

NORMANDY LANDINGS

D-DAY 6TH JUNE 1944

THE ATLANTIC WALL

AS EARLY AS 1942, Adolf Hitler knew that at some point the Allied armies massing in Britain would try to cross the English Channel and blast their way into his Fortress Europe. The Nazi dictator was convinced that if his 'Thousand-Year Reich' were to survive this day of reckoning, it would be up to his troops to hurl the invaders back into the sea faster than they could wade ashore.



In preparation for this seemingly inevitable showdown, the Führer ordered his generals to fortify Europe's northern shore. He dubbed the resulting 2,000-mile long chain of fortresses, gun emplacements, tank traps and obstacles the "Atlantic Wall."

Czech hedgehogs on the beach, Northern France



The defences at high tide

Rommel tours the Atlantic Wall in 1944. The German field marshal harboured grave doubts as to the effectiveness of the fortifications.



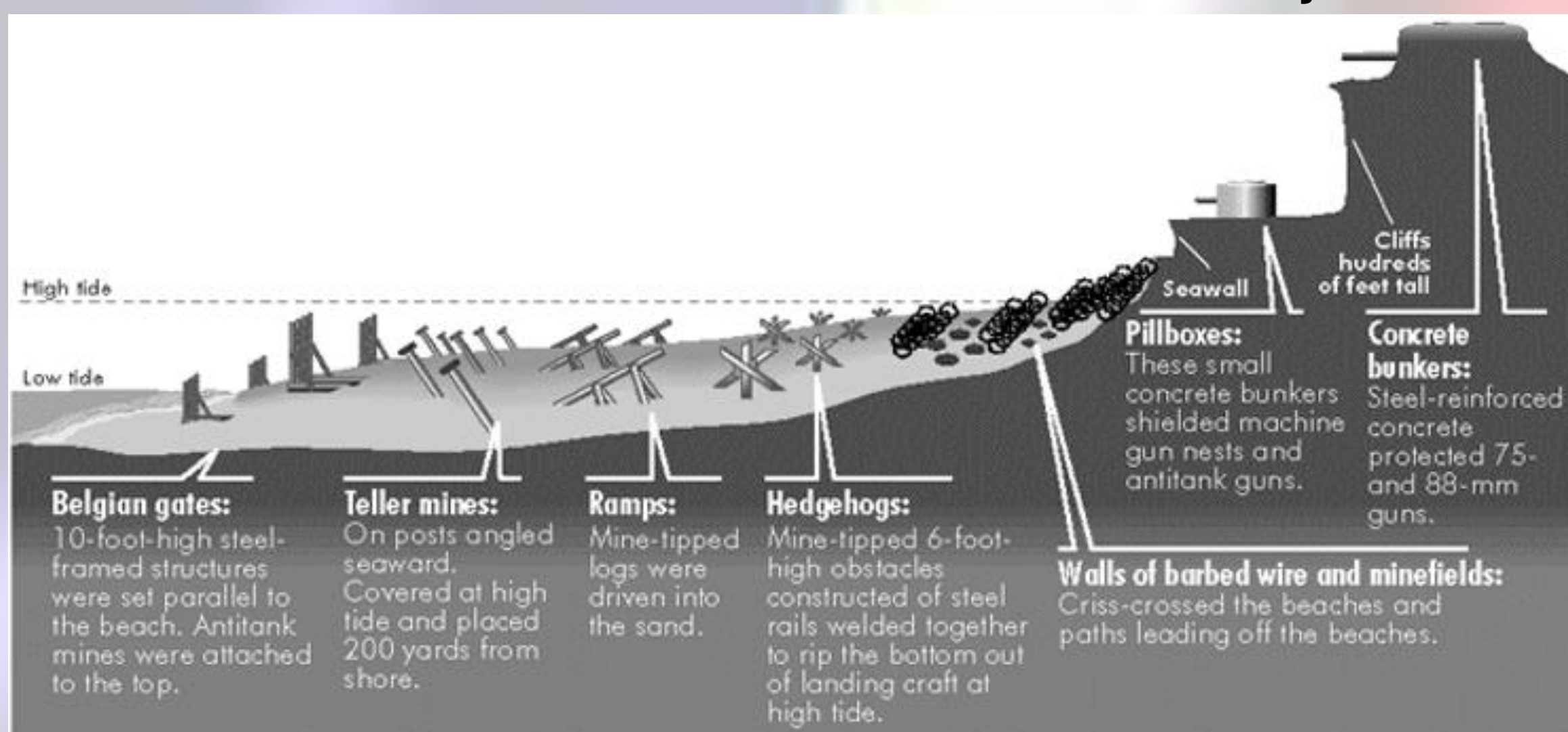
This is a Rommel Asparagus "Rommel Spargel" - a simple but effective obstacle. On top of these, a mine was fixed which would explode if a boat crossed it. The invasion took place at low tide so it failed to destroy or slow down boats on D-Day but they were used by snipers to kill any troops resting underneath them.



Soldiers install obstacles on the beaches of France.



Approximately 1.2 million tons of steel went into the Atlantic Wall. (Enough to build more than 20,000 Tiger tanks.) 17 million cubic metres of concrete into the defences were used. The cost to lay down just the French portion of the Atlantic Wall was 3.7 billion Reichsmarks — an estimated £165 billion today.



Although one of the most impressive engineering feats of modern times, British, American and Canadian troops breached the seemingly impregnable Nazi defences along an 80-mile stretch of French coastline at Normandy in a single day: June 6, 1944.



Allied soldiers pour into France after blasting a hole in the Atlantic Wall on June 6, 1944.