

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Against the Odds*' 2011 Campaign Study: *Bradley's D-Day!* This Campaign Study moves us to the Western Front in World War II, when Hitler's Fortress Europa was about to have its front door kicked in. Months of stalemate in Italy would be eclipsed by a massive cross-Channel invasion of France by Allied forces. John Prados, author of many games over the last forty years, brings us an in-depth simulation of General Omar Bradley's American sector of the invasion. Articles covering every aspect of the campaign back up this gripping simulation, allowing you the full immersion of June 6, 1944. After playing the game and reading the articles, think about subscribing to *Against the Odds* Magazine, an award-winning quarterly with an exciting game in each issue. Subscribers get special issues like the one you hold in your hand at a substantial discount. For now, though, it's time to hit the beach!

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BRADLEY'S  
D-DAY  
BY JOHN PRADOS

“We stand on a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France.” So said the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, not long into one of his speeches that day, June 6, 1984, the fortieth anniversary of the Great Normandy Invasion. “The air is soft,” President Reagan went on, “but forty years ago at this moment, the air was dense with smoke and the cries of men . . . filled with the crack of rifle fire and the roar of cannon.” At that moment the American president stood atop the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc, one key feature of a long invasion front, from which Allied generals feared that German artillery could shoot to break up the flotillas of landing boats or sink the vulnerable troop transports that were bringing American boys to the shores of France in a bid to end the Nazi occupation of Northwest Europe. Brave American Rangers would land below the cliffs and scale them to destroy the threatening German guns. That action will be taken up later, but for the moment the point is that on June 6, 1944, a very great deal hung on small hopes, like those for the success of the Rangers. The day of the invasion, D-Day, was a nexus of World War II, a moment when things could have gone very differently, one of bravery and despair, on both sides; and a day when Allied victory began to come into view.

More than a few participants recall D-Day at Normandy as a near-run thing. Many historians, on the other hand, regard the invasion as almost a surefire move. The truth lies somewhere between those two poles and is ground worth examining. By any measure, D-Day would be a colossal undertaking, in which some 175,000 troops were landed on a hostile coast in a single day, with thousands more parachuted into battle, and involving American and British forces primarily, but also numbers of Canadians, Frenchmen, Poles, Norwegians, and others. This is too much for a mere article, even a study like this one. Whole books have been written about D-Day. But focusing a narrower beam on the American side of D-Day will permit good coverage. In addition, the British landings at Normandy are usually presented as the aspect of the battle where the potential was greatest—both for deeper advance or failure—and an American success is often taken as a given. A closer examination of the possibilities on the U.S. sector reveals

wider scope for either success or failure there also. Here we will consider the joint Anglo-American planning of the Normandy invasion and then zero in on the American side in covering the actual airborne operations, assault landings, and a variety of other features of the battle. Normandy, in the end, was a calculated risk.

THE SECOND FRONT

The Anglo-American Allies had long debated their strategy in the European war. When the Soviet Union stood in danger of being overwhelmed, most particularly during 1942, Stalin had prodded for Anglo-American operations that would draw away some of the weight of the German armed forces. The British and Americans could hardly deny the Soviets' point, and as early as 1942 there existed a concept for an invasion of France, codenamed “Sledgehammer,” then “Roundup.” But some argued the need for immediate operations to gain experience with this kind of complex undertaking, others insisted the field forces were not strong enough as yet to attempt such an invasion, while still others saw the opportunity to eject the Axis from North Africa—in fact accomplished with the Allied invasion of French North Africa combined with the British advance from Egypt after El Alamein. At each subsequent stage of strategic deliberations the Roundup project was ranged against other alternatives. British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill famously plumped for attacking the Germans' “soft underbelly.” First came the desire to exploit victory in North Africa by capturing Sicily. Then there was the idea of knocking Italy out of the war. A side debate concerned whether to invade the Balkans or go straight for the Italian mainland. By the end of 1942, the British were already convinced that Allied forces could not be built up quickly enough to simultaneously conduct operations in the Mediterranean and invade France during 1943. The Casablanca conference early in 1943 affirmed this choice. A conference at Washington that May approved the notion of an attack on Italy. The follow-up meeting at Ottawa in August put the French invasion option firmly on the table and set a target

