Sea transport of Army units, 1905-1939

Introduction

The prerequisite for the Army's ability to move troops between the parts of the country was partly the presence and organization of the necessary transport capacity and partly the Navy's ability to ensure these transports during a crisis or war.

The Norwegian Maritime Transport Agency

The organization that handled the organization of the transport capacity was called the Maritime Administration. The head of the Maritime Transport Service, commanding captain of the reserve HAØ. Bistrup describes the organization in *Danmarks Flaade* (Source 1) as follows (1934):

"The Maritime Transport Service is an institution whose task is to prepare the transport of the Army's personnel and materiel, both in peacetime and wartime (mobilization and security service). In peacetime, it is subordinate to the Ministry of the Navy, in the event of a transition to mobilization, it is directly subordinated to the General Command.

Its origin is due to the wars of 1848-50 and 1864, when it became clear how necessary it was to have such an institution organized already in peacetime, but it was not until 1870 that the Maritime Transport Service was organized in its current form. At the outbreak of the World War, the institution passed its test."

Sea transport regulations for the Army

Sea transport regulations for the Army (Source 2) provide the guidelines for sea transport of army personnel, horses and equipment etc. The regulation has been approved by the Ministry of the Marine and thus is a set of common guidelines.

Landing exercise, autumn 1935.

The regulations place the responsibility for purely maritime matters with the officers of the Maritime Transport Service, including a designated transport officer, as well as the transport master, while the land military responsibility falls under a designated transport officer 1) (officer of the lieutenant class), who leads a loading and unloading command.

The soldiers are from the 16th Battalion's 4th Company and are photographed on board the ship *Charkow* 2).

The picture comes from the article The first press service by Sune Vadskjær Nielsen, and was published in FOV Newsletter no. 11, 17th volume, 6 June 2003.

The need for transport

The size of a merchant ship is usually given in gross register tons, which denotes the internal volume of the ship below a certain deck (the measurement deck). This calculation includes the volume of all rooms, incl. engine room, which is why the net register tonnage (the calculation of useful spaces) is more interesting when the ship's cargo capacity has to be determined with a view to cargo of personnel, horses and material. The conversion formula from gross to net register tonnage is averaged as 100 to 60. The information comes from Source 3; in 1969 the unit of measure gross registered tons was replaced by gross tonnage 3).

The tonnage requirement for certain units (from Source 3):

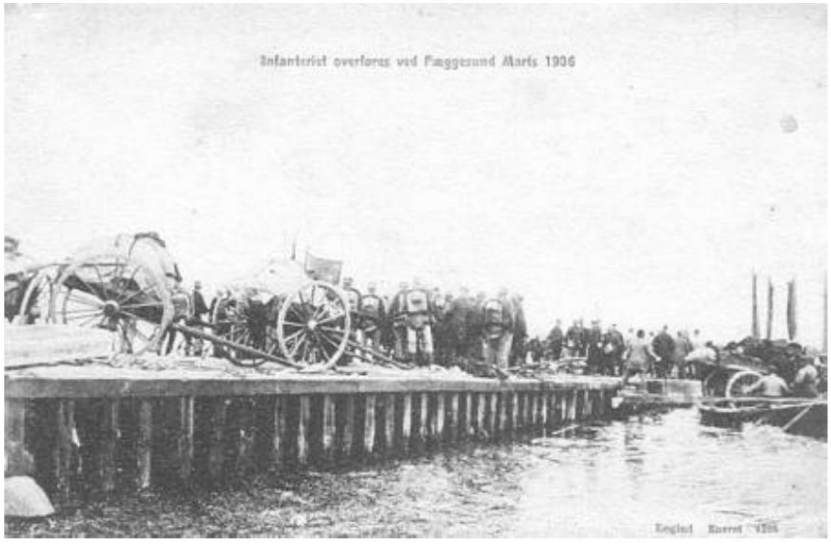
Unit	NRT *)	Unit, continued	NRT *)
Division Command	1,000	Motorized heavy battery	700
Staff of the Infantry Regiment	500	Motorized heavy department	2,800
Infantry Battalion	1,700	Pioneer Battalion	2,000
Recoil works company	300	Pioneer company	500
Machinery company	400	Parking company	800
Protection company	400	Field bridge train	1,300
Squadron	700	Divisional Telegraph Company	1,200
Cyclist squadron	300	Division's radio detachment	400
Horse drawn battery	600	Ambulance	400
Horse drawn department	2,400	The field hospital	200
Motorized lightweight battery	600	Catering company	500
Motorized Light Artillery Division	2,500		

