THE KINGDOM OF GUATEMALA:
UNDER THE MILITARY REFORM 1755-1808

by

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For AddRan College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Preface

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who believed in me during my studies, research, and writing of the present work. In particular, I want to acknowledge the extensive aid and support of my parents Carlos y Julieta, and my step-parents in the United States; Bob and Sue, Ricardo and Rosana, and Baruj and Graciela. Each one of you made this dream possible.

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Vita

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Abstract

Table of Contents

Chapter 1  Introduction  

Chapter 2  The First Military Reform: 1755-1764  
  Before the Military Reform  
  The First Military Reform of 1755  
  The Annulment of Don Alonso Arcos y Moreno’s Reform  
  Don Alonso Fernández de Heredia’s Reform  
  The Seven Years’ War  
  The Military Reform in 1764  

Chapter 3  The Second Military Reform: 1764-1778  
  The Military Reform of 1764  
  Don Pedro de Salazar y Herrera  
  Don Juan González Bustillo  
  Don Martin de Mayorga  

Chapter 4  Don Matías de Gálvez and
The Black Republicans 268
Intendant Anguiano’s Visit 272
The Black Militias of Trujillo 275

Chapter 9 Militia Decline 1799-1808 279
The New Military Regulation and the Reduction of Militias 280
The Debilitation of the Kingdom’s Defenses 286
The Policy of Putting Safety of the Kingdom into Spanish Hands 296
The End of Privileges and the Exclusion of Castes from the Militias 308

Chapter 10 Conclusion 316

Bibliography 329
List of Figures

Figure 1  The Kingdom of Guatemala 1755-1808  3
Figure 2  The Mosquitia  24
Figure 3  Forts of the Kingdom of Guatemala  29
Figure 4  Field Marshal Alejandro O'Reilly  61
Figure 5  Don Matías de Gálvez  96
Figure 6  Spanish Version of the English Attack on the Fort San Fernando de Omoa  124
Figure 7  English Version of the Attack of the Fort San Fernando de Omoa  125
Figure 8  Plan of Fort San Fernando de Omoa 1779  127
Figure 9  The Northern Wall and the Socorro Gate  128
Figure 10  Spanish Offensive 1780  135
Figure 11  Spanish Description of the Fort Inmaculada Concepción 1780  137
Figure 12  English Draw of the Fort Inmaculada Concepción  138
Figure 13  English Map of the San Juan’s River Fortifications  139
Figure 14  Fort San Carlos and the Mouth of Lake Nicaragua  140
List of Tables

Table I  Ojojona District Weaponry, March 1757  31
Table II  Militias of Santiago de Esquipulas 1755-1762  46
Table III  Companies of Yoro, 1764  66
Table IV  Don Garcia Militias, 1755-1767  67
Table V  Militias of Subtiaba 1767  73
Table VI  Militias of Quetzaltenango 1767  75
Table VII  Battalion of San Agustin de la Real Corona 1770  79
Table VIII  Weaponry at Fort San Fernando de Omoa 1771  82
Table IX  Troop Review of Heredia 1777  92
Table X  Infantry Battalion Structure  100
Table XI  Infantry Battalion of Santa Ana 1781  102
Table XII  Commissioned Officers and Soldiers to Train Militias in
the Kingdom of Guatemala 1779  106
Table XIII  Veteran Officers Serving in the Kingdom of
Guatemala 1779-1782  110
Table XIV  Santa Ana Infantry Battalion 1781-1787  182
Table XV  General Militia Review 1794  221
Table XVI  General Militia Review 1799  283
Chapter 1

Introduction

During the second half of the eighteenth century Spanish officials built up a large militia force in Central America, creating a tremendous impact on society. This dissertation reviews the establishment and development of disciplined militias in the Kingdom of Guatemala from 1755 to 1808. Throughout this period, the Spanish Crown raised the largest force ever seen on the Isthmus, having to rely on the inhabitants due to its inability to dispatch veteran forces to defend its territories. In order to attract “volunteers” the Crown offered a series of privileges. By offering these privileges, the King expected to insure the loyalty of all the inhabitants. Defense and loyalty were the main components to keep hold of a territory under dispute in a period of war, economic duress, and independence movements. The militias were able to keep the Kingdom of Guatemala united with and loyal to Spain until after 1808.

The Kingdom of Guatemala extended from Chiapas in southern Mexico to Costa Rica. Santiago de Guatemala became the main seat for the highest royal authorities such as the Captaincy General and the Royal High Court. The Kingdom contained various political-administrative divisions. In 1755 these
territorial divisions included the province, high magistracy, and magistracy. In 1785, a reorganization of the political administration implemented the Intendancies, which were modeled after a military governing system. Thus, the territories were rearranged as main province, intendancy, government, district, high magistracy, and magistracy.¹ Despite the political-administrative changes, the Kingdom of Guatemala remained with the same territories until independence.

Four military reforms shaped the militia structure from 1755 to 1808. In 1755 Captain General Alonso Arcos y Moreno carried out the first and greatest militia reform in the Kingdom of Guatemala. Prior to this date, the militias consisted of individuals without military training, experience, or weaponry, who responded to the call of local authorities. Far from being part of a greater organization, they were just a fragmented force that was gathered in times of emergency. In 1755 Arcos y Moreno proposed a disciplined and trained militia with limited firearms training and a well-defined hierarchy, starting with the Captain General. A cadre of veteran officers would train the militias in basic tactics and in the use of weaponry. With these changes the militia organization in the Kingdom of Guatemala marched on the vanguard of Spanish America.

Figure 1

The Kingdom of Guatemala 1755-1808

Source: J. Antonio Villacorta. Historia de la Capitanía General de Guatemala. (In the National Library, 1942-197-)

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Arcos y Moreno established the custom of enlisting only Spanish, Mestizos, and Mulattoes in the militias of the Kingdom of Guatemala. According to Spanish legislation, those descending from Spanish stock were considered Spaniards. Mestizos, also known as Ladinos, resulted from the mixture of Spaniards and Indigenous populations. Mulattoes consisted of a various groups of people that fell into the same unit organization. A Mulatto company contained Pardos, Lower Mestizos, Free Blacks, or Morenos, and their different mixtures. Most of these groups lived together in the same neighborhoods conforming to a caste structure. There were also Black militias, mostly consisting of newly arrived groups from the coastal outposts and slaves.

The second militia reform implemented in 1763 adhered to the defensive measures taken in Cuba and outlined the future militia organization for the rest of Spanish America. In late 1764, the Kingdom of Guatemala began a militia reform with changes in the militia organization and regulations that closely resembled those carried out by Arcos y Moreno a decade before. The second reform was easily implemented in Central America because it generally kept the militias from the Arcos y Moreno administration intact. These same militias endured until independence despite reorganizations in 1778 and 1799.

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2 This dissertation will refer to Spaniards as those that descend from Spanish stock born either in Spain or in America.

3 A Mulatto battalion was comprised of different castes. See Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica (hereinafter ANCR), Serie Guatemala Colonial, doc. 490, fol. 7. For the case of Costa Rica, the Mulatto battalion included: Pardos, Morenos, Free Blacks, and Mestizos Bajos. The Mestizos Bajos probably did not enjoy acceptance as either Mestizos or Mulattoes. The Mestizos Bajos remained between denominations but were required to serve in the Mulatto battalions.

When Don Matías de Gálvez became the Supreme Military Commander and Inspector General of Veteran Troops and Militias for the Kingdom of Guatemala in 1778, he observed the deplorable state of the militias and decided to totally reorganize the force. This third reform reduced the militia’s numbers and strengthened the regulations that governed them. Gálvez sought to urgently prepare the militia for war in order to conduct a series of assaults between 1779 and 1783 against English enclaves along the coasts. During these years, the militias and officers received royal commissions and the Captain General implemented military regulations for the Mulatto companies. In addition, Gálvez conferred the Fuero Militar de Guerra, granting a de facto series of exemptions, rights, and privileges to the militias serving in Central America.⁵

The debacle of Spain and the series of continuous wars during the 1790s forced the Crown to institute a new militia reform on November 25, 1799. This fourth reform consisted of reducing expenses and choosing Spanish-born officers for the commanding posts. By doing this, the government placed Spaniards as the defenders of the King in the hopes of attracting their loyalty in a period of distress. Consequently, this action reduced the militia force, limited the use of the Fuero Militar, excluded the Mulattoes, and debilitated the defense of the Isthmus. This reform, including most of the changes from the 1755, 1764 and 1778 reforms, endured in the Kingdom until independence.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, France, England, and Spain strove to regain sovereignty over the American territories. To support their aims the monarchies increased their military presence and applied fiscal changes that would cover the expenses that this accrued.\textsuperscript{6} Thus, Spain embarked in a change of administration known as the Bourbon Reforms which sought to improve its defense, taxation, rule, and commerce. These new regulations helped to finance and sustain the ongoing war between the three powers. According to royal policies, new taxation would solve the problem of revenue; however, it created popular discontent regarding these new policies. Insurrections sprang up and, in many cases, developed into revolutionary movements. Like France and England, Spain’s idea of regaining power through the Bourbon Reforms gained momentum at the beginning but produced open revolts in the Spanish American territories.

As part of the Crown’s policy to restore royal authority, the Bourbon Reforms sought to strengthen the military vigor of the Kingdom of Guatemala.\textsuperscript{7} The military reforms in Central America provided ample support and protection for those officials in charge of re-organizing the administration in the Kingdom, helped to facilitate the deployment of military forces, and were part of extensive economic, administrative, and commercial reforms that benefited the set up and


support of militias and veteran troops, which were crucial in safeguarding the necessary changes in the region. The Kingdom of Guatemala devoted the majority of its budget obtained through the Bourbon Reforms to cover military expenses. Consequently, its constant monetary deficit forced the Kingdom to obtain loans from Mexico and Cuba for its defense.

The elite that had been abandoned by the Crown for years challenged the economic controls implemented by the Bourbon Reforms. Rather than providing security and creating a sense of loyalty to the Crown, the militia reforms set up the necessary organization to defy Spanish authority in Central America. The militia organization supplied the elite of each town with an armed force to defend the town's interests. During this period local leaders emerged and towns began to develop into a type of city-state. The militias supplied the power to reject royal policies that might have altered the status quo or gone against the main economic activities of the elite. Placing the militias under the command of those who saw the Bourbon Reforms as a threat to their economic operations led to strong opposition and, in many instances, the resistance of royal policies using military force. In the end, the militias provided a force to oppose the changes rather than to defend the royal policies.

As the militias governed themselves, they escaped from the civil authority in each town, province, and intendancy. Civil law did not have any power over them, and they avoided the will of town councils. The militias had their own

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8 David A. Brading, *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico 1763-1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 34. Brading states that the colonial bureaucracy bitterly resented the measures taken in the 1760s during the tenure of Don José de Gálvez. This resentment was also felt in the Kingdom of Guatemala.
regulations and privileges and were governed by the rule of their officers or the Captain General, resulting in the militiamen being loyal to their battalion commanders and officers because of the *Fuero Militar*, which placed the militia officers as judges. Militiamen would adopt a submissive position in order to obtain favorable verdicts from their military leaders. The privileges granted in the *Fuero Militar* permitted officers and militiamen to defy town councils or other authorities.

The disciplined militias of the Kingdom of Guatemala assisted the Crown in two goals. The first goal was to win the loyalty of the elite by offering them the main posts within the militias, which conferred titles and military honors. The second goal was to divide the opposition to the military and economic changes. In order to regain authority, the Crown played the elite against itself to insure loyalty and achieve desired reforms in the region, and hoped to subdue any attitude of autonomy in each province or town. When the Crown challenged the autonomy through the Bourbon Reforms, the loyalty of the elite to the crown diminished and the militias took a stance either in favor or against the changes.

Different literary works mention the militias of Central America in general terms and most studies seldom review their establishment and impact. The article by Salvador Montoya “*Las Milicias Negras y Mulatas en el Reino de Guatemala (siglo XVIII)*” describes the situation of Mulatto militias during the 1750 and 1760s.\(^9\) Montoya discusses the first military reform in 1755 and focuses on highlighting the importance of pressing Mulattoes into service. In

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“Las Milicias de El Salvador Colonial 1765-1787”, Aaron Arguedas explains the initial organization of the militias and their activity in San Salvador and Sonsonate. Several general works dealing with the defense of Central America also refer to the militias in Guatemala. The book La Defensa de las Indias 1764-1799 by Julio Albi examines the military reforms in Spanish America. The author begins with the reform in 1764 and his main goal is to demonstrate the Spanish ability to conserve the Empire. He focuses mostly on the role of veteran troops and, as part of the defense, enumerates the militia units in Central America. As a continuation of the previous book, Albi wrote Banderas Olvidadas: El Ejército Realista en América that reviews the veteran troops in America and also recounts the militias from 1808 to 1826. Juan Manuel Zapatero in La Guerra del Caribe en el siglo XVIII describes the main battles at the Forts San Fernando de Omoa and Inmaculada Concepción, as well as the conquest of Roatan Island and Black River in 1782. Santiago Gerardo Suárez’s book Las Milicias: Instituciones Hispanoamericanas explains the organization of the militias in America and the General Troop Reviews in Guatemala during the late 1760s. Floyd S. Troy in The Anglo-Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia explains the rivalry for

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11 Julio Albi, La Defensa de las Indias (1764-1799) (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1987).


13 Juan Manuel Zapatero, La Guerra del Caribe en el siglo XVIII (Madrid: AGESA, 1990).

the Caribbean coast of the Central American Isthmus.\textsuperscript{15} Troy studies many diverse topics in this book and provides ample information about the militias during wartime.

Militia studies in other regions demonstrate the importance of militias in the defense of territories and how they impacted society. Allan J. Kuethe in \textit{Cuba, 1753-1815: Crown, Military, and Society} presents the militia reformation and its significant effect on all levels of society.\textsuperscript{16} The Cuban military reformation supplies the examples for the militia organization in New Spain and the Kingdom of Guatemala. Other authors agree that the military reforms led to opposition and insurrection. \textit{The Army in Bourbon Mexico 1760-1810} by Christon I. Archer follows the militia reform in New Spain and provides information for the changes in Guatemala.\textsuperscript{17} In addition, \textit{Reform and Insurrection in Bourbon New Granada}\textsuperscript{18}, \textit{The Military and Society in Colonial Peru 1750-1810}\textsuperscript{19}, and \textit{El Real Ejército de California} analyze the military reforms and their outcome.\textsuperscript{20} Finally, Juan Marchena Fernández scrutinizes the deployment and manpower of the

\textsuperscript{15} Troy S. Floyd, \textit{The Anglo-Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1967).


\textsuperscript{17} Christon I. Archer, \textit{The Army in Bourbon Mexico 1760-1810} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977).


\textsuperscript{20} Carlos López Urrutia, \textit{El Real Ejército de California} (España: Grupo Medusa Ediciones, 2000).
militias in *Oficiales y Soldados en el Ejército de América* and *Ejército y Milicias en el Mundo Colonial Americano*.\(^{21}\)

To study this period of change, the *long dureé*, or long period, provides the best methodology for the interval between 1755 and 1808. According to Michelle Vovelle, the *long dureé* allows the study of social structures and changes in people’s behavior over a long period of time. The militia reforms marked a change in the collective attitude toward the Crown’s policies. Throughout this period, the militia reforms granted privileges to groups at all levels of society and provoked new social dynamism. However, when those privileges were diminished and some groups were relegated, the level of discontentment grew, eventually leading to the beginning of the revolutionary process. As the militia reforms progressed, royal authorities limited the *Fuero Militar*, preferring Spanish-born officers over Spanish-Americans and decreeing the expulsion of the castes from service. As mentioned above, this situation provoked general discontent. As a result, the elite and popular classes acted together to resist royal policies. This situation continued to escalate, eventually sparking open rebellions in 1808.\(^{22}\) Therefore, the *long dureé* is essential to understand the general attitude of the people after the significant social advances of the militia reforms and later the debacle when the Crown banned the castes


from service, causing a radical social change and political revolution in Central America.

Power played a fundamental role in the militia reforms from 1755 to 1808 and permitted the Crown to conduct the Bourbon Reforms and tighten its control of the Isthmus. For fifty-three years militia commanders and officers had the capacity to rule without question over those people serving in the militias and to contribute in the reaffirmation of royal authority in the region. The Captain General maintained control since 1755 by appointing only loyal officers in the militias. Nonetheless, when the militia reforms began to limit the established privileges, the population was not as submissive and began to make public their protest.

During the period of study, the militia reforms facilitated the development of open discontent among the elite and the castes, which Michelle Vovelle describes as people expressing their “vision of the world.” It is within this process that a new political culture arose to begin criticizing such forbidden fields as the government rule or the State. Present in the people’s minds were the impact of new movements such as the Age of Enlightenment, the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the Saint Domingue Revolution that shook the entire socio-political order. During this period, the public sphere initiated in Central America with the awakening of public awareness, discussion

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23 Vovelle, Ideologias, 89.

24 Chartier, Espacio, 29.
of politics, modern ideas, and the public criticism of government decisions.\textsuperscript{25} Undoubtedly, the privileges granted to the militias as part of the \textit{Fuero Militar} provided the elite and the castes with the main vehicle to openly vent their disagreement with royal policies with immunity to civil law. Consequently, outspoken militia officers became community leaders that publicly expressed complaints previously mentioned only in private.

Public opinion could be found in the letters, reports, trials, and militia complaints addressed to superior authorities that are stored at the Archivo General de Centro América, Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica, and Archivo Nacional de Honduras. It was through these documents that the elite and the castes expounded their views and publicly expressed their beliefs and fears. Through letters elite militia officers let authorities to know about their communities and lower classes voiced their frequent requests for justice. For those who could not read and write, which was the majority of the population of Central America, scribes were employed to write letters or they themselves wrote the few words necessary to sign communications. Reports are usually a good source of information about people, militias, officers, their state of service and level of loyalty to the Crown. Reports also present reviews of towns and provinces, focusing on the communities’ behavior and their reaction to economic, social and political changes. Trials represent the best information to appraise the relations between different groups and the level of loyalty of the elite and the castes, both in the militia and in the local communities.

Both the Militia Reforms and the Bourbon Reforms can be analyzed through the *long durée* by tracking the changes in attitudes. During the fifty-three years of military reforms, the Crown exercised great power over these armed groups to protect the royal interests and to stop any insurrection. The militiamen increased in importance with the privileges granted in each reform. At the peak of the reforms, the elite and the castes that were part of the militias enjoyed many exemptions and were loyal to the King. When the Crown began to limit these immunities through the Bourbon Reforms, however, the discontent of those affected became public. Within a few short years, groups dismissed from the militias began rioting, and the militias became polarized between either keeping the Isthmus under Spanish authority and fighting for independence.

This dissertation is divided into ten chapters. The first chapter serves as a general introduction. It describes the environment in which the four militia reforms developed in Central America from 1755 to 1808. It also presents the objective of each chapter by reform or the administrative period of a particular Captain General.

Chapter two deals with the first and greatest military reform of the eighteenth century in the Kingdom of Guatemala that took place during the administration of Don Alonso Arcos y Moreno between 1754 and 1760. In 1755 Captain General Arcos y Moreno organized the largest number of enlisted men in a militia ready to defend Central America and provided regulations, commissioned officers, and companies for each territory. Following Arcos y Moreno’s death in 1760, a Royal Decree in 1761 disapproved the militia force
and ordered its disbandment under the pretence of corruption. The next Captain General, Don Alonso Fernández de Heredia, maintained the militias but refused to uphold the privileges or commissions granted by Arcos y Moreno. Within a year Spain and England were fighting the final stages of the Seven Years’ War (1762 to 1763). This action prevented major military setbacks in Central America and left these units ready for the next reform in 1764.

Chapter three analyses the second military reform between 1764 and 1778. This reform was the direct result of the disastrous campaigns against England in 1762, especially the capture of Havana and Manila. To prevent the fall of Cuba, the King allowed a new militia system as the defense model for the American territories. The Kingdom of Guatemala applied the same militia model beginning in 1764, coinciding with the end of the Fernández de Heredia administration. The next Captain General, Don Pedro de Salazar y Herrera, prepared and reviewed most of the militia forces in Central America between 1765 and 1770. Salazar y Herrera based his militia organization on the structure implemented by Arcos y Moreno, but vehemently criticized the unprepared and unarmed militia. The next Captain General, Don Juan González Bustillo, filled the vacant post for less than two years without any significant military development. In 1773, the Captain General, Don Martín de Mayorga, faced the destruction of Santiago de Guatemala and the relocation of the capital to Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción. His administration dealt with the construction of the new capital of Central America and relegated the development of the militias until
1778. The second militia reform developed the basic defense system lasting until independence.

Chapter four discusses the third military reform carried out by Captain General Don Matías de Gálvez between 1778 and 1783. Upon his arrival in 1778, Gálvez found an unprepared and untrained militias, and immediately began the process of selecting and training them before the Anglo-Spanish War (1779-1783). Gálvez arrived with the sufficient authority to institute a new militia organization and to redefine its privileges. An essential factor to the militia preparation was the assignment of veteran officers and soldiers to train the forces in Central America to march and use firearms effectively. To attract militiamen, Gálvez granted the *Fuero Militar de Guerra* to Spanish, Mestizos, and Mulattoes, allowing immunity from civil law to the castes. This militia reorganization decreased the number of militias but provided trained troops to fight against the English and Zambo-Miskitos along the coasts.

Chapter five supports that the victories along the Central American battlefronts during the Anglo-Spanish War (1779-1783) were due to the militias. For the first time in many years, large numbers of militias were used to attack veteran English soldiers and Zambo-Miskitos. Due to the small number of Spanish veteran troops in the region, the militias constituted the majority of the forces in every expedition. For instance, during the campaign to recover Fort San Fernando de Omoa in November of 1779, there were three times as many militiamen as veterans. During the mobilization of New Segovia in 1780 again the militias exceeded the veteran troops. That same year, militias marched and
burned the English enclave of Black River. In April, Fort Inmaculada Concepción fell and it took the Nicaraguan militias several months to recover it, while Costa Rican militias removed all resistance along the Matina Coast. Lastly, in 1782 Gálvez launched a land-sea offensive against the Matina Coast, Black River, and the Bay Islands, achieving the greatest ever victories against the English. However, the English recovered Black River a few months later.

Chapter six discusses the administration of Don Josef de Estachería and his weak policies that resulted in meager Spanish expansion along the Caribbean Coast from 1783 to 1789. His ineffective policies coincided with the deterioration of the militias, decreasing their number after the end of the Anglo-Spanish War. Estachería failed to conduct a strong colonization policy on the shores of Central America. The lack of support and colonization left these areas open to be reoccupied by the enemy within a few years. Massive costs led to the demobilization of the militias. Consequently, many militias seldom received any training and did not return to activity, thus initiating a period of decline affecting their numbers and privileges. The decline became more evident when the administrative intendancies began operating and new policies focused on obtaining revenues rather than maintaining defense. Estachería's negligence left the militia forces in shambles.

Chapter seven discusses the continued deterioration of the Central American militias and the rising conflict between Spanish-born and Spanish-American officers between 1789 and 1799. The dissension worsened as the French and Saint Domingue revolutionary ideals began to take hold, fueled by
crisis that marked a decline in military strength and economy. Furthermore, Spain was involved in a series of wars that helped to accelerate the decay of the empire. In the midst of this crisis, Spain began to institute the administrative changes known as the Intendancy System in order to increase funds for defense, but it only ended up pushing economic activity in the region into decline. Spain opted to trust only Spanish-born officers and removed Spanish-Americans from civil posts, aggravating the power struggle between those groups. Rumors of possible insurrections led by French agents compelled authorities to make a General Troop Review in 1794. In many instances, the review falsely reported non-existent militia units. Coinciding with the revolutionary movements and the power struggle within the Kingdom, an influx of Black militias from the revolutionary wars in Saint Domingue arrived in Trujillo, Honduras. During this period, the appointment of elderly Captain Generals weakened the militia organization and discouraged support for settlements along the coast, preferring a policy of withdrawal from the coasts. After 1793 the Crown’s mistrust of Spanish-Americans and Mulattoes resulted in the reduction of the militias and the limitations of their privileges.

Chapter eight presents the Spanish decision to place the defense of the coasts in the hands of Mulatto and Black militias, who later confronted and defeated English veteran soldiers trying to capture Trujillo in 1797 and 1799 despite the Crown’s policies regarding the militia reforms. This decision proved to be effective when the English attempted to seize the main Central American Caribbean port in 1797. During the height of the assault the English were able to
disembark and occupy Trujillo for a few hours, before being routed by Black militias. Consequently, it ended the myth that the British army was invincible and confirmed the Black militias as a leading defensive force. Usually, historians attributed the defeat of the English and the recovery of Trujillo to the Saint Domingue Auxiliary militias, but in fact another militia known as the English Moreno Company took the burden of the English assault and was able to expel them. In 1799, it was the Saint Domingue and Black Republican militias that drove back the English veterans from Trujillo. In retaliation, the British attempted to attack the English Moreno compound, which also resulted in defeat. These attacks signaled the last English efforts to seize Spanish territories along the Caribbean coast and demonstrated that Spanish authorities left the protection of the coasts to the Black militias.

Chapter nine analyzes how the new militia regulation of November 25, 1799 sowed the seeds of rebellion in the Kingdom of Guatemala. The new militia regulation expelled the castes, limited the use of the *Fuero Militar*, and sustained privileges only for the Spanish-born militia. During this period, the authorities lacked money to pay the militiamen and resorted to reduce the militias’ activity. Subsequently, the militia became just another bureaucratic institution within the Spanish Empire. The Mulatto and Black militias were deprived of privileges and reduced to be unpaid urban militias. With the exclusion of Mulatto and Black militias, the authorities laid off the most loyal men in the service of the Crown. The Kingdom’s defenses were debilitated by placing its security exclusively in the hands of loyal Spanish subjects who only served in areas close to their
residences. Spain's incapacity to protect its territories, compounded by the chronic economic setbacks resulting from the incessant state of war, increased the isolation and the decline of Spanish rule in the Isthmus. In short, the possessions of the Spanish Crown in the Kingdom of Guatemala rested solely on the loyalty of the militias controlled by the elite of each town until insurrection movements began in 1808.

The last chapter presents final conclusions regarding the militia reforms. During the fifty-three years under study the diminishing numbers of militias and their loss of rights coincided with the decline of the defensive capabilities of the Spanish Empire and the beginning of popular insurrections. It was at this time that the militias had to either remain loyal to the Crown or unite with the people. In many cases, the militias began to opt for autonomy under the leadership of the elite. Thus the development of the militias affected the evolution of independence in the Kingdom of Guatemala.
Chapter 2

The First Military Reform: 1755-1764

Don Alonso Arcos y Moreno, Captain General from 1754 to 1760, implemented the first military reform of the eighteenth century in the Kingdom of Guatemala. He presented to King Ferdinand VI a new plan for the regulation and organization of the militias on February 17, 1755. A year later, Arcos y Moreno informed the King of the specific number of companies, officers, and militiamen in service.¹ In 1759, Ferdinand VI died and was succeeded to the Spanish throne by Charles III. Within a year of Charles’ ascension, Arcos y Moreno had died and Don Alonso Fernández de Heredia assumed the position of Captain General from 1761-1765. Shortly after taking office, Fernández de Heredia implemented the royal decree of April 18, 1761, in which King Charles III had annulled and rejected the military reform implemented by Arcos y Moreno.² Despite the King’s explicit command, however, the 1755 militia organization continued to exist until 1764. This chapter examines the developments of the first military reform in the Kingdom of Guatemala and the organization of the militias after 1755.

In the course of five years, from 1755 to 1760, Arcos y Moreno carried out the first and most extensive military reform in Central America during the

¹ Montoya, “Milicias,” 96-97.

eighteenth century. This military reform created infantry and cavalry regiments, designated new officers, and drew its militiamen from Spanish, Mestizo, and Mulatto populations. Arcos y Moreno attempted to organize a local force to confront any threat against Spanish law and to face the English and their Zambo-Miskito allies on the Caribbean coast. However, Arcos y Moreno’s militia reform suffered a major blow with his death in 1760.3

The militia reform continued from 1760 to 1764 without extensive changes, despite the royal orders that demanded the disbandment of such a force and recalled all commissions bestowed since 1755. Fernández de Heredia kept the militias in service because they were the only force capable of defending the Isthmus following England’s declaration of war on Spain in January 1762. Following the end of hostilities a year later, the humiliating defeats suffered by Spain and the obvious military weakness of the militia forces demanded a total reform of the Kingdom of Guatemala’s defense organization. With the withdrawal of royal support after the 1761 decree, the militias from the 1755 reform lacked proper training and weaponry.

**Before the Military Reform**

Militias had existed since early colonial times in the Kingdom of Guatemala. They were responsible for the protection of Spanish settlements, the

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3 The Zambo-Miskitos were a mixture between indigenous peoples and run away slaves from a shipwreck along the Nicaraguan Caribbean coast in the middle of the seventeenth century. Their area of influence extended from the Black River in Honduras to Bocas del Toro in Panama. Throughout the eighteenth century they maintained an alliance with England and fought all Spanish settlements along the Caribbean coast of Central America.
repulsion of foreign invasions, and the upholding of royal authority. However, only in times of turmoil did the Spanish Crown organize militias. This system impeded the proper organization of an efficient militia because as soon as the campaign ended the militiamen returned to their ordinary lives. Additionally, militiamen rarely received military training and possessed firearms of any kind. Although the existence of these militias discouraged Indian attacks and popular insurrections, they were unable to stop the English from establishing settlements in Spanish-held territory or attacking Spanish outposts. In fact, the English enclaves along the Caribbean shores and the Zambo-Miskitos were the greatest menace to Spanish power in Central America.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the House of Bourbon ascended to the Spanish throne, forging a Franco-Spanish alliance. As a result, Spain battled against England throughout most of the century. These eighteenth-century conflicts were no longer fought on European soil, as the colonies became the battleground. The Caribbean coasts of the Kingdom of Guatemala (frequently disputed lands between Spain and England) became the center of expanding English settlements through military alliances with the Zambo-Miskitos. Thus, after 1700, the Spanish were unable to effectively control the Caribbean coastline of Central America, and the Franco-Spanish alliance only contributed to the decline of Spanish influence in the region.
During the first half of the eighteenth century an intermittent cycle of wars affected many of the territories in the Kingdom of Guatemala. The English and their Zambo-Miskito allies launched raids against towns and posts and resisted Spanish militia attacks along the borderlands. A series of wars between England
and Spain, including the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), the War of Jenkins Ear (1739-1744), and the War of the Austrian Succession (1744-1748), led to intense battles along the coasts. During these wars, the available militias were spread thin to defend the territories, but their inadequate military preparedness doomed any hope of success. In each war, the English successfully exploited the coasts and the Caribbean Sea, exposing Spain’s vulnerability and weakness in the Kingdom of Guatemala. Spanish forces could neither expel the English nor exercise control in the area.

Even in peaceful times skirmishes and attacks frequently occurred between Spanish and British forces along the Caribbean borderlands of Central America. Raids along the coast increased, as well as assaults on inland Spanish provinces like New Segovia in 1701. Twenty-two years later, the Zambo-Miskito power grew to the extent that it destroyed a Spanish flotilla, stopping an offensive to regain control of the Caribbean coast.⁴

In 1740, Robert Hodgson, the English superintendent at Black River, was charged with the preparation of the settlements for military actions during the war with Spain.⁵ Peace rarely existed between the English enclaves and the Spanish towns after the superintendent arrived. For the English, war was another way to strengthen their position along the Caribbean coast and to coerce lucrative trade

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agreements with the Spanish populations. The English settlements served as bases from which to take command of the Caribbean coast of Central America. The English used constant skirmishes and attacks to erode Spanish influence along the coastal areas in order to claim these areas.

Under the reign of Ferdinand VI (1746-1759), several intensive defense measures were undertaken by the Kingdom of Guatemala in order to cope with the English and Zambo-Miskito threats along the Caribbean coast. Firstly, the King appointed two military commanders to prepare a great offensive plan in 1747. These authorities received broader powers than those of the Captain General of the Kingdom and would remain in charge of military decisions as long as the war against England lasted. However, the great offensive never took place because of the death of Colonel Don Juan de Vera, the Honduran Commander, in mid-1747 and the subsequent end of the war in 1748. Despite the end of aggressions, the office of the Captain General was not able to recover supreme power over Central America until 1752, when the last military officer submitted to his authority.  

Secondly, the commencement of construction of Fort San Fernando de Omoa in 1752 marked Spain's desire to reclaim the Caribbean coast from the English. The planning of the greatest fortress in Central America began in 1744

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based upon reports made by engineer Don Luis Diez Navarro, but it was not until 1752 that construction of the first phase of the project began. In his report, Diez Navarro recommended building *El Real*, a provisional fortress that would defend the population and keep the slaves under control. By the end of 1752 the *El Real* defended the entrance to the port of Omoa with 26 cannons. Although Spanish authorities approved the Omoa fortress plan at the end of 1756, orders did not reach Guatemala until mid-1758. The construction of Fort San Fernando de Omoa commenced on September 18, 1759, a month after King Ferdinand VI's death.\(^8\)

Frequent English attacks fueled Franco-Spanish desires to set up effective military measures again in the 1750s. In 1754, a punitive expeditionary force of 1,500 Spaniards under the command of Field Marshal Melchor de Mencos set off from Fort Petén to attack Belize in retaliation for the continuous raids, but the expedition was stopped by only 250 Englishmen. The failure of the expedition exposed the debility of Spanish forces and emphasized the need for stronger defensive steps along the Caribbean coast. In response to the Spanish expedition, the English constructed a fort in Belize City in 1755. This action ended any hopes the Spanish had for capturing and expelling the English from Belize. The next year English forces expanded their operations in the Caribbean during the Seven Years' War by disrupting commerce on the Isthmus and

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intensifying attacks on Spanish positions in Central America. Perhaps the most
damaging assault occurred when English and Zambo-Miskitos raided Matina and
captured the Costa Rican governor, Don Francisco Fernández de la Pastora
(1754-1756). He became the only governor in Central America to ever be
captured. The English later killed him on San Andres Island in 1756.\textsuperscript{9} The lack
of adequate response to these armed encounters confirmed the incapacity of
Spanish forces to confront the English and their allies along the Central American
Caribbean coast.

**The First Military Reform of 1755**

Seeking an effective policy to stop English gains in Central America, the
Crown appointed Field Marshal Alonso de Arcos y Moreno as Captain General of
the Kingdom of Guatemala on October 17, 1754.\textsuperscript{10} Throughout his term, the

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\textsuperscript{9} Woodward, *Central*, 65, 314; Floyd, *The Anglo*, 111-112; Rafael Obregón Loria, *De Nuestra Historia
Patria: Los Gobernadores de la Colonia* (San José: EUCR, 1977), 128-129, 132-134; Ricardo Fernández
Guardia, *Crónicas Coloniales* (San José: ECR, 1975), 137-140.

\textsuperscript{10} Juarros, *Compendio*, 217.
Captain General focused on the defense of the Kingdom. After reviewing the situation in Central America, Arcos y Moreno concluded that substantial military reforms were needed in order to halt the aggressive advances by the English along the Caribbean shores. The Captain General’s plan required the cooperation and involvement of the native population. According to the proposal
presented on February 17, 1755, it was necessary to introduce military discipline and regulations to the local volunteer militias in order to overcome the foreign threats to the Kingdom.\footnote{Montoya, “Milicias,” 96.}

Based on reasonable evidence, Arcos y Moreno predicted war in the near future and concentrated his efforts in preparing Central America’s defenses. A diligent military officer, he perceived that the rapid building of Fort San Fernando de Omoa would safeguard Honduras Bay and would contest English control of the Caribbean shores. As Arcos y Moreno considered the available military force insufficient, he proceeded to develop a plan to organize the local volunteer militias after the Spanish militia model. The current situation demanded immediate action following the failure by Spanish forces to capture Belize in 1754, and the English continual show of force along the Caribbean coasts. Also, reports increasingly pointed out that war between England and France was imminent. Should war break out, Spain would be compelled to fight on the French side. With this in mind, Arcos y Moreno pressed for the swift completion of Fort San Fernando de Omoa and the establishment of a capable military force that could stand against the English.\footnote{Floyd, The Anglo, 109-110. Arcos y Moreno removed two engineers from Omoa for failures to speed up the construction. Cruz, Estudios, 62; Zapatero, El Fuerte, 52, 56.}

A paucity of Spanish veteran troops existed in the Kingdom of Guatemala before Arcos y Moreno came and few arrived during his years as Captain General, since Spain rarely sent troops to Central America between 1748 and
1760. Indeed only a small number of these veteran troops remained to defend Santiago de Guatemala, the forts or presidios, and the main provincial towns. The forts of Petén, San Felipe del Golfo Dulce, Inmaculada Concepción on the San Juan River, together with the outposts of El Real and Matina, constituted the main line of defense against the English before 1754. Although each place contained a detachment of Spanish veteran troops, their numbers varied greatly due to high mortality rate, desertion. In reality the majority of men serving at the forts were untrained Mulattoes. Santiago de Guatemala had two dragoon companies of sixty men who guarded the Captain General and the main administrative buildings. Other veteran military officers and soldiers were billeted to different parts of the Kingdom. After reviewing all of the veteran Spanish forces in the Kingdom, Arcos y Moreno realized that their limited numbers within the provinces lacked the necessary strength to defend the Isthmus from an invading force.

In addition to the foreign menace and Zambo-Miskito attacks, the Kingdom of Guatemala suffered from inadequate military authority. The distance from Santiago de Guatemala contributed to constant abuse by the respective military and royal authorities of each province. In León, Nicaragua, Mulatto militias had become resentful of the administration of the General Arms Commander. In 1745, Mulatto militias mutinied and conspired to kill him. Turmoil within the

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13 Julio Albi, La Defensa, 45.

Leonese Mulatto militias continued until 1750.\textsuperscript{15} Before 1755, militia companies served under the command of their direct captains. This, along with royal rule, resulted frequently in the formation of a kind of corporate military body. These easily governed militias participated in rebellions against the royal power structure. Their disobedience increased with the hardships placed on the population caused by a series of economic reforms adopted after the 1750s.

In Guatemala, the Crown established a liquor monopoly in 1752 to alleviate the payment for military expenditures. Within four years people rioted in Santiago de Guatemala against the prohibition of liquor manufacture.\textsuperscript{16} Not only did the militias do little to help restore order, many of the militiamen either sided with the rioters, or passively supported the movements of protest and insurrection against the royal authorities. For this reason, Arcos y Moreno, without any hesitation, pushed forward a military reform to take firm control of the militias and quell any acts of rebellion.

The Captain General reported to King Ferdinand VI how he planned to discipline the local volunteer militias on February 17, 1755. Arcos y Moreno believed that the volunteer militias required a military organization where drill, regulation, and discipline would keep them in line and focused on the task of safeguarding the rule of the Crown.\textsuperscript{17} Without waiting for royal consent, Arcos y Moreno began the military reform by issuing an order to enlist all men over


\textsuperscript{17} Montoya, “Milicias,” 96.
fourteen years old, which he organized into companies. On April 26, 1755 in the
town of Tegucigalpa, for example, the Captain Miguel de Serbellón y Santa Cruz
commanded Spaniards and Mulattoes over the age of fourteen to present
themselves before Field Marshal Diego Ramírez within eight days in order to
enroll into the militia corps of the province. This decree also sanctioned the
formation of new militia companies as they were required. A fine of twenty-five
pesos for Spaniards and 200 lashes for Mulattoes for those who resisted this
order was enacted by the very Illustrious Captain General Alonso de Arcos y
Moreno.  

Arcos y Moreno proposed an innovative regulation that placed the local
volunteer militias as the main defensive force. The new regulation was intended
to instill discipline and prepare local militias with military training, and also
defined the militias as a permanent and capable force with which to defend the
Isthmus from invasions or insurrections of any nature. To exercise effective
control over the militias and instill loyalty, the Captain General established that
only "honorable" individuals could serve as officers.  

In other words, only those from proven Spanish ancestry and established reputation could obtain officer posts. By this action, total authority could be maintained by the Captaincy
General in Guatemala because Arcos y Moreno personally appointed all new

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18 Archivo Nacional de Honduras (hereinafter ANH), Alcaldíos 1752-1757 (Special Collections: Microfilm
at University of Texas at Arlington), Roll 4. This microfilm collection does not have any numeration or
index.

19 Montoya, “Militias,” 96.
officers. It also set up a strong chain of command from the Captain General on down through the ranks of officers in each province.

To comply with disciplining and preparing the militiamen, the new 1755 regulation stated that sergeants and corporals must be Spanish, preferring those knowledgeable in military methods and regulations.\textsuperscript{20} The sergeants were in charge of military drill. In this way, those who had served in the Spanish Army became indispensable in the training and preparing of the militiamen. Also, Arcos y Moreno hoped that veteran soldiers would teach military regulations to the militiamen. In order to prepare the militias in the art of war, the Captain General followed the military drill and training models of the Spanish Army. All members of the militias had to observe Spanish methods of military training and keep Spanish regulations. Without a doubt, sergeants and corporals became indispensable tools for improving the militia.

The new militia regulation enforced the segregation of Spanish, Mestizos, and Mulattoes. Arcos y Moreno ordered the establishment of separate Spanish, Mestizo, and Mulatto battalions.\textsuperscript{21} Under no circumstances were these groups to be integrated into one company, an action that would damage the honor of the Spanish. Nevertheless, only Spanish officers occupied the high-ranking positions in the Mestizo and Mulatto battalions and companies. In some instances, the Mestizo and Mulatto companies retained their captain, lieutenant,

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., Reglamento de las Milicias de Infantería y Caballería del Reino de Guatemala 1755. Artículo V.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., Artículo VI.
and second lieutenant, but the commanders of these troops were Spanish. As of 1755, Mestizos and Mulattoes composed the majority of the militiamen.

The 1755 military organization altered all previous military regulations in the Kingdom of Guatemala. For the first time, one set of military regulations that applied to the entire militia force extended its privileges to all enlisted men, and adopted the same set of privileges for Spanish, Mestizo, and Mulatto militiamen. Article VI of the militia regulation stated that all men enjoyed the same military privileges; nonetheless, militiamen tended to focus on the civil court jurisdiction exemptions. According to the militia regulation, only military tribunals would view civil and criminal cases of militiamen.22 It essentially granted them the same immunity as the *Fuero Militar de Guerra* extended to soldiers and officers in the Spanish Army. This exemption curtailed the power of local governments and permitted militiamen to avoid civil law, inevitably creating a clash between the local and military authorities.

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, Royal Ordinances had already been trying to clarify the status of militiamen. In the Royal Ordinance of September 16, 1708, King Philip V expressed that militiamen held the right to certain immunities—but only captains, second lieutenants, and sergeants would benefit from the *Fuero Militar* on criminal cases, unless the militiamen were on active duty, in which case they would receive the same privilege.23 In 1752, two

22 Ibid., 99.

town councilmen of Havana stated that militiamen fell under the jurisdiction of local rule. Their reasoning revolved around the Ordinances of 1734 that placed the militias in all civil cases and, in certain instances, criminal cases under local rule. The 1755 militia regulation in the Kingdom of Guatemala ended any controversy. It clearly separated the militiamen from the civil and criminal jurisdictions of local authorities.

The 1756 militia report stated that the Central American Infantry Corps was composed of 19 regiments and Cavalry Corps of 8 regiments. According to the regulation, one regiment was comprised of 12 companies of 53 men each, including a sergeant, corporals, and a drummer. This force totaled 1,689 officers and 31,455 militiamen. However, the men per regiment did not match the final militia numbers reported. On October 16, 1762, an investigation conducted by Dr. Felipe Romana y Herrera, prosecutor of Guatemala’s High Court, pointed out that the tally did not include loose companies whose numbers could not complete a regiment, and were reduced to battalions headed by a commander.

Despite the plans pursued by Arcos y Moreno to shape the militias, they suffered greatly from the combined effects of the lack of training, discipline, and inadequate weaponry. In Granada, Nicaragua, during the general troops inspection carried out in 1760, the commander of the five cavalry companies

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24 Ibid., 261-263. Indies Council consults over the militiamen privileges. Madrid, May 9, 1752.

25 ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 22. Order from Don Alonso Fernández de Heredia to the High Magistrate of Tegucigalpa to report and return all military commissions granted by Don Alonso de Arcos y Moreno to militia officers. Santiago de Guatemala, October 16, 1762. The prosecutor of the High Court, Dr. Don Felipe Romana y Herrera stated that the number of officers were 1,689. Montoya, “Milicias,” 97. He points that 1,688 officers were named by Arcos y Moreno. This is the same set up notified to the King on August 20, 1756.
declared that the respective company captains were unable to gather even half of their men for military review. These captains pointed out that poverty prevented most militiamen from maintaining a horse fit for cavalry, and reminded military authorities that most of militiamen worked on haciendas that were a good distance away from Granada, impeding them from attending regular drill. The greater part of the militias in the Kingdom experienced similar problems as well as a lack of sufficient arms. Few weapons, if any, could be provided by a proper militia armory. The private ownership of the vast majority of weapons was the rule. Training with firearms was sporadic at best, limiting their effectiveness to a disabling degree.

In 1757, Arcos y Moreno ordered a general weaponry review in the province of Tegucigalpa. The district of Ojojona accounted in detail the quantity of weapons for its six companies.

Table I
Ojojona District Weaponry
High Magistracy of Tegucigalpa
Declared by each Captain on May 26 and 27, 1757

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officer of each company</th>
<th>Firearms stated functional or useless</th>
<th>Lances and blades of all kinds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capt. Gregorio de Osorio</td>
<td>5 or 6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt. Geronimo Nieto</td>
<td>10 functional and 2 or 3 useless</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt. Alejandro Núñez</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Francisco Alvarenga *</td>
<td>4 functional</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt. Raymundo Núñez</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 functional and 5 or 6 useless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capt. Juan Bautista Nieto</td>
<td>6 functional and 4 useless</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Captain absent during arms review.

26 AGCA, A2, leg. 31, exp. 1634, fol. General Inspection of the Cavalry Corps, Granada, Nicaragua. Don Juan Antonio de la Peña y Medrano commander of five cavalry companies, November 8, 1760.
According to Arcos y Moreno’s 1755 military reform, Ojojona had raised six infantry companies.\textsuperscript{27} Although the military plan demanded that each company be comprised of at least 53 men, each company’s numbers greatly varied. If officers adhered to the 1755 plan, then Ojojona should have had a force of 318 militiamen. Table I shows that the total number of firearms available in Ojojona counted approximately 28 functional and 7 useless. All of the available firearms could barely outfit half of a company. Also, these firearms belonged to common people who ordinarily used them for hunting. The weaponry review did not state exactly the kind of firearms that were available. Most likely these weapons were muskets, pistols, and shotguns, none of which were appropriate for military use. The owners of these firearms presented them at military reviews because possessing firearms gave them a higher status than the rest of the people serving in the militias. The other category of arms referred to as lances, pikes, and any other kind of blades, such as swords, machetes, and knives totaled 130. These weapons were also used by people as tools for hunting and other tasks in their day-to-day lives. Thus, the number of weapons in Table I totaled 158, enough for arming half of the available militia in Ojojona. With these weapons, military officers presumed to defend the population from the English and Zambo-Miskito attacks. Ojojona was not an isolated case; it actually

\textsuperscript{27} ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 22. General review of companies created in the Province of Tegucigalpa by Don Alonso de Arcos y Moreno in 1755, December 30, 1762.
was representative of the condition of most of the militias in Central America.\textsuperscript{28} In some instances, militias in other locations had more firearms or lances, but an insufficient amount to arm the large number of militiamen available. Hence, more than half of the militiamen on the Isthmus lacked weapons of any kind.

Preventive measures demanded constant reviews of the militiamen, arms, and the preparation of the forts. The province of Tegucigalpa initiated periodical arms reviews in 1757.\textsuperscript{29} In Nicaragua, infantry and cavalry militia reviews from León, Villa de Nicaragua, and Granada took place in 1759.\textsuperscript{30}

Since the English attack on Matina in 1756, the Spanish had been waiting for an occasion to take revenge. On August 31, 1759, a party of 72 merchants consisting of Dutch, English, and Zambo-Miskitos were encamped, with permission of the Spanish authorities, near Matina. In early hours of the next day the Spanish militia attacked and killed 50 men.\textsuperscript{31} After this sweeping victory, protective measures against any further surprise assaults increased along the Caribbean borderlands.

\textsuperscript{28} Ayón, \textit{Historia}, Vol. III, 47. Weaponry account of Nuestra Señora del Viejo, Villa de Realejo, Chinandega, and Chichigalpa, towns of Realejo District, Nicaragua. Arms review ordered by Don Alonso Fernández de Heredia on September 22, 1762. In this review a few men brought firearms, others brought sabers and machetes, but the majority came unarmed.

\textsuperscript{29} ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 22. General Arms Review of the Province of Tegucigalpa, May 23, 1757; Alealdas 1753-1757, Roll 4. General Arms Review of the Province of Tegucigalpa, May 23, 1757.

\textsuperscript{30} AGCA., A2, leg.6, fol. 109. Cavalry Regiment of León, Nicaragua, August 24, 1759; A2, leg. 31, exp. 1633. General Review of Cavalry Corps of Villa de Nicaragua, June 11, 1759; A2, leg. 31, exp. 1634. General Review of Cavalry Corps of Granada, November 8, 1760.

\textsuperscript{31} Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 112-113; Fernández Guardia, \textit{Crónicas}, 140, 144. The account stated that the lieutenant of Matina, Don Antonio José Galiano, and Don Martín de Chavarria headed a detachment of 30 militiamen and unknown number of volunteers to assault the foreign enemies. Fernández Guardia also wrote that the attack occurred on August 28, 1759. The Spanish captured 27 enemies, killed more than 50 and captured booty of more than 40,000 pesos.
In 1760, Don Melchor Vidal de Lorca y Villena, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Nicaragua, reinforced Fort Inmaculada Concepción after the Spanish inflicted casualties on their enemies in Matina. A new moat and drawbridge were added to the fort, and its garrison was increased to 10 artillerymen, 4 squadron corporals, 20 musketeers, 48 fusiliers, 11 militiamen acting as rowers, 7 slaves, 14 exiles, and 8 militiawomen (or corn grinders).\textsuperscript{32} By 1760, Fort Inmaculada Concepción and Nicaraguan borderlands acted as a buffer between the Nicaraguan main settlements and the Caribbean coast.

Arcos y Moreno died in Santiago de Guatemala on October 27, 1760 at the peak of the military reform and after a number of successful operations against the English and Zambo-Miskitos. His death hampered preparations for new strikes. Nonetheless, the militias remained in place and continued with their appointed duties in a time of imminent war.

\textbf{The Annulment of Don Alonso de Arcos y Moreno’s Reform}

For almost a year \textit{Licenciado} Luis de Velarde y Cienfuegos filled the vacant position as Captain General of the Kingdom of Guatemala.\textsuperscript{33} Velarde y Cienfuegos had previously served as the interim governor for a year before Arcos y Moreno took office in 1754. During this year, he continued to appoint militia officers throughout the realm due to the aggressive posture adopted along


\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Licenciado} refers to a University Graduate.
the borderlands. Thus, Velarde y Cienfuegos continued Arcos y Moreno's policy until the new Captain General arrived in Santiago de Guatemala on June 14, 1761.\(^{34}\)

Don Alonso Fernández de Heredia, Field Marshal of the Royal Army, replaced Arcos y Moreno as Captain General. He knew the Kingdom well because he had served as the General Arms Commander of Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica from 1745 to 1752, and had directed the construction of Fort San Fernando de Omoa until 1756.\(^{35}\) The appointment of Fernández de Heredia as Captain General reflected the importance that the Spanish Crown gave to the defense campaign initiated by Arcos y Moreno in 1755. The militia included an extensive number of troops that had attained victories against enemy forces along the Caribbean borderlands. Fernández de Heredia continued to support the militias established by Arcos y Moreno.

King Charles III invalidated the 1755 military reform by Royal Decree on April 18, 1761. His decree charged that Arcos y Moreno “extended in his name new commissions to all the militias of those provinces on unsealed paper and without the registry of the Royal Chancellery and endorsed by his secretary and not by the Royal Chamber Scribes, required 20 pesos for the captain’s commission, 18 for lieutenant’s, and 15 for each second lieutenant’s, and from 800 to 1,000 for the colonel’s.”\(^{36}\) The late Captain General appointed militias in his own name, and used the royal service as an excuse. The commissions

\(^{34}\) Juarros, *Compendio*, 217.

\(^{35}\) Floyd, *The Anglo*, 81-82, 106.

\(^{36}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 1, exp. 15, fol. 1-2. Royal Decree, Aranjuez, April 18, 1761.
extended in this manner ultimately did not have any validity due to the lack of the Royal Seal and a record in the Royal Chancellery. Charles III also charged Arcos y Moreno with the embezzlement of commission fees. Arcos y Moreno had raised a powerful militia force, but had never informed the Crown of the 1,689 new militia officers or the money paid by them. This was yet another example of the corruption that was common in the high royal outposts in Guatemala.

The Royal Decree of April 18, 1761 also accused Arcos y Moreno of violating a previous Royal Decree dated July 9, 1687, by appointing and giving commissions to militia officers on his behalf and not in the King’s name, a practice that had been commonly observed until 1754.

According to the royal explanation, Arcos y Moreno had appointed officers in his name and not in the King’s name during his administration. However, this practice had more than 67 years of precedence, and Arcos y Moreno would have been merely following a custom. In reality, Arcos y Moreno had extended commissions to militia officers on the King’s behalf, although not following the correct procedure. For example, on October 13, 1755, Arcos y Moreno issued the following commission to Juan de Zúñiga: “It is convenient to the King’s service to organize the militias in the Province of Tegucigalpa designating suitable officers for its rule and government, and attending to the good qualities of Juan de Zúñiga, in the name of His Majesty (May God protect him) and using the faculty bestowed on me, I chose and commissioned him as Second
Lieutenant of the Infantry Militias from the Mineral de Yuscaran Company.”

Thus, the accusation lacked veracity because Arcos y Moreno named every militia officer in the King’s name. Nevertheless, his failure to use stamped paper and to pay the legal fees to the Crown was a serious oversight.

