



## Members of the SDRC Strategic Advisory Board

The members of the SDRC Strategic Advisory Board are selected based on their expertise, their role and their network, in order to be able to advise in the best possible manner in the orientation of Switzerland on questions of national security in dealing with the challenges of robotics.

The members will be presented briefly in alphabetical order below, together with the reasons for their selection.

### Andreas Berger



Andreas Berger is an electrical engineer and started his career in 2010 at RUAG. By 2017, Berger was Senior Vice President at Ruag Defence and held the operative and strategic responsibility for leading the Business Unit Network Enabled Operations Services. As CEO, he first led the division RUAG Defence from 2017, and from 2018 RUAG MRO Switzerland. From 1 January 2020, Andreas Berger took over his current role as CEO of RUAG AG.

### Points of contact with the SDRC

The federal company RUAG AG is the most important industrial partner of the Swiss Armed Forces. It is determined as the centre for maintenance, overhaul and repair (MKZ) in the procurement of complex and security-relevant systems.

In his role, Andreas Berger has a large network in the DDPS and in industry. The SDRC works together on research projects with RUAG, as well as in the areas of infrastructure and maintenance. In addition, there is a mutual interest in having results from research industrialised and scaled by RUAG.

In the Advisory Board, Andreas Berger represents the perspective of the MKZ and industry.

## Patrick Gansner



Patrick Gansner has a background in political science and has been involved in the security policy of Switzerland in the DDPS since 2002. Firstly as a security policy advisor and from 2009 as Head of Strategic and International Affairs in the department of Security Policy in the General Secretariat of the DDPS. He has been the Deputy Head of Security Policy since 2018.

### Points of contact with the SDRC

The General Secretariat of the DDPS supports the head of department as a member of the Federal Council and in the management of the department. It is responsible for implementing the political strategy in the administrative units. The areas Strategic and International Affairs, Defence and Arms Procurement Policy as well as the area of Ownership Policy, among others, fall under the responsibility of the area of Security Policy. In his role, Patrick Gansner has a large network in the departmental leadership of the DDPS, politics and with partners in the international cooperation of the DDPS. The SDRC supports the GS-DDPS in questions concerning robotics, for example, with political proposals or as part of the upcoming strategy “Arms Control Disarmament 2022-2025” of the Federal Council. As part of the DDPS’s cooperation with the Center for Security Studies (CSS) of ETHZ, the SDRC launched a study on the topic “Robotics in the Armed Forces”, which also deals, for example, with corresponding implications at the level of security policy. In the Advisory Board, Patrick Gansner represents the perspective of security policy.

## Prof. Dr. Detlef Günther



Detlef Günther has been assistant professor since October 1998, associate professor since July 2003 and full professor for Trace Element and Microanalysis at the Laboratory of Inorganic Chemistry at ETH Zurich since February 2008. Since January 2015, he has been Vice President of Research and Corporate Relations at ETH Zurich, and since 2021 Vice President of Research<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> ETH Zurich has extended its school management by two areas, and dissolved the subject area “Knowledge Transfer and Corporate Relations”, among others, from its previous school management areas, led by Detlef Günther on an ad interim basis and taken over by Vanessa Wood as the new Vice President. Since 1 January 2021, Detlef Günther has been focusing on the area of research.

## Points of contact with the SDRC

In his role, Professor Günther is a member of the Executive Board of ETHZ and has a large network in the areas of research and business.

ETH Zurich is a key research partner of armasuisse Science and Technology. In particular, the SDRC works together intensively with the Institute for Robotics and Intelligent Systems and the corresponding laboratories, as well as with ETH start-ups.

In the Advisory Board, Detlef Günther represents the perspective of academia.

