

The Rio Grande do Sul Aviation Squadrons Group: from the necessity of creation to the causes of extinction

El Grupo de Escuadrillas de Aviación de Rio Grande do Sul: de la necesidad de la creación a las causas de la extinción

O Grupo de Esquadrilhas de Aviação do Rio Grande do Sul: da necessidade de criação às causas de extinção

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ABSTRACT

The present study intends, in the year that we celebrate the Bicentennial of Brazil's Independence, to point out the centennial of the creation of the Aviation Squadrons Group of Rio Grande do Sul, bringing to light facts that occurred 100 years ago, when the Brazilian Army, inserted in a broad modernization program, adopted measures that led to the expansion of its incipient Military Aviation beyond the Federal Capital. The distance related to the 1920's decade allows us, through a historical review, to analyze issues related to national security that led to the creation of the Rio Grande do Sul aviation squadrons group, to seek explanations as to the reasons for its ephemeral existence and extinction, as well as to analyze its contributions towards the defense of the Brazilian territory and the aeronautical development of the country.

Keywords: Aviation Squadrons Group; Military Aviation; Brazilian Border Protection; Brazil's Independence Centennial.

RESUMEN

El presente estudio pretende, en el año en que conmemoramos el Bicentenario de la Independencia de Brasil, marcar el centenario de la creación del Grupo de Escuadrillas de Aviación de Rio Grande do Sul, sacando a la luz hechos que ocurrieron hace 100 años, cuando

el Ejército Brasileño entró en un amplio programa de modernización, expandió su incipiente Aviación Militar fuera de la Capital Federal. La distancia con relación a la década de 1920 nos permite, a través de un rescate histórico, analizar cuestiones relacionadas con la seguridad nacional que influyeron en la creación del Grupo de Escuadrillas de Aviación de Rio Grande do Sul, buscar explicaciones sobre las razones que condujo a su efímera existencia y extinción, además de analizar sus contribuciones a la defensa del territorio brasileño y al desarrollo aeronáutico del país.

Palabras clave: Aviation Squadrons Group; Military Aviation; Protection of Brazilian borders; Centenary of Brazilian Independence.

RESUMO

O presente estudo pretende, no ano em que comemoramos o Bicentário da Independência do Brasil, assinalar o centenário de criação do Grupo de Esquadrilhas de Aviação do Rio Grande do Sul, trazendo a lume fatos ocorridos há 100 anos, quando o Exército Brasileiro, inserido em um amplo programa de modernização, adotou medidas que levaram à expansão de sua incipiente Aviação Militar para além da Capital Federal. O distanciamento em relação à década dos anos 1920, nos permite, por meio de um resgate histórico, analisar questões referentes à segurança nacional que levaram à criação do

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The acronyms and abbreviations contained in this article correspond to the ones used in the original article in Portuguese.

Grupo de Esquadrilhas de Aviação do Rio Grande do Sul, buscar explicações quanto aos motivos de sua efêmera existência e extinção, assim como analisar as suas contribuições em prol da defesa do território brasileiro e do desenvolvimento aeronáutico do País.

Palavras-clave: *Grupo de Esquadrilhas de Aviação; Aviação Militar; Proteção de fronteiras brasileiras; Centenário da Independência do Brasil.*

1 INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the last century, it was very common countries to hire armies of great military powers to help in the reorganization and modernization of their armies. In Brazil there were debates about the possibility of hiring a large military mission, as the possibility of hiring only a few foreign specialists and sending Brazilians to Europe as military observers.

While contracting a large military mission, which could be French, German or even American, would link the Brazilian Army to the knowledge of a single country, contracting foreign specialists and sending observers would make it possible to select methods from several countries, according to the area they wanted to update.

In July 1917, a team of observers was sent to France, under the direction of General Napoleão Aché and with the participation of the 1st Lieutenant Alzir Mendes Rodrigues Lima, a team of observers who had, among other objectives, to acquire aeronautical knowledge so that, when they returned to Brazil, they would help in the organization of the Aviation Service. According to McCann (2009, p. 257) although General Faria, Minister of War, did not want a mission for the whole Army, he prepared the way for that by sending General Napoleão Aché's team to France, where it was ordered French material and measurements were taken in favor of an aviation mission.

