



# Bullet'n Backstory

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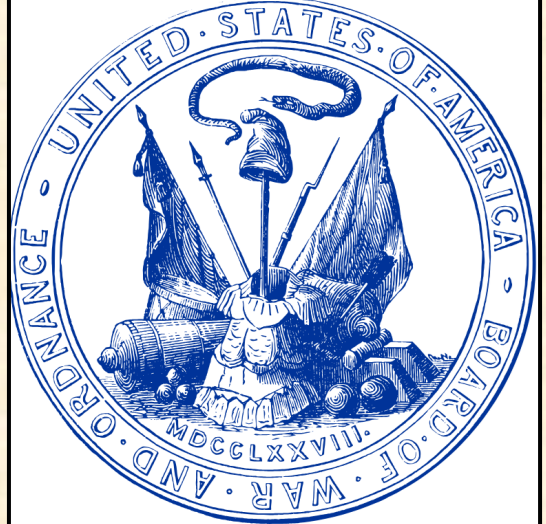
## Commemorating the 250th Birthday of the U.S. Army

### A Force Awakens: The Origins of the United States Army

For 250 years, the United States Army has grown dramatically, adapted to adversity and responded to changing demands, evolving to become the premier fighting force it is today. The professionalism and organization of the current Army is a far cry from origins, when its very survival was in question. Residents of the British colonies of North America required and participated in military defense long before the formal creation of a national armed force in 1775.

Early colonists faced constant threats while establishing a foothold in the New World, both from Indigenous tribes and the representatives of rival European states. Britain did not have the budget or manpower to maintain a large standing Army in America. With the exception of isolated forts and the occasional expeditionary force, settlers could not rely on consistent help from the British Army. Individual colonies took it upon themselves to raise temporary militia units from among the population. These citizen-soldiers defended towns against Native raids and protected colonists pushing into the continent. In the French and Indian War (1754-1763), colonial militia units provided critical manpower in support of British efforts to counter French colonial aspirations. The Treaty of Paris (1763) ended the protracted multi-continent war, but highlighted new tensions between Great Britain and her colonies. The treaty gave the British significant new territory between the Appalachian Mountains and Mississippi River, but also placed significant restrictions on colonists interested in settling there. These who literally pushed the boundaries often found themselves in conflict with Indigenous tribes in the newly acquired lands, which led to calls for protection. Great Britain faced rising costs connected with maintaining a military force sufficient enough to answer such calls.

In response, the mother country attempted to make the colonists pay for themselves through the collection of higher revenues in the form of taxes. In 1765, Great Britain passed the Quartering Act and the Stamp Act. The first required residents of New York to provide food and lodging for British soldiers stationed there. The latter placed a new tax on all legal documents and newspapers. New York resisted, claiming this was an example of Parliament imposing taxation without representation. Newspaper editors likewise rallied against the Stamp Act, highlighting the fact that the colonists only accepted the legality of paying taxes on imports. The Stamp Act was soon repealed, but with the addition of the Declaratory Act, which stated Great Britain had the right to tax the colonies any way it wished. Britain followed up in 1767 and 1768 with the Townshend Acts, which were centered on raising revenue through imports. These taxes - on glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea - called for lowering the tax rate on tea, but also threatened New York to comply with the Quartering Act and sought enforcement through additional customs officials with the right to board and search ships to prevent smuggling. Finally, the Townshend Acts moved all cases involving customs violations would be heard by royal officials presiding over new vice admiralty courts in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston. Colonists responded by participating in widespread boycotts of imported British goods.



Seal of the Board of War and Ordnance (1778)



Boston Tea Party (1789) - W. D. Cooper

In Boston, a new American Customs Board attempted to impose the new duties, resulting in constant protests. The British responded by posting a warship in Boston Harbor, raiding ships, impressing sailors, and shipping citizens to courts in Great Britain to be tried for treason. Bostonians subsequently rioted, leading to the Boston Massacre in March 1770. In December 1773, Samuel Adams, Paul Revere, and other members of the Sons of Liberty disguised themselves as Natives, boarded three British ships in Boston Harbor and dumped 342 chests of tea into the sea.

The Boston Tea Party prompted Britain to pass the Coercive Acts, known in the colonies as the Intolerable Acts, in early 1774. These laws, aimed squarely at punishing Boston, closed the city's port, housed troops among its citizens, removed trials of royal officials from local courts, and revoked the charter of Massachusetts, effectively disbanding locally elected boards and assemblies. Colonists saw the writing on the wall; tension with Great Britain would get worse before it got better. Great Britain had hoped isolating the rebels in Boston would force compliance. However, sympathy for Massachusetts rose

**JANUARY IS MENTAL WELLNESS MONTH**

Mental Readiness Resources: <https://h2f.army.mil/Domains/Mental-Domain/>



This Month in Military History

**Jan. 2, 1492:** As the final act in the 10-year Granada War, Muhammad XII, last Emir of Granada, surrenders the city to Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. The annexation of Grenada completes the Spanish Reconquista, ending seven centuries of Muslim rule on the Iberian Peninsula.

