1979

Pancho Villa's munition

Christopher R. Stewart

*The University of Montana*

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PANCHO VILLA'S MUNITIONS

By

Christopher R. Stewart

A.B., University of Michigan, 1974

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1979

Approved by:

[Signatures]

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

14 December 1979

Date
For My Parents and John and Karen Roesch.

With Special Thanks to Carolyn Wheeler and Jacklyn Yelich.
The revolution that drove Porfirio Díaz from Mexico and carried Francisco "Pancho" Villa to the front pages of American newspapers began innocently enough as a liberal protest against rigged elections. The subsequent decade-long struggle left Mexico in economic and social chaos while it built the groundwork for her political stability in the twentieth century. The actions of Pancho Villa, commander of the Division of the North, largely dictated the course of the revolution from early 1913 until his eclipse from power in the summer of 1915. Like other revolutionaries, Villa needed ordnance and materiel so that his army could achieve victory in the field. Revolutionaries of all factions required supplies to maintain the efficiency of their organizations. Because he dominated Chihuahua and other States of northern Mexico, Villa's supply system had to rely chiefly upon United States sources throughout his campaigns.

From the beginning of his career, Villa realized the critical importance of maintaining an efficient supply network to fuel his army. Without cordial ties with the United States, that network would have been jeopardized and his army vulnerable. His need for munitions in part dictated his actions toward the United States and toward Americans
in Mexico. In addition, the success or failure of his supply system to outfit his army played a role in actions in combat and his military strategy. This study will trace the foundations of his supply system, its relationship to the policies Villa carried forth, and the impact that system had on Villa's ultimate demise.
This study examined the structure and function of Francisco "Pancho" Villa's ordnance and munition system from the outset of 1913 until the end of 1915. The study sought to establish the relationship between Villa's military successes and failures in the Mexican Revolution and his supply organization. Because Villa often publicly stressed the importance of munitions in explaining his campaigns, special attention was given to Villa's public claims about supply and the actual state of his ordnance strength as determined by this research.

In order to determine the origin of Villa's military supplies, how Villa financed payment, and what quantities he accumulated during the three years of the Mexican Revolution analyzed in this, several primary sources were used. After consulting a wide-range of secondary works, research focused heavily on Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929, Record Group 59, National Archives, M-274, Call Number 502. In addition, other critical information came from The Foreign Relations of the United States, The American Republics, 1913, 1914, 1915; The New York Times; The William F. Buckley Papers; and The United States Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations (Fall Committee) 1919-1920, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2. Because Villa purchased almost all of his munitions through the United States, research relied on no Mexican language material.

This study reached several conclusions. Munition supply proved important to Villa's early military success in the revolution prior to December 1914. After that time, the acquisition of munitions was less critical to Villa's military demise than his faulty tactics, contrary to the explanations (given by Villa). Research showed that Villa's army was well supplied with munitions throughout the decisive summer of 1915. His pivotal defeats at Celaya and Leon were not the result of a breakdown in supply but rather because he lacked sound military judgement. Research also supported other studies which linked Germany with Mexican revolutionaries. The quantity of munitions Villa received indicated that German financing of Villa most certainly began as early as April 1915, several months prior to the date heretofore suspected.
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Introduction

The Revolution

Porfirio Díaz ruled Mexico for thirty-five years. At the end of his long reign in 1910, mass discontent with his government had reached a point at which opposition, no matter how timid, met popular support. Francisco Madero, an eccentric hacendado, campaigned vigorously and unsuccessfully to unseat Díaz from the Presidency in the elections of 1910. Madero escaped to the United States. Labeling the elections a fraud, Madero issued a manifesto—known as the Plan of San Luis Potosí—calling on the Mexican people to revolt against the old dictator. Much to the surprise of all, this appeal drew widespread support. Simultaneous rebellions in Morelos, Mexico City, and Chihuahua led to Díaz’s resignation and the subsequent election of Madero as President in the fall of 1911. Madero discovered that victory over Díaz was more easily achieved than the pacification of Mexico. In February 1913, Victoriano Huerta directed a revolt which toppled Madero’s government and threw Mexico into renewed civil war.¹

News of the coup traveled quickly to El Paso, Texas, where Pancho Villa had temporarily established a home. Villa had good cause to oppose the Huerta takeover. During Madero’s revolt against Díaz,
Villa allied himself with the rebels and served as a captain in the revolutionary army. Prior to joining Madero, Villa had spent most of his adult life as a bandit in Chihuahua and Durango. His mainstay had been cattle rustling. Having been a lifelong outlaw, Villa had a natural reason to oppose the Diaz government. Villa met Don Abraham González, the future governor of Chihuahua, and the two men became fast friends. González, the leader of Madero's Anti-Reelectionist movement in Chihuahua, convinced Villa to join the rebellion against Diaz.

Villa developed what one historian has called an "almost doglike devotion" to Madero. Madero's sincere concern for the plight of the common people impressed Villa who had been accustomed to encountering exploitation and harassment from the wealthy. Madero returned Villa's loyalty—a quality Villa valued above all others in his friendships—many times over. He pardoned Villa's past crimes and publicly defended Villa to the press. Madero told the El Paso Times that Villa's banditry had been caused by the oppression and tyranny of the Diaz government and that Villa deserved praise for his work in the revolution. At the end of the Madero rebellion, Villa retired from service in the revolutionary army to settle in Chihuahua. The Madero government gave him a large stipend as a reward for his services.
Villa's retirement lasted only several months. By March 1912, Pascual Orozco, Jr., had begun yet another rebellion against the Madero government from his stronghold of Chihuahua. Villa fled to the mountains of Chihuahua, formed an army of his veteran troops, and began a campaign against Orozco. Meanwhile, Madero dispatched General Victoriano Huerta from Mexico City to quell the rebellion and ordered Villa to serve under him. Villa and Huerta, both accustomed to command, soon quarrelled violently. The cause of the dispute remained unclear but the outcome did not. Huerta arrested Villa for insubordination and placed him in front of a firing squad. Through the efforts of Colonel Rubio Navarrete and Raul Madero, the President's brother, Villa escaped death by a narrow margin and was instead transferred to the penitentiary in Mexico City. Villa passed three months in jail learning rudimentary reading and writing, skills which he had not acquired in his youth. On September 16, 1912 Villa eluded his captors, walking out of his cell disguised in a pair of sunglasses. The ease with which he escaped confinement suggested that the authorities were not opposed to his flight.

Villa made his way to exile in the United States crossing the border at Nogales, Arizona and eventually settling in El Paso. Having learned of an impending coup against Madero, Villa attempted to warn Madero through messages to Abraham Gonzalez. The plotters had even offered Villa a chance to participate. This warning did little good.
Huerta's coup, and the subsequent executions of Madero and Vice President Pino Suarez, enraged Villa. The later execution of Abraham Gonzalez cemented Villa's hatred for Huerta. Not only were the two men he most admired murdered but Huerta and Orozco--the persons responsible for these acts, in Villa's eyes--were already his bitter enemies.

The details of Villa's entry into Mexico to start his campaign against Huerta remained hazy and contradictory. It was clear that prior to departing from El Paso, Villa received a small loan from Gonzalez, some money from his brother Hipolito, and 1,500 pesos from José María Maytorena, then governor of Sonora. Some time in late March or early April 1913, Villa crossed the border in the vicinity of Columbus, New Mexico, with eight companions. Sixteen months later Villa would command an army of 40,000 men.

The Porous Border

Revolutionary bands formed spontaneously throughout Mexico in opposition to Huerta's takeover. The strongest center of rebellion was in the northern states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Sonora, all having contiguous borders with the United States. Villa and others who joined the anti-Huerta movement immediately understood the importance of American support to the success of their efforts. In order to defeat Huerta, arms and ammunition had to be
gathered. Huerta, who ran the official government of Mexico, imported munitions directly from the United States until July 1913 and from Europe and Japan until he fled from Mexico in August 1914. The sale of munitions of war to Mexico had been declared illegal by order of a Presidential Proclamation of March 14, 1912; however, exceptions to this embargo were routinely made for the Federal Government of Mexico. The rebels, of course, resented this. Rebel leaders telegraphed the President and the State Department praising the non-recognition of Huerta and beseeching the government to allow them to purchase munitions. Until February 3, 1914, the United States government denied the rebels their wish.

American responses to the Mexican revolution varied dramatically, especially regarding the export of munitions into Mexico. At the outset of the Madero-led revolt against Diaz, President Taft and his Secretary of State Philander Knox attempted to sustain a strictly neutral attitude toward the rebels. Despite the protests of the Diaz government demanding that the rebels be denied access to arms, Taft refused to curtail this trade. Taft believed that no United States laws were broken in the mere purchase of arms by the rebels. Because no insurrection had been organized in American territory, the rebels remained within the law. In any event, munitions provided to the rebels through American sources had no bearing on Diaz's defeat.
Although Taft would have preferred to keep his policy of neutrality toward the revolution in Mexico, changing conditions forced him to alter that position. He had refused to take action in Mexico in part because he accepted a more limited Presidential role and because he felt any intervention in Mexico's internal affairs would place Americans and American property in Mexico in dangerous straits. Yet by early 1912 that policy showed itself to be ineffective. Americans and American holdings in northern Mexico suffered from mounting numbers of rebel outrages while the Madero government appeared incapable of remedying the situation. Taft's dilemma hinged on arms trading. "The paradoxical part about the whole matter," Atwater affirmed, "was that the revolutionists who were threatening and menacing American lives and property were receiving their arms and ammunition across the border from the United States, especially through the frontier towns of Texas." By late February, Taft began to move more forcibly. Partially because of Henry Lane Wilson's warnings of impending anarchy, Taft had ordered that army strength along the border be increased. Through this show of force, Taft hoped to impress Madero with the seriousness of his commitment to Americans in Mexico. Still, this was not enough.

By March 1912, Taft realized he had to take more drastic action—short of intervention—if Americans were to be safeguarded. Since American investment and American citizens in Mexico were
predominantly in the north, and since rebel power centered in the same regions, Taft found his options quite limited. Any American action favoring the Madero government would be interpreted as a hostile move by the rebels; thus, Americans would be targeted for increased reprisals. Taft restrained from direct intervention because that act would certainly provoke the killing of Americans. He also had to consider the possibility that prolonged anarchy in Mexico would encourage European intervention.

The final incident that impelled Taft to act came in late February. Taft already knew that the northern rebels were decidedly anti-American from the continuous missives from Henry Lane Wilson. At the end of the month, the rebels captured Ciudad Juarez, the center for arms imports from the city of El Paso just across the Rio Grande. On March 2, 1913, Americans living in troubled regions were requested to seek safety; less than two weeks later an embargo on the shipment of munitions into Mexico was imposed.

The Madero government had long-pressed for just such an act. However, as first employed, the embargo denied munitions to both rebel and government buyers. The Presidential Proclamation cut off all shipments, although the Joint Congressional Resolution empowered the president to grant exceptions to the embargo. By March 26, Taft decided to permit Madero's government to import munitions.
policy remained in effect through the remainder of 1912 and well into 1913 for the official government of Mexico. The hesitation in granting import privileges to Madero's government may have been made in hopes of delaying rebel reprisals against American properties and citizens. By making no special announcement of this action, Taft might have hoped to disguise American policy and thus to forestall rebel retaliation. If so, he failed. The rebels markedly increased their attacks on United States citizens and property.27

Woodrow Wilson faced similar difficulties in Mexico and he, too, used the regulation of arms exports as an instrument of his policy. His aims in Mexico had an entirely different focus than those of Taft. Instead of professing a primary concern for the safety of American lives and property, Wilson worked to bring an American-style democracy to that country. He applied the "kernel of his domestic policy" to foreign affairs.28 However nobel an aim this may have been, Wilson used the wrong tactics to implement this goal.29

Huerta's late February coup coincided with the lame duck days of Taft's administration. Although American Ambassador Wilson pressed for recognition of the new Mexican government, Taft decided to put off his decision. He left this choice to the incoming President. The issue of American response to the revolution had been effectively used against Taft in the 1912 campaign. Democrats criticized Taft for his apparent ineptitude in aiding Americans in Mexico.30 Taft may have
found satisfaction by deferring this delicate problem to Wilson. The hostile American press reaction to the assassinations of Madero and Suarez also contributed to Taft's postponement of recognition. In addition, several unresolved territorial disputes and claims against the Mexican government for damages suffered during the revolution had to be considered. Taft and Knox also had to gain assurances that the new government of Mexico was willing to safeguard foreigners living in Mexico. 31

In any case, Wilson opposed recognition. He announced on March 11, 1913 that "we have no sympathy with those who seek to seize the power of government to advance their own personal interests or ambition." 32 Clearly, he intended this as a warning to Huerta. In a statement not intended for public perusal, he made his stand even more emphatic: "I will not recognize a government of butchers." 33 Coming as these statements did before the end of May 1913, Wilson was evidently determined to force Huerta from power. Not only had Huerta illegally deposed a democratically formed government, Wilson felt, but he had compounded his sin with the murders of Madero and Suarez.

Wilson's attitude toward the Huerta government contributed to the ease with which rebel bands were able to circumvent the law and secure munitions. This factor alone, though, did not explain the great success smugglers enjoyed from the advent of their rebellion against Huerta. If Wilson had seriously intended to enforce the
embargo, more effective means to do so were at his disposal. The fact that he refrained from sending more agents or ordering Army personnel to assist border patrols was not based on a lack of information about the prevalence of smuggling. Agents from the border sent ample and frequent reports to Washington complaining of the ongoing illicit arms trade. Kenneth Grieb believed that Wilson's inaction and the absence of specific directives from the State and Treasury Departments indicated "that Washington was at least unconcerned about the problem."34 Evidence supported his analysis.

The border between the United States and Mexico presented an immense challenge to any police force. Stretching approximately 1,600 miles, unfenced, and largely unpatrolled, the opportunities it presented for undetected crossing were innumerable. Aside from geographic convenience for smuggling, those charged with implementing the embargo faced a hostile population. The sympathies of people along the border decidedly favored the rebel cause. Consul Marion Letcher in Chihuahua made a sound summary of the border atmosphere when he reported, "to be anybody or anything among them, one must be an active supporter and adherent of the Mexican rebellion."35

Other factors contributed to the pro-rebel sympathy along the border. Tasker H. Bliss, the Commanding General of the Army's Southern Department at Fort Sam Houston Texas, cited the political clout of the Mexican-American population in influencing the border
community to aid the rebels. He also pointed out that those who helped
the smugglers received special compensation from the rebels; their
cattle were not as apt to be stolen. Merchants who catered to
rebel needs both in illicit arms and non-military supplies also backed
the rebellion because it augmented their trade.

Those charged with prevention of smuggling acted less than
zealously in discharging their duties. The Mexican Embassy in
Washington complained that the authorities in El Paso openly assisted
rebel smugglers while treating the officers of the Mexican government
with contempt. The Collector of Customs in Brownsville, Frank
Rabb, was the object of numerous protests from the Mexican Federal
Government; they pointed out that Rabb was a close friend of General
Luis Blanco, the commander of the Constitutionalist troops who had
captured Matamoros. Matamoros, of course, was just across the
river from Brownsville. Department of Justice agent C.E. Breniman
observed that the Custom house at Douglas, Arizona, across the
border from the rebel-held town of Agua Prieta, only made a pretense
of inspecting carts and wagons which passed across the boundary.
Even the Army patrols were implicated; the troops along the Arizona
border were accused of accepting bribes to allow smugglers to carry
on their work.

To facilitate smuggling, the rebels employed a variety of
devices which escaped detection and some devices which did not. The
clandestine competition between rebel smugglers and American authorities also involved agents of the Mexican Federal Government. These Mexican agents kept close watch over the illicit arms traders and frequently fed this information to United States Department of Justice agents. At times, the tips which Mexican agents furnished to their American counterparts bordered on the ridiculous. The Mexican Consul in New Orleans told Department of Justice agents that the rebel smugglers had concealed ammunition in piano crates intended for shipment to El Paso. A careful search revealed no such shipment. Mexican agents learned that the rebels planned to ship munitions into Agua Prieta cleverly hidden in cans of tomatoes, although diligent searches by Department of Justice agents failed to turn up the ammunition. In another false lead, Mexican agents in New York City clued American authorities onto the fact that the steam ship SUME carried a cargo of arms for the rebels; again, searches found no such cargo.

