

## Episode 10: The Navy During World War I (1914-1918)



*Postcard. Copenhagen. The Rheden. With the royal ship Dannebrog and unanchored warships.  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

Armed conflict between the great powers was planned, but no one could guess when it would come.

The defense scheme from 1909 had made it possible to acquire a number of submarines and increase the number of torpedo boats, and from 1912 aircraft were acquired.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the Danish navy was not only strong in numbers, but it was also a quite modern navy adapted to Danish conditions. The personnel's training was also top notch after several years of extensive squadron exercises. It was thus a well-equipped fleet that was ready to protect Denmark's neutrality.



When one today assesses Denmark's situation at the outbreak of war in 1914, it is important to remember that it was a quite different and smaller country than the one we know today.

Southern Jutland, i.e. the Duchy of Schleswig, as well as the Duchies of Holstein and Lauenborg had after the war in 1864 been part of the German Empire. Denmark thus had a territorial water border with Germany in the Little Belt.



Thousands of young Danish men living south of the Kongeågrønsen were also forced to take part on the German side in the First World War.

## The security force is established

After Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28 July 1914, things developed very quickly in the major political arena.

In Denmark, the Training Squadron had been equipped for most of the summer, as had been the case in recent years. The majority of the Danish navy's combat units were therefore already equipped at the outbreak of war.

### The preparation of the security force

On the evening of 31 July, the international crisis had become so serious that the Danish government decided to call in the security force of the navy and coastal artillery and thereby establish a coup defense of Copenhagen Harbour, and at 21.30 that evening the government gave a written directive to the navy's establishment of a Security Force.



vice admiral OJ  
Kofoed Hansen  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet's  
archive)

According to the directive, the commanding admiral, Vice Admiral OJ, took over Kofoed-Hansen the supreme command of the equipped naval equipment, i.e. the squadrons and station ships.

This meant that Kofoed-Hansen became head of the "Flådens Overkommando", where the staff was formed by the Fleet Staff. With this, the vice admiral took over command of the fleet's operational efforts as planned.

Kofoed-Hansen was responsible for the planning of the operational neutrality and war preparations, for the training of the equipped units and for carrying out the preparations after increasing the security force or full mobilization. He was then to lead the maritime defenses in an attack on land.

The management of the fleet's operational efforts traditionally took place from one of the largest ships, but Kofoed Hansen prepared to be able to lead overall command from an operations center ashore. One or more squadron commanders would lead the fleet's combat units, the minesweepers as well as flotillas composed of the new torpedo boats. However, the vice admiral retained direct command of Captain Hjalmar Rechnitzer's rapidly growing flotilla of small submarines and seaplanes, and he also retained direct control of the waters surveillance and station ships located in key positions such as at Esbjerg and in the Little Belt.

The fleet's very small staff under Commander Thomas Vilhelm Garde was subordinated to the ministry in peacetime while it supported the vice admiral in his operational planning, but when the security force was increased or mobilized, Garde's people formed the core of the admiral's operations center.

Kofoed-Hansen was only responsible for leading the fleet's equipped units, not for their preparation. All responsibility for preparing, equipping and manning the units and then supporting the large ships and the smaller vessels rested with the Chief of the Naval Shipyard, old Rear Admiral George Zachariae. The shipyard, then Copenhagen's largest and technologically leading company, was directly under the Ministry of the Navy



Rear Admiral  
AF Mazanti Evers

(Photo from Orlogsmuseet's  
archive)

The responsibility for the defense of Copenhagen from the sea side was assigned to the commander of the Floating Defence, Rear Admiral AF Mazanti Evers, subordinate to the commander of the 1' General Command (Army).

Rear Admiral Evers assumed command of the overall defense of Copenhagen on the seaward side and established his command station on the Lynette for his vessels and the coastal artillery regiment's works.

On the evening of 31 July, all ships and vessels of the fleet except the inspection vessels at Iceland and Esbjerg were ordered to sail to the Orlogsværftet to be fitted out for war, and the next day the vice admiral emphasized in his operational order that the most dangerous threat would be a German attack with landing on Zealand's east coast.

Navy personnel, including the repatriated conscripts, arrived quickly, and Rear Admiral Zachariae's well-prepared preparation machine at the Orlogsværftet got underway. During the next morning, after receiving supplies at Holmen, the majority of the ships were ready to join the newly established Maritime Squadron. 23 hours after the government decision on the establishment of the Security Force was published, both the squadron and the underwater flotilla were ready and the squadron left Holmen to sail to its standby anchorage as a neutrality guard.

The naval squadron assembled during the evening of 1 August in Sundet just south of Drogden, while the ships that had been lying on Holmen were ready to depart on 2 August at 24 hours' notice. The obvious materiel from the fleet's line became ready within the next few days, after which they started with the Defense's old materiel, most of which quickly arrived at Lynettehavnen and was deployed as planned.

The entire Maritime Squadron was then in place in the Sound on 5 August 1914.



Lynette was the command station and base port for the Floating Defence on Copenhagen Red, i.e. the capital's defenses to the sea side. The picture shows the division's vessels, old torpedo boats and patrol boats as well as small minesweepers. You can also see equipment from the coastal artillery regiment's installation in the harbor (Forsvarets digital photo collection)



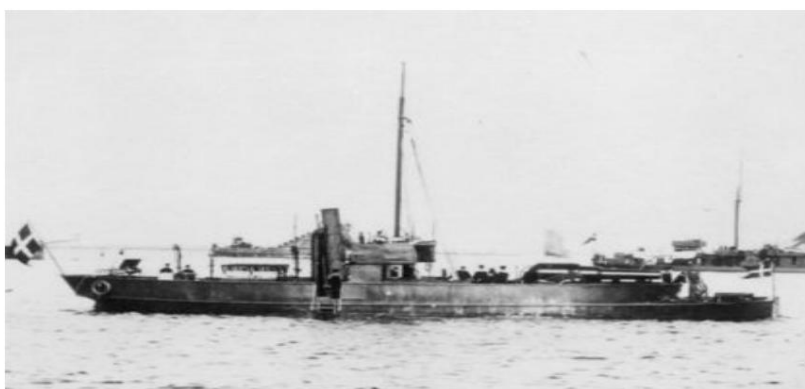
Against the government's clearly stated wish, Vice-Admiral Koefoed-Hansen maintained that the navy had to counter such an attack "with all means". On the same day, a torpedo boat division with three new boats plus two submarines was sent to Masnedø with a radio-carrying state ship (a ship such as a lighthouse, icebreaker, etc., which belonged to the state but which was not a navy ship) as a command ship to secure assertion of neutrality in Småland waters.



*Three of the fleet's first fully serviceable submarines. 2nd April, which had been paid for by collected funds, Nymfen and Thesis. Here in readiness in Helsingør harbor in 1915, ready to fight a British bombardment fleet. The painting and flag on the periscope is a result of the risk of being mistaken as hostile by the belligerent fleets. (Defence's digital photo collection)*

Rear Admiral Anton Evers, had in the spring of 1914 become head of "The Floating Defense on Copenhagen's Red". Evers was in command of the defense of the capital and its harbor against threats from the sea side.

To solve this task, by multiplying the security force or mobilizing, he was given command of the coastal forts from the army as well as small minesweepers as well as old gunboats, torpedo boats and patrol boats from the navy.



*The gunboat Lillebælt was one of the older gunboats that were used as district ships by the Floating Defense at Copenhagen Red.*

*However, the heavy cannon on the foredeck had been removed shortly after the turn of the century and replaced by a few light cannons (Photo from Orlogsmuseet's archive)*

He was to have the minefields laid out and establish near-misses outside the port that secured it against coups, and then lead the port's defenses.

He had two guardian bosses. As head of the Copenhagen Fortifications' "Seafront", he was subordinate to the head of the fortress, i.e. usually the commanding general of the Zealand archipelago, who, after the expansion of the security force, was the army's general-in-chief.

But Evers also covered the fleet's only base and both his old units and his coastal forts had to be able to contribute to the maritime defense in the Sound. In this role, Evers was subordinate to the domineering and strong-willed Kofoed-Hansen. On August 19, the entire fleet was ready. The minesweeping north of Middelgrundsfort was completed on 6 August, while the "bombardment blockade" in Køge Bay was only completed on 12 August.

## Only the right to self-defense

It is clear from the directive that the individual captain was authorized to use armed force for self-defense if necessary, i.e. defended by own or own ships.

Under no circumstances were attacks on other ships allowed without the Government's direct order.

The directive to the Security Force is reproduced below in its entirety:

MINISTRY OF NAVY

Copenhagen, 31 July 1914.

Confidential.

To

The Commanding Admiral

The head of the floating Defence.

Directive for the Security Force.

Due to the threatening situation, the Government DD at 9½ EM issued Order for the Increase of the Security Force for the Navy.

The commanding admiral, as head of the fleet's high command, takes over the supreme command of the naval equipment thus equipped. He hands over the materiel assigned to the floating Defence to the Chief of Defence. Furthermore, he takes over the management of the maritime measures on the maritime territory, in ports and in the open sea, the implementation of which, according to their nature, is reserved for the Government's decision or at all times belongs to the Minister of the Navy.

With regard to the cooperation with the army, he sends the Chief of the Army High Command (the Chief of the 1st General Command) a message about the precautions taken and the situation at sea, just as he can expect to receive the corresponding messages from the Chief of the Army High Command, as the circumstances require. (The head of 1' General Command).

The Chief of the Floating Defence takes over the management of the overall defense of Copenhagen against the Søsiden and is hereby subordinated to the supreme commander in Copenhagen (the Chief of the 1st General Command) according to the rules laid down in § 54 of the Resolution of 15/4 1886 confirmed at the highest level Instructions for Service in the Ships of the Navy. He is directly subordinate to the High Command of the Navy in everything regarding the cooperation between the squadron and the defense materiel and otherwise in relation to maritime measures in the waters around Copenhagen and associated ports, the implementation of which according to their nature is reserved for the Government's decision or at any time belongs to the Minister of the Navy. He keeps the supreme commander in Copenhagen (the Chief of the 1st General Command) informed about orders received in this way.

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In accordance with the political decisions made by the Government, the Security Force's purpose will be to safeguard the State's neutrality in Compliance with the Conventions and those in Kgl. Arrangement of 20/12 1912 determined Provisions.

In the event of possible violations of neutrality - both when these are deemed to be intentional and if they appear to be accidental - the Government's order of conduct must in every case be obtained without delay, and in no case may an attack be carried out without the Government's order, unless it is done in defense (cf. instructions for service in the ships of the fleet).

As Danish maritime territory, the waters off the Danish coast are considered up to a distance of 3 nautical miles from land, except where Danish and foreign maritime territory touch each other, in which case the territorial boundary is indicated by the midwater line.

signature P.

Munch. /sign. Hedemann.

## Navy employees and conscripts

The 1909 Act for the Order of the Navy determined the navy's manning in the smallest detail for each individual personnel category. Thus, the number of permanent naval officers from vice admiral to lieutenant was determined to be 144.

Correspondingly, a ceiling was set for every other category of permanent employees, from engineers to non-commissioned officers and permanent privates to craftsmen at the Orlogsværftet.

In addition to the fleet's newer units - the "line" - the officers were to man the old vessels of the "reserve" and place commanders on the largest state vessels, which the navy planned to arm and use as auxiliary ships.

