

2nd Neapolitan Line Infantry Regiment “Regina”

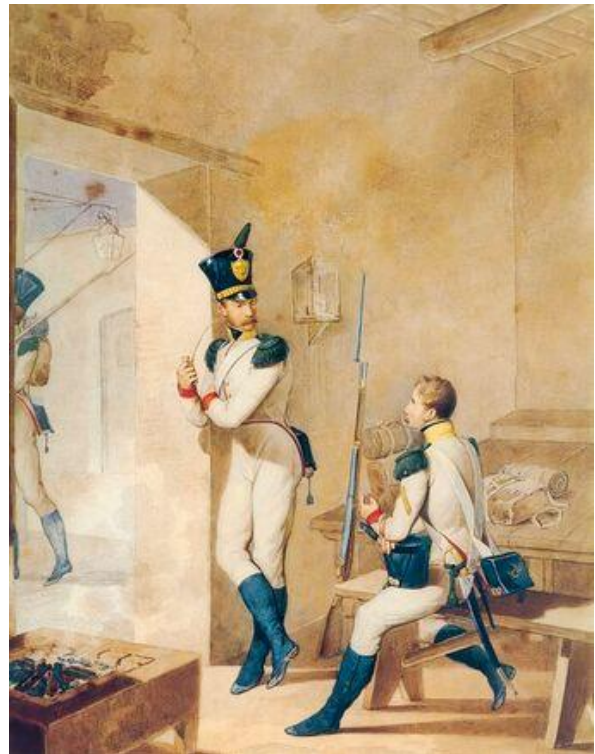
The **2nd Line Infantry Regiment** (*In Italian: 2o Reggimento Fanteria di Linea*) was one of the oldest line infantry units of the Kingdom of Naples, existing since the very beginning of King Joseph’s reign. It served in several theatres but suffered from high rates of desertion, and hence had to be reraised several times from convicts and brigands. It gained distinction in Spain and earned considerable praise from French generals for its effectiveness against Spanish guerrillas. Following the 1815 Campaign and the fall of the Kingdom, it was disbanded in June 1815.

It was given the title “**Regina**” or *Queen’s Own* in 1811 for its distinguished service in the War in Spain.

Formation and Origins

The 2nd Line Infantry Regiment was created with the decree of 13th June 1806 alongside its sister regiment, the 1st Line. Its creation came as a result of Napoleon’s desire for Naples to provide troops for his armies; this would be officially decreed in 1808 in the Treaty of Bayonne. The regiment was hence organised under an old Major named Onofrio, with Giuseppe Rosaroll and Ignazio Ritucci as battalion chiefs and D’Ambrosio, Brocchetti, Verdinois and Filangieri as captains (among others).

Suffering from a lack of recruits, the regiment however was soon reorganised under the direction of generals Francesco Pignatelli and Compère and merged on 17th September 1806 with the newly formed 3rd Line under Colonel Louis de Gambs. This officer, who had previously served in the Bourbon Army, was in fact a spy sent by the exiled government in Sicily; his father, also a senior officer, had secured him a commission in the new Kingdom’s army through connections to the King.



De Gambs’s appointment as colonel of the regiment marked the beginning of a series of internal problems for the 2nd Line that lasted for over a year. Through desertions, sickness and supply problems the regiment found itself reduced to only two battalions in 1807 and by the time of its march to Northern Italy, the regiment was undergoing major desertions. However, the worst was yet to come; on 11th May 1807 Rossaroll alongside 12 captains and practically all of the regiment’s junior officers denounced De Gambs and the regiment’s major as traitors, forcing the Minister of War to severely reprimand the regiment’s officers and replace the Colonel and Major.

On 17th November the regiment was put under the orders of Bigarré, the competent commander of the 1st Line, who took with him Michele Carrascosa as major; these two then worked tirelessly to restore discipline to the unit, having to contend with the poor quality of the regiment's rank and file. Having succeeded in that, the command of the regiment was then given to Carrascosa on 23rd May 1808 when Bigarré set off to accompany Joseph's court to Spain. A month later, the entire regiment set off towards the Pyrenees to take part in the war in Spain; the two battalions were commanded by Battalion Chiefs Chevalier and Palma respectively, and amounted to 1,900 men.

