

DENMARK



Two Danish officers in M1923 khaki service uniform. Both wear the characteristic Danish 'tent hat' with light brown piping and wide braid and the red-and-silver officers' cockade, the officers' open-coller tunic, riding breeches and brown leather riding boots. The officer at right wears a privately-purchased civilian raincoat without rank insignia, a brown leather belt with cross-brace, and a map case suspended at his left hip; his companion wears a dress dagger in his sword frog. (Chakoten: Danish Society for Military History)

Organization

Under the Defence Act of 7 May 1937 the Danish Army (*den Danske Hær*) had 14,550 personnel, with cadre staffs training annually 6,000 conscripts for 11 months' military service – an inadequate strength even in peacetime. Despite intense lobbying by the commander, LtGen Wilhelm Prior, the Danish government, which had naively signed the German-Danish Non-Aggression Pact of 31 May 1939, refused to increase army strength for fear of provoking Germany. The Army had a **General Staff** and seven combat branches:

Infantry: 8 regiments – Life Guards, 6 infantry, 1 bicycle infantry, plus infantry pioneers, and the Bornholm Defence Force. **Cavalry:** 2 regiments – Guards Hussars and Jutland Dragoons. **Artillery:** 3 field and 1 AA regiments. **Engineers:** 1 regiment and 1 signals battalion. **Transport:** 1 battalion. **Army Technical Corps (HTK).** **Air Service:** 2 squadrons. Also: **Administration, Medical, and Veterinary** services. The units were grouped under Army HQ, 1st Zealand Division (MajGen Rolsted) and 2nd Jutland Division (MajGen Essemann).

A 5,000-strong infantry regiment comprised an HQ with supply and ammunition columns; HQ company, with signals, AA, reconnaissance, and engineer detachments, medical personnel, supply and ammunition columns; a regimental gun company; 3x 1,469-strong line and 1 reinforcement battalions, each with an HQ, 4x 230-strong 'light machine gun companies', and a heavy weapons company with HMGs, mortars and AA guns. The 1,800-strong 6th Bicycle Infantry Regiment had an HQ company, 2x 788-strong bicycle battalions (each with 3 bicycle and 1 motorcycle companies), 2 reinforcement battalions, and a heavy weapons company. The Life Guards comprised an HQ and 3 battalions; Bornholm Island's Defence Force had 7 reserve infantry companies. The **Infantry Pioneer Command** had 2x 1,000-strong mobile battalions, each with 3 bicycle and 1 motorcycle companies, for border-defence duties such as destroying roads and light demolitions. Of the **cavalry**, the Guards Hussar Regt had 8 company-size squadrons – 2 mounted, 2 cyclist, 1 each motorcyclist, rifle, heavy weapons, and armoured car (one armoured car platoon with 3x Swedish Landsverk Lynx PV M39 vehicles, and a motorcycle platoon). The Jutland Dragoon Regt had no rifle squadron, and its armoured car squadron awaited vehicles. An **artillery** regiment had 3–4 battalions each of 3 batteries; the AA regiment had 3 battalions each with 3 batteries. The **engineer** regiment comprised



2 battalions with 6 engineer companies, and the **signals** battalion 3 telegraph ('engineer') companies and a radio company.

The **Army Air Service** (*Hærens Flyvetropper*) had 4 squadrons with 52 largely obsolete aircraft. There was a 4,300-strong **Royal Danish Navy** (*Kongelige Danske Marine*), commanded by VAdm Hjalmar Rechinzer.

Combat history

The 'War of 9 April 1940' began at 04.15hrs that morning, when German XXXI Corps attacked Denmark under Operation *Weserübung*. Armoured cars, tanks and motorcycles formed flying columns, while 1st Parachute Regt, in the first combat drop in history, secured Aalborg and the Storstrøm Bridge on Falster island. The Danish government did not order mobilization, and, against Gen Prior's advice, surrendered at 06.00; armed resistance ended at 08.15.

Jutland Division had built roadblocks on the southern border, defended by infantry guns, AT guns and light machine guns. 4th Bicycle Bn (HQ Søgaard) divided into 12 detachments of 28–130 men. Lundtoftebjerg Detachment's AT platoon disabled two German armoured cars and a tank, while the bicycle platoon fought tanks and dive-bombers. Høkkerup Det knocked out three armoured cars, and Bjægskov fought off armoured cars and tanks. 1st Company's Bredevad Det disabled three armoured cars, and Korskrø Det defended Rabsted. Meanwhile 3rd Company's Gaardeby Det engaged armoured cars, and 5th Inf Bn also offered resistance.