Arcos y Moreno’s wrongdoing consisted of writing those commissions on plain paper without a Royal Seal. This was clearly the case in the example of Juan de Zúñiga’s militia commission to second lieutenant as it was written on plain paper, without a Royal Seal, and signed by Arcos y Moreno. The Crown rejected those appointments because there was no official proof of the existence of such militia officers nor was there any military commission records at the Royal Chancellery. The commission extended privileges and exemptions, ordered the authorities not to interfere with military activities, and demanded aid to the officer in any given situation. Since the commission described the officer as being in the service of the Crown, he was to be respected and obeyed. Finally, the commission reminded sergeants and soldiers to obey his orders – whether written or spoken-- at all times. All these privileges and exemptions made the officer invulnerable to civilian justice, and centralized power in the militia. It is possible that the Crown was concerned that these powers would reach the hands of dangerous individuals who did not have royal approval, or that fake commissions could eventually lead certain individuals to challenge the Crown’s authority. The absence of royal approval was the main reason for the

37 ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 21.

38 ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 21. Appointment of Juan de Zúñiga as second lieutenant on the infantry company of Mineral de Yuscarán, Tegucigalpa, October 13, 1755.
1755 military reform invalidation. Not having the Crown’s consent would mean that those 31,455 militiamen would answer to their officers and the Captain General of Guatemala and not the King of Spain.

When the Royal Decree of April 18, 1761, signed in Aranjuez, Spain, was brought to Santiago de Guatemala, it vehemently stated the King’s disapproval of the creation of the 1755 militias. The decree sparked widespread uncertainty among the militias of the Kingdom of Guatemala. Since taking office on June 14, 1761, Fernández de Heredia had avidly supported the 1755 militia reform. Before the decree was brought, the Captain General had been preparing for war with England. However, the royal order eliminated the most important component of his defense plan: the militia. In order to comply with the decree, Fernández de Heredia demanded that all commissions extended by Arcos y Moreno to militia officers in Central America during between 1755 and 1760 be immediately returned. On November 3, 1761, the Captain General wrote and sent copies of the decree to all Governors and District Magistrates for the immediate gathering of all commissions.39 In Danlí, Honduras, the magistrate deputy, Captain Francisco del Castillo y Rada, posted the royal decree in the town square and met with the district militia officers on December 8, 1761.40 The decree stripped militia officers of their commands and annulled their privileges and exemptions. It also expressed the Crown’s opposition to the creation of the

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39 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 1, exp. 15, fol. 1-4.

40 ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 22. Decree ordering the return of militia commissions in the province of Tegucigalpa, November 28, 1761.
1755 militia. As a result, officers and militiamen considered their positions in the militias as ambiguous.

In order to prevent the total disbanding of the militia force, Fernández de Heredia stated in a letter sent to Governors and District Magistrates that after receiving all of the returned commissions, he would re-instate them in the King’s name, on approved paper bearing the Royal Seal, and properly record them in the Chancellery.\textsuperscript{41} By the end of 1761, most of the provinces were in the process of gathering or returning their militia officers’ commissions to Santiago de Guatemala. After careful examination, the High Court at Santiago de Guatemala determined that in several instances, the number of commissions did not match the number of companies created in 1755, and that royal officials had left out the retirement and the promotion of militia officers. The High Court rebuked those provinces and districts that had not kept proper records, such as San Antonio Suchitepéquez, Nicoya, Nicaragua, Subtiaba, Realejo, Sonsonate, and Verapáz, who submitted an extraneous 95 commissions. The district magistrate of Ciudad Real, Chiapas, dispatched all available commissions but failed to obtain lost or torn certificates or those of deceased officers. On October 16, 1762, the Captain General requested a detailed description of the state of the militias in the province of Tegucigalpa that had been created by the 1755 Reform, including the number of commissions extended during Arcos y Moreno’s administration, as

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
well as the number of officers who had been promoted, retired, and died. All of the provinces of the Kingdom carried out this order and appropriately communicated the information to Fernández de Heredia, who had given them only one month to comply. Despite receiving the militia dispatches from almost all of the provinces, the Captain General did not confirm any militia commissions in 1761 or 1762. The same militia organization from 1755, however, remained in place in the Kingdom of Guatemala, as stated in Table II.

Table II

Militias of Santiago de Esquipulas 1755-1762
District of Chiquimula de la Sierra, Guatemala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Nicolás Rodríguez</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Spanish Infantry</td>
<td>July 4, 1755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Commission already sent to Guatemala</td>
<td>July 7, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco Rodríguez</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Spanish Infantry</td>
<td>July 7, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Commission already sent to Guatemala</td>
<td>November 3, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Tiburcio Guerra</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Spanish Infantry</td>
<td>July 4, 1755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Commission already sent to Guatemala</td>
<td>July 7, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Andrés Linares</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Mulatto Cavalry</td>
<td>July 4, 1755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Mulatto Cavalry</td>
<td>July 7, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Mulatto Cavalry</td>
<td>November 11, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matías Linares</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Mulatto Cavalry</td>
<td>July 4, 1755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Mulatto Cavalry</td>
<td>July 7, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Mulatto Cavalry</td>
<td>November 11, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura López</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Mulatto Cavalry</td>
<td>July 4, 1755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio de León</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Mulatto Cavalry</td>
<td>July 7, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Mulatto Cavalry</td>
<td>November 11, 1762</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: AGCA, A2, leg. 31, exp. 1631, exp. 1638; leg. 36, exp. 1722; A2(4), leg. 4, fol. 73.

Table II exhibits the organization of the Mulatto cavalry and Spanish infantry --the two companies from Santiago de Esquipulas-- as a common example of the militias in the Kingdom. It provides evidence that despite the

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42 ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 22. Detailed report of all the militia commissions given in the province of Tegucigalpa, October 16, 1762. A reform officer was a retired militia officer that enjoyed certain military exemptions.
royal decree of 1761, the militias organized in 1755 did not cease to exist. The same officers appointed in 1755 continued to be in place through 1762. Moreover, on July 7, 1762, the officer in charge of reviewing the militia commissions in Santiago de Esquipulas stated that most of the commissions were already in Santiago de Guatemala. The Captain General’s first review of the 1755 militia commissions was not until November 1761. However, in another militia review in the following year, the same officers continued to hold their posts. Fernández de Heredia only appointed new officers to fill vacant positions, as in the case of Antonio de León, second lieutenant in the Mulatto cavalry. Most likely, his predecessor, Ventura López, had either died or retired. As stated above, Fernández de Heredia did not ratify any of the 1755 militia appointments. However, he left the militia unchanged and only proceeded to fill vacant posts, or to retire officers. The Captain General needed the militia intact in order to face the threat of the English settlements along the Caribbean coast in a continuous state of war between 1762 and 1763.

**Don Alonso Fernández de Heredia’s Solution**

The constant hostilities between the Spanish and the English and their Zambo-Miskito allies along the Caribbean coasts, as well as the Anglo-Spanish War, impeded Fernández de Heredia’s efforts to dissolve the 1755 militias, as demanded in the royal decree of 1761, and the Captain General was forced to concentrate on the wars. After Fernández de Heredia took office on June 14,
1761, the Crown ordered him to carry out a combined attack, together with the governors of Yucatán and Cuba, against Belize and Black River, the two main English settlements along the Caribbean coast of Central America. This military venture did not occur because of an Indian rebellion that erupted in Yucatán, and the available troops were diverted in order to quell the uprising. On August 15, 1761, the secret signing of the Third Family Compact officially guaranteed a Franco-Spanish alliance against England and assured Spain’s entrance in the Seven Years’ War by May of the following year. However, the secret did not last long and England declared war on Spain on January 4, 1762.43 Caught unprepared with meager forces to defend Central America, Spain joined in the last year of the Seven Years’ War. It was impossible for Fernández de Heredia to adequately maintain and prepare the militia left by Arcos y Moreno, for which he imposed periodical reviews of troops and arms throughout the Kingdom. On May 27, 1762, Don Francisco del Castillo y Rada reported the state of arms and militias of the Danlí district. The account stated that for its defense the Danlí district had 29 guns, of which only 13 were in good condition, 13 defective, and 3 totally useless. This meant that the established light companies were expected to defend themselves with a total of 13 guns, leaving the remainder of the troops with either cold steel arms or weaponless. Danlí’s militia could not match its bordering enemies: the untamed Jicaque Indians, the Zambo-Miskitos, and the English Black River settlement in the Caribbean coast. Furthermore, Castillo y

Rada requested permission to fill militia vacancies, as Danlí lacked sufficient officers to take command of the defense of its territory.\footnote{ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 22. General State of Militias in Danlí written by Don Francisco Castillo y Rada on May 27, 1762.}

The general militia reviews of 1762 had two goals. The first goal was to reinstate the officer commissions and to fill up the ranks. The second goal was to review the available men and determine their state of readiness. To beef up the militia force, Fernández de Heredia ordered that “in the Present declared war by His Majesty of the British Nation . . . any attempt of invasion by said nation to the provinces of this realm will result in the militia gathering of this Capital for its defense . . . I have decided that all inhabitants in this capital despite any quality or condition manifest without delay the firearms and cold steel weapons that each one has . . . and those who do not have any give their names to the Sergeant Major.”\footnote{ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 22. Guatemala, September 22, 1762.} The order also reminded the militiamen that those who resisted the call to arms would be labeled as “infidel traitors and punished severely.” This command reached all provinces of the Kingdom rapidly after being written in Santiago de Guatemala on September 22, 1762. War made the militias indispensable to the defense of Central America. In 1762, the militias organized by Arcos y Moreno in 1755 defended the Isthmus and gained recognition despite royal rejection.
The Seven Years’ War

During 1762 the Kingdom of Guatemala came under attack as part of the English offensive in the Caribbean. English raids in Central America counted upon the total support of their Zambo-Miskito allies. Consequently, the areas in the proximity of English and Zambo-Miskito settlements became the main zones of action. The Spanish official in Danlí, Don Francisco del Castillo y Rada, described in particular the weakness of the district. In his letter to the District Magistrate of Tegucigalpa, Castillo y Rada stated that due to the shortage of weaponry, the district constantly suffered from unchecked Zambo-Miskito and Jicaque Indian assaults. Additionally, attacks in previous years had decreased the population and increased illegal trade with the Indians. Spanish authorities had no control over roads, rivers, or the border vicinities of the Jamastrán Valley, Olancho Valley, and Segovia in Nicaragua. Castillo y Rada blamed the constant raids and assaults on the English settlements along the coast. The letter also established that if these borderlands were left defenseless, then Danlí, as well as Tegucigalpa, would eventually succumb to Indian and English incursions. Finally, Castillo y Rada concluded that the only way to defeat the enemy was by arming the militias that “held the key to its border defense.”\textsuperscript{46} By May 1762, during the declared war against England, the borderlands of Tegucigalpa

\textsuperscript{46} ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 22. General State of Militias in Danlí written by Don Francisco Castillo y Rada on May 27, 1762.
continued to be defenseless, and were at the mercy of the English and Zambo-Miskito invasions.

To the south, Nicaragua and Costa Rica experienced the same problem as Tegucigalpa. On June 22, 1762, a party of English and Zambo-Miskitos raided Matina, taking 24 prisoners as booty. A month later, a combined English and Zambo-Miskito force overran towns in the Chontales district of Nicaragua. In August, the English and Zambo-Miskitos attacked Fort Inmaculada Concepción on the San Juan River. The assault could not have been planned for a better time due to the recent death of its commander, Don Joseph de Herrera y Sotomayor. English emissaries promptly demanded the fort’s capitulation, which the Spanish officers rejected, and the battle began. The first day of the battle, cannon fire killed the English commander, and after four days of bombardment the English and Zambo-Miskitos withdrew.47 Since the late 1750s, the Spaniards had reinforced and kept the fort with a regular garrison. Periodic troop reviews and reinforcements allowed the fort to maintain a high level of alertness for possible attacks in 1760.48 Although the English incursion came at a time when the fort did not have a commander, it was no surprise to the Spaniards. After the

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47 Floyd, The Anglo, 115-116. The heroine of this battle was Rafaela Herrera, daughter of the deceased commander, who refused to surrender and took charge of a cannon that eventually killed the English commander. AGCA, A2.13, leg. 303, exp. 7055, fol. 10v. Beginning of pension payments to the heroine Rafaela de Herrera of 51 pesos and 6 reales in 1782. Fernández Guardia, Cronicas, 150-155. The total force of the fort consisted of Mulattos and Blacks. Artillery Captain Don Joseph de Herrera y Sotomayor was the only officer at the fort. Fernández Guardia tells the story of how Rafaela de Herrera killed the English commander during the siege of Fort Inmaculada Concepción. Don Matías de Gálvez intervened and obtained the pension for Rafaela on November 11, 1781. Gámez, Historia, 183-184; Alejandro Montiel, Nicaragua Colonial (Managua: Banco Central de Nicaragua, 2000), 144-153.

English failed to take the fort, Spain continued to support it until the war ended. English officers lost a valuable opportunity because Fort Inmaculada Concepción reputedly preserved the “security key for all Central America.”

The militias were unable to prevent the incursions of English and Zambo-Miskitos along the frontiers. In Choluteca, in the province of Tegucigalpa, people abandoned their homes and migrated to other, safer territories after the looting perpetrated in Chontales and the environs of Granada in July 1762. In a letter to the district magistrate of Tegucigalpa, the deputy district magistrate of Choluteca, Don Simón Antonio de Herrera, stated that many inhabitants left those territories and avoided the obligation to defend, as loyal vassals, the holy Catholic faith and the preservation of the King’s properties. For this reason, on September 2, Don Francisco Nicolás del Busto y Bustamante, district magistrate of Tegucigalpa, ordered the inhabitants of the Nacaome, Danlí, Cantarranas, Yuscarán districts, and all those that belonged to its government, not to relocate without a legitimate reason. Busto y Bustamante also stated that the punishment for those that abandoned the districts would be the seizure of their property for His Majesty, or alternately 8 years of service at Fort Inmaculada Concepción for those who did not have any possessions. At the same time, Busto y Bustamante reported the people’s abandonment of his district to the governors of Costa Rica, León, and Comayagua, where most of the refugees had resettled.

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50 ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 22. Decree of Don Francisco Nicolás del Busto y Bustamante, district magistrate of Tegucigalpa province in which he forbade the relocation of inhabitants from its government districts, September 2, 1762.
province remained open to English attacks along the borderlands, and its militias, as reports declared, lacked the necessary firearms to resist the enemy. Due to the prevailing conditions, the militias constituted the only force available to protect or prevent invasion.

Costa Rican authorities, fearing an impending Zambo-Miskito invasion following the raids in June 1762, sought aid from the Captain General in Guatemala. Captain Francisco Xavier de Oreamuno, acting as provisional governor, informed the Guatemalan authorities of a planned invasion. Guatemala, upon receiving the news of a probable invasion, appointed Don Pedro Manuel Ayerdi as Deputy Captain General of the province on November 26. His express orders were to depart for Costa Rica with munitions for its defense.\footnote{AGCA, A1, leg. 1753, fol. 17. Guatemala, November 26, 1762.} Despite continued alertness, the Mulatto militias of La Puebla de los Angeles and the Mestizo militias of Ujarrás that supplied men for the defense of Matina were unable to prevent a Zambo-Miskito attack in June 1763.\footnote{Obregón, \textit{De Nuestra}, 138. Ayerdi never came to Costa Rica because he refused the post.}

Another vital defense line in Central America underwent the problem of not having leading officers during the war against England. At Fort Petén, the leading commander relinquished his post and it remained vacant until the Crown assigned Don Francisco Requena, Adjutant Major of Florida, on November 11, 1762. Also, the commanding post at Fort San Felipe at Golfo Dulce was left
vacant until Don Joaquín de Ibarra, Infantry Sergeant and Bomber of the Royal Army, took possession on April 1, 1763.\textsuperscript{53}

Only Fort San Fernando de Omoa had the strength to face an enemy attack. The English and Zambo-Miskitos considered it as an impregnable stronghold and avoided any action against the fort. Additionally, Fort San Fernando de Omoa consistently amassed large militia forces that came for its construction from the adjacent provinces of Chiquimula de la Sierra, Comayagua, and Tegucigalpa after 1755. Although sending militiamen to Omoa considerably reduced the population due to the casualty rate, and diminished the labor force in the fields of each province, it considerably swelled numbers for the defense of the coast. For this reason, the Captain General declared that in case of attack only the militias of Tegucigalpa, Yuscarán, and Choluteca should go to the aid of Omoa.\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{The Military Reform in 1764}

After the Seven Years’ War concluded with the Paris Peace Treaty on February 10, 1763, Don Antonio Fernández de Heredia proceeded to fulfill his word of extending and revalidating the commissions from Arcos y Moreno’s time. Don Juan Pontigo obtained the revalidation of his commission as Sergeant Major

\textsuperscript{53} AGCA, A1, leg. 1753. fol. 39, 62.

of Ciudad Real, Chiapas, on May 6, 1763. However, a new defense orientation proposed by Don Ambrosio Funes de Villalpando, Conde de Ricla, on January 20, 1763 halted all revalidations. Ricla proposed to arm and train the native Cuban population, including Mestizos, Mulattoes, and Free Blacks, following the fall of Havana to the English on August 13, 1762. This plan altered the defensive measures in every territory of the Spanish Empire. By March 16, 1763, King Charles III accepted Ricla’s recommendations and named him governor of Cuba in order to proceed with the militia reformation. After July 6, when the English returned Havana to Spanish hands, Ricla and Field Marshal Alejandro O’Reilly developed the military reform that would lead to other militia reforms along the entire American continent. For this reason, the Captain General of Guatemala suspended all commission revalidations in 1763. If Cuba reformed its militia, New Spain would soon follow and eventually the Kingdom of Guatemala would change its militia structure. Hence, there were few revalidations in Central America after May 1763.

The 1755 militia reform in the Kingdom of Guatemala set up a force that secured the foundation for the 1764 militia reform. Despite 1761 royal rejection of the 1755 militia reform, impending war obliged Captain General Fernández de Heredia to keep the militia intact in order to check English and Zambo-Miskito attacks along the Caribbean borderlands. The success of the 1755 militia reform rested on the ability to combine veteran and militia units to defend the territory.

55 AGCA, A2, leg. 298, exp. 6637.
56 Kuethe, Cuba, 25, 29, 37-42; Zapatero, La Guerra, 304; Albi, La Defensa, 54, 93-95; Suárez, Las Milicias, 124-125.
Also, as emphasized, the limited arming of the local population played a key role in their ability to protect the territories. The 1755 militia reform forced Spanish, Mestizo and Mulatto populations to unite under a single military command, as well as in combined combat units. It reduced costs to the royal treasury and expanded the native population’s loyalty to the Crown. It also eliminated the necessity to transport and establish Spanish veteran troops in these lands. Most of the veteran forces that came from Spain found it exceedingly difficult to acclimate, resulting in a high death rate. With the limited number of veteran soldiers, the real defenders of the Spanish territories in Central America were the colonial militias. Thus, the Arcos y Moreno militia organization of 1755 favored an easy transition to the second militia reform in 1764 because it shared most of the changes that had been applied in the Kingdom of Guatemala starting nine years prior.

In 1764, Don Juan de Villalva y Angulo came to New Spain with the express mission of implementing a militia reform. His titles as General Arms Commander and Inspector General of all regular and militia troops in New Spain defined the task’s importance. Evidently, the military changes in New Spain influenced the Kingdom of Guatemala. Villalva y Angulo used the militia reform established by Field Marshal Alejandro O’Reilly in Cuba because it worked better in New Spain. In Guatemala, the militia reform proposed by O’Reilly in Cuba did not demand great changes. By the end of 1764, the vicinities of San Pedro Sula and Yoro reported the militia officer nominations in accordance with the new

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57 McAlister, “The Reorganization,” 9, 12; Albi, La Defensa, 93.
regulations. After nine years, the 1755 militia reform established by Don Alonso de Arcos y Moreno, the first effort in the eighteenth century to organize a disciplined militia body in the region, ended in favor of a similar reform set up in New Spain that had been modeled after Cuba.

58 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 671, fol. 3-4. Militia report from San Pedro Sula, December 24, 1764 and from Yoro, December 10, 1764.
Chapter 3

The Second Military Reform 1764-1778

Historians agree that after the fall of Havana and Manila to the English in 1762, an extensive military reform was undertaken within the Spanish Empire.¹ In 1763 the Crown dispatched the Conde de Rícla and Field Marshal Alejandro O’Reilly to Havana with the task of establishing a new militia organization on the island. Together they prepared a draft of a new regulation for the Infantry and Cavalry Militia of Cuba in 1764. According to the proposed changes, Cuba’s defense would rest on local, disciplined militias comprised mostly of Spanish, Mestizo, and Mulatto troops trained by Spanish veterans.

Repercussions of the Cuban military reform promptly echoed throughout the Spanish Empire. Don Juan de Villalba y Angulo, the Lieutenant General of the Royal Spanish Army, General Arms Commander-in-Chief, and General Inspector of the Regular Army and Militia, came to New Spain with explicit orders to carry out a military reform. Villalba y Angulo’s military approach followed most

of the changes proposed by the Conde de Ricla in Cuba. Soon after, the Kingdom of Guatemala also put into effect the new military regulation that had been implemented in Cuba and New Spain in 1764.

In New Spain, as well as in Cuba, the local volunteer militia had never been established in the same manner as the Spanish Militia. According to the new military regulations, the local volunteer militias became known as "disciplined militias" and were modeled after the Spanish Provincial Militias. This modification called for the enlistment of large numbers of men and implemented the biggest military changes of the eighteenth century. Many men enrolled in the disciplined militias, swelling them into the thousands -- a number not seen before in these territories. For this reason, many historians view these military transformations as the greatest performed in the Spanish Empire after 1763.

In the Kingdom of Guatemala, the military reform of 1764 took shape rapidly, built on the foundation provided by the 1755 military reform. Both military reforms had similar regulations and organization, thus most of the militias established in previous years remained in Central America. The militia reorganization began with Don Alonso Fernández de Heredia in 1764. A year later, Don Pedro de Salazar y Herrera replaced Fernández de Heredia as Captain General of the Kingdom and continued to carry out the militia set-up between 1765-1771. The Salazar y Herrera administration focused totally on military matters, and the resulting improvements endured through the Anglo-

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3 Ibid., 5; Kuethe, Cuba, 25-26, 28-29.
Spanish War (1779-1783). In contrast, Captain General Martín de Mayorga’s
government dealt mostly with the relocation of Santiago de Guatemala to Nueva
Guatemala de la Asunción between 1773 and 1779. A powerful earthquake
destroyed Santiago de Guatemala in 1773, and a royal order demanded the
relocation of the city to the Valle de las Vacas two years later. The decree
ordered the population of Santiago de Guatemala to move to Nueva Guatemala
de la Asunción by 1777. The following year, Don Matías de Gálvez, the supreme
military commander, proceeded to carry out the reorganization of the militias.\(^4\)
The second military reform lasted 14 years and prepared the force to fight
against the English along the Kingdom’s Caribbean shores.

The Military Reform of 1764

In 1764, the Crown dispatched Don Juan de Villalba y Angulo with the
Regiment of America consisting of 235 dragoons and 155 infantrymen from
different corps to New Spain. The veteran troops accompanying Villalba y
Angulo were to direct the construction of fortifications and the establishment of
local militias.\(^5\) Villalba y Angulo arrived with two separate plans on how to
accomplish this. The first plan consisted of a provisional organization drafted by
military officers in Spain. The second plan contained recommendations for the
militia reform in Cuba that were written by the Conde de Rícla and Alejandro


O’Reilly. Both plans stated that the defense forces must be comprised of colonial militia units, organized in a similar manner as the Spanish Provincial Militias. In the end, Villalba y Angulo adhered to Ricla and O’Reilly’s recommendations while developing the militia reform.

**Figure 4**

![Field Marshal Alejandro O’Reilly](image)

Field Marshal Alejandro O’Reilly.


In New Spain, royal orders permitted the enlistment of Spanish, Mestizo, and all castes, with the exception of Indians and Blacks, to serve in the militias. Opposition by the Spanish inhabitants to serve in mixed companies led to segregation despite instructions that stated castes could only comprise up to one third of each company. In order to avoid discord, Villalba y Angulo opted to raise

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separate units. In Guatemala, the same organization was instituted but in some instances mixed companies existed due to insufficient numbers of men for a full company or battalion.

The Crown determined that veteran officers and armament for the militias would come from its army and treasury resources. The Spanish veteran soldiers’ primary task was to lead the training of the militias. In order to provide incentives for the veteran’s participation, the Crown offered every veteran serving as an instructor to be promoted to one rank higher and it offered better salaries. In addition, the Crown required towns and villages to dress the militias and levied taxes in each district to supply the militia uniforms. The royal treasury would subsidize the necessary equipment to arm the militias, and all armament had to be stored at the battalion headquarters under direct responsibility of veteran officers, when not in use.

Villalba y Angulo divided the command posts among Spanish militia volunteers and Spanish veterans, encouraging worthy Spanish inhabitants to participate in the reform. In return for their service, officers received military privileges and payment when on active duty or during training. Although these changes were starting to be implemented in New Spain in 1764, similar services and exemptions had existed since 1755 in the Kingdom of Guatemala. As a

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8 Albi, La Defensa, 94, 95.
10 Ibid., 12-15.
result, the already existing militia in Guatemala accomplished an easy transition to the 1764 militia reform.

The Captain General of Guatemala promptly responded to the influence of the Viceroyalty of New Spain by decreeing the implementation of military changes within the Central American militia organization. The plan adopted in New Spain stated that an infantry battalion would consist of 10 companies of 99 men each, and a cavalry and dragoon battalion would consist of 12 companies of 44 men each.11 Variations of this system already existed in the Kingdom of Guatemala. Its militia battalions were comprised of different numbers of companies; in some cases, the battalions were a full 10 companies. The Kingdom of Guatemala applied the military reform according to its own needs, restructuring the organization of its infantry and cavalry battalions.

As in the 1755 reform, the 1764 militia reform used veteran cadres to provide instruction. According to the plan, local militia officers occupied leading posts and veteran officers took secondary posts. Despite militiamen’s position of command, the lower ranking veteran officers retained control because they supervised instruction, constantly advised the local commander, controlled the armament, and informed the Captain General of any misdeed.12

Certain existing command staff group positions were rarely filled. For instance, the posts of corporal pioneer, 6 pioneers, and 2 fifers seldom were appointed. A master armorer employed at the headquarters weaponry hall

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11 Archer, The Army, 11; Suárez, Las Milicias, 193.

12 Albi, La Defensa, 94-95; McAlister, “The Reorganization,” 12-14.
worked in Santiago de Guatemala, but in the rest of the Kingdom, Mulatto blacksmiths repaired the weapons, leaving the militia post unfilled. The surgeon and chaplain posts remained vacant most of the time. In most cases, the functioning officers in any battalion command staff group were a colonel, a sergeant major, an adjutant major, a drum major and two ensigns. Of these officers, the colonel and the two ensigns came from the militia ranks and the rest were veteran officers or at least had served in the Spanish Royal Army. If the number of militia companies permitted the organization of a second battalion, a lieutenant colonel would be in command.¹³

Most of the cavalry companies ceased to exist during the 1764 militia reform. Some loose cavalry companies remained, but the Captain General rarely appointed cavalry command staff. Instead, the oldest captain or the captain of the first infantry company was in command of those loose cavalry companies. For example, during the troop review at San Pedro Sula, the cavalry company formed part of the infantry force and was placed under the command of Sergeant Major Nicolás Francisco Siru.¹⁴ In another case, the Captain General eliminated the six cavalry companies of Santiago de Guatemala and the Mulatto cavalry company of Santiago de Esquipulas.¹⁵

¹³ Suárez, Las Milicias, 143; Albi, La Defensa, 94-95; Kuette, Cuba, 180; McAlister, “The Reorganization,” 12-13. A pioneer was a soldier employed in open trenches and mines. For the cases of Mulatto master armors see AGCA, A3, leg. 1947, exp. 30227. Juan de la Cruz Orozco was the master armorer of Granda and Fort Inmaculada Concepción. ANCR, Serie Complementario Colonial, doc. 259. Blas de la Candelaria Zúñiga y Mena was the master armorer of Cartago.

¹⁴ AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 671. San Pedro Sula Troop Review. December 24, 1764.

¹⁵ AGCA, A2, leg. 6, exp. 95; leg. 31; exp. 1638.
Caste troops were generally identified as Mulatto units, but they consisted of all castes that were allowed to serve in the militias. These companies did not have a command staff. Instead, a Mulatto commander, appointed by the Spanish colonel, served as the leader answerable to a Spanish lieutenant colonel. In the Cartago Mulatto companies in Costa Rica, for example, the leader was the Mulatto Adjutant Pedro Vicente de Chavarría, who received orders from Spanish Colonel Romualdo de Oreamuno.\textsuperscript{16}

The militia reforms in Cuba and New Spain proposed that in each infantry company, the lieutenant, the sergeant first class, and two corporal first class would be appointed from the ranks of veteran troops, while the captain, the second lieutenant, two sergeants, and four corporals first class would come from the militia companies.\textsuperscript{17} In the Kingdom of Guatemala these recommendations were rarely followed because Spain was unable to provide and sustain a large number of veteran troops. Consequently, each company continued appointing its officers as established in 1755.

Don Alonso Fernández de Heredia, the Captain General, reinstated some militia officers and commissioned others during the new reform. In 1764, the Province of Comayagua, Honduras, reported the organization of its militias to Santiago de Guatemala according to the new regulations. The district of Yoro

\textsuperscript{16} AGCA, A1(6), leg. 2, exp. 29, fol. 23v; ANCR, Serie Guatemala Colonial, doc. 490, fol. 7; Serie Complementario Colonial, doc. 736, fol. 38.

\textsuperscript{17} Suárez, \textit{Las Milicias}, 144; Albi, \textit{La Defensa}, 94-95; McAlister, “The Reorganization,” 13; Kuethe, \textit{Cuba}, 180.
reviewed its four companies, as shown below in Table III, and proclaimed that each officer pay six pesos per appointment. ¹⁸

Table III

Companies of Yoro, Province of Comayagua, Proposed Officers under the New Militia Regulation, December 10, 1764

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Díaz</td>
<td>Sergeant Major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiburcio Andino</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Infantry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph de Castro</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Infantry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Tiberio Martínez</td>
<td>Adjutant</td>
<td>Infantry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faustino Martínez</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Infantry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Ponce</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph del Puerto</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estéban de Zúñiga y Urbina</td>
<td>Adjutant</td>
<td>Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel Ramos</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago Alemán</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrés Mesa</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando López</td>
<td>Adjutant</td>
<td>Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymundo Sandoval</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matías Burgos</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Infantry Company of Sulaco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anselmo Morillo</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Infantry Company of Sulaco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Joseph Ortega</td>
<td>Adjutant</td>
<td>Infantry Company of Sulaco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Rosales</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Infantry Company of Sulaco</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 671, fol. 4.

Rather than adhere to the newly established stipulations, the Yoro militia, as in most places, adjusted the militia organization to its necessities, or simply continued with the organization from the Arcos y Moreno administration. Table III shows that the infantry and cavalry companies formed one unit under the command of Sergeant Major Manuel Díaz, who, according to the instructions, must have either served in the Spanish Army or had some superior knowledge in military matters. The new regulation also called for the lieutenants and sergeants

¹⁸ AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 671, fol. 4.
to come from the veteran ranks; but in Yoro, as well as in most of the rest of the Kingdom, few men had ever served in the Spanish Army. The lieutenants were wealthy Spaniards or worthy town people without any military experience. In Yoro’s militia structure, the deputy high magistrate appointed an adjutant officer for each company.

Although the 1764 militia regulations called for changes, the militia structure in the Kingdom of Guatemala continued to operate basically the same way it had since 1755. The militia from the town of Don García in the High Magistracy of Escuintla and Guazacapán illustrates the reform review process from 1755 to 1767.

Table IV

Don García Militias 1755-1767
High Magistracy of Escuintla and Guazacapán

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Santelizes *</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>1st Cavalry Company</td>
<td>September 1, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo Ayala</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Militia of Escuintla</td>
<td>July 22, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo Ayala *</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>1st Cavalry Company</td>
<td>September 1, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago Dardón *</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>1st Cavalry Company</td>
<td>September 1, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermenegildo Salazar</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Cavalry Company</td>
<td>September 1, 1755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermenegildo Salazar *</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>2nd Cavalry Company</td>
<td>September 1, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Santiago Matambo</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Cavalry Company</td>
<td>September 1, 1755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrés de la Rosa</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Cavalry Company</td>
<td>September 1, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel de Jesús Ayala</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Cavalry Company</td>
<td>September 1, 1767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AGCA, A1, leg. 1753, fol. 169-170; A2, leg. 298, exp. 6641, fol. 5; A2(4), leg. 4, fol. 74.
* These officers had commissions from Arcos y Moreno or Fernández de Heredia.

Table IV illustrates that the same militia structure from 1755 remained in place after 1764. On September 1, 1767, Don Juan de Rivera y Péres, the Deputy High Magistrate, reported that two companies had existed in the town of
Don García since 1755. According to the report, in 1755 each company was comprised of 50 men, but over the ensuing years one company had ceased to exist due to an insufficient amount of men. The only company in service in 1767 contained 110 men. The High Magistrate requested the organization of a second company with the same officers that were in place in 1755. The report clarified that an asterisk marked officers who had previous militia commissions given either by Arcos y Moreno or Fernández de Heredia, and those unmarked were nominated for the position. In fact, most of the officers from Don Garcia had obtained their appointments from Arcos y Moreno. In the first cavalry company, the reviews of 1762 confirmed that Lieutenant Eduardo Ayala had obtained his commission from Arcos y Moreno, claiming his rank according to his appointment in 1755. The captain and second lieutenant were either appointed in 1755 or had obtained their commissions from the 1764 Fernández de Heredia appointments. The captain of the second cavalry company, Don Hermenegildo Salazar, originally appointed in 1755, retained his post through the 1764 reform. Lieutenant Joseph Santiago Matambo, originally commissioned in 1755, had either died or retired following the 1764 reform. The Deputy High Magistrate recommended that Second Lieutenant Andrés de la Rosa take the Lieutenant’s post in 1767. As illustrated above, the town of Don Garcia kept both its cavalry companies, as well as most of its officers.

In order to revitalize the reform campaign in New Spain, the Spanish Crown sent Inspector General Joseph de Gálvez in 1765. His mission consisted

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of increasing revenue, tightening the administration, and setting up monopolies as tobacco and alcohol to provide sufficient funds to finance militia expenditures. Gálvez held considerable power so as to enforce improvements to the 1764 militia reform. His commission clearly stipulated that the militias must follow the ordinances that were set forth in the reform. He clarified that it was the town council’s duty to provide uniforms and equipment, as well as to propose three qualified men for each of the officer’s posts. Perhaps the most powerful resolution established by the Inspector General was the application of the *Fuero Militar de Guerra* for the disciplined militias, which was instituted on May 3, 1766. The *Fuero Militar* protected the enlisted militiamen from criminal prosecution even when they were inactive and covered them completely when mobilized. Mulattoes were covered by it only while on active duty. The *Fuero Militar* also exempted militiamen from paying taxes and fees. Through the *Fuero Militar* Gálvez also released the Castes from the payment of tribute (*laborio*).\(^{20}\)

**Don Pedro de Salazar y Herrera**

On October 30, 1765, a few months before leaving office, Fernández de Heredia reviewed and described the status of the defense forces of the Kingdom of Guatemala. His chronicle states that only two veteran companies composed of 30 men each plus two officers safeguarded the security of all of Central

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America. Fernández de Heredia emphasized that the protection of the isthmus depended on the readiness of 62 veteran soldiers. The Captain General communicated to royal authorities that the ultimate defense of Central America rested upon the imposition of strict discipline upon the militias given that, in many places like the forts of San Fernando de Omoa and Inmaculada Concepción, Spanish soldiers tended to desert or rapidly die.²¹

By the end of 1765, the Spanish Crown needed someone who could carry out the administrative and military reforms in the Kingdom of Guatemala that Gálvez had imposed in New Spain. Consequently, the Field Marshal of the Royal Army and Grenadier Captain of the Royal Spanish Guards, Don Pedro de Salazar y Herrera, relieved Fernández de Heredia as Captain General on December 3, 1765.²²

From the beginning of his administration, Salazar y Herrera focused on improving the 1764 military reform. In a general report, Salazar y Herrera indicated the number of militias throughout the Kingdom of Guatemala on December 1, 1767. The description cited 557 companies consisting of 21,814 infantrymen and 8,927 cavalrymen for a grand total of 30,714 militiamen. The castes comprised the largest number with 236 infantry and 88 cavalry companies, totaling 324 companies. Spanish militias embodied 109 infantry and 75 cavalry companies, adding up to 184 companies, while the Mestizo militias

²¹ Montoya, “Milicias,” 97-98; García Peláez, Memorias, 74; According to the report, García Peláez states that there were only two dragoon companies consisting of sixty men in the Kingdom of Guatemala.

²² Juarros, Compendio, 217.
constituted 28 infantry and 21 cavalry companies for a total of 49 companies. In the end, Salazar y Herrera’s militia differed from the force established in 1755 by only 714 men.

In 1768, the Captain General once again analyzed the composition of the militias and their ability to defend the Kingdom of Guatemala. Salazar y Herrera warned that the available forces could not quell a popular insurrection and that the militias, due to inadequate training would be incompetent to repel an invasion. He also stressed that the number of armed Mulattoes by far exceeded the number of Spaniards and reported the castes’ inability to learn to operate firearms, therefore, substantially diminishing the militia’s potential for military training. The Mulatto cavalry suffered from an insufficient number of officers, poor training, and the inability to maintain horses. He also noted that in case of war, it would be impossible for the treasury to maintain the entire force. Finally, the Captain General expressed his concern that the shortage of weaponry only permitted the arming of one third of the force, with the drills taking place without guns.

As in previous years, the Captain General took a census of the number of veteran troops and their respective ranks in order to determine their state of readiness. In total, the force contained two dragoon companies of 30 men each, including two officers, a Lieutenant and a Second Lieutenant. The 60 soldiers accounted for all of the veteran troops within the Kingdom, with most of them...

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24 Montoya, “Milicias,” 101; Suárez, Las Milicias, 248; Ayón, Historia, Vol. III, 53; Garcia Peláez, Memorias, 73.
residing in Santiago de Guatemala. The veteran troops’ duty was to protect royal buildings and warehouses. Salazar y Herrera protested the fact that veteran troops only acted as guards of royal institutions. He warned that the towns and populations within the isthmus would have to rely solely on the militias for security due to the scarcity of veteran troops. As a solution, Salazar y Herrera recommended the creation of four well-trained battalions to deal with emergencies. These battalions could be deployed as a rapid defensive force that would give time for the militias to reach the area under attack. To complement the battalions, the Captain General requested a dragoon squadron and the necessary officers to instruct them.25

On December 1, 1769, Salazar y Herrera again reported to the King the difficult situation regarding the militias. He maintained that most of the Mulatto infantry troops were armed only with cold steel weapons that were inadequate for warfare, and that the existing firearms could only arm one-third of the force. This situation was even worse for the cavalry corps because, besides the absence of weaponry, they also lacked officers and horses.26

In 1767, the General Troop Review reported that in almost every town, the militia structure was similar to the 1755 militia. Other reviews also showed little variation. As seen in Table V, the companies of Posoltega and Telica in the


26 Suárez, Las Milicias, 249-250; García Peláez, Memorias, 73.
Magistracy of Subtiaba, reviewed on August 28, 1767, maintained the same structure as from previous years.

### Table V

**Magistracy of Subtiaba, Nicaragua, 1767**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officer Name and Company</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company of Posoltega</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Manuel Cantón</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>August 28, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estéban Calvo</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>August 28, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Vanegas</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>August 28, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company of Telica</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Luis de Ayala</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>December 31, 1761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>March 13, 1772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Dolmos</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>December 31, 1761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>March 13, 1772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Santiago Ramos</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>August 28, 1767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AGCA, A1, leg. 1753, fol. 238; A1, leg. 1754, fol. 12-13; A2, leg. 31, exp. 1637.

In Posoltega, the post of militia captain was held by Don Manuel Cantón, “the only Spaniard available in town.”27 According to the regulations, Spaniards had to occupy the leading positions in the militia, even in the case of the company of Posoltega, which was comprised totally of Mulattoes. The promotion of any Mulatto within the militia ranks would bring the authorities under intense scrutiny in regards to their loyalty. In the case of Lieutenant Estéban Calvo, the authorities in Subtiaba concluded that he was a “Mulatto of quiet life and had served many years as a sergeant.”28 Similarly, the authorities were favorably disposed towards another Mulatto, Martín Venegas, granting him the commission

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27 AGCA, A1, leg. 1753, fol. 238.

28 Ibid.
as Second Lieutenant due to "many years of service as sergeant and his proven zeal for royal duty."\textsuperscript{29}

The very same structure worked in the company of Telica. The Spaniard, Don Luis de Ayala, commanded a company consisting entirely of Mulattoes. As in the case of Don Manuel Cantón of Posoltega, Ayala was the only Spaniard deemed worthy in Telica during 1767. The report, however, did not state the ethnicity of Lieutenant Manuel Dolmos, but he was most likely a Mulatto. Finally, the High Magistrate entrusted the oldest serving Mulatto, Sergeant Joseph Santiago Ramos, with the commission of Second Lieutenant because he "obeyed all superior orders and recalled his knowledge of good conduct."\textsuperscript{30}

In the case of Quetzaltenango, an account of its militia stated that in 1762 there were only two companies. Five years later, the Magistrate of Quetzaltenango reviewed his militia force, on July 18, 1767, which had increased to three companies (Table VI).\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} AGCA, A2, leg. 6, exp. 96. Report written on February 20, 1762.
Table VI

Magistracy of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala 1767

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco Antonio Aldana y Guevara</td>
<td>Magistrate</td>
<td></td>
<td>July 18, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Gregorio Lizaurzabal y Anzola</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td></td>
<td>October 15, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Sebastián Gálvez</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td></td>
<td>September 17, 1770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Manuel Escalante Meño</td>
<td>Sergeant Major</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>June 8, 1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Gaspar de los Reyes</td>
<td>Adjutant Major</td>
<td></td>
<td>August 7, 1766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Vicente de Lima</td>
<td>Commander Captain</td>
<td>1st Company</td>
<td>July 18, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florencio Cansino</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>1st Company</td>
<td>July 18, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agustín Méndez</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>1st Company</td>
<td>July 18, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felipe Benítez</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>2nd Company</td>
<td>July 18, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felipe Díaz</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Company</td>
<td>July 18, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Escobar</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Company</td>
<td>July 18, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Ventura Escobedo y Ramiro</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>3rd Company</td>
<td>July 18, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Tomás Figueroa</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>3rd Company</td>
<td>July 18, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Díaz</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>3rd Company</td>
<td>July 18, 1767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AGCA, A1, leg. 1753, fol. 289-290, 302; A2, leg. 6, exp. 97; A2, leg. 298, exp. 6640, fol. 1; exp. 6642.

Table VI shows the status of the Quetzaltenango militia in 1767. It also shows that the command staff preceded the 1764 reform. Excluding the Arms Commander-in-Chief, Don Francisco Antonio Aldana y Guevara (commissioned by Salazar y Herrera) the remaining high-ranking officers obtained their commissions during the Arcos y Moreno administration. The appointments to the ranks of colonel, lieutenant colonel, and sergeant major dated back to at least 1762 or before. As of 1767, the majority of these high-ranking officers had retired but they maintained their commissions within the militias. As no other officers filled those posts, these retired officers occasionally performed duties. Lieutenant Colonel Sebastián Gálvez is an exception because documents do not mention his name after 1762. In all likelihood he either had died or left the area,
although he was not replaced until the authorities commissioned Don Gaspar de los Reyes as Adjutant Major to supervise the militia in 1766.

Don Vicente Lima was in direct command of the three companies of Quetzaltenango. He was the captain of the first company and the most distinguished Spaniard in the area. Each company differed from the number of men stipulated in the militia regulations of Cuba and New Spain, coinciding rather with the number of troops specified by Arcos y Moreno in 1755. The first company contained 56 militiamen and the second and third had 55 each.\(^\text{32}\) This demonstrates that the organization of the 1755 militia reform still served as the model for the militias in 1767.

After reviewing the militias in 1767, Salazar y Herrera reported that the militia in Central America was useless. Consequently, he proposed military changes and rapid reinforcement by veteran troops in the area. In 1768, the Captain General outlined a series of reforms to Don Alejandro O’Reilly, the military reformer of Cuba and Puerto Rico and the overseer for the Kingdom of Guatemala. O’Reilly wrote to King Charles III on April 23, 1768, recommending the requests proposed by Salazar y Herrera. The King responded favorably to most of the petitions on April 1, 1770. To strengthen Central America, the Crown allowed the organization of a 200-man dragoon squadron in 1769, four rapid action battalions in 1770, and the establishment of an officer cadre, an engineer unit, as well as an artillery detachment. However, the appeal for a veteran

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\(^{32}\) AGCA, A1, leg. 1753, fol. 289-289v; García Peláez, *Memorias*, 75.
battalion was declined, the Crown decreeing that it would dispatch such a force only in case of war.\textsuperscript{33}

Forts formed the defensive front line in the Kingdom of Guatemala, and the Crown received specific notifications of their precarious situation after 1767. At Fort San Fernando de Omoa, Salazar y Herrera sought improvements and a faster pace in the construction. In 1769 he made modifications to the fort’s plans, to which the Crown consented to in 1770. At Fort San Felipe del Golfo Dulce, out of the 37 bronze cannons, 27 were useless and the rest were comprised of different calibers. Furthermore, the shortage of ammunition (only 200 cannonballs were available) and the lack of gunpowder severely crippled the cannons’ effectiveness in repelling an assault. Fort Inmaculada Concepción on the San Juan River was in a similar situation as to the other fortresses. In 1767 the fort’s deplorable state was reported to the Captain General, who ordered the Nicaraguan governor to provide the necessary resources. In 1768, the armament of the fort consisted of 23 bronze and iron cannons of small caliber, 1,400 cannonballs, and 100 muskets. The cannons had no carts, making them immovable, and the fort did not have enough gunpowder.\textsuperscript{34}

Rumors of war with England drove the Captaincy General to prepare the Caribbean coastal defenses in 1770. The removal of the English settlements from the Falkland Islands by the Spanish governor of Buenos Aires in June 1770 further contributed to the crisis. Consequently, Spain and England were on the


brink of war by the fall of 1770. Immediately the forts began the process of preparation. Don Manuel de Acuña, an artillery lieutenant who came to San Fernando de Omoa in 1767, repaired the artillery carts at Fort Immaculada Concepción in 1770. Additionally, in November the authorities placed Captain Manuel de Quiroga as the commander of Fort Immaculada Concepción and reinforced it with 100 veteran soldiers. Finally, in the same year the Crown dispatched four engineers that were to prepare the defenses of its forts.\footnote{Kueth, Cuba, 92-93; Ayón, Historia, Vol. III, 54-56; Floyd, The Anglo, 122. The 100 veteran soldiers came via Cartagena.}

Weaponry headed the priority list of requested war material as early as 1767. Salazar y Herrera had previously mentioned in 1765 the insufficient amount of firearms, to which the Crown allocated 600 muskets to the Kingdom. In 1769, the Crown dispatched an additional 3,000 firearms for the militias to help alleviate the weapon shortage. These weapons constituted half of the 6,000 that the authorities had to distribute among the towns in Central America.\footnote{Ayón, Historia, Vol. III, 51.} Despite being the biggest shipment of weapons received to date, it did little to help arm the 30,714 militiamen and the newly created battalions in the Kingdom.

In 1770, the Crown authorized Salazar y Herrera to organize four militia battalions to deal rapidly with invading forces and/or insurrections. In contrast to ordinary disciplined militias, these militias received ample military training and weaponry. Part of their training consisted of slow the advance of enemy troops, allowing additional troops to reach the combat area. These battalions acted as fast engaging forces for limited operations. The Battalion of San Agustín de la
Real Corona from Chiquimula and Zacapa was one of the four battalions organized on February 6, 1770 (Table VII).

Table VII
Battalion of San Agustín de la Real Corona
Chiquimula y Zacapa 1770

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Antonio de Ugarte</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Alejandro Rosales</td>
<td>Lieutenant-Colonel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Fernando Porras</td>
<td>Sergeant Major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Antonio Morales</td>
<td>Adjutant Major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco Arriaza</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Grenadier Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Jacinto Morales</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Grenadier Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Marroquin</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Grenadier Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Miguel de Ayala</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>1st Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Mateo de Ayala</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>1st Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph María de Ayala</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>1st Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco Peláez</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>2nd Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Antonio Oliva</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Martín Oliva</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan de Aragón</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>3rd Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Marcos de Aragón</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>3rd Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>3rd Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Miguel Paiz</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>4th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Manuel Paiz</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>4th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Paiz</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>4th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Enrique Orellana</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>5th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Leandro Corral</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>5th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Félix Orellana</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>5th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Basilio Seseña</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>6th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan de Mata y Rey</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>6th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Alejo Cayetano</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>6th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Manuel de Ayala</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>7th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Manuel Antonio Mayorga</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>7th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Christóbal de Aldana</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>7th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Manuel Antonio Dardón</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>8th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Félix Rojas</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>8th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Rojas</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>8th Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Tomás Dardón</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Loose Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco de Castro</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Loose Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Antonio de León</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Loose Cavalry Company</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This battalion adhered completely to the structure stipulated by Don Juan de Villalba y Angulo for New Spain in 1764. The command staff resembled those of Spanish infantry and cavalry battalions. Each battalion consisted of ten companies, and each company contained 99 militiamen. After adding up the militiamen and officers, the battalion numbered 1,036 soldiers.\(^\text{37}\)

In the case of the San Agustín de la Real Corona battalion, Colonel Joseph Antonio de Ugarte was a veteran soldier from the Royal Army and a Spaniard of stature in Chiquimula.\(^\text{38}\) The force consisted of nine infantry companies, and one cavalry company. Of all the infantry companies, the grenadier company contained the best shooters, led the charge, and carried grenades to fight the enemy. The troops in the other eight infantry companies were known as fusiliers. Lastly, loose cavalry made up the tenth company. As a Spanish battalion, it was expected that all officers came from honorable Spanish families, so they could help to sustain it.\(^\text{39}\)

The San Agustín de la Real Corona battalion’s responsibility consisted of securing the area around Fort San Fernando de Omoa, Fort San Felipe del Golfo Dulce, and the districts of Chiquimula and Zacapa. To be able to comply with its mission, the battalion constructed a new armory in Pueblo Nuevo of Santísima Trinidad de Chiquimula. It was here that the battalion’s 800 firearms, still an insufficient number for the enlisted militiamen, were stored.\(^\text{40}\)

\(^{37}\) Suárez, _Las Milicias_, 143, 193.

\(^{38}\) AGCA, A1, leg. 1753, fol. 254-254v.

\(^{39}\) Albi, _La Defensa_, 72-73, 94-96; Kuethe, _Cuba_, 42-44; Suárez, _Las Milicias_, 141-144, 155.

\(^{40}\) AGCA, A1, leg. 1753, fol. 254-254v.
The tension between Spain and England prompted the inspection and reinforcement of the Caribbean defenses in Central America during the latter part of 1770 and the beginning of 1771. Forts like San Fernando de Omoa and Inmaculada Concepción benefited from the threat of war by having their garrisons strengthened and armaments made ready. In San Fernando de Omoa, the commander, Don Francisco Aybar, took the necessary precautions to guard against attacks from the English settlements of Belize, Key Cocina, and Black River by placing guards along the Chachalagua, Motagua, and Cuyamel Rivers on February 19, 1771. Also, Aybar dispatched guards to watch the Punta Gorda settlement, due to the positive results obtained during the Anglo-Spanish War of 1762.41

As can be observed in Table VIII, the replenishment of armaments at San Fernando de Omoa was insufficient for the forces stationed there. Don Joaquín Castillo, the royal treasurer, accounted for weapons and war supplies between November 9 and 16, 1771.

41 AGCA, A3, leg. 1286, exp. 22131, fol. 1-2v.
Table VIII

Weaponry at Fort San Fernando de Omoa in 1771

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaponry</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muskets</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayonets</td>
<td>1,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musket bullets</td>
<td>18,022½ lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pistol bullets</td>
<td>395 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron pedreros of 1 lb caliber</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron cannon of 18 lbs caliber</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron cannon dismounted of 6 lbs caliber</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron cannon dismounted of 4 lbs caliber</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron cannon dismounted of 2 lbs caliber</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little bronze cannons (falconets) of 4 lbs caliber</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze cannon of 24 lbs caliber</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze cannon of 12 lbs caliber</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze cannon of 4 lbs caliber located at bastion San Joseph</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze cannon of 6 lbs caliber located at bastion Santa Barbara</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In November 1771, the garrison of Fort San Fernando de Omoa consisted of an infantry company and an artillery detachment, totaling 51 soldiers. The infantry company was comprised of a captain, a corporal first class, a corporal second class, a drummer, and 32 soldiers, with the vast majority being Mulattoes from Central America, and very few Mestizos or Spaniards. Four hundred muskets armed the infantry troops insufficient for the number of people that might come to help in its defense. The artillery detachment consisted of a constable and 14 artillerymen. These artillerymen manned 28 cannons of different calibers.
As with the infantry company, the artillermen came from different parts of Central America and Spain.\textsuperscript{42}

Despite its strategic position along the Caribbean coast, Fort San Fernando de Omoa did not lodge large quantities of troops and relied on the local militias in the vicinity for aid. Most of the men serving at the fort were exiles and had little military training; therefore, the fort’s defense rested on the militia aid from Comayagua, Tegucigalpa, Chiquimula, and Zacapa districts. Nearby militiamen working at San Fernando de Omoa from San Pedro Sula, Santa Barbara Tencoa, and Yoro had the double duty of building the fort and defending it.\textsuperscript{43} In addition, the recently organized battalion of San Agustín de la Real Corona was designated as the leading unit to defend Fort San Fernando de Omoa and confront foreign invasions. The large quantity of bayonets, muskets, and bullets kept at the fort were used to supply weapons and munitions to the troops that would assist in the fort’s defense.

