



Much about the fall of the Alamo on March 6, 1836 is shrouded in mystery. Some “facts” seem to be based on myth.

General Santa Anna said the battle would involve “no quarter,” meaning he would take no prisoners. That appears to be a fact.

One longstanding story has the Mexican General ordering his bugler(s) or his band(s) to sound the “El Degüello” before launching the attack. If so, what version did the Alamo defenders hear?

In recent years, sheet music found in Mexico City supports the view that Santa Anna’s musical no-quarter warning sounded like the version we hear in this video clip.

What do curators at The Alamo tell us about any pre-attack bugle sounds? The following is [information from The Alamo website](#):

*Tradition holds that on the morning of March 6, 1836, General Santa Anna ordered his band to play a song called El Degüello during the assault on the Alamo. The song supposedly meant "throat cutting" and was played in situations where no quarter was to be given to the enemy. According to author Walter Lord, the song was "a hymn of hate and merciless death, played to spur the Mexican troops forward in their final assault on the Alamo."*

*As in the case of many Alamo "facts," not all historians agree that El Degüello was actually played at the Alamo. Writing in 1860, early Alamo historian Rueben M. Potter contended "The guns of the fortress soon opened up on them [the Mexican soldiers], and then the bands at the South battery struck up the assassin note of degüello!" But modern historians, as example by Dr. Stephen L. Hardin, omit the song from their descriptions of the battle.*

*One possible eyewitness to the battle, [Madame Candelaria](#), reportedly told a newspaper reporter in 1899 that she heard the call played at the battle. The article's author exclaimed "The degüello was sounded, and Mrs. Candelaria said that they all understood very well what it meant, and every man prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible." Those who believe that Madame Candelaria was not at the Alamo place little stock in her account.*

*At least three versions of sheet music of El Degüello are available to researchers. See:*

*Amelia Williams, "Critical Study of the Siege of the Alamo and of the Personnel of Its Defenders: Chapter IV," [Southwestern Historical Quarterly](#) (January 1934): 188;*

*Walter Lord, [A Time to Stand](#) (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), in the illustration section between pages 112 and 113;*

*J. Hefter, [The Mexican Soldier](#) (Mexico, 1958), Plate IV.*

Jaime Rodriguez has made this version of El Degüello available via YouTube.

Credits:

Video clip of El Degüello, online via Jaime Rodriguez at YouTube.

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Santa-Anna-Orders-No-Quarter-Bugle-Sounds>