

British Military Interventions in Colonial Frontier Violence

Revised schedule checked 5 October 2026

Purpose. This schedule identifies documented deployments and armed encounters involving British military personnel in colonial conflict with Aboriginal people. It retains the original entries, adds omissions and distinguishes expeditions, garrison encounters, military support for policing and protective stations. South Australia has separate entries for Moorundie and Port Lincoln.

Scope. This is a non-exhaustive schedule, not a national count of wars or military call-outs. A row can encompass several operations; a single operation can involve several encounters. The early northern settlements and Western Australian posts require further systematic examination. Naval operations and general garrison duties are not comprehensively covered.

Counting personnel. Figures are the strength described in the cited account, not a verified maximum throughout an operation. Officers and non-commissioned officers are included only where stated. Police, settlers, convicts and guides are excluded from the military figure unless the entry explicitly says otherwise. Unknown figures remain unknown, and figures for different years must not be added as a simultaneous national force.

Martial law. Bathurst and Van Diemen's Land remain in both this schedule and the separate martial law schedule because a proclamation and the deployment of soldiers are distinct facts. "Not identified" means no proclamation has been established for that entry in the sources listed here.

Interpretation. Military participation establishes that soldiers were used; it does not, by itself, settle whether an episode was warfare. Equally, small forces or few military deaths do not establish that it was not warfare. Contemporary descriptions, duration, orders, purpose and the organisation of both sides must be examined separately.

Schedule of documented military involvement

Date	Place or operation	Unit or military personnel	Military strength and qualification	Nature of involvement and source	Martial law
December 1790	Botany Bay and Georges River, NSW	Marine-led garrison parties under Watkin Tench; NSW Corps officers on the second expedition	First order: 40 privates, 4 officers and unspecified NCOs. Second: 30 privates, 6 NCOs and 3 officers = 39.	Two punitive expeditions ordered after the spearing of McEntire. Tench records no prisoners or Aboriginal casualties from them. Do not treat the two parties as one cumulative force. [1]	Not identified
June 1795	Hawkesbury, NSW	New South Wales Corps	66 soldiers and 2 subalterns = 68 in the cited expedition account	Paterson dispatched troops to deter attacks and force Aboriginal people away from settlement. Continuing garrison strength is a separate question; the previous 94 figure is omitted pending a dated source. [2]	Not identified

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March 1797	Toongabbie and Parramatta, NSW	NSW Corps soldiers with armed settlers	Military number not established	Collins describes an armed pursuit and a confrontation in Parramatta involving soldiers and Pemulwuy's party. An encounter involving existing troops, rather than a separately quantified call-out. [3]	Not identified
3 May 1804	Risdon Cove, Van Diemen's Land	New South Wales Corps under Lieutenant William Moore	Moore describes 5 soldiers with him and 2 sent to a farm; overlap and total engaged uncertain	Garrison soldiers fired on Aboriginal people; a carronade was also fired. Contemporary accounts conflict about the circumstances. Include as an armed garrison encounter, not a newly dispatched expedition. [4]	Not identified
12 November 1804	Paterson's northern settlement, Van Diemen's Land	Military guard at Port Dalrymple	Number engaged not established	The guard fired during an encounter at Paterson's camp. Separate from Risdon Cove and the later Black Line. The cited university history records one Aboriginal person killed and one wounded. [5]	Not identified
April 1805	Hawkesbury settlements, NSW	New South Wales Corps detachments	Number not established	Governor King's published general orders record military detachments posted to protect outlying settlers during renewed conflict. This is a separate deployment period from 1795 and 1816. [6]	Not identified
April 1816	Hawkesbury–Nepean and Appin, NSW	46th Regiment of Foot	Approximately 70–85 in the earlier schedule; provisional reconstruction, not a verified maximum	Three initial military parties under Wallis, Schaw and Dawe. Macquarie's journal confirms orders and operations, including the Appin killings. His use of companies is not proof of full establishment strength; retain the range only as provisional. [7]	Not identified
1824	Bathurst district, NSW	British garrison troops	About 75 in the cited heritage study; dispatch versus total available requires reconciliation	Military operations during escalating conflict and martial law west of Mount York. The published figure should not be represented as an independently verified roll of troops in the field. [8]	Yes
December 1827	Fort Wellington, Raffles Bay, present NT	British soldiers under Captain Henry Smyth; 39th Regiment command	3 soldiers, with 2 convicts, in this expedition	A hostage-taking expedition fired on Aboriginal people and killed members of a family. Colonial Secretary McLeay's 1828 correspondence expressly condemned the conduct. Other Fort Wellington encounters are separate. [9]	Not identified
1828–1832; Black Line 1830	Van Diemen's Land	British garrison regiments; 63rd Regiment among those involved in 1830	About 550 soldiers in the Black Line; over 2,200 participants of all categories	Military activity under martial law extended beyond the October–November 1830 sweep. The Black Line was an attempt to capture and displace Aboriginal groups; its civilian participants are not counted as regular soldiers. [10]	Yes

Date	Place or operation	Unit or military personnel	Military strength and qualification	Nature of involvement and source	Martial law
28 October 1834	Pinjarra, Western Australia	21st Regiment of Foot within Stirling's mixed party	10 in the named detachment: 2 corporals + 8 privates; another soldier led a packhorse, giving 11 soldiers in that party account	Expedition and proposed protective post. The contemporary party list distinguishes the extra soldier from the 10-man detachment. Mounted police and civilians must be recorded separately. Presence in the party does not prove each soldier fired. [11]	Not identified
1836	York district, Western Australia	21st Regiment under Lieutenant Henry Bunbury	Detachment strength not established for this punitive deployment	Bunbury's letter of 10 July describes orders to act against Aboriginal people and his night shooting of several. The 10 soldiers on his Williams escort are a different operation and cannot simply supply the York figure. [12]	Not identified
December 1837–January 1838	Nunn expedition and Waterloo Creek, NSW	NSW Mounted Police staffed by soldiers; Major James Nunn	2 sergeants + 20 troopers, plus Nunn = approximately 23	Military personnel serving in a police organisation were dispatched north after killings of stockmen. Includes the Waterloo Creek killings. Retain the distinction between their military employment and their police role. [13]	Not identified
11 October 1840	Melbourne encampment raid, Port Phillip District, NSW, now Victoria	28th Regiment with Mounted Police, Border Police and constables	Regular troop strength not established	Mixed military and police operation that surrounded an Aboriginal gathering and made mass arrests. Contemporary newspaper reports identify the regiment and its officers. Police numbers and prisoner totals are not troop strength. [14]	Not identified
From late 1841	Moorundie, River Murray, South Australia	96th Regiment of Foot	12 men + 1 NCO = 13 in the published reconstruction	Protective military station supporting Eyre's magistracy after overland-route violence. A continuing station, not evidence that regular soldiers participated in the August 1841 Rufus River killings. [15]	Not identified
1842	Port Lincoln and surrounding district, South Australia	96th Regiment under Lieutenant Francis James Hugonin	19 in McLean's memoir: 1 lieutenant + 1 sergeant + 1 corporal + 16 privates; other accounts give smaller figures	Military protection, searches and armed encounters involving several parties. McLean's figure describes the ordered detachment; it is not proof that 19 soldiers took part in every encounter or were the maximum present throughout. [16]	Not identified