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(Theme music)

Voiceover: The following is a production of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. Bringing citizens and citizen soldiers together through the exploration of military history, topics, and current affairs, this is *Pritzker Military Presents*.

(Applause)

Havers: Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* for a discussion by Stephen Bourque about his book *Beyond the Beach: The Allied War Against France*. I'm your host Rob Havers, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago and is sponsored by the United States Naval Institute. This program and hundreds more covering a full range of military topics is available on demand at PritzkerMilitary.org. During WWII air power firmly established itself as a critical component of modern warfare with bombing becoming established as a major strategic as well as a tactical force. Stephen Bourque's work of *Beyond the Beach* examines the Allied air war against France in 1944 and explores the relationship between ground and air operations and its impact upon the French population. As a precursor to Operation Overlord General Dwight D. Eisenhower took command of all American, British, and Canadian air units, employing them for tactical and operational mission over France as part of what was termed the transportation plan. Using bombers as his long-range artillery he directed the destruction of bridges, rail centers, ports, and military installations and even French towns with the intent of preventing German reinforcements from interfering with Operation Neptune, the Allied landings on the Normandy beaches. Ultimately this air offensive resulted in the deaths of over 60,000 French civilians and an immense amount of damage to towns, churches, buildings, and works of art. This intense bombing operations conducted against the friendly occupied state resulted in a swath of physical and human destruction across northwestern France, something that is rarely discussed today. Stephen A. Bourque spent twenty years of enlisted and commissioned service in the United States Army. He later obtained his PhD at Georgia State University and taught military history at several military and civilian schools and universities including the School of Advanced Military Studies at the US Army Command and General Staff College, where he is professor emeritus. Please join me in welcoming Stephen Bourque to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library.

(Applause)

Bourque: First of all, appreciation to the museum, to Rob and Megan Williams and staff for making this such a wonderful, wonderful trip. Appreciate all they've done. Shortly after 1530 hours, August 17, 1942 twelve US Army air corps Boeing B-17E flying fortresses departed Grafton Underwood in England. Watching on the runway was the American air commander, General Carl Tooe Spaatz. Accompanied by a host of journalists and politicians, and one of the lead aircraft was Ira C. Eker, 7th corps bomber command's commander. The British were determined not to let the Americans fail and provided four squadrons of spitfires to intercept the German fighter. The aircraft crossed the English Channel and arrived over Rouen-Sotteville without German fighters intercepting them. At 1839 hours they dropped their bombs and headed back to England. On the way they took fire from an antiaircraft battery and were the object of Luftwaffe attempts at interception. A series of intense dogfights took place, and the British lost four spitfires and the Germans an FW-190. When the bomb crews returned to Grafton Underwood without casualties there was much backslapping and cheering. As the official history notes, pilots and mechanics swarmed out to meet the incoming crews like, as one observer put it, the crowds at a football rally. The history report of the

bombing is somewhat interesting. Out of 36,900 pounds of bombs dropped that day, it noted, quote, "approximately half fell in the general target area," end quote. The results were good enough for Spaatz to cable General Henry H. Arnold, the chief of the Royal Air Force in Washington, the next day. The attack of Rouen far exceeded in accuracy any previous high altitude bombing in the European theater by German or Allied aircraft. Moreover it was his understanding that the results justified quote, "our belief," end quote, in the feasibility of daylight bombing. The simple fact is that Spaatz's report is inaccurate. There is no comment in the air force's official history as to what happened to the rest of the bombs. But many were wide on the target hitting civilian buildings in downtown Rouen over two miles away. French sources reported that the attack killed fifty-two civilians and injured about 120. These reports however do not capture the effects of this mission on the ground. Four of those 120 casualties were from the Rivert family. Robert and Michelin Rivert lived in Rouen with their four children: Nicole, fourteen; Girard, twelve; Jean Pierre, nine; and Philippe, four. Jean Pierre's son Bertrand and I have become very good friends during the writing of this book, and he shared with me some of the family's experiences. They often spent their holidays with their grandparents in Dieppe, as Michelin, her sister Lisette, and the children did that weekend of August 15, 1942. They returned home on Monday afternoon, two days later, August 17th. Lisette said goodbye and walked back with a friend who had met her at the station while Michelin waited for her husband, who was a little late. When Robert arrived the family began to walk home. Girard and Jean Pierre, as young boys will, ran ahead through the ancient city streets back to their home. Meanwhile Robert, Michelin, Nicole, and Philippe slowly strolled home on a beautiful summer afternoon. They never made it. While they were wandering home the American bombs intended for the Sottevilliere rail yard almost three miles away hit the heart of the city. Near the Place-de-Beaulegines, east of the city's museum of natural history, some of the first American bombs dropped over Europe killed the entire group. The two boys had missed the bombs impact area and were safe but stunned from the bombing. Lisette got home just as the munitions began to fall and sent her husband Armand out to check on the family. He first visited Robert and Michelin's home, but no one was there. He talked to the neighbors but no one had seen them. He then went back to the train station in search of his in-laws but found nothing. He then began to check the city's hospitals, but his journey was quite tricky because the city was in shock and not prepared for this kind of event at this stage of the war. Curfew arrived. They're under German occupation, and Armand had to return home to care for Girard and Jean Pierre who were stunned but uninjured. Armand and Lisette, and much of the city, did not sleep well that night. The next morning he headed out again and went directly to the city morgue. The brother-in-law entered a room where the dead bodies and body parts were laid out for identification. He did not find the Riverts among this gruesome scene. Armand then entered a second chamber where a large table was covered with about twenty dead bodies. He immediately recognized Robert, Michelin and Philippe, lying naked wearing only their socks. All the bodies were scarred by open wounds caused most likely by shrapnel from the exploding bombs. But there was no trace of fourteen-year-old Nicole. A medic came over to Armand with some bloody body parts and said, "Do you recognize this leg? This arm?" He had no idea and was sick from what he had seen. He went back out to take a break and asked his neighbors to contact the grandparents back in Dieppe and let them know the bad news. He then returned to the morgue and was there when a new group of bodies arrived and had been placed in a refrigerated room in identification drawers. The attendants pulled them out one by one, and finally after a long series of these painful reviews, Armand saw Nicole's remains. She was almost unrecognizable, with a disfigured body and her head practically torn off with no more recognizable face, and missing a leg, which was later

