

Western Naval Task Force Marker

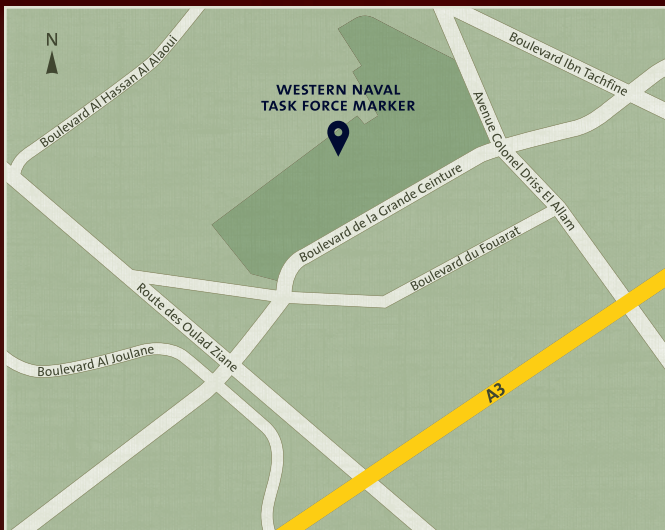


The Western Naval Task Force Marker in Casablanca, Morocco is located at the Ben M'Sik civilian cemetery. The bronze plaque is mounted on a solid block of Moroccan granite. It commemorates the Western Task Force, which made successful assault landings on the Atlantic coast of French Morocco at Fedala, 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.



INSCRIPTION

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA HONORS THOSE ELEMENT OF THE UNITED STATES WESTERN TASK FORCE WHICH SUCCESSFULLY MAKE 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.



Western Naval Task Force

GPS N33 34.727 W7 34.526

The Western Naval Task Force Marker is in the Ben M'Sik European Cemetery. From the A3 city bypass, take the Route des Ouled Ziâne exit.

American Battle Monuments Commission

This agency of the United States government operates and maintains 26 American cemeteries and 29 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



American Battle Monuments Commission
2300 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 500
Arlington, VA 22201 USA

Consulate General of the United States
8, Bd Moulay Youssef
Casablanca Morocco
TEL (212) 522-26-45-50
EMAIL daramerica@state.gov



Western Naval Task Force Marker

American Battle Monuments Commission



The battleship USS Massachusetts (BB-59) during a lull in the Naval Battle of Casablanca, November 8, 1942.

Photo: Naval History and Heritage Command



NORTH AFRICA, 1942: STRIKING BACK

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.



U.S. Army soldiers aboard the transport USS *Joseph T. Dickman* (APA-13) receive ammunition in preparation for the landing before dawn on November 8, 1942.

Photo: National Archives



A Grumman F4F-4 Wildcat fighter taking off from USS *Ranger* (CV-4) to attack targets ashore during the invasion of French Morocco, November 8, 1942.

Photo: National Archives



U.S. Navy landing craft of various types swarm about a mother ship off Safi, French Morocco, during American landing operations, November 8, 1942.

Photo: Library of Congress



Army Jeep rolling off a Navy landing craft at Fedala harbor during the amphibious operations of the U.S. Western Task Force on November 8, 1942.

Photo: Library of Congress