



Dwight D.  
Eisenhower  
Memorial

## NATIONAL EISENHOWER MEMORIAL EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

### LESSON

# D-Day: Advising Eisenhower



#### Duration

One 45-minute period

#### Grades

7–12

#### Cross-curriculum Application

U.S. History, World History, Geography, English



## Historical Background

During the invasion at Normandy on June 6, 1944, 156,000 troops from multiple Allied nations moved across the English Channel from Great Britain to France. The invasion opened up a crucial second front against German military forces, and the operation's success was a pivotal development in the Allied campaign.

As Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower made the final decision to begin the invasion. In the process, he had to assess weather and geographic conditions while also coordinating with military allies in the United Kingdom and with the French Resistance in France. If Eisenhower made the wrong decision, it would be disastrous for the Allies.

## Objective

Students will examine primary and secondary sources related to General Eisenhower's decision to invade Normandy. After analyzing the sources, students will prepare a brief for General Eisenhower advising him on the best course of action. Students will develop an understanding of the many factors involved in making important decisions, including dealing with incomplete information. The outcome of decisions such as this one were not guaranteed. We know now what happened, but, at the time, Eisenhower did not.

Working in groups that might reach different conclusions, students will understand the importance of seeking out a variety of perspectives and will learn about how a leader benefits from the advice of his staff and makes tough decisions. Students will create a "Top Secret" memo containing their advice to Eisenhower on the eve of D-Day. These conclusions will be based on direct evidence from the provided sources.

## Essential Questions

1. What does it mean to be a leader? What qualities define a good leader?
  2. How do leaders make tough decisions based on information from their staff or advisors? What are the characteristics of a good advisor?
  3. What is the role of preparation and strategy in military operations?
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## Sources

- » “How was the invasion planned?” June 5, 2013. Eisenhower Memorial  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AL4QBbzdXS8>  
*Teacher Notes: Two-minute video on Eisenhower’s plan for the invasion of Normandy.*  
*Interesting details:*
    - Eisenhower increased the size of the invasion force from the original plan.
    - The plan included landing at five different beaches in Normandy in northern France.
    - It also called for paratroopers to parachute into France.
  
  - » Conditions in Normandy. June 3, 1944. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.  
<https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/research/online-documents/d-day/1944-06-03-conditions-in-normandy.pdf>  
*Teacher Notes: A report on conditions in Normandy from three days before the invasion.*  
*Interesting details:*
    - The report contains information on weather, the coordination with the French, obstacles on the beach, and prospects for Allied air forces to assist the invasion.
    - Students will need to find the section of the report that deals directly with their role.
    - The report indicates that each area presents specific and serious challenges to the success of the mission.
  
  - » First U.S. Infantry Division Assault Map. April 1944. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.  
*Teacher Notes: Illustration of the obstacles and fortifications on Omaha beach.*  
*Interesting details:*
    - “Hedgehogs” were obstacles placed on the beach by the German military. They were made of metal beams pointing in several directions.
    - Another kind of obstacle, “Tetrahedra” were constructed using metal beams in a tetra-hedron or pyramid shape.
    - Both hedgehogs and tetrahedra were positioned by the German military to slow down Allied tanks and armored vehicles.
  
  - » “The Decision That Changed The World.” Eisenhower Memorial.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ip3htBMu-EQ>
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*Teacher Notes: Eisenhower E-Memorial short film (6:06) on the decision to launch the invasion of Normandy.*

*Interesting details:*

- *Video highlights the concerns Eisenhower and his advisors had prior to the invasion.*
  - *Video highlights how Eisenhower gathered advice from a variety of sources to make his decision.*
  - *At 2:45, students can hear audio of Eisenhower's Order of the Day for June 6, 1944.*
  - *At 4:45, hear what Eisenhower learned as first reports from the invasion come in.*
- » (OPTIONAL) "In case of failure" message. June 5, 1944. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.  
<https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/research/online-documents/d-day/in-case-of-failure-message.pdf>

*Teacher Notes: This is a brief note Eisenhower drafted before the invasion in case the operation did not succeed. A handout of the transcription is provided for additional support. Interesting details:*

- *Eisenhower planned to take full blame for a failed invasion.*
- *Eisenhower, in what appears to be a simple mistake, wrote the wrong date on the note. It was written on June 5, not July 5.*

## Materials

- » Advise Eisenhower Memo Sheet
- » Advisor Role Handout

## Preparation

- Print one copy of the Eisenhower Memo Sheet for each student.
- Print one copy of the Advisor Role Handout for each student. Circle or highlight the role you wish to assign to each student.
- Print out four copies of each primary source — one for each "expert" group.
- Cue videos for classroom use.