### **Dr. Mark(us) Höpflinger**



Dr. Markus (Mark) Höpflinger completed a vocational apprenticeship as a commercial clerk and then graduated with a master's degree in Electrical Engineering and Information Technology from ETH Zurich. After his studies, he was involved as an engineer in the development of the locomotion system for the Mars Rover "ExoMars" of the European Space Agency. He subsequently obtained a doctorate at the Autonomous Systems Lab (ASL) at ETH Zurich in the area of mobile robotics. Between 2013 and 2015, Mark Höpflinger was a leading researcher and was involved in various national and international research projects of the ASL.

## Points of contact with the SDRC

Since 2015, he has been working for armasuisse Science and Technology, the technological centre of the Swiss Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). Here, he is head of the Swiss Drone and Robotics Centre (SDRC), and manages, among other areas, government research in robotics in the security area.

In the Advisory Board, Mark Höpflinger represents the perspective of the SDRC and is responsible for the adaptation of the input from the Advisory Board in the further development and orientation of the activities of the SDRC.

### **Dr Bernhard Knechtenhofer**



Dr. Bernhard Knechtenhofer studied Economics at the University of St Gallen and graduated in 2003 with a doctorate. He was subsequently employed as a consultant at PricewaterhouseCoopers AG, where he was active as a member of management in various projects in the private and public sectors. Dr. Bernhard Knechtenhofer joined the Federal Administration in 2006. He held executive positions as project manager and programme manager in the Armed Forces Logistics Organisation (AFLO) as well as in the Armed Forces Staff. In 2013, Dr. Knechtenhofer completed an in-service Master of

Advanced Studies in Security Policy and Crisis Management at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich. In 2016, he switched to the General Secretariat of the DDPS.

Here, Dr. Bernhard Knechtenhofer worked for the head of the DDPS as the Head of Projects, IT and Controlling. In this role, he also represented the DDPS in the respective parliamentary committees and delegations. In addition, he managed the administrative side of the internal audit of the DDPS.

In 2019, he became head of the competence sector Command and Control + Reconnaissance Systems of armasuisse in his current role as assistant director.

#### Points of contact with the SDRC

In his role, Dr. Bernhard Knechtenhofer is a member of the corporate management of armasuisse and has a large network in the area of Procurement.

The main points of contact of the SDRC with Procurement are, for example, drone defence, the project Battlefield Recovery and Logistic Robots, as well as innovations in system procurements with fast technological development.

In the Advisory Board, Bernhard Knechtenhofer represents the perspective of Procurement.

#### **Major General Claude Meier**



After training as a professional military pilot at pilot school, Claude Meier joined the Surveillance Wing of the Air Force in 1985 and has since then been deployed in various roles in the Armed Forces. In 2003, he obtained the French university degree DEA (Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies) in science of history at the "Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes" along with his training at the Collège Interarmées de Défense in Paris. In 2013, Major General Meier also successfully completed an in-service Master of Advanced Studies in Security Policy and Crisis Management at ETH Zurich. In 2016, he was appointed by the Federal Council as

Head of the Armed Forces Staff with a promotion to Major General.

In 2021, Claude Meier started his current role as senior staff officer at the Geneva Centres for Peace and Security Policy.

#### Points of contact with the SDRC

In his role, Major General Claude Meier has a large network in the Armed Forces. He is co-initiator and co-founder of the Swiss Drone and Robotics Centre (SDRC), has supported its setup from the start and has a correspondingly in-depth knowledge.

In the Advisory Board, he represents the perspective of the Armed Forces, as well as the Geneva Centres for Peace and Security Policy (GCSP, GICHD, DCAF).

## Dr. Thomas Rothacher



Between 1987 and 1990, Dr. Thomas Rothacher completed an apprenticeship as a metallurgy lab technician in the former Defence Technology and Procurement Agency. He then studied physics, mathematics and philosophy at the University of Bern and graduated in 1998 as a physicist with a doctorate in natural sciences. In addition to his successfully acquired doctorate in natural sciences in 2004 (Dr. phil.-nat), he completed additional in-service continuous and further training.

Thomas Rothacher has been working in various organisations and roles at armasuisse since 1998. Since 1 May 2015, he has been head of the competence sector Science and Technology in Thun and was appointed as Deputy National Armaments Director by the head of the DDPS in 2020.