Still, not all the preposterous sounding tips from Mexican agents merited dismissal. On the contrary, many of the fears they expressed about rebel smuggling were substantiated. Consul Arturo M. Elias in El Paso accused the Shelton-Payne Arms Company of that city of complicity in a plot to deliver 212,000 cartridges and 1,000 rifles to the rebels in late May 1913. Department of Justice agents spoke to Mr. Payne and found that he indeed engaged in frequent sales to the rebels. An agent reported:
"Mr. Payne frankly admitted that he had been down to Del Rio and other points proximate to the border for the express purpose of getting orders for guns and ammunition as that is his business, and he believes he is well within his rights so long as he does absolutely nothing to assist in getting the goods across the border, which Mr. Payne stated his firm has time and again refused to do."\(^{44}\)

Arms dealers along the border showed themselves more than willing to aid the rebels to circumvent the feeble detection system thrown up by the American government. Hardware dealers and dry goods merchants along the border imported large stores of cartridges and guns, which they sold in small lots to anyone with sufficient funds.\(^{45}\) To the inquiries of Justice Department agents as to where the munitions were bound and who purchased them, dealers turned a cold shoulder. Frustrated agents consistently received such non-cooperation with their investigations.\(^{46}\) Everyone they encountered sympathized with the rebels, save the Mexican Federal agents. The Praeger Hardware Company, for example, made a practice of repacking ammunition in concealed packages and made deliveries to their customers in the middle of the night to further confound the efforts of the authorities.\(^{47}\)

Two other factors aided the smugglers' success. First, the Department of Justice agents along the border were woefully understaffed for the task ahead of them. The proliferation of arms traders along the entire rebel-held frontier frustrated the small staff assigned to stop smuggling. "We are so short of help" the agent in San Antonio lamented, "that it is next to impossible to keep up with all these
movements." In May 1913, one agent policed the region from Del Rio to Eagle Pass, two American towns directly opposite rebel-held territory. That agent considered the job to be "an utter impossibility." By the middle of 1913, one agent served in San Antonio with three others who had the responsibility to investigate smuggling along the border from Yuma, Arizona to Brownsville, Texas. It was not an ample staff for the work.

The second factor helping rebel smuggling was their own network. By the end of April, the Constitutionalists—as the northern rebels, loosely united, were called—had already established juntas in American border towns at El Paso, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Laredo, and Brownsville, and further inland at San Antonio. These juntas, in addition to smuggling efforts, served as the centers for pro-rebel propaganda. Since the rebels controlled almost all of northern Mexico bordering the United States by the end of May 1913, with the exception of Ciudad Juárez, they had a constant and direct funnel to American munitions. The substantial trade carried forth in these months naturally produced arrests but here too the rebels were fortunate.

The high profits to be made, the proliferation of buyers and the friendliness of the public built a favorable climate for illegal trade, yet in spite of these conditions arrests were made. If smugglers had the misfortune to walk into the arms of United States Customs
officers or of agents of the Department of Justice with a load of guns and bullets, they still had little reason to fear severe penalties. Successful prosecution for violations of the embargo law proved highly unlikely. In the first place, as Bliss observed, even if apprehended and brought to trial, the rebels were guided by expert legal counsel.\textsuperscript{53} The actions of courts, however, almost negated the need for any counsel at all.

Two decisions by the Arizona District Court in March 1913 pointed the way for future litigation against smugglers. These decisions in indictments filed against the Steinfeld Company of Tucson and the Phelps-Dodge Hardware Company of Tucson and Douglas effectively condoned smuggling in spite of the Proclamation of March 14, 1912. These two companies dealt in huge supplies of rifles and cartridges which they ordered from east coast munitions firms. Federal District Attorneys brought charges against them for violation of the Proclamation hoping to end wholesale shipments to the border. These hopes were not realized.

The court found that since the defendants did not actually ship the munitions they sold but rather merely sold munitions to customers in the United States, they were not guilty. It was no violation of the law simply to order millions of rounds of ammunition. In addition, since no specific destination for the arms bound for Mexico could be proved, the court overturned the indictment. Charges, they affirmed,
had to denote specifically where the illegal shipments were bound. These decisions "permitted the shipment of large quantities of arms and ammunition to frontier towns, when the real destination was obviously Mexico, and then, in effect, forbade Federal officers to interfere with such goods until the final shipment into Mexico had already begun." A smuggler would have to be caught in the act in order to be successfully prosecuted; even then, there was no guarantee that trial would convict the accused trafficker. In the Grand Jury investigation of twelve cases of suspected smugglers at Phoenix, all indictments were rejected. In an ironic twist, the Foreman of the Grand Jury, Tom Coleman, accused agents of the Mexican Government of being at the root of all the trouble; he complained that they harassed honest tradesmen. Although Coleman was known to have ties with rebel smugglers, this decision reflected the strongly pro-rebel sentiment of the border.

Thus, the border environs demonstratively offered a sound base of operations for smuggling. Despite the embargo on arms sales, the traffic in munitions continued, largely unaffected by the law. A pro-rebel public, an inefficient and poorly staffed police force, a sympathetic court system, and an eager group of arms merchants combined to speed the delivery of weapons to Mexico. Department of Justice Agents estimated that 3,000,000 rounds of ammunition crossed the border in the vicinity of Douglas, Arizona in 1913 alone.
suspected by Department of Justice agents of being rebel suppliers—Krakauer, Zork, and Moye and Shelton-Payne Arms Company, both of El Paso—received a combined supply of more than 7,500,000 cartridges and 7,000 rifles from 1912 until the end of 1913. Through careful attention to his ordnance system, Villa assured himself of a large share of this trade as the revolution progressed.
CHAPTER I: FOOTNOTES


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48. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, May 26, 1913, 812.00:7622.

49. RDS, R.G. 59, Consul Letcher to Secretary of State, May 27, 1913, 812.00:7669.

50. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, July 7, 1913, 812.00:7979.
51. RDS, R.G. 59, Consul Ellsworth to Secretary of State, May 1, 1913, 812.00:7334.


53. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, April 24, 1913, 812.00:7256.

54. Atwater, American Regulation of Arms Exports, pp. 87-88.

55. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, December 1, 1913, 812.00:10025.

56. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, November 17, 1913, 812.00:9833.

57. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, January 2, 1914, 812.00:10401.

58. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, December 19, 1913, 812.00:10284.
Villa, like other budding revolutionaries, encountered various obstacles in outfitting and organizing his army for battle. Chief among his problems were the raising of revenue to purchase supplies and pay his troops and the building of public support, both at home and in the United States. Villa showed that he was resourceful and determined in his efforts to achieve these goals.

Until his defeats at the battles of Celaya and León in the summer of 1915, Villa had no difficulty in recruiting men to join his army. Finding the money to pay for his army's needs proved more complex a challenge. Aside from the 10,000 peso-stipend he received from Madero at the close of his campaign against Díaz, Villa was not a rich man. In all likelihood, Villa spent this money prior to Huerta's coup. One could speculate that Villa had accumulated some money from his career as an outlaw, though no evidence of this has come to light. At the outset of entry into Mexico, he received 1,500 pesos from José María Maytorena and a loan from his brother--enough money to buy horses and guns for his small band in the spring of 1913.
Villa relied on his skills as a bandit to gain the necessary money in the early stages of his campaign; his critics argued that he financed himself in this manner throughout the revolution. The New York Times reported that Villa robbed a train east of Chihuahua City in early April 1913 and took 75,000 dollars worth of silver bars. In a later story describing the same incident, the El Paso Times placed the value of the stolen silver at 90,000 dollars. Since the El Paso Times had closer links to Villa's campaign, their estimate was probably more accurate. In any case, train robbery could not be depended upon as a constant source of revenue and Villa looked elsewhere.

The sale and taxing of cattle made throughout the revolution gave Villa a more consistent income. Shortly after making his train robbery, Villa confiscated a herd of cattle and drove them to Columbus, New Mexico, where he sold them to Sam Ravel. Ravel played a role in Villa's much debated attack on Columbus in March 1916. Additional cattle-related funding probably came to Villa through the efforts of the Madero family—wealthy pro-revolutionary hacendados. Since the Maderos were longtime allies of Villa, it was safe to assume Villa received a part of the income from the sale of Madero family cattle arranged in March 1913. Raul Madero, later one of Villa's most trusted generals, traveled to Fort Worth, Texas, where he completed a large sale.
Another possible source in the first months of Villa's campaign might have been pro-revolutionary sympathizers, both in the United States and in Mexico. The aid sent to Villa's soldiers by the people of El Paso following Villa's capture of Ciudad Juárez attested to the willingness of Americans to aid his movement. One known donation came to Villa's compatriot, Colonel Toribio Ortega, from a grateful El Paso citizen. The mother of Dr. Harle, whom Villa freed from prison where he had been held by Mexican Federals, appreciated the rebel actions. She sent 500 dollars to Ortega which he used to purchase munitions. This example was probably not an isolated case, especially because of the great popular support Villa received.

Contrary to the testimony of Henry Lane Wilson—who asserted that Villa plundered mines and estates of foreigners wherever he found them—Villa consistently abstained from this action, with the exception of the property of Spanish nationals and the Creel and Terrazas families. Villa's confiscations did increase beginning in the spring of 1915, but prior to that time foreign-held property in Mexico under Villa's control was relatively secure. Villa did rely on forced loans from banks, upper-class Mexicans, and Spanish nationals, however, to derive income for his army. Because of his needs for munitions, he refrained from imposing these policies on Americans and their companies until after the American recognition of Venustiano Carranza in October 1915.
The documented funds Villa gathered throughout 1913 amounted to a considerable sum and, in part, explain the relative ease with which he supplied his growing army. In his first major victory, the capture of Torreón, Villa demonstrated his deference toward Americans and his general revenue-raising scheme which he followed through the revolution. Villa demanded a forced loan of 3,000,000 pesos from the predominantly Spanish merchants and land owners of that city, a demand which specifically exempted Americans. Writers disagreed over the exact sum Villa managed to extract from Torreón in his first visit in October 1913. Martín Luis Guzmán believed Villa took 300,000 pesos; Clendenen stated that Villa received 300,000 dollars. This confusion resulted in part from the fact that Villa apparently demanded a specific loan from the banks of Torreón for 300,000 pesos. According to reports from John Silliman, American vice-consul at Veracruz, Villa managed to collect most of his loans in any case, taking a total of 3,000,000 pesos from the city. At that time, two pesos equalled about one dollar.

Before departing, Villa ordered that all cotton in the region be harvested as it was property of the revolution. The Laguna district of Torreón produced almost all of Mexico's cotton and the estimated value of the crop approached 20,000,000 dollars. Had he been able to convert all this cotton to cash, it certainly would have given him
ample funding for his army. However, because Villa's stay in Torreón was threatened by counterattack from advancing Federal troops, he remained there only a short time. His army was vulnerable. He retreated northward two weeks after taking the city, leaving a small garrison behind. The Federals retook the city by early December. Even if Villa had succeeded in harvesting and shipping the crop, he had no direct route north toward the American border; the Federals still occupied Chihuahua City and Ciudad Juárez, key points on the railroad line. Without this link to the American market, it was not probable that Villa—at this time—exploited the Laguna cotton.

Although accounts differed over the exact quantity of money Villa extracted from Torreón, they agreed on how he spent it. Villa dispatched his brother Hipólito and another trusted compatriot, Carlos Jauregui, with money to go to the border and buy arms. Jauregui had been helpful to Villa in his escape from prison and had joined Villa's original band crossing into Mexico from the United States. After a short squabble with General Tomás Urbina who attempted to pocket a portion of the loot for himself, Hipólito Villa and Jauregui took the money to the vicinity of Ojinaga where they transacted their business. Since no further record of their actions appeared, "one can surmise they were successful in their mission."

With an army then numbering between 6,000 and 9,000 soldiers, Villa moved in early November against the remaining Federal
opposition in Chihuahua State. After a three-day skirmish with the
Federal garrison at Chihuahua City, Villa directed a lightning attack
on Ciudad Juárez. The Federals assumed Villa had pulled back to the
south, retreating from Chihuahua City to lick his wounds, but they
erred in their perceptions. On the night of November 14-15, Villa
led his army in a surprise storming of Juárez which resulted in quick
victory. His army entered the town in trains which the Federals
believed carried their own forces. His capture of Juárez brought
him control of almost all of Chihuahua for it compelled the Federals
at Chihuahua City to withdraw to safety at Ojinaga. By the beginning
of January 1914, all of Chihuahua State belonged to Villa.

Control of Juárez boosted Villa's financial stature. Three days
after he entered the city—before he moved his troops south to meet
the Federal counterattack at Tierra Blanca—he demanded and
received a forced loan of 100,000 dollars from two banks in Juárez. In
addition, in his rapid capture of the city he had taken 500,000 dollars
worth of clothing and other provisions from the stores of the Federal
garrison. Having total authority in Chihuahua allowed Villa to draw
from numerous sources to finance his affairs. He immediately
imposed taxes on the cattle exported from Chihuahua to the United
States. One of the larger ranches paid him nearly 25,000 dollars
duty in the months of November and December alone. Another cattle
company reportedly paid him 8,000 dollars in the same time.
Apparently, the ranchers had reached a working arrangement with Villa, for Bliss reported that they seemed satisfied with the Villa taxes.28

Other loot came to him while in Juárez. He collected 300,000 pesos just after arrival from gambling hall revenues and more forced loans on local banks.29 With a constant income assured from gambling halls, bordellos, duties on cattle, and his forced loans, Villa amassed a tremendous war chest with which to outfit his army.30

In Chihuahua City, still more bounty awaited Villa. After the Federal soldiers fled, Villa entered Chihuahua City and decreed the outright confiscation of all property owned by Spanish nationals; at the same time he issued his own fiat currency and declared that it was the only legal tender for the regions he dominated. People were ordered to exchange Mexican Federal money for Villist bills.31 Later that month Villa expanded his confiscations. He ordered that all lands and property belonging to the Creel and Terrazas families now belonged to the revolution.32 Because Terrazas and Creel owned the largest estates in Mexico and had vast cattle holdings, this act gave Villa access to 500,000 head plus banks, homes, and ranches.33

Still more income came to Villa. Having captured Luis Terrazas Jr., Villa forced him to reveal the location of 500,000 dollars of gold which had been taken from the Banco Minero in Chihuahua City and hidden from the rebels before they advanced into town.34 Although
Guzmán and Reed presented differing accounts of the seizure of this booty, they concurred that it totaled 500,000 dollars. Villa also took control of several mines when he decreed wholesale confiscations. The exact worth of this metal escaped tabulation; however, The New York Times reported in early February that Villa was "already in possession of much bullion." At that time he considered minting his own coins, though he never did. Mexicans, as most people in times of instability, tended to hoard gold and silver. Thus had he minted coins they would have simply been taken from circulation. In any event, having decided not to operate a mint, he used captured bullion to purchase goods in El Paso.

Thus, by early 1914, Villa had built a solid economic base from which to supply his forces. Estimates placed his accumulated wealth at 5,000,000 pesos. In addition to this cash, he had control over vast property and livestock. He had achieved a remarkable financial success, and with this money he built the most powerful army Mexico has seen.

Throughout his rise to power in Chihuahua, Villa cultivated a positive public image; this image aided his recruiting efforts in drawing soldiers to his army but more importantly it helped to maintain his supply lines in the United States. Villa wished Americans to know that he professed nothing but friendship toward the United States. He did this in a variety of ways. In June 1913, he sent a note to the American
Consul at Ciudad Juárez warning him of a pending attack on that city. He expressed his anxiety for Americans in that city who might suffer injury when his army moved in. Although this might have been part of a plan to divert the attention of the Mexican Federal army from his real intentions, Villa knew the importance of American good will from the beginning. A month later Villa sent his troops to the relief of a band of American citizens at Madera who were menaced by outlaws.

In August, Villa tracked down and executed the bandit "Mocho" Moreno who was accused of murdering an American citizen in Chihuahua. He told the press he would come to the aid of any Americans who were in the regions under his rule. The El Paso Times gave front page coverage to these heroic pro-American acts undertaken by Villa, which led to speculation that Villa bribed this paper. However, from May 1913 until early 1915, The New York Times also donated much space to pro-Villa stories. At any rate, Villa made certain that his pro-American deeds received attention.

