

Follow-up audit of the implementation of key recommendations

Armed Forces Staff, Centre for Historic Equipment of the Armed Forces

Key facts

In 2001, the Federal Council decided against the introduction of a legal provision that would have made it possible to establish and operate an Armed Forces museum, or to support private efforts to do so. However, since 2009, the Centre for Historic Equipment of the Armed Forces (CHEAF) has been responsible for the collection of historical Swiss Armed Forces equipment. The aim is to document and present the history and technical development of the Armed Forces. Three employees are responsible for the decommissioning of this equipment. In addition, the CHEAF has concluded service agreements with three foundations (Thun/Burgdorf, Dübendorf and Uster) for a total annual budget of approximately CHF 3.8 million.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the implementation of three recommendations made around ten years ago. The mandate also included an assessment of the business relations between the Confederation and the Clin d'Ailes museum in Payerne, as well as the risks associated with the takeover of the weapons and ammunition collections by the CHEAF following the privatisation of Ammotec SA.

Overall, the results show many shortcomings and the three recommendations made by the SFAO have still not been implemented.

The recommendations have not been implemented

The vision, strategy and collection concept are defined. The strategic and operational objectives are not in line with the available resources: priorities should be set. The future of the Armed Forces' historical equipment should be assessed in terms of its durability, effectiveness and efficiency.

The wording of the service agreements and annual objectives has improved. However, adjustments are still needed to strengthen the control tools and to better manage the foundations. Each service agreement should contain a clause on the foundations' duty to inform and on the CHEAF's right to supervise. The latter should also be part of the decision-making process in relation to the foundations' hiring and salary policy.

With regard to the 2011 recommendation on covering the real estate costs of the Aviation Museum in Dübendorf, negotiations are underway between the Armed Forces Staff and the MHMLW Foundation. The SFAO is not in a position to comment on the chances of implementation by 1 January 2023, when the free land lease expires.

Risky takeover of ammunition and weapon collections

In its role as an ammunition manufacturer, Ammotec AG has collected ammunition in accordance with the collection principle for historical Armed Forces equipment. This collection has been supplemented by various donations of weapons and ammunition. There is no overview of these various collections and the inventories are not reliable. In the case of one donation in particular, the Confederation should not have accepted it, as it was subject to several strict conditions, including that it be completed and not be moved.

As a result of the change in ownership (privatisation of Ammotec AG), all of these collections are to be managed by the Confederation. The costs and risks are therefore transferred to the Confederation. The building that is to house them will not be operational in time; the costs of the transitional period will therefore be borne by the Confederation. The option of renting the current premises is estimated to cost around CHF 160,000 per year, but no negotiations have yet taken place.

The financial aspects of the collaboration with the Clin d'Ailes Museum need to be clarified

The Clin d'Ailes military aviation museum is a CHEAF-accredited institute. It does not pay any rent for the grounds of the military airfield in Payerne where the museum is located. As there is no legal basis for this, it should be charged rent from 1 January 2033 (expiry of easement granted by the Confederation). The service agreements for Mirage III flights foresee an annual price update – this has not been done. The billing method for the aviation fuel tank should be reviewed and the effective prices for maintenance and servicing should be invoiced.

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