

**Washington Assumes Command - I**

**Lead:** When he returned home in 1783, he was the most famous man in the world. It all started eight years before.

**Intro.:** *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

**Content:** In June 1775, the Continental Congress, itself willing to start a war but not yet to declare American independence, appointed George Washington of Virginia its military commander and sent him off to Boston to confront 10,000 British troops occupying the port. In the

**course of nine months he would meet the men with whom he would prosecute America's longest-declared war, he would experiment with those strategic martial impulses that for good and for ill sustained his Army and the country through to the end, and would begin the process of maturation that would shape him into the nation's most consequential founder.**

**Just before he arrived, units of the 16,000 rag-tag colonial militia whom he would command had bravely endured the British assault on Breed's Hill, later confused as Bunker Hill. They lost, but surprised themselves by so mauling the attackers, inflicting a 50% casualty**

rate, that back in London wags decried that a few more such victories would completely obliterate the British military. Despite this moral achievement, Washington came to Cambridge convinced that short-term militia could not prevail in the war. Nothing there changed his mind, in fact he never departed from the notion that a solid, permanent core of trained, professional, in-for-the-duration regulars, was the key to American success. Next time: servant of civilian rule.

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

## Resources

**Ellis, Joseph J. "Washington Takes Charge," *Smithsonian* 35 (10, January 2005): 92-103.**

**Freeman, Douglas Southhall. *George Washington: A Biography*. New York, NY: Scribners, 1947-1958.**

**Lengel, Edward G. *General George Washington: A Military Life*. New York, NY: Random House, 2005**

**Wall, Charles Cecil. *George Washington: Citizen Soldier*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1980.**

**<http://edsitement.neh.gov/curriculum-unit/what-made-george-washington-good-military-leader>**

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