As Villa rose in military stature, he continued his deference toward Americans and American property in Mexico. Reports from Torreón in October 1913 confirmed Villa's good will. "General Villa," Consul Carothers said, "has shown himself very well disposed to Americans." Not only had he exempted Americans from his forced loans, but he had ordered troops to guard American businesses and had provided a special train for Americans who might wish to leave
the city. Immediately after taking Juárez, Villa ordered the execution of looters and forbade drinking; his ability to keep good order in Juárez impressed consul Edwards and relieved those citizens of El Paso who had feared worse.

Villa hoped to make his actions clear and justifiable in the American public's mind. For every criticism leveled against him, Villa had a logical and immediate countercharge. Villa took bank funds, but he promised to repay the money when the revolution triumphed. Villa confiscated the property of the Creel and Terrazas families, but he decreed that their estates would be divided among the widows and orphans of the revolution. He responded to criticisms of his actions against the Spanish and wealthy Mexicans saying that these people had supported the tyrannical Huerta government and had oppressed and abused the Mexican people for centuries. When the State Department made repeated protests against those seizures, Villa promised that former owners would be compensated for their losses. Villa's actions convinced John Silliman—who had never met him—that Villa represented "the highest type of physical, moral, and mental efficiency" possible in Mexico.

Villa even tailored his campaigns in order to minimize danger to Americans, or so he wanted the United States to understand. "I have left my army twelve miles outside the city," Villa told reporters, "so that I can give protection to families living here and across the
river." At the same time, Villa expressed great regret over the lone American death resulting from his capture of Juárez. Perhaps the most heatedly debated aspect of Villa's behavior for Americans to understand was his treatment of prisoners. He had executed those he captured. Since the press made it clear that the Federals followed the same practice—and since as Villa explained, the men he put to death were "all more or less responsible for the murder of President Madero and Abraham González—some of his critics were silenced. Taking Villa's side in the debate, an American journal wrote, "It is a sad thing, this death in warfare, but it is not the worst. The oppression of a people such as Mexico has long known is worse." Villa's agreement in January, after a conference with General Hugh Scott, effectively ended complaints; he promised to follow the rules of civilized warfare and thus further enhanced his image in the United States.

By early 1914, Villa seemed blessed. Victorious in battle, popular both at home and abroad, and well supplied with money, he seemed to be Mexico's hope for the future. By this time he had built a reliable supply network which effectively brought munitions to his army.
CHAPTER II: FOOTNOTES


2. Clendenen, The United States and Pancho Villa, p. 29.


5. Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 165.


7. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, April 12, 1913, 812.00:7151.


10. United States Senate; Fall Committee, p. 2274.


12. RDS, R.G. 59, Theodore Hamm to Secretary of State, October 15, 1913, 812.00:9658.


15. RDS, R.G. 59, Silliman to Secretary of State, October 25, 1913, 812.00:9391.


17. Ibid.
18. Atkin, Revolution, p. 158.
22. Cumberland, Mexican Revolution, p. 50.
27. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General to Secretary of War, December 27, 1913, 812.00:10386.
28. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General to Secretary of War, January 6, 1914, 812.00:10467.
31. RDS, R.G. 59, Letcher to Secretary of State, December 11, 1913, 812.00:10167.
32. RDS, R.G. 59, Secretary of War to Secretary of State, December 17, 1913.
33. Atkin, Revolution, p. 94.
34. RDS, R.G. 59, Letcher to Secretary of State, December 11, 1913, 812.00:10167.
35. Guzman, Memoirs of Pancho Villa, p. 139; Reed, Insurgent Mexico, p. 133.


43. RDS, R.G. 59, Letcher to Secretary of State, August 25, 1914, 812.00:13232.


45. RDS, R.G. 59, Hamm to Secretary of State, October 15, 1913, 812.00:9658.

46. RDS, R.G. 59, Edwards to Secretary of State, November 15, 1913, 812.00:9749.


51. RDS, R.G. 59, Silliman to the Secretary of State, December 5, 1913, 812.00:10077.


CHAPTER III

FELIX SOMMERFELD AND FRIENDS

The Movement of Weapons into Mexico

Villa gathered munitions from the United States and Mexico, yet by late 1913, he had come to depend primarily on the United States. Villa's method of securing arms inside Mexico was simple and relatively easy to tally; he took munitions from the Federals in battles. In the early months, before his army swelled in numbers, this method provided critically needed weapons. The earliest reference to captured munitions appeared after the battle at San Andres, prior to Villa's Torrón victory. There, according to Guzman, Villa took 600 rifles, 150,000 cartridges, and several hundred hand grenades. Others reported that Villa also gained four field pieces and six machine guns from this engagement. Just after the battle, Fidel Avila brought 200,000 rounds of ammunition to Villa's troops. Avila, who would later serve in Villa's Chihuahua government, evidently smuggled the munitions across the border near Douglas, Arizona.

Reports from Department of Justice agents confirmed that Villa had been successful in securing ammunition. They believed that his troops had a reserve supply of 150,000 cartridges and that his men
were well armed and well provisioned. The El Paso Times backed up these reports. It observed that Villa had "plenty of ammunition" and that he also carried nine cannons with him.

In Torreón, Villa found additional armaments. The New York Times said that he "captured practically all the Federal's arms and artillery." Other writers gave more specific totals. According to one, Villa took 13 cannon; 500,000 cartridges; 1,000 rifles; 6 machine guns; 40 railroad engines; and a vast amount of rolling stock. Guzmán's account supported this, though he estimated that Villa received only 300 rifles. In any case, Villa's army gained a large quantity of munitions at Torrón. He described this as a critical victory because "it supplied us with materials and enabled me to prepare my forces for winning important towns." Consul Hamm sustained these reports of Villa's having secured supplies following his victory. Hamm informed the State Department that upon his departure from Torrón in mid-October Villa led 6,000 well-armed and well-supplied troops.

When he took Juárez and won a quick victory over counter-attacking Federals at Tierra Blanca, Villa again reaped stores of arms from the Federals. His takings here proved, however, to be less substantial than those from Torrón. The rebels harvested 95,000 rounds of ammunition and two machine guns by storming Juárez. Ten days later, Villa boasted from Tierra Blanca that
"we have completely routed the enemy. We took all his artillery and three trains." 11 Clearly then, as Villa came to dominate all of Chihuahua he successfully preyed on the battered troops of the Federal Army in order to equip his army. However, he knew he had to procure his munitions from other sources. One could not sustain an army by this method of foraging for munitions. Villa looked to the United States to fulfill that demand. Central to his system of finding arms through America was Felix Sommerfeld.

In testimony given to Federal Agents in New York City on June 30, 1915, José Vasconcelos, a minister of the Convention Government of Mexico, identified Sommerfeld as Villa's principle agent in the United States. Vasconcelos said that Sommerfeld had the responsibility of purchasing arms for Villa since mid-1915, and that Sommerfeld supported himself from commissions on his purchases. 12 Information about Sommerfeld appeared earlier than Vasconcelos recalled, at least in terms of his involvement in Mexican revolutions.

That involvement began before 1911. Sommerfeld migrated to Mexico from Germany around 1900 after having served as a reserve officer in the Kaiser's Army. Among other vocations, he worked as a correspondent for the Associated Press for a short time. 13 In a method that was not clear, Sommerfeld met Madero, who, when he became President of Mexico, appointed Sommerfeld as the head of
the Mexican Secret Service. Department of Justice agents believed that Sommerfeld's primary duties in the Madero administration entailed undercover work in the southern part of the United States.

The earliest specific mention of Sommerfeld cropped up in Department of Justice reports in May 1913. Sommerfeld, accompanied by Alberto Fuentes, the former governor of Aguascalientes, and Francisco Vasquez Gomez, a Madero revolutionary, traveled to Ciudad Porfirio Diaz. There they met with Venustiano Carranza, the titular leader of the rebel's Constitutionalist movement. The following day Sommerfeld returned to the United States "endowed with powers from Chief Carranza"—powers which presumably included munitions purchasing. Sommerfeld's trail for the next several weeks was roughly traceable due to the diligence of the Mexican Federal agents. Their suspicions reaffirmed American agents' reports linking him to rebel arms smuggling.

Department of Justice agents learned that Sommerfeld traveled to Washington in company with Vasquez Gomez on May 20, 1913 with the express purpose of buying munitions. From Washington he made his way to New York City where he stayed at the Hotel Belmont on May 26th. At the same time Sommerfeld was in the city, the Madero brothers were also present. Raul and Julio Madero reportedly met with Clyde Sheehan and Francis Bannerman, two men who had been implicated in a large arms deal; they arranged for the pending
delivery of 50,000 Mauser rifles and thousands of cartridges to be sent to the rebels. This shipment had been purchased by Francisco Madero before Huerta took power. Agents believed that Sommerfeld played some part in this transaction. They also believed that the Madero brothers had come to New York City to meet with Sheehan and Bannerman for delivery of this shipment. In the same visit, Sommerfeld met with another munitions supplier, Ed Mauer, in order to buy ammunition. As events proved, Mexican agents had good cause to worry.

Subsequent to the Madero brothers' and Sommerfeld's visits to New York, a large shipment of weapons left that city for New Orleans. Rumor held that this shipment was "part of a purchase made by Madero about three years ago." Several field pieces; 150,000 cartridges, and 2 machine guns reportedly were on board. Thus, it was possible that arms originally purchased by Madero might have been funneled to Villa and Carranza.

Sommerfeld's connection with the Madero family in arms trafficking was supported by additional dispatches from Department of Justice agents in June and July 1913. "We have every reason to believe," they commented, "that the Maderos, while they are not actively engaged, are furnishing money to Carranza through Sommerfeld and Juan Sánchez Azcona." Sommerfeld, the Madero brothers, and Juan Sánchez Azcona met in San Antonio in late June; by this time,
agents were regularly keeping eye on Sommerfeld's actions. "Felix Sommerfeld is with them as a sort of secretary and acts as an agent between them and Carranza at Piedras Negras" the report said. 21 Thus, it was clear that Sommerfeld had close ties with the Maderos, with Carranza, and with suspected arms dealers in the early summer of 1913. Sommerfeld's relationship to Villa seemed less certain. However, since the Madero family backed Villa, it was probable that Sommerfeld already knew him too. In addition, the testimony of José Vasconcelos, if accurate, established that Sommerfeld worked with Villa as early as June 1913. In addition, since the Constitutionalist movement led by Carranza included Villa's army under its banner, no conscious distinction would have been made between arms bound for Villa or Carranza in the reports of the Department of Justice agents. Therefore, arms for Villa might have simply been referred to as "Constitutionalist" or "rebel" shipments. It was equally possible that Villa and Carranza relied on identical smuggling systems at this stage of the revolution.

Sommerfeld disappeared from the reports of Department of Justice agents for several months. The only reference to him prior to January 1914, appeared on December 15, 1913, when he left Juárez for Chihuahua City to confer with Villa, supposedly to discuss the treatment of foreigners in Villa's territory. 22 Sommerfeld came to Juárez, if not with Villa, at least shortly thereafter. In an article in
Literary Digest describing conditions in Mexico under Villa's government, Sommerfeld was reported to be a close and trusted advisor of Villa, who had been with him just after Villa took the city. If this story was true, Sommerfeld had Villa's trust as early as November 1913.

In early January, Sommerfeld's name surfaced in Department of Justice reports; at this time, he was reported to be moving between El Paso and Marfa, Texas. With Sommerfeld were H.A. Thompson and another man referred to as "Remus;" both men were later identified as arms smugglers. Oddly enough, Thompson had served as some sort of a Federal officer before he began dealings with Sommerfeld. After this time, a curious change appeared in the reports of American agents. Sommerfeld returned to El Paso on January 15. He then directed the attention of United States Customs officials to various clandestine plots of the Mexican Federal officers. By this time, neither the rebels nor the Mexican Federal Government had the legal right to import munitions. In late July, Wilson had ordered that no munitions cross the border. The Mexican Federal Government operatives attempted to pass munitions and arms across the border despite the embargo, just as had the rebels. Sommerfeld informed American agents that the Federals planned to send munitions to their besieged garrison at Ojinaga. He later advised American officers that the Federals had concealed munitions stored in the Union Depot at
El Paso. He told the Americans that he acted on a tip from Mr. E. Hughes, the head clerk at the Shelton-Payne Arms Company. Hughes may have had more interest in aiding the rebel faction than in aiding the Federals; the well-endowed rebels were far better customers than the increasingly hard-pressed Federals. Sommerfeld advised American agents that the clever Federals had disguised their munitions which they soon would spirit to Ojinaga. Searches discovered no such ammunition. Later that month Department of Justice agents were pleased to report that Sommerfeld had volunteered to infiltrate the Mexican Federal junta in El Paso in order to inform American officers of illicit arms trafficking.

These reports revealed a number of possible changes in the illicit border arms trading and a certain alteration of Sommerfeld's role. A man who had once been considered a criminal now worked in conjunction with American officers charged with preventing smuggling. This information reconfirmed the suspicions of the Mexican Federal Government which had long believed that American law officers worked hand in hand with the rebels. These reports also attested to the intelligence and, perhaps, cleverness of Sommerfeld. By directing the attention of American officers toward the Huerta smugglers, he diverted them from acting against the rebels. That the Custom Officers and Department of Justice agents cooperated with Sommerfeld—a known rebel smuggler—might have simply been interpreted as great
cleverness by Sommerfeld and a decided lack of the same by American agents.

However, Sommerfeld's ability to gain the confidence of the American agents probably resulted more from the conditions along the border in January 1914, than it did from the gullible character of American officers. Efforts to curtail rebel smuggling took place amid a decidedly hostile environment for American operatives charged with this duty. Understaffed and overmatched by the sheer volume of the illegal arms trade, agents drew the wrath of most El Paso residents from the start of the revolution. Agents undoubtedly knew the rumors, abundant in mid-January, that the President planned to rescind the embargo and open the border to unlimited arms trade. Believing that the best of their efforts to stop smugglers were probably for naught with the impending suspension of the embargo, agents may have been more willing to direct their actions against the Federal smugglers than the more popular rebel faction. There was the added chance that Sommerfeld intended to exhaust the energy of the American operatives. The numbers of false leads given to the Americans by opposing sides in the smuggling community undeniably reduced the zeal they had to catch smugglers. Whether done consciously or not, these unsubstantiated tips aided smuggling.

Between the outset of his campaign against Huerta and his capture of Juárez, Villa probably relied more on captured munitions from his
battles than on smuggling. After the capture of Juárez, having direct access to American suppliers, he depended on the United States to fill his needs. He did engage in smuggling from the beginning, though the quantities he received prior to taking Juárez did not match those he received afterwards. In June and July Villa based his army around Ascención where he awaited the arrival of munitions from the United States. According to Clendenen, Villa had already established his smuggling operations at El Paso prior to departing for war. Whether Sommerfeld played a role in the operation at this time was not discovered. Most evidence suggested that Villa received munitions from the United States in these months. The El Paso Times reported that 200,000 cartridges crossed the border near that town in late June. Since the Mexican Federals still had the privilege of importing any munitions they requested, it was obvious that this shipment went to the rebels. Villa commanded the strongest rebel force outside of Juárez. Further evidence suggesting that Villa armed his troops through American sources came from Consul Edwards in Ciudad Juárez who reported in early July that "Villa and Ortega are said to have money and are paying for what they get." Since these reports predated the first reported successes Villa had in taking armaments from Federal troops in battle, it seemed obvious he secured arms from America.

Villa evidently did not get all he paid for. On July 16, 1913, Federal agents seized a large shipment of ammunition believed to be
destined for Villa.  The 448,000 cartridges, valued at 20,000 dollars had been hidden underneath mounds of coal in boxcars at an El Paso railroad yard. Federal agents were not always so lucky. At the same time this ammunition was discovered, Colonel Ortega, Villa's subordinate, smuggled 90,000 rounds across the border near El Paso. Since Villa had netted from 75,000 dollars to 90,000 dollars from his train robbery in April, the money could have purchased almost 1,000,000 cartridges.

