

Following the defeat at Saratoga and tactical draw at Monmouth Courthouse, the British military changed its strategy. It had failed to make significant progress in the northern and middle colonies and its ultimate plan to isolate New England along the line of the Hudson River had failed. Knowing that Loyalist support was greater in Georgia and the Carolinas, the British made a major military adjustment and began its Southern Campaign, designed to invade and occupy the southern colonies with help from colonists loyal to England. In December of 1778, the campaign officially began with the British seizure and subsequent occupation of Savannah, Georgia. The British next set their sights on a much bigger prize – Charleston.

Patriot military forces quickly realized Charleston would be a likely target for the British. Commander-in-Chief George Washington appointed Benjamin Lincoln in charge of the city's defenses in December 1779. Unfortunately for Lincoln, Washington could not afford to offer additional defenses or reinforcements because of the need to keep significant forces near New York. Upon arriving in Charleston, Lincoln realized it was a dire situation. Many of the fortifications protecting Charleston were inadequate or unfinished. While Lincoln and his soldiers worked feverishly to improve the fortifications, British lieutenant general Henry Clinton and 13,500 British and Hessian soldiers were closing in on Charleston from the sea. American efforts did little to halt the British advances, and by April 1, Charleston was under siege. By April 9, British forces had begun shelling Charleston from its harbor. Over the coming days, however, Lincoln refused several of the British demands for surrender. By April 22, the situation was totally hopeless for Lincoln. He proposed surrender terms to Clinton in which he would capitulate in exchange for the freedom of his soldiers. Clinton refused and the bombardment of the city intensified, resulting in several damaging fires that threatened to engulf the entire city. On May 12, with no bargaining power, Lincoln was forced to surrender under harsh terms. Clinton demanded the capture and incarceration of over 2,500 soldiers, many of whom would die in squalid British prisons. In addition, the Americans were forced to surrender 300 cannons and over 6,000 muskets.

Following the siege, the largest and most important city in the southern colonies was in British control. The surrender at Charleston would represent the single largest Patriot surrender of soldiers and weapons during the entire war.

1. Why did the British change strategies?

- A. They had defeated the Patriots in New England and wanted to end the war
- B. Their plan to isolate New England had succeeded
- C. They thought they'd achieve greater success where there were more Loyalists
- D. They had been defeated at Monmouth Courthouse and needed a new strategy

2. What happened first?

- A. The British seized Savannah, Georgia
- B. The Battle of Monmouth Courthouse
- C. Benjamin Lincoln is put in charge of Charleston's defenses
- D. January 1, 1780

3. Why was Lincoln's situation at Charleston dire?

- A. The fortifications were inadequate and Washington could not send reinforcements
- B. The British military would include both British and Hessian soldiers
- C. Because the other major southern port, Savannah, had been captured by the British in December
- D. Because he knew that surrender terms would be harsh

4. What does "capitulate" mean in the following sentence?

He proposed surrender terms to Clinton in which he would capitulate in exchange for the freedom of his soldiers.

- A. Negotiate
- B. Retreat
- C. Fight on
- D. Give up

5. As April went on...

- A. the British simply waited for the Patriots to surrender.
- B. the situation in Charleston improved for the Patriots.
- C. the situation became hopeless for the Patriots.
- D. the British bombardment began to subside.

6. Which of the following is true about the Siege of Charleston?

- A. It was the single largest Patriot surrender of soldiers and firepower in the war
- B. It meant that the Continental Army was mostly destroyed
- C. The most important city in the colonies was in British control
- D. The British were close to winning the entire war

7. Which of the following best describes the Siege of Charleston?

- A. The Siege of Charleston represented a Patriot change of strategy and brought them one step closer to winning the war
- B. The Siege of Charleston represented a change of strategy for the British and its success resulted in George Washington's surrender
- C. The Siege of Charleston was the first victory in England's Southern Campaign and resulted in the capture of thousands of soldiers and significant firepower
- D. The Siege of Charleston represented a major change in strategy for the British and resulted in Loyalists taking over the Carolinas.