The Haderslev roadblock in eastern Jutland comprised the 3rd Inf Bn and 1st Battery, 8th Artillery Battalion. The Heavy Company's AT gun knocked out three tanks, and at another roadblock a soldier died whilst single-handedly manning an infantry gun. Other Haderslev units resisted until 08.15, destroying two tanks. The Tønder garrison in western Jutland comprised the infantry gun and bicycle platoons of the Pioneer Command's NCO School, and 1st Pioneer Bn's 4th Company. They destroyed four armoured cars at the Abild and Sølsted roadblocks, retreating from dive-bomber attack to Bredebro. 14th Infantry Battalion fought at Sønderbro, and two batteries of 14th AA Bn shot down a bomber.

On Zealand, the Life Guards Training Company defended the Amalienborg royal palace; 11th Inf Bn took the ferry to Sweden, where some later formed a Danish Brigade. Admiral Rechinzer surrendered the Navy without firing a shot. German fighter-bombers attacked Værlose

LEFT A Danish infantry MG section; the soldiers wear M1938 light grey sidecaps with or without national cockades, M1910 black greatcoats over M1915 light grey tunics and trousers, and M1930 black leather boots. They have M1888 belts, support straps, single M1906 ammunition pouches, M1915 bayonets and M1869 entrenching tools. M1923 helmets are strapped to their M1939 backpacks, and all carry ammunition for the section's 8mm M1924 Madsen light machine gun, here mounted for sustained fire. They are armed with 7.92mm M1898 Krag-Jørgensen rifles. (Chakoten: Danish Society for Military History)

RIGHT A detachment of Danish motorcycle troops, probably from an Infantry Pioneer Command battalion; all wear M1923 helmets. The Nimbus MC motorcyclists (first & second right) wear the brown motorcyclist/AFV overall (see Plate B3), with black M1888 belts and support straps and single M1906 ammunition pouches. The sidcar passengers, operating the mounted 8mm M1929 Madsen MG, are wearing infantry M1915 grey field uniforms under M1910 black greatcoats (see Plate A3). Motorcycle-sidcar combinations armed with 20mm M1938 Madsen cannon destroyed 11 German armoured cars and two PzKw I tanks, and killed many troops, during Denmark's brief but locally fierce resistance. (Chakoten: Danish Society for Military History)

Table 1: Danish Army selected battle order 1 November 1937–9 April 1940

Army HQ (Copenhagen)	
General Staff; HQ & 10 Bn, AA Regt; Eng Regt (HQ, Sig Bn – 8 Radio Co; 7, 10 & 11 Telegraph Cos); Air Service; Bornholm Defence Force; Transport Bn	
1 Zealand Division (Copenhagen)	
Life Guards (1–3 Bns, band); 1 Inf Regt (1, 15 & 21 Bns; 24 Reinforcement Bn); 4 Inf Regt (8, 11 & 17 Bns; 28 Rflmt Bn); 5 Inf Regt (7, 14 & 19 Bns; 25 Rflmt Bn); Hussar Guards Regt (1 & 2 Cav Sqns; 1 & 2 Bicycle Sqns; 3 Bicycle (MCycle) Sqns; Rifle Sqns; Heavy Weapons Sqns; Armoured Car Sqns); 1 Art Regt (1 & 2 Reserve & 6 Bns); 2 Art Regt (4, 5, 11 & 12 Bns); 13 Bn, AA Regt; 1 Eng Bn (1–3 Cos)	
2 Jutland Division (Viborg)	
2 Inf Regt (8, 13 & 18 Bns; 22 Rflmt Bn); 3 Inf Regt (6, 9 & 20 Bns; 23 Rflmt Bn); 6 Bicycle Infantry Regt (4 & 5 Bicycle Bns; 10 & 20 Rflmt Bns); 7 Inf Regt (2, 10 & 12 Bns; 27 Rflmt Bn); Pioneer Command (1 & 2 Bns); Jutland Dragoon Regt (1 & 2 Cav Sqns; 1–3 Bicycle Sqns; Hvy Wpns Sqns; Armd Car Sqns); 3 Art Regt (3, 7–9 Bns); 14 Bn, AA Regt; 2 Eng Bn (4–6 Cos)	