found in the branches of a tree. Girard and Jean Pierre were all that remained of this family. Jean Pierre's, Bertrand's father, suffered from PTSD for almost all the rest of his life as a result of this bombing. While he was a child, his father never spoke about it, and the family generally believed that the Germans killed his grandparents, aunt and uncle. All this changed in April 2001 when Jean Pierre had a severe health problem and had to go in for surgery. He decided to come clean and tell Bertrand the story, sharing the details of the experience. Until Jean Paul's confession nobody inside the family spoke about the victims they nicknamed "our shameful dead," as other families did when referring to casualties caused by Allied bombing. They could be proud if someone was killed by Germans while serving in the resistance, but when your own allies killed members of your family, survivors were ashamed of it. Jean Paul passed away last month, March 2019 with his son at his side. One must wonder what he thought about the American liberation. Brought up like everyone else--by the way, just for the record here, I am not a left wing commie pinko. I was brought up—I spent more than twenty years serving my country in the US Army and then another decade or so taking for the army's command and general staff college, so this became quite a profound shock, because brought up like everyone else in my generation I assumed were were always the good guys and were fighting for liberty. I got caught in the standard narrative. I never thought much beyond it, and I'll discuss the issue of narrative in a second. But one day after I'd had taken students on a trip to Europe I ended up at a train station having breakfast, having a typical croissant and coffee in a French train station, which is probably the best meal in town. And I'm looking at the wall, and there on the wall is a large plaque, and the plaque goes--this is the city of Metz—"To those of our rail system who were killed by the bombings in August 1944." And I'm thinking about it, I'm going, we did that. We did that, and I had no idea. So I went across the street to a local bookstore and picked up a copy of a book by Eddy Florentine called *Quand les Allies Bombardaient la France*, "When the Allied Bombed France." And it's very much a journalistic account, very sensational, the Americans bombing here, British bombing here. Very sensational-type account. And it didn't make sense to me. That's not how we operate. Somebody who spent as much time in the military as I had, that's not how we operate. I taught planners at Leavenworth. That's what we did. We plan operations, and they're there for a purpose. So that got me thinking, and that's what started me on this work. So the standard account follows. The line described typical brave American forces landing on D-Day. We can talk about this all day, but this kind of encapsulates the American view of WWII. In a nutshell Private Ryan lands on the beach, right, George Patton gets control of it and liberates all of Western Europe. And it's pretty much done. And then we come back and have a president come by and say nice things at the cemetery. Bookshelves groan with the weight of histories that tell this general story, from Anglo American point of view with some attempts to include the Germans in it. Most of these studies glorified the performance of this unit or that unit or the decisions of a particular general showing why he was the key to Allied success. The number of people who think George Patton won WWII by himself is astounding. It makes them really angry when I tell them that Courtney Hodges went further and faster than Patton did with his 1st Army. In the early years of the 21st century Frenchmen and Anglo Saxons alike portrayed the advance across France, Le Voie de Liberte, the road to liberty, as a triumphant procession. Certainly that was the message of Ronald Reagan's famous speech, which we all remember from the 1980s to set the tone for most Americans' understanding of the invasion. I think we all remember that or at least my age, here are the boys at Pointe du Hoc. Very passionate speech. There were tears in my eyes. Air power narratives are the same. So if you talk to the air force--I spent a lot of time talking to the air force guys--they would say essentially the air guys take the war to Germany, the heavy bombers fly over, they go Regensburg, Schweinfurt,