Villa and Ortega had forged a strong friendship by this time and they operated in the same regions. It was sensible to assume that they shared the same smuggling operation. Ortega served loyally with the Division of the North until his death in combat in the summer of 1914. Department of Justice reports linked Ortega to smuggling forays in early June 1913 and throughout that summer. In August, they reported Ortega smuggled another 40,000 rounds across the border near Fabens, Texas, a favorite location for clandestine operations. Villa probably shared in Ortega's supplies.

Villa accumulated sufficient ammunition while in Ascensión to enable him to rout the Federals at San Andrés in August. This victory, as noted earlier, brought him additional munitions. Further evidence linking Villa to smuggling came from Tasker H. Bliss; he reported that in the weeks when Villa had gone south to take Torreón, there had been a marked decline in smuggling near El Paso.
Any doubts about the efficiency of Villa's supply system disappeared following his capture of Juárez. Plentiful munitions were just across the river. Of the four major arms dealers along the border, two maintained headquarters in the city of El Paso. These two firms, Shelton-Payne Arms Company and Krakauer, Zork, and Moye, along with the Steinfeld Company of San Antonio and Phelps-Dodge Hardware Company of Arizona, imported the bulk of border armaments. From March 1912 until mid-December 1913—a time in which no munitions could legally be taken into Mexico by the rebels—these companies received a total of more than 7,000 rifles and 7,500,000 cartridges. Thus in taking Juárez, Villa seated himself at the center of arms trading.

Tasker H. Bliss anticipated that smuggling would balloon when Villa arrived; he doubled his regular patrols along the border in the vicinity of El Paso. Villa's immediate need for ammunition after his victory at Juárez has been debated, but in all probability he had scant stores upon his arrival. Bliss' precautions, therefore, seemed quite sensible. Villa announced he found what he came to Juárez for by seizing 95,000 rounds from the Federal garrison. Yet, 95,000 rounds would hardly have been enough for the requirements of a 6,000-man army. This statement may have been given not as a gauge of his strength, but rather to impress the Mexican Federal army and to reduce the diligent efforts by American officials to halt smuggling.
After several days of battling around Chihuahua and in the actual taking of the Juárez garrison, Villa's troops had undoubtedly spent much of the ammunition they gained from taking Torreón. Ten days after arriving in Juárez, Villa was reported to be short of ammunition. John Reed described Villa's army upon arrival in Juárez as being "almost armless," though he may have overstated the case. By November 26, Villa had enough munitions to defeat the Federal army at Tierra Blanca.

Munitions awaited buyers in El Paso when Villa took Juárez. In early November, Krakauer, Zork, and Moye had 446,000 rounds and 100 carbines in their warehouses. It was possible Villa took advantage of this situation prior to departing to face the Federals, though smuggling undoubtedly continued in his absence under the direction of General Juan S. Medina who garrisoned the city. After Villa returned from Tierra Blanca, a river of weapons came to Juárez.

Sommerfeld made his base in El Paso at this time and may have influenced the increase in smuggling. Subsequent to the capture of Ciudad Juárez, Villa paid him two-hundred thousand dollars in the space of three weeks. Villa's brother, Hipólito, received similar payments during this same time. Hipólito may already have converted the money from the Torreón campaign into weapons and, knowing Villa's plans in advance, ordered them delivered to El Paso. The smuggling
evidently worked well. Bliss observed in mid-December that most of Villa's troops carried new model carbines.

Federal agents who experienced frustration in the past now faced sterner challenges. A flourishing arms trade began in the grocery stores, the pawn shops, and second-hand merchants of El Paso. These dealers greatly complicated the duties of Americans, who had an impossible task before the advent of Villa. Reports of smuggling and suspected smuggling poured out of El Paso. Agents learned that 95,000 rounds crossed the border near Fabens, Texas in late November; another 24,000 rounds came to Juarez in early December. Agents were certain that the vast bulk of illegal shipments escaped detection, despite their best efforts. The arrest of a few dozen smugglers—each having several thousand rounds or a dozen rifles—did little to stem the tide. As a further blow to the American operatives, just at the time Villa stepped up smuggling efforts, the Federal Grand Jury rejected indictments made against a dozen noted smugglers. By the end of January, Villa's position had markedly improved. Over the next several months his control of Chihuahua and the actions of the United States government would make him even more of a force in Mexico.
CHAPTER III: FOOTNOTES


2. RDS, R.G. 59, Letcher to Secretary of State, August 8, 1913, 812.00:8623.


4. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, August 23, 1913, 812.00:8670.

5. The El Paso Times, September 8, 1913, p. 2.


7. Atkin, Revolution, p. 149.


9. Ibid.

10. RDS, R.G. 59, Hamm to Secretary of State, October 15, 1913, 812.00:9658.


12. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, July 3, 1915, 812.00H87:39.


15. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, May 26, 1913, 812.00:7622.

16. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, May 15, 1913, 812.00:7508.
17. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, May 16, 1913, 812.00:7518.

18. Ibid.

19. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, June 14, 1913, 812.00:7789.

20. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, July 7, 1913, 812.00:7979.

21. RDS, R.G. 59, Secretary of War to Secretary of State, July 8, 1913, 812.00:8002.

22. RDS, R.G. 59, Secretary of War to Secretary of State, December 15, 1913, 812.00:10187.


24. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, January 17, 1914, 812.00:10599.

25. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, January 21, 1914, 812.00:10650.

26. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, January 30, 1914, 812.00:10751.

27. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, February 5, 1914, 812.00:10794.

28. RDS, R.G. 59, Mexican Embassy to Secretary of State, November 26, 1913, 812.00:10023.

29. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, June 21, 1913, 812.00:7867.


34. RDS, R.G. 59, Edwards to Secretary of State, July 11, 1913, 812.00:8022.


38. Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 199.

39. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, June 9, 1913, 812.00:7746.

40. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, August 6, 1913, 812.00:8266.

41. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, September 8, 1913, 812.00:8743.

42. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, October 28, 1913, 812.00:9460.

43. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, December 13, 1913, 812.00:10284.

44. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department to Secretary of War, November 26, 1913, 812.00:9941.


47. Reed, Insurgent Mexico, p. 142.

48. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, November 17, 1913, 812.00:9833.

49. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, November 22, 1913, 812.00:9881.

50. Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 170; Braddy, Cock of the Walk, p. 104.

52. Ibid.

53. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department to Secretary of War, December 27, 1913, 812.00:10386.

54. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, December 17, 1913, 812.00:10246.

55. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department to Secretary of War, November 26, 1913, 812.00:9941.

56. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, December 5, 1913, 812.00:10072.

57. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department to Secretary of War, December 20, 1913, 812.00:10360.
CHAPTER IV

THE OPEN BORDER AND VERACRUZ

The Relationship Between Villa's Diplomacy and Arms Imports

"Villa is Jubliant," the headline read. On February 3, 1914, President Wilson removed the embargo on munitions bound for Mexico. Villa had every reason to be ecstatic. He telegraphed his response to The New York Times lauding the justice of President Wilson's decision and promising the prompt pacification of Mexico. The paper printed it on the front page. The paper also reported that Villa would delay his campaign against the Federals at Torreón in order to amass more munitions now that all import restrictions had been lifted. Although El Paso arms dealers reportedly lacked ammunition and rifles in the first few weeks after the embargo ended, that situation changed rapidly. Indeed, if this report told the story accurately, it tended to support the efficiency of Villa's smuggling operations up to the end of the embargo. In the first several days after the President's announcement, only 37,000 rounds crossed the border from El Paso to Juárez. According to this story, there were no other munitions in El Paso at this time. However, Shelton-Payne Arms Company and Krakauer, Zork, and Moye had regularly received shipments of weapons prior to this time; from December 26, 1913 to January 30, 1914, Shelton-Payne had been sent
at least 200,000 rounds while 1,000,000 rounds came to Krakauer, Zork, and Moye.  

Villa obviously had succeeded in circumventing the embargo but this success paled in comparison to the arms which he imported after February 3, 1914. As The New York Times suspected, Villa's delay in attacking Torreón resulted in part from his desire to exploit this newly available source of arms. This he did. Curiously, in the same story, reporters had learned that Francis Bannerman, a New York City arms dealer who had traded with the Madero family and Sommefeld, opposed the lifting of the embargo. He argued that this act would not bring peace to Mexico, but it was also probable that he resented the increased competition from other arms merchants which would result from open trade.

By March 20, 1914, seven weeks after the lifting of the embargo, 2,900,000 cartridges had passed from El Paso to Juárez. Seven million more cartridges and 10,000 rifles had also been ordered and were bound for El Paso for the rebels. Thereafter trade increased. By late April when the border closed again in wake of the Marine landing at Veracruz, Villa had received 6,800,000 rounds of ammunition. Just before the reimposition of the embargo, 2,500 carbines also crossed into Juárez from El Paso.

Finances occupied Villa's attention as well during the months of early 1914. Blessed with a strong treasury by mid-January, he
realized that with a growing army and with difficult battles ahead, he would have to find additional ways to pay for his campaigns. The mines of Chihuahua were one additional source Villa tapped in late January. He met with the owners of the mining and smelting companies of Chihuahua on January 23, 1914.12 A week later he and the mine operators reached an agreement whereby Villa's government received 10 percent of mining profits.13 The American Smelting and Refining Company, owned by the Guggenheim family, was the largest firm in Chihuahua. Villa may have gained additional payments beyond the 10 percent tax on profits, although rumors of Guggenheim payoffs have never been proven.14 The company had suspended production for a time but Villa gave them assurances that he would make conditions safe for their operation.15

Villa's second capture of Torreón in April 1914 gave him even greater wealth; there he achieved the high water mark of his financial security. Torreón was the center for Mexico's Laguna cotton district and Villa meant to have it for himself. Immediately after taking the city, Villa ordered the exile of all Spanish nationals.16 Villa's expulsion of the Spaniards, who owned the majority of cotton production, may have been prompted by a desire to keep them from interfering with subsequent confiscation of their property. In any case, confiscation and expulsion complemented each other as policies bringing income to Villa.
Estimates varied as to the exact value Villa derived from these actions. Certainly, it was substantial. Prior to his seizures at Torreón, Villa had amassed approximately 15,000,000 dollars of property. Torréon brought him much more. Cotton confiscated from Torréon arrived in Juárez three days after Villa took that city. Consul Hamm informed the State Department that most of the cotton crop had already been seized and was in transit to the American border. The destination of the cotton and other confiscated products was El Paso. Consul George Carothers, who had been assigned to accompany Villa by the Secretary of State, reported that Villa shipped cotton, bullion, and other products to Juárez, where they were sold through El Paso dealers. Carothers observed that the sales were arranged by Villa’s own agents, independent of Constitutionalist leader Carranza and brought arms and ammunition solely to Villa’s army. Seventy carloads of cotton had been shipped to El Paso for sale by April 16. The total crop Villa confiscated at Torreón was 100,000 bales. Domination of the city also gave him control over the highly productive mines in the immediate vicinity.

His ordnance system functioned smoothly for products other than munitions required by Villa’s army. By late April his army grew to 20,000 men and observers noted his soldiers were well armed, well clothed and had the most modern equipment. Uniforms for his troops came to Villa from the Hayman Krupp Company of El Paso; Department
of Justice agents suspected that 10,000 uniforms went to the rebels in late January. In his memoirs, Villa recalled that the firm's manager, Victor Carusoe, supplied him with everything he needed and extended him credit whenever he needed it. Carusoe, who later admitted to making much profit from his dealings with the rebels, sued the Villa supply agency in December 1915 in order to recover money due him. Evidently, he had extended Villa too much credit.

Villa's capture of Torreón brought him some additional military stores from Federal Army supplies, but the exact quantity was disputed. The New York Times reported that four large guns, 1,000 rounds of shrapnel, and "thousands of rifles" fell to Villa's army. Other sources mentioned the capture of large quantities of ammunition, although Carothers believed that the retreating Federals blew up most of it. Yet from the duration and severity of the battle, Villa had definitely expended more munitions than he captured.

Subsequent to the battle of Torreón, Sommerfeld received first mention in Guzmán's biography of Villa. Villa identified him as a German Jew, who, because of his abiding faith in Madero, had been placed in charge of buying munitions for Villa's troops. He was able and loyal, Villa recalled, and "he always delivered arms and ammunition on time and in good condition." Consul Letcher reported later that Sommerfeld was "a henchman of the Maderos" and Villa's chief arms purchaser. According to Letcher, Villa gave Sommerfeld the
dynamite concession for the State of Chihuahua as reward for his services, from which Sommerfeld derived a substantial income. Because Letcher had come to despise Villa by this time—calling him "promiscuous" and saying that, "his coarse, thick-lipped mouth" suggested "an admixture of Negro blood"—the accuracy of his information may have been suspect.

Because Department of Justice agents' reports became less complete following the suspension of the embargo, Sommerfeld's activities in the early months of 1914 could only be roughly detailed. However, one important link in the Villa supply network surfaced in these months. American agents believed that by late February, Sommerfeld had collaborated with Sam Dreben, a man long suspected of illegal arms trading. Sam Dreben first appeared in Mexico during the Madero revolt against Díaz. At the battle for Juárez, where Villa's troops fought, Sam Dreben—an American identified as "The Fighting Jew"—served in the rebel army. Thus it was possible that Villa had met Dreben as early as December 1910.

Dreben appeared in several reports from Department of Justice agents in 1913. In November of that year he visited the A. Baldwin Company in New Orleans where he attempted to buy part of the huge stock of munitions that company had on hand. In exchange for these weapons, Dreben offered revolutionary bonds. For several weeks prior to and after this time, the A. Baldwin Company and the
Stauffer-Eshleman Company had been under surveillance by American operatives; these firms had been importing large quantities of munitions from Remington and Winchester through New York City. In mid-December, 4,500,000 rounds were in the Stauffer-Eshleman warehouses.

Dreben had ties to another mysterious smuggling figure, T.N. Solomon. American agents believed that Dreben and Solomon—who later served as a cotton broker for Villa's agency in El Paso—organized two shipments of munitions through New Orleans—one on January 9, 1914 and another later that month. By late February, Solomon was reported to be conducting arms purchases for the rebels, moving between New York and New Orleans in his business.

From January through the winter and spring of 1914, Villa worked on his public relations with the American press and government. As Nancy Brandt wrote, "He was vain enough to enjoy the attention that they (reporters) gave him and modern enough to realize the value of a good public image." To enhance the coverage his campaigns received, Villa permitted ten photographers and journalists to journey with him on his personal train during the Torreón attack and after. He kept repeating his justification for seizing Spanish property—because criticism arose again with his capture of Torreón—stressing that Spanish had oppressed the Mexicans and, therefore, merited the treatment they received. He argued that if he had not
exiled them, the Mexican people would have killed them. As mentioned before, Villa's division of captured Spanish lands among the widows and orphans of the revolution did much to aid his American image.

While justifying his property seizures, Villa consistently bent to the urging of the American State Department. This flexibility by Villa made him appear more worthy of American support. He met with General Hugh Scott and agreed to follow the rules of civilized warfare; instead of executing his prisoners, he promised simply to keep them captive. In early February, Villa dispatched troops to hunt down the guerrilla raider Maximo Castillo, who had attacked a train in Chihuahua and killed several Americans in the process; reportedly, Villa was "outraged" at this incident. Villa repeatedly assured the State Department he would respect the lives and property of all foreigners in regions under his control; he seized the Spanish property because he had proof that they aided and plotted with Huerta. Carothers reassured the State Department that Villa's bombastic statements threatening to kill all the Spanish in Torreón were simply intended to frighten them from helping the Federal army defend the city. Carothers promised no massacre of the Spanish and none took place. Villa even agreed to American suggestions that a neutral zone be set up outside Torreón where non-combatants might escape the carnage.
The goal of Villa's conscious behavior toward Americans and American desires in Mexico seemed obvious; he needed access to border supplies. Although his campaign to keep his image polished did not always succeed—as shown in the Benton murder—he received generally favorable press coverage until his defeats at Celaya and León in April and June of 1915. To further promote his public relations, he printed his own newspaper in April 1914. *Vida Nueva* reflected Villa's decidedly pro-American pretensions while serving to counter Carranza's papers in the battle to gain mass support in Mexico. That paper's editorial policy contrasted sharply with Carranza papers, which tended to be hostile to American actions in Mexico.

