

The WWII German Bomb Launching Base at the Place Called Taissiau (Dun-Sur-Auron - Cher - FR)

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Abstract

The search for WWII German bomb launching bases in France is certainly an important subject. The poorly known WWII German bomb launching base at the place called Taissiau near Dun-sur-Auron (Cher department - France) represents an interesting case. Searches for information about this base on the internet, in the DAWA catalogue of WWII German radar bases in France and at the town hall of Dun-sur-Auron were unsuccessful. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to present and to deepen as much as possible the knowledge about this base in order to ensure that its existence and characteristics will be known by a large public of interested people.

Keywords

WWII, German-Base, Bomb-Launching-Base, Taissiau, Dun-Sur-Auron, Cher, Radar, *Wurzburg-Riese*, Conflict Archaeology, Contemporary Archaeology

1. Introduction

The search for WWII German bomb launching bases in France is certainly an important subject. The poorly known WWII German bomb launching base at the place called Taissiau near Dun-sur-Auron (Cher department) represents an interesting case. Searches for information about this base on the internet, and in the DAWA catalogue (Lippmann, 2023) of WWII German radar bases in France were unsuccessful. A request for information on said base addressed to the town hall of Dun-sur-Auron received the reply “... we have no knowledge of this”. Therefore, it appears of great importance to present and to deepen as much as possible the knowledge about this base.

2. Historical Context

From 1936 to 1939, Spain was the place of a severe civil war between republican and nationalist parties. As a consequence of the evolution of the military situation, several migratory flows of Spanish refugees reached France. In the department of Cher, 120 refugees arrived in 1936, 965 in 1937, 162 in 1938 and 3002 in 1939 during the so called “*Retirada*”. In Cher, the majority of the Spanish refugees found employment in agriculture (*Archives Départementales et Patrimoine du Cher, 2000*).

In order to regulate the situation of these Spanish refugees, the French government adopted several decrees. On 12th April 1939, Daladier’s Decree specified the obligations to which foreigners in France were subject. The decree, allowing refugees as forced laborers, legalized the creation of the Foreign Workers Companies (*Compagnies de Travailleurs Étrangers: CTE*) whose statutory framework was established by a decree of 27th May 1939.

The *CTEs* were formed by a number of sections according to the circumstances. In general, each *CTE* comprised five sections of fifty workers, making a total of 250 workers and a unit of permanent employees formed by civilian and military personnel. According to the decree of 9th April 1940, these workers were subject to the provisions of the Army Code of Military Justice. The *CTEs* were employed in different construction projects planned at departmental and municipal levels (*Parello, 2016*).

The mobilization of many French citizens due to France’s entrance into the WWII in September 1939 left many jobs unfilled in practically all economic sectors. In Cher, the army industry and agriculture sectors particularly benefited from the support of the *CTEs*.

At the beginning of the WWII the *CTEs* stationed in Cher were the following:

- the 180th and 196th *CTEs* employed by the Technical Experimental Establishments at Bourges;
- the 114th *CTE* employed by the Air Ministry (designated also as the 163rd *CTE* according to the “War nomenclature” and also 2/114th *CTE* in a document of February 1940) at Dun-sur-Auron (46° 53' 5.38" N, 2° 34' 18.6" E, height 174.81 m) (*Archives Départementales et Patrimoine du Cher, 2000*).

After the French defeat, the *Wehrmacht* and the *Einsatzkommandos* captured several thousand of Spanish refugees in the occupied zone. Upon Hitler’s order, from September 1940, they were deprived of their prisoner of war status, handed over by the *Gestapo* and sent to concentration camps in Germany. About 7200 of them were sent to the Mathausen and Gusen concentration camps (*Parello, 2016*).

Disbanded at the Armistice, the French 72nd Artillery Regiment was recreated on 1st September 1940 as part of the Vichy army. It was then stationed in Issoudun, Dun-sur-Auron and L’Isle-Jourdain. It was again disbanded in November 1942 after the German invasion of the French free zone (*Sicard, 1997*).

The 114th *CTE* remained on place until its transformation into a Foreign Workers Groups (*Groupements de Travailleurs Étrangers: GTE*) by the Vichy govern-

ment on 27th September 1940.

The *GTE* should not be confused with the Compulsory Work Service (Service du Travail Obligatoire: *STO*), identifying the requisition of hundreds of thousands French workers, forced to work in Germany to support the German war effort. The *STO* was put in place by the Vichy government between 1942 and 1944.

