

# The European Theater



# Europe Before U.S. Entry

- Continental Europe was largely under the control of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy until mid-1943

- War was fought in North Africa and the Eastern Front + Pacific Theater

  - **China & U.S. vs. Japan**

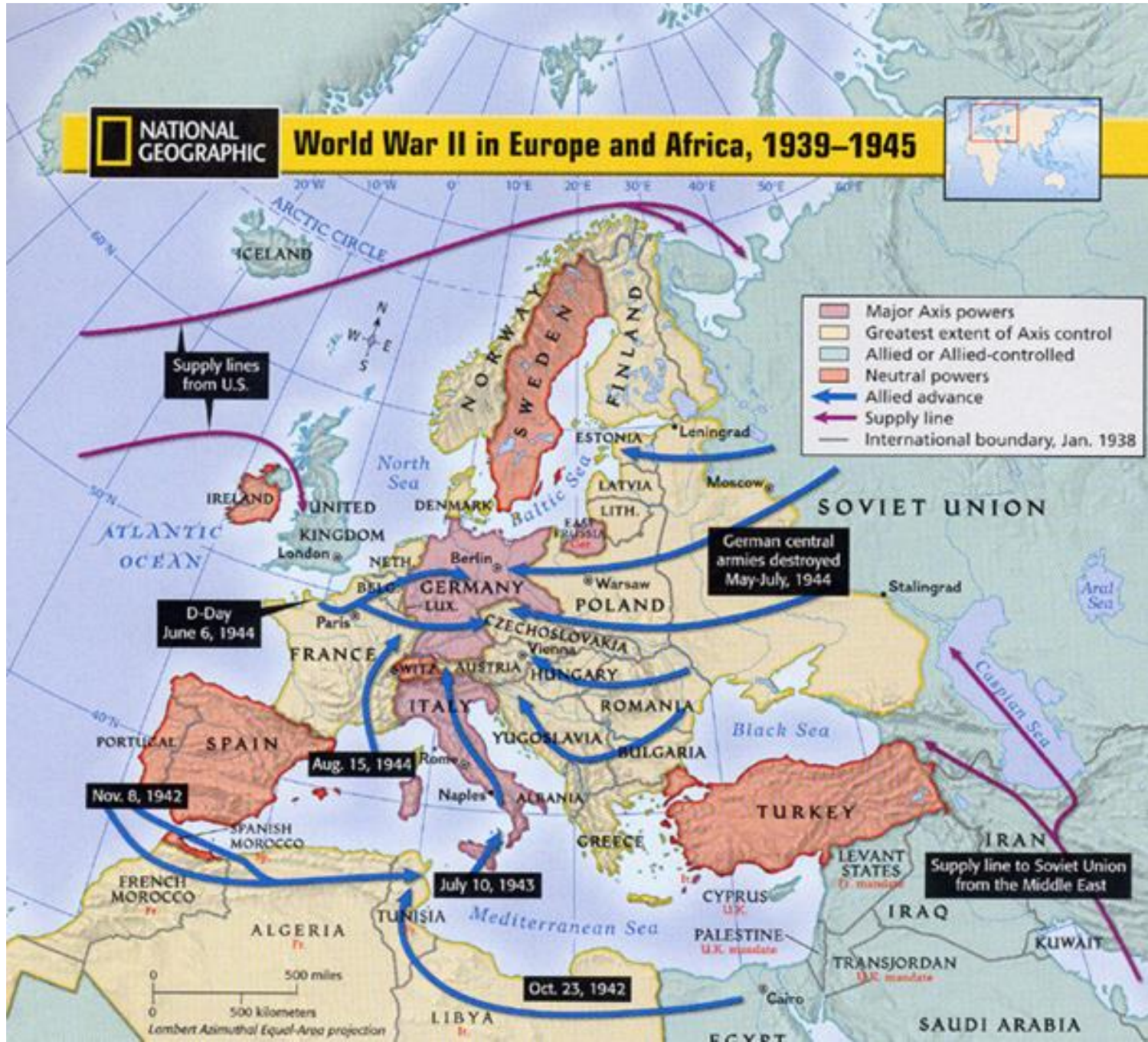
## North African Campaign

- **Great Britain vs. Italy & Germany**

## Eastern Front

- **Soviet Union vs. Germany**





# Eastern Front (Great Patriotic War)

- **Soviet Union vs. Germany**
- Hitler continues to press on in the Soviet Union
- Russian winters were harsh for the German Army
- Soviet heavily resisted
- **Battle of Stalingrad**
  - August 1942 – February 1943
  - Major turning point in the Eastern Front and the European Theater
  - German army suffers heavy losses and becomes surrounded



Nearly 99% of Stalingrad was destroyed during the battle



# U.S. Arrives in the Mediterranean/African Theater

The United States joins WWII on December 8, 1941

- U.S. concentrates on the Pacific Theater initially
- **Operation Torch** (November 1942)
  - U.S. finally deploys soldiers to North Africa to assist Allies



# U.S. Arrives in the Mediterranean/African Theater (cont.)

- **Battle of Kasserine Pass** (February 1943)