*) NRT = net register tonnage

The previously mentioned ship *Charkow,* whose size is stated to be 1,036 gross register tons, thus had a net register tonnage of 621, which could result in e.g. 2 recoil gear companies (+).

The transport capacity

For sea transport, all available shipping equipment was used - steamships, motor ships, ferries, seagoing barges (barges) and tugboats - and calculations were carried out on the transport capacity of all Danish ships that were suitable for military transport. These calculations were documented so that a transport officer - in a book he brought with him - immediately knew what the individual ship could contain in terms of personnel, horses and material.



The infantry is transferred over Feggesund, March 1906.

The spelling has been changed to modern practice; the image is reproduced from a contemporary postcard.

Feggesund 4) is the part of the Limfjord that lies between Thisted and Løgstør Bredning in the western part of the Limfjord.
Here you can take a small ferry from Mors to Thy or vice versa.

The strait is quite narrow, and the sailing time for the SALLINGSUND ferry is stated to be 5 minutes.

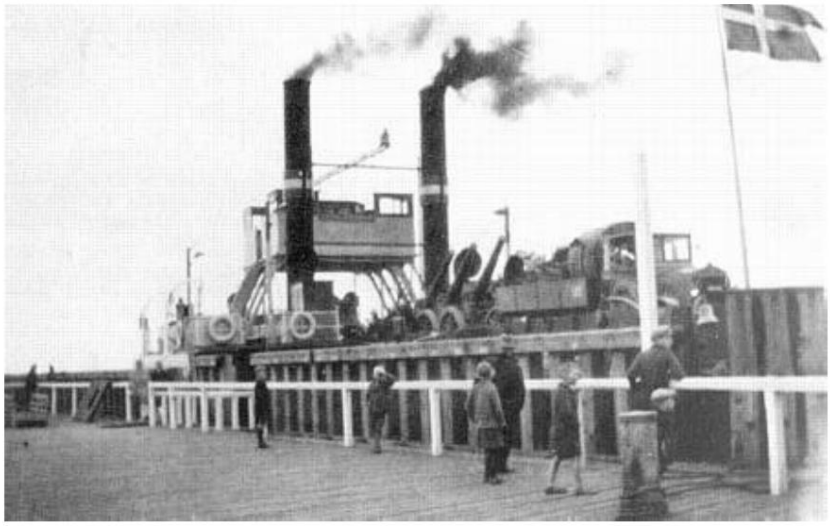
Most of all the transport seems to take place with the help of pontoons (on the right in the picture), so perhaps the picture should rather belong under the mention of Feltbroekvipagen. However, I have chosen to show it here as a counterpart to the following pictures of the artillery.

A command of the 3rd Artillery Division's 1st Battery set out from Nykøbing Mors in April 1917 to be ferried to Glyngøre.

It is not known what function the carts (with the very large wheels) have on the quay/pier. Possibly these are sanitation vehicles. A more precise designation is desirable, should anyone know it.

The ferry is "Lillebælt", Denmark's first railway ferry, built in 1872 in Newcastle. Used i.a. on the Little Belt crossing and later as a reserve ferry on other smaller crossings such as Sallingsund and Masnedsund. Scrapped 1922.