On 29th August 1942, during a first raid, Jews from Indre, Cher, and Indre-et-Loire departments were captured. They were sent to the Douadic transit camp, inspected for a few days in order to determine those eligible for deportation, then gradually sent to the regional camps of Nexon (Haute-Vienne) or Rivesaltes (Pyrénées-Orientales) where the trains to the Drancy camp were organized, the last stop before the extermination camps.

On 23rd February 1943 during a second raid in the unoccupied zone, organized by the Vichy government, a list of about a hundred foreign Jewish was drawn up. Some of them, warned by the French Gendarmerie, hid themselves and escaped capture. However, convoys brought others to the Gurs camp (Pyrénées-Atlantiques) and then to Drancy camp (AJPN.org, 2018).

It was during this period that a German bomb launching base was constructed at the place called Taissiau (46°54'5.39" N, 2°31'13.2" E, h. 163.38 m) about four km North-West from Dun-sur-Auron.

On 6th June 1944, the “maquis” of the Croix de Maupioux of the Francs-Tireurs et Partisans (*FTP*) installed in the forest of Dun-sur-Auron, participated in the attack against the headquarters of the Vichy Militia in Saint-Amand-Montrond (Cher). From 8th June the town was then attacked by German troops. The *FTP* maquis withdrew to the Creuse department, except for a few “maquisards” who remained in Dun-sur-Auron.

On 20th and 21st June 1944, combats in Dun-sur-Auron involving the Vichy Militia and the 3rd Battalion of the 1st Regiment of France (*RF*) resident in Dun-sur-Auron, caused several killed.

On 20th June, three groups of the 1st *RF*, led by Mr Gadier, a pro-German Frenchman who knew the maquis, went on the attack. Arriving at the maquis hut in the Maulne wood, they shot one maquisard and arrested eight others, who were sent back to the 1st *RF* camp where they were interrogated, beaten and mistreated. The next day, one of them was found hanged in his cell. The others were transferred to the Riom prisoner camp and some of them transferred to the Dachau concentration camp in Germany, where two died.

On 22nd August 1944, the 3rd Battalion of the 1st *RF* joined Colonel Bertrand's French Forces of the Interior (*FFI*) 33rd *Demi-Brigade*.

On 1st September 1944, a unit of the 95th Indian Brigade of the *Wehrmacht* (*Taglichbeck* column) crossed the Cher and along its way sowed terror, killed, raped women, and burned houses. At the entrance to Dun-sur-Auron, arriving from the Levet town, south of the Bourges town, it encountered the resistance of the French 2nd Battalion of the 33rd *Demi-Brigade*. Soldiers and civilians were killed and houses were burned. During the night between 1st and 2nd September and the following day of 2nd September, the staff of the Family Colony (*Colonie familiale*) of

Dun-sur-Auron, which hosted a clandestine surgical unit, collected the bodies of the wounded and the killed to treat or identify them. The victims were buried on 5th September in the Dun-sur-Auron cemetery (Gorand, 2006-2024).

The Cher was liberated on 13th September 1944 (AJPN.org, 2018).

3. The WWII German Base at the Place Called Taissiau

During WWII, Operation Jedburgh was a clandestine Allied initiative in which three specially trained operators teams were parachuted into occupied France and other countries with the mission of conducting sabotage, coordinating guerrilla and leading French resistance forces' actions against German communication lines and troops (Special Forces in World War 2, 2025).

The extract of Jedburgh Hamish—After Action Report declares:

* 1st August 1944: “Do you have any information on a launch pad north of Bourges for the new JPCOE flying bomb? We'll have more information early next week.”

* 8th August 1944: “The location of the German flying bomb launch pad is as follows, 4 km northwest of Dun-sur-Auron. The Germans require 250 kilowatts for their operations at this location. There is a radar station here. All the equipment on the ground was dug up in (?) Bernow.”

* 18th August 1944: “The ramps for the flying bombs at Dun-sur-Auron are almost ready. The bomb has four separate wings which, when opened, form one wing at the front and one wing at the rear of the fuselage. During a recent test flight, the bomb crashed immediately after take-off because one wing failed to deploy. The bomb is 6 m long and 2 m in diameter. The ramp is vertical and makes two loops after which the projectile takes off. The wings are supposed to deploy when the projectile leaves the ramp. This information is supposed to come from a German officer. I am trying to confirm it.”

* Observations: “We also came into possession of information concerning the VI or V2 bomb launch site. We were finally able to confirm the existence of this launch site southeast of Bourges, information which was passed on to London.”