The connection between Villa's public relations program and his need for munitions came sharply into focus when the American Marines landed at Veracruz. This action threatened Villa in several ways. The seized cotton from Torreón had not yet been sold, and part of the crop had been temporarily impounded by a court injunction brought by former owners. In addition, more than 2,500,000 rounds were bound for El Paso (having been purchased by his agents) just at the time of the invasion; another 350,000 cartridges were in El Paso on the day that the border closed to munitions traffic. By this time, Villa doubted that he could rely on Carranza or Pablo González—whose rebel army threatened to take Tampico—to help him get arms. This
knowledge made it all the more important that his American sources be protected. Thus, he faced the imperative task of securing munitions as fast as possible before the embargo was reimposed. Villa understood that the crisis between Wilson and Huerta, which had begun on April 10th, threatened to bring war between the United States and Mexico with the certain closure of the border to follow. His supply agents realized this too. On April 20, 1914, the rebels in El Paso were sending all available munitions to Juárez at a feverish pace. These efforts paid off, as noted earlier, in the crossing of 2,500 rifles on April 20, three days ahead of the renewed embargo. Just ahead of the official closing of El Paso on April 24, 1914, 1,000,000 rounds crossed into Juárez. From Chihuahua, Villa hurried to the border expressing hope that the boundary would not be closed while at the same time reminding the American government of his need for ammunition to carry on his war against Huerta.

Villa followed a conciliatory policy toward the United States following the renewal of the embargo; he stressed two themes. He consistently affirmed his friendship for the United States while reminding the State Department and the American press of his needs for American munitions to carry on the fight. In this second part of his response, he noted many times his justice toward foreigners and the order and stability he promoted in regions under his control. His attitude did not succeed in opening the border immediately but it
did endear him in the hearts of Americans who expected that Villa would mount his army to attack the United States. When he came to Juárez from Chihuahua, he assured the Americans of his steadfast friendship.  

Calling Huerta a drunkard, Villa promised Americans he would not be drawn into war against them. Although Johnson believed Villa's attitude toward the American invasion stemmed from a desire to embarrass Carranza—who had reacted to the Americans with much more hostility than anticipated by the United States—the determining factor appeared to be Villa's need for munitions. 

Grieb supported this analysis.

As a reflection of Villa's attitude, Vida Nueva portrayed the invasion as resulting from Huerta's unjustified provocation. Its articles emphasized that Mexicans must not be deceived into making a false alliance against the United States because this would play into Huerta's plot to save himself.

Villa's responses worked to his favor, at least in the United States. American journalists pointed out that Villa, with an army estimated at 50,000 men, could easily have rallied the Mexicans to attack the United States. Because of his strong will and friendship for America, he averted the crisis. Americans felt gratitude for Villa's action and credited him with preventing war. This deed did not bring Villa the reward of an immediately opened border, but it assured him of favorable American actions in the future.
CHAPTER IV: FOOTNOTES

2. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, January 13, 1914, 812.00:10545; January 17, 1914, 812.00:10599; January 30, 1914, 812.00:10751; February 5, 1914, 812.00:10794.
9. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, March 20, 1914, 812.00:11266.
10. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, April 24, 1914, 812.00:11785.
16. RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, April 6, 1914, 812.00:11419.
17. RDS, R.G. 59, Letcher to Secretary of State, February 21, 1914, 812.00:11043.


20. RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, April 9, 1914, 812.00:11461.


25. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, February 5, 1914, 812.00:10794.


27. William F. Buckley Papers, Microfilm 699 (Austin: University of Texas); New York Sun, December 12, 1915.


29. Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 191; RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, April 6, 1914, 812.00:11419.


32. RDS, R.G. 59, Letcher to Secretary of State, August 25, 1914, 812.00:13232.

33. Ibid.
34. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, March 4, 1914, 812.00:11073.

35. Braddy, Cock of the Walk, p. 97.

36. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, December 1, 1913, 812.00:10025.

37. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, December 17, 1913, 812.00:10246.

38. Ibid.

39. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, February 5, 1914, 812.00:10794.

40. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, March 13, 1914, 812.00:11179.


42. RDS, R.G. 59, Letcher to Secretary of State, March 16, 1914, 812.00:11183; Tinker, "Campaigning with Villa," Southwest Review, pp. 149-50.

43. RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, February 3, 1914, 812.00:10820.

44. RDS, R.G. 59, Hamm to Secretary of State, April 19, 1914, 812.00:11703. RDS, R.G. 59, Letcher to Secretary of State, February 21, 1914, 812.00:11403.


49. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, February 10, 1914, 812.00:10903.


58. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, April 24, 1914, 812.00:11785.

59. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, April 12, 1914, 812.00:11654.

60. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, April 23, 1914, 812.113:3135.

61. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, April 24, 1914, 812.00:11685.

62. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, April 23, 1914, 812.00:11654.

63. Johnson, *Heroic Mexico*, p. 194; *RDS*, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, April 22, 1914, 812.00:11618.


CHAPTER V

BUILDING THE DIVISION OF THE NORTH

Stockpiling for the New Revolution

The renewed embargo complicated Villa's ordnance system, yet it by no means strangled it. The closed border may have caused Villa to alter his lines of supply in order to be assured of munitions. Until the renewed embargo, Villa relied primarily on munitions shipped to El Paso; before February 3, 1914, agents smuggled them to Juárez; after that time, they came to Villa through legal means. Arms did continue to flow to El Paso after April 23, 1914 in the fairly certain confidence of circumventing law enforcement efforts—a method which had proved effective in past months. Despite the embargo, 5,000,000 rounds came to El Paso by May 10. Still, arms in that city or anywhere along the American border were vulnerable to seizure by American authorities. That vulnerability may have contributed to Villa's decision to import arms through Tampico.

Whether this decision belonged to Villa or to Sommerfeld was unclear; it was a calculated risk which both men were aware might backfire. Tampico fell to the rebel army of Pablo González in mid-May and subsequently became the center for large munition imports. Villa had met with González in late May at Saltillo where according to
most accounts, the two men amicably discussed the future course of revolutionary action. By this time though, Villa and Carranza quarrelled violently over numerous issues and threatened to begin an all-out war against each other. Both men desired to lead the revolution. Since González served Carranza loyally, and since González's army held Tampico, any shipments for Villa going to that port were subject to seizure on Carranza's order. The American border presented risks as well and Villa may have felt he could influence González to cooperate. Villa did buy arms which were sent to Tampico. He had ample funds and he had the hope that González would allow him to receive his munitions. Additionally, since the American State Department urged Villa to reconcile his disputes with Carranza for revolutionary unity, Villa may have imagined some amicable arrangement would be reached. If so, he miscalculated.

Villa accumulated ammunition and arms through his victories at Saltillo in mid-May and at Zacatecas in June. At Saltillo, he gained ten pieces of artillery and an undetermined quantity of cartridges from the fleeing Federals. Prior to his attack on Zacatecas, Villa boasted that his army was 20,000 men strong and well supplied with weapons—having 6,000,000 rounds in reserve. After taking Zacatecas, he claimed that he had found large stocks of ammunition left by the retreating army. Carothers confirmed this pat revolutionary boast, noting that Villa had taken 12,000 rifles in
capturing Zacatecas, although The New York Times set the figure at 6,000.⁸

Villa also continued to smuggle munitions through the port of El Paso. In the wake of the Marine landing at Veracruz and the subsequent mediation conference at Niagara Falls, the border had, of course, been officially closed. Yet, munitions shipments to El Paso through the spring and summer of 1914 showed not a decrease but an increase over past months. High volume smuggling continued as it had in the past. The Huerta government protested, but the United States maintained that such shipments had been outlawed. Therefore, such protests were unfounded.⁹ Yet in light of conditions along the border, these complaints were highly justified. The New York Times noted that an entire trainload of munitions which had been amassed in May and June left from Juárez for Chihuahua on June 30, 1914.¹⁰

American policy, in effect, ignored rebel smugglers. In reporting on the rumored passage of 200,000 rounds from El Paso to Juárez in early July, agents of the Department of Justice affirmed that the rumor was probably true; conditions along the border were such that "the practice of running contraband cannot be stopped without the assistance of the law."¹¹ Law enforcement agents experienced some confusion because the President had not ordered the embargo to be enforced under the Congressional Resolution of March 14, 1912;
orders from the War Department had merely required that munitions be prevented from entering Mexico. Authorities could confiscate smuggler's munitions, but they had no power to arrest the smugglers themselves; the munitions were illegal but the act of smuggling was not. While seemingly keeping to an attitude of neutrality toward the conflict in Mexico in order to placate the Huerta government negotiators at Niagara Falls, Wilson's refusal to implement the official embargo worked to the advantage of the rebels, particularly to Villa. Collector Zach L. Cobb lamented the scandalous level of smuggling and protested that he was unable to curtail arms traffic without the legal assistance of the embargo. Bliss complained that the smugglers laughed at his men. Border restrictions, then, placed only minor obstacles in the way of arms trading.

Reports from the border over the spring and summer confirmed this. Bliss estimated that at least 150,000 rounds of ammunition flowed from the vicinity of El Paso to Juárez each week. He stated that he would not have been surprised if the actual level of smuggling had been six times greater than that. Villa himself journeyed to Juárez several times with the express purpose of supervising this trade.

With the opening of Tampico, another possible route for importing arms became available, and Villa hoped to exploit it. His gambling on González may have worked against him. By mid June, Villa
complained to agent Carothers that Carranza had impounded a shipment of arms which he had personally paid for.\textsuperscript{17} At this time, the Carranza-Villa dispute for revolutionary domination had reached volatile levels. Carranza ordered that Villa's army be denied coal from the Sabinas fields of Coahuila in addition to his command that ammunition at Tampico be kept from Villa.\textsuperscript{18} In the meantime, prior to this wide-open rupture between Villa and Carranza, Sommerfeld had traveled to Washington, D.C. and New York, shortly after the fall of Tampico, to secure munitions for Villa. According to \textit{The New York Times}, those munitions had been sent to Tampico.\textsuperscript{19} Villa complained bitterly about this action by Carranza and essentially threatened to suspend operations against Huerta until he received his ammunition and coal.\textsuperscript{20} Cumberland noted that this was what Villa actually did.\textsuperscript{21}

Villa's anger was justified. The exact quantity of Villa's shipments to Tampico remained in doubt, but it was certain they were large. Shipments directly from New York to Tampico began on June 3, 1914 with the departure of the \underline{Antilla} with a cargo of 3,000,000 rounds.\textsuperscript{22} Although the American government thereafter officially forbade munitions shipments from American ports to Mexican ports—as a way of maintaining the guise of impartiality for the Niagara conference—the United States in effect condoned these shipments.\textsuperscript{23} William F. Buckley, who served as one of the United

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\textsuperscript{20} Villa's anger was justified. The exact quantity of Villa's shipments to Tampico remained in doubt, but it was certain they were large. Shipments directly from New York to Tampico began on June 3, 1914 with the departure of the \underline{Antilla} with a cargo of 3,000,000 rounds. Although the American government thereafter officially forbade munitions shipments from American ports to Mexican ports—as a way of maintaining the guise of impartiality for the Niagara conference—the United States in effect condoned these shipments.

\textsuperscript{21} William F. Buckley, who served as one of the United
States delegates to the Niagara Falls Conference, lamented this subterfuge. He pointed out that the shipment of arms from American ports to Mexican ports continued in spite of the embargo through a simple device. Munitions were shipped from New York to Galveston, Texas. Thereafter, vessels took the munitions to Tampico. In order to stay within the limits of the law, vessels leaving Galveston signed shipping papers which affirmed their destinations to be Havana. Their obvious port of call was Tampico. Buckley testified that at least six separate voyages from Galveston to Tampico took place in early June. Buckley further pointed out that Secretary of State Bryan had approved of this scheme.²⁴

Villa's share in these shipments must have been substantial. The bitterness he expressed at Carranza's withholding ammunition from him hinted at the size of Villa's orders. More concrete evidence appeared in The New York Times which identified the Antilla munition held by Carranza as belonging to Villa.²⁵ Records indicated that the vast bulk of munitions shipped to Tampico over these months originated in New York City with Flint and Company. In his testimony before the Fall Committee in 1919, Sherburne G. Hopkins, an agent for Carranza, identified Charles R. Flint as a well-known New York City banker and merchant. In 1911, Hopkins approached Flint with hopes of securing a loan for the Madero government.²⁶ Since Carranza controlled Tampico, it was clear that at least a part of the munitions sent there
were intended for his troops. As an agent for Carranza and an acquaintance of Flint, Hopkins may have been involved in these shipments. Yet there was other evidence which linked Villa to Flint. Collector Cobb reported in late August that Villa had purchased 5,000,000 rounds from Charles R. Flint, Company and that 2,000,000 rounds had already arrived in El Paso from the same source.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, another of Villa's armament agents, Lazaro De La Garza—who had been in Washington, D.C. with Sommerfeld to negotiate arms purchases in late June 1914—had direct ties to Flint. Collector Cobb reported in September that De La Garza left Mexico to take up headquarters in New York City: "His address will be care of Flint and Company," Cobb noted. "You will have to judge as to the significance of this."\textsuperscript{28}

On June 4th, the Antilla sailed from New York for Tampico, leaving just before the imposition of the marine embargo. Carothers also identified this shipment as having been purchased by Villa.\textsuperscript{29} Agents of the Department of Justice believed that the ship carried only 2,000,000 rounds and not 3,000,000 as previously thought.\textsuperscript{30} After the ammunition arrived and in spite of Carranza's orders, Villa had received this shipment through the efforts of Colonel E. Santos Coy who took it from Tampico through Saltillo to Torreon.\textsuperscript{31} In reporting on this cargo, The New York Times said: "How Villa got the munitions was not made known, but it was said that the task was accomplished
through the daring of some of Villa's lieutenants who went to Tampico for the purpose."\textsuperscript{32}

A second known shipment for Villa arrived in Tampico in early July.\textsuperscript{33} Leon J. Canova, another of the American agents sent to treat with revolutionary leaders by Wilson, reported that Carranza released this cargo to Villa on July 23, 1914.\textsuperscript{34} On July 31, yet another shipment of 2,000,000 rounds specifically consigned to Villa arrived at Tampico.\textsuperscript{35} From these reports, then, it was evident that Villa had ordered at least 6,000,000 rounds to be delivered through the port of Tampico; his source was in all probability the Charles R. Flint Company. Of these 6,000,000 cartridges, Villa received 4,000,000.

It may have seemed inconsistent strategy on Carranza's part to allow Villa to receive these supplies; at a time when both men were determined to squash each other, it made little sense for Carranza to supply Villa. It appeared on the surface to indicate a lapse in his reasoning.\textsuperscript{36} Several explanations might have justified these events. Carranza may not have exercised total control over González, whose army held the port. Because González promoted a reconciliation between Carranza and Villa, he may have felt that by allowing Villa to secure munition in June and July, he was working toward revolutionary unity.\textsuperscript{37}
A second possible explanation grew from the fact that vast quantities of munitions were shipped from Flint and Company in New York during June, July, and August. Department of Justice agents' records indicated that a minimum of 13,000,000 rounds and 7,000 rifles left New York City consigned for Galveston in those months. That Villa's agents dealt with Flint and Company has been shown. Assuming Villa made substantial purchases to be delivered to him through Tampico, Carranza's policy may have been directed towards placating Villa's worries. In permitting Villa to receive 4,000,000 rounds, Carranza may have been able to gain access to far greater quantities consigned to Villa. If Carranza had refused to release the munitions which began to arrive in June, Villa would have diverted future shipments away from Tampico. Thus, by giving Villa a portion of his arms, Carranza may have gained more for himself—all free of charge.

Finally, as The New York Times suggested, Villa raiders may have spirited this ammunition from Tampico to Torreón. However, since González's troops held Tampico and Saltillo, they probably could not have accomplished this task without either González's or Carranza's approval.