In 1771, the authorities at Santiago de Guatemala, determining that Fort Inmaculada Concepción did not have sufficient strength to face an assault, organized a veteran company to reinforce it. Salazar y Herrera had already reported the calamitous state of the fort in 1767.\textsuperscript{44} As a result, the Crown had approved a veteran infantry company to be sent to protect the strategic entrance of the San Juan River. The infantry company, requiring an annual expense of

\textsuperscript{42} AGCA, A3, leg. 1287, exp. 22141, fol. 3-12, 16-19v. Troop Review on November 6, 1771.

\textsuperscript{43} AGCA, A3, leg. 1286, exp. 22135, fol. 18. Payments made to the volunteer troops working at San Fernando de Omoa on May 2, 1771.

\textsuperscript{44} Ayón, \textit{Historia}, Vol. III, 52-53.
10,572 pesos, included 54 veterans and the officers Don Manuel Quiroga, Don Juan de Aysa, Don Ramón Suazo, and Don Pedro Bricio.\footnote{AGCA, A2, leg. 303, exp. 7055, fol. 3; A3; leg. 590, exp. 11700, fol. 20; ANH, Roll 26, fol. 1205-1206, veteran forces destined for Fort Inmaculada Concepción disembarked at San Fernando de Omoa on June 16, 1771.} However, the number of veteran troops at the fort soon diminished due to desertion, sickness, and a high mortality rate, resulting in the replacement of veterans by militiamen, exiles, and Mulattoes.

The threat of war demanded careful preparations along both coasts of the isthmus. In Nicaragua, the governor ordered that two soldiers and a corporal keep watch from Tajolotepa hill in the jurisdiction of León as early as July 31, 1770. On September 15, the militias of Mesatepate dispatched soldiers to guard the Pacific coast. Similarly, the militias of Nuestra Señora de la Concepción de Managua established observation points along the coast on November 22. Around the same time, the authorities in Santiago de Guatemala decreed the reestablishment of guards at Matina, Costa Rica. On February 9, 1771, the governor of Costa Rica, Don Joseph de la Nava, ordered the placement of a corporal and five militiamen at the mouth of the Matina River, and another corporal and two soldiers at the mouth of the Reventazón River for a period of three months.\footnote{AGCA, A3(5), leg. 123, exp. 729, fol. 22-22v; exp. 731, fol. 24, 26, 30-32.}

Don Pedro de Salazar y Herrera vigorously fostered the defense of the Kingdom, but paid with his life for his effort. In his zeal, Salazar y Herrera visited the Fort San Fernando de Omoa to inspect the progress of construction where
he contracted the sickness that ended his life on May 20, 1771.\textsuperscript{47} His death seriously hampered the positive momentum of the militia reform and the defense of the realm because authorities stalled military improvements in the immediately ensuing years.

**Don Juan González Bustillo**

Don Juan González Bustillo temporarily assumed the vacant post left by Salazar y Herrera from 1771 to 1773 until the Crown determined the new Captain General. During his tenure, González Bustillo continued filling military and bureaucratic posts. Probably one of his main contributions consisted of assigning a slave shipment to work in San Fernando de Omoa and the arrival of troops and armament from Spain.

González Bustillo simplified the transaction of 217 slaves that would serve in the construction of San Fernando de Omoa in 1771. The cooperation of the interim Captain General contributed to the payment of the 55,760 pesos to the Asentistas de Negros and the slaves transportation in the San Marcos brig and the balandra El Diamante to San Fernando de Omoa. Following this transaction, the dependency on food products from nearby haciendas increased due to the rise in population at San Fernando de Omoa.\textsuperscript{48} González Bustillo diligently


\textsuperscript{48} AGCA, A3, leg. 709, exp. 13273; exp. 13283; exp. 13298.
coped with the exorbitant expenses from San Fernando de Omoa that effectively permitted the advancement of construction.

The importance of San Fernando de Omoa increased with a stronger Spanish naval presence after 1771. The coastguard, armed with 14 cannons and a series of other boats, protected the vicinity of Omoa Bay. These boats kept English forces on alert and exercised a limited dominion of the Caribbean Sea. In addition, the Spanish Crown reaffirmed its determination to control and reclaim the Caribbean coast.

Increasing the naval presence in the Gulf of Honduras, Omoa Bay, and Amatique Bay enabled Spanish authorities to finally secure the vital armament supply line to Fort San Felipe del Golfo Dulce. In 1771, transfers of war equipment increased from San Felipe del Golfo Dulce to Santiago de Guatemala. On April 12th, Joseph Vargas unloaded 12 boxes containing 238 muskets at the arms hall in Santiago de Guatemala. A month later, Manuel Antonio Dardón brought in a load of pistols. Juan Gregorio Roldán earned 97 pesos, 4 reales, and 2 maravedies for transporting 20 boxes of muskets on September 18. Finally, another load of muskets costing 78 pesos and 6 reales came in on December 31. As has been noted, the Spanish policies toward Central America contributed to open the ports of the Caribbean, increasing Spanish presence. Although the González Bustillo administration worked to improve the

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50 AGCA, A3, leg. 709, exp. 13197; exp. 13211; exp. 13269; exp. 13329.
defenses along the Caribbean, they left the militias intact for the newly appointed officer.

**Don Martín de Mayorga**

Don Martín de Mayorga, Field Marshal of the Royal Spanish Army, replaced González Bustillo as Captain General on June 12, 1773. The militia reform in the Kingdom was stalled during his administration because of a catastrophic earthquake that destroyed Santiago de Guatemala a few months after he took office. Between 1773-1778 Mayorga concentrated his efforts on the construction of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, the new capital for Central America.\(^{51}\)

Mayorga’s military policy focused on filling vacant posts, reviewing troops, and organizing new companies without furthering the military reform. Vacating the captaincy of the third Spanish infantry company of Valle de la Hermita, Sacatepéquez High Magistracy, Mayorga commissioned Don Ventura Galbán de Iriarte from Spain on November 28, 1775. He reviewed troops from the High Magistracy of Escuintla and Guazacapán. As with the Jumay Valley infantry company, it was comprised of more than 100 men and the Los Esclavos cavalry company consisted of 41 soldiers in 1774. Mayorga also approved the creation of a Spanish cavalry company in the High Magistracy of Suchitepéquez on

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December 15, 1773. According to the troop review, the company enrolled 17 native born Spaniards and 20 Spanish-Americans on November 26, 1775.\textsuperscript{52}

The American War for Independence undeniably influenced the development of the militia force in Central America. Mayorga did not propose changes in the militias during his administration, but events obliged the King to take the necessary preparations for war and revenge. As soon as the American War of Independence developed into a broader military conflict, Spain initiated plans to go to war against Britain in order to recover the honor lost by her calamitous defeats in 1762.\textsuperscript{53} The Family Compact signed in 1761 compelled a Franco-Spanish alliance and, therefore, forced Spain to enter into war against England. The Spanish Crown began preparing its forces in 1776 and had reorganized the militias when war broke out in 1779.

In 1776, military reports centered on San Fernando de Omoa because it was the main liaison port between Spain and the best fortress on the Caribbean coast. Consequently, the Crown accelerated its construction and ordered volunteer troops from the province of Comayagua to return to work at San Fernando de Omoa after a year of absence. Two years later, the volunteer militiamen from Yoro and Comayagua were still working on the construction of

\textsuperscript{52} AGCA, A2, leg. 298, exp. 6644, fol. 2; A2(4), leg. 7, exp. 111, fol. 1, 3; exp.115, fol. 5; exp. 117, fol. 17.

\textsuperscript{53} Floyd, The Anglo, See Chapter IX: Preparation for War and the Terry Mission (1764-1779), 119-131; Kuethe, Cuba, Chapter 4: Revenge, 78-112.
the fort, which caused resentment in the population due to the high death rate of
the workers and the lack of food production in the province.\textsuperscript{54}

On November 30, 1776 Don Francisco Beingno Toves provided the
authorities in Comayagua with information regarding the distance and time
separating Fort San Fernando de Omoa from other main populated centers.
Government officials began sketching plans for possible militia mobilizations and
a complete description of the road to San Fernando de Omoa. According to
Toves, the distance from Comayagua to San Fernando de Omoa was 70
leagues, the same distance from San Fernando de Omoa to Gracias a Dios.
Yoro was 65 leagues, Tencoa was 45, and San Pedro Sula was 20 or 22. Toves
estimated that the average pace was 5 or 6 leagues a day and pointed out that
extreme weather could affect the march.\textsuperscript{55} According to Toves, it would take 3 or
4 days for the troops to move from San Pedro Sula to San Fernando de Omoa.
The rest of the towns would take longer to mobilize their troops. Because of its
proximity, San Pedro Sula emerged as the main center to give initial support to
San Fernando de Omoa in case of an assault, giving the other towns time to
mobilize their militias.

Based on previous reports written by Salazar y Herrera, the Crown
conceded to assign a veteran battalion to Central America in 1777. Earlier
requests petitioning a veteran battalion had been rejected by Spain. Royal

\textsuperscript{54} AGCA, A3, leg.1289, exp. 22171. August 1, 1776. A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 686, fol. 13. Reports written on

\textsuperscript{55} AGCA, A3, leg. 687, exp. 12965, Letter from Don Francisco Benigno Toves to Don Salvador
Dominguez on November 30, 1776. The Spanish league measured 5572.7 meters. See Zapatero, \textit{La
Guerra}, 245.
authorities insisted that the Crown would only approve the deployment of a veteran battalion in case of war.\textsuperscript{56} With the threat of war on the horizon, the authorities in Seville assembled the infantry battalion in Cádiz. On September 16, the royal treasurer of Andalucía forwarded the troops payment of their salaries through December, the time that it would take them to travel to San Fernando de Omoa. After disembarking on December 2, the commander, Joseph de Estachería, reviewed the 399 men in 8 companies that made up the veteran infantry battalion of San Fernando de Omoa.\textsuperscript{57} The battalion would serve as the garrison of San Fernando de Omoa, a leading training force for the militias, and the main combat unit in the Kingdom. The coming of the veteran infantry battalion indicated the Crown’s determination to expel the English from Central America.

A royal artillery company from Spain arrived at San Fernando de Omoa on December 20, 1777. The company consisted of 100 men under the command of a captain commander. Following its arrival, the company was split between Nueva Guatemala, the Forts San Fernando de Omoa, San Felipe del Golfo Dulce, and Inmaculada Concepción. The captain commander, a lieutenant, a sergeant, two corporals first class, and eight artillerymen went to Nueva Guatemala. Fort San Fernando de Omoa retained a lieutenant, two second lieutenants, four sergeants, five corporals first class, a Black drummer, and 39 Black artillerymen. Fort San Felipe del Golfo Dulce received a sergeant, two

\textsuperscript{56} Ayón, \textit{Historia}, Vol. III, 53-54.

corporals first class, and 12 artillerymen. Finally, Fort Inmaculada Concepción received two second lieutenants, two sergeants, three corporals first class, a drummer, and 19 artillerymen. This force counted for an annual expense of 19,716 pesos and 6 reales to the royal treasury.\textsuperscript{58} With the arrival of veteran troops, the authorities were confident that they could hold off any attack and had the capacity to launch an assault on the English settlements along the Caribbean coast.

Complementing the arrival of veteran troops, the Captaincy General ordered an extensive militia review of Central America in 1777. In the town of Heredia, province of Costa Rica, the inspection showed the number of its officers and militiamen as of June 14, 1777 (Table IX). The battalion consisted of seven infantry and three cavalry companies. In the report, the deputy high magistrate included the Mulatto cavalry, despite its diminutive size, to comply with the order that all troops be reviewed. The total active force that was reported totaled 719 militiamen, (not incorporating the 303 men who were unfit for service), but the final numbers showed that the battalion was actually comprised of 1,022 militiamen.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{58} AGCA, A3, leg. 590, exp. 11700, fol. 17; ANCR, Serie Cartago Colonial, doc. 955, fol 1-1v. Reglamento del número de individuos que se compone la compañía del Real Cuerpo de Artillería. The Captaincy General of Guatemala enacted the Royal Artillery Corp Regulation on October 15, 1777. Zapatero, El Fuerte, 103.

\textsuperscript{59} ANCR, Serie Guerra y Marina, doc. 10631, fol. 45. General Troop Review, Villa Vieja (Heredia), June 14, 1777.
Table IX
Troop Review of Heredia, Costa Rica 1777

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Manuel Zumbado</td>
<td>Spanish Infantry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Nicolás González</td>
<td>Mestizo Infantry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Cayetano Gilíérez</td>
<td>Mestizo Infantry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Francisco González</td>
<td>Mestizo Infantry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Agustín Pérez</td>
<td>Mestizo Infantry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco Xavier Ramírez</td>
<td>Mestizo Infantry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Mores</td>
<td>Mestizo Cavalry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Chaves</td>
<td>Mestizo Cavalry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugenio Calvo</td>
<td>Mulatto Infantry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Antonio Chaves</td>
<td>Mulatto Cavalry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ANCR, Serie Guerra y Marina, Doc. 10631, fol. 45-45v.

The veteran reinforcements that were sent to the different fortresses soon began to succumb to the severe climatic conditions or desert their posts while militiamen replaced them. In the Fort Inmaculada Concepción, infantry and artillery troops diminished despite the arrival of freshly dispatched reinforcements in the early 1770s. By June 1778, officers from the fort planned to establish the Bandera de Recluta, a recruitment post in Cartago, Costa Rica. In a letter sent to the governor, the officers Don Pedro Bricio and Don Antonio Antoniotti expressed that the recruitment was needed to complete the infantry and artillery companies. The Costa Rican governor rejected this form of enrollment and demanded that Bricio and Antoniotti first consult their commander.\(^\text{60}\)

\(^\text{60}\) AGCA, A2(6), leg. 6, exp. 8. Letter addressed to Don Pedro Bricio and Don Antonio Antoniotti by the governor of Costa Rica on June 23, 1778.
A similar situation to that of Fort Inmaculada Concepción occurred at San Fernando de Omoa. Upon its arrival on December 2, 1777, the veteran battalion consisted of 399 men. According to the plans designed in Spain, half of the battalion would serve as the main defense force of San Fernando de Omoa and San Pedro Sula. The other half would reside in Nueva Guatemala. However, by May 4, 1778 the battalion had diminished to 204 men. Almost half of the soldiers sent from Spain had either died or deserted because of the extreme weather conditions within five months. A report written by Don Matías de Gálvez on July 4th claimed that almost all of the soldiers from the second company serving in San Fernando de Omoa were sick, and he recommended their relocation. The report also demanded the right to postpone any soldier replacement in San Fernando de Omoa due to the troops' deplorable condition. The effective forces at San Fernando de Omoa were the militias serving at the fort, the slaves, and the militias that came to work. The sick and dwindling companies of the veteran battalion were stationed in San Pedro Sula and the militias of the town were the ones that could rapidly aid the fort. In short, the defense of the coast and San Fernando de Omoa continued depending upon the militias for its defense and not on the professional soldiers.

The militia reform of 1764 concluded in 1778 when the Inspector and Commander General, Don Matías de Gálvez, declared that the militias were unfit

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61 AGCA, A3, leg. 689, exp. 12975, fol. 45.

62 AGCA, A3, leg. 689, exp. 12975, fol. 141v; A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 685. Reported that four companies remained in San Fernando de Omoa with a total force of 200 men on December 8, 1777.

63 AGCA, A2, leg. 299, exp. 6692, fol. 1-2v.
for service and resolved to reform them. The second military reform commenced with minimal improvements by Fernández de Heredia in 1764. He simply used the available troops from the prior militia reform of 1755. Salazar y Herrera’s administration produced sweeping military changes that were halted by his death in 1771. However, his reports vehemently reviewed the militia’s capacity versus its weakness, to the point of declaring it useless. Perhaps the Crown expected that Mayorga’s administration would have lead to greater improvements to the militias. However, all this planning failed when an earthquake destroyed Santiago de Guatemala in 1773, and Mayorga was forced to focus on building Nueva Guatemala to the detriment of the militias. In an evaluation of Mayorga’s administration, the Minister of the Indies, Don Joseph de Gálvez, considered him at fault for not improving the condition of the militias in the Kingdom. The Minister of the Indies considered Britain as an untrustworthy nation that was ready to take over the richness of Central America.  

The unacceptable condition of the militias during Mayorga’s administration prompted his dismissal after 1778. Don Matías de Gálvez, brother of Don Joseph de Gálvez, was charged with the task of examining and taking control of the militias in 1778. The Crown had faith in him to the point of appointing him as Captain General of Central America just a few months before war broke out in 1779. The policies of Mayorga were deficient regarding the preparation of the militias after 1778. Don Matías de Gálvez, after observing the state of the militias, was compelled to reform them toward the end of 1778.

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Chapter 4

Don Matías de Gálvez and the Third Military Reform 1778-1783

This chapter outlines the most outreaching military reform that took place in eighteenth-century Central America. The third military reform involved the total reorganization of the disciplined militias during the period from 1778 to 1783. Spain preceded the military reform by sending a veteran battalion at the end of 1777 and the arrival of Don Matías de Gálvez as the Supreme Military Commander and Inspector General of Veteran and Militia Troops in 1778. From 1778 to 1783 Gálvez set up new militias and new regulations that remained in place until 1799.

During the twenty-one years of the third military reform the militias were the main defense force for Central America as Spain dispatched only two veteran battalions: one in 1777 and another in 1790. The new militia organization reduced the number of militiamen as compared to the previous reform of 1764. By doing this, the Crown hoped to reassert its authority in Central America and sought to increase the participation of Spaniards by reducing the Mulatto militia force.¹ The militia changes instituted by Gálvez proved to be effective during the

Anglo-Spanish War (1779-1783) when the English enclaves along the Caribbean coast fell into Spanish hands, and the English suffered defeats on almost every front in Central America.

Figure 5

Don Matías de Gálvez


The revolutionary movement in the thirteen English colonies in North America and the staunch French involvement in the war for Independence contributed to the weakening of British military strength in 1776. Spain perceived that the success of the American Revolution indicated an excellent opportunity to
overcome Britain, and resolved to enter the conflict with the explicit purpose of avenging the losses suffered during the Seven Years War (1756-1763). Preparations to enter the war were begun throughout the Spanish Empire in 1777. In a plan to test Britain’s military response, the Spanish conducted military actions against England’s ally, Portugal, by attacking Santa Catarina Island and Colonia del Sacramento in the Río de la Plata basin in 1777.² The positive results of the campaign in the Río de la Plata basin gave the Spanish the confidence that the militias and veteran troops could confront English troops in other parts of the empire. As a result of the experience in South America, Spain expected to clear out the British enclaves in the Kingdom of Guatemala with a veteran battalion, a contingency of officers that took part in the Río de la Plata campaign, and the disciplined militias.³

Don Matías de Gálvez

Spain dispatched Colonel Matías de Gálvez to the Kingdom of Guatemala to further assist in the preparations. The Second General Commander and Inspector General of Militia and Veteran Troops reached San Fernando de Omoa in the first days of July 1778. In order to aid him in his task, Gálvez was granted

² Burkholder and Johnson, Colonial, 269; Floyd, The Anglo, 128.
³ AGCA, leg. 1755, fol. 244-245, 261; leg. 4684, exp. 40408. Officers from the Veteran Battalion included: Lieutenant Joaquín Valderas; Second Lieutenant of the 7th company, Joaquín Abadía; and Sergeant First Class Juan Roldán who took part in the campaigns in Santa Catarina, Sacramento, and the actions along the coast of Honduras in 1780 and 1782.
greater military powers than Fernández de Heredia had during the 1745-1752 campaign, enjoying supreme military authority over the entire Kingdom. Later that year, Gálvez toured Comayagua, Tegucigalpa, León, Granada, and San Salvador to determine the state of the militias. During his visits, Gálvez prepared the troops, delivered orders for emergency plans, and commissioned officers.4

At the time it was reported that the British, desiring to build a canal across the isthmus, planned to invade Nicaragua, an action that would divide Spanish America into two territories.5 It became imperative that Fort Inmaculada Concepción, Río San Juan, Lake Nicaragua, and the town of Granada begin extensive preparations for their defense. Engineers Don Joaquín Isasi and Don Joseph Alexandre were sent to reconnoiter the lake in order to draw up a map that would be used to design a regional defense plan for the deployment of troops. Also, Don Ignacio Maestre, commander of Omoa, received the order to build a fleet in Lake Nicaragua that would enable Spanish forces to transport troops, ammunition, and stop an English advance.6

During the Central American troop inspections, Gálvez noted a deficient militia, and concluded that it was unsuitable to serve in a war. The Supreme Commander ordered the total reorganization of the disciplined militias at the end

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5 Floyd, The Anglo, 129; Zapatero, La Guerra, 255-256.

6 AGCA, A2, leg. 303, exp 7065, fol. 1. Order from Don Martin de Mayorga to further payments of the officers in Omoa and Granada. Nueva Guatemala, November 21, 1778.
of 1778, beginning the third military reform in Central America. Gálvez was determined to reform the militia battalions by using the soldiers and officers from the veteran battalion to train the best militia available for future campaigns in Central America.

**The Third Military Reform**

The third military reform consisted of three main components: a new system of militia deployment; military instruction conducted by veteran soldiers; and new military regulations. Gálvez had designed a master plan that included the organization of new infantry battalions, cavalry companies, a regiment of provincial dragoons, provincial artillery companies, and Mulatto militias. The new militia organization overwhelmingly preferred an infantry force over cavalry, and included a large component of Spaniards in its ranks.

At the end of 1778, the Supreme Commander informed provincial authorities of the reform and designated veteran soldiers to train the militias in Central America. In some places the reorganization of the militias began as late as 1779 due to their distance from Nueva Guatemala and delays in the dispatch of the officers in charge of training. The organization of the militias was completed after four years with the officers and militias receiving their royal commissions.

Among the first places to implement the reform was Santa Ana, Magistracy of San Salvador, with the organization of an infantry battalion and a
cavalry regiment on November 19, 1778. Gálvez understood that cavalry represented an obstacle for the development of militias and they seldom played a significant role in Central American military campaigns. Additionally, previous reports by Captain General Pedro de Salazar y Herrera stressed the difficulties in having cavalry troops as early as 1769.  

Thus Gálvez ordered the demobilization of the cavalry prior to the General Troop Review in 1781 because some of its members had been integrated into the infantry battalion of Santa Ana.

Gálvez set up infantry battalions in the Kingdom based on the same structure recommended by O’Reilly and Ricla in Cuba. According to the reports, the infantry battalion in Santa Ana contained one grenadier and eight fusilier companies as shown in Table X.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranks</th>
<th>Companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Grenader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant First Class</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant Second Class</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal First Class</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal Second Class</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militiamen</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drummer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernumeraries</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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7 Suárez, *Las Milicias*, 250.

The command staff included a colonel, a lieutenant colonel, a sergeant major, an adjutant major, a chaplain, a surgeon, a drum major, two fifers, and two ensigns. Gálvez only commissioned the first three posts for most of the battalions. If all the instructions were followed accordingly, the Santa Ana battalion would total 796 militiamen plus officers. This was the exact number of troops in a veteran battalion on the Island of Cuba. In other words, Gálvez modeled each militia battalion in the Kingdom of Guatemala after the veteran battalion set up in Cuba. Ultimately, the number of troops serving in a battalion varied from province to province, but their numbers were kept close to the parameters set by the Supreme Commander.

Table XI displays the Santa Ana Infantry Disciplined Militia Battalion in 1781. Records suggest that it was the same battalion organized in 1779, due to the fact that some officers had been appointed since the early 1770s and had remained in the infantry battalion after the reform. Additionally in 1781, other officers had been transferred to the infantry battalion from the cavalry companies that had been disbanded in 1780. Finally, the battalion colonel completed the organization by appointing a new set of officers between 1780 and 1781. Thus, the organization of the infantry battalion in Santa Ana was completed in 1781.

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9 AGCA, A1, leg. 4684, exp. 40404, fol. 7v-8; A2, leg. 295, exp. 6570, fol. 11-12v. Letter from Don Matías de Gálvez to Don Joseph González de Navas dated on January 6, 1781. It reminded that the ordinances for the Cuban militias also included the militias of the Kingdom of Guatemala. Fernández Guardia, Cronicas, 168-177. Probably, Colonel Joseph González de Navas was the former governor of Costa Rica Don Joseph Joachim Navás. See also, Obregón, De Nuestra, 138-140.

10 Kuethe, Cuba, 179. This is the same organization as a veteran battalion in Cuba. Kuethe shows the set up for a regiment that was comprised of two battalions. See AGI, Indiferente General, 1885. Reglamento para las Milicias de Infantería y Caballería de la Isla de Cuba, 1769.

11 AGCA, A2(3), leg. 7, exp. 32, fol. 2-30.
At this time, the general review stated that each company consisted of 66 militiamen and eight supernumeraries, excluding officers, sergeants, corporals, drummers, and fifers.\textsuperscript{12} The numbers did not radically change because each fusilier company maintained the same amount of militiamen before the reform was carried out. Only the grenadier company increased its numbers to equal the size of the fusilier companies, despite being ordered to have a smaller number of militiamen.

\textbf{Table XI}

\textit{Newly Organized Infantry Battalion of Santa Ana in 1781}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Company, age, and place of origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Pablo Goloronz</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Grenadier Company, 62 years old, from Barcelona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Manuel Cosio</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Grenadier Company, 37 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Justo Figueroa</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Grenadier Company, 25 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco López del Moral</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>1st Fusilier Company, 31 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Felipe López del Moral</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>1st Fusilier Company, 25 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Miguel Figueroa</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>1st Fusilier Company, 20 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco Méndez Dávila</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>2nd Fusilier Company, 39 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Fernando Méndez</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Fusilier Company, 22 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Miguel Tovar</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Fusilier Company, 32 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco Méndez Calderón</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>3rd Fusilier Company, 37 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Jose Ciriaço Méndez</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>3rd Fusilier Company, 31 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Medina</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>3rd Fusilier Company, 22 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Antonio López de Aragón</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>4th Fusilier Company, 33 years old, from Càdiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Santiago Martínez</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>4th Fusilier Company, 37 years old, from Metapán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Mariano Méndez Alfaró</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>4th Fusilier Company, 19 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Luis Hidalgo</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>5th Fusilier Company, 20 years old, from Chalchuapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Lorenzo Terviela</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>5th Fusilier Company, 40 years old, from Zaragoza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph María Ypiña</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>5th Fusilier Company, 31 years old, from Sonsonate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Nicolás López</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>6th Fusilier Company, 32 years old, from Metapán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Fernando Arvizú</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>6th Fusilier Company, 36 years old, from Metapán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Saldaña</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>6th Fusilier Company, 23 years old, from Texitepeque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Gerardo Sandoval</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>7th Fusilier Company, 27 years old, from Texitepeque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Francisco Méndez</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>7th Fusilier Company, from Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Mateo Sandoval</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>7th Fusilier Company, 31 years old, from Guatemala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{12} AGCA, A2(3), leg. 7, exp. 34, fol. 1-11. July 18, 1781.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Age/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Pedro Antonio Figueroa</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>8th Fusilier Company, 37 years old, from Metapán</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco Leiva</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>8th Fusilier Company, 25 years old, from Metapán</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Manuel Figueroa</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>8th Fusilier Company, 23 years old, from Metapán</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Command and Staff Group</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph González de Navas</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>From Spain (veteran officer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Antonio Andrés de Molina</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>From Santa Ana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Félix Mir</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td>From Spain (veteran officer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Antonio Escuarsi</td>
<td>Adjutant Major</td>
<td>40 years old, from Italy (veteran officer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Pedro Antonio Nolasco Figueroa</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>1st Ensign of the Battalion, 19 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Bernardo Medina</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Ensign of the Battalion, 17 years old, from Santa Ana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Santa Ana’s militia was organized on November 19, 1778, when the Supreme Military Commander commissioned Don Francisco Salablanca, captain of the veteran battalion, and Don Félix Mir, lieutenant of the Royal Army and lieutenant colonel of the cavalry militias, to set up a new battalion.\(^{13}\) Prior reports did not reveal the state of Santa Ana’s militia force. The first complete troop review took place in 1781 when Don Manuel de Carranza, the militia Sub-Inspector, visited Santa Ana, and recorded its companies.\(^{14}\)

In order to ensure the approval from the Crown, a written registration of each officer and the militia as a whole was maintained. Each officer received a commission from the King, which acknowledged his rank and ordered the submission of militiamen to his command. Most of the royal commissions arrived from Spain between 1782 and 1783, four years after Gálvez had ordered the reorganization of the militias. The delay was due to war and a slow mail system between Central America and the Spanish Royal Court. Consequently,

\(^{13}\) AGCA, A1, leg. 4684, exp. 40404, fol. 7v.

\(^{14}\) AGCA, A2(3), leg. 7, exp. 31, fol. 2; exp. 32.
Carranza’s inspection corroborated the names of the militia officers in order to seek royal confirmation in Spain because, at the time of his review, none of the officers had received their royal commissions.

Similar processes happened in other militias in the Kingdom. Gálvez appointed Don Vicente Arizabalaga, captain of the veteran battalion, to organize and oversee the training of Comayagua’s infantry battalion in 1779. However, the Crown did not officially approve its officers until August 12, 1783, and the proclamation did not arrive in Nueva Guatemala until January 3, 1784.\footnote{AGCA, A2(4), leg. 3, exp. 38, fol. 1; A2, leg. 299, exp. 6735, fol. 1-2v.}

On April 29, 1782, the King approved the commissions of two infantry company officers in Realejo, Nicaragua, and six provincial artillery companies in the village of Nicaragua. Both confirmations arrived in Nueva Guatemala during the first days of January 1783.\footnote{AGCA, A2, leg. 299, exp. 6718; exp. 6721.} The regiment of provincial dragoons of Nueva Guatemala received its royal sanction on July 9, 1782, and the proclamation reached the Captaincy General on December 31, 1782.\footnote{AGCA, A2, leg. 299, exp 6710.} Around the same date, the two Costa Rican cavalry squadrons obtained authorization to be organized.\footnote{AGCA, A2.2, leg.10, exp. 181, fol. 13; A2(6), leg. 1, exp. 36.} Most of these militias had been active since 1779 and had participated in the campaigns against English forces along the Caribbean coast, despite the lack of royal consent.

In contrast to the regular militias, the Mulatto militias did not need royal sanction. The King granted Gálvez the full authority to organize them and
commission their officers. The Crown empowered the Supreme Commander to designate these militias at will. As a result, Gálvez drastically reduced the number of Mulattoes serving in Central America to only 1,320 men. Of all the Mulatto militias organized during the Gálvez reform, Costa Rica had the largest force, with seven infantry companies: five in Cartago, one in Esparza, and one in Bagaces, totaling 609 militiamen\(^\text{19}\). On August 5, 1782, after three years of activity, Gálvez officially acknowledged the Mulatto officers and their commander.\(^\text{20}\) The Mulatto militias followed the same organization as the other militias but fell under the direct jurisdiction of the Captain General of the Kingdom. He was the only officer in the Kingdom that could resolve any matters regarding these militias.

### The Role of Veteran Troops

In addition to setting up new militia battalions, Gálvez assigned part of the veteran force to provide the necessary training. Orders dispatched to these veteran soldiers and officers explicitly stated their task to organize, prepare, and train the disciplined militias in the Kingdom. Table XII summarizes where Gálvez commissioned the veteran soldiers to instruct militiamen in 1779.

\(^{19}\) AGCA, A2.2, leg. 10, exp. 181, fol. 13, 15. Documentation erroneously referred to six companies while in reality there were seven. See ANCR, Serie Complementario Colonial, doc. 3375, fol. 5. It refers to the seven Mulatto companies of Costa Rica in 1781. Rina Cáceres, “La Puebla de los Pardos en el Siglo XVII,” Revista de Historia 34 (Julio-Diciembre, 1996): 90. A report confirmed seven Mulatto companies in 1781.

\(^{20}\) AGCA, A2.4, leg. 299, exp. 299, fol. 1.
Table XII

Veteran Soldiers and Officers Commissioned to Organize and Instruct New Militias in the Kingdom of Guatemala during 1779

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Company and Place of Commission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan de Orea</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Grenadier Company, commissioned in Sonsonate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Simón Ubau</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>Grenadier Company, commissioned in Ciudad Real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Vicente Arizabalaga</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>1st Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro Benedic</td>
<td>Corporal First Class</td>
<td>1st Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicente Garrida</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>1st Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Rafael Gutiérrez de Cárdenas</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Company, commissioned in Costa Rica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Fernando Basurto</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>2nd Company, commissioned in Suchitepéquez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomás de Eraso</td>
<td>Sergeant Second Class</td>
<td>2nd Company, commissioned in Suchitepéquez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Gutiérrez</td>
<td>Sergeant First Class</td>
<td>3rd Company, commissioned in San Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Granizo</td>
<td>Sergeant Second Class</td>
<td>3rd Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernabé Nieva</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>3rd Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio Quintana</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>3rd Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isidro Labella</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>3rd Company, commissioned in Ciudad Real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto García</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>3rd Company, commissioned in San Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Taramás</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>4th Company, commissioned in Petén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Abella</td>
<td>Sergeant First Class</td>
<td>4th Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Tomás de Julia</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>5th Company, commissioned in Segovia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Manuel Anzuelo</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>5th Company, commissioned in San Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernardo García</td>
<td>Sergeant First Class</td>
<td>5th Company, commissioned in San Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando Dávila</td>
<td>Sergeant Second Class</td>
<td>5th Company, commissioned in Segovia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerónimo Lobo</td>
<td>Corporal First Class</td>
<td>5th Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Martín</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>5th Company, commissioned in Segovia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignacio Cortés</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>5th Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lázaro Marrufino</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>5th Company, commissioned in Suchitepéquez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Valero</td>
<td>Sergeant Second Class</td>
<td>6th Company, commissioned in Ciudad Real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian Joseph</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>6th Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio Rojo</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>6th Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Ávila</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>6th Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Francisco Salablancía</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>7th Company, commissioned in Santa Ana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Antonio Echeverría</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>7th Company, commissioned in Quetzaltenango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blas Baena</td>
<td>Sergeant Second Class</td>
<td>7th Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristóbal Vilches</td>
<td>Sergeant Second Class</td>
<td>7th Company, commissioned in Quetzaltenango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Safra</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>7th Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Martínez</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>7th Company, commissioned in Sonsonate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Barrionuevo</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>7th Company, commissioned in Quetzaltenango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Pablo de Pedro</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>8th Company, commissioned in Chiquimula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadeo Muniesa</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>8th Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio Monterrubio</td>
<td>Sergeant Second Class</td>
<td>8th Company, commissioned in Chiquimula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Barrantes</td>
<td>Sergeant Second Class</td>
<td>8th Company, commissioned in Quetzaltenango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomás del Prado</td>
<td>Corporal First Class</td>
<td>8th Company, commissioned in Chiquimula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Andreu</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>8th Company, commissioned in Comayagua</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: A2, leg. 113, exp. 2169. List of veteran officer instructors in the last quarter of 1779.
Table XII shows commissioned veteran soldiers in strategic places of the region where confrontation against the English and their allies was most likely to occur or places that could supply reinforcements rapidly to areas of military action. Regions such as Chiquimula, Comayagua, and Segovia received many veterans due to their proximity to the English enclaves. Gálvez expected that most of the fighting would take place around the Gulf of Honduras, and accordingly sent these militias veteran instructors to prepare them. The protection of Fort San Felipe del Golfo Dulce and Amatique Bay was also extremely important. As the leading town in the region, Comayagua became the support center for the war along the coast, supplying money and troops to San Pedro Sula, Omoa, and other towns. The Segovia region bordered English, Zambo-Miskito and Jicaque Indian enclaves that were a constant threat to Spanish settlements in Nicaragua and Tegucigalpa. For this reason, these provinces were assigned plenty of veteran soldiers. Comayagua had more veterans than other places due to its importance in the defense of the Caribbean coast.

Fort Petén served as a buffer against possible incursions from the English settlements in Belize. The long distance from important Spanish towns and English support lines was also a deterrent from attacks from the settlements in Belize; nonetheless, Gálvez commissioned Lieutenant Juan Taramás to organize and instruct the militia that was stationed at the fort.
A veteran detachment was used to organize the militias in Quetzaltenango, San Salvador, Santa Ana, Sonsonate, Suchitepéquez, and Ciudad Real. In these provinces the veteran soldiers served a dual purpose: first, to structure a capable militia force that would enforce royal authority and second, to supply fresh troops to the front lines. From these provinces, only San Salvador and Santa Ana sent part of their militias to participate in the coastal campaign in Honduras between 1780 and 1782.\textsuperscript{21} The rest of these provinces used their militias to control and discourage any attempt to thwart royal authority during wartime.

The strategic location of Nicaragua and Costa Rica demanded a strong presence of veteran officers during the late 1770s and early 1780s as shown in Table XII. Lieutenant Colonel Ignacio Maestre had been overseeing the militia training in Granada since 1779, and Gálvez had left Omoa at the end of that year to prepare the militias in Nicaragua for war. The Supreme Commander devoted seven months to the Nicaraguan militias in 1780.\textsuperscript{22} Three officers aided in the training of the militias: Lieutenant Colonel Joseph de Estachería, commander of the veteran battalion; Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Joachim González de Navas; and Captain Tomás de Julia. Costa Rica also had officers training its militias since 1779. Lieutenant Rafael Gutiérrez de Cárdenas and Lieutenant Colonel Juan Fernández de Bobadilla directed the formation of the new militias in 1779. Later, Sergeant Second Class Felipe Gallegos joined as Adjutant Major in 1780.

\textsuperscript{21} AGCA, A1, leg. 1755, 116; A1(3), leg. 38, exp. 400, fol. 2; A2, leg. 295, exp. 6570, fol. 1-22v.

\textsuperscript{22} Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 145; Ayón, \textit{Historia}, Vol. III, 103, 109, 110; Zapatero, \textit{La Guerra}, 259; Gálvez remained in Nicaragua from February to September 1780.
and Adjutant Major of the veteran battalion, Don Juan Flores, became the Arms Commander of the province in 1781.

Gálvez considered it imperative to post veteran soldiers in key areas to oversee their defense, as shown below in Table XIII. The Captain General appointed Lieutenant Colonel Joseph de Estachería as Nicaragua’s governor and commander of Fort San Carlos in 1782. Lieutenants Colonel Joseph González de Navas arranged Santa Ana’s militia battalion in late 1780, and a few months later Gálvez assigned the first fifer, Don Antonio Escuarsi, as Adjutant Major. The Sergeant Major of the veteran battalion, Don Cayetano Ansoategui, had been governor and commander of Comayagua’s militias in 1779, and Lieutenant Gabriel Hervias took command in 1780. Captain Félix Domínguez was placed in command of Fort San Fernando de Omoa in 1780. Grenadier Captain Joseph de Casasola was sent to inspect and prepare the militias in Segovia in 1781. By making these appointments, Gálvez assured that veteran officers belonging to the Guatemalan Veteran Battalion were in control of the militias during the war and ready to move reinforcements into the places that they were needed.

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23 AGCA, A2, leg. 299, exp. 6731, fol. 1-2v. Estachería governed Nicaragua with royal consent after June 30, 1782, although he was most likely appointed by Gálvez as governor and arms commander-in-chief of Nicaragua in 1779. Gámez, Historia, 196.
Table XIII

Veteran Officers Serving in the Kingdom of Guatemala from 1779 to 1782

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Matías de Galvés</td>
<td>Supreme Commander of Veteran Troops and Militias</td>
<td>In Nicaragua</td>
<td>1780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph de Estachería</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td>Governor of Nicaragua</td>
<td>1779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph González de Navas</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td>Commander of Fort San Carlos</td>
<td>1782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Cayetano Ansoategui</td>
<td>Colonel of the Royal Army</td>
<td>Commissioned in Santa Ana</td>
<td>1780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Cayetano Ansoategui</td>
<td>Sergeant Major</td>
<td>Governor of Comayagua</td>
<td>1779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Cayetano Ansoategui</td>
<td>Sergeant Major</td>
<td>Commander of the expedition to Black River</td>
<td>1780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Ignacio Maestre</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Army</td>
<td>In Granada</td>
<td>1779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Fernández de Bobadilla</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Army</td>
<td>Commissioned in Costa Rica</td>
<td>1779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Juan Flores</td>
<td>Adjutant Major</td>
<td>Arns Commander of Costa Rica</td>
<td>1781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Félix Domínguez</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Commander of Omoa</td>
<td>1780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Joseph Casasola</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Commissioned in New Segovia</td>
<td>1781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Tomás de Julia</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>In Granada</td>
<td>1781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Gabriel Herbias</td>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Commissioned in Comayagua</td>
<td>1780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Felipe Gallegos</td>
<td>Sergeant Second Class</td>
<td>6th Company, Commissioned in Costa Rica</td>
<td>1780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Antonio Escuarsi</td>
<td>1st Fifer</td>
<td>Commissioned in Santa Ana</td>
<td>1781</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: AGCA, A1, leg. 1754, fol. 199; leg. 1755, fol. 116; leg. 4684, exp. 40404, fol. 1, 7v. A2, leg. 296, exp. 6570, fol. 1, 3, 14-15, 18; leg. 303, exp. 7055, fol. 6v; leg. 6046, exp. 53633. A2(3), leg. 5, exp. 26; leg. 7, exp. 32, fol. 1-30; exp 34, fol. 1-11. A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 46, fol. 4; exp. 47, fol. 6. A3, leg. 1058, fol. 89; leg. 1058, exp. 19389, fol. 2. Floyd, *The Anglo*, 156.

In 1779, the veteran troops in the Kingdom of Guatemala consisted of a veteran battalion and a dragoon squadron. The veteran battalion accounted for 399 men, who disembarked in Omoa on December 2, 1777. By May 4, 1778, sickness and death had depleted its number to 204. The number of troops stayed basically the same as shown by reviews that were held in 1780. The dragoon squadron consisted of 200 men. At the end of 1779, the veteran force

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24 AGCA, A3.1, leg. 689, fol. 45, 141v; leg. 583, fol. 197. The Veteran Troop Review totaled 201 soldiers. Nueva Guatemala, November 21, 1781.

in the Kingdom roughly reached 400 men plus officers. This force was barely able to defend the Kingdom and could not attack English positions along the isthmus. For this reason, the defense of the isthmus fell upon the newly organized disciplined militias. The victories of the Spanish forces during The Anglo-Spanish War from 1779 to 1783 demonstrated that militias could stand up to professional soldiers, and that the system of using a combination of veteran soldiers and militias was successful in the defense of the isthmus.

**The Training of the Militias**

Since the beginning of his militia reforms in 1778, Gálvez used the Cuban Militia Regulation as the model for his changes and firmly maintained that the militias in the Kingdom of Guatemala should observe the Cuban Militia Regulation that had been enacted in 1769. Some of the Cuban Militia Regulation procedures such as the militia organization, duties, and services were already in place in Cuba after the first draft in 1764. Because many Central American authorities limited and omitted parts of the Cuban Militia Regulation, the Captain General decided to enforce it. The regulation was designed to improve military discipline and grant exemptions to the militiamen through the *Fuero Militar*. By doing this, the Crown sought to increase loyalty and service in

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the militias. Thus, the new regulations balanced discipline and exemptions in an attempt to attract men into the King’s service.

When Gálvez took office, he found the militia system in total disarray, and proceeded to impose military discipline on to the available troops. He shared the view of his brother in Spain, Don Joseph de Gálvez, the Minister of the Indies, who believed that the laxity of military discipline contributed to the decadence of the troops in the Americas, which compromised the defense of the Kingdom of Guatemala.28

Orders stressed that veteran officers organized and supervised the training of the militias. In Santa Ana, the Captain of the veteran battalion, Don Francisco Salablanca, reviewed the training of the militia once a week. The Supreme Commander reminded the officer that he must specify the training in advance, due to the fact that soldiers lived spread all over the area.29 Optimally, the veteran officer would oversee the training of the troops who were assembled on Sundays, before or after mass, depending upon the place.30

Sergeants and corporals were the backbone of the training corps for the militias due to their supervisory role. The drill began with teaching the organization of the formation followed by marching. After the troops were able to manage marching, the sergeants and corporals focused on the ability to fire a

29 AGCA, A1, leg. 4684, exp. 40404, fol. 7v.
30 Albi, *La Defensa*, 96.
weapon, in which each militiamen would practice the essential movements of firing, such as “get ready to load”, “prime, load”, “get ready”, and “fire”.\textsuperscript{31}

**The Fuero Militar de Guerra**

An essential part of the new regulation was the *Fuero Militar de Guerra*, known as the *Fuero Militar*, which consisted of a series of exemptions and privileges that were granted to the militiamen and their families. With these special considerations the Crown expected to draw the best individuals to serve in the militias. First, it placed the militias under military jurisdiction that could only be overruled in extreme cases, such as the litigation of debts, usurping of property, participation in riots, sedition, heresy, gambling, frauds against the royal treasury, or disrespect to the civil magistrates. Second, the exemptions liberated the militiamen from being forced to serve in municipal posts, providing transport, lodging and subsistence for the army, levies, communal work, and prison. If ever in prison, the militiamen did not pay fees.

The *Fuero Militar* consisted of both passive and active regulations. Passive *Fuero Militar* regulations involved petitions heard against the militiamen in military tribunals. Active *Fuero Militar* regulations were only in effect during the mobilization of the militia and allowed the militiamen to take actions against persons of another *Fuero*. Additionally, Mulatto militiamen were free from the annual tribute payment of two pesos, and were protected from civil law while in

\textsuperscript{31} AGCA, A1, leg. 4684, exp. 40404, fol. 8v-9; A2, leg. 299, exp. 6760, n. 7-8.
service. The regulation stated that in any trial involving a militiaman the judge
would be the commander of his unit and the punishment had to be approved by
the Captain General. These exemptions and privileges were the main
inducement to join the militia, as there was a constant deficiency of funds to pay
the troops; however, the Crown did intend to reward men of recognized birth and
zeal for serving in the militia.

Before 1778, a limited and misused Fuero Militar existed in Central
America. Authorities restricted the Fuero Militar to Spanish officers and
commonly left out the militiamen and the castes. Although officers usually
pleaded Fuero Militar, they were frequently held accountable by to civil law and
not military law. As demonstrated by the case of Don Tomás de Escamilla, an
infantry lieutenant from San Vicente, Magistracy of San Salvador, the civil
authorities refused to recognize the Fuero Militar, despite the fact that Escamilla
was entitled to it. His case was stalled in a civil court from 1753 to 1771, rather
than being properly tried in a military court. After the privileges of the Fuero
Militar were granted to Mulatto militias, civil authorities regularly appealed to the
Council of the Indies to answer questions and make clarifications. Jurisdictional
conflicts among the various Fueros and the ordinary courts were a continual
cause of judicial delay and backlogs throughout the Spanish world.

Local authorities from Havana questioned the privileges given to
Mulattos in 1752. Havana and Caracas both sought information about the

32 McAlister, The “Fuero,” 4-10; Kuethe, Cuba, 44-49; Albi, La Defensa, 112-115.
Fuero Militar granted to the Mulatto militias in 1763 and 1765, respectively.\textsuperscript{34} Lyle McAlister states that by 1766 all militias enjoyed the benefits of the Fuero Militar.\textsuperscript{35} However, in the Kingdom of Guatemala authorities did not comply with the orders and continued to restrict the Fuero Militar until 1778 when Gálvez ordered that the Cuban Military Regulation of 1769 would govern the militias of the Kingdom and clarified that the Fuero Militar covered all military and militia forces under his command.\textsuperscript{36} In 1779, the defiant prosecutor of the High Court of Guatemala, Don Francisco Saavedra, intended to remove the privilege of the Fuero Militar from the Mulatto militias that exempted them from paying the annual tribute. After reviewing the allegations, the Council of the Indies rejected the payment imposition and upheld the privileges granted by the Fuero Militar in 1782.\textsuperscript{37}

In late 1778, Gálvez ended the controversy regarding the usage and coverage of the Fuero Militar in the Kingdom of Guatemala. The Captain General addressed to Don Francisco Salablanca, veteran captain organizing the militias in Santa Ana and declared that the Fuero Militar covered all of the militias.\textsuperscript{38} Three years later, on November 6, 1781, Gálvez wrote Lieutenant Colonel Joseph González de Navas who was at the time organizing the militia battalion in

\textsuperscript{34} Konetzke, Colección, Vol. III, Primer Tomo, 261-263, 307-312, 325-328.

\textsuperscript{35} McAlister, The “Fuero,” 10.

\textsuperscript{36} AGCA, A1, leg. 4684, exp. 40404, fol. 9v; A2, leg. 295, exp. 6570, fol. 11, 13.

\textsuperscript{37} Konetzke, Colección, (Vol. III, Segundo Tomo, 1780-1807), 489-500.

\textsuperscript{38} AGCA, A1, leg. 4684, exp. 40404, fol. 9v. Letter to Captain Don Francisco Salablanca. Nueva Guatemala, November 19, 1778.
Santa Ana, and pointed out that the militias of this Kingdom enjoyed the *Fuero Militar* as stated in the Cuban Military Regulation of 1769.\(^{39}\)

In Costa Rica, the magistrates of Cartago’s town council forced people from the Puebla de Los Angeles, a Mulatto neighborhood, to perform public works and domestic services. The Mulatto militia officers claimed that the *Fuero Militar* protected them from the civil authorities and their abuses. After consultations, the Captaincy General concluded in 1785 that the Mulatto militias enjoyed the *Fuero Militar*, and ordered Colonel Joseph Antonio de Oreamuno to safeguard the rights of the militiamen. As stated, the militiamen could bring to military justice those town council magistrates and even annul the rights granted by another *Fuero*. The resolution continued to be in practice as late as 1797 as the Governor demanded that the Mulatto militiamen use a rosette on their hats to identify them. The Governor recognized that the *Fuero Militar* was conferred to the Mulatto militias, but allowed the town council magistrates to continue to demand the tribute from other Mulattoes who had no connection with the militiamen’s families.\(^{40}\) Spaniards and Mulattoes alike serving in the militias were defended by their Colonels, Sergeant Majors, and militia commanders from any attempt by local authorities to curtail the rights that they were entitled to through their service in the militias.\(^{41}\) Overall, Gálvez used the *Fuero Militar* to boost Spanish membership in the militia and to help to encourage loyalty to the Crown.

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\(^{39}\) AGCA, A2, leg. 295, exp. 6570, fol. 11.

\(^{40}\) ANCR, Serie Complementario Colonial, doc. 736, fol. 50-53v.; Serie Guatemala Colonial, doc. 490, fol. 55.

It also provided the Mulattoes with privileges but, in the long run, the military transformation tended to exclude most of the castes from the militias.

The Militia Re-organization

The implementation of the Cuban Military Regulation in the Kingdom of Guatemala brought about re-organization that reduced the number of men serving in the militia. Reports showed that the infantry and cavalry force consisted of 30,714 militiamen in 1767.\footnote{Montoya, “Milicias,” 100; Ayón, Historia, Vol. III, 54-55.} Gálvez understood that the militia force demanded excessive expenses and that the system did not work. For this reason, in 1779 he ordered the decrease in size of the militia force to 21,076 troops.\footnote{AGCA, A2.2, leg. 10, exp. 181, fol. 15; García Peláez, Memorias, 94. On October 23, 1781, the militias were 13,180 men and 1,604 as supernumeraries. This number reflects the militias reported at the time.} The Captain General pursued a course of action that he hoped would be able to balance the budget while providing a military force capable of defying English and Zambo-Miskito attacks.

The militia reorganization decreased the large numbers of Mulatto militiamen who were then considered a threat. According to Spanish authorities, the changes would place the defense of the Kingdom with indisputably loyal Spaniards.\footnote{Suárez, Las Milicias, 248; Wortman, “Bourbon,” 222; Government and Society, 130.} The military reform radically transformed the numbers and proportions of Mulattoes in the militias. According to the General Troop Review in 1767, the proportion of Mulattoes far exceeded the other groups. It stated that
58.17% of the militiamen came from the castes, 33.03% were Spaniards, and 8.8% were Mestizos.\textsuperscript{45} Following the implementation of Gálvez’s militia reform in 1779, the Mulattoes constituted only 6.26% of the militias, numbering 1,320 militiamen out of 21,076 men.\textsuperscript{46} These numbers and proportions demonstrated that Spanish authorities wanted to eliminate large numbers of caste men under arms who received the benefits of the \textit{Fuero Militar}. Nonetheless, those 1,320 men were cavalry and infantry companies exclusively commanded by Mulatto officers, and these companies were under the direct authority of the Captaincy General. The same report ambiguously expressed that the rest of the militias were either Spaniard or Mestizo. Even though in places like Sonsonate, Quetzaltenango, Nicoya, and Realejo where the vast majority of the population came from the castes, their militia companies were Spanish.\textsuperscript{47} Jicaro shared the same situation where the veteran Captain, Don Tomás de Julia, commanded the infantry company. The report failed to mention that the company consisted of 110 Free Black militiamen.\textsuperscript{48} In the militias, Spaniards, Mestizos, and castes served in the same battalions, with commanding posts being in the hands of worthy Spaniards.

Orders from the Captain General established that militia commanders only commission the best men available as officers. Instructions sent to Santa Ana required that militia captains, lieutenants, and second lieutenants should be

\textsuperscript{45} Montoya, “Milicias;” 100; Ayón, \textit{Historia}, Vol. III, 54-55.

\textsuperscript{46} AGCA, A2.2, leg. 10, exp. 181, fol. 13-15.

\textsuperscript{47} Montoya, “Milicias;” 100. Militia General Review of 1767.

\textsuperscript{48} AGCA, A 3.1, leg. 583, exp. fol. 214-215.
commissioned according to birth and merits obtained in the service of the Crown. In a similar statement issued in Sacatepéquez, it was stressed that only people “reputed as Spanish, from known merits, and convenience” would be selected as militia officers, preferring those that had already served in the royal army. Spain sought men from Spanish stock who were undoubtedly loyal to command the militias in the Kingdom. These actions were part of a general policy that perceived Spaniards as the main vehicle to reclaim dominion over the colonies by placing them in military and administrative posts.

The majority of the 9,636 men removed from service by the military reform were Mulattoes. While Spanish officers and militiamen were retired or transferred to new battalions and companies, Crown officials viewed the castes as untrustworthy and, if armed, they could pose a serious threat to Spain’s sovereignty over the region. The reduction of the militia battalions in 1779 resulted in the elimination of loose companies, such as the cavalry companies of Jutiapa and Chiquimula de la Sierra, which consisted of Mulatto militiamen. The newly formed battalions preferred Spaniard or Mestizo militiamen over Mulattoes. After 1779, the presence of Mulattoes in the militias decreased both in numbers and in proportion. Only along the Caribbean coast did Mulatto militias continue to be the major force to defend the Kingdom.

