

D-Day: 'A turning point in World War II and history'

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Today is the 74th anniversary of D-Day, the day of the Normandy landings on June 6, 1944. The Western Allied effort that day was a turning point to liberate mainland Europe from Nazi Germany.

More than 425,000 Allied and German troops were killed, wounded or went missing during the Battle of Normandy. This figure includes over 209,000 Allied casualties, with nearly 37,000 dead in the ground forces and a further 16,714 deaths in the Allied air forces.

Dave Stout, the past Illinois state VFW commander from Alton, is one who is reflecting today on those special troops who gave their lives and “saved the world.”

“Nine-thousand U.S. men died that day and undertook the largest invasion of all time against the odds,” he said. “It was an unbelievable day of sacrifice and heroism. The Nazis were threatening the entire global system and those people that sacrificed so much should never be forgotten.”

Next year will be the 75th anniversary of the D-Day invasion at Normandy. Stout said he hopes the D-Day celebrations in 2019 will be massive, remembering those who lost their lives in that conflict.

“It was an absolute turning point in the war and in history,” he said. “It pretty much changed how warfare was fought in so many different ways. The entire world was just so appalled at the things that happened and the loss of life. There was a loss of life not just in the military on both sides, but an incredible amount of civilians lost their lives in World War II. These soldiers on that day started the downfall of Nazi Germany. It was an epic day and epic battle. It ranks right up there with some of the most important battles of the ancient world.”

Today, twenty-seven war cemeteries hold the remains of over 110,000 dead from both sides: 77,866 German, 9,386 American, 17,769 British, 5,002 Canadian and 650 Poles.

Between 15,000 and 20,000 French civilians were killed, mainly as a result of Allied bombing. Thousands more fled their homes to escape the fighting.