

WORISGO SPECIAL REPORT

Winter Olympics 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Winter Olympics 2026, scheduled from 6 to 22 February 2026, will be co-hosted by Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, marking Italy's return as a Winter Olympic host two decades after Turin 2006. Organised under a decentralised “multi-cluster” model across northern Italy, the Games will span key venues in Lombardy, Veneto, and Trentino-Alto Adige. This geographically dispersed format enhances regional inclusion but simultaneously introduces heightened coordination demands in logistics, transportation security, cyber infrastructure protection, and inter-agency crisis response mechanisms.

From a security standpoint, the 2026 Winter Olympics will constitute one of Europe's most complex peacetime security operations in recent years. The event is expected to draw over 2,900 athletes and delegations from more than 80 countries, alongside significant global media presence and high-profile political attendance. Italian authorities, in coordination with European security frameworks and the International Olympic Committee, are expected to deploy layered security architecture encompassing counter-terrorism preparedness, cyber resilience, crowd management, airspace monitoring, and critical infrastructure protection. The distributed venue model, while reducing congestion risks, expands the security perimeter and necessitates advanced intelligence sharing and real-time surveillance integration across regions.

Economically, the Games are positioned as a strategic instrument for regional revitalisation and national branding. Italy anticipates substantial investment flows into infrastructure modernisation, hospitality, transportation networks, and digital systems. Unlike previous Olympic cycles characterised by heavy capital expenditure on new builds, Milan–Cortina emphasises the reuse and upgrading of existing facilities, aligning with fiscal prudence and long-term asset sustainability. The expected influx of international tourism and global broadcast exposure is projected to stimulate employment, SME participation, and downstream sectors such as aviation, luxury retail, and alpine tourism.

At a broader strategic level, the 2026 Winter Olympics serve as a platform for Italy to reinforce economic resilience within the European Union and project stability amid ongoing global geopolitical uncertainty. Large-scale sporting events increasingly operate at the intersection of security, diplomacy, and economic statecraft. In this context, Milan–Cortina 2026 represents not merely a sporting spectacle, but a calibrated demonstration of organisational capacity, public safety assurance, and post-pandemic economic recovery strategy.

