

May 24

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12 May, 1961.

News Editor
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Parachute Engineers build Air Strip in Norfolk

On the 24 May, 1961 the first exercise of its kind ever held in Europe, Exercise 'Flat Earth' involving the whole of 9th Independent Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers under command of Major I.T.C. WILSON, MBE, MC, PSC, will begin. The exercise aims to train 9 Squadron which is part of 16th Parachute Brigade Group in the building of an air strip with all men and equipment being parachuted. The air strip is being built in the Stamford (Primary Training Area) near Thetford, Norfolk.

Bulldozers Parachuted on Platforms

There are three lifts with planes taking off from RAF Abingdon. 188 officers and men the whole of 9 Squadron less rear party and thirteen heavy drop platforms are being used in the exercise.

SPN 4452K
Lt Levis Oliver A 288
Lt Kinross
FLT Lt Kinross

On the platforms which are being parachuted are:-

- (a) Four caterpillar bulldozers. ✓
- (b) Four wobbly wheeled rollers. ✓ 1st 200k
- (c) One 1 x 1 ton vehicle. ✓
- (d) Five landrovers.
- (e) Thirty wheelbarrows.

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A Hyster Grid Roller is being pre-positioned. This is the first time one has been used by the Squadron.

P hour for each of the three lifts is 8.00 a.m., 2.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. on 24 May, 1961.

At present there is a 24 hour delay if wind conditions are unfavourable. There will be approximately 60 men and four platforms dropping in each lift.

Aircraft land on airstrip

Two days later 3 Squadron from 3 Division Engineers are flying in with more equipment and also take over maintenance and improvement of the area.

This exercise is part of the years training of 9 Independent Parachute Squadron. The airstrip is not permanent and will be ripped up after the exercise.

Control of the Exercise

The Control Staff is being provided by HQ RE 3 Division, Chiseldown Camp, Nr. Swindon. Lt Col Cooper RE is producing a Control Centre on the Site at Robin's Lodge (a ruin) near Thetford. (See attached route plan.)

/Your

Your representatives are cordially invited to attend this exercise. They will be met by a representative of 9 Independent Parachute Squadron, Capt A. Julius at the BELL Hotel, Thetford at 6.15 a.m. on 24 May 1961. He is also the DZ Safety Officer so will not be able to wait for late comers. Your representatives unable to get to Thetford by 6.15 a.m. for the first lift and wishing to see later drops can make their own way to the Control Centre at Robin's Lodge.

Information on the exercise can be got from myself or Major I.T.C. Wilson, MBE, MC, PSC, OC 9 Squadron, Farnborough, or Lt Col Cooper at HQ RE 3 Division, Chiseldown Camp, Nr. Swindon.

I should be grateful for cuttings of any material which might be published.