## Procedure

1. Introduce students to the basic facts surrounding the invasion of Normandy. (See *Historical Background* above. Also it may be helpful to use a map of Europe to orient students to the location of the invasion). Encourage them to think about the question “How was the invasion planned?” as they watch the video.
2. Explain to the students that they are going to create a memo advising Eisenhower on the upcoming invasion. Divide students into 4 “jigsaw” groups of experts: weather experts, geography experts, French Resistance experts, and air campaign experts. These different groups reflect the complexity of modern military staffing. Hand out the Advisor Role Handout so students can learn about their assigned role in the group.
3. Give each group a copy of the primary sources. Each group will examine these sources looking for information related to their area of expertise. It should be stressed to students that these sources reflect what was available to the Allies before the D-Day invasion.
4. Tell each group to read carefully and determine the most important part of their source as it relates to a possible invasion of France and their group’s expertise. Cue students to examine their source closely (for help, make use of the Teacher Notes for each source above).
5. Re-form students into new “advisory” groups with one student from each expert group (weather, geography, French Resistance, and air campaign) placed in each group. Pass out the Advise Eisenhower Memo Sheet. Students will share with their new group what their source is telling them about the pending invasion according to their expertise.
6. Within their new groups students will prioritize which of the factors General Eisenhower should consider and why. To support their position, students should refer back to the primary source evidence. Groups should record their answers on the Advise Eisenhower Memo Sheet.
7. Ask students to report their group’s findings to the class. Ask students to compare each group’s findings. What advice was similar? What advice was different? Show the Eisenhower Memorial video, “The Decision that Changed the World” to reveal Eisenhower’s decision and its result on D-Day.

## Differentiation

For students who struggle with dense text, provide excerpts of each source. Students may also benefit from a National Archives Primary Source Analysis Sheet <<http://www.archives.gov/edu->



[cation/lessons/worksheets/document.html](#)>.

Teachers may also make use of the Teacher Notes that accompany the above sources. Providing these notes to students may help them to notice important details within the sources.

Extension activity for advanced students: Analyze Eisenhower’s “In case of failure” message. Prepare a creative way to introduce this source to other students your age: Would you create an on-line exhibit or exhibit in a museum? A classroom activity? A brief video documentary? Guiding questions: What would you highlight for your audience? Why did Eisenhower write this message before the invasion? What does the message draft tell us about Eisenhower and leadership?

## Assessment

Students will be assessed on their ability to collaborate in both jigsaw groups and in their ability to contribute to the memo sheet and subsequent presentation to the class. Quality work will balance a variety of perspectives and model how a leader makes tough decisions. The Advise Eisenhower Memo Sheet should contain conclusions based on direct evidence from the provided sources. See attached rubric.

## Related Sources

### *Lesson Plans*

- » *Eisenhower Speaks*. National WWII Museum.

<http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-teachers/lesson-plans/eisenhower-speaks.html>

This lesson directs students to closely analyze Eisenhower’s Order of the Day and his “In case of failure” message and then write their own “Order of the Day.”

- » *Teaching With Documents: Message Drafted by General Eisenhower In Case the D-Day Invasion Failed and Photographs Taken on D-Day*. National Archives and Records Administration.

<https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/the-night-before-dday>

This lesson from the National Archives asks students to analyze two documents written by General Dwight Eisenhower before the invasion of Normandy on D-Day.

### *Secondary Sources and Digital Resources*

- » *American Experience: D-Day*. Public Broadcasting Service.



