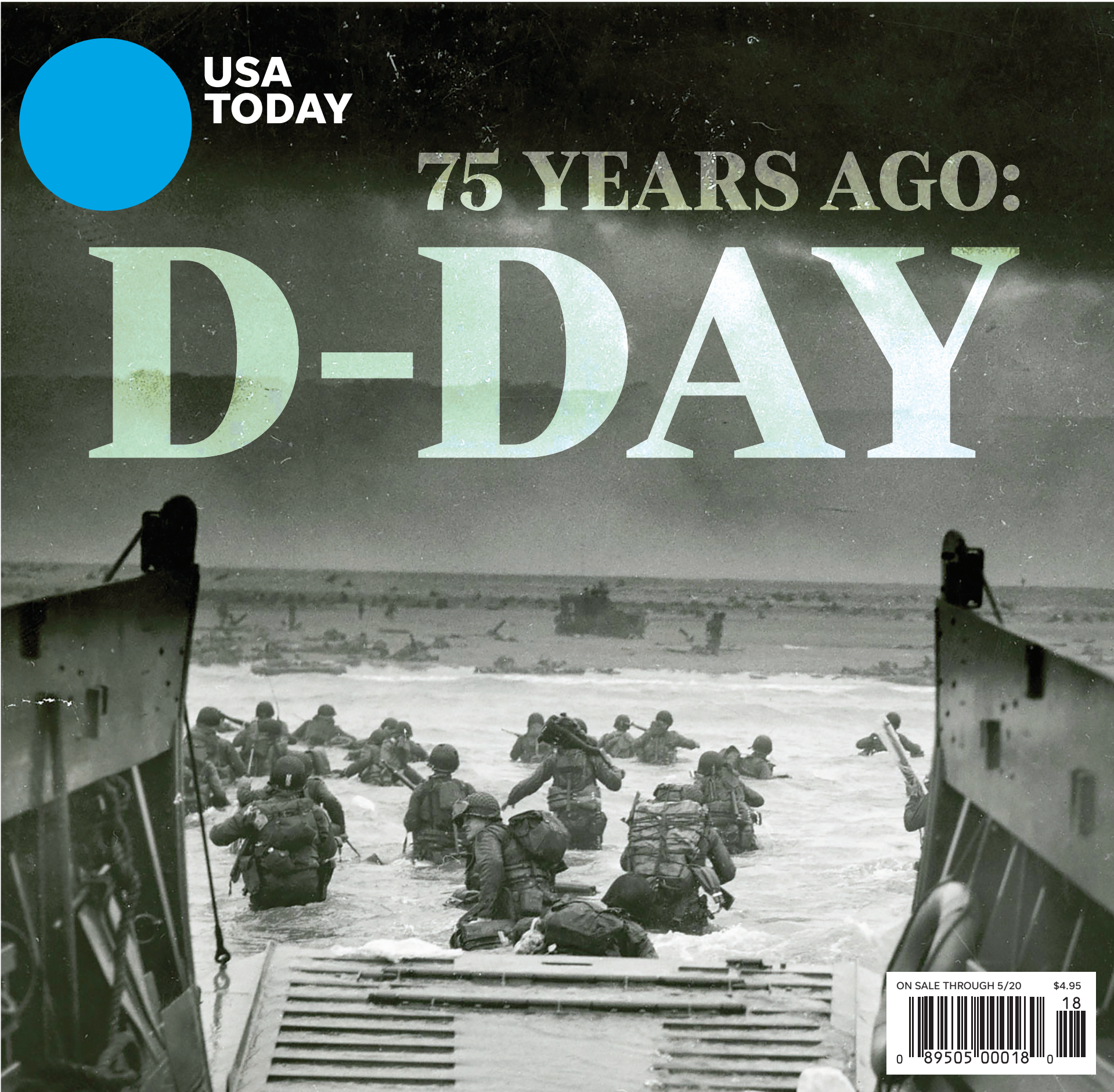



Remembering the heroes of the ‘Great Crusade’ in WWII



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REMEMBERING D-DAY

THINGS TO DO

6 ways to mark day

Observe D-Day at museums, memorials and the French coast

Matt Alderton Special to USA TODAY

On June 5, the skies over Normandy, France, will buzz like a hive of angry bees. As the warbling roar grows louder, its source will come into focus as a fleet of 38 Douglas C-47 Skytrain transport planes — or “Dakotas,” as they were known in the British Royal Air Force — converge over the village of Ranville to drop some 250 uniformed paratroopers onto the countryside below.

For many in attendance, the event called “Daks Over Normandy” will be like nothing they’ve ever seen. For surviving WWII veterans, however, it will be soberingly familiar, as its reason for being is the 75th anniversary of D-Day — June 6, 1944, when more than 150,000 Allied troops stormed the beaches of Normandy to begin the liberation of Western Europe from Nazi tyranny. Preceding the amphibious assault were 24,000 paratroopers who crossed the English Channel in more than 800 Dakotas. It’s their often-unsung contribution that Daks Over Normandy will commemorate with the largest gathering of Dakotas since the war.