Spanish Campaign of 1808-13

The 2nd Line was organised into General Louis François Jean Chabot's division of St-Cyr's VII Corps in August 1808 and set off to La Junquera later that month. On 3rd September, barely a month into its service, it was ambushed by a force of some three thousand insurgents near the town; after eight hours of firing, the regiment dispersed the insurgents through a vigorous bayonet charge. The regiment took some fifty casualties from this action but received Chabot's praise in the division's daily bulletin. Unfortunately, following the desertion of some 200 men, the regiment had to once again be reorganised, this time in Fort Bellegarde on the Pyrenees: it re-entered service in October at the strength of 1,597 men, with five executions putting an end to the desertions.

The regiment then first served at the Siege of Rosas, where it protected the main breaching battery, and was in reserve at the Battle of Cardedeu. On 21st December it played a decisive role in turning the Spanish right at Molins del Rey and forcing them to retreat. According to Chabot's report, the regiment's two battalions crossed the Llobregat at San Feliù and marched to position themselves on the Villafranca road and cut the Spanish line of retreat; while under fire by two cannons and a howitzer the regiment pressed home their attack, and determined to win pushed several Spanish battalions back through an intrepid bayonet charge. Chabran asserted this manoeuvre was executed "avec ordre et precision" and brought "le plus grand honneur au 2e régiment".

Following the affair at Molins del Rey the regiment was stationed in San Sadurní for two months, and then took part in an action at Piera in which Carrascosa was briefly captured but freed the next day. The regiment did not take part in the Battle of Valls.

In February 1809 the regiment was involved in escorting convoys back to Barcelona. In one such action, Chabot was severely wounded in an ambush and hence his division was disbanded; the 2nd Line was



The 2nd Line's elite companies were grouped during the Siege of Girona.

incorporated into Lechi's force alongside the 1st Line, and was deployed to General Verdier's force at the Third Siege of Girona. At this point the regiment numbered only 765 men.



The tête de colonne of the 2nd Line.

On the evening of the 7th of July the 2nd Line's elite companies took part in the assault on the breach at Montjuich alongside the 1st Line, under the command of Capobattaglione Casella. This assault was repulsed with horrifying losses, yet the 2nd Line continued to serve in the trenches outside Girona. Around this time Carrascosa was promoted to General and the command of the regiment went to Pietro Federico Edoardo Chiarizia, previously a battalion chief in the 1st Line. Chiarizia was by no means a good administrator; he was despised by his superiors and subordinates alike, and apparently had a violent temper. His poor administration of the regiment caused the 2nd Line to go through severe supply and morale problems, and eventually he was recalled to the Kingdom following repeated requests by both General Pignatelli and Marshal Augereau to have him cashiered.

Fortunately for the regiment, it was soon transferred out of the carnage of Girona after a second failed attack upon the main breach into the city. The remnants of the regiment, now only some 200 men, were sent to Rosas to spend the winter there and recover. It then took part in convoy work,

which proved uneventful until a detachment of 50 men led by Lieutenant Giannone was captured by insurgents; this apparently happened after it was abandoned by General Guillot, who was meant to accompany them. Around this time Murat had written to Napoleon to recall his troops to the Kingdom, but was turned down bluntly; hence, reinforcements arrived from the homeland, the 2nd Line receiving a convoy of 1,500 recruits in late November. This came alongside the formation of the Neapolitan Division under General Francesco Pignatelli-Strongoli and the replacement of General St-Cyr with Marshal Augereau. The strength of the regiment on January 1st 1810 was 1,431 men and officers.