No one seems to have predicted that the armed forces would be able to maintain readiness for a very long time. It was also not thought that one would have to find officer personnel for new elements such as the flying service, which was established after the passing of the law, and its situation and operations room. new opportunities that the radio gave in the message and command business.

The number of naval officers was small, but when working with the documents of the time, one gets the impression of a corps capable in all areas, which was not least in all technical areas well trained and worked innovatively to improve equipment and equipment as well as application procedures.



1911-15

*Group photo of cadets 1911-15 (Defence's digital photo collection)*

In addition to the naval officer corps, the legal text described, category by category, in detail how the "Engine Corps" was staffed with engineers, machinists and firemen at different pay levels. The same happened to the "Artillery Corps" staffing of non-commissioned officers, constables and hornblowers, as well as to the "Sailor and Naval Mine Corps" composition of non-commissioned officers, sailors and "mine sailors".

As the navy's schools did not have their own manning standard, the last of the larger parts of the navy's organization was the Zachariaes Orlogsværft. With its engineers, craftsmen, own police and fire brigade, office workers, designers and many other specialties, the staffing at the yard reached a little over 800 persons.

In addition to the permanent personnel, the navy's capabilities depended on the best possible use of the relatively limited number of conscripts who were trained each year for the less complicated functions. This included the officers of the state ships and the large merchant fleet who were given the rank of reserve officer in the navy. The fact that in 1914 Denmark was still very much a maritime nation did not make it difficult to discharge young men with the right background.

## Denmark neutral

At the same time as the Fleet Security Force was being prepared on 1 August, a statement was issued to all nations that Denmark would remain completely neutral during the war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. On 4 August, Denmark issued a similar statement on the occasion of the declarations of war between Germany and Russia as well as Germany and France.

Later that day, Germany responded to an English ultimatum about the violation of Belgium's neutrality, after which England declared war on Germany. World War I was now a reality, but the Danish government was determined to enforce Denmark's neutrality.

## Mine laying

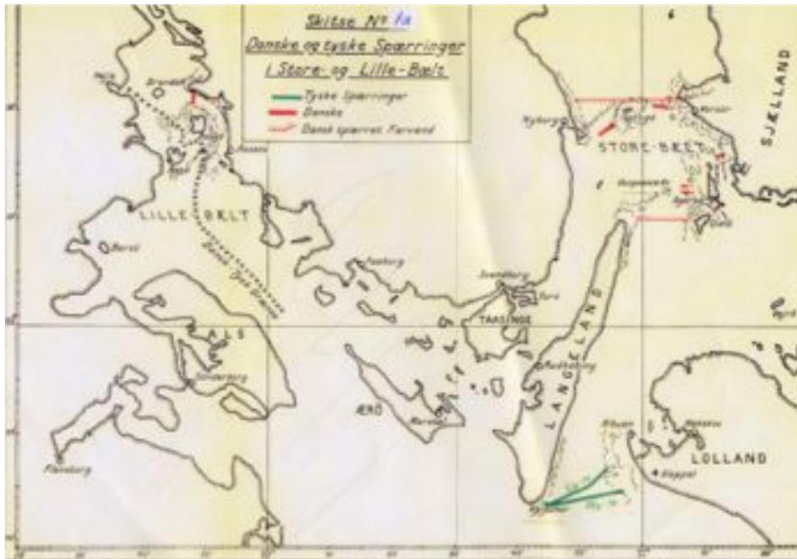
Early in the morning of August 5, 1914, it was reported that German ships were laying mines in the southern part of the Langeland Belt and the southern part of the Great Belt between Lolland and Langeland.

And the same morning, a verbal demand was raised from the German side that Denmark initiate a blockade of the Great Belt, i.e. minelaying when the German envoy handed the Danish government what it perceived as an ultimate demand to block the navigational waters against both warring parties, i.e. against a British penetration attempt.



*The minesweeper Lossen was one of the minesweepers that participated in the laying of the Danish mine barriers in the Great Belt in August 1914  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*





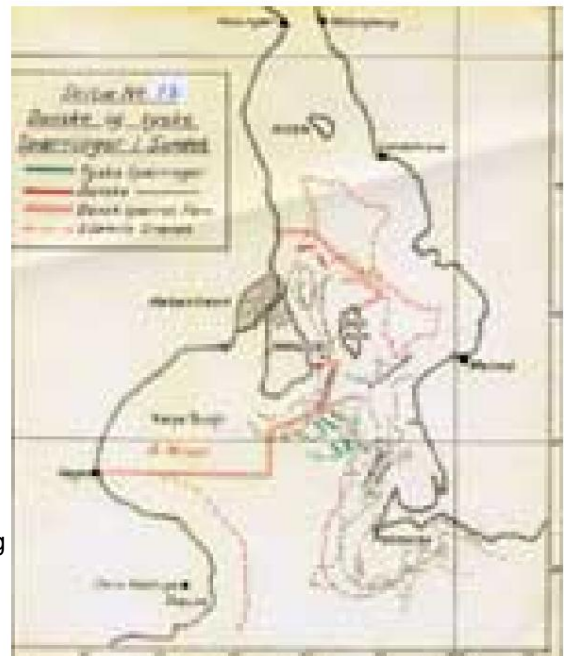
Early in the morning of August 5, 1914, it is reported that German ships were in the process of laying mines in the southern part of the Langeland Belt (Drawing Orlogsmuseet's archive)

Instead of simply complying with the German wish, a hastily convened government council decided already on the same day, in which the commanding admiral, vice admiral OJ Kofoed-Hansen also participated, to lay mines in both the Øresund, the Great Belt and the Danish part of the Little Belt.

The vice-admiral actively worked for the decision to comply with the German wish, because he saw this as a way to keep Denmark out of the war.

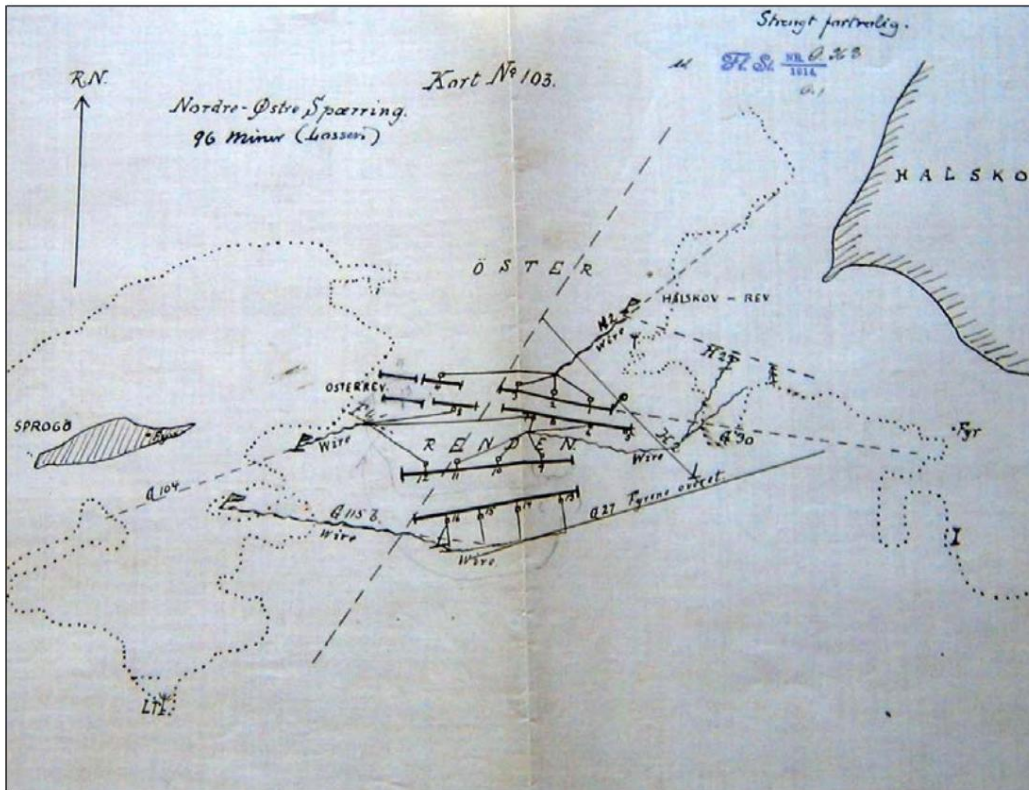
The Minister of Defense subsequently gave the order to initiate the mining of the Danish straits, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs personally communicated the following to the German and English envoys:

*"In order to assert neutrality and keep the military minesweepers in the Øresund and Køge Bay operations away from the Danish waters and coasts and (the Orlogsmuseet's archive) to preserve the different parts of the country, the Danish Government has decided to block Danish territorial waters in the Sound and Big and Little Belt with Mines."*



When the government followed his recommendation, he sent half of the fleet's combat power to the Great Belt, where it formed "2. Squadron" under Commander Garde. The torpedo boats at Masnedø joined the force whose task was to lay mine barriers between Korsør and Nyborg and then defend them against British penetration attempts.





The minelayer Lossen's sketch of the minefield it laid in Østre Rende in Storebælt off Korsør from 6 August 1914. (Rigsarkivet)

Both King Christian X, Marine Minister Munch, Squadron Leader Garde and Commander Jøhnke in the Marine Ministry were opposed to the vice admiral's order that one should fight against a British force's attempted passage, but Foreign Minister Erik Scavenius supported Kofoed-Hansen because his order made Danish neutrality credible in Germany's eyes. The order was maintained, and thereafter, as the order to fight a landing attempt, formed the main framework for naval neutrality efforts during the war.

### The High Command's order to the Ships of the Fleet



The torpedo boat Vindhunden on patrol (Orlogsmuseet archive).

On 19 August 1914, High Command Order No. 92, which i.a. was intended to

summarize the many Fleet Orders issued so far regarding condition orders for the fleet's ships under various conditions.

Next, the complete content of the order is reproduced:

#### Supreme Command Order No. 92:

Point 1. Any action against violations of neutrality must, as a rule, begin with a protest. Force must only be used take place when it is done as a defense or in accordance with the Order of Relations (cf. Supreme Command Order No. 1 and the order below).

Point 2. Protest against violation of neutrality can - depending on the circumstances - take place:

- a. By firing loose shots (in conjunction with 2 b).
- b. By international Signal.
- c. Orally.
- d. In writing.
- e. By sharp shots for the bow of the culprit (in connection with 2 b).

As far as possible, Protest when firing loose shots must be used before Protest when firing sharp shots for the bow (2.e is given).

Point 3. In the case of violations of neutrality, a distinction must be made between "insignificant" and "significant".

Violation of the residence regulations can be counted among the "insignificant" violations (cf. Royal Ordinance of 20. December 1912), involuntarily overstepping the boundaries of closed or closed waters, etc. - In the event of involuntarily overstepping the limits of closed or closed waters, the person concerned must be encouraged to leave this area by the same route he used on arrival. Passage of the water must not take place (cf. Clause 3.c.).