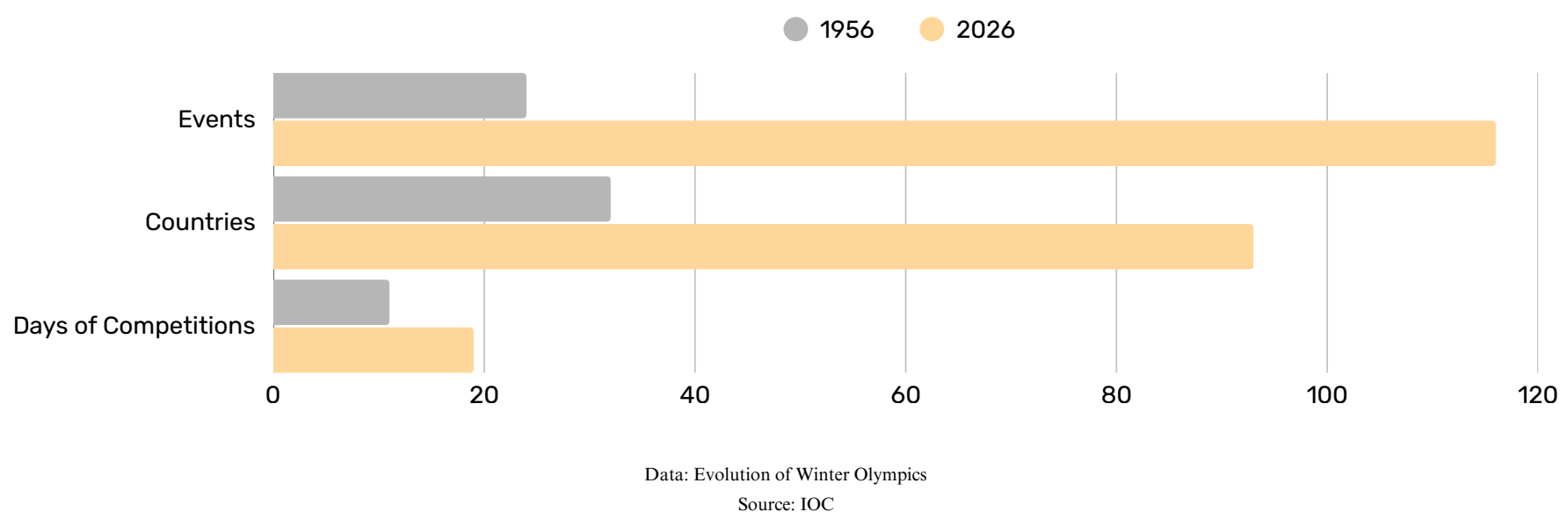
WINTER OLYMPICS 2026



Map: Venues for Winter Olympic 2026

The Winter Olympics 2026 is to be staged across 25 competition venues located primarily in the Lombardy and Veneto regions of northern Italy, reflecting a decentralised multi-cluster hosting model. The Opening Ceremony is scheduled to take place at San Siro Stadium in Milan, anchoring the Games within one of Europe's most iconic sporting arenas. The Milan cluster will host ice hockey, figure skating, speed skating, and curling events, with figure skating held at the Mediolanum Forum and ice hockey staged at Fiera Milano Rho, while the newly constructed PalaItalia Santa Giulia will serve as a major arena venue. The Cortina cluster will stage alpine skiing, bobsleigh, skeleton, and luge, including alpine events at Olimpia delle Tofane. Additional competitions will be distributed across Val di Fiemme, Bormio, and Livigno, with freestyle and snowboard events taking place at Livigno Mottolino Park, alongside cross-country skiing and ski jumping events hosted in established alpine facilities, reinforcing the Games' emphasis on utilising existing winter sport infrastructure.

WHY SECURITY MATTERS?



The Winter Olympics 2026 has unfolded within a high-visibility and high-risk environment, bringing together thousands of athletes, officials, global leaders, and international media across northern Italy. Although the opening ceremony at San Siro Stadium has concluded without major incident, the broader security posture remains critical as competitions continue across multiple regions. The presence of dignitaries, large spectator concentrations, and ongoing political demonstrations heightens the need for sustained vigilance, particularly given Europe’s evolving counter-terrorism landscape and the potential for disruptive protest activity.

The geographically dispersed structure of the Games — spanning Milan and several alpine clusters — significantly complicates operational coordination. Authorities must simultaneously secure dense urban venues and remote mountain sites, requiring synchronised intelligence-sharing, rapid mobility, and integrated command-and-control systems. Italian security forces have therefore maintained a layered deployment that includes counter-terrorism units, bomb disposal teams, sniper coverage, and advanced surveillance networks, supported by interconnected operations centres across northern Italy. In this context, sustained security effectiveness underpins not only public safety but also Italy’s economic credibility, international reputation, and its demonstrated capacity to host complex global mega-events without disruption.

SECURITY MEASURES TAKEN

6000

Security personnel deployed across the Olympic sites during the games.
This includes:



Bomb Disposal Experts



Sniper Unit



Counter-Terrorism Units



Canine Unit



Mountain Police

Across competition areas, officers from local police headquarters and stations — supported by specialists from the Forensic Police — are overseeing venue security to ensure the smooth conduct of events and the protection of spectators and fans during the Winter Olympics 2026. In higher-risk zones and ceremonial venues, the security posture is significantly reinforced: alongside snipers, canine units, and bomb disposal experts, the State Police have deployed elite formations including the NOCS (Central Security Operations Unit), tasked with rapid counterterrorism response in light of the event's international profile and the presence of heads of state and foreign delegations. The UOPI (First Response Operations Units), trained for high-risk operational scenarios, provide additional tactical depth. On the alpine front, specialised mountain police units patrol ski slopes and Olympic courses, combining law enforcement responsibilities with advanced rescue capabilities; their preparation has been coordinated through the Moena Alpine Training Center to ensure readiness in complex mountainous terrain.

TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS - MILAN



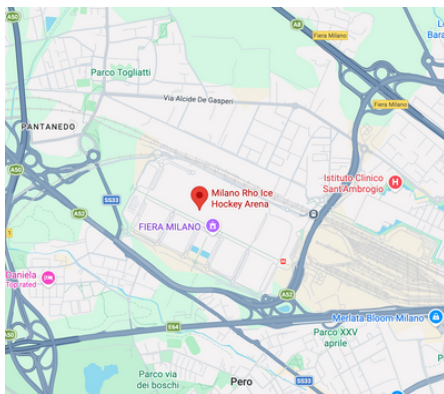
Milano Santa Giulia Ice Hockey Arena (Feb 5–22)

Full traffic closure (except authorised vehicles):

- Diagonal road (Via Sordello–Via Bonfadini link)
- Via Bonfadini (Largo Gonzaga ↔ arena access)
- Largo Gonzaga (eastbound)
- Extended perimeter roads across Rogoredo–Morsenchio–Taliedo corridor

Parking: Prohibited across all affected streets.

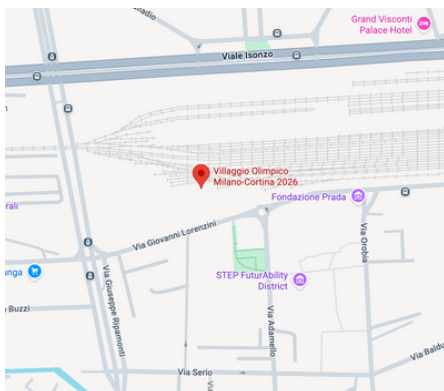
Impact: Significant traffic disruption across the southeast Milan sector throughout the Games period.



Rho & Assago Venues

- Milano Rho Ice Hockey Arena (Rho) – No road closures.
- Milano Ice Skating Arena / Assago Forum (Assago) – No general traffic restrictions.
- Minor service road closure in Assago (authority access only).
- “Red zones” = increased police checks only.

