

## The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1943-1945 - 120 mm mortar company

### Introduction

The brigade's heavy fire support consisted of a mortar company, which was equipped with 4 120 mm mortar.

The company's personnel met for training on 15 March 1945 and the mortars arrived at the beginning of April. After a few days of theoretical orientation, the crew was divided into mortar operators, telephonists, ammunition haulers as well as protractors and engine orderlies.

During the contraction in southern Sweden in mid-April 1945, 3 passenger cars, 13 lorries and 20 motor vehicle drivers were added.

On May 5, 1945, the company numbered 1,081 men and 20 vehicles, organized as follows:

- Chief with command group (27) • 2 platoons of 2 groups (14).

### 120 mm mortar M.41 S

In the Swedish army, the mortar had the designation *12 cm grenade kastare m/41 (grk m/41)*.

The mortar was developed by the Finnish arms factory *Tampella*, and had the designation m/40 in the Finnish army.

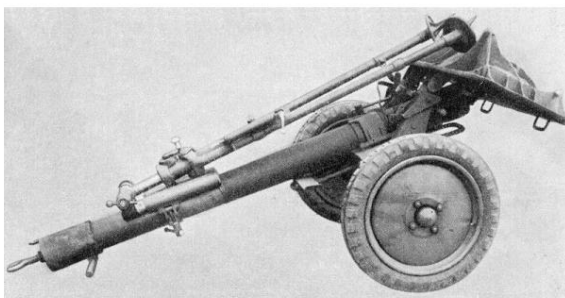
Swedish arms factories such as Bofors and Husqvarna licensed the mortar, whose maximum firing range was approx. 5 km.

Immediately after the war, the mortar was used in the Danish army, where it was given the designation *120 mm mortar M.41 S*.

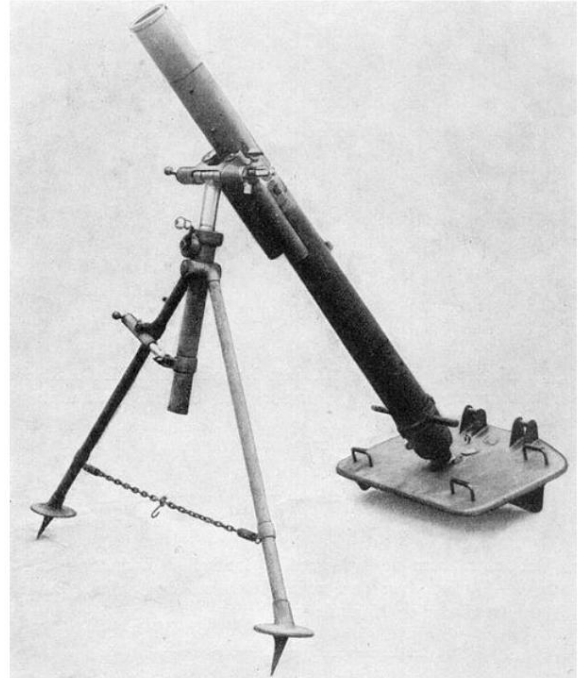
In driving position, the mortar was placed on a two-wheel transport axle. Weight in firing position: 255 kg; in driving position: 390 kg.

### Ammunition

For the mortar, *120 mm high-explosive grenade M.41 S* was used, which (with shock tube) weighed 12.5 kg. The explosive grenade could be fired with 8 different charges (1-8)



*120 mm Morter M.41 S, in driving position.*  
From Source 2.



*12 cm mortar M.41 S, in firing position.*  
From Source 2.

Source 3 mentions journalist Jørgen Thanum Jensen in *Menig soldat i Brigaden* that on the evening of 4 May 1945 he helped to collect the heavy mortar company's ammunition from trucks.

Each ammunition box weighed 100 kg and 100 boxes were collected.

From this it can be deduced that 800 grenades were delivered to the company, which may mean that the basic stock per mortar was 200 shells.

### Plans for the purchase of additional mortars

From the Danish side, there was interest in acquiring an additional 20 heavy mortars and 20,000 high-explosive grenades as well as 500 pistols.

Two representatives from the Brigade, accompanied by a Swedish lawyer, traveled secretly to Finland on 7 September 1944 to negotiate the options. The Finns were very interested and offered - in addition to what was ordered - tanks and heavy armored vehicles. The deliveries were to be made through a private Swedish company in order to create as little fuss as possible about the matter.

<sup>1</sup> If the strength figure is compared with the subsequent organization, 25 people are missing. These may well be the 20 motorcar drivers and a team of kitchen lots. The 4 vehicles missing from the comparison could be 1 kitchen cart and 3 motorcycles.

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The deal came about and was approved by both the Finnish and Swedish governments. A ship was chartered for the transport and part of the payment was made, but a mistletoe had not been sworn in - the Finnish defense minister fell ill and had to withdraw.

His replacement was obviously a more cautious man and he submitted the case to the Russian Control Commission, which they had otherwise tried to avoid. After several months of silence, the Finnish government had to announce in January 1945 that the Russians had refused to approve the deal.

Among the possible reasons for the Russian no, Knud JV Jespersen mentions in Source 4 that the Russian side regarded the Brigade as a possible threat in the event of an invasion of Denmark, as it would constitute the only military force under Danish control.

### Welcome home! Do you have any Swedish cigarettes?

It was probably not exactly this welcome that the mortarmen and the other brigadiers had expected when they disembarked in Denmark, but as the situation had developed, they were received by cheerful Danes and not by a warlike enemy.



*12 cm grenade launcher m/41,  
with Swedish crew.*

Before returning home, 14 days of intense training had passed, and from 25 April the company was on alert.

The company was alerted at midnight, on the night between May 4 and 5. This was followed by two hours of hard work loading all the ammunition onto the lorries and then moving to Helsingborg.

The town was teeming with Danish soldiers, and after many hours of waiting, it was finally announced at 10:00 that the company would be transferred at 2:00 p.m.

At 14.15 the company drove to the harbor area, where mortar crews pried the mortars off and pulled them on board the ferry that was to sail them across. The rolling stock then drove on board. Each man was issued a life jacket. As a parting gift from Sweden, they received a piece of chocolate and as a welcome gift from Denmark - a green Tuborg.

On 6 May, the motor march towards Copenhagen and the reception of the population followed. Unlike some of the other units, the march in took place without any shooting incidents.

After 14 days in Copenhagen, the company was sent to Herning, where it was assigned guard duties, including at the access roads to Karup Airport.

The company was repatriated on 10 July 1945.

The picture, which originates from the now no longer active Wermlands Militär Historiska Förening.

### Sources

1. *The Danish Brigade* edited by Niels Grønnet and Bent Demer, H. Hirsprungs Forlag, Copenhagen 1945.
2. *Swedish weapons in the Danish army 1946* by Captain IV Vorsling, Dansk Artilleri-tidsskrift, 4th issue, August 1946, pages 105-122.
3. *1½ years with the Danish Brigade* by lieutenant colonel PAF Norup (chief of staff at the Brigade), Militær Tidsskrift 1947, pages 271-308 and 353-406.
4. *The Brigade - The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1943-1945* by Knud JV Jespersen, Gyldendal, Copenhagen 1993, ISBN 87-00-14924-1.
5. "Mats' Weapons Page" - Mats Persson's defunct page with description of Swedish weapons.
6. *The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1943-45* by Second Lieutenant P. Lyng, student at the Army Officers School, class Krogh I, 1976-80.