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How History and the World was Changed by an Invasion

While I was serving in Burma and China during WWII in a special forces unit under the direct control of American General "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell, our task was to survey and bring up to date maps of Burma, China and Indo-China, many of which were over fifty years old (one ancient Chinese map was almost 800 years old), and in most cases providing details up 20 to 40 miles in the wrong location. Rivers flowing the wrong way, mountains and hills in the wrong place and wrong heights. Valleys, farmland or villages etc, not shown. These grave fundamental errors of cartography made the planning of air-drops of troops or supplies and bombing of suspected targets almost impossible to be carried out with certainty and accuracy.

From the 1st of June 1944, there was an almost total blanket of radio messages, or if there was they did not make sense to us out in the dense jungle. Radio communication to and from Colombo, Ceylon; New Delhi, India; Bletchley Park, England; Cairns, Australia and Washington, U.S.A. and to our naval contacts at sea were so strange to us, that we sensed that something big was afoot somewhere by the Allies.

From Britain no invading army had crossed the English Channel since the army of King James III in 1688. Then, on June 6, 1944, an armada of some 8,000 Allied vessels sent more than 156,000 men and women, and some 30,000 vehicles towards the Nazi occupied coast of France. A total of 13,000 aircraft completed the invading forces. On the night of June 5, six parachute regiments (a total of 23,000 men) were dropped behind enemy lines.

The invasion was titled "Operation Overload", consisting of British, American, Australian, Canadian, Free French and other troops under the command of Bernard Montgomery "Monty", they broke through the German defence line of the so-called "Atlantic Wall", after landing on selected beaches rather than at a major sea port. By nightfall, approximately 9,000 Allied personnel were dead or wounded, but more than 175,000 had made it safely to shore by midnight. French villages were secured and German troops captured by the thousands.

The German leader, Adolf Hitler scoffed and stated, "The news couldn't be better. Now we have them where we can destroy them." Eleven months later, he and the "Axis" were toppled in Europe. Out in the Far East and Pacific arena, the war went on for another fourteen months, until the dropping of atom bombs on Japan, being a major factor.

But other 'wars to end wars' were never really successful, Korea, Vietnam, conflicts in Africa, Malaysia, the Middle East and now once again in Iraq, once more against a former dictator and international terrorism. This shows that we cannot drop our guard, but must be vigilant. We must also have a

dependable and well equipped military service, with reliable allies. Australia requires a larger and more effective Coast Guard Service. Some form of National Service for younger citizens that would provide a core of trained personnel in time of need. (Military, national emergency or what have you).