

## SPANISH COLONIAL PERIOD

The Spanish Colonial Period covers the period 1739 (the discovery of the Arizonac mine) through 1856 (the arrival of the American military in Tucson).

Prior to the Reglamentos of 1772 (Regulations of 1772), the Spanish military in present day Arizona operated similarly to a feudal kingdom. During the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century around the 1760s, the Spanish crown began active consolidation of military resources.

The colonial military was reorganized, regular Spanish Army officers were put in control, and the colonial forts (presidios) were reorganized. In present day Arizona, presidios were established at Tubac, then Tucson, at Terrerate near Sierra Vista, and a military supported colony at Yuma. Spanish forces operated through all of southern Arizona and well into the White Mountains. In the 1780s a number of extensive campaigns were conducted against the Apaches resulting in the first reservation system and a period of peace lasting into the Mexican period.



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Among the duties one would expect, the Spanish Colonial military, utilizing presidio soldiers, escorted wagon trains, conducted exploratory expeditions, opening the road to California and Santa Fe, founded San Francisco, and even started the first mail service, an early pony express. The presidio soldier commonly identified as a *soldado de cuera* or leather armored soldier, also fulfilled the role of a *tropa ligera* or light troop, a group of soldiers that were a sort of Special Forces, lightly armed and trained in Apache tactics.

The *tropa ligera* soldier wore the uniform of the presidial soldier, but without the leather armor, shield or

lance. He carried a carbine and a sword. He would be dressed in the 1772 pattern coat, breeches, leggings, shoes and hat of the period. He would be armed with a carbine, carbine sling and belly box.