



D-Day: Consequences.

“Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle hardened, he will fight savagely.... I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full victory!”

— Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, message to troops on June 6, 1944

One only has to watch the opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan* to appreciate the dangers of D-Day

missions. Even before D-Day, the Allies had suffered numerous casualties and significant equipment losses. In fact, in April and May 1944, Allied air forces lost nearly 12,000 men and more than 2,000 aircraft in operations, which were key to paving the way for D-Day.

Those who made the ultimate sacrifice

Allied casualties' figures for D-Day have generally been estimated at 10,000, including 2,500 dead. Broken down by nationality, the usual D-Day casualty figures are estimated at approximately 2,700 British, 1,074 Canadians, and 6,603 Americans. However, recent painstaking research by the U.S. National D-Day Memorial Foundation has achieved a more accurate – and much higher – figure for Allied personnel killed on D-Day. They have recorded the names of individual Allied personnel killed on June 6, 1944 in Operation Overlord and thus far have verified 2,499 American D-Day fatali-

ties and 1,914 from the other Allied nations, totaling 4,413 dead (much higher than the established figure of 2,500).

One of the most notorious and fatal moments for American service members – more than 700 of them was in one of the biggest full-scale rehearsals for D-Day, held off Slapton Sands in Devon a little more than a month prior to D-Day.

It involved all 23,000 U.S. soldiers who were preparing to land on the Normandy beach codenamed Utah. Due to an error in paperwork, the landing ships and their escorts were on different radio frequencies and couldn't talk to each other.



Photo # 26-G-2368 LCM evacuates casualties from a Normandy beach, 6 June 1944



So when one of the ships, HMS Scimitar, had to return to Plymouth after an accidental collision, the Americans could not be informed that they were inadequately protected and vulnerable.

As bad luck would have it, nine German U-boats stumbled across the maneuvers and torpedoed the ships, sinking two ships and damaging a third. At least 749 men died.

In addition to service members' deaths, civilians were obviously also in harm's way at times. 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.

Who died first on D-Day?

There are many claims for this unfortunate status. The first two British soldiers killed on D-Day were Lt. Den Brotheridge of the 6th

Airborne Division and Lance Corporal Fred Greehalgh. Brotheridge was shot in the neck while leading his platoon, and Greehalgh immediately drowned when he stepped out of Brotheridge's glider.



The first U.S. soldier to die on D-Day was 28-year-old Lt. Robert Mathias of the 82nd Airborne Division. He sustained a bullet wound in the chest right before he jumped out of his aircraft.

He commanded his men to follow his lead as he jumped from the plane and died mid-air.

Naval and aircraft losses...

Inevitably, the Allies suffered naval and aircraft losses that day. The Germans successfully shot down 127 Allied aircraft on D-Day alone, not counting the nearly 2,000 other planes destroyed during the summer of 1944.

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

D-Day 70th Anniversary: Honoring the Past, Securing the Future

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