

Audit of resource management

Defence Group – Armed Forces Command Support Organisation

Key facts

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) published an audit on the operational capability of the 2020 air-to-ground communication system¹ in 2021. It found that there were fundamental risks and problems in the area of resource management in the Defence Group (Group V) which exceed the level of an individual project. It therefore announced a separate audit of ICT management at the Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). In addition, the SFAO audited the implementation status of selected recommendations from the IT security audit at the Armed Forces Command Support Organisation (AFCSO)².

The problems of resource management and especially resource availability at the AFCSO were not unknown in 2020/21 and were the subject of several analyses. In the meantime, the Armed Forces management has triggered various measures which concern both the Defence Group and armasuisse. The focus of this audit was mainly on the measures related to resource management.

The audit shows that the problem of available AFCSO resources still exists and has a direct impact on the projects concerned. However, it also shows that the measures introduced are on track to improve the situation. A final assessment is not possible at present, because some measures have not yet been fully implemented.

Political decisions can influence the strategy

The Armed Forces plan in a capability-oriented manner and it is evident that there is a stringent strategy geared towards an effective and efficient use of resources. Since Parliament ultimately decides on resources, procurements and decommissioning, the AFCSO is dependent on the political context when allocating resources.

Group V's overall ICT plan improves resource management in 2022

In principle, Group V's overall ICT planning with the portfolios "existing ICT infrastructure" (AFCSO) and "development of the new digitalisation platform NDP" (Cyber Command) is suitable for the resource management of Group V. The division into two ICT sub-portfolios that was decided for the transformation phase from AFCSO to Cyber Command is comprehensible. Both Group V's overall ICT plan V and the two sub-portfolios were prepared in 2021 for the first time and for the most part according to the principles of the new budgeting process, which is still being revised. These enabled improved resource management in 2022.

Needs still not aligned with resources

For 2021, it can be estimated that approximately 50% of the reported demand from the projects could not be covered and may have led to corresponding postponements or delays

¹ The audit report for audit mandate 20429 can be downloaded from the SFAO website (www.sfao.admin.ch).

² The audit report for audit mandate 19364 can be downloaded from the SFAO website (www.sfao.admin.ch).

in the affected projects and programmes. The SFAO is unable to quantify the exact extent of this "wave of delays caused by general staff shortages" in terms of FTEs, skills, money and its distribution over time. The delays in the projects will also generate further costs that the SFAO cannot quantify. The portfolios of Group V's overall ICT plan still need to be adjusted with regard to waivers, suspensions or re-prioritisations. These adjustments depend on the analysis of the dependencies between systems and applications, which are also a key input variable for the ranking and prioritisation of the portfolios.

In addition to the revision of the portfolios, the roles and responsibilities, or rather the understanding of them, should be clarified between AFCSO and beneficiaries.

PORTFOLIO project is a central part of resource management

The PORTFOLIO project and the quality of the future portfolio reports depend to a large extent on other ongoing activities. As long as these activities are not completed, it will be difficult to assess the validity of the reports and thus the basis on which decisions are made. The first draft of the portfolio report includes key planning parameters as a basis for decision-making.

The SFAO recommended that Group V adjust the portfolio as soon as reliable facts and a basis for decision-making are available. In doing so, a number of measures should be fully exhausted. The priority must be to solve the ongoing problem of unavailability, especially of committed human resources for projects and programmes.

Financing issue is being tackled

According to the Equipment Ordinance³, the beneficiaries are responsible for the financing of their projects and their subsequent operation. In the past, they have not sufficiently fulfilled this responsibility.

One of the reasons for the resource problems is that the DDPS uses its guarantee credits only to request the services of third parties, rather than those of AFCSO employees. The project budgets were no longer sufficient because the AFCSO had to outsource more and more services.

In order to resolve the issue, the Chief of the Armed Forces issued guidelines specifying that in future, the beneficiaries must finance all ICT services. In addition, they must include an estimate of the ICT operating costs in their project proposals.

Follow-up IT security audit at the Armed Forces Command Support Organisation

The follow-up audit found that eight recommendations can be closed and two recommendations will soon have been implemented. The AFCSO has implemented its action plan and corrected the shortcomings. The details can be found in section 6 and appendix 4.

Original text in German

³ DDPS Ordinance of 26 March 2018 on the Acquisition, Use and Decommissioning of Military Equipment, SR 514.20