Serving with the Division, the regiment spent the first several months of 1810 in relative tranquility, being garrisoned in Capmany, Luedan and the fortress of Figueras. It then took part in the entire corps' march from Reus to Lérida, where it marched in the advance guard and constantly engaged Spanish insurgents in the Catalanian hills, notably in the gorge of El Pla (26th August) where the 2nd Line was the sole Neapolitan unit engaged, with 5 companies of the regiment charging to take the crest of the heights. The division did not take part in Suchet's Siege of Lérida, and was instead assigned to maintain order and guard supply lines along the Ebro in September. The division supervised the transportation of Suchet's siege train down the river, allowing both convoys containing siege guns and supplies to pass down unmolested.

However, in one notable action on 17th September, a force of some 250 men of the 2nd Line's first battalion under Capobattaglione Labrano were forced to surrender after being surprised by a strong

Spanish column near Flix. According to Labrano's report, he had deployed his bivouac in a depression in the ground, as he had expected his voltigeurs under Captain Amato to hold the heights and keep watch as the convoy sailed down the river. Upon being attacked Labrano attempted to withdraw to Riba-Roja where a second Neapolitan force would've come to support him; however, the commandant was wounded thrice and the recruits of the regiment threw down their arms. A valiant attempt by Captain Schemberg's force of the 1st Line to free their captured comrades failed, and hence the action ended in disaster for the Neapolitans.

On November 10th Chiarizia was finally recalled to the Kingdom and the provisional command of the regiment went to Capobattaglione Giovanni Ritucci. On the 22nd the command was given to Colonel D'Aquino.

Soon, the Neapolitans in Spain were constricted into a brigade under the command of General Gratien Ferrier, in the division of Claude Antoine Compère; many senior officers and soldiers being repatriated soon after, giving the brigade a strength of some 3,000 men (31st January 1811).

The Neapolitans continued to guard the supply line of the Ebro before being deployed to support Suchet's operations around Tarragona in mid-1811. At the town of Calatayud, Ferrier with 4 elite companies of the 2nd Line and 1st Light and one Polish detachment unwisely advanced to meet a superior Spanish force outside the settlement and was surrounded; a rapid bayonet charge opened the way for the force to withdraw inside the town's fortified convent, and both forces soon withdrew. Casualties of the Neapolitans in this action amounted to some 10 killed and 40 wounded. The entire operation was mentioned in the *Monitore Napoletano*. On 1st October, the entire division was employed in besieging Oropesa and Torre del Rey, two heavily fortified coastal towns in Valencia. The former fell quite rapidly, with the garrison surrendering when a musket shot from a grenadier of the 2nd Line severed the chord hoisting the garrison's flag; the latter fell on October 12th when the garrison was successfully evacuated by British ships.

Finally, the brigade participated in the Siege of Valencia, but the 2nd Line was not engaged. This would mark the last combat action of the 2nd Line in Spain; on October 14th the remaining Neapolitan infantrymen in Spain were all incorporated into a newly-formed 8th Line Regiment under the command of the capable Guglielmo Pepe. This regiment would serve in Spain until the final days of the campaign in 1814.

Reorganisation

On 8th December 1810 the regiment was granted the title Regina, or Queen's Own. The unit was then raised to 4 battalions on 7th July 1811; this battalion would be given to the 7th Line in July 1813.

The regiment did not participate in the Russian or German Campaigns of 1812-13. On 3rd July 1813 Giuseppe di Brocchetti was appointed as the regiment's colonel.

1814 Campaign in Northern Italy

With the start of the conflict in Northern Italy, the 2nd Line was assigned to Luigi D'Aquino's brigade of the second division under D'Ambrosio. The division crossed the Tronto river on December 31st 1813; the regiment itself set off from the town of Accumoli in Latium. The division united at Ancona and waited there for the Guard Divisions to catch up. Soon, with the commencement of hostilities, the French

garrison of the citadel of Ancona was blockaded by MacDonald's brigade of the division, while D'Aquino's brigade advanced to Imola. These then marched onto Modena, where they advanced with the entire army on Piacenza. On 13th April, these finally became engaged in the Battle of the Taro against the French forces of General Maucune. The 2nd Line deployed on the morning of the 14th in Guastalla (six companies), Brescello (three companies), Gualtieri and Boretto (one company each); however, these were not engaged in any direct combat against the French. The battle ended later that day.