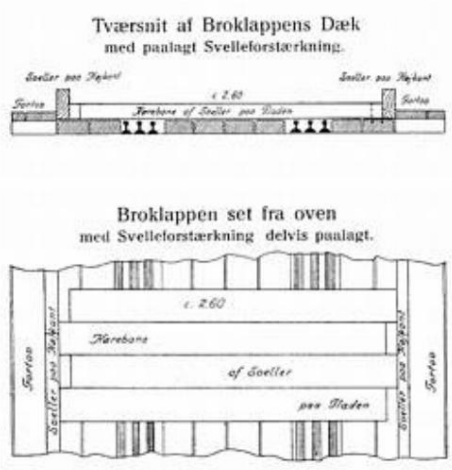
Image and information come from Source 4.



15 cm long iron cannon, Model 1887, during ferry transport, 1927.

The image, which originates from Source 4, shows parts of the 7th Artillery Division on board the ferry at the Oddesund crossing on 28 September 1927.

On the bed of the Triangel cannon tractor you can see, among other things, the wide iron rings, which were mounted on the outside of the cannon wheels, whereby the cannon could be brought into position in the terrain, without the rather narrow wheels cutting into the ground [5).]



Forstærkning af Storebæltsoverfartens sporbærende Broklapper ved Overførsel af tungt motoriseret Skyts eller tunge Lastmotorvogne.

Arbejdet udføres fra Broklappens yderste Ende. Svellerne paa Højkant anbringes *først*, idet de stilles tæt op mod Fortovets Kant. Derefter lægges Kørebanens Sveller, idet disse skiftevis stødes imod (og derved støtter) Svellerne paa Højkant i højre og venstre Side. Overgang imellem Svelledæk og Færge, henholdsvis Land, udjævnes mest muligt ved Anbringelse af Planker ell. a. (Der maa ikke graves i Ballasten).
Behov af Sveller: 115-120 Stk. af ikke over 2,7 m's Længde.
Arbejdsmængde: Forstærkningen kan, naar Svellerne er oplagt umiddelbart ved Broklappen, paalægges, h.hv. aflages af c. 20 Mand paa 10—15 Minutter.
NB. Broklappen maa ikke løftes med Svellerne paalagt, da Hejseværket derved kan sprænges. Kørsel over Broklappen skal saavidt muligt ske *midt ad* Kørebanen.

From Source 2.

15 cm howitzer battery on board large belt ferry, approx. 1935.

The pamphlets are 15 cm field howitzers M.1929.

The image comes from Source 6, where it has the following subtitle: *"The heavy and long-range batteries held their most important firing exercises at Oksbøl in Jutland. The drive there was for the Zealand batteries an excellent and welcome exercise."*

Disembarkation on an open beach

Landing on an open beach is mentioned in the *Sea Transport Regulations* (Source 2) only as an eventuality, for use in an emergency, so any actual wartime landing has hardly been foreseen.

The *Huskebogen* (Source 3) mentions the following guideline: *"When embarking on an open coast, when everything is very carefully prepared and the weather conditions are favorable, you can count on the landing of a division's infantry and cyclist formations as well as a single light artillery division - all with associated for combat strictly necessary vehicles - in 12-15 hours."* This rule of thumb was probably intended rather for the assessment of a potential enemy's options than for one's own circumstances.

Landing exercise, 1930.

From Source 6, where the subtitle reads: "The vanguard of the first wave lands. In the background, the troop transport ship can be seen. Everything - including the boats - is improvised landing equipment. On the right in the picture, civilian press people. Carrying out and preventing landing attempts is of particular importance for a country with Denmark's geographical peculiarities ."