France was a developed country in the aeronautical field at the beginning of the last century and, with the extensive use of airplanes in its army, it had been victorious in World War I. These factors contributed to the fact that in 1918, Brazil hired a French military mission to help the Brazilian Army in the development of its aviation. With the support of this mission, known as the French Military Aviation Mission or Small Mission, on January 29, 1919 the Military Aviation School (EAvM) was created and on July 10 of the same year it was opened in Campo dos Afonsos, Rio de Janeiro.

Still in 1919, they hired a French military mission for the whole Brazilian Army. Among the arguments used by supporters for this choice was precisely the fact that an aviation mission had already been hired in from France. According to McCann (2009, p. 259), it would not be advisable to employ a mission from another country with different methods for instruction in other branches of the service, due to the confusion it would cause.

The Military Aviation School was the first Aviation Unit of the Brazilian Army. In its facilities located in Campo dos Afonsos, Rio de Janeiro, then Federal Capital and the main region to be militarily defended, it was established, under the technical influence of the French people, the basis for the beginning of the development of an aviation culture, still nonexistent in the Land Force.

Despite the concerns with the protection of the Federal Capital, the borders in the south of Brazil, especially those with Argentina, were the places that caused great concern at the time. Studies indicated that an invasion attack could come from there.

2 THE FRONTIERS IN THE SOUTH OF THE COUNTRY

In Brazil in the early 1920s, when few roads were available and there were few railroads, navigation was an important mean of connection. The countries which used the "Rio da Prata" River Basin and its neighborhood took part of a complicated relationship.

In the Brazilian strategic analysis, strongly influenced by at the time Major Tasso Fragoso, who served as military attache in Buenos Aires between 1909 and 1911, Argentina was always considered as a potential invader in a hypothetical war. For the Americans, according to Bellintani (2009, p. 537), Brazil did not need to worry about enemies in the North or West. The strategic region was the South.

In 1910, Major Tasso Fragoso wrote a long memorandum entitled "Conjectures about Argentina's operations plan against Brazil". In this document speculations are made about mobilization plans designed by Argentina, which would assemble an army of 50,000 men on the border of Rio Grande do Sul within 30 days in the event of a declaration of war, while another 50,000 would assemble at a slower pace. Although there was no evidence of an Argentine operations plan, Tasso Fragoso believed that the Brazilian Army should admit that the Argentine had such mobilization capability and war plans (MCCANN, 1982, p. 60).

Argentine studies also showed concerns about Brazil, according to Avellaneda (2017, p. 341), the monthly publication of the Argentine War College, launched in 1923 and entitled *Estudios y Comunicación de Informaciones* talked about these issues. Although it had a limited and reserved circulation, it addressed geopolitical studies and hypotheses of possible conflicts with neighboring states. The most mentioned conflict hypothesis involved Brazil.

In case of an Argentine attack, besides the troops in the South, the railway line that connected São Paulo to Rio Grande do Sul would allow the country to gather enough forces to counterattack. This railroad had a junction in Santa Maria that connected Porto Alegre and Uruguaiana to the state of São Paulo.

Thus, if a war broke out, how would Argentina conduct it? It would never be able to dominate all Brazil, so it would seek to destroy the Brazilian Navy and invade Rio Grande do Sul to attract the army and provoke a battle. Without control of the sea, the Brazilians would have to move along the narrow railroad that connected São Paulo and Curitiba to Santa Maria, a railroad that Tasso Fragoso compared to the Trans-Siberian Railroad in the Russo-Japanese War. The attack would come through Corrientes against Uruguaiana, Itaqui and São Borja. The Brazilians would retreat to defend the railroad until they gathered enough forces to counterattack (MCCANN, 1982, p. 61).

A defense plan against the supposed invaders should foresee the protection of Santa Maria, an important railroad junction through which army reinforcements would move, as well as the cities through which the hypothetical attack would come: Uruguaiana, Itaqui, and São Borja.

However, according to Bellintani (2009, p. 239), Argentina’s military superiority over Brazil was, at that time, unquestionable. In order to reverse this situation, in 1922, when Brazil’s attention was focused on the celebrations of its first centennial of independence, the Brazilian Army, concerned about the fragility of the country’s borders, took several measures that increased not only its capacity of action but also its deterrence.

3 DECREE 15.235, FROM DECEMBER 31, 1921

Although it is not always a simple task to distinguish the limits between action capacity and deterrence capacity, we can say that the extensive barracks construction program that would allow mobilizing reservists was one of the measures that increased the Brazilian Army’s action capacity.

