

Operation Overlord: The Planning and Execution of the landings on Juno Beach

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HIS 495

December 9 2015

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World War II, one of the most researched areas of the twentieth century, has attracted many historians to dedicate their careers to researching and discovering new information about WWII. However, some areas within WWII still hold valuable information waiting to be discovered, more specifically within Operation Overlord. Operation Overlord, the code name for the enormous plan to invade occupied France required cooperation between many allied nations that stretched across the world. The invading force consisted of American, British and Canadian soldiers all coming together to “carry out a joint Anglo- American operation from the United Kingdom from which further offensive operations could be developed.”¹ Within the enormous plan of Operation Overlord, historians have left many topics of importance under researched, including Eisenhower’s planning of the invasion and the assault on Juno Beach. Canadian historians have studied the events that occurred on Juno beach because of the important role that Juno played in the Canadian military History narrative. However, most American historians tend to overlook Juno beach because of the major role that the United States played on Utah and Omaha beach. American historians unfortunately focus solely on the American beaches and overlook the significance in the other three beaches.

Juno Beach played a significant role in the success of the overall operation. Both British and Canadian soldiers stormed Juno beach on D-day with the support of supplies and firepower from the Americans, making it the only invasion beach on which the three English-speaking

¹ Daniel Malone, “Breaking Down the Wall: Bombarding FORCE E and Naval Fire Support on JUNO BEACH” (MA Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 2003) 20.

nations fought side by side to liberate Europe. The immediate objective of the Canadians on Juno Beach was the village of Bernieres-sur-Mer. This village was a vital stepping-stone in France that if captured would provide the allies with a strong foothold in Europe. After this village was captured, the next series of objectives for the Canadians was to capture the village of Caen and the Carpiquet Airfield. The capture of the Carpiquet Airfield proved to be a crucial victory for the allies, not only did it limit the German air power, it provided opportunity for allied air forces to be deployed further inland. The efforts made by the Canadians that landed on Juno Beach helped propel Operation Overlord towards success.

Operation Overlord became the best hope of saving the majority of the free world from total destruction and annihilation by the Nazis. If Overlord failed, the liberation of Europe would be delayed several years, causing thousands more soldiers and civilians to perish. Overlord evolved into the most complicated and thoroughly planned military operation ever executed. Countless variables like the weather, management of supplies and the organization of manpower played major roles in the planning of Overlord. The courage and determination seen by units within the Canadian military specifically is a reason to further research this topic and to educate all about the sacrifices and commitments that were made on a stretch of beach in a foreign country.

Allied leaders realized early on in the planning of Overlord that a Supreme Commander needed to be appointed over the entire operation.² The question was who should be appointed as the leader of the largest amphibious assault the world has witnessed. There had been large amphibious invasions before, but nothing compare in size or importance. If Overlord were to

² Mark Zuehlke, *Juno Beach Canada's D-Day Victory: June 6, 1944*, (Maderia Park: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005) 28.

fail, the future of Europe would be completely unknown. Winston Churchill, the leader of the war-torn United Kingdom, recognized that “in the long haul the northwest Europe campaign would see more American than Commonwealth divisions deployed,”³ he suggested that Roosevelt “name an American to the Supreme Commander post.”⁴ Heeding to Churchill’s advice, Roosevelt decided to appoint Dwight Eisenhower as the Supreme Allied Commander (SAC) over the entire operation. Eisenhower, a West Point Graduate and future president, was given the enormous task of managing the entire operation. Eisenhower was a seasoned and well-qualified choice for the position. He had previous experience in managing large-scale invasions as well. Eisenhower gained the much needed experience when he was in charge of “Operations Torch, Husky (the invasion of Sicily), and the subsequent invasion of Italy,” all of which contributed to the final Allied command and staff structures for Overlord.⁵ Eisenhower took the lessons he learned from these other European and African invasions and applied them to Overlord.