Among the "substantial" violations that can be imagined on the part of the belligerent Powers, must be counted:

- a. Direct attacks on Danish warships or vessels and landing on Danish soil of large armed forces Troop forces.
- b. Attack on a ship or vessel belonging to the adversary which, as a result of detention, grounding, damage or other legal reason for residence resides on Danish maritime territory under the protection of the Danish flag.
- c. Attempt to pass (force) a body of water which is closed to the fleets of the belligerent Powers.
- d. Battle between belligerent forces that continues on Danish territory.
- e. Attempt to carry out Visitation or Arrest of a Danish or foreign merchant ship on Danish maritime territory.

ad a. The attack or the landing must, when Protest cannot be submitted in time, without further orders be met with all available funds.

ad b. The Danish force must, as far as possible, be positioned in such a way that it directly covers the relevant ship or vessel in a timely manner, and in all cases a Danish ship or vessel's place under these conditions is between the attacker and the attacked, regardless of the damage, thereby itself like. The form of protest must conform to the present conditions.

If the attack continues after Protest as under Pkt. 2 a. (2 e), is surrendered, the weapons are used.

ad c. The form of protest must conform to the present circumstances. Is that a submerged submarine, there attempting the passage, sharp shots for the bow are likely either to cause further submergence or to cause the boat to go to the surface; in the latter case it must be assumed that the boat will comply with the protest, and it should therefore not be fired upon unless it itself opens fire; it will then be able to be forced to go back without major use of force. If the boat continues its journey submerged, the periscopes must be fired upon.

ad d. If the conditions make it possible to stop the fight by running between the fighting parties, the intervention must take place. The form of protest must conform to the present conditions.

ad e. The attempt must be met with a Protest, as attention is drawn to the fact that the person in question is on Danish Maritime Territory. If the protest and then given a polite, but firm, warning is undeniably not respected despite reference to the fact that you have an order to prevent any attempts at visitation or arrest, these must be prevented by force.

Point 4. Persecution outside the maritime territory on the occasion of a violation of neutrality found there may not take place, and reprisals in the event of a subsequent return to the maritime territory are excluded, unless a special order exists.

Special rules were also given for the passage of airplanes, landing on Danish territory in case of emergency and much more.

### **The task of the fleet**

After the decision to mine the Danish straits, the Navy was faced with a difficult task, partly the guarding of Danish neutrality and countering attacks on Danish territory, but at the same time a possible defense of the laid mine barriers.



*The individual squadron was usually composed of at least one coastal defense ship as flagship, 1-2 cruisers and a number of torpedo boats and submarines as well as some support ships, here the coastal defense ship Olfert Fischer is seen with the cruiser Hejmdal behind.  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

Strategically, the tasks set were in direct conflict with each other, in that the guarding of neutrality required a dispersion of the forces, while the defense of the mine barriers and countering a possible attack required a concentration of the forces.

The solution was that the Maritime Squadron was divided into a 1st Squadron, which was to have a station in the Sundet, a 2nd Squadron, which had a station in the Great Belt, while a smaller number of ships were stationed in the Little Belt and Smålandsfarvandet.

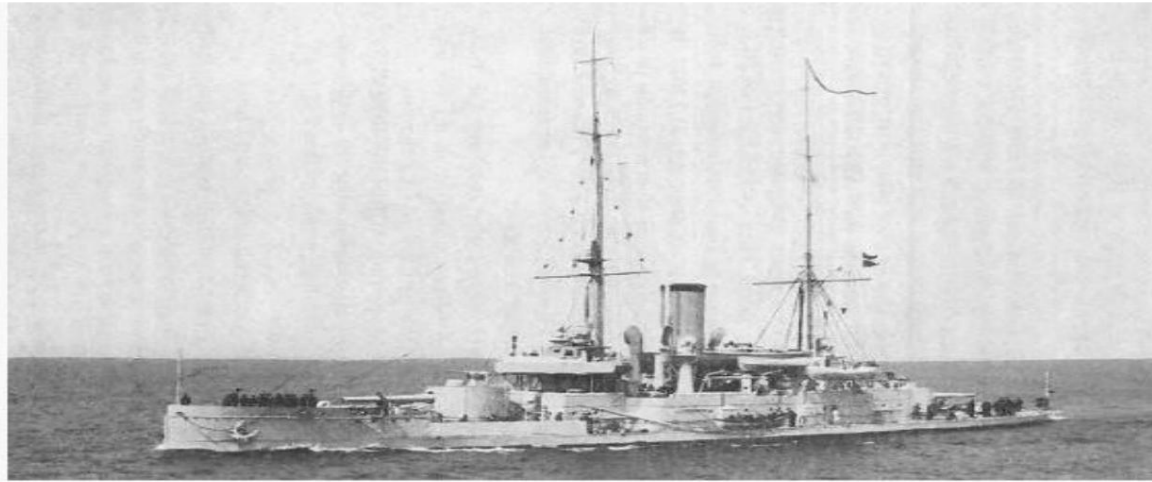
The individual squadron was usually composed of at least one coastal defense ship as a flagship, 1-2 cruisers, 6-9 torpedo boats and 3-4 submarines, as well as some support ships, in addition to this was the Floating Defense on Copenhagen's Red, which had 4 gunboats or inspection ships and 12- 15 older torpedo and patrol boats and a number of support ships.

In addition, during the entire world war, a station/inspection ship was permanently stationed at Skagen, the west coast of Jutland (Esbjerg), the Faroe Islands, Iceland and the Danish West Indies.

Our long stretches of coast were, however, only sporadically guarded for many periods.

## **Ships and smaller vessels and other equipment**

The backbone of the fleet's line consisted, in the opinion of the older naval officers, of three coastal armored ships of Herluf Trolle class - Herluf Trolle, Peder Skram and Olfert Fischer



*The coastal defense ship Olfert Fischer was part of the Security Force during most of the world war 1914-18  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

as well as the armored battery Skjold.



*Armored battery Shield in the original black/  
yellow paint job.  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

Together with the two small old cruisers Gejser and Hejmdal



*The cruiser Gejser - (Photo from the Orlogsmuseet archive)*



*The cruiser Hejmdal - (Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*



and the two minelayers Lossen and Hjælperen



*The minesweeper Lossen was one of the minesweepers that participated in the laying of the Danish mine barriers in the Great Belt in August 1914 (Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

the battleships were the only warships that could carry out slightly longer-lasting operations and operate in bad weather

Not least the young and younger naval officers, in opposition to the old, were of the opinion that the fleet's combat power was based on the nine - ten new torpedo boats and not least on the strength of submarines, which with the building of the "B-class" would reach twelve units within a few years.

After equipping the submarines with radio and gyrocompasses, they became the vice-admiral's essential means of operating mobile against attacking landing and bombardment forces.

The small but growing force of seaplanes was attached to the submarine flotilla and given reconnaissance and liaison duties.

In addition, the navy prepared, by laying out minefields, to make foreign naval operations against Copenhagen more difficult.

The prepared barricades, which had to be armed and disarmed via cables, could be supplemented with mines laid by the torpedo boats, including in Swedish waters, to impede the freedom of movement of a bombardment fleet.

The old torpedo boats and patrol boats from the fleet's reserve, many of which were very small, were to be part of the Defense as guard vessels. The same force also included the small minecraft that could lay out and maintain the mine barriers that covered Copenhagen's harbour.

Inspection ships and other government ships, which were involved by the navy as auxiliary ships, could partly be used as command or depot ships for forces of smaller vessels that were used from provincial ports, or as radio-equipped station ships in important waters.

Four smaller government ships were planned to be used under the army.

## Prelude and preparations

When the war broke out in August 1914, Denmark was neutral. This neutrality and the survival of the country was perceived as directly threatened by the fact that Germany and England, as Great Britain was then called, were adversaries. Both were now naval powers, and there was a risk that the English would search in through the straits or perhaps go ashore at Esbjerg to threaten the Kiel Canal, so that the Germans could not move their fleet between the Baltic Sea and the North Sea. The risk of an attempted invasion was increased by the fact that Russia was an ally of England and France. Control of the Straits would make direct cooperation between Germany's enemies possible.



*The main force of the fleet, "1. Squadron" at the emergency anchorage off Klampenborg. (photo: Holger Damgaard, The Royal Library)*

The Danish army leadership saw it as likely that Germany would pre-empt an invasion attempt by securing control over Denmark.

It would happen in a coup attack against Copenhagen at the outbreak of war or more likely as a landing close to the capital followed by a bombardment as the English had done in 1807.

The naval leadership could not rule out this possibility and collaborated with the army on countermeasures at the same time as preparing to be able to counter an English use of internal Danish waters at the Great Belt as a base area for operations in the Baltic Sea.

However, the operative Danish naval commander, the vice admiral, perceived it as likely that the English penetration attempt would only come after a major naval battle in the North Sea, where the German battleship fleet had suffered defeat.

The radical minority government and especially its defense minister P. Munch had no expectations or opinions about what would happen. In his eyes, it would be fruitless and irrelevant to try. But regardless of which great power moved into Denmark, the Danish forces were only supposed to mark neutrality, not defend the country.

This was also the case if both parties chose to operate on Danish territory. But as the Radicals ruled as a minority government, having promised the King to administer the 1909 Defense Acts loyally, their intention could not be made public. But in the event of a threatening attack, one could fail to mobilize the army so that the country could wage a defensive war.



*P. Munch (National Archives)*

(An intention that P. Munch was shamefully trumped 26 years later, when the Social Democratic Radical government, where P. Munch (B) was foreign minister and defense minister was Alsing Andersen (A), partly through a constant disarmament policy and partly by reversing both turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to the reports that came about an imminent attack on Denmark. And posterity will probably leave no one in doubt as to which of these two actually determined Danish defense policy in 1940.)

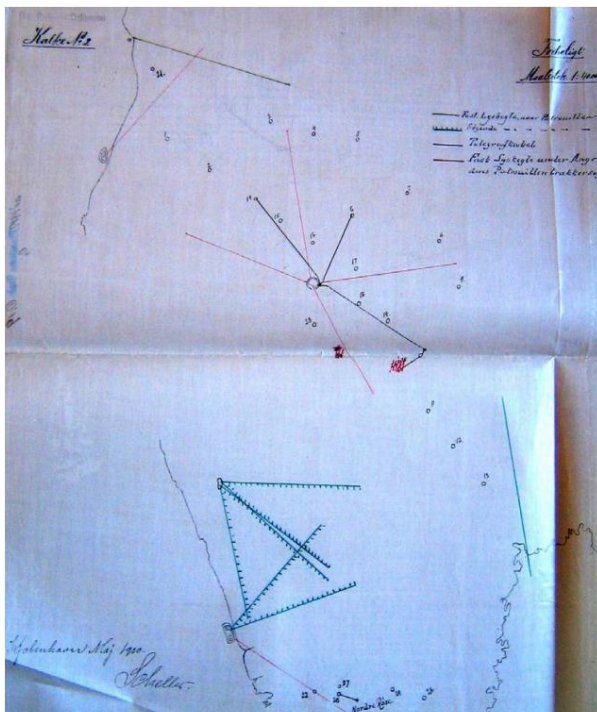
## Coup attack against Copenhagen

Ever since the end of the 1890s, not least the army's leadership had seen the Defense's low preparedness as its greatest weakness, after the fortress had been built.

The army was a purely training force for recruits, having assembled units only at the major exercises that usually took place after re-enlistments in the fall. During the winter months, the army only had the small force that looked after horses and equipment.

At this time, naval preparedness was not much better. They only had a larger and reasonably well-trained force during the squadron exercises in the autumn, which concluded the year's training activities.