Calógeras had planned to build the entire program in time for the Centennial of Independence on September 7, 1922. Besides the obvious patriotic symbolism, he wanted the new barracks ready to receive reservists that he intended to mobilize as part of the celebrations. (MCCANN, 1982, p. 332).

Regarding the elevation of its dissuasion capacity, we can say that the great impact came through Decree N° 15.235, from December 31, 1921, published in the Official Gazette of the Union on February 2, 1922, which approved changes in the Army’s organizational structure, contemplating, among other measures, a large-scale aeronautical project with reflections on national integration and defense of our borders.

The new structure provided for an active peacetime army distributed in seven Military Regions and two Military Circumscriptions. The troop units were distributed into five Infantry Divisions, three Cavalry Divisions, and one Mixed Brigade. However, the big news was the implementation of the Special Troops, which comprised twelve Aviation Squadrons and one Assault Car Company.

The Aviation Squadrons were divided into five observation (divisional) squadrons, three fighter squadrons, three bombing squadron and one mixed squadron. According to the **Regulation for Exercises and Combat Aviation** (BRASIL, 1927, p. 5), the Fighter Aviation had as mission the destruction of aerial objectives; the bombing aviation developed the task of destroying ground objects; and the Reconnaissance and Observation Aviation, the information in the echelon army or division.

Table 1 - Forecasting the distribution of the Bombardment Squadrons.

BOMBARDMENT SQUADRONS		
Nr	Military Organization	City
1	1 st bomber Squadron Attached to the 3 rd Military Region	Alegrete - RS
2	2 nd bomber Squadron Attached to the 2 nd Military Region	São Paulo - SP
3	3 rd bomber Squadron Attached to the 3 rd Military Region	Margem do Taquari - RS (General Câmara)

Source: Brazil (1921).

Table 2 - Forecasting the distribution of the Mixed Aviation Squadrons.

MIXED AVIATION SQUADRONS		
Nr	Military Organization	City
1	Mixed Aviation Squadron Subordinated to the Mixed Brigade	Campo Grande - MS

Source: Brazil (1921).

Table 3 - Forecasting the distribution of Fighter Squadrons.

FIGHTER SQUADRONS		
Nr	Military Organization	City
1	1 st Fighter Squadron Troop attached to the 3 rd Military Region	Alegrete - RS
2	2 nd Fighter Squadron Troop attached to the 2 nd Military Region	São Paulo - SP
3	3 rd Fighter Squadron Troop attached to the 3 rd Military Region	Margem do Taquari - RS (General Câmara)

Source: Brazil (1921).

Table 4 - Forecasting the distribution of the Observation Squadrons.

OBSERVATION SQUADRONS		
Nr	Military Organization	City
1	1 st Observation Squadrons Subordinate to the 1 st Infantry Division	Campo dos Afonsos - RJ
2	2 nd Observation Squadrons Subordinate to the 2 nd Infantry Division	São Paulo - SP
3	3 rd Observation Squadrons Subordinate to the 3 rd Infantry Division	Santa Maria - RS
4	4 th Observation Squadrons Subordinate to the 4 th Infantry Division	Juiz de Fora - MG
5	5 th Observation Squadrons Subordinate to the 5 th Infantry Division	Porto União - SC

Source: Brazil (1921).

In addition the twelve squadrons, in attachment 6 of Decree n° 15235 provided for the staff of the Military Aviation School, whom, according to Decree N° 14121 of March 31, 1920, were subordinated to the Improvement Squadron and the Aviation Company.

Decree n° 15235 was dubious in some points, such as for example in attachment number 14, which provided for six and not five observation squadrons, or in art. 4, which provided for an observation squadron for each cavalry division, which added to those provided for each infantry division, would total eight such squadrons and not five.

This peacetime reorganization plan would represent a great advance to the Army's organizational structure.

Considering only the aviation squadrons, it was observed that the Army would increase its personnel by more than one thousand soldiers and that 180 aircraft would be necessary to equip these squadrons (O RIO ..., 1981, p. 1).

Although this plan was approved, it was never fully put into practice, because some authorized units did not make it out of the planning. The twelve aviation squadrons are among the units that were not fully created. McCann (2009, p. 310) states that some contemporary observers were perplexed by the size of the Army, in which there was always a difference between the headcount that Congress authorized and the actual number of soldiers in the units. The discrepancies were striking in the 1920s.

