

“Sky Shield” and Switzerland

The ties with NATO being pushed forward

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Jean-Paul Vuilleumier.
(Picture ma)

On 10 April 2024, the Swiss Federal Council decided to join the “European Sky Shield Initiative” (ESSI) and authorised the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) to sign the declaration of accession. On 17 October 2024, the Swiss Armaments Director Urs Lo-

her signed the official document to this effect. The people and the cantons had no opportunity to express their views on this.

With this new step towards NATO, our seven-member government council is allowing the further erosion of our country’s neutrality and sovereignty.

The positive and trivialising tone of the Federal Council’s media release on 18 October 2024 regarding Switzerland’s accession to an important European NATO armaments project is alarming. Read for yourself:

“With its participation in the ESSI, Switzerland is increasing international opportunities for cooperation: ESSI enables better coordination of procurement projects, training and logistical aspects in the area of ground-based air defence (GBAD). The general provisions are defined in the MoU [Memorandum of Understanding], according to which the member states carry out the projects and programmes for the cooperative procurement of GBAD systems as part of the ESSI and can exchange ideas on the opportunities in other areas of cooperation. As a participant state of the ESSI, Switzerland can now conclude separate programme agreements for individual projects and programmes as part of the MoU. The initial focus is on medium-range ground-based air defence. *Attractive opportunities for cooperation will be available* in the future in the areas of shorter-range and longer-range air defence.

ESSI is compatible with Swiss neutrality

Signing the declaration of accession to the MoU does not lead to any obligations. Even after signing, Switzerland will decide freely where and to what extent it will participate in the ESSI and which ground-based systems it will procure. As previously, when signing the Memorandum of

Understanding in July 2023, in which Switzerland and Austria presented *their reservations under neutrality law* in an additional declaration, Switzerland also additionally set out its reservations under neutrality law in a public unilateral declaration of accession regarding the signing of the MoU. This refers in particular to the suspension clause of the MoU which enables Switzerland to withdraw from the cooperation due to its neutrality, should a member of the initiative become party to an international armed conflict.”

Source: <https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documenta-tion/media-releases.msg-id-102847.html>

With this press release, the Federal Council is trying to palm it off on the public by claiming that with signing “their reservations under neutrality law”, Switzerland will be free to decide “where and to what extent” it wants to participate in the billion-dollar “Sky Shield” project.

But how can it be that in a supranational military alliance of currently 15, and soon 22 NATO and EU states, signing a declaration of accession “does not lead to any obligations” and that Switzerland will “decide freely where and to what extent it will participate” and which weapons system it will procure?

In view of the compliant attitude of our state government in the face of previous financial and economic pressure from Washington and Brussels – for example, the seamless adoption of the Russia sanctions since February 2022 – these statements can only be window dressing.

ESSI is – and this should be emphasised – a European NATO armaments project. Switzerland is not a member of NATO but is being further integrated through this armaments project. If a European NATO state were to fire missiles at Russia during the conflict over Ukraine, Russia would want to switch off Sky Shield, and Switzerland would also be targeted. By joining, the risk of becoming a target is consciously taken.

Even if the Federal Council claims that neutrality is not endangered, this will not appear plausible to many states. The Federal Council can keep saying, “We remain a neutral state.” The fact is that on 28 February 2022, the New York Times reported: “Switzerland has abandoned its neut-

ality.” In the UK, Spain and France, this was the big headline. We can declare a hundred times that we are still neutral. If this is no longer perceived as such by the international community, then we are no longer neutral.

In view of these developments, the announcement and active support of the federal

popular initiative “Safeguarding Swiss neutrality” is becoming increasingly urgent. The population, parliamentarians and responsible media can bring our country back on the path of reason by supporting this popular initiative and enshrine its goals in the federal constitution.