

D-DAY

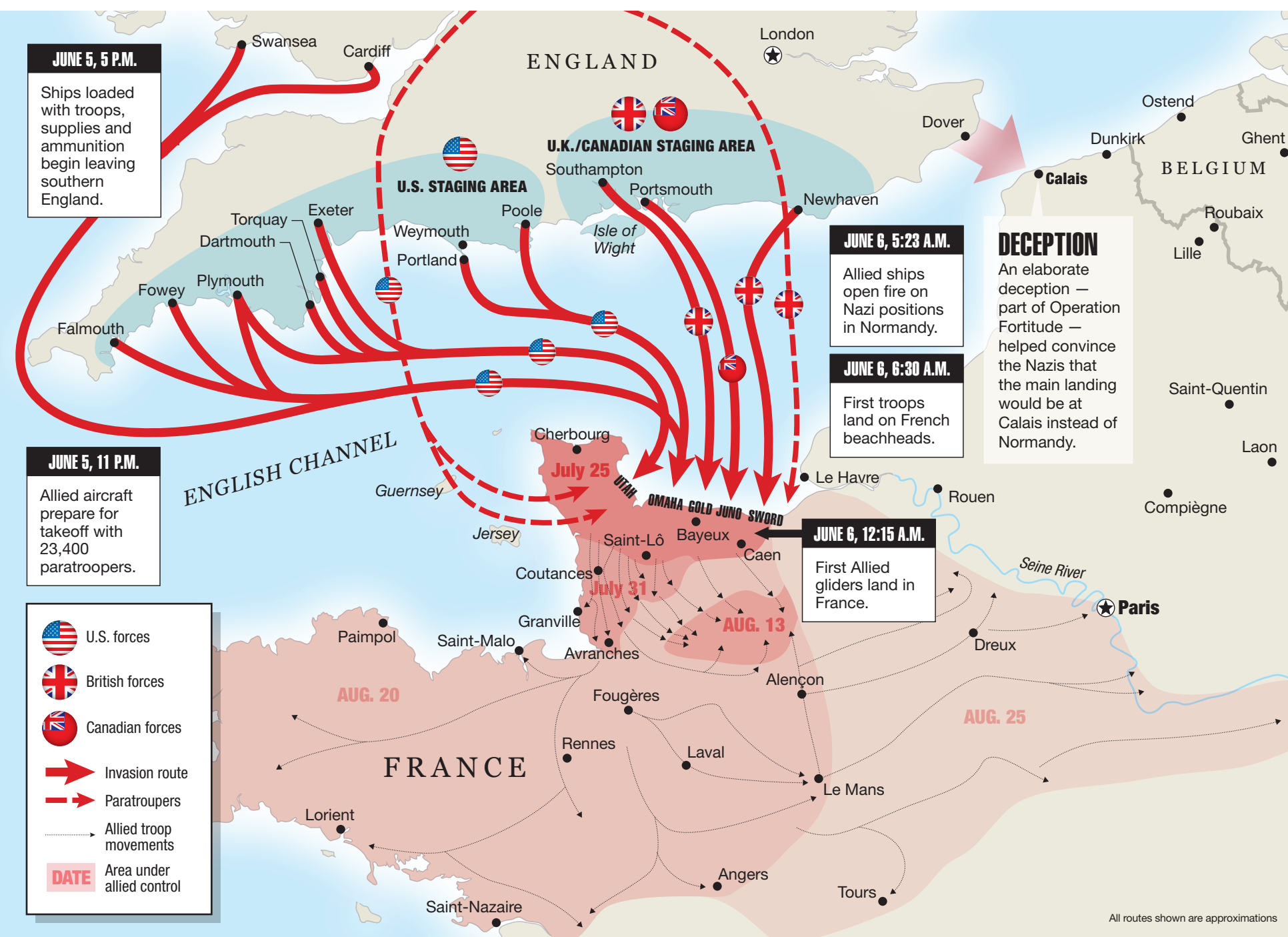
75th anniversary

ON TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 1944, the Allied invasion of the Nazi-controlled European mainland began. Code-named "Operation Overlord," it is still recognized as the largest military operation ever undertaken by air, land and sea — U.S., British and Canadian military numbered over 156,000.

Under the direction of the Supreme Allied Commander, U.S. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the troops descended on Normandy, the northern region of France that

sits 100 miles across the English Channel from England. Stormy weather delayed the invasion for 24 hours. But it had to proceed as moon phases and tides played a significant role in the operation. Aerial and naval bombing preceded the infantry invasion of the five beaches at Normandy — Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel had developed heavy fortifications along the

northern coast of France in anticipation of an invasion, though he did not know exactly when or where it would occur. Allied land forces, under the command of British Gen. Bernard Montgomery, endured heavy losses to take the beachheads, dodging mines, wooden stakes, barbed wire and other obstacles. More than 4,000 Allied troops, half of them American soldiers, lost their lives in the D-Day invasion, and thousands more were wounded. Nazi casualties were estimated at 4,000 to 9,000.



