



The Mother of All Landings: Supplying *OVERLORD*

FROM THE ARCHIVES



78th anniversary of V E Day.

“For the first time in eleven months there is no contact with the enemy. The victory which was won on Omaha and Utah Beaches has reached its climax. Today belongs to the men of this Army who fought and conquered the enemy from Normandy to the Elbe. There is no enemy situation to report for there is no longer an enemy to defeat.” First Army G2 INSUM as of 072400B, May 1945.

On the morning of 6 JUN 1944, the Allies were coming ashore for a landing operation they had only dreamed of just a few years earlier. Overcoming an angry sea and German fortifications, the Allies took to the beaches along the Normandy coast in France. The D-Day landings remain the largest seaborne landing in military history consisting of almost 200,000 naval personnel and over 150,000 Soldiers. Planning for the D-Day landings took over a year and supplying this landing force proved to be one of the most complex obstacles of World War II.

Planning for *OVERLORD*, as it was called, was intricate. Only following the success of *TORCH* in the North Africa Campaign were eyes shifted back to the European Theater. Mounds of materiel had already been pushed across North Africa and had begun to journey into Southern Europe with the Italian Campaign in July 1943. However, the logistics of moving a force up from Sicily through the Italian countryside presented major issues, many of which were not overcome until well after the Germans hastened their retreat. There was also the issue of the occupation of France, which proved to be a key strategic issue. Thus, Churchill’s concentrated approach to about-face from Africa to Europe allowed better buildup of forces for the eventual landing in 1944.

American supply operations were riddled with significant losses from 1941 thru 1943 due to the presence of U-boats conducting ruthless and indiscriminate warfare in the Atlantic. By early 1944, the threat—while ever present—had begun to wane. Furthermore, large convoys of ships moving materiel from the North American continent to Britain allowed for sufficient buildup. However, this was not the only threat to staged buildup. Britain had long been plagued by harassing attacks from the German Luftwaffe, and recent strikes from V-1 and new V-2 weapons made these supply hubs continuously vulnerable. To aid in the preservation of this materiel, deception tactics were used. These ranged from false reporting of targets being struck, to entirely fake forces comprised of balloons and empty buildings.

Building up to the day that *OVERLORD* was to be executed was *BOLERO*, an effort of great magnitude with the mission of staging all logistical needs for the Allies during the landing. *BOLERO* set the stage to provide the Allies with anything they needed. This included food, snacks, and beverages to uniforms, rucks, and pouches to artillery, small arms, and aircraft. All this materiel was shipped to Britain and distributed to hundreds of staging points around the country. In the month leading up to *OVERLORD*, 1.9 million tons of materiel was sent across the Atlantic alone. This materiel would be slowly trickled into France by sea via the Normandy landing point using temporary mulberry harbors. Even under fire, these harbors were quickly set up, and materiel began to be offloaded to prepare for the push further inland.

Despite over 12 months of planning, *OVERLORD* continued to encounter complications during and after the landings were complete. Disembarkation of supplies could not wait, and as a result a lot of materiel had to be offloaded under machine gun and artillery fire. The German Atlantic Wall also proved to be a major obstacle. Numerous barricades and fortifications were located just below the water line. This chewed through and ensnared many ships. Beach conditions also made landing and staging of vehicles difficult. Clearing obstacles on the beach under fire proved to be a dangerous task, but one that was necessary to finish the download of materiel. Between the lag in logistical staging and the intense fortification of the Germans entrenched just off the beach, this caused the Allies to make slow gains and fail to achieve their D+1 objectives. Forces that dropped in behind enemy lines were forced to extend their resources longer while waiting for resupply and reinforcement from the beach head.



Nonetheless, in the days following the initial landing operation, the Allies continued to push through German lines sending them into a defensive posture. Following the breakout from Normandy, the Allies then were charged with ways to ensure the logistics of a rapidly mobile force. Efforts to maintain the frontline proved costly. The main effort was the Red Ball Express, which ran constantly to supply the Allies in France. However, it was later determined that the cost of fuel for these deliveries was making it inefficient and unsustainable. Additional relief was provided following the success of Operation *DRAGOON* in southern France in August of 1944. This follow-on landing added an additional 150,000 Soldiers at the onset and bolstered it to over 500,000 by the time the entire force landed. With the Battle of the Atlantic won, and a steady flow of materiel now established across North Africa, Britain, and the southwest half of France, the days of the Axis powers in Europe were very much limited.

Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month

The rich heritage of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders spans the world and the depths of America’s history.

Generation after generation, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have established a proud legacy that reflects the spirit of our Nation — a country that values the contributions of everyone — who call America home.

Asian American and Pacific Islanders communities consist of approximately 50 ethnic groups speaking over 100 languages.

As we celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, we pay tribute to all the Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who have strived and fought for a brighter future for the next generation of leaders.



German Ghost tank, designed to produce a loud “ooooh” sound to make allied forces suspect the forests were haunted by spooky ghosts (Berlin, 1943)



World War II saw a pretty steep advancement in technology deployed by militaries around the world. More efficient tanks, small arms, and aircraft were found all over the place. However, a point that people like to poke at is the more strange things that the German’s made. While it is wonderful story fodder, the German Army did not in fact deploy a German Ghost Tank, that’s just silly.



History is being made every day at this command.

Headline Photo: American Soldiers landing on the French coast with a Coast Guard landing ship under heavy gun fire. 6 JAN 1944.

Bottom left, D-day breakout from Omaha Beach.

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Contact: usarmy.ria.asc.list.history@army.mil | Bldg. 390, 1 Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island, Illinois, 61299

Kevin Braafladt : Command Historian | Mark Struve : Assistant Historian | Kaleb Bemis : Archivist

