

= Omaha Beach =

Omaha Beach was the code name for one of the five sectors of the Allied invasion of German @-@ occupied France in the Normandy landings on 6 June 1944 , during World War II . Omaha is on the coast of Normandy , France , facing the English Channel , and is 8 kilometers (5 mi) long , from east of Sainte @-@ Honorine @-@ des @-@ Pertes to west of Vierville @-@ sur @-@ Mer on the right bank of the Douve River estuary . Landings here were necessary to link the British landings to the east at Gold with the American landing to the west at Utah , thus providing a continuous lodgement on the Normandy coast of the Bay of the Seine . Taking Omaha was to be the responsibility of United States Army troops , with sea transport , mine sweeping , and a naval bombardment force provided by the United States Navy and Coast Guard as well as elements from the British , Canadian , Free French and other Allied navies .

On D @-@ Day , the untested 29th Infantry Division , along with nine companies of U.S. Army Rangers redirected from Pointe du Hoc , were to assault the western half of the beach . The battle @-@ hardened 1st Infantry Division was given the eastern half . The initial assault waves , consisting of tanks , infantry , and combat engineer forces , were carefully planned to reduce the coastal defenses and allow the larger ships of the follow @-@ up waves to land .

The primary objective at Omaha was to secure a beachhead of eight kilometres (5 miles) depth , between Port @-@ en @-@ Bessin and the Vire River , linking with the British landings at Gold to the east , and reaching the area of Isigny to the west to link up with VII Corps landing at Utah . Opposing the landings was the German 352nd Infantry Division . Of the 12 @-@ 020 men of the division , 6 @-@ 800 were experienced combat troops , detailed to defend a 53 @-@ kilometer (33 mi) front . The Germans were largely deployed in strongpoints along the coast ? the German strategy was based on defeating any seaborne assault at the water line .

Very little went as planned during the landing at Omaha . Difficulties in navigation caused the majority of landing craft to miss their targets throughout the day . The defenses were unexpectedly strong , and inflicted heavy casualties on landing U.S. troops . Under heavy fire , the engineers struggled to clear the beach obstacles ; later landings bunched up around the few channels that were cleared . Weakened by the casualties taken just in landing , the surviving assault troops could not clear the heavily defended exits off the beach . This caused further problems and consequent delays for later landings . Small penetrations were eventually achieved by groups of survivors making improvised assaults , scaling the bluffs between the most heavily defended points . By the end of the day , two small isolated footholds had been won , which were subsequently exploited against weaker defenses further inland , thus achieving the original D @-@ Day objectives over the following days .

= = Terrain and defenses = =

Omaha was bounded at either end by large rocky cliffs . The crescent @-@ shaped beach presented a gently sloping tidal area averaging 300 m (330 yd) between low and high @-@ water marks . Above the tide line was a bank of shingle 2 @-@ 5 m (8 ft) high and up to 15 m (49 ft) wide in places . At the western end , the shingle bank rested against a stone (further east becoming wood) sea wall which ranged from 1 @-@ 5 ? 4 m (5 ? 13 ft) in height . For the remaining two thirds of the beach after the seawall ended , the shingle lay against a low sand embankment . Behind the sand embankment and sea wall was a level shelf of sand , narrow at either end and extending up to 200 m (220 yd) inland in the center , and behind that rose steep escarpments or bluffs 30 ? 50 m (33 ? 55 yd) high , which dominated the whole beach and were cut into by small wooded valleys or draws at five points along the beach , codenamed west to east D @-@ 1 , D @-@ 3 , E @-@ 1 , E @-@ 3 and F @-@ 1 .

The German defensive preparations and the lack of any defense in depth indicated that their plan was to stop the invasion at the beaches . Four lines of obstacles were constructed in the intertidal zone . The first , a non @-@ contiguous line with a small gap in the middle of Dog White and a larger gap across the whole of Easy Red , was 250 m (270 yd) out from the highwater line and

consisted of 200 Belgian Gates with mines lashed to the uprights . 30 meters (33 yd) behind these was a continuous line of logs driven into the sand pointing seaward , every third one capped with an anti @-@ tank mine . This defensive measure was not as effective as the Germans would have wished . Another 30 meters (33 yd) shoreward of this line was a continuous line of 450 ramps sloping towards the shore , also with mines attached and designed to force flat @-@ bottomed landing craft to ride up and either flip or detonate the mine . The final line of obstacles was a continuous line of hedgehogs 150 meters (160 yd) from the shoreline . The area between the shingle bank and the bluffs was both wired and mined , and mines were also scattered on the bluff slopes . To some extent , the German barricades set up to prevent tanks advancing on the shores became useful to Allied infantry as they provided cover from machine gun and small arms fire .

Coastal troop deployments , comprising five companies of infantry , were concentrated mostly at 15 strongpoints called Widerstandsnester (" resistance nests ") , numbered WN @-@ 60 in the east to WN @-@ 74 near Vierville in the west , located primarily around the entrances to the draws and protected by minefields and wire . Positions within each strongpoint were interconnected by trenches and tunnels . As well as the basic weaponry of rifles and machine guns , more than 60 light artillery pieces were deployed at these strongpoints . The heaviest pieces were located in eight gun casemates and four open positions while the lighter guns were housed in 35 pillboxes . A further 18 anti @-@ tank guns completed the disposition of artillery targeting the beach . Areas between the strongpoints were lightly manned with occasional trenches , rifle pits , and 85 machine @-@ gun emplacements . No area of the beach was left uncovered , and the disposition of weapons meant that flanking fire could be brought to bear anywhere along the beach .

