Beach obstacles at Pas de Calais, France, were designed to slow the movement of coming troops and military vehicles as part of the Nazi’s “Atlantic Wall”.¹
Breaking through the “Atlantic Wall”

To guard against an Allied invasion of Europe, Adolf Hitler ordered the laying of millions of mines and miles of barbed wire and poured tons of concrete to create a defensive barrier along the western coast of Europe. The plan was a sham because the Germans didn’t know exactly where an invasion would occur. Yet it cost many Allied soldiers their lives to secure the beaches of Normandy.

Belgian gates: 10-foot-high steel-framed structures were set parallel to the beach. Antitank mines were attached to the top.

Teller mines: On posts angled seaward. Covered at high tide and placed 200 yards from shore.

Ramps: Mine-tipped logs were driven into the sand.

Hedgehogs: Mine-tipped 6-foot-high obstacles constructed of steel rails welded together to rip the bottom out of landing craft at high tide.

Pillboxes: These small concrete bunkers shielded machine gun nests and antitank guns.

Concrete bunkers: Steel-reinforced concrete protected 75- and 88-mm guns.

Walls of barbed wire and minefields: Criss-crossed the beaches and paths leading off the beaches.
German pillbox for artillery along the Atlantic Wall, France.
German troops man an MG-34 somewhere along the coast of France.\textsuperscript{ii}

Rommel tours the Atlantic Wall in 1944. The German field marshal harboured grave doubts as to the effectiveness of the fortifications.\textsuperscript{iv}
TASK: Find the Regimental Crest of the Queen’s Own Rifles regiment
The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada dug in at the end of D-Day near Carpiquet.

Members of the Queen’s Own Rifles “A” Company, June 6, 1944.
June 4, 1944, 21.30: “OK, let’s go.” Following several days of bad weather, the Met Office predicts 24 hours of settled conditions from late on June 5. Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, decides the time is right to move.

June 6, 00.20: Airborne assault. More than 19,000 U.S. and British paratroops drop into Normandy to secure western and eastern edges of battlefield.

Night of June 5-6: 1,068 RAF and USAF heavy bombers drop more than 5,000 tonnes of bombs on enemy strongpoints.

05.30, Drenching: First heavy bombardment of the war begins at dawn. 7 battleships, 23 cruisers and 103 destroyers pound German shore batteries to protect assault craft.

British 2nd Army: Lieutenant General Sir Miles Dempsey

British 6th Airborne Division: 6,250 paratroops to secure eastern edge of battlefield, destroy four bridges over River Odon to cut off German counter-attack from east, silence shore batteries at Merville – which threaten Sword Beach with big guns – and capture intact two strategic bridges across River Orne and Caen Canal (Pegasus Bridge) to secure exit routes from beachheads. 6th Airborne suffers 650 casualties.

Douglas C-47 Dakota: Over 900 C-47s – many pulling British and U.S. gliders – transport 60th and 101st divisions from England to Cotentin Peninsula. Allied D-Day aircraft are marked with black and white stripes for easy “friend or foe” recognition.

Waco CG-4A glider: Carries 13 troops plus equipment or either a jeep, small truck, or 75mm howitzer.

Airspeed Horsa Mk II glider: Carries up to 30 troops, vehicles or artillery. 867 British and U.S. gliders used on D-Day.

Spitfire: RAF flies 55 squadrons of Spitfire fighters. Total of 11,500 aircraft deployed to support landings – 127 planes lost.

06.30, American beaches: Utah – U.S. 4th Infantry Division meets light enemy opposition. 23,050 troops with support vehicles are landed. Caen is estimated at 197. Omaha – US 1st Army lands 34,250 infantry. Objectives: Take villages of Vierville, St. Laurent, Colleville; attack west toward Pointe du Hoc; and east to Port en Bessin to link up with British. Heavy German resistance turns Omaha into killing zone – Americans sustain 2,000 casualties. 25,000 extra troops land during course of D-Day.

07.30, British beaches: Gold – 50th Division of British 2nd Army lands 24,970 troops. Objectives: Cut Caen-Bayeux road, take Amfreville, move to Port en Bessin and join Americans; link up with Canadians to east. British suffer 113 casualties while securing Gold. Sword – British 3rd Division lands 28,845 troops. Objectives: Take Ouistreham; capture Caen and strategic Carpiquet airfield; push up bridges over Orne River and Caen Canal. Link up with 6th Airborne Casualties: 630.

07.55, Canadian beach: Juno – Canadian 3rd Infantry Division lands 21,400 troops. Objectives: Cut Caen-Bayeux road, seize Carpiquet airport and form line between Gold and Sword beaches. Casualties: 1,204.

Midnight: End of day one. Allies have landed over 176,600 men in Normandy, supported by over 10,000 tanks, support vehicles and artillery. By the end of day one, the Allies have suffered more than 12,500 casualties – German losses on D-Day are estimated at 6,000.