

# Liberators! Napoleonic Wargaming in South America

## Argentine Flags in the War of Independence, 1810-1824



Fig. 1 United Provinces

The flags presented here are part of a series of illustrations by David Prando on display in the Museo de Armas, Buenos Aires. They show the evolution of Argentine flags during the period of Independence. In general, the flags are of typical Spanish design until Independence in 1816. The white and blue stripes associated with the Argentine flag began to appear in 1813 and after 1816 all Spanish elements disappeared completely. The most common elements in these flags are the coat of arms of the city of Buenos Aires and the Phrygian cap of liberty, surrounded by a wreath and overseen by the Argentine sun. This latter symbol became dominant while the Buenos Aires coat of arms vanished. This reflected both the nature of independence from Spain and the growing tensions over the power and role of Buenos Aires within the new United Provinces.

Also note the repeated use of the regimental number surrounded by a wreath. This appears to be a common feature across both years and theater of service. Some of the flags in this collection are hypothetical; others were proposed but never flown. In any case, they give an insight into the types of designs likely used by the Argentine forces and should help you in designing the flags for your own units.



Fig. 2 Auxiliar 1810-12

United Provinces of the Rio de La Plata, 1810-1815 (Figure 1):

This photo shows the pre-Independence flag of the United Provinces. It has the Spanish colors of red, yellow and red with the coat of arms for Castile and Leon topped by the Spanish royal crown.

Ejercito Auxiliar del Peru, 1810-1812 (Figures 2 & 3):

These flags illustrate the shift between a nominally loyal Spanish colony fighting against another viceroyalty and an Independent group of provinces fighting for Independence. The first flag is the same Spanish flag as the United Provinces flag except with the words "Victoria y Libertad" (Victory and Freedom) added. This flag is a hypothetical reconstruction. The second bears a single white and blue stripe, the colors of the new Argentina.



Fig. 3 Auxiliar 1812-16



Fig. 4 Artillery 1808-15

Artillery de Buenos Aires, 1808-1815 (Figure 4):

This flag is a typical Spanish artillery flag with the coat of arms of Buenos Aires on the upper left and lower right ends of the Bourbon cross. This flag is a hypothetical reconstruction.

1st Regiment or "Patricios", 1806-1815 (Figure 5):

This is a "Sencilla" flag for the 7th Regiment. According to Spanish regulations, each regiment would have a "Coronela" and a "Sencilla" flag,



Fig. 5 Patricios 1806-15

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equivalent to the English "King's Colors" and "Regimental Colors". It bears a stylized coat of arms for Buenos Aires slightly detached from the Bourbon cross. The "Coronela" would bear the same coat of arms design where appropriate.



Fig. 6 7th Regiment "Coronela"

7th Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 1813-1815 (Figures 6 & 7):

These flags show what early Argentine flags might have looked like for all the infantry regiments. Both the "Coronela" and "Sencilla" are standard Spanish designs from the 1762 Ordenanza. They

carry the coat of arms of Buenos Aires, which would fit the regulation, but also display the Phrygian cap design that became the symbol of Argentine Independence. Both flags are hypothetical reconstructions.



Fig. 7 7th Regiment "Sencilla"



Fig. 8 Jujuy, 1813

Flag given to the Cabildo of Jujuy by Belgrano, 1813 (Figure 8):

This flag is the classic Phrygian cap design of Argentine Independence upon a simple white background. In it we see the foreshadowing of San Martin's classic design in the Army of the Andes.

5th Regiment, Headquarters flag, 1813 (Figure 9):

This flag was flown in Buenos Aires at the depot for the 5th Regiment. It shows the blue-white-blue stripes typical of later Argentine flags with a number 5 in the middle.



Fig. 9 5th Regiment

7th Regiment, 1st and 2nd Battalions, 1815 (Figures 10, 11 & 12):

This is a series of flags proposed by Colonel Domingo French for the 7th Infantry Regiment. The anverse of the flag varied by battalion: the 1st was to feature the Phrygian Cap and laurel wreath, similar to the design on the flag of the Army of the Andes, while the 2nd battalion would have the Argentine sun over a white and blue striped background. The two battalions shared the same reverse; the number 7 bordered by a wreath over the striped white and blue background. These designs were not adopted but are a useful "what if" when it comes time to paint flags for your miniature regiments.



Fig. 10 7th Regiment, reverse



Fig. 11 1/7th Regiment, anverse



Fig. 12 2/7th Regiment, anverse

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Argentina, 1816-1818 (Figure 13):



Fig. 13 Argentina, 1816-18

This flag shows the Argentine flag from Independence until just before the anarchy that led to the Unitarian-Federalist civil wars. It is the classic blue-white-blue design but with a red star in the middle. It would not have been carried by individual units but might have been used at an army headquarters or in fortresses and other bases.

9th Regiment, 1816-1820 (Figure 14):

This photo shows the flag for the 9th Regiment. It has the blue-white-blue stripes typical of Argentina with the number 9 inside a laurel wreath. It is conceivable that this design would be used throughout the army as elements of the design also appear in the flags for the Army of the Andes.



Fig. 14 9th Regiment



Fig. 15 Army of the Andes 1818-24

Army of the Andes/United Army (Figures 15, 16, 17 & 18):

These flags show designs for the Army of the Andes during the period of the liberation of Peru. In each case the single white and blue stripe of Argentina and the Phrygian cap design are central elements. In the case of the 7th Regiment we see a 7 surrounded by a laurel wreath in the same design as the 9th Regiment flag above. The flag for the Regiment de Rio de la Plata has no number as this regiment was a combination of the 7th and 8th Regiments while the artillery flag brings back the coat of arms of Buenos Aires as well as an ornate set of symbols designating the artillery branch on either side of the central lozenge.

It is reasonable to assume all other Argentine units in the Army of the Andes and/or the United Army in Peru had similar flags with similar devices.



Fig. 16 7th Regiment 1820-22



Fig. 17 Rio de la Plata Regiment 1822-24



Fig. 18 Artillery 1820-24