Service in the Neapolitan War

The regiment remained attached to D'Aquino's brigade in the second division through the 1815 Campaign too; at the outbreak of hostilities in March 1815, the division formed part of the main Neapolitan column marching towards Fano and Pesaro, under the personal supervision of Murat. The division did not take part in the Battle of Panaro; instead, it advanced to Ferrara and forced the Austrian garrison (under General Lauer) to take refuge in the citadel. On the morning of the 7th Ambrosio left De Medici's brigade in Ferrara to continue the siege and himself took D'Aquino's brigade to Vallonga, where the fortified bridge of Occhiobello (on the Po) was situated. This strongpoint was held by a strong Austrian force under Feldmarschalleutnant Johann Friedrich von Mohr, which withdrew across the bridge upon being confronted by the Neapolitans.



Fusilier of the 2nd Line in 1814.

Around morning of the 8th, the 2nd Line and 3rd Light were launched across the bridge, into the van of the Austrian defences. Volleyed by the Austrians and bogged down by chevaux de frise and abatises, the attack took heavy casualties and petered out. It was followed by another five waves of Neapolitan troops, to which the Austrians responded with their own sallies; all were repulsed. Colonel di Brocchetti was in the thick of the fighting, distinguishing himself and receiving the title of Baron from the King for his bravery. By the end of the day the Neapolitans having suffered some 2,000 killed or wounded decided to suspend operations for the night. Austrian losses stood at around 500.

This repulse caused the brigade's morale to fall drastically, and following the defeat at Carpi the entire army shifted south and retreated. On the 11th the 2nd Division beat off a strong Austrian attack across the Occhiobello bridge, but then pulled back anyways. Ferrara was abandoned on the 13th.

Thus began the retreat of the entire Army. Following a skirmish at Imola, the main army under Murat would be reunited with the Guard divisions in May in Marche, where the stage would be set for the decisive battle at Tolentino.

On the 29th of April the regiment was in Iesi alongside the rest of D'Ambrosio's division. They soon pulled back to Macerata to link up with the rest of the army in order to give battle; Bianchi's corps followed them earnestly, and the two armies encamped south of Macerata on the 1st. On the 2nd,

D'Ambrosio and Lecchi's divisions were ordered forwards against the enemy lines near Sforzacosta, and saw good success in pushing the enemy lines back. The brunt of the fighting was borne by the 3rd Light and the 2nd Line, and the day ended with the Austrians being pushed back to the outskirts of Tolentino and Rancia. During all of this D'Ambrosio was seriously wounded, and the command of the division was given to D'Aquino.

The next day the pivotal part of the battle would come, in which the 2nd Line would play a crucial role in. After the Guard had captured Rancio castle and the hill of Cantagallo, Lecchi and D'Aquino were ordered to shore up the right flank of the Neapolitan line and advance against the Austrian left. This particular area of the battlefield was extremely well defended; the ground was rocky, uneven and full of ditches, and a heaven for defending infantry. The Austrians had positioned General Eckhardt's division there – these were well-positioned on the steep heights, and supported by strong cavalry. When D'Aquino eventually set off to attack shortly past midday, he immediately made his first mistake: leaving his advance guard (composed of a battalion of the 2nd Line and four companies of voltigeurs) too far ahead to be able to be supported by his main column. General Bianchi, realising this, immediately rushed forward IR27 Chasteler and a squadron of the Ducal Tuscan Dragoons, the former turning the battalion's flank and the latter assaulting the square that it formed into. Upon being charged by the bloodthirsty Tuscans, the Neapolitan square disintegrated and the men were either killed or taken prisoner. Seeing this unfold from Cantagallo, Murat immediately pushed forward a squadron of chevaulegers, which itself retreated after being confronted by superior forces.

