

# French Cavalry Remounts and Replacements December 1806 to December 1807

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## Abstract.

Much has been said about the remounting of the French cavalry in 1806 and 1807 on captured Prussian and Saxon Horses. This paper sets out to test this hypothesis as well as to establish how Napoleon regenerated his mounted troops following the battle of Eylau and Friedland in 1807.

## Horse provision December 1806 to February 1807.

Following the battles of Jena and Austerstadt, the French Army moved into Poland.

Whilst in cantonments, Napoleon began re-organising his badly depleted cavalry. Napoleon estimated the number of men and horses he would need to make up for losses.<sup>1</sup> The cuirassiers and carabinieri were short of 997 men to complete each regiment with 5 squadrons, the dragoons needed 1,000 men to increase the service squadrons to 250 men, the chasseurs and hussars were also short of similar numbers of men, totalling some 4,000 remounts. The detachments of cuirassiers and other troops sent from Italy, spent the winter in Berlin as Sub-Lieutenant de Gonneville notes:

*Our division occupied the barracks of the Prussian guard and the body-guard, and we spent a week there to recover ourselves a little, for we had considerable need after marching so long without a halt, and the more that after Inspruck we had a continuance of rainy weather, and had to pass by roads that were dreadfully broken up and inundated plains ; among them there were some near Augsburg more than a league in length, that we passed at night ; I never understood how it was we were not all stuck there. We left Berlin about the middle of January, 1807, to join the army already beyond the Vistula.<sup>2</sup>*

Napoleon planned initially to field a force of 51,000 men, but only had 36,000, and would need 16,000 horses and men, in addition to remounts and replacements.<sup>3</sup> By the summer, the cavalry force was to be 77,000 men. 10,000 would be drawn from the conscription class of 1807 to make the force up to 70,000 men and 7,000 would be drawn from the class of 1806 that had not yet been called up.<sup>4</sup> 12,500 men were to be sent immediately to the army, and 20,000 rather than 10,000 reserves were needed.<sup>5</sup> General Bourcier was to obtain 24,000 horses and to send them to Potsdam, at least 6,000 were to be dragoon horses, and sent to Cassel. Each horse complete with bridle and saddle was to cost 600 francs and 10 to 11

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1 Napoleon to Dejean 6 January 1807 11566

2 De Gonneville p61

3 Napoleon to Dejean 6 January 1807 11566

4 Napoleon to Dejean 6 January 1807 11566

5 Napoleon to Cessac 6 January 1807 11567

million francs was available for the purchase of the horses.<sup>6</sup> The light cavalry mounts were to be aged 5 ½ years old and measure under 15hh high. The maximum age was 9 years old.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, Napoleon ordered the production of 2,000 hussar saddles, 4,000 dragoon saddles, 1,000 cuirassier saddles, along with the requisite number of bridles, portmanteau, stirrup leathers and irons, breast plates etc. 40,000 pairs of shoes, 4,000 pairs of dragoon boots and 1,000 pair of cuirassier boots were also ordered to be made.<sup>8</sup> Two days later, Napoleon increased the cavalry force to 84,000 men.<sup>9</sup> 6 to 7 million francs was to be spent to purchase an additional 8,000 horses. The horses for the light cavalry were to measure 13.2 hh to 14hh and to be aged five to years of age, and for the heavy cavalry 14.hh to 14.3 hh and aged four years.<sup>10</sup> The heavy cavalry squadrons were to be increased from 180, to 220 men, the line cavalry to 160 men per company. 3000 to 4,000 men were to be taken from Italian dépôts with a similar number of horses.<sup>11</sup> An additional 6,000 horses were to be levied in Berlin, 400 being sent to the cavalry of the Imperial Guard.<sup>12</sup>

The loss of horses between December 1806 and January is shown below:<sup>13</sup>

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6 Napoleon to Dejean 6 January 1807 11566  
7 Napoleon to Dejean 6 January 1807 11566  
8 Napoleon to Dejean 6 January 1807 11565  
9 Napoleon to Dejean 8 January 1807 11585  
10 Napoleon to Dejean 8 January 1807 11585  
11 Napoleon to Dejean 8 January 1807 11585  
12 Napoleon to Clarke 28 January 1807 11704  
13 SHDDT C2 481, 484, 484

Regiment	Horses Lost 15 December 1806 to 7 January 1807	Remounts gained 15 December to January 1807
1 Dragoons	166	
2 dragoons	29	
4 Dragoons		33
5 dragoons		105
8 dragoons	35	
9 dragoons	73	
12 dragoons	100	
14 dragoons	75	
16 dragoons		144
18 dragoons		126
19 dragoons		14
20 dragoons	198	
21 dragoons		30
26 dragoons	36	
27 dragoons		10
3 Hussars	97	21
5 Hussars	46	161
7 Hussars	121	161
8 Hussars	75	151
9 Hussars	45	100
10 Hussars		82
13 Hussars	41	
Provisional Hussars	121	
7 Chasseurs	56	80
10 Chasseurs	70	49
11 Chasseurs		91
13 Chasseurs	41	110
20 Chasseurs	6	
21 Chasseurs		44
22 Chasseurs		124
Totals	1,431	1,636

*Table 1: Losses and gains of horses 15 December 1806 to 7 January 1807*

From table above, the army gained 1,636 horses, to make up for the loss of 1,431 horses. Even with this gain, many regiments were still understrength. For example the 10<sup>th</sup> Chasseurs a Cheval lost 70 horses but only gained 49. The 20<sup>th</sup> Dragoons lost 198 horses and received no remounts. Not all the returns for the cavalry in the period under examination can be located in the French archives, so we must rely on Napoleon's estimate of losses 6,997 riding horses up to 7 January 1807.<sup>14</sup> 1807 is the first time provisional regiments are used on a large scale in Napoleon's armies. In general terms a provisional regiment was likely just to be a provisional administrative structure. These general administrative groupings for moving troops from rear areas to field armies are titled "*marche*" companies, squadrons, battalions etc. When reaching the designated Corps or similar formation, these units were usually broken down or distributed among the existing units (usually part of their parent Regiment). A "Provisional" title indicated that the battalion or regiment unit is consciously intended to be engaged in battle in that formation. This system was applied both for infantry and cavalry. In order to get horses to where they were needed, the remount service was established at Potsdam.

