

**The Battle of Saltanovka, July 23, 1812:
After Action Report
Marshal Louis Davout defeats General Nikolai Raevsky**



Marshal Davout

The initial setup was based closely upon the historical disposition of troops at the actual battle. The only variation to this was to give the Russians three options for deployment of the Grenadier division and its accompanying artillery. Two options placed this division in support of either the Saltanovka or Fatova assault, whilst the third offered the flank attack option, through the wooded area, to the west of Fatova village. If this latter option were selected, the arrival would be decided on a 50% chance per turn, after turn two. Release of the remaining French and Russian reserves would be at the discretion of the GM's based upon their analysis of the tactical situation and the pleading of the representative players.

The Russian commander elected for the flank march, and the French, forewarned of a possible Russian advance through the woods, positioned one battalion in the woods to contest their arrival.

The Russians tasked with assaulting Saltanovka determined to use their enormous superiority in artillery, dominating the immediate approaches to the town, to facilitate their potentially difficult crossing of the steeply sided Dnieper tributary. Whilst the Russians tasked with assaulting Fatova Mill, across the same watercourse, elected to forego any artillery preparation, and lead with infantry. This decision had the result that their own infantry for a major part of the initial assault would mask their artillery, and fully thirty-six cannon available in this area would be without targets.

The French were outnumbered at least three to one in this opening stage of the engagement, and that would only increase if the Russian Grenadiers arrived without an introduction of additional French reserves.

As the thirty-six-gun battery opened up, sweeping the ground around Saltanovka, the infantry of both Kolubakin and Paskievitch moved remorselessly forward. The French artillerymen were careful only to target the compact infantry of their opponents, and not engage in counter battery fire. As the Russian battalions crossed the watercourse, and reformed on the French bank, the first of the French reserves were released. Three squadrons of French Chasseurs rode towards Saltanovka, whilst one squadron of Light Horse Lancers trotted towards Fatova. The Russian response was to release one brigade of Dragoons to the Saltanovka thrust, but as they still had to negotiate the watercourse their arrival would be delayed, and for the present the initiative lay with the French cavalry. These immediately launched two Chasseur squadrons towards a Russian brigade, forcing their lead regiment into square, which resulted in the cavalry reining in. But the effect was to stall the Russian advance and to present some attractive, static targets to the French artillery.



Gen. Raevsky

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At Fatova mill, without preliminary bombardment, the Russian infantry swarmed to the attack. Several battalions threatened but failed to infiltrate the strong French defenses, and a desultory musket duel commenced, in which the French had the advantage. Once engaged in the firefight, the Russians found it exceedingly difficult to then close on the position, and the initiative quickly turned in favor of the French. Seizing any opportunity they saw, the French supporting battalions made quick and decisive counter thrusts with bayonet charges, throwing the Russians back across the watercourse.

At Saltanovka, a Russian brigade launched piecemeal assaults against a solitary French battalion, which resisted manfully, until finally overcome by attrition. The French supporting battalion then occupied Saltanovka village and awaited the inevitable Russian infantry assault. With little or no effective artillery support the Russians found it difficult to make headway, and by limiting their attack to piecemeal assaults with only one battalion committed at a time, the French were able to easily throw back the Russians.

With the primary Russian assaults faltering, finally the Grenadier division made an appearance as the head of its column advanced along the track through the woods. The lone French battalion, deployed in line, advanced toward the column head. This brazen move threw the lead Russian brigade commander off balance, and the column head hesitated and stopped. The Russians countered by deploying two battalions on either side of the road. In this formation the Russians tentatively advanced into musket range, but the resultant firefight was largely ineffective due to the heavy nature of the woods. Frustrated by the delay, the Russian division commander finally order a three-pronged bayonet charge, delivered by a column on the road and the two flanking battalions in line. This proved irresistible and the French were bundled back towards Fatova village. Valuable time had been lost, however, to the Russians, and one French battalion had effectively stalled the advance of twelve Russian battalions, with three batteries of artillery.

The Russians having exhausted many of their infantry in fruitless assaults against Fatova, now decided to bring their artillery into the attack. The French battled the multiple fires caused by this incendiary fire for thirty to forty-five minutes, but this sapped their strength, and they were unable to resist the Russian infantry assault when it finally came. Fatova mill was now in Russian hands. Up to this point all had been in favor of the French, they had resisted every assault, and held the initiative in all areas. But with the mill lost, and the Russian Grenadiers remorselessly advancing through the woods, things looked bleak. Then crisis struck for the French.

