

What Made Fighter Plane Crash

By Brian E. Møller

On 15 September 1970 west of Christiansfeld a Danish fighter plane crashed into a field. The pilot, a 23 year-old Second Lieutenant, was killed instantly. A farmer and a blacksmith who were repairing a harvesting machine on the field saw the accident. Only a few seconds after the crash they saw in the sky a glowing ball moving away from the area.

On 16 September you could read the following headlines in the newspapers: *“Fighter plane disappeared into a hole”*, and *“Young Second Lieutenant killed in plane crash”*. Four Hawker-Hunter fighter planes from Squadron 724 had taken off from Vandel Air Force Base with a course towards Holland on the morning of September 15th as part of a practice flight.

After approx. 20 minutes flight one of the Hawker Hunters group crashed vertically into the ground, exploded and left a crater 15 m wide and 6 m deep in a field in Frørup near Christiansfeld.

After a couple of hours investigation the accident investigation team established that the pilot didn't make it out of the plane before the crash, and debris was found up to several hundred metres from the crash site. The main part of the plane was totally buried in the ground due to the fact that the sides of the crater had caved in. The excavation was not totally without danger since the plane was armed.

The four fighter planes had flown at low altitude due to foggy weather and violent rain. Just as the order was given to climb above the clouds, the radio connection was cut off from the Hawker Hunter that was to crash vertically into the ground a few seconds later.

A case appears

At the end of the article from the newspaper *Sønderjyden* from 16 September 1970 is the following written under the headline *“Young Second Lieutenant killed in plane crash”*:

“A witness to the plane crash has told the police that a few seconds after the plane had hit the ground he observed a glowing ball in the sky moving away with great speed in a northerly direction. Reflection from the explosion or the exhaust from the other fighter planes are two of the possibilities the police mention as a cause of the phenomenon.”

Any experienced UFOlogist would raise his eyebrows and think twice. And that was exactly what Kai E. Møller (KM), at that time SUFOI's representative in South Jutland, did. He started immediately to find out who this witness was and where he could contact him. Shortly after Kai E. Møller was able to visit the witness, the 41 year-old herdsman Carl Gustav Christiansen (CGC).

In a letter of 20 September 1970 Erling Jensen (at that time leader of SUFOI's Report Center) writes to KM:

“I hereby send you a questionnaire on a possible UFO, which Carl Gustav Christiansen (CGC), Frøruprød of 6070 Christiansfeld, saw in connection with the plane crash in Frøruprød 15 September this year.

“He was approx. 250 m from the crash site. Since it was rather gloomy and raining, he was not aware of the plane until just a few seconds before it hit the ground.

“There was a powerful explosion followed by a couple of smaller ones. He turned his head a little to the left and saw a circular fire ball with a distinct outline. It moved away in a westerly direction and with the speed of a sports plane. The remarkable thing was that even though the object was moving away it didn’t become noticeably smaller; it had a sound like the sound you hear when a hailstorm approaches. All of a sudden it disappeared together with the sound - it didn’t explode, it just ‘went out’.

“CGC has no idea as to what it might have been but assumed that it came from the plane. The object kept the same altitude from when he first saw it till it disappeared.

“There is another witness, a blacksmith apprentice, whom I have not been in contact with. CGC told me that he was deeply shocked (the apprentice that is) and that he wasn’t himself last Sunday...”

Kai E. Møller contacted the accident investigation team a couple of times to get information concerning the plane crash but received the message that he would have to wait for the public explanation which would be released when the accident investigation team is finished with the report. So KM decided to contact the witnesses again and left with that in mind.

When he arrived the witnesses told him that they had had a visit from a military person who forbade them to talk to the press and *“people such as that fellow Kai E. Møller”*. However the witnesses didn’t see anything wrong in speaking to the press and to KM.

KM wrote in a letter to Erling Jensen on 3 November:

“Together with this letter follows 4 reports. Arne Asmusssen (AA), witnessed together with Carl Gustav Christiansen the plane crash in Frøruprød near Christiansfeld. AA’s story concerning the crash is almost identical to CGC’s statement. AA however believes that he saw the ball rise a little while at the same time making a weak turn to the south.

“He believes he heard a hissing but was not able to localise it. AA believes the ball to have been 2 maybe 3 m in diameter, but is not too sure about it. AA also saw the ball on top of the same trees as CGC, so if it was something from the crashing plane it would have had to have made a turn of 90 degrees since both these men are sure it flew towards the west.”