Allied intelligence had identified the coastal defenders as a reinforced battalion (800 ? 1000 men) of the 716th Infantry Division . This was a static defensive division estimated to comprise up to 50 % of non @-@ German troops , mostly Russian volunteers and German Volksdeutsche . The recently activated but capable 352nd Infantry Division was believed to be 30 kilometres (19 mi) inland at Saint @-@ Lô and was regarded as the most likely force to be committed to a counter @-@ attack . As part of Rommel 's strategy to concentrate defenses at the water 's edge , the 352nd had been ordered forward in March , taking over responsibility for the defense of the portion of the Normandy coast in which Omaha was located . As part of this reorganization , the 352nd also took under its command two battalions of the 726th Grenadier Regiment (part of the 716th Static Infantry Division) as well as the 439th Ost @-@ Battalion , which had been attached to the 726th . Omaha Beach fell mostly within ' Coast Defense Sector 2 ' , which stretched westward from Colleville and allocated to the 916th Grenadier Regiment , with the third battalion 726th Grenadier Regiment attached . Two companies of the 726th manned strongpoints in the Vierville area while two companies of the 916th occupied the St. Laurent area strongpoints in the center of Omaha . These positions were supported by the artillery of the first and fourth battalions of the 352nd Artillery Regiment (twelve 105 mm and four 150 mm howitzers respectively) . The two remaining companies of the 916th formed a reserve at Formigny , two miles (3 km) inland . East of Colleville , ' Coast Defense Sector 3 ' was the responsibility of the remainder of the 726th Grenadier Regiment . Two companies were deployed at the coast , one in the most easterly series of strongpoints , with artillery support provided by the third battalion of the 352nd Artillery Regiment . The area reserve , comprising the two battalions of the 915th Grenadier Regiment and known as ' Kampfgruppe Meyer ' , was located south @-@ east of Bayeux outside the immediate Omaha area .

The failure to identify the reorganization of the defenses was a rare intelligence breakdown for the Allies . Post @-@ action reports still documented the original estimate and assumed that the 352nd had been deployed to the coastal defenses by chance , a few days previously , as part of an anti @-@ invasion exercise . The source of this inaccurate information came from German prisoners of war from the 352nd Infantry Division captured on D @-@ Day as reported by the 16th Infantry S @-@ 3 D @-@ Day Action Report . In fact , Allied intelligence had already become aware of the relocation of the 352nd Infantry Division on June 4 . This information was passed on to V Infantry Corps and 1st Infantry Division HQ through 1st Army , but at that late stage in the operations , no plans were changed .

= = Plan of attack = =

Omaha was divided into ten sectors , codenamed (from west to east) : Charlie , Dog Green , Dog White , Dog Red , Easy Green , Easy White , Easy Red , Fox Green , Fox White , and Fox Red . The initial assault was to be made by two Regimental Combat Teams (RCT) , supported by two tank battalions , with two battalions of Rangers also attached . The infantry regiments were organized into three battalions each of around 1 @, @ 000 men . Each battalion was organized as three rifle companies each of up to 240 men , and a support company of up to 190 men . Infantry companies A through D belonged to the 1st battalion of a regiment , E through H to the 2nd , I through M to the 3rd ; the letter ? J ? was not used . (Individual companies will be referred to in this article by company and regiment , e.g. Company A of the 116th RCT will be ' A / 116 ') . In addition , each battalion had a headquarters company of up to 180 men . The tank battalions consisted of three companies , A through C , each of 16 tanks , while the Ranger battalions were organized into six companies , A through F , of around 65 men per company . V Corps ' 56th Signal Battalion was responsible for communications on Omaha Beach with the fleet offshore , especially routing requests for naval gunfire support to the destroyers and USS Arkansas .

The 116th RCT of the 29th Infantry Division was to land two battalions in the western four beaches , to be followed 30 minutes later by the third battalion . Their landings were to be supported by the tanks of the 743rd Tank Battalion ; two companies swimming ashore in amphibious DD tanks and the remaining company landing directly onto the beach from assault craft . To the left of the 116th RCT the 16th RCT of the 1st Infantry Division was also to land two battalions with the third following 30 minutes after , on Easy Red and Fox Green at the eastern end of Omaha . Their tank support was to be provided by the 741st Tank Battalion , again two companies swimming ashore and the third landed conventionally . Three companies of the 2nd Ranger Battalion were to take a fortified battery at Pointe du Hoc , three miles (5 km) to the west of Omaha . Meanwhile , C Company 2nd Rangers was to land on the right of the 116th RCT and take the positions at Pointe de la Percée . The remaining companies of 2nd Rangers and the 5th Ranger Battalion were to follow up at Pointe du Hoc if that action proved to be successful , otherwise they were to follow the 116th into Dog Green and proceed to Pointe du Hoc overland .

The landings were scheduled to start at 06 : 30 , " H @-@ Hour " , on a flooding tide , preceded by a 40 @-@ minute naval and 30 @-@ minute aerial bombardment of the beach defenses , with the DD tanks arriving five minutes before H @-@ Hour . The infantry were organized into specially equipped assault sections , 32 men strong , one section to a landing craft , with each section assigned specific objectives in reducing the beach defenses . Immediately behind the first landings the Special Engineer Task Force was to land with the mission of clearing and marking lanes through the beach obstacles . This would allow the larger ships of the follow @-@ up landings to get through safely at high tide . The landing of artillery support was scheduled to start at H + 90 minutes while the main buildup of vehicles was to start at H + 180 minutes . At H + 195 minutes two further Regimental Combat Teams , the 115th RCT of the 29th Infantry Division and the 18th RCT of the 1st Infantry Division were to land , with the 26th RCT of the 1st Infantry Division to be landed on the orders of the V Corps commander .