Dresden, Berlin. The list goes on and on and on. Until September 1944 most bombing missions done by the 8th air force and British bomber command, RAF bomber command, were not against Germany. Most of them were against liberated countries under enemy occupation. It's not something the air force talks about, but again that's not their narrative. Then there are other narratives. For example German fortress troops. How did they experience D-Day? There are two pictures up here of Polish troops, one in British uniforms and one in Russian uniforms. What's their narrative like? The Canadians--Canadians often get confused with the British. Tell the Canadians sometime they're part of the British army, and it will be an interesting conversation with them. The French have other different narratives based on where they were and what they endured during the war. One narrative belongs to my friend Bertrand and his grandfather, and his father rather, which is very tragic. That is not unusual. And just an aside, France at the end of WWII is a country so screwed up that we have trouble understanding it today. Just the issues that roll through. WWI, 1.3 million French soldiers died in WWI. That's the equivalent of 13 million Americans. We've never come anywhere close to that. General Petain, who was loved and hated, political divisions, operational defeat, the exo. At one point in time there were between 8 and 12 million Frenchmen and Belgians on the road running away from the invading German army. I mean, these are issues that--a lot of them never go home. Political surrender, German occupation, Dunkirk. The Frenchmen for years they don't like the British too much, as is showing up with the Brexit issues right now I think. Economic collaboration, Jewish expulsion, forced labor and prisoners of war. 1.3 prisoners of war never come home until the end of the war. Resistance ended in the Milice fighting a civil war in France. De Gaulle, the free French, Allied bombing, Allied invasion occupation, reconstitution of the government. France is screwed up in 1945, '46. Nobody wants to talk about bombing in '45, '46. They did start talking about it in the 1990s, which is kind of fascinating. By the way, those of you interested in the thought that the French surrendered to the Germans in 1940, keep in mind the French killed about 27,000 Germans soldiers, and that's a rather high price to pay. So, the French have a different narrative. What they discovered is that almost seventy-five years ago as part of the northwest European campaign against Nazi Germany, the armed forces of the United States and Britain commonwealth unintentionally waged an air war against France and Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy. Nearly 60,000 people in five years in large, methodical, and efficient attacks, most of those in '44, damaging cities, harbors, and rail lines in a friendly Axis-occupied country. I also learned there's no such thing as precision bombing in WWII. Amazingly inaccurate. And also a thing I found most interesting is this is the largest air bombing operation in history. And in many ways there are some issues, especially on D-Day, which we'll talk about today, where it didn't go very well. And the air force obviously doesn't want to talk about it. And what bothers me the most, and we'll talk about this also, is the senior army officials decided to target French towns for destruction ahead of time without Germans in there knowing that they were going to essentially kill the people in those towns. And that for me certainly was quite an eye-opener. So why bomb France? Does everyone know who that guy is up there? That's Erwin Rommel. When Montgomery, who's the ground force commander for Operation Neptune--when Montgomery goes to bed at night he has a picture of Rommel above his bed. Okay? I have a map that shows the fighting on Anzio. The Germans were brilliant at counter attacking. They were brilliant at Kasserine Pass, if anyone studied that at all, fighting in Cicely, in Italy both at Anzio and Salerno. The Germans were magnificent. And what bothered Eisenhower the most and Montgomery was what would happen if the Germans were able to use that incredibly well-developed French rail system and road system and put reinforcements into the Normandy area? That absolutely petrified them completely. And so that's the main

reason for the bombing. Should also note that Eisenhower and the army had been in a struggle with the air commanders for a long time. Tooe Spaatz, Doolittle, Ira Eker, for control of the air force. The US Air force wants to become independent. So there's an awful lot of internal political tensions taking place at that times. And so Eisenhower and George C. Marshall are essentially proving a point. It's our air forces, and we'll use them like we want when we want to. There's no theory. There's no theory. What's theory mean? Well, theory means there's a theory of war. You have a clue to how you're going to employ your military force. Certainly on land there's an awful lot of theory. You mass your forces, economy of force, you have a main effort, you have a secondary effort, you have reserves. You have a whole dog theory of how to employ force. The air force's theory, and I'm using air forces generically to mean US Army air forces and the British royal air force, bomber command specifically--for them they have no theory. Their idea goes back to guys like Trenchard and Douhet, and those ideas are you take the war to the enemy and you bomb the cities and towns in enemy territory. That works, and maybe until the territory is friendly territory. Now what do you do? How do you deal with that, and that's a problem. There's no doctrine. So what is doctrine? Doctrine is how you take theory, mesh it with experience, and figure out a way to actually employ the force. Doctrine is what allows an air commander to use his forces. We're going to invade Normandy. What's the doctrine to France? What's the doctrine for doing that? There's no doctrine. There's no doctrine at the higher level, there's no doctrine at the training level, and so that's gonna cause a bit of a problem. And what that means is the same methodology that the air commanders are using for fighting and flying aircraft over Germany are the same one's they're using against France. And we'll talk about how that's a problem here in just a second. There's no real accounting. Today if you bomb--you know, we've just been through fifteen years of war in Afghanistan and Iraq or so. If you bomb a mosque, everybody knows tomorrow. Right? If you take out--how many wedding parties did the US Air Force and the US Army take out during these last series of wars? They look like a wedding party. They're all getting together. Well, that kind of thing happens, and nobody knows. There are no observers with the air force on the ground. Okay. There's no--the people who write--so if you ever read the New York Times from 1944 and loo at the New York Times, you get all these reports of the air force in action. We're doing this, we're doing this--who's writing those? Not reporters. Air force public relations officers, and that goes almost directly right into the newspapers. Any reports coming from the ground must be propaganda, must be German and Vichy propaganda. Couldn't possibly be true. The police couldn't possibly be reporting this stuff. So we really don't have accurate reporting on the ground. And ignored issues of targeting. We'll talk about targeting. How do you target? What does it mean to target something? Where do French workers live? Right next to the factories. So if you target a factory, you're gonna hit the French workers. The other problem is in terms of how they fly. They don't fly, it's not one plane--on the bottom there you see the Norden bombsight. A lot of us grew up thinking this is great. Nah. It's an analog device. And an analog device, it has to compute for things like air speed, air density, weather, can't--fog. Can't see through fog. It works great in Arizona. One plane, one bomb, one target works brilliantly. Doesn't work that way. The other thing is the air force doesn't change your methodology of flying. So rather than flying one plane over a target and dropping, they fly in a long series of planes, three aircraft, at least three wide, sometimes three groups of three, and they're always groups of six, so you start adding up the numbers, and it would be like if you wanted to take this building out in 1944 guaranteed you take out the art museum, the hotel over here, you'd take out a whole lot of this city because you just can't do it. So you have problems with doctrine, theory, training, and all that comes together. It was just--and you gotta remember these are young kids. These are young

