

NATIONAL D-DAY MEMORIAL

Bedford, Virginia



“We shall accept nothing less than full victory!”

The National D-Day Memorial near Bedford, Va., commemorates the landing of the Allies on the Normandy, France beaches on June 6, 1944, the beginning of the massive campaign to wrest Europe from the Nazis. The strike was labeled Operation Overlord. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, chief of the Allied forces, told the troops they were embarking on a great crusade with the eyes of the world upon them. "We will accept nothing less than full victory!"

There were five landing beaches: Omaha and Utah for the Americans, Gold and Sword for the British; and Juno for the Canadians. The Germans, hunkered on the cliffs in bunkers with 88mm cannon and machine guns, were waiting. Paratroopers of the 101st Airborne, the 82nd Airborne, and British and Canadian units were dropped behind the German lines the night before the landings; most ended up far from their intended targets.

The invasion fleet, sailing from England across the channel, consisted of nearly 7,000 vessels and comprised the largest amphibious landing ever, that of approximately 156,000 men that first day. Within five days, 326,000 men had gone ashore as well as 54,000 vehicles.

D-Day casualties totaled about 10,000, including 4,414 killed. American casualties included 1,465 killed, 3,184 wounded, 1,928 missing, and 26 captured. German casualties are estimated at 4,000 to 9,000. Thousands of French civilians were killed, mostly from Allied aerial bombings.

The D-Day landings were the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany, which surrendered to the Allies on May 8, 1945.



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Why Bedford?

The 88-acre site, built in the Blue Ridge Mountains at a cost of \$25 million, opened on June 6, 2001 with 20,000 in attendance, including President George W. Bush. On D-Day, the tiny town of Bedford, population 3,200, lost 19 of its 35 soldier boys, the highest casualty rate for any location in the United States.





Commanders of Operation Overlord:

clockwise from upper left,

Dwight D. Eisenhower of the U.S., Supreme Allied Commander; Omar Bradley of the U.S., commander of the U.S. First Army; Bernard Montgomery of Great Britain, Ground Forces Commander in Chief; Walter Bedell Smith of the U.S., chief of staff at SHAEF; Arthur Tedder of Great Britain, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander.



Le Monument aux Morts was dedicated in 1921 outside the Church of St. Aignan, Trévières, France, in honor of the 44 men of the town who died during World War One. On June 9, 1944, three days after D-Day, U.S. infantrymen assaulted the village, which had been occupied by two regiments of German infantry. During the battle, the sculpture was hideously defaced by artillery. It stands as a testament to the destructiveness of war and the fragility of peace. This recasting at the National D-Day Memorial argues that peace is a consequence of vigilance and justice, not an accident of complacency or indifference. The ruined statue is a tribute to the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of the Allied forces in Normandy.