

**ARMAMENTS OF THE TROOPS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD, 1788-1931
(7)
EQUIPMENT OF THE BRIGADE OF “ARTILLERÍA VOLANTE”
ATTACHED TO THE ROYAL CORPS OF “GUARDIAS DE CORPS”,
1797-1803**

(Translation by Héctor J. Meruelo)



Mounted Artillery musketoon; 675 mm long ,18 mm (“de a 17”) caliber barrel, dated 1803 , marked under Crown “GA/BIO/LA” (Andres de Gabiola, Eibar) provided with lug for attachment of a socket bayonet, probably a sword-bayonet; Spanish lock, Biscayne variant, marked “BOLVN”(unidentified); Oval brass insert inscribed “R” under Crown embedded in its stock; Total overall length of the weapon 1,020 mm.

The “Artilleria Volante” (literally “Flying Artillery”), a mounted Artillery force designed to support the Cavalry, was conceived by the artilleryman, Don Vicente Maria de Maturana, using eight pounder cannon of the same length as four pounders, although weighing seventy more pounds, which could fire either shot or grenades; Called “Maturana’s maneuver cannon” or “lightened cannon”, they were a precedent to the future “obuses largos” (howitzers); They suffered from one defect in that, as the exact position of the (round) grenade inside the bore was not known, sometimes its fuse could contact the charge and explode inside the piece; In 1822 a French artilleryman, Henry Joseph Paixhans designed a sabot system to prevent this accident from happening.

After being tested in Buenos Aires, they were demonstrated to Carlos IV in Aranjuez, in 1795, and in 1797 he ordered the creation of a Brigade of "Artillería Volante" to be attached to the Royal Corp of "Guardias de Corps", with eight pieces and a staff composed of one "Comandante" (the above mentioned Colonel Maturana), one Captain, three Lieutenants, two Sergeants, one Drummer or Bugler, four Corporals and fifty three artillerymen.

In 1801, due to the war with Portugal, its numbers were increased and formed into two Divisions; Forming their Main Staff were: One "Comandante" (Maturana, now a Brigadier), two Aids, one Brigade Sergeant, two Buglers, and one "Mayoral" (a foreman in charge of the horses), and, in each Division, one Captain, two Lieutenants, two Sergeants, four Corporals, eight "Artilleros-Postillones", and thirty- eight "Artilleros Volantes" in the First Division, and thirty-seven in the Second one; They each had four four-pounders and four eight-pounder "licornes" (lightened pieces).

It was formed with Officers and troopers drawn from the Royal Artillery Corp, but it was disbanded in April of 1803; Those existing illustrations of their gunners show them equipped only with machetes, which must have been very similar, if not identical to, the one adopted in 1802 for the Army gunners.



Artillery machete, Model of 1802; Slightly curved, fullered, single edged, 520 x 46 mm blade, flat spine up to the double edged clip-point; Brass handle, leather scabbard with brass mounts including two channels for the needles used to clean the flashpans.

As a mounted force we can assume that they had numbers armed with musketoons or "tercerolas" (cavalry musketoons) perhaps of the same model as the one shown at the start of this article where the Crowned marking on its barrel tells us that it was special equipment, contracted by a specific unit ,

to the Placencia Gunmakers Guilds for its exclusive use, in contrast to the regular issue weapons made in the Placencia Royal Factory for the regular Army troops.

The carbine, specimen number 1973 in the collection of the "Museo de Artillería", is one of these regular issue weapons, and is identified in both the Catalogues of 1856 and 1911 as the model that equipped the Horse Artillery Brigades created in the Regulations of 1802, which organized the Corp into five Regiments of twelve companies, forming three Brigades, two Divisional brigades and one Headquarters Brigade, and one of the Divisional Brigades in each of the first four Regiments was a mounted Brigade; In the fifth regiment, the two Divisional brigades were on foot, as also were the Headquarters brigades .



Standard issue carbine, number 1973 of the collection of the “Museo del Ejército”, catalogued as “Model 1802” for horse artillery; 18 mm caliber (“de a 17”), 847 mm long barrel, with mounting lug for a machete-bayonet; Spanish lock, Biscayne variant; Specimen marked “2º Rº , 3ª Bª , 3ª Cª Nº. 24” (2nd regiment, 3rd brigade, 3rd company, number 24); Overall length 1190 mm .

Better suited to the equipment of mounted artillery is the following specimen of musketoon, made in the Valencia Factory, which was created in November of 1808 and was active until early 1812 when the French occupied the city and disassembled it.



Standard issue musketoon for mounted artillery; 660 mm long, 18mm caliber (“de a 17”), with mounting lug for a machete-bayonet ; Spanish lock , Biscayne variant , marked “FA.VA.” (Fábrica de Valencia); Overall length 1037 mm; Missing the rear sling ring.

The first specimen shown in this article, lacking any sling rings, can be defined as an irregular “tercerola”, as its barrel has a bayonet lug , while this last shown specimen , also with bayonet lug, but with sling rings, is a conventional model of musketoon for mounted artillery.

**Juan L. Calvó,
October, 2011.**

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