  - First major battle between American and German forces
  - American forces defeated, demonstrated inexperience and bad leadership
- Changes to the military
  - American soldiers performed better
- Erwin Rommel (Desert Fox) and his Afrika Korps ousted of North Africa by May 1943



**American Sherman  
Tank first saw  
combat in the North  
African Campaign**







**Captured German  
Tiger Tank**



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# The Tide Turns in Europe

**With North Africa liberated from Nazi Germany and Italy, Allies turn their attentions north**

## Italian Campaign (June 1943 – May 1945)

- Allies invade Sicily then Italy
- Mussolini falls from power (July 1943)
  - After 18 years of ruling Italy
- Rescued by Hitler
  - Sets up new regime in northern Italy
  - Italian Social Republic





**Mussolini with  
German  
commandos who  
rescued him in the  
Gran Sasso raid**

# Italian Social Republic







New regime set up by Nazi Germany with the rescued Mussolini in charge

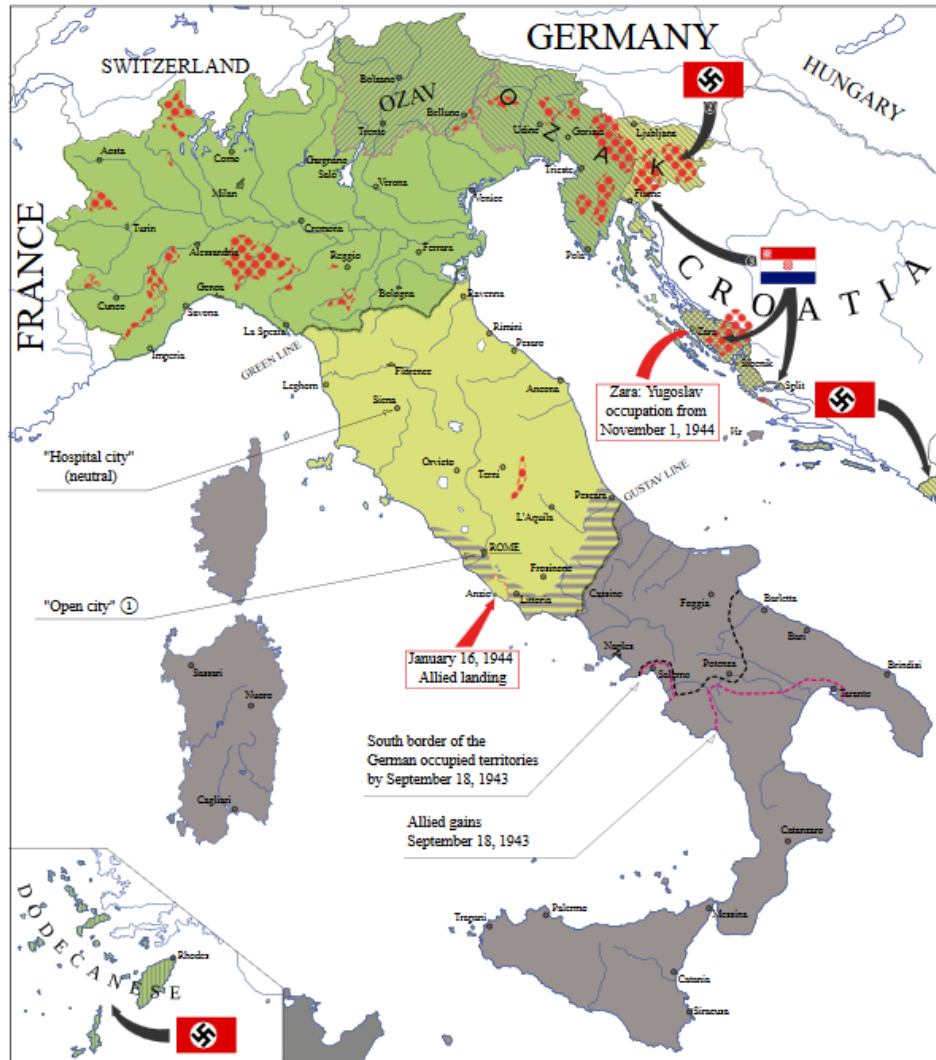
- September 1943 – April 1945
- Parts of Italy controlled by Nazi Germany
- Ended with Mussolini's execution by Italian **partisans** (guerilla freedom fighters)



