASSIGNED TO HIS STAFF.

GENERAL PERSHING'S VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AND HIS YOUNG STAFF OFFICERS' INGENUITY AND DETERMINATION WERE THE KEYS TO MAKING ORDER OUT OF THE CHAOS IN COLUMBUS AND SET THE STAGE FOR THE MASSIVE YET ORDERLY LOGISTICAL EFFORT THAT WOULD , IN LARGE MEASURE, ENABLED AMERICAN SUCCESS IN FRANCE ONNLY TWO YEARS LATER.

ONE OF THESE BRIGHT YOUNG OFFICERS WAS A SECOND LIEUTENANT NAMED GEORGE PATTON, WHO WAS AN AIDE TO GENERAL PERSHING DURING AND AFTER THE EXPEDITION. YOUNG LIEUTENANT PATTON ADMIRED GENERAL PERSHING'S STYLE OF INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP, AND DETERMINATION TO TAKE THE FIGHT TO THE ENEMY.

AND HE LEARNED HIS LESSONS WELL, FAMOUSLY LED A RAID DURING THE EXPEDITION WITH FIFTEEN MEN AND THREE DODGE TOURING CARS, AND BROUGHT BACK BOTH SUPPLIES AND PRISONERS.

THUS DID LIEUTENANT PATTON LEAD AMERICA'S VERY FIRST MECHANIZED MILITARY ACTION. AND THE REST IS HISTORY.

FROM HIS TIME IN COLUMBUS UNTIL GENERAL PATTON'S PREMATURE DEATH, GENERAL PERSHING BECAME A MENTOR AND CHAMPION OF PATTON, WHO LATER OVERSAW THE TRAINING OF AMERICAN TROOPS IN FRANCE AND COMMANDED A TANK BRIGADE UNDER GENERAL PERSHING IN WORLD WAR I.

IT IS FITTING THAT THIS OBSERVANCE HAS PROVIDED THE MEANS FOR PERSHING AND PATTON FAMILIES TO RE-ESTABLISH CONTACT FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1942, WHEN GENERAL PATTON VISITED GENERAL PERSHING AT WALTER REED ARMY HOSPITAL JUST PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR NORTH AFRICA, AND HIS PIVOTAL ROLE IN LEADING AMERICAN TROOPS DURING WORLD WAR II.

BOTH GENERAL PERSHING AND GENERAL PATTON CARED DEEPLY FOR THEIR TROOPS. BOTH UNDERSTOOD THAT MILITARY SUCCESS WAS DIRECTLY DEPENDENT ON HIGHLY DISCIPLINED, WELL-TRAINED, AND WELL-EQUIPPED FORCES.

IS TO THESE ENDS THAT BOTH DEDICATED THEMSELVES FROM THE UNCERTAIN DAYS HERE IN COLUMBUS A CENTURY AGO AND THROUGH TWO WORLD WARS. AND SO DOING, BOTH OF THESE EXTRAORDINARY LEADERS HAD A PROFOUND EFFECT ON THE HISTORY OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

THANK YOU ALL SO VERY MUCH FOR COMING HERE TODAY.