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American troops are onboard their landing craft, ready to leave Britain for their amphibious assault on German-occupied France. Their next stop will be Normandy; their next engagement will be the battle to break Germany's "Atlantic Wall." The U.S. Army Center for Military History describes this picture: "View of an LCT with American troops and equipment loaded aboard awaiting the signal for the assault against the continent. England. Undated - June 1944."

When Eisenhower gave the order to "go," most of the Allied assault troops had been aboard their transport vessels for hours. Berthed in various ports throughout the south of England, they were waiting for the weather to break.

Thanks to maps and photographs, from official military sources and national archives, we can look back to view important scenes from June 5, 1944.

- Coast Guard Flotilla 10, in the background, with British landing craft preparing to leave for the Normandy invasion. These landing craft brought US soldiers to Omaha Beach.
- Departing from various British ports as part of "Operation Neptune," the ships and troops reconnoitered in the North Atlantic, joining at a spot called "Picadilly Circus" and proceeding, as a convoy, to their individual destinations: USA to Utah and Omaha Beaches; Britain to Gold and Sword Beaches; Canada to Juno Beach.
- The four-hour crossing through rough waters was difficult.
- A convoy of Landing Craft Infantry (Large) made its way to Normandy's beaches on June 6th. Each LCI(L) - the shorthand term for such landing crafts - towed a barrage balloon to protect the vessel and its men from low-flying German aircraft. Some of the men on board attended Mass before they put themselves in harm's way.
- Landing Ship Tanks (there were about 1,051 LSTs used in WWII) were built to carry troops and transport supplies. On D-Day, USS LST-73 (which ferried troops of the 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division) was also protected by a gas-filled balloon.

- "Higgins Boats," the nickname for "Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel" (LCVP), also brought some of the 156,000 men to the shores of France on June 6th.
- "Rhino Barges" were used to off-load tanks and trucks - and ferry them ashore - during the first hours of the invasion.
- The U.S. Coast Guard rescued men whose ships, attacked by German firing power, sank before they reached the beach. Others were rescued nearer shore where they were given "First Aid" treatment.
- LCVPs brought Allied troops to the beaches. Some of the men carried M1903 rifles and M1 carbines. Ahead - for many - lay death and serious injury. For others, life in a beach foxhole (and fighting the dug-in Germans) would forever redefine the meaning of June 6th.
- American troops landed at Normandy beaches dubbed "Utah" and "Omaha." Canadians landed at "Juno," while the British were responsible for "Gold" and "Sword" beaches.
- With Nazi radar operating at Cherbourg, and on the Normandy beach itself, the Allies headed toward their landing destinations. German batteries (referred to in this French-language map as "Batterie Allemande") were waiting.
- When Allied planes (sent ahead to "soften up" the Germans before the invasion began) crashed that morning, no one needed a "black box" to explain what went wrong.

Hitler's efforts to isolate Great Britain, and to hold that country hostage, were about to end forever.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CROSSING-THE-CHANNEL-Normandy-Invasion>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/CROSSING-THE-CHANNEL-Normandy-Invasion>

Questions 2 Ponder

What Was It Like to Cross the Channel En Route to D-Day?

Allied forces had trained for months before beginning their cross-channel journey to France. Many men had been onboard their ships for days, waiting to leave when the weather finally improved.

Imagine you are one of the people who will make the four-hour crossing, of the English Channel, in a boat which tosses you all around, sprays water in your face and generally makes you nauseous, knowing that soon you will face enemy soldiers who will do all they can to end your life.

What thoughts are going through your head during that crossing?

Does the four-hour crossing, in choppy water, help or hinder your personal sense of well-being as you move closer and closer to the Normandy shore? Explain your answer.

If your homeland (for example, America) seems less likely to endure immediate threats from Hitler than Great Britain's homeland (for example), would that change your attitude about the crossing and your role in the Normandy Invasion? Why, or why not?

Media Stream



Americans Leaving Britain for Cross-Channel Attack

U.S. National Archives

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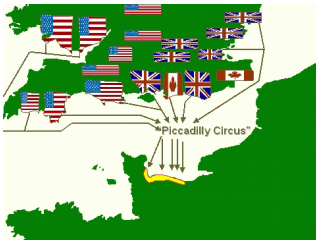
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Americans-Leaving-Britain-for-Cross-Channel-Attack>



British Landing Craft - Preparing to Leave

Image online, courtesy the uscg.mil website.