- Italian Social Republic (as of 1943)
- German operational zones: OZAK (Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral) and OZAV (Operational Zone of the Alpine Foothills)

## THE ITALIAN SOCIAL REPUBLIC DURING THE CIVIL WAR

-  Territory nominally administered by the RSI
-  Territories lost between Dec. 1943 and Sep. 1944
-  German Operational Zones (military administration)
-  Territories annexed by Croatia
-  Partisan Republics, Free Zones and territories held by Yugoslav partisans (1944)
-  Provinces annexed by Italy prior to German and Croatian occupation



**Mussolini's body after execution**

# 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team

**U.S. army military unit composed almost entirely of Japanese American soldiers**

- Most came from families who were interned
- Served in Europe (Italy, France, Germany)
- Most decorated military unit in U.S. history
- 14,000 men served
  - 9,486 Purple Hearts
  - 21 Medals of Honor
- “Go for Broke!”



# 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team





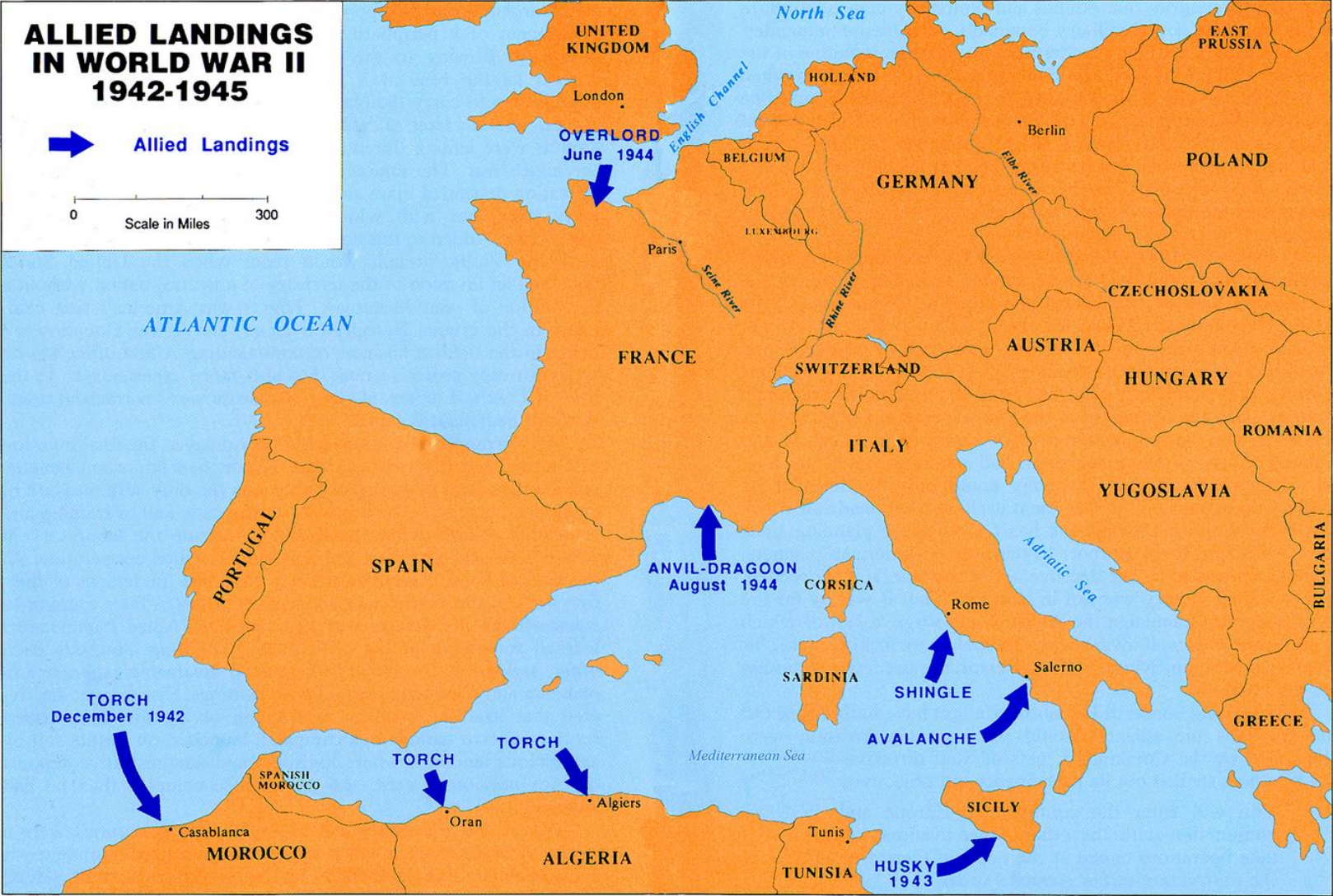
# World War II in Europe and North Africa



- Stalin repeatedly requests Allies to open up a second front to split German forces
- **Tehran Conference** (November 1943)
  - Allies agree to open second front
- Allies begin planning invasion of Europe through France – Operation Overlord (D-Day invasion)

**The “Big Three” at  
Tehran, Iran  
during the Tehran  
Conference in  
November 1943**





# D-Day (June 6, 1944)

Allies open up the second front through **Operation Overlord**

- 5 beaches
- Aerial landings the night before to capture important points
- Largest amphibious invasion in history
  - 5,000 ships
  - 1,200 planes
  - Over 160,000 soldiers





**General Dwight. D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, addresses paratroopers before Normandy landings**