D'Aquino, hearing of the demise of his advance guard, decided to descend the valley formed into four huge squares, each composed of an entire regiment. The 2nd Line's two remaining battalions constituted the second square; this grave formational error caused the entire division to suffer greatly in the face of Austrian artillery, and upon being volleyed by the Austrians at the foot of the valley, the first square broke and fled. Seeing the demise of their comrades, the 2nd Line initially attempted to give fire to the enemy but then itself broke and fled uphill.

This marked the end of the 2nd Line's effective contribution during the battle.

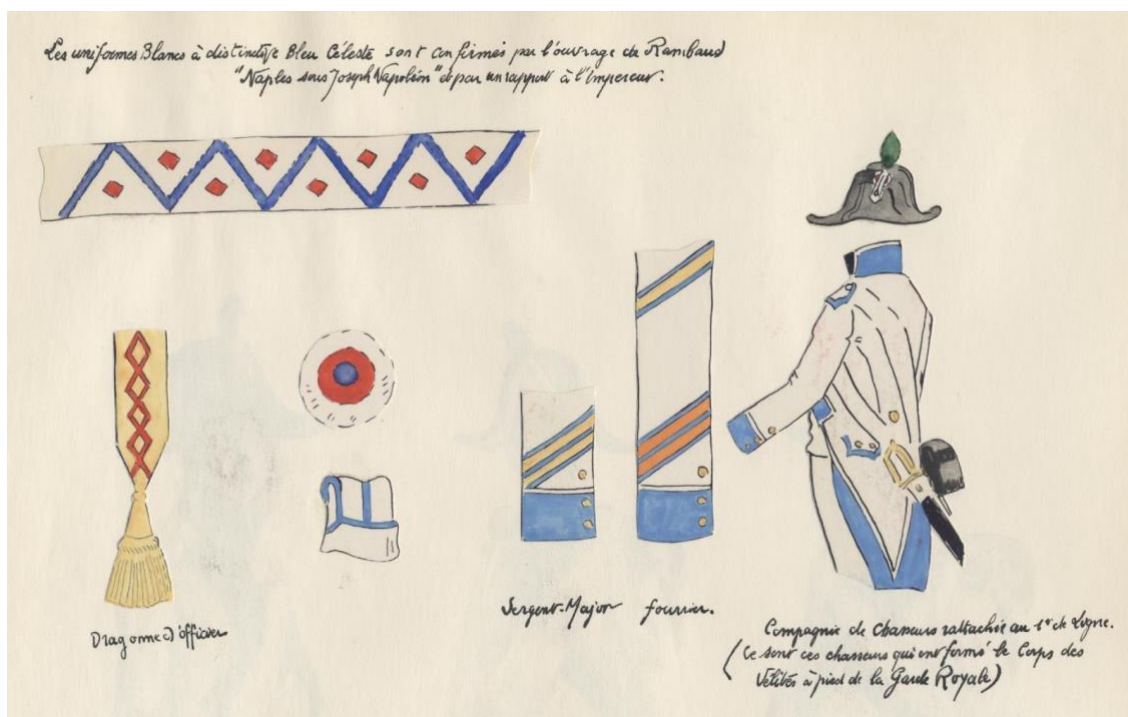
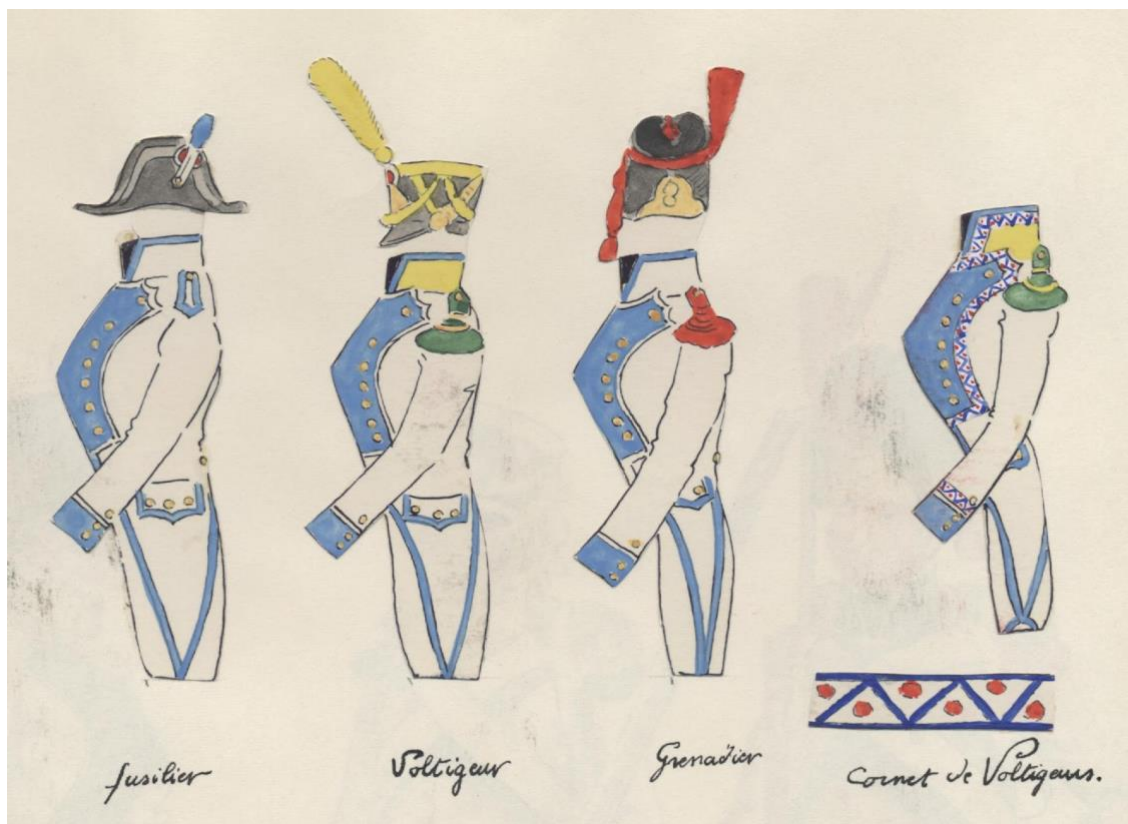
It is unclear what the fate of the 2nd Line was after the retreat from Tolentino. D'Aquino was promptly sacked by Murat on the 5th of May, and the disorganised remains of the army proceeded south in a gruelling 250 kilometre march. According to Pepe, on the 16th the Second Division numbered only around twelve hundred men. The regiment itself was probably down to battalion strength by the end of the campaign, and it is doubtful it took part in the battle at San Germano. The army finally reached Capua on the 18th, and after the signing of the Treaty of Casalanza it generally disintegrated. Thus, the 2nd Line was disbanded, although some of its officers (including di Brocchetti) would continue to serve under the Bourbons.