kids, and it's not a professional--they're learning the job as they go. They're only in their twenties that are doing these bombing mission. Jimmy Stewart was like early thirties and he was like ancient compared to these guys. The planners are only in their late twenties, early thirties, and there's no history of this. So you have to have a little compassion and understanding that these guys are learning on the job. And unfortunately my air force friends will tell us that they still today don't really have a doctrine how to do this over occupied states, which is kinda scary I think really, don't you think. So this is my book. This is what's in the book. I'm not gonna read you the whole book today. Okay, that's the whole book, and I talk about narratives, what it means to narrative. And that's just different perspectives. Our perspective is not the difference versus the British perspective as the Russian perspective, right. Russian perspective--how many soldiers did the Russians lose in WWII? We're talking 35-40 million. You're talking population numbers that are unbelievable. So their perspective is a lot narrative is different than ours. The narrative of the French, the narrative of the British. They'd been in war since 1939 and 1940. So everybody's got a different perspective. So I talk about that. The operational environment. What's it like to be in France in 1940? We can talk about--that's a fascinating study in itself. Then about Eisenhower, how he got there, how he organized his command. Then these become the targets, the airfields and ports. They were already going after airfields and ports before Eisenhower got there. French industry. We can--that's another topic. Who knew? I mean, France was the number one or two producer, number one or two producer of weapons and armaments on the eve of WWII in Europe and perhaps in the world, 'cause we weren't doing much during the interwar years. One or two. Where does that production go after the Germans arrive? It goes to the Germans. Renault. It's a real scandal in France. Factories like Renault are producing--they're talking to the Germans by the way, the dust hasn't even cleared yet, and they're talking to the Germans in June 1940 about, what can we do for you? And they're sending trucks, an awful lot of the trucks used by the Wehrmacht on the eastern front are French trucks. All those tanks and artillery pieces, awful lot of them go right to the eastern front and are being used there. So it's an amazing story that is only recently--- Andy LaCroix and some other--there's a lawsuit that took place not too long ago against Ford Motor Company 'cause Ford was doing the same things. All kinds of fascinating pieces with that. That we could talk about. Crossbow. The number one task of the US and British air forces in WWII was to keep the V1 and V2 rockets from landing in London. And they did that until middle of June, which wasn't bad. Then after that the Germans invented these very rapid movement and temporary--they could come up, set up a V1, launch it, move a V2 in, launch it, and it was a little more difficult then. But that was the number one job, political, that had to be done. And those of you who remember the Desert Storm to Gulf War, there's a great scud hunt in which the special forces guys were roaming all over Iraq trying to find scuds before they go launching places. Same thing, nothing changed. Fortitude. Operation Fortitude is the bombing of--we all know the story of fortitude, which is George Patton running around in southern England with fake little dummy tanks set up and dummy communications set up and everything. One of the things that keep the Germans focused on the fortitude, which is the deception plan, the bombing up in Pas-de-Calais is that we were bombing the heck out of that place. Starting about a week out we start launching major bombing raids at places like Calais, Boulogne-sur-Mer, right there along the coast. What's the measure of accuracy for those bombing mission? Make noise. Make noise. You don't have to actually hit anything, you just have to scare them and let them know we're coming. And they do that. Unfortunately in the process they kill a whole lot of French civilians. Whole lot of them. The rail centers, the transportation plan. That gets a lot of press and discussion. We can talk about that later, and that' going after the rail yards. I've become a believer--while you have to take