KEY PLAYERS



Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower

Appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in late 1943, he oversaw the entire liberation of Nazi-occupied Europe. He, along with six others, would be promoted to five-star general in December 1944.



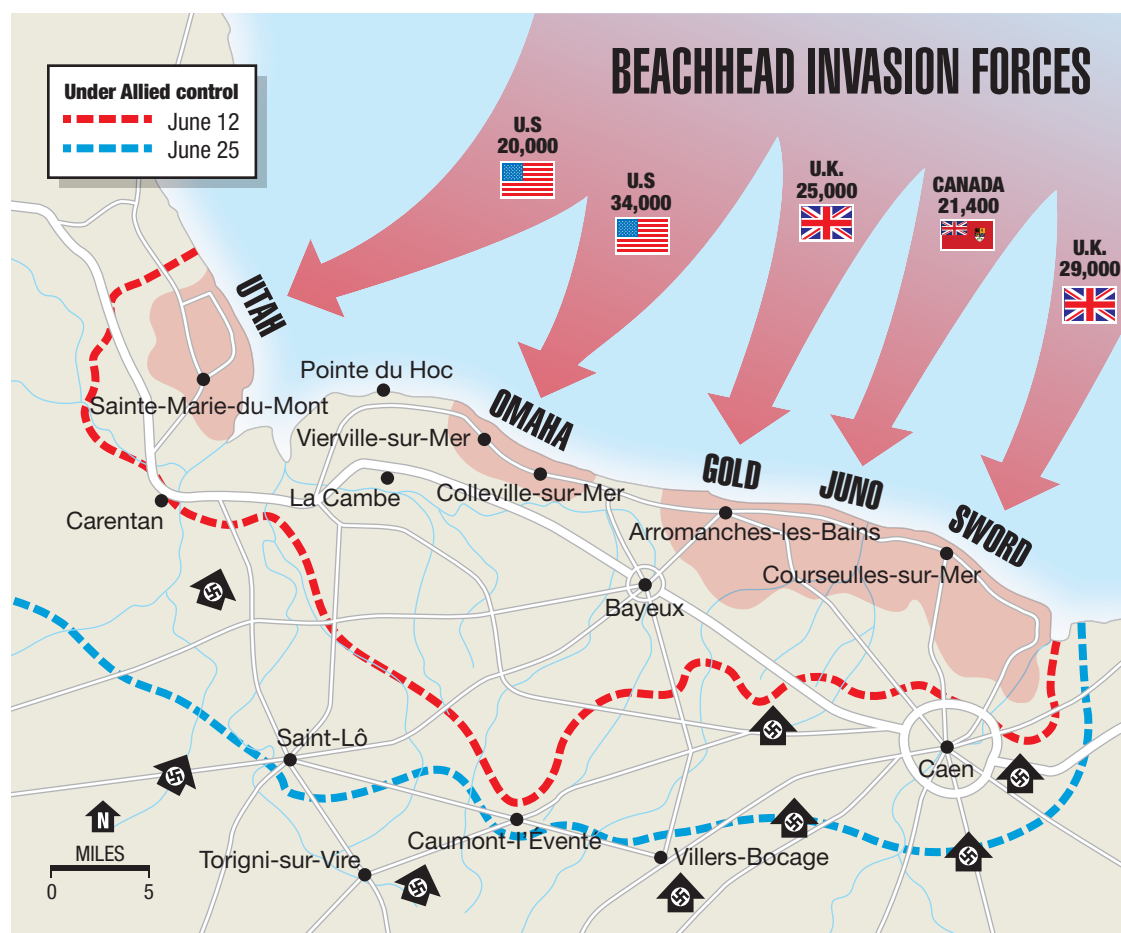
Gen. Bernard Montgomery

As Commander in Chief of the Allied Ground Forces for the invasion, he continued in command of the 21st Army Group for the rest of the campaign in Europe, eventually receiving the unconditional surrender of German forces in 1945.



