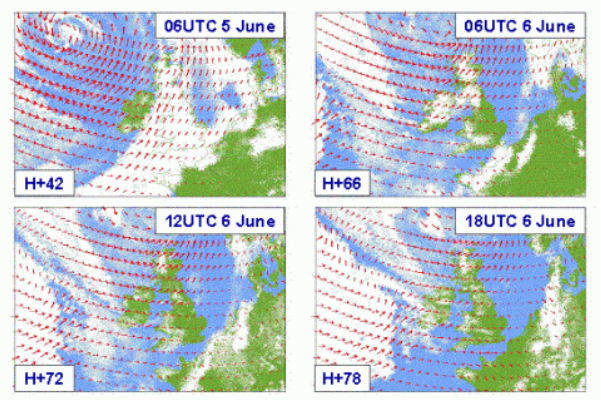
THE WEATHER BREAKS



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These weather maps depict the changing weather-pattern along the Normandy coast between June 5-6, 1944. The actual start date of the Allied invasion, originally set for June 5, depended on forecasts by Dr. James Stagg of the British Meteorological Office (serving as Group Captain and General Eisenhower's main "weatherman"). Images online, courtesy European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts.

Things did not look good when Dr. James Stagg of the British Meteorological Office (serving as Group Captain) briefed Eisenhower and his commanders on June 3.

Based on weather forecasts (which, at the time, could not reliably extend past 48 hours), a June 5th departure was impossible. (The link depicts the actual weather map for 5 June 1944.) The worst weather in twenty years had descended on the English Channel.

Then ... almost miraculous news was reported by a Royal Navy ship, stationed due south of Iceland.

Despite the current weather, the ship had reported sustained rising pressure in its area. Since that part of the North Atlantic often impacts Great Britain's weather patterns, an unexpected narrow window of opportunity had just opened for June 6th.

If the weather held, Allied troops would not have to wait two more weeks (which, it turns out, would have been utterly catastrophic to the outcome of the mission) to attempt the greatest amphibious invasion in history.

They would also avoid the risk that General Erwin Rommel (the German commander who was caught completely unaware in early June) would reposition his troops to better fortify the Normandy coast (just a small part of the "Atlantic Wall" which Hitler and his forces had created for Germany).

At 0415 hours, June 5th, Dr. Stagg briefed Eisenhower and the planning generals one last time. The unseasonable high, first reported by the British ship, would give Allied troops good weather throughout the night and into Tuesday afternoon.

The long-planned, risk-filled invasion would soon become reality.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-WEATHER-BREAKS-Normandy-Invasion

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-WEATHER-BREAKS-Normandy-Invasion

Questions 2 Ponder

Is There Such a Thing As Miracles?

The worst weather in 20 years has descended on the English Channel, likely delaying the Normandy Invasion. Then, astonishingly, the weather breaks.

At a time when weather forecasts cannot reliably extend beyond 48 hours, a Royal Navy ship, located due south of Iceland, reports an unexpected event. Despite the current weather, the barometric pressure is rising.

The rising pressure means there might be a very narrow window of opportunity for the Allies to make their crossing from Britain to Normandy.

The greatest amphibious invasion in history cannot move forward without a break in the weather. When that highly unexpected, extremely unlikely break actually occurs, the Allies commence their cross-channel expedition.

Sometimes people refer to these unexpected events as “miracles.” Do you think that is a good term? Why, or why not?

Media Stream



Dr. James Stagg - D-Day Weatherman
Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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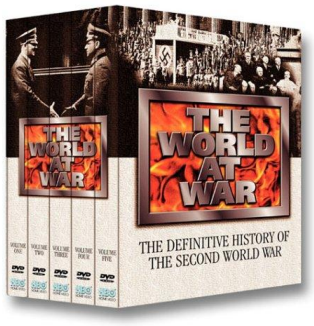

The World at War - Series
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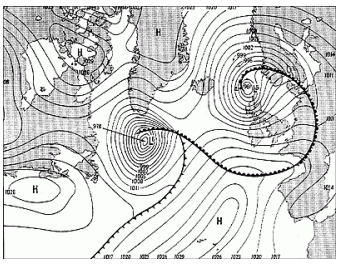

D-Day Weather Map - June 5, 1944
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English Channel - View from Space

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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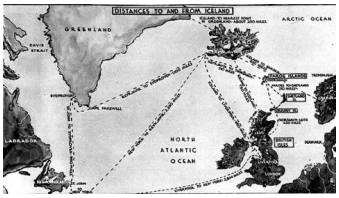

Iceland - Map of Distances to and from Iceland

Image published in the *London Illustrated News*, on 26 July 1941. Online, courtesy the sunnycv.com website.
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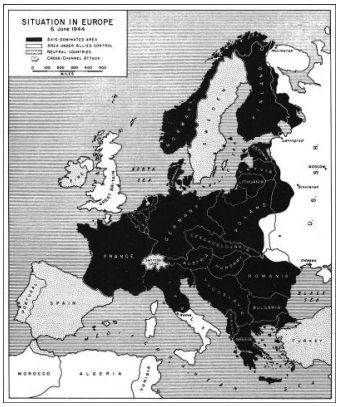

Situation in Europe - June 6, 1944

Image online, courtesy Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum.
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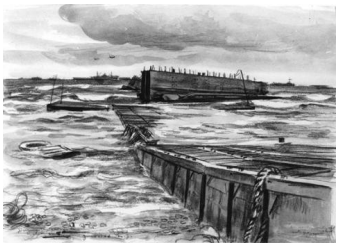

Stormy Weather: June, 1944 - Illustration

Image 88-193-TB online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.
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Stormy Weather: Normandy Beaches June, 1944 - Painting

Image 88-193-KP online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.
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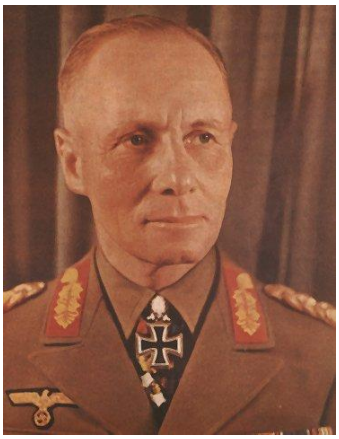

General Erwin Rommel

Image online, courtesy the quarterdeckmilitria.com.au website.
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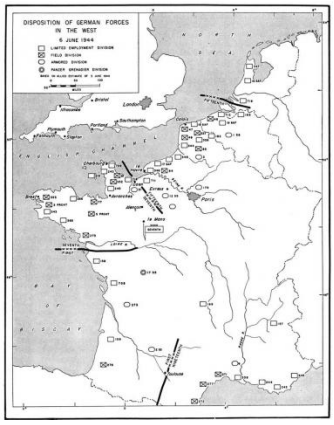

Disposition of German Forces - June 6, 1944

Image described above, online courtesy the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

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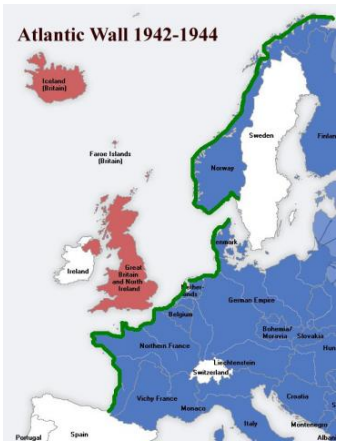

Atlantic Wall - German Conquests in WWII

Image by Uberstroker; online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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