out rail yards, we didn't have to do it the way they did. Now, that's hindsight because I understand the process a little more, and they're leaning it on the ground, but it means that France's rail system is totally detoured, which is good if it's only Germans using it, but we also know the story of the Red Ball Express and trying to resupply the Allied armies as they're moving across France, and because destroyed all those rail yards we couldn't use them and all those rail lines. So some of that stuff had to have been thought through. And again the planning at that level. This is the largest thing the US military has ever done. And this is just one piece of it, and planning for that was difficult. The bridges, we'll talk about--the bridges are in the book. And that's the most effective way of stopping German troops from moving. Frankly blowing up the bridges hitting them on the Seine and the Loire rivers makes it very difficult to move supplies all the way from the north or from the south, and that's the most effective. So the landings. It's interesting. We're going on seventy-five years since the invasion. For seventy-five years there are two narratives on this. There's the army narrative, the air force missed the target. As one infantry officer says, "The air corps might just as well have stayed home in bed for all the good their bombing did." And the air force's perspective, well, it's difficult to measure the effectiveness of the bombing. It's difficult to do that. So for seventy-five years they've been talking across each other. And it's kind of fascinating because what I've discovered--this is original scholarship--but I've discovered it doesn't have to be that way. This is a map for the joint fire plan issued on April 8, 1944, signed by the chiefs of staff and each of the component commanders. It provided guidelines for air and naval gunfire support during the invasion. Montgomery's 21st army group staff took the lead in identifying the enemy positions they wanted destroyed or neutralized while the air force and air planners determined the facilities or installations they needed to attack to support it. Let me back up one second. I'm talking about bombing. I'm talking about use of air power. This ain't an air force problem. Okay? Nobody in the air force-- either bomber command or the 8th air force or the 15th air force that's flying out of the south--none of them wanted to do any of this bombing. For them it took away from their principle mission, which was to bomb targets in Germany. And so it's important to keep that in mind because I presented this paper at the Air Command and Staff College. That's not potentially a real friendly audience for this kind of topic. It's exciting. But if you keep that in mind, the air force did not want to do it. And in a number of cases--well, Harris did, who was bomber command commander. He did everything he could to not do it. Spaatz comes back from one briefing where he runs into his office screaming, and his aid writes it all down. This invasion is going to fail. We don't need to do it. He really thought bombing would bring the Germans to the end. But I'm gonna go along with it because I must. He fights. He--Tooey Spaatz--and Doolittle, who was the commander of the 8th air force. The two of them fight all the time with Eisenhower and Montgomery to kind of prevent, keep themselves from doing it. So just keep in mind this is--and we can talk about the reason why and stuff later on--this is not something they wanted to do, so they were forced to do this. So the first group of targets were the artillery batteries, such as Crisbeq that could interfere with the approaching invasion fleet. Bomber command would hit them first, okay. Then after bomber command would come out, they would stun--if you've ever been there, these are major artillery batteries. Huge things. Bomber command is gonna try to hit them first. They have the only munitions that can actually penetrate those very, very thick bunkers. Behind them will come the 8th air force. And the 8th air force will hit a whole series of targets along the beaches, except on Utah Beach where the 9th air force will attack. Then after they leave, then will come the very large naval task force. Again the naval task force usually gets forgotten. There's a huge number of destroyers, monitors, battleships out there pumping shells onto that coast. And they're going after some of the batteries, for example, that the British bombers

would miss. For example if you've ever been to Normandy itself, along the coast not too far from Arromanches is the Longues-sur-Mer battery. If you've seen the movie *The Longest Day* that's where the artillery guy goes out on the front looks over the side and sees the fleet. The naval ships are doing direct fire at those guys trying to knock out the guns throughout the coast. So there's a whole big effort taking place there before anything else happens, before anybody lands. But I want to emphasize the point that none of this bombing that's taking place is designed to scare the Germans. It's designed to destroy German targets, stun German targets, break up German supply lines, destroy German artillery installations. It's not there to shake, scare, or disrupt. Operation Flashlamp. Shortly after midnight bomber command commenced a formal invasion by executing Operation Flashlamp. The initial raids on the most dangerous artillery batteries overlooking the invasion sector. After some refinement of the original target list from the previous April, they settled on ten artillery batteries--seven in Calvados and three in La Manche. Flying during a full moon between six and 12,000 feet above the general tick clouds below they had little chance of finding or actually hitting the targets. Over 1,300 bombers took part. Think about 1,300 bombers. How many bombers are in the entire US air force. And the answer is nowhere close. This is the largest mil-air operation in Royal Air Force history up to that point in time. With each battery occupying between one and two football fields in size and space, receiving the full attention between 100 and 131 Lancasters and Halifaxes. These raids were not to destroy the batteries but to send the gun crews into the shelters and disorganize the batteries by damaging buildings, communication stumps, and insularly installations. And by all accounts they did little damage to any of the guns, especially those in protected concrete encasements. But the attack did have an effect on those French civilians who lived by. During the assault in Vierville, bombs hit the town of Cabourg five miles away killing firefighter Marcel Bertrand and his fourteen-year-old son Roland as well as twenty-six other civilians. Bombers attacked a battery at Maisy, killing a dozen villagers hiding in a trench. And the nearby village of Gefosse Fontenay, a bomb hit the Boudies home wiping out eight members of the farming family. Bombers hit the town of Isigny seven miles inland from the battery, rescues later discovered a home with five dead bodies, mostly children, aged six months to twelve years old. They found two people wounded and trembling dogs still chained to a shattered stove. In the middle of the sector Ver-sur-Mer near Mont Fleury battery another twelve citizens died under the bombs. Bombs killed another forty civilians near Ouisterham before a single paratrooper or infantryman landed. By the way interesting when--the research that has been done is pretty amazing. The French university at Caen primarily has taken the lead. They have literally identified every French civilian killed from Cherbourg up to the area around Dieppe rather up in that area and all of Normandy. It's amazing. I can literally open the back of the book and the list of the casualties right there, why they died, what day they died on. Doesn't account for all of them, though, because remember I mentioned all the Frenchmen who were on the road running away from France, where did they go? So some of them are still unaccounted for. So, as the British aircraft departed the French coast, American bombers took their place. Units from the 9th air force attacked installations on Utah Beach while heavy bombers of the 8th air force struck the targets at Omaha and on the commonwealth landing areas. The air units had to complete their bombing runs and fly the aircraft out of the area five minutes before H-hour, the time when the landing craft reached the coast. The timing was difficult and different in each sector with American infantry touching down at 0730 and commonwealth forces landing at 0825. So what you see there is the H2X radar. This is a--we talk about navigation problems. This is a navigation radar. It's designed to get you to the area. It's not a targeting radar, which means this will get you to a big city or a built-up area. So it's very inaccurate. Doolittle is

