



Swiss Bunkers: Cold War Fortresses Become Shields of the Digital Era

Published on 13/05/2026

For decades, they were the symbol of Swiss armed neutrality. Today, the bunkers carved into the Swiss mountains are returning to international attention, but with a different function than in the past. No longer just nuclear shelters or military fortifications: in the midst of the digital era, these structures are increasingly considered as potential **safes for sensitive data, critical infrastructures, and strategic systems**.

The renewed interest has been sparked mainly by recent international conflicts. Attacks on data centers in the Middle East have shown how data processing centers have now become **high-value strategic targets**. The physical protection of information thus returns to a central role in a global scenario marked by cyber threats, sabotage, and hybrid warfare.

During the Cold War, Switzerland built about **8,000 bunkers**, many of which are hidden in the Alpine rock. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, numerous fortifications were progressively decommissioned and sold to private individuals. Some were converted for civilian use, while

others slowly began to transform into structures dedicated to the secure storage of data.

One of the most emblematic cases is found in the Canton of Lucerne, where an old civil protection shelter has been transformed into a modern **underground data center**. The infrastructure, built in 1968 and designed to withstand a nuclear attack, was converted thanks to an investment of about 30 million Swiss francs.

The allure of these structures lies in their ability to offer physical protection in naturally shielded environments. Reinforced concrete walls, limited access, and relatively stable temperatures make the bunkers particularly interesting for companies managing sensitive information or high-value assets.

According to some estimates reported by the Swiss press, about forty private bunkers could have significant commercial potential precisely for activities related to data storage, artworks, and precious reserves.

Modern Warfare Changes the Concept of Security

The return of the bunkers is not just an economic or technological issue. Behind this new attention lies above all a profound change in the way national security is conceived.

The war in Ukraine, conflicts in the Middle East, and the rise of hybrid threats have shown that the modern battlefield has become extremely transparent. Drones, satellites, sensors, and surveillance systems make it increasingly difficult to hide strategic infrastructures or military movements. For this reason, fortified works are once again taking on a concrete function.

The Swiss Army has recently intensified its focus on the drone and cyber defense sector. At the beginning of 2026, the strengthening of the **Drone and Robotics Competence Center** was confirmed, a structure tasked with developing operational capabilities and systems to counter new technological threats.



Experimental drone in operation at the Swiss competence center dedicated to the development of UAV systems and robotics. Source: RSI / Ti-Press.

The Swiss Federal Council has also highlighted the need to increase investments in air defense, cyberspace protection, and anti-drone systems. In the 2026 Army Message, Bern has allocated significant economic resources precisely for the protection of critical infrastructures and the strengthening of defensive capabilities against remote attacks.

Swiss military authorities openly acknowledge that the threat posed by drones has altered strategic balances. Brigadier Hans-Jakob Reichen, responsible for army development, explained that modern soldiers are subjected to **continuous surveillance** and that fortified works can once again offer protection against observation and bombardments.

At the same time, the new head of the Swiss army, Benedikt Roos, has recently highlighted the country's vulnerability to drone attacks and threats in the digital domain, emphasizing the need to quickly fill important operational gaps.

Switzerland Between Neutrality, Cybersecurity, and Resilience

The reassessment of the bunkers thus represents more than just a real estate or industrial operation. It is the signal of a **strategic transformation** involving the entire European security system.

In recent years, Switzerland has invested increasingly decisively in cyber defense. The participation of the Swiss Army in the international exercise "LOCKED SHIELDS" 2026, one of

the world's most important activities dedicated to cyber defense, confirms the intention to strengthen the protection of digital infrastructures and strategic networks.



Personnel of the Swiss Army Cyber Command engaged in operational and cyber defense activities during international exercises. Source: Swiss Federal Department of Defense.

At the same time, the country is developing new capabilities related to the electromagnetic space, satellite systems, and the protection of military computer networks. The new Swiss Army Space Competence Center testifies to how modern security no longer concerns only land, sea, and air, but also **cyberspace and digital infrastructures**.

Even the traditional cavalry patrols of the army are now integrated with surveillance drones, in a mix of historical technologies and advanced systems. A concrete demonstration of how the armed forces are trying to quickly adapt to ever-evolving operational scenarios.

In this context, Swiss bunkers assume a completely new symbolic and strategic value. Those structures born to survive a nuclear conflict are becoming useful again in a world where the protection of data, energy networks, and critical infrastructures is as essential as traditional defense.

In the heart of the Alps, the old Cold War fortresses are thus preparing to live a second life, transforming into one of the most evident symbols of the **new security of the 21st century**.

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