### Points of contact with the SDRC

In his role, Thomas Rothacher has a large network with all relevant stakeholders at armasuisse. Based on the role of armasuisse S+T as a body with technological responsibility for the security of Switzerland, as well as a superordinate organisation unit of the SDRC, he will hold the chairmanship of the Advisory Board. Together with Claude Meier he is a co-initiator and co-founder of the SDRC.

In the Advisory Board, he represents the perspective of armasuisse S+T, as well as, representing the National Armaments Director, aspects for implementing the armament policy of the Federal Council in the DDPS.

## Major General Rolf André Siegenthaler



Major General Rolf Siegenthaler studied at the University of Lausanne from 1987 to 1993 and graduated with the Licence ès Lettres in the subjects of German Studies, English Studies and Political Science. In 1993, Major General Siegenthaler joined the training personnel of the engineer corps and was deployed as a unit instructor in the recruit school. Between 1998 and 2001, he was active in the Military Planning Directorate of the General Staff as an engineer corps planner. After a study visit at the NATO Defense College in Rome (senior course), he was deployed between 2002 and 2007 in the command of the Armed Forces

College, first as group leader and then as Chief of Staff/Head of Study Programmes in the General Staff School as well as most recently as Commander Deputy of the Armed Forces Professional NCO School. In 2007, Major General Siegenthaler was entrusted with the command of the Engineer School 74 and the military training area in Bremgarten AG. Between 2009 and 2011, he successfully completed an in-service Master of Advanced Studies in Security Policy and Crisis Management at ETH Zurich. In 2011, Major General Siegenthaler became Head of Control of the Army and in this role Chief of Staff of the sub-project Organisation of the Armed Forces as part of the Armed Forces Development Programme. In his militia role, he commanded the engineer battalion 6. In 2013, he was

appointed by the Federal Council as Head of the Armed Forces Planning Division/Deputy Head of the Armed Forces Staff while simultaneously being promoted to Brigadier. Rolf Siegenthaler has been active as Major General in the role of Deputy Head of Operations since 2018.

#### Points of contact with the SDRC

In his role, Major General Rolf Siegenthaler has a large network in the Armed Forces. In its further development, the SDRC is reinforcing its activities towards innovation approaches for the deployment forces of the Army. The aim is to deploy robotic systems with a (rather) low level of technological maturity which enable the Armed Forces to achieve a high and/or rapid increase in capability.

In the Advisory Board, Rolf Siegenthaler represents the perspective of the Armed Forces, and of the Command Operations.

#### **Lieutenant General Hans-Peter Walser**



Lieutenant General Hans-Peter Walser studied Law at the Faculty of Law and Economics at the University of Bern and graduated as lic. iur. In 1994, Lieutenant General Walser joined the training personnel of the infantry and has been deployed since then in various roles in the Armed Forces. From 2002 to 2003, he obtained a Master of Science in National Resource Strategy in further education from the National Defense University in Washington D.C. USA. Between 2010 and 2012, he assumed the role of Deputy Head of the Armed Forces Staff and Head of Armed Forces Planning. In 2013, he was appointed Head of the Armed Forces Staff by the Federal Council, with simultaneous promotion to Major General. In 2016, Lieutenant General Walser was appointed by the Federal Council as commander of Territorial Region 2.

Since 2020, Hans-Peter Walser has held the role of Chief of Training as Lieutenant General and in addition to his traditional role became Deputy Chief of the Armed Forces in 2021.

#### Points of contact with the SDRC

In his role, Lieutenant General Walser has a large network in the Armed Forces. The SDRC cooperates closely with the training unit Engineer/Rescue/ABC, which is subordinate to the Training Command. To promote the sustainability of this cooperation, a memorandum of understanding was signed at the end of 2020.

In the Advisory Board, Hans-Peter Walser represents the perspective of the Armed Forces, and of the Training Command.