

Fortitude: “Fortitude is the guard and support of other virtues” – John Locke

On 06 JUN, 78 years ago, the United States and its allies began the invasion of Normandy in what has become known as D-Day. Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Coasties (the Air Force was not yet its own branch) stormed beaches and jumped in behind enemy lines to begin the liberation of France. The goal was simple, defeat Germany and the Axis Powers. Many units involved in the operation suffered massive casualties, such as the Rangers at Pointe du Hoc, 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions at Omaha Beach, and the Paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne. These men knew the fighting was going to be fierce and costly. Research by the National D-Day Memorial has confirmed 4,414 total Allied deaths, 2,499 which were American.

Application: Fortitude comes from a Latin word which means strength and force. One can think of a military fort, a strengthened and fortified position. In the same way, a person of fortitude is the person who has the ability face extreme adversity, danger, and opposition and stand resilient. The individuals who stormed the beaches of Normandy and jumped in behind enemy lines were people of fortitude. They knew what the mission required and did their job, many making the ultimate sacrifice. Being in the Profession of Arms entails that someday we may be asked to make a similar sacrifice. In that moment, fortitude is what will strengthen you to honor your commitment to your country. Take a moment and reflect on the heroic sacrifices made by our military predecessors and be motivated to build a foundation of fortitude in your own life.