

2019/6/5 (EN): HGT

Knowledge development in the military geospatial system of the Austrian Armed Forces (part 1)

Hermann Häusler/Gerald Gnaser/Friedrich Teichmann

So far, the term military geospatial system has hardly been analysed in technical literature, although the term military geography has been common as “the application of geography for military purposes” for decades. As is generally known, the term military geography reaches back to the amalgamation of the Military Geographic Institute in Milano/Italy with the Topographic-Lithographic Agency of the General Quartermaster in Vienna, to become the k.k. Military Geographic Institute (MGI) in 1839. Afterwards, in 1844, the “Landesbeschreibungsbüro im k.k. Generalstab” was established, which was tasked with military geographic country descriptions. After the Austrian Armed Forces had been established in 1955, the first MilGeo-Conception was developed by Major (later Colonel) Ing. August Zewedin in 1957 already. In 1984, the Military Geospatial Service was established as Section V/9a „MilGeo-Wesen“ in the Federal Ministry of Defence, together with respective bodies in the I. Korps (in Graz) and II. Korps (in Salzburg), in the Armoured Division (in Baden), in the Air Division (in Langenlebarn) and in all Military Territorial Headquarters in the Austrian provincial capitals. The tasks of military geography within military country description were acquisition, assessment and processing of the interdependency of certain terrain and military factors. At that time, the term „Militärischer Geo-Dienst“ was used for this special “technical service” of the Austrian Armed Forces. According to the then service manual „Command and Control Concepts“, the term „Militärisches Geowesen“ was to be understood as “organisation, actions and institutions as well as technical and subject areas dealing with military surveying, military country description, and military town and country planning”. In the course of the territorial defence concept of the Austrian Armed Forces, which – according to Horst Pleiner – was in force from 1972 until 1990, military town and country planning increased in relevance. With the modification of the military doctrine after the end of the Cold War, the disbandment of the MilGeo-departments in the Corps-Headquarters as well as their restructuring in the Military Territorial Headquarters, the spectre of tasks of the military geographic service changed as well, partial aspects of military town and country planning having been safeguarded by “Comprehensive Environmental Protection”. Whereas the classic „Militärischer Geo-Dienst“ of the Austrian Armed Forces had focused on generating Austrian military maps (with different map scales), today digital terrain and satellite image data are processed rapidly, and map products covering certain mission areas abroad („Operational Mapmaking“) are provided in digital form. The essay on the development of the military geospatial (MilGeo) system of the Austrian Armed Forces especially appreciates the collaboration of militia experts on top of the MilGeo-Knowledge-Pyramid.