A detachment of Russian dragoons had advanced towards Fatova, which the French lancers attempted to intercede, but outnumbered they were quickly overthrown; this unmasked the flank of a French horse battery. Two French battalions that had been facing off the Russian infantry that had earlier been thrown back across the Dnieper tributary, were now wheeled towards the threat, but this exposed their flank to the waiting Russian infantry. In a decisive stroke, the battery was hit in flank, as were the French supporting infantry, the French reeled from this combined assault, and both their infantry and artillery were beaten, with numerous cannon being abandoned to the enemy. But it was clear that this had been the last gasp of effort from the Russians engaged before Saltanovka and Fatova, and a lull set in across the field. The French were able to rush up reserves, effectively replacing all the battalions they had lost earlier

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Napoleonic Battle Scenario

in the fight, all the Russians had available were the Grenadiers, that were only now appearing at the edge of the woods. The French had only to contain the Russians and they could presumably win the day. Furthermore, the French still held in reserve the three massive regiments of elite cuirassiers, with two supporting horse artillery batteries, and this bolstered the French army morale enormously.

The Russian Grenadiers pushed out of the wood line, and deployed a twelve-gun position battery on the bank of the stream, which lay between them and Fatova village – if appearances could be decisive then they would be unstoppable, but it was clear that the Grenadier division no longer had the will to fight. The demise of the two Russian line divisions, was sapping the fight from the Grenadiers – the commanding officer was heard to bellow, ‘where are my Grenadiers? These men fight like peasants!’ Following a brief exchange of musketry and cannon fire, the French battalions threw themselves against the Russian positions, on the banks of the stream, and cut through the Grenadiers like butter – the Russian army morale had collapsed. The French were victorious.

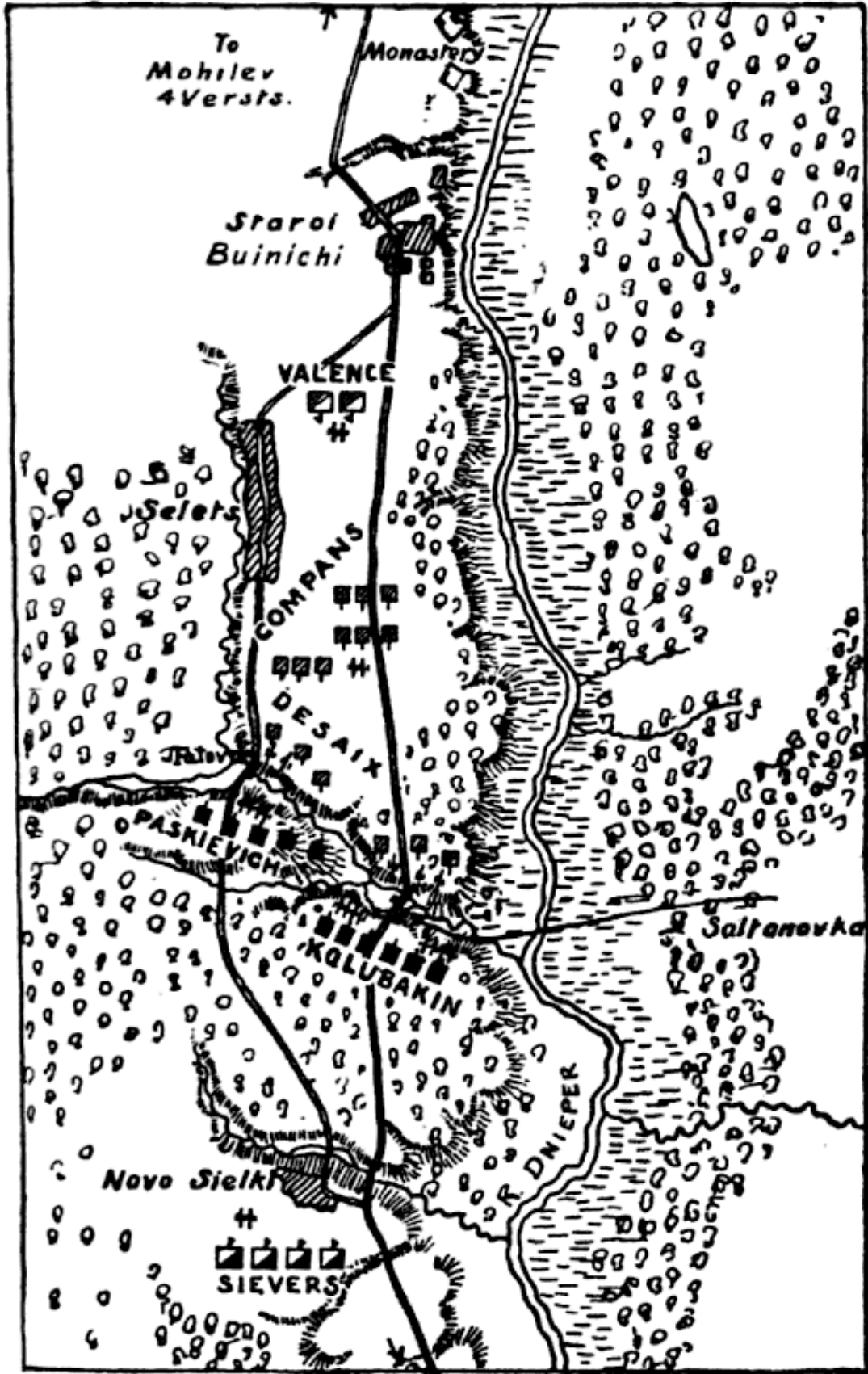
The immediate cost of victory had been enormous, nearly one in four Frenchmen were killed, wounded or missing, but the same was true of the Russians, and they had greatly outnumbered the French. The effort displayed by the Russians had been tremendous, and they deserved enormous credit, but the French had been lions, and Marshal Davout could be rightly proud to command such troops that fought and died on this day in July 1812, in defense of the road to Mohilev.

