

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 20 (1993)
Heft: 2

Artikel: New security policy and Army '95 : more professional and more flexible
Autor: Rusconi, Giuseppe
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-907407>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 28.04.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

More professional and mo

Switzerland's future army will be slimmer. Fat will be replaced with muscle. But we will still be armed against all comers. In practice, this means fewer men, more professionalism and more flexibility.

That at any rate is how the Federal Council sees Switzerland's security policy in the future. The government's intentions have been set out in three reports: the Federal Council's Report '90 to the Federal Assembly on

Giuseppe Rusconi

Switzerland's security policy, dated October 1, 1990; the Federal Council's Report to the Federal Assembly on the army concept for the 1990s, dated January 27, 1992; and the Draft Military Law and Army Organisation, including explanations of the Army '95 concept, dated November 25, 1992.

We do not have enough space to describe all the changes which are due to take place in the Swiss army. Those es-

pecially interested can obtain all three reports from the Federal Military Department. We will confine ourselves to the major changes.

The new situation

According to the Federal Council, the international situation is at present undergoing an important transformation. The Cold War is at an end, and the fall of communism in eastern Europe means that the decades-long "enemy" of the western democracies has disappeared. But on the other hand there is now no

longer a security balance in Europe, even though efforts are being undertaken in the face of innumerable problems to build one (the Maastricht Treaties). Although the danger of world war has receded, the situation in Europe remains extremely unstable. It is marked by the breakup of the USSR which has been accompanied by violence in many places, by the terrible civil war in ex-

Military fire fighting exercise to save a burning house.



Yugoslavia whose cruelties provide a grim reminder of the Second World War, and by the increasing threat of escalation throughout the Balkans. Nor is central Europe free from nationality conflicts and inter-state tensions leading to further divisions, as in the case of former Czechoslovakia. Western Europe has not been totally isolated from the nationalist virus, which is seen in autonomy movements like the Italian



At a military parade, with Jean-Pascal Delamuraz at centre (Photos: Prisma)

re flexible

"Lega Lombarda" and the permanent state of tension in Belgium. The rebirth of racist ideologies also gives cause for anxiety – and not only in Germany.

The Federal Council also takes account of other factors of instability, such as "the continuing dissemination of chemical and nuclear weapons of mass destruction, the spread of militant, fundamentalist religious communities such as those in the Islamic world, and the increase in terrorism and arms dealing". We may add to these the growing

influence of international crime (drug trafficking) and "the ever greater north-south and east-west divides, as well as the migratory pressures associated with them".

New tasks for the army

The changed situation in Europe and throughout the world has led the Federal Council to work out a new security policy in which the army is certainly involved but in which it no longer occupies the central position. The government has defined the instruments of the new security policy as follows and in this order: foreign policy, the army, civil defence, economic and foreign trade policies, national economic supply, border security and information. These instruments are to be coordinated but still maintained on an individual basis. In this way the army will be kept in being, and the will of the people (as expressed in the November 26, 1989, referendum) respected – leading to a more realistic assessment of the situation.

And what will the new tasks of the army be? The report on security policy states that the army will contribute to the promotion of peace by providing

personnel for use in international peace missions and observation forces (see Swiss Review 6/92), as well as ensuring the military protection of international conferences held on Swiss territory.

The army will also contribute to the prevention of war by defending Switzerland and its people in the following ways:

- by providing permanent and credible evidence of its will to defend the country and its capability of doing so;
- by ensuring that Switzerland's land area never becomes a military vacuum;
- by defending the national air space;
- by defending the national territory from the borders into the very heart of the country;
- by continuing military resistance in occupied areas.

In addition, the army may be required to help maintain civil order in the following ways:

- by providing specially trained units for use in cases of disaster;
- by using suitable troop units to provide essential assistance when required in coordination with the appropriate civilian bodies both in Switzerland and abroad;
- by protecting equipment and installations which are of special importance or are particularly sensitive.

What will change for the soldiers?

In the draft of the new military law and army organisation approved by the Federal Council on November 25, 1992, the main lines of Army '95 were set out. The following changes directly affecting soldiers are planned:

1. The present security situation in Europe and the world allows a reduction in the total duration of service for private soldiers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) from 330 to 300 days. In the event of a crisis the figure may return to 330.
2. Army retirement will be at 42 for all ranks from private to captain. This means that the Home Guard will be abolished.
3. Units will no longer make a distinction between active soldiers and territorials.
4. Basic training will be reduced to 15 weeks as a general rule.
5. The majority of army members take a 19-day retraining course every two years (a total of 10). These will in future end on Fridays rather than Saturdays.
6. There will be an ombudsman to provide advice to those liable for military service.
7. Annual shooting practice will remain, but membership of a shooting association will no longer be compulsory.
8. General inspections of soldiers and NCOs will take place every five years (a total of 3).

