

Military Call-Outs Against Convicts, Rioters and Strikers Colonial Australia 1804–1891

Illustrative schedule of British and colonial military intervention against non-Aboriginal disturbances

Key point: British and colonial troops were repeatedly called out against non-Aboriginal disturbances including convict uprisings, bushranging, riots and strikes. The mere use of troops or martial law does not by itself establish that the underlying event was a “war”.

Date	Episode	Nature of disturbance	Military force used	Why it matters
1804	Castle Hill rebellion, NSW	Convict uprising	About 80 soldiers across three detachments	Martial law declared; troops used to suppress the rebellion.
1808	Rum Rebellion, Sydney	Military overthrow of Governor Bligh	Almost the entire NSW Corps	A military coup against the colonial government, not a war.
1826	Norfolk Island convict uprising	Convict mutiny / uprising	Resident garrison (numbers uncertain)	Military force used to suppress convict resistance on Norfolk Island.
1830	Ribbon Gang / Bathurst district	Bushranging and convict disorder	About 130 soldiers	Troops deployed in pursuit and suppression.
1834	Norfolk Island convict mutiny	Convict rebellion	Resident military force	Military and civil authorities suppressed a violent revolt.
1854	Eureka Stockade, Ballarat	Miners’ rebellion	About 276 soldiers and police combined	Regular troops and police assaulted the stockade.
1861	Lambing Flat riots, NSW	Anti-Chinese riots / civil disorder	About 130 infantry initially; artillery also involved	Troops deployed to restore order and support civil authority.
1890	Maritime Strike	Industrial strike / labour unrest	Troops deployed in support of police (numbers varied)	Military aid to civil power across several colonies.
1891	Shearers’ Strike, Queensland	Industrial strike / labour unrest	About 1,000 military personnel	Major military deployment to protect property and support civil order.

Note: This is a working schedule designed for comparative use. Force numbers are approximate and some entries are grouped episodes rather than single-day engagements. The pattern remains clear: military call-out was a recurrent colonial response to many forms of internal disturbance unrelated to Aboriginal frontier conflict.