D-Day June 6, 1944

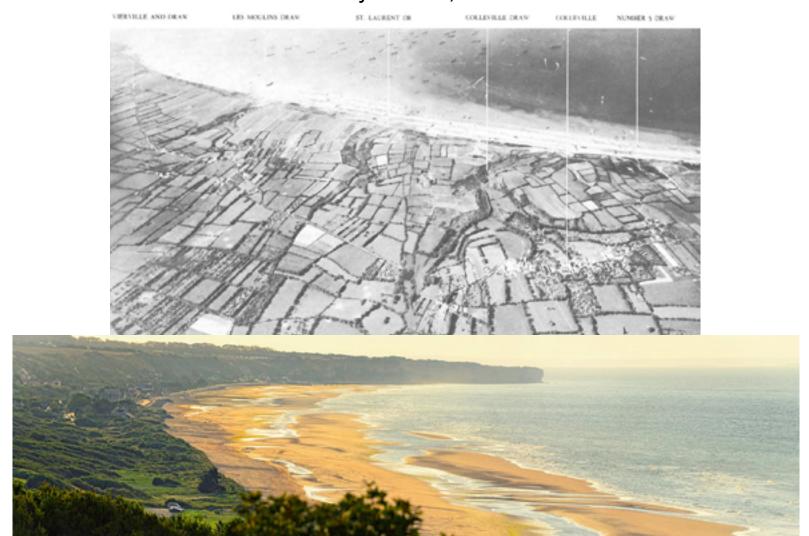# D-Day June 6, 1944

Websites

Go to the following website: **www.history.com/topics/d-day**
Below the word D-Day and above the 1st picture, click on the blue word that says videos. Watch the clip called D-Day (1:42). After you watch that video watch at least 2 other videos of your choosing.

Interactive Map

Go to the same website: **www.history.com/topics/d-day**
Click on the interactive map, click on Europe & Africa and spend a few minutes exploring at least 2 of the topics.

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Dwight Eisenhower

What did a paratrooper carry on D-day?

-M-1 Garand Rifle with 8-round
-ammunition
-cartridge belt with canteen
-hand grenades
-main parachute
-reserve parachute
-Mae West (life preserver)
-anti-flash headgear and gloves
-3 knives
-shovel
-flashlight
-pocket compass
-machete
-flares
-loaded .45 automatic pistol
-medical kit
-2 pounds of high explosives
-escape/survival kit
-toggle rope
-additional personal items
-4 pieces of chewing gum
-2 bouillon cubes
-2 Nescafe instant coffees, 2 sugar cubes, and creamers
-4 Hershey bars
-1 pack of Charms candy
-1 package pipe tobacco
-1 bottle of water purification

Planning

The Allies believed they would be ready to invade Europe in the summer of 1944. The Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight Eisenhower, planned the invasion codenamed Operation Overlord. The plan called for 160,00 British, American and Canadian soldiers to cross the English Channel by boat and land on the beaches of Normandy France. The Allies massed millions of soldiers and thousands of tanks, planes and ships in England. D-Day would become the largest amphibious (from the water) invasion in world history.

Paratroopers

The night before soldiers landed on the beaches of Normandy, thousands of paratroopers (soldiers who parachute into battle from airplanes), were to be dropped a few miles behind the beaches of Normandy. Their mission was to stop German reinforcements (extra soldiers) from moving to the the beaches of Normandy to help battle Allied soldiers landing on the beaches. 24,000 paratroopers

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parachuted into Normandy before the invasion. Many were killed when their planes were shot down. Most landed miles away from their drop zones. The Nazis had flooded the fields behind Normandy and many paratroopers weighted down by 100 lbs. of equipment drown when they landed.

DID YOU KNOW?
The British parachuted hundreds of large dolls into Normandy. They hoped the Germans would be confused and mistake them for real soldiers. The dolls lovingly called "Rupert" were designed to make small explosions when they hit the ground

Hundreds were shot as they helplessly floated towards the ground. Eventually the paratroopers began to organize themselves into small groups and moved towards their assigned areas. Without these men, the D-day invasion would have been a failure.

The Germans

Dragon's Teeth

The Nazis knew the Allies would invade France, they just weren't exactly sure where or when the invasion would take place. For years the Germans built defenses on the coast of France they nicknamed the Atlantic wall. Normandy would be defended by 12,500 German soldiers along with hundreds of concrete bunkers containing machine guns or cannons. The land itself was an obstacle. Many miles of beaches were surrounded by high cliffs, difficult to climb, the Germans troops would be able to shoot down on the Allied soldiers. There were also thousands of man made obstacles. Long, sharp pieces of steel called "hedgehogs" were welded together to tear up Allied ships. "Dragon's Teeth" were 3 foot high triangle shaped blocks of cement designed to stop tanks. "Belgian Gates" were 7 foot high and 10 foot wide steel gates that were sunk just off the coast.