practicing with this right up until the end of the fighting, and he thinks he can get it, the period of invasion, and he thinks he can get it really close. He's pretty confident with it. Sometime, sometime between 4 June and the invasion somebody at the 8th air force decided to change the bombing time. So this is critical. They decided to change the bombing time, so when they get to what they call their target markers when they're supposed to drop the bombs, depending on the target they were told to delay the bomb to strike from five to thirty seconds. Now, think about it. You're flying at about a hundred miles an hour, and you see where you're supposed to bomb, and then you decide to wait on count, one--how far are you gonna be? So what that means is for the 8th air force almost all of their targets, all of their bombs missed the targets, hit targets deep in the rear. So tomorrow I'm gonna go over to the University of Chicago archives. In there are the papers of James Cate. James Cate is one of the official historians for the US Air Force who wrote the official history at the end of the war. At the footnote on that page it talks about the delay, Cate says, "Eisenhower approves this change." That's not true. There's no evidence Eisenhower approved that change, and I've been through all that evidence. Eisenhower did not make hasty decisions. He had conferences routinely. He brought in—if it's a decision that affects the land component commander, in this case it would have been Bradley, he would have brought Bradley in for a talk. And Bradley says later on, I had no idea that was intentional so I'm going to the library tomorrow, the archive tomorrow, to get the correspondence between Cate and the air force and just see if there's anything in there. Because why did he put that footnote in there? Which from a scholar's point of view is certainly not something you want to do. And we can talk about that later. Alright. Omaha Beach. After 0650, 450 B-24 liberators, 8th division, 8th air force's 2nd bomb division right at Omaha. By some accounts less than two percent of the bombs hit the targets, destroying German positions. Warnings about fratricide, and that's of course why they decide to make the change. The air force is very aware of how inaccurate their bombing is, and they're very concerned about hitting American and British forces. So as a result that's why they make the change. What that means is the bombs land in the rear. They don't hit targets. They don't hit anything except Frenchmen. 1st bomb division, Major General Williams, he picks the middle sector. Again we're talking 450 B-17 flying fortresses. I don't know if you've ever been. How many have been to Normandy, jut out of curiosity? So if you drive along the beach you see these little bunkers. There's a gun sometimes, a little gun. That's gonna be twelve B-17s. That's gonna be twelve B-17s to hit that thing. That's interesting, no? So they miss a lot of that stuff. You know, again, fishing and pre-war tourist village of Courseulles-sur-Mer was all but destroyed. Hit by about sixty bombers by itself. 3rd bomb division. This is Curtis LeMay, most--if there was--this is one of the most massive expenditures of firepower belonged to LeMay's 3rd division. He used and destroyed German military emplacements on the eastern portion of the invasion area. LeMay was--(chuckles) he was so inaccurate that at one point they almost took out the pathfinders for the 6th British division that were trying to set up the attack on a Merville battery, so it's a really interesting piece. The good news of course is the 9th air force, because the 9th air force had responsibility for bombing the targets on Utah Beach, and they performed brilliantly. They performed brilliantly. They came in low, identified the target, multiple reign in a stream of aircraft rather than flying in formation in a stream of aircraft they're able to adjust. They did it exactly like you're supposed to do. By the way you have to compare the casualties on Omaha Beach and the casualties on Utah Beach. And there were very few American casualties on Utah Beach, very little collateral damage on Utah Beach as opposed what takes place on Omaha, so... Then of course the naval bombardment. This all gets confusing. Memories of this day never went away for those who survived. In 1993 a lady named Bernadette, who was six at the time of the invasion, lived in Vierville