### **Case Study 1: Potsdam Remount dépôt**

Potsdam served as the principle remount dépôt for the army. 780 Horses for the heavy cavalry to act as remounts were established here on 10 September 1806. Much has been said about the mounting of French dragoons and the cavalry in general on captured Prussian and Saxon Horses. Between 9 October and 7 November, some 18,450 captured horses would be passed to the dépôt at Potsdam. Indiscipline of troops resulted in huge wastage of horses. Many were killed for food, sold to horse dealers, stolen by peasants or horse dealers, or simply lost. Of these 18,450 horses, only 3,800 had arrived at Potsdam by 1 December 1806.<sup>15</sup> In total, Potsdam would receive 6,962 captured horses by 25 February 1807, and the small dépôt at Cassel 866, in total 7,828 captured horses out of the 18,450 would reach the remount dépôt and be allocated as mounts in the French army, a staggering 10,622 being lost between 7 November 1806 and 25 February 1807. So hampering was this loss of horseflesh that Marshal Soult reclaimed the horses from the cavalry bands and spare officers mounts in order to move his artillery and wagons in his army corps. In the same period 10,977 horses were be purchased from the German horse markets.<sup>16</sup> One wonders how many of these horses were original captured horses? Of these horses 3000 came from Hanover, 2000 draught horses each from Mecklemburg, Hanover and Brunswick. 1500 horses were purchased on Higher-Silesia. General Dejean was ordered to establish at Potsdam 994 remounts for the heavy cavalry and 996 for the light cavalry. By 12 December 1806, Bourcier had 1,132 remounts in Potsdam.

In addition to providing mounts, Potsdam operated as a large scale equine hospital. Wittenberg and Potsdam became large dépôts for sick and injured horses. Potsdam dépôt was established and controlled by General Bourcier. Napoleon ordered all the captured horses from Spandau to be sent to Potsdam on 28 October 1806. Of these 4,000 horses, only 393 would arrive.<sup>17</sup> Contractors who were ordered to move the horses, being found to be lax in their post.

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14 Napoleon to Dejean 15 March 1807 12038

15 Archives Nationale, AF IV 1180 Bourcier to Clarke 1 December 1806

16 Archives Nationale AF IV 1180 Dejean to Clarke 25 February 1807

17 Archives Nationale AF IV 1180 report General Bourcier 2 November 1806

After this debacle, Napoleon ordered all horse convoys to be guarded by French troops as opposed to civilian contractors<sup>18</sup>. By November 4, 829 sick or injured horses out of an initial column of 2029 horses had arrived at Potsdam with the closing of small dépôts for sick horses.<sup>19</sup> Bourcier demanded that the hygiene of barracks and stables be immediately improved, and that sick horses on marches were to be cared for by well-trained veterinarians. 8 veterinarians were added to Bourcier's staff at Potsdam. However a flu epidemic at Potsdam, illustrated that even the improved sanitary conditions were far from ideal, and the way in which sick horses were stabled and cared for required a fundamental change.<sup>20</sup>

Bourcier set about his task with great zeal. The staff at Potsdam was enlarged to include a Colonel to command the small ancillary dépôts attached to Potsdam, a Major to oversee detachments and their formation, and 14 Captains or Lieutenants from the School of Hippology, who were specially commissioned to take care of the horses in convoys.<sup>21</sup>

Between 1 and 31 December 1806, Potsdam was able to rehabilitate 6,821 horses that were sick and by 1 March 1807 rehabilitate some 1,046 horses from sword, bayonet or bullet wounds. Horses with nasal discharges were to be held together in an ancillary dépôt away from the wounded horses. By isolating 55 horses with flue, Bourcier was able to prevent the infection spreading to the rest of the equine population held in the main stables at Potsdam.<sup>22</sup> By 1 March, Bourcier had processed some 12,700 horses.

However the lack of sufficient transport to bring in fodder to Potsdam was a great embarrassment Bourcier, Napoleon being obliged to reduce the establishment by 1,500 horses, which were moved to a new dépôt at Kulm in April 1807. At the same time a dépôt was established at Breslau which held 525 horses for cuirassiers, 1140 for dragoons and 1,000 horses suitable for the light cavalry. 2000 horses were to be purchased from Hanover, Mecklemburg, Bayreuth and Brunswick and to be sent to Breslau to act as remounts. The lack of fodder also effected the army. On 21 February 1807, Marshall Ney reported to Napoleon that his horses had not eaten for 6 days and not gallop let alone carry the weight of their rider. Out of 1,400 horses in Ney's light cavalry brigade, only 250 were fit enough to carry their rider by the end of March 1807.

Operating so far from France, the means of getting remounts and replacements to the army had to be reviewed. Marching men directly from France in to the theatre of operations without staging posts had been used for the campaign of 1805, and in the campaign of October 1806 against Prussia the army was already close or in the theatre of operations. What was required was for the establishment of forward supply dépôts. Material in terms of cannon, saddles, muskets, clothing would be sent to these dépôts along with rations. The men would march from France to these dépôts and then forward to join the army. Marshall Kellerman was placed in charge of the dépôts of Western Germany and Eastern France, with dépôts established at Magdeburg and Cassel. 11 provisional regiments of cavalry were formed, by adding a 5 squadron to each cavalry regiment. These men were to be equipped and trained at their dépôts in France, and then dispatched as provisional squadrons to Magdeburg, Cassel or Potsdam their horses coming from France. During the march to the

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18 Archives Nationale AFIV 1180 Napoleon to Bourcier 5 November 1806

19 Archives Nationale AFIV 1180 report General Bourcier 4 November 1806

20 Archives Nationale AFIV 1180 Bourcier to Clarke 21 November 1806

21 SHDDT E31 6

22 SHDDT E31 6

forward dépôt, the men were to undergo on the job training. This method was employed in all future conflicts, but from 1812, it seems the men marched from the dépôt in France to a remount dépôt to be mounted.

