D Day Essay, Research Paper

After four months of bombing supply lines the Allied armies landed in

Normandy on the northwestern coast of France on June 6, 1944. This day is known

as D-Day. This was the most pivotal day of World War II, the outcome of the

invasion was to decide the fate of Europe. If the mission were a success then

control of the continent would be possible. If it were lost the control would

belong completely to the Axis armies.

The invasion of Normandy was history’s greatest amphibious operation. It

involved 4,400 ships, 11,000 fighters and bombers, 1,500 tanks, and

approximately 154,000 British, Canadian and American soldiers, 23,000 of those

soldiers arriving by parachute and glider. Of the forty-seven Allied divisions

used in the invasion twenty-one of them were American. Opposing them were about

sixty German divisions in France and the Low Countries. In the area of invasion

nine German infantry divisions and a Panzer divisions fortified themselves along

the Atlantic Coast.

The Germans believed that the invasion would come from an area known as Pas

de Calais. They believed this because this was the easiest place to deploy a

large number of troops. American planners created an army that would sail for

the Calais but only on paper. The planners hoped that the Germans would catch

wind of this and keep armies in the Calais area. They kept their Fifteenth Army

in the Calais area. This is how the coast of Normandy became the invasions site.

The morning of June 5 was chosen as the date. It was chosen based on the

brightness of moonlight, the lowest winds to hold down channel chop, and the

lowest tides. Unfortunately bad weather force General Dwight Eisenhower to

postpone the invasion for 24 hours. One day later the weather was still a

possible problem General Eisenhower launched the attack nevertheless.

Only a few hours before the attack was to take place two divisions of troops

were parachuted into the French countryside. These soldiers were placed there to

secure rail lines, bridges, roads, and airfields. These things were necessary

for the advancement of the Allied attack. The divisions successfully landed

undetected inside German lines. The attack on the beaches of Normandy was now

ready to take place.

American forces, led by Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, landed on the western beaches

of Utah and Omaha. British and Canadian troops, led by Gen. Bernard Montgomery

and Gen. Sir Miles Demsey, landed on the eastern beaches called Gold, Juno, and

Sword. Allied air forces controlled the skies but could not penetrate the walls

of well-entrenched Germans. Especially at Omaha Beach, at Omaha casualties came

to 2,000 soldiers. In contrast only 210 soldiers died at Utah beach. ?The came

ashore on Omaha Beach, the slogging, unglamorous men that no one envied,?

Conrnelius Ryan wrote in his account of events, The Longest Day. ?Some of the

men hadn?t a chance. German gunners on the cliffs looked almost directly down

on the waterlogged assault craft that heaved and pitched toward these sectors of

the beach. Awkward and slow, the assault boats were nearly stationary in the

water?Men plunged over the sides into deep water where they were immediately

picked off by machine gun fire.? The British and Canadian troops had fewer

casualties and met less resistance to the east. The British 3rd division

destroyed a battalion of panzer tanks that were sent in response to the attacks

on the beaches of Normandy.

By the end of D-day close to 150,000 Allied soldiers and their vehicles,

munitions, equipment, and provisions were unloaded on the beaches of Normandy.

In a week the troops totaled a half-million men. By July two million troops and

quarter of a million vehicles had landed in France.