

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

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT – ‘D-DAY HAS COME’

[Presented by Sophie Raworth, broadcaster]

For centuries this body of water had been one of Britain's greatest tools of defence. In 1944, though, it was time to use it for attack. Britain and its Second World War allies had been planning the biggest, most audacious air and seaborne invasion in history: D-Day.

Since 1940 most of Western Europe had been occupied by Nazi Germany. This invasion was vital in opening up a new front in the war.

It was to be the critical step in driving back and finally defeating Hitler's forces. To do that the Allies would need to work out how to get an unprecedented number of soldiers, vehicles and weapons across the Channel and land them on some of the most heavily defended beaches in the world.

If they managed to get them ashore, they'd have the might of Nazi Germany in front of them and the sea behind them. With no place to hide, it was crucial that the meticulously planned operation worked.

On 5th June 1944, the Allied invasion force was ready to launch, much of it from here in Portsmouth.

Roads were teeming with soldiers and their vehicles, while a vast fleet of ships lay just off this coastline. Thousands of aircraft were ready in their airfields. All were poised to cross the English Channel.

On June 6th, the people of Portsmouth awoke to find the invasion fleet had gone. All that was left were messages of thanks chalked on to the pavements and walls by soldiers.

D-Day had begun.

IMAGES COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES