



*For the WK period Turtmann housed Fliegergeschwader 3, a wing which would have been activated in wartime to control F151 and F151 6 (6ème Esc Av) and their assigned ground/airfield units. Here the traffic is held up while an F-5 taxis to the runway through the village.*

refresher camps (Wiederholungskurs or WKs), the last such camp being WK'03. In 1967, one of the caverns was modified to operate the Mirage, and between 1986 and 1994 the Hunter operated from Turtmann. It then became an F-5 base. A regular user was the pilot recruitment school (Flieger Rekrutenschule) which used the airfield for its off-base training courses.

Turtmann was memorable for all pilots who flew from there. The airfield is located in the middle of a narrow valley, surrounded by some very striking mountains, requiring special pilot skills to counter the typical but unpredictable winds. The runway is short and narrow.

To land on runway 08 the pilots had to fly 12° off the centreline at an 8° incidence. To land on runway 26, the pilots have to approach the runway 4° off centreline, with an angle of 11°, and cannot land as a pair. At the west end of the airfield the runway is situated amid Turtmann village, with several public roads crossing the runway.

Turtmann is a typically Swiss air base, with the runway on one side of a main road and the caverns on the other. Offering a fair deal of protection, the cavern concept was originally aimed to minimise the period the aircraft were exposed before take-off and after landing, although it is now considered somewhat outdated given the capabilities of today's precision weapons. For operations the F-5s were towed outside the cavern (theoretically each

*As well as cavern accommodation, Turtmann also had two hardened taxi-through shelters at each end of the runway, well camouflaged with grass. These were used by aircraft on quick-reaction alert, and for last-chance weapons arming.*

squadron had its own cavern) with the pilots already strapped in, only requiring the external supply of compressed air in order to be able to start engines. Military reservists would have stopped traffic and over-enthusiastic spectators from getting too close, allowing the Tigers to cross the road to the runway. Tigers returning from a mission were towed back inside the caverns immediately after engine shut-down with the pilots still inside their cockpits.

During the two-week exercise period of a WK, it is the only time that both the ground troops and the air squadrons are simultaneously in service. The purpose of the F-5 deployment at Turtmann was therefore aimed at the combined training of both the pilots and the airfield personnel attached to the Flugplatz Abteilung 3 (air base battalion 3), working together in operations from the caverns.

Ground troops operated the whole airfield (including airfield security and air defence), while the personnel of Fliegerkompanie 8 (FlKp 8) serviced the aircraft.

Between 3 and 14 March 2003 the 'wartime' airfield at Turtmann was activated for the last time to accommodate two F-5 Fliegerstaffeln, or air squadrons: Fliegerstaffel 1 (the last F-5 unit with professional pilots) and Fliegerstaffel 6 (a reserve unit). On 5 March, some 22 different F-5E Tiger II's were flown in from different air bases around the country for the very last time. For the exercise Fliegerstaffel 1 and 6 deployed 17 Profi-pilots (professionals) and 11 Miliz-pilots (reservists), between them accumulating 190 flying hours during the WK. The missions flown were planned by the Swiss Air Operations Centre (AOC) and covered a wide spectrum, including air-to-air combat scenarios,