March 1 saw the first mixed training course in the Swiss army. A woman recruit in her new uniform.
(Photo: Michael von Graffenried)

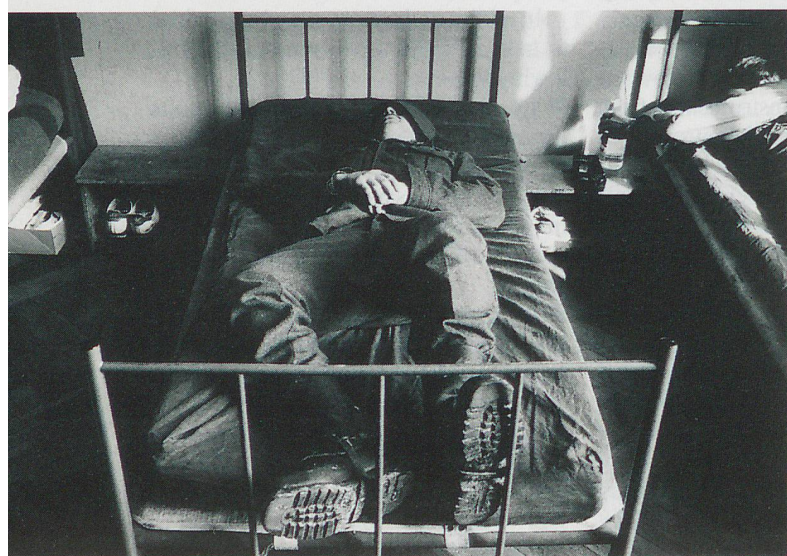


The structure of Army '95

The number of armed forces personnel will be reduced from about 600,000 to about 400,000 men and women. But not all branches will be affected by this



The Army '95 concept includes a careful combination of work...



...and rest. (Photos: Michael von Graffenried)

Two questions each to Kaspar Villiger

Security – with

The Army 95 reform programme and the purchase of new fighter aircraft, which is an integral part of it, are not uncontested. Federal Councillor Kaspar Villiger, head of the Federal Military Department, and Social Democrat National Councillor Andreas Gross, head of the Group for Switzerland without an Army, have been interviewed by Swiss Review.

Mr. Villiger, will the Army 95 reform programme weaken the army?

Kaspar Villiger: A credible army must reflect both the foreign and domestic situations. The Federal Council has defined a Swiss security policy to take account of recent changes. The Cold War is behind us, and the old structures have broken up. This provides us with new opportunities, but it also increases instability. Risks remain, and the world is not more secure. Army 95 covers all this. National defence is no longer our only task, but Army 95 will be smaller, with shorter periods of service. It will be more flexible and more dynamic, however; forces will be concentrated, and weaponry will be modernised. And military expenditure will fall! The old army of the Cold War days will become a many-sided instrument of crisis management.

Why can Switzerland not afford to forget about buying new fighter aircraft?

Our air force is old; we must replace 130 oldtimers with 34 new jets. This has priority, and it is in the budget. No new taxes will be needed. On June 6, Swiss voters will not only decide whether to buy these 34 jets. This initiative by the Group for Switzerland without an Army aims rather to prevent old aircraft being replaced before the year 2000. It is not only our defence which is at stake, but also our prestige. Can foreigners be expected to trust us if we hand over our security to people who want to phase out the army? The Federal Council also

measure to the same extent. For example, the number of infantry will drop by more than 40%, while signals troops will be reduced by less than 10%.

The most important changes are as follows:

- abolition of the Home Guard (reducing the age limit to 42);
- abolition of the special mountain fortress and frontier forces (units trained exclusively in ground warfare are no longer considered appropriate);
- concentrating the military infrastructure into stronghold units; this would leave other units free for non-territorial duties;
- restructuring the three mechanised divisions into five tank brigades (increasing operational flexibility);
- creating infantry regiments in Berne and Geneva (important cities);
- setting up a special regiment comprising four battalions for cases of disaster;

● adjusting the weapons structure of the mountain fusilier battalions in such a way that troops trained in mountain warfare can be used throughout the country;

● amalgamating the active and territorial age groups.

Soldiers' training

It is stated in the Army '95 guidelines that military training should be developed "in a spirit of mutual respect between officers and troops". Military training should "serve above all to promote a spirit of responsibility, discipline and comradeship, which are the foundation stones of success in both general and crisis situations". The importance of "a reasonable combination of work with rest and recovery" is underlined. The unit should be considered as "a social community" with a view to "improving both training and performance". ■