Swiss Air Force test approaches at Zurich Airport guided for the first time by military air traffic controllers from operations centre in Dübendorf

Geneva, 11 March 2021 – To complete the Quick Reaction Alert (24-hour air police service) in Switzerland, the Swiss Air Force conducted ten test approaches with F/A-18 fighter aircraft in Zurich Airport from 4th to 9th March 2021. For the first time, these test approaches, during which no landings were made, were conducted from the Air Force's Operations Centre at the Air Defence and Direction Center (ADDC) in Dübendorf by military air traffic controllers from Skyguide. This is an absolute exception, as the responsibilities between civil and military air traffic control are precisely defined. The controlling of aircraft in different sectors does not occur as a matter of principle. These test approaches have made it possible to practice efficient guidance of the interceptors in the event of an unscheduled need.

The test approaches were carried out on Zurich Airport's Runways 14 and 16, with so-called "missed approaches" (approaches without landing). All test approaches were carried out successfully without any incidents. The very good teamwork between the operational units involved also contributed to this success.

These test approaches are unusual for Swiss air traffic control because they were conducted for the first time by air traffic controllers in the military operations centre at the Air Defence and Direction Center (ADDC). Normally, only civilian air traffic controllers guide aircraft onto the final approach of Zurich Airport. The responsibilities between civil and military air traffic control are precisely defined, which is why these test approaches conducted from the Operations Centre are an absolute exception. Skyguide's military air traffic controllers also have a general approach endorsement in their licence for civil aerodromes.

In order to keep noise emissions for the population as low as possible, the approaches by the F/A-18 fighter aircraft were carried out at higher speeds than those of civilian aircraft. This resulted in a reduction of noise emissions.

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