
THE STATE AUDIT OFFICE'S POSITIONS

The main questions in the audit were first of all whether connecting flight activities in their present scope are economical and whether the Defence Forces' aircraft and personnel resources are used effectively in connecting flight activities, and secondly whether the present flight supplement system is economically effective. Recommendations 1 and 2 with comments are the audit's answer to the first question. The audit's answer to the second question is presented in recommendations 3 and 4 with comments.

At present the Defence Forces do not evaluate whether connecting flights are economical. If a pilot needs to go somewhere, this is often done using Air Force planes if they are available. Since the Flight Technology Unit pays for fuel, it is cheaper for an administrative unit to use an Air Force plane for a connecting flight than to buy a commercial ticket out of its own budget funds. Services which are free to the user tend to increase the demand for services.

Recommendation 1:

The Defence Forces should evaluate the economic effectiveness of connecting flight activities. The Defence Forces' own aircraft should only be used for connecting flights in which their use is indispensable for operational reasons or is economically justified. Units using flight services should be charged according to cost for connecting flight activities.

Recommendation 2:

The Defence Forces should evaluate the annual quantity and quality of connecting flights from an operational and financial viewpoint and on this basis make an estimate of aircraft requirements for connecting flights.

In order to obtain benefits under the present flight supplement system, a pilot must fly at least two hours a month. Flights are conducted to a certain extent only so that pilots will receive flight sup-

plements, which are a substantial boost to pay. This has also led to uneconomical flying: connecting flights cause significant costs in the form of aircraft wear as well as maintenance and fuel costs. Flight supplements are also paid to personnel whose main task does not include flying. In this case the need to fly each month takes time away from main tasks.

In order to keep pilots from leaving and taking jobs with Finnair, for example, the Air Force has paid pilots a flight supplement. The need to maintain a sufficient level of pay is a reality. Training for fighter pilots lasts many years and is very expensive. Keeping turnover low through the service commitment system and pay makes sense for the state economy. Pay should be high enough so that pilots do not leave and take other jobs to a significant extent. The last time this happened was in the late 1990s, when about 70 pilots left to take jobs mainly with Finnair. Recruiting must also receive proper attention.

If the Defence Forces as an employer stopped requiring flight time as a condition for the flight supplement, pilots would not be under pressure to engage in uneconomical connecting flights in order to boost their pay. As an indirect effect it would no longer be necessary to arrange special flight service for pilots working outside flying units (for example in the General Staff and abroad). The total costs of flights needed to obtain the flight supplement are considerably higher than the costs of flight supplements themselves. The bulk of total costs comes from connecting flight activities and time away from main tasks.

Recommendation 3:

The Defence Forces should consider changing pilots' pay so that total pay no longer depends largely on the performance-based flight supplement. One possibility would be a pay system in which pilots are paid a higher salary in tasks which require a pilot's certificate, without the obligation to log flight time. Even under the present system, in preparing the next collective bargaining agreement, the Defence Forces should consider the possibility of no longer requiring flight time as a condition for the flight supplement. This would create the proper conditions to examine the economy of connecting flight activities.

Efforts have been made to keep pilots in squadrons longer. This would lower the annual training requirement, which would naturally result in savings.

All the L-level tasks in the Air Force do not require pilot's training. Owing to the flight supplement, pilots' pay is substantially higher than that of army and navy officers of similar rank.

Recommendation 4:

The General Staff should if possible replace officers with pilot's training for example in staff, maintenance and planning tasks with Army and Navy officers and should also take this into consideration in deciding on the number of officers to be trained for the Army and Navy.

The State Audit Office believes that the Defence Forces can reallocate funds particularly over the longer term if it implements the measures presented in this audit report.