Hedgehogs

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The Landings

156,000 Allied soldiers landed on D-day. The Allies divided the landing area into 5 beaches codenamed: Gold, Sword, Juno, Utah and Omaha. The British and Canadians would land at Sword, Gold and Juno. The Americans would land at Utah and Omaha. Omaha Beach was the key area to the whole invasion because it was in the middle of the other beaches. If the Allies could not defeat the Nazis on Omaha Beach, the invasion would be a disaster. Unfortunately, Omaha was also the largest and most heavily defended beach. The plan called for the Allied soldiers to cross the 20 mile English channel in large ships called troop transports. These ships could carry hundreds of soldiers. When they were a few miles from the Normandy coast, the soldiers would climb ropes over the side of the ship and into smaller boats waiting below. These smaller boats called Higgins boats carried about 30 soldiers and had no roof. The small Higgins boats sped towards the Normandy shore. Once they hit the beaches the front door of the boat dropped and soldiers ran off onto the beaches. They would have to cross 200 yards (2 football fields) of beach with nothing to hide behind, while being shot at by 8,000 German soldiers and 85 machine guns. After crossing the beach, the soldiers reached a steep cliff that in places was 100 feet high. There were small valleys in the cliffs leading from the beach inland, these were called draws. The draws would be the Allies only hope of getting off Omaha beach. Thousands of soldiers would have to squeeze through these small valleys

German soldiers surrender on D-Day

Higgins Boat

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under heavy fire. 32 U.S. tanks were supposed to land at Omaha beach to help the soldiers, but 27 sank in the channel. The remaining tanks were destroyed in minutes. Some boats hit sandbars 50 or more yards from the beaches and soldiers would have to walk in neck high water to the beaches. Many soldiers drowned, weighted down by their equipment. 2,000 of the 30,000 American soldiers were dead by the afternoon and

DID YOU KNOW?

Some of the 1st soldiers the Allies encountered on the beaches of Normandy were Korean. They were captured by the Japanese and forced to fight for Japan, until they were captured in battle by the Russians and forced to fight for the U.S.S.R. then they were captured in battle by the Germans and forced to defend Normandy. They finally surrendered to U.S. soldiers and were allowed to return home

3,000-4,000 were wounded. The ocean and sand was turning red from all the blood. After hours of fighting, the Americans were able to force the remaining Germans to surrender or retreat inland. Omaha beach was captured and the D-day landings were a success.

Results

D-day, June 6, 1944, is one of the most important days in U.S. history. If the invasion had failed it would have taken several years for the Allies to be ready to try again. In that time, Hitler and Germany would be busy building jet airplanes and possibly the atomic bomb. If D-Day had failed the war and the

world may have turned out totally different. Instead the invasion was successful. It was the beginning of the end for the Nazis. Within months almost 1 million Allied soldiers would land in France to battle the Nazis. 2 months after D-day, Paris would be liberated. Within a year, Hitler would commit suicide and Germany would surrender, ending the war in Europe.

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1. Who was the only U.S. General to land by sea during the 1st wave on D-Day?

2. The Nazis planted long wooden poles in fields at Normandy to prevent gliders from landing. What were these obstacles called?

3. In 1998, what movie followed Captain John Miller and his soldiers from the landings on D-day to their search for a missing American soldier?

4. Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne and the 101st Airborne parachuted into Normandy on D-Day. What was the nickname of each of these divisions?

5. D-day was originally scheduled for June 5, 1944. Why was it postponed?

6. American paratroopers knew they would have trouble locating each other in the dark What children's toy did they carry to help find each other?

7. True or False   Before D-Day, General Eisenhower wrote 2 letters. One congratulating the soldiers on victory and the second accepting all the blame in case the invasion had failed.

8. General George Patton was one America's best and well known generals. He was wounded in WWI and fought dozens of battles in WWII. He was killed in a jeep accident near the end of the war. What were his last words?

"_____ ____ ____ _____ _____ ____ _____!"

9. True or False The Nazis may have won at Normandy if they would have sent their Panzers (tanks) to the fighting quicker, only Hitler could approve that order. The reason he didn't was because he was sleeping at the time of the invasion and everyone was afraid to wake him up.

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Frequently Asked Questions

What does the "D" in D-Day stand for?

The "D" does not stand for "Deliverance", "Doom", "Debarkation" or similar words. In fact, it does not stand for anything. The "D" is derived from the word "Day". "D-Day" means the day on which a military operation begins. The term "D-Day" has been used for many different operations, but it is now generally only used to refer to the Allied landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944.

Why was the expression "D-Day" used?

When a military operation is being planned, its actual date and time is not always known exactly. The term "D-Day" was therefore used to mean the date on which operations would begin, whenever that was to be. The day before D-Day was known as "D-1", while the day after D-Day was "D+1", and so on. This meant that if the projected date of an operation changed, all the dates in the plan did not also need to be changed. This actually happened in the case of the Normandy Landings. D-Day in Normandy was originally intended to be on 5 June 1944, but at the last minute bad weather delayed it until the following day. The armed forces also used the expression "H-Hour" for the time during the day at which operations were to begin.

