

# SIAM.

## THE AVIATION SERVICE OF THE SIAMESE ARMY.

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The Ministry of War having decided in 1911 to adopt aviation for use in the Army, three Officers of the Royal Engineer were selected and sent to France in order to study aviation. These three Officers began their flying instruction in July, 1912, at Villa Coublay, near Paris, and by the following October 22<sup>nd</sup> Major Luang Sakdi Salyavudh obtained his certificate as a qualified aviator of the French Aero Club, on a *Breguet* machine. In May, 1913, Lieutenant Thip obtained his certificate, on a *Nieuport*, whilst Captain Luang Avudh Sikikorn received his certificate on a similar machine on June 30<sup>th</sup> of the same year.

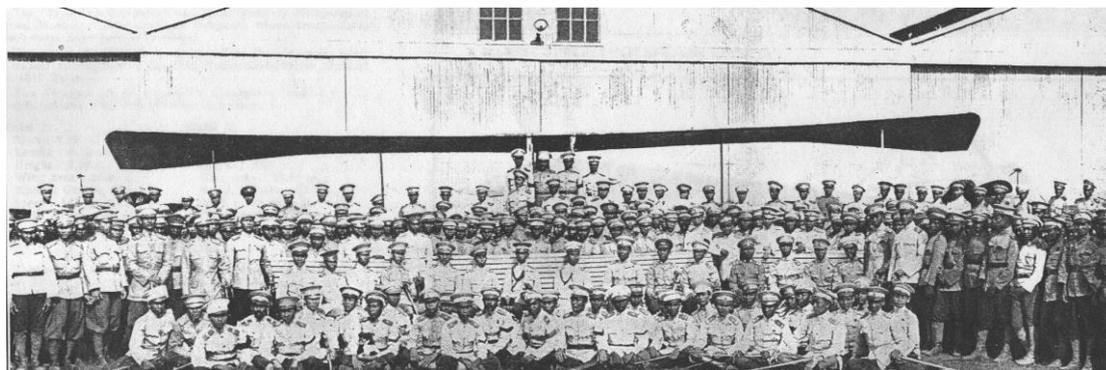
Major Luang Sakdi then qualified and obtained the "Brevet d' Aviateur Militaire Francaise" on the 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1913.

Having qualified as pilots, all three Officers returned to Siam in September, 1913. Taking back with them several *Nieuport* monoplanes and one *Breguet* biplane, making their debut in flying in Siam in December, 1913.

From January, 1914 onwards, many flights were made and passengers were taken up to show the practical use of the aeroplane, several demonstrations, including cross country flights being made in order to familiarize population with the new kind of locomotion.

In April, 1914, His Majesty the King presented to the Army a 100 h.p. *Breguet* biplane, which had been offered by Chao Phya Abhai Phubesr as a gift.

Having seen the practical use of aeroplanes and convinced of the great service it could render to the Army, H.R.H. the Prince of Pisenoulok, Chief of the General Staff, decided to form a Flying Corps, which was officially organised on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1914, officers of the Army being admitted as candidates for the Aviation Service.



OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE SIAMESE ROYAL FLYING CORPS

#### THE ARMY AVIATION CORPS.

The Aviation Corps, although in its infancy, has made considerable progress, considering the difficulties it has had to overcome. The European War having broken out soon after it was formed, there was no longer any possibility of renewing the machines, nor of following the progress of aviation in a practical manner. Spare parts to motors were obtained with great difficulty, and the machines had to be repaired with raw national material.

The Corps is under the direction of the Inspector General of Royal Engineers, and draws its recruits by voluntary service from officers and men in the Army.

Those who have obtained their certificates as pilots may either be appointed Chief Pilots or are retained for service with the Flying Corps for not more than one year. The latter must then join their former units, returning to the Flying Corps every six months for one month's training.

At present the Corps Aviation School has trained about twenty-five pilots, all of whom are officers, with the exception of ten non-commissioned officers.

In the four years since aviation has been started in Siam, only one fatal accident has occurred, when one of the officers fell whilst passing his examination as a qualified pilot, in February, 1918.

The Corps Aviation School and Head Quarters is situated at Dorn Muang, a little north of Bangkok, where hangars and workshops have been constructed.

The types of machine in use are all of French make, being *Nieuport* monoplanes of the 1912 Model, and *Breguet* biplanes of 1912 Type.

The *Nieuports* are of two models, Monoplane Model I and II Single-Seaters, with the following dimensions :-

Model I	Model II
Span : 8.20 m.	Span : 8.75 m.
Length : 6.70 m.	Length : 7.20 m.
Height : 2.20 m.	Height : 2.40 m.
Wing area : 20.60 m.	Wing area : 21.60 m.
Motor : Gnome 50 h.p.	Motor : Gnome 60 h.p.
Speed : 110 km.p.h.	Speed : 120 km.p.h.
Total weight : 105 kl.	Total weight : 150 kl.



A NIEUPORT-TYPE MONOPLANE, built in Siam.

By Sakpinit Promthep



A SIAMESE BREGUET BIPLANE, used for training.

#### ACTIVITIES.

During the last two years, the Aviation Corps has taken part in the Army Manoeuvres and has given useful work. As a result of Siam's declaration of war against the Central Powers, an Aviation Corps composed entirely of volunteers is to be sent out to France and will serve with the French Armies in the field.

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