Whether intentional or accidental, the fact is that other countries did not know for sure the real warlike capabilities of the Brazilian Army, both in personnel and equipment. The transmission of the idea that Brazil was stronger than it really seemed acted as a deterrent, contributing to national security issues.

Simultaneously with the creation of Decree N° 15.235, began the deployment of Military Aviation beyond Rio de Janeiro. The first region chosen to receive air support was precisely the southern tip of the country.

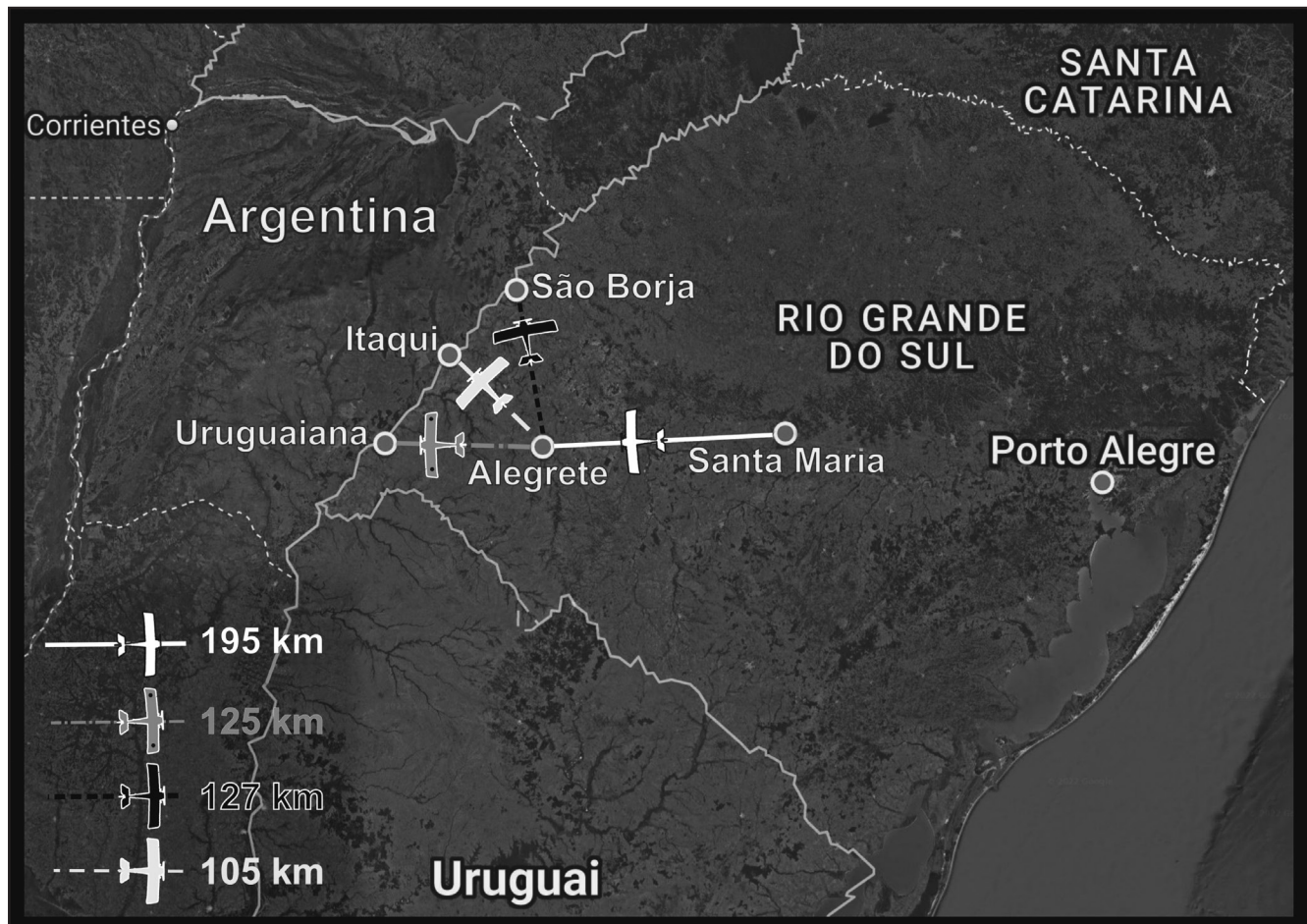
On December 31, 1921, two train compositions were organized to Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul: one leaving Deodoro and carrying material from Campo dos Afonsos and the other leaving the Port Wharf, in Rio de Janeiro, carrying aeronautical material arrived directly from France (LAVENÈRE-WANDERLEY, 1975, p. 80).

