



FIS1 10 has marked the final year of Mirage IIIRs service by painting two of its aircraft in special schemes based on the unit's badge. The schemes, known as 'Black' and 'White', were revealed during the last WK at Buochs in March 2003.



The final Buochs WK also featured FIS1 19 flying F-5Es. This aircraft carries special markings behind the cockpit for the ultimate Buochs deployment, the legend reading 'Farewell Buochs, 4 April 2003, FIKp 20/FIS1 19'. It also carries the FIS1 13 badge on its nose, this unit being one of two F-5 squadrons to be disbanded in 2003.

Fliegerstaffel 10 was formed on 1 September 1963 by redesignation of the Aufklärer-Gruppe, which had been formed in 1954. It received Mirage IIIs from 1968. In 1992 the Mirage IIIRs fleet was distributed among three squadrons – Fliegerstaffel 3, 4 and 10, operating in peacetime from the bases of Sion, Payerne and Dübendorf, respectively. Fliegerstaffel 4 undertook its last WK in April 1999 at its war-base in Payerne, and at the end of 1999 was disbanded, its personnel and aircraft integrating with those of Fliegerstaffel 10. On 31 December 2001, Fliegerstaffel 3 underwent the same fate. From 1 January 2002 there was again only one reconnaissance squadron in the Swiss Air Force,

Fliegerstaffel 10 flying all the remaining Mirage IIIRs and DS aircraft.

For the WK exercise, Fliegerstaffel 10 brought six Mirages to Buochs and 10 pilots, plus two former pilots to help in operations. Fliegerstaffel 19 could count on 12 aircraft, the majority having been flown in from Turtmann from the WK exercise there finished just one week earlier. Until 1993 FIS1 19 underwent Wks at nearby Alpach, moving to Mollis the following year. In 2000 the unit had its first WK at Buochs.

Most reconnaissance missions during the WK were flown over France to an area near Paris. Unusually, a few night missions were flown, the Mirages being equipped with an infra-red reconnaissance pod fitted on the centreline station. The squadron still had three pilots qualified for flying night reconnaissance missions.

The departure of a Mirage III from the cavern is spectacular. Just before the mission starts, the

departure is announced to the groundcrew through loudspeakers inside and the doors of the cavern are then quickly opened. The pilot initiates start-up while still being towed inside the cavern. The moment the aircraft is just outside, the engine is fully ignited, and a few seconds later it is released from the towbar while still moving. The tow-cart then speeds away, while the Mirage crosses the public road, heading for the runway.

On 26 March, two specially painted reconnaissance Mirages were officially presented. Affectionately dubbed 'Black' and 'White', they were adorned with their unit badges superimposed over the total aircraft surface, with one aircraft painted in a bluish dark grey and the other white. Additionally, a text on the central fuel tank read 'nil non videmus' ('nothing we do not see').

At the end of this last WK at Buochs, Flugplatz Abteilung 10 was dissolved, although the base hosted one more training camp in May, a lower-key one-week TK exercise undertaken by Fliegerstaffel 1's F-5s (their last) involving mainly the less experienced pilots from the squadron.

Buochs airfield will continue to be operated by Airport-Buochs AG for civilian use. The air force will also continue to use it for its Ranger ADS-95 reconnaissance drones, while the base has been placed on the reserve list.

Meanwhile, the Mirage is destined for a busy year until its retirement. In May FIS1 10 held its last WK at Sion, and was due to take part in Exercise Elite at Dübendorf, as well as the Axalp firepower demonstration. The last flight of the Mirage is planned for 17 December. Until then 'Black' and 'White' were scheduled to make several airshow appearances.

Marnix Sup-MIAS

With part of the Pilatus plant forming a backdrop, a Mirage IIIRs makes one of the type's last landings at Buochs. The Mirage was originally slated to stay in service until 2007.