French losses in killed and wounded amounted to 12% or 2,167 men [including 580 prisoners], 11 cannon and the eagle of the 108th Line. All the cannon were reclaimed following the action, as the French retained the field.

Russian losses in killed and wounded amounted to 12% or 2,686 men [including 795 prisoners].

According to Foord’s book, Napoleon’s Russian Campaign of 1812 [p97], admitted historical losses were, French 900, and Russian 11% or 2,504. The Russians claimed they had inflicted 4,134 French casualties, so an average would have been 14% or 2,517. The results of the re-fight are within one and two percent of the historical losses, and the result, in this case, was the same, a minor tactical victory but a strategic victory. The French had clearly succeeded in blocking passage for the Russians through Mohilev and juncture with the First Western Army commanded by Barclay de Tolly.

The following page represents a map of the action taken from Foord, page 95.



Battle of Saltanovka, July 23, 1812

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Legend:

Units and Officers that are grayed out indicate that they are off table in reserve.

Units and Officers that are in red indicate that they have a compulsory movement restriction, or in the case of an officer, wounded or otherwise incapacitated [captured].

- [W] denotes No Advance
- [R] denotes Halt or Retire
- [Y] denotes Routing
- [D] denotes Dispersed and removed from the field

Corps Davout

[101] Marechal d'Empire Davout - Active A- [1400 paces]

Division Dessaix

[102] General de Division Dessaix - Active C [800 paces]

[121] 9/7th Foot 12/ 188 [8] C
[122] 2/5th Horse 2/ 148 [6] B-

Brigade Frederichs

[103] General de Brigade Frederichs - Active B [400 paces]

Regiment 85th Ligne

[104] Colonel 85th Ligne - Active C [200 paces]

[101] 85th Ligne/1 107/ 613 [1] B+
[D] [102] 85th Ligne/2 222/ 512 C+ [Lost 1 cannon]
[103] 85th Ligne/3 180/ 535 C+ [Lost 1 cannon]
[104] 85th Ligne/4 177/ 538 [1] C
[D] [105] 85th Ligne/5 186/ 314 C+

Brigade Leguay

[105] Brigadier General Leguay - Active B [450 paces]

Regiment 108th Ligne

[106] Colonel 108th Ligne - Active C+ [225 paces]