“This is probably going to be the last really big D-Day anniversary with living World War II veterans, so we’re doing something epic,” says Moreno “Mo” Aguiari, executive director of the D-Day Squadron, Daks Over Normandy’s American contingent.

Daks Over Normandy will be but one in a series of events taking place in Normandy on or around June 6. President Trump will visit England and attend a ceremony in Portsmouth to commemorate the anniversary before traveling to Normandy on June 6 to take part in a similar French ceremony at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial at Colleville-sur-Mer.

You don’t have to travel thousands of miles to be pay tribute to the service and sacrifice of the “Greatest Generation.” Check out these commemorations taking place across the USA.



John Wayne played an airborne battalion commander in *The Longest Day*. The 1962 film, a best picture Oscar nominee, tells the story of D-Day from both sides. 20TH CENTURY FOX

The National WWII Museum (New Orleans)

June 6 is always special at The National WWII Museum in New Orleans, which originally opened as The National D-Day Museum on that date in 2000. But this year’s celebration promises to be the biggest yet. Planned events include panel discussions, special tours of the museum’s original exhibit “The D-Day Invasion of Normandy,” and two film screenings, one of the 1962 movie *The Longest Day* and one of a new, museum-produced documentary. The day starts with a special ceremony at 6:30 a.m. and concludes with a musical performance by the museum’s band. Museum admission will be free from June 4 to 6. (nationalww2museum.org)



Adapted from the civilian DC-3 airliner, Skytrain transport planes (aka Dakotas) carried D-Day paratroopers. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
NORMANDY INVASION

National D-Day Memorial (Bedford, Va.)

The National D-Day Memorial is expecting about 25,000 visitors for a six-day program titled “The Final Salute.” The program starts June 4 with a book signing by Maxine Giannini, co-author with her late husband, Ugo, of *Drawing D-Day: An Artist’s Journey Through War*. Ugo Giannini’s sketches — which will be on display — are the only known sketches made on D-Day by a soldier taking part in the landing. Other planned activities planned for “The Final Salute,” which runs through June 9, include an aerial tribute; a commemorative observance featuring foreign dignitaries and a Normandy veteran roll-call; D-Day re-enactments; performances of the play *Tuesday Mourning*, which tells the story of the men from Bedford who died on D-Day; an outdoor concert of patriotic music; and a 1940s-themed parade honoring the “Greatest Generation” with antique cars, marching bands and more. Admission to the memorial is free on June 6. (dday.org/75th)



The National D-Day Memorial is in Bedford, Va., which suffered the greatest proportional losses on D-Day (19 men killed) of any town in the USA. ASHLEE GLEN



A statue of Dwight Eisenhower watches over the grounds of his library, museum and boyhood home in Abilene, Kan. JOHN MILBURN, AP

Dwight D. Eisenhower
Presidential Library,
Museum and Boyhood
Home (Abilene, Kan.)

This site pays tribute to soldier-turned-president Dwight Eisenhower every single day. But for the 75th anniversary of the invasion that he commanded, it will do so with special gusto. “Commemoration Week” runs from June 1 to 6. On June 1, visitors can see D-Day re-enactments, WWII-era military equipment, a pop-up museum and a “Symphony at Sunset” concert. Subsequent days will feature films, lectures and family activities, culminating on June 6 with a wreath-laying ceremony; a speech by retired Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, a Kansan who served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and a “Hope and Liberty” concert. Although admission to permanent exhibits is \$10 for adults, many Commemoration Week programs will be free. (eisenhower.archives.gov)

GoRuck D-Day
Challenges
(Nationwide)

Founded by a former Green Beret, GoRuck makes rucksacks, outdoor apparel and other gear inspired by the equipment used by U.S. special operations forces. It also hosts “rucking” challenges in which participants complete endurance courses carrying heavy loads on their backs — mimicking commandos who complete missions carrying heavy rucksacks. In honor of D-Day, GoRuck is hosting commemorative challenges in cities across the country. Taking place the weekend of June 1, the challenges range in difficulty from “light” to “heavy.” Light challenges last approximately four hours and have registration fees that start at \$40, while heavy ones last more than 24 hours and start at \$220. During each event, participants will remember D-Day by re-enacting the physical movements of soldiers who stormed the beaches at Normandy. (goruck.com/special-events)



The museum includes Memphis Belle, a famous WWII bomber. JOHN MINCHILLO, AP

National Museum
of the U.S. Air Force
(Dayton, Ohio)

Located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, this museum’s commemorations will focus on the aerial operations that were D-Day’s opening act. Those who visit on June 6 will see a special wreath-laying ceremony in the museum’s Memorial Park as well as a flyover by C-47 transports. Afterward, visitors can watch D-Day reenactments, explore a D-Day exhibit inside the museum, see WWII military vehicles, watch a screening of the film *D-Day Normandy 1944* and attend a “Living History” presentation with World War II veterans. Although film screenings require tickets, museum admission is free. (nationalmuseum.af.mil)