

DEPECHE FROM THE HQ OF THE ARMÉE IMPÉRIALE,  
MADRID 21st JANUARY 1810

TO: Major Neal, Commander of the 1st Battalion of the Régiment Irlandais in the service of the Empereur Napoléon.

FROM: Général Buquet, Commander of the Gendarmerie of Spain.

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Major,

In accordance with the high command in Madrid, your battalion has been selected for the most honourable task of securing the supply lines of the Armée Impériale in Spain.

Intelligence has reached us, giving notice of an imminent attack of the insurgents on our main supply depot located on the route between Aranda and Somosierra. This mountain outpost is being defended by 4 companies of the valiant Regiment Erbprinz-Hessen and a company of French artillery of the line under the joined command of Major Oliver.

However due the winter storms and landslides, roads have been interrupted and the only way to come close to the outpost is by boat on the river Manzanares.

As it is your task to reach the outpost before the onslaught of the Guerillas, who are infamous for their atrocities, you will board boats and rafts tomorrow at dawn, and together with two squadrons of the Gendarmerie française under the command of Captain Martin, and a supply convoy, make for the mountain outpost. You will defend the outpost until relief forces arrive in Spring.

Best of Luck and

VIVE L' EMPEREUR

Signed: Général Buquet

– The Outpost Action –

22nd January 1810

Major Neal, Commander of the 1st Battalion of the Régiment Irlandais in the service of the Empereur Napoléon, assembled his troops at dawn to board ten rafts and boats on the river Manzanares, as ordered by Général Buquet, Commander of the Gendarmerie of Spain.

Major Neal was aware of the fact that this was a dangerous task and could cost his battalion dearly. Nevertheless, as a brave and valient soldier he called his officers together to brief them on the honourable task of securing the supply lines of the Armée Impériale in Spain. These were the following four Irishmen:

Captain Roderik O'Connor, commanding the elite grenadier company  
Captain Sean O'Kelly, commanding the voltigeur company  
Lieutenant Eamon Parnell, commanding the 1st fusileer company  
Lieutenant Brian Collins, commanding the 2nd fusileer company

All of them had joined the Irish Regiment to serve above all against the British and hoped that Napoleon would support them in the liberation of Ireland, once the job in the Penninsula was done. It was there third year as brothers-in-arms, having gone through serious fighting and hardship. However there foremost loyalty was to Major Neal, who now briefed his staff on the order received from the HQ in Madrid.

**"We have to reach the mountain outpost, held by our Hessian allies, located between Aranda and Somosierra, as quickly as possible. Guerrilla bands have been reported massing in this area under the command of the rogues *Espoz y Mina, El Medico, El Marquesito, El Capuchino, El Empecinado*. It is of ultimate importance that this outpost is held until relief forces arrive from France in Spain, as all the supplies for the Army of Spain take this route accross the mountains. As roads have been interrupted by winter storms we need to take the rafts and boats. The problem is that we have no accurate maps of the mountain area in question, which means that we will have to send out reconnaissance troops to find the outpost. For this purpose General Buquet has placed two squadrons of Gendarmerie Francaise at our disposal. The commanding officer is Capitaine Martin (known for his bad temper and gambling). I ask you to avoid any conflict with him and his men, as long as this operation goes on. Please brief your companies accordingly. Captain O'Connor and his grenadiers will take charge of the supply convoy. Captain O'Kelly's voltigeurs should be prepared for reconnaissance action, while the fusileers will remain within sight of our Battalion standard. I expect your utmost efforts and Good Luck"**

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