The navy's leading young intellectual, the then first lieutenant Henri Wenck, had described in a lecture at the Søljntant selskabet in March 1900 how the Germans would be able to capture the Danish capital through a coup d'état in the harbor, which actually happened forty years later. In his view, the only immediate option to counter this threat would be for the army's coastal artillery's winter crew to be concentrated at Middelgrundsfort, so that it could be maintained in constant readiness with manning of various types of artillery.



A sketch from the Defense drawn up in 1910 and updated in 1912 showing the telephone buoys near Middelgrund and Charlottenlund forts to the north and Kastrup Fort to the south, which the old torpedo and patrol boats lay by every night. Also shows the fixed cones of light from the forts' floodlights.

During the security period, telephone buoys were also used at the height of Drogden and next to Kalveboderne

(National Archives)

The threat perception really reflected the German planning of the period. At this time, the German navy saw it as crucial to have control over Denmark at the start of a conflict against England.

This was to be done by securing control over Copenhagen before the Danish army was mobilized and manned the fortress.

The possibilities of getting mobilized conscripts to Copenhagen were to be hindered by German naval forces in the Great Belt, Kattegat and Smålandsfarvandet, as well as by the landing of an army corps at Køge, which by a rapid advance to Roskilde could cut off the railway to Copenhagen.

At the same time, they went directly against the Danish decision-makers by threatening a ship bombardment of Copenhagen from the Sound and by the landing of another army corps at Dragør, which, in an air march to Slotsholmen, took advantage of the fact that the fortress' forts on Amager had never been built.

The Danish army leadership had foreseen a landing at Dragør, but saw it as a preparation for establishing bombardment batteries at Amager, which could cover the town centre. On the whole, the army leadership – unlike Wenck – seemed unable to free itself from the idea that the 1807 process would repeat itself.

In the decade before 1914, both defenses had focused on being able to meet the threat to Copenhagen in the event of an outbreak of war. As far as the army is concerned, this was done by gathering as many garrisons as possible on Zealand. Then it was easier and faster to prepare a security force that could secure and man the key works of the fortification as well as protect a mobilization.

In addition, the army built an intelligence service to warn of invasion preparations in the German ports.

The navy's part was, firstly, a build-up of the permanent crew, so that the decisive parts of the defence's security force could be manned, including primarily submarines and some of the new torpedo boats.

The immediate notification was also to be made by telegraphic messages from the army and navy's joint coastal lookout service, by messages from the naval officer who was the captain of the mail steamer Korsør-Kiel and by equipping lightships and state ships with radios so that warning messages could be received from the waters, including not at least from the Sound north and south of Copenhagen.

During the crisis in the autumn of 1912, the small situation room was established at the Naval Barracks, which could gather the messages that arrived from the Orlogsværftet's radio as well as telegraphically from the coastal lookout organisation. The situation room cooperated with the officers' round-the-clock watch in the General Staff, which had been established the previous year to be able to alert key personnel in case of critical intelligence from abroad.

The early warning and defense of Copenhagen Harbor was Rear Admiral Evers' Defense's task.

Access to garden pools was blocked with barriers and chains. During the day, most of his old torpedo and patrol boats were in the Lynette harbors and others at Dragør, but at night the boats were anchored at telephone buoys in an extended semicircle in front of the entrances to the harbor from the south and especially the north.

Here they lay as listening and observation posts, supported by the floodlights of the coastal fortifications, whose cones of light shone in a fixed direction, so that ships heading towards the city would be observed and reported from the boats.

In fog, people were relegated to acting as listening posts.



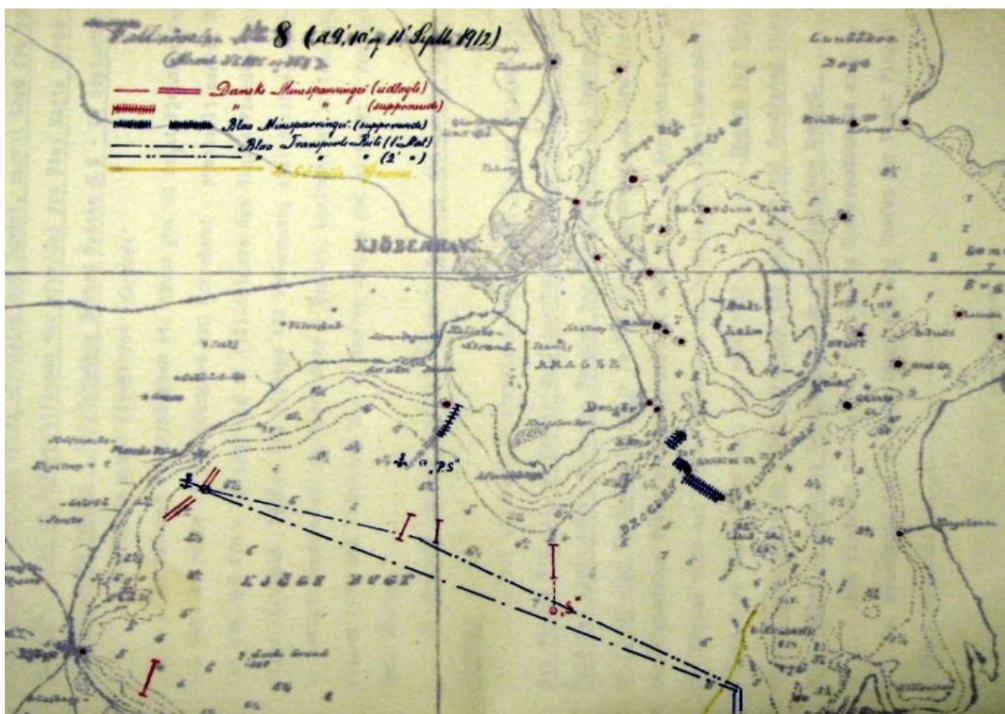
## German landing in Køge Bay

As already mentioned, around the turn of the century, Germany had plans to land a corps at Køge early enough to prevent the mobilizing Danish army from gathering in Copenhagen.

Later, when the German army rejected the possibility of a coup, the main landing of the attack plan was aimed at Korsør, the Zealand port closest to Kiel.

It was also the natural base for a direct control of the Great Belt coasts and from here and from Sprogø with access to the Baltic Sea.

But as already described, both the navy and especially the Danish army expected that the Germans would direct their operations towards the capital if they saw control of Danish territory as urgently necessary. Therefore, their landing would take place close to the capital, i.e. on East Zealand. Køge Bay was the most likely landing place, Fakse Bay the secondary option.



A 1912 sketch from the navy's exercise to counter a German landing in Køge Bay. (National Archives)

Countering this landing threat became the central issue of naval and army cooperation before the war. It was this task that was practiced and analyzed in war games and exercises.

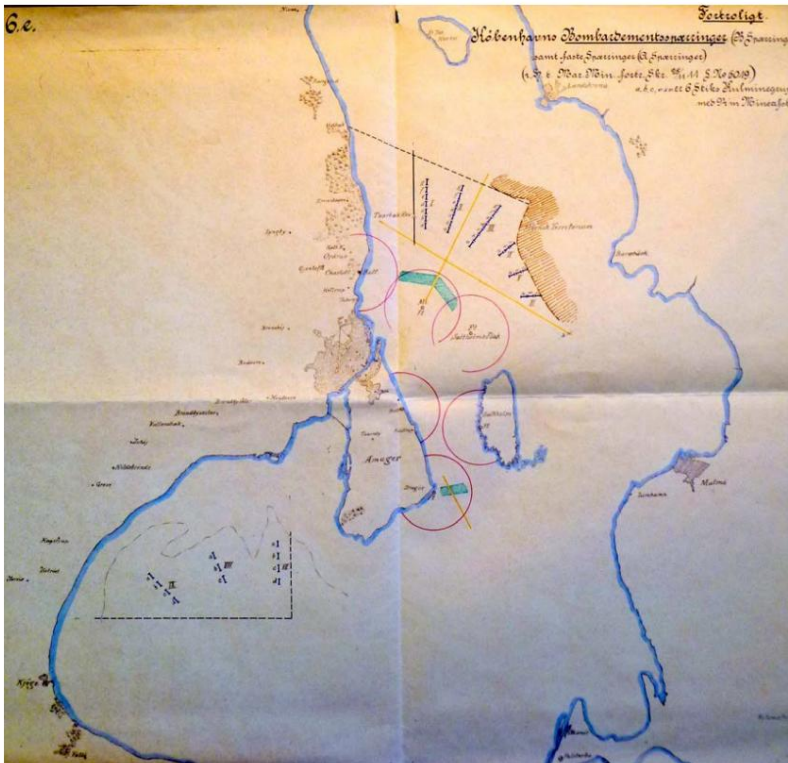
Attacking the transport ships was the first and primary role of the new submarines.

A landing in Køge Bay would very likely be accompanied by a ship bombardment of the city from the bay, and this would be made difficult by a very large anti-bombardment minefield south of Amager and by the new coastal fortifications at Dragør, Kongelunden and Mosede.

At the same time, the army had to secure Copenhagen against a coup d'état with ships' boats aimed at the Kalveboderne.

British (or German) naval bombardment of Copenhagen from the Sound: The naval leadership was of the opinion that if the British wanted to force Denmark to make the country's territory available for their operations, they would, as in 1807, do this by bombardment of Copenhagen, and the easiest and most effective way would be to use heavy ship artillery.

The new sea fortifications north of the city - Tårnbækfort and Saltholms Flakfort - together with Middelgrundfort and the minefield north of this fort as well as hastily laid minefields, the squadron and the submarine flotilla had to be ready to face such a bombardment. The fleet's primary emergency anchorage was therefore chosen next to Klampenborg.



The defense's sketch from 1911 showing both the fixed access mine barriers (the southern one at Dragør was not laid out) and the planned anti-bombardment barriers.

It was also envisaged, if necessary, to mine Swedish waters using torpedo boats.

(National Archives)

By the autumn of 1914, the submarine force had grown so large that Kofoed-Hansen decided it was ready to be deployed in this task. A couple of the boats were therefore stationed in Helsingør. If a bombardment fleet was reported on its way, the flotilla deployed the submarines in a long "string of pearls" from Gilleleje to immediately north of Middelgrunden. This meant that the bombardment fleet would repeatedly be subjected to torpedo attacks on its way south. It was during an exercise of this planned deployment that the Danish submarine Havmanden in mid-October 1914 was perceived as a German submarine and attempted to be torpedoed by the British submarine E-11.