<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/dday/index.html>

This site, a companion to the PBS documentary film, features maps, soldiers' letters home, interviews, a timeline and lesson plans related to D-Day.

- » "Ok, We'll Go.": *Just What Did Ike Say When He Launched the D-Day Invasion 70 Years Ago?*, Timothy Rives, *Prologue*, Spring 2014, National Archives and Records Administration.

<http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2014/spring/d-day.pdf>

An article about the deliberations and exact words that Eisenhower used to launch the D-Day invasion.

- » *Seeking Simulations*. Teachinghistory.org.

<http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/ask-a-master-teacher/23691>

This post by the Stanford History Education Group provides a good summary of best practices regarding simulations in a history class as well as links to additional resources.

#### *Primary Sources*

- » *Eisenhower Recalls Sacrifices of D-Day, 20 Years Later*. CBS News.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/eisenhower-recalls-sacrifices-of-d-day-20-years-later/>

An interview with Dwight Eisenhower conducted by Walter Cronkite on the twentieth anniversary of D-Day, June 6, 1964. Eisenhower and Cronkite visit the cemetery at Normandy and the former president reflects on his decision to launch the invasion.

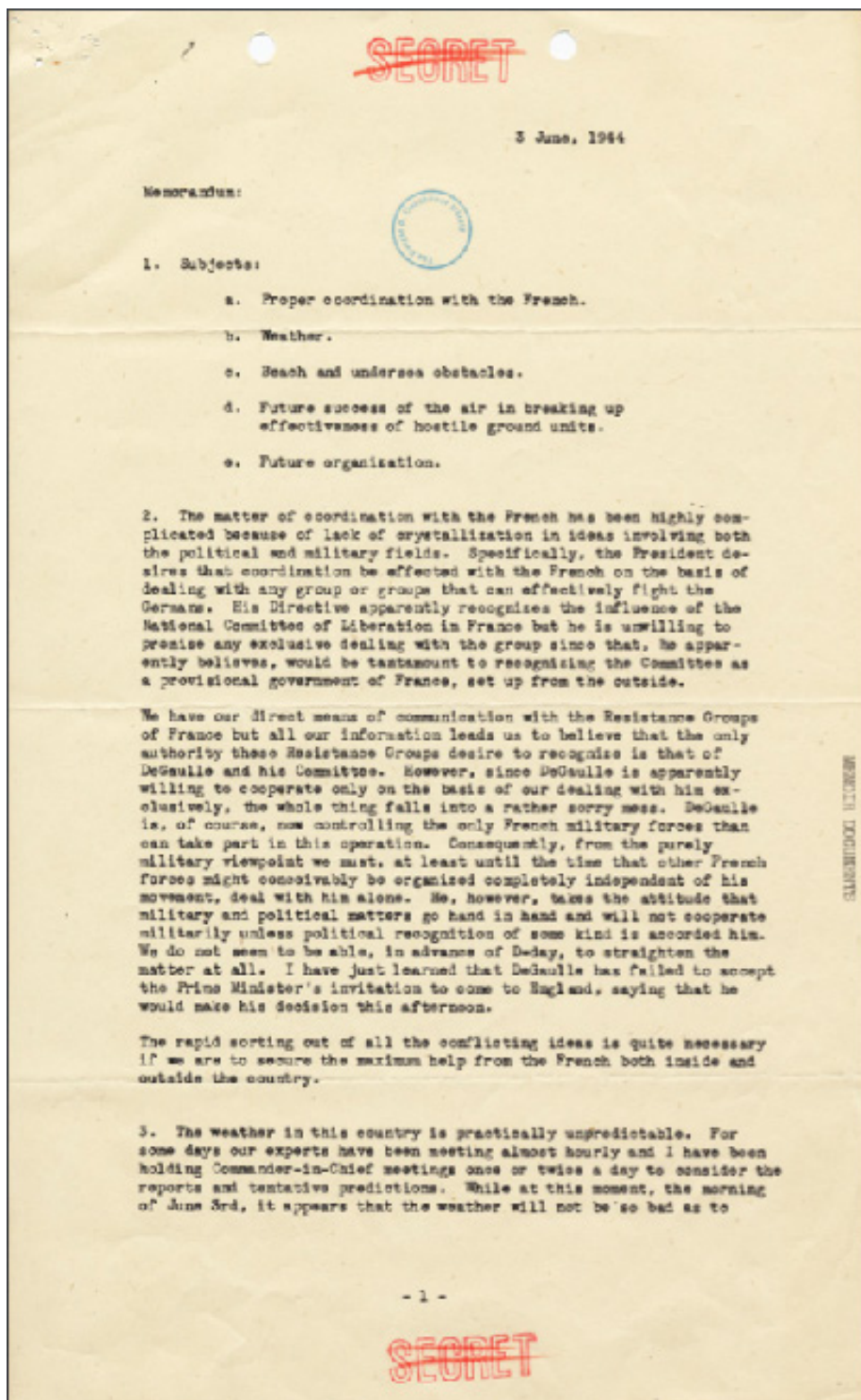
- » *World War II: D-Day, the Invasion of Normandy*. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