49 AGCA, A1, leg. 4684, exp. 40404, fol. 8; A2, leg. 299, exp. 6760, n. 6.
50 Navarro, La Política, 95-97, 104-105.
51 AGCA, A2(3), leg. 7, exp. 32. fol. 1-30.
52 AGCA, A1, leg. 1753, fol. 57; A2, leg. 36, exp. 1722.
The application of the military reform restricted the entrance of the castes into service thus diminishing their access to benefits. Orders repeatedly stressed that “soldiers should come from the men of best disposition and strength giving priority to those most suitable for service.”

Those considered appropriate for the service were either Spanish or Mestizos. Officers only recruited militiamen from the castes in extreme circumstances. As a result, the pressure that the castes could place upon royal authorities to obtain favors lessened due to their limited numbers in the militias. Those Mulattoes who were recruited into the militia enjoyed favors and obtained social mobility but the great majority of castes served only in the urban militias that the Crown had stripped from the *Fuero Militar* by 1786. This shows that one of the major aims of the Spanish officers was to eliminate the castes access to military privileges by reducing their numbers in the disciplined militias.

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53 AGCA, A1, leg. 4648, exp. 40404, fol. 8.

Chapter 5

The Central American Militias and the Anglo-Spanish War
1779-1783

According to leading historians, the militias in general lacked proper military training and therefore could not face professional soldiers. For this reason, most historians strongly praise the role of the scant Spanish veteran forces and minimize the militias’ duty in the defense of Central America.¹ This chapter explores the role of the militias as the vast majority of the available force and their participation in the Anglo-Spanish War from 1779 to 1783. These militiamen were able to triumph by repelling English professional soldiers, settler-volunteers, and Zambo-Miskitos as they attempted to make advances on many fronts along the Caribbean coast.

Spanish authorities concluded that 1779 was time to enter a war against England, initiating the Anglo-Spanish War of 1779 to 1783. The successful effort of France and the rebellious thirteen English Colonies forced England to divert most of its available manpower and resources to North America, thus providing Spain with the best opportunity to expel the English from all of the Spanish

territories and to annul concessions obtained by the English after the Seven Years' War. Preparations for a military operation in Central America were made, which included the unofficial appointment of Don Matías de Gálvez as Captain General on April 4, 1779. On May 15 of the same year Gálvez received the royal commissions that authorized him to direct the defense of the Kingdom. These royal directives preceded Spain's decision to declare war on England, which was done on May 18. News of the official declaration of war reached Nueva Guatemala by August 13, and orders were immediately communicated throughout the Kingdom's provinces. After this date, Gálvez began preparing to march for the English settlements along the Caribbean coast.

The First Assault: San Fernando de Omoa

The military engineer, Don Simón Desnaux, was named as the commander of Fort San Fernando de Omoa a day before the declaration of war on August 12, 1779. Desnaux's appointment was due to receiving the unofficial news of the declaration of war and his extensive knowledge of the fort, thanks to an inspection written in May 1778. Furthermore, he accepted the commander commission after Gálvez committed to reinforce the fort with the Dragoon Squadron of Guatemala, two militia companies from Comayagua, and provide

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2 Juarrós, Compendio, 218.
3 ANH, Roll 30, fol. 429.
4 Zapatero, La Guerra, 240, 250; El Fuerte, 93-97, 104.
gunpowder to the depleted reserves. None of these changes ever occurred, however, despite the promises from Gálvez. Desnaux’s arrival to the fort was delayed by prolonged preparations and by an impassable road. He finally arrived on September 24. On that day four English ships, three frigates and a balandra from the Leeward Squadron, appeared on the horizon, causing alarm until they departed on September 26. In response to the presence of the English ships, commander Desnaux made the proper defensive preparations and sent news to Gálvez.⁵

When Desnaux took over command, the force at Fort Omoa barely exceeded 100 men. Two companies defended the fort: an artillery company consisting of eight officers and 40 Black slaves, and an infantry company that included six Spanish corporals and 50 other men. At the time, half of the infantry and artillery officers were assigned in other places. Historian Juan Manuel Zapatero argues that the infantry company was only composed of veteran soldiers.⁶ Undoubtedly, those soldiers serving belonged to the old veteran infantry company, but by this time the majority were Mulattoes from all over Central America.⁷ Most likely, they were exiles that were serving their sentences at Omoa. Only the officers and command staff were veteran soldiers or Spaniards.


⁶ Zapatero, La Guerra, 249; Albi, La Defensa, 165.

⁷ AGCA, A3, leg. 1287, exp. 22141, fol. 3-12v; Zapatero, El Fuerte, 103.
Troy S. Floyd points out that after seeing the enemy ships, Desnaux requested reserve troops from San Pedro Sula. The force eventually numbered

Figure 6

Spanish Version of the English Attack on the Fort San Fernando de Omoa

Source: Juan Manuel Zapatero. El Fuerte San Fernando y las Fortificaciones de Omoa. (Tegucigalpa: IHAA, 1997), 105.
250 soldiers when a newly organized infantry company of 110 Mulatto militiamen joined the garrison at Omoa. Additionally, the timely arrival of a military engineer, Captain Juan Dastier, with 20 veterans reinforced the available troops. Adding together the number of troops at the fort, the reinforcements from San Pedro Sula and the veterans that came with Dastier, approximates the number offered by Floyd. As can be seen from above, Mulatto militiamen comprised the majority of the forces that were defending the fort.

**Figure 7**

*English Version of the Attack on the Fort San Fernando de Omoa*


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9 Zapatero, *La Guerra*, 249.
On October 16, the English returned with a force of 750 men. This force was divided between 250 soldiers from the Loyal Irish Corps with the rest made up of volunteer settlers and Zambo-Miskitos. Captain William Dalrymple of the Loyal Irish Corps and Navy Commodore John Luttrell commanded the attack on Fort San Fernando de Omoa, which was to be a combined sea and land assault. The battle began when the 250 veteran soldiers from the Loyal Irish Corps and an equal Zambo-Miskito force landed some miles away and occupied the hill behind the fort placing some artillery on it. Furthermore, the English moved in 14 ships that were armed with 110 cannons on the seaside of the fort. On October 19, the English began to fire on the fort, catching it in a crossfire from land and sea. During the early hours of October 20, the English attacked and succeeded in scaling the walls by attacking in columns and using ladders. The surprise attack forced the surrender of the fort, and the capture of 365 people and a great amount of booty from the docked ships.\(^{10}\)

Floyd and Zapatero consistently report that Desnaux put up a heroic defense at the battle for Omoa. Both historians, however, downplay the role of

the militias and supported Desnaux’s version that Mulattoes did not know how to
fight, hid from the enemy, deserted the fort, and simply left the officers fighting

Figure 8

Plan of the Fort San Fernando de Omoa April 17, 1779

Source: Juan Manuel Zapatero. La Guerra del Caribe en el Siglo XVIII (Madrid: AGESA, 1990), 247.

alone. Fort San Fernando de Omoa fell for several other reasons, however, and not entirely due to the incompetence of the militiamen. Accounts in 1778 and 1779 stated that the fort’s construction was incomplete and deficient. In May

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11 Floyd, The Anglo, 136-139; Zapatero, La Guerra, 251; Albi, La Defensa, 166; Garcia Peláez, Memorias, 86.
1778, Desnaux reported that during shooting practice with 16, 18, and 24-pound cannons, the construction of the battery proved to be fragile and incapable of resisting a serious enemy attack. A year later, the Inspector Don Agustin Crame pointed out that the unhealthy climate prohibited the veteran troops from remaining at Omoa. Also, the Inspector pointed out the weakness of the flank where an emergency or escaping gate called *El Socorro* stood. This was the same place that the English had concentrated their attack, forcing the fort's capitulation. Additionally, insufficient ammunition and armament posed a problem for the defenders. Gunpowder reserves could not sustain the defense against an enemy assault. After capturing the fort, the English artillery captain reported that the Spanish had 50 quintals of gunpowder, mostly damaged. Out of the 69 cannons at the fort, only 25 worked properly.\(^{12}\) Spanish authorities were well aware of all of the above problems that made Omoa virtually indefensible prior to its fall to the English.

**Figure 9**  The Northern Wall and the *El Socorro* Gate

![Image of the Northern Wall and El Socorro Gate]


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Historians contradict each other about the number of men that left Guatemala for Fort San Fernando de Omoa. Most of them concentrate on the number of veteran troops and disregard the militias. On October 17, the general commander, Colonel Gálvez and the second commander, Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Panigo, began marching to the coast with reinforcements three days before the fall of Omoa. The force consisted of 54 soldiers from the veteran battalion, 159 militiamen from San Agustín de la Real Corona Battalion, 159 militiamen from the Comayagua Battalion, 90 men from the Guatemalan Dragoon Squadron, 80 exiles from the Guatemalan Penitentiary, and 60 Black slaves: 602 men in total. Companies from the San Agustín de la Real Corona and Comayagua Battalions received orders beforehand to join the expedition as the general commander passed through the area. The 159 militiamen from the San Agustín de la Real Corona Battalion joined the general commander in Chiquimula de la Sierra. On August 31, Gálvez dispatched orders to the Comayagua Battalion requiring that two militia companies join his expedition. Comayagua military authorities dispatched the two companies, each including at

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13 Zapatero, La Guerra, 252; Ayón, Historia, Vol. III, 103. He describes the units. Floyd, The Anglo, 139. He states that it was a force of 1000 men. Albi, La Defensa, 166.

14 Zapatero, La Guerra, 257; El Fuerte, 110. Zapatero erroneously placed this list as part of the force that went to Nicaragua to rescue Fort Inmaculada Concepción on the San Juan River in May or June 1780. Ayón, Historia, Vol. III, 103. He gave a description of the force that was marching from Nueva Guatemala to Fort San Fernando de Omoa in September and October 1779. Zapatero placed Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Francisco Panigo, commander of the Guatemalan Dragoon Squadron, as second commander in June 1780. Actually, he died in the battle for Fort San Fernando de Omoa as reported on January 1, 1780. This information is according to written statements of the auxiliary military fund (Monte Pio Militar) for aid and retirement, as well as payments to Panigo’s widow, Doña Barbara del Castillo on March 8, 1780. AGCA, A2, leg. 303, exp. 748; Cruz, Estudios, 68; García Peláez, Memorias, 86; Gámez, Historia, 187.

least 77 militiamen, on October 10. These were the same two companies that had originally been offered to Desnau to strengthen the fort. The militias comprised the majority of the relief force with 318 men, 140 exiles and slaves, and 144 veteran soldiers.

Exactly when the Captain General received the communication of Fort San Fernando de Omoa’s capitulation is still under debate, but Floyd proposes that it occurred toward the end of October at Quezalica in the Santa Rosa de Copan Plains. Upon receiving the news, Gálvez called up more troops and activated a general alert in the Comayagua province. Hence, Floyd’s date matches the call up for more troops because Comayagua dispatched seven more militia companies, the remainder of its battalion, to Fort San Fernando de Omoa on October 24. Also, other militias close to the coast made themselves available for service: Olancho, Olanchito, and Yoro. Finally, Gálvez designated the Gracias a Dios Militia Battalion as reserve troops.

In order to assure that the fort was recaptured, Gálvez decreed that all available veteran officers and soldiers in the region muster in San Pedro Sula. On January 1, 1780 the veteran battalion detachment was increased from 54 soldiers to 138. In a subsequent troop review on November 30, 1779, the Guatemalan Dragoon Squadron was shown to have increased to 192 men. The combined force of these two units numbered 330 soldiers.

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16 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 3, exp. 38; Albi, *La Defensa*, 165.

17 Floyd, *The Anglo*, 139.

18 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 3, exp. 38.

19 AGCA, A3.1, leg. 583, exp. 11670, fol. 56-57v.
In addition to the mustering of the available troops in the region, Gálvez ordered that the jails be emptied and the prisoners dispatched to the General Headquarters at San Pedro Sula. Nearby provinces like San Salvador, Santa Ana, and Sonsonate sent their prisoners to the front line. Captain Cristóbal Bernal received the commission to pick up the prisoners from San Miguel, San Vicente, and Sonsonate. Meanwhile,Captain Francisco Candina delivered 114 prisoners from San Salvador to Chalatenango on route to San Pedro Sula.\(^{20}\) Probably from these men as well as the Guatemalan exiles, Don Antonio María Gabilán organized a 100-man company referred to as “volunteer prisoners”. This company was placed on the front line with the promise of freedom after the battle.\(^{21}\)

Overall, Gálvez accounted for 783 militiamen from the Comayagua Battalion and 159 militiamen from the San Agustín de la Real Corona Battalion for a total of 942 men. Undoubtedly, the number of militiamen serving at the battle of San Fernando de Omoa was over 1,000. Thus, forces from the Kingdom of Guatemala were close to 1,430 before the battle for the fort began.

Historians claim that veteran troops secured the victory at Omoa and they minimize the significant role that the militias played in the battle.\(^{22}\) Beginning with the march from Nueva Guatemala, leading historians correctly follow the numbers of veteran troops deployed to Omoa. These same authors also point

\(^{20}\) AGCA, A1, leg. 1755, fol. 49, 116.

\(^{21}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 6, exp. 62. fol. 1.

out that some militiamen accompanied the force. However, the militia numbered more than three times that of veteran troops, and they performed equally well during the battle. Reports from the battle stated that on November 26 Spanish trenches that had been dug around the fort cut the supply lines and left the defenders of the fort without water. After three days of cannonade and infantry charges, the English fled to Jamaica in their ships. The English commander Dalrymple realized that being confronted by a superior force without aid coming, the best option was to evacuate Fort San Fernando de Omoa. Gálvez reoccupied the fort on November 29, concluding the campaign. Before leaving Omoa for Comayagua, Gálvez assigned the Guatemala Dragoon Squadron to the fort where these forces were stationed until 1781. An assessment done following the battle established that the volunteer prisoner company suffered 15 desertions and 11 deaths on the front line.

Nueva Segovia and Black River Operations

In the Nueva Segovia and Tegucigalpa provinces, the veteran battalion concentrated on harassing the settlements of the English and their allies in order to distract troops from crossing over the San Juan River. Troop reviews confirmed that the veteran battalion did not immediately leave San Fernando de

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24 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 6, exp. 62, fol. 1-4.
Omoa for Nicaragua as the Captain General did. Instead, the battalion waited until January 1, 1780 for the 52 soldiers that had remained in Nueva Guatemala to join back up. The next review in Tegucigalpa on February 1 revealed that the number of soldiers had increased to 200. Threats of invasion in March forced the battalion to move to Nueva Segovia’s borders at the Trinchera compound until April, whereupon it began moving back to Tegucigalpa during May and June. Finally, the veteran battalion reviewed its troops in Granada on July 15 and were quartered there until January 1781.25

Militias also took part in operations to keep the enemy at bay. After the expulsion of the English from Fort San Fernando de Omoa, Gálvez thought that it was time to push the Zambo-Miskitos back to the coast.26 During the months of March and April of 1780, the veteran battalion and the militias from Olancho, Olanchito, Yoro, Comayagua, and Tegucigalpa moved closer to the enemy settlements. Don Lorenzo Vázquez y Aguilar, the militia commander, lieutenant colonel of the royal army, and adjutant major of the militias, lead the militia expedition of Tegucigalpa’s battalion. These units were part of the seven divisions that assaulted and burned Black River.27 It was a major setback for the Zambo-Miskitos, as they were pushed back to the coast and the English were unable to protect them due to their campaign on the San Juan River. Spanish


27 AGCA, A1, leg. 1755, fol. 60-61; A3.1, leg. 583, fol. 76-79. The Veteran Battalion Troop Review at Nueva Segovia took place on March 1, 1780. Ayón, Historia, Vol. III, 110; Floyd, The Anglo, 153-154; García Peláez, Memorias, 89.
pressure on the poorly defended English settlements was alleviated with the capture of the Fort Inmaculada Concepción in April, as the veteran battalion and militias withdrew.

Militia battalions from San Miguel and Gracias a Dios formed part of the forces that took part in the 1780 campaign. Captain Cristóbal Bernal deployed the militias of San Miguel against enemy forces along the Mosquito Coast and at Black River. Colonel Miguel Machado also mobilized the Gracias a Dios battalion for the campaign at Black River. Moreover, the militias fell under the command of Don Cayetano Ansoategui, sergeant major of the veteran battalion, who commanded the whole operation. The Spanish expedition against Black River involved more troops than were used in the battle to recover Fort San Fernando de Omoa. The militias dispatched from the San Miguel, Tegucigalpa, Comayagua, and Gracias a Dios battalions combined with the Olancho, Olanchito and Yoro militias amounted to approximately 4,462 men, while the veteran battalion consisted of only 200 soldiers.

28 AGCA, A1, 1755, fol. 116; A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 46, n. 8. La Criba was the Spanish name for Black River.

29 AGCA, A2.2, leg. 10, exp. 181, fol. 12v-13. These militias had been ready since 1779. Each battalion consisted of 783 men and the militias from Olancho, Olanchito, and Yoro amounted to 1,330 soldiers.
The Nicaraguan Campaign

Reports from León indicated an imminent English attack at the beginning of 1780. Though the Spanish court received definite information of England’s intention to take possession of the San Juan River prior to the outbreak of the war, rumors took force following the outbreak of hostilities. British officials dreamed of building a canal using Lake Nicaragua and the San Juan River, thus cutting the Spanish Empire in two. Strategic, geo-political, and commercial
factors drove the English military expedition against Nicaragua. Gálvez immediately prepared to march in order to defend Nicaragua and Costa Rica.\textsuperscript{30}

The Captain General left Comayagua for Granada where he established his General Headquarters on February 22, 1780. According to historians, Tomás Ayón and José Dolores Gámez, Gálvez remained in Granada until June when he moved his Headquarters to Masaya until September.\textsuperscript{31} Reports describing the capture of Manuel Borbón, a deserter from the eighth company, by Indigenous Magistrates from Mesatepe (and his eventual transfer to Masaya) showed that the Captain General was already residing there on June 10.\textsuperscript{32} In September, Gálvez left Nicaragua for Nueva Guatemala but not without having prepared an extensive military operation along the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua and Costa Rica that would help in the dislodging of the English from Fort Inmaculada Concepción.

On March 24, 1780, an English expedition from Jamaica captured San Juan del Norte at the mouth of the San Juan River. Up river, a vanguard column of two hundred veteran British troops from the Sixtieth Foot Regiment and Seventy-Ninth Royal Liverpool Volunteers captured San Bartolomé Island on April 9. The English seized 20 Spanish soldiers during the action. That day, the


\textsuperscript{31} Floyd, The Anglo, 145; Ayón, Historia, Vol. III, 103, 109, 110; Zapatero, La Guerra, 259; Gámez, Historia, 187-188. Gálvez arrived in Granada on February 22, 1780 and remained there four months. Later on he moved to Masaya. In October Gálvez was back in Nueva Guatemala.

\textsuperscript{32} AGCA, A3, leg. 583, fol. 116.
Spanish commander, Don Juan de Aysa, sent an urgent dispatch to Gálvez requesting aid. Two days later, the English forces arrived at Fort Inmaculada Concepción and on the thirteenth laid siege. For days, both forces engaged in cannonade and charges, until part of a wall collapsed and permitted the English to enter the fort on April 28. Without supplies, relief troops, or water, commander Aysa capitulated on April 29.  

**Figure 11  Spanish Description of the Fort Inmaculada Concepción 1780**

Source: Revista del Caribe Nicaraguense WANI (January-June, 1990): 64

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Debate persists about the number of soldiers defending the fort. Floyd and Zapatero claim that there were 270 men, while Albi places the number of defenders at 123. However, the official English dispatch of the capitulation of Inmaculada Fort stated the capture of 235 people being 149 soldiers and officers.\textsuperscript{34} In 1771, the Crown had organized a veteran infantry company of 54 soldiers to provide professional defenders to the fort.\textsuperscript{35} In 1780, the Fort was garrisoned by 200 infantrymen, 16 artillerymen, 40 musketeers, and 20 militiamen. Most of the men serving at the fort were either exiles or Mulattoes while veteran troops composed only a small part of the garrison.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Figure 12  English Draw of the Fort Inmaculada Concepción}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure12}
\end{center}


\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{34} Zapatero, \textit{La Guerra}, 256; Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 144. Floyd said that the total number of people at the fort were 270. Ayón, \textit{Historia}, Vol. III, 113; Albi, \textit{La Defensa}, 166-167, 171. Albi indicates that there were 43 soldiers from the veteran infantry company, 2 artillerymen, and 78 Blacks totaling 123 defenders. Also, he accepts that when fort fell to the English they captured 200 people. Collections, \textit{The Kemble}, 212-215.
\item \textsuperscript{35} AGCA, A2, leg. 303, exp. 7055, fol. 3; A3, leg. 590, exp. 11700, fol. 20; Zapatero, \textit{El Fuerte}, 98.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Gámez, \textit{Historia}, 191; Montiel, \textit{Nicaragua}, 156. Montiel places the number of defenders at 235.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Zapatero and Ayón portray the effort made by the fort’s commander, Captain Juan de Aysa, and the troops, including the Mulattoes as a “heroic defense”. They refer to the fort’s capitulation as unavoidable due to the enemy’s superior numbers. However, the fort fell due to reasons well established beforehand by Inspector Crame in 1779. During his visit a year prior to the attack, Crame expressed the fragility of the structure, the absence of troops for its defense, and the lack of weaponry. Eventually, authorities provided men and weapons but did not repair the fort’s structure, the major weakness that led to its capture.\textsuperscript{37}

Figure 13  
English Map of the San Juan’s River Fortifications


\textsuperscript{37} Zapatero, La Guerra, 255-56; Ayón, Historia, Vol. III, 111-113; Gámez, Historia, 192-193.
After receiving the mail dispatched by Aysa on April 9, Gálvez appointed Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Joachim de Nava to lead a relief force to the fort. Nava expected to surprise the enemy by using a jungle path instead of the route from the lake that was already being watched by the English. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Colonel Nava reached the fort after the English were in total control. Authorities asserted that the delay caused by following the path through the jungle was the cause of losing Fort Inmaculada Concepción. The expeditionary force withdrew to the mouth of the lake where it built a second line of defense called Fort San Carlos.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Figure 14 } Fort San Carlos and the Mouth of Lake Nicaragua

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fort_san_carlos.png}
\end{center}

Source: Collections of the New York Historical Society, \textit{The Kemble Papers 1780-1781} (Vol. II New York: Printed for the Society, 1885), 410

\textsuperscript{38} Ayón, \textit{Historia}, Vol. III, 112-113; Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 145-146. Zapatero and Albi made the same mistake by using the Colección de Documentos del Conde de Clonard that erroneously places Don Manuel Francisco Panigo as commander of the leading force that liberated Fort Inmaculada Concepción. Panigo had died at Fort San Fernando de Omoa in December 1779. The militias and veteran forces cited did not come to Nicaragua except for the veteran battalion that arrived in 1780. Gálvez left Nicaragua in September 1780 and did not go to Fort Inmaculada Concepción nor to San Juan del Norte pursuing enemy forces as indicated by Zapatero. See Zapatero, \textit{La Guerra}, 259; Albi, \textit{La Defensa}, 167.
Fort San Carlos was in constant communication with Granada thanks to two armed schooners.\textsuperscript{39} The capture of Fort Inmaculada Concepción placed all militia units in the area under arms. Chontales called up its six militia companies to defend the vulnerable settlements. León's cavalry and militia companies defended all the northern territory, including Nueva Segovia. The Realejo company's watched all of the area that extended to the coast and the port. The battalion and cavalry of Nicaragua (Rivas) defended the south. Granada and its militias took over the burden of the defense of the lake and the San Juan River. At the time Granada had an infantry battalion of 783 men and an undisclosed number of artillery and cavalry companies.\textsuperscript{40} If the expedition to Fort Inmaculada Concepción that was sent in April consisted of more than 1,000 men, then the whole Granada Battalion as well as various artillery companies took part. The cavalry remained in Granada because Captain Luis Blanco Desacido "commanded 100 cavalrymen during all the time fearing an invasion by the English and later departed to Fort San Carlos."\textsuperscript{41}

Even a town such as Jicaro dispatched its company to reinforce Fort San Carlos. Veteran Captain Tomás de Julia commanded this unit from October 1780 to the end of March 1781, when it headed back to Jicaro. The company consisted of 110 free Black soldiers.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39} Ayón, \textit{Historia}, Vol. III, 112-113; Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 146. Floyd says that there were 500 militiamen.

\textsuperscript{40} AGCA, A2.2, leg. 10, exp. 181, fol. 12-13v.

\textsuperscript{41} AGCA, A1, leg. 1755, fol. 40.

\textsuperscript{42} AGCA, A3.1, leg. 583, fol. 214-215.
Three factors impeded the English advance towards Lake Nicaragua. First, there was a large militia force stationed at Fort San Carlos. Most of the force was concentrated at the mouth of the lake where the Spaniards had finished building the defenses in June. The fort contained a palisade with 16 cannons plus the support of armed schooners. It also had a secure supply line coming from Granada. Second, torrential rains impeded the advance of English troops from Fort Inmaculada Concepción. The rains also caused an unprecedented number of casualties due to sickness. Finally, reinforcements never arrived from Jamaica due to new emergencies along the Caribbean and North American fronts.\textsuperscript{43}

At the end of the rainy season in November, the English forces at Fort Inmaculada Concepción were devastated by the weather, disease, and high mortality rate.\textsuperscript{44} According to the reports given by the Indigenous and Mulattoes that escaped from the English camp, the fort contained only a small garrison that was in bad shape. Exploiting this advantage, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Joachim de Nava commanded Captain Tomás de Julia to approach the fort on December 31, 1780. Three days later, Julia reached the fort and shelled it from afar. Presented with Spanish superiority and the lack of assistance, the English garrison fled down the river. On January 4, 1781, Tomás de Julia and the militias

\textsuperscript{43} Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 146-152; Fortescue, \textit{A History}, Vol. III, 345-346.

\textsuperscript{44} Linebaugh and Radiker, \textit{The Many}, 263-266.
from Granada and Masaya re-captured Fort Inmaculada Concepción, ending the Nicaraguan campaign.\textsuperscript{45}

**The Matina Coast**

In Costa Rica, strong defensive measures were taken at the beginning of 1780, averting the necessity to defend the Matina coast by expelling any enemy intruders in that territory. On January 5, the War Council dispatched a party of 25 men to build fortifications on the road to Matina from “San Juan Azul to the old trench.” Of the 25 men, 15 were selected from Ujarrás and the other 10 were from the Puebla de los Angeles, the Mulatto neighborhood of Cartago.\textsuperscript{46} These places traditionally supplied men for the military detachment at Matina. The men that were selected most likely belonged to the militia companies and thus knew the best location for the fortifications.

The fear of invasion intensified in January 1780 when a group of 26 people arrived in Matina. Presumably, they were runaway slaves or captives that had been detained in settlements up the coast. They were questioned about the activities of the Zambo-Miskitos where they informed the authorities that a military expedition was in the works. The commander of Matina immediately sent a messenger to Governor Joseph Perié in Cartago. Upon receiving the news,


\textsuperscript{46} ANCR, Serie Cartago Colonial, doc. 743, fol. 1.
the governor dispatched an urgent message to Granada. In his letter, dated January 16, Perié reported the imminent invasion of Costa Rica to Lieutenant Colonel Ignacio Maestre. The news accelerated the preparation of the province's defense and the number of soldiers at Matina was increased to 50. ⁴⁷

**Figure 15** Matina Coast Offensive

1- Barva  
2- Cartago  
3- Turrialba  
4- Atirro  
5- Matina  
6- Ujarras  
7- San Juan Azul  
8- Quebrada Honda  
9- Bonilla  
10- Colorado River  
11- Tortuguero


⁴⁷ AGCA, A2(6), leg. 1, exp. 33, n. 6, 12.
By February, the militiamen had finished digging trenches in Quebrada Honda and Bonilla. By doing this, military authorities were able to establish a second defensive line against any invasion forthcoming from the Caribbean coast. Don Tiburcio Machado, captain of the Ujarrás infantry company, defended Quebrada Honda’s trench with another 13 militiamen, and Lieutenant Colonel Juan Fernández de Bobadilla commanded the 14 men at the Quebrada de Bonilla trench.\footnote{Ibid.}

In addition, the authorities in Costa Rica ordered the repair and preparation of all firearms. Military expense reports show that Mulattoes of the Puebla de los Angeles repaired and cleaned weapons during late 1779 and into April 1780. Between February and April, blacksmiths fixed 272 16-caliber weapons. These were referred to as part of 400 old firearms because the militias had received 500 new 19-caliber muskets in 1778. The blacksmiths also produced 22,000 bullets for the 19-caliber muskets and another 14,500 the 16-caliber weapons. carpenters made several wooden boxes to transport muskets and ammunition. Finally, Indians from Tucurrique and Atirro transported war material to Matina on April 20 where the expedition departed for the coast.\footnote{AGCA, A1(6), leg. 2, exp. 29, fol. 24v; A2(6), leg. 1, exp. 33, n. 6; exp. 34, fol. 11; A3, leg. 1062, exp. 19304, fol. 51; ANC, Serie Complementario Colonial, doc. 449, fol. 4; León Fernández, Colección de Documentos para la Historia de Costa Rica: Asentamientos, Hacienda y Gobierno (Biblioteca Patria, Vol. III, San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1976), 375. Governor Joseph Perié reported to Gálvez the state of the Costa Rican militia in 1780.}  

While in Granada, Gálvez informed Governor Perié of the military expedition that was to take place on March 1, 1780. The letter acknowledged the intense efforts made by Perié to bring the Zambo-Miskitos to the Spanish side
and to sign a truce the following year. However, the Zambo-Miskito Indians continued with their alliance with England. It also stated that the Captain General commissioned Captain Tomás López del Corral and Sergeant First Class Felipe de Gallegos to conduct a military expedition onto the shores of Matina. Gálvez expected full cooperation from Perié to eliminate the “enemies in all the coastal districts under your command.” Preparations were immediately intensified in order to furnish troops for the mission.

According to the plan, three divisions scouted the coast of Matina from April to September 1780. All of the divisions were under the command of Captain Tomás López del Corral together with Don Nicolás Astúa, Don Pedro Aymerich, and Don Juan Francisco Bonilla, the respective captains of each division. Mulatto Captain Pedro Vicente Chavarria went as supernumerary with 76 soldiers. Each division contained between 75 and 100 militiamen.51

The three divisions received sufficient logistic support from Cartago, Matina, and the trenches in Quebrada Honda and Bonilla. In Cartago, the authorities supplied men from the two infantry battalions, the two cavalry squadrons, and the six Mulatto militias. Matina served as the base along the coast to concentrate troops and receive aid. The trenches kept forces ready to stop any enemy incursion and to provide rapid relief to the soldiers in Matina and

50 AGCA, A2(6), leg. 1, exp. 33, n. 7; García Peláez, Memorias, 90.

51 AGCA, A1(6), leg. 2, exp. 33.
the expedition. In the Quebrada Honda trench the battalion militias guarded the area, while in the Bonilla trench the Mulatto militias prevented any assault.\(^{52}\)

As expected, the three divisions cleared the coast of Zambo-Miskitos and Englishmen. In a well-planned attack, the militias fell upon and captured the English detachment left on the Colorado River. On August 20 in Tortuguero, the militias burned houses that the English had used as residences and arrested 15 people.\(^{53}\) This was probably the greatest victory of the expedition because Spanish forces did not venture to attack the Zambo-Miskitos in their own territory. These attacks reaffirmed the Spanish resolution to claim the coast as well as the power of its army in the area. Additionally, it caused a setback in Anglo-Zambo-Miskito relations because the English could not protect the settlements nor prevent attacks from Cartago. Moreover, the threat of assault against Matina vanished after the Cartago militias ended the Zambo-Miskito and English dominion of the coast.

Militias from San Salvador, Tegucigalpa, Comayagua, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua pressured the enemy settlements in a coordinated effort to divert the attack on the San Juan River in 1780. Only with the capture of Fort Inmaculada Concepción did the English and Zambo-Miskitos succeed in penetrating the

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Spanish defenses. It turned into a sour victory, however, because sickness completely demolished the garrison. Costa Rican militias weakened the English position when they assaulted and captured detachments close to the San Juan River. In August, the English were suffering from the climatic conditions. When the rain receded in December, Nicaraguan militias charged against a defenseless fort and a disorganized enemy, which concluded in the recovery of the fort and expulsion of the English from the area.

Zambo-Miskito Attacks in 1781

During 1781, the Zambo-Miskitos launched two major attacks against Spanish positions along the Caribbean coast without the British support. The setbacks in the North American war continued to pin down a large number of troops and the precarious situation of Jamaica deterred the English from any actions in the region.\textsuperscript{54} Thus, the Zambo-Miskitos tried to stop Spanish advances against their coastal positions.

On February 23, 1781, the commander of the veteran battalion, Don Joseph de Estachería, stationed in Nicaragua, reported that the “English are arranging an expedition consisting of one thousand Zambos, Miskitos, and other nations, being their intention to enter into Spanish territory by the Segovia River.”\textsuperscript{55} To impede the intended incursion, Estachería dispatched the grenadier


\textsuperscript{55} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, n. 4.
company with its Captain, Don Joseph de Casasola, and 40 soldiers to the
Trinchera, also calling up the militia battalion from Nueva Segovia to aid in the
expedition. However, Casasola stated that the militias from Nueva Segovia
lacked muskets and discipline, so he requested a force of 200 men from the
Tegucigalpa militia battalion that were paid for two months.\(^{56}\) The invasion never
occurred and the Spanish force did not engage in any armed struggle and safely
returned to Tegucigalpa in May.

Not long after, a group of Zambo-Miskitos assisted by the English invaded
San Pedro Sula. On June 5, 1781, an urgent letter notified the governor of
Comayagua, Don Francisco Aybar, of the conquest of San Pedro Sula. The
governor immediately warned the towns of Yoro and Olancho. Also, Aybar
dispatched two militia divisions from Comayagua on June 6 and 7 by the routes
of Petoa and Camino de Abajo, in order to trap the enemy force in the vanguard
and the rear. Lieutenant Colonel Juan Antonio de las Barcenas commanded the
first division of 94 militiamen that took the Petoa road. The second division
commanded by Captain Antonio del Castillo numbered 114 men and used the
Camino de Abajo route. As the incursion was a looting raid typical of the Zambo-
Miskitos, when the troops arrived in San Pedro Sula, the situation was totally
under control, and they almost immediately returned to Comayagua. Barcenas
returned to Comayagua on July 3 and Castillo returned on July 6.\(^{57}\)

\(^{56}\) AGCA, A3.1, leg. 583, fol. 65.

\(^{57}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, n. 5, 6.
A similar incursion was conducted in Matina on October 2. In a surprise attack, the Zambo-Miskito Indians raided the garrison, and killed and captured several officers and soldiers. The commander of Matina, Cavalry Captain Pedro Aymerich, stated that out of the 20 men under his command, 8 were captured.\(^5^8\) As in San Pedro Sula, Matina’s raid was a punishing expedition that lasted a short time. Over all, it did not affect the situation because the Spanish forces continued to control the area.

**The Spanish Offensive in 1782**

At the beginning of 1782, Spanish forces prepared their biggest offensive against the English settlements. This action sought to permanently remove the English from Central America and subdue the Zambo-Miskitos. Floyd argues that Gálvez had planned the offensive for 1781. Nonetheless, it suffered various delays due to the complexities of coordinating the arriving forces and because Spain had resorted to diplomacy, seeking the return of Gibraltar.\(^5^9\) Despite these obstacles, the offensive had to take place during the dry season, a period that demanded rapid military maneuvers in order to occupy all of the English settlements before the coming of the rains. If the Spanish succeeded in conquering all of the enemy settlements, they would almost certainly foil any immediate counterattack and would give themselves the time to consolidate their


hold on the region free of the threat of a rapid counter offensive, due to the disastrous consequences the English had faced during the rainy season in their previous military campaign.

The offensive plan consisted of four fronts. The first used Trujillo (a port reoccupied by Spain during the offensive in 1780) as a base to launch an attack against Roatán, Black River, and other English settlements along the coast. It also included conquering and subduing the Zambo-Miskito settlements along the coast of Nicaragua. On the second front, Costa Rican forces would free the coast of Matina as far as the San Juan River. The enemies would have to surrender to the superior forces coming from the northern and southern fronts. The third front included a large naval force from New Spain, Cuba, and Yucatán that would eliminate the possibility of any invasion by sea. On the fourth front, troops from Nicaragua would pressure the Zambo-Miskitos by land from the western part of the province. With this plan, Gálvez would subdue the enemies of Spain by cutting off all escape routes and supply lines, leaving them impotent.

The Costa Rican Offensive

In Costa Rica, the number of militias at the outposts along the coast and inland were decreased, due to the overwhelming sense of security that existed in 1782. The coastal defense line at Matina quartered only 52 men, a small garrison compared to the magnitude of the expedition. The inland defense line consisting of the Quebrada Honda and Bonilla trenches continued to be
garrisoned by a detachment of soldiers, as it had since 1780. The number of militiamen assigned to these posts had noticeably diminished during the campaign of 1782. The militias posted at the Quebrada Honda and Bonilla trenches were not manned by more than 3 soldiers in any given month. Most likely, Costa Rican militias felt confident because of their victory in 1780 and by the weak counterattack by Zambo-Miskitos in 1781. Authorities in Cartago thought that enemy settlements did not pose a threat to the security of the province and that they could repeat the cleansing operation along the Matina coast without using a large force.

The Costa Rican offensive began on January 15 and lasted until March 12, 1782. As in 1780, Costa Rican militias took the offensive against the enemy. Three divisions marched to the Matina coast under the command of veteran Lieutenant Rafael Gutiérrez de Cárdenas. The commander directed the first division, and Captains Nicolás Astúa and Juan Núñez commanded the second and third divisions, respectively. Reports indicated that the first, second, and third divisions consisted of 35, 40, and 46 men, respectively. These divisions contained half of the number of militiamen that they had in 1780. Confidence and the absence of enemies along the Matina coast attributed to the moderate number of militiamen involved in this operation. During the campaign, the militias encountered no resistance of any kind and safely returned to Cartago, while maintaining a presence in Matina and the trenches.

60 AGCA, A1(6), leg. 4, exp. 38, n. 6, 8-9; exp. 39, fol. 4-5.

61 Zapatero, La Guerra, 259; Albi, La Defensa, 168; AGCA, A1(6), leg. 4, exp. 38, n. 8-9.
The Black River and Bay Islands Offensive

In Trujillo, veteran troops and militias were gathered in large numbers during February and March of 1782. Gálvez had planned to take over Roatán Island, and then transport the troops to the settlement at Black River. Historians disagree as to the number of soldiers quartered at Trujillo; some claimed that the number of troops at the port swelled up to 3,900, while others claim between 2,000 and 3,000. Veteran Captain Gabriel Hervias carried Gálvez’ war report to the King after the conquest of Black River. It stated that four divisions totaling 1,600 militiamen and 200 veterans were camped at a site known as Campamento, a league away from Trujillo, on March 9. In the next five days more troops and supplies were landed at the port. The forces included veteran detachments, mostly serving on ships and boats, from the regiments of Línea del Rey and Navarre; and the veteran battalions of Castilla, Campeche, and Guatemala; while militias provided men from the Chiquimula de la Sierra, the San Agustín de la Real Corona, and the Gracias a Dios infantry battalions. Finally, the newly organized Guatemalan Regiment of Provincial Dragoons and the cavalry squadron from León completed the force required for the expedition.\(^{62}\)

\(^{62}\) Zapatero, La Guerra, 259; Albi, La Defensa, 168; Floyd, The Anglo, 155-156. Floyd maintains that a force between 2,000 and 3,000 soldiers assembled at Trujillo. Mack, “Ephemeral,” 143. Hervias reported the Honduras coastal campaign to the King. He left Trujillo for Spain on April 24, 1782. AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, exp.49, fol. 1-3v; A2, leg. 299, exp. 6726; Albi, Banderas, 43, 392. The Regiment of Navarre was in reality a battalion. García Peláez, Memorias, 98-99.
Comayagua and Tegucigalpa assembled a force of 1,500 militiamen that converged into one unit in Juticalpa while marching towards Black River. Comayagua committed part of its infantry battalion together with troops from Santa Ana and San Salvador. Tegucigalpa committed part of its infantry battalion and companies from Nueva Segovia.\textsuperscript{63}

A debate persists on number of men that participated in the expedition to Roatán Island. Zapatero and Albi claim that Gálvez led a force of 3,900 men on board 4 frigates, 1 corvette, 6 balandras, 6 schooners, 4 cannon boats, and 8 pirogues, while Floyd argues that the attacking force consisted of 600 men on 20 fleet-ships.\textsuperscript{64} It is unlikely that Gálvez left Trujillo for Roatán Island with all the manpower available, stripping the town of its entire defense force. This maneuver would have jeopardized the security of the town and might have encouraged an attack from Black River that, in return, would halt the entire expedition.

In all likelihood, veterans and militiamen took part in the operation against Roatán Island on March 14. The veterans were detachments of New Spain’s Navarre Regiment, Yucatán’s veteran company stationed at Fort Bacalar belonging to the Veteran Battalion of Castilla, and Cuba’s Linea del Rey Regiment. From Central America, Gálvez commissioned part of the Guatemalan Veteran Battalion, a 200-men force. Finally, the militias supplied soldiers from

\textsuperscript{63} Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 155, 157-158; Albi, \textit{La Defensa}, 168; Zapatero, \textit{La Guerra}, 259; García Peláez, \textit{Memorias}, 98.

\textsuperscript{64} Zapatero, \textit{La Guerra}, 259; Albi, \textit{La Defensa}, 168; Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 156; Durón, \textit{Bosquejo}, 91. He lists 100 veterans and 500 militiamen from Zacapa, Chiquimula, Comayagua, Segovia, Matagalpa, and León.
the newly organized Guatemalan Regiment of Provincial Dragoons and the Gracias a Dios Battalion totaling 1,000 men. Accounts from different officers established that Guatemalan Veteran Battalion, the Regiment of Provincial Dragoons, and militias completed the landing at Roatán Island. Nonetheless, most of the battle consisted of a two-day ship cannonade with the English capitulation on March 17. Again, Hervia’s report clarified the operation in Roatán. The Spanish force reached Roatán on March 15 and negotiated the English surrender at 8 a.m. on March 17. A landing force of 1,000 men scoured Roatán Island, rounding up runaway slaves and burning all English houses and plantations. On March 21, the Spanish shipped 71 English soldiers, 135 settlers, and 300 slaves to Havana as prisoners of war, completing the total subjugation of the island. Inaccurately, Zapatero and Albi state that all of the militias went on the Roatán expedition. They even indicate that militias from Matagalpa, San Salvador, and Santa Ana took part in the assault, while in reality these divisions did not reach Trujillo at all. Both authors failed to acknowledge that a column of 1,500 militiamen headed directly to Black River.

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66 Mack, “Ephemeral,” 144. This information came from letters written by Don Matías de Gálvez, docked at Port Roatán on board the Frigate Santa Matilde on March 20. Spanish forces reported 2 soldiers dead and 4 wounded for the entire campaign. García Peláez, Memorias, 95-96.
The militia divisions from Comayagua and Tegucigalpa met in Juticalpa before marching against Black River. For this mission, orders required the quartering of the militias in Santa Ana on January 15, 1782. The next day, the troops under the command of Don Antonio Escuarsi headed to Comayagua. Previous instructions determined that only 200 militiamen from Santa Ana would go on the Black River expedition. Gálvez divided these troops into two companies of 100 men each. From San Salvador Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Joseph de Vallejo chose 3 companies, consisting of 313 militiamen. Like the

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67 AGCA, A2, leg. 295, exp. 6570, fol. 16, 22.
soldiers from Santa Ana, the militias of San Salvador marched to Comayagua. The militia battalion from Comayagua provided 500 men, to be commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Vicente Arizabalaga. From Tegucigalpa, Lieutenant Colonel Nicolás Urrútia led his 300 militiamen and the 212 soldiers coming from Nicaragua to the Juticalpa General Headquarters.

According to Floyd, the force was divided into two divisions before leaving Juticalpa and then marched to the junction of the Agalteca and Paún Rivers. On March 4, Lieutenant Colonel Urrútia left with a column of 500 men. A day later, Lieutenant Colonel Arizabalaga led a 1,000 man column. Both forces met and formed one body on March 22. Three days later, somewhere close to the Black River and the sea, the column came under fire. On March 26, the enemy struck again, killing four soldiers, but the militias inflicted 32 casualties on their attackers. Arizabalaga halted and waited for the assault from Trujillo by sea. Heavy rains and the impact of the enemy attacks confined the column to its position for almost two weeks. On April 9, the commander authorized its retreat after concluding that a delay in the invasion that the militias could longer sustain had occurred. On their way back, the militias suffered due to insufficient supplies, as stressed by Don Juan Francisco Candina, grenadier captain from San Salvador. The shortage of food, which had a severe impact on the troops, was alleviated on April 20, when the General Commander provided some cattle. It was after Aguaquire that the 212 militiamen from Nicaragua, Nueva Segovia,

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68 AGCA, A1(3), leg. 38, exp. 400, fol. 1-6v.
69 Floyd, The Anglo, 158; AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 57, fol. 23, 37. The force was divided into two divisions. Matagalpa and León provided 130 men while Nicaragua and Nueva Segovia provided 82.
León, and Matagalpa left for the General Headquarters in Olanchito. Two months after the operation began, the troops returned to the starting point in Juticalpa, and Arizabalaga reported 300 casualties between the dead and sick.\textsuperscript{70}

**Figure 17**  
Spanish Offensive Against Black River 1782


On March 30, a military expedition of nearly 1,500 men left Trujillo for Black River on board 13 ships fitted out from Havana and Trinidad de Cuba. Commanders Colonel Ildefonso Ignacio Domezán and Don Joseph Coquet

\textsuperscript{70} Floyd, *The Anglo*, 158-159; AGCA, A1, leg. 1755, fol. 47-49; A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 57, fol. 23, 37; A2, leg. 299, exp. 6707; García Peláez, *Memorias*, 95, 98.
divided the troops for the assault.71 Without a coordinating attack with the forces on land commanded by Arizabalaga, the troops from Trujillo were forced to disembark close to Fort Dalling, as called by the English, or Fort Quepriba, as named by the Spanish. That day, the scant English garrison at Fort Dalling capitulated, cutting off the escape route of the other southern settlements. On April 1, the Spanish force landed and overran Fort Black River, also known as La Criba or Pitt. The superior number of troops, the support from the ships, and the line of supplies permitted the Spanish to secure victory. The Spanish met no opposition because the English and Zambo-Miskitos had escaped through the inland rivers and lagoons. Spanish troops pursued the retreating enemy forces up to the Paún and Black Rivers, but were unsuccessful in capturing them. Finishing the expedition, the Spanish left a garrison under the command of Don Joseph Coquet, and 3 frigates departed for Trujillo on April 3.72

Zapatero indicates that officers from the Guatemalan Veteran Battalion and the Veteran Battalion of Castilla were distinguished in the action, and seldom mentions any other units.73 Evidently, Captains Joseph de Casasola and Pablo de Pedro belonged to the grenadier company and the eighth company of the Guatemalan Veteran Battalion. During the assault, the grenadier company was

71 AGCA, A1, leg. 2643, exp. 22502, fol. 21-22v. A letter from Gálvez announcing his victory in Roatán Island to the authorities in Nueva Guatemala and expressing that on March 26 the expedition would sail for Black River. Trujillo, March 26, 1782. A last minute delay probably impeded the departure until March 30. Floyd, The Anglo, 157; Albi, La Defensa, 168; Zapatero, La Guerra, 261. Albi and Zapatero falsely claim that after capturing Roatán Island the troops headed to Black River without stopping at Trujillo. Documents show that Gálvez returned to Trujillo on March 23 and sailed for Black River on March 30.


73 Zapatero, La Guerra, 261.
to engage the enemy first with the support of the eighth company. Certainly, Lieutenants Joseph Infante and Juan Joseph de Fierro from the Veteran Battalion of Castilla fought during the landing of the troops. They were part of the infantry reinforcements sent from Fort Bacalar on eight pirogues that first transported troops and then joined in the fight. Zapatero, however, avoids referring to the participation of the militias in the assault. Declarations made by various officers show that the militias did participate in the assault. The Crown rewarded the Provincial Dragoon Lieutenant, Don Nicolás de Eceta, for his service during the surrender of Fort Dalling and promoted him to army lieutenant.\textsuperscript{74} Similarly, the captain of the fourth company from the Gracias a Dios Battalion served in Black River and was rewarded in May by being made the commander of Trujillo.\textsuperscript{75} Many more companies from other battalions contributed to the successful campaign such as: Chiquimula de la Sierra, San Agustín de la Real Corona, and the Cavalry of León. These militia companies constituted the majority of the 1,500 men sent to Black River.

After the offensive ended in April, the veteran reinforcements left and the militias garrisoned all Spanish settlements along the Honduran coast. The defense of fort San Fernando de Omoa depended on companies from Chiquimula, Gracias a Dios, Santa Barbara of Tenoa, Comayagua, and León.\textsuperscript{76} Trujillo equally received companies from Olancho, Olanchito, Yoro, Tegucigalpa,

\textsuperscript{74} AGCA, A2, leg. 299, exp. 6726.

\textsuperscript{75} AGCA, A1, leg. 1755, fol. 116; Garcia Peláez, \textit{Memorias}, 98.

\textsuperscript{76} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 51, leg. 114, exp.2177; A3, leg. 1305, exp. 22226.
Matagalpa, León, Nicaragua, and Nueva Segovia.\textsuperscript{77} Black River totally depended on its links with Trujillo, which periodically dispatched militiamen from Santa Ana, San Miguel, Tegucigalpa, León, Matagalpa, Nicaragua, Nueva Segovia, Olancho Viejo, Olanchito y Herrero, Sonaguera, Yoro, and Comayagua. Most of these militias were present when the English attacked and retook Black River in August 1782.\textsuperscript{78} Roatán Island was also re-conquered by the English in 1782.

**The Setback**

According to F. W. Fortescue, the Spaniards and the French planned to conquer Jamaica in 1782, and prepared a force of 50 ships and 20,000 troops that would meet in Saint Domingue. The French sent Count De Grasse leading a fleet of 33 ships. In response to the threat, Jamaica devoted time and forces for its defense, but was unable to dispatch enough forces to protect the settlements of Black River. On April 12, the entire French fleet was defeated by British Admiral George Rodney in Dominica. The English victory at sea changed the whole panorama of the Caribbean and gave Jamaica the freedom to support operations along the Caribbean coast of Central America.\textsuperscript{79} Suddenly, Gálvez

\textsuperscript{77} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 54; exp. 57, fol. 3, 7, 11, 23, 37.

\textsuperscript{78} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 49, fol. 1-8; A2, leg. 114, exp 2176, fol. 2-6; Floyd, *The Anglo*, 159-161. Floyd states that the garrison at Black River numbered between 300 to 400 men, divided between Forts La Criba and Quepriba. However, when the English attacked, Spanish forces only added up to 173 soldiers. Zapatero, *La Guerra*, 261. Zapatero claims that the garrison at Black River totaled 750 men. Garcia Peñaz, *Memorias*, 100.

could not count on naval assistance from Cuba, New Spain or even Bacalar because England dominated the seas. As a result, any campaign to conquer the rest of the Zambo-Miskito settlements along the coast of Nicaragua could not be accomplished, and the Spanish offensive came to an end.

Black River and Roatán Island were retaken by the English due to incompetent decisions made by the Spanish authorities and veteran soldiers. The British Navy dominated the sea and the shores of Central America despite the Spanish coast guards in the region. Black River and Roatán Island depended on the availability of ships to deliver relief troops and supplies. If support lines were cut, then the detachments could offer resistance for only a short time. An English assault surprised the garrison at Fort Dalling on August 21. English and Zambo-Miskito forces numbered 400 men, and the Spanish garrison consisted of 33 militiamen. The attack left only one survivor who escaped to Fort Black River. Don Tomás de Julia, the veteran captain in charge of the garrison had divided his forces between the Forts Dalling and Black River. Being at war and in enemy territory, Fort Dalling did not have the necessary number of soldiers to defend it. The surprise attack was not the reason for its defeat; rather it was the insufficient number of soldiers and the absence of relief forces or aid. After the massacre at Fort Dalling, Julia realized that he did not have an emergency plan nor was he even able to dispatch a messenger to Trujillo for aid, and instead waited for the English raid. On August 22, knowing the Spanish ships' itinerary between Trujillo and Black River, the English were able to capture the corvette Europa that carried 65 Yoro militiamen that were
destined for Fort Black River. Cutting off the Spanish support lines and relief troops, the English returned to Cabo Gracias a Dios and organized the strike against Black River. On August 28, a fleet of 11 ships and a force of 1,200 men attacked Black River. English forces demanded a complete surrender but Julia held back until August 31, when he returned the fort to the British. Julia had a paltry force of 140 men and provisions for only four days. Outnumbered and without hope, the commander capitulated without a fight. Roatán Island fell in the same way as Black River, only that it was much easier for the English to retake the island than were the coastal settlements.

If the English would have dared to invade Trujillo after conquering Black River, they could have inflicted another defeat on the Spaniards and pushed the frontier to Sonaguera. Don Cristóbal Bernal, militia captain of the Gracias a Dios Battalion, acting as commander of Trujillo, upon receiving the news of the fall of Black River on September 10, decided to take precautionary measures. The commander immediately dispatched gunpowder, muskets and war materiel to Sonaguera. On September 12, the War Council decided to burn supplies and the camp, fearing an English raid when they sighted 3 frigates heading to

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80 AGCA, A3, leg. 1354, exp 22707, leg. 1-4. The corvette Europa participated in all the sea operations during 1782. Zapatero, *La Guerra*, 259; Garcia Pelaez, *Memorias*, 101. Garcia Pelaez states that there were 67 men on the corvette Europa.