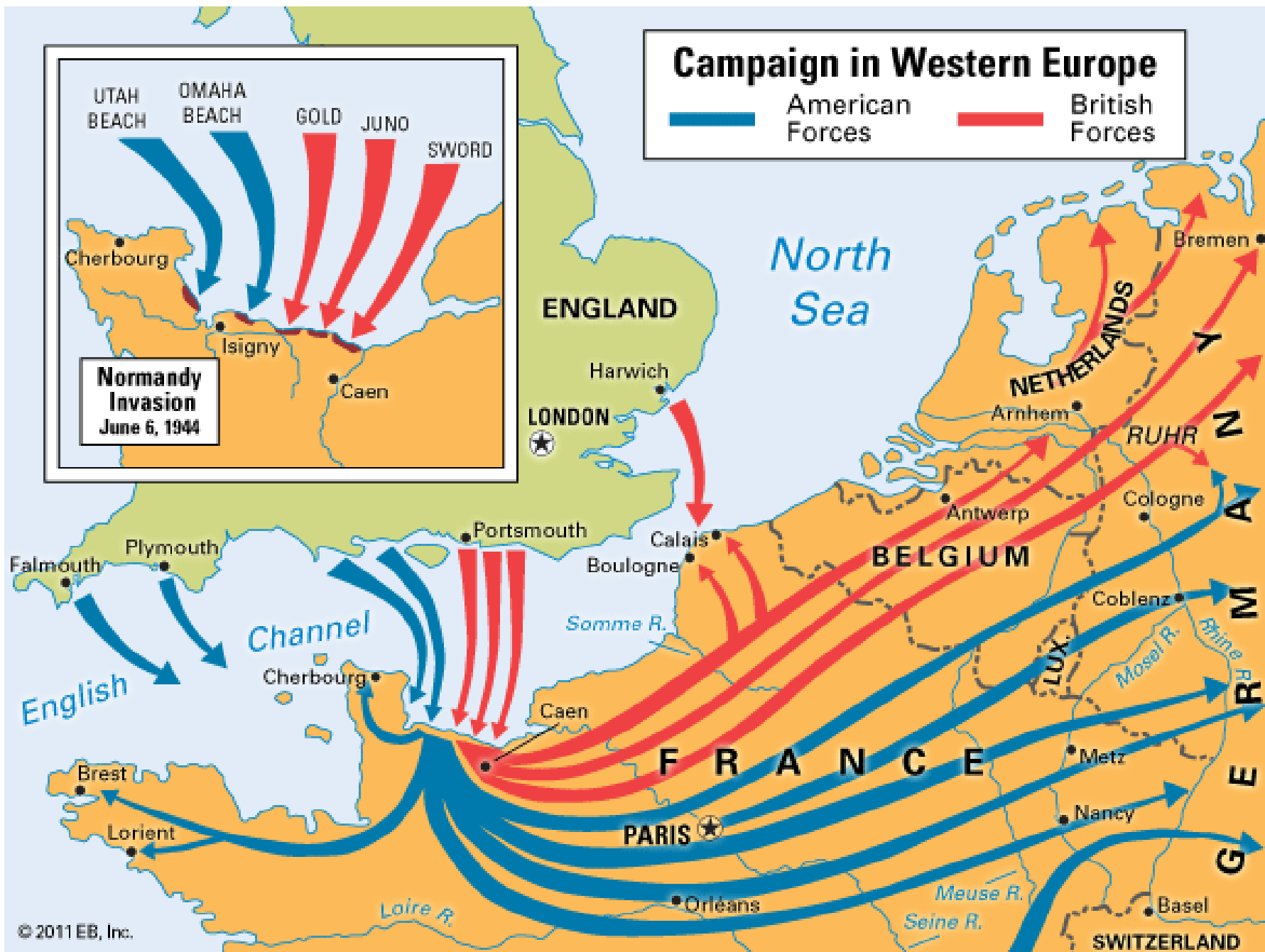
# Campaign in Western Europe

 American Forces  British Forces

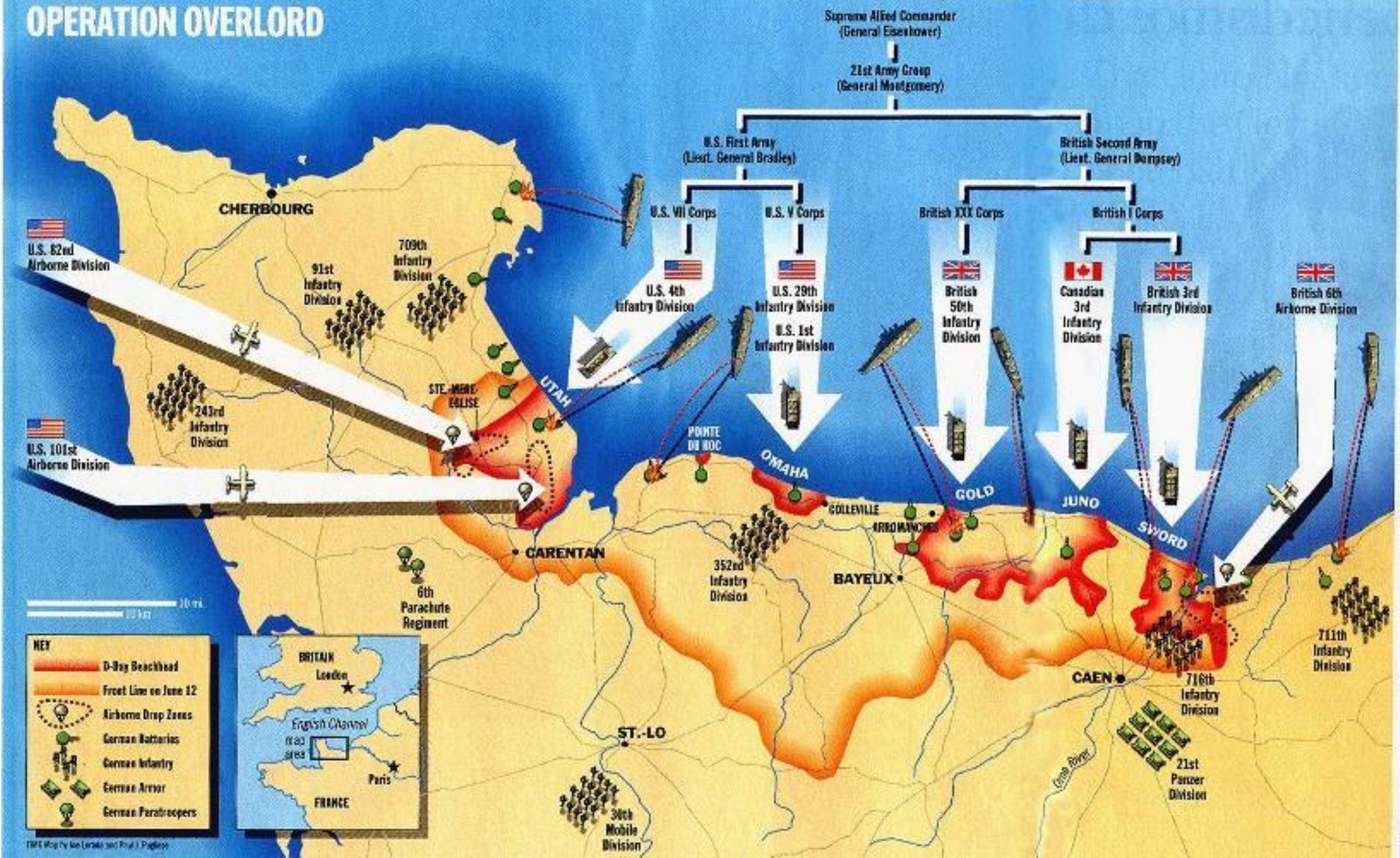
**Normandy Invasion**  
June 6, 1944

UTAH BEACH  
OMAHA BEACH  
GOLD  
JUNO  
SWORD

Cherbourg  
Isigny  
Caen



# OPERATION OVERLORD



TIME Map by Joe Lavado and Paul J. Pugliese

## Beachhead Secured

- By end of July, almost 1.5 million soldiers crossed the English channel
- By the end of August, over 2,000,000 crossed the channel