<https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/research/online-documents/world-war-ii-d-day-invasion-normandy>

This site features an excellent collection of primary sources related to D-Day and the invasion of Normandy, including Eisenhower's Order of the Day for June 6, 1944 and his handwritten "In case of failure" message to be used in the event the invasion did not succeed.



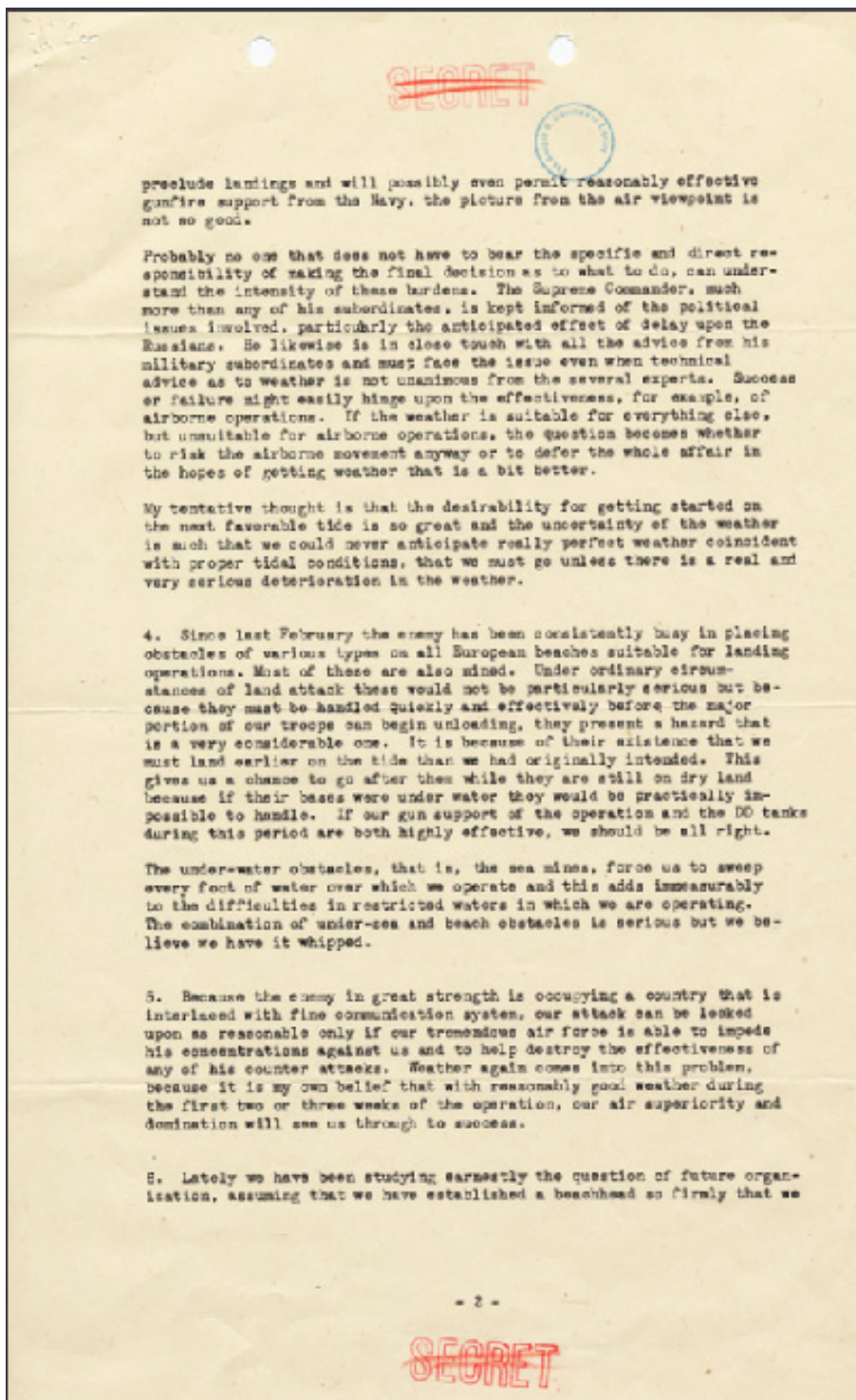
Conditions in Normandy, pg. 1. June 3, 1944. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.





