



Volume 22

Number 037

**America's Revolution (118) – Organizing the
Continental Army – I**

Lead: In the 1700s the United States broke from England. No colony in history had done that before. This series examines America's Revolution.

Intro: *A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts*

Content: George Washington arrived in Massachusetts in early July 1775 ready to take charge of the Continental Army. He found a militia-based army that was poorly led, poorly trained, and poorly disciplined.

While he was generally pleased with the American performance at Breed's Hill, he and his troops faced a British Army numbering 5000 that was fully equipped, well-fed and competently led. It may have been surrounded and confined in Boston but it was still a large, threatening force.

In many ways the army Washington faced was not dissimilar from most European armies in the early part of the 1700s. While he had served as head of the Virginia militia, he had read the works of continental military authorities and was sympathetic to the way they described how an army ought to be organized and how campaigning should be conducted. Prior to the vast changes wrought by the French Revolution, the British and their European rivals fought along lines dictated by class arrangements. Upper classes provided officers and the lowest classes populated the

rank and file. This meant that recruitment was forced and a rough order was maintained by a severe and unbending control. Since such a system could only secure a limited number of troops, most countries hired foreign mercenaries to supplement their forces. Upper class officers ran these poor man/hired man armies with heavy-handed punishment and vicious forms of discipline.

Washington did not have the luxury of commanding such an army. He had to fight a whole different war. Next time: the problems of a citizen's army.

At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.

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