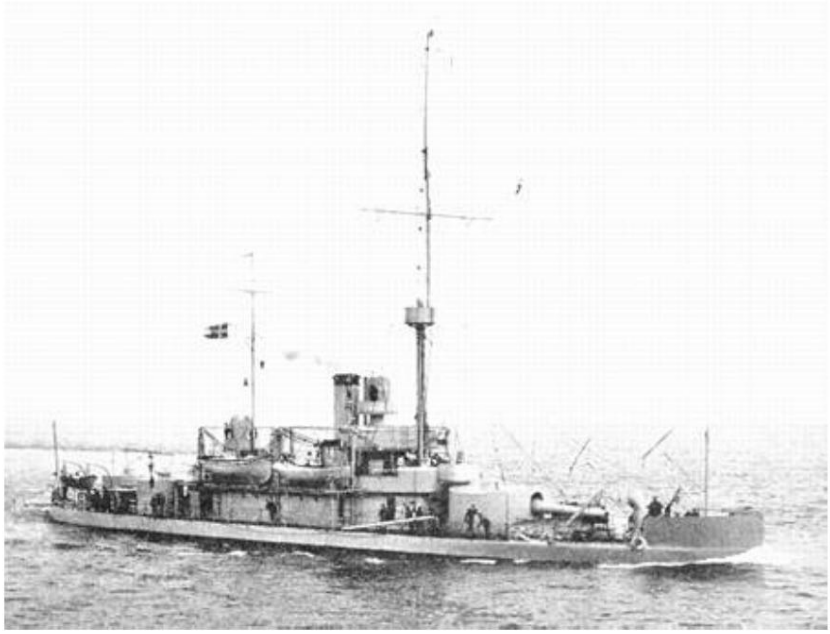
The dating comes from a reproduction in *Se lig ud! Conscription for debate* by Hans Chr. Bjerg, Uffe Østergaard and Hans Engell, Folk & Forsvar, Copenhagen 1999, ISBN87-987619-00.

The soldiers wear white helmet ties and are thus enemy forces on the exercise in question, the details of which are unfortunately not known.

The fleet's transport boats

Although the most important transports were foreseen to be carried out with civilian tonnage, from the 1860s the Navy had a small number of transport boats (later minesweepers/miners) which could be used as "landing vessels". The *Artillery in Århus* (Source 4) mentions annual exercises in loading and unloading at the 3rd Artillery Department, including an exercise in the framework of the 1st Jutland Brigade at Århus in 1905 and a landing exercise on Samsø on 15 August 1906, which is described with a source in .a. Århus Diftistidende and Illustrated Family Journal:

"On August 15, 1906, at 3:00 a.m., the 3rd Artillery Division was alerted and a force of four guns and six ammunition wagons was raised, which, together with a detachment of dragoons and two battle-hardened companies of the 20th Battalion, were loaded into the Navy transports, which was in the harbor (= Aarhus harbour). At 06:00 the transport fleet, the cruiser HEJMDAL, the armored battery SKJOLD and three torpedo boats took off for Samsø, which was reached at 09:00. The armored ships OLFERT FISCHER and HERLUF TROLLE and a torpedo boat were assumed to be enemy forces that violated Danish neutrality by breaking some supposed mine barriers between Tunø and Samsø, and the force coming from Århus was to prevent the enemy from going through the mine barriers and making a landing on Samsø.

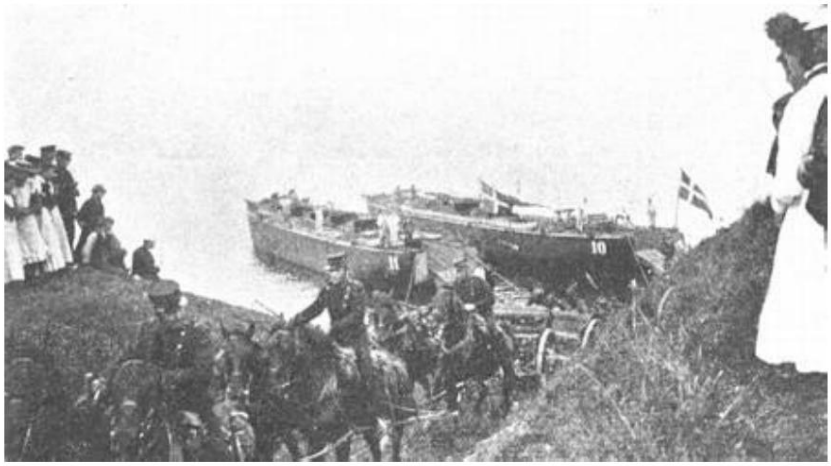


Coastal defense ship SKJOLD, 1912 6).