4 THE ARRIVAL OF AVIATION IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL

On January 7, 1922, the convoy led by Captain Alzir Mendes Rodrigues Lima arrived in Santa Maria, carrying French mechanics, 50 soldiers, aircraft and several machines for the workshops, whose mission was to prepare the facilities for three squadrons and an aviation park (REVISTA DA AERONÁUTICA, 1969, p. 38).

In practice, the distribution of the squadrons occurred slightly differently from what was foreseen in Decree n° 15.235. Santa Maria received an aviation park, a fighter squadron and a bombardment squadron, and Alegrete received an observation squadron. In this way, the cities of Uruguai, Itaqui and São Borja were at a distance of less than 130 km from the air support of Alegrete and the important railroad junction would have the air support of Santa Maria.

Figure 1 - Map of the border region of Rio Grande do Sul.



Source: Adapted of the Google Maps.

According to the Minutes of the Inauguration of the Aviation Park (REVISTA DA AERONÁUTICA, 1969, p. 37), the work carried out in Santa Maria was done on an urgent and provisional character. While the urgent status was justified due to the need to assemble aircraft for the great maneuvers of Saicã, it is clear that the provisional character refers to part of Decree N° 15235, which provided for the distribution of squadrons.

5 THE MANEUVERS IN SAICÃ

Between January and March 1922, an infantry and a cavalry division were concentrated in the Saicã region, in Rio Grande do Sul, with the objective of carrying out a large campaign exercise in which the troops' would be evaluated.

This exercise became known as the Saicã Maneuvers from 1922 and although much quoted, it is little explored. According to Bellintani (2009, p. 538), an effective of 5 to 7 thousand men were employed, led by the French Military Mission, by adopting the principles of the French system. Soldiers of all arms were employed and reservists were mobilized.

Figure 2 - Saicã Maneuvers. It is possible to read in the dedication "To Muniz, as a souvenir of the first maneuver in which Army Aviation took an active part. May 1922."



Source: Cultural Space of the Army Aviation.

In February 1922, Major Roswag from the French Military Mission went to the site to check the airplanes that for the first time would be used by the Army in training together with the troops.

The director of the maneuver was the Chief of Staff (Brazilian), assisted by General Gamelin (French) and by the entire French Military Mission, which had been the organizer of the exercise in its smallest particularities.

Even disregarding the tactical evolutions adopted with the last war, the arbitration of the exercise pointed out many mistakes made by the Brazilians regarding battlefield technique.

Senior officers, with a map of the region and a compass in their hands, took a wrong turn and ended up not knowing where they were, battalions were not fed due to the lack of professional training of the intendants, there was no security service for marching and fighting, brigade commanders did not know where their battalions were and battalion commanders did not know where their brigade commanders were, or even, after receiving an order to march to attack, they marched without knowing what to do (CIDADE,1998,p. 441).

For Silva (2016), Brazilian Army in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was clearly unprepared and lacked military instruction that privileged the war sciences over the exact sciences.

Saicã Maneuvers from 1922 marked the first use of airplanes by the Army in training with the troops and materialized a turning point in Brazilian military thought by showing the need to break with the positivist ideas still present in military culture.

6 THE PARK'S INAUGURATION

On April 2, 1922, about five months after the beginning of its construction, was inaugurated the Military Aviation Park in Santa Maria. On that day, the national pavilion was hoisted by the Minister of War, Pandiá Calógeras, and the ceremony was attended by illustrious figures from the history of the Brazilian Army, as for example, the then General Rondon, future Patron of the Communications Weapon, 1st Lieutenant Eduardo Gomes, Brazilian Army aerial observer and future patron of the non-existent Brazilian Air Force, 1st Lieutenant Oswaldo Cordeiro de Farias, Brazilian Army aerial observer and future Divisionary Artillery Commander in World War II, Colonel De Seguin, Chief of the French Military Aviation Mission and other personalities.

Figure 3 - Aviation Park in Santa Maria.



Source: Cultural Space of the Army Aviation.