81 Floyd, *The Anglo*, 160-161. Floyd calculates that 1,000 men took part in the assault. Zapatero, *La Guerra*, 261. Zapatero argues that after a violent battle Julia capitulated with 750 men from the veteran battalion. See also *www.royalprovincial.com*, Loyal American Rangers/Black River Volunteers/Indian Dept/ Fall of Black River Fort. Jamaica, October 10, 1782. The English troops attacking Fort Black River totaled 1,180 men. According to English sources, the Spanish commander, Julia, capitulated with his force consisting of 27 officers and 715 rank and file. Jamaican Governor Campbell reported that 100 men were captured in the corvette Europa. English reports exaggerated the number of men captured to increase its victory.
Roatán. Evidently, Bernal did not intend to fight or even attempt to resist an English incursion. The forces at Trujillo did not have naval aid, relief, or supplies, and instead hid and waited for the enemy’s reaction.

War had drained the European powers of support and monetary resources. For this reason, France, Spain, and England conducted a series of talks that culminated in the signing of a preliminary peace treaty on November 30, 1782. In Central America, tension along the borders remained, but military operations diminished. Negotiations among the belligerent states continued until the final signing of a peace treaty at Versailles on November 3, 1783.

The militias of Central America defended and prevented the expansion of British forces in the region during the Anglo-Spanish War 1779-1783. On every front, the militias comprised the majority of the forces, and easily were double or triple in the number of the veteran forces. During the various battles, the militias constituted the only available force, as in the case of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and the Black River expedition coming from Juticalpa in 1782. Militias and veteran forces fought alongside each other at Fort San Fernando de Omoa, Black River, and Roatán securing important victories. However, the militias were forced to surrender the recently conquered lands when the English and Zambo-Miskitos counter-attacked in 1782. Most of the victories and defeats depended on veteran officers directing attacks and managing troops. The outcome of the Anglo-Spanish War between 1779 and 1783 was a direct result of the military reform and the involvement of the militias of Central America.

82 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 57, fol. 64.
83 Floyd, The Anglo, 161-162; Woodward, Central, 72.
Chapter 6

The Weak Policy of Don Joseph de Estachería and
The Spanish Expansion along the Caribbean Coast
1783-1789

The administration of Captain General Joseph de Estachería (1783-1789) coincided with a period of expansion along the Caribbean coast, a change in the administrative government, and a sharp decline of the militias of the Kingdom of Guatemala. At the conclusion of the Anglo-Spanish War in 1783, the peace treaty recognized Spanish sovereignty over the coasts of Central America and decreed that the English were to turn over their settlements in 1787. That same year the Spanish Crown implemented the Intendant Military System in order to better manage their resources on the isthmus. The new political-administrative system restructured all jurisdictions without affecting the militia activity. Nonetheless, Estachería’s government reduced the militias and restricted their privileges in order to cut back on mounting costs.

During the last stages of the Anglo-Spanish War (1779-1783), the Spanish authorities rewarded militia officers with promotions for their battlefield victories and entrusted to them the safety of Crown possessions. In the militia, officers received new commissions, and new battalions were granted royal sanctions.
after 1782.¹ Several high-ranking militia officers also assumed positions as High Magistrates in various provinces. Don Francisco Carbonel, lieutenant colonel of the Zacatepéquez Battalion, became the high magistrate of Escuintla on January 27, 1783. Similarly, Don Francisco Xavier de Aguirre, lieutenant colonel of the San Miguel Battalion, assumed the interim high magistracy of Verapaz on February 13, 1783. Finally, Don Pedro Antonio Toriello, captain of the Amatitán and the Zacatapéquez Battalion, assumed the office as sheriff of the San Carlos Penitentiary in Nueva Guatemala on January 29, 1783.²

Through his policy, the Captain General, Matías de Gálvez, sought to place loyal Spaniards as well as veteran military officers in key administrative and political posts. Don Joseph de Estachería, lieutenant colonel of the veteran battalion, became Brigadier of the Royal Spanish Army as well as leading officer of the regular forces, after the Nicaraguan campaign in 1780-1781. In addition, Estachería was appointed the governorship of Nicaragua thanks to Captain General Matías de Gálvez recommendation in 1781.³ By doing this, Gálvez cleared the way for his future replacement. When the Crown rewarded Gálvez with the Viceroyalty of New Spain, he also earned the right to choose his replacement and immediately designated Estachería on February 19, 1783.⁴

¹ AGCA, A2, leg. 299. Commissions of militia officers and militia battalions in 1782 and 1783.
² AGCA, A1, leg. 1754, fol. 213-215.
³ AGCA, A2, leg. 299, exp. 6731, 6742. Montiel, Nicaragua, 267, 415.
Gálvez considered it of primary importance to appoint a capable veteran officer in charge of the defense and administrative work in Central America.

The British Evacuation of the Coastal Settlements

Spanish authorities began with significant efforts to obtain territorial rights along the coast of Honduras after conquering the English settlements in April of 1782. Gálvez commissioned veteran Captain Gabriel Hervias to deliver the important information regarding territorial claims to the Spanish court. Hervias left for Spain a short time after the victories at Roatán and Black River.\(^5\) In May 1782, the militia Captain and Second Commander of Trujillo, Don Cristóbal Bernal, officially recognized the newly conquered territory of Black River as a Spanish possession.\(^6\)

On Honduras’s coastal campaigns in 1782 coincided with the initiation of diplomatic negotiations between Spain and England. By this time, both nations had depleted their resources and Britain had lost its North American colonies. In Central America, English settlements had become vulnerable to Spanish attacks. Negotiations between the belligerent European courts resulted in a preliminary peace treaty on November 30, 1782 ending in a general peace settlement on September 3, 1783. The English recognized Spanish sovereignty and agreed to

\(^5\) AGCA, A31, leg. 583, fol. 54. Captain Hervias delivered documentation to the Spanish court regarding the victories along Caribbean coast of Honduras. April 24, 1782.

dismantle its settlements along the Honduran and Nicaraguan coasts. In exchange, Spain granted the English logging rights between the Belize and Hondo rivers.\footnote{Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 161-164. Robert A. Naylor, \textit{Penny Ante Imperialism: The Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras, 1600-1914} (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1989), 64. Naylor date the preliminary treaty as being signed on January 20, 1783 and the peace Treaty of Versailles as being signed on September 2, 1783.}


Trujillo acted as the military command post during negotiations from 1783-1786. Its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Gabriel Hervias, and Captain Cristóbal Bernal pressured the English settlements to evacuate the region after 1784. Both officers carried out reconnaissance missions between the Black River and Bluefield sites. They also delivered royal communiqués to settlers regarding the negotiations.\footnote{AGCA, A1, leg. 1755, fol. 116v-117. Naylor, \textit{Penny}, 67.}

After 1783, the surrounding towns provided Trujillo’s military manpower. Sonaguera, the closest town to Trujillo, continuously supplied militias like the third company serving in March 1783, as well as providing rapid succor in case of
emergency.\(^{10}\) Yoro dispatched a company in June 1783 and another in March 1784. The first company consisted of 106 and the second of 95 militiamen.\(^{11}\) San Jorge Olanchito sent its three infantry companies after 1782.\(^{12}\) Olancho Viejo sent an additional two companies in 1784. One company comprised of 73 soldiers, and the other of 81.\(^{13}\) These towns continued to reinforce Trujillo until 1808.

In order to protect Trujillo, the Spanish transported large quantities of armament in 1787 as soon as the peace negotiations and the British evacuation were initiated.\(^{14}\) Captain Cristóbal Bernal declared that the armament inventory as of June 30, 1783, consisted of 250 muskets and 2 bronze cannons, of 3 and 4-pound calibers.\(^{15}\) Not long after on September 2, 1783, Don Juan Bautista Meléndez, a retired militia captain, transported 147 muskets.\(^{16}\) Another shipment consisting of muskets, gunpowder, and bullets arrived on January 24, 1784.\(^{17}\) In 1787, Don Benito Bulmes delivered 348 muskets, bayonets, and three cannons from Tegucigalpa.\(^{18}\) In order to refurbish and secure the armament, it was

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\(^{10}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 6, exp. 58, fol. 1.

\(^{11}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 8, exp. 82 and 84.

\(^{12}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 54; leg. 6, exp. 58, fol. 1; leg. 8, exp. 78, exp. 79, and exp. 83.

\(^{13}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 8, exp. 80 and 81.

\(^{14}\) Naylor, *Penny*, 69.

\(^{15}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 55. 105 muskets of 19 and 145 of 16.

\(^{16}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 8, exp. 77, fol. 32.

\(^{17}\) ANH, Roll 33, fol. 1271. Document regards the shipments as 27 loads.

\(^{18}\) ANH, Roll 34, fol. 1063. The cannons were 3 and 4-pound caliber.
alternated between Yoro and Trujillo. In 1787, Yoro received two arm shipments, one of 132 muskets and the other of 336.\textsuperscript{19} Two years later, Don Josef de Bacas, a lieutenant from Yoro, transported 15 guns to Trujillo.\textsuperscript{20} In 1790, Trujillo received 30 new model muskets from Tegucigalpa.\textsuperscript{21} Finally, Trujillo acquired 5 loads of 500 cartridge belts on October 10, 1790.\textsuperscript{22} All this information suggests that Trujillo’s stock of armament consisted of 500 muskets and the 3 and 4-pound caliber cannons available in order to defend itself.

On June 26, 1787, Lieutenant Colonel Hervias supervised the transfer of the English settlers and formally took possession of the coastal territories.\textsuperscript{23} With this action, Spain initiated its military expansion along the coast by establishing garrisons at the former British settlements. Trujillo acted as the administrative center while Havana provided supplies, as well as military and naval support. Mexico provided further financial assistance to the defenders and future colonists of the area. This action demanded a sharp increase in militias in order to protect the area. Inland towns in Honduras were constantly required to assign militia companies to Trujillo in 1789. Tegucigalpa contributed by reinforcing Trujillo with militiamen as early as May of that year.\textsuperscript{24} Don Ignacio Arraurrenechea, adjutant major of Tegucigalpa’s militia, took command of Trujillo’s divisions on February

\textsuperscript{19} ANH, Roll 34, fol. 1136, 1147.

\textsuperscript{20} ANH, Roll 35, fol. 959. Don Josef de Bacas transferred the weapons on June 12, 1789.

\textsuperscript{21} ANH, Roll 36, fol. 238. The shipment took place on August 9, 1790.

\textsuperscript{22} ANH, Roll 36, fol. 224.


\textsuperscript{24} ANH, Roll 36, fol. 258. Mack, “Ephemeral,” 149.
11, 1790. Other companies left the same town on May 14\textsuperscript{th} and July 27\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{25} Don Manuel Gutiérrez, adjutant major of Comayagua infantry battalion, furnished troops to Trujillo on October 14.\textsuperscript{26} Even far away towns, such as Gracias a Dios, sent militia detachments to Trujillo during 1789.\textsuperscript{27}

Authorities commonly dispute the number of men serving in the various settlements along the coast, and barely completed the list of required militiamen. In 1791, the four settlements of Trujillo, Black River, Cabo Gracias a Dios, and Roatán Island contained a total force of 340 militiamen. Most likely, the same military force had endured since its initial positioning in 1787. Expansion efforts advanced when veteran Captain Pedro Bricio assumed the command of Cabo Gracias a Dios on April 28, 1788, and intensified with Don Francisco Pérez de Brito who replaced him next year.\textsuperscript{28} To consolidate the Spanish gains along the coast, Captain General Estachería ordered the mapping of the shoreline and the re-founding of Cabo Gracias a Dios at a new location in 1789.\textsuperscript{29} After 1790, troops from Tegucigalpa normally supplied the manpower of Cabo Gracias a Dios.\textsuperscript{30} Coinciding with this broadening operation, the Engineer Captain from Comayagua, Don Juan de Ampúdia y Valdéz, began strengthening the defenses

\textsuperscript{25} ANH, Roll 36, fol. 137, 274-275.

\textsuperscript{26} ANH, Roll 36, fol. 276-277.

\textsuperscript{27} ANH, Roll 35, fol. 1030, 1049. Gracias a Dios militia Commander Juan Francisco Milla at Trujillo on January 21, 1789. Captain Baltazar Castejón. Trujillo, September 14, 1789.

\textsuperscript{28} ANH, Roll 36, fol. 85, 248.

\textsuperscript{29} AGCA, A3, leg. 590, exp. 11700, fol. 19v-20. Description of the force serving in the four coastal settlements. fol. 3v-5. Estachería ordered Don Antonio Porta y Costas to establish the new Cabo Gracias a Dios settlement on July 6, 1789.

\textsuperscript{30} ANH, Roll 36, fol. 276. Troops commanded by Captain Guillermo Rivera on April 30, 1790.
of Black River and Trujillo, the most important settlements in the area, which constituted the largest number of militiamen on May 31, 1788.\textsuperscript{31} Don Tadeo Muniesa, veteran captain and graduated lieutenant colonel, reported that the force at Black River was comprised of 150 men as of April 30, 1790. Most of this force had come with Commander Gregorio Félix de la Rosa from Tegucigalpa.\textsuperscript{32} Another garrison operated with the same number of troops at Trujillo. At Roatán Island, the military authorities had destined only 33 men in 1788.\textsuperscript{33} Finally, the Cabo Gracias a Dios garrison probably had a similar number of militiamen as Roatán Island in order to comply with that 340 men should serve in the settlements along the coast.

The Spaniards did not venture to place military outposts between Cabo Gracias a Dios and the mouth of San Juan River.\textsuperscript{34} In Honduras, the military authorities designed Cabo Gracias a Dios to be the last station on the frontier of Zambo-Miskito territory. The next military establishment was at the San Juan River mouth, consisting of a small militia garrison, with a larger force standing at Fort San Carlos.\textsuperscript{35}

The Spanish were also able to exert their influence with the increase of vigilance of the coasts. Pirogues from Fort Bacalar remained after the Anglo-

\textsuperscript{31} ANH, Roll 34, fol. 1965.

\textsuperscript{32} ANH, Roll 36, fol. 1299. Report from Don Tadeo Muniesa. Fol. 258, 271. Tegucigalpa’s detachment serving at Black River during 1790.

\textsuperscript{33} ANH, Roll 34, fol. 1882. Militiamen on Roatán Island on March 8, 1788. Sometimes the number reached up to 35 men.

\textsuperscript{34} Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 167.

\textsuperscript{35} AGCA, A3, leg. 590, exp. 11700, fol. 19-20.
Spanish War as the pre-eminent naval force between Trujillo, Roatán Island, and Black River. In 1784, the infantry captain and commander of Fort Bacalar pirogues, Don Nicolás Pereira, repeatedly traveled between Trujillo and Roatán Island. Similarly, Captain Pedro Vázquez piloted the 18-cannon brig, San Matías, during the Honduran shore expeditions. Afterwards, the San Matías was stationed in Trujillo in order to chase off enemy ships until its return to Havana on June 9, 1784. Three years later, Vázquez was in charge of the schooner, Nuestra Señora del Carmen. The schooner not only transported troops and supplies from Havana to Trujillo, but also supplied the sorely needed vigilance between Trujillo and several other settlements until January 12, 1788. Vázquez continued to patrol the area with the Señor San Josef also known as the Patrón from July 1788 until March 18, 1789.

The Colonization of the Coastal Areas

In 1786, the Ministry of the Indies designed a master plan for the colonization of the Mosquitia. According to the plan, Spain would send colonists from Galicia, Asturias, and the Canary Islands to populate the former British settlements along the shores of Central America. The plan called for the colonization of Black River, Cabo Gracias a Dios, and even those establishments

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36 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 8, exp. 77, fol. 108. December 12, 1784.
37 AGCA, A1, leg. 1755, fol. 185-186, 190.
38 Ibid., fol. 191.
39 Ibid., fol. 192.
at heart of the Nicaraguan coastal zone, such as Bluefields. Following the implementation of the plan, ships carried a total of 1,298 colonists to the port of Trujillo between July 1787 and January 1788.40

The government effectively distributed the colonists among the settlements together with ample amounts of food, supplies, and money to sustain them until they were able to take root. The lack of monetary resources in the Kingdom of Guatemala resulted in the assistance of New Spain Viceroyalty’s that constituted 200,000 pesos per year. Most of this money was used to buy supplies in Havana that were sent to the newly colonized areas via Trujillo.41

Two years after the occupation of the area by Spanish settlers, authorities decided that Cabo Gracias a Dios was not favorable for coast colonization. The decision came from the continuous dependence on government rations during 1789.42 For two years the colonists had been unable to produce any food from the poor soil in the area. Under orders, the veteran Captain Commander Pedro Bricio instructed Don Antonio Porta y Costas to search for a fitting place along the coast that would allow for the prompt relocation of the settlement. In 1790 the commander of Trujillo, Don Juan de Orea revised the plan for the new Cabo

40 ANH, Roll 36, fol. 1313. Floyd, The Anglo, 169. Mack, “Ephemeral,” 147. Mack sustains that it was Don Matías de Gálvez who implored the King to send colonists in 1783. García Peláez, Memorias, 97. According to García Peláez account, it was Gálvez who recommended the recolonization after recovering Black River in 1782.

41 Floyd, The Anglo, 171.

42 Ibid., 169.
Gracias a Dios, but despite all efforts, few colonists ever came to and less remained in Cabo Gracias a Dios.\footnote{AGCA, A3, leg. 590, exp. 11700, fol. 3v.}

Black River proved to be more favorable to the new colonists than Cabo Gracias a Dios because it had a larger presence of troops, as well as ample government support. However, it was isolated and surrounded by and under the constant threat from the Zambo-Miskitos. Floyd points out that the settlers from the Canary Islands did not venture out of the compound for fear of being attacked. Additionally, the poor sandy soil barred the population from growing food for its own survival, resulting in the total dependence on Havana and Trujillo for their supplies.\footnote{Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 169-170.}

Since its re-occupation in 1780, Trujillo had grown rapidly. Trujillo contained most of the military forces, immigrants from Spain, and local population in the area. The port boomed to the point of becoming the biggest center between San Fernando de Omoa and Chagres in Panama because of its contact with Havana, Spain, and the other settlements along the coast.

Despite the Crown’s wishes to colonize the Mosquitia coast, the Spanish were unable to re-settle in Bluefields due to the lack of colonist, money, and principally the Zambo-Miskito King George II, who lived at Sandy Bay.\footnote{Ibid., 169.} Spanish occupation or rule did not exist between the settlements of Cabo Gracias a Dios and the San Juan River garrison. Most of this area contained a large Zambo-
Miskito population that dominated the coast and kept the Spanish outposts under
constant threat resulting in minimal Spanish expansion along the Nicaraguan
cost.

Influencing the Zambo-Miskitos

Spanish military officers tried to win over the Zambo-Miskito leaders with
gifts and favors once the English evacuated the Honduran and Nicaraguan
coasts. The British departure from the shores and the Spanish occupation
carried a reversal of the traditional hostile Zambo-Miskito policy. The Tuapi
governor, Colville Breton, who ruled from Sandy Bay to Bluefields, leaned toward
the Spanish camp after the assurances of Lieutenant Colonel Don Gabriel
Hervias, who offered Spain’s friendship. At the time, Breton was in love with a
captive from Nicaragua who taught him the elements of Christianity and probably
convinced him to visit Cartagena. On July 6, 1788, Breton accepted baptism and
became known as Carlos Antonio de Castilla after the king and the viceroy,
respectively, symbolizing the Spanish influence over him. In December 1788,
Carlos Antonio went to León to continue with his marriage preparations. On
December 22, 1788, in the cathedral of León, Carlos Antonio married María
Manuela Rodríguez Mojica with the blessings of both the royal and church
authorities, with vigil following on January 11, 1789. Thanks to this union,
Spanish royal authorities expected to win over a large part of the Zambo-
Miskitos. Following his marriage, Castilla was appointed to the post of
Mosquitian Governor. Nonetheless, King George II continued with his allegiance with England and opposed the Spanish intrusion into the Zambo-Misquito territories. Subsequently, when Carlos Antonio returned to Tuapi in April 1789, he encountered many of his subjects challenging his authority.\textsuperscript{46}

In addition to the Tuapi Governor, royal authorities also had the support of Colonel Robert Hodgson known as the Younger, a former English Superintendent of the Mosquitia that had been captured during the Anglo-Spanish War. The Minister of Indies instructed Don Juan Antonio Caballero de Góngora, the New Granada Archbishop-Viceroy, to assist in the control of the Central American Caribbean coast. Caballero believed that Colonel Robert Hodgson the Younger, captured by a coast guard and transferred to Cartagena, could influence the Zambo-Miskitos to come over to the Spanish side. Hodgson reassured Caballero that he had enough influence to win over the Zambo-Miskito chiefs by virtue of having been a former English superintendent and a British military officer. Caballero recommended Hodgson be made Governor, and sent him to Bluefields in 1787. Hodgson’s influence turned out to be limited and a short time after his appointment, the Archbishop-Viceroy discovered that Hodgson could not persuade the Zambo-Miskitos to join Spain as he had claimed.\textsuperscript{47}


\textsuperscript{47} Floyd, The Anglo, 166-168, 175-176. Naylor, Penny, 70. Spanish authorities appointed Castilla to assist Hodgson.
Administrative Changes: The Intendancy System

Besides the previous justifications explaining the lack of occupation of the Caribbean coast, the main blame rested with the decision makers in the intendancies and the military commanders of each settlement. The Isthmus underwent a process of administrative accommodation that favored the decline of the coastal occupation. In 1786, the Crown ordered the establishment of the Army and Province Intendancy in the Kingdom of New Spain, which also included the Kingdom of Guatemala. It reduced the number of provinces from 32 to 15 and created 4 intendancies. The intendancy of Chiapas consisted of the government of Soconusco and the high magistracies of Ciudad Real and Tuxtla. The intendancy of Honduras included the government of Comayagua and the high magistracy of Tegucigalpa. The intendancy of San Salvador included the high magistracies of Sonsonate and San Salvador. Finally, the intendancy of Nicaragua contained the government of Nicaragua, the high magistracy of Nicoya and the magistracies of Realejo and Matagalapa. Costa Rica remained a government, and the Captain General continued controlling over Guatemala. He exercised the privilege to appoint a sub-delegate for each administrative district of the intendancies, however, lost the right to designate high magistrates and could only appoint them in the interim until the Crown could dispatch its own official.48

The intendency system deemed to boost the public, financial, and judicial administrations but its main task focused on increasing revenue and developing the military defense. Spain adopted this system from France where the good administration of finances and revenues provided the necessary resources to further the Crown’s military objectives. Indeed, the royal ordinance emphasized its military structure by placing military officers as intendants and sub-delegates.\(^{49}\)

With the intendency system, the authorities obtained initial success by increasing revenues. However, the constant changes in the administration only contributed to more military inefficiency. Furthermore, Captain General Estachería lost his position by abusing his power in commercial ventures within Central America.\(^{50}\) Estachería’s activities centered more on his personal gain than on the problems of the Kingdom.

All new interim intendants came from the military ranks and Guatemala’s High Court. As of 1785, in San Salvador, the Crown placed Prosecutor of Guatemala’s High Court Don Josef Ortiz de la Peña and in 1786, in Chiapas, Don Francisco Saavedra y Carvajal, also a Prosecutor of Guatemala’s High Court was appointed to the position.\(^{51}\) The Honduran and Nicaraguan


\(^{50}\) Floyd, *The Anglo*, 183.

intendancies continued with military governors after 1786. Three years later, however, the Crown replaced all of the intendants in the Kingdom. As can be seen above, even though during the period between 1786 and 1789 the expansion along the Caribbean coast received the necessary support from the authorities, the leadership failed to make effective decisions in support of the re-colonization.

The Decline of the Militias

During Estachería’s administration (1783-1789), the Kingdom of Guatemala showed considerable decline of the militias, mounting military costs, and an inability to pay troops, shortage of funds that resulted in rising discontent between the Spaniards and the castes. Estachería’s policy stated that the inland towns of Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica were to support the military outposts along the coasts. Towns were to supply the necessary manpower for the garrisons and, in case of emergency, would furnish militia troops to defend the area. In Guatemala, Chiquimula de la Sierra and Zacapa provided the militiamen for the forts at San Felipe and San Fernando de Omoa. Honduras periodically sent troops from Tegucigalpa, Comayagua, Gracias a


Dios, and towns near coast to patrol the settlements and Fort Omoa.\textsuperscript{54} San Pedro Sula and the hamlets around Fort Omoa supplied the means of subsistence as well as men for the garrison.\textsuperscript{55} In Nicaragua, Granada took the burden of furnishing both Fort San Carlos and the detachment at the mouth of the San Juan River with the necessary troops.\textsuperscript{56} Finally, in Costa Rica, Puebla de Los Angeles and Ujarrás, provided men for the outpost at Matina.\textsuperscript{57}

In each province, the military commander preferred sending Mulattoes to the lowlands due to a false pretense that they could more easily survive the harsh conditions than Spaniards could. Because of this, the bulk of the forces for the defense of the coastal areas were non-Spanish militias. After the signing of the peace treaty with England in 1783, the vast majority of the militias were deactivated because the Crown no longer required their services. The end of hostilities along the Caribbean coast in 1787 increased the need to demobilize the large number of now unnecessary militias.

Estachería’s policy limited militia activity in the areas distant from the coast, resulting in the steep decline of the militia organization after 1783. The Captain General continued commissioning high-ranking officers in each


\textsuperscript{55} San Pedro Sula’s Mulatto militia company traditionally supported the defense of Omoa since its establishment in 1782.

\textsuperscript{56} Granada had sent its militias to the Fort San Carlos since 1782. ANH, Roll 35, fol. 1009, 1019. Don Luis Tife sent troops and supplies from Granada to San Carlos. Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 162.

\textsuperscript{57} ANCRI, Serie Complementario Colonial, doc. 3781, fol. 1-18. Militia detachment in Matina from the Puebla de los Angeles and Ujarrás. 1787.
provincial militia battalion, but neglected to commission new lower-ranking officers to sustain the militia force. Santa Ana’s battalion exemplifies the rapid deterioration between its establishment in 1781 and the General Troops Review in 1787 (Table XIV).

Table XIV
Santa Ana Infantry Battalion 1781-1787

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1781</td>
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The 1781 General Troop Review of Santa Ana’s battalion showed a fit force during the Anglo-Spanish War. The battalion received 500 muskets for the troops to take the pledge of allegiance in January of that year. A year later, a detachment of 200 men were sent as part of the offensive against Black River. These years marked the zenith of the militia at Santa Ana due to the constant

58 AGCA, A2, leg. 295, exp. 6570, fol. 9, 15-16v. Garcia Peláez, Memorias, 95.
troop reviews that were being conducted by the Kingdom’s militia Sub-Inspector Don Manuel de Carranza, and the completion of the battalion. Table XIV shows the troop review in 1781 showing that the battalion consisted of 693 men. In this review, the battalion was at its best, having all the necessary manpower plus a large quantity of muskets.

The General Troop Review of 1787 shows a decline in the state of the unit. The grenadier, first, fourth, and sixth companies did not have the deceased officers replaced marking an absence of leadership in the battalion. Officers from the first company usually took command of the grenadier unit when a vacancy became available. Both companies were comprised of the best officers and men of the battalion, but without a captain the company declined. A similar situation occurred with the battalion Command Staff Group. Although Colonel Joseph Joachin González de Nava had not resided in Santa Ana since late 1781, he retained his commission and command. Ultimately, Nava died in Granada on April 10, 1784, though his demise was not even reported and the post of colonel remained vacant for three years. Lieutenant Colonel Félix Mir led Santa Ana’s troops in the great offensive of 1782. Afterwards, Gálvez assigned him to serve at Omoa, and he never returned to Santa Ana. Adjutant Major Antonio

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59 AGCA, A2(3), leg. 7, exp. 31, fol. 2.
60 AGCA, A2(3), leg. 7, exp. 34.
61 Sometime after December 9, 1781, González de Nava left Santa Ana to join Don Matías de Gálvez. See A2, leg. 295, exp. 6570, fol. 20. Fernández Guardia, Crónicas, 177.
Escuarsi remained at his post and led the battalion until his transfer to New Segovia in 1785. Immediately, Don Fernando Dávila replaced Escuarsi as Adjutant Major of the battalion.\textsuperscript{63} As can be seen, Santa Ana’s battalion functioned with only one veteran officer in the Command Staff Group who performed duties as sergeant major. The rest of command staff posts continued to remain vacant and greatly contributed to the lack of discipline in the battalion.

The General Troop Review of 1787 stated that each company consisted of 54 soldiers, 15 officers, and 8 supernumeraries. In total, the battalion had a force of 693 men - the same number as in 1781. This account failed to mention the vacancies in each company and in the Command Staff Group. Therefore, even though the report did not show it, the number of troops had diminished from the last General Troop Review. In addition, the weaponry on hand did not even meet the needs of even one company. The review established that each company had 10 muskets with bayonets, totaling 90: fifty 46-caliber and forty 42-caliber all of which were completely useless.\textsuperscript{64}

**Decline of Militia Exemptions and Mounting Financial Costs**

The privileges enjoyed by the militias that had been granted by the *Fuero Militar* began to be limited when the *Indigo Growers Society* pushed for a labor

\textsuperscript{63} AGCA, A2, leg. 303, exp. 7055, fol. 9. Appointed as Adjutant Major in Nueva Segovia 1785.

\textsuperscript{64} AGCA, A2(3), leg. 5, fol. 26.
Distribution Ordinance in 1784. It put into place a compulsory work conscription system for Mestizos and Mulattoes that did not have lands to produce beans, corn, tobacco, and indigo. The Distribution Ordinance annulled the militia exemptions and forced men to serve as laborers. Additionally, the Ordinance placed the militia under civilian jurisdiction when town judges forced militiamen to work lands that were producing indigo. In short, the Distribution Ordinance overrode the privileges and exemptions given in the *Fuero Militar*. The Ordinance failed after that first year but it set the precedent of invalidating the militiamen’s privileges.

Besides the Distribution Ordinance, the debilitating of the militias occurred following the conclusion of the Anglo-Spanish War in 1783, resulting in its deactivation. Spanish authorities considered active militias a surplus cost; therefore, only the most necessary forces remained on duty. The conclusion of the Anglo-Spanish settlement negotiations for the Caribbean coastal areas resulted in the deactivation of most of the militias. In 1787, English settlers abandoned Black River and other establishments along the coast and recognized those territories as Spanish property. The deactivation of the militias advanced rapidly after this time. In order to fill the vacancy left by the deactivation of the disciplined militias Spanish authorities began employing urban militias that served without payment and so represented no cost at all.  

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Mounting costs during the Anglo-Spanish War severely restricted the availability of militia forces after 1783. Troops that participated in the great offensive of 1782 began receiving payments following the cessation of hostilities in 1783. Matagalpa’s magistrate, Don Joachim Folch de Cardona, expressed the urgency to pay the militia wages on May 9, 1783. Folch de Cardona stated that the King commanded each jurisdiction to assemble expeditions, of which the troops invariably expected to be paid by the officials in León. The situation regarding the militia’s wages concerned the magistrate to the point of inform authorities that the sentinels and the Agua Caliente detachment had not received any payment during the previous three years. Folch de Cardona also stated that the treasury owed the Jinotega detachment 5,000 pesos bringing the amount owed to the militias serving at Black River to over 12,000 pesos in delayed wages.67

In the province of Costa Rica, the Crown’s newly implemented cost saving policies reduced the size and expenses of Matina’s militia detachment. The accounts provided by Don Joseph Miguel Velasco totaled 3,544 pesos to be paid to the 50 militiamen during 1784.68 Three years later, the garrison consisted of 25 men, which cost 2,505 pesos and 7 reales for the twelve-month period.69 The new policies of the intendant reduced the militia force by half.

67 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 5, exp. 50. Letter addressed to Don Juan Antonio Fernández de la Buria. Matagalpa 9 May 1783. The letter referred to troops serving at La Criba also known as Black River.

68 AGCA, A1(6), leg. 4, exp. 44.

69 AGCA, A1(6), leg. 4, exp. 51, n 6.
Contrary to the rest of the Central American militias, Honduran forces experienced unusual activity elevating their expenses after 1783. The costs to activate and maintain these forces increased expenses and this pressure on the treasury at the time. Militias from Tegucigalpa, Comayagua, Gracias a Dios, Tencoa, Olancho, Olanchito, and Yoro provided the necessary forces to furnish the garrisons at San Fernando de Omoa, Trujillo, Black River, Cabo Gracias a Dios, and Roatán Island. Dispatching those militiamen to the coastal areas, however, did not enjoy popular support from their home communities nor did the coastal settlements like the presence of these Mulatto men.

Forcing the castes in to service along the coast resulted in vast numbers of desertions. In September 1784, the Tegucigalpa detachment saw the desertion of three militiamen prior to its departure for the coast. Don Juan de la Peña, the grenadier captain, demanded the expulsion of the three militiamen from Tegucigalpa’s parochial church, where they had taken refuge. The militiamen claimed sanctuary and the church acknowledged their status. After explaining that the deserters would receive a minimal disciplinary action and that sanctuary could not be possible because it would set a precedent, Peña made the cleric liable for the delay. After Peña’s somewhat futile attempts, the arms-commander-in-chief of the province, Don Guillermo Rivera, requested the Vicar General to turn the deserters over to the authorities and to declare it illegal for militiamen to take shelter in a church. Shortly thereafter, on October 18, the

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70 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 6, exp. 62, fol. 4; exp. 66. leg. 8 exp. 77, fol. 167, exp. 79-84. For the years 1783-1784. A2(4), leg. 11, exp. 106, exp. 109-112, exp. 115-119. For the years of 1787-1788. A2(4), leg. 13, exp. 125, fol. 1, 2, 16. For the year 1789.
Vicar General rendered the decision that deserters could not enjoy sanctuary status. Following this incident, companies sent to the coast were under constant scrutiny in order to reduce high rate of desertion. To assure that the troops would go to the settlements, authorities resolved to forward payments to the men. The sub-delegate of Gracias a Dios, Don José Antonio Milla, paid the Christmas third before initiating the July march to the coast but twenty militiamen from his company deserted anyway on the way to Trujillo.

As the Central American economy deteriorated at the end of 1780s, the military found itself to be in a precarious financial position. Military expenses amounted 231,772 pesos annually; of which, half of it was financed by the treasury of New Spain. The heavy price to colonize the coast and maintain a large military apparatus exceeded the potential. Despite succeeding in increasing revenues, the intendants faced a decline in the production and commercialization of indigo, cattle, silver, and cacao. The expulsion of the English from the coastal areas changed the center for the black market to Belize and gave more power to the merchant group in Guatemala by monopolizing the finance and commerce of indigo, the primary product.

71 ANH, Roll 32, fol. 7722-7705, 7696, 7630. September 26 to October 18, 1784.

72 ANH, Roll 36, fol. 278. July 27, 1790. Roll 35, fol. 118, 120, 134, 137, 148. The Caja de Rescates was founded in 1780 to develop the mining industry but ended up financing the war efforts. Taracena, Illusión, 216-217.

73 Wortman, Government and Society, 155. Miles L. Wortman, Gobierno y Sociedad en Centro América, 1680-1840 (San José: EDUCA-BCIE, 1991), 185, 187, 368, 370.

Instability

Economic hardships and increasing war exigencies from the new policies produced strong tension between the Spanish and Mulatto populations. In June 1782, Don Joaquín José de Posada, high magistrate, militia colonel, and arms commander-in-chief of Tegucigalpa, implemented some provisions for Jeréz de la Frontera de Choluteca that collided with the interests of the town council and some of the most powerful inhabitants. Don Pedro de Zelaya, town councilmen, and Don Marcos de Ayala, Holy Brotherhood sheriff, led a resistance movement to countermanding Posada’s orders. They arrested and imprisoned the emissary, Don Manuel Murias and armed 400 men to challenge the authority of the high magistrate as well as to prevent an assault from loyal militias in the adjacent jurisdictions.

According to accounts, Zelaya and Ayala recruited popular thieves and outlaws in order to gain the sympathy of the vast Mulatto population. In Jeréz de la Frontera de Choluteca, the local interests and aspirations of the Mulatto community defied royal authority. The uprising demonstrated the inability of the authorities to subdue the Mulatto population and the incapacity of other militias to quell a resistance movement. At this time, most of the militias engaged in defending the coastal settlements, as well as nearby populations seldom supported the high magistrate’s policies and therefore were reluctant to restore order.75

75 ANH, Roll, 32, fol. 1036-1114. The rebellion began on June 9 and lasted until August 1782. This file is incomplete. Roll 32, fol. 9446. In the report, the authorities acknowledged the uprising on February 28, 1784, that involved 400 men.
Events in Nicaragua exemplified the resentment between Spanish military officers, distinguished families, and the Mulatto community. In December 1783, a robbery in the house of Don Juan de Orea, lieutenant colonel of the veteran battalion who resided in the town of Granada, involved several men from leading families and some Mulattoes. An extended dispute emerged between the militias and veteran officers for jurisdiction, as some prominent militia officers were accused and subsequently incarcerated for the theft. Additionally, the partial judging of Governor Juan de Aysa, colonel of the royal army, add to the indignation of the militia, leading families, and veteran officers. Moreover, the torture and ill treatment of leading citizens in the jail infuriated the principal families who charged Orea for ordering the infliction of punishment to their relatives. These occurrences led to the planning of an assault on Orea’s house by a group of militia officers, town residents, and Mulattoes. In August 1784, authorities established that Pedro de Alcantará Lara, a resident of Leon, Jacinto Bazán, a Mulatto slave, and an Indian had stolen the 1,200 pesos.76 Far from pacifying the indignation of leading families and Mulatto population, the accusation and subsequent arrest of these men only increased the level mistrust of royal and veteran authorities in the province.

Four years later, Intendant Aysa consulted the Council of Indies over the Royal Ordinance for New Spain’s Intendants that specifically stated the required tribute of two pesos for Mulattoes. Although Intendant Aysa considered the measure just, he resolved that it was not convenient at the time “due to the

76 Ayón, Historia, Vol. III, 137-142.
exorbitant number of Mulattoes in that province, compared to other classes, and the little force that the government was able to bring to bear in order to sustain a decree that would most certainly incur strong resistance. Aysa neglected to mention that applying such a measure would decrease the number of Mulattoes in the militias which would in turn compromise the defense of the province because the militias largely consisted of men from this group. Authorities recognized the resentment of the Mulatto community should the royal administration try to collect the tribute. Rancor would only increase if government officials would try to undermine the Fuero Militar that had been granted in 1782. These privileges released the Mulattoes from paying any tribute in exchange for serving in the defense of the province, and provided a channel for Mulatto militia officers to dispute royal orders and town council decisions.

Another dispute took place in September 1783 in Quetzaltenango when a veteran officer commissioned Mulatto officers, thus relegating Spaniards to his command. European militia officers were insulted when the veteran officer gave preferential treatment to people of dubious origin before other Spaniards. Don Domingo Gutiérrez Marroquín, captain of the second company of Quetzaltenango’s militia battalion, stated that Lieutenant Colonel Juan Ventura Escovedo, Grenadier Captain Manuel Florentino Cansinos, Felipe Páez the captain of the fourth company, and Manuel Días captain of the fifth company were people of “low birth,” and their appointments contradicted the orders given

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77 Konetzke, Colección, Vol. III, Segundo Tomo, 628-631. Consulta del Consejo de las Indias Sobre los motivos que ha tenido el gobernador e intendente de Nicaragua para no proceder a la exacción del tributo que se impone a los mulatos y negros libres. Madrid, September 10, 1788.
to the veteran officer. At the time, European captains led the first, second, third, seventh, and eight fusilier companies. When the battalion’s lieutenant colonel acting as commander died, Gutiérrez Marroquín argued that he should fill the vacancy, being the oldest officer, and because Manuel Dias was unable to fill the post. To strengthen the petition, Gutiérrez Marroquín provided the baptisms of the Mulatto officers showing their “obscure ancestry and the despicable truth” of being Mulattoes, consequently, excluding them from becoming officers.\textsuperscript{78} In arguing against the posting of the Mulattoes, Gutiérrez Marroquín showed his disdain for the lower classes, and especially for the Mulatto population’s attempt to advance socially by occupying posts reserved solely for Spaniards.

The Mulatto resentment against the Spanish in Quetzaltenango led to a popular insurrection on April 19, 1786. Don Fernando Corona, the magistrate, solicited aid from the Huehuetenango and Chanta militias of Totonicapán. The grenadier company as well as the first, second, third, and part of the fourth fusilier companies of Quezaltenango defended the town council and the magistrate from the rebels.\textsuperscript{79} Gutiérrez Marroquín pointed out that the majority of people who took part in the insurrection were militiamen, and one Mulatto officer was exiled to Havana for his involvement.\textsuperscript{80} The descriptions offered by Gutiérrez Marroquín and the receipts of troops payments indicated that only Mulatto forces militiamen rebelled against the authorities of the town. It also

\textsuperscript{78} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 9, exp. 152, fol. 1-4, 24-29. This controversy extended from 1783 to 1790.

\textsuperscript{79} AGCA, A2, leg. 116, exp. 2222, fol. 1-3v, 5, 9-10. The payment of the militia troops reached 3,066 pesos.

\textsuperscript{80} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 9, exp. 152, fol. 28.
suggests that the main reason for the insurrection lay in the deep underlying resentment of the Spanish by the Mulatto communities.

In Costa Rica, the Mulatto community frequently looked to its militia officers to fight the abuses committed by the town council of Cartago. Mulatto militia officers signed and dispatched a petition to the High Court in Nueva Guatemala protesting the town council policy to draft young people from Puebla de Los Angeles for public service, ignoring the Fuero Militar enjoyed by many of its members since 1782. Governor Joseph Perié repeated to the town councilmen that Mulattoes belonged to his jurisdiction due to the different services performed for the Crown. Perié also condemned the town councilmen's actions against the Mulatto militiamen despite privileges given by the Fuero Militar. In May 1785, the High Court clarified that all Mulattoes fell under ordinary justice, unless they were militiamen. The practice of drafting Mulattoes, however, continued and Mulatto officers formally accused the town councilmen of conscripting their sons and women to do servile works. In September of that same year, Guatemala's High Court dictated that anyone who dared to harass relatives of the Mulatto militia would face a military tribunal, and commanded the governor to fully apply the Fuero Militar. The Fuero Militar granted the power to Mulatto officers to bring to military justice anyone who did not respect the resolution of the High Court. This victory over the town council and leading families of Cartago protected the families of Mulattoes in service, but it widened the gulf between the two communities.

Controversies between the Spanish and Mulatto community in Cartago reached the boiling point on Holy Thursday 1784. Traditionally, a small detachment of the Mulatto militia and its commander, Josef Joaquim Coronel, waited at the cloister of the convent of San Francisco to take part in the nightly procession of pedimento. As the Mulatto detachment was about to join the procession, the Adjutant Major of the battalion and Lieutenant of the Royal Army, Don Felipe Gallegos, asked “Who ordered those soldiers to be there? Gallegos, immediately ordered the expulsion of the Mulatto detachment and recriminated Coronel for not informing him of his presence beforehand. The heated discussion led Gallegos to hit Coronel on the head with a stick, causing profuse bleeding. Following the incident, Coronel accused Gallegos of assaulting him due to “his scorn of the Fuero Militar that protected the Mulatto militia” and for “his animosity towards the Mulatto people.” According to witnesses, Coronel called the Mulatto militiamen to his aid, but at that moment, the town councilmen intervened to restore order. They immediately took Coronel and Gallegos to the Governor Don Juan de Flores’ residence. Before leaving the cloister, town councilman Don Francisco Carazo ordered the Mulatto militiamen to stand down. However, on the way to the governor’s house, he saw a throng of Mulatto people approaching and again stopped them by threatening to have them imprisoned. Meanwhile, another councilman met Gallegos on the way to the governor’s house in order to protect him, followed by Carazo with Coronel. The governor imprisoned Gallegos for the night- although it was more for his protection than for any scandal that he caused.\(^2\)

\(^2\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 43, exp. 102, fol. 1-12.
Following this incident, Coronel wrote a letter to Governor Juan de Flores demanding justice. The governor, however, instead tried to remove Coronel and the other Mulatto officers. Coronel demanded civil, criminal, and military proceedings against Gallegos by citing the rights given to him by the *Fuero Militar*. In addition, the Mulatto commander asked for the return of young Mulattoes in Gallegos’ service to La Puebla de Los Angeles - especially, Joseph Joachim Chavarria, the drummer from Coronel’s company, who was serving under the pretext of learning how to play.  

83 In his investigation, Flores interviewed town councilmen who witnessed the events that took place between Coronel and Gallegos. The governor’s report to Captain General Estachería included the insolent way Coronel treated Gallegos, the intent of mutiny, and the frequent drunken state of Coronel. In short, Flores concluded that the Mulatto militias should be subservient to Spanish officers, and opened a file to demonstrate the consistent state of Coronel’s intoxication, recommending his removal. In 1785, the Guatemalan authorities dictated a Royal Pardon, issued in honor of the birth of twins to the King that included Coronel, -but commissioned Flores to scrutinize his behavior.  

84 These disputes stemmed from the existing animosity between Spanish and Mulatto communities and for the privileges granted by the *Fuero Militar*. The Costa Rican Mulatto community became outspoken during these years by taking advantage of the military privileges that they had been granted and their avid voice, Josef Joachim Coronel.

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83 Ibid., fol. 1-4, Cartago, April 8, 1784.
84 Ibid., fol. 16-29.
After six years as Captain General Joseph de Estachería had failed to sustain the Spanish administrative changes and the military expansion in Central America. By the end of his rule in 1789, Estachería relegated the militias to the veteran troops in a futile attempt to place Europeans in most of the political and military posts. According to the Guatemalan writer Don Domingo Juarros, Estachería “governed with great integrity.” Nonetheless, Floyd argues the contrary, stating that Estachería was dismissed for letting the merchants run the economy and permitting fraud in the royal tobacco monopoly. Indeed, during these years Guatemalan merchants dominated fiscal activities in Central America and the erroneous policies contributed to a critical economic situation by 1789. Though the administrative changes after 1786 did increase revenues, expenses were augmented as well as especially by the military. Thus, far from having a definite policy, Estachería helped to destabilize an already shaky and declining economy, which resulted in severe economic problems at the beginning of the 1790s.

In military matters, the Crown trusted an experienced soldier to conduct the expansion along the coast. The expansion, however, exceeded Central American revenues and the Spanish officers were unable to further the colonization beyond Cabo Gracias a Dios, the ephemeral southern outpost.

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85 Juarros, Compendio, 218-219.

86 Floyd, The Anglo, 183.

Furthermore, the settlements were a money consuming enterprise that only served to proclaim Spanish sovereignty, but seldom provided significant occupation.

Militias were relegated because Estachería preferred to put the security of Central America in the hand of the veteran regiment. Spanish officers scorned at the potential of the militias and questioned the *Fuero Militar* granted to them. Estachería placed the defense of Central American in the hands of the two veteran battalions. The first came in 1777, with himself as commander, and the second arrived in 1786, doubling the number of veteran troops. 88 Two years later, the royal hall of arms at Nueva Guatemala reported to have 4,140 muskets and 911 swords, the largest number ever. 89 Confident in the veteran battalions, Estachería deactivated the militias. However, this was a period of political instability challenged by the emerging Mulatto communities. The *Fuero Militar* provided the effective device to contest authority and to advance in the struggle against abuses. As stated, the Captain General worked to annul the privileges established by the *Fuero Militar* by allowing the Distribution Ordinance to be issued in San Salvador during 1784. 90

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89 AGCA, A2, 303, exp. 7064.

90 Fernández Molina, “Población,” 338.
Chapter 7

Decline and Dissension Within the Militias 1789-1799

For years, King Charles III and the Minister of the Indies, Don Joseph de Gálvez, had wished to expel the English from Central America. Following the end of the Anglo-Spanish War in 1783, a series of negotiations resulted in the final evacuation of the British settlements in 1787. Shortly after, the Minister of the Indies approved an expansion and colonization plan for the Mosquitia coast.¹ Within two years, however, the main proponents of the expansion had died and the settlement of the coast was crippled by a lack of sufficient royal support. In 1787, the Minister of the Indies died, followed by King Charles III next year. His successor to the Spanish throne, King Charles IV, proved incompetent in its governing of the Empire. Due to the turn of events, Estachería’s administration failed to establish a firm grip on the coastal areas and only was able to maintain a feeble military presence, thereby failing to subjugate the Zambo-Miskitos.

In 1789, Central America entered a period of crisis caused by the erroneous policies of Estachería’s administration, the loss of competent Spanish

royal leadership and death of Spanish leadership, and unstable economic situation. This instability was to last until Central America achieved its independence from the Spanish Empire. Wars waged as a result of Spain's belligerent policies in 1793 increased the difficult situation within the Empire and the Kingdom. Furthermore, the ineptitude of King Charles IV and the Guatemalan Captain Generals helped to fuel the political instability. In top of all this, the Intendant System further worsened the already delicate situation by placing incompetent officers that only increased confusion. The years between 1789 and 1799 were marked by the gradual deterioration of Spanish control. During this time, the Spanish military policies favored militia inactivity, curtailed exemptions, and effectively reduced privileges granted to the castes, facilitating dissension between Spanish-born army officers and Spanish-American militia officers. The outcome was a decline in the militias that ended in a new military reform in 1799 that removed the castes from the Fuero Militar and decreased the numbers of men serving in the disciplined militias.

Administrative Changes and the Zambo-Miskito Revolt

1789-1790

A weak administration and the failure of the Mosquitia colonization provided the breeding ground of the Zambo-Miskito revolt of 1790. Estachería succeeded in the evacuation of the British and the colonization of the coast, but he did not provide the necessary support to strengthen these settlements,
leaving them vulnerable. The Crown replaced Estacheria with Brigadier Bernardo Troncoso y Martínez as the Captain General in 1789. The 84 year-old Troncoso proved to be an ineffectual commander because of his advance age and failing health. In his five years in office, Troncoso spent more time in the hospital than on the administration of the Kingdom. During Estacheria’s administration the coastal colonies did not receive proper support, but with Troncoso the situation deteriorated to the point of losing them entirely in 1790.

The Crown and the Captain General had entrusted the intendants to supply and protect the coastal settlements. After 1786, however, the initiation of new administrative changes brought about much confusion. Both intendants and sub-delegates were barely adjusting to the new policies to govern their territories, when the Crown replaced them in 1789 with Europeans newcomers who were unfamiliar with the region. The lack of coordination increased when the new intendants failed to attain the cooperation of the indigenous population severely limiting the new intendants’ ability to provide protection for the settlements along the coast.

In Honduras, Intendant Joseph Neponuceno de Quesada y Barrionuevo (1783-1789) was replaced by Don Alexo García y Conde (1789-1793). Similarly, the Nicaraguan Intendant, Don Juan de Aysa (1783-1789) was replaced by Don Joseph Mateu y Aranda (1789-1793). In Costa Rica, the

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2 Floyd, *The Anglo*, 170-171, 175, 183. Troncoso was 84 years old when he was appointed as Captain General. Juárezs, *Compendio*, 219. Troncoso had served previously in Havana.


constant shift of governors compromised its defense capabilities. Don Joseph Perié governed from 1785-1789. Following Perié’s illness and eventual death, Don Joseph Antonio de Oreamuno was appointed to the governor’s post (1788-1789). For a few months following Oreamuno, Don Juan Estéban de Pinillos acted as governor until Don Josef Vázquez y Téllez was appointed to the post in November 1790. After 1789, the settlements and the defenses of the Caribbean coast deteriorated until they were finally abandoned in 1791, because the intendants had failed to support effectively the settlements and resist the Zambo-Miskito advances.

The continuous replacement or death of key military commanders accelerated the deterioration of the settlements along the coast. In 1787, in order to reinforce its determination to keep the coast occupied, the Crown created new military commander posts for Trujillo, Black River, Cabo Gracias a Dios, Roatán Island, and at the mouth of the San Juan River. Two years later, a military commander post was also commissioned for Fort San Carlos. At the port of Trujillo, the main base for the expansion and control of the coast, royal authorities designated Colonel Félix Dominguez as commander in 1787. During Dominguez’ continues absences several officers replaced him as Don Josef de Alcántara. On May 29, 1789, a year previous to the Zambo-Misquito rebellion, Don Josef de Cocaña was assigned as interim arms commander, later replaced

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5 Obregón, De Nuestra, 142, 148-150.


7 ANH, Roll 34, fol. 1034. May 29, 1788.
by Don Juan Ignacio de Arraurrenechea on September 14.⁸ On November 29, 1789, the eve of the Zambo-Misquito rebellion Commander Domínguez died unexpectedly. His death came at the time when the militias were receiving irregular payments for their service.⁹ Commander Alejandro Medina filled Domínguez position in 1790 and confronted the advancing Zambo-Miskitos.¹⁰

A similar situation took place at Black River in August 1788, where the provisional commander was veteran Captain Isidoro Gordon.¹¹ That year, Lieutenant-Colonel Lorenzo Vázquez y Aguilar occupied the post as commander until his death in 1790.¹² Again, the commander died precisely when aggressors threatened the settlements along the coast.

The settlement at Cabo Gracias a Dios had two weaknesses: it had the smallest garrison and it was located close to the heart of the Zambo-Miskito camps. Captain Pedro Bricio became the interim commander on April 28, 1788. A year later, on December 31, he was replaced by Captain Francisco Pérez de Brito.¹³ During the Zambo-Miskito attack of 1790, a combination of Pérez de Brito’s poor decisions and insufficient support from the surrounding settlements resulted in the retreat of Spanish forces and victory for the enemy. The Spanish

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⁸ ANH, Roll 35, 852, 854.

⁹ ANH, Roll 36, fol. 56. Roll 38, fol. 1773, 1810, 1815, 1821, 1826, 1830. Reports stated the lack of payments in 1788.

¹⁰ ANH, Roll 36, fol. 268.

¹¹ ANH, Roll 38, fol. 1870. August 20, 1788.

¹² ANH, Roll 38, fol. 1860; Roll 36, fol. 197. Artillery Lieutenant Don Juan Valerio conducted the remaining effects of Commander Vázquez y Aguilar from Trujillo on June 30, 1790.

¹³ ANH, Roll 36, fol. 65, 248.
forces were unable to launch a counter-attack and were only able to defend the other settlements by bringing troops from the inland Honduran towns.

San Fernando de Omoa underwent a similar experience. Its commander Colonel Ignacio Maestre died in 1790.\textsuperscript{14} His death marked a serious blow to the ability to launch offensives from the biggest fort in the area. As in the other locations, the death of its commander limited its ability to control and combat the Zambo-Miskito rebellion.