The large but very flat-bottomed transport boats were pushed ashore by torpedo boats and steam barges, so that they ran right up to the beach. Others, including those with the guns, remained a bit further out, but it was possible to wade ashore from all of them. When the bows of the boats were lowered and laid out as a bridge, the disembarkation could begin, and it took no more than 45 minutes before everything was ashore.

There had been no soldiers on Samsø since 1864, when a patrol corps from Aarhus was there one day, so everything that could crawl and walk on the island was therefore naturally crowded together, and among them several veterans from the wars of 1848 and 1864, of which several had worn their war medals and commemorative ribbons for today's occasion.

The exercise ended at 3pm in pouring rain. Fairly high seas slowed the loading, and a transport boat had come to rest so hard on the ground that it had to be towed free by SKJOLD. The entire exercise force reached back to Aarhus approx. at 21:30."



Artillerymen land on Samsø, 15 August 1906.
From Source 4.

According to information on the Danish Marinehistorie website, TRANSPORTBAAD Nr. 10 in the Navy's numbers from 1861 to 1956; from 1928 as MINEBAAD (minesweeper) Nr. 2.

The long service period must be close to a record!

The fleet's securing of transports

In planning the defense of Denmark, the connection between the parts of the country is an important factor. This task was naturally assigned to the Navy, which, however, after the First World War had increasingly less opportunities to solve it.

The period's planning complexes for the land defense of Denmark are dealt with in detail in the treatises *Jutland Landsforsvar from 1901 to 1940* by Michael Clemmensen (Source 7) and Planlæggingen *af det Zealand land defense 1922-1940* by Ole Isgaard Olsen (Source 8). During a series of general staff exercises in the 1920s and 1930s, they worked with different scenarios,

including among other things the transfer of forces from Jutland/Fyn to Zealand was included, just as troops could be evacuated from Zealand in extreme cases. Odsherred would then become the focal point, as in the event of a surprising and superior enemy attack, the possibility of withdrawing the forces on Zealand was foreseen.

Although in principle the Danish defense of neutrality had to be organized against any enemy, the general staff exercises leave no doubt that Germany was the likely enemy. The general staff exercises in 1932 and 1936 were based on the fact that a German attack on Zealand was launched based on the fear of an English attack through the Øresund and the Belts. The German side wanted to force the Danish government to yield to an occupation of Zealand, whereby the English attack had to be countered.

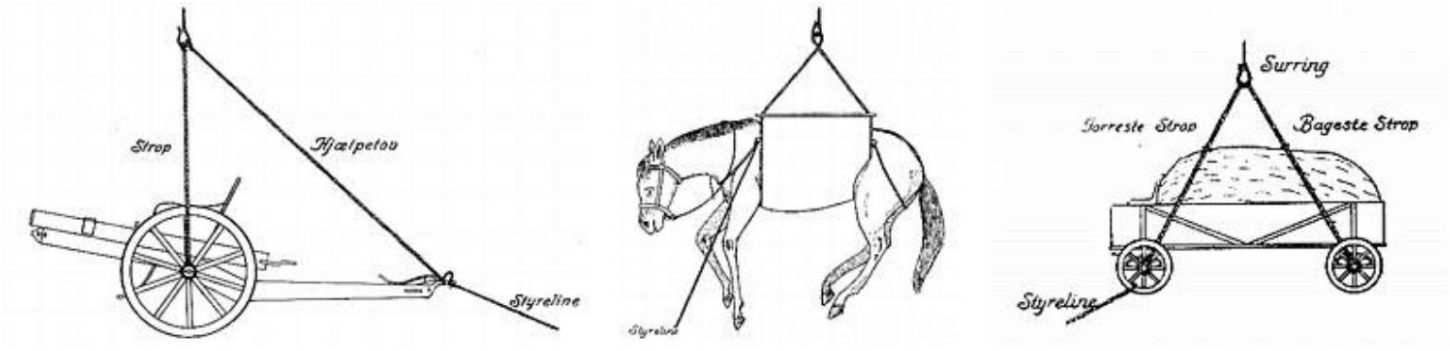
Developments in the military field made it likely that German warships would dominate the waters around Zealand and the other islands in the event of an invasion. Whether it was thus possible for the Navy to ensure its own transport between the parts of the country must therefore be assessed based on an assessment of the relative strength between Danish and German naval forces. As the Navy was equipped with a view to neutrality enforcement, primarily through securing laid minefields, and not for more offensive operations, the possibility of securing own transports in wartime conditions must be assessed as extremely limited.