The Aviation Park’s facilities were large and modern for the time. It had two hangars that could hold 10 Breguet airplanes. There was also a pavilion with 310 m² for the warehouse, a pavilion with 360 m² for the carpentry and fabric covering workshops, another pavilion with 480 m² for the assembly and repair of engines, an underground storage area for gasoline boxes, lodging, canteens and facilities for the several administration offices, besides an electric generating plant.

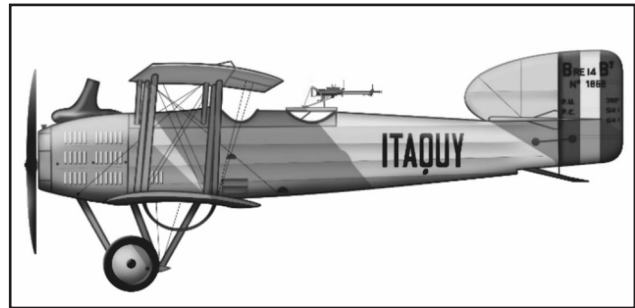
In the words of Captain Graciliano Negreiros, in charge of organizing the various aviation fields in Rio Grande do Sul, the date April 2, 1922, inauguration of the Santa Maria Aviation Park, marks the first chapter in the history of Military Aviation in the State of Rio Grande do Sul (REVISTA DA AERONÁUTICA, 1969, p. 38).

7 THE CREATION OF THE AVIATION SQUADRONS GROUP

Although the Aviation Park was inaugurated on April 2, 1922, the act that marks the creation of the Aviation Squadrons Group of Rio Grande do Sul happened through an Ordinance from the Minister of War on June 5, 1922. This Ordinance, published in Army Bulletin n° 26, from June 10, 1922, created an Aviation Squadrons Group in the 3rd Military Region, directly subordinated to the Commander of the Military Region, in terms of discipline, administration and tactical instruction; and to the Army General Staff, in terms of technical instruction and general inspection.

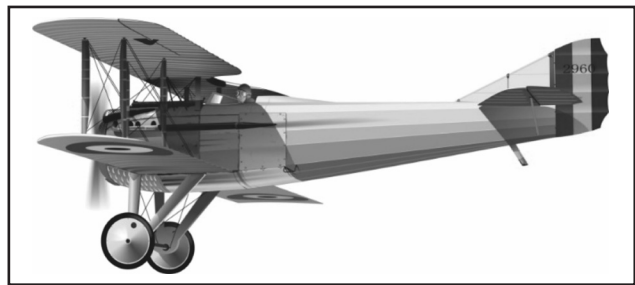
The first commanders of the Rio Grande do Sul Aviation Squadrons Group were Artillery Captain Alzir Mendes Rodrigues Lima and Artillery Captain Raul Vieira de Mello.

Figure 4 - Breguet XIV aircraft design.



Source: Personal collection Col. Av Refm Camazano.

Figure 5 - Spad VII aircraft design.



Source: Personal collection Col. Av Refm Camazano.

8 THE FIRST COMMANDERS

Captain Alzir is one of the great names in the history of Military Aviation, whose accomplishments sometimes go unnoticed. He attended in 1904, the 1st year of the Brazilian Military School at Praia Vermelha, in Rio de Janeiro, being part of the last class of students of this School. In 1906 he was transferred to the War School in Porto Alegre. On February 14, 1908, he was declared an officer aspirant. As a lieutenant, he participated in the Contestado Campaign. In 1914 he was enrolled in the Brazilian Aviation School. In 1917 he was part of the mission sent to France which had the objective, upon his return to Brazil, to organize the General Aviation Service in the Army (BRASIL, 1988, p. 443).

Table 5 - Aviation Squadrons Group Distribution.

RIO GRANDE DO SUL AVIATION SQUADRONS GROUP			
Nr	Military Organization	City	Aircrafts
1	1 st Bombardment Squadron	Santa Maria - RS	04 Breguet XIV
2	1 st Fighter Squadron	Santa Maria - RS	09 Spad7
3	3 rd Observation Squadron	Alegrete - RS	06 Breguet XIV
4	3 rd Provisional Aviation Park Company	Santa Maria- RS	---

Source: Lavenère-Wanderley (1975, p. 124).