Previous to the Zambo-Miskito uprising, Guatemalan and Nicaraguan royal authorities had intended to pacify and win over the Caribbean inhabitants. The marriage of Zambo-Miskito Chief Carlos Antonio de Castilla with María Manuela Rodríguez Mojica consecrated an opportune alliance making a decisive Spanish headway into the Miskito territories. After the marriage took place on December 22, 1788, Intendant Aysa requested a written treaty of friendship and alliance from Castilla who granted it, nevertheless, the marriage led to open rebellion by Castilla’s subjects who opposed cooperation with Spain. Before Castilla departed from León to Tuapi Lagoon in early 1789, several Miskito chiefs rose up against his authority in the Bluefields region. For this reason, he opted to return via the northern territories under the protection of the Zambo-Miskito King George II, who expressed his disapproval of the Spanish intervention. Upon returning to Tuapi Lagoon, Castilla found that his nephew, Alparis Delce of Pearl Lagoon had joined King George II. In his disapproval of the Spanish alliance, a few months later, in September of 1790, King George II refused to recognize any

\textsuperscript{14} AGCA, A3, leg. 1075, exp. 19598.
Spanish authority and launched an assault on Cabo Gracias a Dios. Coinciding with this rebellion, Alparis Delce killed his uncle and claimed his dominion over Bluefields and Tuapi Lagoon.\(^\text{15}\)

Beginning in March 1790, King George II headed a united Zambo-Miskito force against the Spanish outposts. Attacks were centered on the settlements of Cabo Gracias a Dios and Black River due to their vulnerability and weakened defenses. Cabo Gracias a Dios was comprised of only a small militia garrison that depended totally on Trujillo, its only line of communication by sea. By March, the position of Cabo Gracias a Dios became impossible to defend for the few Spanish troops who opted to retreat from the Zambo-Miskito siege. After receiving reports of the uprising, the intendant ordered the inland towns to send troops to Trujillo and Black River, beginning in March and continuing through June.\(^\text{16}\)

Intendant Alexa García y Conde dispatched troops in 1790 to protect Black River from a possible attack after the strong advances made by the Zambo-Miskito and the precipitated Spanish withdrawal from Cabo Gracias a Dios.\(^\text{17}\) For many years, Black River represented the chief military prize in the


\(^{16}\) ANH, Roll 36, fol. 117-120, 134, 137, 148, 151-152, 165, 268, 271, 274-279. The payments to troops serving in Trujillo and Black River during this emergency signaled the rapidity to protect the other settlements. Floyd, The Anglo, 169. The documents do not mention Cabo Gracias a Dios as a Spanish possession after March 1790. The Zambo-Miskitos began rebelling against Spanish dominion in March of 1790.

\(^{17}\) ANH, Roll 36, fol. 268-277.
Anglo-Spanish struggle for the Mosquitia. Thus, the Spanish could lose Cabo Gracias a Dios, but not Black River, which represented the pride of possessing a former English colony.

Robert Hodgson (the Younger), the acting Spanish governor of Bluefields had failed to quell the Zambo-Miskitos. The Zambo-Miskitos had drove out Hodgson from Bluefields during the 1790 uprising. In an effort to contain the Zambo-Miskito revolt, Spanish authorities in Nueva Guatemala called Hodgson to their presence. However, Colonel Hodgson died in Nueva Guatemala on June 6, 1791, this event eliminated one of the few reliable connections with the Zambo-Miskitos chiefs.

After the rebellion lost its momentum and most of troops had returned to the inland cities, Spanish officers began negotiations with the Zambo-Miskitos. As a result, Zambo Major General Joal came to Nueva Guatemala. During this meeting, the Spanish intended to forge a friendship or at least to obtain a cease-fire. Despite the efforts of the Spanish negotiators, however, the hostilities continued.

When the fear of an assault on Black River subsided in 1791, the Intendant and Honduran Royal Treasurer made available the resources to rebuild churches, barracks, hospitals, warehouses for supplies and ammunition, military defenses, and government buildings for the settlements. Completion of

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19 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 9, exp. 158, fol. 1-27.

20 ANH, Roll 36, fol. 200. Don Carlos Pinzón, lieutenant of the royal artillery corps, escorted Joal and received 350 pesos for travel expenses on October 11, 1790.
this infrastructure, however, was complicated due to the lack of skilled workers.\textsuperscript{21} Lieutenant-Colonel Don Tadeo Muniesa made it known that of “many of the 150 militiamen serving at Black River hid their skills frightened that they would be ordered to work.”\textsuperscript{22} In order to solve the problem of lacking qualified labor, the military officers recommended extra payment to Mulatto militiamen for contributing their skills in carpentry and blacksmithing.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{Figure 18} \hspace{1cm} The Caribbean Coast of Central America

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., fol. 1311-1314.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., fol. 1299-1302. Report written on April 30, 1791.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., fol. 1305. Comayagua’s Renta Provincial, July 22, 1791.
\end{itemize}
In October of 1791, the Spanish at Black River recognized the need for mahogany wood for the different projects and the urgent repair of the pirogues that unloaded the supply ships. Most likely, the fear of a Zambo-Miskito attack and the Anglo-Zambo-Miskito alliance prompted the Spanish to contract Mr. Stephen Winter, an Englishmen, to provide the necessary wood. The Spanish commander at Black River sought to build a commercial bond with the Zambo-Miskitos in order to forge a durable friendship. By doing this, the Spanish hoped to prevent any possible military action, as well as to gain the trust of the Zambo-Miskito, which would result in the growth of the Black River colony.

**Economic and Political Crisis After 1789**

Despite the initial revenue increase, the Central American intendants faced a chronic economic decline of the main products of the region: indigo, cattle, silver, and cocoa. The Guatemalan merchant group increased its economic power by monopolizing the finance and commerce of indigo after the English moved the center for illegal trade to Belize and strengthened their commercial ties with the Guatemalan elite.

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24 Ibid., fol. 1442-1448, October 6-8, 1791.
25 Naylor, Penny, 71.
The 1790s, however, ushered in a period of rapid and somewhat drastic economic deterioration that was fueled by the world competition. Central America ceased to be the center of the indigo trade that it once had been. Mining products, cattle and cocoa were also declining, further depleting the financial resources with which to cover the military expenditures. Deepening of the crisis continued throughout the decade as militia mobilizations were accentuating the rising costs of an already bankrupt state.27

Although royal ordinances decreed the construction of defenses along the coast in 1791, Spain was on the brink of economic collapse and could not provide any financial aid to the region. The economic shortages that had began in late the 1780s reached a major crisis proportions by 1792, lasting through Central America’s independence.28

In 1793, Spain replaced all of the Central American intendants and declared war on France, increasing the difficulties suffered by these territories. The shifting of intendants did not provide solutions to the ongoing economic crisis. Furthermore, the declaration of war against France on March 7 reduced


transatlantic trade. Finally, the Crown focused solely on the acquisition of war resources neglecting all other concerns.\textsuperscript{29}

To manage the Kingdom during these difficult times, royal authorities entrusted Don Josef Domás y Valle as Captain General, for the period of 1794-1801. If Captain General Troncoso had led an ineffective government from 1789 to 1793, Domás y Valle was worse as he could not control the deficit, a general goods shortage, insubordination of crown officials, and the mismanagement of the Treasury. It should be noted that his advanced age (90) was a major contributing factor to the weakness of his administration.\textsuperscript{30} In Europe, the French armies had defeated Spain, forging an Anglo-Spanish alliance from 1793–1795. The English and Central Americans thereby benefiting from the resultant increased in commerce. In 1795, Spain made peace with France, but a year later declared war on Great Britain creating an ongoing conflict that lasted until 1808.

**Wars and the Fear of Revolutionary Expansion**

During the late 1780s, Europe and the Caribbean were shaken by revolutions that proved to be the most influential of the eighteenth century. In 1789, the ideals of the French Revolution threatened all monarchical systems in


Europe. In the French possession of Saint Domingue, the French Revolution with its Declaration of the Rights of Man provoked a massive slave revolt in 1791. These two events inspired slave rebellions and conspiracies throughout the entire Caribbean region, disrupting the economy and menacing the political systems of Spain, England, and France.\textsuperscript{31}

England and Spain took advantage of the incessant calls for assistance and decided to profit through a military intervention in Saint Domingue. Local authorities in Saint Domingue began begging for Jamaican troops, arms, and ammunition as early as September 1791.\textsuperscript{32} Spain reinforced its position on the island by recruiting slaves and Free Black men as auxiliary troops, promising freedom and other privileges if they cooperated in quelling the uprising. Formal occupation, however, did not begin until the start of the Franco-Spanish War in 1793. For two years Spain was able to occupy Saint Domingue thanks to the strength of its auxiliary troops that dominated most of the regions. In 1795, Spain agreed to withdraw its forces from Saint Domingue and ceded its holdings on the island to France. Similarly, British troops landed on Saint Domingue on 1793, but they were also forced to withdraw in 1798. France also dispatched large contingents of veteran troops between 1791 and 1803. Despite having regular soldiers and ample logistic military support, none of the main powers could quell the rebellion. Furthermore, the strong resistance and inability of the major


\textsuperscript{32} Fortescue, \textit{A History of the British Army} (Vol. IV, New York: AMS, 1915), 76.
powers to control the most productive colony in the region during the slave rebellion in Saint Domingue inspired other insurrections along the Caribbean basin.\footnote{Gaspar and Geggus, \textit{A Turbulent}, 21-25. See also David Patrick Geggus, \textit{Haitian Revolutionary Studies} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), Chapter 11. The Great Powers and the Haitian Revolution, 171-176.}

The beheading of French King Louis XVI triggered the Franco-Spanish War. Most European monarchical houses perceived the French Revolution as dangerous and allied to dismantle the French way of government. Spain placed unacceptable conditions to maintain its neutrality towards the revolutionary French regime and declared war on March 7, 1793. At the beginning of the war, Spain achieved important victories but after a series of defeats that followed the Spanish House of Bourbon signed the peace Treaty of Basel on July 22, 1795. The treaty demanded the return of all conquered territories and Spain ceded the other half of Saint Domingue to France. In addition, King Charles IV and the French Republic signed a defensive and offensive treaty on June 27, 1796, that was ratified in San Ildefonso on August 18 resulting in the declaration of war against England on October 7. This war was to last through the rest of Charles IV’s reign.\footnote{Ayón, \textit{Historia}, Vol. III, 214-215, 239-243.}

The outbreak of war in 1793 obliged Britain and Spain to fully cooperate in order to minimize any influences from the French and Saint Domigue Revolutions in their respective territories. In a Royal Decree, the Spanish King explained that after the beheading of his “august cousin Louis XVI” and the need to combat the
French revolutionaries, Spain formed a defensive and offensive alliance with Great Britain. The provisional treaty provided a system of alliance and commerce, in which, both kings combined their wartime resources to fight France and to hurt its trade with neutral nations. At the same time, Spain and Britain opened their ports in order to protect their navies. Ultimately, the alliance relied upon mutual aid in the case of invasion, and to no cease hostilities until France returned any conquered territory. Despite being negotiated as early as May 25, 1793, the treaty suffered numerous delays in its ratification by both nations, and it was not until November 8 that Charles IV signed it. The war communication arrived in Comayagua on April 22, 1794, and three weeks later in Tegucigalpa.\textsuperscript{35} The Honduras’ Intendancy was the most vulnerable place for the introduction of revolutionary ideas as it had the main ports on the Caribbean with its defenses placed in the hands of slaves and Mulattoes.

In Guayaquil, royal authorities discovered a clock with inscriptions and paintings allusive to the French Revolution. As a result, the King resolved to forbid the introduction of such propaganda into Spanish territories and alerted all royal functionaries, the army, and intendants to be on the alert for such things. The Royal Order signed on July 20, 1793, however, did not get to Nueva Guatemala until November 15\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{36} In the Kingdom of Guatemala, royal authorities perceived San Fernando de Omoa and Sonsonate as the most susceptible places for the introduction of subversive propaganda. Though

\textsuperscript{35} ANH, Roll 37, fol. 1307-1320.

\textsuperscript{36} ANH, Roll, 37, fol. 1936.
preventive instructions came to Comayagua on May 8, 1794, it was almost a month later before they arrived in Tegucigalpa. By this time, rumors persisted that French agents were coming into New Spain. According to the information, French agents, with the aid of disaffected Mexicans, would lead an uprising to conquer the port of Veracruz. These rumors caused great alarm resulting in mobilization of troops in the viceroyalty. In the light of rumors, Guatemalan authorities began conducting a series of investigations to check the loyalty of French residents.

As disturbing news from Mexico City increased, Nueva Guatemala’s military authorities acknowledged that French agents planned to lead an insurrection. In October 1794, the authorities took preventive measures, such as placing under arms one company of the Provincial Dragoon Regiment. Sixty men in total patrolled the capital city. To have effective control, the Captain General commissioned Don Manuel Martínez as interim Adjutant Major of the Provincial Dragoon Corps. Also on October 21, 1794; Domás y Valle dispatched a corporal and 8 privates to guard the Arms Hall. The Provincial Dragoons continued to guard Nueva Guatemala for the next three months.

Domás y Valle only reluctantly trusted the population of Nueva Guatemala in the event of an uprising. Upon receiving more news from New Spain, the

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37 Ibid., fol. 1939-1940.
39 Carlos Meléndez Chaverri, La Ilustración en el Antiguo Reino de Guatemala (San José: EDUCA, 1970), 142-144.
40 AGCA, A3, leg. 2165, exp. 32519, fol. 37-40.
Captain General ordered that all weapons be transported to the Royal Palace. The Royal Master Armorer, Don Francisco Planas, notified that for the “utmost security and under the actual circumstances” all weapons were already in the Royal Palace on December 12.\textsuperscript{41} Moving them to the Royal Palace insured that the firearms were only accessible to the Captain General and the veteran soldiers. In the case of riots, the militias, lacking of firearms, would no threat should they decided to join the insurrection. Within a year, however, the Franco-Spanish War had ended and rumors working against royal authorities had dissipated.

The Captain General, Domás y Valle, had enough valid reasons for mistrusting the militias in case of rebellion. Veteran officers refused to accept the granting of the \textit{Fuero Militar} and other exemptions to disciplined militias. The regular army officers rejected the idea that militias, without tough military discipline, should enjoy the same privileges that they had. For several years, the Captain Generals had tried to attenuate the \textit{Fuero Militar} given to the militias.\textsuperscript{42} Troncoso continued the policy of crippling militia exemptions and to curtailing the use of the \textit{Fuero Militar} by decreeing a new rule in 1791. He exempted Mulattoes from serving on the coast if they worked in the mines in Honduras. Mine owners constantly charged that large numbers of Mulattoes serving on the coast prevented them from finding workers.\textsuperscript{43} As a result, the authorities

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., fol. 2.

\textsuperscript{42} Fernández Molina, “Población,” 335. Captain General Estachería approved the Ordinance of the San Salvador Indigo Producers that sought to annul the militia exemptions in 1784.

\textsuperscript{43} ANH, Archivos Municipales de Yoro, Roll 7, Box 2, fol. 2562. July 9, 1791. ANH, Colonial Section, Roll 36, fol. 567. June 9, 1790.
permitted Mulattoes to work in the mines in lieu of serving at the coastal settlements and, in this way, they were able to strip them off the \textit{Fuero Militar}. Additionally, if the Mulattoes worked in the mines, the Crown would not have to pay them, and would thus save money for the devastated treasury. Lastly, the new order turned over the control of the Mulattoes to local authorities and miner owners. Another royal order issued in 1793 established that local authorities could arrest any militiaman that committed a crime and later hand him over to the military authorities.\textsuperscript{44} This decree placed the militias totally under local jurisdiction. It curtailed one of the most important exemptions for the Mulatto militias, the ability to avoid arrest and incarceration by local authorities. The confusion and ambivalence of these orders permitted local authorities to negate militia privileges and abuse the castes. Indeed, the weakening of the privileges for the castes and the abuse by local authorities did little to assure their loyalty. Therefore in 1794, Domás y Valle depended solely on regular soldiers to protect royal authority against French sponsored insurrections.

\textbf{The Struggle for Power}

The French Revolution, the Saint Domingue Revolution, the rumors of insurrection, and the mistrust of the local militias obliged royal authorities to prefer Spanish-born officers over Spanish-American officers for key posts.

\textsuperscript{44} AGCA, A2, leg. 9(4), exp. 171, fol. 1-3. Nueva Guatemala, August 12, 1793.
Captain General Troncoso only entrusted war veterans with important positions. Don Fernando Basurto, adjutant major of the veteran regiment and second mayor of León’s town council, requested control of the royal treasury of Comayagua. Don Francisco Antonio de Castro, militia captain of the north coast of Chontales, petitioned for the position of director of the Monte de Socorro of the Indigo Producers. Likewise, Don Cristóbal Bernal, infantry captain of the royal army and commander of Fort San Felipe del Golfo Dulce, requested the High Magistracy of Escuintla in 1791. 45 Continuing his policy, Troncoso sought to place Spanish-born military officers in the more important military posts. Don Manuel de Novas, the captain of the royal artillery corps, became commander of San Fernando de Omoa in 1790. Three years later, Troncoso appointed him as military chief of the Verapaz Province with the express order to rule and discipline the militias. 46

The policy of preferring Spanish-born officers to Spanish-American officers led to a power struggle in the Kingdom of Guatemala. Newly arrived veteran officers were rapidly promoted to high military positions. Don Salvador Jabalois was a fusilier lieutenant of the royal regiment in 1787. Two years later, he received a commission as captain of the royal army and interim commander of San Fernando de Omoa. In 1792, Jabalois became adjutant major of the Provincial Dragoon Regiment in Nueva Guatemala. 47 Problems immediately

45 AGCA, A1, leg. 1755, fol. 110-120. These appointments happened in 1791. Also, see Nombramientos y Mercedes de Don Bernardo Troncoso 1790, fol 92.


47 AGCA, A3(3), leg. 500, exp. 5609; A1, leg. 1755, fol 193v; A2, leg. 297, exp. 6606. ANH, Roll 35, fol. 1017.
began to arise from this policy. In Comayagua, Colonel Cayetano Ansoategui had open disputes with his militia subordinates for appointing a veteran officer to be in charge of the transporting the money used to pay the troops without first consulting them. Militia captains complained to the Captain General that Ansoategui treated them badly for protesting the election, which resulting in his receiving a severe reprimand from Nueva Guatemala in 1791. In a letter, Ansoategui stated that if the officers had behaved appropriately this incident would never have taken place. However, the militia officers responded that the colonel had treated them without respect in word and deed. Ansoategui’s disdain for the Spanish-American officers and his mistrust of the natives influenced his preference for posting Spanish-born officers. In a similar situation in 1793, when the new high magistrate of Sonsonate, Don Manuel Cotón, posted new government regulations, there was a rupture in the relations between him and the town council. In Granada, the intervention of a judge in military recruitment led to a delicate situation between Lieutenant-Colonel Francisco Antonio Ugarte and the intendant.

Despite the preference of placing Spanish-born officers in military posts during the 1790s, Spain displayed the weakness of its along the coasts by having to rely on the loyalty of the local militias. Spanish-born officers either died or renounced their assignments at the coastal settlements. In 1790, the

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48 AGCA, A2, leg. 13, exp. 142; A2(4), leg. 14, exp. 157.
experienced commander of San Fernando de Omoa, Colonel Ignacio Maestre, died while directing the defense of the port.\textsuperscript{51} Two years later, Fort San Felipe del Golfo was left without a commander due to the resignation of Cristóbal Bernal. The interim commander, Luis Rodríguez, had also requested that he fill the vacancy in the artillery detachment.\textsuperscript{52} Experienced Spanish officers attempted to avoid this serving at the coastal settlements because of the poor living conditions that would eventually cost them their lives. Many rejected the posts or served for a very little time before renouncing their commissions to these areas. The military reports from the coastal posts showed the weakness of the Spanish defensive potential between 1792 and 1794.\textsuperscript{53} Most of the accounts during the 1770s and 1780s showed that the situation was as it has been planned. The situation as it stood in the early 1790s, however, was rarely taken into consideration and just reviews only focused on the costs to the royal treasury. Regular soldiers and officers did not serve in the coastal areas. According to the military service reports, most of the Spanish regular officers and soldiers resided in towns away from the coastal areas between 1793 and 1796.\textsuperscript{54} The vast majority of the defense force was composed of disciplined militias. Militia reviews from Roatán, Trujillo, and Black River between 1791 and 1793

\textsuperscript{51} AGCA, A3, leg. 1075, exp. 19598, fol. 1-1v. Letter announcing the death of Colonel Don Ignacio Maestre in 1790. March 26, 1791.

\textsuperscript{52} AGCA, A1, leg. 1755, fol. 243. January 6, 1792.

\textsuperscript{53} AGCA, A3, leg. 590, exp. 11700, fol. 1-20v.

showed that their garrison soldiers came from Gracias a Dios, Tegucigalpa, Comayagua, and Olanchito. A similar report indicated that the artillery and veteran companies guarding San Fernando de Omoa were composed mainly of slaves, militiamen, and exiles. Even in Costa Rica, the Mulatto militias continued supplying men for the defense of Matina in the 1790s. However, these militias reluctantly complied with their commissions to guard the coast, and most of the time only marched under threat from the local authorities. The Spanish-born officers were always a minority in the defense force and by this time, many had already married, being absorbed into or developed strong ties between themselves and the Spanish-American and local populations.

The General Troop Review of 1794

In 1793, the Crown replaced all of the intendants in Central America, and a year later commissioned a new Captain General in Nueva Guatemala. These changes resulted from new developments in the international arena. The Franco-Spanish war, the Anglo-Spanish alliance, and the menace of French revolutionary agents demanded a complete review of the troops and the

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55 AGCA, A2, leg. 13, exp. 140-141; leg. 14, exp. 154, 158, 159.


57 ANCR, Serie Complementario Colonial, doc. 590, fol. 20, 22, 56, 57.
defensive capability of the Kingdom. On July 16, 1794, two months after assuming the post of Captain General, Don Josef Domás y Valle received the General Troop Review (Table XV).\(^{58}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Description of the Company</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infantry</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Ana</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 63 men each</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tegucigalpa</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Agustin</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 63 men each</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartago</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leon</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Segovia</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiqimula</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 63 men each</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comayagüa</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quetzaltenango</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
<td>783</td>
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<td>Gracias a Dios</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Miguel</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Granada</td>
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<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaraagua</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonsonate</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacatepéquez</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Salvador</td>
<td>2 battalions, 18 companies of 87 men each</td>
<td>1,566</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ciudad Real</td>
<td>1 battalion, 9 companies of 87 men each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olancho</td>
<td>6 companies of 100 men each</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olanchito</td>
<td>3 companies of 110 men each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yoro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jicaro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Realejo</td>
<td>2 companies of 100 men each</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chontales</td>
<td>6 companies of 110 men each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Escuintla</td>
<td>4 companies of 87 men each</td>
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<td>Castillo del Petén</td>
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<td>Suchitepequez</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuxla</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totonicapán</td>
<td>3 companies of 87 men each</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verapaz</td>
<td>1 company</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicoya</td>
<td>3 companies of 77 men each</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cavalry</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tegucigalpa</td>
<td>1 squadron, 3 companies of 56 men each</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>2 squadrons, 6 companies of 56 men each</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leon</td>
<td>1 squadron, 3 companies of 56 men each</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Agustin</td>
<td>2 companies of 56 men each</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonsonate</td>
<td>2 companies of 56 men each</td>
<td>112</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicaraagua</td>
<td>1 Spaniard company</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Provincial Dragoons</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1 regiment, 4 squadrons, 12 companies of 50 men each and 10 supernumeraries</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Artillery Details</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>6 companies of 110 men each and 10 supernumeraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemala Penitentiary</td>
<td>2 infantry companies of 108 men each and the supernumeraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>7 infantry companies of 67 men each</td>
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<td>Chiquimula</td>
<td>1 cavalry squadron, 3 companies of 56 men each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verapaz</td>
<td>1 infantry company</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicoya</td>
<td>1 infantry company</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Pedro Sula</td>
<td>1 infantry company</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,320</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Force**: 21,076


This General Troop Review corresponded identically to the General Troop Review presented in 1782. Domás y Valle received this report from the Kingdom’s general war auditor, Don Joaquin Vasco y Bargas, who simply transcribed the militia set-up that had been established in 1782. In fact, both reviews contained the same distribution and number of troops. Vasco y Bargas had simply ignored several changes and reported 21,076 men as the total force.\(^59\)

Table XIV shows a detailed account of each unit and its manpower. Infantry made up the largest force in the review, totaling 17,405 men. Infantry battalions numbered either 563 or 787 soldiers. Also, in some places, authorities considered it necessary to create companies instead of battalions to protect areas like the borderlands and the coasts. Companies along the borderlands had different troop or manpower ratios, and usually the numbers of companies varied according to the quantity of men available. The second largest force in the review was the cavalry and dragoon corps which accounted 1,691 men. The

\(^{59}\) AGCA, A2.2 leg. 10, exp. 181, fol. 22.
third force was comprised of the artillery units based in Granada. The artillery force consisted of six militia companies, for a total of 660 men. In this report, royal authorities showed that the infantry, cavalry, dragoon, and artillery units were composed of Spanish-Americans or Mestizos. Finally, the severely reduce Mulatto militias only made up a small part of the force and not the majority, as reported in previous years. Mulatto infantry and cavalry units numbered only 1,320 men. Supposedly, Mulatto militias only existed in places where the Spanish could not provide a complete company.

Vasco y Bargas’ report contained various incongruities. The General Troop Review did not show the current available force in 1794. The report also divided troops between Mulatto and non-Mulatto units. According to this account, non-Mulatto units accounted for the greatest number of men. This was an erroneous conception because Mulatto troops actually were in the majority, and in some localities they were the only available force. The General Troop Review erroneously presented these Mulatto soldiers as Spanish. This situation occurred because either Vasco y Bargas or town officers put down the battalions as Spanish, despite their being comprised of, in large part, the castes. The Sonsonate battalion received the classification of Spanish militia in 1794, disregarding the fact that the authorities had repeatedly stated that Mulattoes had constituted the majority of the force since 1767. When Captain General Matias de Gálvez commissioned the battalion, he appointed a Spanish command staff
and officers. The Sonsonate battalion became part of the Spanish militias in 1782. Likewise, the San Salvador militia was largely composed of Mulattoes who belonged to the Spanish militia. When authorities sent 313 militiamen for the great Caribbean offensive in 1782, only the officers were Spanish. Similarly, the Jicaro militia company appeared in the report as a Spanish company, while in reality, it consisted entirely of Mulatto and Black men. In this company only its command staff was Spanish. The majority of the disciplined militias were composed of either caste or Mestizo soldiers. Only in very few instances were whole units entirely made up of Spanish officers and soldiers.

Another anomaly was the presentation of the Guatemalan Penitentiary Mulatto companies as active. The general war auditor neglected to report the abolition of the Mulatto companies. In 1792, Captain General Troncoso ordered the dismantling of the Penitentiary in Nueva Guatemala and decommissioning of its two companies. Vasco y Bargas continued with the same militia organization and claimed that both companies remained on active duty despite the money saving policies and annulment of privileges to the castes.

The erroneous information created the impression that most of provincial militias continued in service and consisted mainly of Spanish men. In 1791 the

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60 Montoya, “Milicias”, 100. The Captain General reported that the Sonsonate force consisted solely of Mulattoes on December 1, 1767. Also mentioned were Quetzaltenango, Soconusco, Totonicapán, Verapáz, Suchitepequez, Solola, Nicoya, Realejo, Subtiava, y Matagalpa.

61 AGCA, A1(3), leg. 38, exp. 400, fol. 1-6v.

62 AGCA, A3.1, leg. 583, fol. 214-215. This company had been comprised of 110 Mulatto or Black men since 1780.

63 AGCA, A1, leg. 2643, exp. 22085, fol. 2. Royal Palace, Nueva Guatemala, September 22, 1792.
High Magistrate and Commander of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, Don Francisco Sebastián Chamorro, reported that based upon the number of men in his jurisdiction, he could enlist four companies in Totonicapán. Nonetheless, the wicked habits within the Mulatto militiamen prevented authorities from furnishing even one company. Commander Chamorro acknowledged that most men fit for duty were Mulatto, but their unruly state and undesirable conduct deterred them from undergoing of the rigors of military discipline. Additionally, the high magistrate doubted the loyalty of these militias and recommended the total abolition of this body from his jurisdiction.\(^64\)

The militias described by Vasco y Bargas did not match the reports coming from the provinces. First, the sense of having a Spanish militia was false because most of the men serving were either Mulatto or Mestizo. Second, the number of active militias had decreased due to the abolition of or changes to the different bodies. Third, many of these militia forces were inactive, having been deactivated, such as Totonicapán where the commander stated that the men only cared about privileges but never drilled.\(^65\) Moreover, the militias continued functioning with the same structure and military staff inherited since Captain General Gálvez in 1782. For years, militias continued to exist despite the lack of replacements for dead officers and soldiers. Thus, the report lacked veracity and presented a pointless review of troops that only described the force that had been planned in 1782.

\(^{64}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 9, exp. 168, fol. 1-5v. Letters written on July 12 and 18, 1791.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., fol. 5v.
Weak Policy and Retreat

The appointment of Don Josef Domás y Valle proved to worsen the situation that his predecessor had left behind. He was 90 years old when he became Captain General. The peace treaty signed between Spain and France in 1795 had provided only a short rest before the war against Great Britain erupted. From 1796 until 1808, Spain suffered an English maritime blockade and was unable to trade with its colonies or send military reinforcements to Central America. For this reason, Domás y Valle pursued a cautious policy of withdrawing to a more secure defense line in order to stabilized the situation forging understandings with the English and Zambo-Miskitos, as well as to save funds for the war effort. This policy resulted in retreat and weakness, to the point of leaving the defense of the Caribbean coast to foreign militias.

During the interim period of peace between 1795 and 1796, Spanish authorities took advantage of the time and rearmed the territories in Central America. Anticipating the future war against England, the Spanish Crown dispatched war materiel to its colonies. Costa Rica, the southernmost province of the Kingdom of Guatemala, received 25 boxes containing: 150 muskets, 3 boxes of powder, 2,200 bullets, and 600 flint stones in 1795. All this equipment

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came via Nicaragua and, though not enough to face an invasion it did help in the
defense of the province.

Insufficient support for the militias also left the coastal settlements almost
completely defenseless with any additional expense increasing the burden of an
already bankrupt royal treasury. The Captain General contemplated retreating
from the ephemeral settlements of Roatán and Cabo Gracias a Dios to the main
port of Trujillo. 68

Figure 19  The Sonaguera- Yoro Frontier

Source: Taylor E. Mack. “Contraband Trade Through Trujillo, Honduras, 1720s-1782,” Yearbook of the

68 Floyd, The Anglo, 184.
The Spanish garrison did in fact evacuate the vulnerable outpost of Cabo Gracias a Dios on August 25, 1795. These colonies lacked the basic elements needed to sustain the population and the minimal manpower to protect them. The war against England in 1796 further increased the pressure on these weak outposts. The Honduran Intendant, Don Ramón Anguiano, considered withdrawing to the old Yoro-Sonaguera frontier prior to abandoning Trujillo and San Fernando de Omoa. On April 14, 1797, an English convoy carrying a large number of Black Caribs from Saint Vincent took over Roatán Island. The weakened garrison, without any hope of receiving aid from Trujillo, convinced Spanish Commander Francisco Pérez de Brito to capitulate. Following the departure of the British, Spanish and Saint Domingue Auxiliary officers negotiated the relocation of the Black Caribs to Trujillo in May.

Part of the Captain General’s cautious policy involved the appeasement of the Zambo-Miskitos and the reinforcement of Black River during the years of peace. In 1795 and 1796, the militia from Olancho Viejo defended and assisted in the construction of the settlement, together with 53 canoe rowers from the King’s Pirogues. The Crown commissioned Don Manuel Dambrine, an experienced officer, as commander. He was in charge to direct the construction of the different projects and for reaching out to the Zambo-Miskitos. Evidently, this policy was successful because throughout 1796 Spaniards traded with


70 Floyd, The Anglo, 184.

leading members of the Zambo-Miskito community such as: Captain Rafael, prince Esteban brother of King George II, Major Joal, Captain Quito, Officer Luqui, Officer Baiben, Sergeant Pinly, and Captain Senyon.\textsuperscript{72} Dambrine and the other officers hoped to gain the trust of leading Zambo-Miskitos and to eventually recruit them to the Spanish camp. However, the efforts were unsuccessful and because as soon as news of the outbreak of war reached the Zambo-Miskitos, King George II and most of his subjects joined the English side.

Despite being technically at war, the Zambo-Miskitos continued demanding gifts in exchange for peace, and Spanish authorities continued to provide them in order to maintain the precarious stability. In April 1798, several pirogues came to Matina and requested the customary gifts for King George II from Governor Tomás de Acosta. After consulting Intendant José Salvador in Nicaragua, Governor Acosta invested 807 pesos and 6 reales in gifts in order to avoid an assault and to keep the fragile agreement.\textsuperscript{73}

As soon as news of war reached Guatemala in 1796, the Kingdom’s Troops Sub-inspector, Don Roque de Abarca, ordered the preparation of defenses and militias. This was a period of barracks construction that disregarded the austerity contingencies imposed in order to cut expenses. On July 10, 1796, in Nueva Guatemala, the Dragoon Regiment requested the construction of barracks to quarter its militias and to drill. Similarly, Fort Petén reported the conclusion of general construction on December 31, 1797. During

\textsuperscript{72} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 20, exp. 232.

that year 5 new batteries containing 18 cannons were completed and 200 new muskets for the two companies were provided. Also, in order to strengthen the defenses of the coast, the Captain General ordered the construction of a new fort at the mouth of Motagua River in 1796. Congruent with these dispositions, militias were mobilized to protect the coastal areas, such as in Sonsonate where the Infantry Battalion Commander, Don Rafael de Ypiña, dispatched Lieutenant Pedro Pérez, Second Lieutenant Basilio Pérez, and 75 soldiers of the Eighth Fusilier Company to the port of Acajutla. These militiamen were dispatched to the area due to the presence of several English ships from December 21, 1796 to January 14, 1797. The Captain General approved the measures taken to defend Acajutla, and ordered the Intendant of San Salvador to assist with any number of men, armament, and supplies that were requested. At the same time, Domás y Valle ordered the placement of one or two useless cannons in order to deter to the enemy from attempting a landing. These decay cannons would only be use to intimidate the enemy. The next year, the Santa Ana Militia Battalion Adjutant Major, Don Juan Manuel Gil, came to the coast to act as a lookout for English ships. In 1799, a company under the command of Don José Días del Castillo, Adjutant Major of San Salvador Infantry Battalion, went to the town of Misata in search of an enemy boat. Comayagua and Tegucigalpa continued furnishing militias during the war to the settlements along the Caribbean coast. Likewise, Chiquimula and Zacapa assigned militiamen to Gualán and the new Motagua Fort. The Chiquimula Battalion sent Captain Eugenio José Vidal, Second Lieutenants Luis España and Juan Miguel Palma, as well as 100 men to
Gualán on January 1, 1797, initiating a movement of militia forces that continued throughout the entire year. As a result of the constant activity with the militia and the forts expenses were increased at their highest level between 1797 and 1798.\(^4\)

In 1797, the Captain General enacted a law that stripped the militiamen of the *Fuero Militar* and contributed to the decline of the militias through 1799. For years the *Fuero Militar* had disrupted relations between Spaniards and castes in Central America because the former rejected the idea that Mulattoes were given the same military privileges and that military law treated them as equal. Thus, the authorities sought to put an end to the privileges obtained by the castes in 1782. Since the late 1780s, Spanish officials had minimized the access to the privileges of the *Fuero Militar* to Spaniards and the castes serving in the militias. Nonetheless, the castes suffered more because the *Fuero Militar* challenged the rule of the elite in each town. Because of this pressure, there was a gradual process that looked to extricate the castes from receiving any military privilege.

In Cartago, the Mulatto militias struggled to keep their privileges in place during 1797. The governor, Josef Vázquez y Téllez, stated to them that all they needed to do was to wear a uniform and a rosette on their hats to in order to assure their protection under the *Fuero Militar*. Those caught without a uniform and claiming the *Fuero Militar* would suffer punishment. The Mulatto community

had continued to be exploited by the elite of Cartago, and to avoid any encounter with families protected by this Fuero, the governor compelled the militiamen to differentiate themselves from the rest. The Spaniards resented the fact that Mulattoes could defy them in military tribunals and employ officers from their own class, and thereby, becoming equals under the law. Cartago’s Mulatto community safeguarded all communications relating to the privileges granted within the Fuero Militar. Consequently, the Mulatto community knew its rights very well and took full advantage of them, which in turn, increased the anger of the Spanish.\footnote{ANC \textit{Serie Complementario Colonial}, doc. 736, fol. 52, 54-54v. Josef Vázquez y Téllez command. Cartago, November 23, 1797. Communication. Cartago, July 18, 1797.}

The Captain General argued that in wartime the outposts needed a large number of men and therefore, decreed that town vagrants should relieve those serving along the coasts. According to the order, it involved all inhabitants, but in reality, mostly affected those without land who where considered to be living an idle life. It also established that no militiamen could claim privileges and exemptions to avoid being declared a vagrant.\footnote{AGCA, A1, leg. 4565, exp. 39151, fol. 1-6v. Nueva Guatemala, February 13, 1797.} This edict curtailed the Fuero Militar and placed the castes as the most vulnerable group to provide men for the shore. Consequently, Domás y Valle complied with the Spaniard’s calls to strip the castes of the Fuero Militar and to stop sending elite people to the coastal settlements. The Captain General’s edict was just the preamble part of the cessation of military exemptions for the castes. In Spain, the Royal Court considered it dangerous that people of dubious loyalty bear arms, and conferred
that task only to Spaniards through the new military regulation of November 25, 1799. After this date, Mulatto and Black militias only served in urban militias without payment on privileges.

By the end of this period, the authorities had perceived the dangers of having armed militias of questionable loyalty. The uprising in Sonsonate and the passive actions of other militias caused the government to question the loyalty of the castes. Policy dictated that Spanish militiamen should guard the Spain's possessions due to the incapacity of the Crown to dispatch veteran forces to Central America after 1790. Nonetheless, Spaniards continued to be opposed to serving in the coastal areas and relegated that task to the castes, despite the aforementioned policies. In this way, the military reform of 1778-1783 was able to endure until 1799.

In Sonsonate, strife between local and royal authorities ended in mutiny on December 12, 1795 against the High Magistrate, Don Manuel Cotón. According to Cotón's report, when he tried to jail the local Magistrate Don Casimiro José de Cuellar, the militiamen opposed him. Following this incident, the troops and the people lost respect for the high magistrate and royal justice. However, the greatest complaints were concentrated on the disaffection of the militia. Cotón expressed that of all the militiamen only Lieutenant Tomás Guevara had supported him; the rest had sided with Cuellar, assisted by Colonel Bernardo de Veira. The report also petitioned the Captain General to send a proclamation ordering the militias to back up Cotón's order.77 This uprising

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showed the inability of the royal authorities to quell a revolt headed by a leading citizen. Don Casimiro José de Cuellar was both a local magistrate and a militiaman. Therefore, he received the popular support of the local militias and the leading inhabitants. Royal authorities viewed the revolt as dangerous because armed mulattoes led by Spaniards could pose a serious threat to the Crown’s rule.

In order to keep firm control of the Kingdom, the Captain General and the Crown resolved to appoint only loyal Spaniards to military posts. The policy intensified during 1799 when the Captain General sought trustworthy people with military backgrounds. In Nicaragua, the intendant recommended Don Justo Abaunza for the sub-delegation of Nicoya on May 23. Abaunza was a lieutenant of Granada’s militia and was of “distinguished birth.” Likewise, Don Blas Baena was appointed to the sub-delegation of San Pedro Sula on June 10. Baena was commissioned in the Fijo Battalion and above all, he was European. Don Felipe O’conor and Don Narciso Arguello were appointed to the sub-delegations of Masaya and Matagalpa for the same reasons as the others. The new course of action was intended to reaffirm control in all areas of Central America and to boost the loyalty of the Spaniards.


79 AGCA, A1, leg. 1756, fol. 300-301, 314, 416-417, 434.
Despite efforts to assign the defense of Central America to the Spanish population, the aforesaid were opposed to serve along the Caribbean coast because of the high death rate and continued the relocation of the castes to these locations. Spanish officers often died while serving at the coastal settlements, leaving interim commanders in charge during most of the 1790s. At San Fernando de Omoa, veteran Captain Pedro González Hernández, became the temporary senior officer on January 12, 1799.\textsuperscript{80} His interim position denoted the short life span of Spanish officers due to incessant illness in that vicinity. Therefore, Spanish officers resisted their appointments to the lowland areas and within the agreement of town councils and military officers assigned the castes to substitute them. In this way, the same troops whose loyalty was being questioned were the ones who guarded the most vulnerable places in conjunction with the newly arrived Black militias. Thus, the responsibility of defending the main ports of the Kingdom fell to foreign and caste militias.

During the 1790s Guatemalan authorities walked a thin line due to the costs of the war, discontent within the population, the rising tensions provoked by the French and Saint Domigue Revolutions, and that Mulatto and foreign Black militias defended key coastal areas despite the vehement opposition by Spanish military officers. In fact, the Black militias –consisting of Saint Domingue, Saint Vincent, and Zambo-Miskitos expatriates- repelled English attacks against Spanish possessions in 1797 and 1799. This was a period of contradictions and

\textsuperscript{80} AGCA, A3, leg. 979, exp. 18060.
enormous expenses that influenced the defense. The lack of money and ineffective policies damaged the militia organization. Therefore, the government reduced the number of disciplined militias and increased the number of urban militias that were not convened by the *Fuero Militar*.\textsuperscript{81} Finding the defenses of the coastal settlements in a weakened state the Zambo-Miskitos under the command of General Robinson assaulted Black River on September 4, 1800. The Zambo-Miskito occupation and Spanish retreat showed that the defensive policies failed to support the settlements along the coast and put in danger the Caribbean ports.\textsuperscript{82}


Chapter 8

The Last English Effort to Conquer the Caribbean Coast

1797-1799

In 1797, the English suffered a great military setback at the hands of the Black militias at the port of Trujillo, Honduras. The defeat and rapid repulsion of regular English troops signaled the end of large-scale invasions along the Caribbean coast of Central America. The intent of the invasion was to capture the intendant and arms commander-in-chief of Honduras, Don Ramón Anguiano, conquer Trujillo push the frontier back to the previous 1779 border, and revive the old alliance with the Zambo-Miskitos after easily defeating Spanish forces. The over confident English regular troops, however, failed to retain Trujillo and were routed by the Black militias. The fact that the Black militias consisted of foreign men without professional military training only served to increase the humiliation of the English. These Black militias, consisting of “English Morenos from the Old Encampment” and “Saint Domingue Auxiliaries,” resisted the assault, while local Spanish militia and veteran officers fled during the early stages of the attack. Another group, the “Black Republicans,” (a rebellious group of Black Caribbeans that had been transported from Saint Vincent Island to Roatán Island by the English), reinforced the foreign Black militias in first March
and then again in May. That March, while transporting the Black Republicans, the Spanish captured one English ship thus provoking the first of several attacks on Trujillo. Over the course of the next few years, the reduced number of Spanish regular troops and scant militia units could not offer sufficient resistance to the English attacks and left the coastal defenses in the hands of Mulatto and Black militias. The English attack on Trujillo showed that the new forces defending the coast could stop an attack by regular English troops and posed a serious threat to independence of the Zambo-Miskitos. In one decisive blow, the Black militias destroyed the myth of English superiority and reduced the Zambo-Miskitos to live within their territories without menacing the Spanish dominion. It also showed the inability of the Spanish to protect the coasts with their own troops, having to rely on Mulatto and Black Militias to defend their coastal holdings.

The Black Militias

Since early colonial times the task of patrolling the shores of Central America fell mostly into the hands of Mulatto or Black men. When emergencies occurred, reinforcements in the form of Spanish inland militias would come to the rescue and would serve for a limited time on the coast. By the end of the eighteenth century, the same forces continued to defend the coast for Spain, with the addition of the foreign Black militias. After 1790, Spanish militias and veteran troops had decreased to such an extent, that at every post number of the caste
soldiers overwhelmingly exceeded that of the Spanish or Mestizos. The Mulatto and Black militias at San Fernando de Omoa, Trujillo, Black River, San Carlos, and Matina constituted the backbone of each force. Of these places, Omoa and Trujillo remained as the most important establishments as they had the largest populations, were the locations of the main coastal fortresses, and procured most of the trade. Without these ports, Central America would suffer serious setbacks in communication, commerce, and would be at the mercy of the enemy. The ports, however, remained in Spanish hands due to the loyalty and tenacity of the Mulatto and Black militias. Furthermore, the arrival of Black foreign troops provided these settlements with experienced soldiers who successfully defended these areas for Spain.

Three different Black foreign militias served the Spanish in Trujillo. The first group consisted of Zambo-Miskitos, who lived close to the English settlements and submitted to the Spanish authorities when the British withdrew in 1787. The English Moreno Company was organized in July 1787 when a group of 18 people led by a Black man named Ben submitted to the Spanish commander of Black River, Lieutenant Colonel Gabriel de Hervias. Hervias immediately demanded their enlistment into a company known as the English Moreno. Ben, who later became known as Tadeo Muniesa was appointed as captain of the English Moreno Company after which he relocated his unit to the Old Encampment situated one league west of Trujillo. The English Moreno Company’s task was to populate and secure the encampment. Transferring
Muniesa’s groups served to halt any negative influences from other Zambo-Miskitos who were still loyal to the British. In 1792, another group of Blacks arrived from Belize and were also enlisted into Muniesa’s company.¹ The second Black Militia group had a long history of fighting as auxiliaries of the Spanish Army under the direction of Jean-Francois in Saint Domingue. The Black men who fought with the Spanish forces in Saint Domingue were known as Saint Domingue Auxiliaries. When France and Spain signed a peace treaty in 1795, Spanish forces began withdrawing from Saint Domingue and authorities recommended that the Auxiliary forces be transferred to Cuba. However, Cuba opposed the resettlement of these men, because the presence of armed black men might increase the possibility of insurrection by the slaves, especially following the revolts in Saint Domingue. Cuban-Spanish authorities resolved the situation by transferring the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries to remote areas of the Empire, where their presence aided the colonization process, and would cause no problems with the local populations. Among those places, the authorities chose Trujillo based upon the need for workers and defenders for the last effective border town on the Caribbean coast. Spanish authorities decided to deploy the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries as an experienced force that could confront the Zambo-Miskitos or the English, both of whom had a longstanding loyalty to the King of England. On March 10, 1796, 310 people, consisting of

black officers, soldiers, women, children, and slaves landed at Trujillo. The Saint Domingue Auxiliaries numbered 41 officers and 74 soldiers including 26 grenadiers, totaling 115 men fit for service. In addition, three of the officers were able to act as interpreters due to their ability to speak Spanish.²

The third group was a remnant of the Black Carib rebels from Saint Vincent Island that began a pro-French insurrection against English rule in 1795. Influenced by the ideals of the revolutionary movement in Saint Domingue, the Black Caribs fought for the abolition of slavery for almost two years. In the beginning, the Black Caribs controlled the hill country of the island, but English veteran troops reinforced by black troops were able to wipe out the resistance and they had utterly defeated the Black Caribs by the end of 1796. To purge the island of any further trouble, English authorities decided to deport the Black Caribs to the coast of Central America. In total, the English expelled nearly 5,000 Black Caribs, but poor living conditions and disease decimated them so that within a few months more than half of them had died. During the transport of the Black Caribs in early March 1797, the Spanish coastguard captured one of the English ships en route to Roatán Island and brought it to Trujillo with its cargo of 287 people. Other English ships were able to unload and abandon over 2,000 Black Caribs on Roatán Island. The officers in Trujillo sent the Black Republicans back to Roatán and initiated negotiations to transfer the entire population that had been abandoned in the island to Trujillo if it accepted the

Spanish rule. The Spanish commander of the Auxiliary troops, Don Joseph Rossi y Rubí, as a special envoy, arranged the evacuation of the Black Republicans from May thru December of 1797. From Trujillo, the Black Republicans spread to other areas along the coast and eventually became known as the Garifuna.³

The First Attack on Trujillo

News of the new Anglo-Spanish War (1796-1808) reached the Caribbean region in October 1796 and military preparations were immediately begun. The English resorted to its superiority at sea and effectively blockaded Central America from any trade or communication with Spain. Trujillo, as a leading port, was forced to reduce its commercial activities because of the constant threat from enemy ships. Its land defenses were also prepared and the coastguard was equipped for possible encounters at sea.

The outbreak of war accelerated the process of preparing the coastguard task force along the Caribbean coast, because Spain relied solely on it to combat enemy ships and to protect the ports of Trujillo and San Fernando de Omoa. Traditionally, the coastguard had served between these two main ports, patrolling the coast. In addition, the coastguard transported troops and supplies to the

settlements, and it acted as a defensive unit that could provide rapid assistance when needed. In short, its mission was to police the Spanish coastline and prevent enemy landings.

In one of the frequent patrol operations carried out around the Bay Islands, the Spanish overtook an English frigate that had attacked the port of Trujillo. In early March 1797, the Spanish coastguard disable the English frigate, Experiment, and escorted it to Trujillo.⁴ This frigate had formed part of the convoy that was taking the Black Republicans to Roatán Island. The capturing of this frigate allowed Spanish authorities to find out about the English plans to dump a large group of rebellious slaves at Roatán Island. On the frigate Experiment, Spanish military officers discovered 287 Black Republicans who provided specific information as to their numbers and history. Using as interpreters officers from the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries who spoke a similar French Creole, Grenadier Captain, Manuel Fernando Dambrine, the second commander, offered Spanish protection to the leader of the Black Republicans. Dambrine reassured the Black Republicans of the Spanish proposal when they were sent to Roatán a day before the first attack on Trujillo. According to Dambrine, he obtained the word of the Black Republican chief that after the departure of the English they would negotiate their allegiance to Spain.⁵


⁵ AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 690, leg. 31. Letter of Don Manuel Fernando Dambrine. Trujillo, June 14, 1797. Dambrine pointed out that there were 287 Black Republicans in the frigate. Fortescue, A History, Vol. IV, 544. He stated that the cargo comprised of 300 men. Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), AGS/Secretaría de Guerra, 7244, exp. 34/3. Intendant Don Ramón Anguiano mentioned that The Experiment contained 289 Black Republicans.
officers in Trujillo offered the Black Republicans’ freedom and land plots in exchange for the acceptance of Spanish rule. The Black Republicans would have posed a serious threat to Spanish security if they allied with the English or remained loose as Spain would need a stronger force to recover Roatán. In addition, these men had considerable experience in fighting English regular troops and could provide excellent soldiers to protect the weakest part of Central American coast. The Saint Domingue Auxiliaries, who convinced the Black Republicans to join the Spanish Empire in exchange for protection from their former masters, continued the negotiations begun by Spanish authorities.

The English mounted a rapid military operation to retaliate for the capture of the frigate *Experiment*. The weak force dispatched was either working from erroneous intelligence, or it underestimated Trujillo’s defenses. The objective of the attack was to punish the port and either to recover the frigate or to capture a Spanish ship. The English launched the assault on Trujillo on the night of March 16th. Trujillo’s Commander Don Salvador Javalois observed the suspicious maneuvers of a schooner and a *balandra* approaching the port on March 16. Not long after, Don Adriano Troncoso, commander of the brig *San Antonio*, confirmed the ships to be enemies, and Javalois, who was at the Concepción battery, immediately ordered troops to get their posts. In order to protect the brig *San Antonio*, Javalois prepared the Saint Joseph and Saint Ipolito batteries, the latter with two acquired cannons from the Concepción battery and ordered the second commander, veteran Captain Manuel Fernando Dambrine, to command it. At 11 p.m. Javalois dispatched an armed pirogue to observe the movements
of the English. The pirogue returned a short time later, after being followed by
the enemy. Two hours later, two English boats approached the brig *San Antonio*. 
They were, however, discovered in time, and fell under fire by soldiers, the brig,
and the Saint Joseph and Concepción batteries forcing them to retreat. 
Following the English withdrawal, Javalois ordered troops to patrol the wall and
the nearby beaches in order to prevent enemy landings.\(^6\)

The second commander’s account validated that of Javalois’, except that
downplayed the first commander’s role in the defense. According to Dambrine,
his vigilance throughout the night prevented the English from capturing the brig
*San Antonio*. From his post at the sea wall, he alerted the guard, called the
commander, and ordered the drum to play the *Generala*, a call code for
emergencies. Moreover, he instructed his soldiers to fire at the enemy boats and
then proceeded to the second cannon battery at Saint Joseph and ordered
troops there to fire at the enemy boats. The combination of the early discovery
and superior firepower available to the Spanish forced the enemy’s swift
withdrawal. Trujillo’s attack came as predicted Spanish officers expected an
enemy assault and the satisfactory preparations made beforehand by Grenadier
Captain Dambrine saved the port. He had prepared the defenses and the
fortifications of the port, while simultaneously acting as an engineer and

\(^6\) Rubio Sánchez, *Historia*, Vol. II, 336-337. Commander Don Salvador Javalois reported the attack to the
Captaincy General on April 20, 1797.
artilleryman. Dambrine’s actions, however, overshadowed Javalois command initiating disputes over the war preparations of Trujillo.

The Second Attack and the Fall of Trujillo

Before the second attack took place, the English made careful preparations to capture the intendant and -arms-commander-in-chief of Honduras. The reasons the English wish to take the port and to capture Don Ramón Anguiano were threefold: to push the frontier back to the previous 1779 border; to revive the old alliance with the Zambo-Miskitos by proving that the English could easily defeat the Spanish; and to retaliate for the capture of the frigate *Experiment*. On the night of April 26, 1797, English troops approached Trujillo but met no resistance. They were able to successfully captured both the town and the port. However, the next day the Black militias launched a counterattack and recovered the town, the batteries, and the port in early morning hours forcing the invading soldiers to retreat. On April 28, following their routing, the English were forced in to exchanging prisoners. Thus, in three days, the English accomplished nothing and were dealt a major defeat at the hands of the Black militias.