This was thus one of the reasons why the defense of Jutland and Zealand was regarded as two largely isolated undertakings, where the possibility of transferring troops between the parts of the country was included as an eventuality.

Sources

1. *Denmark's Fleet* by Captain Lieutenant K. Dahl (ed.), The Society for the Publication of Cultural Writings, Copenhagen 1934.
2. *Sea transport regulations for the Army,* Ministry of War, Copenhagen 1934.
3. *Memory book for use in the field, during exercises and war games* by HH Jørgensen, N. Olaf Møllers Forlag, Copenhagen 1936.
4. *Field artillery in Aarhus 1881-1969* by PE Niemann, Forlaget ZAC, Copenhagen 1981, ISBN 87-7348-047-9.
5. *Artillery in Denmark* edited by Marian Plough, Varde Artillerimuseum, 2001, ISBN 87-89834-39-9.
6. *Our Army in War and Peace, Volume II* by Arne Stevns, Nordiske Landes Bogforlag, 1943.
7. *Our Fleet in the Past and Present, Volume II* by Halfdan Barfod, Nordiske Landes Bogforlag, 1942.
8. *Jutland's land defense from 1901 to 1940* by Michael H. Clemmensen, published by the author, Copenhagen 1982.
9. The *planning of Zealand's land defenses 1922-1940* by Ole Isgaard Olsen, Published by the Defense Command, 1985.

Per Finsted



The state railways' ferry equipment was preferred for military transport, as horses and rolling stock could be taken directly on board. With a view to using other ships, various auxiliary equipment had been developed, i.a. horse harnesses and carrying straps for cannons and wagons, with which the cargo could be hoisted aboard. The horse straps came in two sizes, one for ordinary horses and one for Icelandic horses (the infantry's ammunition horses). The drawings are reproduced from Source 2.

Notes

1) The term *lead officer* is thus not, as assumed in note 1 to The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1943 - 1945 - The Danish Flotilla, Part 2 a Swedish-inspired term from the time of the Brigade, but a Danish regulatory term.

2) This is probably the good ship *Charkow (II),* which was built at A/S Helsingør's Jernskibs- og Maskinbyggeri in 1913. The ship (1,036 gross registered tons) belonged to DFDS from 1913 to 1940. *Charkow* was sunk on 13 March 1940 in North Sea, on the way from Manchester to Copenhagen, by the German submarine U-19. The ship sank instantly, with the loss of her entire crew of 20 men. Source: Shipping-Info.net, which seeks to provide information on all ships associated with DFDS and subsidiaries; the page also indicates the position where *Charkow* went down.

3) Source: Maritime glossary.

4) Source: Highways.dk.

5) The cannon was originally part of the equipment of Copenhagen's Land Fortification, but after the fortress's closure in 1920 was transferred to the field artillery, where it served as a heavy piece until the more modern artillery became available - 15 cm field howitzer M.1929 and 10.5 cm field cannon M. 1930. At both the Tøjhusmuseet in Copenhagen and the Artillery Museum in Varde, you can see a copy of this pamphlet, which, cf. Source 5, was only officially declared obsolete in 1941. (Source 4.)

6) From *Our Armored Ships 1863-1943* by Commander Captain R. Steen Steensen, Marine Historical Society, Copenhagen 1968.
In the Defense Regulations of 1909, the designation was changed from *armored battery* to *armored coastal defense ship;* in 1922 the designation was changed to *warship.* See also Dansk Marinehistorie's mention of Panserbatteriet SKJOLD (1897-1929).