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Obama joins heads of state to honor D-Day veterans at ceremony marking 65th anniversary of Normandy invasion

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NORMANDY AMERICAN CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL, France -- U.S. President Barack Obama, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Prince Charles of Wales, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Gordon Brown and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper spoke here today at a ceremony honoring the servicemembers who fought and died during the allied invasion of Normandy 65 years ago.



DAVE MELANCON

(Left to right) President Barack Obama, accompanied by Prince Charles of Wales, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and President of France Nicolas Sarkozy, returns a salute to an honor guard of U.S. and allied servicemembers during the 65th anniversary commemoration of D-Day at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial, June 6. The heads of state honored veterans of the D-Day invasion and World War II.

“You, the veterans of that landing, are why we still remember what happened on D-Day. You remind us that in the end human destiny is not determined by forces beyond our control,” Obama said. “Our history has always been the sum total of

the choices made, and the actions taken, by each individual man and woman. It’s always been up to us.”

Obama came to Normandy after the president visited Cairo, reaching out to Muslims to seek a new beginning and build new partnerships to fight violent extremists, and Germany, where he visited the site of the World War II Buchenwald concentration camp and wounded servicemembers at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

More than 100 World War II veterans from Great Britain, Canada and the United States attended the ceremony. Military aircraft from France, Great Britain and the United States performed a flyover, and the U.S. Army Europe Band and Chorus provided music. Hundreds

more military and civilian members of all services from across Europe and the U.S. also supported the event.

The allied invasion of Normandy marked the greatest seaborne invasion in history, with about 155,000 servicemembers, 5,000 ships and landing craft, 50,000 vehicles and 11,000 aircraft. The allies paid a heavy price for the daring assault; about 2,500 were killed and thousands more injured in the operation.

The U.S. First Army established a cemetery here June 8, 1944. The first American cemetery on European soil in World War II, today it is the final resting place for 9,387 servicemembers.



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