

Swiss air force

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In 2004 the Schweizer Luftwaffe celebrates its 90th anniversary, the same year that the Army XXI programme comes into effect, reducing significantly the size of the Swiss air force. Responding to the current nature of the European military balance, Switzerland has decided to pull large numbers of aircraft out of service, resulting in the disbandment of several units (Fliegerstaffel 1, 10 and 13 were disbanded at the end of 2003) and the closure of several war bases (Interlaken, Buochs and Turmman).

In line with this, a significant restructuring programme has been completed, seeing the integration of Fliegerbrigade 31 and Flugplatzbrigade 32, which is now known as Lehrverband Flieger 31 (Air Training Command).

From 1 January 2004, the Swiss Air Force will have three F/A-18 Hornet squadrons and three of F-5 Tigers at its disposal. They operate from three war-bases, Payerne, Sion and Meiringen, with the latter being the last with a cavern hangar structure. Training takes place at the airfields of Emmen, Locarno and Dübendorf, although the latter is planned to cease Tiger operations by 1 January 2005 and Hornet operations around 1 January 2007.

The Überwachungsgeschwader 85 (UeG or Surveillance Wing), headquartered at Dübendorf, will oversee training and operations of the Kommando Piloten Schule Luftwaffe 85 (Pilots School - HQ at Sion), Kommando Lufttransport 85 (Air Transport - HQ at Alpnach) and Kommando Luftverteidigung 85 (Air Defence - HQ at Payerne) under which the different Flieger Staffel fall according to role.