



## THE IMPORTANCE OF AIR SUPERIORITY: UNDERSTANDING AIR FORCES &amp; D-DAY

Following years of preparation and planning, the Allies took to the beaches of Northern France on the morning of 6 JUN 1944. The mission objective was straightforward but difficult: establish a foothold on the European mainland, opening a third front against the Axis Powers. Little did the Allies who took to the beaches that morning know that the liberation of France sans a few isolated pockets was just over six months away. Even more significant, the end of the war in Europe was less than a year away. But the success of such an operation has many facets that contribute to it. Strategic planning by the Allies in the form of logistics, communication, and counterintelligence was key. In addition, preparation of the battlefield conditions was also significant.

While there were numerous operations in preparation for D-Day, one of the most significant was *CROSSBOW* and *POINTBLANK*. Sometimes collectively referred to as the Combined Bomber Offensive, these operations sought to achieve the suppression and destruction of the *Luftwaffe*. *POINTBLANK* was the Allied effort to cripple *Luftwaffe* assets such as aircraft plants, oil facilities, rubber plants, aircraft, and airfields. *CROSSBOW* was the effort to destroy Germany's "retribution weapons"—more popularly referred to as V-weapons—and their facilities. The combined objective was to cripple the German air effort and sanitize the skies for Allied air and ground forces.

These missions were not without fail. Perhaps the most well-known objective

failure of these campaigns was the bombing of Dresden. Coupled with the poor sight accuracy of bombing runs and incendiary nature, many bombing runs resulted in widespread collateral damage. The 1945 Dresden bombing mirrored similar campaigns carried out in the Pacific Theater during the same timeframe. An estimated 30,000 civilians were killed in the raid. The strikes stoked the development of precision bombing systems that were implemented after World War II.

But what of the impact of the combined effort on D-Day?

The *Luftwaffe* was known to be at least modestly efficient and advanced. However, their force projection in the form of Messerschmitt, Heinkel, and Junkers aircraft—some of which were the first jet aircraft—fell well short in terms of production numbers. The German high command's focus was on the production of V-weapons, U-boats, and tanks. The sister of the *Luftwaffe*, the *Kriegsmarine*, suffered similar shortfalls with blue-water fleet issues. Thus, while Germany was certainly a formidable foe in the skies, it quickly began to take on a void after Allied airstrikes lashed at their strategic airfields, plants, and storage.

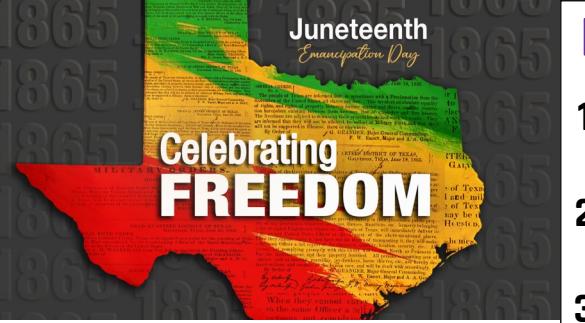
During the D-Day invasion, the Allied to *Luftwaffe* materiel ratio was over 10:1. The Allies had carried out significant bombing campaigns within 350 miles of the Normandy beachhead prior to the landing. Most of the enemy aircraft that filled the skies carried out quick strafing runs against landing forces at the beach head before making runs against the force buildup on the beach itself. These runs were effective, but in the face of the size

of the landing did not slow Allied advance in any meaningful way. Allied air losses were around 127, but most of those were due to flak from the ground rather than air engagements. With a fielding of 10,521 aircraft, the Allies' loss rate was under one percent. However, the Allied campaigns did not stop there. By the end of June, under 500 aircraft remained in France, leaving the *Luftwaffe* all but crippled.

Any loss is a significant one, however the losses suffered by the Allies—some 10,000 personnel—were significantly reduced due to the preparation of the battlefield by the air campaign. The ease of movement inland was also aided by these missions. In addition, strikes against German V-weapon launch sites slowly began to bring the long-range threat to a close (although the few V-3 sites continued to be a major threat until after their sites were abandoned).

The success of D-Day is one that is shared by all force providers and participants and was nothing shy of a miracle. However, this success rested largely on the careful planning by the Allies and the prepping of the battlefield to remove a significant threat. The U.S. Army Air Forces and the Royal Air Force met the need to remove that threat. While it can never be said that air superiority alone can win a war, it can be said that air superiority can help expedite the end of that war. Today, the U.S. Air Force works with its partners to project force around the world in support of our Nation's defense and the defense and confidence of our Allies.

The D-Day Invasion is another example of an air force that can fly, fight, and win. Always flying high.



On June 19, 1865 — over 2 years after President Lincoln declared enslaved persons free — Major General Gordon Granger and Union Army troops marched to Galveston, Texas, to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation. They freed over 250,000 Black Americans, the last enslaved people in Texas. Opal Lee, also known as the "Grandmother of Juneteenth" played a large part in making Juneteenth a federal holiday.

Lee campaigned for decades to make Juneteenth a federal holiday.

At the age of 89, she conducted a symbolic walk from Fort Worth, from which she departed in September 2016, to Washington, D.C., where she arrived in January 2017. In June 2021, at the age of 94, Lee's efforts succeeded as a bill to make Juneteenth a federal holiday was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden.

For more information on Juneteenth as well as information on the celebration of Pride Month (also in June) from the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, scan the code to the right.



## MONTHLY TRIVIA

- 1 How many different "V-weapons" existed?
- 2 Approximately how many tons of bombs were used during the Combined Bomber Offensive in Europe?
- 3 What were the key industrial targets during the Combined Bomber Offensive?

## TRIVIA ANSWERS

Check on Learning:  
1 Where was the first Emergency Service mission flowing by the Iowa Wing?

**Over the Missouri River**

2 What was the name of the program that was accelerated to completion following the loss of Gary Powers' U-2 spy plane?

**ARCHANGEL**

3 What was the first jet fighter introduced into U.S. service?

**P-80 Shooting Star**

Thaddeus Lowe transmits a message from his balloon at 500 feet to the White House below—the first airborne telegraph in history.

The first combat action for the Tuskegee Airmen takes place over Tunisia.

Over 13,000 paratroopers board C-47 transports bound for "the Great Crusade" just before sunset. They will land behind Germany lines shortly after 0200.

The first American airstrikes on Hanoi commence, mostly striking oil facilities.

The F-117 Nighthawk makes its maiden flight in the Tonopah Test Range.

1981

