

D-DAY: HOW WAS THE BIGGEST EVER SEABORNE INVASION LAUNCHED?

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT – Planning every last detail

[Presented by Sophie Raworth, broadcaster]

At midday on 6 June, several hours into D-Day, Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced to the House of Commons that Allied troops had landed in France.

He said: “The commanders who are engaged report that everything is proceeding according to plan...and what a plan!”

The decision to put that plan into action was made right here at Southwick House near Portsmouth. US General Dwight D. Eisenhower, leader of the Allied forces, was the man who made it, confident that everything that could have been thought of had been.

He knew that he was sending his soldiers off to France with the best maps available. Aerial reconnaissance and reports from the French Resistance had provided minute detail of the terrain and German defences.

Meanwhile, covert Royal Navy teams in mini submarines had surveyed the beaches. He knew his team of commanders had planned every detail, even conducting dress rehearsals along the British south coast.

He knew that now was the best time to invade. Clear weather and smooth seas were more likely in June and the 5th to the 7th would provide bright moonlight for the air invasion and early-morning tide for the seaborne troops.

But even the best-laid plans could go wrong.

Bad weather had already forced Eisenhower to delay for 24 hours. Now he had to gamble that his meteorological team had correctly predicted a 36 hour break in the weather.

Eisenhower’s words, “OK. Let’s go,” sent his commanders rushing to their posts. Left alone, he could only trust and hope that the exhaustive preparations would be enough to win the day.

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