Villa still devoted attention to his finances in the spring and summer. From the campaign against Zacatecas, he took 250,000 dollars through forced loans and special taxes. Cattle provided his
greatest income in these months, however. Cobb noted that because of the ongoing revolution, most of the cattle in Chihuahua remained unbranded, making them impossible to identify and thus an easy mark for rustlers. Branded cattle would not have discouraged Villa in any case. Cobb reported that Villa contracted with J.E. Garrett of Corpus Christi, Texas to deliver 35,000 cattle; their arrangement called for 500,000 dollars to be paid to Villa—100,000 dollars of that sum having been paid by July 24. The New York Times gave a far different account of this transaction. Their story said that Villa contracted with Garrett for the sale of 300,00 cattle for which 5,000,000 dollars was to be paid. This money was to be divided between Villa and the Terrazas family, although the ratio of the shares was unknown. It was possible both accounts were accurate since The New York Times story followed Cobb’s report by two days. One deal might have followed another. However, since The New York Times account reported that as a stipulation of the contract, Luis Terrazas, Jr. was to be given his freedom and since this did not take place, the accuracy of that story may be challenged. However, Villa received a substantial income from the sale of cattle in this time; how much was not clear.

The sale of cotton provided another financial mainstay to Villa through the summer. Department of Justice agents reported that T.N. Solomon worked in El Paso for Villa selling the cotton taken
from Torreon; he used the money to buy munitions. Villa's border agents evidently adhered to his prompting to sell cotton and other confiscated goods at cutrate prices in order to attract buyers. In spite of various injunctions brought against the sale of the confiscated cotton, sales progressed. Canova reported that Villa's agents delivered the cotton to brokers in El Paso, receiving in exchange approximately 50 percent of its market value. This policy drew the buyers Villa had anticipated. Thus through cattle sales, cotton sales, and export taxes levied against Chihuahua cattle companies, Villa derived a healthy income through the mid-summer of 1914.

Because of this financial stability and his need for American good will, he was able to adapt his policies to American government pressures. When his appointee, Fidel Avila, decreed on July 27, 1914 that all mines must reopen or be subject to confiscation, the American government protested. Villa promised that the decree would not be enforced. Rich men could afford to be magnanimous. By agreeing not to enforce this order, Villa gained additional prestige in the American press and promoted his cause in the State Department.

That summer he announced that all Spanish citizens who had not aided Huerta were free to return to their homes. Although few Spanish citizens risked returning to Villa-held regions, this action pleased the American government.
Even with the elimination of Huerta, Villa and Carranza showed no signs of disarming. Villa, as ever, knew the importance of good American relations to his military stockpiling program he carried on over the summer. By relenting on the mining decree in Chihuahua, he remained faithful to his design giving special treatment to Americans above all other foreigners. At the same time he hinted that reconciliation between himself and Carranza would be aided by a lifting of the embargo on munitions, a somewhat illogical argument. He continued to stress his willingness to mediate with Carranza to resolve their differences—as the State Department continually pressed him to do—yet all signs pointed to conflict.

On the same day that Carranza decreed that no more munitions consigned to Villa could come to Tampico—presumably he would seize them—he requested that the United States institute an official embargo on the border. Tensions mounted through July and by August the die had been cast. Bliss reported that the rebels in the vicinity of El Paso made strenuous and successful efforts to transport munitions across the border. Curiously enough, the remainder of the American-Mexican border witnessed no such activity. For some reason, he observed, the rebels in Chihuahua were forced to import their munitions, while rebels elsewhere received supplies through the port of Tampico.
Chihuahua had become a hotbed of military preparedness. Consul Letcher in Chihuahua City observed that Villa scoured the countryside for men and horses and rushed to import all the munitions he could buy. "Nobody here doubts the purpose of his activity." Carothers agreed with Letcher's report. He predicted that Villa's current campaign to import munitions foretold of a coming struggle with Carranza. Carothers also noted that as Villa built his army, Sommerfeld had been sent to New York City, presumably to buy more arms.

By the fall of 1914, Villa's efforts to outfit his army had been quite successful. Having withdrawn from combat against Huerta's troops following the Zacatecas campaign, Villa concentrated his energy on fundraising, recruiting, and securing munitions for the coming battles. In all aspects, he succeeded. Canova described the array of Villa's might in mid-September. "After several months preparation" he noted, Villa, "if he does move south will go with one hundred and sixty cars of provisions and the most ample equipment." Despite the various accords ironed out between Villa and Carranza—the Pact of Torreón, the Sonora truces—the new revolution could not be averted. With troops numbering from 40,000 to 50,000 men and a well-stocked arsenal, Villa commanded the most powerful army of the revolution. His defeat merits close examination.
CHAPTER V: FOOTNOTES

1. RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, May 10, 1914, 812.00:11875.


3. Atkin, Revolution, pp. 204-05.


9. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, July 8, 1914, 812.113:3457; RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, July 22, 1914, 812.113:3462; RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, July 23, 1914, 812.113:3466; RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, July 24, 1914, 812.113:3470.


11. RDS, R.G. 59, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, July 8, 1914, 812.00:12492.

12. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, July 3, 1914, 812.00:12574.

13. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, August 8, 1914, 812.00:3504.

14. RDS, R.G. 59, Bliss to Secretary of War, August 10, 1914, 812.113:3516.
15. **RDS, R.G. 59,** Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, July 29, 1914, 812.00:12725.

16. **RDS, R.G. 59,** Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, July 20, 1914, 812.00:12559.


18. **RDS, R.G. 59,** Letcher to Secretary of State, June 4, 1914, 812.00:12160.


27. **RDS, R.G. 59,** Cobb to Secretary of State, August 25, 1914, 812.00:13026.

28. **RDS, R.G. 59,** Cobb to Secretary of State, September 3, 1914, 812.00:13089.

29. **RDS, R.G. 59,** Carothers to Secretary of State, June 16, 1914, 812.00:12266.

30. **RDS, R.G. 59,** Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, June 9, 1914, 812.00:12212.
31. **RDS, R.G. 59**, Carothers to Secretary of State, June 16, 1914, 812.00:12266.


33. **RDS, R.G. 59**, Canova to Secretary of State, July 24, 1914, 812.00:12650.

34. **RDS, R.G. 59**, Canova to Secretary of State, July 25, 1914, 812.00:12650.

35. **RDS, R.G. 59**, Bevan to Secretary of State, July 31, 1914, 812.00:3491.


38. **RDS, R.G. 59**, Canova to Secretary of State, August 14, 1914, 812.00:12979.

39. **RDS, R.G. 59**, Cobb to Secretary of State, July 24, 1914, 812.00:12601.


41. **RDS, R.G. 59**, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State, July 2, 1914, 812.00:12413.


43. **RDS, R.G. 59**, Canova to Secretary of State, June 18, 1914, 812.00:12386.

44. William F. Buckley Papers; Report of Corralitos Cattle Company.


49. RDS, R.G. 59, Hanna to Secretary of State, July 9, 1914, 812.00:12449.

50. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, August 4, 1914, 812.113:3500.

51. RDS, R.G. 59, Letcher to Secretary of State, July 25, 1914, 812.00:12614.

52. RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, August 1, 1914, 812.00:12706.

53. RDS, R.G. 59, Canova to Secretary of State, September 23, 1914, 812.00:13272.

54. Cumberland, Mexican Revolution, p. 156.

55. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, August 18, 1914, 812.00:12914.
CHAPTER VI

FROM SEPTEMBER TO CELAYA

Villa Hesitates and Is Lost

Until the end of 1914, Villa gradually increased his power; from the beginning of the new year until the battle of Celaya, he gradually lost it. After the battle of Celaya, Villa's fortunes took a dramatic downward turn. The impact of ordnance and supply to his demise, while not the key element in his reversal, played an important role. In a life and death struggle with Carranza, Villa's resources proved less substantial than his enemy's.

At the outset of his fight with Carranza, Villa's supply system functioned with no visible weaknesses. In September and October he stationed his army in garrisons along the railroad line from Juarez south toward Aguascalientes. At Aguascalientes the revolutionary factions met in one final attempt to arrive at peace, but both Villa and Carranza prepared for war. Villa's troops were well armed, well equipped and fairly enthusiastic. His stockpiling had built massive stores; he had 71 pieces of artillery, 75 machine guns, and an ammunition supply of 20,000,000 rounds. He claimed all of his 40,000 troops had Mauser rifles. Clearly, the embargo had failed.
The unofficial embargo had been lifted in September because of protests by the Shelton-Payne Arms Company. While it did little to deter smuggling, the unofficial embargo—which had been in force since April 23—allowed American officials to confiscate illegal cargoes of munitions bound for Mexico. The Shelton-Payne Company demanded to know by what law they were prevented from selling munitions to Mexico. Ironically, their protest was prompted by the seizure of two carloads of munitions bound for Villa's arsenal in Juárez. Collector Cobb impounded these munitions—515,000 rounds—in early August when Villa's agents attempted to bribe Customs guards to allow the arms to pass into Juárez. The protests of Shelton-Payne resulted in a ruling by the Attorney General that, because the President had not declared an embargo, there was no law to detain shipments of munitions into Mexico. After September 8, 1914, the border had no restrictions on arms trade. This ruling undoubtedly aided Villa. Consul Blocker at Piedras Negras reported Villa had purchased "practically all the output of the Remington gun factory." On October 6, 10,000 rifles went from El Paso to Juárez.

The repeated protests by Carranza calling for the closure of the border failed. The New York Times reported a marked rise in arms exports following the official opening of trade. With De La Garza and Sommerfeld in New York to arrange shipments and with Villa's substantial income, it was no wonder that trade boomed. Bliss
reported that "several million" cartridges crossed from El Paso to Juarez in the first week of October. A week later, he submitted a similar, if vague, report on ammunition shipments for Villa. Again, in early November, Bliss remarked that wholesale remitting of guns and bullets to Mexico took place. Albeit imprecise, Bliss' reports indicated the continued smooth running of Villa's supply system.

With the failure of the convention at Aguascalientes to reconcile the revolutionary factions, the long-postponed fight began. The Convention, packed with Villa supporters, declared Carranza in rebellion of November 10, 1914. For the next six weeks Villa and his allies enjoyed success on the battlefield while Carranza and his forces pulled back into strongholds at Tampico, Veracruz, and several cities along the northern border of Mexico. All observers expected Villa to crush Carranza especially because of the alliance Villa achieved with Emiliano Zapata, the commander of 25,000 rebels from Morelos.

Carranza, however, had several advantages not immediately apparent at the outset of the struggle. He held the port cities of Tampico and Veracruz where revenues from oil taxes enabled him to purchase munitions for his army. In addition, by having these ports, he had uninterrupted supply lines from the United States and Europe. Atkin believed that this proved to be a major factor in Carranza's eventual victory over Villa. By January, Carranza had collected
500,000 dollars worth of gold from oil taxes and frequently received arms shipments.\textsuperscript{16}

More critical, perhaps, was the loyalty of the most able general that the revolution knew, Alvaro Obregón. Obregón cast his lot with Carranza when the Convention failed to bring peace. Longtime a leader of the Sonora rebels, Obregón had worked to bring reconciliation between Carranza and Villa; yet when men had to chose sides in November, Obregón supported Carranza.\textsuperscript{17} Without Obregón, Carranza could not have defeated Villa and Zapata.\textsuperscript{18}

To explain why Obregón sided with Carranza rather than Villa, Johnson believed Obregón simply felt he had to choose between the lesser of two evils.\textsuperscript{19} Obregón's decision was probably influenced by Villa's threats to kill him during the conferences in September.\textsuperscript{20} In any case, that decision proved decisive for Carranza's triumph.

Although at the zenith of his power in late November and early December, Villa faced unforeseen obstacles which later contributed to his defeat. Perhaps foremost among them was his failure to seize the initiative and attack Carranza. Until the battle of Celaya, Villa pursued an ineffective war of attrition which only Carranza could win. Although the border remained open for Villa's purchases until October 1915--just prior to American recognition of Carranza's de facto government--Villa's ability to pay for arms declined, particularly following his defeat at Celaya. Carranza controlled the oil taxes and
thus had a continuous income. Villa's income came from confiscations and taxes (or forced loans) particularly on mining properties. Because the mines in Villa's territory were owned primarily by Americans, increased levys against them jeopardized cordial relations with the United States. By waiting, then, Carranza grew rich while Villa grew more desperate for revenue.  

His inability to take advantage of his strength in November and attack Carranza at Veracruz cost him dearly as the months passed. To explain his hesitation, several other factors should be considered. Among other weaknesses, Villa's army was not as powerful as it seemed. His alliance with Zapata's army of 25,000 was more apparent than real. Zapata's troops took Puebla in mid-December, but they held it only a short while. Thereafter, Zapata's influence on future military campaigns ended. The role he played was "purely negative;" Zapata "could only prevent actions by the enemy, he could not compel them." This left Villa without the support of 25,000 troops who were ineffective soldiers when they ventured outside their patria chica, Morelos.  

The disintegration of the Convention government also hampered Villa's revolution and kept him from moving against Carranza. When part of the Convention government defected, they not only upset his administration but they took a bite out of his treasury—a severe blow to Villa's already weakening resources. Villa often professed a reluctance
to assume the Presidency of Mexico, yet he refused to be constrained by or supportive toward the revolutionary government which he nominally served under. Largely as a result of Villa's refusal to support the Convention, it fell into chaos. The inner conflicts of the Convention government proved to be decisively detrimental to Villa's cause. When the Convention government met in Mexico City and attempted to bring order, Villa permitted his troops and generals to do as they pleased despite his assurances to Convention President Gutierrez that he would abide by Gutierrez's decisions. Martin Luis Guzman accurately described the anarchy which prevailed in the city in mid-December: "What days those were, when murders and robberies were like the striking of a clock, marking the hours that passed." By the end of December, Gutierrez threatened to leave the capital because he lacked the power to quell the ongoing vendettas and pillaging. Villa left his campaign against the Carrancistas in Jalisco and returned to Mexico City where he agreed to subordinate his armies to the Convention government. These promises never materialized. By mid-January Gutierrez had endured enough.

The announced reconciliation between Villa and Gutierrez did little to stem the chaos in Mexico City. In frustration with Villa, Gutierrez attempted to form an alliance with Obregon and Antonio Villareal, but these two generals rejected his plan and remained loyal to Carranza. When Villa discovered this plot, he gave orders that
Gutierrez should be killed. In mid-January Gutierrez, learning of Villa's order, fled Mexico City. By this action, Villa lost not only part of the Convention leadership and the loyalty of several skilled generals—Jose Isabel Robles and Lucio Blanco among them—but half of the government's treasury. He could little afford to lose generals or money, particularly not 10,000,000 pesos. Having already lost Toribio Ortega in June, Villa's corps of competent generals ran seriously low.

A final factor contributing to Villa's hesitation to move against Carranza was Villa's concern for supply. Villa placed more importance in protecting his supply base in Chihuahua at the moment he had the opportunity to defeat Carranza. Like Zapata, Villa thought in terms of his patria chica. For him, Mexico was the northern States. But he had more pragmatic reasons for focusing his attention on the north. Since October, the troops of Maclovio Herrera threatened the region around Casas Grandes. In Durango, Domingo and Mariano Arrieta commanded armies loyal to Carranza and menaced Villa's supply lines. Other pro-Carranza generals commanded garrisons at Piedras Negras, Nuevo Laredo, and Matamoros; and all were well-fortified to withstand Villist attacks. These Carranza forces challenged Villa's domination of the north and threatened to cut him off from his source of supplies in the United States.
Villa continued to win victories in battles he led against Carrancista forces, yet his staff commanders met with less success. His continued string of victories may have lulled him into a false sense of confidence; having never lost a major battle, he may have felt he could strike a decisive blow against Carranza whenever he wished. Villa probably had great respect for Obregón's ability, and this respect made him more careful about preparations for battle.

In January, events moved against Villa's cause. Manuel Chao and Aguirre Benavides deserted him for Carranza. Puebla fell to Obregón's army on January 6. By the end of the month, his army occupied the capital. Villa's armies had taken Guadalajara in mid-December only to evacuate a month later to the forces of General Dominguez. His officers failed in the north. Stubborn resistance at Ebano and Tampico kept that port under Carranza's control.

