

Audit of the Air2030 programme risk management armasuisse

Key facts

The Air2030 programme comprises four projects: the acquisition of a new fighter aircraft to replace the F/A-18s and F-5s, the acquisition of a long-range ground-air defence system, the replacement of the air traffic control system and the maintenance and replacement of radar facilities. This programme, with a budget of more than CHF 8 billion, was commissioned by the Air Force and the Armed Forces Staff. It is managed by armasuisse.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the risk management of this programme. Improvements are recommended at several levels, such as in regard to the financial risks inherent in the purchase of the future fighter aircraft.

Risk management is in place, but there is room for improvement

The SFAO found that risk management for this programme has been clearly defined and is being appropriately implemented. However, there is room for improvement: the description of the identified risks should be more detailed, and risk reduction measures should be indicated in a more systematic way. Finally, the visibility and traceability of the contributions made by external risk managers should be ensured.

Despite the efforts of the Head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS), the SFAO noted that the Air2030 programme is not integrated into the federal risk management system. The Armed Forces Staff should ensure consistency between the risks associated with Air2030 and the risk management of the Confederation. Major risks should be included in R2C, the Confederation's risk management tool.

Financial risks related to the F-35A should be taken into account

In June 2021, the Head of the DDPS announced that the F-35A from the US manufacturer Lockheed Martin had been chosen as the new fighter aircraft. The choice of this model led to extensive discussions at the political level and in the media. The SFAO felt it was important to objectively assess some of the points raised in order to evaluate their relevance in terms of risk.

During the evaluation phase of the four candidate aircraft, the identified risks were managed separately for reasons of confidentiality. According to armasuisse, they will be integrated into the risk management system in 2022. At the end of 2021, no financial risks related to the new fighter aircraft had been included in the project risks.

In the SFAO's view, there is no legal guarantee of a fixed price, i. e. a lump sum in accordance with Swiss legal precedent, for the procurement of the F-35A. The maintenance costs for the full life cycle of the aircraft are also uncertain. The SFAO recommends that armasuisse add these financial aspects to its risk inventory.

The SFAO did not carry out a financial audit of the F-35A costs, nor did it examine the evaluation phase of the candidates that resulted in the F-35A being selected. This will be addressed by the National Council Control Committee during the course of 2022.

Measures have been taken to ensure system interoperability

The audit also looked at the risks of system interoperability, but did not carry out an IT audit of the project. The different elements of the Air2030 programme must be able to communicate with each other. The replacement of the air traffic control system is a crucial element in this, as it has around 50 interfaces with other systems.

The SFAO found that interoperability risks have been identified and included in the Air2030 programme risk management. Measures have been taken since the beginning of the project, in particular by choosing to favour standard protocols rather than customised solutions.

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