One of the main adjustments that Eisenhower made from the previous operations was the dividing up of power within the leadership team. Prior to Eisenhower’s appointment, “Lieutenant General Morgan and his COSSAC²⁴ staff, charged with the planning of Overlord in 1943, had to operate under a system of "opposite numbers" until General Eisenhower arrived in January 1944 and insisted on an integrated combined staff.”⁶ Once Eisenhower assumed command, he combined several different groups of leadership in to one to help streamline the planning process. Eisenhower also decided that “the land component command should reside with him

³ Zuehlke, *Juno Beach*, 28.

⁴ Zuehlke, *Juno Beach*, 28.

⁵ Rice, Anthony J. 1997. "Command and Control: The Essence of Coalition Warfare." *Parameters* 27 (1): 158.

⁶ Rice, *Command and Control*. 159.

and not with a separate commander and staff,” because of the difficulties he experienced during Operation Husky with not having complete control of the battlefield.⁷ Eisenhower would appoint other generals to be in command of their respective beaches but he still would have ultimate authority over their actions, regardless of their country of origin. Once the initial leadership changes were made by Eisenhower, he was able to move on to other logistical issues.

As Eisenhower transitioned into his SAC role and started to prepare and plan for the coming invasion, he realized that more changes to the plan needed to be made. The seriousness of the situation prompted Eisenhower to thoroughly examine the entire plan for ways to improve its probability of success. The original invasion plan called for an initial assault force of three divisions. Eisenhower and Churchill both realized that a three division assault force had a very small margin of success.⁸ In order to overcome this obstacle and make the invasion more likely to succeed Eisenhower decided to “increase the assault force to five divisions.”⁹ This increase in the size of the assaulting force caused a strain on the production of landing craft and supplies to outfit the extra soldiers. However, the necessary changes were made in the production of war material to ensure that the five-division force was adequately supplied. The larger force gave the Allies an improved chance at gaining a foothold in Europe, and therefore there was no choice but to adjust to the larger force. By expanding the assault force, Eisenhower wanted to “obtain an adequate bridgehead quickly and to retain the initiative.”¹⁰ The acquisition of a firm bridgehead became essential if the Allies wanted to have any chance for the operation to succeed. Once a

⁷ Rice, *Command and Control*. 159.

⁸ Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff, cable, 23 January 1944, in *The Papers Of Dwight David Eisenhower The War Years*, Vol 3, ed. Alfred Chandler, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970) 1673.

⁹ Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff, cable, 23 January 1944, 1673.

¹⁰ Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff, cable, 23 January 1944, 1673.

safe and large beachhead was established, heavier vehicles and members of the command staff could come ashore.

It was important to not overload the beaches with soldiers at first because this could cause over congestion on the beaches, which in turn would expose soldiers to more risks. There thus had to be a balance between overwhelming the enemy and not overwhelming the space available. The larger landing force hoped to be able to find a “weak spot through which to exploit.”¹¹ A three division assault force did not have the size to provide the opportunity for an adequate front to be established. Eisenhower was not alone with his concerns about the original plan of Operation Overlord. Churchill too thought “Overlord was based on too limited an allocation of assault forces.”¹² Churchill supported Eisenhower’s decision to increase the total size of the initial assault force. Churchill believed “every effort should be made to add at least 25 percent strength to the initial assault,”¹³ the addition of two whole divisions satisfied both leaders’ concerns. Therefore, both nations recommitted themselves to the production and deployment of more troops.

With the addition of two whole divisions, some major logistical problems had to be addressed in order for Overlord to work. Both the British and Americans had to operate at full capacity if the countries wanted to produce enough equipment and supplies for the troops, and the addition of two divisions put pressure onto the supply side of the military. Having these problems in mind, Eisenhower stayed in close communication with the British about the status of the production of supplies needed for the invasion. One of the most important items needed for the invasion were landing crafts. Landing crafts were not only needed to take the soldiers to the

¹¹ Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff, cable, 23 January 1944, *1673*.

¹² Zuehlke, *Juno Beach*, 29.