By the middle of February, with the civil war at a military stalemate, Villa's financial foundations began to teeter. Consul Bonney at San Luis Potosí reported that General Urbina attempted to collect a forced loan from local merchants. This demand for 130,000 dollars did not exempt Americans. Although Urbina's later behavior showed that he may have been more concerned with lining his own pockets than in advancing the cause of the revolution, the incident demonstrated a need for funds and, perhaps, Villa's growing inability to control his subordinates. Later in February, Consul Davis
in Guadalajara—which had again been taken by Villist troops—reported that Villa demanded contributions from all the merchants of the city. Again, Americans were not exempted. Although Carothers secured promises from Villa that Americans in both places would not have to pay, these actions foretold of Villa's financial instability.

In March, Villa threatened to tax Americans again, this time in Monterey. He placed a million dollar levy on the Chamber of Commerce which he claimed was for the relief of the poor. His demand did not exempt Americans. He relented on this demand after pressure from the State Department, yet he seemed more and more desperate as spring came. Indications of his financial distress were reflected in the decline of his fiat money. In January, his peso had dropped to fourteen cents on the dollar—its lowest exchange rate since issuance.

Villa threatened to confiscate mines in Chihuahua in mid-March unless they renewed production. In spite of earlier accords which guaranteed mining safety and provided Villa with 10 percent of mining profits, chaotic conditions hampered mining operations. Villa's frustration at being denied revenue resulted in the issuance of Decree Number 5, which required mines to begin operation or lose their titles. Carothers received Villa's promise that the Decree would not be enforced, but these actions bespoke of growing financial difficulties for Villa.
Reports from the border supported these findings. It was reasonable to assume that a substantial portion of the revenues Villa amassed in late 1914 had already been spent to outfit his massive army. An army of 40,000 men with carbines, a supply of 20,000,000 cartridges and other ordnance must have consumed a good portion of Villa's reserves. His confiscations and forced loans of February and March supported this assumption. By early December, reports from the border indicated a drastic reduction in munitions which went from El Paso to Juárez. The vast shipments of October and November already detailed were no longer evident in the weekly reports from General Bliss. In January, February, and March these reports showed no munitions going from El Paso to Juárez. At the same time, the border towns of Laredo, Matamoros, and Douglas—all opposite Carrancists-held cities—imported substantial quantities of munitions according to these records. Thus it was clear that records of munition shipments were kept in these months, although just as clear that none came to Villa.

Only at the beginning of April did Villa again start to receive munitions through El Paso. In the week ending April 4th, he received 4,464 carbines and 1,153,860 cartridges. The following week, another 661,000 rounds and 1,555 rifles came to him through El Paso. It seemed inconsistent that in months when Villa's financial weakness seemed severe, he should suddenly begin to import vast lots of
munitions, especially since he had been unable to do so in the three months prior to this time.

In late March, Hipolito Villa stayed in New York City where he sought funds, apparently for munitions purchases. This fact will be shown later as a possible explanation for Villa's sudden resurgence of importing.

The seeming purposelessness of Villa's campaigns in February and March may in part be explained by his need to gain ammunition and rifles that he could not secure through El Paso. The months of continuous fighting had most certainly claimed a large part of his reserve supplies. In mid-February, a report which substantiated this contention appeared. The New York Times reported that 8,500 rifles and 4,000,000 rounds had arrived in San Diego, California via Galveston. The origin of this shipment had been New York City. Because Flint and Company had sent millions of rounds to Galveston through the summer of 1914 and because Villa's agents dealt extensively with that company in past months, it was logical to assume the munitions originated with Flint and Company. Because Carranza controlled Tampico and Veracruz, it was obvious that the shipment was destined for Villa. No other revolutionary leader at this time could have used such a large consignment.

In late February, The New York Times linked Villa's actions on the west coast of Mexico to this shipment of arms. Villa had recently
retaken Guadalajara from the Carrancistas at this time, as noted earlier. The New York Times reported that Villa brought his army to the coast in order to be certain of receiving the 9,000 rifles and 3,000,000 cartridges then in transit from San Diego to a Mexican port, presumably somewhere near Manzanillo. Although this story gave a different tally for the quantity of munitions, it identified the shipment as being the same made to San Diego in late January. Carothers reported that Villa fought on the outskirts of Manzanillo on February 19, 1915. The New York Times reported that Villa captured Zapotlan, a town on the way from Guadalajara, on February 20, 1915. However, Villa probably did not receive this shipment. His own memoirs attested to a critical shortage of munitions by late March. Villa probably left the coast before he could secure the munitions. Responding to the pleas of Felipe Angeles, Villa left the coast with the main body of his army and moved toward Monterrey. He left General Urbina in charge of west coast operations. If the arms did land, they would probably have been taken by Urbina. Yet because Urbina's troops were badly mauled by Carrancista forces in late March, it was likely that had he received the ammunition, he lost most of it in battle. Cumberland maintained that Villa occasionally received ammunition through Mexico City, yet it was doubtful that these shipments could have amounted to much.
Thus by late March Villa's financial recourses and munitions were in short supply. The efforts of his subordinates to take Tampico from González had failed and other drives to dislodge the Constitutionalist forces from border garrisons had stalled. However, as March ended, the Carrancistas had not been able to decisively defeat Villa's troops either. This military stalemate changed in April at Celaya.
CHAPTER VI: FOOTNOTES


2. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Canova to Secretary of State, October 6, 1914, 812.00:13518.


5. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Secretary of Treasury to Secretary of State, September 8, 1914, 812.113:3660.


9. Ibid.

10. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, October 6, 1914, 812.00:13462.

11. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, October 14, 1914, 812.00:13545.

12. *RDS*, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, November 5, 1914, 812.00:13724.


17. Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 259.


28. RDS, R.G. 59, Silliman to Secretary of State, December 29, 1914, 812.00:14095; RDS, R.G. 59, Silliman to Secretary of State, December 23, 1914, 812.00:14076.


31. Ibid.


36. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, November 5, 1914, 812.00:13742; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department to Secretary of War, November 10, 1914, 812.00:13972; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, November 18, 1914, 812.00:13851.

37. Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 287.


40. RDS, R.G. 59, Silliman to Secretary of State, January 27, 1915, 812.00:14273.

41. RDS, R.G. 59, Davis to Secretary of State, February 2, 1915, 812.00:14485.


44. Foreign Relations of the United States, February 24, 1915, p. 986.


46. Ibid.


49. RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, April 16, 1915, 812.63:58.

50. RDS, R.G. 59, Canova to Secretary of State, October 6, 1914, 812.00:13518.
51. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, January 7, 1915, 812.00:14197; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, January 13, 1915, 812.00:14241; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, January 20, 1915, 812.00:14278; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, January 26, 1915, 812.00:14319; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, February 3, 1915, 812.00:14366; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, February 17, 1915, 812.00:14436; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, February 24, 1915, 812.00:14470; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, March 24, 1915, 812.00:14737; and RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, March 31, 1915, 812.00:14791.

52. Ibid.

53. RDS, R.G. 59, April 8, 1915, 812.00:14866.

54. RDS, R.G. 59, April 15, 1915, 812.00:14899.


58. Ibid.

59. RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, February 22, 1915, 812.00:14431.


63. Atkin, Revolution, p. 250.

64. Cumberland, Mexican Revolution, p. 199; Womack, Zapata, pp. 221-23.

CHAPTER VII

CELAYA AND THE AFTERMATH

The Beginning of the End

On the eve of the most decisive battle of the revolution, Villa's finances received another setback. Because of the protests of American stockmen, Villa's cattle sales through El Paso were substantially reduced in April. By the end of the month, this trade had been almost completely shutoff. In agreeing to relent on the mining decree issued on March 15, Villa lost another revenue source, although he did arrange with the mining companies for the sale of his fiat currency to them in exchange for specie as a form of tax payment.

Other difficulties beset him at this time. He protested to Duval West, an American envoy sent by President Wilson, that the Sante Fe Railroad no longer delivered coal to his troops; coal he purchased had not been delivered. In his memoirs he claimed that he had purchased large quantities of munitions in March, but that his agents had difficulties "getting them into Mexico as Washington was not so favorable as before." It was unclear what difficulties he referred to. This comment may have been made as a partial rationale for his defeat at Celaya which he blamed on a variety of factors dealing with munitions. In any case, only small quantities of munitions reached
him before the battle of Celaya. In contrast to the summer and fall of 1914, when Villa received ammunition in the millions of rounds every week, Sommerfeld and Hipólito Villa managed to purchase only 750,000 rounds in March. Villa lost the battle at Celaya and six weeks later repeated in defeat at León. Villa stressed that he lost the battle of Celaya because he lacked ammunition. Before the battle of León, however, that excuse had been eliminated. Cobb reported from El Paso that from the time of the battle of Celaya until early May Villa received 2,500,000 rounds and 3,500 rifles. A week later, still before the battle of León, 963 rifles and another 2,900,000 rounds of ammunition came to Villa. Villa had sufficient weapons with which to equip his army at León. Yet he suffered a second massive debacle. By the time his army was in the process of being cut to shreds by Obregón's forces, more than 7,700,000 cartridges and 4,300 rifles had passed from El Paso to Juárez. Although reported ammunition shortages may have explained his defeat at Celaya, they could not explain what happened at León.

All signs pointed to a serious financial crisis concurrent with Villa's need for ammunition. His peso, which had dropped to fourteen cents on the dollar in January, continued to decline, reaching a value of four and one-half cents on the dollar by April 24, 1915. By early May, Villa's agency had to pay exceedingly high rates for the
ammunition that El Paso dealers sold.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, the buying power of his currency plummeted while prices he paid were increased. At a time when he had little income from cattle sales, when he had negotiated and spent revenues from Torreon's cotton, and when he had relented on forced loans, it seemed odd that Villa should suddenly receive huge lots of munitions. This situation became all the more difficult to explain in wake of the disaster at Celaya. An alternative resource must have supplied him.

It was possible that Villa received help from German government agents who were directly interested in promoting revolutionary factions in Mexico. While no irrefutable evidence can sustain the charges of German financing, many bits of circumstantial information led to just such a conclusion. In order to show this, the affairs of Felix Sommerfeld should be reexamined.

According to Friedrich Katz, Sommerfeld had established a close rapport with Bernard Dernberg by May 1915. Dernberg worked as a propaganda agent for the German government in the United States at this time.\textsuperscript{12} In the month of May, Dernberg wrote to Admiral Henning von Holtzendorff—who later forwarded the letter to German Foreign Secretary Von Jagow—suggesting the benefits to be derived from an American war with Mexico. Sommerfeld, Dernberg affirmed, pledged himself to work for whatever policy would best serve the interests of Germany.\textsuperscript{13}
Further links between Sommerfeld and German agents were established earlier. In early April 1915, German Naval attache Karl Boy-Ed and Franz Rintelen von Kleist—the man who financed Huerta's attempted return to power in Mexico—were known to be meeting with Sommerfeld. By April 5, 1915, an account had been opened by Sommerfeld at the Mississippi Valley Trust Company in St. Louis. Two members of the German Embassy's staff opened accounts at the same bank at the same time. Department of Justice agents believed that these accounts were made to conceal payments from the German government to Sommerfeld.

From Sommerfeld's account in St. Louis, 380,000 dollars was paid out to the Western Cartridge Company of Alton, Illinois from April 5, 1915 to December 1, 1915. All these purchases were consigned to Hipolito Villa at El Paso. It was possible—but by no means proven—that additional arms came to Villa from the Simmons Hardware Company of St. Louis. Department of Justice agents reported that in July, while Remington had shipped no arms to the border for the past several months, Simmons Hardware had been sending "large quantities" to Mexico.

No shipments came to Villa at Juárez from January until April. Sommerfeld had purchased, in four separate lots, 750,000 rounds of ammunition in March. Because "there is no evidence that the war in Europe made the slightest difference in the volume of munitions going
to Mexico," it was probable that if Sommerfeld had had money in March, he would have purchased more supplies. 18 It seemed clear that in March he lacked funding. If 20,000 dollars had purchased 448,000 rounds of ammunition, then 380,000 dollars could have paid for as many as 9,000,000 rounds. 19 German funding could then have explained the sudden rise in the quantity of arms Villa received after April.

If German aims were to provoke conflict between the United States and Villa, then this policy worked counter to that goal. Jagow’s letter, responding to the suggestions made by Dernberg, affirmed that German interests would be served by an American-Mexican conflict. "It would be desirable," he wrote in May 1915, "that America, a good friend of the English, occupy itself in another war in order to disinterest itself in Europe." 20 German willingness to finance Mexican revolutionaries appeared plain. In April or May, 895,000 dollars was given to the Huerta-Orozco alliance with hopes of installing a pro-German government in Mexico. 21

However, by supplying Villa with munitions at this stage of the revolution, they reduced their chances of provoking a conflict with the United States. Had they denied Villa supplies, it is certain his financial and military situation would have become much more critical after April and May. At that time, before the battle of Léon, he commanded from 20,000 to 30,000 troops. 22 Because German aid—
assuming it was given—reduced Villa's immediate needs for munitions, it allowed him to relent on his confiscations and forced loans demanded from Americans. He did not provoke the United States because he did not need to. By March 16, 1916, he commanded 400 troops in the raid on Columbus. Thus German aid may have contributed to forestalling Villa's attacks on the United States and certainly contributed to relieving Villa's need to exploit American interests in Mexico. Pershing's expedition against Villa would have been much different if Villa had commanded 20,000 men.

The battle for Celaya marked Villa's rapid decline from power. Because this engagement and the subsequent conflict at Leon effectively ended Villa's military strength, the impact of ordnance on his defeats should be carefully weighed. From all descriptions of the battle, it seemed that Villa's supplies were less critical a factor than the tactics he employed.

The fight featured Villa's forte, the furious headlong cavalry charge against Obregon's more scientific style of warfare. Obregon, unlike Villa, had studied trends of the Great War in Europe; he adapted his strategy accordingly. With the advice of Colonel Maximilian Kloss, a German officer working on his staff, Obregon ordered that trenches be dug and barbed wire be stretched around the town of Celaya. Obregon had several weeks to prepare for Villa's attack. The broad plains surrounding Celaya made this tactic effective; with
supporting machine gun positions, Obregón's troops had well-
protected fortifications from which they mowed down the attacking
Villists. 28 Eleven thousand men waited in Celaya for the expected
Villa assault on April 6, 1915. 29

At the outset of the battle, ammunition for attacking troops was in short supply. Yet nothing compelled Villa to attack. Obregón refused to move forward against Villa's army because he faced superior numbers of troops and because he had built strong defenses. 30 Villa ignored the sage counsel of General Felipe Angeles to postpone attack, thereby allowing reinforcements to arrive and forcing Obregón into the open plains where his troops would have been more vulnerable. Had Villa done this, more ammunition would have reached his troops and, perhaps, in spite of his tactics, he may have come away from Celaya in better military strength. Still, in consideration of his repeated refusal to modify his tactics of frontal assault—as witnessed at Leon and Agua Prieta—Villa's delay probably would have made little difference in the long run.

Estimates of Villa's losses varied according to which side submitted the report. Villa at first claimed that his army had won a smashing victory but later admitted to defeat. 31 The Carranza authorities reported a giant triumph. On April 15, they reported they had taken thousands of rounds of ammunition, thirty cannon, and thousands of prisoners. 32 Later they claimed Villa lost 14,000 dead
and 8,000 prisoners. Whatever the exact tally, Villa troops were brutally massacred. In one day of head-first charges, 2,000 Villists were slain.

Villa attributed his loss in part to his eagerness to strike a blow against Obregon. More frequently he blamed defeat on a lack of ammunition. In light of the records from the border and stories detailing the urgent efforts of his agents in New York to rush ammunition to the border, this claim was no doubt accurate. His troops had only eighteen rounds each by April 13—scant supplies indeed for the bloody fighting at Celaya. Villa found other reasons for his defeat: green recruits who ran away from their first combat experience and cowardly ex-Federal officers who served in his ranks. Still, he harped continuously upon the issue of munition shortages.

The battle of Leon, pitting the same armies in renewed combat in late May and early June left Villa without this explanation. Reinforced with additional troops and munitions, Villa met defeat once more. Immediately after his defeat at Celaya, great lots of ammunition began arriving at his temporary headquarters in Aguascalientes. By April 19, he had received from 3,000,000 to 10,000,000 rounds. In early May, 3,500 new rifles had been sent to his army. Villa had 15,000 troops with him at Aguascalientes in late April; at that time, he called up his reserves from the north
to reinforce him. By the beginning of the battle, he commanded between 25,500 and 30,000 men. He did not appear to be lacking for military stores.

