

The D-Day Landings

On 6 June 1944, a military force of thousands descended on France, in a desperate and determined attempt to stop Adolf Hitler and his Nazi troops from Winning World War II. The dictator and his army had already invaded and taken over huge areas of Europe.

The Normandy landings, later called the 'D-Day' landings, were a pivotal event in World War II and began a sustained attack that lasted for a total of 11 months. The operation, which was codenamed Overlord, involved a huge amount of planning and deception. It undoubtedly had a major impact on the outcome of the war.

Why was the day of the landings called 'D-Day'?

Strangely, the 'D' in 'D-Day' just stands for 'Day'. In this campaign, the army referred to the date of attack as 'D-Day' and the time of attack as 'H-Hour', simply to prevent the actual details of the plan from falling into enemy hands. They referred to the days and hours around D-Day and H-Hour using pluses and minuses: for example, the day after D-Day was 'D+1', and three hours before the attack was 'H-3'

How did the landings start?

The D-Day landings were carried out five years after World War II began. The Nazi army had assembled on the Normandy coastline, in northern France, but would soon encounter the Allied forces of Britain, America and Canada.

The initial wave of attacks on the Nazi forces involved planes and warships targeting their positions along the French coastline, in a bid to damage their defences and make it easier for troops to arrive by sea. At the same time, paratroopers descended from planes behind enemy lines. Their aim was to destroy key targets and capture bridges and roads, in order to support the entry of troops from the sea and prevent the Nazi forces from being able to move around easily. During this time, it is thought that dummies were dropped from planes in an effort to confuse the Nazis and create panic amongst their troops.

Early on the morning of 6 June, at around 6.30 am, Allied troops began to land along an 80 kilometre stretch of beach bordering Normandy in northern France. It is thought that a total of 156,000 troops had arrived in Normandy by the end of D-Day and that nearly 7,000 vessels were involved in the mission.

What happened during the battle?

The D-Day fighting took place mainly on five beaches in Normandy which were codenamed Juno, Gold, Omaha, Sword and Utah. The number of soldiers injured and killed varied from beach to beach. The heaviest fighting occurred on Omaha beach, on which American troops landed. In the ferocious fighting, many of the American soldiers lost their lives — but eventually the beach was taken. By the end of the day, the Allies had secured a foothold along the coast and were able to advance further into France.

In total, it is thought that the Allied forces suffered around 10,000 casualties that day, including both the injured and the killed. In the months that led up to the invasion, thousands of aircrew also lost their lives in missions linked to the operation. Although exact numbers are not known, it is believed that between 4,000 and 9,000 Nazi soldiers were killed in the fighting on 6 June.

What happened after D-Day?

Following the initial invasion, the first wave of troops pressed further inland, allowing more and more Allied troops to arrive in France. The determined attack saw many of the Nazi soldiers being captured or forced to retreat by the Allied troops. By the end of August 1944 — less than three months after the D-Day operation — the Nazis were retreating out of France.

The war did not end immediately, but the D-Day operation had a significant impact on the Nazi forces' through Europe. The war finally ended in Europe when the Nazi forces surrendered on 7th May 1945.

How is D-Day remembered?

Since 2007, the annual Normandy D-Day Festival has commemorated the arrival of the Allied forces and remembered the soldiers who died during the attack. Parachute landings, musical firework displays, picnics, parades and concerts all take place as part of the festival.

Significant world leaders, including Barack Obama and Queen Elizabeth II of England, have attended ceremonies paying tribute to the fallen soldiers. They commemorate those from across the world who bravely fought and sacrificed their lives trying to bring World War II to an end and to re-establish peace across Europe.

D-Day Landings - Matching

Draw a line to match the information, using the text to help you.

paratroopers
American troops
Overlord
Barack Obama

D-Day operation codename
attended tributes
landed on Omaha beach
landed behind enemy lines

10,000
nearly 7,000
five
heaviest fighting

casualties
Omaha beach
vessels
beaches

Nazi surrender
D-Day
D-Day invasion began
Normandy commemorations

around 6.30am
6 June 1944
7 May 1945
Since 2007

D-Day Landings - Label

Label the information with the correct date, place or name.

the five beaches of Normandy	
D-Day operation codename	
military force of thousands descended on	
pivotal event in World War II	

the time that D-Day began	
length of the beach of Normandy	
number of German troops killed	
date the Nazis surrendered	
number of beaches involved	
D-Day date	

The D-Day Landings – Fill in the Gap

Read the sentences and choose the correct word or words to fill the gap.

Early on the morning of 6 June at around 6.30 am, Allied troops began to land along an 80 kilometre stretch of beach bordering _____ in northern France.

The war finally ended in Europe when the Nazi forces surrendered on _____ 1945.

By the end of August 1944 - less than three months after the D-Day operation — the Nazis were retreating out of _____.

At the same time, _____ descended from planes behind enemy lines. The operation, which was codenamed _____ involved a huge amount of planning and deception. It undoubtedly had a major impact on the outcome of the war.

The determined attack saw many of the Nazi soldiers being _____ or forced to retreat by the Allied troops.

The Normandy landings, later called the _____, were a pivotal event in World War II and began a sustained attack that lasted for a total of 11 months.

In total, it is thought that the Allied forces suffered around _____ that day, including both the injured and the killed.

During this time, it is thought that _____ were dropped from planes in an effort to confuse the Nazis and create panic amongst their troops.

The Nazi army had assembled on the Normandy coastline, in northern France, but would soon encounter the Allied forces of Britain, America and _____.

On 6th June 1944, a military force of thousands descended on France, in a desperate and determined attempt to stop _____ and his Nazi troops from winning World War II.

The initial wave of attacks on the Nazi forces involved planes and warships targeting their positions along the French _____ in a bid to damage their defences and make it easier for troops to arrive by sea.

The D-Day fighting took place mainly on five beaches in Normandy, which were codenamed _____ Gold, Omaha, Sword and Utah.

The dictator and his army had already invaded and taken over huge areas of _____.

Although exact numbers are not known, it is believed that between 4,000 and 9,000 Nazi soldiers were killed in the fighting on _____.