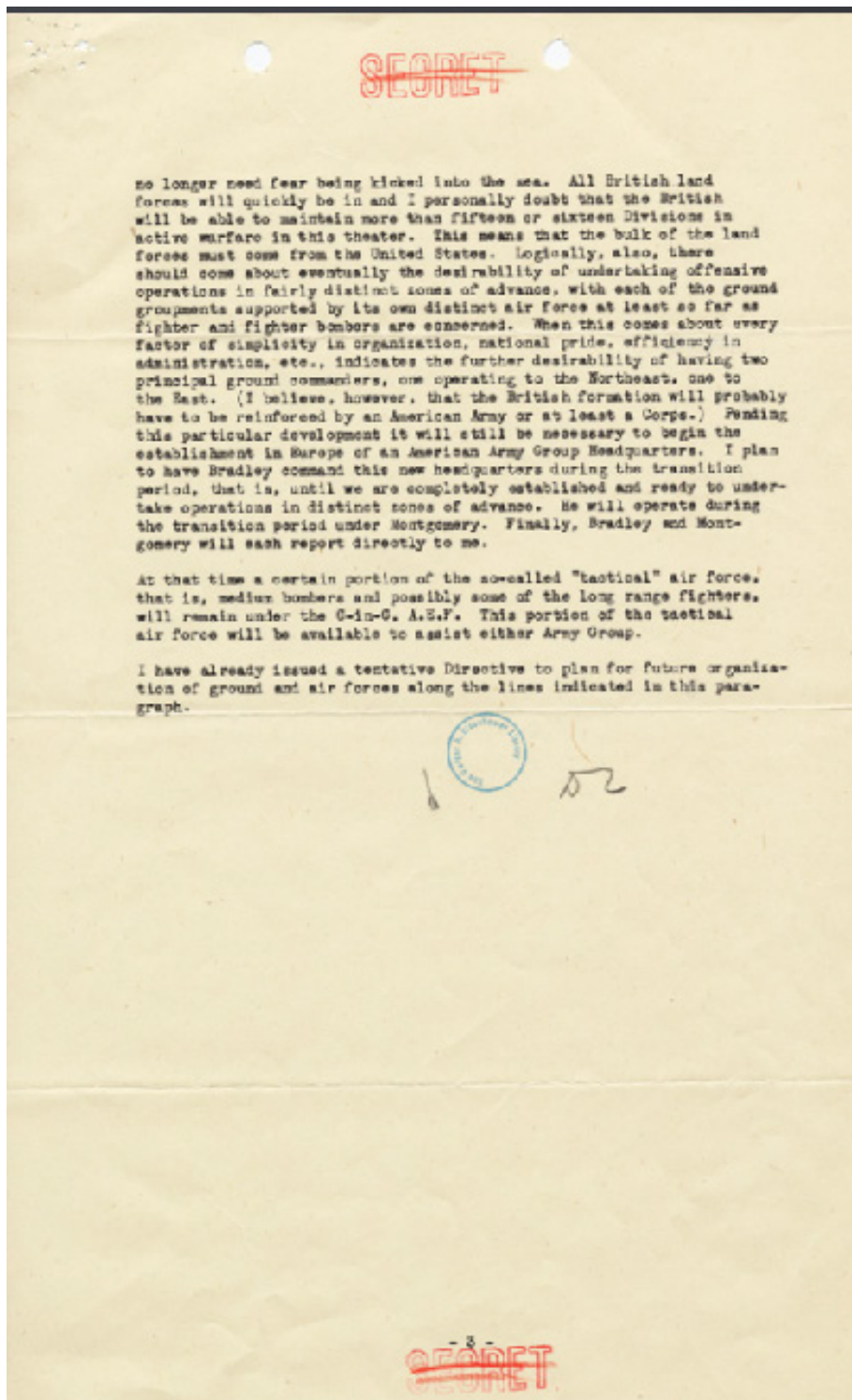


Conditions in Normandy, pg. 2. June 3, 1944. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.