¹³ Zuehlke, *Juno Beach*, 29.

beach but also to shuttle the supply trucks, tanks and other vehicles. Eisenhower frequently wrote to the British about the production of landing craft, which were essential to getting the soldiers to the beach, insisting “we can do better than this I know, I’m sure we can obtain a few more of these crafts”¹⁴ he adamantly wrote. Eisenhower kept a close eye on the additional resources required to fulfill the new Operation Overlord plan.¹⁵ He discovered that by “cutting down the scales of vehicles carried in the assault and follow-up” he could round up enough craft to provide for the needs of the two additional assault forces.¹⁶ The acquisition of supplies also became extremely important if Eisenhower wanted a chance at liberating Europe. Restrictions on the Homefront in America were deemed necessary in preparation for the assault. Many people were asked to plant “victory gardens”, and a restriction was placed on the production of goods that used materials needed for the war like metals and rubber. Once again the production capabilities of the American and British workers would be tested to provide enough equipment for the operation.

The logistical issue of providing enough equipment to get the soldiers to the beach was just the beginning. Now the problem of how to bring adequate supplies to the soldiers fighting on the beach had to be answered. Eisenhower and his fellow leaders of Operation Overlord understood the importance of “providing the assault force with ammunition, supplies and reinforcements over the beaches.”¹⁷ If supplies did not reach the beach in a timely manner to support the troops, the entire operation would fail. In order to overcome this obstacle an idea developed that artificial harbors could be created and a floating road could be constructed in

¹⁴ Eisenhower to George Marshall, *17 January 1944*, 1662.

¹⁵ Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff, cable, 23 January 1944, 1674.

¹⁶ Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff, cable, 23 January 1944, 1673.

¹⁷ Samuel Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston : Little, Brown, 1947) 24.

order to provide an “uninterrupted flow of men and materiel” to the beaches.¹⁸ The artificial harbor called a mulberry was a “four-footed pierhead that could climb up and down on its own legs and could be connected to the shore by an articulated pontoon pier.”¹⁹ The mulberries needed to be able to move up and down so that it could rise and fall with the tide. This floating harbor idea was the first of its kind. The development of the mulberry is a testament to resourcefulness of American and British minds during a time of war. In order to allow ships to dock safely at the mulberries, the allies sunk bombardons in the water to break up the waves.²⁰ In total, two mulberries supplied the entire operation; Mulberry A supplied the American beaches and Mulberry B supplied the British and Canadian Beaches. Without these harbors, supplies and equipment would not have been able to reach the soldiers, which would have caused many more casualties.

Another project that developed in order to assure soldiers a quick and safer trip ashore were gooseberries.²¹ Each gooseberry “consisted of a line of ancient ships [ships destined to be scrapped] which were to be sunk parallel to the shore in about three fathoms of water.”²² These gooseberries were similar to the bombardons because they provided shelter water for the landing crafts to navigate through in order to drop the soldiers and equipment off on the beach. Without these gooseberries the small landing crafts could have been easily swept away by the swells and swamped. Months of planning and preparation went in to the development of both the mulberries and gooseberries. Churchill realized that the inventions created to help with Operation Overlord

¹⁸Morison, *Naval Operations*, 25.

¹⁹ Morison, *Naval Operations*, 25.

²⁰ Morison, *Naval Operations*, 25. Bombardons were steel structures sunk in the water

²¹ Morison, *Naval Operations*, 26.

²² Morison, *Naval Operations*, 26.

were necessary to “best cope with the enemy’s superior strength.”²³ Without these inventions, the Operation would have not succeeded.