Johnson contended that Villa was again critically short of ammunition for the battle of León, but the records from the border shipments disputed this. Reports from Carothers, Schmutz, and Cobb showed that this was not the case. The reason he lost again at León had little to do with munitions; Villa had simply learned nothing from his encounter at Celaya. When explaining his attitude to Angeles before the battle of León—when Angeles again cautioned Villa to adopt a defensive campaign—Villa refused to listen, saying, "I am a man who came into this world to attack. If I am now defeated by attacking today, I will win by attacking tomorrow." Rejecting Angeles' advice, Villa opened another massive assault against Obregón's Army of Operations on June 1, 1915. The results were similar to Celaya. By June 6, the battle had ended; Villa's army had been crushed. Villa allowed his passionate hatred for Obregón—of whom he once said, "I would rather be beaten by a Chinese than by Obregón"—to overcome sound military reasoning. The Constitutionalists claimed 10,000 killed, wounded, or captured Villista troops at the end of the battle.
CHAPTER VII: FOOTNOTES

1. Hill, Emissaries to a Revolution, p. 323.


6. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, April 16, 1915, 812.00:15118; RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, April 20, 1915, 812.00:14897.

7. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, May 5, 1915, 812.00:14973.

8. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, May 26, 1915, 812.00:15105.

9. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, June 5, 1915, 812.00:15265.

10. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, April 24, 1915, 812.00:14971.

11. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, May 10, 1915, 812.00:15092.


13. Ibid.

15. Sandos, "German Involvement," Hispanic American Historical Review, p. 83.


26. Lieuwen, Mexican Militarism, p. 34.

27. Atkin, Revolution, p. 250.


29. Cumberland, Mexican Revolution, p. 199.

30. Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 287.

32. RDS, R.G. 59, Silliman to Secretary of State, April 15, 1915, 812.00:14857.

33. RDS, R.G. 59, Arrendondo to Secretary of State, April 16, 1915, 812.00:14882.

34. Atkin, Revolution, p. 251.


38. Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 289.

39. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, April 20, 1915, 812.00:14897.


41. Ibid.


43. RDS, R.G. 59, Schmutz to Secretary of State, April 19, 1915, 812.00:14931.

44. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, May 5, 1915, 812.00:14973.

45. RDS, R.G. 59, April 22, 1915, 812.00:14935.


47. Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 290.


50. Atkin, Revolution, p. 252.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

The Relationship of Munitions to Villa's Demise

None of the news following the battle of Leon was good news for the Villistas. Perhaps the most critical result of his defeats in the early summer of 1915 was the loss of popular support from the Mexican people. Later in his career when he eluded Pershing's Expedition, he would regain the admiration of the people, but at the end of the battle of Leon this was not the case. The invincible General of the Division of the North no longer possessed his aura of victory.

His once massive army started to disintegrate. By July, when he began his retreat northward to his home bases in Chihuahua, fewer than 10,000 troops remained under his command with desertions from his ranks becoming commonplace. In desperation, he recruited teenagers and women to fight in his army; he increased the enlistment bonus to ten pesos. Still his soldiers left him. The rapid decline in his currency made enlistment bonuses meaningless; but even with monetary inducement, it was unlikely that people would join him anyway. A long revolution and Villa's stunning defeats had cut into popular zeal to serve with him. As prices in Villist-controlled...
territory soared and the value of his fiat money lost its worth, food shortages followed by hunger riots broke out in Chihuahua and Durango. This single factor, more than any other, created popular animosity against Villa. If, as Johnson believed, men fought for leaders more than causes in this revolution, Villa's losses had crippled his prestige. Men did not fight for a defeated general.

Munitions continued to flow to his agency in Juarez, yet he had fewer and fewer troops who would be able to use them. Now that Villa's triumphs had ended, his generals and agents became more concerned with personal gain than with the cause of the Division of the North. Carothers reported in late June that "military commanders everywhere are grafting to the full extent of their ability." His agents in El Paso and Juarez stole from Villist funds for their own purposes just as did his field generals.

As he retreated northward, Villa ransacked towns for food and supplies. Wherever he took his army he demanded that his worthless currency be accepted as legal tender and he set high taxes on anyone who still had "real" money. He kept to this pattern at Aguascalientes in June and at Chihuahua, Durango, and Torreon in July and August. These actions did little to bolster his fighting strength; his soldiers had had enough battles. All the while the army of Obregon moved gradually north forcing Villa from Aguascalientes to Torreon to Chihuahua. By mid-September, the evacuation of Torreon was
underway. By the end of the month, his army prepared to withdraw from Chihuahua, too.

Curiously, throughout the latter part of the summer and fall, arms continued to flow from El Paso to Juárez. From June 1 until mid-July, Villa received more than 7,000,000 cartridges. After July 15, Villa received large weekly shipments of munitions until mid-September. Between July 15 and September 8, 1915, an additional 4,300,000 rounds came to Juárez. In this same space of time, only 260 carbines were imported, which suggested that Villa had fewer troops to arm or less money to buy weapons with. The imports in June, July, and August supported the argument that Villa received outside financing, possibly from German sources. The weakness of his financial condition had already been shown. By early May, the Madero family no longer backed him. In the light of the widespread grafting, it seemed unlikely that the money which paid for these arms came from the Villa agency on the border. Thus, though fighting a losing campaign, he continued to receive munitions in bulk—from July 1 to mid-September 12,000,000 rounds came to his army. His defeats after Celaya had to have another cause than the lack of ammunition. In addition, this information disputed Quirk's belief that Villa's actions—increasing confiscations and arbitrary taxation—after June resulted from Villa's great need for more arms and ammunition.
Abruptly in mid-September, imports of munitions fell sharply. In the two weeks prior to the renewal of the embargo on October 9, 1915, total imports to Juarez were only 8,300 cartridges. In spite of his numerous setbacks following Celaya and Leon, until the American recognition of Carranza's de facto government, Villa's policy continued to favor American interests in Mexico. Amid confiscations of the summer and fall, Villa often threatened to tax Americans or to confiscate their property; but he always relented on the demands he issued. In late July, he decreed that all merchants of Chihuahua turn their wares over to his troops; foreigners were to be reimbursed with Villa currency while Mexicans were not so lucky. Villa confiscated Mexican goods as a "contribution to the revolution." In conference with General Hugh Scott and George Carothers a week later, Villa agreed to return all the merchandise.

Villa had also decreed on July 26 that all mine and smelter owners were to meet at Chihuahua City on August 9; he intended that they should pay him a 300,000 dollar loan. The owners feared that Villa might implement the notorious Decree Number 5 and confiscate their property if they did not heed his demands. Villa relented again, agreeing not to demand the money; grateful owners donated 1,000 tons of coal to his army. Several explanations can be given suggesting why Villa behaved this way. General Scott believed that Villa cooperated with American
demands simply out of faith in United States intentions not to recognize Carranza and out of his friendship for General Scott. Fearing American recognition of Carranza, with the certain closing of the border, Villa probably wished to keep the cordial ties which gave him access to supplies. It was shown that in July and August and until mid-September, large supplies of munitions were bound to him from the United States. These munitions were vulnerable to seizure in the event Villa followed through on his threats.

Villa's continued cooperation fit into American efforts to mediate the revolution. Not wishing to recognize Carranza, the United States government worked to keep Villa afloat financially as a balancing against Carranza's power. Through the efforts of Secretary of State Lansing, Villa received permission to export slaughtered beef into El Paso in early August. This was part of a plan whereby a mediated peace could be achieved without Carranza becoming President.

A final American attempt to arrange a mediated settlement eliminating Carranza began in mid-August. General Scott received permission to contact Alvaro Obregon in hopes of forming an alliance which excluded Carranza. Obregon remained loyal to Carranza, the plan collapsed and Scott returned to Washington. The plan indicated just how far the American administration was willing to go to install any leader except Carranza as Mexico's President. This
policy favored Villa who had shown himself pliable to American requests; in doing so he received financial rewards.

Villa's open hostility to American firms after the recognition of Carranza correlated with the closing of the border and the end of his purchases of munitions. Orders came from Washington on October 9, 1915 to halt shipments of arms; but as has been shown, Villa's shipments four weeks prior to that date had all but ended.

The sale of confiscated goods from Juárez to El Paso continued throughout September and well beyond the closing of the border for munition exports. Villa's agency continued to sell goods—receiving 100,000 dollars cash in one week in September—however, the increased rampant grafting on the part of agents reduced the effectiveness that this organization had in delivering supplies to Villa.

By early October, Villa's attitude toward Americans changed. Americans could no longer count on exemptions from Villa's decrees. He took 1,000 head of cattle from the Corralitos Cattle Company; in past times, he merely taxed them. In early November, as his remaining troops moved to Sonora to regroup with the forces of José María Maytorena, Villa demanded forced loans of 25,000 dollars from four American mining companies. He did not relent in his demands. Clearly, Villa had ended his pro-American favoritism.

Villa boasted to the American press on October 9, 1915 that he commanded an army of 40,000 men, all well-armed and anxious to
fight. His claims of being well-armed were no doubt accurate. His claims of having 40,000 motivated troops were greatly overstated. Cobb reported that Villa led an army of 7,000. In any case, those he led were disheartened and deserting in droves. By the end of his third disaster at Agua Prieta—where he ordered his troops to their deaths in the same style as he did at Celaya and León—his agents in El Paso were being sued by suppliers.

Clendenen maintained that when the United States recognized Carranza Villa still comanded a "formidable" army. He still had as many as 10,000 troops and sufficient munitions. His army though was hardly the fighting force it had once been. His soldiers were dispirited and his officers clamored for an end of combat. Deser-tions, formerly the problem for opposing armies, now had become rampant within Villist ranks. Many of his best generals left him seeking asylum in the United States.

The difference that arms supplies made in Villa's campaigns seemed less significant in the latter stages of the revolution than they did in the opening months of his drive against Huerta. The friendly American border gave him easy access to munitions enabling him to equip the men who flocked to join the Division of the North. His army had grown to over 40,000 men by the beginning of January. As he built his army, his access to cotton, cattle, and other forms of wealth expanded. This enabled him to purchase additional supplies to arm
additional men. In sum, Villa's strength steamrolled forward in the first year and a half of his campaign. The arms he gained certainly propelled his rise to power. Yet the key to his success was his ability to draw men to fight with him. Without troops, no amount of munitions Villa secured would have won battles.

Men joined Villa in part because he epitomized the caudillo tradition in Mexico. He boldly led his soldiers into battle, showing all that he was more of a man than anyone else. Fearless in the fight, adept with women, horses, and guns, Villa possessed the charismatic qualities essential for drawing recruits. He was "virile (in Mexico, muy macho) earthy, passionate, given to emotional outbursts." These traits coupled with his fierce hatred of his foes helped to explain both his success and failure.

The second explanation for his successes and failures was the way in which he directed the forces he commanded. His tactic of direct frontal assault served him well against the unenthusiastic and largely conscripted army of Huerta. His troops, confident of victory, responded to his orders. Their massed charges won battles at Ojinaga, Torreon, and Zacatecas. By the spring of 1915, those tactics proved ineffective, yet Villa refused to adapt to the new circumstances he faced. He fought a more determined and enthusiastic enemy—which was well-led and well-supplied. He had never been
defeated. Then he had the largest and most well-equipped army, yet he lost. His repeated squandering of men cost him victory.

Villa claimed he lost the battle of Celaya because he lacked ammunition. Records of arms shipments supported that assertion. However, the same records showed that large quantities of munitions came to his army following the battle and throughout the remainder of the summer months. Villa's weaknesses were not supplies but in how he used the forces he had. Impatient for victory—although under no pressure to attack—Villa charged ahead. By waiting, he was assured of more men and more munitions and better artillery support. His armies might have been able to take Tampico if Villa had delayed. 44

Villa's lack of ammunition ended before the battle of León. Large supplies reached him along with reinforcements, but he achieved the same result. His army rushed into the teeth of well-prepared defenses and were massacred. No matter how well-provisioned, few armies can sustain themselves fighting in that manner. No commander can waste thousands of soldiers in repeated attempts to dislodge an enemy. This second defeat broke the confidence of his troops. Now it was Obregón who was undefeated, the supreme caudillo. Villa had been soundly beaten, something which men who lead by charisma can ill afford. Without a will to fight, the army crumbled. Ironically, as this process took place, munitions flowed to his army.
This flow of munitions suggested that the German government may have backed Villa as early as April 1915. Research by Michael Meyer confirmed that the Germans were involved in financing Huerta's attempted return to power in the spring of 1915. Barbara Tuchman showed the German interest in supporting the Carranza government in a possible war with the United States on the eve of American entry in the First World War. The Germans were obviously working to support any faction which might occupy the United States in conflict, and thus keep America out of the European struggle. If the Germans supplied Villa with munitions in the spring of 1915, as this preliminary research indicates, it was certainly consistent with their intrigues with Huerta and Carranza.

During the summer of 1915, Villa lost the support of the people. Without their backing, he could not mount an army. Oddly, it was Carranza who best summarized the relationship between munitions and Villa's successes. In an interview at Veracruz on August 31, a journalist asked Carranza if an embargo on munitions from the United States would shorten the revolution. "I do not think so," Carranza said, "as we had to start against Huerta without arms when Huerta had immense supplies of all kinds of munitions. He was defeated in spite of that fact, the very evident reason being that the Constitutiona-lists had the people supporting their movement." It was not a shortage of munitions which kept Villa from triumph, it was rather his rash
direction of the massive force he commanded. Having lost at Celaya and León, he lost the confidence and support of the Mexican people. Without this, no amount of ammunition mattered.
CHAPTER VIII: FOOTNOTES


3. RDS, R.G. 59, Davis to Secretary of State, June 26, 1915, 812.00:15587; RDS, R.G. 59, Coen to Secretary of State, July 22, 1915, 812.00:15586.

4. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, July 26, 1915, 812.00:15545.


6. Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 60.


8. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, July 13, 1915, 812.00:15431.

9. RDS, R.G. 59, Schmutz to Secretary of State, July 15, 1915, 812.00:15284.

10. RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, July 26, 1915, 812.63:143; RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, August 11, 1915, 812.512:757; RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, August 1, 1915, 812.00:15605; RDS, R.G. 59, Coen to Secretary of State, August 30, 1915, 812.00:15970.

11. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, July 26, 1915, 812.00:15545.

12. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, September 18, 1915, 812.00:16224.
13. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, September 30, 1915, 812.00:16334.

14. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, July 14, 1915, 812.00:15445.

15. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, August 6, 1915, 812.00:15730; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, August 13, 1915, 812.00:15812; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, August 19, 1915, 812.00:15908; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, August 25, 1915, 812.00:15985; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, September 3, 1915, 812.00:16054; and RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, September 8, 1915, 812.00:16175.

16. Ibid.

17. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, May 9, 1915, 812.00:14996.


19. RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, September 23, 1915, 812.00:16319; RDS, R.G. 59, Commanding General, Southern Department, to Secretary of War, September 30, 1915, 812.00:16397.

20. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, August 1, 1915, 812.00:15606.

21. RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, August 10, 1915, 812.00:15718.


23. Marcosson, Metal Magic, p. 203.

24. Clendenen, The United States and Pancho Villa, p. 183; RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, August 10, 1915, 812.00:15718.


27. RDS, R.G. 59, Lansing to the President, August 6, 1915, 812.00:15751a.

28. Ibid.

29. RDS, R.G. 59, Lansing to Scott, August 13, 1915, 812.00:15717.


31. RDS, R.G. 59, Secretary of State to Secretary of Treasury, October 9, 1915, 812.113:3704a; RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, September 24, 1915, 812.00:16285.

32. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, September 24, 1915, 812.00:16285; RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, October 27, 1915, 812.00:16612.

33. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, October 10, 1915, 812.00:16440; *William F. Buckley Papers*: Report from Corralitos Cattle Company.

34. RDS, R.G. 59, Carothers to Secretary of State, November 5, 1915, 812.00:16717.


36. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, October 10, 1915, 812.00:16440.


40. RDS, R.G. 59, Cobb to Secretary of State, September 7, 1915, 812.00:16071.
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