

# Army Aviation Troops - In the Field, Part 2

## Introduction

As a supplement to the Army's Air Force - In the field, Part 1, here follows an account of the field airfields that the Army's Air Force had designated for use during a mobilization.

## The field airfields on Zealand

As a result of the regular foreign policy crises, in January 1939 the Army's Flying Troops requested permission to establish field airfields. In the event of war, the planes had to be relocated here, as the fixed airfields (Kastrup and the new airfield in Værløse etc.) were all well known to a possible attacker.



On 29 August 1939, the General Command submits an inventory of locations that could be used as airfields if certain works were carried out (planning, etc.).

In Zealand there were four locations, the location of which is indicated on the map:

- a** Kærup (per Ringsted)
- b** Prøvegård (north of Farrendløse)
- c** Tybjerg Gård (west of Haslev)
- d** Assendrup (west of Haslev)

Four locations were also designated for the Jutland Aviation Division - in Jutland - one of which was the airfield at Salten Langsø, near Rye by Silkeborg.

The field airfields play - albeit indirectly - a role in connection with the German attack on Værløse

Airfield on 9 April 1940, as the machines were just ready to depart for the field airfields at the start of the attack.

## No deployment to the field airfields

During a meeting of the General Command on 8 April 1940, the commander of the Army's Flying Troops, Colonel C. Førslev, requests permission to divert the planes from Værløse to the reconnoitered airfields on Zealand. The experience of the German attack on Poland in September 1939 was that the Polish flying troops had been surprised at their peacetime airfields, which were known to the enemy, and the colonel did not want a repeat of this.

However, the colonel's request was rejected, as the Government had ordered the General Command not to carry out troop movements. The planes thus had to remain at Værløse, but were made ready during the night with weapons, ammunition and bombs for all eventualities.

On the same day, Lieutenant AC Petersen - by car - is sent out to inspect the field airfields. He leaves at 2.30 pm and is back in Værløse at 6.15 pm, where he can report that "*all the airfields were in good usable condition*" [1](#)). —

As is well known, the diversion came to nothing, and the majority of the Army Air Force's machines were thus destroyed by the German attack.

General Prior, who was head of the General Command, on 9 April 1940, at 05.25, commanded Colonel C. Førslev to deploy the squadrons to the mobilization airfields. At the same time, the general states that Kastellet is occupied and that he will try to organize a defense of Zealand. The colonel informs the general that on his own - some time before - he has already given the order to prepare the layout, and that the machines are just being made ready for take off.

Thus it was that the machines were ready with spinning propellers when the German attack began. The attack started immediately after the colonel had finished his telephone conversation, and lasted until approx. 06.30.

When the attack has ceased, the squadrons (between 06.30 and 06.45) were ordered to go to the field airfields, with the remaining airworthy material. However, none of the machines got into the air, as during the preparation an order is first received that no aircraft may leave Værløse (06.45), and immediately after (07.00) that no further resistance may be made.

From the squadrons' fencing reports, reproduced in Source 2, the following planned deployment appears:

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 2. Squadron (Jewish Aviation Division's fighter squadron)            | Tybjerg Gård                  |
| 3. Eskadrille (Reconnaissance squadron of Zealand Aviation Division) | Assendrup <a href="#">2</a> ) |
| 5th Squadron (Jewish Aviation Division's reconnaissance squadron)    | Tybjerg Gård                  |

## The R-52's reconnaissance flight

However, one machine came to use one of the field airfields, namely R-52, which took off from Værløse on 9 April 1940, at 04.45. The machine was driven by Second Lieutenant H. Pontoppidan Sørensen (5th Squadron) and had as observer Lieutenant PE Paulsen (from 3rd Squadron).



A pre-war photo of the R-49 shot down on 9 April 1940 and the R-52.  
*From Source 2*

The task was to conduct a reconnaissance along the border.

The plane had been prepared during the night, but one thing had been overlooked - there was no power on the generator for the radio!

The machine was thus unable, en route, to report its observations.

R-52 returned to Værløse immediately after the attack and was immediately ordered to Tybjerg Gård (according to the 5th Squadron's fencing report). Lieutenant Paulsen mentions in Source 3 that they were ordered to "... fly to Ringsted and land nearby..." and later that they landed "... at a farm that we knew..." - so exactly which locality is in question is not entirely clear.

Immediately after the landing, 10-12 machines are observed - at a distance of 1,000 m and at a height of 100 m - which could look like the 3rd Squadron and based on the idea that it is better to join forces, the R-52 immediately takes off again. However, they cannot catch up with the machines, which also later turned out to be German! On cue, the crew agrees to return to the landing pad.

Here the R-52 is hidden at the edge of the forest and Lieutenant Paulsen sets off on foot to the nearest telephone exchange, while Second Lieutenant Sørensen guards the machine. Lieutenant Paulsen gets through to Værløse after a few hours of waiting, and can now hand in his somewhat "intoxicated" observations. At 05.10 you had seen approx. 10 machines flying east. North of the border - at Kruså - a motorcade had been seen at 05.40. Several large ships had been seen in Flensburg Harbour, and over Funen at a height of 500-600 m 3 formations of 4 machines (bombers) had been seen heading north.