Uniform

Like all Neapolitan line regiments, the 2nd Line's uniform was a heavily modelled version of the standard French uniform. The regiment's distinctions were light red, although during Joseph's reign the regiment was equipped in the same light-blue facings as the 1st Line (the only difference being the collar being white piped blue).

1806-1811 Uniform

Detail	Description
Headgear	French style bicorne for all companies; pompom colour based on company (Green, Blue, Orange, Violet respectively) Grenadiers also equipped with French-style bearskins with red chords, plume and back patch, bearing a single yellow grenade insignia patch
Neckstock	Black
Coat	White, French cut, no cuff flaps, light blue facings Collar light blue with white piping Lapels light blue Pockets diagonal; white with light blue piping Cuffs light blue with white piping, two brass buttons Coattails long; white with light blue piping, grenade/bugle insignia for grenadiers and voltigeurs respectively
Epaulettes	Fusiliers white shoulder-straps piped light blue Grenadiers red fringe epaulettes Voltigeurs green fringe epaulettes
Waistcoat	White; 9 equally spaced brass golden buttons, cuffs and collar light blue
Breeches	White
Gaiters	Black
Equipment	Bandoliers White; one for Fusiliers and Voltigeurs, two for Grenadiers Waistbelt n/a Cartridge Box Black, Insignia N/A Fatigue Cap White with light blue lining; light blue company insignia for elite companies Footgear regular French infantry cowhide shoes, 36-40 nails depending on size



