



0. D-DAY COMMANDERS - Story Preface

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American troops load their gear and other supplies into landing craft which will take them to a beach along Normandy's coastline. The U.S. Army Center for Military History describes this picture: "American troops load onto landing craft at a port in Britain from where they will shove off for the invasion of Europe on D-Day. Undated - June 1944."

Eisenhower's chief of staff was Lt. General Walter Bedell Smith, an American. Most of his principal commanders were British:

- Air Chief Marshall Sir Arthur Tedder: Principal coordinator of air forces
- Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay: Invasion naval commander
- Air Chief Marshall Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory: Head of tactical air support
- Air Chief Marshall Sir Arthur T. Harris: Head of RAF Bomber Command
- Lt. General Carl Spaatz, an American: US Strategic Air Force Commander in Europe
- Gen. Sir Bernard Law Montgomery: Pro tem Commander of Allied Ground Forces

Once the troops were ashore, Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley (known as the "G.I's General") would lead the Americans (the First U.S. Army) while General Sir Miles Dempsey would lead the Second British Army (which included Canadians and some French troops).

Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., head of the Third U.S. Army, would join the battle after the Allies had achieved a secure foothold on the Continent.

The plan, which would give Allied Forces a chance to break the Nazi's hold on Western Europe, was called "Operation Overlord." Fraught with danger, it anticipated huge casualties as the men tried to secure Normandy's beachheads.

For paratroopers, including members of the 101st Airborne (called the "Screaming Eagles" whom General Eisenhower encouraged before they left England on June 5) and the 82nd Airborne ("All American") Divisions,

the likelihood of death was seventy percent.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/D-DAY-COMMANDERS-Normandy-Invasion>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/D-DAY-COMMANDERS-Normandy-Invasion>

Questions 2 Ponder

What's in a Name like "Operation Overlord?"

When the Allies began to plan the Normandy Invasion, the commanders named the mission "Operation Overlord."

What does "overlord" mean to you?

Do you think "Operation Overlord" was a good name in light of the mission's objectives? Explain your answer.

If you had to change the name of the Operation to something else, what would you call it? Why?

Who Are the Screaming Eagles?

With a 70% chance of being killed, as they paved the way for ground action, paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division had a "Rendezvous with Destiny," to use the words of their first commander, Major General William C. Lee.

These paratroopers, whose stories were told in the HBO series "Band of Brothers," were called-upon to do some of the most-dangerous work of the war in Europe.

Their official history contains these words:

The 101st continued training in England until D-day, 6 June 1944, when its pathfinders became the first Americans to set foot in occupied France.

Following them, the Screaming Eagles parachuted into Normandy and cleared the way for the 1st and 4th Infantry Divisions at Omaha and Utah beaches. After 33 days of continuous fighting, including a bitter battle for the town of Carentan, the 101st returned to England to prepare for future airborne operations.

On 17 September 1944, the 101st jumped into Holland during Operation "Market Garden." Holding a narrow corridor 16 miles long, through enemy territory, from Eindhoven to Grave, the division fought against heavy odds for ten days. The division then continued its role in the liberation of Holland, spending a total of 72 days in combat.

In November 1944, the 101st returned to France for a well-deserved rest, only to be called to action again in the Battle of the Bulge. While defending the critical transportation hub of Bastogne, Belgium, the 101st was surrounded by advancing enemy forces who demanded immediate surrender.

The acting division commander, Brigadier General Anthony C. McAuliffe, made history with his classic reply, "Nuts!" The siege was broken on 26 December 1944, but the fighting continued until 18 January 1945.

After moving through Alsace and the Ruhr Valley, the 101st captured Hitler's mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden. On 30 November 1945, eight months after the German surrender, the Screaming Eagles were inactivated.

Why do you think the paratroopers, of the 101st Airborne, were known as "Screaming Eagles?"

What does that name mean to you?

What would it be like to do a job knowing the risk of death was seventy percent?

Media Stream



Americans Loading for Cross-Channel Attack

U.S. National Archives

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Walter Bedell Smith

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Signal Corps.

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Sir Arthur Tedder

Image online, courtesy the historycentral.com website.

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Sir Arthur Tedder - Photo

Image online, courtesy Futura DTP (a Danish-language website).

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Sir Bertram Ramsay

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory

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Sir Arthur T. Harris

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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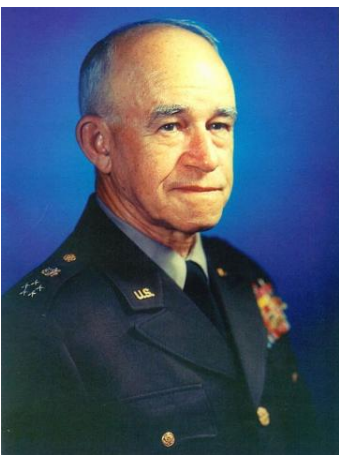


Carl Spaatz

Image online, courtesy the [ibiblio.org](http://www.ibiblio.org) website.

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Omar N. Bradley

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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D-Day - Positions Map

Image online, courtesy lucashistory blog.

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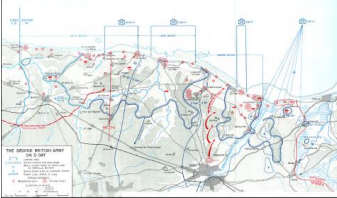


Sir Miles Dempsey

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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D-Day - Second British Army Map

Image described above, online courtesy HyperWar Foundation and iBiblio - The Public's Library and Digital Archive at University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill).

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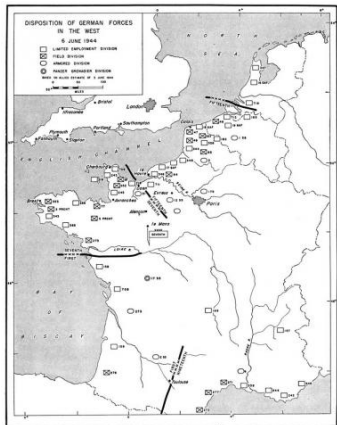


George S. Patton, Jr.

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

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Disposition of German Forces in the West - June 6, 1944

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

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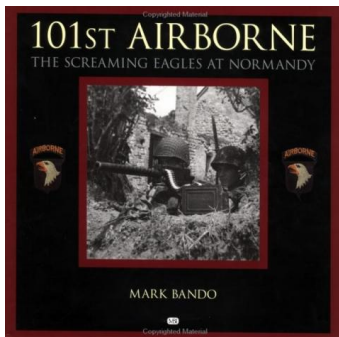
General Eisenhower Briefing Paratroopers

Image, described above, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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101st Airborne: The Screaming Eagles at Normandy

Image online, courtesy Zenith Press and Google Books.

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D-Day - All American Airborne Patch

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Operation Overlord - Planning the D-Day Invasion

A Note about the Universal Newsreels. Universal City Studios gave all of the Universal Newsreels to the American people in 1976. Now in the public domain, the entire collection is available at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland.

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