The objective was for the beach defenses to be cleared by H + 2 hours , whereupon the assault sections were to reorganize , continuing the battle in battalion formations . The draws were to be opened to allow traffic to exit the beach by H + 3 hours . By the end of the day , the forces at Omaha were to have established a bridgehead five miles (8 km) deep , linked up with the British 50th Division landed at Gold to the east , and be in position to move on Isigny the next day , linking up with the American VII Corps at Utah to the west .

The assault force expected to execute this plan totaled over 34 @, @ 000 men and 3 @, @ 300 vehicles , with naval support provided by two battleships , three cruisers , 12 destroyers , and 105 other ships . These were provided predominantly by the US Navy , but also included British and Free French warships . The 16th RCT (swollen by 3 @, @ 502 men and 295 vehicles attached for the beach landing) numbered 9 @, @ 828 troops , 919 vehicles and 48 tanks . To move this force required 2 transport ships , 6 Landing Ships , Tank (LSTs) , 53 LCTs , 5 Landing Craft Infantry (

Large) (LCI / (L) s) , 81 LCVPs , 18 LCAs , 13 other landing craft , and about 64 DUKWs . Assault craft were crewed by the US Navy , US Coast Guard and the British Royal Navy .

= = Initial assault = =

Despite these preparations , very little went according to plan . Ten landing craft were swamped by the rough seas before they reached the beach , and several others stayed afloat only because their passengers bailed water out with their helmets . Seasickness was prevalent among the troops waiting offshore . On the 16th RCT front , the landing boats passed struggling men in life preservers and on rafts , survivors of the DD tanks which had sunk in the rough sea . Navigation of the landing vehicles was made difficult by the smoke and mist obscuring the landmarks they were to use in guiding themselves in , while a strong current pushed them continually eastward .

As the boats approached to within a few hundred yards of the shore , they came under increasingly heavy fire from automatic weapons and artillery . The force discovered only then the ineffectiveness of the pre @-@ landing bombardment . Delayed by the weather and attempting to avoid the landing craft as they ran in , the bombers had dropped their ordnance too far inland , as a result of an order to wait 10 seconds extra before dropping their bombs . In the bombers , this translated to several miles inland , detonating some landmines that were planted by the Germans , but having no real effect on the coastal defenses . Another issue was the equipping of contact @-@ fuse bombs instead of time @-@ delay fuses in a tradeoff between more craters , meaning more cover for advancing infantry , or no craters , meaning easy vehicle access to the beach .

= = = Tank landings = = =

Because sea conditions were so rough , the decision was made for the 116th RCT to carry the DD tanks of the 743rd tank battalion all the way to the beach , after 27 of the initial 29 DD tanks of the 741st tank battalion swamped while wading to shore . Coming in opposite the heavily defended Vierville draw , Company B of the 743rd Tank Battalion lost all but one of its officers and half of its DD tanks . The other two companies landed to the left of B / 743 without initial loss . On the 16th RCT front , the two DD tanks from the 741st tank battalion that had survived the swim ashore were joined by three others that were landed directly onto the beach because of their LCT 's damaged ramp . The remaining tank company managed to land 14 of its 16 tanks (although three of these were quickly knocked out) .

= = = Infantry landings = = =

Of the nine companies landing in the first wave , only Company A of the 116th RCT at Dog Green and the Rangers to their right landed where intended . E / 116 , aiming for Easy Green , ended up scattered across the two beaches of the 16th RCT area . G / 116 , aiming for Dog White , opened up a 1 @,@ 000 @-@ yard (900 m) gap between themselves and A / 116 to their right when they landed at Easy Green instead . I / 16 drifted so far east it did not land for another hour and a half .

As infantry disembarked from the landing craft , they often found themselves on sandbars 50 to 100 yards (45 to 90 m) out . To reach the beach they had to wade through water sometimes neck deep , and they still had 200 yards (180 m) or more to go when they did reach shore . Those that made it to the shingle did so at a walking pace because they were so heavily laden . Most sections had to brave the full weight of fire from small arms , mortars , artillery , and interlocking fields of heavy machine gun fire . Where the naval bombardment set grass fires burning , as it had at Dog Red opposite the Les Moulins strongpoint , the smoke obscured the landing troops and prevented effective fire from being laid down by the defenders . Some sections of G / 116 and F / 116 were able to reach the shingle bank relatively unscathed , though the latter became disorganized after the loss of their officers . G / 116 was able to retain some cohesion , but this was soon lost as they made their way westwards under fire along the shingle in an attempt to reach their assigned objectives . The scattering of the boats was most evident on the 16th RCT front , where parts of E /

16 , F / 16 and E / 116 had intermingled , making it difficult for sections to come together to improvise company assaults that might have reversed the situation caused by the mis @-@ landings . Those scattered sections of E / 116 landing at Easy Red were able to escape heavy casualties , although , having encountered a deep runnel after being landed on a sandbank , they were forced to discard most of their weapons to make the swim ashore .

Casualties were heaviest among the troops landing at either end of Omaha . In the east at Fox Green and the adjacent stretch of Easy Red , scattered elements of three companies were reduced to half strength by the time they gained the relative safety of the shingle , many of them having crawled the 300 yards (270 m) of beach just ahead of the incoming tide . Within 15 minutes of landing at Dog Green on the western end of the beach , A / 116 had been cut to pieces , the leaders among the 120 or so casualties , the survivors reduced to seeking cover at the water 's edge or behind obstacles . The smaller Ranger company to their right had fared a little better , having made the shelter of the bluffs , but were also down to half strength .

