American Battle Monuments Commission

Western Naval Task Force Marker

The Western Naval Task Force Marker in Casablanca, Morocco is located at the Ben M'Sik civilian cemetery. The bronze plaque is mounted on a solid block of Moroccan granite. It commemorates the Western Task Force, which made successful assault landings on the Atlantic coast of French Morocco at Fedala, Safi, and Port Lyautey on November 8-11, 1942. This was the first U.S. trans-oceanic amphibious operation, which embarked from the east coast. Army units were transported and supported by more than 100 naval vessels. NOTE: Port Lyautey was renamed Kenitra in 1956, and Fedala was renamed Mohammedia in 1960.

American Battle Monuments Commission

This agency of the United States government operates and maintains 25 American cemeteries and 27 memorials, monuments and markers in 16 countries. The Commission works to fulfill the vision of its first chairman, General of the Armies John J. Pershing. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I, promised that "time will not dim the glory of their deeds."

For more information on this site and other ABMC commemorative sites, please visit: www.abmc.gov

Inscription

The United States of America honors those elements of the United States Western Task Force which successfully made opposed landings at Mohammedia, Safi and Kenitra on 8-11 November 1942, their heroic sacrifices and achievements and their indomitable courage during this initial phase of United States combat operations contributed immeasurably to the success of Allied endeavors which followed.
By mid-1942, German and Italian advances in Europe had slowed. The Allies were ready to push back. The time was too early for a Cross-Channel operation into France. Something else was needed.

**July 25, 1942:** U.S. and British leaders decided to strike in North Africa. Combined U.S. and British forces would conduct amphibious landings. The operation would harmonize with British offensives pushing the German Afrika Corps westward from Egypt. Lt. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower was to command Operation TORCH.

**July thru October:** The Allied planners settled on an operation to strike simultaneously at three points in North Africa. The Eastern Task Force and the Center Task Force would deploy from Great Britain to Algeria. British and American units would be conveyed via British shipping. The Western Task Force would consist of U.S. Army units aboard U.S. Navy ships departing from the east coast.

Rear Admiral Henry Kent Hewitt commanded the Western Naval Task Force. Major General George S. Patton, Jr. commanded the Western Army Task Force.

Army and Navy units trained intensively on amphibious techniques. The Western Task Force was organized into three operational components: the Northern Attack Group, Central Attack Group, and Southern Attack Group. Plans were developed for landings on the coast of French Morocco.

**October 23 and 24:** More than 100 ships began the trans-Atlantic crossing. Five submarines had departed earlier to reconnoiter the planned landing sites. Aircraft carriers provided air support for the crossing and the landings. Battleships, cruisers, and destroyers protected the transport ships.

**November 8:** The three attack groups began landing troops and tanks before dawn on Sunday, November 8. The locations:

- Southern Attack Group at Safi
- Central Attack Group at Fedala (now Mohammedia)
- Northern Attack Group at Mehedia/Port Lyautey (now Kenitra)

Vichy French forces resisted the landings. The Naval Battle of Casablanca developed as their ships, aircraft, and coastal artillery fought back. U.S. Navy warships, led by the battleship USS Massachusetts (BB-59) bombarded and diminished the opposition.

Fighting on land continued for three more days, as negotiations proceeded between the Allies and the Vichy government.

**November 11:** Vichy French resistance in French Morocco ended. They became part of the Free French and joined Allied operations in North Africa.