

Report on inspections in depots in France (30 July and 6 August 1957)

Caption: Division II of the Agency for the Control of Armaments (ACA) circulates its report on the inspections held in French depots on 30 July and 6 August 1957, at the ERGM(EB) tank depot in Gien and the aircraft depot in Limoges (Romanet). For this joint inspection, the report concludes that the depots inspected were 'mixed' and that the SHAPE inspector played a full part in the inspections, which were carried out with no difficulty. The inspectors mention that it would be desirable to ensure that the French representatives agree with the Council decision (CR(57)20) which states that the inspections performed in depots in the second half of 1957 are to be considered as real inspections and not 'exercises'. Furthermore, given the considerable differences between the quantities in the 1957 ACA questionnaire and the quantities shown in the depot records on 1 January 1957, as was also found in Bourges, it would be useful, if possible, for the questionnaire to be simplified and sent out no later than 1 December each year.

Source: Agency for the Control of Armaments. Report on inspections in depots in France July 30th & August 6th 1957. Summary. [Paris] : 1957. pp. 2-5. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://anlux.lu/>. Western European Union Archives. Armament Bodies. ACA. Agency for the Control of Armaments. Year: 1956, 01/01/1956-31/12/1959. File ACA-177. Volume 1/1.

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W. E. U.

Page 2.

SECRET

REPORT

ON

INSPECTIONS IN DEPOTS IN FRANCE

July 30th & August 6th

1957

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OBJECT

The Object was to make an inspection of quantities in one tank depot and one aircraft depot.

PROCEDURE

A meeting was held with Lt Colonel GAUCHET of the French Ministry of Defence and Colonel PICHON of S.H.A.P.E. on 25th June, to select the depots for inspection. The Agency suggested the tank depot at GIEN which was agreed by Col. Gauchet. The Agency suggested the aircraft depot at CHATEAUDUN or at NANTERRE. Colonel Gauchet wished to consult the French Air Force on this question and later telephoned proposing No.603 Aircraft Depot at LIMOGES to which the Agency agreed. (It is probable that LIMOGES was proposed because it is modern, well organized and very efficient).

EXECUTION

The usual procedure was followed at each depot, i.e. the Inspectors had a preliminary meeting with the Commandant and accompanying French officers.

The Inspectors :

- (a) asked for a general description of the depot,
- (b) asked for an explanation of the system of records,
- (c) selected a few items of material for special scrutiny in the records,

W E U.

SECRET

W. E. U.

Page 3.
SECRET

(d) made a physical check of the selected materiel
and (e) made a rapid visit to the remainder of the depot.

REPORT

AT E.R.G.M.(E.B.), GIEN.

This is one of the largest tank depots in France. The depot at GIEN is designed for 4th echelon repair of tanks while the sub-depot at NEVOY is used for storing tanks.

The recording system is the same as that in use at BOURGES (See report on "exercise" at Bourges on 17th and 18th Sept. 1956) and calls for no comment. The minor discrepancies which became apparent during the inspection between the actual stocks and the revised statement (Annex I) which the Inspectors were given at the preliminary meeting are insignificant and were easily explained.

There were, however, very considerable differences between the quantities given in the reply to the Questionnaire and the quantities shown in the records as at 1st January 1957 (See Annex II). This leads to the conclusion that all the quantities given in the reply to the Land Forces Questionnaire are inaccurate to some extent.

The explanation given by Col. Gauchet for these discrepancies was that the Questionnaire (ACA(57)Q) was not received till March 1957 and that the information had to be obtained by telephone. This explanation is not very convincing as ACA(57)Q was sent from the Agency on 19th Jan. 1957.

The inspection was very well prepared by the French authorities. The Commandant gave a well prepared description of the depot and illustrated his remarks on a plan. He also handed over a revised statement of quantities (Annex I).

The inspection was made in a most cordial atmosphere and the Inspectors were given all the information they required and were permitted to visit all parts of the depot.

AT No.603 AIRCRAFT DEPOT AT LIMOGES (ROMANET).

Only reactor motors were controlled at this depot.

The stocks given in reply to the Questionnaire ACA(57)Q were checked against the records and were found to be correct.

SECRET

Three types of reactor motor were checked physically against the record of stocks held on 6th Aug. 1957 and found to be correct. This was the first occasion in any depot in any country on which all the quantities given agreed with the records and the stocks.

The Inspectors were particularly impressed with the simplicity and clarity of the French Air Force accounting, recording and provisioning system.

The depot is accommodated in very good modern buildings and is well organized and appears to be very efficient.

CONCLUSIONS

Both the depots inspected were "mixed" and the S.H.A.P.E. inspector took his full and equal part in the inspection.

At both depots the arrangements for the inspection had been well prepared and the inspections were made quickly and with no difficulty.

The inspection group received the fullest co-operation from the staff of the depots and the representatives of the Ministry of Defence.

At GIEN, Air Vice Marshal Pidcock pointed out that the inspection was the first real (effective) inspection to be made in a French depot, and that it was not an "exercise" as had been the case in 1956. Colonel Gauchet said that, in his opinion, the operations of the Agency were still "exercises". He said, however, that he was prepared to regard the "visit" as a real inspection.

It is desirable that this question should be discussed with the French Ministry of Defence to ensure that they agree with the decision of the Council (CR(57)20) that the inspections in depots in the second half of 1957 are to be real inspections and not "exercises of inspection".

One other matter calls for serious comment. It is that the quantities given in reply to the Questionnaire ACA(57)Q at GIEN show very considerable differences from the quantities shown in the depot records on 1.1.57.

The same situation was found at BOURGES, and this gives rise to the suspicion that all the quantities stated for Military Depots are inaccurate to some extent.

The explanation given for this, i.e., that the ACA(57)Q was not received till March 1957 (in fact it was sent to France on 19th Jan.57) is not very convincing. Colonel Gauchet requested that in future it shall be sent by 1st of December each year. It is considered that the request is reasonable and would remove the excuse for inaccuraciés.

It is therefore strongly recommended that the Questionnaire be sent out not later than the 1st of December in future. It is also recommended that, if possible, the Questionnaire be simplified and that only essential information is demanded.

ACTION REQUIRED

1. Discussion with the French Ministry of Defence in order to obtain agreement that inspections in "mixed" depots by S.H.A.P.E. and the Agency Inspectors are real (effective) inspections and not "exercises of inspection".
2. A decision on whether the Questionnaire should be sent from the Agency by 1st of December each year and whether it can be simplified.

G.A.H. Pidcock.

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