

LTC Tobias Tesch - May 24th, 2024 - Stormy Weather

A warm welcome to everybody.

We are all here today to commemorate the crash of "Stormy Weather", which was the name of the American B-17 "Flying Fortress" that made an emergency landing at this place at Skærtøft exactly 80 years ago today.

There were quite a few fatal plane crashes around the island Als during World War II, but this crash was an exception indeed because all 10 American crewmembers survived the crash, although they were all captured and sent to a POW camps in Germany.

We stand in front of the monument, established in 2004 on the 60th anniversary of the crash of "Stormy Weather". "Stormy Weather" was one of the 279 x B17 bombers of the 351st Bombardment Group. This group was divided into four squadrons; 508, 509, 510 and 511, with Stormy Weather belonging to 509 Squadron. The 351st Bombardment Group lost 124 x B17 aircraft during the war. The monument still today maintained by volunteers.

So why do we commemorate this crash every five years on this date?

Because we must never and will never forget soldiers who have fought and for many have fallen during the execution of their fight for freedom and democracy. That is why we continue to remember the fallen soldiers in the wars of 1848-50, in 1864, during the WW1 and WW2 and of course in recent times the wars in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, and now also in Europe again - in Ukraine.

The comparison between the 10 young airmen from America, with the many Danish soldiers who fought and ultimately fell in both Iraq and Afghanistan is obvious. Both parties were fighting a war so far from their homes that one can only have respect for the fact that despite this they participated voluntarily - at a well-known risk of losing their lives with the purpose to supporting to create peace and freedom for the local population.

Therefore, we will continue to remember the efforts and sacrifices of the many and show our respect and gratitude for their fight for our freedom.

Thank you.