

Swiss defense news

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SWISS DEFENCE NEWS

"Mirage" and Aircraft Industry

Early in February, the Federal Council published its third report on the present state of production of the "Mirage III s/rs" fighter aircraft. The Government is obliged to inform Parliament twice a year until the fifty-seven aircraft are delivered. It will be recalled that Parliament ordered a reduction from one hundred to fifty-seven planes when an additional 576 million francs were asked for, three years after 746 million francs had been granted. The reduction has necessitated a revision of the various contracts. The latest report states that this as well as the technical development is going on according to plan.

The experience so far with the double-seaters and reconnaissance planes is satisfactory according to the report. The first Swiss "Mirage" fighter was tested by Chief Test Pilot Haefliger of the KTA (STM Service Technique Militaire). Some of the general testing is done in France, some in New Mexico. At the moment, no more additional credits are anticipated by the Federal Council. As regards pilots, only officers will be able to take over the "Mirage", as the training of the militia n.c.o.'s is not long enough to get enough experience, and the service of a second lieutenant-to-be is required to provide enough knowledge and skill. There is no shortage of applicants, however.

The "Mirage" fighter is constructed under licence in various aircraft production centres in Switzerland. The three main sections are body construction, machinery and electronics, final assembling and testing. The first is mainly centred on "Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke A.G." at Altenrhein/St. Gall and the "Pilatusflugwerke A.G." at Stans/Nidwalden. Sulzer A.G. Winterthur are responsible for the machinery, and the "Eidgenössisches Flugzeugwerk" at Emmen/Lucerne for fitting electronic devices, for final assembling and overall testing. Dozens of firms are involved all over Switzerland, to mention only three firms in Geneva alone: Charmilles s.a., Motosacoche s.a., and Usines Jean Gallay s.a.

By 1969, the "Mirage" fighters should be ready for action. The question will then be "what next?" for the Swiss aircraft industry. For obvious reasons, civil aviation cannot be relied upon to fill the gaps. The industry has appealed to the military authorities to plan ahead for the 'seventies. The Chief of the KTA, Divisional Commander Kuenzy, has announced that the question is being studied by the Chief of General Staff. Early in February, the Federal Council stated that the Swiss fighter "P-16" was under consideration for use in the Swiss armed forces, provided it met requirements as well as or better than foreign fighter planes. To develop the "P-16", i.e. the "AJ-7", would help Swiss aircraft industry considerably. A respective message to Parliament for the necessary credit grants is not expected before 1969, however.

Of Arms, Men and Training Centres

Two years ago, Parliament agreed to purchase 540 armoured fighting vehicles of the American type "M113". In December, the last of these were delivered. By Christmas, all tank grenadier and mortar companies had finished their basic training with the new tank.

The first Swiss tank "61" was taken over by the Army in summer. With this, a phase of fifteen years of development and production came to a close. A large number of Swiss industrial firms (120 in all) had co-

operated with the "Eidgenössische Konstruktionswerkstätten" in Thun. 65% of the total cost went to private industry, about 22% of the federal works and only some 13% abroad from where the motor and the hydraulic tower steering come.

In January, the Federal Military Department signed several agreements with foreign companies regarding delivery of war materials. Amongst them is the English firm Ferranti who received an order for several electronic data transmission devices for the "Florida" system. A statement was issued in December that Switzerland had not been charged excessively for the "Bloodhound MK II" ground-to-air missiles.

Two American self-propelled howitzers are at present on trial at the Swiss Army training centre in Thun; their suitability to Swiss terrain is being tested.

In September, it was announced that the federal arms factory in Berne (dating from 1875) with a staff of 330 could no longer satisfy modern requirements. The matter is under further consideration.

In several parts of the country, the local population has been objecting to the setting up of military training centres. The most violent objection has come from the Franches Montagnes (Jura) where the people would agree to a centre for Army horses, but not to a military training centre. It has now been announced by Federal Councillor Chaudet that the planned centre would probably be transferred to another part of the country, possibly Appenzell Innerrhoden. The Communes of Andermatt and St. Luziensteig are against an extension of the military establishments in their districts; the inhabitants of the Mont-Racine (Neuchâtel) region are afraid that the nature reserve would suffer. From Solothurn comes a report of Commune objection to a shooting range in the Guldenenthal.

The work is progressing on the new tank training ground in the Ajoie, and the Federal Military Department bought ground in the Hongrin Valley to erect a rifle range.

A new type of prefabricated buildings has come into use in the Army and is proving successful; it is also cheaper by about 20%.

The question of adequate training grounds is a real problem in a small country like Switzerland where one-third of the surface is unproductive and the population has more than doubled in the last century. The text of the old soldiers' song about what soldiers should eat and drink and where they should sleep, could, according to National Councillor Peter Dürrenmatt, be added to "where should they practice?"