on the western portion of Omaha beach. Vierville, some of you may know, that is where Private Ryan, Tom Hanks, comes ashore and storms up through that way. That's where Cota in the film *The Longest Day* shows up, is breaking through that area. She lived in Vierville, the western portion of Omaha Beach. She remembered her father's death. She remembered that her mother could not sleep that night and continued to pester her husband who was a veteran of the Great War. "I cannot sleep. Something is wrong," she would say. "Sleep, leave me alone," was his reply. She remembered nothing about the bombardment, but does remember her dad early in the morning going out on the garden that overlooked the sea. In the faint light he saw the ships and began yelling at his wife, "Dress the kids. We've got to get out of the house. I'll wake the neighbors," which he did. He wanted them to hide in a nearby ditch, but his wife would not leave the house. He insisted and tried to improve the shelter for her. Just as she was about to join him, a shell probably from one of the three or four ships bombarding a German position in Vierville cut open her father's stomach. Obviously it was a sight she would never forget. Certainly other civilians perished during the final bombardment phase, however neither the Allies nor the Germans had any option other than to fight it out on the beaches. Those that lived in a battle zone from time immemorial had few options other than to hide. Given the intensity of the air attack, sea bombardment, and the subsequent assault, it is hard to assess the precise cause of each French civilian casualty during this period. Ouistreham, the largest town along the coast, suffered ninety-seven dead on June 6th and 7th, thirty of them hit by a naval gun while hiding from the bombardment. Port-en-Bessin on Omaha Beach lost twenty-five civilians while St. Aubin, Romaro, and Juno suffered twenty-five dead. The list continues and blends with those who died because of ground combat during the landings. The fighting destroyed all the villages on the invasion beaches, leaving survivors homeless and dazed in the wake of the assault. However civilians in the landing zone were the unfortunate ones, and most French men and women had no illusions that as the invasion approached those in the assault would suffer. Most were well aware of the fate for those caught between opposing armies during the Great War. Most were aware what had happened to those in the path of the German forces. Of course they simply had no choice but to hide and hope for the best. So a second aspect of the bombardment concerned its effectiveness. For seventy-five years, as I mentioned, participants and historians have complained about the inaccuracy of the heavy bombers and how they destroyed so few of the German defensive positions before the landings. The official text acknowledges the effectiveness but strives to mitigate the criticism. Bradley, commanding forces during the invasion, remarked in his memories, "Not until later we learned that most of the 13,000 bombs dropped during the heavies had cascaded harmlessly into the hedgerows three miles away." Craven and Cate, again, the official authors, recognized the commanders on Omaha Beach were disappointed with the air components and ability to neutralize German defensive positions, but suggest, and I quote, "Accurate assessment of the effectiveness of these attacks is impossible," end quote. This evaluation is not entirely correct. And in most instances is relatively easy to evaluate the results of this bombing. For example, a little after 0730 hour Central European time thirty-five German soldiers from the 352nd and 716th infantry divisions--let me get my Widerstandsneest up there--manning their position at Widerstandsneest 62. They'd been on alert since 0200 when the British woke them up and had taken cover as heavy bombers and ships toured the terrain all around them. Other than filling the air with dust and causing their ears to ring, the bombardment had done little damage and no one was hurt. One of the most powerful German fighter positions on Omaha Beach was intact and ready to fight as several companies from the US 16th infantry regiment 1st division approached the beach in their landing craft. Lieutenant Bernard Frerking, the supporting artillery forward observer, picked up his

telephone and was pleasantly surprised to hear the voice of his battery commander a couple kilometers away. In spite of the massive bombardment the line to the artillery unit was intact and all of the battalion's 105-millimeter guns untouched and ready to fire. Within moments the strong poised machine guns, small arms, and light artillery began raking the Americans with direct fire. Mortars within the strong point dropped high explosive shells at the water's edge. The field artillery thousands of meters behind the strong points began bombing landing craft as they reached the coast. The firepower from this relatively small number of defenders was devastating. There's only sixty guys there. According to historian John C. McManus, by the end of the day US 16th infantry lost one third of its manpower, 820 soldiers killed, wounded, or missing in action. Labeled target forty-three in the field order, it was US 2nd bomb division's responsibly to attack it, and they sent thirty-six B-24 liberators carrying fifty-two fragmentary or high explosive 100 pound bombs. Because of the time delay they all missed their target. As Bradley pointed out in his autobiography this margin for safety had undermined the effectiveness of the air mission, to seasick infantry bailing their craft as they wallowed through the surf, this air bombardment was to mean many more casualties on Omaha Beach. The inaccuracy of that morning's air assault allowed German defenders along the invasion beach to do their job unhindered and directly contributed to some of the white headstones in the US military cemetery on the bluffs overlooking this position. It's probable the adjustment of the bombing times had the opposite effect of what planners had intended for the French casualties that they had hoped to prevent. No wonder few air enthusiasts have wanted to realistically discuss the details of the largest bombing operation in history. The towns are a kind of an interesting topic, because these are towns--I really had no idea about what took place. On the right you see a list of towns that General Montgomery wanted rubble. And rubble meaning, if you know French cities, French towns, they're built with the people live in the center and all the farms are out in the countryside. The center of course is where the streams are, that's where their markets are, that's where their mills are. That's where they live. And then they go out to take care of the farm, take care of the cattle and their farm stuff. All roads come through these little towns, and so Montgomery and the 21st army group had picked out about a dozen--the number goes up and down depending on the day of the week--that they wanted rubble, and by rubble I mean very specifically they wanted the ancient stone buildings destroyed, knocked down so the Germans could not use the center of those towns and had to go around, and then they'd be open for the attack. These towns of course are where Frenchmen live. Those are the towns that they're talking about. Behind the lines between ten and twenty or so miles behind the beaches. And what he wants to do again, go back to that original slide, why did they bomb. They want to keep the German armor from rolling on through. Every day they can do that that's going to be good. So let's just talk one example 'cause we could go on obviously for days. Michelle Chapron. In the spring of 1944 thirteen-year-old Michelle Chapron lived in a boarding house on Rue Verville just east of the center of St. Lo. As the administrative center of the department of La Manche the sixty had the secondary schools that smaller towns did not. Michelle was from one of these, Carentan, thirty-five kilometers closer to the coast. Her landlady, thirty-four-year-old Simone Grave, was struggling to get by under the German occupation by renting out the extra towns in her home to transient students and teachers. Like millions of other women in France, Simone's life was difficult. She had four young children. Jean, eight; Georgette, six; Eves, three; Genevieve, two, and had to go on with their lives while her husband was away. In this case the Germans had incarcerated the monsieur in the local prison for trying to evade working for the occupation regimes. Other tenants in this small home that spring included sixty-year-old Augustine Barbier a professor at the local school, and her thirty-year-old daughter