In this way some 7,112 new cavalry troopers arrived in Poland. Kellerman also oversaw the transfer of 9,559 horses from the army of reserve and 10,306 were brought into the dépôt at Potsdam.<sup>23</sup> In this remounting of the army prior to Eylau, the 1st Dragoons received with its passage to Berlin a mounted detachment of at least 100 dragoons, leaving of Versailles from 12 to September 15. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoons received a detachment of 80 men coming from the dissolution of the regiments of foot dragoons, a detachment which was mounted in Potsdam, leaving on November 22 and joined the division there before the passage of the Vistula.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoons did not receive reinforcements before the passage of the Vistula. The first detachment bound for this regiment started from Potsdam on December 1; it came from the footmen from Moulins at the same time as the corps itself. The 14<sup>th</sup> Dragoons received a detachment of 100 men coming from the dissolution of the regiments of foot dragoons, mounted in Potsdam and starting out on November 22. The 20<sup>th</sup> Dragoons received a detachment of 80 men coming from the dissolution of the foot dragoons, mounted in Potsdam and starting out on November 22. The 26<sup>th</sup> Dragoons received a detachment of 40 men coming from the dissolution of the foot dragoons, mounted in Potsdam and starting out on November 22. All these detachments, forming a reinforcement of approximately 400 horses, could join their corps before the passage of the Vistula, since there was only 16 to 18 days march from Potsdam to Warsaw, and take part in the operations of December and were directed to their corps on January 22. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoon Division received detachments of men from Berlin during December 1806. The 3 Dragoons received, on its passage to Frankfurt-on-the Oder (dépôt of Major Lambert), a mounted detachment of 136 men, having left from Versailles between 12 and 15 September 1806. The 6 Dragoons, received on its passage to Frankfurt, a detachment of 85 men coming from the dissolution of the foot dragoons, mounted in Potsdam and started out on November 10. The 10 Dragoons did not receive anyone; it did not have a company from the foot regiments; the grand dépôt was in Abbeville and was to provide a squadron to the reserve of the army from the coast, in Bologna. The 11<sup>th</sup> Dragoons received a detachment of 80 men coming from the dissolution of the foot dragoons, mounted in Potsdam and started out on November 22. In addition on November 18 two detachments of 144 men from the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Dragoons were established around Berlin, in the village of Rosenthal, to await the passage of their regiments there. (Report of General Belliear to the Major General.) They may very well come from the men and the horses tired or wounded which had not been able to follow in the pursuit, and were independent of the 80 dragoons of the 11<sup>th</sup> Dragoons mounted in Potsdam. In the 3 dragoon division, the 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoons received, with its passage in Berlin, a mounted detachment of at least 100 men, departing Saint-Germain from 12 to 15 September. The 12<sup>th</sup> Dragoons received a detachment of 100 men coming from the dissolution of the foot dragoons, mounted in Potsdam and starting out November 10. This detachment is included in the situation presented for December 15. The 8<sup>th</sup> Dragoons received 17 mounted dragoons departing from its dépôt in Strasbourg at the end of September and arriving in Berlin during the last days of October; moreover, it received 80 dragoons coming from the dissolution of the foot dragoons, mounted in Potsdam and starting out on November 10. The remounts received by the army 15 December 1806 to 22 January 1807 are as follows:<sup>24</sup>

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23 SHDDT E31 6

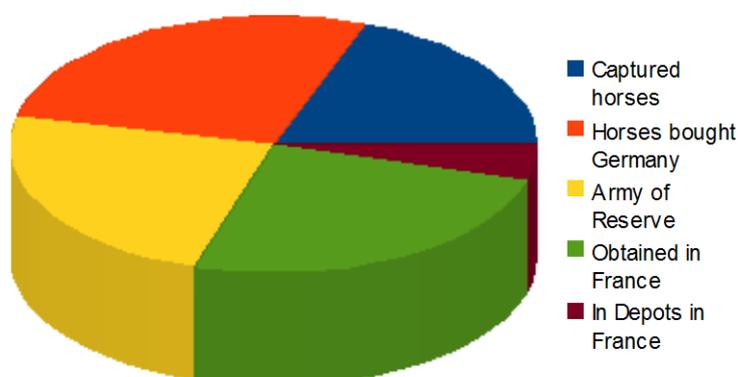
24 SHDDT C2 481, 484, 484

Corps	Remounts Received
1 Dragoon Division	400
2 Dragoon Division	300
3 Dragoon Division	505
4 Dragoon Division	226
5 Dragoon Division	343
1 Heavy Cavalry Reserve	415
2 Heavy Cavalry Reserve	360
Light cavalry all corps	613
Total	3,162

*Table 2: Remounts taken into the Army by 22 December 1807*

Even with the large influx of horses to the army via the remount service, by the close of January many regiments were still missing horses.

In the period 14 September 1806 to 22 April 1807 some 40,555 remounts had been taken into the army. Illustration 1 below shows the origin of these horses:<sup>25</sup>



*Illustration 1: Graph showing origins of horses taken into the Army September 1806 to April 1807*

From illustration 1, it is clear the number of mounts obtained in France was more than the total number of captured horses, the vast majority of the remounts being purchased from

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25 SHDDT C2 481, 484, 484

German, or French horse dealers, already broken to ride or drive in harness. Clearly we can see that the hypothesis that the French army was mounted on Saxon and Prussian horses is not sustainable. The total number of captured horses was less than 20% of all horses provided to the French Army in the period under examination. We see therefore that the French cavalry was remounted predominantly on French horses.

### **Care and Maintenance of the Horse on Campaign.**

Based on the practices outlined in the cavalry regulations of 20 May 1788, early nineteenth century horse care in France was enlightened and was 70 years in advance of the work of Louis Edward Nolan of the 1850's in Britain. Indeed, it is comparable to best practice recommended by the British Horse Society. During the period 1789-1815, the French state invested millions of francs in the purchase of cavalry and artillery horses, so it was in the state's best interest to keep their investment in good a health as possible.

On campaign, each man was to carry 4 days oats or barley, 2 days of hay in bushels and 4 days rations for himself. During the winter campaign of 1807, in order to find fodder for the horses, parties from each cavalry regiment were sent out in search of oats, hay, straw:

*..the 3rd of February, I was in orders to go to get oats in five villages, named in the order where I had to go ; my instructions were to despatch any vehicles that I could manage to get loaded from each village to that which we occupied, under the escort of two or three men. It followed from this that I had no military precaution to take, and that we were in perfect safety, for at the last village I had to search there would not be more than three or four men left me, as the others were to go away in proportion to our discoveries of oats. Besides, when we crossed at Thorn, we had been told that the line of our advanced posts was eleven leagues to the front, and no measures for protection had been taken the night before on our arrival at our cantonment. My detachment consisted of twenty-three men, of whom two were sergeants and two corporals; having to return by nightfall I did not take my cuirass, and we set out in a cold of some eighteen or twenty degrees, but beautiful weather, while snow had continued to fall the whole time after our departure from Berlin. They found me a guide, and we made our way across a great plain covered with snow a foot thick, and quite un-trodden.*<sup>26</sup>

On this mission, de Gonneville managed to load three vehicles with oats but as ambushed by patrols of Russian cavalry, and ended up loosing his oats as well as being captured.

Foraging for feed stuffs for the horses with the army as well as the men became a hall mark of French armies. The system worked well in relatively agricultural rich areas, but failed miserably when areas were best by poor harvests or had limited agricultural productivity as in Spain. The army was forced to rely on convoys of food from France, which was sporadic at best. More horses and men died of starvation than enemy action.

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26 De Gonneville, pp. 63-64.

## February to June 1807

Despite Napoleon forbidding further troop movements, Marshal Michel Ney had advanced northward, towards Königsberg. His primary motive was the lack of supplies. Although there were plenty of supplies in Prussia, extremely cold weather and bad roads significantly delayed their availability and arrival. Therefore Ney felt compelled to move further northward and search for rations and fodder. His light cavalry marched on Guttstadt by Passenheim and Oertelsburg and in the following days his headquarters were first at Wartenburg; then at Allenstein, with his troops dispersed all over the neighbouring countryside. The Battle of Eylau resulted.