In January, this year's training of the n.c.o.'s began in most centres. 4,000 soldiers started out on their instruction courses as corporals, 350 in Thun alone. In spring, some 18,500 youngsters will begin their initial military service, and an even larger number in summer. 48,000 men and n.c.o.'s will be in longer military service in the course of this year. Another 5,000 will be undergoing training as officers, sergeants, quarter-masters and sergeant-majors. Thun and Bière are the two biggest training centres in Switzerland.

According to the revision of the military organisation in 1961, changes have been made in Army service. By the end of 1965, 50,000 men, born 1909-1912 (officers 1907-1908), were dismissed from compulsory militia service. The upper limit of the "élite class" has been shortened and fixed at 32 (36 previously); "Landwehr" at 42 (48) and "Landsturm" at 50 (60). Men and n.c.o.'s now serve only twelve years in the first category, ten in the

second and eight in the third. The final adjustment will be made this year.

A new compulsory shooting programme has come into force on 1st January; "Schliesspflicht" has been extended to the age of 42. This is only one aspect of the new federal decree regarding the administration of the Swiss Army. It concerns all matters financial, transport, provisioning, medical services, animals, buildings, etc. In 1965, 452,612 militia men, about a quarter of them voluntarily, did their rifle shooting (rifle or assault rifle). In addition, nearly 237,000 men went in for the voluntary "Feldschiessen" with rifle and over 22,000 with pistol.

A commission of experts is at present studying a possible reorganisation of the Federal Military Department. This was set in motion following the "Mirage" affair. The final report will be presented to Parliament in the autumn.

Anniversaries

A number of jubilees have recently been celebrated. The military training centre of Frauenfeld reached a century in September. The Swiss Women's Auxiliary Service was twenty-five years old the same month. The celebrations took place in Berne in the presence of the Chief of FHD Andrée Weitzel and Federal Councillor Chaudet. Another silver Jubilee could be registered by the Army Meteorological Service in October. In December it was fifty years since the "Zentralstelle für Soldatenfürsorge" was founded, the soldiers' welfare organisation.

Finally, on 4th February, the 25th Military Winter Championships began at Grindelwald with a participation of 260 men from all parts of the country. Accredited foreign Military Attachés attended, and a Swedish team competed, losing honourably to the Swiss.

Fusilier Hans Fluetsch (Arosa), Lance-Corporal Alfred Seiler (Grindelwald) and Lance-Corporal Werner Graf (Horgen) are the new Swiss champions in the three military winter events.

Appointments

On 1st October, the Chief of Information at the General Staff, Col. Pierre Musy (son of the former Federal Councillor) was promoted to Brigadier.

On 1st January, the following officers took up their new posts: The Chief of Army Training is Divisional Commander, now Corps Commander, Pierre Hirschy, in succession to Corps Commander Robert Frick. He is an Infantry man from Neuchâtel, a construction engineer (ETH) as well as a licensed ski instructor. His father was President of the Swiss Ski Association and of the Olympic Committee which supervised the Olympic Winter Games at St. Moritz in 1928. The new Chief's wife is the former racing skier and slalom champion Miss Rosemarie Bleuer from Grindelwald.

Corps Commander Hirschy's successor as Chief of Mechanised and Motorised "Leichte Truppen" is Brigadier, now Divisional Commander James Thiébaud. The new Brigadier to take his place as Commander of a Frontier Brigade is Col. Otto Stalder (Ruegsau/Berne).

The new Commander of the central training courses for higher officers, "Zentralschule II A and III A", is Col., now Divisional Commander Gérard Lattion (Liddes/Valais). The retiring Brigadier Pierre Glasson's successor as Commander of a Frontier Brigade is General-Staff Colonel, now Brigadier, Léo du Pasquier (Freurier).

Another retiring Commander of a Frontier Brigade,

Brigadier Benno Siegwart, has been replaced by General-Staff Colonel Hans Hemmeler (Aarau). Brigadier Ferdinand Bietenholz (Pfaeffikon/Zurich) is the new Commander of General-Staff Courses.

The Commandant of the Valais Cantonal Police, Ernst Schmid, has been appointed Commander of the Army Police (rank of Colonel).

Some twenty States have Military Attachés in Switzerland, half of them living in Berne, the others in Bonn, Paris and Rome.

Switzerland has half a score of Defence Attachés abroad, covering over twenty countries. In Washington, London and Paris, there is also an assistant. Early in the year, the first Swiss Military Attaché to Russia was appointed. Hitherto, the officer in Warsaw was also accredited to Moscow.

(Based on news received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse and "Basler Nachrichten".)



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THE INTERNATIONAL SALON OF TOURISM AND SPORT IN LAUSANNE

The eighth International Salon of Tourism and Sport, which was held in Lausanne from 26th February to 6th March, was interesting and brilliant. After the growth already noted last year, the number of exhibitors taking part again increased appreciably this year as well as the area occupied by the stands. In the tourist sector, the Salon gave an attractive view of a number of countries, on the official stands of Argentina, Bulgaria, Brazil, Cyprus, Germany, Israel, Italy, Morocco, Rumania, Spain, Turkey, USSR and last but not least Switzerland of course.

[O.S.E.C.]