The submarine Havmanden (No. 3) is seen here on its way out of the Port of Copenhagen. (Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)





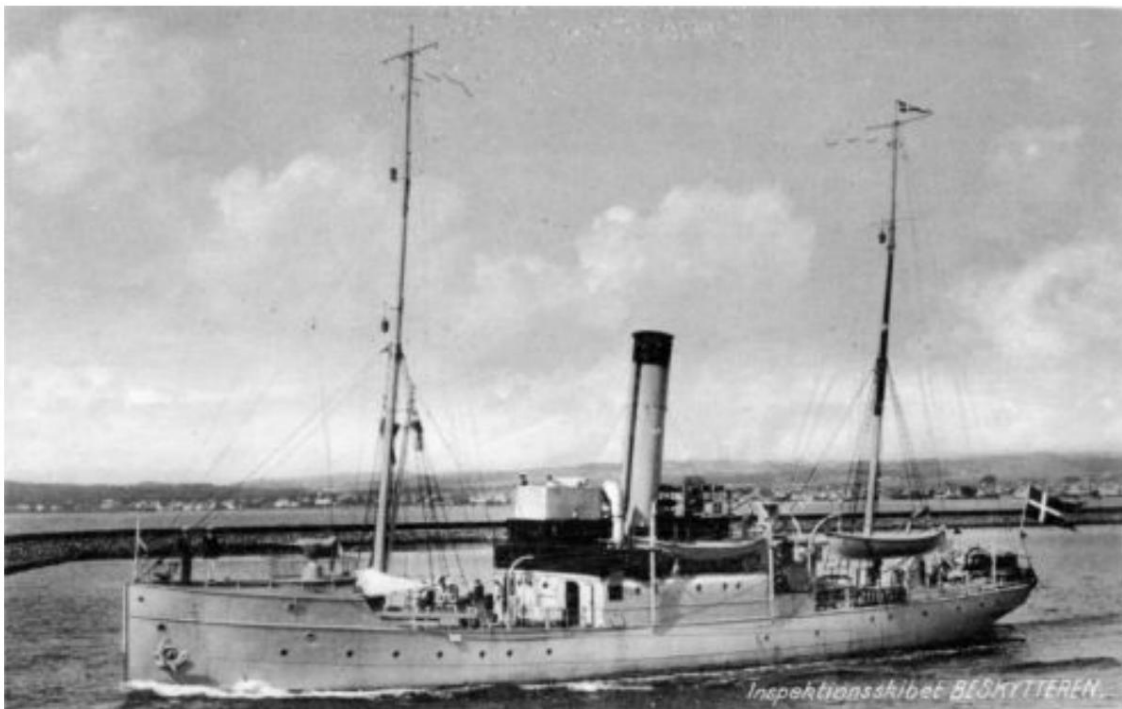
## British use of Esbjerg

But with regard to the navy's efforts outside Copenhagen and in the Great Belt, Kofoed-Hansen considered it crucial that the Danish armed forces indicated that they would not passively tolerate a British use of Esbjerg.

It was both possible to imagine that the harbor would be used as a destroyer base to support a close blockade by the German fleet and as a starting point for a land operation against the Kiel Canal.

Denmark had both semi-official German statements and fresh intelligence which emphasized the German interest, and the vice admiral would do his best to avoid the Germans moving into Denmark to solve the task themselves.

Therefore, at the outbreak of war, an inspection ship with radio and an experienced commander was placed in Esbjerg harbour, and preparations were made for a rapid mining of Grådybet.



*The inspection ship the Protector. (Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

Kofoed-Hansen, together with the commanding general in Jutland, had also ensured that Esbjerg was guarded by a battalion that covered the access to the harbor with some field artillery.

## German use of the Little Belt With

the border at Kongeå, Germany had control over the southern part of the west coast of the Little Belt, and Kofoed-Hansen's appearance at the outbreak of war demonstrates that he was aware that free use of the belt was seen as necessary for the German fleet.

The admittedly narrow but deep strait was the High Seas Fleet's primary route from Kiel to the Kattegat.

The navy limited itself to maintaining a presence with a radio-equipped station ship and otherwise carrying out a small symbolic mining in a place that was not used by the German navy.



## The effort in the Limfjorden

The main force of the army was with the implementation of the 1909 army law gathered on Zealand to solve the neutrality defense tasks here. The limited army force committed to Jutland was expected, in the event of a German advance, to quickly retreat to the Limfjord and, if necessary, go back to the island of Mors to take the final battle here.

The defense of the island depended on being able to prevent the Germans from crossing from Salling or later Thy with improvised means. Therefore, the Danish forces had to control the Limfjorden. It required two things. Entry from the North Sea at Thyborøn and especially from the Kattegat at Hals or other places east of Aalborg had to be closed.

In addition, the fjord around the island was to be patrolled at night by armed Danish vessels. The army had unsuccessfully tried to get the navy to provide a few older ironclads, and the solution was to arm four smaller state ships with light guns, transfer normal crew and officers to the navy and put mobilized ship's gunners on board as a supplement. At the same time, a retired naval officer was placed with the region's commanding general as an adviser.



*The rescue steamer Vesterhavet was one of the four small state ships that were prepared for deployment in the Limfjorden in support of the Jutland army's defense of Mors Here are the crew and one of the two 37mm revolver guns. With which the ships were armed. (Fishing & Maritime Museum, Esbjerg)*

## The mine laying during the First World War

When the war was a reality in the summer of 1914, things suddenly went very fast.

At 5 o'clock in the morning on 5 August 1914, it was reported that German ships had begun laying mines in the southern part of the Langelandsbelt.

Later that morning, the German envoy paid a visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he made an oral inquiry concerning:

***"if Denmark would immediately block the Great Belt effectively" - i.e. with mines - "against both belligerent powers".***

At the same time, they also laid out mines themselves in the Langeland Belt and in the Little Belt. After all, Southern Jutland belonged to Germany. At this time, the main German fleet was in the North Sea, i.e. on the Elbe and at Wilhelmshafen, and the Germans feared an English attack on the weaker German naval forces in the Baltic.

### **Several ministerial meetings and the State Council urgently convened**

The Danish government was strongly divided on the question of possible mine laying in Danish waters, and at one point during the morning the government came close to being blown up because of this disagreement.

The commanding admiral, vice-admiral OJ Kofoed-Hansen, with the support of the incoming commanding general Gørtz, however, spoke strongly throughout the day for the laying of mines.

Both were convinced that if Denmark did not block the Great Belt itself, the Germans would undoubtedly carry out this block themselves, and possibly occupy Danish lands. This would definitely put Denmark on a collision course with Germany.

During the course of the day, several, and sometimes heated, ministerial meetings were held. And at three o'clock a meeting had been called in the State Council, where the matter was to be decided.

At 4 o'clock the commanding admiral, vice-admiral OJ Kofoed-Hansen and the commanding general, general Gørtz, were also summoned to the ongoing meeting of the Council of State.

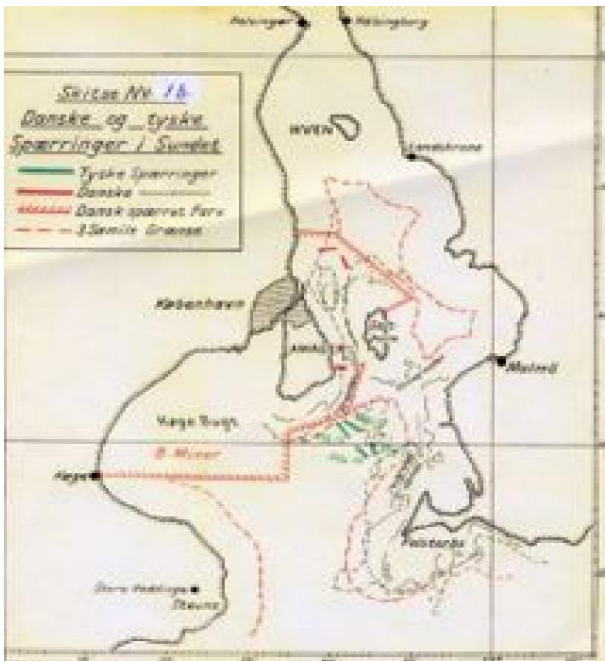
The commanding admiral could now further add that several German minesweepers stayed at Kjelsnor, apparently also with troops on board. Everything pointed to the fact that Germany was in the process of preparing further minelaying in Danish waters.

Instead of simply meeting the German wish (demand), the hastily convened government council decided to lay out mines in both the Øresund, the Great Belt and the Little Belt.

### **The mine laying is started**

As early as 5 o'clock that afternoon, the Minister of Defense gave the order to start the mining of the Danish straits, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs personally communicated the following to the German and English envoys:

*"In order to assert neutrality and keep military operations away from Danish waters and coasts and to preserve the connection between the various parts of the country, the Danish Government has decided to block Danish territorial waters in the Sound and Great and Little Belt with mines."*



## The mine laying continues

On 10 August, the 2nd Squadron in Storebælt finished laying out the planned mine barriers. The day before, 9 August, an order had been given to start laying mine barriers in Køge Bay.

This operation was planned to begin on 11 August, which is why the 1st Squadron in the Sound was sent to the area for, among other things, to mask the mine laying there.

The following day, 12 August, the mine barriers in Køge Bay were also in place

The planned Danish mine blockades of the Danish cities were then completed. - The navy's task was now to monitor and guard these barriers.

## The mine search service

Shortly after the outbreak of World War I, the mine danger began to make itself felt in earnest in our waters. It is not surprising when you think about how many German mines, in particular, were located along and in the navigable waters.



*The inspection ship Diana had a permanent station at Skagen from 1917, and participated here, among other things, in the search for mines in Skagerrak. (Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

An efficient search of the most trafficked waters with our inspection ships, torpedo boats, patrol boats and rented equipment was therefore quickly established.

Demining teams were also stationed on the west coast of Jutland, at Albuen and on Bornholm.

The search for mines in the North Sea was carried out as a Nordic collaboration that had been planned at a mining conference in 1915.



## German mine blockades cause problems

Since the laying of the first mine barriers on 5 August, Germany had stubbornly claimed that no mines had been laid on Danish territory.

Even so, the Navy had to defuse nearly 6,000 foreign mines that had left German and English minefields.



1916 German soldiers with sea mines (Photo from the National Archives)

In November 1914, however, the Germans had to admit that several mines had drifted into Danish territory at Langeland, and they promised to remove these mines immediately.

While trying to remove these, one of the German trawlers encountered a German mine and sank.

After several days of easterly storms, several mines were found drifting in the Great Belt, of which 5 were found by Danish ships and destroyed.

## 3 mines are defused per day

The neutralization of drifting mines was quite a formidable task. During the Security Force from August 1914 - March 1919, a total of 5,803 mines were neutralized by the Danish navy, or an average of around 3 mines per day.

A further 4,000 or so foreign mines, mainly British, had to be defused in the years following the end of the war.

This was not a harmless job, and during the World War it cost 9 Danish marines their lives and wounded 7.

In total, during and after the end of the First World War, almost 10,000 mines were found and rendered harmless. The majority of these mines were English, but it was still the German mines that posed the greatest danger.

According to the Hague Convention, a mine must disarm itself if it breaks free from its mooring. It turned out that 75% of the German mines were still armed when they were found.

## Truce

Immediately after the conclusion of the armistice on 11 November 1918, the government immediately took measures to restore normal traffic conditions in Danish waters.

On the same day that the armistice was a fact, the removal of our mine barriers was begun, just as the blocked water sections were opened and the lighthouses were lit again.

However, the search for mines and the rejection vessels at the German mine barriers and the removal of the German mines still required a lot of equipment.

Originally, the German demand for minelaying in the Great Belt in August 1914 was intended as a protection of the weak German forces, which were in the Baltic Sea at the outbreak of war, against a surprise British attack.

However, the English did not come at all, as the Germans had feared - and it soon became clear that the minefields were in fact the biggest nuisance for the German fleet, which had lost both a port of entry and a line of retreat.

But since the mines had first been demanded to be laid out, it was difficult later for the Germans to motivate a new demand for their removal.

The German demand in 1914 for mine blocking of the Great Belt thus helped ensure Danish neutrality during the First World War.

### However, the war still claimed victims

14 December 1918, more than a month after the armistice had begun, a further 3 Danish marines were killed and 8 wounded when the torpedo boat Sværdfisken was mined at Albuen in the Great Belt.