In 1919, with the rank of captain, he joined the first group of instructors of the recently created Military Aviation School. Between July 1922 and August 1923, he commanded the Aviation Squadron Group of Rio Grande do Sul. He took part in the Revolution of 1924, acting in aerial operations against the rebels in São Paulo. In 1927, he was part of the first group of officers transferred to the recently created Aviation Weapon.

On August 21, 1932, in the rank of colonel, he assumed command of the Military Aviation School. At that time, the 1932 Revolution was underway, in which he took part as the oldest pilot, not only of the Military Aviation, but of the entire conflict (DARÓZ, 2013 p. 279). On September 27, 1932, still as Commander of the Military Aviation School, he participated in linking air mission between Resende and Campo dos Afonsos, in Rio de Janeiro. On this occasion, due to bad weather, his plane crashed into Serra do Mar, resulting in the death of the pilot who was flying with him. Two days after the accident, the Pioneer Commander of the Rio Grande do Sul Squadrons Group left the command of the EAvM. Captain Raul Vieira de Mello, like his predecessor in the Command of the Aviation Squadron Group, received flight instruction in 1914 at the Brazilian Aviation School. In 1917 he graduated from the Naval Aviation School. In 1920 he graduated in the

first class of military aviator pilots at the Military Aviation School, where he later became an instructor. He commanded the Rio Grande do Sul Squadrons Group between 1923 and 1925. He was the sole survivor of the first fatal accident at the Military Aviation School in 1920, when there was an aircraft collision on the ground.

9 AVIATION AND THE REVOLUTIONS OF THE 1920s

The 1920s was intense for both Brazilian and Army history. It was during this period that the Army's trajectory became confused with the Brazilian nation itself. In this manner, the one, represented by the ideas stemming from the Empire's period, and the new one, represented by the ideas that emerged after the end of the First World War, confronted each other.

The expectations with the creation of the Aviation Squadrons Group of Rio Grande do Sul were great. In Captain Alzir's view, the Squadrons Group was strategically located, supplied with personal and material resources for the aviation necessities (A FEDERAÇÃO, 1921, p. 1). For the Captain Vieira de Mello, the land in Rio Grande do Sul was abundant, suitable for landing sites, unlike Rio de Janeiro, where training flights could not get away from the Military Aviation School, due to the maximum flight distance established by the French Military Aviation Mission for safety reasons (CABEDA, 1989, p. 155-156).

Despite the optimism shown by Captain Alzir and Captain Vieira de Mello, the Rio Grande do Sul Aviation Squadrons Group faced difficulties since the beginning of its creation.

Figure 6 - Colonel Alzir.



Source: Cultural Space of the Army Aviation

Figure 7 - News of the crash of Colonel Alzir's plane.



Source: Manned... (1932).

During 1921 election campaign, with the release of the famous letters falsely attributed to the candidate and future president of the Republic Arthur Bernardes (1922-1926), containing attacks on the military, the first step was taken towards a crisis that led to the beginning of the so-called Tenentist Rebellions.

The first of them occurred in 1922 and was known as Revolta do Forte de Copacabana. The use of aviation, according to Lavenère-Wanderley (1975, p. 83) had the participation of two Naval Aviation planes that attacked the Copacabana Fort, dropping two bombs that fell into the water without causing major damage. As there were several aviators among the rebels, among them First-Lieutenant Eduardo Gomes, the Military Aviation School was militarily occupied and pilot-aviator officers were arrested, planes immobilized, and flight instruction suspended.

In April 1924, when the next lieutenant revolt was approaching, the Aviation Squadrons Group of Rio Grande do Sul suffered a setback in its consolidation capacity. Through a warning, the Minister of War determined that the Group should be considered a detachment of the Military Aviation School, continuing, however, to be administratively subordinated to the 3rd Military Region Command and technically to the Army's General Staff.

On July 5, 1924, the Paulista Revolution began. According to Lavenère-Wanderley (1975, p. 84) a large number of aviation pilots, who worked at Campo dos Afonsos, were arrested as suspected of being revolution supporters and the Military Aviation School activities were suspended.

Through the Improvement Squadron and the 1st Aviation Park Company, which were detached from the Military Aviation School and moved on to São Paulo, aerial reconnaissance, bombardment, and liaison operations were conducted against the insurgents. According to McCann (2009, p. 319), with the lieutenant rebellions, especially from 1924, the government became so suspicious that it removed financial support and immobilized the planes.

