

Observers criticized the poor marksmanship of the line *soldados*. One critic remarked that one out of ten recruits never saw a musket and only one out of a hundred had actually ever held one (Olivera and Cr  t   1991). An efficient supply system hampered Mexican marksmanship. One writer noted Santa Anna's 1847 *Ejercito del Norte* had been superficially drilled, and not allowed to target fire their weapons because of the lack of ammunition (Robles 1934). Mexican gunpowder was considered poor by most standards, containing too much sulphur and charcoal. Contemporary accounts from both the Texas Campaign and the Mexican-American War noted Mexican cartridges were often overcharged to give the weapon more punch (Lewis 1950). The result was an intimidating flash in the weapon's pan, stinging cheeks and eyes, and a considerable recoil. U.S. and Texian accounts claimed Mexican troops often fired from the hip to reduce the discomfort of the discharging weapon. In 1839, Texian Ordnance Officer George Hockley commented "the French, the Spaniards, the Mexicans, and some others, fire quickly and from the hip" (Hockley 1839). At the 1842 battle of Lipantitlan, a Texian was amazed as one Mexican sergeant took nearly point blank aim at him, only to turn his head before firing, causing the shot to go high (*Telegraph and Texas Register* 1842). Nevertheless, *cazadores* were competent marksmen, as Texians at the 1835 battle of Bexar could attest. For example, a shot from *cazadore* Felix de la Garza of the Morelos Battalion killed Texian leader Ben Milam (Creed 1935). Mexican ordnance officers occasionally issued the wrong ammunition. Such foul-ups occurred in all armies, but this fact provided scant comfort to those *soldados* issued Brown Bess ammunition for their Baker Rifles during the 1847 battle of Churubusco (Hefter et al. 1958).

Mexico's cavalry seemed better prepared. The legacy of horsemanship, dating back to the tough *presidial* lancers of the colonial period and the frontier ranching traditions, produced a thriving horse culture, reflected in the large numbers of cavalry units. Cavalrymen were designated as regular line units and irregular auxiliaries, primarily made up of local rancheros. Arms for the cavalry consisted of a wide variety of *escopetas* (short-barreled carbines), swords, *espada anchas* (short swords), lariats and the lance. The lance was the deadliest and most reliable weapon a horse soldier could carry. In several engagements, lancers almost proved fatal to the Americans, armed with swords and single shot pistols. Indeed, the first skirmish of the Mexican-American War was a Mexican victory, secured by excellent light cavalry tactics. Texians developed a healthy respect for Mexican cavalry. In the 1835-1836 Texas War, Mexican regular cavalry swept the field at Agua Dulce and Encinal del Perdido. They also performed swift and almost decisive service in the skirmish of April 20, 1836 at the San Jacinto. Only at the siege of Bexar, where frontier presidial companies fought as defending infantry and at the San Jacinto on April 21, where the cavalry found themselves unsaddled and walking their horses to water, did the Texians succeed against Mexican cavalry. During the nine years of hostilities between Texas and Mexico, the Texians developed a system of mounted tactics to deal with Mexican cavalry (Hefter et al. 1958).