

Battle of Montijo

26 May 1644

Portuguese victory over Spain



Field of Battle

Portuguese General Albuquerque gathered 6,000 infantry, 1,100 cavalry and 6 cannons and crossed the frontier attacking small towns until reaching the town of Montijo, which surrendered without a fight. Not having encountered the Spanish army, Albuquerque decided to return to Alentejo. While on march, the Portuguese were confronted by a Spanish force led by the Baron of Mollingen consisting of 4,000 infantry and 1,700 cavalry. On the 26th of May 1644 the two armies met not far from Montijo.

The Spanish adopted a semi circle formation, which would permit a simultaneous attack on the Portuguese front and flanks. Albuquerque, marching in a slow pace towards Portugal, had prepared for a rear attack with the strongest formations in the rear. The Portuguese cannons initiated the hostilities, the Spanish side soon replied, but very ineffectively. The Spanish cavalry attacked the Portuguese left flank, routing the 150 Dutch cavalry. The panic spread to the rest of the cavalry on both flanks who abandoned the field through their own lines, taking refuge in woods, leaving the infantry disorganized. Led by Mollingen, the Spanish cavalry easily opened a breach in the centre of the Portuguese positions, taking the Portuguese artillery. Thinking that the Battle was won, Mollingen's troops scattered themselves without care on the field looting.

Taking advantage of the Spanish lack of reserves and dispersion, Albuquerque and his officers rallied some of the scattered troops and quickly retook the Portuguese artillery. A Portuguese artillery officer, efficiently used the artillery to stop the Spanish forces from regrouping. The rallied Portuguese troops took back the field, and drove the Spaniards across the Guadiana inflicting heavy losses.