**Jan. 5, 1781:** With 1,600 troops under his command, infamous American traitor Benedict Arnold, now a British Brigadier General, conducts a surprise raid, capturing and setting fire to the city of Richmond, Virginia, and the neighboring port at Warwick.

**Jan. 8, 871:** At the Battle of Ashdown (Berkshire), Æthelred I of Wessex, defeats an invading Danish army under Bagsecg and Halfdan. Æthelred, the fourth son of King Æthelwulf to take the throne, dies in April and is succeeded by his final brother, whose successful 15-year rule leads him to be called Alfred the Great.

**Jan. 11, 1865:** Three hundred men, under Confederate General Thomas L. Rosser, cross the Allegheny Mountains in deep snow and extreme cold to surprise two Union regiments at Beverly, West Virginia, capturing 580 prisoners.

**Jan. 14, 1761:** At the Third Battle of Panipat, the Afghan Durrani Empire and its allies defeat the Indian Maratha Confederacy near modern day Haryana, India. In one of the largest of battles of the 18th century, 125,000 troops fought over the course of several days. Over 60,000 were killed in action and 40,000 Maratha prisoners were executed the following day.

**Jan. 17, 1781:** In the worst British defeat since Saratoga (1777), American Revolutionary troops under Brig. Gen. Daniel Morgan defeat British forces under Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton at the Battle of Cowpens, turning the tide in South Carolina.

**Jan. 20, 1778:** After stabbing a British prisoner of war under his care, Massachusetts-born soldier David Henley becomes the first American officer to be court martialed. After a four-week trial, Henley is acquitted.

**Jan. 23, 971:** The Southern Han (China) state is forced to submit to the Song Dynasty after the first regular war elephant corps in Chinese history is defeated by crossbowmen at the Battle of Shao.

**Jan. 26, 1699:** Venice, Poland, and Austria sign the Treaty of Karlowitz with Ottoman Empire, formally ending the Great Turkish War (1683-97).

**Jan. 29, 1918:** Four thousand Soviet Bolsheviks overwhelm a battalion of four hundred Ukrainian student separatists at the Battle of Kruty.



The Battle of Lexington (1910) - William Barnes Wollen

throughout the colonies, leading to the meeting of the First Continental Congress in September 1774. The delegates agreed to a full boycott of British goods and urged the colonies to reform and train their militias in preparation for armed conflict.

In October 1774, members of the dissolved Massachusetts assembly formed the Massachusetts Provincial Congress with John Hancock as president. This body had effective control over all of the colony but Boston, which was occupied by British troops. In February 1775, Britain consequently declared that Massachusetts was in rebellion. In an effort to disarm the colonists, 700 British Army regulars were ordered to seize colonial arms stored in Concord. Unknown to the British, Patriot leaders had learned of the plan and removed the arms weeks earlier. The night before the campaign, Revere led the effort to raise the alarm between Boston and Concord. On April 19, members of the colonial militia faced off with the British at Lexington and Concord, then harassed them on the road back to Boston and laid siege to the city. In support of this siege, on April 23, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress authorized raising 26 company regiments. Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island soon raised regiments of their own.

The Second Continental Congress decided to proceed with the establishment of a Continental Army on June 14, 1775. On day one, this Army consisted of existing colonial militia and volunteer troops already in place outside Boston (22,000) and New York (5,000). On day two, Congress unanimously elected George Washington to be commander-in-chief. Washington organized into three divisions, six brigades, and 38 regiments. Overnight on June 16, 1775, more than 1,200 colonial troops besieging Boston secretly occupied Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill, establishing a fortified line across the Charlestown Peninsula. The next morning, upon learning of the move, the British made plans to attack. The result would be the Continental Army's first battle: Bunker Hill.

Coming in February - The Development of the Continental Army

JMC Historical Document Collection

The JMC Public and Congressional Affairs Office maintains the JMC Archives, which collects and maintains historically significant records, including: emails, manuscripts, letters, reports, studies, images, videos, films, photographs, oral history interviews, briefings, SOPs, policies, decision papers, memoranda, statistics, newspapers, newsletters, brochures, maps, blue prints, drawings, and artifacts. Such records are pertinent to the Army's knowledge of active and predecessor installations, the ammunition industrial base, and JMC missions. JMC regularly uses these materials to research command history, and to answer research queries. When JMC workers leave positions or make physical moves, it is vital that their records be assessed before disposal. If employees are uncertain about the historical value of materials, the best policy is to make the items available to Paul Ferguson (paul.t.ferguson14.civ@army.mil).