A protracted period of rest followed, during which the emperor exerted himself unremittingly to re-equip, reinforce and supply his troops. Hitherto he had been based on the entrenched camp of Warsaw, but he had already taken steps to organize a new line of supply and retreat via Thorn, and this was now completed. At the same time Lefebvre was ordered to press the siege of Danzig with all vigour, and on the 5 of May, after a most gallant resistance, Kalckreuth, who redeemed here his failure of Auerstädt, surrendered. English assistance came too late. By the beginning of June the French had more than made good their losses and 210,000 men were available for field service.

The high losses suffered during the campaign had profound effects on the Grand Army. Napoleon began to rely on more conscripts and an ever-increasing number of foreign troops to fill his depleted ranks, 'Four-fifths of the army after Eylau (1807) were recruits of 1806 or 1807'.<sup>27</sup>

During the new year Napoleon busied himself with the remounting of his cavalry. By 25 February 1807, the remount dépôt at Cassel had processed 10,977 horses and held some 866 horses. The remount dépôt at Potsdam needed 6,962 horses to mount dismounted men. Between 1 December 1806 and 25 February 1807 Potsdam had sent 3,500 to 3,800 horses to each army corps and had mounted 7,000 men.<sup>28</sup>

At the start of March, Napoleon ordered Marshall Kellerman to form four provisional regiments of cavalry from the men at dépôts in France who were equipped, mounted and trained and had arrived at Potsdam. Each regiment to have 5 companies. Each each regiment the 1 company were to be Hussars, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chasseurs a Cheval, 3 and 4 companies dragoons and the last carabinieri or cuirassiers. Each company was to have 120 men, the regiment 600 men.<sup>29</sup>

Remounts for the army was still as pressing concern for Napoleon, in the middle weeks of March.<sup>30</sup> Getting mounts into Poland from Potsdam and getting mounts to Potsdam remount dépôt were causes of concern. In addition, the cold weather, and lack of fodder for the cavalry and artillery horses were ebbing away faster than they could be replaced and at a rate Napoleon had not anticipated.<sup>31</sup>

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27 Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 52.

28 An AF IV 1180 25 February 1807.

29 Napoleon to Kellerman 6 March 1807 11949

30 Napoleon to Dejean 15 March 1807 12038

31 Napoleon to Dejean 15 March 1807 12038

<b>Regiment</b>	<b>Horses lost September 1806 to 7 January 1807</b>	<b>Horses lost 7 January 1807 to 15 March 1807</b>
Cuirassiers and Carabinieres	997	1,400
Chasseurs	2000	3,900
Hussars	2000	3,900
Dragoons	2000	3,900
Total Losses	6,997	13,100

*Table 31: Horses lost January to March 1807*

From table 3 above we can see that in the period September 1806 to 7 January 1807 the cavalry lost 6,997 horses, when the artillery horse losses were added to this, the figure came to 9,200 horses excluding the Guard cavalry. The two guard cavalry regiments are estimated at losing a 1000 horses between them. Between 7 January and 15 March 1807 13,100 riding horses were lost. With the addition of draught horses, and the Guard the figure came to 16,197 horses.<sup>32</sup> Total losses to 7 January were 25, 397 horses. As replacements, between 1 November 1806 and 7 January 1807 some 21,513 remounts were taken into the army. A short fall of 3,884 horses

To remedy this, Napoleon increased the purchase of remounts to 46,500 horses to make up these losses.<sup>33</sup> These losses were primarily through starvation, neglect and the intense cold:

*The country held by the two armies was soon exhausted, and became the scene of the most terrible misery to be found in history; all the houses were stripped to give the horses the straw of the thatch ; there were no oats, and the cavalry regiments received orders to obtain them by any possible means. I was detached with thirty picked men to go on the left bank of the Vistula, with carte blanche to seize upon oats wherever I could find any, and also get the vehicles necessary to transport them. I made four days' march without finding any, but in every village that I passed I requisitioned the best horsed carts and took them with me.<sup>34</sup>*

To partly offset the use of French horses, captured Russian horses were used as remounts as Lieutenant de Gonnevillle of the 6th Cuirassiers notes:

*on my return to the regiment I possessed nothing but what I had on and one shirt that I had bought at Pillau, in order to have a change during my captivity. My portmanteau had been sent to the Prussian advanced posts with a sum of twelve pounds, and this I had never received. So I required an entire new outfit, and had two horses to buy. The regiment advanced me what was necessary, and the Colonel himself came to my assistance with all the zeal of friendship. I soon found myself owner of a horse from the Ukraine, as light as a bird and never wearied, and of another that was good but of a more ordinary kind. A little later I purchased for ten thalers a Cossack horse that had been left behind sick ; he recovered and would have done me good service.<sup>35</sup>*

32 SHDDT C2 Bourcier to Clarke 14 March 1807

33 Napoleon to Dejean 15 March 1807 12038

34 De gonnevillle p 115

35 De Gonnevillle p114

The remount dépôt at Potsdam on 14 March held a large number of men awaiting mounts, namely 300 curiassiers, 50 carabinieri, 500 dragoons and 100 light cavalry, excluding 250 men each from the 3 and 24 regiment of chasseurs a cheval.<sup>36</sup> Far more horses were needed than had been supplied to the army.<sup>37</sup>

Between 4 March and 25 March large numbers of horses which had been authorised for purchase in January arrived at Potsdam, namely: 2,600 for the heavy cavalry along with 230 officers mount a further 722 were needed to bring all squadrons up to strength.<sup>38</sup> The dragoons had received 2,400 horses but still required 4,300 remounts to mount the dismounted men in the various dépôts. The remount dépôts for the dragoons held 996 horses, to which were to be added 300 captured enemy horses. 4,000 horses were needed for the Chasseurs a Cheval. Most of the cavalry dépôts in Germany were empty of horses. For example the 10 hussars had 300 dismounted men but only 16 horses, and only 160 were expected from France.<sup>39</sup> 13,000 mounts were purchased in March 1807.

For the 10<sup>th</sup> Hussars which had 300 men at the dépôt and only 16 horses, Napoleon authorised 180,000 francs credit for the purchase of 613 hussar saddles and horses on 27 March 1807.<sup>40</sup> A review of the cavalry dépôts in Germany, revealed that Cassel held 50 men each for the 10<sup>th</sup> Chasseurs a Cheval and 20<sup>th</sup> Dragoons, Freidberg held 44 men of the 17<sup>th</sup> dragoons, Erfurt held 88 men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Hussars. At Minden where 40 men of the 12<sup>th</sup> chasseurs and 11 men of the 7<sup>th</sup> hussars, and 91 men of the 5<sup>th</sup> Chasseurs at Munster. All these men were to be sent to Magdeburg where 600 horses were to be delivered to act as mounts.<sup>41</sup>

By the closing week of April 1807, an additional 19,042 remounts had been taken into the army by 22 April 1807. In total 40,555 horses were taken into the army as replacements by this date.

