



D-DAY. Behind the lens



On **June 6, 1944**, the beaches of Normandy witnessed what is considered to be **the beginning of the end of WWII**. This year will mark the 80th anniversary of one of the most significant, well organized, intricate operations in the history of warfare. In less than 24 hours the Allies landed around 156,000 troops in Normandy: 73,000 American 61,715 British (UK and colonies) and 21,400 Canadian.

While the bravery of the soldiers who stormed the beaches is well documented, less is known about the filmmakers who risked their lives to capture this monumental event. These filmmakers were an integral part of the Allied force and their mission was to **capture the realities of war on film**. They shared with common soldiers the same tragic experiences on the Beaches: Omaha, Utah, Juno and Sword and they faced the same hardships and dangers.

Among the most famous ones there were the American **John Ford** and **George Stevens**. The former was a popular Hollywood film director, famous for his Western movies who served during WWII as head of the photographic unit for the Office of Strategic Services, the latter was a film director, producer, screenwriter and cinematographer in the US who served in the Army Signal Corps.



Filming **D-Day** was a formidable task. The heavy, cameras of the time were not designed for combat conditions and people like Ford and Stevens had to contend with sand, water, and the constant threat of enemy fire. Many cameras malfunctioned and some filmmakers were wounded when they landed with the first waves but their footage was extremely important. It was used not only for historical record but also for propaganda and also to boost the moral of people back home.

A couple of days after the landings, the first film was produced. It's called "D-Day D plus 3" and it's a compilation of the first four days of the assault. [It required a great effort](#) by different companies and groups as John Ford states in an interview in 1964 "My memories of D-Day come in disconnected takes like unassembled shots to be spliced together afterward in a film ... To tell the truth, I was too busy doing what I had to do for a cohesive picture of what I did to register in my mind".



A different point of view was given by Jack Leib who went to England in 1943 to document the training and preparation of the troops.



[Vai al video](#)

After filming the D-DAY many of them followed the troops through France and Germany. George Stevens for examples kept filming in France and Germany and was the first one to record the atrocities of concentration camps. Once back home he started working in Hollywood again and won two Oscars. The work of these filmmakers has left an indelible mark on the historical record. They were much more than just observers; their courage and dedication ensured that the heroism and sacrifices of D-Day would be remembered forever.

D-DAY TEACHING MATERIAL

- [Activities and lesson plans – National D-Day Memorial;](#)
- [BBC Broadcasts;](#)
- [Activities and lesson plans – WWII National Museum New Orleans;](#)
- [London calling Europe – Radio Londra;](#)



News

- [Poem used to announce the landings to the French resistance;](#)
- [Webinar Le lingue live – D-DAY.](#)