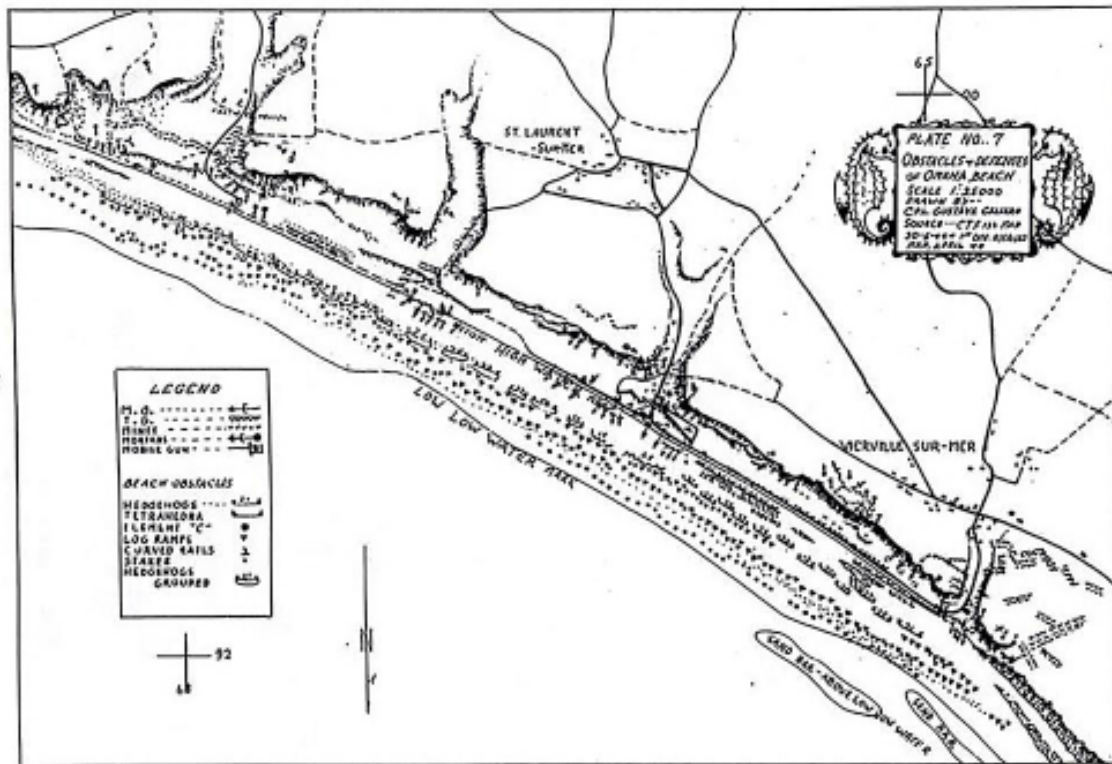


Conditions in Normandy, pg. 3. June 3, 1944. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

