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Ressort: Special interest

## Axalp Fliegerschiessen 2021

Axalp bei Brienz (Switzerland), 30.01.2022 [ENA]

Axalp is Back!

The shooting exercise in Axalp is back, in October 2021 the Swiss Air Forces managed to reorganize the event following the cancellations of previous years. In 2019 the event was canceled and in 2020, however, due to Covid19 as early as August, the SAF preferred postpone it to 2021.

This year we were therefore able to admire again the shooting skills of the Swiss Top Guns, the acrobatic skills of the various displays, including the newly born Swissparawings, and the evolution of the Patrouille Suisse in the context of the Swiss Alps.

Axalp Fliegerschiessen is the annual shooting exercise for pilots of the Swiss Air Forces, the shooting range is open throughout October and the Swiss Air Forces allow the civilian public to attend a welcome three-day airshow in the mountains above the Meiringen Air Base.

The first day of training this year allowed, due to the restrictions due to the Covid19 pandemic, access to only 2000 people among the public, guests and the media. For the remaining two days of the airshow the number granted was 4000 people per day (3500 public and 500 guests and media - source: Swiss Air Force). As every year, guests and media were able to access the theater of operations by flying with Aerospatiale SuperPuma and Cougar helicopters of the Swiss Air Force, while for the remaining public access (via ticket sold in the previous days) is on foot.

The peculiarity of Axalp Fliegerschiessen is precisely the access to the positions for spectators: starting from Brienz with transport services organized by the Swiss Air Forces (SAF), you can access the village of Axalp at about 1500 meters up in the swiss mountain, from here then, either via a chairlift (which covers only a part of the route) that through a path, you climb up to reach the three main positions to attend the airshow between 2000 and 2400mt. s.l.m.: Brau, Tschingel and Ebenfluh. Once you reach the stations, the spectacle that nature offers even before attending the exercises and displays is immense and fills the eyes of enthusiasts.

With the splendid background of the Alpine mountains on one side and the valley that hosts Meiringen Air Force Base and Lake Brienz on the other, we were once again able to witness an exceptional display of skill by the pilots of the Swiss Air Forces.

With their McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornets, the Swiss pilots tried their hand at the shooting exercise

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with several direct passes on the targets positioned on the mountain walls of the shooting theater and in the valley in front of the command post of Ebenfluh (Kommandoposten Ebenfluh - KP Ebenfluh).

Once you reach the top of one of the three stations, Axalp Airshow repays all the effort and for this reason, among the many aviation enthusiasts, this event is a mandatory stop at least once in a lifetime.

The Best Shot Aircraft Team again this year benefited from the very welcome availability of the SAF and with a pleasant flight in SuperPuma went to the top of Ebenfluh to attend the event.

Before the flight we attended a Briefing with Major General Peter "Pablo" Merz who from 1 July 2021 replaced Major General Bernhard "Benü" Müller in role of Commander of the SAF, after having played the role of "Project Manager of new fighter jet of SAF" for purchase new aircraft (which from 2025 will be Lockheed Martin F35A Lightning II - ed).

During the briefing, Major General Merz explained the roles of the air forces, their commitments and their future with the new air defense systems that will be acquired in the coming years.

The show went as planned, with an intense program that entertained the 4000 present for over 2 and a half hours of exercise/airshow with good weather conditions, with also a good temperature due to the high altitude in which the shooting theater is located, and some clouds to help photographers in their compositions.

**Programm Axalp 2021:**

- F/A-18 gun firing in the mountains
- Cougar's flight characteristics (SuperPuma Display Team)
- SuperPuma in Firefighting missions
- Air Policing mission (with Pilatus PC24)
- Parascouts Missions (supported from 2 Pilatus Porter)
- Flyover with 4 F/A-18 and Tiger Hunter (from Fliegermuseum Altenrhein)
- Flyover Swiss Air Force Training Aircraft (F/A-18; Pilatus PC21; Pilatus PC7)
- F/A-18 flight characteristics (Swiss Hornet Display Team – Capt. Yannick "Fönsi" Zanata)
- Pilatus PC-21 presentation (Lieutenant Colonel Daniel "Stampa" Stämpfli)
- Special Forces Operations (KSK: Kommando Spezialkräfte)
- Patrouille Suisse

The Highest Officers of SAFs were present at the event: Major General Peter Merz - Commander of Swiss Air Force, Major General Bernhard Müller - Former Commander of SAF, Lieutenant General Thomas Süssli - Chief of Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Hans-Peter Walser - Chief of Training & Education

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Command/Deputy Chief of the AFs.

In front of these high offices, in addition to aerial exhibitions, we were also able to admire a simulation of intervention of Swiss Special Forces, "KSK: Kommando Spezialkräfte", who arrived with a swiss air force transport helicopter, Eurocopter SuperPuma, lowered themselves to the ground and then positioned themselves and simulate their attack with different weapons until their recovery always by helicopter.

The Air Forces during the airshow honored, with two fly-overs and flares, the long career of the Hawker Hunter T.Mk.68 J-4206 HB-RVV "Double Victory" at its last display in an official airshow, in fact on Saturday 23 October 2021 the "Tiger Hunter" was withdrawn from the flight line of the Fliegermuseum Altenrhein and is now on display to the public in the museum itself. The 160 Hawker Hunters acquired by Switzerland have served the air forces in 10 different squadrons and for over 30 years have expressed their potential in more than 300,000 flight hours in over 480,000 operations.

Beautiful scenery, many performances worthy of the skill of the participants and the skills of the forces involved and the closing of the airshow which has always been the task of the Swiss aerobatic team, the Patrouille Suisse, with its fascinating display. The Swiss have once again been able to give a chase of emotions without interruption to all the fans present, an incessant action in the skies of the Bernese mountains.

Granted on Tuesday for training and Wednesday for the first day of the official airshow, unfortunately for Thursday the air forces had to give up the event due to the weather conditions that brought a lot of rain and strong winds at high altitude. Disappointed many spectators who should have participated on that day, but aware that this is also the risk of Axalp, also known for this type of situation. During the month of October, however, it is possible to access the security areas reserved for the public on several days outside the event.

The sound of the many jet and propeller engines, the sparkle of the many flares, the vibrating scream of the guns of the F/A-18 Hornets, the fumes of the Patrouille Suisse during its display will remain etched in the minds of the many who flocked to attend one of the most exciting and imitable event of the year.

The appointment is therefore for next year, October 2022, for a new Axalp Fliegerschiessen, with new emotions, new displays and the spectacle of the Swiss mountains and valleys where the theater of operations is located.

from Axalp bei Brienz (BE): Daniele Maiolo, Maria Sordon (BSA Team)

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