

Arolla, 8 April 2026

Press Release—Swiss Armed Forces

Patrouille des Glaciers 2026: a major military operation in the high mountains

Arolla (VS), 8 April 2026 – Six days before the first starts of the Patrouille des Glaciers (PdG) 2026, the Swiss Armed Forces are preparing for a complex operation in an alpine environment. This operation is far more than a sporting event and mobilizes around 900 Armed Forces personnel under demanding conditions. It requires rigorous planning, close coordination with numerous partners, and comprehensive risk management.

The Armed Forces bear operational responsibility for the race and deploy all the resources required to ensure that it can be carried out safely and effectively. The Patrouille des Glaciers Foundation, for its part, is responsible for the event's promotion and marketing.

A planning operation in an extreme environment

For the Armed Forces, the Patrouille des Glaciers represents a major planning operation. It combines the challenges of alpine terrain, the effects of the environment—altitude, rapidly changing weather conditions, and isolation—as well as the simultaneous management of several missions. Logistical, medical, and security preparations have been underway since March. The military deployment will remain in place through the dismantling phase until the beginning of May. Nearly 300 tons of equipment are being mobilized to support all units. Distributed across 15 posts along the route, Armed Forces personnel provide command, security, medical support, logistics, and communications. This continuous deployment makes it possible to cover the entire route in an especially demanding environment.

Coordination and cooperation are at the heart of the operation

The success of this operation is based on close coordination among numerous stakeholders. The Armed Forces work with civilian authorities, rescue organizations, logistics partners, and foreign military units with comparable alpine expertise. This cooperation strengthens interoperability and enables training under conditions that closely resemble real deployment. It illustrates the Swiss Armed Forces' ability to integrate partners into a complex operational framework and to conduct an operation in a multinational setting.

A military operation in the service of a legendary event

Although the sporting competition is the visible part of the Patrouille des Glaciers, it is built on the meticulous work of the Swiss Armed Forces, which ensure that the event runs smoothly.

This edition brings together 1,376 patrols and 5,504 participants. PdG Commander Brigadier Yves Charrière highlights in particular the record participation of 112 women's patrols, as well as the growing presence of mixed and military patrols. This development reflects the opening of the discipline while at the same time preserving the Armed Forces' core values: commitment, team spirit, and stepping beyond one's comfort zone.

The race takes place on two demanding high-mountain routes:

- Zermatt–Verbier: 57.5 km and 4,386 metres of elevation gain.
- Arolla–Verbier: 29.6 km and 2,200 metres of elevation gain.

Swiss medalists on the start line

Following the inclusion of ski mountaineering in the Milan-Cortina Olympic Games and the Swiss successes that followed, several medal-winning athletes are among the seven teams fielded by the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC). Olympic champion Marianne Fatton and Rémi Bonnet, winner of the World Cup final last week in Villars, are both former PdG winners and will be on the start line. The PdG Foundation's ambassadors and European medalists Caroline Ulrich and Aurélien Gay, runner-up in the World Cup, will also be competing.

A real-life exercise for the Armed Forces

The PdG is a central event for military sport and for training in alpine terrain. Among the registered teams are 279 military patrols, underscoring the importance of this race for troop training, cohesion, and endurance. Beyond the sporting competition, this operation represents a genuine real-life exercise. It enables the armed forces to test their capabilities in command, logistics, and risk management in a complex and demanding environment.

A strong focus on sustainability

The PdG is also committed to reducing its environmental impact. The use of public transport is encouraged, in particular through a partnership with SBB that allows participants to travel free of charge. In addition, a CO₂ balance is prepared for each edition to define concrete reduction measures.

Race operations and safety

Provided conditions allow, the starts of races Z1/Z2 in Zermatt and A1/A2 in Arolla will take place according to plan. During the briefing ceremony in Zermatt, the commander will inform the patrols about the safety conditions and the conduct of the race.

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