

184. The sorties of Coastal Command included are only those on anti-shipping and anti-U-boat patrols in the Bay of Biscay and Channel areas and off the Dutch coast. The weight of depth charges, bombs, etc., dropped and casualties or claims arising from these sorties are not included.

(c) *The Assault*

Decision to make the Assault

185. After consultations with the Commanders-in-Chief of the three services, during May, you had fixed the date of the Assault for 5th June. The decision as to date had to be taken in good time to permit of the completion of final preparations. Some of the ships in the invasion Armada, for example, had to sail a week before the time planned for the assault.

186. As the date approached, the weather forecasts pointed to very serious deterioration in conditions for D-Day. On 3rd June, you summoned a conference at your Advanced Headquarters at Portsmouth to consider the weather situation. This conference included yourself, the Deputy Supreme Commander, Air Chief Marshal Sir A. W. Tedder, G.C.B., your Chief of Staff Lieutenant General W. B. Smith, Admiral Sir Bertram H. Ramsay, K.C.B., K.B.E., M.V.O., and his Chief of Staff, General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, K.C.B., D.S.O., and his Chief of Staff, and the Heads of the Naval, Army and Air Meteorological Services. I attended this conference with my Senior Air Staff Officer, Air Vice-Marshal H. E. P. Wigglesworth, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.C.

187. The first meeting took place at 2100 hours on 3rd June. It lasted until after midnight, when you decided to postpone any decision until the meteorological staffs could collect later reports.

188. The second meeting took place at 0400 hours on 4th June, and in the light of weather forecasts then available, you decided to postpone the time of the assault for 24 hours, primarily on the grounds that the air forces would be unable to provide adequate support for the crossing and assault operations, and could not undertake the airborne tasks.

189. The meeting reassembled at 2100 hours on 4th June, and after considerable deliberation a decision was again deferred to enable the meteorological staffs to study later data.

190. The final meeting took place at 0430 hours in the morning of 5th June. Weather conditions forecast for the following day were still far from satisfactory and from the air point of view, below the planned acceptable minimum.

191. Nevertheless, taking into account the fact that the adverse weather conditions imposed an equal handicap on the enemy air

forces, I considered, and I gave this as my opinion, that the Allied air effort possible would provide a reasonable measure of air protection and support and that airborne operations would be practicable.

192. After considering also the weather conditions as affecting the land and sea operations, you made the decision that the assault was to take place on the first high tide in the morning of the 6th of June and that the airborne forces were to be flown over and dropped in their allotted zones before dawn of that day.

The Assault is made

193. The assault was on a five divisional front on the east side of the Cherbourg Peninsula immediately north of the Carentan Estuary and the River Orne.

194. The First United States Army landed between Varreville and Colleville-sur-Mer; 1 R.C.T.* landed between Varreville and the Carentan Estuary, 2 R.C.T. between the Carentan Estuary and Colleville-sur-Mer. The Second British Army with five brigades, landed between Asnelles and Ouistreham. These sea-borne forces were supported on their flanks by two airborne forces, two United States Airborne Divisions being dropped and landed in the area of St. Mere Eglise, and a British Airborne Division in the area between the Rivers Orne and Dives. The map† facing shows the landing beaches and the positions gained in the first three weeks of the assault.

195. The first airborne forces landed before dawn on 6th June and the landing barges and craft coming in on the first tide, touched down at 0630 hours. Follow-up forces were landed with the second tide, and in the evening, additional airborne forces were flown in.

196. There was no enemy opposition to the original passage of the assault or airborne forces. This fact is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that many of the ships had, of necessity, been at sea for periods of some days.

197. I have set out in Section (b) of Part II at paragraph 35, the tasks undertaken by the air forces in support of the assault. For convenience of presentation, these tasks have been dealt with under the five headings shown below:—

Protection of the Cross-Channel Movement,
Neutralisation of Coastal and Beach Defences,
Protection of the Beaches,
Dislocation of Enemy Communications and Control,
Airborne operations.

198. The Order of Battle of A.E.A.F. as at D-Day is set out at Appendix "D",† the strength of aircraft available was as follows:—

Type	United States Forces	Royal Air Force	Grand Total
Medium Bombers	532	88	620
Light Bombers	194	160	354
Fighter and Fighter Bombers ...	1,311	2,172	3,483
Transport Aircraft	1,166	462	1,628
Reconnaissance Aircraft	158	178	336
Artillery Observation Aircraft ...	—	102	102
A.S.R. (Miscellaneous)	—	96	96
Powered A/C Total	3,361	3,258	6,619
Gliders	1,619	972	2,591
Grand Total	4,980	4,230	9,210

* R.C.T. = Regimental Combat Team.

† Maps and Appendices not reproduced.