

3003 Berne, 7th July 1990

Dear Secretary of Defense,

In October 1988, after an extensive evaluation, the Swiss Government selected the F/A-18 Hornet as the new fighter aircraft for the Swiss Armed Forces. According to the original time schedule, the procurement programme should have been submitted to Parliament before the end of 1990.

As you are well aware, the political situation having changed quite dramatically during the last 12 months, it has become much more difficult to find the necessary political support for major armament procurement programmes. Members of the Swiss Parliament are calling for a peace dividend, in quite the same way as Parliaments of other countries do. After long considerations, the Swiss Federal Council came to the conclusion, that it would not get the necessary political support for an F/A-18 procurement at the present time. Therefore, it was decided to alter the time schedule for the procurement of a new fighter aircraft. Before submitting the aircraft procurement programme, the Federal Council will submit to Parliament an extensive report on the Swiss security policy taking into account the new security situation in Europe. This will enable Parliament to take the decision on the aircraft procurement programme after having analyzed and debated the need for a credible air defense.

Given the fact that the decision to postpone the aircraft procurement programme had to be taken by the Federal Council as a whole, I was not in a position to give you any advance indication of the Government's intentions.

The time period until the Federal Council will take its decision to submit the aircraft procurement programme shall be used to investigate further means to reduce acquisition costs. To that extent the Federal Council decided that the Mirage

His Excellency
Mr. D. Cheney
Secretary of Defense

Washington DC



2000 aircraft shall be reviewed, since first results of recent contacts with the French authorities indicated that the Mirage 2000 in its improved version could represent an interesting alternative to the F/A-18.

Of course, it is absolutely clear that the ultimate decision between the F/A-18 and the Mirage 2000 will be based only on commercial and technical criteria. It is equally clear, that we shall make sure that the competition between the two aircraft will be fair. The F/A-18 programme will remain a valid competitor in this review. Explaining the Federal Council's decision to the public, I declared that I continue to consider the F/A-18 an outstanding aircraft and an ideal solution for Switzerland.

For the moment, I am not in a position to give you an assessment of when the decision on the procurement of the new fighter aircraft will be taken. However, I can assure you that the Federal Council's decision will not be influenced by other than security policy considerations.

I am aware of the tremendous amount of effort made by the United States in order to facilitate close cooperation for the preparation of the Swiss F/A-18 procurement programme. I should like to take this opportunity to express me sincere thanks and appreciation for your exemplary assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Kaspar Villiger
Federal Councillor