Yvonne. Also new to the boarding house was a recently hired instructor who had just taken a room. Michelle had yet a chance to introduce herself and find out anything about him. After a weekend visit home she returned to her room on June 5th in preparation for classes the next day. Awakened that night by the sounds of the invasion coming from the coast, she was like everyone else excited and unable to get back to sleep. When she ran to school the next morning the headmaster told her, "The school is closed. It's the invasion." Her grandmother lived in another part of the city, which is why she went to St. Lo. So after returning to the boarding house to gather some belongings, she raced down to Rue Falourdel across town to join her. It took some time for her to cover eight kilometers and climb the hill to her grandmother's house. Arriving around noon, her aunt Helene was also visiting, and three generations of French women spent the day attempting to understand what was going on around them and what was happening along the coast. Then a little before eight o'clock in the evening many bombers arrived over St. Lo, and the women watched with horror as the ancient city burst into flames. Michelle later found out that the bombing had killed her fellow boarders, the Gravey family, 350 other citizens of the town. She never forgot that terrible night. Just by comparison, we were mentioning the 1st infantry division's casualties on Omaha Beach, right, 1st infantry division suffered 165 killed on D-Day. Just kind of put it in perspective. And again it's not that we're doing victim's history here, but we don't know about this. That's what bothers me. This is part of the accounting of the cost of the war, cost of the invasion. This is the town of St. Lo in July '44. The boy in the brown sweater is Max, thirteen years old, and his nine-year-old brother Robin is the other one in the red one. A soldier in the US army signal corps snapped this picture as he was setting up a communications center in the ruined town. I always thought, until I started working on this project, I always thought St. Lo was destroyed by the fight just before Operation Cobra. That's just what I assumed, never thought much about it. But of course it takes place on June 6, 1944. Max and Robin are out--and this kind of encapsulates the problem of France. They're out looking for their father in the city bombed by the Americans, and where is their father? He's just been killed by the Gestapo 'cause he was part of the resistance, and he never finds him. Again it's just one of those horrible kinds of stories. Bombing France, so what? One of the largest collateral damages. When we talk about collateral damage in the US military now all the time. It's one of the largest in history. The numbers we agree on are about 60,000 dead French civilians. The numbers could be as high as 75 or 80,000. Again, accounting for people. Not to mention again the dirty story that's in here are all the salve laborers that are killed by this bombing. The people who are building the V1 rocket sites, the V2 rocket sites, the Atlantic wall. These targets are all being hit. Rail yards, they're all being hit by allied bombers. So we really are never gonna have that idea. Most cities are destroyed, again, if you go to Caen--compare Caen with Bayeux if you go to that area. Bayeux is old, old timber buildings. They haven't been hurt. It was not bombed. Caen, they've got that--a lot of it, especially in the center of town--right now Caen is going through an amazing renaissance getting ready for the 75th. The French have gotten totally into this tourism business, military history tourism. They are going guns a-blazing. They've got hotels going up and everything. The buildings in the old town all have that old '60s, late '50s, early '60s buildup. Also what's interesting of course with the burning of Notre Dame in Paris the other day, those cities there, same thing happened in a lot of these French cities. Rouen, Caen, where the old churches--and most of them have been resorted. Again, about 3,000 civilian deaths from Allied bombing, 8,000 Norman civilians total, and again they number about 60,000 for the total thing. Interesting is, it's left out--and what I'm always fascinated by--what does that have to do with American/French relations? When I was a kid growing--I'm born in 1950, child of WWII veterans. I was always

amazed, why don't the French like us? Why don't they like us? We liberated them! And now you start to find the complexity of the problem. A lot of the French fighting resistance were communist, and of course we keep them from taking power. And then we have the same story right here. How would you feel if you lost a leg when you were eight years old, as one of the people I know about? How would you feel about the Americans who came through for the next thirty or forty years? You might have issues. (Applause)

Havers: Thank you to Stephen Bourque for a great discussion, and thank you to the United States Naval Institute for sponsoring this episode of *Pritzker Military Presents*. The book is *Beyond the Beach: The Allied War Against France*, published by the Naval Institute Press. To learn more about the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, visit us in person or online at PritzkerMilitary.org. Thank you, and please join us next time on *Pritzker Military Presents*.

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(Theme music)

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(Theme music)

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