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February 21, Major Brisbin, Second Cavalry, with four troops Second Cavalry, a detachment of Company C, Seventh Infantry, a field-gun and fifteen citizens, numbering two hundred and twenty-one officers and men, left Fort Ellis, Mont., to march to the relief of a party of citizens, besieged by Indians, at the trading-post at Fort Pease, reaching there on March 4. The original party had consisted of forty-six men, who defended themselves deperately in a stockade, until the relief column of troops arriced. Six persons had been killed, eight wounded, and thirteen had excaped by night, only ~~nineteen~~ being found left in the stockade, and these were brought off by the troops.

In November, 1875, Indian Inspector E. C. Watkins reported to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs the attitude of certain wild and hostile bands of Indians, under the leadership of various chiefs or head-men, who were roaming about Dakota and Montana.

Some of these bands had never accepted the reservation system, would not recognize the authority of the government, and insisted upon remaining wild and perfectly free from control. Of this class was "Sitting Bull," who was not a chief, but a "head-men," and whose immediate following did not exceed thirty or forty lodges.

Among the Indians referred to were some who had not only attacked settlers and emigrants, but who had also been in the habit of making war upon the Mandans, Arickarees, and other tribes who were friendly to the whites. Inspector Watkins recommended, therefore, that troops should be sent into the country inhabited by these wild and roving bands, to punish and reduce them to subjection. His report, with the views of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, together with the recommendation of the honorable Secretary of the Interior that these Indians be informed they must remove to reservations before January 31, 1876, or in event of their failure to do so by that date, that they would be turned over to the War Department, were all referred by the General of the Army to Lieutenant-General Sheridan, December 13, 1875.