It was Napoleon's intentions that by 1 June 1807, the nine cavalry dépôts in Italy to send their dismounted men and horses to Poland. The 14 cuirassiers had 390 horses in their dépôt but only 25 men. By June they were to furnish 500 men and horses. The 6<sup>th</sup> Chasseurs a Cheval and 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars were to field 2,000 men and horses, the 24<sup>th</sup> chasseurs a 1,000 men and horses as opposed to 400. The 7<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> dragoons were to field 3,000 men and horses as opposed to 1,400. The 14<sup>th</sup> Chasseurs were to field 1,000 men and horses rather than 300. In this way Napoleon aimed to add 10,000 horses and riders to the army, 7,000 French, 2,000 Italian and 1,000 from Naples.<sup>42</sup>

At the start of April, the cuirassier dépôt at Posen held 347 dismounted men, and 200 horses had died during the past month. Of the remaining horses 100 were to be 'reformed' i.e. sold as unfit for further service with the army. 100 new horses were to be obtained, and good saddles were to be obtained either from Marinwerder, Marienburg, Elbing or Bromberg.<sup>43</sup> At the

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36 SHDDT C2 Bourcier to Clarke 14 March 1807

37 Napoleon to Clarke 22 March 1807 12123

38 Napoleon to Dejean 25 March 1807 12162

39 SHDDT C2 Bourcier to Clarke 20 March 1807 see also Napoleon to Dejean 25 March 1807 12162

40 Decision 27 March 1807 12188

41 Napoleon to Berthier 30 March 1807 12231

42 Napoleon to Eugene 25 March 1807 12174

43 Napoleon to Murat 7 April 1807 12325

cavalry dépôt at Kulm the large number of dismounted dragoons they were formed into a provisional battalion of Foot dragoons, of four companies, each of 100 men. The men were to be armed for foot service and then dispatched to Graudenz to guard the magazines at Marienwerder.<sup>44</sup> 600 horses arrived at Kulm at the end of April, reducing the number of dismounted dragoons to 400.<sup>45</sup>

By 14 April 1807 the first provisional cavalry regiments had been created from the following units.<sup>46</sup>

Provisional Regiment	Constituent Regiment	Number of Men
1	Hussars	138
	Chassuers	36
	Dragoons	160
	Cuirassiers	320

*Table 4: Regiments forming first provisional cavalry regiment.*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> provisional regiment contained 800 good horses, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> regiment was in the process of being formed.<sup>47</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> regiment was Italian.

To replace men lost at Eylau, Marshall Kellerman was ordered in April to raise from 16, 24, and 25 Military Division 7,000 men for the cavalry and 3,000 horses. Detachments from the 1<sup>st</sup> Chasseurs a Cheval and other regiments of cavalry who had mounted and equipped men in France were to be sent to Wesel and thence to Potsdam.<sup>48</sup>

At the close of April, Napoleon authorised a shakedown of the remount system.<sup>49</sup> The principal remount dépôts were at Cassel and Potsdam, with holding areas at Minden, Fulde, Brunswick and Hanover, controlling some 3,000 horses. These lesser dépôts were controlled by General Fauconnet.<sup>50</sup>

During April, the remount dépôt at Potsdam under the aegis of General Bourcier, held 4,000 horses, and had been able to mount the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Chasseur a Cheval regiments, and had overseen the distribution of 15 to 16,000 horses from the dépôt to dismounted men and newly conscripted men arriving at the dépôt from France.<sup>51</sup> Bourcier had been allocated a budget of 20,000 francs per regiment in need of remounts. However despite his best efforts, 1,500 dismounted men remained at Potsdam. Bourcier was authorised to obtain sufficient horses from the dépôts commanded by General Fauconnet.<sup>52</sup> They remained in France a pool of 80,000 horses, of which 12,000 were to be sent to the remount dépôts in Germany, and a further 16,000 Napoleon estimated would be needed with the recommencement of hostilities with Russia in the Spring. The army he noted perhaps needed another 40,000 mounts to mount the men remaining in dépôts. An inspection of Potsdam remount dépôt on 1 March

44 Napoleon to Berthier 16 April 1807 12392

45 Napoleon to Berthier 21 April 1807 12438

46 Napoleon to Clarke 14 April 1807 12376

47 Napoleon to Clarke 16 April 1807 12393

48 Napoleon to Dejean 21 April 1807 12433

49 Napoleon to Dejean 22 April 1807 12445

50 Napoleon to Dejean 22 April 1807 12445

51 Napoleon to Dejean 22 April 1807 12445

52 Napoleon to Dejean 22 April 1807 12445

1807 revealed regiments had as few as 21 horses for 500 dismounted men.<sup>53</sup>

Napoleon was also singularly unimpressed with the officers of the 24<sup>th</sup> Chasseurs a Cheval who had sold their remounts on to the Italian Cavalry and claimed replacement mounts as well as pocketing the funds from the sale. This lawlessness would be stamped out Napoleon demanded and in future all requests for horses had to be clearly justified in writing rather than horses being supplied ad lib on a verbal contract.<sup>54</sup> Horses, Napoleon stressed, cost the Empire a lot of money. 13,751,713 francs had been spent in the purchase of 40,000 horses up to 1 March 1807. He required a further 7,057,828 francs to pay for the purchase of 21,513 horses obtained between 1 and 25 March, and a further 9,314 between 25 March and 22 April 1807.<sup>55</sup>

By 22 April 1807 the army had obtained or was in the process of obtaining 70,827 horses, which was still below the numbered required to mount all dismounted men and new conscripts.

On the 9 May, Napoleon ordered General Bourcier to obtain 2,000 horses from the base of the Vistula river and 2,000 from Hanover.<sup>56</sup> The largest problem Bourcier had was to find suitable mounts for the cuirassiers. In March, General Dejean, had pressed Bourcier to search Germany for at least 4,000 cuirassiers horses, but he had only been able to locate 1,132.<sup>57</sup>

In the middle weeks of May, Potsdam remount dépôt held 772 men but only 83 horses.<sup>58</sup> In addition were 630 sick or injured horses, and 87 in the infirmary. The 630 sick or injured horses were to be disposed of and 500 new horses purchased.<sup>59</sup> By the end of May, Bourcier had obtained 10,000 horses for the army which was still below the number required.<sup>60</sup>

For the build-up to the Spring offensive, three provisional regiments of cavalry were dispatched from Berlin along the regiments of Italian *Cuirassiers* and *Chasseurs a Cheval*.<sup>61</sup> The cavalry was still short of men and horses by the last week of May:<sup>62</sup>

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53 Napoleon to Dejean 22 April 1807 12445