In the explosion, which probably occurred when one of the boat's screws hit the shock horn of a German mine, the stern was broken and bent upwards.

It was possible to get the torpedo boat salvaged back to Holmen, and it could later be repaired and returned to active service.



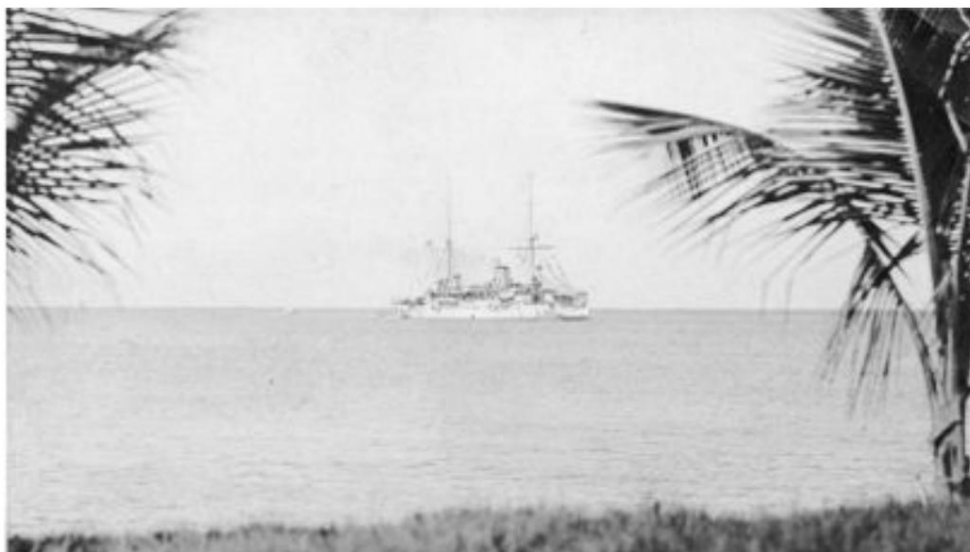
*The torpedo boat Sværdfisken is seen here after returning to Holmen with the stern ship blown away, on the left in the picture the submarine Nymfen can be seen. (Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

## The West Indian Islands

In the autumn of 1915, the cruiser *Valkyrien*, under the command of Commander Henri Konow, was sent to the Danish West Indies as a station ship.

Negotiations with the United States about the sale of the islands had been held several times over the past 50 years. During the World War, the Americans were strongly influenced by the possibility that the Germans would try to take over the Danish islands, where German companies had significant economic interests.

In an indicative referendum in Denmark, there had been a majority in favor of selling the islands to the USA, the negotiations had now fallen into place, and it was decided that the *Valkyrie* should remain in the West Indies until the handover, at the same time the commander, Commander Henri Konow, was installed as temporary governor.



*The cruiser Valkyrie as a station ship in the West Indies during World War I (Photo from the Orlogsmuseet archive)*

On March 31, 1917, Dannebrog was officially struck at the barracks in Charlotte Amalie on Sankt Thomas and the Danish West Indian Islands, Sankt Thomas, Sankt Croix and Sankt Jan were transferred to the United States, after having been in Danish possession since 1666.

When the cruiser *Valkyrie* began the journey back to Copenhagen the following day, a foreign flag flew over the community that for 245 years had been the western border of the Danish navy's service.

## The Sønderjyden are brought home

For a part of the fleet, however, the war was not finally over when the Security Force was abolished.

The cruiser Valkyrie, which was equipped as a cadet ship in the summer of 1919, was sent to Egypt and Malta in July to pick up released prisoners of war, Danish southerners who had been forced to serve in the German army during the world war.

It was successful for the cruiser, which among its young cadets i.a. could muster Crown Prince Frederik to return to Denmark in September with a total of 160 Danish southerners on board.

As early as October 1920, the Valkyrie was sent out again; this time to the Netherlands, Belgium and France to repatriate released South Jutland prisoners of war, a total of 135 South Jutland people came on board.



*As a young cadet in 1919, King Frederik IX helped to bring South Jutland prisoners of war back to Denmark. (Photo Royal Palace)*

## Neutrality violations

One of the navy's most important tasks was to protect Danish neutrality, a task that required many resources.

- A total of 164 violations of Danish neutrality were reported between 1914 and 1918. But both Germany and England violated Danish neutrality during the First World War, mostly unintentionally, but in several cases also intentionally.

Type of Neutrality Violation	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	Violations in total
Material neutrality violations	0	1	0	1	0	2
Bringing in or visiting merchant ships in Danish maritime territory	5	8	1	2	2	18
Offenses in closed waters	4	22	23	4	0	53
Passage over restricted waters by Aircraft and Airships	1	2	22	7	12	44
Other minor or involuntary violations	2	0	3	1	2	8
Warships of warring powers stay on Danish territory under the guard of Danish warships	1	2	11	2	6	22
Emergency landing of aircraft or airships of belligerent powers on Danish territory	1	7	0	1	8	17
<b>Total number of neutrality violations</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>164</b>

In the following you will find a brief description of some of these incidents:



## English torpedo attack on the submarine Havmanden

On 19 October 1914, the submarine Havmanden took part in an exercise with flying boats in the northern part of the Sound. The submarine sailed on the surface. 5 nautical miles from Nakkehoved lighthouse, the submarine was suddenly attacked by the submerged English submarine E.11, which had mistakenly identified the Danish submarine as being German.

The English submarine, together with two sister boats, E.1 and E.9, was on its way to the Baltic Sea to assist the Russian fleet.



*Danish Submarines of the A class 1912 (Photo Orlogsmuseet's archive)*

The submerged E.11 fired two torpedoes at the Danish submarine. On board Havmanden, people first became aware of the English attack when a torpedo was suddenly observed that went to the surface astern of the submarine.

A moment later, a torpedo was heard screeching under the bottom of the Merman, but luckily the torpedo did not explode, and the Merman escaped with horror.

The following day, however, one of the torpedoes drifted ashore off Nakkehoved lighthouse and exploded upon stranding.

The English submarines E.1 and E.9 later managed to break through the German guarding in the southern part of the Sound and continue into the Baltic Sea, while E.11 turned around and returned to England.

Later, the British government admitted that one of their submarines had mistakenly shot at the Merman and expressed its regret that it had happened.

## German attack on English submarine

The very next summer the English again tried to get more submarines into the Baltic Sea, when during the summer of 1915 they tried to get the submarines E.8, E.13, E.18 and E.19 through Danish waters.

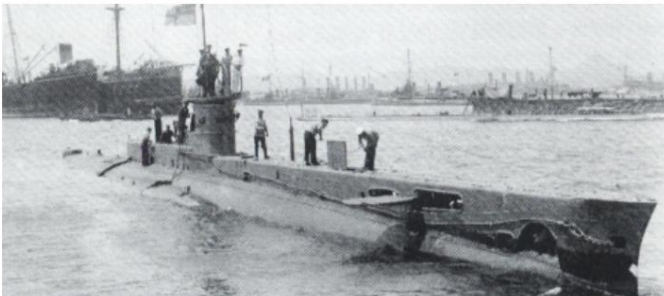
E.8, E.18 and E.19 managed to slip through unseen.

But the fourth, E.13, ran aground shortly before midnight on 18 August 1915 at the southern tip of Saltholm in Øresund, within Danish territorial waters. - An incident which probably developed into the bloodiest violation of neutrality in Danish territory during the world war.



*The abandoned and destroyed English submarine E.13 aground at Saltholm after the German attack on 19 August 1915 (Photo from Orlogsmuseet's archive)*

### The incident about the submarine E.13 at Saltholm



*English submarine of the E class (Rigsærkivet)*

On the night of 19 August 1915, the two English submarines E.8 and E.13 tried to sail down through the Øresund to get further into the Baltic Sea.

The submarines were to reinforce the British submarine force that was already operating in the Baltic Sea.

This was a maneuver that was not only made difficult by the mine blockades laid out in the Sound, but also the Danish and Swedish warships that patrolled the Sound to enforce Danish and Swedish neutrality respectively during the First World War.

The English submarine E.8, under the command of Captain-Lieutenant Francis Goodhart, managed to slip through unseen. The lieutenant captain had chosen a route that lay close to the Danish coast. The route took the submarine west of Saltholm.

E.13, under the command of Captain Lieutenant Geoffrey Layton, chose a course close to the Swedish coast, this course would take the submarine east of Saltholm. - However, E.13 was not so lucky.

Apparently due to an error with the compass, the submarine ran aground at Swaneklapperne and the grounding occurred within Danish territorial waters.



*South-eastern corner of Saltholm.*

## The grounding was observed from the Danish side



*The guard ship, the gunboat Falster (Photo Orlogsmuseet)*

The grounding had been observed from the Danish ships that were on watch in the Sound. However, the submarine's nationality was not known to the Danes at this time.

The Danish guardship Falster, an old gunboat, under the command of Captain N. Chr. Bay Schmith, lay at anchor on the west side of Saltholm; between Drogden and Saltholm.

The following relative order was therefore issued by the Fleet High Command to the Defense Squadron:

*"If it is a German submarine and other German vessels will assist, protest must be made, but no other means used for the time being.*

*If it is an English submarine, German vessels must be prevented from seizing it or attacking it.*

*First protest is used, then if this is not respected, **available means are used**".*

This order was later confirmed by the Chief of the Fleet High Command, Vice Admiral O. Kofoed Hansen around 8 o'clock on the morning of 19 August 1915.

## First Danish torpedo boat arrives at the site

The commander of the Defense Squadron, Rear Admiral Evers, immediately ordered one of his torpedo boats, the Narwhal, to investigate the submarine's identity and enforce Danish neutrality.



*The torpedo boat Narwhalen (Photo Orlogsmuseet)*

At 5 o'clock in the morning, the torpedo boat Narwhale under the command of First Lieutenant JA Thiele, first Danish ship on the scene and was finally able to identify the grounded submarine as an English submarine, of the E class.

The Danish torpedo boat went along the side of the stranded submarine and informed the commander of E.13, Lieutenant-Captain Geoffrey Layton, that according to the neutrality regulations, he had 24 hours to leave Danish territorial waters.

At the same time, he was informed that he could not be given any assistance to restore the ship to good condition, nor would it be allowed for E.13 to receive help from outside.

If the English submarine was still within Danish territory at the end of the 24-hour period, both ship and crew would be interned. Captain Layton simultaneously requested that one of his officers be transported to the Danish guard ship to inform them of the situation.

This wish, announced Premier Lieutenant Thiele, could be granted as soon as more Danish ships were on the scene.

### **More Danish ships to the area**

In order to support the Defense Squadron, which primarily consisted of older ships, the Ministry of the Navy ordered that the 1st Squadron, which was anchored off Skovshoved, should immediately move to the area around the grounded submarine.

1. Squadron, under the command of Commander TV Garde, consisted of, among other things, of the armored ship Peder Skram, under the command of Commander CV Carstensen, and the smaller cruiser Gejser, under the command of Captain TA Topsøe-Jensen.

The squadron also included the 1st Torpedo Boat Flotilla, commanded by Captain Eduard Haack.

Two of the torpedo boats, Sølven, led by the flotilla commander, and Tumleren, under the command of Captain Godfred Hansen, were immediately ordered to the grounding site and were placed at the disposal of the Chief of the Defense Squadron.



