

# Swiss Armed Forces deployment during the COVID-19 pandemic: Militia pharmacy officers roles and duties

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## Abstract

From March 6 to June 30, 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Swiss Federal Council mobilised militia formations of the Swiss Armed Forces to assist the cantons with healthcare, logistics and security in the fight against SARS-CoV-2. Ten militia pharmacy officers were enlisted in 2 out of the 4 hospital battalions deployed, as well as in the medical logistic battalion and in the staff of the logistic brigade that embedded them all. Their missions were mainly to plan, conduct and control the medical logistics, hygiene and drug manufacturing activities. In the hospital battalions, the pharmacists especially managed: (1) supply of medical material dedicated to mission-related training of soldiers, to civilian health facilities assistance and to medical transportation, (2) as member of the hygiene commission: establishment and application of hygiene procedures to reduce contamination risk of military personnel, (3) provision of conscripts own medication at time of personal counselling in one of the battalion. In the medical logistic battalion, the support of both military and civilian pharmaceutical production facilities was the most important activity of pharmacists and soldiers. In the military facility, surface/hand-disinfectants were especially produced. In the supported civilian pharmaceutical industry, a 25%-increase of the overall production for civilian hospitals clients was provided. Thanks to their civilian and military background, militia pharmacy officers have been quickly and effectively deployed throughout the country. The role of pharmacists within their respective battalions has emerged as especially crucial in the pandemic context and the performed missions were sometimes beyond their traditional duties. Their official roles should be further developed, as well as their basic and practical training, in conjunction with their functions in other countries. This would be of particular importance for any other major health crisis requiring the mobilization of the army.

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