54 Napoleon to Dejean 22 April 1807 12445

55 Napoleon to Dejean 22 April 1807 12445

56 SHDDT C2 Dejean to Bourcier 9 May 1807

57 SHDDT C2 Dejean to Bourcier 25 March 1807, see also Bourcier to Dejean 10 April 1807

58 Napoelon to Clarke 14 May 1807 12582

59 Napoelon to Clarke 14 May 1807 12582

60 SHDDT C2 Bourcier to Clarke 30 May 1807

61 Napoleon to Clarke 6 May 1807 12542

62 Napoleon to Cessac 21 May 1807 12619

<b>Regiment</b>	<b>Horses Missing</b>
2 Cuirassiers	60
3 Cuirassiers	50
4 Cuirassiers	50
5 Cuirassiers	50
6 Cuirassiers	100
9 Cuirassiers	45
12 Cuirassiers	100
1 and 2 Carabiniers	50
2 Dragoons	50
8 Dragoons	50
11 Dragoons	50
12 Dragoons	50
18 Dragoons	50
19 Dragoons	25
20 Dragoons	25
26 Dragoons	50
1 Chasseurs	100
2 Chasseurs	100
3 Chasseurs	60
5 Chasseurs	60
7 Chasseurs	70
12 Chasseurs	100
13 Chasseurs	20
15 Chasseurs	50
24 Chasseurs	150
2 Hussars	50
7 Hussars	20
9 Hussars	50
Total	1715 men and horses

*Table 5: Remounts required 22 May 1807*

From table 5, we see that even with the huge number of purchases authorised, the cavalry at the close of May was still short of horses. In particular, the heavy cavalry were 505 horses short and received 70 remounts by the end of May 1807. The dragoons lacked 350 and received no remounts by the end of May, and the light cavalry in the week 21 May to 30 May had lost a further 70 horses. To rectify this lack of horses and men, 2,000 horses were levied

from the horse markets at Elbing, as follows:<sup>63</sup>

Horse Type	Horses Needed	Horses Obtained	Short Fall
Curiassier	435	150 + 300 saddles	285
Dragoons	350	300 + 800 saddles	50
Light cavalry	930	550 + 900 saddles	380
Artillery Riding Horses	400	500	0
Draught Horses	400?	500	0
Total	2,515	2,000	665

*Table 6: Remounts authorised to be purchased 30 May 1807*

From table 6, we can see that the cavalry was short some 2,515, of which, 2,000 were authorised for purchase, leaving a short fall of 665 horses. Thus by the start of hostilities in June, the cavalry would be short of horses and men. By 1 June 1807 the army had obtained 82,827 horses.

## Equipment Train

One major innovation of 1807 was the militarisation of the army equipment train. One important lesson learned by Napoleon during the winter campaign in Poland was the ineffectiveness of his logistical system in providing for his troops outside the fertile and well-populated areas of central Europe. The concept of ‘living off the land’ failed as this campaign led Napoleon’s army into a territory that was sparsely settled and less fertile. Discipline in the army began to suffer as the troops fanned-out over wider areas in search of sustenance. To combat this trend, greater reliance was placed upon the makeshift supply columns at the corps level, but these were far too insufficient. Napoleon was forced to transport supplies from his centre of operations in Warsaw.

The problem of supplying food to armies had usually being solved by a combination of local supply and from supplies stockpiled in magazines. Local supplies would be obtained from the population by either requisition, paid or forced, or by looting by troops. Requisition was usually conducted by the armies' commissary staff, allowing the fighting arms to concentrate on their own duties, and the resulting supplies distributed to the troops. Naturally for troops to resort to looting led to a diversion from the main effort of the campaign and usually a lessening of discipline.

Supplying an army from stockpiles in magazines had its own limitations. Supplies would first have to be gathered and transported to the magazine. They would then have to be transported forwards to the troops that required them. This obviously required a large amount of transportation which would increase the further an army travelled away from its magazines. Consequently the army would be tied to its supply trains, without which it would starve, limiting its room for manoeuvre whilst also forcing it to defend its lines of communication from enemy threats. The transportation and acquisition of supplies would usually be in the hands of private contractors hired by the governments concerned.

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63 Order 30 May 1807 12701

In 1805 Napoleon's arrangements for his campaign on the Danube involved the movement of 150 wagons from his camps at Boulogne, these would supplement 1000 wagons provided under contract by the Compagnie Breidt however the bulk of supplies would be carried by 3500 wagons requisitioned from the areas he was to campaign through. These best laid plans went awry, the wagons from Boulogne ended up in the wrong place, the Compagnie Breidt only had a fifth of the wagons needed and locals proved unwilling to part with theirs for any length of time.

Between 1805 to 1807 the monopoly of supplying draught horses and harness to move the army's equipment wagons was handled by the Breidt company. The failings of the company during the winter campaign of 1806-1807 saw the government take steps replace them as sole source of motive power for the wagons. For the 1805 campaign to move the army from Boulogne to Austria, the Breidt company were obliged to provide 1,000 wagons and 4,000 horses, of which 540 arrived with the army. Napoleon needed 22,600 draught horses, and had to *levee* 3,750 draught horses from eastern France, and a further 900 from the Italian Departments as shown below. Of the hoped for 3,750 horses, only 3,278 arrived, namely: 413 Ardennes, 477 Mezieres, 474 Haut-Saone, 489 Besancon, 468 Jura, 466 Nièvre, 491 Strasbourg

One such company which provided both horses and wagons to the army was Company Kayser which was contracted to provide additional horses and wagons. In addition Merchant Hirsch was authorised by M Otto, a representative of the company, to obtain more mounts. Even after the company's failure in 1805 it still won the contract to supply horses in 1806, promising on 15 September 1806 to provide each battalion with two ration wagons, totalling 75 drivers and 200 horses. Under the decree of 26 March 1807 the horses and drivers became part of the army.

*"I would like to form baggage train battalions. Each battalion should have a governing body and be commanded by a man of the rank of infantry captain. Each company could be made up of thirty-two caissons, each pulled by four horses and driven by two men. [...] Hence in each company there should be 32 caissons, 128 carthorses and 64 men. You should add a field forge, a carriage for replacement harnesses and other provisions for the repair of the caissons. Each company should be divided up into four squads of eight caissons, the whole commanded by a Maréchal des logis chef. Six companies could form a battalion, and so a battalion would comprise 192 carriages, 768 horses and 384 men."*<sup>64</sup>

8 battalions of equipment trained were formed, each having 9 officers mounts, 37 riding horses, 576 draught horses, 32 pack horses to move 144 wagons (136 caissons, 4 wagons, 4 field forges), a total of 72 officers mounts, 296 riding horses, 4,608 draught horses and 256 pack horses. All were to be purchased by the *Department Remonte* under the guidance of General Bourcier. The militarised equipment train reduced the military's reliance on contractors, but did not mean the end of civilian contractors being used to provide wagon trains.

