

D-Day

The Normandy Landings



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D-Day

The term D-Day refers to a specific date for a planned operation, often a military attack.

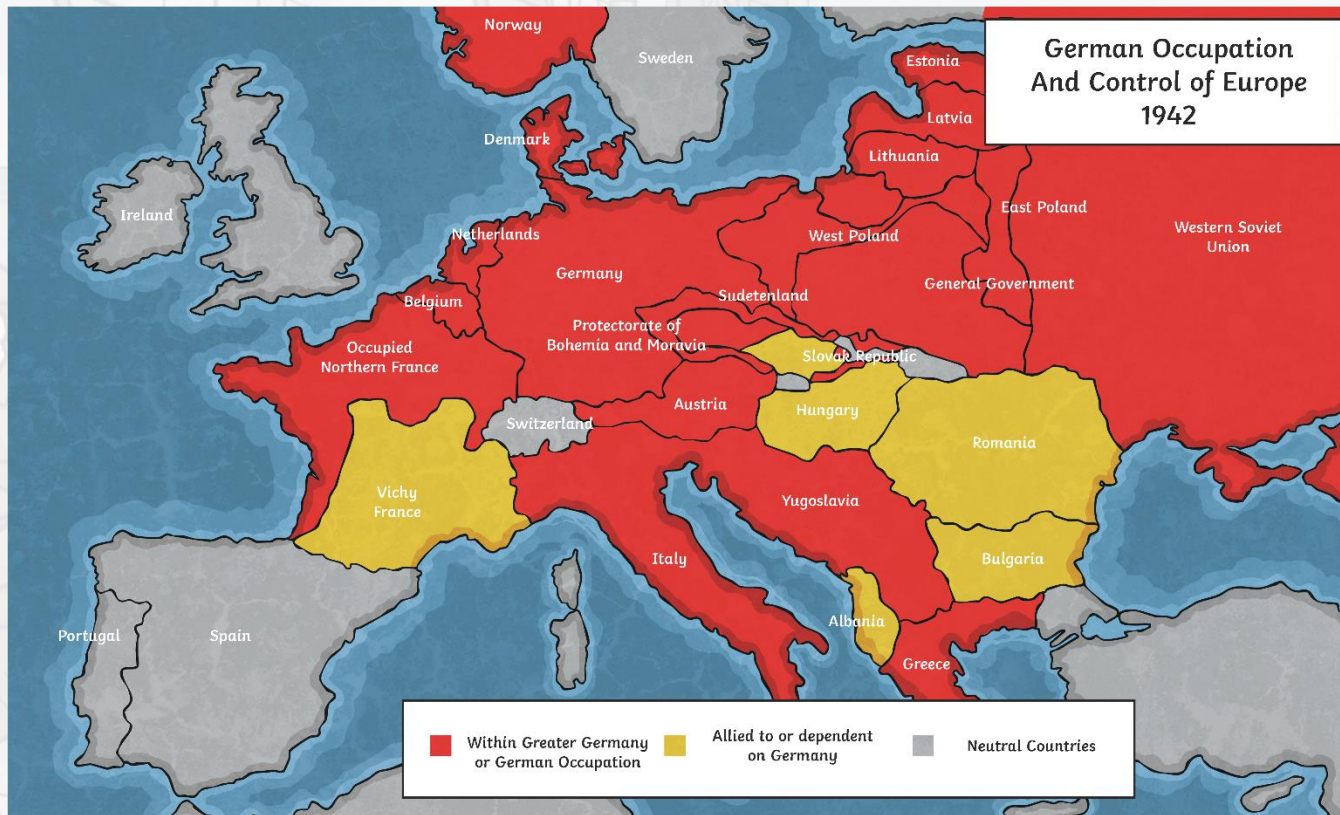
However, the term D-Day has also become synonymous with the allied attack on the beaches of Normandy which took place on 6th June 1944.



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The Atlantic Wall

During the Second World War, Germany was in control of much of Europe. This map shows which countries were controlled by Nazi Germany in 1942.



The Atlantic Wall

Strongholds secured by Germany in France were fiercely defended and Adolf Hitler ordered the construction of fortifications - known as the Atlantic Wall - along the coastal regions of north-western Europe and Scandinavia in preparation for an expected Allied attack by Great Britain.

Note: Britain occupied the Faroe Islands and Iceland during the war.



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Operation Overlord

From early on in the war, it was clear that in order to secure Allied success, the liberation of north-west Europe from German control was vital. The Allies made plans to try and drive the Germans out of France.

They planned Operation Overlord - a huge military assault which would combine naval, land and airborne attacks on the Germans in France.



Operation Overlord

Every detail of the operation was so intricately planned that it took over two years to put the plan into action. Operation Overlord was the biggest military operation the world had ever seen and was a collaborative effort between more than 12 countries.



And what a plan!

“This vast operation is undoubtedly the most complicated and difficult that has ever occurred.”

- Winston Churchill

Operation Neptune

The Normandy Landings, which were code-named **Operation Neptune**, were the first stage of Operation Overlord.

At just after midnight on 6th June 1944, the operation began.

Five key beaches were targeted. Securing control of these areas would give the Allies the best possible chance of fully penetrating into France and completing their ultimate objective.

Soldiers arriving on Sword beach



The Beaches

The stretches of beach were given different code names and troops from Britain, America and Canada led the attacks.

Utah – attack led by American troops;

Omaha – attack led by American troops;

Gold – attack led by British troops;

Juno – attack led by Canadian troops;

Sword – attack led by British troops.

Executing the Plan

Just after midnight on 6th June, Allied paratroopers are dropped behind enemy lines to undermine German defences.

From 6:30am, Allied troops land on the beaches. The shallow waters allow them to wade ashore quietly and take the enemy by surprise.

Throughout the day, Allied air forces overpower the German Luftwaffe and gain control of the airspace.

Allied warships also fire bombs to weaken the German defences along the Atlantic Wall.



Securing a Foothold

The Allies suffered heavy casualties during the Normandy Landings and did not manage to completely liberate all the beaches or complete all their objectives on the first day.

However, they did manage to secure a foothold which allowed them to continue the operation. The Allies would eventually succeed in liberating France from Nazi control.



Completing the Mission

Operation Overlord completed its mission fully on 30th August 1944, when the last of the Germans retreated from France.

The Normandy Landings were a major turning point in the war; there would be further battles still to fight. However, D-Day clearly marked out the beginning of the end of the war.



A British soldier helps a French civilian in Caen

D-Day Remembrance

Many D-Day veterans visit Normandy on the anniversary of the D-Day landings to pay their respects to comrades, who lost their lives in the battles. They also attend special services with readings from veterans, parades and music from live bands.

The efforts and sacrifices made by the thousands of servicemen and women during D-Day will never be forgotten.

You can find out more about some brave D-Day veterans here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0198pwf/profiles>

Ranville War Cemetery, Normandy



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