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**America's Revolution (119) – Organizing the
Continental Army – II**

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: In July, 1775 George Washington arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts to take over command of the Continental Army. He was concerned that the fighting ability and physical condition of his troops would prove inadequate against

the British Army, representing arguably the world's most powerful military force. He revered the way in which this enemy, indeed all European armies were organized and employed, but his experience with the Virginia militia had convinced him that he would never have such an army and his pragmatism led him to conclude that he would have to fight with the army bequeathed him. He could improve their discipline and supply, but could not turn them into the ranks of human machines British officers had at their disposal.

His experience in Virginia and now with the New England militia massed around Boston convinced him that citizen armies are not efficient fighting engines. His men were not professional soldiers. They were citizens on temporary duty with interests and passions that lay with their lives at home, not with the army they served. They were

certainly courageous, sometimes astonishingly so and they if pressed could be very effective fighters, but they were small “d” democrats and inherently democrats do not make good soldiers, at least in the early stages of service before training. Therefore, Washington was determined to make do with what he had. From his time in Cambridge through the end of the war he struggled to create the conventional army of his dreams, but he was not so idealistic that he could not find creative ways to use the army he had. He fought during winter, he deployed partisan guerilla fighters, he used espionage to seek out enemy weaknesses, his fighting in the west convinced him of the value of employing troops using Indian fighting tactics, and he sought to lift his regiments out of their resistance to discipline and sacrifice by inspiring entreaties to the support of political liberty, freedom and

**American independence. Next time:
organizing the ranks.**

**At the University of Richmond's School of
Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm
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