L / 16 eventually landed , 30 minutes late , to the left of Fox Green , taking casualties as the boats ran in and more as they crossed the 200 yards (180 m) of beach . The terrain at the very eastern end of Omaha gave them enough protection to allow the 125 survivors to organize and begin an assault of the bluffs . They were the only company in the first wave able to operate as a unit . All the other companies were , at best , disorganized , mostly leaderless and pinned down behind the shingle with no hope of carrying out their assault missions . At worst , they had ceased to exist as fighting units . Nearly all had landed at least a few hundred yards off target , and in an intricately planned operation where each section on each boat had been assigned a specific task , this was enough to throw the whole plan off .

= = = Engineer landings = = =

Like the infantry , the engineers had been pushed off their targets , and only five of the 16 teams arrived at their assigned locations . Three teams came in where there were no infantry or armor to cover them . Working under heavy fire , the engineers set about their task of clearing gaps through the beach obstacles ? work made more difficult by loss of equipment , and by infantry passing through or taking cover behind the obstacles they were trying to blow . They also suffered heavy casualties as enemy fire set off the explosives they were working with . Eight men of one team were dragging their pre @-@ loaded rubber boat off the LCM when artillery hit ; only one survived the resulting detonation of their supplies . Another team had just finished laying its explosives when the area was struck by mortar fire . The premature explosion of the charges killed or wounded 19 engineers , as well as some nearby infantry . Nevertheless , the engineers succeeded in clearing six gaps , one each at Dog White and Easy Green on the 116th RCT front , the other four at Easy Red on the 16th RCT front . They had suffered casualties of over 40 % .

= = Second assault wave = =

With the initial targets unaccomplished , the second and larger wave of assault landings brought in reinforcements , support weapons and headquarter elements at 07 : 00 to face nearly the same difficulties as had the first . The second wave was larger , and so the defenders ' fire was less concentrated . The survivors of the first wave were unable to provide effective covering fire , and in places the fresh landing troops suffered casualty rates as high as those of the first wave . Failure to clear paths through the beach obstacles also added to the difficulties of the second wave . In addition , the incoming tide was beginning to hide the remaining obstacles , causing high attrition among the landing craft before they had reached the shore . As in the initial landings , difficult navigation caused disruptive mislandings , scattering the infantry and separating vital headquarters elements from their units .

On the 116th RCT front , the remainder of the 1st Battalion , B / 116 , C / 116 and D / 116 , were due to land in support of A / 116 at Dog Green . Three boats , including their headquarters and beach @-@ master groups , landed too far west , under the cliffs . Their exact casualties in getting

across the beach are unknown , but the one @-@ third to one @-@ half that made it to shore spent the rest of the day pinned down by snipers . Not all sections of the badly scattered B / 116 landed there , but those that did were quickly forced to join those survivors of A / 116 fighting for survival at the water 's edge . Two companies of 2nd Rangers , coming in later on the edge of Dog Green , did manage to reach the seawall , but at the cost of half their strength .

To the left of Dog Green sat Dog White , between the Vierville and Les Moulins strongpoints (defending draws D @-@ 1 and D @-@ 3) ; and here was a different story . As a result of earlier mis @-@ landings , and now because of their own mis @-@ landing , the troops of C / 116 found themselves alone at Dog White , with a handful of tanks from the first wave in sight . The smoke from the grass fires covering their advance up the beach , they gained the seawall with few casualties , and were in better shape than any unit on the 116th RCT front so far . Although the 1st Battalion was effectively disarmed of its heavy weapons when D / 116 suffered a disastrous landing , the buildup at Dog White continued . C / 116 was joined by the 5th Ranger Battalion almost in its entirety . The Ranger commander , recognizing the situation at Dog Green on the run @-@ in , ordered the assault craft to divert into Dog White . Like the C / 116 , the smoke covered their advance , although the 2nd Rangers were caught out on the right flank of the Ranger 's landing . This was where the 116th RCT regimental command group , including the 29th Division assistant commander Brigadier General Norman " Dutch " Cota , was able to land relatively unscathed .

Further east , the strongpoint defenses were effective . On the Dog Red / Easy Green boundary , the defenses around the Les Moulins strongpoint took a heavy toll on the remaining 2nd Battalion , with H / 116 and headquarters elements struggling ashore there . The survivors joined the remnants of F / 116 behind the shingle , and here the battalion commander was able to organize 50 men for an improvised advance across the shingle . A further advance up the bluffs just east of Les Moulins was too weak to have any effect and was forced back down . To their left , mainly between the draws on the Easy Green / Easy Red boundary , the 116th RCT 's support battalion landed without too much loss , although they did become scattered , and were too disorganized to play any immediate part in an assault on the bluffs .

On the 16th RCT front , at the eastern end of Easy Red , was another area between strongpoints . This allowed G / 16 and the support battalion to escape complete destruction in their advance up the beach . Nevertheless , most of G / 16 's 63 casualties for the day came before they had reached the shingle . The other 2nd Battalion company landed in the second wave ; H / 16 came in a few hundred yards to the left , opposite the E @-@ 3 draw , and suffered for it ? they were put out of action for several hours .

On the eastern @-@ most beach , Fox Green , elements of five different companies had become entangled , and the situation was little improved by the equally disorganized landings of the second wave . Two more companies of the 3rd Battalion joined the melee , and , having drifted east in the first wave , I / 16 finally made their traumatic landing on Fox Green , at 08 : 00 . Two of their six boats were swamped on their detour to the east , and as they came in under fire , three of the four remaining boats were damaged by artillery or mines , and the fourth was hung up on an obstacle . A captain from this company found himself senior officer , and in charge of the badly out of shape 3rd Battalion .