[D] [106] 108th Ligne/1 377/ 373 B [Lost 1 gun/Eagle] [Honors]
[D] [107] 108th Ligne/2 306/ 416 C [Lost 1 cannon]
[D] [108] 108th Ligne/3 150/ 577 C [Lost 1 cannon]
[Y] [109] 108th Ligne/4 223/ 513 C [Lost 1 cannon]
[110] 108th Ligne/5 69/ 463 C-

Division Compans

[107] General de Division Compans - Active B [875 paces]

[123] 2/6th Foot 9/ 191 [8] B-
[R] [124] 16/7th Horse 142/ 8 [2] B- [Lost 4 cannon]

Brigade Guyardet

[108] General de Brigade Guyardet - Active B [450 paces]

[116] 111th Ligne/1 0/ 752 [1] B
[117] 111th Ligne/2 0/ 754 [1] C
[118] 111th Ligne/3 17/ 732 [1] C
[R] [119] 111th Ligne/4 66/ 657 C+ [Lost 1 cannon]
[120] 111th Ligne/5 0/ 506 C

Regiment 61st Ligne

[109] Colonel 61st Ligne - Active C+ [250 paces]

[W] [111] 61st Ligne/1 143/ 571 [1] B
[112] 61st Ligne/2 0/ 736 [1] C-
[113] 61st Ligne/3 0/ 702 [1] C
[114] 61st Ligne/4 0/ 713 [1] C+
[115] 61st Ligne/5 200/ 324 D+ [Honors]

Regiment 111th Ligne

[110] Colonel 111th Ligne - Mortally wounded C [175 paces]

Division Valance

[112] General de Division Valance - Active C [800 paces]

[134] 4/5th Horse Artillery 0/ 150 [6] B-
[135] 6/5th Horse Artillery 0/ 150 [6] C

Regiment 3rd Chassuers a Cheval

[111] Colonel 3rd Chassuers a Cheval - Active B [225 paces]

[125] 3rd Chassuer a Cheval/1 39/ 161 C+
[126] 3rd Chassuer a Cheval/2 0/ 200 C+

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[D] [127] 3rd Chassuer a Cheval/3 85/ 115 C+

Brigade Reynaud

[113] General de Brigade Reynaud - Active C [400 paces]

Regiment 6th Cuirassier

[114] Colonel 6th Cuirassier - Active B- [250 paces]

[128]	6th Cuirassier/1	0/ 360	C+
[129]	6th Cuirassier/2	0/ 360	C+

Brigade Dejean

[115] Brigadier General Dejean - Active C- [350 paces]

Regiment 11th Cuirassier

[116] Colonel 11th Cuirassier - Active D+ [150 paces]

[130]	11th Cuirassier/1	0/ 325	C
[131]	11th Cuirassier/2	0/ 325	C

Brigade De Lagrange

[117] Brigadier General De Lagrange - Active B [500 paces]

Regiment 12th Cuirassier

[118] Colonel 12th Cuirassier - Active B [225 paces]

[132]	12th Cuirassier/1	0/ 400	C-
[133]	12th Cuirassier/2	0/ 400	C-

Squadron 5th Chevauleger

[119] Captain 5th Chevauleger - Active C [200 paces]

[R] [136] 5th Chevauleger/1 10/ 140 C

Strengths:

	losses/active	
	2423/ 11301	Bayonets
	134/ 2786	Sabres
	165/ 835	Artillerists
	11/ 45	Cannon
	2722/ 14922	Total of all arms
	8	Standards present
	1	Standards lost

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Corps Raevsky

[501] **Generalleutnant Raevsky - Active B [1400 paces]**

Division Paskevitch

[502] **Generalleutnant Paskevitch - Active C- [650 paces]**

[513] Position Bty #26	0/ 300 [12]	C
[514] Light Bty #47	0/ 300 [12]	B-
[515] Light Bty #48	0/ 300 [12]	D+

Brigade Nevorsky

[506] **Generalmajor Nevorsky - Severely wounded B [500 paces]**

Regiment Nivegorod

[508] **Oberst Nivegorod - Captured C- [150 paces]**

[D] [507] Nivegorod Infantry/1	131/ 327	C+
[D] [508] Nivegorod Infantry/2	163/ 286	C+