Upon sighting three English war ships around Punta Quemara at noon on April 26, Spanish ships, troops, and most of the officers began to abandon

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7 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 690, fol. 35v-35v. Letter from Don Manuel Fernando Dambrine to the Governor and Captain General, Don Josef Domínguez Valle. Trujillo, June 18, 1797.
Trujillo, leaving the defenses to the undermanned Black militias. The incompetent actions and absence of leadership of the commander Captain Salvador Javalois caused the rapid demoralization of the troops. Almost immediately, the ships, most of which belonged to the Havana convoy that had arrived on April 12, were loaded with the indigo and hurriedly departed from the port. Javalois recalled that the frigates *Perpetua* and *O*, the brigs *Flecha* and *San Antonio*, and the schooner *Bruna*, having a total of 130 cannons between them had sailed and refused to assist in the defense of Trujillo. At 6 p.m., an English war ship, a frigate, and a brig at the port. An envoy landed and demanded the immediate surrender of commander Javalois; otherwise, the English ships would reduce to “town to ashes”. Javalois requested four hours to discuss the terms with the War Council but the envoy refused. At the meeting, Spanish officers agreed not to surrender, and in the case of open hostilities, they would open fire from the Concepción battery, where the commander’s headquarters stood. Two hours later, the burning of two houses close to the headquarters coincided with the approach of the English ships causing fear among the troops. At once, the veteran soldiers and the Spanish militias abandoned the batteries and the other posts without firing a single shot, running for their lives either towards the mountains or to the road to Sonaguera. According to Javalois, the remaining force of one-hundred men that he was able to gather, was insufficient to challenge the invaders. Without hope, the War

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Council decided to abandon the town, following the orders prescribed from Guatemala authorizing the retreat. At 9 p.m. most of the remaining troops, settlers, and exiles, led by Javalois, began their journey to the Old Encampment and Sonaguera, where they would set up a defensive line with the remaining soldiers. As soon as the troops left town, disorder reigned and the soldiers dispersed in to the mountains.⁹ A few officers and settlers stayed in town, rejecting the order to withdraw, but doing nothing to oppose the English landing. Meanwhile at the Old Encampment, Captain Tadeo Muniesa, leader of the English Moreno Company confronted the British landing party, assisted by commander Suasy (Pierre Dieu Choisi) of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries.¹⁰

The Spanish retreat from Trujillo showed commander Javalois to be a coward. It also showed the Spanish garrisons lack of preparations against the assault. According to the first commander, the enemy had a large number of troops ready to disembark who would have easily overrun the town. The one-hundred militiamen could not resist the push of the British veteran troops. As a result, Javalois decided to withdraw in order to set up a defense line in Ofrecedera, an entrance to the mountains on the road to Sonaguera. Information regarding the number of enemy troops came from Don Francisco Pérez de Brito,


the commander of Roatán Island, who as a prisoner had stood on the main deck of the British war ship and communicated to the War Council that he had seen more than 600 men in arms. When questioned regarding his proceedings, Javalois stated that the enemy could land between 400 to 500 men -- a superior force compared to his meager garrison. For this reason, the commander decided to set the line of defense at Ofrecedera hoping to stop the British from moving further inland. In later writings, the second commander, Captain Manuel Fernando Dambrine, assured that when he came with the enemy envoy to demand Trujillo's capitulation, he informed the War Council of the British inferior number of troops, shortage of artillery and inferiority in the caliber of weapons. Dambrine also pointed out that due to the elevated number of sick men on board, the British could only place one third of their available force in Trujillo. Despite this information, the Spanish left Trujillo and at 11 p.m. an English officer landed with two unarmed soldiers and Dambrine. In front of Trujillo's population the English officer took Dambrine's saber and gave it to one of the soldiers who broke it in two, symbolizing the town's capitulation. At 12 a.m., approximately 60 to 70 men under the command of Don Francisco Geraghty, grenadier captain of the Irish Brigade Fifth Regiment, completed the takeover of Trujillo without any

11 AGI, AGS/Secretaría de Guerra, 7244, exp. 34/6, Reporting the actions in Trujillo to the Captain General, Josef Domás y Valle from Intendant Ramón Anguiano. Olanchito, May 1, 1797. Reports to Intendant Ramón Anguiano from the Commander Salvador Javalois. Boca de la Montaña de Oviedo, April 27-28, 1797.


13 AGI, AGS/Secretaria de Guerra, 7244, exp.34/17. Report to the Captain General Josef Domás y Valle from Intendant Ramon Anguiano. Trujillo, June 20, 1797.
opposition.\textsuperscript{14} Even historian J.W. Fortescue confirmed that 50 “convalescent soldiers” of the Irish Brigade triumphed in Trujillo.\textsuperscript{15} Javalois eluded confrontation with the British invaders and justified his actions by relying on contradictory reports about the enemy’s numbers. The commander validated the decision to retreat by following the report of Pérez de Brito and totally ignoring the one from Dambrine. As commander, Javalois abandoned the population without any plan, and failed to confront the reduced number of English troops. The British operation collapsed thanks to the Black Militias and to the fact that Intendant Anguiano had departed one day prior for Olanchito.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Challenging the Official Account of Trujillo’s Recovery}

The accounts of the fall and subsequent recovery of Trujillo contradict each other. The official account published in the Guatemalan Gazette stressed that Javalois had prepared a plan for the port’s recovery that had been successfully carried out by the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries. A few days later, Second Commander Manuel Fernando Dambrine, Josef del Valle, the captain of the Settlers Company and Navigator Joseph Sarriá, reported to the other provinces the ineptitude of Javalois and Intendant Anguiano during the attack.

\textsuperscript{14} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 22, exp. 270, fol. 15. Don Manuel Fernando Dambrine’s declaration on April 29, 1798. He said that English men controlled the town at 2 a.m. Most likely, he meant to 12 a.m.

\textsuperscript{15} Fortescue, \textit{A History}, Vol. IV, 544.

\textsuperscript{16} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 22, exp. 270, fol. 37. The last War Council directed by Don Ramón Anguiano in Trujillo was on April 24. He left the next day for Olanchito.
Finally, Tadeo Muniesa, captain of the Black English Company of the Old Encampment, requested a raise in pay in 1801. To justify his petition, Muniesa reviewed his merits throughout the years, among them being the recovery of Trujillo in 1797. As proof, Muniesa presented declarations of Spanish eyewitnesses confirming that the English Moreno Company and its captain had repulsed the English invaders and recapture Trujillo.

On May 17, 1797, the Guatemalan Gazette printed the official version of the fall and subsequent recovery of Trujillo. In the article, Intendant Anguiano endorsed the military actions that Commander Javalois had undertaken. Javalois pointed out that his plan had taken into consideration the recovery of Trujillo because prior to his departure, he had left two groups ready to launch an attack at dawn while the enemy was looting. Later on, reports confirmed that the enemy had disembarked in small numbers and that for this reason the commander had dispatched Don Josef del Valle, the settlers’ company captain, to coordinate the recovery of Trujillo. Shortly after, Valle with some troops from the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries and the English Moreno Company assaulted the enemy, forcing a total rout of the English forces on the morning of April 27. The Spanish lost one (Black) militiaman, and 11 casualties and took 8 prisoners. The next day, at 9 a.m., the English resolved to exchange prisoners for the Spanish officers Don Manuel Fernando Dambrine and Don Bernardo Garcia. To conclude the report, Anguiano reminded the Captain General of the “activity and watchfulness” of Javalois, the “vigorous and right defense” of the settler’s Captain Josef del Valle, “the love for the King” of Treasurer Juan Ortiz de Letona,
and the merits of Commander Suasy of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries, as well as noting the contribution the of other officers: Macier, Fantasie, Gil, Lapis, and Gampolo in the recovery of Trujillo. Subsequently, Commander Javalois awarded a gold medal and seven silver medals (engraved with the King’s face) to the commander and officers from the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries.\footnote{Rubio Sánchez, *Historia*, Vol. II, 332-335. Reproduction of the Guatemalan Gazette print. Wednesday, May 17, 1797.}

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\caption{Trujillo Area}
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In addition to the report sent by intendant Anguiano, the Guatemalan Gazette used a letter written by the commander of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries Suasy, who described the action in Trujillo from April 26th to 29th. In this account, Suasy placed himself as the hero of the capture and the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries as the leading force in the counterassault that caused all of the casualties to the English. Suasy downplayed the participation of the English Moreno Company, to the point of accusing them of drinking before fighting, deserting the battle, initiating the looting of Spanish houses, and refusing to protect the beach, because Tadeo Muniesa and his troops had gone to sleep. According to the letter, Suasy and the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries recovered the town, killed the enemies, bombarded the ships, and conducted the prisoner exchange with minimal aid from other forces.¹⁸ Thus the Guatemalan Gazette certified the actions of intendant Anguiano, the resolutions taken by commander Javalois, the heroic fighting by the Spanish officers, and the important role of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries. All of this information came under great scrutiny and investigation, however, after Dambrine challenged Javalois’ and Anguiano’s conduct during the Trujillo action.

Following the recovery of Trujillo, Second Commander Manuel Fernando Dambrine, the settler’s Captain Josef del Valle, and Navigator Joseph Sarriá wrote three separate reports dealing with the military operations that took place during the three days. The reports emphasized the incompetence of

Commander Javalois and Intendant Anguiano. They also dispatched the reports to the Captain General as well as to the other provinces of the Kingdom. A resulting inquiry was initiated regarding the abandonment of Trujillo and the actions taken by its military commanders. On May 11, a letter detailed as “reserve” from the Guatemalan War Council, ordered Intendant Anguiano to present the reports mentioned in his chronicle of May 1. These reports accounted the different military actions performed by Javalois in Trujillo. At the same time, the War Council delivered a series of questions about the retreat and the defense of the port. Javalois responded repeatedly that the town had an open beach and, was impossible to defend. The commander stressed that the withdrawal was necessary in order to block Trujillo’s only entrance and exit at the Old Encampment, a distance of one league away. Feeling insecure at the Old Encampment, Javalois moved to Ofrecedera two leagues further in order to reunite the dispersed troops, and to stop enemy from moving into the rest of the province. Before relocating, he ordered Valle to proceed into the Old Encampment with as many men as he could and sent Suasy to spy on the enemy with the intention of recovering the town. Meanwhile, the commander sent a message to the intendant requesting fresh troops from Sonaguera and Olanchito. Another set of accusations implied that Javalois never had it in mind to recover the town, due to his disorderly retreat. Refuting these accusations, Javalois stated that the small number of men and the previous reports of large enemy forces had compelled him to leave the town in an orderly fashion, and later on in total disarray to the Old Encampment. Commander Javalois
confirmed that he had instructed Valle to come into the Old Encampment around midnight. Javalois, also argued that he did not received the first military report from Valle until 4 p.m. April 27, when Spanish troops were already in control of Trujillo, and for this reason he did not return to Trujillo earlier.19

In his defense, Intendant Anguiano stated that the division of government in Honduras favored lack of control and action, creating constant challenges to his rule and encouraging enemy attacks along the coast. At the time, the intendant and the Captain General were disputing over the authority of the settlements and the assignment of Don Josef Antonio Molina as the militia sub-inspector, who curtailed the intendant’s rule over the troops. In short, Anguiano blamed the Guatemalan War Council for the insubordination in Honduras. He explained that since the beginning of the war, Olanchito had suffered from a continuous shortage of military aid and Trujillo had suffered much from hunger, suggesting that for these reasons he could not bring aid to Trujillo when it was attacked. Additionally, Anguiano referred to the reports written by Dambrine, Valle, and Sarriá as “malicious”, to the point of saying, that Dambrine “destroyed his authority”. Trying to diminish the accusations, Anguiano wrote to Captain General Josef Domás y Valle explaining Javalois’ reasoning for the evacuation. In a detailed description, the intendant expressed that Trujillo lay defenseless and without fortification and a garrison could not stop enemy access from neither the left nor the right. Even if fortified, the town lacked troops, and its only line of

defense depended upon halting a landing operation at the beach. If the enemy came in great numbers, it was better to evacuate, saving the garrison and the population, as well as securing the only entry to the province. Finally, the intendant placed all of the responsibility of the defense on Trujillo’s commander. In conclusion, he recommended that the defense line be returned to the Yoro-Sonaguera front, due to the difficulties in assisting Trujillo and the coast.  

Dambrine’s accusations completely flattened the defense and refutations presented by Javalois and Intendant Anguiano. The charges, and later declarations showed Javalois ineptitude before, during, and after the attack. Dambrine expressed that upon restoring Spanish authority in the town and assuming command on April 28, he began writing reports to the Captain General and Intendant Anguiano at Olanchito, 30 leagues distant from Trujillo. He quickly developed a well-founded suspicion that the reports were not being sent to the Captain General and instead, were being intercepted by Intendant Anguiano. Dambrine implied that Javalois and Intendant Anguiano sought to hide their ineptitude actions and, therefore, resorted to dispatch the three accounts directly to the Captain General on May 5. The first accusation emphasized that the entire responsibility for the abandonment of Trujillo without fighting fell on the shoulders of Anguiano. Dambrine pointed out that at headquarters on April 24th, the intendant “publicly” ordered that they retreat if the enemy assaulted the 

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20 AGL, AGS/Secretaría de Guerra, 7244, exp. 34/4/19. Reporting to His Majesty King Charles IV, the bad state of his province due to the resolutions of the Guatemalan War Council. Letter from Intendant Ramón Anguiano to Don Juan Manuel Alvarez. Trujillo, August 7, 1797. Description of Trujillo’s defenses by Ramón Anguiano to Captain General Josef Domás y Valle. Trujillo, June 20, 1797. Fernández Hernández, El Gobierno, 61.
colony rather than defending it as demanded by the Guatemalan War Council. The second accusation indicated that those who wrote the memorandum of May 1, Javalois and Anguiano, and the subsequent writings of Don Joseph Rossi y Rubi and a militia lieutenant from Tegucigalpa, were not even present at Trujillo’s fall and recapture. In other words, Dambrine disputed that Javalois and Anguiano could accurately write about the occurrences in Trujillo on April 26th and 27th when both refused to come to the field and relied on reports written by Don Josef del Valle and Commander Pedro Suasy. Furthermore, parts of other communications relating to the battle came from the writings of Don Joseph Rossi y Rubí, who did not visit Trujillo until May 12, and a militia lieutenant from Tegucigalpa, who escaped the day it was recovered, neither of whom participated in any actions against the enemy. Also, Dambrine implicated the afore-mentioned of eliminating writings contrary to the accounts given by the Captain General. Accordingly, at the first War Council meeting after Trujillo’s recovery, sometime in the middle of May, all adverse evidence was removed from the minutes of April 26th and 27th.²¹

The series of inquiries, ordered by the Guatemalan War Council and conducted by Intendant Anguiano, revealed the cowardice of Javalois for abandoning Trujillo without resisting the enemy. Subsequently, Intendant Anguiano persecuted the military officers that criticized his actions and offended his honor. Anguiano concluded that Javalois had committed a “disgraceful exit”

from Trujillo and recommended his removal from the post. The Guatemalan War Council charged that Javalois left the town voluntarily and was guilty of abandoning Trujillo without fighting.22 Once Javalois was found guilty, Anguiano tried to minimize the charges by eliminating possible witnesses. Thus, he persecuted all military officers that cast any doubt on his military reports dispatched to the Captain General. Dambrine, as the main military officer contradicting the reports suffered the bulk of wrath of the intendant. Anguiano accused Dambrine of insubordination and transferred him to Sonaguera after taking command of Trujillo. In a letter to the Captain General, Dambrine accused the intendant of giving leave to the majority of militia officers. One of the main irregularities was that of an army captain and a lieutenant of the Veteran Battalion, Don Juan Balero, who received a passport dated on April 24. According to Dambrine, Balero’s document was made in Olanchito where the intendant was residing at the time, but it did not arrive in Trujillo until May. Also, Dambrine blamed Anguiano for harassing Balero and the other officers who participated in the recapture of Trujillo.23 Far from calming the debate over the recovery of Trujillo, the Spanish reports did nothing to offer a reasonable explanation regarding the repulsion of the English troops on April 27th. The official report lost all credibility when Dambrine, Valle, and Sarriá criticized the

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incompetence of the Spanish troops, the abandoning of the post by commander Javalois, and the ineptitude of intendant Anguiano. Contrary to the report printed in the Guatemalan Gazette, the writings of the dissenters indicated that the majority of the Spanish troops fled, while some Spanish officers did not run and tried to organize a counterattack. Nonetheless, the information presented by either side did not challenge the fact that it was the Black forces that re-conquered Trujillo.

The Vindication of the English Moreno Company

Four years after the fall of Trujillo, the English Moreno Captain Tadeo Muniesa displayed his military merits and proudly remarked that his company had expelled the English forces from Trujillo on April 27, 1797. To establish the validity of his achievements, Muniesa gathered information from Spanish eyewitnesses confirming that the English Moreno Company had freed the town. Muniesa repeatedly stressed that his company had planned and led the counterattack that liberated Trujillo. He challenged the official report printed in the Guatemalan Gazette, where commander Javalois and Intendant Anguiano assured that the recovery took place thanks to the brave actions of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries. The evidence presented by Muniesa contradicted those

assertions and explained, step by step, the recovery of Trujillo by the Black English Company with the aid of other forces.

Contrary to Muniesa’s account, historians and Spanish circles had credited the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries for restoring Trujillo as reported in the Guatemalan Gazette on May 17, 1797. The official narrative dispatched to the Captain General consisted of the chronicles written by Commander Salvador Javalois and validated by Saint Domingue Auxiliary Commander Pedro Suasy, who covered up the disastrous military actions. Thus, Javalois and Suasy helped each other by corroborating the events dealing with the abandonment and subsequent recovery of Trujillo. Javalois claimed that the recovery resulted from a well-thought out plan that he developed before abandoning the town. Accordingly, he assigned the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries to lead the attack. For his part, Suasy acknowledged Javalois’ command as truly saving Trujillo’s honor. Suasy and other members of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries exaggerated their parts in the military operation, thus benefiting themselves and Javalois. The Saint Domingue Auxiliaries were designated as the liberating force of Trujillo, and to congratulate their effort, Javalois rewarded them without ever conducting an investigation. Throughout the documents, commander Javalois relied to a great extent on the information given by the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries, to the point of dispatching the official chronicle with Suasy’s version.

Spanish eyewitnesses contended that Trujillo’s War Council relinquished the town after the English envoy came to shore demanding the capitulation at 6

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p.m. on April 26. According to the official report, the War Council determined to resist until an enigmatic fire broke out close to the headquarters, and enemy war ships approached the port causing fear in the majority of the troops who then resolved to flee around 8 p.m. This action forced authorities to abandon the town without offering any resistance at approximately 9 p.m.\textsuperscript{26} The eyewitnesses accounts differed completely from the official story. Don Mateo Maldonado, who resided close to the headquarters, discredited the official version. He mentioned that Tadeo Muniesa came at 7:30 p.m., asking for the latest news and demanding to know why the batteries had not fire at the approaching enemy war ships. Maldonado replied that “without any doubt the town would be abandoned” and immediately after, Muniesa entered the headquarters to meet Javaloi.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, before the fire broke out and the English ships approached the port, the War Council had already resolved to depart from Trujillo. After the withdrawal of the Spanish troops, Don Antonio González de León, the Royal Treasurer of Black River, expressed that Muniesa was the first to conceive of the idea of repelling the enemy and thus the departure of Javaloi from the town occurred without planning or without considering a possible counterattack to drive out the invaders.\textsuperscript{28}


\textsuperscript{27} AGCA, A2(4), leg 22, exp. 270, fol. 14-14v. Declaration of Don Tadeo Maldonado. Trujillo, April 4, 1798.

\textsuperscript{28} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 22, exp. 270, fol. 10-11. Declaration of Don Antonio González de León. Black River, April 1, 1798.
Preparations for the Recapture of Trujillo

At the Old Encampment, Muniesa began gathering forces and planning Trujillo's recovery in the early hours of April 27th. Here to the statements between the narrative of Suasy and the accounts of eyewitnesses are contradictory. In Suasy’s version, he recalled contacting Muniesa to propose an attack. Once Muniesa agreed, Suasy immediately informed Commander Javalois, asking for permission to proceed. Javalois consented and excused himself from participating for being sick. Don Antonio González de León and infantry Captain Manuel Dambrine, however, gave a different version. They indicated that Muniesa dispatched scouts into town to find out the strength of the enemy force and their whereabouts, as well as to look for the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries that had scattered into the hills. Moreover, Dambrine explained that Muniesa drew the support of Suasy and some of the Auxiliaries. The declarations of Don Josef del Valle, the settlers’ company captain, confirmed that Muniesa had prepared the troops beforehand. Valle arrived at the Old Encampment with some people and found out that Muniesa has prepared to march by 3 a.m. The English Moreno Company and other militias were ready to move out while a party consisting of a lieutenant and eleven men were scouting the movements of the English in Trujillo. Valle provided logistics, as well as two weapons for the Black soldiers. One of them, Feliciano Figueroa, later died

when the firearm exploded.\textsuperscript{30} None of the witnesses reported Suasy or the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries as having planned the attack or that any of their number served in the scouting parties. The information from the witnesses ratified Muniesa’s assertions that he was the leading planner of the attack and the English Moreno Company was the main force.

**The Assault of the English Moreno Company**

The English Moreno Company assumed the leading role in the assault against the British forces. After receiving reports of the situation and preparing their weapons, units began assembling at the Old Encampment at around 5 a.m. on April 27\textsuperscript{th}. Don Tadeo Maldonado met Muniesa as he was leaving with his officers and troops sometime between 4 and 5 a.m. Probably about an one hour later, Muniesa and 44 men were on the outskirts of town. Don Francisco Santos encountered the English Moreno Company at his land plot and gave them 42 cartridges and a gun. Santos reported that at 7 a.m. soldiers from the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries unit began passing by in groups. The battle commenced between 7 and 8 a.m., Don Pedro Miguel Hernández stated that English Moreno soldiers began to jump out from different places. Some of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries followed them, others moved on to different positions, and still others

did not charge at all. Muniesa’s company pursued the enemy as they were trying to board their ships or to take the hills. Don Pablo Amado joined in the English Moreno Company’s attack against the main square and the Concepción battery, forcing the enemy to flee. José Maldonado, the son of Muniesa, recapture the Concepción battery and open fire on the English boats. Once he recovered the battery, Amado hoisted the Spanish flag. Immediately, Muniesa’s soldiers followed the English into Trujillo’s Black neighborhood when the ships began firing shrapnel, attempting to protect the boats that were picking up the troops. At the Saint Ipolito battery, Don Juan Fernández de Vilchez, infantry lieutenant of the Veteran Battalion and eyewitness, stated that Muniesa’s soldiers captured an officer and five soldiers who were trying to escape.\textsuperscript{31} The evidence overwhelmingly shows that Tadeo Muniesa and the English Moreno Company led the assault and recovered Trujillo. In contrast, Suasy’s account did not provide any Spanish witnesses at all.\textsuperscript{32}

During the assault, the Saint Domingue Auxiliary Company’s task consisted of cutting off the enemy’s escape from Trujillo’s batteries and the plaza. Spanish bystanders did not indicate that the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries, as a unit, participated in the first strike against the British lines in town.

\textsuperscript{31} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 22, exp. 270, fol. 6-19. Declarations of Don Domingo Cabrera, Don Agustín Cabrera, Don Francisco Santos, Don Vicente Sánchez, Don Antonio González de León, Don Pablo Amado, Don Pedro Miguel Hernández, Second Commander Manuel Dambrine, urban settler’s Captain José del Valle, and veteran infantry Lieutenant Juan Fernández de Vilchez. Mack, “Ephemeral,” 170-171. Mack states that 42 English Moreno served in the Company and 62 Saint Domingue Auxiliaries received literacy rations out of the 100 serving. A group of officers were on their way to Granada. Thus, the number of Auxiliaries at Trujillo comprised 62 and not all of them participated in the assault.

Eyewitnesses pointed out that most of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries came in at the end of the battle with the settler’s Captain Josef del Valle. Fernández de Vilchez observed that the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries cut the enemy escape route at the Negro and Texera Rivers.\textsuperscript{33} Fernández de Vilchez’s description matches the one offered by commander Suasy, who reported that the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries began attacking from the hospital area with its nine officers and thirty-one men. The Saint Domingue Auxiliaries ambushed the British soldiers trying to escape from the Saint Ipolito battery and the plaza only after the English Moreno Company dislodged them.\textsuperscript{34} Thus, the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries served as a supporting secondary force. Don Josef del Valle and the other combat units comprised of some militiamen and the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries arrived at the end of the battle. The fight for Trujillo lasted between half an hour and an hour, after which the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries went to search for enemies in the nearby hills. At the end of the military action, the Spaniards began to accuse the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries of looting their houses.\textsuperscript{35}

Once the invading force had fled, Muniesa assumed the position as the acting commander of Trujillo. Once the English Moreno Company and Saint Domingue Auxiliaries regained the Concepción, Saint Ipolito, and Saint Joseph

\textsuperscript{33} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 22, exp. 270, fol. 18v. Declaration of Don Juan Fernández de Vilchez.

\textsuperscript{34} Rubio Sánchez, Historia, Vol. II, 340-341. There are the Saint Domingue Auxiliary officers that marched with Suasy: Colonel Hilario, Commanders Mancier, Lapiz, and Pedro; Captains Fantasía, Gil, Anus, and Salta.

\textsuperscript{35} AGCA, A2(4), leg. 22, exp. 279, fol. 8v, 9v, 13v. Declarations by Don Francisco Santos, Don Vicente Sánchez, Don Pedro Miguel Hernández, and Don Juan Fernández de Vilchez.
batteries, they began to exchange fire with the English ships. According to the available descriptions the English ships could not match the firepower of the batteries and were forced to sail away. Furthermore, the ensign ship sustained damage from an impact to the stern. The ships and the troops on shore continued firing at each other in to the afternoon. That night, patrols along the beach reinforced positions in case the enemy tried to disembark again. At 9 a.m. on April 28, the English hoisted a white flag and proposed to exchange prisoners. Trujillo’s officers demanded the freedom of twenty-six prisoners in return for an officer and six English soldiers. The exchange occurred sometime around 5 p.m. and, according to Don Domingo Martel, Muniesa turned over the command of Trujillo to Dambrine, the highest ranking Spanish officer present. Dambrine accepted the command from Muniesa and the other officers submitted to his authority.\footnote{AGCA, A2(4), leg 22, exp. 270, fol. 5v, 11, 15-19. The number of English prisoners was corroborated by the declaration of Don Manuel Fernando Dambrine. Improperly, Dambrine went into an English ship on the afternoon April 26 and remained as a prisoner until the exchange. Rubia Sánchez, Historia, Vol. II, 334, 340-46. The official report stated erroneously that there were 9 English prisoners. Suasy gave the final numbers as 6 Englishmen in exchange for 26 Spaniards.}

Following the recovery, Commander Javalois entered Trujillo to gather reports and then expeditiously departed in order to defend his military actions. On April 27, the settler’s Captain Valle dispatched the first message to Javalois alerting him of Trujillo’s liberation. Javalois received the message at 4 p.m. in Boca de la Montaña de Oviedo, 3 leagues away. Four hours later, in a second communication, Valle assured Javalois that the Spanish controlled the town. However, Javalois resolved not to march to Trujillo until reinforcements from
Sonaguera and Olancho joined his unit. The next day at dawn, a “fatigued” Javalois marched to the Old Encampment in the company of Captain Francisco Pérez de Brito, a few veterans and a group of militiamen, after the additional troops never arrived. At 8 p.m., Javalois arrived at the Old Encampment with 60 militiamen and then he continued to Trujillo where he arrived two hours later.\(^{37}\) A short time after, a militiaman informed Dambrine that Javalois would be arriving in a half an hour and would like to meet him. Before meeting Dambrine, Javalois talked to Suasy and notified his intention to depart next day, as well as leaving Dambrine in command of town. Sometime between 10 and 11 p.m. Commander Javalois arrived in Trujillo and spent the night at the Concepción battery. Early in the morning of April 29\(^{th}\), Javalois met with Dambrine to inform him that “he came to get the reports of Don Joseph del Valle because the best thing was to go and see the intendant in Olanchito and he erred and that he should not retake the command of Trujillo.” After the meeting with Dambrine, Javalois called in Commander Suasy and as him for a trustworthy person to assist him in his secret departure. Suasy stated that his brother Matheu was a person of confidence and courage. Javalois and Matheu left Trujillo secretly for Saladillo at noon of the same day.\(^{38}\)

\(^{37}\) AGI, AGS/Secretaría de Guerra, leg. 7422, exp. 34/6, 14.

The Black Republicans

The English occupation of Roatán Island was a direct result of the failed attempt to take Trujillo. On April 29th, the three English ships that had attacked Trujillo departed with the recently recovered frigate Experiment. From Trujillo, the convoy sailed directly towards Roatán Island. Two days later, authorities in Trujillo reported that the English had occupied Roatán Island where a large contingent of Black Republicans was stationed. Again, on May 1st, Trujillo went on alert when two English ships appeared near Punta Quemara. This time, however, the English lacked the necessary force to seize Trujillo, and were content with threatening the port.

Preoccupation within Spanish circles grew due to the large influx of Black Republicans to Roatán Island. Don Joseph Rossi y Rubí and Don Manuel Fernando Dambrine disputed over who drew the Black Republicans to the Spanish side, which ultimately led to the recovery of the island. Rossi y Rubí had been appointed to the post of commander of the Auxiliary Troops in Guatemala. When news from Trujillo informed him of the arrival of the Black Republicans and the capitulation of Roatán Island, he set out from Guatemala with a group of

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39 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 22, exp. 270, fol. 15v. Don Manuel Fernando Dambrine saw Captain Geraghty with his sprained ankle and four wounded men on board of The Experiment where he was captive. Mack, “Ephemeral,” 172.

40 AGI, AGS/Secretaria de Guerra, leg. 7244, exp. 34. Letter from Intendant Ramón Anguiano to Don Juan Manuel Alvarez, Trujillo, August 7, 1797.

41 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 690, fol. 30, 40v. Letter from Manuel Fernando Dambrine to Captain General Josef Domás y Valle, Trujillo, June 19, 1797. Here Dambrine stated that ships were seen on May 1st. Letter from Salvador Javalois to Manuel Fernando Dambrine, Olanchito, May 3, 1797.
Saint Domingue Auxiliary officers via Granada. In Comayagua, Rossi y Rubí received the order to advance on April 27\textsuperscript{th} and fifteen days later he arrived in Trujillo.

Roatán Island fell on April 14\textsuperscript{th} when an English convoy of two war ships, four frigates, and three brigs forced Commander Don Francisco Pérez de Brito to surrender. Following the island’s capitulation, the squadron sailed for London, leaving two Black Republicans- twin brothers both named Jack, in command. In early March, during the transfer of the Black Republicans to Roatán Island, the English frigate *Experiment* had been captured by Spanish ships. Once this ship was brought to Trujillo, Spanish authorities discovered a cargo of 287 Black Republicans revealing the English plans for abandoning a group of rebellious Blacks from Saint Vincent at Roatán Island. Thus, the series of attacks on Trujillo came as a consequence of the capture of the *Experiment*.\textsuperscript{42}

From March until the 26\textsuperscript{th} of April, authorities permitted the Black Republicans that had been captured with the frigate *Experiment* to remain in Trujillo during the negotiations for their freedom in return for loyalty to Spain. Second Commander Dambrine attested that the success of this operation depended upon offering protection to the commander of the Black Republicans. As a result of these agreements, the Black Republicans in Trujillo sent word to their brethren on Roatán Island of the willingness of the Spanish to grant them their liberty in return for their service to the Kingdom. Three Black Republican

envoys came to Trujillo’s War Council meeting to negotiate their submission to Spanish rule. Dambrine claimed that he had arranged and attracted the Black Republicans to the Spanish side. Even before their departure, the Black Republican commander, through its lieutenant-interpreter, gave his word to Dambrine that after the English had deported from Roatán Island they would return to Trujillo in order to finish the pact.43

On April 26, once the negotiations were completed, Spanish authorities permitted the 287 Black Republicans to sail to Roatán Island. Don Bernardo García piloted the frigate *Principe Guillermo Enrique*, and most likely the *Experiment*, which was once again disable when the convoy was attacked by the English convoy force that assaulted Trujillo later that same day.44 The English delivered the 287 Black Republicans to Roatán Island and held the capture Spaniards to use as a bargaining chip in later negotiations.

Don Joseph Rossi y Rubí rapidly recovered Roatán Island due to the previous agreements with the Black Republicans and the backing of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries. Upon reaching Trujillo on May 12, Rossi y Rubí went to the camp of Intendant Anguiano and the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries. Six days later, Commander Rossi y Rubí sailed to Roatán Island and was able to recover it on the same day. According to the official chronicle of the recovery of Roatán Island, the northern part of the island capitulated without opposition while in the

43 Geggus, *Haitian*, 189. AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 690, fol. 31. AGI, AGS/Secretaría de Guerra, leg. 7244, exp. 34/6. The official report established that Don Manuel Fernando Dambrine and Don Bernardo García became English prisoners on April 26, 1797.

south one of the brothers Jack and 150 soldiers surrendered when the Spanish expedition gained control of the battery. Rossi y Rubí returned to Trujillo on May 21, having completed his task. Of extreme importance was the aid of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries throughout the expedition to Roatán Island. The negotiations that had been conducted in Trujillo beforehand prepared the road for the ease of the Spanish re-conquest of the island. In addition, the presence of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries helped to turn the Black Republicans to the Spanish side as both groups hated the English, both came from a similar culture, and both spoke related dialects of French Creole. Since the beginning, the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries had been the intermediaries between the Spanish and the Black Republicans. The Saint Domingue Auxiliary Company and its officers were the ones to welcome the 287 Black Republicans to Trujillo and act as translators between the Black Republican commander and the Spanish authorities. A large portion of the expedition to Roatán Island most likely consisted of Saint Domingue Auxiliaries. Reports stated that twelve Saint Domingue officers landed with Rossi y Rubí and negotiated the terms. This helped to bring about the rapid and peaceful recovery of the island. When Rossi y Rubí returned to Trujillo, he wrote a memorandum declaring himself as the conqueror of the island with the aid of the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries. The Captain General rewarded Rossi y Rubí by commissioning him as the Governorship of Roatán Island. He also rewarded the volunteers and sea people that took part in the operation, these most likely being the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{45} Fernández Hernández, \textit{El Gobierno}, 160. AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 690, fol. 30. Letter from Don Manuel Fernando Dambre to Captain General Josef Domínguez Valle. Trujillo, June 14, 1797. AGI,
As soon as Spanish authorities completed the recapture of Roatán Island, the process of transferring the Black Republican population to Trujillo began. The Black Republicans provided a large number of experienced soldiers so the authorities decided to use them in order to reinforce the port. In order to attract the Black Republicans, Spanish officials offered land plots on the outskirts of town. In this way, the population was augmented, thus transforming Trujillo into an almost invincible stronghold.\footnote{AGS/Secretaría de Guerra, leg. 7244, 34/5. Letter from Intendant Ramón Anguiano to Don Juan Manuel Alvarez. Trujillo, 7 August 1797. Intendant Ramón Anguiano erroneously wrote that Roatán Island was recovered on May 12th.}

**Intendant Anguiano’s Visit**

When Trujillo was returned to Spanish control, Intendant Anguiano paid a visit in order to reward the troops and to inspect the defenses. Javalois had already determined who would receive the prizes and medals within the Black Militias that recovered the town. The predilection for the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries over the English Moreno officers was reflected in the recompense. In two letters that he wrote while he was in Saladillo, Commander Javalois listed how the medals were to be distributed. In one letter detailed as “reserved”, Javalois explained to Dambrine that he donated 7 silver pesos to Gampol to use them as medals until the real ones arrived. The pesos were to be given to:

\footnote{Geggus, *Hattian*, 189. AGCA, A2.2, leg. 301, exp. 6868. Plans for the distribution of the Black Republicans.}
Mansier, Fantasia, Gile, Josef Lapis, Gampol, captain Muniesa, and his lieutenant. To Commander Suasy, Javalois bestowed one ounce of gold in place of the gold medal. In another letter addressed to Suasy and Mansier, Javalois also listed the officers who were to receive medals. Anguiano used the references presented by Javalois and gave the silver medal to captain Tadeo Muniesa on May 30th, reserving most of the recognition for the Saint Domingue officers despite the fact that they were the ones to least deserve it.\footnote{Fernández Hernández, El Gobierno, 160. Rubio Sánchez, Historia, Vol. II, 348. Reward given to the Saint Domingue Auxiliary artillery Captain Santillán. He already belonged to the royal artillery company. Geggus, Haitian, 189. AGCA,A2(4), leg. 22, exp. 270, fol. 2. Leg. 50, exp. 690, fol. 39v-40. Letters from Don Salvador Javalois to Don Manuel Fernando Dambrine, Suasy, and Mansier. Saladillo, April 30, 1797.}

After the recovery, Intendant Anguiano regarded the defenses of Trujillo as unacceptable. The intendant publicly disapproved of the works carried out by Dambrine prior to and following the enemy assault. His real motivation for this was to discredit Dambrine and to cover up the cowardice of Javalois. The latest writings of Dambrine had tarnished the honor of Intendant Anguiano and put his ability to command into question. In the report on Trujillo defenses, Anguiano vividly described that any investment in Trujillo’s defenses was a waste because the town stood in a vulnerable position. The batteries were built of wood and dirt and could not resist a sustained attack. Anguiano continued by stating that Trujillo had no wall or stockade, and even if constructed, the town did not have the necessary men to guard it. For these reasons, Intendant Anguiano stressed that the only way to stop an enemy advance rested on halting them at the beach, and if the enemy had a superior force, the intendant recommended that Trujillo be evacuated and that the available forces should set up a defense line at the
entrance of the province as Javalois did, in order to save Comayagua from being pillaged. In short, Anguiano stated in his report that he believed the defenses of Trujillo to be unfit to face an enemy attack. In addition, Anguiano never lifted a finger to improve the defenses of Trujillo to resist or to halt an enemy advance. Correctly, Dambrine stressed that Anguiano preferred to retreat than to try to defend such an unwholesome place.48

**Figure 21** Anguiano’s Defense Line


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48 AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 690, fol. 29, 37. Intendant Ramón Anguiano was a military royal engineer. AGI, AGS/Secretaría de Guerra, leg. 7244, exp 34/4, 19. Letter from Intendant Ramón Anguiano to Captain General Josef Domás y Valle reporting on the defenses of Trujillo. Trujillo, June 20, 1797.
The Black Militias of Trujillo

The recovery of Trujillo showed the importance of the Black Militias in the defense of the Caribbean coast. For years, Spain had looked for the best way to challenge the English dominion of the sea and the coasts of Central America. The coming of the Black Militias resolved the problem of finding able men to fight in the name of the Spanish Empire. The English veteran soldiers had enjoyed the myth of being invincible until facing the Black Militia troops of Trujillo. The defeat of professional English troops was serious set back for the British and it signaled the decay of their power. Following the debacle at Trujillo, the English did not launch any further major military operations against the Central American ports. The English troops proved clumsy without their Zambo-Miskito allies and were unable to defeat the unprofessional Black soldiers. Furthermore, the English failed to convince the Zambo-Miskitos that the British were still a superior military power initiating a rapid decline among English-Zambo-Miskito relations, paving the way for better relations with the Spanish camp. In 1797, as a direct result of the Battle for Trujillo, Spanish royal authorities decided to expand the Black Militias to other parts of the coast and placed its defense in the hands of the English Morenos, the Saint Domingue Auxiliaries, and the Black Republicans.49

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The decision to leave the defense of Trujillo in the hands of the Black Militias paid off in 1799 when they repulsed the last English attempt to conquer it. Accounts stated that a corvette and a brig were seen on Punta Castilla at 2 p.m. on May 14th. At 4 p.m. without responding to the Spanish signals, the enemy ships approached the royal army brigs _Resolución_ and _San Antonio_. The _Resolución_ and the _San Antonio_ opened fire immediately after discovering that the corvette and the brig were English. The battle raged for two and a half hours. Meanwhile at the port, the Spanish sent troops to the Saint Joseph battery, 100 Caribbean men under the command of the veteran Lieutenant José Fernández and militia Second Lieutenant Simón Diego, and an artillery unit under the command of Don Esteban Guant. The commander the assembled a company of 200 men, mostly composed of Caribbean soldiers to defend the town. Finally, Don Bernardo García and a company of 121 men established a battle line close to the Negro River. At sea, the commander of Trujillo sent reinforcements consisting of 85 Caribbean militiamen to strengthen the ships’ crews. Accordingly, the brig _Resolución_ commanded by militia Captain Salvador Bara received 25 men, with about the same number going to the brig _San Antonio_. Finally, the rest of the men were sent to the schooner Ariel, under the command of the Caribbean Captain Babiar.50

The English remained close to Trujillo, making repairs on their ships. At 11:30 p.m. on May 16, they launched an assault on the Old Encampment where the English Moreno Company resided. The reason for attacking the English

Moreno Company was to settle old scores from when this unit expelled the British from Trujillo in 1797. Close to midnight, the English sent a party in two boats. Upon landing, the British encountered fierce opposition in a running battle that lasted for about an hour. Captain Muniesa, commander of the English Moreno Company, stressed that he captured several pieces of equipment the British abandoned when they finally fled. Upon hearing of the assault, the commander of Trujillo dispatched militia Captain Josef del Valle with 60 men to aid the English Moreno Company; however they arrived after the English had already fled. For the next two days, the English ships lingered in the bay until at 3:30 p.m. on May 18th, they finally sailed off.\textsuperscript{51}

The presence of the Black Militias permitted the Spanish to maintain control of the coastal areas of Honduras as well as other places in Central America. The futile English effort to conquer Trujillo exemplified the decline of their influence along the Caribbean coast in Central America, ending British military supremacy over the Spanish settlements. The large number of Black Militias assured that Spain had the loyal troops that were ready to fight to the end against their hated former masters. With the end of English dominion over the coast of Honduras, the Zambo-Miskitos began a series of internal struggles that caused rapid decay that effectively neutralized them as a threatening force to Spanish supremacy in the region. The Zambo-Miskito menace was further diminished by large numbers of newly arrived Black Militias moving into their

territories and claiming them for Spain. The Zambo-Miskitos were eventually forced to move into territories that did not represent any military importance and therefore Spain did not divert resources for their colonization. The valiant defense between by the Black militias of Trujillo in 1797 and 1799 demonstrated that English military supremacy in the region had deteriorated, allowing for Spain increase its hold on the Caribbean coast.
Chapter 9

Militia Debacle 1799-1808

A series of critical events pushed Spain to invoke a new military regulation on November 25, 1799. As in the past, all military regulations were in response to new defense exigencies within the empire and, on this occasion, Spain also was wrestling with chaotic economic conditions as well as the liberals among its educated class vying for changes in the way of government. Spain confronted England in a new war (1796-1802 and 1804-1808) during deep economic, political, and military crises. In order to finance the war effort, the king imposed new taxes, forced loans called “patriotic loans,” and salary reductions for bureaucrats and military officers. Indeed, most of the economic changes that had been implemented sought to reduce expenses in order to support an unpopular war that demanded too much of sacrifice from society. These resolutions only amplified the people’s hostility towards and incompetent king. Furthermore, the Franco-Spanish alliance ended in disaster when French troops invaded Spain in March of 1808. The invasion prompted the abdication of the incompetent Charles IV. The French invaders placed Joseph Bonaparte as the ruler, while the Spanish population initiated a rebellion in the name of the “wishful” King Ferdinand VII. The break in power led to the beginning of
independence movements in Spanish-America. Furthermore, the new military regulation of 1799 decreased the number of militias and excluded the castes preparing the road for popular revolts throughout Central America after 1808.

The New Military Regulation and the Reduction of Militias

Spain began a new Anglo-Spanish War (1796-1802, 1804-1808) with a totally decimated regular army, a pitifully small force of veteran troops in America, and a decaying militia system to defend its territories. When the Franco-Spanish War ended in 1795, Spain’s army was on the brink of ruin. A year later, King Charles IV formed an alliance with France and declared war on the traditional enemy, multiplying the burdens on the population and the army. England responded to Spain’s renewed aggression by blockading all naval traffic between Spain and its territories in America. Spain, unable to break the isolation, continued in a war that was impossible to win from the beginning. A great part of the war was centered in the Caribbean basin where strong confrontations between naval and ground forces ensued. Most of the Spanish Empire relied on its militias and the few veteran troops available, while the English were in control of the sea. The English used their control of the seas to launch attacks on key places all along the Caribbean Basin. In February 1797, the English captured the island of Trinidad, permitting them to gain control of the entrance of the Antilles. San Juan, Puerto Rico, also became a military objective.
as it was along the return trade route for ships sailing to Europe. In April, a large amount of English force disembarked and tried unsuccessfully tried to seize the town.\(^1\) In a short period of time, Spain lost important possessions and was forced to remain on the defensive without any hope of defeating the enemy. Considering the shortages of resources and soldiers, the King ordered the implementation of a new military regulation that he hoped would contend with the serious problems affecting the Spanish Empire’s defenses.

Three years after the Anglo-Spanish conflict began, the Crown again attempted to strengthen the defenses of the empire by invoking yet another new military regulation. The new regulation, implemented on November 25, 1799 was applied after the dismal failure of the previous one. The new military regulation further decreased the number of militias in the region of Central America, reduced its privileges, and limited the membership to Spaniards. It was with these measures that the King hoped to cut expenses. The Crown limited the Mulattoes from militia service, expecting to attract the loyalty of the Spanish population. The military regulation did not order changes in military strategy or in the weaponry use, it excluded the participation of castes from service and put into place policies in order to reduce expenses. With a meager Spanish force that was more interested in honors and privileges serving mostly in the urban centers, and a large grunted caste population, the Spanish prepared to face English and Zambo-Miskito assaults in Central America.

As part of the new regulation, Colonel Roque de Abarca, Sub-inspector of Veteran Troops and Militias, initiated a tour in order to review and prepare for the

defense of the Central American coastal areas. In his initial moves in 1799, Abarca was able to reduce military expenditures saving 225,768 pesos annually. The Sub-inspector journeyed to the Mosquitia Coast between 1799 and 1800 in order to determine a new defensive plan for the region. On this trip, Abarca visited all of the major settlements before falling ill while in the San Juan River region in 1800. As a result of his reviews, the Sub-inspector implemented a new military reform and demanded the reduction of troops in every province of the Guatemalan Captaincy General.²

With the new military reform, the disciplined militias enlisted only accounted for 11,671 men, while five years prior they had numbered 21,076. Abarca’s plan cut out 9,405 soldiers or 44.62% of the active force at the time.³ According to the historian Bernabé Fernández, the military reform suffered from several major problems, such as the: placement of militias in towns unable to sustain them, the lack of agreement between the amount of men serving and the latest censuses, and more importantly, the placement of unnecessary militias in some localities. Ultimately, the military reform weakened the interior defensive structure of the Kingdom.⁴ The militia reform consequently, failed to protect the region because the implemented policies responded more to financial problems than to the renovation of the militia although, the reduction of the militias saved money, it brought much discontent among those that it excluded. As a

² Fernández Hernández, El Reino, 173-174.
³ See Tables XV and XVI.
⁴ Fernández Hernández, El Reino, 175-176.
consequence instead of providing a strong militia, the military reform debilitated
the defense of the Isthmus.

Table XVI
General Militia Review in 1799
Kingdom of Guatemala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Description of Unit</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Ana</td>
<td>1 battalion</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tegucigalpa</td>
<td>1 battalion</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartago</td>
<td>1 battalion</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>León</td>
<td>1 battalion</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Segovia</td>
<td>1 battalion</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiquimula</td>
<td>1 battalion</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comayagua</td>
<td>1 battalion</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quetzaltenango</td>
<td>1 battalion</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granada</td>
<td>1 battalion</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Salvador</td>
<td>1 battalion</td>
<td>588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciudad Real</td>
<td>2 companies</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olancho</td>
<td>3 companies</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Pedro Sula</td>
<td>2 companies</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoro</td>
<td>4 companies</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jicaro</td>
<td>2 companies</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realejo</td>
<td>2 companies</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verapaz</td>
<td>2 companies</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicoya</td>
<td>2 companies</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>9,391</strong></td>
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Provincial Dragoons

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Description of Unit</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1 regiment, 4 squadrons, 12 companies of 50 men each and 10 supernumeraries</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonsonate</td>
<td>1 squadron, 3 companies</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Salvador</td>
<td>2 squadrons, 6 companies</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tegucigalpa</td>
<td>1 squadron, 3 companies</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Segovia</td>
<td>1 squadron, 3 companies</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,620</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Provincial Artillery

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Description of Unit</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>6 companies of 110 men each and 10 supernumeraries</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>660</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Force**: 11,671


The flaws of the new regulation became evident with the distribution of forces in each intendancy. According to the above table, Don Roque de Abarca and the Captain General seemed to be more concerned about the Caribbean

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coastal defenses than those of the interior provinces. The defensive plans of the internal provinces did not take into account the possibilities of and invasion, let alone the dangers of internal revolt. Most of the defenses were concentrated along the coast where the militias could respond to possible sea-land invasions. The scant Spanish veteran force could neither prevent nor resist an attack at any of the coastal fortresses due to the fact that most of the companies serving at these bastions were consisted of exiles from different regions. Thus, the defense of Central America relied completely upon the disciplined militias and the urban militias that would fill the ranks in the case of a shortage of manpower.

According to table XVI, the Spanish authorities considered the Chiapas intendancy to be safe as the whole territory had only two militia companies. Along the coastal areas disciplined militias seldom existed; based upon the presented information, military officers seemed to believe that the enemy would not dare to invade this intendancy by sea. Furthermore, the two companies garrisoned at Ciudad Real guarded the entire jurisdiction of Ciudad Real, Tuxtla, and Soconusco.

The Guatemalan militias fell under the direct rule of the Captain General. In Nueva Guatemala City, the Dragoon regiment kept the peace and security in the center of the territory. To the west, the Quetzaltenango infantry battalion could stop any aggressive actions from either enemy forces or from dissenters. To the east, Abarca left one infantry battalion in Chiquimula to defend both the urban centers and the Caribbean coast. Finally, two infantry companies in Verapáz would prevent, or at least resist, the English if tried to enter from Belize.
The San Salvador intendancy had suffered from some invasion attempts in the past and, therefore, authorities assigned a larger force to defend this territory. The San Salvador City's defense force was comprised of two Dragoon squadrons and one infantry battalion that could rapidly be mobilized to defend both to the east and to the coast. Santa Ana's infantry battalion enforced Spanish rule in the northern part of the province. The defense of the High Magistracy of Sonsonate fell to a dragoon squadron that was primarily devoted to the security of the port of Acajutla. In the case of an emergency, San Salvador's or Santa Ana's troops would provide men to aid in the defense of the coast.

The majority of military force of the Honduras intendancy was dedicated to the defense of the coast, concurring with ample support from the infantry battalions based at Tegucigalpa and Comayagua. Tegucigalpa's Dragoon squadron could act as a rapid relief force that could overwhelm or reinforce the coastal defenders prior to the arrival infantry. There were nine infantry companies distributed along the coast. These were based in Olancho, San Pedro Sula, and Yoro. The Pacific coast of Honduras was virtually undefended as there were no militias assigned to the area. Most likely, it fell under the protection of Tegucigalpa's infantry battalion.

The Intendancy of Nicaragua as in case of Honduras, had its military forces distributed in order to protect the main urban centers and the Caribbean frontier. Six artillery companies based in Nicaragua and an infantry battalion in León and Granada were assigned for the defense of the Pacific coastal populations. Granada also supplied most of the men that were serving around
the Lake Nicaragua and at the San Juan River posts. The main Pacific port of Realejo had two infantry companies assigned to defend it. To protect the northern frontier and the northern Caribbean shore, the authorities set up an infantry battalion and a dragoon squadron in Nueva Segovia. Additionally, there were two infantry companies at Jicaro to check the Zambo-Miskito menace. Complementing this force, León’s infantry battalion also supplied men and arms for the defense of the borderland. In the High Magistracy of Nicoya, two infantry companies defended the territory extending from the town of Nicoya to a few leagues from the coast in either direction. Finally, Costa Rican forces consisted of a single infantry battalion that would be able to reach to any action on either coast.

As can be seen from the above, these troops were insufficient to confront any enemy and to defend such a vast territory. The distribution of the militias mostly supplied men for the defense of the Caribbean coast, especially in Honduras and Nicaragua, and depriving the Pacific coast of a disciplined defense force. Along the Pacific coast of the Kingdom, there were only three places that had militias ready to defend the coast in Sonsonate, Realejo, and Nicoya. The rest of the coastal areas were virtually defenseless.

The Debilitation of the Kingdom’s Defenses

In 1799, the Crown had reduced the militias and began to dismantle the veteran forces serving in Central America, which contributed greatly to the weakening of the Kingdom’s defenses. The reduction of troops in Central
America resulted from the dismal economic situation, making it difficult to pay existing military force. The Crown felt that reducing the number of disciplined militias, augmenting the number of urban militias, and maximizing the number of veteran soldiers serving within the area help would relieve the financial pressure that was being place on the Royal Treasury. Consequently, the 1799 military reform decreased the number of disciplined militias by 44.62%. Furthermore, all of those dismissed from the disciplined militias were immediately enlisted into the urban militias without payment or privileges. In 1802, the Costa Rican governor Don Tomás de Acosta stated that the disciplined militia comprised of one infantry battalion with the Mulatto militia and the cavalry squadrons being absorb into of the urban militias without enjoying any exemption.\(^5\) The urban militia only received the call to arms in extreme cases of urgency, mainly in order to defend their immediate jurisdiction. These units consisted of local commoners who had no formal training in the use of arms and therefore posed no real threat.

After 1799, the number of soldiers serving in veteran units was also reduced in Central America. Orders in 1802 combined the pre-existing two infantry battalions into one. It also suppressed the ranks of colonel and lieutenant colonel in exchange for a commander. The veteran companies at Forts San Fernando de Omoa, Trujillo, and San Carlos were mostly commanded by veteran officers but were mainly comprised of exiles and Mulatto or Black militiamen. In 1804, the veteran artillery company enlisted 127 soldiers who were distributed throughout Granada, León, Fort San Carlos, Omoa, Trujillo,

\(^5\) ANCR, Serie Cartago Colonial, doc. 934, fol. 34. Cartago, May 22, 1802.
Petén, and Nueva Guatemala. Finally in 1807, a loose infantry company was formed and subsequently scattered throughout the Kingdom of Guatemala in order to augment the manpower of the two companies. Veteran forces differed from other military units serving on the Isthmus because they supposedly received continuous military training. By reducing this force, military authorities weakened the already limited defenses of Central America.

