

France thanks Navy for D-Day

Dedicates Normandy statue

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SAINTE-MARIE-DU-MONT, France — The U.S. Navy was honored Saturday for its key role in the massive D-Day amphibious invasion that helped propel the Allies to victory in World War II.

Hundreds of uniformed American sailors and French well-wishers — as well as a few Navy veterans of the war — joined U.S. and French officials on Utah Beach for the inauguration of Normandy's first monument honoring the sacrifices of U.S. sailors in the conflict against Nazi Germany.

Utah was one of five landing beaches code-named for the invasion.

The U.S. Navy Monument at Normandy features a 12-foot bronze statue of a Navy captain and two sailors overlooking the beach — where a 5,000-vessel armada landed on June 4, 1944, and unleashed some 156,000

soldiers, mostly Americans, British and Canadians, in a massive assault known as D-Day.

The statue, with the figures crouching or standing around one another, is meant to portray three phases of the landings: the planning, the launch and the follow-up. One figure holds a mortar shell like those fired during the invasion.

The statue was a project of the Naval Order of the United States, and was designed by Stephen Spears of Fair Hope, Ala., according to Eric Beaty, an official with the U.S. Consulate in the western French city of Rennes.

Until the ceremony, the Navy had been the only U.S. military service not recognized by a memorial in Normandy, according to a Web site set up by the Naval Order about the monument.

Casualty estimates for the Allied forces on D-Day vary, but range from 2,500 to more than



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French and U.S. officials unveiling a monument at Utah Beach in France honoring the Navy's role in the D-Day invasion.

5,000 dead.

A total of 1,068 U.S. sailors died in Normandy or off its shores June 6-10, 1944, Beaty

said. Among their main roles were to carry ashore or give cover to the Allied troops storming the beaches.