

# British Invasion and Occupation of Manila

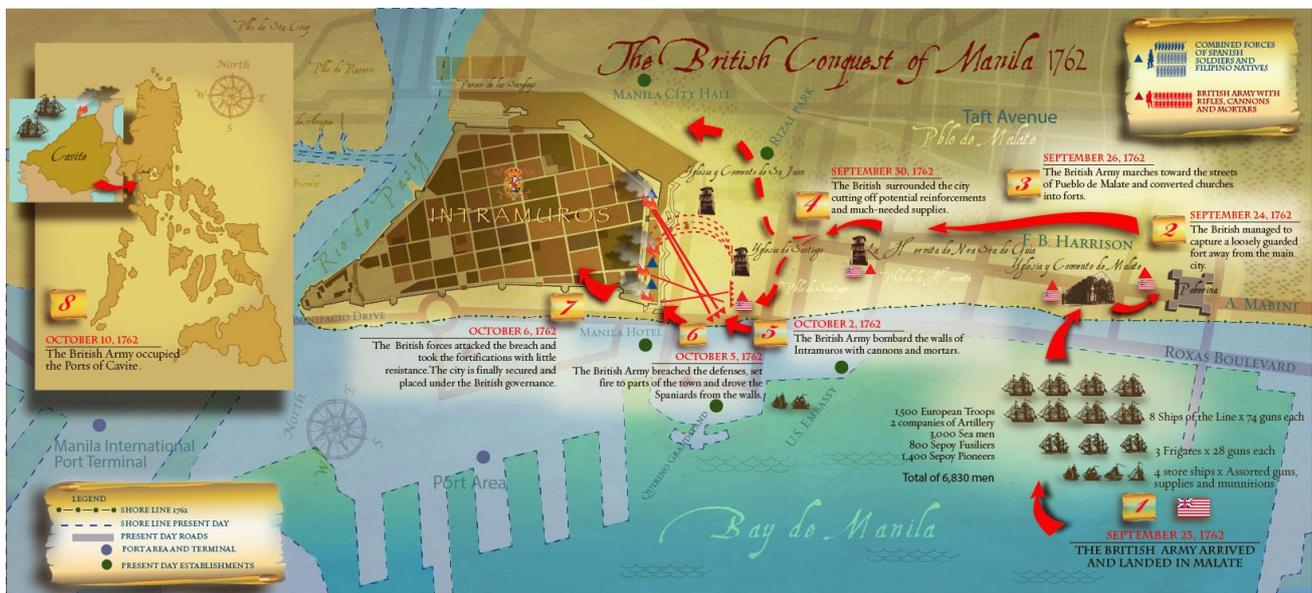
A timeline: 1761-1764



The conflict between the European powers during the period of 1756–1763 spilled over to their colonies in Asia. One of the outcomes was a two-year period of British control over the Philippine Islands.

This was after the Age of Discovery and the establishment of European colonies around the world—when the power of the western nations was measured in terms of the colonies they possessed. In the 1700s, the battle for dominance in the “new world,” or current-day North America, was being waged between France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In 1756, the two countries formally declared war upon each other, which likewise drew into the conflict their allies: Prussia and Portugal, who were allied with Britain; and the Spanish Empire and Austria, who were allied with France. Although several battles were fought in mainland Europe, the battle for dominance reached the colonies, thus spreading the war across the globe. When the war broke, both Britain and Spain had a presence in Asia. The British had already established the East India Company—the trading outpost and colonizing authority of the United Kingdom in India. The British were on their way to establishing their empire, which would eventually span the globe.

Two years into the war between the United Kingdom and the Spanish Empire, a British fleet—under the East India Company—was dispatched from their colony in India toward Southeast Asia to conquer colonies under the Spanish crown. The fleet was under the command of Rear-Admiral Samuel Cornish and Brigadier General William Draper, and its land forces were comprised of Regiments of British Soldiers, Royal Artillery, and Indian Sepoys. The “little army,” as Brig. Gen. Draper described it in his journal, arrived in the Philippine Archipelago on September 23, 1762. <sup>[1]</sup>



News of a fleet on its way to the archipelago came to Manila the day before, September 22, 1762. This was forwarded to the Archbishop of Manila, Miguel Rojo, who was then the acting Governor-General.<sup>[2]</sup> According to Archbishop Rojo's journal, the Spanish forces in the city were unaware of a declaration of war, but nonetheless made necessary preparations against a hostile fleet.<sup>[3]</sup> Manila was put in a State of Defense and a force was sent to Cavite to protect the port.

Upon the British fleet's arrival in Manila Bay, an emissary from the Spanish forces was sent to deliver a letter to the Commanding Officer, to ask about their nationality and reason for their arrival. The British replied by sending two messengers of their own, which bore the orders of King George III: Capture the city of Manila and order the Spanish in the city to surrender.<sup>[4]</sup> At this point, Archbishop Rojo had likewise been informed of the ongoing war between France and the United Kingdom.

