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Senate

Statement of Senator Dianne Feinstein

“Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of D-Day”

Mrs. FEINSTEIN: Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate the anniversary of the Allied invasion of Western Europe.

Sixty years ago yesterday, Allied troops landed on the beaches and parachuted into the fields of Normandy in an effort that would lead to the eventual destruction of the German army and the liberation of the European continent.

On the early morning of June 6, 1944, after years of logistical coordination and deceptive intelligence operations, U.S. troops and their counterparts from Britain, France, Canada and Poland brought to bear their enormous power and tremendous bravery on Hitler's military.

On that momentous day, over 150,000 Allied servicemen including 73,000 Americans, 5,000 ships, and more than 1,000 planes started to beat back the German Army.

The attack began just after midnight when more than 13,000 paratroopers carrying between 70 and 90 pounds of equipment jumped down into German-occupied territory. As these men fell through enemy fire to the fields and farmland of Normandy, the largest armada ever assembled steamed across the English Channel toward the French coast.

At 6:30 am, the first wave of troops arrived on the beaches, unloading tens of thousands of soldiers in the face of mortar, artillery and machine gun fire from the cliffs above the Normandy beaches.

A second wave of Allied forces landed at 7 am, charging up hills and scaling cliffs through continued firepower. The fighting continued throughout the day and at day's end, the Allied casualties numbered nearly 10,000, of which 2,500 had died including more than 1,400 Americans.

But more than 100,000 Allied soldiers had made it ashore and secured French coastal towns. On D-Day Plus Five, June 11, over 325,000 Allied troops, 54,000 vehicles and 104,000 tons of supplies had arrived in Normandy.

The D-Day invasion was one of the most daring military operations in history and it succeeded because of the courage of Allied soldiers and the careful planning of Allied military leaders. These brave troops and their leaders knew that this attack would determine the fate of Europe and much of the world for many years to come.

With success on the coast of Normandy, the Allies advanced across France, liberating village after village on the path to Berlin. The massive landing and subsequent arrival of troops had allowed for a relentless advance and cleared the way to a conclusion of the war.

The Americans who survived that day and that war are no longer young. Indeed, there are fewer D-Day veterans this year than last, and there will be fewer still next year. Yet the men who fought on that day sixty years ago, and the Americans who supported their efforts at home and abroad, have created a legacy of peace

and prosperity that continues to reign across Europe today.

Europe is united, not by force of arms or tyranny, but by economic strength and cooperation. Last month, ten new countries joined the European Union. Former battlefield adversaries now enjoy freedom of movement, a single currency and a secure future for themselves and their children.

The legacy of those D-Day veterans is also apparent in our Nation today. Just last week, thousands of veterans came to Washington, DC to celebrate the opening of the World War II Memorial. These veterans reminded us that the prosperity we have enjoyed for most of the past 60 years came at a price—the 400,000 American lives that were lost during World War II.

The remarkable advancements in our Nation and the world during the past 60 years would not have been possible without the extraordinary effort undertaken by this generation of Americans and our allies who shared our commitment to freedom.

Today, courageous soldiers, sailors, marines and pilots continue to serve and sacrifice for this country. As we remember the brave individuals who served in Normandy and across the globe during World War II, we must also honor the men and women of today's military who are in harm's way.

As of June 3, 126 American soldiers have died in Afghanistan and another 818 have died in Iraq. Thousands more have been injured. These men and women, along with their families,

have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Today, I honor them and the approximately 140,000 soldiers who continue to serve in the Middle East.

June 6, 1944 was a crucial day in the history of this Nation and the history of the world. Today we recognize the contribution of those who served our Nation on that day and thank them for staring down tyranny and liberating Europe. They continue to serve our nation through the undiminished memory of a battle fought far from home for the good of all people.