In 1808 the price for an equipment train draught horse was fixed at 360 to 380 francs, mules for use in place of pack horses at 450-600francs a piece. Clearly the mules were of high quality than the draught horses. The draught horses were to stand between 14.1hh and 15.2hh.

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64 *Correspondance* n°11945 6 March 1807

The army still relied on private contractors to move equipment. Company Sieur Julian provided 600 horses to the corps observation of the Gironde, at the rate of 3,50 francs per day. Company Olry was employed 1808 to 1809, who hired both horses and wagons at the following tariff:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Price per day</b>
4 Horse Wagon	24francs a day
3 horse wagon	18 francs a day
2 horse cart	14..25 francs a day
1 horse cart	7,50 francs a day
Riding Horse	6,65 francs a day
draught horse	5,80francs a day
Pack horse	5,80 francs a day

*Table 7: Hire rates for draught horses and wagons.*

From 1 July 1807 the control of the horses for the artillery and equipment train was handled by an office at the Ministry of war. At this date, the army had at its disposal some 16,168 horses in 16 battalion of train. 11 May 1808 500 mules and 500 horses were purchased to act as a remount pool for the train troops.<sup>65</sup>

## **June to December 1807**

The casualties of the short Friedland campaign 1 June to 22 June 1807 are as follows:

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65 SHDDT E31 6 Report General Preval

<b>Regiment</b>	<b>Officers horses killed</b>	<b>Officers horses wounded</b>	<b>Troop horses killed</b>	<b>Troop horses wounded</b>	<b>Died of fatigue on marches.</b>
1 Carabiniers			117	126	
2 Carabiniers			148	108	
1 Cuirassiers	3		51	10	
2 Cuirassiers			51	14	
3 Cuirassiers	9		94	148	
4 Cuirassiers	9	1	108		1
5 Cuirassiers			23	1	
6 Cuirassiers	10		120	63	
7 Cuirassiers	9		44		
8 Cuirassiers	9		41		
9 Cuirassiers	8	4	115	12	
10 Cuirassiers			18	2	
11 Cuirassiers				2	
12 Cuirassiers	10	2	139	19	
1 Dragoons	5		84		6
2 Dragoons	5		23	6	
3 Dragoons					
4 Dragoons	15	5	141	5	14
6 Dragoons	5		23	15	29
10 Dragoons	5		64		62
11 Dragoons	6		11	5	63
14 Dragoons	3		107	32	95
16 Dragoons	4		10	3	
17 Dragoons					
18 Dragoons	10	4	80	15	
20 Dragoons	3		41		1
26 Dragoons			12		
1 Horse artillery			6		
2 Horse Artillery			7		
3 Horse artillery		1			
2 Bat Train			18		23

3 Bat Train			15		
5 (bis) Train Bat			3		
6 Train Bat				11	
1 Hussars			4	6	11
7 Chasseurs					
10 Chasseurs				9	1
12 Chasseurs					
15 Chasseurs					110
Totals	128	17	1,618	502	415

*Table 8: Casualties suffered by the cavalry June 1807*

In total for the period 1 June to 22 June, 2,161 horses are known to have been killed or died. Returns are absent for the light cavalry during the campaign, but are likely to have been around 1,000 horses based on the attrition rates of other regiments. These losses of 3,200 coupled with the 665 horses missing from ranks before the campaign started brings the total losses to of 4,000 horses. General Bourcier estimated that 80 to 90,000 horses were taken into the army from September 1806 to September 1807. The real figure was 86,827 horses<sup>66</sup>

Bourcier also estimated that between September 1805 and January 1809, 130,000 horses were purchased for the army. The actual figure was 129,854 horses less officers horses, vivandieres horses, captured horses which could certainly add another 20,000 horses to this.<sup>67</sup> 37,881 were purchased between September 1805 and September 1806, and 5,146 were purchased in 1808.<sup>68</sup> Of these horses Bourcier estimated the deaths at 95,000 to 1 January 1809, the deaths from 1806-1807 being 80,000.<sup>69</sup> Taking horses that belonged to officers, vivandieres into consideration the figure could well be 100,000 horses. This was the largest single loss of horseflesh and men the army had had to contend with. The purchase of 129,854 horses was at the time the largest mobilisation of horses the army had ever undertaken.

With the conclusion of the campaign of 1807 against Russia, the cavalry dépôt at Potsdam was wound down. It held on 15 September 1807 1,243 horses, of which 860 were sick or injured. In addition, the dépôt held 480 dismounted men of whom 300 were sick or injured. General Bourcier the commander of the dépôt was authorised to distribute the well horses to the men available for service and to send the remainder of the horses to the dismounted men held at other dépôts.<sup>70</sup>

August 1807, Napoleon began planning an army for service in Spain.<sup>71</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Dragoons were to be recruited up to strength, 96 dismounted men from the dépôt, and 306 men from the cavalry dépôt at Versailles were formed into a 4<sup>th</sup> squadron. The 3<sup>rd</sup> squadron was to be formed from 97 men at the dépôt and 260 men from Versailles. The 26<sup>th</sup> chasseurs a cheval

66 SHDDT E 31 6

67 SHDDT E 31 6

68 SHDDT E 31 6

69 SHDDT E 31 6

70 Napoleon to Berthier 15 September 1807 13151

71 Napoleon to Berthier 19 August 1807 13053

were also to be recruited up to strength along with the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> dragoons 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> squadrons. In this manner, Napoleon planned to form 7 squadrons of 2,400 horses, to be formed into four provisional regiments. The 1<sup>st</sup> regiment was to be formed from the 26<sup>th</sup> chasseurs, the three regiments from the dragoons. A general of brigade was to command two provisional regiments, a general of brigade to command four regiments.<sup>72</sup>

As part of the regeneration of the army post the treaty of Tilsit, Napoleon began to re-organise the cavalry reserve.<sup>73</sup> Each brigade of heavy cavalry was to form two provisional regiments:

<b>Provisional Regiment</b>	<b>1 company</b>	<b>2 company</b>	<b>3 company</b>	<b>4 company</b>	<b>5 company</b>	<b>6 company</b>
1	1 carabiniers 120men	2 cuirassiers 120 men.	1 cuirassiers 140 men	2 cuirassiers 140 men	3 cuirassiers 140 men	
2	5 cuirassiers 140 men	12 cuirassiers 140 men	12 cuirassiers 140men	9 cuirassiers 120 men	10 cuirassiers 120 men	11 cuirassiers 120 men

*Table 9: Constituent units of the provisional cuirassier regiments 1807.*

Each regiment was to be commanded by a Major, with a staff to comprise an adjutant-major, two adjutants NCO's, and two staff officers. Each company was to have a captain, a lieutenant, two second lieutenants, a sergeant major, four sergeants, six corporals, two trumpeters, and a farrier.<sup>74</sup>

