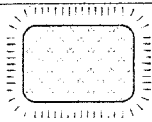


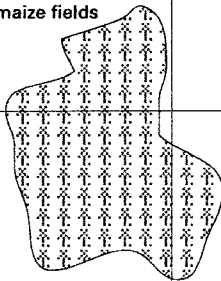
The Battle of Condore

Condore Village

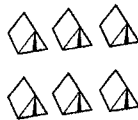


dry water
tanks

maize fields



ravine



French camp

Condore, 7th December 1758

During the month of April 1758 the French General Comte de Lally arrived in Pondicherry to take command of the French forces in the South of India. Lally immediately recalled the Marquis de Bussy from his services in Hyderabad. This move angered de Bussy who realised that the French influence in the Deccan depended upon a presence of French troops. Lally also appointed as Commanding General in the Circars, the Marquis de Conflans. On the 2nd June Lally attacked and took the British fort of St. David. Later in the year, taking advantage of the lack of French troops in the Deccan, Raja Anandraz a pro-British prince from Tanjore, raided the French factory and fort at Vishakpatanam. On the 20 October Lt. Col. Forde arrived with a British army and promptly joined forces with the Raja. Conflans gathered together an army of troops from all parts of the district in order to confront Forde and the Raja. This British force had recently been reinforced by EIC troops sent from Bengal.

Conflans, after receiving a letter from his superior Lally, demanding immediate action against the British, advanced to the town of Rajamahendri. Learning that the local Raja had gone off to join Forde's army, Conflans received intelligence that Forde's army was made up of raw sepoy and native levies. Conflans proceeded to build an entrenched camp in the vicinity of a fort at Peddapur, about 40 miles away from the town. This move effectively denying the road to Forde who stopped short of the French position at the village of Chambol 4 miles away and proceeded to fortify the place. Both leaders now watched each other for 4 days, not daring to attack the others strong position.

On the 8th December however, both men decided to act. During the night, Conflans sent a small force with 6 guns to occupy a small hill above the British position, and at daybreak on the 9th to bombard Forde into an attack on the French army, which would be ready in positions of advantage. At the same time Forde arranged with the Raja to quit the camp at 4.15 AM in order to move to Condore, close to the road to Rajamahendri. If both these plans had worked, at daybreak on the 9th the French would have opened fire on an empty British camp, however few plans ever work perfectly, this affair was to be no exception.

At 4 AM Forde's troops quit the camp and marched towards Condore, the Raja's men however, spent the next few hours getting ready to move and were still in the camp when the French guns on the nearby hill opened fire, causing casualties and confusion in their midst. A very panicked Raja sent a series of messengers after Forde asking for help whilst managing to gather his men, retreat from the camp and follow on in the rear of the main army. Forde halted part way to Condore village and the two forces met up shortly after. The joint force then moved on and reached Condore by 8 AM. They deployed in front of the village in an extended line with the Sepoys out on each flank, the EIC troops in the centre and the Raja's horse and foot cowering in and around a large dry water tank in the rear.

Meanwhile Conflans, moving up to support his detachment with all his other troops and guns, reached the area of Condore, found the British line stretched out in front of the village and resolved to attack at once, in the belief that Forde's force was of inferior quality. The British force was composed of 500 European foot, regular and EIC artillery, 1800 Sepoys and 5,500 poorly armed foot and horse of the Raja's followers. The French army was composed of 500 Compagnie foot, 6000 Sepoys, 500 native horse and a mixture of Compagnie and native artillery.

The battlefield was a relatively open plain with a shallow ravine running across the plain in front of the French camp. The village of Condore (*Kondur*) lay about 2 miles away from the ravine, and possessed a rather large dry water tank. The area in between the village and the ravine was partially cultivated with low rice fields and an area of tall maize.

As the French army deployed, Forde noticed that the enemy overlapped his force on both flanks by a considerable margin and in order to counter this he spread his force out on both wings. At about 8.30 AM the French advanced at speed towards the left of Forde's force. Forde responded by placing his European battalion to the rear of the maize field, out of sight of the enemy to their front. The Bengal Sepoys, who were the only Sepoys of either side dressed in red jackets, all the others wearing white, found themselves somewhat out on a limb and about to take the brunt of the attack.

The French guns opened fire at long range and proceeded to engage in a 40 minute contest with the British guns, neither side causing significant casualties. When Conflans finally resumed the attack, the French guns had to begin the lengthy process of limbering up the cumbersome guns to their oxen before they could move. The French infantry therefore found themselves a full half mile ahead of their artillery by the time they reached the enemy. When the French Compagnie battalion were 200 yards away from the Bengal Sepoys they halted, dressed ranks and began to deliver a musketry volley. The Compagnie foot then attacked and drove the Bengal Sepoys from the field with the French native horse in pursuit. Conflans believed that he had now won the battle and ordered his Compagnie infantry to follow up their success. The now disorganised French troops set off after the enemy but as they appeared around the corner of the maize field the EIC infantry battalion, marching to occupy the ground vacated by the Bengal Sepoys, halted and delivered rolling musketry into their flank. The French battalion broke immediately and ran directly to the rear followed by the EIC foot and some rallied sepoy.

Meanwhile the French Sepoys on the left wing of Conflans army were getting the better of a firefight with the Madras Sepoys who did well to hold them at bay, but as soon as the Compagnie foot broke, the French Sepoys lost heart and fell back in good order. Forde's troops pursued the French right up to their guns, still in the rear, and took these at the point of bayonet. Here Forde halted and reformed his troops whilst he attempted to get the Raja to support him, to no avail. Forde now resolved to attack the French camp. Behind the ravine were drawn up the rallied French infantry supported by several large guns which opened fire on the advancing British who returned fire with musketry and charged across the ravine. The French broke again and ran off towards Rajamahendri. The British took possession of the camp with all its supplies. The French lost 32 guns, 156 Europeans and many sepoy. 50 ammunition wagons, 1000 bullocks and 7 mortars were taken in the camp. The British lost 49 Europeans and over 100 sepoy.