Mr Francis Guillou acting for the Purple Network of the Central Bureau of Intelligence and Action (Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action: BCRA), remembered, “... due to the presence in Dun of a *Luftwaffe* company stationed there to ensure the security of the work undertaken for the installation—at a place called Taissiau—of a VI or V2 launch ramp to “flood” Normandy where Allies were contained by the German defenses.” (Henoff, 2024)

4. The Visit

The visit took place in September 2006.

The base identified components were the following (Figures 1-6).

A 10 × 10 m concrete emplacement (1) (46°54'3.29" N, 2°31'49.07" E, h. 160.56 m) comprising a main surface partly covered by stones, terrain and tall grass and a partly uncovered peripheral surface with a concrete bord. On one corner of this

surface was a concrete square block with four small rectangular holes. On one side was a shallow rectangular well which, according to its grooved bord shape, had to receive a cover. The interior of the surface and the well were partially filled with terrain which did not allow further exploration.

A 26 × 10 m concrete emplacement (2) (46°54'3.31" N, 2°31'46.25" E, h. 160.52 m) is no longer visible, probably covered by terrain.

A 45 × 15 m concrete emplacement (3) (46°54'2.2" N, 2°31'41.79" E, h. 161.61 m) is no longer visible, probably covered by terrain.

A 20 × 10 m concrete emplacement (4) (46°54'3.56" N, 2°31'37.81" E, h. 160.37 m) is no longer visible, probably covered by terrain.

A 6 × 7 m power plant emplacement (5) (46°54'5.08" N, 2°31'35.2" E, h. 161.65 m) was formed by a thick slab with grooves, partly covered by stones and rubble. One U-shaped groove bordered three sides of the slab, in its slab middle was a Y-shaped groove with arms protruding towards the base of the U-shaped groove, without communicating with it. Around the slab, there was no remains of other constructions, therefore, it seems that this slab supported a wood house or a wood cabin in the U-shaped groove.

A V229 emplacement (6) (46°54'7.54" N, 2°31'24.35" E, h. 164.04 m) for radar *FuMo 214—Würzburg Riese* was quite deteriorated. On the top surface, six 10 × 15 cm fixation holes for the radar base were clearly visible. The lateral inclined surfaces preserved the square inspection opening and the original concrete coverage. Some disappeared coverage portions showed the internal mix of concrete and local stones but no trace of an internal metal armor. At its interior was undulated metallic sheets. Around the emplacement, there were no remains suggesting a protection wall.

The cultivation works on the fields were always carried out around the two emplacements (1) and (6).

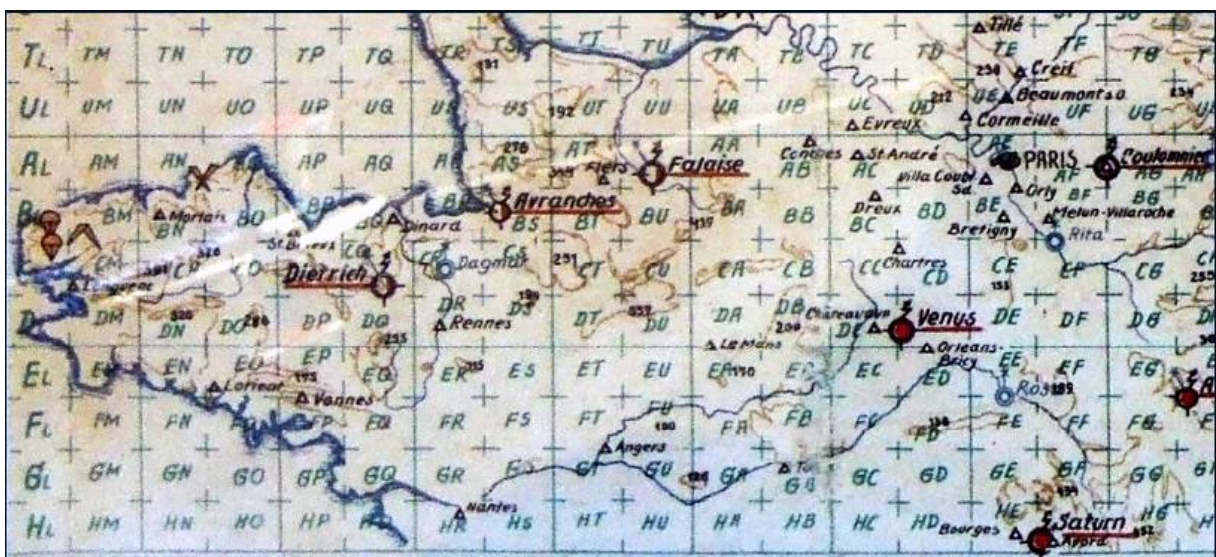


Figure 1. Luftwaffe navigation map, on the bottom right the Bourges—Avord sector (Henoff, 2024).

