

2016/4/5: The reform of the Armed Forces 1962/63

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The first reorganisation of the Armed Forces of the Second Republic

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In 1963, as a result of a reform, a reorganisation of the Armed Forces took place. The general conditions were, among other things, general conscription, a period of service of nine months, selective service periods, budgeting, mobilization - which was in its initial plannings at that time, neutrality, and the available armament of the Austrian Armed Forces, for the most part consisting of the "armament packages" of the former occupying powers. The experiences from the Army Structure 1956 and from the deployment of the Armed Forces during the Hungary Crisis 1956 were to be taken into consideration, too. The "political" actors in the Federal Ministry of Defence (BMLfV) were the Federal Minister of Defence (BM für LV) Dipl. Ing. Dr. Karl Schleinzler (ÖVP) [* 8.1.1924 - † 19.7.1975] und State Secretary Otto Rösch (SPÖ) [* 24.3.1917 - † 3.11.1995]. A „first“ restructuring took place with the armoured detachments in August 1960, when the previous operational and organisational concept was changed by transforming the 3rd and 9th Brigades into the 3rd and 9th Armoured Brigades. On 1st January 1963, the 3rd and 9th Armoured Brigades were redefined to become mechanised brigades. On 1st January 1964, this "mechanised" reorganisation had its "delayed" completion when the 4th Infantry Brigade was transformed into a mechanised brigade (4th Mechanised Brigade) as well. Thus, there was a centre of gravity (even though of modest dimension) of mechanised troops available in the Danube region. The training of the mechanised troops was restructured, too. While the military management set decisive impulses, the nine months period of service, which required selective service at least twice, also had to be taken into consideration for further planning steps. The Army Structure 1963 improved the permanent operational readiness at peacetime, which was to become an advantage during the Czechoslovakia Crisis 1968 because of the rapid decampment readiness of the "touch-of-a-button-brigades". The increased operational readiness proved also useful in the course of the flood assistance missions 1965 and 1966, when, among others, twelve engineers companies were available immediately. The available personnel and material possibilities, however, were not sufficient to perpetuate the reduced army organisation to a full extent. This reform, however, was "once" impressive because of the "short" time period from the first planning steps to the beginning of the transformation on 1st January 1963, with concrete results, such as the beginning of comprehensive defence, the implementation of the "shield-and-sword concept", inspections and instructions, equipping with new weapons and gear, and "medial" reflexion. "Now", only the military territorial commands still exist. Let future generations of military historians, too, do research on the general conditions and substantial changes of this 1st Army Reform, remembering how everything had begun: ... at that time in 1963!