Regiment Ladoga

[504] **Oberst Ladoga - Active C [225 paces]**

[501] Ladoga Infantry/1	118/ 362	B-
[502] Ladoga Infantry/2	86/ 406	C+

Brigade Liebart

[503] **Generalmajor Liebart - Active C+ [300 paces]**

Regiment Poltava

[505] **Oberst Poltava - Active B- [175 paces]**

[503] Poltava Infantry/1	45/ 422	C+
[D] [504] Poltava Infantry/2	101/ 379	C-

Regiment Orel

[507] **Oberst Orel - Active C+ [200 paces]**

[D] [505] Orel Infantry/1	174/ 313	C-
[D] [506] Orel Infantry/2	165/ 285	C+

Brigade Gogel

[509] **Generalmajor Gogel - Active B- [500 paces]**

Regiment 42nd Jagers

[511] **Oberst 42nd Jagers - Mortally wounded C+ [250 paces]**

[511] 42nd Jagers/1	44/ 451	C+
[D] [512] 42nd Jagers/2	179/ 279	C

Regiment 5th Jagers

[510] **Oberst 5th Jagers - Active C+ [175 paces]**

[D] [510] 5th Jagers/2	188/ 289	C-
[509] 5th Jagers/1	97/ 381	B-

Division Kolubakin

[512] **Generalleutnant Kolubakin - Active B [950 paces]**

[528] Position Bty #12	0/ 300 [12]	C+
[529] Light Bty #22	0/ 300 [12]	C
[530] Light Bty #23	0/ 300 [12]	D+

Brigade Ryleieff

[513] **Generalleutnant Ryleieff - Active C [400 paces]**

Regiment Smolensk

[514] **Oberst Smolensk - Active C+ [250 paces]**

[516] Smolensk Infantry/1	69/ 399	C
[D] [517] Smolensk Infantry/2	168/ 316	C+

Regiment Narva

[515] **Oberst Narva - Active C [200 paces]**

[R] [518] Narva Infantry/1	110/ 355	C
[519] Narva Infantry/2	33/ 435	C

Brigade Pantzerbieter

[516] **Generalmajor Pantzerbieter - Active C- [300 paces]**

Regiment New Ingremannland

[517] **Oberst New Ingremannland - Active C [150 paces]**

[D] [520] New Ingremannland Infantry/1	202/ 260	C+
[D] [521] New Ingremannland Infantry/2	203/ 251	D

Regiment Alexopol

[518] **Oberst Alexopol - Active C [150 paces]**

[D] [522] Alexopol Infantry/1	132/ 357	C
[W] [523] Alexopol Infantry/2	17/ 471	B-

Brigade Palitzin

[519] **Generalmajor Palitzin - Active B [450 paces]**

Regiment 6th Jager

[520] **Oberst 6th Jager - Active C- [175 paces]**

[D] [524] 6th Jager/1	176/ 303	C+
[525] 6th Jager/2	6/ 486	C

Regiment 41st Jager

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[521] **Oberst 41st Jager - Active B-** [225 paces]
 [526] 41st Jagers/1 0/ 478 C
 [527] 41st Jagers/2 38/ 440 C

Division Prince Charles of Mecklenburg

[522] **Generalleutnant Prince Charles of Mecklenburg - Active B-** [950 paces]
 [543] Position Bty #11 0/ 300 [12] C
 [544] Light Bty #20 0/ 300 [12] C-
 [545] Light Bty #21 0/ 300 [12] B-

Brigade Chatilov

[523] **Generalmajor Chatilov - Active D+** [300 paces]

Regiment Kiev Grenadiers

[524] **Oberst Kiev Grenadiers - Active C+** [225 paces]

[531] Kiev Grenadiers/1 0/ 489 C
 [532] Kiev Grenadiers/2 0/ 473 C-

Regiment Moscow Grenadiers

[525] **Oberst Moscow Grenadiers - Active C+** [225 paces]

[533] Moscow Grenadiers/1 0/ 488 C+
 [534] Moscow Grenadiers/2 0/ 483 C

Brigade Buxhowden

[526] **Generalmajor Buxhowden - Active C** [350 paces]

Regiment Astrakhan Grenadiers

[527] **Oberst Astrakhan Grenadiers - Active C** [175 paces]