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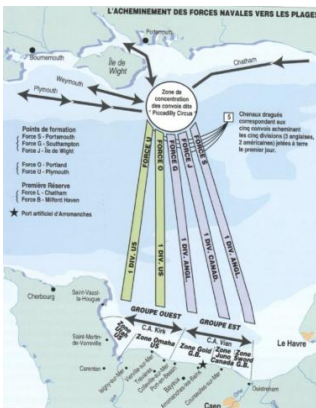
Routes From the English Coast to the Picadilly Circus Location

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Routes From Picadilly Circus to the Normandy Beaches

Image online, courtesy French-language Wikimedia Commons.

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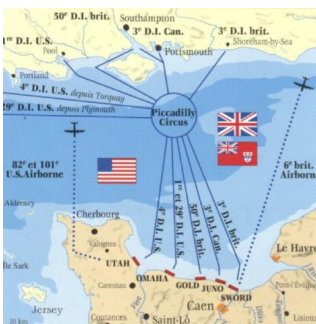
D-Day - Convoy Crossing the English Channel

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Normandy Invasion - Convoy Routes to the Beaches

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Photo # USAF 52409 AC "D-Day" invasion beach from the air, 6 June 1944



Normandy Beaches - Aerial View

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Photo # 80-G-252368 USS LCH(L)-217 en route to Normandy, 6 June 1944



D-Day - Barrage Balloon at Normandy

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Photo # 80-G-231247 Convoy of LCH(L)s en route to the Normandy invasion beaches, 6 June 1944



Convoy using Barrage Balloons - En route to Normandy

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Photo # 26-G-2407 Mass on board a LCI en route to the Normandy invasion beaches, 6 June 1944



Mass on Board - Enroute to Normandy

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Photo # 26-G-2358 LST approaches the Normandy coast, 6 June 1944



Supply Transports Enroute to Normandy

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Photo # SC 19062 USS LST-73 moves toward the Normandy invasion beaches, 6 June 1944



Troop Ships En route to Normandy

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Photo # 26-G-2343 Army troops wade ashore on "Rhino" Beach, 6 June 1944

Higgins Boats - Landing Craft at Normandy

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Photo # 26-G-2370 US8 LST-21 unloads British tanks and trucks off Normandy, 6 June 1944

Rhino Barges

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Photo # 26-G-2335 "Rhino" ferry and tug approaches the Normandy shore, 6 June 1944

Off-Loading Heavy Equipment at the Beach Landing Sites

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Photo # 26-G-2375 Coast Guardsmen rescue survivors off Normandy, June 1944

Equipment Ferried to the Beach on Rhino Barges

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Equipment-Ferried-to-the-Beach-on-Rhino-Barges>



Photo # 26-G-2378 Rescuing a survivor off Normandy, June 1944

Off-Shore Rescue Operations

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Photo # SC 320469 Troops rescue men from a sunken landing craft on "D-Day", 6 June 1944

Survivor Rescue

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Near-Shore Rescue

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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First Aid at the Landing Site

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Army Troops Wade Ashore

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Landing Craft at the Beaches

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Troops on the Landing Craft

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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The Tough Beach - Watercolor by Dwight Shepler

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Approaching Omaha Beach

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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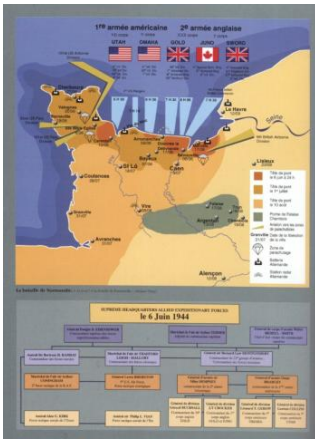


Omaha Beach - Troops Wade Ashore

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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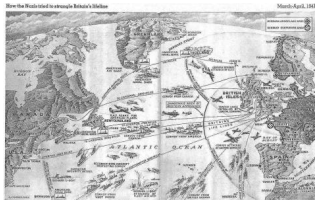


German Batteries - Map

Image online, courtesy French-language Wikimedia Commons.

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How the Nazis Tried to Strangle Britain's Lifeline

Map illustration online, courtesy University of San Diego.

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Eisenhower - Charge to the Invasion Forces

Historical footage, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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