

THE INVASION OF WESTERN EUROPE

6 June to 31 December 1944

The following is an extract from General Eisenhower's report on the Allied operations from 6 June to 26 August 1944:

The equivalent of five panzer divisions have been destroyed and a further six severely mauled, including one panzer grenadier division. The equivalent of twenty infantry divisions have been eliminated and a further twelve very badly cut up. Included in this total of infantry divisions are three of the enemy's crack parachute divisions. In addition, one parachute division and two infantry divisions have no hope of escape from the fortress ports of the Brittany Peninsula in which they are marooned. One infantry division is isolated in the Channel islands.

Total enemy casualties amount to over 400,000 killed, wounded, and prisoners of war, of which over 200,000 are prisoners of war. Of these prisoners, 135,000 have been captured since 25 July. The total continues to mount.

One thousand three hundred enemy tanks and over 20,000 motor transports have been captured or destroyed. About 500 assault guns and 1,500 field and heavier artillery guns have been captured or destroyed. In addition, the enemy has suffered very heavy losses in coast artillery equipment.

The German Seventh Army and the newly formed Fifth Panzer Army have been decisively defeated and into this defeat have been drawn the bulk of the fighting strength of the First and Fifteenth Armies. Three field marshals and one army commander have either been dismissed or incapacitated by wounds. One army commander, three corps commanders, fifteen division commanders, and one fortress commander have been either killed or captured.

In the air, the Luftwaffe has taken a fearful beating. Since 6 June, 2,378 German aircraft have been destroyed in the air and 1,167 on the ground. In addition, 270 aircraft were probably destroyed and 1,028 aircraft were damaged in the air.

At sea, the enemy has been unable, in spite of his former boasting, to interfere seriously with the invasion forces. Enemy attacks on convoys have been driven off on very many occasions and losses to Allied shipping have been small. Of the enemy's naval losses, some 300 vessels of all classes have been sunk or heavily damaged by Allied action. In addition, a number of enemy merchant ships have been sunk and the

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Germans themselves have been forced to scuttle, in their harbors, large numbers of all types of shipping, both naval and mercantile.

A large proportion of the enemy's effort has been devoted to attack by mine laying. The sustained work of mine-sweepers has resulted, within three months, in a "mine bag" off the French beaches which totals one tenth of all mines swept in five years in all theaters of war.

Allied teamwork, extending through all services, has again demonstrated its ability to overcome the most adverse kind of conditions in defeating the enemy. Allied units from other countries have fought effectively alongside American and British Forces and the F.F.I. have done much valuable work.

The command system has functioned smoothly in spite of difficulties due to enforced separation of commanders and of poor signal communications due to distances and the rapidly changing situation.

Many factors are woven into the warp and woof of this great victory. Among these a few are listed below, with no attempt to give their order of importance.

One was meticulous care in planning and preparation, supported resolutely in all important aspects by the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

Another was the fact that we achieved some degree of surprise involving place, timing, and strength of attack. The excellence and sufficiency of amphibious equipment, with measures for dealing with beach defenses and obstacles, was also important.

The brilliant preparatory work of the air forces, a belief in the effectiveness of which was the very cornerstone of the original invasion conception, began months ago and reached its highest intensity at the very moment of landing. It is my conviction that except for this aerial preparation, including as a special mission a prolonged campaign against the transportation systems of northwest Europe, the venture could not have logically been undertaken. The air support of ground forces has been most effective throughout the campaign. The supply and maintenance services have performed miracles.

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But the greatest factor of all has been the fighting qualities of the soldiers, sailors, and airmen of the United Nations. Their valor, stamina, and devotion to duty have been beyond praise. They will continue to be.

In a cable to General Sommervell, Commanding General, Army Service Forces, General Eisenhower stated that while all American units were shipped to France with full equipment, during the first seventy days of the operation the ground forces required more than 900 tanks to replace battle casualties. In that same period other losses replaced included 2,400 automatic rifles, 1,750 quarter-ton trucks, 1,500 mortars, and 83,000 miles of field wire. Ammunition was consumed at the rate of 150,000 tons per month.

In supporting the operation the air forces lost 3,000 planes, for which replacements, of course, had to be provided. They dropped more than 55,000 tons of bombs and used 44,000,000 gallons of gasoline.

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