[W] [535] **Astrakhan Grenadiers/1** 91/ 380 B-
 [Y] [536] **Astrakhan Grenadiers/2** 159/ 321 C

Regiment Fangoria Grenadiers

[528] **Oberst Fangoria Grenadiers - Active D+** [150 paces]

[R] [537] **Fangoria Grenadiers/1** 207/ 277 B- [Honors]
 [R] [538] **Fangoria Grenadiers/2** 66/ 422 C-

Brigade Hesse

[529] **Generalmajor Hesse - Active C** [400 paces]

Regiment Siberia Grenadiers

[530] **Oberst Siberia Grenadiers - Active C+** [250 paces]

[539] Siberia Grenadiers/1 0/ 464 C+
 [540] Siberia Grenadiers/2 0/ 463 C

Regiment Little Russia Grenadiers

[531] **Oberst Little Russia Grenadiers - Active C+** [250 paces]

[541] Little Russia Grenadiers/1 0/ 473 C+
 [542] Little Russia Grenadiers/2 0/ 476 C

Division Sievers

[532] **Generalmajor Sievers - Active C** [650 paces]

[554] Horse Bty #10 0/ 300 [12] C

Brigade Pantchaulidseff

[533] **Generalmajor Pantchaulidseff - Active B+** [500 paces]

Regiment Karkov Dragoons

[534] **Oberst Karkov Dragoons - Active B** [200 paces]

[546] Karkov Dragoons/1 25/ 250 C [Honors]
 [547] Karkov Dragoons/2 0/ 275 C

Regiment Tchernigov Dragoons

[535] **Oberst Tchernigov Dragoons - Active C** [150 paces]

[548] Tchernigov Dragoons/1 0/ 280 B-
 [549] Tchernigov Dragoons/2 56/ 224 B-

Brigade Emmanuel

[536] **Generalmajor Emmanuel - Active B-** [500 paces]

Regiment Kiev Dragoons

[537] **Oberst Kiev Dragoons - Active B-** [225 paces]

[550] Kiev Dragoons/1 0/ 275 C+
 [551] Kiev Dragoons/2 0/ 275 C+

Regiment New Russia Dragoons

[538] **Oberst New Russia Dragoons - Active C-** [175 paces]

[552] New Russia Dragoons/1 0/ 290 C
 [553] New Russia Dragoons/2 0/ 290 C

Strengths:

losses/active		
3168/ 13940	Bayonets	
81/ 2159	Sabres	
0/ 3000	Artillerists	
0/ 120	Cannon	

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3249/ 19099 Total of all arms
28 Standards present

The immediate post battle losses including dead, wounded and missing were:

Pyrrhic victory for the I Corps d'Armee
Game turn 14

The I Corps d'Armee has suffered losses of:

[31%] 5542 men of all arms
incl.[3%] 580 prisoners of all arms

[37%] 5128 bayonets
[8%] 249 sabres
[16%] 165 artillerists
11 cannon[s] lost

Honors: [115] 61st Ligne/5

Losses include 1 standard[s]:
[106] 108th Ligne/1

Losses include 1 General[s]:
[110] 111th Ligne - Mortally wounded

The Russian 2nd West Army has suffered losses of:

[32%] 7215 men of all arms
incl.[3%] 795 prisoners of all arms

[41%] 7134 bayonets
[3%] 81 sabres
[0%] 0 artillerists

Honors: [546] Karkov Dragoons/1

Losses include 3 General[s]:
[506] Nevorsky - Severely wounded
[508] Nivegorod - Captured
[511] 42nd Jagers - Mortally wounded

The following day, following return of dispersed and walking wounded the results were:

Minor victory for the I Corps d'Armee

The I Corps d'Armee has suffered losses of:

[12%] 2167 men of all arms
incl.[3%] 580 prisoners of all arms

[13%] 1913 bayonets
[3%] 111 sabres
[14%] 143 artillerists
11 cannon[s] lost

Honors: [106] 108th Ligne/1

The Russian 2nd West Army has suffered losses of:

[12%] 2686 men of all arms
incl.[3%] 795 prisoners of all arms

[15%] 2600 bayonets
[3%] 77 sabres
[0%] 9 artillerists

Honors: [537] Fangoria Grenadiers/1

Battle of Saltanovka, July 23, 1812