

Answer Questions and Debate on Your Paper

D-DAY ARRIVES

Do not write on This!

June 5, 1944, was a stormy, sleepless night for those on the coast of Normandy, France, whether in the LSTs offshore, the bombers and gliders overhead, the concrete bunkers on the beach, or among the partisans moving into position to disrupt German troop movements to the beach. Night air raids had become common, but this one seemed worse hour by the hour. On board the LSTs and transports, chaplains prayed, and the crowded men were deep in thoughts of family, home, and fear that they might not measure up.

The Nazi defenders were not sure what was going on. Their radar stations had been bombed, the *Luftwaffe* had been grounded, and the naval ships remained in the harbor because of the storm. Railroads had been battered and telephone lines cut. The weather had been so bad that many defenders relaxed, thinking that no attack would come in such miserable weather. Many German division commanders were away from their units attending a war game where the subject was a naval assault on Normandy.

At Calais, the few remaining German radars began picking up signals produced by clever British engineers. Echoes of troop transports were made by reflector balloons carried by motor launches, and strips of aluminum foil dropped from RAF bombers simulated more planes. Most *Luftwaffe* planes in the region were rushed to Calais to stop the invaders.

The beaches of Normandy had been given code names by the planners: from left to right, the beaches were named Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword. Utah and Omaha were to be taken by U.S. troops, the others by British and Canadian troops. U.S. parachute and glider drops behind enemy lines at Utah were to precede the landing; British drops were behind the lines at Sword beach.

The first British paratroopers and gliders landed shortly after midnight, and using clickers to find each other in the darkness, formed units and began completing their assignments. The most difficult job went to a British paratroop battalion that was to take out guns surrounded by a barbed wire tangle, an antitank ditch, and machine gun nests. The guns were in a blockhouse with steel doors and thick concrete walls. Despite the obstacles, they succeeded, and saved many lives as a result.

A slow German reaction time was critical to success. At 1:11 A.M., a phone call awakened a general informing him of the parachute drops. Word reached Rommel's chief of staff at about 2:15, but he did not believe this was the real invasion. However, he sent the message on to Runstedt. At 2:55, he sent the message to Berlin, but he was still not sure whether the attack was at Normandy or Calais. By 4:15 Runstedt concluded that Normandy was the invasion site and ordered available reserves to Normandy. He sent a message to



The successful assault on the beaches of Normandy, France, allowed Allied troops to break the German's Atlantic Wall and start pushing them back towards Germany.

Jodl asking for approval. Jodl was not awakened until 6:30; he angrily denied the order for reserves since it had been done without permission. At that same time, observers looked out at the ocean and saw hundreds of ships and LSTs on the horizon. Then the naval barrage began, and the ground shook along the 50-mile invasion front.

The landing was a huge operation: 150,000 men, 12,000 planes, 1,500 tanks, 5,300 ships. They were equipped with new machines never used before in war: portable harbors called Mullberries, flail tanks with big chains on them to pound the ground and explode mines (Crabs), amphibious tanks called DDs, and Crocodile tanks that shot flame instead of shells.

Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., a veteran of three other landings, went with the men landing at Utah Beach. Fortunately for them, they were 2,000 yards away from the assigned landing site. Their beach was deserted, and they moved quickly inland. Omaha Beach was much more dangerous and losses there were heavy. Defensive positions were on cliffs that were hard to reach. Brigadier General Norman Cotta arrived on Omaha Beach at 7:30 and found that the men were terrified. Finding some Rangers, he said: "If you're Rangers, get up and lead the way." They took the challenge and climbed the cliff. The Canadians and British struggled at their beaches, but once past them, began to move inland. In one day, the Atlantic Wall was cracked.

It was fortunate for the Allies that D-Day was a success, because a week later, on June 12, the Germans launched their first V-1 rockets on England. Nicknamed "buzz bombs" and "doodle bugs," they flew at a maximum speed of 150 to 250 miles per hour (mph) and at an altitude of 2,000 to 3,000 feet. Cheap to build, they were designed for bombing large urban areas since they had no guidance systems. V-1s dropped with a high-pitched sound warning of their arrival. V-1s were so slow that many were shot down by the RAF or antiaircraft fire.

V-2s were much more sophisticated. First used in September 1944, they flew at up to an altitude of 120 miles, then dropped at 2,000 mph. No defense could stop them. They often made a crater 30 feet deep when they crashed, so much of their explosion was muffled by the ground.

German technology also produced the ME-262, a jet aircraft capable of flying 540 mph, much faster than any Allied plane. It came out in April 1944, and Luftwaffe pilots saw this as a tremendous interceptor. Hitler demanded that its wings be strengthened to make it a bomber. When it did intercept Allied bombers, it flew so fast it had to be slowed down to hit its target. Of the 220 used in combat, 120 were shot down.

If the invasion had been delayed or defeated, these attacks would have changed the war and given Germany time to develop other weapons.

Respond to debate in a Paragraph

Debate : **Yes or No?**

Success at Normandy came more from good planning than from luck and enemy mistakes.

Name _____ Date _____

Write Question CHALLENGES and Answer it

1. What had the Allies done to interrupt German defense of Normandy?

2. What was the effect of the storm?

3. What simple devices made the Germans believe the landing was going to be at Calais?

4. What city and state were honored by having Normandy landing beaches named after them?

5. How long was it between the time of the first phone call to a general until Jodl was contacted?

6. Why did Jodl reject the sending of troops to Normandy?

7. How long was the invasion area?

8. How many men and ships were involved?

9. What were two nicknames given V-1s?

10. What was the fastest airplane used in the war?

Name _____

Date _____

Write Questions and answer them**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

1. Cooped up on an LST waiting to hit the beach, what would you have been thinking about?

2. How much depended on successful use of science and technology?

3. Why were V-1s and V-2s more of a threat than the Luftwaffe to cities like London?