At first glance, a factor like weather does not seem like it would affect a huge operation like Overlord, but it had everything to do with the planning and execution of Overlord. Eisenhower originally wanted the operation to take place in early May, which would allow them to have a longer campaign season before the weather turned too cold.²⁴ However, with restrictions on supplies and the increased size of the invasion, Eisenhower had to push back the operation one month. Eisenhower agreed to postpone the invasion because it allowed them “an additional month of good weather for preparatory air operations and for training additional troop carrier crews.”²⁵ The one-month delay also allowed them to collect an additional month’s production of supplies. The weather proved to be a blessing to the operation in the beginning because it allowed extra time to train and collect material. However, as time grew closer to the target date of early June the tension increased also. Eisenhower had to shoot for a target date that allowed for the high and low tides to be exploited. Eisenhower also had to pick a date that offered sufficient moonlight for night bombings and the deployment of paratroopers hours prior to the main operation.²⁶ The tide and moonlight issues limited his window to either June 5th-7th or June 18th-20th.²⁷

²³ Saunders, Tim “*Juno Beach: 3rd Canadian & 79th Armoured Divisions*”, McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2004, 17.

²⁴ Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff, cable, 23 January 1944, 1675.

²⁵ Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff, cable, 23 January 1944, 1675.

²⁶ Saunders, Tim “*Juno Beach: 3rd Canadian & 79th Armoured Divisions*”, McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2004, 27.

²⁷ Morison, *Naval Operations*, 33.

Because of Juno Beach's location on the coast, the assault on Juno would happen approximately fifteen minutes after the beginning of the other assaults.²⁸ This delay worried both Eisenhower and Keller because it would give the Germans extra time to prepare for their arrival. However, the delay was an obstacle that the leaders simply had to deal with. As the first window approached, Eisenhower held several meetings daily with his staff and meteorologists that had "every weather facility in the United Kingdom at its disposal."²⁹ The forecasts called for terrible conditions for airplanes and small landing crafts on the 4th and 5th of June which caused the operation to be postponed again. On the morning of June 5th "Eisenhower turned out for his final weather conference. His trailer was shuddering under the force of the wind and the rain seemed to be driving horizontally; but the worst was over."³⁰ His staff informed him that there was to be a small break in the weather for two days starting on the morning of June 6th; after this date Eisenhower's meteorologists did not know when the next opportunity would be. Eisenhower could not afford to try to keep Operation Overlord a secret for another month, so on June 5th at 4:15am he made the decision, "O.K. Well go."³¹

When Eisenhower made the decision to proceed with the attack, he launched "the most ambitious amphibious invasion of modern times."³² The allies proceeded to attack the French coastline from five different beaches. The securing of each one of these beaches (Omaha, Utah, Gold, Sword and Juno) was important to the overall plan. Every landing beach served a purpose and had objectives that needed to be accomplished. Juno beach, the only Canadian assigned beach, became instrumental in the liberation of Europe. Juno Beach was attacked by "the

²⁸ Saunders, *3rd Canadian & 79th Armoured Divisions*, 27

²⁹ Morison, *Naval Operations*, 80.

³⁰ Morison, *Naval Operations*, 82.

³¹ Morison, *Naval Operations*, 83.

³² Mildred Berman, "D-Day and Geography", *Geographical Review* Oct. 1994, Vol. 84, 470.

Canadian 3rd Infantry Division, commanded by Major General R.F.L. Keller and composed of just over 15,000 Canadians (and 9000 British) .”³³ General Keller and the 3rd Canadian Division were known as “the most successful invaders on D-Day,” which is a testament to his leadership.³⁴ The Canadians were selected to attack Juno Beach because “they were the only members of the Allied armies who had direct experience of attacking the German’s Atlantic Wall”.³⁵ The experience the Canadians had come at a cost; however, this unit’s loss of life better prepared them for the resistance they would meet on Juno Beach.

Like Eisenhower, General Keller also attended military college; Keller entered the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, in the last years of WWI. After his graduation, he enlisted in the infantry in the Canadian army. Keller’s first command was the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade early in WWII. In September 1942, Keller was reassigned to his last command which was the 3rd Canadian Division who eventually stormed Juno Beach. Shortly after the successful storming of the beach, General Keller was wounded in Europe and was relieved of his command.³⁶ General Keller died in 1954, ironically on a visit to Normandy. Those who served with him remembered him as loud and outspoken. However, without General Keller, the Canadians would not have seen the success that they did on Juno Beach and in turn, Operation Overlord could have failed.