Between November and December of 1926, another revolution occurred, this time in the garrisons of São Gabriel, Bagé and Santa Maria. According to Cabeda (1989, p. 152), this Revolution is relatively little known, perhaps due to its short duration. Although it contemplated in its plans air support, the Rio Grande do Sul Aviation Squadrons Group did not participate in the operations due to the condition in which its aviation was. According to McCann (2009, p. 319), in 1926 the American attaché reported that: "the army air service remains paralyzed. [...] It is clear that Mr. Bernardes has no confidence in a large Army contingent and does not want to take the risk of being bombarded."

In 1921, according to the initial planning, the Aviation Squadrons Group of Rio Grande do Sul would receive 45 aircraft, being 15 fighter planes, 15 reconnaissance planes and 15 bomber planes (A FEDERAÇÃO, 1921, p. 1). In 1922, 9 fighter aircraft (SPAD VII), 4 observation (Breguet XIV) and 6 Bomber planes (Breguet XIV) came into operation (LAVENÈRE-WANDERLEY, 1975, p. 80-82). At its peak, it had 30 aircraft (CABEDA, 1989, p. 154).

Figure 8 - Breguet XIV aircraft(São Borja).



Source: Cultural Space of the Army Aviation.

Figure 9 - Breguet XIV aircraft(Itaquy).



Source: Cultural Space of the Army Aviation.

By the end of 1926 only four were still in operation (CABEDA, 1989, p. 154) and twenty-six aircraft were unused. The four aircraft that were still in operation belonged to the Alegrete squadron. They were: São Borja, Uruguayana, Itaqui and Livramento. The promising facilities in Santa Maria were quickly transformed into an aircraft graveyard.

The argument that Argentina was ahead of Brazil in aviation did not reduce the aversion of President Arthur Bernardes (MCCANN, 2009, p. 319). On November 15, 1926 the new president of Brazil, Washington Luís, took office and the Military Aviation entered in a new phase of reorganization and development.

The milestone that marked the beginning of this phase was Law n° 5.168, from January 13, 1927, which created the Army Aviation Weapon. According to Lavenère-Wanderley (1975, p. 91), this law was a government act of great consequences, which gave a definite impulse to Military Aviation and brought it out of the painful period of stagnation between 1922 and 1926.

Despite the boost received, the Rio Grande do Sul Aviation Squadrons Group, which was already quite weakened, was disbanded through the Order from March 12, 1928, leaving no other option but its extinction and reversion of its material and personnel to reinforce the also weakened Military Aviation School in Campos dos Afonsos- RJ.

10 CONCLUSION

Rio Grande do Sul Aviation Squadrons Group was officially created on June 5, 1922, as an embryo, within the aeronautical sector, from an audacious restructuring project of the Brazilian Army, which sought to correct vulnerabilities regarding the security of our borders at the beginning of the last century.

Its ephemeral existence and extinction were conditioned by the events of the troubled

decade of the 1920s, when the maintenance of the governors' policy, the unreliable electoral process, and the concentrated and alternate command of the Republic among some of the Nation's States, contrasted and caused divergences with the moment lived by the Brazilian Army. Besides this, contributed to this scenario the modernization process conducted by the French Military Mission and the post-World War I climate, which aroused idealism and aspirations on the part of young officers regarding the possibility and necessity of their actions for the development of Brazil.

The President's distrust of the danger that aviation represented to the prevailing system led to the adoption of measures that had a negative impact on the development of aviation.

Although the Rio Grande do Sul Aviation Squadrons Group prematurely ended its operations in 1928, its creation had an impact on the country's aeronautical development, considering that the first chapter of Military Aviation beyond Rio de Janeiro was written in 1922. The performance of this group, through its dissuasive power, contributed in favor of the maintenance of the Brazilian territorial limits, but unfortunately it was defeated and dissolved due to the systematic action of an internal component, which in order to defend the prevalence of its interests, imposed measures that led to the inoperability of the Army's air fleet.

Its first Commander, Colonel Alzir Mendes Rodrigues Lima, although he does not occupy a prominent place in the list of great names in Military History yet, he was present at decisive moments and places, playing roles that contributed to the success of the implementation and consolidation of Military Aviation.

From 1933 on, after being restructured and with the experience acquired through the Rio Grande do Sul Aviation Squadrons Group, the Military Aviation began its definitive deployment throughout the National Territory.

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