**Paris and rest of  
France liberated by  
September 1944**



# Germany on the Defense

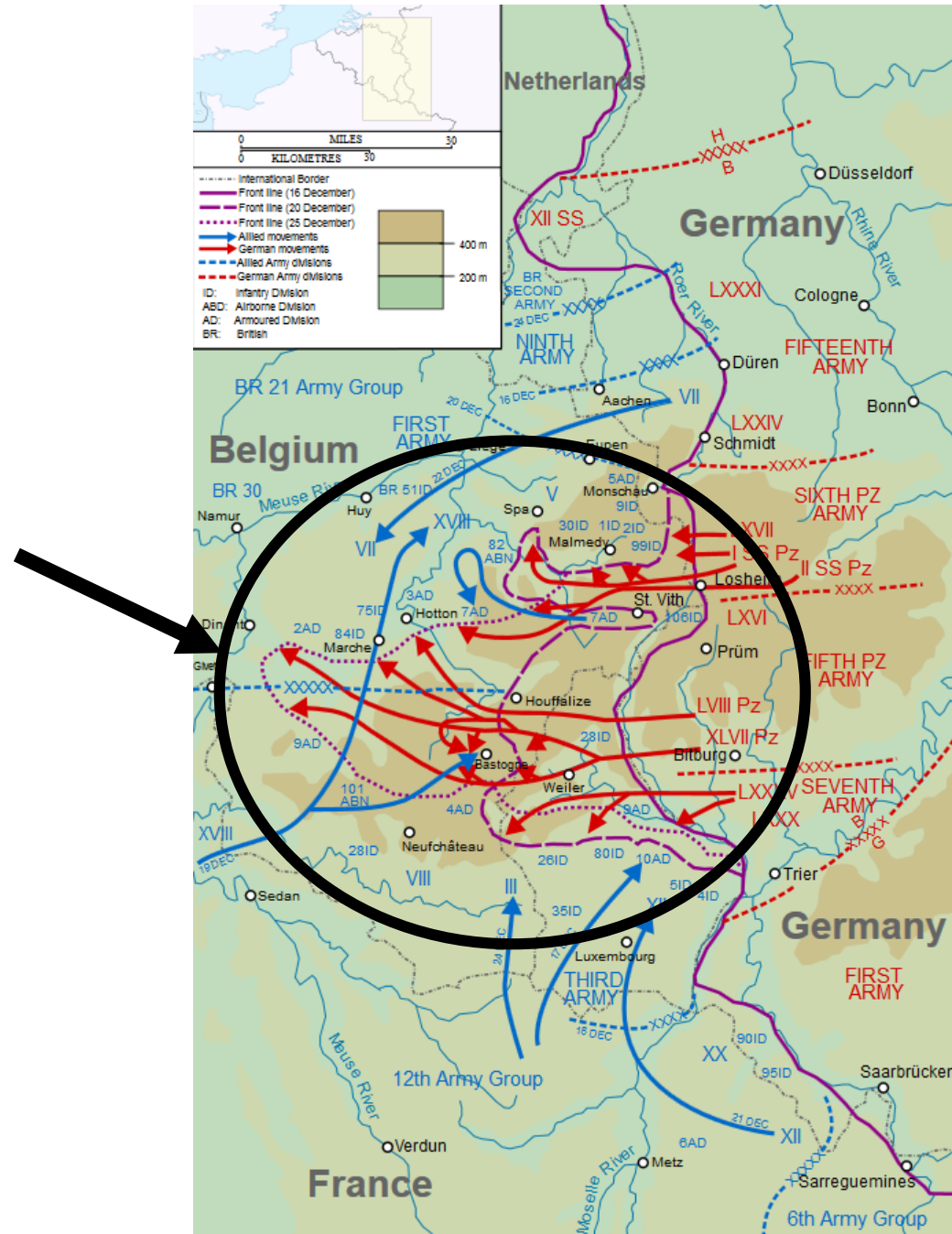
**Germany fights on the defensive as Allies make rapid advances on both fronts**

- Soviet Union attacks from the east around same time as D-Day invasion
- **Battle of the Bulge** (December 1944)
  - Germany's final attempt to push Allies back
- March 1945: Allies enter Germany
  - 3 million Allied soldiers and 6 million Soviet soldiers approach Berlin by April



# Battle of the Bulge

- Named after for the “bulge” that appeared in the lines by German surprise counterattack
- Bloodiest and largest battle for U.S. military
- Germany failed to gain major advantage
  - Military reserves depleted
  - Luftwaffe (air force) destroyed



# German Unconditional Surrender

**Berlin, the capital of German, becomes surrounded by the Allies by April 1945**

- Hitler takes cyanide and shoots himself in his bunker
- Third Reich unconditionally surrenders on May 7, 1945; official on May 8<sup>th</sup>
  - V-E Day (Victory in Europe Day)

**Only Japan remains**