Juno beach, a small beachfront, had casualty rates just as deadly as the larger beaches: “the entire beach was open to murderous fire from machineguns positioned for a full 180-degree

³³ Douglas Burrer, “*Juno Beach: The Canadians Avenge Dieppe*”, Military Review June 1994, Vol. 74.

³⁴ Prados, John. “*Normandy Crucible: The Decisive Battle that Shaped World War II in Europe*”. Penguin, 2011.

³⁵ Saunders, *3rd Canadian & 79th Armoured Divisions*, 9.

³⁶ Prados, “*Normandy Crucible*”.

sweep.”³⁷ The area that the Canadians landed on and “attacked was approximately 6 1/2 kilometers (4 miles wide) .”³⁸ Juno beach consisted of “pebble beaches backed by cliffs that give way to a pastoral landscape of farms and villages.”³⁹ All along the beach, Hitler erected defenses to prevent an allied invasion from happening. Hitler ordered these defenses to be constructed and they became known as The Atlantic Wall. The Atlantic Wall, a series of fortified concrete strong points, stretched along the west coast of Europe from Belgium around northern France.⁴⁰ The Atlantic Wall crumbled on Juno because of the determination of the soldiers on the ground and the bombardment of artillery. In order to make it safely to the beach, General Keller created The Landing Craft Obstacle Clearance Unit. This unit “did magnificent work, but the speed of the assault was such that they had insufficient time to neutralize or demolish all of the obstacles.”⁴¹ Because it was impossible to completely clear the path to the beach, the Canadians improvised instead. The larger and heavier crafts would charge what obstacles that were left in order to destroy them and the smaller more maneuverable crafts would weave between the obstacles.⁴² This method did create some casualties, but the pressure to maintain the speed of the assault forced the Canadians to take the risk. One landing craft even struck a mine on its way to the beach but was able to use its momentum to beach itself and allowed the troops and vehicles to unload.⁴³ The determination and courage that the Canadians showed helped propel them towards accomplishing their objective.

³⁷ Martin, *Battle Diary*, 5.

³⁸ Burrel, “*Canadians Avenge Dieppe*”.

³⁹Berman, “*D-Day and Geography*” 469.

⁴⁰ Berman, “*D-Day and Geography*” 470.

⁴¹ Saunders, *3rd Canadian & 79th Armoured Divisions*, 103.

⁴² Saunders, *3rd Canadian & 79th Armoured Divisions*, 103.

⁴³ Charles Cooke, "Landing on Juno Beach, 6 June 1944: The View from LCT 721," (2004) Canadian Military History: Vol. 13: Iss. 3, Article 7. Pg 77

Once on the beach, the Canadians had to fight through beach obstacles like “wire, bent railway tracks, stakes (with mines attached), mine fields, beach walls and anti-tank ditches” before they could even think about progressing toward their objective.⁴⁴ The Canadians used their engineers to destroy the beach obstacles by either defusing the mines or exploding the obstacle completely. However, the engineers were not able to clear the obstacles immediately; this delay combined with the speed of the assault caused a dangerous buildup of soldiers on the beach. Many Canadian landing crafts “could not be immediately disembarked because of the congestion on the beach and its exits.”⁴⁵ The traffic jam that formed left the Canadian soldiers vulnerable to attack. Only once the traffic jam of engineers and initial soldiers cleared could other units come ashore.

One of the units in waiting was the Canadian Antitank regiment. This regiment was originally supposed to be providing artillery support but was quickly converted to antitank before departure in fear of an armored German counter attack.⁴⁶ The regiment used its guns to destroy pillboxes on the beach and other fortified positions because the German tanks were occupied with the other assaults at first.⁴⁷ Once the Canadians moved passed the obstacles, they encountered stiffer beach defenses that consisted of “heavy concrete emplacements housing 75mm or 88mm guns and smaller concrete gun shelters housing 5cm anti-tank guns.”⁴⁸ To defeat these defenses, the Canadians called for the bombardment of the problem areas by allied ships waiting in the English Channel as well as using the antitank weapons. Juno beach’s smaller size, and its close proximity to both the United Kingdom and future objects inside France, made Juno

⁴⁴ Malone, “*Breaking Down the Wall*” 32.