The stopover in Værløse around 06.30 had been so rushed that they had not had the opportunity to deliver the messages. However, both of them had formed a hasty impression of the situation and believed, when they did not see bomb craters on the runways, that the pilots themselves had set the machines on fire.

On a borrowed bicycle, Lieutenant Paulsen now returns to the machine and conveys the message from Værløse: "*Stay where you are and await further orders*".

After a hasty council of war, the two now decide that, if everything breaks down, to set fire to the machine and then search away from the area. The friendly owner of the field later shows up and offers a night's lodging and meals, raising the mood a few notches. A later call from Værløse brings further clarity about the state of things, as well as the message that the craftsmen will arrive the next day to dismantle the machine and transport it and the crew to Værløse.

Well-preserved back at Værløse Airfield on April 10, 1940, where everything is falling apart, all that remains is

pack the personal belongings and connect with the families to reassure them.

On 11 April 1940 at 07.00, Værløse Airfield was cleared for Danish forces.

### About remote sensing of German (and Danish) aircraft



German reconnaissance aircraft of the type Hs 126.

The confusion may seem strange at first, but it must be remembered that not all German aircraft were - by the conditions of the time - modern-looking monoplanes. They must also be reminded that the Danish planes since December 1939 were camouflage painted.

For example, the Germans used reconnaissance aircraft of the type *Henschel Hs 126*, which was a high-wing monoplane, and *Henschel Hs 123*, which was a biplane. However, I am not aware whether machines of the latter type took part in the attack on Denmark 3).

Almost regardless of the type, it has certainly been easy to confuse the German planes with Danish biplanes.

Incidentally, aircraft of this type were the first to land at Værløse Airport.

## Concluding remarks

Colonel (then lieutenant colonel and head of Zealand Aviation Division) TPA Ørum stated in November 1998: "*Værløse Flyveplads was not in order, and the planned 6 mobilization airfields, which included the farmers' fields, were either cultivated by the farmers or not functional, as there was no plan on facilities for the ground personnel.*" The colonel was 97 years old at this time - born 12 July 1901 and died 31 January 1999.

Whether it is to be attributed to a shift in memory or other factors, the number of mobilization airfields does not match the figures given in other sources. Apart from this, the colonel's judgment appears to be correct. Deployment to the field airfields was apparently also not rehearsed in a larger style and it does not seem as if the deployment of the ground personnel was ordered in the same way as for the intended spread of the aircraft.

On the one hand, it can be stated that it would of course be preferable to have the aircraft moved from Værløse, so that they could not be destroyed by a combined attack, and the ground personnel could then always follow.

On the other hand, the combat power of the squadrons would be next to nothing without their logistical backup. If the deployment time of the ground personnel is taken into account, as stated in the Army's Flying Troops - In the Field, Part 1, it would thus be some time before the squadrons could operate from the field airfields.

Lieutenant-Colonel TAP Ørum first took command of the Zealand Flying Division as late as Saturday 6 April 1940 and he used the weekend to familiarize himself with the special mobilization regulations, including the location of the secret mobilization airfields.

It was the colonel's impression that no one had been interested in these field airfields for years, which is why he initiated the previously mentioned inspection, which was carried out by Lieutenant AC Petersen. It is therefore obvious to conclude that none of the preliminary work that was necessary in terms of clearing, filling, planning, blurring etc. was completed in advance.

Whatever intentions the colonel may have had to make amends for past damage, it was in any case too late. You had to - also in this area - lie as you (= the country's politicians and the top management of the defense) had been right.

## Sources

1. *The planning of the Zealand land defenses 1922-1940* by Ole Isgaard Olsen, Published by the Defense Command, 1985.
2. *The attack on Værløse Airfield on 9 April 1940* by Hans A. Schrøder, 2nd edition with additions, Air Force Library 2002, ISBN 87-988691-2-4.
3. *April 9 - Portrayed in letters from Danish soldiers* collected and published by Arne Stevns, Steen Hasselbalchs Publisher, 1940.
4. *Colonel TPA Ørum is dead - 97 years old*, FlyNyt Nr. 2/1999.

Per Finsted



Parade at Værløse Airport.

*From Source 1, which also states that the line-up on 9 April 1940 must have roughly looked like this.*

*One understands the desire to send the squadrons out to their field airfields!*

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**Notes:**

1) Now the content of the command to Lieutenant Petersen is not apparent from the source text (Source 3), but the given time period seems to me to be very short and hardly allowed for a particularly thorough inspection. A large part of the time could almost be spent on pure transport time. There can hardly have been time for anything other than to ascertain that the staked out fields still existed.

2) It does not appear to which 1st Squadron (Sjællandske Flyverafdeling's fighter squadron) was planned to be deployed, but only that it was ordered to the "mobilization site". If the pattern from the Jydske Flyverafdeling can be transferred, i.e. the department gathered at one field airfield, then 1st Squadron may be intended for Assendrup as destination.

3) In Source 1, however, it is mentioned that at 07.00 over Værløse "a squadron 1-engined biplanes - 11 machines in formation, from west to east. The machines, whose nationality could not be determined, flew north of the camp." (From Officiant ATA Overbye's report to the Commander of the 1st Squadron.)