



# D-Day: Tactics.



So much about D-Day has become almost common knowledge today but actually took immense planning to orchestrate, of course. Not surprisingly, with this massive a mission, there are also many odd details as well. Here we provide a bit of both.

For example, there are the basic facts surrounding the D-Day events, themselves:

The armed forces used codenames to refer to the planning and execution of specific military operations. Operation Overlord was the codename for the Allied invasion of northwest Europe. The assault phase of Operation Overlord was known as Operation Neptune. This operation involved landing troops on the beaches and all other associated supporting operations that helped establish a beachhead in France.

Operation Neptune began on D-Day (June 6, 1944) with naval "D-Day" operations ending June 30, 1944. By this time, the Allies had established a firm foothold in Normandy. Operation Overlord also began on D-Day, and continued until Allied forces crossed the River Seine on August 19, 1944. The Battle of Normandy is the name given to the fighting in Normandy between D-Day and the end of August 1944.

Soldiers participating in the Normandy landings came from the United States, Britain, Canada, Belgium, Norway, Poland, Luxembourg, Greece, Czechoslovakia, New Zealand and Australia. Some 177 French commandos also took part.

It was in April and May 1944 that 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.



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Photo # NH 97395 USS Nevada at sea, during the later 1930s



It's all about planning. Some lesser-known facts...

D-Day planning was classed as "Most Secret" and took place at Norfolk

House in London's St James's Square. The building had a private bar installed so staff could talk freely without risking loose talk in local pubs.

In the summer 1943, a copy of a secret Operation Overlord plan flew out of a window in Norfolk House. Later, a man turned in the papers, saying his eyes were so bad he had no idea what it was.

USS Nevada (BB-36) was one of the few ships in the U.S. Navy to participate in several major WWII events in both European and Pacific theaters, including Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. After repair from that attack, she became the Flagship during Normandy landings. USS Nevada supported forces ashore from June 6-17, and again on June 25<sup>th</sup>. During this time, she employed her guns to hit permanent shore defenses on the Cherbourg Peninsula. She participated at the landings on Southern France during Operation Dragoon, as well. After having her gun tubes replaced, she sailed to the Pacific to for the Okinawa invasion. In July 1946, she was assigned to be a target ship for the first Bikini atomic experiments (Operation Crossroads). The Nevada was designated "ground zero" for

the first test, codenamed "Able," which used an airdropped weapon. As such, she was painted an "ugly" reddish-orange to help the bombardier's aim. He missed her by about 1,770 feet! She was then towed to Pearl Harbor and sunk a torpedo after being a target ship for Iowa Class Battleship, which also failed to sink her.

Having been given the top-secret mission to attack the Merville battery on D-Day, Terence Otway had to be certain his men wouldn't spill the beans ahead of June 6, 1944. He sent 30 of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force's prettiest members in civilian clothes into village pubs near where his soldiers trained. They were asked to do all they could to discover the men's mission. None of the men gave anything away.

## Allied troop composition

American troops from Company A mostly came from the small Virginia town of Bedford and had the responsibility for the carefully orchestrated shelling of German gun positions. Unfortunately, it made little difference, and the company suffered 90 percent casualties.

## Double agents and codes...

A Spaniard codenamed Garbo was a British double agent who played a crucial role in duping Germans where the invasion would occur. While living in Portugal, Garbo produced reports of life in England, which the Germans accepted as true. He spoke no English, however, and used a French-English dictionary, supported by newspapers and the local library. One of his most glaring errors was to suggest that men in Glasgow would do anything for a liter of wine.

Coded sentences were necessary to keep French resistance workers in the know before D-Day. "The dice is on the carpet" was an order to destroy trains and railway lines, while "It's hot in Suez" instructed them to destroy cable and telephone lines.

Just weeks before D-Day, "Utah" appeared as an answer to a crossword clue in The Daily Telegraph. On May 22, "Omaha" also popped up as a crossword answer. "Overlord" appeared on May 27<sup>th</sup> and "Neptune" on June 1<sup>st</sup>. MI5 cleared the compiler of wrongdoing, but, to this day, there has been no satisfactory explanation.

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

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