Field Marshal Erwin Rommel

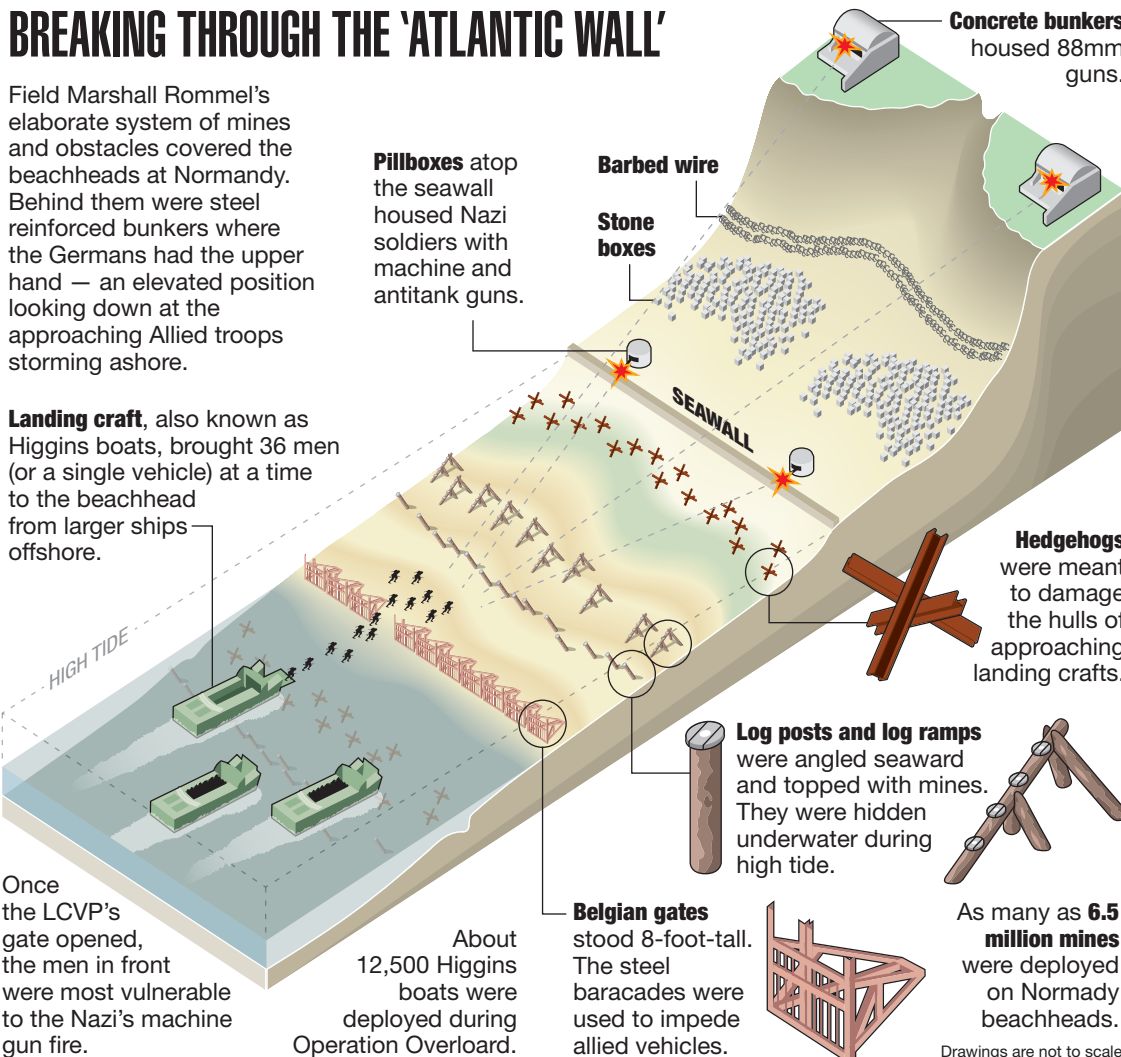
Rommel developed the coastal defenses along the Atlantic Wall in anticipation of an Allied invasion. He would commit suicide in October 1944 instead of facing trial after being implicated in a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler.



BREAKING THROUGH THE 'ATLANTIC WALL'

Field Marshall Rommel's elaborate system of mines and obstacles covered the beachheads at Normandy. Behind them were steel reinforced bunkers where the Germans had the upper hand — an elevated position looking down at the approaching Allied troops storming ashore.

Landing craft, also known as Higgins boats, brought 36 men (or a single vehicle) at a time to the beachhead from larger ships offshore.



THE NUMBERS



10,440

total aircraft, including bombers, fighters, gliders and air transports



6,330

total ships, including minesweepers, warships, destroyers and troop and cargo carriers



12,500

tanks and other ground vehicles landed at Normandy beaches

D-DAY CASUALTIES

Including those killed, wounded or missing:

Utah beach: Less than 300 Americans

Omaha beach: 2,400 Americans

Gold beach: 400 British

Juno beach: 1,200 Canadians

Sword beach: 630 British

Total Americans killed on D-Day: 2,499

Total other Allied troops killed on D-Day: 1,914

German losses: 4,000-9,000 casualties on D-Day

Entire Battle of Normandy:

- More than 209,000 Allied casualties; nearly 37,000 dead among the ground forces; 16,714 among the air forces
- An estimated 200,000 German troops killed or wounded
- 15,000-20,000 French civilians killed

Sources: Encyclopedia Britannica, BBC, Stars and Stripes, U.S. National D-Day Memorial Foundation

Graphic by Kevin Burkett | (Logansport, Indiana) Pharos-Tribune