The British fleet originally planned to attack the port of Cavite that night in order to confuse the Spaniards, but opted instead to attack Manila, recognizing the likelihood of a domino effect should they take down the capital first.<sup>[5]</sup> (Cavite would eventually fall to the British on October 11, 1762.)<sup>[6]</sup>

On the morning of September 24, Brig. Gen. Draper sent scouts to survey the surroundings for the impending attack on Manila. The British proceeded to deploy their troops on the shore, but met resistance. Archbishop Rojo recounts that the Spanish opened fire at the British to little effect: the British had taken cover in a church in Malate. Malate was taken within the day, but as the Spanish retreated they burned parts of the village in their wake.

The next day, British forces advanced and captured the fort of Polverista, which had been abandoned by the Spanish after the battle of the previous day. According to Brig. Gen. Draper's account, Polverista proved to be good cover for the British repelling the Spanish forces, who had attacked throughout the night. The Spanish had 50 regular troops, some militiamen, and 800 native soldiers.

The fighting continued until the next day, and was marked by increasing violence. According to Brig. Gen. Draper's account, straggling seamen were murdered by "savages"<sup>[7]</sup>—among other atrocities committed during the skirmishes. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Draper sent a letter to Archbishop Rojo, ordering the surrender of the Spanish forces, likewise informing the acting Governor-General that he might not be able to restrain his soldiers from taking revenge for the barbaric acts committed by the Spanish forces to the invaders.<sup>[8]</sup> The next day, the Spanish sent a flag of truce.

On September 27, 1762, the Spanish sent an emissary to the British commanding officer, to apologize for the atrocities committed by the native soldiers and to negotiate the release of Antonio Tagle, a nephew of the Archbishop who had been captured.

Tagle was released the next day, escorted by British Lieutenant Fryar. Upon their arrival, they were attacked by the native troops, under the command of the Spanish authorities. In his journal, Brig. Gen. Draper mentions that the two were murdered in a "manner too shocking to mention."<sup>[9]</sup>

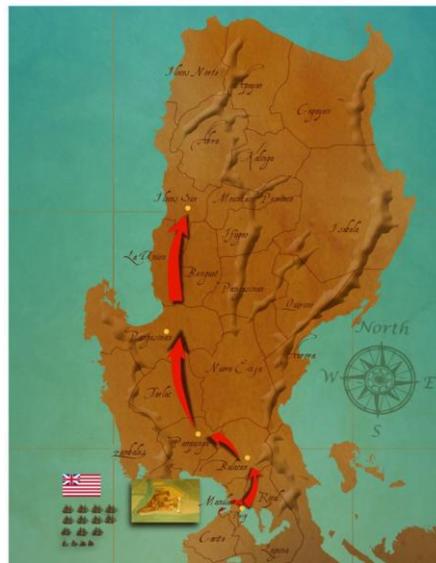
Archbishop Rojo, however, details the death of the two men in his logs that the natives cut off the head of the British soldier and stabbed Tagle seven times, mortally wounding him.

Bombardment resumed the next day, the 29<sup>th</sup>. Shells from British ships were fired at the city of Intramuros, as British soldiers continued their advance on the ground, even through the rough weather at the onset of October. The British troops, on October 2, 1762, deployed a battery of twenty-four pounders to continue their siege of the walled city. On October 3, 1762, natives under the command of the Spanish forces launched a counterattack against the advancing British regiment. There were approximately 5,000 native soldiers, 2,000 of which came from Pampanga.<sup>[10]</sup> This was Spain's final push against the British in the city of Manila, but the British successfully pushed them back. British bombardment continued until the 4<sup>th</sup> of October.

The final siege of the walled city of Intramuros began on October 5, 1762. Archbishop Rojo recounts that at 6:00 a.m., British troops began leaving the lines to head for the breach. The British seized the foundry and attacked the Royal Gate, which they battered down with axes and iron levers.<sup>[11]</sup> On the night of the 5<sup>th</sup>, final preparations were made for the final push into the walled city.<sup>[12]</sup>

Brig. Gen. Draper's account shows that at 4:00 a.m. of October 6, 1762, the British troops started their offensive by firing mortar shells against the Spanish. At daybreak, a large body of Spanish troops formed in front of St. Andrew's Church.<sup>[13]</sup> However, the resistance proved futile; the Spaniards eventually surrendered the city to the British.

The British occupation would extend toward the north, including Bulacan, Pampanga, and parts of Ilocos. It would last for two years. Within those two years, the occupation would bring about supporters of British rule manifested in rebellions by local leaders such as Diego and Gabriela Silang.



This map shows the chronological advance of British troops toward parts of Northern Luzon. Click the image to enlarge.

Ref.: <http://malacanang.gov.ph/the-british-conquest-of-manila/>

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