⁴⁵ Saunders, *3rd Canadian & 79th Armoured Divisions*, 111.

⁴⁶ Stan Medland, "Confrontation in Normandy: The 3rd Canadian Anti-Tank Regiment on D-Day," *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 3: Iss. 1, Article 6 (1994), 55.

⁴⁷ Medland, *Confrontation in Normandy*, 55.

⁴⁸ Malone, “*Breaking Down the Wall*” 32.

a prime target for the allies' invasion. Eisenhower had faith in the Canadians to overcome the defenses and terrain on Juno beach and to reach the objectives.

The objective of Juno beach in Operation Overlord “was to aid in the successful landing of ground forces and to allow the formation of a bridgehead from which an invasion army could be consolidated and proceed in further campaigns.”⁴⁹ The overall success of the operation depended on each beach being attacked and then defended until reinforcements arrived. The objectives of the 3rd Canadian division specifically on Juno “required the Canadians to seize three successive objectives, up to 20 miles inland.”⁵⁰ These objectives had to be accomplished if the Canadians wanted to be victorious over the Germans. D-day started for one Canadian regiment at 03:15 with orders to get to the landing crafts.⁵¹ The soldiers scurried to the crafts, anxious to proceed with the long awaited assault. The Canadians proceeded “with nine battalions of infantry and three armor battalions” and set their sights on the village of Bernieres-sur-Mer.⁵² As the soldiers in their landing crafts approached the beach, they expected to hear gunfire and explosions but “Everything was dead quiet, it could have been a picture postcard of any one of a hundred tiny French beaches.”⁵³

The Queens Own Rifles of Canada (QOR), the first Canadians to touch the sand, targeted the village of Bernieres-sur-Mer as their primary objective.⁵⁴ Once on the beach, the silence broke, and machine gun fire began to ring out and mortars fell from the sky targeting the soldiers.⁵⁵ The soldiers of the QOR encountered mines all over the beach like other units did,

⁴⁹ Malone, “*Breaking Down the Wall*” 20.

⁵⁰ Burrer, “*Canadians Avenge Dieppe*”.

⁵¹ Charles Martin, *Battle Diary: From D-Day and Normandy to the Zuider Zee and VE*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994) 1.

⁵² Burrer, “*Canadians Avenge Dieppe*”.

⁵³ Martin, *Battle Diary*, 4.

⁵⁴ Martin, *Battle Diary*, 1.

⁵⁵ Martin, *Battle Diary*, 6.

and had to make the difficult decision of which path to run down that looked the safest, all while avoiding machine gun fire and mortars.⁵⁶ The soldiers continued to push forward through the beach and toward the village of Bernieres-sur-Mer, where they encountered “heavy strands of barbed wire” and had to cut through it before they could proceed to the village.⁵⁷ The placement of the barbed wire and other obstacles are to blame for the initial back up of soldier and vehicles on the beaches. Once to the village, the QOR and other mixed units attacked the objective and secured it. Artillery and antitank units were utilized to destroy buildings that housed German defenders. After its capture, the Canadians of the QOR dug in and waited for reinforcements to arrive with the next orders. Despite many casualties, “the QOR had managed a successful first day of action,” and the Canadians fought through “very difficult beaches, cleared the village of Bernieres-sur-Mur, and advanced to objectives that were seven or eight miles inland.”⁵⁸ The Canadians who fought on Juno beach on D-day thus accomplished something special that no other regiment did. The soldiers of the QOR “were the only regiment to capture and hold the assigned D-day objective.”⁵⁹

The accomplishments of the Canadians on D-day became enormously important. The Canadians success on D-day “was measurably greater than their Allied counterparts.”⁶⁰ Their success allowed their beach to become a foothold in Europe that allowed many soldiers and supplies to move in to Europe to help repel the Nazis. The Canadian push inward ended on D-day itself because of the intelligence that was received about possible German tanks in the area.⁶¹ When this information was received, the antitank regiment that was being used to flatten

⁵⁶ Martin, *Battle Diary*, 8.