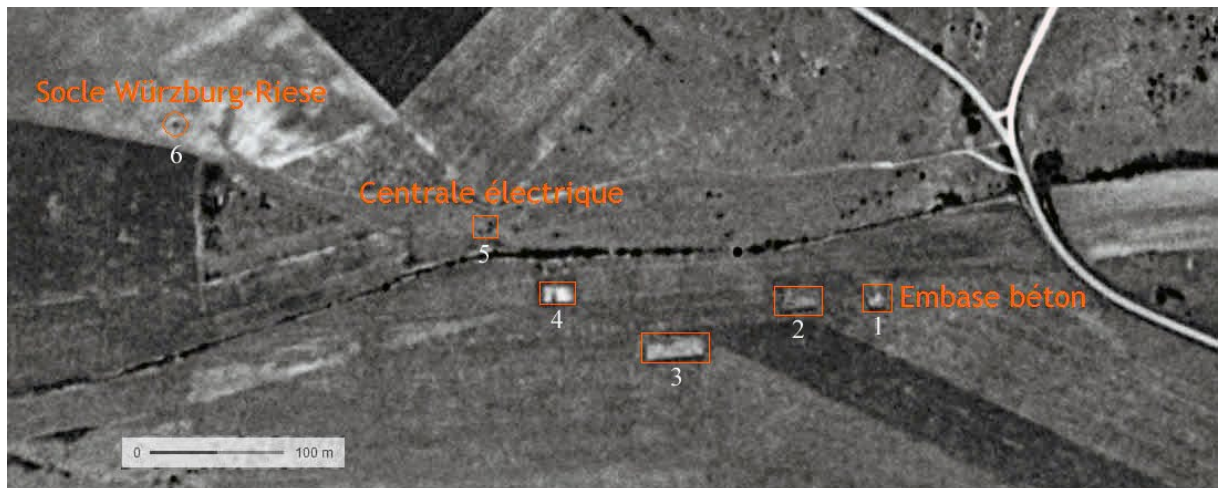


Figure 2. German base general view—1 - 4 concrete emplacements (Embase béton); 5 power plant emplacement (Centrale électrique), 6 Würzburg Riese emplacement (Socle Würzburg Riese) (Henoff, 2024).

IGNF_PVA_1-0__1950-06-29__C2225-0031_1950_F2225-2425_0089



Figure 3. German base detailed view.

IGNF_PVA_1-0__1950-06-29__C2225-0031_1950_F2225-2425_0089

5. Discussion

It is possible that workers of the 114th GTE under the control of the *Organisation Todt* (O.T.) contributed to the construction of the Taissiau base.

Figure 1 indicates a WWII German base coded *Saturn* between Bourges and Avord. Its identification with the Taissiau base, due to the due the schematic representation of the map, is possible but not completely certain because Taissiau is located about 17 km south of Avord and about 22 km south of Bourges.

A farmer, met during the visit, stated that the place was used as a launch base for rockets without indicating from where he obtained this information.

The purpose of the concrete emplacements can tentatively be so interpreted:

* Emplacement (1): a launching site, the four small rectangular holes on the partly uncovered peripheral surface could indicate the presence of a missing wire

mesh mast for supporting, preparing and launching the flying bombs.

* Emplacement (2): a possible barracks place for flying bombs final preparation or fuel depots, although close to the Emplacement (1) ~ 40 m, where the flying bombs were launched.

* Emplacement (3): a possible barrack place for flying bombs and/or fuel depots, although close to the Emplacement (1) ~ 120 m, where the flying bombs were launched.

* Emplacement (4): possible barrack place for personnel lodgment or second launch site, sufficiently displaced form Emplacement (1) ~ 250 m.

* Emplacement (5): a power plant, sufficiently displaced form Emplacement (1), ~ 280 m, the Y-shaped groove was probably intended for receiving electrical cables.

* Emplacement (6): *V229* emplacement (6), sufficiently displaced form Emplacement (1), ~ 530 m, for radar *FuMo 214—Würzburg Riese*.

