

- 36 -

Washington in November, 1875, where the plan of the winter campaign was evolved, and Inspector Watkins wrote the first letter to the commissioner of Indian affairs suggesting the war? Thus was the Sioux war of 1876, the crime of the centennial year, inaugurated.

In December, 1875, as a preliminary measure, the trader at Standing Rock was ordered to quit selling ammunition to the Indians of the agency. It had been the practice for many of the agency Indians to make a winter hunt, and there was a necessity for their doing so in the winter of 1875-6, since there was a scarcity of rations at the agencies. On the 17th of January, 1876, the commissioner of Indian affairs telegraphed the agents at Red Cloud, Spotted Tail, Standing Rock, Crow Creek, White River, Cheyenne River, Fort Berthold, and Fort Peck, to stop all sales of arms and ammunition to all the agency Indians, and seize any that were liable to reach them. This produced uneasiness and distrust among all the Indians, and hence some of the young men left the agencies and did not return. Subsequently, orders were promulgated that all Indians then absent from the agencies, should, on their return, surrender their arms and their ponies. No exception was made in favor of such bands as were absent, with the knowledge of the agents, and then engaged in hunting. The effect of this order was to surprise the Indians, and many of them refused to submit to it, and not being permitted to come home without a compliance, when the troops were put in motion, these Indians, being regarded as "hostile," were driven back, and many from necessity, others from choice, took refuge with Sitting Bull, and thus his forces were augmented.

In the latter part of February, 1876, Gen. Crook took the field with about thirteen hundred troops, making Fort Fatterman