⁵⁷ Martin, *Battle Diary*, 9.

⁵⁸ Martin, *Battle Diary*, 16.

⁵⁹ Martin, *Battle Diary*, 14.

⁶⁰ Burrer, “*Canadians Avenge Dieppe*”.

⁶¹ Saunders, *3rd Canadian & 79th Armoured Divisions*, 139.

pillboxes and other fortified positions was called to the front of the formation and dug in to prepare for a counterattack. Still, the successfully secured beachhead was crucial to Operation Overlord.

The artillery support from the ships anchored in the Channel allowed Juno beach to be a success, for without the coordination of artillery, casualties would have been much higher. Eisenhower realized early on that Juno beach needed “overwhelming fire support, including close support, during the initial stages of the attack” if the Canadians had any hope at “winning a beachhead.”⁶² In order to fulfill this need, the “Royal Navy decided to form a permanent naval assault force” that would be responsible for supporting the troops storming Juno beach.⁶³ The support force had to train for weeks prior to the invasion to practice the bombardment in order to ensure that the shells would not land prematurely and cause friendly fire deaths. As the Canadians made their way to the beach in their landing crafts, they “could see the rockets and naval guns firing through the night sky.”⁶⁴ The Royal Navy managed to “bombard selected strongpoints with high-caliber shells for almost two hours.”⁶⁵ The bombardment lasted until the soldiers hit the beach in order to soften up the defenses.

Several types of shelling happened on Juno. The first type of shelling, traditional, was supposed to eliminate enemy gun emplacements and obstacles that might delay the ground forces. The traditional method became the most frequently used and most effective. When using the traditional method, “direct hits were scored on assigned targets and fire was continued on the targets as long as possible without jeopardizing the assault force.”⁶⁶ Another method of fire

⁶² Zuehlke, *Juno Beach*, 23.

⁶³ Zuehlke, *Juno Beach*, 23.

⁶⁴ Martin, *Battle Diary*, 4.

⁶⁵ Morison, *Naval Operations*, 183.

⁶⁶ Malone, “*Breaking Down the Wall*” 57.

support used was called “drenching fire.”⁶⁷ Drenching fire was not used to completely destroy individual targets; it was used to cover an entire area. Drenching fire “had more of a psychological effect and less of a material effect” on the enemy, so it did not always kill the enemy, but it prevented the enemy from returning fire or moving about freely.⁶⁸ The negative psychological effect that drenching had on the Germans proved to be detrimental to their morale, which gave the advantage to Canadian attackers. Drenching fire not only lowered the morale of the enemy troops but it neutralized the enemy in many cases.⁶⁹ The overall effectiveness of artillery on D-day allowed the Canadians to push through the beach defenses and secure their objectives, which ultimately made Juno beach a success.

Juno beach played a very significant role in the overall plan of Operation Overlord. Without the effort and sacrifices of the British and Canadian soldiers on Juno, the entire Normandy invasion would have failed. The capture of both the village of Caen and Carpiquet Airfield propelled the invasion of German occupied France to victory. At first glance, Juno beach was just a small piece of the big picture. However, the small size of Juno beach does not correlate to its strategic importance. The accomplishments of the soldiers who fought on Juno beach were extraordinary. The coordination and execution of an amphibious assault of this size and multinational cooperation had never been attempted before, so for this operation to succeed it was spectacular. Future generations need to forever be reminded of the sacrifices that were made on Juno Beach. The soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice in order to liberate the people of Europe from their oppression.

⁶⁷ “Drenching Fire” refers to the saturation of a designated area by naval Bombardment.

⁶⁸ Malone, “*Breaking Down the Wall*” 7.

⁶⁹ Malone, “*Breaking Down the Wall*” 60.

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