= = = American situation = = =

Along with the infantry landing in the second wave , supporting arms began to arrive , meeting the same chaos and destruction as had the rifle companies . Combat engineers , tasked with clearing the exits and marking beaches , landed off @-@ target and without their equipment . Additionally , with the exception of DD tanks , they did not have the benefit of " Hobart 's Funnies " (a wide range of British @-@ designed , specially adapted armored vehicles specifically designed to penetrate German fixed defenses) which had been offered to American commanders , and were accepted . The Americans requested all " Funnies " that were based on the Sherman M4 tank chassis , but the vehicles could not be produced in enough quantity to supply both the Commonwealth forces and American forces in time for D @-@ Day . Even if enough could have been produced in time for D

@-@ Day there were not enough LCTs available to carry the DD and wading tanks and the " Funnies " .

Many half @-@ tracks , jeeps and trucks foundered in deep water ; those that made it ashore soon became jammed up on the narrowing beach , making easy targets for the German defenders . Most of the radios were lost , making the task of organizing the scattered and dispirited troops even more difficult , and those command groups that did make the shore found their effectiveness limited to their immediate vicinity . Except for a few surviving tanks and a heavy weapons squad here or there , the assault troops had only their personal weapons , which , having been dragged through surf and sand , invariably needed cleaning before they could be used .

The survivors at the shingle , many facing combat for the first time , found themselves relatively well @-@ protected from small arms fire , but still exposed to artillery and mortars . In front of them lay heavily mined flats exposed to active fire from the bluffs above . Morale naturally became a problem . Many groups were leaderless and witnesses to the fate of neighboring troops and landings coming in around them . Wounded men on the beach were drowning in the incoming tide and incoming landing craft were being pounded and set ablaze .

= = = German situation = = =

As late as 13 : 35 the German 352nd division was reporting that the assault had been hurled back into the sea . From the German vantage point at Pointe de la Percée , overlooking the whole beach from the western end , it seemed that the assault had been stopped at the beach . An officer there noted that troops were seeking cover behind obstacles , and counted ten tanks burning . By 07 : 35 , the third battalion of the 726th Grenadier Regiment , defending Draw F @-@ 1 on Fox Green beach , was reporting that 100 ? 200 American troops had penetrated the front , with troops inside the wire at WN @-@ 62 and WN @-@ 61 attacking the Germans from the rear . Casualties among the defenders were mounting . While the 916th regiment , defending the center of the 352nd zone , was reporting that the landings had been frustrated , it was also requesting reinforcements . The request could not be met , because the situation elsewhere in Normandy was becoming more urgent for the defenders . The reserve regiment , the 915th of the 352nd division , which had earlier been ordered against the American airborne landings to the west of Omaha , was diverted to the Gold zone east of Omaha , the defenses there having crumbled .

= = Breakthrough = =

The key geographical features that had influenced the landings also influenced the next phase of the battle : the draws , the natural exits off the beaches , were the main targets in the initial assault plan . The strongly concentrated defenses around these draws meant that the troops landing near them quickly became incapable of carrying out a further assault . In the areas between the draws , at the bluffs , units were able to land in greater strength . Defenses were also weaker away from the draws , thus most advances were made there .

The other key aspect of the next few hours was leadership . The original plan was in tatters , with so many units mis @-@ landed , disorganized and scattered . Most commanders had fallen or were absent , and there were few ways to communicate , other than shouted commands . In places , small groups of men , sometimes scratched together from different companies , in some cases from different divisions , were " ... inspired , encouraged or bullied ... " out of the relative safety of the shingle , starting the grueling task of reducing the defenses atop the bluffs .

= = = Assaulting the bluffs = = =

Survivors of C company 2nd Rangers in the first wave landed on Dog Green around 06 : 45 ; by 07 : 30 , they had scaled the cliffs near Dog White and the Vierville draw . They were joined later by a mis @-@ landed section from B / 116 , and this group spent the better part of the day tying up and eventually taking WN @-@ 73 , which defended draw D @-@ 1 at Vierville .

At 07 : 50 , Cota led the charge off of Dog Green , between WN @-@ 68 and WN @-@ 70 , by forcing gaps in the wire with a Bangalore torpedo and wire cutters . Twenty minutes later , the 5th Rangers joined the advance , and blew more openings . The command party established themselves at the top of the bluff , and elements of G / 116 and H / 116 joined them , having earlier moved laterally along the beach , and now the narrow front had widened to the east . Before 09 : 00 , small parties from F / 116 and B / 116 reached the crests just east of Dog White . The right flank of this penetration was covered by the survivors of the 2nd Rangers ? A and B companies , who had independently fought their way to the top between 08 : 00 and 08 : 30 . They took WN @-@ 70 (already heavily damaged by naval shells) , and joined the 5th Rangers for the move inland . By 09 : 00 more than 600 American troops , in groups ranging from company sized to just a few men , had reached the top of the bluff opposite Dog White and were advancing inland .

The 3rd battalion 116th RCT forced its way across the flats and up the bluff between WN @-@ 66 (which defended the D @-@ 3 draw at Les Moulins) , and WN @-@ 65 (defending the E @-@ 1 draw) . They advanced in small groups , supported by the heavy weapons of M / 116 , who were held at the base of the bluff . Progress was slowed by mines on the slopes of the bluff , but elements of all three rifle companies , as well as a stray section of G / 116 , had gained the top by 09 : 00 , causing the defenders at WN @-@ 62 to mistakenly report that both WN @-@ 65 and WN @-@ 66 had been taken .