Following the release of the 1811 uniform regulations, the regiment's facings changed:

1811 Uniform

In 1811 the new uniform regulations were implemented in Murat's Army, uniforming the 1st Regiment as follows:

Detail	Description
Headgear	Fusiliers French style black felt shako with brass plate bearing regimental number (2) or royal cypher, pompom colour based on company (Green, Blue, Orange, Violet respectively) Grenadiers French style black felt shako with brass plate bearing a grenade, red pompom Bearskins (as mentioned above) also in use Voltigeurs French style black felt shako with brass plate bearing grenade over a horn with regimental number (2), green pompom
Neckstock	Black
Coat	White, French cut, cuff flaps, light red facings, two rows of 7 buttons Collar light red with white piping Lapels light red Pockets white with light red piping Cuffs pointed, light red with white piping, two brass buttons Coattails short; white with light red piping, grenade/bugle insignia for grenadiers and voltigeurs respectively
Epaulettes	Fusiliers white shoulder-straps piped light blue. Grenadiers red fringe epaulettes Voltigeurs green fringe epaulettes
Waistcoat	White; 9 equally spaced brass golden buttons, cuffs and collar light blue
Breeches	White
Gaiters	Black
Equipment	Bandoliers White; one for Fusiliers and Voltigeurs, two for Grenadiers to hold the cartridge box and briquet. Waistbelt N/A Cartridge Box Black, Insignia N/A Fatigue Cap White with light red lining; light red company insignia for elite companies Footgear regular French infantry cowhide shoes, 36-40 nails depending on size



Uniforms of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Regiments in 1813. From left to right: Fusilier (1st), Grenadier (2nd) and Voltigeur (3rd).

Colours

According to the 1806 regulations, the regiment was to carry one red, black and gold 1806-pattern French-style flag, identical to that of the 1st Line (other than in the central lozenge's inscription). It is unclear whether this flag actually went to Spain with the regiment but it is probable it was taken to the depot at Mantua in 1807.

1806-Pattern *Drapeau*:

- Field: white
- Corners in White and Red
- Golden lacing with regimental number
- Obverse (right): Inscription "Giuseppe Napoleone/Re Delle Due Sicilie/Al 2o Reggimento/D'Infanteria/Di Linea" written in gold
- Reverse (left): Lesser arms of the Kingdom of Naples under Joseph

On 15th February 1811, the regiment was issued new blue and amaranth flags with the Murattian coat of arms and a new inscription. Contrary to the official 1810 decree, the 2nd Line actually had one such flag per battalion (meaning the regiment had 4 such flags between 1811 and 1813). These were probably not taken on campaign, as no reports of it ever being captured; however, in Captain von Weingarten's sketch of the battle, the leading square of the 2nd Line is depicted with a flag. It is possible this is an artistic mistake or a botched depiction of a battalion fanion.

1810-Pattern *Drapeau*:

- Field: blue
- Red and Amaranth checkerboard surrounding
- Obverse (right): Green laurel/holly wreath topped with “GN” and crown; inscription “Al/REGGto/D’Infanteria/2o Di Linea
- Reverse (left): Shield of the lesser arms of the Kingdom of Naples under Joachim Murat alongside two mermaids, a royal crown of five hoops and the Order of Two Sicilies.



Drapeau of the 2nd Line of the 1810 pattern.

List of Colonels

<u>Date Appointed</u>	<u>Name</u>
17th September 1806	Louis de Gambs
17th November 1807	Auguste-Julien Bigarré
23rd May 1808	Michele Carrascosa
22nd November 1810	Luigi Antonio d’Aquino
3rd July 1813	Giuseppe di Brocchetti

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