The inefficiency of the new military was swiftly demonstrated when an unspecified number of Zambo-Miskitos, led by King George and General Robison, overran the Black River settlement on September 4, 1800. Sometime between 2 and 3 a.m., in a sudden assault, the Zambo-Miskitos surprised the population and killed the entire garrison force, causing the settlers to flee for their lives. A few days later, hungry and unclothed settlers began arriving in Trujillo. Subsequently, many of those that had escaped the attack succumbed to a deadly epidemic reducing the original 120 colonizers to only 58.

In the General Armament Report of 1799, Don Manuel de Nova established that the Black River outpost had 14 iron cannons of 4, 8, and 9 caliber; as well as 4 short conic battalion bronze cannons. He also inventoried 127 muskets, 1,200 flint stones, a sufficient supply of bullets and cartridges, and

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6 Fernández Hernández, *El Reino*, 174; Albi, *Banderas*, 45-46; *La Defensa*, 239; Durón, *Bosquejo*, 96. Honduran intendant Alexo García y Conde received the order to reduced the Veteran Regiment to a Battalion on March 20, 1794.


a large quantity of powder. So even though the garrison had ample supplies to hold off an attack, the state of the militia was deplorable resulting in the loss of the settlement. According to the colony defense plan adopted in 1791, there were enough arms to supply up to 150 men. The number of militias, however, had been radically decreased due to the new reforms' changes (encouraging the Zambo-Miskitos to strike). The quantity of muskets that had been declared in the inventory was barely enough for the men and did not state that not all of them were in good shape to be used to repel an attacking force. Furthermore, most of the men assigned to Black River were Mulattoes who had been forced to serve on the coast without any incentives having been employed mostly in construction projects. Thus, the lack of a prepared military force of an adequate size was a direct care of the successful Zambo-Miskito action.

Another fact that contributed to the fall of Black River was the settlement's heavy dependence on troops and supplies from Trujillo, making it very difficult to defend and recover once it was captured. The defenders found themselves in an impossible situation as they lacked the necessary provisions, and the enemy dominated the surrounding areas. The subsequent retreat to Trujillo firmly delineated the border between Spanish territories and the further advance of the Zambo-Miskitos. Furthermore, Spanish forces at Trujillo were unable to launch an attack or even a punitive expedition due to the poor condition of its military

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forces. Honduran Intendant Anguiano repeated several times to the Captaincy General the absence of “military tactics” to defend Black River and prophesized its fall.\textsuperscript{12} After the Zambo-Miskito conquest of Black River, Spain made no attempts to recover it or to settle any more colonists in the area. Robinson, the Zambo General, took up residence at Black River and governed as its “king” until 1817.\textsuperscript{13} The reduced number of men defending the settlements and the lack of resources to aid Black River were direct results of the inability to support the troops due to economic instability, which were worsened by the new militia reductions decreed of 1799.

The Zambo-Miskito victory at Black River never really represented a real threat to Spanish dominion of the Caribbean coast. Black River was an outpost that depended completely on support from Trujillo and was thus a prime target for an attack. The Zambo-Miskitos stormed Black River in the hopes of rekindling the English-Zambo-Miskito military alliance. In fact, the Zambo-Miskito King, George II, strove to unite the different groups in order to be able to carry out the operation after breaking off relations from Spain in 1798. At least two meetings occurred during 1800 between the Zambo-Miskitos and the English leadership in Belize in order to prepare the attack. The first meeting took place early in the year with Admiral Stephen, King George’s II brother, from the southern Mosquito district and the second gathering took place during the

\textsuperscript{12} Fernández Hernández, \textit{El Gobierno}, 61.

\textsuperscript{13} Floyd, \textit{The Anglo}, 185.
summer when King George II traveled to Belize.\textsuperscript{14} Not long after, the Zambo-Miskitos attacked Black River without English assistance. British authorities considered it unnecessary to open yet another front in Central America, especially after the failure in Trujillo. Furthermore, Central America did not figure into the military agenda as England wished to concentrate its military forces in the European and the Caribbean theaters. Without English support the Zambo-Miskitos were unable to pose a threat to the garrisons of Trujillo, Omoa, or any other establishments. With the absence of English aid the unity between the different groups forming the Zambo-Miskito nation began to once again fade following the success at Black River.

Black River proved to be an ephemeral victory because as soon as the English disregarded the alliance, the Zambo-Miskito nation fragmented into a civil war among its different groups. One of the first casualties was King George II, who died in a power dispute in late 1800. His successor was too young to become king, so his uncle Stephen held the regency until 1816. Without a leader to oversee a central government the Zambo-Miskito nation broke up into several chiefdoms.\textsuperscript{15}

In Nicaragua the latest cuts in the militia began a period of fear and insecurity on both coasts. Furthermore, the absence of a defensive plan for this area was a great concern. On October 13, 1801, Realejo’s sub-delegate

\textsuperscript{14} Naylor, Penny, 72.

reported that an English boat had seized two pirogues loaded with merchandise. Realejo only had one boat in bad shape for visiting the incoming ships. In 1802, royal authorities reported that the boat be repaired, but due to its poor construction and weakened state it could not go into the open sea. Two years later, intendant Salvador designated 418 pesos for the construction of a boat for the Coast Guard.16 These actions, however, were not enough to defend the port against English attacks.

On October 11, 1802, a hurricane hit the eastern part of Nicaragua leaving the area around Fort San Carlos without defenses. The strong winds demolished the three militia barracks, the marina, and the headquarters of the fort. In addition, the *El Morro* battery and parts of the fortifications suffered serious damage, as well as, the improvements that had been done in 1801. Intendant Salvador immediately arranged for the reconstruction of the fortresses and dispatched all of the necessary aid. Taking advantage of the Spanish vulnerability, the Zambo-Miskitos went to the outpost of San Juan del Norte on May 25, 1803. The Miskito General, two captains, and 80 men demanded muskets, powder, bullets, clothing, utensils, tobacco, soap, sugar, and liquor. The Zambo-Miskitos stated that if within a three-month period they did not receive these “gifts,” they would attack the post, burn the houses and kill the soldiers. Upon receiving news of the encounter, the commander of Granada wrote to the Captain General requesting instructions. On July 22, Guatemala ordered the reinforcement of San Juan del Norte post with an officer, two

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sergeants, and 20 grenadiers with orders to defend the post with all the means at their disposal. The Captain General instructed the commander of the outpost to state that if the Miskitos wanted the friendship with Spain without “gifts” they would have it. Following the end of this period of tensions, the Captain General ordered the detachment with its artillery to withdraw to Fort San Carlos on October 7.17

Far from relieving the tension in the San Juan del Norte region, the military dispositions led to constant confrontation and alarm. The Costa Rican governor reported that the Zambo-Miskitos complained to Matina’s commander on March 24, 1804. They said that when passing by San Juan del Norte, Spanish soldiers would fire at them without reason. At this meeting, the general of Pearl Lagoon, commander of the fishing party that was working around the Matina coast, requested sugar, cocoa, tobacco, liquor, soap, and clothing for their king. According to the account, a few days later three Blacks approached Matina’s post and repeated the demands for the gifts. These men also brought information that a great number of Zambo-Miskitos were preparing to assault San Juan del Norte by the Colorado River. As soon as news arrived at Granada and León, leading merchants petitioned more troops from Colonel Don Joaquín Arechavala to defend the ships carrying valuable cargo to that port. Intendant Salvador complied with the request and sent 65 veteran soldiers, 16 artillerymen, and 4 cannons to protect the San Juan del Norte and the incoming commercial shipping from Havana and Cartagena. On May 24, Don Roque de Abarca

17 Ibid., 274-277.
demanded the restoration of the troops to Granada. During the same month, Don Juan Eugenio Guzmán, the commander of Matina reported that Mr. Cortrell, a resident from San Andres Island, assured him that Stephen, the Miskito king, had gone to Jamaica and promised to turn over the ports of San Juan del Norte and Trujillo to the English in exchange for 3,000 muskets. Cortrell stated that the majority of the weapons were already in Zambo-Miskito hands and that the King was organizing the expedition.\(^{18}\) Despite all the threats, however, the assaults never occurred and most of these actions turned out to be mere rumors. In reality, the Zambo-Miskito king looked for friendship with Spain and seldom planned any assaults on Spanish posts that might result in strong punitive raids. The Zambo-Miskitos lacked the force and weaponry to strike the biggest Spanish settlements along the coast even though Spanish forces along the coast were also without the means to properly defend or complete the conquest of the area due to the extreme war exigencies.

The weakening of the coastal defenses in the years following 1799 was a direct result of unfulfilled promises, the end of the policy of giving gifts to the Zambo-Miskitos, and the bitter jurisdiction dispute between intendant Anguiano and Captain General González Saravia, (Anguiano desired to pull back the coastal defensive line to Sonaguera), and the shortage of resources for dispatching militias to the coast. The policy of Captain General González Saravia put an end to the practice of giving “gifts” to the Zambo-Miskito king and his generals. Instead, González Saravia offered them friendship and the union

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 278-283.
with Spain in exchange for their loyalty to the Crown. In the most serious attempt, González Saravia invited the Miskito King, Stephen I, to Nueva Guatemala, who came escorted by the Spanish Captain Pareja. This mission, however, failed after the Spanish encountered tough opposition from the Zambo General Robinson at Black River. After the English attack on Trujillo in April of 1797, Anguiano began an intense dispute with the Captain General over the control of the Mosquitia Coast and the defenses of Trujillo. In a report Anguino suggested the creation of a semi-intendancy under his control to govern Trujillo and the Mosquitia region, and accused the Captain General of curtailing his power by commissioning his relative as militia sub-inspector in Honduras. The dispute facilitated the transfer of Cabo Gracias a Dios until the Chagres region to the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada in 1803. During these years, the Captain General recommended that Anguiano be reassigned to another post due to his ineptitude to govern, and because the intendant wanted to pull back the coastal defense line to Sonaguera and Olanchito, dismantle the port of Trujillo and relocate its population. After three years, the Captain General took the command of the Mosquitia coast from Trujillo to San Juan del Norte. However, great problems remained in Central America because the Kingdom lacked enough funds to cover the enormous defense expenditures for the coast. The dispute finally ended in favor of the Captain General, but its settlement did not solve the

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urgent matters regarding the occupation of the strategic posts along the Mosquitia shore.

The Policy of Putting Safety of the Kingdom into Spanish Hands

Without any vacillation, Spain decided to place the defense of its territories in the hands of Spanish born officers following the slave insurgency movements and the advances of French Revolutionary ideals in different parts of America. Spain opted to trust the defense of its colonial territories to a meager veteran force and the reinvigorated Spanish militias. Royal officials considered the Spanish population to be an essential part in securing Spanish holdings and so they sought to boost their devotion to the Crown. In Central America the militia force consisted --at least on paper—only of Spanish and Mestizo men. The militia reform of 1799 had been installed in the hope of giving the Spanish inhabitants the honor of defending the region. These new policies were designed to attract the elite members into the armed service by excluding the non-Spanish. Throughout the years, Spanish men had reluctantly accepted the castes serving in the militias and rejected the rights granted to them by the *Fuero Militar*. The 1799 military reform revived the Spanish tradition of the elite undergoing military training in order to defend the King’s territories. As a reward for their service His Majesty granted honors through the *Fuero Militar* and placed the security of his territories in Spanish hands.
Those who wrote the new regulation intended to create a force capable of confronting any menace. For this reason, Captain General González Saravia and the General Sub-inspector of Militias and Veteran Troops, Don Roque de Abarca, considered military training as an essential part of the formation of a soldier. Furthermore, Central America needed a trained force due to the reduction of the militia force in the years following 1799, and the small number of able-bodied men available in order to protect the Isthmus. Thus, the preparedness of the men was of extreme importance to the Captain General and the General Sub-inspector, especially under the threat of war and the possible Zambo-Miskito attacks.

To carry out the training of the military, Abarca commissioned new interim sergeant majors and gave them the task of reviewing and preparing a militia training program in each locality while awaiting officers to come from Europe. The urgency to train the militias became evident when Abarca made clear the need to commission three interim sergeant majors. Captain Don Alejandro Carrascosa, adjutant major of the Quetzaltenango’s militia, was assigned to instruct the Provincial Dragoon Squadron in Nueva Guatemala, Captain Don Josef Ximénez became the adjutant inspector, and lastly, Don Andrés Taboada, adjutant major of the Zacatepéquez’ militia, received the promotion to sergeant major because it was customary in Spain for people of his social standing to hold that rank.\textsuperscript{21} On February 7, 1801, Captain Don Josef Ximénez received the commissions to set up the militia in Antigua Guatemala and to arrange the

\textsuperscript{21} AGCA, A2.2, leg. 301, exp. 6874, fol 1-2. Nueva Guatemala, February 4, 1801.
militias of Zacatepéquez. After the troop reviews in these localities were completed, Ximénez prepared the militia detachments serving at San Fernando de Omoa and San Felipe del Golfo Dulce outposts.\textsuperscript{22} The need for the training of troops and commission of sergeant majors extended to all Central American intendancies, such as in Nicaragua where Abarca appointed Don Juan Sánchez in León and Don Simón Ubau in Granada.\textsuperscript{23}

Abarca’s newly appointees demanded that military officers conduct military drills daily and prepare a force capable of confronting the enemy. Military training would begin at 6 a.m. with the drum roll waking up the soldiers who subsequently proceeded to wash and get ready for inspection. Half an hour later, the sergeants and corporals would review the dress and weaponry of each militiaman. At 7 a.m. the companies would report to the barracks’ central plaza to begin weaponry instruction. Abarca placed extreme importance in military formations and arms handling. According to the orders, each sergeant explained the drill and the veteran corporals followed the instruction in front of their men. The rest of the corporals oversaw the militia’s training and corrected mistakes, especially in the lateral and rear formations. At 10 a.m. the instruction ended and the troops ate. Afterwards, the soldiers would attend to different tasks until 7:30 p.m. when the drums played \textit{retreta} and officers would again review the troops.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22} AGCA, A2.2, leg. 301, exp. 6869, fol. 1; Exp. 6870, fol. 1-4; Exp. 6875, fol. 4v. See merits of Ximénez.

\textsuperscript{23} AGCA, A2.2, leg. 301, exp. 6875, fol. 1-3v. Nueva Guatemala, February 14, 1801.

\textsuperscript{24} AGCA, A2, leg. 294, exp. 6520, fol. 1-2. Libro deOrdenes del Cuerpo.
Sub-inspector Abaca also wrote new regulations for the coastal fortresses in order to boost the involvement of Spaniards on their defense. The regulation clarified the number of troops and the payment that would receive while serving at the Omoa, Golfo Dulce, Trujillo, San Carlos, and Petén posts. Despite acknowledging that the vast majority of those men serving at these posts were not Spanish, Abarca hoped that with the salaries that were being offered, Spaniards would be more willing to occupy the main positions. Most of the officers' ranks, however, continued to remain vacant. Additionally, the regulation required the enlistment of Spaniards as sergeants and corporals in the companies. Under extreme circumstances, Abarca permitted non-Spanish people of lighter color to occupy those posts.\textsuperscript{25} The main goal of the regulation was to regain Spanish control over the defenses, and to maintain that Spaniard officers assured the security of the territory and loyalty to the King.

To continue the policy of reinforcement of the militias, the Captain General gave instructions for different corps formation along the Isthmus in 1803. Under direct orders, the town council of Nueva Guatemala commissioned four sheriffs to oversee the enlistment of new recruits. González Saravia demanded that the readiness of each company was maintained at all times, insuring that there were never vacancies.\textsuperscript{26} Similar revisions were developed in other areas of Central

\textsuperscript{25} AGCA, A2, leg. 300, exp. 6778, fol. 1-3. Royal Decree, October 5, 1803. Fort San Fernando de Omoa's company consisted of 90 men costing 12,588 pesos per year. Forty-three militiamen with the expense of 4,968 pesos served in San Felipe del Golfo Dulce. Trujillo and San Carlos had the same quantity of soldiers with 120 each and cost 17,052 pesos yearly. Finally, the Petén force was comprised of 57 men and cost 7,020 pesos a year, for a total number of 430 soldiers costing 58,680 pesos annually to the Royal Treasury.

\textsuperscript{26} AGCA, A2, leg. 300, exp. 6776, fol. Nueva Guatemala, November 15, 1803.
America where Crown officials discovered negligence from the appointed officers. In Olancho, the sub-delegate, Don Mariano Aguilúz, sabotaged the formation of the infantry militia battalion. An identical incident occurred in Yoro where Don Juan Agustín Valenzuela neglected to organize the cavalry squadron. According to the military changes of 1799, the Captain General sought to either complete or strengthen the Spanish militias in the region by assigning more Spanish troops to more perilous areas.

Fearing uprisings and inconsistencies in the new organization, royal authorities preferred to place Spaniard-born officers in leading government and military posts rather than Spanish-Americans. This policy soon created difficulties between the two groups. Crown officials felt that Spanish-born officers would remain loyal to the King while Spanish-Americans might join insurrection movements. Therefore, Spanish-born officials were assigned to key positions within the government and militias. The Crown policy fed the seed of resentment that had been planted among the Spanish-Americans by the Revolutions abroad, accelerating their thoughts of independence.

The process of placing Spanish-born officers sped up at the end of the 1790s. Lacking veteran troops to defend the territories in America and skeptical about the loyalty of Spanish-Americans, the Crown decided that Spanish-born men must occupy leading posts in the militarized government of Central America. As a result, those recommended for any key position were either Spanish-born or

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military officers with a proven loyalty to King, such as Don Justo Abaunza, lieutenant of the Granada militia, who under scrutiny became the sub-delegate of Nicoya due to his distinguished birth and military record. The Crown approved his appointment on January 9, 1800. Under similar circumstances, Don Blas Baena, a European and lieutenant of the veteran battalion, obtained the sub-delegacy of San Pedro Sula.29

Relegating Spanish-Americans from administrative and political posts quickly promoted instability in the region. The placement of Don Felipe O’Connor as Masaya’s sub-delegate brought out an animosity from the town council and its leading inhabitants. In 1800, Masaya’s town council accused the sub-delegate of intervening in the town council election, and demanded that he cease this practice. The intendant and the sub-delegate reported that the town councilmen intentionally misinformed the Captain General and did not respect the authorities. However, the Captain General allowed the town council to maintain its independence, reasoning that the recent uneasiness in the Central American town councils and indigenous populations was preventing him from favorably judging the intendant and its sub-delegates. Moreover, the authorities in Nueva Guatemala warned that if they ruled in favor of the intendant, the various town councils and indigenous populations might promote a riot against the Crown’s administration.30

29 AGCA, A1, leg. 1756, fol. 300, 305, 314, 416.

In 1801, a report in Nueva Guatemala warned the government that despite the traditional loyalty of the town, private disputes coming into the public arena were causing unrest within the population and the formation of opposing political parties. Royal authorities suspected that professors with liberal thinking were feeding the internal disputes that now embraced the whole town. Therefore, Don Ambrosio Cerdán y Portocarrero recommended imposing restrictions before further problems developed. Don Antonio Isidro Palomo expressed that the root of the disagreements in Nueva Guatemala came from the town’s relocation, but that now over permissiveness was promoting and encouraging the formation of opposotion parties. At the same time, the Marqués de Aycinena reported that these disputes were upsetting the tranquility of the place.\footnote{AGCA, A1, leg. 2643, exp. 2278, fol. 1-20v. Audiencia Indiferente, Reservadísimo, reports written by leading inhabitants of Nueva Guatemala, May 5 and 11, 1801.} The elite disputes in Nueva Guatemala turned into a struggle that in turn fed the discord against the Crown’s policies, eventually leading to a secret investigation in order to determine the gravity of the situation. Conclusively, royal officials recognized the fragility of the situation and the opposition of the Spanish-Americans to certain policies practiced in the Kingdom of Guatemala.

Increasing estrangement between the local and royal authorities further disrupted the relations between Spanish-born and Spanish-Americans. On September 11, 1805, Don Francisco Sebastián Chamorro, Quetzaltenango’s Magistrate, complained of the lack of respect shown to him by local authorities. According to his predecessor, it was customary that on the day of the King’s Patron Saint all Crown employees came to the magistrate’s house to pay their
respects and from there, the officers’ would parade to the Church. This particular year, however, only the tobacco factory manager and the royal warehouse manager followed the custom and went to the mass, out of uniform. Chamorro demanded a clarification from the Captain General that on the day of the King’s Patron Saint all royal employees should go to church in uniform and afterwards come to pay their respects to him at his house. The magistrate concluded that the procession of royal employees through town would help to infuse respect in his ministers and thereby the King’s rule. Chamorro described that several of the members of the elite openly refused to endorse royal policies or to get involved in any display of power.

When the Crown actually needed men to protect the lowlands and places far away from their home towns, Spanish-Americans and veteran officers generally opted to ignore the call. Frequently, military officers resigned from or died while serving at the posts along the Caribbean coast and these vacancies were refilled in those regions. Those officers that did not go did not go voluntarily, and they usually sought to finish their tour of duty as soon as possible, as they feared the high mortality rate at these posts. The scarce number of veterans available following the troop reduction further obligated the Captain General to transfer several veteran officers to the coasts. Following the death of Don Josef de Gálvez at Petén, cavalry Captain Don Nicolás Francisco de la Barrera was forced to take over command of the post on July 2, 1801. Following the completion of Barrera’s period as a commander, the Crown

32 AGCA, A1, leg. 198, exp. 4001, fol. 1-1v.
commissioned Don Luis Abella a veteran captain of the infantry battalion as the new commander. He took command on May 22, 1802. Abella was most likely commissioned because Barrera refused to continue serving at the post. Similar cases happened in Omoa, where the death of Don Josef Ymblusqueta forced the authorities to appoint Don Tomás Wallop as interim commander on June 26, 1802. Within a year, the Captain General commissioned Don Josef Panigo, veteran captain, as commander due to the subsequent death of Wallop on April 16, 1803. On the same date, Don Francisco Andrés Embite, a veteran lieutenant, received orders to take over the command of Fort San Carlos due to the death of Lieutenant Colonel Don Francisco Muñiz. The militias would reluctantly answer the calls for the defense that those high in the military echelons would either die or refuse to serve in.

In order to help to solve the problem of the militias aversion to serving in the lowlands, royal authorities created “volunteer” companies that were in reality men forced in to service in these areas in order to cover up the shortages of manpower at fortresses along the Caribbean coast. Throughout different correspondence, officials in Chiquimula, Zacapa, Comayagua, and León expressed that many troops died while serving in the lowlands. Commissioner Don Manuel Antonio Bances noted that every four months during 1801 a force of 60 militiamen departed from Chiquimula to Fort San Felipe del Golfo Dulce and San Fernando de Omoa. While serving at the forts, many men either succumbed to the different diseases in the field or came back only to die at home. This

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33 AGCA, A1.39, leg. 1757, exp. 140, 141, 239, 245; A2, leg. 92, exp. 1895, fol. 5.
combined with many people migrating to other areas before serving along the coast, the region became depopulated, resulting in the ruin of crops. Thus, Bances requested that the Crown relieve the troops on duty in Golfo Dulce and Omoa having them report only in case of invasion. By doing this, it would also save the royal treasury money. To cope with the shortage of men, Bances proposed sending the large amount of vagrants and criminals in the province to the posts. The military officers, however, disagreed with this plan because the vagrants would not defend the area. The authorities in Nueva Guatemala instead proposed that people living at those posts be the ones to fill the companies and man the defenses.\textsuperscript{34}

In 1801, the Audiencia prosecutor Don Gaspar de Piloña, revealed in a short report the incapacity of the veteran battalion to protect the Isthmus and the inability of Spain to send reinforcements. Piloña stated that the insufficient number of veteran soldiers prevented this force from assisting the settlements on the coast. According to this report, not even 50 soldiers from the whole veteran battalion were able to take arms. The prosecutor also disclosed that in the present situation expecting reinforcements from Spain was arduous and if in the event that they would come, the Spanish soldier turned-gentleman has lost his zeal for service, refusing to do marches, and being unwilling to do any menial work in this kingdom.\textsuperscript{35} In short, Piloña expressed his deep concern for the inadequate defense along the coast. The inability of the veteran soldiers and the

\textsuperscript{34} AGCA, A1, leg. 380, exp. 7874, fol. 1-5.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., fol. 3v-5v. Nueva Guatemala, May 5, 1801.
constant protests of the Spanish militiamen serving at the coastal posts presented an obscure panorama of the whole line of defense. Royal officials presumed that the 1799 militia regulation and the new commissions for Spanish men to enlist in the militias would solve the problem of the defense of Central America. However, two years after the replenishing of all military forces on the Isthmus by the royal authorities acknowledged their failure to create a capable defense force.

Part of the blame for the failure to create a capable military force lay with Spaniards, themselves, as they generally were more interested in receiving honors and privileges than in serving in the line of duty. Corruption of royal officials and the absence of motivation to serve in the lowlands halted the set up of the militias in different parts of the Kingdom. For two years Sergeant Major Don Juan Manuel Gil was unable to set up the new militia battalion in Olancho due to the corrupt Sub-delegate Don Mariano Aguilúz. The lack of information from this force, led the General Sub-inspector of Militias, Brigadier Don Roque de Abarca, to commission Don Alejandro Carrascosa, sergeant major of the San Miguel dragoon squadron, to inquire about the delay on December 10, 1803. Carrascosa found that Aguilúz was selling exemptions to people who wanted to avoid service, did not aid in the formation of the battalion, and presented for review only men with whom he had personal impediments. Notified beforehand of Carrascosa’s task, Aguilúz explained that it was impossible to set up the battalion due to the lack of men in the Olancho jurisdiction and pleaded for the annexation of other territories to complete the battalion. With the aid of retired
officers, Carrascosa put forward a list of 300 available men in the Olancho jurisdiction and demanded the rapid formation of the battalion. Aguilúz began the task by offering the advantages of the *Fuero Militar* to volunteers. Fifteen days later Carrascosa reviewed the new battalion. In the jurisdiction of Yoro, authorities deposed Sub-delegate Don Juan Agustín Valenzuela for sabotaging the organization of the cavalry squadron in the same manner as Aguilúz had done.\(^{36}\)

After 1803, royal authorities had completed revamping the finished militia structure in Central America by keeping the same troops serving in the Caribbean lowlands and attempting to maintain the armament in each area. The last effort to strengthen the militias occurred when the Captaincy General allowed the incorporation of several corps in 1803. Despite the effort, the militia force consisting of Spanish men suffered a sharp decline during these years. The review of the Sonsonate’s dragoon squadron in 1803 showed the ephemeral state of the unit, which at the time consisted of 18 soldiers, a sergeant major, and an interim adjutant major. This dragoon squadron established in Sonsonate, however, responded more to the ambitious elite than to the needs of the force. Only those with enough resources and prestige could join this company, as its captain, also incorporated the town council.\(^ {37}\) To protect the coastal areas, royal officials maintained the same policy of providing veteran troops, militias, and exiles. In Trujillo, the force included 26 veterans and 66 soldiers, mostly

\(^{36}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 50, exp. 677, fol. 1-9v. December 10-14, 1803.

\(^{37}\) AGCA, A2(3), leg. 6, exp. 29, fol. 1-5. Sonsonate, September 3, 1803. Don Jacinto Villavicencio was the captain of this unit.
residents from the aforementioned town. Additionally, Olancho provided 100 militiamen in 1805.\textsuperscript{38} This force rotated during the year to protect most of the coast of Honduras and to keep the enemy at bay. In reality, the insufficient number of men could not repel an assault or put up a proper defense of the area. Lastly, to help to balance the small number of men in service, the Captaincy General supplied master armourers to provide maintenance and to keep the weaponry in good shape. The small number of them, however, obligated authorities to split them between places, as in the case of Justo Fariñas, who fixed the armament in Comayagua and later on traveled to Granada in 1804.\textsuperscript{39}

The End of Privileges and the Exclusion of the Castes from the Militias

The 1799 militia regulation restricted even more the privileges granted by the \textit{Fuero Militar} and excluded the castes from service, causing a severe decline of the already meager forces protecting Central America. For years, cases involving crimes and disputes, against or in favor militiamen consumed the military judge advocate at Nueva Guatemala. Royal authorities acknowledged that militiamen abused the military privileges granted by the \textit{Fuero Militar} due to its ambiguous interpretation and use. The Crown therefore decided to end this practice and clearly defined how and when to apply the military immunities. As a

\textsuperscript{38} AGCA, A2, leg. 22, exp. 274, fol. 1-2v; Exp. 275, fol. 3, 16-17. Forces during the year of 1805.

\textsuperscript{39} AGCA, A2, leg. 22, exp. 272, fol. 5-7. Comayagua, July 25, 1804.
result, officials began curtailing the benefits enjoyed by militiamen, precipitating the unwillingness of men to serve in the militias. Moreover, the 1799 militia regulation excised the castes from service and sided with the Spaniards whom for years had been stating that Mulattoes did not deserve the same military distinctions. Immediately, the militia force was reduced, excluding the most loyal group on the Isthmus. The castes were subsequently enlisted into the urban militias without privileges or payment. The alienation of this large group damaged the defense of the Isthmus defense because it stripped from the militias their best and most loyal fighters.

As the new regulation expanded in the region, it restricted the use of the *Fuero Militar* and other immunities by the militiamen. The rights and privileges commonly applied in the past were now subject to strict military criteria that in some cases completely nullified these exemptions after November 25, 1799. Among those suffering from annulment of rights was retired militia Captain Agustín Valenzuela. Valenzuela was a “noble” from Comayagua who lost his military immunities after killing Don Juan Pardo in September 1805. He was stripped of all the privileges due to the new stipulations stated by the militia regulation of 1799. He enjoyed a long military career beginning as lieutenant of Comayagua’s infantry battalion in 1779. In that year, his battalion marched to San Pedro Sula to relieve San Fernando de Omoa when the English conquered the fort. The next year, he participated in the operation against Black River through its capitulation. In 1792, Valenzuela was promoted to captain of the fourth infantry company and retired from the service in June 1804. For his
twenty-five years of active service, Valenzuela obtained full *Fuero Militar* and the right to wear military uniform for the rest of his life. Five months after his retirement, Valenzuela was behind bars after severely assaulting Pardo. Due to the gravity of the inflicted wounds, Pardo died in September 1805.\(^{40}\) In previous years, the *Fuero Militar* would have protected Valenzuela by lowering the charges or by placing him under house arrest. His long military career and proven loyalty to the Crown place him in a position to receive a favorable military trial. Under the new dispositions, however, Valenzuela fell from grace due to the new regulation that halted the abuse of the *Fuero Militar* and nullified it according to military ordinances. Authorities proceeded to apply the *Fuero Militar* and immunities only as the regulation stated and any other interpretation or incorrect application was restricted.

The case of Don Simón Xiraldés in 1805 proved both the reluctance of Spanish men to undergo military service and the strict application of the new military regulation. Don Antonio Norberto Serrano Polo, interim intendant of Honduras, condemned Xiraldés to six years of military service for having an “illicit” relationship. Most probably, the sentence was to be carried out the transferring of Xiraldés to some military outpost on the Caribbean coast. Before the authorities could transfer the prisoner, Xiraldés received a commission as lieutenant of the first infantry company of Comayagua.\(^{41}\) This action stopped the sentence and permitted Xiraldés to reside in Comayagua because the military

\(^{40}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 36, exp. 471, fol. 22-23.

\(^{41}\) AGCA, A2(4), leg. 36, exp. 473, fol. 1.
privileges placed him out of the reach of civil law. Presumably, Xiraldés’ family either bought his militia position or used its connections to avoid his assignment to the coast where he could suffer from severe sickness or death. For Xiraldés as for any Spanish man, it was considered very dangerous to serve in the militia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Firstly, most of those serving as military officers contributed in order to help pay company expenses, sacrificing their time and businesses, receiving low payment, and being mobilized whenever ordered. Secondly, men could end up being sent to places that were dangerous to their health or where its death was certain. The series of restrictions on military exemptions therefore diminished the inclination for men to go into service.

The new policy not only succeeded in excluding military privileges to Spanish officers. For the castes the situation turned catastrophic as it ended all immunities and rights that had protected them from local authorities since June 28, 1782.\textsuperscript{42} Spaniards often expressed that military exemptions conferred to the castes provided a sense of insolence and equality, to them, besides eluding the power of civil law. Caste military officers tended to represent and vocalize in their communities the disputes against Spaniards and local authorities. In the following two decades after 1782, the castes continuously challenged Spaniards and local authorities through the exploitation of military exemptions. It served as a great tool in boosting the participation in the military and improving loyalty to the King. In 1799, the new military regulation brought the recent social advance

\textsuperscript{42} Regulation for Mulatto militias in Central America. ANCR, Serie Complementario Colonial, doc. 736, fol. 52-53; Serie Cartago Colonial, Doc. 1090, fol. 357-370.
of the castes to an end. Manuel Josef Gutiérrez, a Mulatto, challenged the validity of the detention of his servant and ox cart by the local authorities at San Miguel de Sacoaltitán in Sonsonate on November 3, 1800. Authorities argued that the servant insulted them, which resulted in the immediate seizure of his load and the demand of payment for feeding the animals. Angrily, Gutiérrez wrote a letter, in a disrespectful manner, warning that the loss of his trade in this case would reach the Royal High Court in Nueva Guatemala. Most likely, Gutiérrez exaggerated his contacts and pretended to employ to the greatest possible advantage --his military exemptions as a militia sergeant. The high magistrate of Sonsonate, however, intervened and he forbade Gutiérrez to write any further letters, fined him 25 pesos, and ordered him to defer to the local authorities on December 1, 1800.\footnote{AGCA, A2(3), leg. 2, exp. 12, fol. 1-4v.} In the end, Gutiérrez found that his military exemptions did not work because civil law took precedence over military law in this case. In addition to the prevention of Gutiérrez from applying the Fuero Militar, the high magistrate perceived the insults as acts of defiance against the law. The high magistrate submitted Gutiérrez and every mulatto to the jurisdiction of civil law, disallowing them the immunities while serving in the militia, as well as implementing the new regulation that totally omitted the castes from the exemptions.

One of the main goals of the new regulation was the eradication of the castes from service and thus, the nullification of their privileges. As a result of the new regulation, the Costa Rican governor stated on May 22, 1802, that the
militia force was reduced in strength to one battalion, and claimed that the
cavalry squadrons and Mulatto militias were transferred to the urban militias
without enjoying any Fuero Militar unless they were on active duty. Thus,
Mulatto militiamen and cavalrymen fell solely under civil law were under the
jurisdiction of town officials like any other civilian. The Spanish officers of the
cavalry squadron, however, were allowed the Fuero Militar while determining a
new commission or going into retirement.\textsuperscript{44} The new militia regulation completed
the long struggle to expel the castes from the armed forces and Mulatto men lost
all of the rights that they had previously obtained. The order to disband the
Mulatto militias and enlist the militiamen into the under urban militias of Cartago
took place a short time after the promulgation of the 1799 militia regulation. Don
Tomás de Acosta, the Costa Rican Governor, announced in an alarm drill on
February 10, 1800 that the Mulatto militias were henceforth part of the urban
militias.\textsuperscript{45} Despite the exclusion of the castes from the militias, on an official
level, however, the actual segregation never took place due that the vast majority
of the population ready to serve in the defense of Central American were the
castes. In the Capital of the Kingdom on August 29, 1801, the authorities
expressed their doubts by reminding the government that according to the new
regulation there was no impediment to Spaniards serving together with Mulattoes
in the same units “due to their greater number.”\textsuperscript{46} In reality, the so called Spanish

\textsuperscript{44} ANCR, Serie Cartago Colonial, doc. 934, fol. 34-34v.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., fol. 22.

\textsuperscript{46} ANCR, Serie Guatemala Colonial, doc. 788, fol. 1-8v.
militias included large numbers of the caste soldiers among their numbers due to the shortage of men able or willing to serve.

On paper, the Spaniards had succeeded in abolishing the military privileges of castes, but failed in providing men for the defense of Central America. The Captaincy General tried to place veteran troops and vagrants in the establishments but could not obtain enough numbers, obliging the castes to continue providing the largest force to defend the Isthmus as well as being the ones to comprise the vast majority serving along the coast. To reinforce the ports and coastal military posts, the Captaincy General demanded the continuous dispatching of militia companies from the territories that bordered these areas. Thus, battalions began rotating militia companies designated as “volunteers” in Spanish government papers. In reality, the Crown coerced these companies to serve along the coast. Troops compelled to serve at Forts San Fernando de Omoa, San Felipe del Golfo Dulce, Motagua, Trujillo, and San Carlos came from Chiquimula, Zacapa, León, Granada, and inland towns of Honduras. In many instances the corps defending the coast consisted of the urban militias that were mostly composed by Mulatto men. For example, Zacapa designated its fourth urban militia company to the defense of Fort Motagua after 1798. Additionally, Zacapa and Chiquimula supplied the companies that defended the San Fernando de Omoa and San Felipe del Golfo Dulce fortresses. In all of these cases, the Royal High Court in Nueva Guatemala acknowledged
that the militias protecting the establishments were “forced Mulattoes without discipline.”

The inland towns of Honduras sent large militia detachments to Trujillo putting the defenses in hands of the castes. The incessant number of militias came from Yoro, Olancho, Olanchito, Tegucigalpa, and Comayagua. During 1802, Olanchito dispatched a forced company comprised of one officer and 17 militiamen every month. Similarly, Olancho sent 50 soldiers after, June and Yoro sent 49 men for the better part of that year. At the time, Trujillo’s defense force consisted of veteran artillery and infantry companies. The royal artillery corps consisted of two officers and 30 artillermen. The infantry company consisted of a captain and 78 soldiers, of whom the majority were Mulattoes, Free Blacks and convicts. On April 10, 1802, the chief defense force became the Caribbean Battalion, a unit consisting of one grenadier and eight fusilier companies. The men serving in this battalion were Free Blacks from the Saint Vincent and Saint Domingue islands who had arrived in previous years. Three years later, the defensive line in Trujillo was comprised of the Caribbean Battalion and a company from Olancho. The defense of Trujillo depended completely upon the loyalty of the castes because those troops coming from the inland Honduran towns were mostly Mulattoes, while the force protecting Trujillo had a caste majority in its ranks as well.


Chapter 10

Conclusion

Militias played a fundamental role in Spanish American Colonial society. In Central America, the influence of the militias over colonial society increased after 1755 thanks to the changes proposed in the Bourbon Reforms, where most of the taxation revenues and new earnings of the monopolies were used to finance the armament, uniforms, and militia payroll. The creation of new militias also allowed great numbers of people to enjoy privileges and honors, two things that were extremely important for the Spaniards. In similar ways, the exemptions attracted popular participation in the defense of the Crown’s holdings. Through their participation, Mestizos and castes enjoyed military honors and the use of uniforms, elements that increased public recognition and social mobility. Finally, the militias defended the Crown’s territories against both foreign and native enemies, therefore becoming the most important institution in the day-to-day life of Central America. Their importance in the defense of the territories justified unlimited monetary subsidies.

Between 1755 and 1808 people employed more weaponry than ever before. This new dependency on firearms led to the concentration of power in those that had control over the access to them. Throughout this time Spain was incapable of supplying all of the weapons that were required by the militias. In
most of the local and General Troop Reviews, the commander-in-chief pointed out the shortage of firearms. Only during the Anglo-Spanish War, from 1779 to 1783, did the Crown supply money and weapons in large quantities, but despite this injection, Spain still fell short in order to cover the available forces. After the war ended, all military aid was cut back because of the bankrupt economy of the Spanish Crown. Nonetheless, during the course of these years, the people of Central America depended on weaponry more than ever due to the wars and raids. Service in the militias gave men a fair amount of knowledge of firearms as well as officers the opportunity to create a popular following thanks to the regulations that demanded complete obedience at all times. The unending financial problems and wrongful royal policies provoked popular uprisings in Central America after 1808. These events were very difficult to bring under control due to the lack of arms for the loyal troops to confront the dissenters. Those having access to weapons were able to exercise control over the population and thus became the de facto military leaders of the movements. Often militia officers would mobilize and command their companies either in support or in defiance of the revolts, realizing that they held absolute authority over their troops.

In order to complete the defensive plan, Spain delivered massive resources in the second half of the eighteenth-century to build and reinforce the various forts in Central America. The Caribbean forts became the main bastions for both the defensive and the offensive expeditions against the Zambo-Miskitos and the English. It was at this time, therefore, that funding for new constructions
and renovations, troops, and weaponry became available in great amounts. Forts like San Fernando de Omoa and Inmaculada Concepción were the keys to the defense of the Caribbean coast, concentrating most of the improvements and troops. Others forts, such as San Carlos and Trujillo, facilitated the movement of troops and attacks against enemies along the Caribbean coast. In no other period did Spain deploy more militiamen, weaponry and money to the forts in Central America than in the period from 1755 to 1808.

In order to have a force that could confront the foreign threats against the integrity of the Kingdom of Guatemala, Spain resorted to carrying out the greatest military reform in Central America that in reality consisted in four military reforms from 1755 to 1808. These reforms formed part of an extended change in the military that had a similar organization, regulation and related military privileges throughout the entire period of study. In spite of the reorganization of the corps, the militia retained the same basic system. The only major change in each reform was the decrease in the number of militiamen due to exorbitant maintenance costs.

The first and largest military reform carried out in the Kingdom of Guatemala began in 1755 with the organization of an extended militia force by Captain General Alonso Arcos y Moreno. Before the 1755 reform, there were only two veteran companies and the remnants of the militia force that had been created in 1687 that were available for the defense of Central America. In addition, the governors of each province would organize militias for especial operations without the intention of keeping them as regular forces. The 1755
military reform ended the trend of improvisation and instituted the set up of a force that—at least on paper—received regular military drill. Arcos y Moreno organized and regulated the largest force ever seen on the Isthmus, composed of 31,455 men and 1,689 officers. During the six years that the militia reform functioned, however, men hardly received any drill or weapons, resulting in the deterioration of the militia force that prompted its annulment by the Crown in 1761.

Despite being a short military reform, Arcos y Moreno’s militia reform laid the foundation for the following militia reforms in the Kingdom of Guatemala up until independence. The importance of the reform did not rely on the number of men but on the organization and regulation because it constituted the basis for the future reforms. It also allowed for an easy transition from the first reform in 1755 to the second in 1764 as well as the subsequent reforms. As a result, most of the militias and their officers remained in their positions until the last day of the Spanish administration of Central America.

After the militia reform of 1755 was instituted, the elite flocked in great numbers in order to obtain commissions as officers and the honor that came with them. The militias became the only force to enforce order in the towns and to give the elites military power. Thanks to this system, the militia officers controlled the only force capable of stopping an insurrection or invasion. Thus the loyalty of these territories rested in the hands of the militias and the leading families of each territory. The cancellation of the military reform in 1761, however, ended
the experiment and seriously damaged the defensive capability of the Kingdom of Guatemala in the middle of the Seven Year’s War (1756-1763).

The disastrous results of the Seven Year’s War demanded for a rapid expansion of military and economic reforms in the Spanish Empire. Havana’s vulnerability showed the urgency of a new defensive plan in the Spanish territories. A new military reform in Cuba began in 1764 with the Regulation of the Infantry and Cavalry Militias. While this was an innovative military reform in other Spanish territories, a similar regulation had existed in the Kingdom of Guatemala since 1755. Captain General Pedro de Salazar y Herrera (1765-1771) set up the disciplined militias in each province of the Kingdom in 1765. Preparedness and regular drill were part of the plan to keep militia ready for action. The militia was a body that had its own laws and was comprised of Spanish, Mestizo, Mulatto, and Black men. However, the militias barely trained and they did not have the necessary weapons. In the end, these disciplined militias did not differ much from the plan presented by Arcos y Moreno in 1755. In fact, most of the officers and militia formations came directly from the Arcos y Moreno militiamen.

Spain was hesitant to arm large groups of people with dubious loyalty and demanded that veteran officers control the militias of each town. Policies required that faithful Spaniards lead the militias in order to avoid any misuse of the weaponry and so authorities sought out those that had previously served in the Royal Army. A scarce number of veterans lived in the region, however, and most of the militias fell under the command of the traditional Spanish families that
dominated other administrative posts. It was on the eve of war in 1777 that Spain resolved to dispatch a veteran battalion and an artillery company with express orders to prepare and take command of the militias.

The replacement of Salazar y Herrera, Don Martin de Mayorga (1773-1778), halted the military reforms and failed to prepare the region for the upcoming war. Mayorga concentrated on the construction of Nueva Guatemala, a process that took his entire administration. This Captain General ignored the militia reform and thus weakened the militias.

Don Matías de Gálvez made the most significant changes and pushed forward the third military reform from 1778-1799. After reviewing the troops, Gálvez decreased the active force to 21,076 soldiers. Most of those dismissed were Mulattoes, who following Gálvez’s action, only accounted for 1,320 of the total force. To prepare the troops for war, he placed most of the militias under the command of veterans. With this set up Gálvez defeated the English in all fronts during the Anglo-Spanish War (1779-1783) and assured that his reform lasted for twenty-one years, longer than any other.

Veteran soldiers were sent throughout the Isthmus in order to oversee the drilling of the militias. Thanks to this, the militiamen learned how to fight and perfected their use of firearms. Almost every militia battalion in the region had at least some kind of supervision from veteran soldiers. The veteran battalion provided all the manpower for this operation and coordinated the actions of the militias during the war. Gálvez imposed discipline and better organization on the
militias by adhering completely to the Cuban regulation in order for the militias to be more effective during the expeditions.

During the Anglo-Spanish War (1779-1783), the militias composed the backbone of the force in every single front and were responsible for obtaining overwhelming victories over regular English soldiers. Spanish veteran soldiers never reached large numbers in the region and in 1778 the Guatemalan Veteran Battalion only numbered 200 men. On every war front the militias were the majority of the force and their fighting capacity was proved when they continually defeated English veteran soldiers and their Zambo-Miskito allies.

Gálvez bestowed the Fuero Militar to all militiamen in Central America in 1778 and thereby provided the most important tool for them to defy the authorities. The privileges extended to the militias clashed with both civil authority and the elite because military officers and active militiamen were able to circumvent common law. The men received numerous exemptions from: communal forced labor, taxation, donations, and payment for bureaucratic paperwork. For the Spaniards, the Fuero Militar increased their status and honor. For the Mestizoes, it elevated their position in society. But for the Mulattoes it gave them the avenue to fight exploitation at the hands of Spaniards and allowed them to seek equal rights in military courts. Thus, the Fuero Militar became the main reason to serve in the militia, for the military --as a group-- defended these privileges from those trying to control them.

As a result of the Anglo-Spanish War (1779-1783), all of Central America became militarized. Veterans filled most of the administrative posts in the
Isthmus, including governorships, magistracies, and every other important position in the Spanish government. After 1779, most of positions in Central America fell into the hands of Spanish veteran soldiers where they remained until independence.

After the Anglo-Spanish War (1779-1783) ended, the militias and their privileges declined due to the ineffective policies of the Captain Generals. Don Josef de Estachería (1783-1789) simply maintained the force left by Gálvez. His administration challenged the privileges granted by the Fuero Militar and let the militias deteriorate by not filling vacant posts. The immediate successors, Don Bernardo Troncoso (1789-1794) and Don Josef Domás y Valle (1794-1801), continued with the legacy left by Estachería. Both contributed to the decline of the militias and the crippling of the Fuero Militar. They followed policies that sought to place only loyal Spaniards in administrative posts and to expel groups from the militias that were considered not to be loyal, such as the Mulattoes.

Estachería’s administration placed Europeans in most of the political and military posts in Central America. This policy awoke feelings of resentment among the Spanish-Americans. As the policies remained, it widened the division between Spaniards and Spanish-Americans as well as the Crown and its subjects.

From 1789-1799 the crisis in Central America worsened thanks to a series of events that the Spanish government could not sustain. Firstly, the colonization process and the set up of military posts along the Caribbean Coast drained the treasury coffers. Spanish and Guatemalan officials considered it important to
regain the coastal region by bringing in European colonists escorted by a strong militia detachment. Secondly, the Spanish administration feared the expansion of French and Saint Domingue revolutionary ideals. The actions taken by Spanish officials widened the gap between the government and the people. Finally, the continuous state of war since 1793 and the demand for new funds caused ample discontent and deteriorated the government in such way that it crippled the ability of the militias to react.

Military reports in Central America indicated a decline of the militias from 1789-1799. Several officials blamed the decline on the lack of military training and the vacancies had remained unfilled for years. In the General Troop Review of 1794 all of the militias seemed at full strength but the account was false. Officials continually stressed that the militias were declining due to the lack of royal support. The Captaincy General further weakened the militias by disarming and removing groups considered unfaithful, such as the Mulattoes. Overall, in these ten years the militias suffered from continuous defeats that finally forced them to retreat from the coastal colonies, poor condition of the troops, false reports, and erroneous decisions.

In order to confront the perilous situation along the coast, Spanish authorities resolved to leave the protection of the Caribbean settlements to Mulattoes and Blacks due to the weak military situation in the Isthmus and the incapacity of Spanish militias to defend it after 1797. For years Spanish authorities had obliged Mulattoes to serve along the coast in order to defend the region, a policy that failed. In 1797 the large influx of Blacks coming from the
Caribbean Islands permitted authorities to formulate a new strategy. Accordingly, the Captaincy General appointed Spanish commanders to oversee the Mulatto and Black militias. According to this plan, the Mulatto and Black militias would guard the coastal zone for Spain in exchange for freedom and land grants. These forces twice defeated the English in their efforts to conquer the port of Trujillo in 1797 and in 1799. These two actions marked the end of English dominion of the coast and the created an unwillingness for the Zambo-Miskitos to challenge the new forces serving Spain. They also signified a new change in the geo-political situation in an area where Spanish dominion was completely dependent on the loyalty of Mulattos and Blacks.

The fourth militia reform (1799-1808) reflects the debacle of the militias on all fronts. First, it called for the reduction of the force by 44%, as stated in the royal decree of November 25, 1799. Thus, the total number of militias was reduced to 11,671 men and was composed of Mestizos and Spaniards with the exclusion of Mulattoes. This situation coincided with the collapse of the economy, bad administration, and unending war with England since 1796. Second, the expulsion of the castes weakened the defense of Central America even more. In many parts of the Isthmus the only available defensive force was composed of Mulattoes. Third, it augmented the dissatisfaction with Spanish policies that only sought to get money for the war. Fourth, the most serious blow was the end of privileges for all forces that had been provided by the Fuero Militar. In a single decree the Crown stripped men of the privileges that they had enjoyed for many years. These changes in policy produced dissent, riots, and the search for better
ways of government by the Spanish Americans in the years to come. The military organization and the loyalty of the militiamen to individual commanders permitted the rise of military leaders known as caudillos after 1799 who, in most cases, led resistance movements with the full cooperation of Mestizo and Mulatto militiamen.

The fourth militia reform took place during the administration of Captain General Antonio Gonzalez Molliendo y Saravia 1801-1814. His management of the Kingdom drove the population to resent the ruling policies and to look for other alternatives. As a consequence, Mulattoes and Mestizos under the leadership of Spanish-Americans revolted in several towns across Central America beginning in 1808. Most of the rebellious people justified their claims against the Crown by citing all of the privileges that they had lost. The various demonstrations opposing Spanish rule showed that different groups had united to challenge the Crown’s dominion over their lives. 1808 marked the beginning of a period of struggle that would not end until 1821 when Central America obtained independence and the caudillos took control of the region.

The Bourbon Reforms were the driving force behind the Militia Reform. Through the Militia Reform, authorities wished to regain power in the American territories and to tighten the social control. In doing so, however, they encountered open opposition from several different groups. As the Crown progressed with its proposed modifications, it awoke a culture of criticism in a period of social and political convulsion. This public sphere transcended from the private environment and increased the awareness and criticism of the Spanish
rule. Militiamen, shielded by the *Fuero Militar*, vented their frustrations and disagreements in military courts where they could talk freely and without fear. Militia officers therefore became the main interlocutors for their communities by giving voice to the unhappiness caused by the abuses.

After 1765, the military reforms created a group of officers and militiamen who obeyed the king in theory, but in reality they obeyed their particular views and interests. The militiamen profited more from their rank than from their wages. Through the series of privileges that they were granted, the militiamen often ignored the law because civil authorities could not prosecute them. Uniforms and rank were thus important incentives for the troops to obey their officers, who were mostly Spaniards. The castes enjoyed the status and protection granted them by the *Fuero Militar*. Mulattoes and Blacks were able to elevate their status in their communities and either facilitated or challenge their relations with the Spanish community.

The Captain Generals and Governors of the Kingdom of Guatemala all came from the ranks of the military. Therefore, defense and security matters dictated the government agendas. In this way, the defense of the Isthmus became the main objective of the government. Consequently, the militias and military officers controlled the security of the Kingdom and became the main regulators of social life in the region. Their legacy extended well into the modern Central American period.

The military reforms changed the relations between the groups that composed society. The negotiation of privileges and favors determined the
behavior of officers and militias. Spanish men filled the officer ranks in the militias while the vast majority of militiamen were Mestizos and Mulattoes. For these groups, the only way to demand certain privileges was for them to be loyal to their officers. Discontented militias, however, forced officers to settle in order for them to retain their power and honor.

Overall, the militia in Central America promoted changes in the social behavior of its inhabitants. The constant training of militias and the wars forced the greater part of the population to depend on them. For this reason, the military reform began a process that inadvertently prepared a group of people to take control of the situation when Spain no longer had effective control of the Kingdom.

The lack of resources available to pay the militias and the difficulty of communication with Spain created an independent attitude in the militias since the early 1790s. Spain rarely sent regular military officers after 1797. The shortage of economic resources to supply or pay the militias forced Spain to reduce the standing force. As a result, the end of the war against England in 1807 and the French invasion of Spain in 1808 triggered the beginning of the independence movements from Spanish domination supported in many cases by militias and their officers who controlled the access to the weapons.
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