*1st squadron's flagship, Peder Skram (Photo Orlogsmuseet)*

The Defense Squadron's torpedo boat Støren, under the command of First Lieutenant Erik Garde, was also ordered to the area to replace the Narwhal. The three torpedo boats were in the area around the grounded submarine around 8.45am.



## But the Germans also watched

Immediately after the arrival of the other 3 torpedo boats, the torpedo boat Narhvalen ran up to the side of the grounded English submarine and, at the request of the English commander, led one of his officers, second-in-command First Lieutenant Paul Eddis over to the Danish guard ship Falster, which was lying right on its other side of Saltholm.

The German ships that were in the northern part of Køge Bay, and immediately outside Danish territorial waters, probably also observed E.13's mischief



*The German torpedo boat G132 (Photo Orlogsmuseet)*

The torpedo boat Støren reported that already early in the morning a German torpedo boat had passed close by the beached submarine. The torpedo boat did nothing, just as the guns were not manned either. It probably just wanted to find out about the situation.

On the way south, it carried out a lively radio communication, presumably relaying its observations and requesting further instructions.

Apparently everything breathed peace and no danger.

## Hell breaks loose

At 9.28, the commander of the Sølven, Captain Haack, reported that two German torpedo boats were approaching at high speed from the south. The German torpedo boats G132, under the command of Leutnant zur See, Count von Montgelas, and G134 rapidly approached E.13 from the south.

No doubt, an attack on the English submarine E.13 was immediately imminent. From the mast of the German torpedo boat flew the "Abandon Ship" signal flags.

Immediately after coming into range, G132 fired a torpedo at submarine E.13. However, the torpedo did not hit E.13, but took the bottom and exploded close to the submarine.

Torpedo boat G132 continued to shell the submarine with her machine guns and pretty soon the defenseless submarine was set on fire. At the same time, poisonous gas flowed out from the submarine's batteries and the commander, Lieutenant-Captain Geoffrey Layton, therefore ordered his men to abandon the ship. - There was nothing the crew could do. The entire attack lasted less than 3 minutes.



*However, the torpedo did not hit E.13, but exploded when it hit the bottom*

*(Photo Orlogsmuseet)*

## The Danes were incredibly passive

The 3 Danish torpedo boats, which were right next to the English submarine, apparently behaved completely passively and did not interfere in the battle itself.

1st squadron, with i.a. the armored ship Peder Skram and the cruiser Gejser, at the time when the attack was launched, had reached a position approx. 5 nautical miles from the site. At 10.35 the squadron observed a powerful explosion from the area around the stranding.

The guns on the Danish ships were manned, but remained silent. This despite the fact that early in the morning the navy's chief of staff had given direct orders to protect the grounded English submarine, if necessary by force of arms.

## The Danes are waking up

Immediately after the English commander had ordered the crew off board and several English sailors had tried to swim to the solid ground a few hundred meters further towards Saltholm, the Danish torpedo boats intervened.



*The torpedo boat Søulven  
(Photo Orlogsmuseet)*

The torpedo boat Søulven, which was at anchor close to the English submarine, immediately put full steam under the boilers and at the same time cut the anchor chain and thus let the anchor go overboard. At the same time, Søulven put one of its lifeboats into the water to help the survivors from E.13.

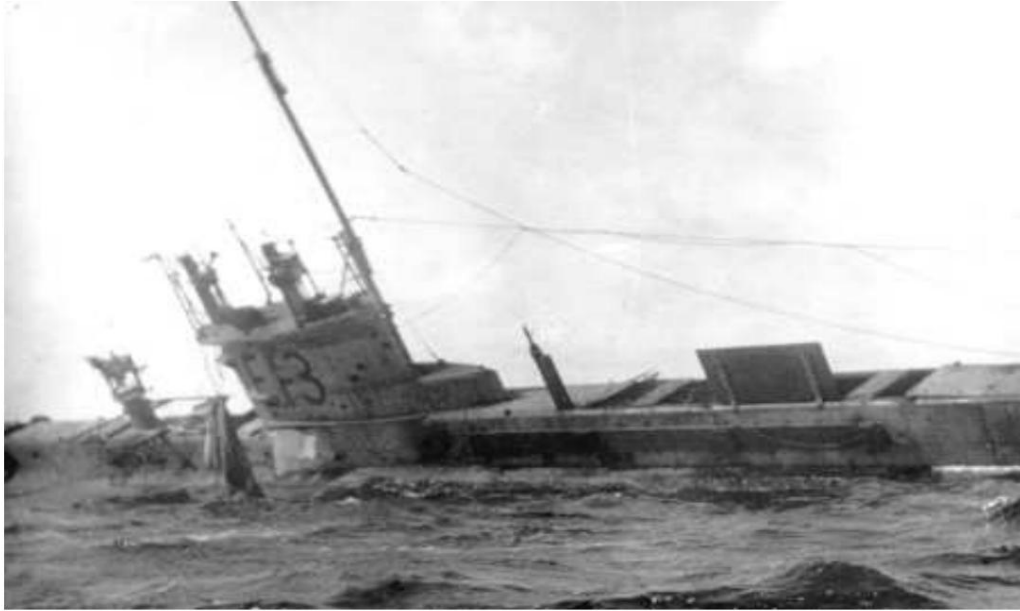
At full speed, the Sea Wolf sailed forward towards the German torpedo boats to protest against this violation of Danish neutrality.

At the same time, the torpedo boat Støren ran between the English submarine and the attacking German torpedo boat and helped to pick up the surviving English sailors from the water.

When the Danish torpedo boats got in between, the German Torpedo boats G132 and G134 immediately broke off the attack, and started moving south again at full power. The result is 15 dead English submariners. The surviving English submariners, including the commander, Captain Lieutenant Layton, are later brought to Holmen on board the torpedo boat Støren.

On the same day, the fleet rescued 14 dead English submariners, all of whom had drowned. The 15th and last of the dead is not rescued until a few days later. The dead were brought in to Holmen.

The English Ensign flew from the submarine's short mast throughout the attack and also after it.



*The abandoned English submarine E. 13 after the attack (Photo Orlogsmuseet)*

## **The war is over**

The 14 surviving English submariners now had to realize that for them the war was over. They were interned in Denmark and could only expect to be released when the First World War was over. For most of them, that's what happened too.

But the commander, Lieutenant Captain Layton, and his second-in-command, First Lieutenant Paul Eddis, wanted it differently. They escaped from internment, quite simply.

The 15 coffins with the fallen British submariners were brought back to England after a mourning ceremony on Holmen aboard the DFDS ship S/S Vidar. The dead were accompanied by a Danish officer, Commander Rørd Hammer; and three Danish torpedo boats escorted the ship to Hull.

The wreck of E.13 was later salvaged by the Danes and taken to Holmen.

After the war, the submarine, by agreement with the English, was sold for scrapping

## **Lusitania's trackman runs aground on the West Coast**

One of the more peaceful violations of neutrality occurred in November 1916, when a German submarine ran aground due to engine damage off Vrist just south of Harbøøre on the west coast of Jutland.

A Danish warship was ordered to the site to guard the submarine and enforce Danish neutrality.

However, it turned out to be an easy task. When the German submarine commander learned that they could not bring the submarine safely, they chose to blow up the ship.

Later it turned out that the beached and now blown-up German submarine was the submarine, U 20, which in May 1915 had sunk the English passenger ship Lusitiana. A lowering that was later strongly instrumental in bringing the United States into the war.

### **The relationship order is being tightened**

In 22 cases, Danish warships had to guard belligerent warships or merchant ships within Danish territorial waters or in Danish ports.



*The torpedo boat Søulven was involved in the E.13 affair, which included helped to tighten the ratio order for the fleet's ships.*

From the start of the world war, the guarding of these ships had been carried out on the basis of the precautionary order issued by the High Command of the Fleet on 19 August 1814, exactly one year before the episode with the English submarine E.13.

The directive for the guarding of the ships was primarily drawn up to ensure that the neutrality provisions were respected, but after the E.13 episode, the precautionary order was tightened to avoid similar repetitions.

When the German cargo ship Prinz Friderich Wilhelm thus ran aground on 16 December 1916 on its way north of Zealand and Funen in very bad weather, the order for the two guarding Danish torpedo boats was quite different:

*"Preliminary ammunition up and the torpedoes ready to fire. If an attack takes place during the day, it will probably be by submarine. A periscope is seen, a protest flag is raised and immediately afterwards fired".*

### **The battle at Bjerregaard**

On 1 September 1917, 4 armed German trawlers were fired upon within Danish territorial waters and driven by British destroyers off Bjerregaard on the west coast of Jutland.

There were no Danish warships nearby, but ships were immediately directed to the area for a temporary guarding of the wrecks of the German vessels.

The German crews that came ashore were immediately interned by the Danish authorities.

During the British shelling, several shells fell ashore and caused a lot of damage. Later, the British government expressed its regret for the episode.



## Igotz Mendi's stranding at Skagen

The Spanish freighter Igotz Mendi had been brought up by the German auxiliary cruiser Wolff in the Indian Ocean, and was under the German flag and with German prize crew on board on its way to Kiel when it ran aground off Skagen on 24 February 1918.

On board the cargo ship was still the Spanish crew, just as there were also a number of prisoners of war of various nationalities taken by the Germans.

Danish warships, including the inspection ship Diana and the cruiser Hejmdal, were immediately ordered to the scene to prevent attack, visitation or arrest by a foreign power.



*The cruiser Hejmdal, seen here leaving the Port of Copenhagen, had to fire a warning shot when a German submarine tried for the second time to approach the grounded Spanish cargo ship Igotz Mendi. (Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

A passing German submarine attempted on the 26th to contact the German prize crew on board the Spanish ship. The Danish ships allowed signaling between the ships, but prevented radio telegraphy.

At noon the same day, the Spanish crew were brought ashore in the lifeboat.

During the afternoon, the Danish government decided, as the period of stay had been exceeded, that the German crew should be brought ashore and interned. The ship was to be returned to its original Spanish crew and the prisoners of war were to be released.

Due to a storm in the area, it was not immediately possible to inform the German captain of this decision.

The following day the weather worsened further, and the German naval crew had to be brought ashore in the lifeboat after giving a distress signal.

Later that morning, a German submarine tried to approach the grounding site again, but was repelled by warning shots from the Danish cruiser Hejmdal.

A Danish guard from the navy stayed on the ship until 29 February, after which the police took over the guarding.

Subsequently, the Igotz Mendi was picked up by Svitzer, brought into port and handed over to her Spanish crew.

## The sinking of the submarine Dykkeren:

On 9 October 1916, the submarine Dykkeren, under the command of First Lieutenant Svend Aage Christiansen, left Holmen. Just outside the port of Copenhagen, the course was set to the north, towards Tårnbæk. The submarine and its 9-man crew had quite unconsciously begun the boat's last fateful journey.



*The submarine Dykkeren docked at Orlogsverftet. (Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

## The Navy's first submarine

The submarine Dykkeren was the Navy's first submarine. It had been built for the Danish navy at the Fiat San Giorgio shipyard in La Spezia in Italy in 1908/09, and after being towed from Italy to Denmark, entered the Danish fleet on 29 September 1909.

In contrast to the fleet's later submarines, which were also equipped with diesel engines, Dykkeren was only equipped with electric motors, which meant that its range was severely limited, especially since the batteries could only be charged at Holmen from the start.