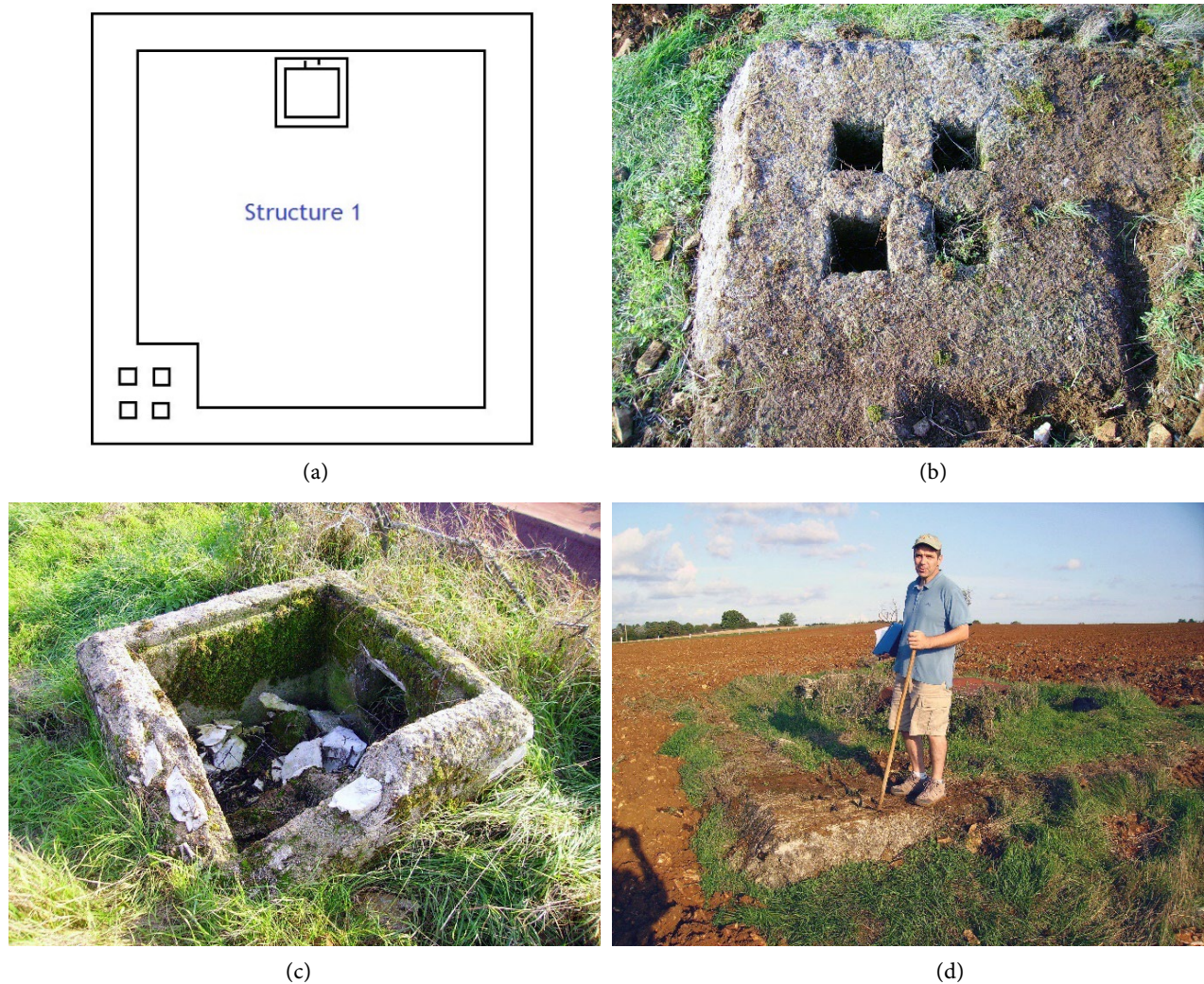


Figure 4. Emplacement (1)—(a) peripheral surface plan; (b) concrete square block with four small rectangular holes; (c) shallow rectangular well; (d) peripheral surface general view.