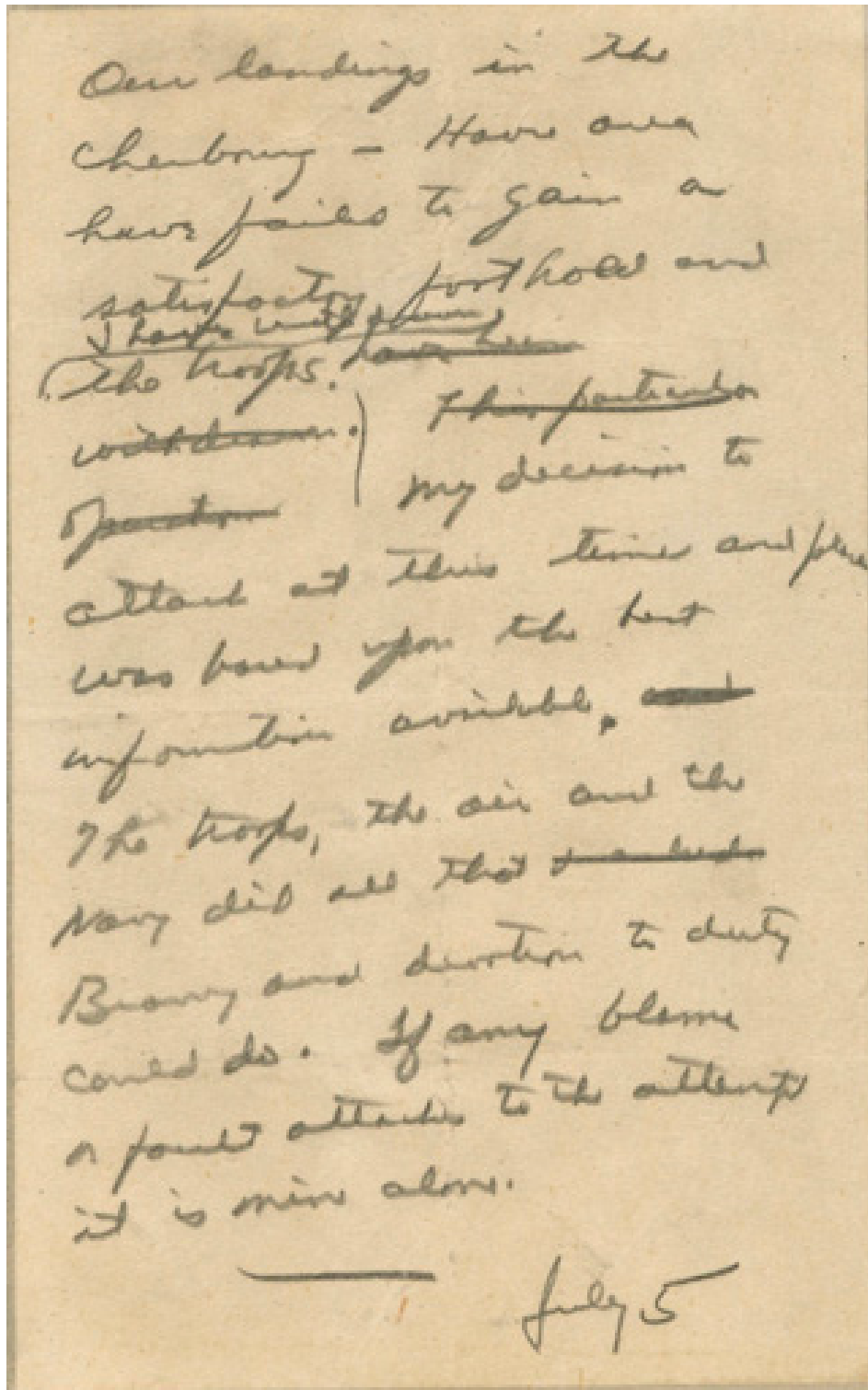




First U.S. Infantry Division Assault Map. April 1944. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.



“In case of failure” message. June 5, 1944. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.