Between 07 : 30 and 08 : 30 elements of G / 16 , E / 16 , and E / 116 came together and climbed the bluffs at Easy Red , between WN @-@ 64 (defending the E @-@ 1 draw) and WN @-@ 62 (the E @-@ 3 draw) . At 09 : 05 , German observers reported that WN @-@ 61 was lost , and that one machine gun was still firing from WN @-@ 62 . 150 men , mostly from G / 16 , having reached the top hampered more by minefields than by enemy fire , continued south to attack the WN @-@ 63 command post on the edge of Colleville . Meanwhile , E / 16 , led by Second Lieutenant John M. Spalding and Captain Robert L. Sheppard V , turned westward along the top of the bluffs , engaging in a two @-@ hour battle for WN @-@ 64 . His small group of just four men had effectively neutralized this point by mid @-@ morning , taking 21 prisoners ? just in time to prevent them from attacking freshly landing troops . On the beach below , the 16th RCT commander , Colonel George Taylor had landed at 08 : 15 . With the words " Two kinds of people are staying on this beach , the dead and those who are going to die ? now let 's get the hell out of here ! " he organized groups of men regardless of their unit , putting them under the command of the nearest non @-@ commissioned officer and sending them through the area opened up by G / 16 . By 09 : 30 , the regimental command post was set up just below the bluff crest , and the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 16th RCT were being sent inland as they reached the crest .

On Fox Green , at the eastern end of Omaha , four sections of L / 16 had survived their landing intact and were now leading elements of I / 16 , K / 16 and E / 116 up the slopes . With supporting fire from the heavy weapons of M / 16 , tanks and destroyers , this force eliminated WN @-@ 60 , which defended the draw at F @-@ 1 ; by 09 : 00 , the 3rd battalion 16th RCT was moving inland .

= = = Naval support = = =

The only artillery support for the troops making these tentative advances was from the navy . Finding targets difficult to spot , and in fear of hitting their own troops , the big guns of the battleships and cruisers concentrated fire on the flanks of the beaches . The destroyers were able to get in closer , and from 08 : 00 began engaging their own targets . At 09 : 50 , two minutes after the McCook destroyed a 75 mm gun position in WN @-@ 74 , the destroyers were ordered to get as close in as possible . Some approached within 1 @,@ 000 yards (900 m) several times , scraping bottom and risking running aground . An engineer who had landed in the first wave at Fox Red , watching the Frankford steaming in towards shore , thought she had been badly hit and was being beached . Instead , she turned parallel to the beach and cruised westwards , guns blazing at targets of opportunity . Thinking she would turn back out to sea , the engineer soon saw that she had instead begun backing up , guns still firing . At one point , gunners aboard the Frankford saw an immobilized tank at the water 's edge , still firing . Watching the fall of its shot , they followed up with

a salvo of their own . In this manner , the tank acted as the ship 's fire control party for several minutes .

= = = Pre @-@ invasion naval bombardment = = =

General Bradley reviewing Allied troops in England training for D @-@ Day , promised the soldiers that the Germans on the beach would be blasted with naval gunfire before the landing . " You men should consider yourself lucky . You are going to have ringside seats for the greatest show on earth , " he said , meaning naval gunfire . "

Rear Admiral John L. Hall , Jr . , (Commander Task Force 124 , the " Omaha " Beach Assault Force) , strongly disapproved of what he considered to be the small amount of air and naval bombardment used . Hall was recorded saying " It 's a crime to send me on the biggest amphibious attack in history with such inadequate naval gunfire support . "

Later analysis of naval support during the pre @-@ landing phase concluded that the navy had provided inadequate bombardment , given the size and extent of the planned assault . Kenneth P. Lord , a U.S. Army planner for the D @-@ Day invasion , says that , upon hearing the naval gunfire support plan for Omaha , which limited support to one battleship , two cruisers and six destroyers , he and other planners were very upset ? especially in light of the tremendous naval gunfire support given to landings in the Pacific .

Historian Adrian R. Lewis postulates that American casualties would have been greatly reduced if a longer barrage had been implemented .

= = = German defenses inland = = =

While the coastal defenses had not turned back the invasion at the beach , they had broken up and weakened the assault formations struggling through them . The German emphasis on this Main Line of Resistance (MLR) meant that defenses further inland were significantly weaker , and based on small pockets of prepared positions smaller than company sized in strength . This tactic was enough to disrupt American advances inland , making it difficult even to reach the assembly areas , let alone achieve their D @-@ Day objectives . As an example of the effectiveness of German defenses despite weakness in numbers , the 5th Ranger battalion was halted in its advance inland by a single machine gun position hidden in a hedgerow . One platoon attempted to outflank the position , only to run into another machine gun position to the left of the first . A second platoon dispatched to take this new position ran into a third , and attempts to deal with this met with fire from a fourth position . The success of the MLR in blocking the movement of heavy weapons off the beach meant that , after four hours , the Rangers were forced to give up on attempts to move them any further inland .

= = Beachhead = =

Despite penetrations inland , the key beach objectives had not been achieved . The draws necessary for the movement of vehicles off the beach had not been opened , and the strongpoints defending these were still putting up a spirited resistance . The failure to clear beach obstacles forced subsequent landings to concentrate on Easy Green and Easy Red .

