

P. 101

Pulaski's Legion On March 28, 1778 Brigadier General Count Pulaski was authorized by Congress to raise an independent corps of 68 cavalymen and 200 light infantrymen. Pulaski, who had been the nominal commander of the Brigade of Continental Cavalry, was apparently very restless as the figurehead leader of two or three hundred rag-tag troopers in four regiments so short of men, horses, and supplies that they could not even be gathered together for him to command, so desperately were they foraging for subsistence.

Pulaski doubtlessly wanted out of this muddle and he was eager to fight. Washington was probably only too glad to be rid of the strange foreigner. Pulaski procured handsome uniforms for his corps, lances for his horsemen (and unless the Congressional records contain a misprint—for the footmen as well¹⁹⁰), and set about to obtain men. Some recruits were obtained in Maryland. General Washington had allowed Pulaski to recruit up to a third of his infantry from German deserters, but Pulaski recruited anyone who came forward in the true "Freikorps" tradition. There were British deserters among the cavalry, much to Washington's displeasure.¹⁹⁰ As Pulaski's Legion was actually organized in the autumn of 1778 it consisted of a staff, three troops of cavalry, one company of Mamelukes (chasseurs), a grenadier company, two infantry companies, and a "supernumerary" company. A British source also credited it with a detachment of artillery armed with a light brass field gun. Each company and troop consisted of about 25 or 30 men. Pulaski attempted to christen his corps the Maryland Legion but this name was seldom used.

February 2, 1779 Congress ordered Pulaski's Legion to the southern Department to which it proceeded, frightening the local populations along the way with its poor conduct. October 11, 1779 Pulaski died from a terrible wound

*Borg, F. Anderson: Encyclopedia
of Continental Army units
Harrisburg, Pa., 1972; Stackpole
Books, p. 101-02*