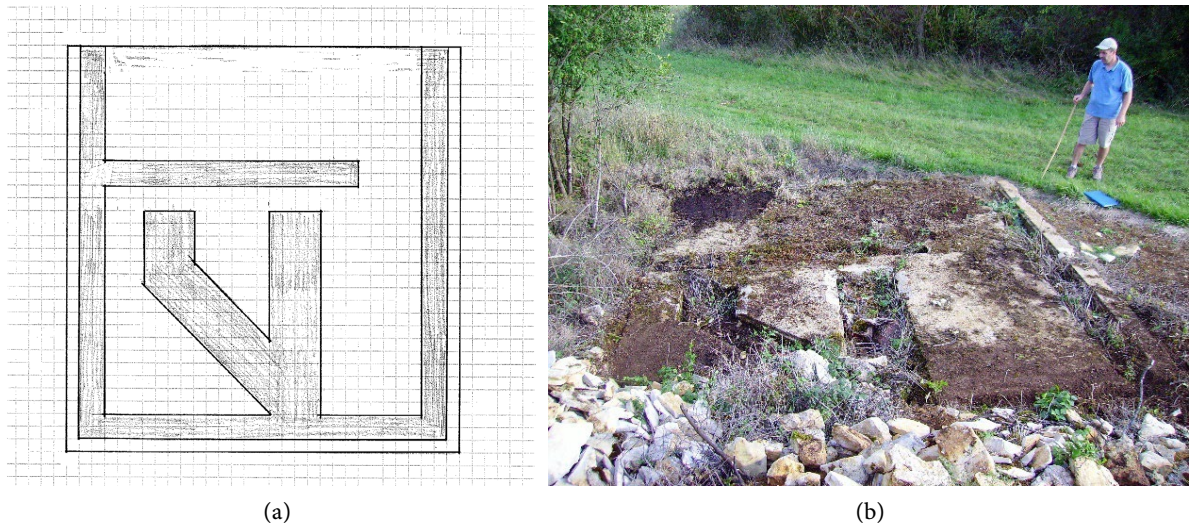


Figure 5. Emplacement (5)—(a) concrete platform plan, transformer—power plant. (b) thick slab with U- and Y-shaped grooves.



Figure 6. V229 emplacement (6)—(a) North vision with fixation holes for the radar base and square inspection opening; (b) South vision.

The purpose of a single radar *Würzburg Riese* instead of two, as normal in the WWII German radar bases such as those coded *Mandrill* (Dupont et al., 2007) at Chânes-Froids near Monterfil (Ille et Vilaine), *Made* (Tomezzoli & Pottier, 2007) near Les Mees (Sarthe), *Re 500 Pinguin* (Tomezzoli & Colliou, 2017) at Le Bous near Saint-Pabu (Finistère), *Stp. QU 500 Renntier* (Tomezzoli, 2021) at Roz-Be-strée at the Pointe du Raz (Finistère), was to control and probably to correct the trajectories of the flying bombs by means of electromagnetic signals.

Assuming the excerpt of the Jedburgh Hamish—After Action Report sufficiently precise, the JPCOE flying bombs were not V2 which, although launched vertically, were 14 m long and had no wings at the front of the bomb fuselage. The presence of said wings let to think that they were a kind of gliding flying bombs like the V1 which actually were about 7 - 8 m long and about 1.5 m in diameter, “had four

separate wings which, when opened, formed one wing at the front and one wing at the rear of the fuselage”, but were launched from inclined (48°), not from vertical ramps. The souvenir of Mr Guillou about a *VI* or *V2* launch ramp is rather vague about the possible flying bombs launched from the base of Taissiau, however, the ranges of the *VI* (about 200 - 250 km) and of *V2* (about 320 km) were sufficient for “flooding” the invaded Normandy.

The Taissiau base was about 243 km South-East from the German *V2* bomb launching base (47°42'17.54" N, 0°21'03.15" E, h. 82.94 m) near Vaas (Sarthe) and the *V2* depot of the place called Les Pilliers (47°41'50.29" N, 0°06'41.69" E, h. 42.91 m) near Luché-Pringé (Sarthe) (Tomezzoli, 2007). In this case, the trajectories of the *V2* towards the ports of Great Britain's South coast, about 350 km away, were controlled by the *Made* radar base of the *Kammhuber* defence line.

6. Conclusion

The visit to the WWII German bomb launching base at the place called Taissiau permitted the determination that some vestiges of its components were still preserved and others probably covered by terrain and vegetation and consequently unrecognizable. As usual in archaeological research, further issues concerning the base remain to be solved: the possible Saturn identification of the base, its possible operative status, the kind of flying bombs intended to be launched, the missions actually accomplished. For the moment, the forgotten position of the base in the countryside and the coverage by terrain and vegetation of many of its components contribute to their preservation, but a more certain legal status and cultural recovery of the base would be desirable. However, it is hoped that this article can form the basis for further studies on the base.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this article.

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