

Message on the 244th Anniversary of General Cornwallis's Surrender at Yorktown
October 19, 2025

On October 19, 1781, the cause of liberty was immortalized on a riverside Virginia field when the Continental Army wrested victory from the arms of the most powerful empire on the face of the Earth, ending more than 6 years of crushing warfare and concluding the most epic fight for freedom in the history of the world. Today we honor the sacrifice and invoke the courage of every American giant who secured our independence at the legendary Siege of Yorktown and throughout the Revolutionary War, and we renew our resolve that America will never bend, break, yield, or surrender in the face of tyranny.

After years of fierce fighting for independence, General George Washington and his Continental Army set forth on a grueling march from New York to Virginia, where British General Charles Cornwallis and his army were encamped. This stand would determine whether the Patriots—taxed without representation and denied the right to govern themselves—could finally break free and secure the blessings of liberty. Upon arriving in Yorktown on September 28, 1781, the Patriots—with the help of French forces—pinned the Redcoats within a perimeter of suffocating trenches. Low on artillery and waning in morale, Cornwallis' men were stranded with little hope of slipping through the Patriots' lines, and freedom was in America's grasp.

Days later, on October 9, American and French soldiers began their first bombardment, shattering British barricades and kicking off a brutal stretch of relentless canon fire. By October 14, the siege lines had closed in almost entirely and the Patriots were inching closer to Cornwallis's main defenses.

At last, on October 19, 1781, history was rewritten as the British issued their formal surrender, ending all military operations in the Revolutionary War and ensuring the righteous cause of American independence for eternity. Following more than half a decade of gruesome combat against the mightiest military force on the planet, the fate of freedom was secured against all odds by a band of farmers, frontiersmen, blacksmiths, and merchants. As French General Marquis de Lafayette famously wrote in the wake of the victory, "Humanity has won its battle, liberty now has a country."

Though the war did not formally end until the Treaty of Paris was signed nearly 2 years later, on that momentous day in Yorktown, American sovereignty won its ultimate triumph. Now—244 years later and as we begin celebrating 250 years of glorious independence—it remains the duty of every citizen to preserve the spirit of Yorktown and keep this hard-won legacy of American grit, greatness, and resolve alive for generations to come. Today we salute the heroes who fought for our freedom at Yorktown, we channel their fortitude, and in their honor, we pledge to forge a glorious national future inspired by their deeds and worthy of their sacrifice.

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