

The Napoleon Series

The German and Dutch Troops in Spain

Chapter 2 Part II: Troops of Hessen-Darmstadt

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Hessen-Darmstadt Gros und Erbprinz Infantry Regiment 1809
by Richard Knötel
(Courtesy of the Antony Broughton Collection)

Uniforms

Regt "Gross-und Erbprinz", Hessen-Darmstadt

The coat of the regiment was dark blue with a yellow collar edged in blue, yellow cuffs and a dark blue flap edged in yellow whilst the turnbacks were red. Whilst the facings were yellow, edged in dark blue with white button lace (set 1-2-2-2) these were generally worn closed allowing the buttons only to outline the plastron. All buttons were of white metal. The Fusiliers had blue shoulder straps (one source states piped in yellow) secured near the collar. The shako was of the standard French style with a red and white cockade, white shako cords and silver shield bearing the left-facing lion rampant emblem: the chin strap was of black leather but had a yellow borders on the outsides. The pompom of the Fusiliers denoted the battalion and company as follows:

	1st Battalion	2nd Battalion
Type of Shako Plume	All One Colour	Upper Half White, Lower Colour
1st Company	White	Yellow
2nd Company	Black	Black
3rd Company	Blue	Blue
4th Company	Red	Red

with the flame above all pompoms being in red. Fusiliers carried the sabre with a sword knot in the company colour. Breeches were dark blue and worn with black gaiters coming to below the knee and piped along the heart-shaped upper edge in yellow: these were later replaced by trousers in the usual Spanish brown cloth but usually decorated with a broad yellow side-stripe. Grenadiers had the traditional red plumes, shako cords, epaulettes and sword knots whilst Voltigeurs had green plumes and shako cords; their epaulettes had green straps and fringes whilst the half-moons (tournantes) and retaining straps (passants) were yellow; sword straps were green with a yellow "acorn".

Officers kept the same uniform colourings except that they had blue turnbacks, no cuff flap and often wore the single breasted surtout with yellow piping down the front seam. The bicorne continued to be worn until 1816 with a red plume, with a black base. On campaign in Spain the silver gorget and epaulettes of rank were generally left with the baggage .

Drummers wore the standard uniform with either company shoulder distinctions or blue "swallows'-nests" laced in yellow. The drums were brass with white tension cords and the hoops decorated with red and white triangles (upper with points of red triangles pointing up and lower with points downwards).

Within each regiment two flags were carried by each battalion. The first company of the first battalion carried the Avancierfahne or the Sovereign's colour and the fourth company carried a Retirierfahne or Battalion colour; the second battalion would have had two Retirierfahnen carried by the same first and fourth companies. There are several illustrations showing the "Pro-Patria" motto on the flag with the half of the central wreath in oak leaves rather than laurel. Sources indicate however that the oak leaves were only officially specified for the new flags in 1814 when the motto was re-stated in German.

The flags were 1.3 m square and were nailed to the staff, which was black for the Regiment Erbprinz, with 40-50 round gold nails. The spear-head finial was golden with the cypher "L L" cut out. Attached to the flag staffs were white cravates decorated with two lines of red and yellow. It may not be certain how many flags were carried to Spain by the two battalions of the regiment but it is known that two standards were captured with the regiment at the fall of Badajoz. These were known to be the second of the 1st Battalion and the first of the 2nd Battalion; however these would have been of the same design.



Hessen Darmstadt Infantry Regiment Erbprinz, 1812 by Herbert Knötel
(Courtesy of Greenhill Books)

Hessen-Darmstadt Foot Artillery

The coat was dark blue with the collar, cuffs and facings black piped red. The cuff-flaps and the epaulettes were dark blue piped red. Red turnbacks. (Knotel would seem to indicate black cuff-flaps and epaulettes piped red and dark blue turnbacks piped red). The white metal buttons had white lace similar to the Infantry on the facings although the buttons were singly spaced. On campaign the coat would have been worn closed.



Kanonier
vom Grossherzoglichen Artillerie-Corps.
1812
in Spanien.

Hessen-Darmstadt Artillery in Spain 1812 by Richard Knötel
(Courtesy of the Antony Broughton Collection)

In 1806 the bicornes had lost their white edging and by the time that the troops went to Spain it is probable that the shako had been adopted. This would have been similar to that of the Infantry but with a red pompom and a black plume, black chin straps with red borders.

Artillerymen were issued originally with a straight sword rather than the Infantry sabre but later this probably changed to a musket with the sabre-briquet. The dress uniform consisted of blue breeches with black gaiters to below the knee and piped along the heart-shaped upper edge in red, with yellow metal buttons on the outer edge of the gaiters. On campaign in Spain these were replaced by brown trousers with red outer stripe.

Officers continued to wear the bicorne but now "fore and aft" with its gold lace and a black-over-red plume. The coat was the same as their men but without the red piping. Buttons and lace were gold.

The men of the Artillery Train wore a dark blue single breasted surtout with black collar and cuffs, and red turnbacks. They wore a plain black hat with the brim held up at the left side with some white lace and a red pompom. They had white breeches in high-boots and were armed with a short sabre slung on a white shoulder strap with red or white sword knots.

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