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**America's Revolution (120) – Organizing the
Continental Army – III**

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: As he attempted to shape the Continental Army into a fighting force capable of engaging the British Army that was locked up in Boston during summer 1775, George Washington faced a series of vexing problems. His men were ill-equipped

and poorly trained, but as citizen soldiers on temporary duty in this the first great crisis of the Revolution, they were resistant to the order which characterized a regular army. Troops and their officers talked to British soldiers they faced across lines separating the two armies, many slept away from their units, often they abandoned their duty before being relieved, latrines were allowed to overflow, the camps were messy, food served the men was often rancid and noxious, and soldiers were given furlough freely which meant that units were almost always undermanned.

And this was only garrison duty. Washington was not conducting a tactical campaign in Boston, his army was not maneuvering on the battlefield. He was simply trying to get his army organized as an army. Therefore, he began to issue a veritable blizzard of general orders

identifying deficiencies in the ranks and trying to get some structure to this motley force. To enforce his orders he convoked courts-martial. These courts dealt out severe penalties to malingerers, officers and enlisted alike, and soon the most deficient were being drummed out of the army.

All the while he was organizing the men, he was also attempting to strengthen the American ramparts and by the end of summer at least that task was nearing completion, so much so that Washington felt he was ready to conduct offensive operations against the British. He was somewhat discouraged when the counsel of his officers was not to attack. Yet, the greatest threat his command faced was an imminent shortage of manpower. Enlistments of many New England militia units would be up by the end of the year. If they departed this would leave the Continental Army at a serious

disadvantage should the British attack and would make it almost impossible for Washington to throw the enemy out of Boston.

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

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