How many Allied troops were involved in D-Day?

On D-Day, the Allies landed around 156,000 troops in Normandy. The American forces landed numbered 73,000: 23,250 on Utah Beach, 34,250 on Omaha Beach, and 15,500 airborne troops. In the British and Canadian sector, 83,115 troops were landed (61,715 of them British): 24,970 on Gold Beach, 21,400 on Juno Beach, 28,845 on Sword Beach, and 7900 airborne troops.11,590 aircraft were available to support the landings. On D-Day, Allied aircraft flew 14,674 sorties, and 127 were lost.
In the airborne landings on both flanks of the beaches, 2395 aircraft and 867 gliders of the RAF and USAAF were used on D-Day.
Operation Neptune involved huge naval forces, including 6939 vessels: 1213 naval combat ships, 4126 landing ships and landing craft, 736 ancillary craft and 864 merchant vessels. Some 195,700 personnel were assigned to Operation Neptune: 52,889 US, 112,824 British, and 4988 from other Allied countries. By the end of 11 June (D + 5), 326,547 troops,

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54,186 vehicles and 104,428 tons of supplies had been landed on the beaches. As well as the troops who landed in Normandy on D-Day, and those in supporting roles at sea and in the air, millions more men and women in the Allied countries were involved in the preparations for D-Day. They played thousands of different roles, both in the armed forces and as civilians.

How many Allied and German casualties were there on D-Day, and in the Battle of Normandy?

"Casualties" refers to all losses suffered by the armed forces: killed, wounded, missing in action (meaning that their bodies were not found) and prisoners of war. There is no "official" casualty figure for D-Day. Under the circumstances, accurate record keeping was very difficult. For example, some troops who were listed as missing may actually have landed in the wrong place, and have rejoined their parent unit only later.

In April and May 1944, the Allied air forces lost nearly 12,000 men and over 2,000 aircraft in operations which paved the way for D-Day.

The Allied casualties figures for D-Day have generally been estimated at 10,000, including 2500 dead. Broken down by nationality, the usual D-Day casualty figures are approximately 2700 British, 946 Canadians, and 6603 Americans. However recent painstaking research by the US National D-Day Memorial Foundation has achieved a more accurate - and much higher - figure for the Allied personnel who were killed on D-Day. They have recorded the names of individual Allied personnel killed on 6 June 1944 in Operation Overlord, and so far they have verified 2499 American D-Day fatalities and 1915 from the other Allied nations, a total of 4414 dead (much higher than the traditional figure of 2500 dead). Further research may mean that these numbers will increase slightly in future. The details of this research will in due course be available on the Foundation's website at www.dday.org. This new research means that the casualty figures given for individual units in the next few paragraphs are no doubt inaccurate, and hopefully more accurate figures will one day be calculated.

Casualties on the British beaches were roughly 1000 on Gold Beach and the same number on Sword Beach. The remainder of the British losses were amongst the airborne troops: some 600 were killed or wounded, and 600 more were missing; 100 glider pilots also became casualties. The losses of 3rd Canadian Division at Juno Beach have been given as 340 killed, 574 wounded and 47 taken prisoner.

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The breakdown of US casualties was 1465 dead, 3184 wounded, 1928 missing and 26 captured. Of the total US figure, 2499 casualties were from the US airborne troops (238 of them being deaths). The casualties at Utah Beach were relatively light: 197, including 60 missing. However, the US 1st and 29th Divisions together suffered around 2000 casualties at Omaha Beach. The total German casualties on D-Day are not known, but are estimated as being between 4000 and 9000 men.

Naval losses for June 1944 included 24 warships and 35 merchantmen or auxiliaries sunk, and a further 120 vessels damaged.

Over 425,000 Allied and German troops were killed, wounded or went missing during the Battle of Normandy. This figure includes over 209,000 Allied casualties, with nearly 37,000 dead amongst the ground forces and a further 16,714 deaths amongst the Allied air forces. Of the Allied casualties, 83,045 were from 21st Army Group (British, Canadian and Polish ground forces), 125,847 from the US ground forces. The losses of the German forces during the Battle of Normandy can only be estimated. Roughly 200,000 German troops were killed or wounded. The Allies also captured 200,000 prisoners of war (not included in the 425,000 total, above). During the fighting around the Falaise Pocket (August 1944) alone, the Germans suffered losses of around 90,000, including prisoners.

Today, twenty-seven war cemeteries hold the remains of over 110,000 dead from both sides: 77,866 German, 9386 American, 17,769 British, 5002 Canadian and 650 Poles.

Between 15,000 and 20,000 French civilians were killed, mainly as a result of Allied bombing. Thousands more fled their homes to escape the fighting.