


The steps that led to D-Day

After the defeat of most West European countries in 1940, only Britain remained fighting against Nazi Germany and its allies in Europe. Standing against the Nazi empire was one thing, being able to defeat her was another. Victory would only come if the Western Allies and the USSR fought in Europe itself. To do that, Britain, its Empire and Commonwealth and the US would have to cross the sea and land back into West Europe whilst the Soviet forces battled in Eastern Europe. The build up for that invasion took time.

<p style="text-align: center; color: red; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">1941</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Japan attacks Pearl Harbour, Dec 1941 (photo IWM OEM 21469)</p>	<p>27 March</p> 	<p>Britain and the US agree to cooperate in strategic planning in the event the US enters the War. It was also agreed in principle that the defeat of Germany would be the first priority. This was followed on the 9-12th August by the signing of the 'Atlantic Charter' by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt. The charter set out common wartime principles and emphasised the strength of an Anglo-American alliance, despite US neutrality.</p>
	<p>22 June</p> 	<p>Germany attacks the Soviet Union – Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia.</p>
	<p>6 November</p> 	<p>Stalin calls for the creation of a 'second front' in Europe to relieve pressure on the Russian forces battling the German army.</p>
	<p>7 December</p> 	<p>Japan attacks the United States naval fleet at Pearl Harbour. The Japanese were an ally of Nazi Germany and the attack meant that the Axis Powers of Germany and Italy effectively declared war on the US. In response, the US declares war on Japan, and then Germany and Italy.</p>

1942



United States Navy crews at Londonderry Naval Base, 1942
(photo IWM HU 54537)

26 January



The first US Army unit arrives in Britain - elements of the 34th Division land at Belfast (Northern Ireland).

9-14 April



British and US military commanders discuss the build-up of US forces in the UK for an eventual invasion of German-occupied Europe. The build-up phase was codenamed Bolero.

25-27 June



Churchill and Roosevelt meet in Washington DC. They agree to attack German forces in North Africa before launching the invasion of mainland Europe.

1 July

The First Battle of El Alamein (North Africa) begins.

22 October

Conscription age in Britain is reduced to 18.

22 November



Churchill speaks:

"This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

1943



Stalin, Roosevelt & Churchill meet in Teheran 1943
(photo IWM HU 54537)

14-24 January ↓	Churchill and Roosevelt meet at Casablanca, Morocco to discuss next phase of war. They decide to attack Sicily and Italy to divert German military resources.
30 January ↓	The German forces fighting at Stalingrad, Russia, surrender, the first major defeat of Hitler's armies.
1 April ↓	Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (designate), or COSSAC, formally established to provide planning group for cross-Channel invasion (code-named Operation Overlord)
by mid year ↓	British code-breakers based at Bletchley Park had broken the complicated codes sent by the German Military. The information learned helped to counter the German U-boat threat to Allied merchant shipping in the Atlantic, allowing more resources to arrive into Britain, and supplied important information about German movements and abilities.
3 September	Allies invade mainland Italy
28 November - 1 December	Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin meet in Teheran, Iran, where they discuss the planned 1944 cross-Channel invasion.
4-6 December ↓	Churchill and Roosevelt meet in Cairo, Egypt, and agree that the US General, General Eisenhower will command Allied Forces for the planned invasion of Europe.

1944



Sherman tanks driving ashore from landing craft during Exercise 'Fabius', 6 May 1944. (photo IWM H 38270)

31st March



US D-Day beach landing training exercise (Operation Beaver) at Slapton Sands, Devon, demonstrates a dangerous lack of coordination between units.

15th April



Up to 10,000 RAF and USAAF aircraft begin training to support the Overlord landings. The Transportation Plan involves attacking rail and road targets throughout northern France and Belgium in a bid to prevent German reinforcements reaching the coastal areas once the invasion had begun.

28th April



750 US army and navy personnel killed, and another 300 wounded when a convoy of landing craft training for the Overlord landings was attacked by German E-boats off Slapton Sands, Devon.

3-9th May



Operation Fabius, the final rehearsal before the Overlord landings, is held along the English Channel coast between Littlehampton in Sussex and Slapton Sands in Devon. Fabius is judged a success and the invasion given the go ahead.

5 Jun



D-Day for Overlord postponed 24 hours because of poor weather.

**D-Day
6 June 1944**