

# Swiss intelligence blamed as Cold War secret army files vanish

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The Swiss secret services are suspected of spiriting away files on a British-backed underground force that was created to resist Russian occupation during the Cold War.

Politicians and historians called for government action this week after the Tages-Anzeiger newspaper reported that the defence ministry had “lost” 27 top secret files from a 1991 public inquiry into the clandestine organisation Projekt 26.

The force, set up in the 1950s, was disbanded in 1990 when its exposure caused one of Switzerland’s biggest 20th-century scandals. P-26, as it was known, recruited and trained more than 400 people to fight the invaders should the Soviet Union’s Warsaw Pact forces overrun the neutral state. The group, which maintained secret weapons depots throughout the country, was revealed to have operated with British and American support outside Swiss civilian control and with no legal basis.

Similar paramilitary networks were set up with US and British support in Italy, Belgium, France, Greece, West Germany and the Netherlands, according to historians.

The report and related files were never fully published and the Federal Council, the Swiss government, decreed that they should remain secret until 2041. A copy of the main report is held by the national archives but the sensitive appendices have vanished.

Experts said they believe that the documents were destroyed or deliberately hidden to conceal embarrassing details about Switzerland's secret proximity to Nato and ties to its intelligence services.

“It is scandalous that such files disappear at the federal government,” Sacha Zala, president of the Swiss Society for History, said. “It is hard to imagine that these documents . . . are simply lost.” They were “stolen or destroyed because it is about foreign intelligence services,” he added.

Josef Lang, a historian and former MP, said: “There are three possibilities. The papers were shredded, hidden or lost, in that order of likelihood but even if the most innocent option is the case, that's also a scandal.”

During the 1991 public inquiry into police spying on suspect Swiss citizens it emerged that about 900,000 people had been under P-26 surveillance.

The defence ministry said that it was still looking for the missing files.

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