A brigade of dragoons was to be formed of two provisional regiments, the first formed from the 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> regiments, totalling 480men, and the second from the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> regiments, to comprise of 500 men.<sup>75</sup>

In addition two brigades of provisional light cavalry were to be formed, one of chasseurs the other of hussars. The chasseurs brigade was formed again of two regiments, the first regiment to be of 600 men from the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> regiments. The second provisional regiment again of 600 men was formed from detachments of the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> regiments.<sup>76</sup> The hussars 1<sup>st</sup> regiment was formed from 480 men from the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> regiments. The 2<sup>nd</sup> provisional regiment from elements of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> regiments to again contained 480 men. Each regiment was to be commanded by a major.<sup>77</sup> On 6 December, the hussar brigade, along with the dragoons brigade and the 10 dragoon regiment were ordered into Spain.<sup>78</sup> The French army was destined to fight in Spain and Portugal until 1814 suffering an increasing number of defeats at the hands of the Spanish and British armies. Most importantly of all it provided a continual drain on French resources. Spain was to cost Napoleon an annual commitment of 300,000 men per year fighting in the peninsula and after five years of warfare 260,000 casualties.

72 Napoleon to Berthier 19 August 1807 13053

73 Napoleon to Clarke 16 October 1807 13259

74 Napoleon to Clarke 16 October 1807 13259

75 Napoleon to Clarke 16 October 1807 13259

76 Napoleon to Clarke 16 October 1807 13259

77 Napoleon to Clarke 16 October 1807 13259

78 Napoleon to Clarke 6 December 1807 13378

## Summary.

After the victories of the 1806 campaign the *Grand Armée* became an increasingly cosmopolitan force. By 1807, approximately one third of the force was of a foreign nature and this steadily increased over the years. The creation of the Imperial Guard, the army's elite, had the detrimental effect of draining off the best soldiers from the line regiments, undoubtedly weakening their quality. The superb officer corps that existed in the army suffered increasingly higher casualties in the later years, especially after 1808, as the quality of the rank and file decreased, necessitating more sacrifices from the officers to inspire the men to great deeds or even to hold their morale together. As the years of warfare dragged on the officer corps was filled with every available means, such as promotion from the ranks or commissions granted to newly entered cadets, often with adverse effects on performance. The same acquitted itself with the rank and file who were made up more and more of partial or untrained conscripts during the later years .

After the Jena campaign of 1806 the size of French armies and as well as the states commitment to support the armies greatly increased. At Eylau in 1807 Napoleon suffered approximately 25,000 killed and wounded for a battle that was essentially a draw and solved nothing. In 1808 after finally achieving the decisive victory at Friedland Napoleon turned toward Spain. After achieving an initial victory Napoleon left the affairs of Spain to his Marshals and he was never to return.

Between leaving the camp at Bolougne in the summer of 1805, and the new year of 1809, 95,000 riding horses had been killed. Of this number, perhaps as many as 80,000 horses were lost in the campaign of 1806 to 1807. These losses would be a portents of what was to come. The loss of thousands of experienced officers, NCO's and men changed the way in which the cavalry was able to operate. In previous years, Napoleon added conscripts to existing formations.

The army of 1807/08 was formed virtually from scratch, built around a cadre of survivors of the 1807 campaign. From 1807, we see Napoleon taking raw conscripts from dépôts, adding them to a cadre of dismounted men and forming them into scratch cavalry formations.

The army which Napoleon had welded into one of the greatest fighting formations of the nineteenth century froze and bled to death over the winter of 1806-1807. Those that survived would be the cadre for new formations, and would in the main perish in Russia in 1812. 1807, perhaps therefore marks a watershed in the performance of the cavalry and perhaps Napoleon's forces as a whole. The performance of the cavalry in the 1809 campaign in Germany, was markedly different to that of 1806. There was no large scale pursuit of the defeated Austrians, and the cavalry, particularly the heavy cavalry, was reduced to a crude sledgehammer offensive weapon. The nimble, agile, campaigns Napoleon fought prior to 1809, and perhaps even 1807, disappear, and battles degenerated into artillery bombardments and a 'slugging match' between cavalry and infantry. It would not be till 1814 that the Napoleon of the 1790's and up to 1807 would emerge once more onto the battlefield.

As well as heralding the decline of the fighting efficiency of Napoleon's armed forces, 1807 is also crucial to understanding how the army would regenerate itself in future years. By 1807, the Napoleonic state was able to mobilise huge numbers of horses and men, which would prove vital in coming campaigns. The supply of men and horses over the winter of

1806-1807 also marks a water shed. It clearly demonstrated that the forward remount dépôt system had the capacity to quickly and effectively regenerate the cavalry. The remount dépôt operation in 1805 to the summer of 1806 was sparse, and did not have the capacity nor need to process large numbers of horses. Under General Bourcier from the autumn of 1806, the system was able to process by July 1807 up to 150,000 draught and riding horses, the largest single mobilisation of equide resources till 1813. The logistical challenge faced by Napoleon in feeding his armies was partially met. 1807, therefore offers us a paradox. It started the process of the decline in fighting efficiency of the army, but also clearly demonstrated that the remount dépôt system was a highly efficient organisation able to quickly regenerate the mounted contingent of the army. With an enormous Empire to control, Napoleon had to take into his army men from outside of France. These new formations did not have the enthusiasm for Napoleon that had driven his early armies. Furthermore, the army was filling up with conscripts, volunteers no longer flocked to the French flag, and the desertion rates increased. Finally as a result of 1807, Napoleon's later armies would never again achieve the same level of training and efficiency that they had done so between 1800 and 1806, and could not perform the most intricate of manoeuvres.<sup>79</sup>

## **Bibliography**

The crux of this work was written by consulting hundreds of files of original archive material held at the Archives Nationales in Paris, primarily cartons :

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Series AF IV Maison de l'Empereur Box 1183 Cavalerie, Generalities Remontes;

Series C2 Box 470 Situations 1806

Series C2 Box 471 Situations 1807

Service Historique Defence Armée du Terre:

Series 2C Box 545 Depot General de la Cavalerie et des Remontes;

Series AG Box 1M Concernant les Remontes;

Series C8 Correspondence Militaire Espagne; Series E31 Veterinary General Preval

Placed on the Napoleon Series: April 2013

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<sup>79</sup> The army at Bolougne on 1 November fielded 18,176 horses, and the troops in garrison 23,009 horses, the army as a whole having 59,743 horses. The loss of perhaps as many as 80,000 horses and men in 1806-1807, and 90,000 men in the period September 1805 to January 1809, means that probably all these horses, and a high proportion of the riders would have been killed. Some of these men would have survived, and became the cadre of new formations. Quite clearly therefore, the army that was honed to near perfection at Bolougne had died, at least for the mounted troops, in the campaigns of 1806-1807. SHDDT C2 16