Where vehicles were landing , they found a narrow strip of beach with no shelter from enemy fire . Around 08 : 30 , commanders suspended all such landings . This caused a jam of landing craft out to sea . The DUKWs had a particularly hard time of it in the rough conditions . Take the 13 DUKWs carrying the 111th Field Artillery battalion of the 116th RCT : five were swamped soon after disembarking from the LCT , four were lost as they circled in the rendezvous area waiting to land , and one capsized as they turned for the beach . Two were destroyed by enemy fire as they approached the beach and the lone survivor managed to offload its howitzer to a passing craft before it also succumbed to the sea . This one gun eventually landed in the afternoon .

The official record of Omaha reports that " ... the tanks were leading a hard life ... " . According to the commander of the 2nd battalion 116th RCT the tanks " ... saved the day . They shot the hell out

of the Germans , and got the hell shot out of them . " As the morning progressed the beach defenses were gradually being reduced , often by tanks . Scattered along the length of the beach , trapped between the sea and the impassable shingle embankment and with no operating radios amongst the commanders , tanks had to be controlled individually . This was perilous work . The commanding officer of the 111th Field Artillery , who had landed ahead of his unit , was killed as he tried to direct the fire of one tank . The command group of the 741st tank battalion lost three out of their group of five in their efforts . Additionally , the commander of the 743rd tank battalion became a casualty as he approached one of his tanks with orders . When naval gunfire was brought to bear against the strong @-@ points defending the E @-@ 3 draw , a decision was made to try to force this exit with tanks . Colonel Taylor ordered all available tanks into action against this point at 11 : 00 . Only three were able to reach the rallying point , and two were knocked out as they attempted to go up the draw , forcing the remaining tank to back off .

Reinforcement regiments were due to land by battalion , beginning with the 18th RCT at 09 : 30 on Easy Red . The first battalion to land , 2 / 18 , arrived at the E @-@ 1 draw 30 minutes late after a difficult passage through the congestion off shore . Casualties were light , though . Despite the existence of a narrow channel through the beach obstacles , the ramps and mines there accounted for the loss 22 LCVPs , 2 LCI (L) s and 4 LCTs . Supported by tank and subsequent naval fire , the newly arrived troops took the surrender at 11 : 30 of the last strong @-@ point defending the entrance to the E @-@ 1 draw . Although a usable exit was finally opened , congestion prevented an early exploitation inland . The three battalions of the 115th RCT , scheduled to land from 10 : 30 on Dog Red and Easy Green , came in together and on top of the 18th RCT landings at Easy Red . The confusion prevented the remaining two battalions of the 18th RCT from landing until 13 : 00 , and delayed the move off the beach of all but 2 / 18 , which had exited the beach further east before noon , until 14 : 00 . Even then , this movement was hampered by mines and enemy positions still in action further up the draw .

By early afternoon , the strong @-@ point guarding the D @-@ 1 draw at Vierville was silenced by the navy . But without enough force on the ground to mop up the remaining defenders , the exit could not be opened . Traffic was eventually able to use this route by nightfall , and the surviving tanks of the 743rd tank battalion spent the night near Vierville .

The advance of the 18th RCT cleared away the last remnants of the force defending the E @-@ 1 draw . When engineers cut a road up the western side of this draw , it became the main route inland off the beaches . With the congestion on the beaches thus relieved , they were re @-@ opened for the landing of vehicles by 14 : 00 . Further congestion on this route , caused by continued resistance just inland at St. Laurent , was bypassed with a new route , and at 17 : 00 , the surviving tanks of the 741st tank battalion were ordered inland via the E @-@ 1 draw .

The F @-@ 1 draw , initially considered too steep for use , was also eventually opened when engineers laid down a new road . In the absence of any real progress opening the D @-@ 3 and E @-@ 3 draws , landing schedules were revised to take advantage of this route , and a company of tanks from the 745th tank battalion were able to reach the high ground by 20 : 00 .

Approaches to the exits were also cleared , with minefields lifted and holes blown in the embankment to permit the passage of vehicles . As the tide receded , engineers were also able to resume their work of clearing the beach obstacles , and by the end of the evening , 13 gaps were opened and marked .

= = = German reactions = = =

Observing the build @-@ up of shipping off the beach , and in an attempt to contain what were regarded as minor penetrations at Omaha , a battalion was detached from the 915th Regiment being deployed against the British to the east . Along with an anti @-@ tank company , this force was attached to the 916th Regiment and committed to a counterattack in the Colleville area in the early afternoon . It was stopped by " firm American resistance " and reported heavy losses . The strategic situation in Normandy precluded the reinforcement of the weakened 352nd Division . The main threat was felt by the Germans to be the British beachheads to the east of Omaha , and these

received the most attention from the German mobile reserves in the immediate area of Normandy . Preparations were made to bring up units stationed for the defense of Brittany , southwest of Normandy , but these would not arrive quickly and would be subject to losses inflicted in transit by overwhelming Allied air superiority . The last reserve of the 352nd Division , an engineer battalion , was attached to the 916th Regiment in the evening . It was deployed to defend against the expected attempt to break out of the Colleville @-@ St. Laurent beachhead established on the 16th RCT front . At midnight General Dietrich Kraiss , commander of the 352nd Division , reporting the total loss of men and equipment in the coastal positions , advised that he had sufficient forces to contain the Americans on D + 1 but that he would need reinforcements thereafter , to be told that there were no more reserves available .

= = End of the day = =

Following the penetrations inland , confused hard @-@ fought individual actions pushed the foothold out barely a mile and a half (2 @. @ 5 km) deep in the Colleville area to the east , less than that west of St. Laurent , and an isolated penetration in the Vierville area . Pockets of enemy resistance still fought on behind the American front line , and the whole beachhead remained under artillery fire . At 21 : 00 the landing of the 26th RCT completed the planned landing of infantry , but losses in equipment were high , including 26 artillery pieces , over 50 tanks , about 50 landing craft and 10 larger vessels .