KM never encountered any public explanation from the accident investigation team so he contacted them again. This time they told him that the pilot had had trouble with his instruments and without realising it was flying upside-down. So when the pilot received orders to climb on top of the clouds, the ‘upside-down’ pilot without knowing it crashed vertically into the ground.

After this report there was no more that KM or SUFOI could do and the case was filed as unsolved.

New age , new theory

Today, 25 years later, a new generation has become representative of SUFOI. Kai E. Møller stepped out of SUFOI a couple of years after this case to take care of a new addition to his family; a child who was to take over his place approx. 20 years later.

Yes, I have heard many interesting stories from my father’s time with SUFOI, and the case about the plane

crash near Christiansfeld was the one that I remembered the most. It annoyed me that the mystery didn't even get an interpretation or even a possible explanation. So I started thinking about how a plane could fly upside-down without the pilot feeling it.

Sometimes with modern pilots there occurs a dizziness (a vertigo attack/fit). This makes the pilot feel dizzy and nauseous. These attacks occur when the pilot is exposed to strong acceleration power; g-forces.

In the inner ear we find the canals which are full of liquid these are put into oscillation and transmit impulses out to the central nervous system. How difficult it is for the brain to interpret these impulses varies from pilot to pilot. But this condition can progress into another and worse condition (spatial disorientation) which causes the pilot to no longer recognise what's up or down (according to Illustreret Videnskab No. 5, 1995). Could this also have happened to the pilot from squadron 724 in 1970?

I don't really understand all this technical stuff but I do have my own theory which is a pretty simple one. If the acceleration of the plane is strong enough the force that is pulling the pilot back in the seat would be greater than the force pulling him downwards and therefore to him it would be as if he was laying on his back with his legs up.

However this theory is not without a few inconsistencies. Can a plane from the 1960s accelerate so much after 20 minutes flight? And if yes, why did it accelerate so much? I'm no plane expert so I'm hoping to find someone who can help me with this part of the case.

I contacted the Flight Technical Command to get more information concerning the cause of the plane crash. The technical report from the accident investigation team is classified "*due to the technical nature of the language used*", but they would see if they could find anything I could have a copy of!!

Not to let anything slip through my fingers I decided to take a closer look at the descriptions of the object and the surroundings made by the witnesses.

In their reports which I found in our archives, they describe the phenomenon as a light yellow or fire coloured ball perhaps with a weak corona (ring). It sounded like a hailstorm or a hissing. The size was approximately the distance you would have between the thumb and the index finger if you stretched out your arm. The other witness believes 2 - 3 m in diameter.

Both witnesses believe the light ball to have had a speed of 120 -400 km per hour and to be app. 250 - 400 m away from them. Arne Asmussen made a drawing of an object with a frayed 'corona'. The light ball was seen at approx. 10.15 am. It was overcast with rain so we may rule out any astronomical phenomenon.

Was it ball lightning?

Our knowledge today of ball lightning is limited, however we do recognize its existence. Ball lightning is a mystery of the second degree, as Arthur C. Clarke would call it. Ball lightning possibly sends out a very powerful electromagnetic field and this may easily have disrupted the pilot's instruments. Further still it can move in unpredictable orbits and easily turn 90 degrees.

Ball lightning is seen in many colour varieties often yellowy or white. It varies in size and is typically app. 30 cm in diameter. Nevertheless people often describe it as the size of a tennis ball or a football, even over one metre in diameter. It can move both slow and fast.

The sound is described as a whistling, humming or sizzling sound or soundless. It sometimes disappears in an explosion and at other times without any noise at all. In some observations there is a smell distinctive of sulphur or ozone. The shape of ball lightning also varies so the name can be somewhat deceptive.

When comparing the witnesses' description of the ball and our knowledge of ball lightning we find plenty of similarities. The yellow-white colour, the hissing sound and its eccentric orbit. The sound disappeared at the same time as the object but not with a explosion. The size is somewhat harder to estimate and it could be that the observers have misjudged the distance (especially AA who estimated the object diameter to be 2-3 m). Take the moon for example. How big is it in the sky? Holding out your arm between the thumb and the index finger it is 1 cm or the size of a pea. But that doesn't say anything about its real size if we don't know the distance to it.

All in all it suggests that the two witnesses saw a ball of lightning and that this probably caused the crash. Of course the technical reports from the accident investigation team plus a greater knowledge of ball lightning would have explained this case better but this is my theory up to now. If any new data occurs and changes this I'll be in touch again.