



D-Day: The Supplies.



Without doubt, the supplies and logistics required to coordinate D-Day was nothing short of immense and amazing. From uniforms and rations to ammunition, medical supplies and an assortment of planes, ships, tanks, jeeps and trucks, supplies ultimately added up to more than 5 million tons and took approximately two years to accumulate. The Americans reportedly provided the majority of those supplies. In fact, Gen. Eisenhower is said to have described Great Britain in 1944 as “the greatest operating military base of all time.”

From Navy Seabees to Army quartermasters, providing the necessary infrastructure to accomplish one of the world’s most significant military missions required unparalleled foresight and certainly a bit of luck.

Not surprisingly, at this point in history, technology was changing, many modern-day discoveries we take for granted weren’t available, and these things only added to the supply challenges:

Though Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin in 1928, it really wasn’t until 1941 that it was used to treat bacterial infection. An American drug company began mass production just in time for D-Day—enough so that troops’ bacterial infections could be treated effectively.



Ultimately, Fleming and two Oxford University researchers won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1945 for their work in this.



*Good logistics alone can't win a war.
Bad logistics alone can lose it.*

*- General Brebon B. Somervell
Commanding General
Army Services Forces, 1942*

One of the greatest feats of military engineering was Operation Pluto (Pipeline Under The Ocean), an ambitious joint project between British scientists, oil companies and the armed forces to lay undersea oil pipeline from England to France to enable invasion force fueling.

A *Scientific American* article about Seabees recounted their recruitment strategy as, “...if you’re over 16 and under 51, still in good health, and want to line up with a two-fisted crew of really tough hombres who fight with one hand and build naval bases with the other, you may volunteer for service in the Seabees.”

Seabees underwent specialized training beyond boot camp that taught them how to build storage tanks that could hold up to 10k gallons of water, clear tree stumps with dynamite, turn sandy landscapes into working roads, and building pontoons quickly while under attack.

D-Day By the Numbers

By the end of June 11 (D +5):

- **326,547** troops
- **54,186** vehicles, and
- **104,428** tons of supplies

...had arrived on the beaches.

- War planners projected that the first 20 days after the initial assault could potentially require **5,000 tons of gasoline**.
- Operation Pluto provided more than **1 million gallons of oil** to Allied Troops daily.
- The estimated **3,489 long tons of soap** would be required the first four months in France.
- **~17 million maps** are estimated to have supported the D-Day mission.
- **20,000 tons of supplies per day** were unloaded at Utah and Omaha beaches within weeks of the D-Day assault.
- **10,000 Seabees** of Naval Construction Regiment 25 built substantive pontoon causeways onto the D-Day beaches so Allied troops could charge forward.
- By D-Day, **~300 billion units of penicillin** were available to armed services crossing the channel.
- **2,830 calories** were in the K-rations U.S. soldiers received during World War II.
- In 1939, Hershey reportedly produced **100,000 ration bars per day**. However, this number increased to **24 million/week** by the end of the war.

D-Day 70th Anniversary: Honoring the Past, Securing the Future

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