Timeline of Events: The Battle of Yorktown

February, 1781  The Major General Marquis de Lafayette was ordered to take his Continental troops to Virginia.

May 10, 1781  British General Charles Cornwallis, earl Cornwallis, and his army entered Virginia. Cornwallis believed that American resistance would fail if he defeated Virginia.

August 1–2, 1781  Cornwallis and his army encamped at Yorktown and across the York River at Gloucester Point. Lafayette's spies overheard Cornwallis's plans to use the port as a base of supply and Lafayette relayed word to General George Washington in New York.

August 14, 1781  Washington found out that French Admiral de Grasse was sailing for the Chesapeake Bay with a large battle fleet and army.

August 19, 1781  Washington began to move the allied army south secretly.

September 5, 1781  The French fleet under Admiral de Grasse defeated a British fleet under Admiral Thomas Graves in the Battle of the Capes, leaving the British army isolated and without a prospect of reinforcement at Yorktown.

September 14, 1781  The British navy withdrew from the Virginia coast.

September 14, 1781  Washington and French General Rochambeau arrived in Williamsburg.

October 14, 1781  In the night, 400 French soldiers stormed British Redoubt No. 9 and 400 American soldiers under the command of Lafayette and Alexander Hamilton stormed Redoubt No. 10.

October 16–17, 1781  Under heavy bombardment from the allied army, Cornwallis realized that reinforcements would not reach him in time. He decided to escape from Yorktown, but a sudden storm ruined evacuation attempts.

October 19, 1781  British troops under Cornwallis surrendered to Washington’s combined American and French forces, effectively ending major military operations in the American Revolution.

October 21, 1781  British troops were sent to Winchester, Virginia; Frederick, Maryland; and Lancaster, Pennsylvania for imprisonment.

October 28, 1781  Cornwallis signed a parole agreeing to stop fighting the Americans.

November 25, 1781  Prime Minister Lord North exclaimed, "Oh God, it is all over" when news of the Yorktown defeat reached London.

September 3, 1783  By the terms of the Treaty of Paris, Great Britain recognized the independence of the United States. Congress ratified the treaty on January 14, 1784.