

# A Chronology of French Decisions and Actions

by Jacques de TRENTINIAN \*

- 1775 New England:** (April 19) First shots are fired at Lexington and Concord. London: (September 21) Beaumarchais writes to King Louis and Foreign Minister Vergennes: "the time has come for France to intervene". Philadelphia: (December 18 and 27) Bonvouloir (as Vergennes' envoy) sounds out Franklin and Jay; he is told and reports that the Colonies will proclaim their independence and request military equipment and engineers.
- 1776 Versailles:** (March 12) Vergennes' "Considerations" depict to the King why he should support the rebels. After consulting his Council, Louis XVI adopts the suggested strategy (April 12 ).  
-Royal decisions are made to reinforce the Navy (April 22), to launch Beaumarchais' discreet operation supplying equipment to the U.S. (May 3), and send engineers. Congress' envoy Silas Deane meets Vergennes (July 17) and Beaumarchais; Franklin, head of delegation, arrives in Paris (Dec. 20).  
**West Indies:** (June 8) eight more infantry battalions are positioned by France in addition to four existing colonial regiments.
- 1777 Versailles:** (January 25) Du Portail is secretly commissioned by the King to train a US Engineers Corps. He leads the U.S. engineering effort throughout the war and makes the draft of the Military Academy.  
**Pasajes:** (April 20) Under Count de Broglie's patronage, de Kalb and LaFayette embark for America.. General DeKalb will be killed at Camden (1780), General La Fayette will serve throughout the war, promote in French opinion the American Independence and help bridging the cultural gap between the two populations.
- 1778 Paris:** (February 8) Amity and Alliance Treaties are signed between France and the US. Marquis de Bouillé captures Dominica (Sept 7), Toulon: Admiral d'Estaing sails for the US with 12 ships-of-the-line and an ambassador (April 12).  
**Newport RI:** Admiral d'Estaing's squadron engages British occupation forces,
- 1779 Aranjuez:** (April 12) France secures an alliance with Spain and plans at Spain's request a new allied armada to attack Great Britain's coasts.  
**Grenada:** Admiral d'Estaing captures a decisive security upon British economy.  
**Philadelphia:** Congress accepts France's proposal to send ground forces in America (September), in addition to 30 battalions already positioned in her colonies.
- 1780 Brest:** (Feb 2) Comte de Guichen's squadron is dispatched to operate in the Caribbean and Mexico Gulf.  
(April and May) Three combats outsmart British Admiral Rodney.  
(May 2) General Rochambeau's expeditionary corps embarks for America.  
(Jul 11) The French army prepares to land at Newport (Rhode Island).
- 1781 Brest:** Comte de Grasse's and Bailly de Suffren's squadrons sail (March 22). Virginia: Victories at sea off Cape Charles (Sept. 9) and on land at Yorktown (Oct. 19)  
**West Indies:** (Nov. 25) Marquis de Bouillé recaptures St-Eustacius.

**1782 West Indies** (St-Kitts, Montserrat), **Minorca, India**: new securities are captured; British Royal Navy is challenged all over the world by France and her Allies. Rodney's success at Les Saintes does not hinder French superiority in the Islands nor prevent the Allies' trade sailing to Europe.

**1783 Paris**: Independence is ratified by the British through peace treaties signed at Versailles (September 3); 100,000 French soldiers and sailors have contributed to the war effort; 5,000 have been killed and 9,000 wounded in combat, many more lost their lives through disease or from longer-term effects of their wounds.

\* This chronology is from enclosure that accompanies the DVD **“France's Contribution to American Independence -- Seven years of close cooperation and sacrifices”**.

See webpage **“France’s Contribution to American Independence”** at:

<http://xenophongroup.com/issues/contribution.htm>