Our landings in the  
Cherbourg - Have now  
have failed to gain a  
satisfactory foothold and  
~~I have with plan~~  
The troops ~~have been~~  
~~withdrawn.~~ This particular  
operation | my decision to  
attempt at this time and place  
was based upon the best  
information available, ~~and~~  
The troops, the air and the  
Navy did all that ~~was~~  
Bravery and devotion to duty  
could do. If any blame  
or fault attaches to the attempt  
it is mine alone.

July 5

Transcription of Eisenhower's "In case of failure" message. June 5, 1944. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

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Our landings in the  
Cherbourg-Havre area  
have failed to gain a  
satisfactory foothold and  
I have withdrawn  
the troops.  
My decision to  
attack at this time and place  
was based upon the best  
information available.  
The troops, the air and the  
Navy did all that  
Bravery and devotion to duty  
could do. If any blame  
or fault attaches to the attempt  
it is mine alone.

July 5



## Advisors Role Handout

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*You have been asked to be part of a team to help General Eisenhower decide when to launch the Normandy invasion. Your team will consist of four team members, each with their own expertise:*

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**Weather expert:** You are a staff meteorologist of the United States Army Air Forces forecasting team. Your team is working with other meteorologists from the British Royal Navy and Air Forces, along with the British Meteorological Office to come up with an accurate weather forecast for General Eisenhower.

**Geography expert:** You are an officer in the Army Map Service, working as a cartographer or map maker. Among your responsibilities, you work with a team to evaluate the French terrain and provide intelligence about German positions and weaponry.

**French Resistance expert:** With your knowledge of the French language and culture, you are part of a team with intelligence about the French Resistance who want to liberate France from the Nazi occupation. The French Resistance provides valuable military intelligence, as well as fights against and sabotages the German forces.

**Air campaign expert:** You are a junior officer in the United States Army Air Forces charged with providing General Eisenhower with the latest intelligence about the German Air Forces' capabilities and recommendations on how the Allies should conduct their air campaign.

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*Keeping in mind what your area of expertise is, look at the secret documents provided. What are the most important details, according to your perspective and expertise? Be ready to share these with your group members, who are looking at the same documents but with a different perspective.*

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## Advise Eisenhower Memo Sheet

TOP SECRET  
ALLIED FORCE HEADQUARTERS

FROM: -----

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TO: Supreme Commander, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower

It is the opinion of this advisory group that the following be considered the highest priority in planning the invasion of Normandy (Be sure to include 1-2 sentences explaining WHY this factor must be given top priority):

1.

Supporting source:

2.

Supporting source:

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### Advising Eisenhower Rubric

	Fully Meets Expectations <i>3 points</i>	Minimally Meets Expectations <i>2 points</i>	Not Yet Within Expectations <i>1 point</i>
<b>Factual Understanding</b>	The memo sheet demonstrates understanding of the main idea of the selected source (or piece of evidence) and identifies its key details.	The memo sheet demonstrates understanding of the main idea of the selected source (or piece of evidence) but does not identify key details.	The memo sheet does not demonstrate understanding of the main idea of the selected source (or piece of evidence).
<b>Sourcing</b>	The memo sheet demonstrates understanding of the selected source's origin: especially when it was created and the creator's goal.	The memo sheet demonstrates partial understanding of the selected source's origin: when it was created and the creator's goal.	The memo sheet demonstrates insufficient understanding of the selected source's origin: when it was created and the creator's goal.
<b>Evidence-Based Claim</b>	The memo sheet makes a reasonable claim and uses appropriate sources and evidence to support that claim. The claim balances a variety of perspectives.	The memo sheet makes a reasonable claim but the sources and evidence only partially support that claim. The claim only partially balances a variety of perspectives.	The memo sheet makes a claim that is not supported by appropriate sources and evidence. The claim does not balance a variety of perspectives.
<b>Presentation</b>	The memo sheet is well-organized and clear. No (or only minor) spelling and grammar errors.	The memo sheet is somewhat disorganized and unclear. Several spelling and grammar mistakes.	The memo sheet shows little or no organization. Repeated major spelling and grammar errors.