Only 100 of the 2 @, @ 400 tons of supplies scheduled to be landed on D @-@ Day were landed . Casualties for V Corps were estimated at 3 @, @ 000 killed , wounded and missing . The heaviest casualties were taken by the infantry , tanks and engineers in the first landings . The 16th and 116th RCT 's lost about 1 @, @ 000 men each . Only five tanks of the 741st tank battalion were ready for action the next day . The German 352nd division suffered 1 @, @ 200 killed , wounded and missing ; about 20 % of its strength . Its deployment at the beach caused such problems that Lieutenant General Omar Bradley , commander of the U.S. First Army , at one stage considered evacuating Omaha , while Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery considered the possibility of diverting V Corps forces through Gold .

= = Aftermath = =

The foothold gained on D @-@ Day at Omaha , itself two isolated pockets , was the most tenuous across all the D @-@ Day beaches . With the original objective yet to be achieved , the priority for the Allies was to link up all the Normandy beachheads . During the course of June 7 , while still under sporadic shellfire , the beach was prepared as a supply area . Surplus cargo ships were deliberately sunk to form an artificial breakwater and , while still less than planned , 1 @, @ 429 tons of stores were landed that day .

With the beach assault phase completed the RCTs reorganized into infantry regiments and battalions and over the course of the next two days achieved the original D @-@ Day objectives . On the 1st divisional front the 18th Infantry Regiment blocked an attempt by two companies from the 916th and 726th Grenadiers to break out of WN @-@ 63 and Colleville , both of which were subsequently taken by the 16th Infantry Regiment which also moved on Port @-@ en @-@ Bessin . The main advance was made by the 18th Infantry Regiment , with the 3rd battalion of the 26th Infantry Regiment attached , south and south @-@ eastwards . The heaviest opposition was encountered at Formigny where troops of the 2nd battalion 915th Grenadiers had reinforced the headquarters troops of 2nd battalion 916th Grenadiers . Attempts by 3 / 26 and B / 18 with support from the tanks of B / 745 were held off and the town did not fall until the morning of June 8 . The threat of an armored counterattack kept the 18th Infantry Regiment on the defensive for the rest of June 8 . The 26th Infantry Regiment 's three battalions , having been attached to the 16th , 18th and 115th Regiments the previous day , spent June 8 reassembling before pushing eastwards , forcing the 1st battalion of the German 726th Grenadiers to spend the night extricating itself from the pocket thus forming between Bayeux and Port @-@ en @-@ Bessin . By the morning of June 9 the 1st

Division had established contact with the British XXX Corps , thus linking Omaha with Gold .

On the 29th divisional front two battalions of the 116th Infantry Regiment cleared the last defenders from the bluffs while the remaining 116th battalion joined the Rangers in their move west along the coast . This force relieved the 2nd Ranger companies who were holding Pointe du Hoc on June 8 and subsequently forced the German 914th Grenadiers and the 439th Ost @-@ Battalion to withdraw from the Grandcamp area which lay further to the west . Early on June 7 WN @-@ 69 defending St. Laurent was abandoned and the 115th Infantry Regiment was therefore able to push inland to the south @-@ west , reaching the Formigny area on June 7 and the original D @-@ Day phase line the following day . The third regiment of 29th Division ; the 175th , started landing on June 7 . By the morning of June 9 this regiment had taken Isigny and on the evening of the following day forward patrols established contact with the 101st Airborne Division , thus linking Omaha with Utah .

In the meantime , the original defender at Omaha , the 352nd Division , was being steadily reduced . By the morning of June 9 the division was reported as having been " ... reduced to ' small groups ' ... " while the 726th Grenadier Regiment had " ... practically disappeared . " By June 11 the effectiveness of the 352nd was regarded as " very slight " , and by June 14 the German corps command was reporting the 352nd as completely used up and needing to be removed from the line .

Once the beachhead had been secured , Omaha became the location of one of the two Mulberry harbours , prefabricated artificial harbors towed in pieces across the English Channel and assembled just off shore . Construction of ' Mulberry A ' at Omaha began the day after D @-@ Day with the scuttling of ships to form a breakwater . By D + 10 the harbor became operational when the first pier was completed ; LST 342 docking and unloading 78 vehicles in 38 minutes . Three days later the worst storm to hit Normandy in 40 years began to blow , raging for three days and not abating until the night of June 22 . The harbor was so badly damaged that the decision was taken not to repair it ; supplies being subsequently landed directly on the beach until fixed port facilities were captured . In the few days that the harbor was operational , 11 @,@ 000 troops , 2 @,@ 000 vehicles and 9 @,@ 000 tons of equipment and supplies were brought ashore . Over the 100 days following D @-@ Day more than 1 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 tons of supplies , 100 @,@ 000 vehicles and 600 @,@ 000 men were landed , and 93 @,@ 000 casualties were evacuated , via Omaha .

Today at Omaha jagged remains of the harbor can be seen at low tide . The shingle bank is no longer there , cleared by engineers in the days following D @-@ Day to facilitate the landing of supplies . The beachfront is more built @-@ up and the beach road extended , villages have grown and merged , but the geography of the beach remains as it was and the remains of the coastal defenses can still be visited . At the top of the bluff overlooking Omaha near Colleville is the American cemetery . As late as 1988 , particles of shrapnel , as well as glass and iron beads resulting from munitions explosions , have been found in the sand of the beach .