In 1916, the submarine was therefore primarily used as a training submarine, with very limited wartime tasks, as its primary role was to train new submariners.

## Routine diving

At 1:30 p.m., the submarine reached the training site off Tårnbæk Reef just north of Copenhagen, and preparations were made for the routine diving. From the accompanying vessel, the torpedo transport vessel Sleipner, you could follow the preparations.

In those days, for safety reasons, the submarines were always accompanied by a surface ship during practice dives.

On board Dykkeren, the hatches were ordered closed, and soon after the waves of the Øresund washed over the submarine as it began its dive.

After a short time there was nothing to reveal the submerged submarine, except for the hoisted regulation signals on board the escort ship.



*The submarine Dykkeren at sea (Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

## Collision course

The submarine had only been submerged for a very short time when a large steamer was observed from the bridge on Sleipner heading straight for the place where the submarine had sunk.



*Escort frigate the torpedo transport vessel Sleipner  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

The escort vessel used its steam whistle to alert the foreign ship, which later turned out to be the Norwegian steamer S/S Vesla af Bergen, but apparently the steamer continued its voyage.

Sleipner now began to emit short blasts with his steam whistle, which is the international distress signal at sea. Vesla, now realizing that it was headed for danger, immediately turned back on the machines - but too late.

Soon after, the bow of the steamer was lifted slightly out of the water when it apparently hit something underwater!

## The submarine The diver sinks

Inside the submarine it sounded as if a stack of iron plates were falling when the Norwegian steamer hit the submarine. The submarine capsized violently during the collision and the water quickly began to enter the stern.

The diver had been hit just aft of the aft descent hatch and a major leak was struck at the hatch frame. The water gushed into the stern and engine room through the damaged hatch aft.

Immediate action had to be taken by the trapped crew to save life!

The chief, First Lieutenant S. Aa. Christiansen, acted as a professional submariner. He immediately gave the order to blow out the main tanks and at the same time tried to release the submarine's keel.

The purpose was clearly to get the Diver back to the surface.

But the disaster could not be averted and in a cascade of air bubbles the submarine came to rest at approx. 10 meters of water and with a weak hitting side.

It was now a little past 2 in the afternoon.

## Instant alert and quick response

Sleipner raised the alarm immediately by sailing over to the unanchored station ship at Tårnbæk Reef, the gunboat Guldborgsund, which could relay the alarm to the fleet's high command.

By pure chance, there was a diver on board in Guldborgsund. - And not a completely random diver.

The diver was the captain at the time, Baron Niels Juel-Brockdorff, who was himself an experienced submariner and had previously been the leader of the Diver.



*Captain, Baron Niels Juel  
Brockdorff  
(Photo Orlogsmuseet archive)*

Juel-Brockdorff was currently in command of the fleet's newest submarine Triton, which was just in those days for inspection at the Orlogsværftet.

He had therefore chosen this particular day to visit Guldborgsund's commander, Captain Hermann Ewald, who was also married to his wife's sister.

### 3 men come up to the surface

When Sleipner came to the side of the gunboat, Juel-Brockdorff went on board, so that if possible he could help with the rescue work. He was immediately put on the diving suit in the accompanying vessel as they sailed towards the buoy which marked the spot where the Diver had disappeared.

On the way there, it was suddenly observed that 3 men appeared on the surface, led by submariner Janus Sørensen. They had managed to sneak out through the command tower. The 3 men were quickly picked up by a boat that Vesla had put in the water.

They could report that the commander of the Diver, First Lieutenant Svend Aage Christiansen, was still in the command tower.

It was now half past three.



*Here are seen crew members from the submarine Bellona wearing the important vests around 1920.  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

### 6 life jackets for 9 men

The submarine was equipped with a total of 12 oxygen breathing apparatuses with built-in life jackets. 2 of these had been destroyed, while 4 were located in the water-filled compartment.

Now there were only 6 devices with corresponding life jackets for the 9 men in the submarine.

On board the submarine it was therefore decided that the 3 who had no oxygen breathing apparatus should immediately try to escape through the command tower.

The boss, who was equipped with an oxygen breathing apparatus, had to assist them in the exit. The plan was for all 9 of them to try to sneak out through the command tower, with the boss as the last man standing.

### First diver down by the submarine



*The head of the diver, first lieutenant S. Aa Christiansen, died at*

*the accident*

*(Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

From Sleipner it was now decided to send the diver, Niels Juel Brockdorff, down to try to make contact with the boss in the command tower.

Juel-Brockdorff himself says about the experiment:

*"I also landed well enough on the deck, but as the boat was lying quite a bit on its side, I had to carefully crawl to the deck and was unlucky enough to slip, so before I could really get hold of it, I dumped on the bottom. -"*



He continues: *"With the three tugs on the lifeline, I was signaled that I should be hauled up; a new attempt also failed as the current took me, so I had to give up"*.

The accident happened at 1 p.m., and since most of an hour must have passed before I could get down, it seems doubtful whether the boss had been alive at the time."

### **Chlorine gas and water inside the submarine**

It soon became impossible for the 5 crew members to stay afloat. Not least when the intruding salt water began to develop chlorine gas from the accumulators.

The crew therefore sought refuge forward in the torpedo room. Through the porthole to the command room they could see how the water continued to rise.

The men's thorough training, discipline and personal courage were now put to a severe test.

Many hours would still pass in uncertainty before they could breathe freely at the surface again.

### **The recovery vessel arrives**

The navy had long ago foreseen that something like this could unfortunately happen, and therefore had a contract with Svitzer for salvage assistance in the event of a submarine accident.

Barely three hours after the accident, Svitzer's recovery vessel Kattegat was able to anchor in position and the recovery could begin.

The first thing that was done was to send a diver down with an air hose so that fresh air could be pumped down to the trapped people. Next, steel wires had to be attached to the hoist fittings which were mounted in the bow of the Diver.

### **Contact the detainees**

While Svitzer's experienced divers thus began the recovery of the sunken submarine, Juel Brockdorff was again sent down to try to make contact with the rest of the crew.



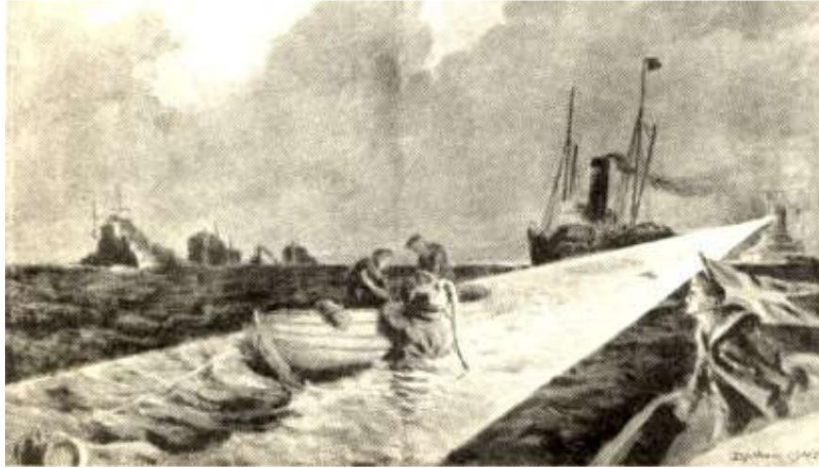
With a hammer in his hand, he tried to signal in Morse code to the detainees. He himself says:

*"I stood on the bottom, and the signaling took place like during a school lesson. - Machinist Andersen and I fortunately knew the alphabet by heart, and his answer came so clearly from the small room in there behind the steel plates that this also calmed both him and me". -*

It was an experience to be able to climb the ladder again, get the window opened and report to the commander of the flagship, Olfert Fischer, *"that the five men were in good spirits. -"*

*Heavy diver in a suit of approximately the same appearance as the one used by Juel-Brockdorff in 1916. The suit weighed approx. 70 kilos.  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

Several times during the course of the evening, Juel-Brockdorff was sent down to the submarine to keep in touch with the prisoners and at the same time tell them how the work was progressing.



*The salvage operation is in full swing (Simultaneous drawing - Orlogsmuseet's archive)*

## **5 men are rescued alive**

When the steel cables were attached, Kattogat began to raise the submarine very slowly, while fresh air continued to be pumped into the boat.

Finally, at 11 p.m., the front end of the submarine broke the surface of the Øresund again, but not so high that the front hatch could be opened. Bags of sawdust were therefore placed around the hatch before it was opened.

After being trapped for almost 9 hours in the gas-filled submarine Dykkeren at the bottom of Øresund, they managed to rescue the last 5 men from the crashed submarine back to the surface.

After a mouthful of fresh air, they were soon brought on board, where scalded coffee and a brandy awaited.

## **The boss died**

A boat sailed to the submarine's conning tower, which also rose above the water. From here, the body of First Lieutenant Christiansen was recovered, who had died during the ejection of the first three crew members, and was therefore unable to assist the others in the ejection attempt.

He stayed at his post and gave his life for his crew.

A torpedo boat with the naval flag at half-mast sailed the body of the commander and the survivors back to the station at the Orlogsværftet.



*The diver's crew photographed before the First World War.  
On the far right is then Lieutenant Rechnitzer (Photo from the  
Orlogsmuseet's archive)*

## The diver's final

Due to the lake, as well as the bad weather and the timing, it was decided to lower the Diver to the bottom again, now that the crew had been rescued.

A few days later, they managed to recover the submarine and bring it into Holmen. But it turned out that it was not possible to repair the boat, after which it was scrapped.



*The diver's stern deck photographed on Holmen after the collision.  
The empty hatch frame is clearly visible, while the logic ship Hekla and the British submarine E.13 are seen in the background  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet's archive)*

## Captain Juel-Brockdorff is honored

The diver's former commander, Captain Niels Juel-Brockdorff, who was the first to dive down to the sunken submarine and through most of the salvage operation kept in touch with the trapped submariners, was praised for his efforts.

Three days after the accident, Juel-Brockdorff received a written acknowledgment from the Chief of Naval High Command, Vice Admiral OJ Kofoed-Hansen:

*Sir. Captain N. Juel-Brockdorff, Commander of the Submarine Triton:*

*After the completion of the rescue of the crew from the crashed submarine, the diver finds occasion to face Mr. The captain to express his recognition of your excellent assistance in this work, which is considered to have contributed significantly to the achieved result.*

*signature O. Kofoed-Hansen*

Already on 18 October, Captain Niels Juel-Brockdorff was also appointed a Knight of the Order of the Dane, as a further official recognition of his efforts.

## The rescue reverberated around the world



*After the accident, several of the navy's larger ships were equipped with a crane aft for lifting submarines.*

*Here you can see the Coast Guard ship Peder Skram with the crane mounted aft  
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet's archive)*

The discharge, which was carried out from the submarine Dykkeren, was the first of its kind to be carried out in the world.

The affair therefore caused a stir international attention in maritime circles, and the sinking of the submarine Dykkeren's was subsequently mentioned in many maritime journals.

Immediately after Dykkeren's collision, a number of conditions were changed in the Danish submarines to avoid a similar situation, just as the fleet's larger ships were equipped with a heavy crane on the stern deck, in order to be able to assist in future situations if possible.

Fortunately, these cranes never came into use for this purpose.

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With a relatively strong naval force consisting of armored ships, submarines and torpedo boats, supported by laid mines, Denmark had succeeded in asserting its neutrality and getting through without being involved in the war.