



Utah Beach: The Amphibious Landing and Airborne Operations on D-Day, June 6, 1944

Joseph Balkoski

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From the Inside Flap In the early-morning darkness of June 6, 1944, a fleet of U.S. Army Air Force C-47s roared through the skies over Normandy as 13,000 U.S. paratroopers dropped into the marshes and villages behind the beach code-named Utah. A few hours later, American infantrymen--21,000 by day's end--surged out of landing craft and rushed the beach itself. D-Day had begun. Yet Allied commanders were troubled. The plan for Utah Beach had not even existed four months earlier, having been tacked onto Operation Overlord largely at the insistence of Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower and D-Day ground commander British Gen. Bernard Montgomery. A combined airborne and seaborne invasion of this magnitude had never before been attempted. Many feared that the elite American troops executing the assault would be slaughtered. Not only was Utah the most isolated of the five D-Day beaches--which meant the troops could be cut off for days--but the German defenders had flooded huge tracts of land behind the beach in the airborne drop zones. To move inland, the infantry would have to trudge over a few narrow causeways secured by the paratroopers at the opposite ends. On D-Day, this bold operation would end in either a secure footing on the coast of France, or a bloody repulse back across the English Channel. Success would mark the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany and the liberation of Europe. Failure would paralyze the Allies and prolong the struggle for months, if not years. American troops knew the stakes were high and the perils grave. Nevertheless, from the sea and sky, they confidently cascaded into that far corner of Normandy and contributed decisively to the Allied triumph on D-Day. In *Utah Beach: The Amphibious Landing and Airborne Operations on D-Day, June 6, 1944*, Joseph Balkoski shows how American soldiers, sailors, and airmen gained that victory in the face of long odds. With the same verve and authority that made his earlier *Omaha Beach* so compelling, he weaves firsthand accounts, meticulously detailed maps, and dramatic storytelling into the first truly comprehensive narrative of this critical World War II battle. It is indispensable history and unforgettable reading.

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