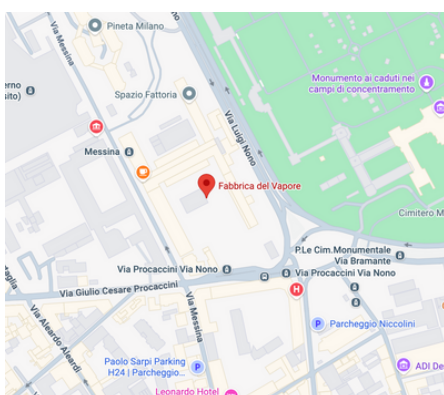
Impact: Minimal disruption to ordinary traffic.



Olympic Village – Scalo Romana (Until Feb 22)

- One-way system on Via Lorenzini (Adamello → Ripamonti).
- Dedicated Olympic lane (barrier-separated).
- Side lane reversal on Via Ripamonti.
- No parking on affected sections.
- Motorcycles/bikes banned from trolleybus 90/91 reserved lane (P.le Lodi → Viale Serra).

Impact: Managed but sustained traffic modification in south-central Milan.



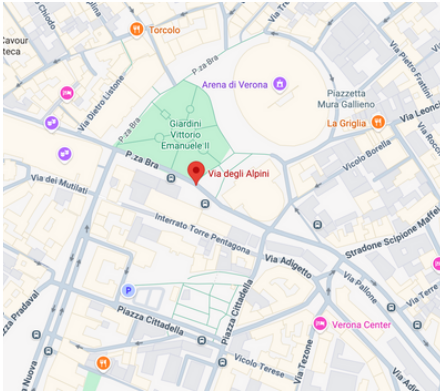
Fabbrica del Vapore Area (Feb 7 – Active Measures if Extended)

Large perimeter closures around:

- Piazzale Cimitero Monumentale
- Via Bramante, Via Niccolini, Via Cenisio, Via Messina, Via Procaccini and extended Sarpi–Monumentale grid
- Surface transport diversions.
- Pedestrian restrictions in core perimeter.
- Monumental Cemetery closed (event-linked).

Impact: Localised but high-density disruption in northwest Milan.

TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS - VERONA



Long-Duration Restrictions (Jan–Mar)

- Via Shakespeare (odd side, 25 spaces) – No parking (23 Jan–18 Mar).
- Via degli Alpini (Gran Guardia ↔ No.9) – Full parking ban incl. scooters (19 Jan–31 Mar).
- Via Interrato Torre Pentagona –
 - Transit only for authorised vehicles (14 Jan–31 Mar).
 - Parking restricted (12 reserved spaces).
- Via Frattini (No.7 ↔ Via Patuzzi) – Reserved parking for organisers (7 Jan–18 Mar).
- Piazzale Maestri del Commercio – Logistic Compound in place (24 Nov–31 Mar):
- No public parking.
 - PT terminus moved to Lungadige Capuleti.
 - Foundation vehicles authorised for ZTL & bus lanes.



Core Axis (Primary Impact)

- Corso Porta Nuova (No. 1–63, both sides extensive coverage)
- Piazza Bra (virtually full frontage coverage)
- Via Roma (broad building coverage)
- Via Mazzini (Arena-side section)
- Via Dietro Anfiteatro / Via Anfiteatro



Secondary Streets (Fully Included in Yellow Zone)

- Piazza Pradaval
- Piazza Cittadella
- Interrato Torre Pentagona
- Via dei Mutilati
- Via Leoncino
- Via degli Alpini
- Vicolo Tre Marchetti
- Vicolo/Vicoletto Listone
- Via Dietro Listone
- Via Pallone
- Via Adigetto
- Stradone Scipione Maffei
- Piazzetta Municipio
- Piazzetta Mura Gallieno
- Vicolo Borella
- Largo Divisione Pasubio
- Via Ponte Cittadella
- Piazzetta Alcide De Gasperi
- Piazzetta Melvin Jones

GEOPOLITICS AND CROSS BORDER OPERATIONS

The security framework of the Winter Olympics 2026 has been structured around an extensive cross-border cooperation architecture, reflecting the transnational threat environment that increasingly surrounds major global events. Foreign police officers are operating alongside Italy's Public Security Department, supported by coordination mechanisms with Interpol and Europol, enabling rapid intelligence-sharing and joint operational responses. This multinational layer enhances Italy's capacity to address terrorism, organised crime, cyber threats, and other cross-border risks that may intersect with the Games, reinforcing the notion that Olympic security now extends well beyond national boundaries.

Cybersecurity has emerged as a particularly sensitive dimension of this effort. Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani confirmed that Italian authorities recently thwarted Russian-linked cyberattacks targeting foreign ministry offices, Olympic-related platforms, and hospitality infrastructure in Cortina. In response, interforce teams have been operating continuously across both physical and digital domains, implementing a dual-track strategy focused on protecting critical computerised infrastructure while intensifying real-time web monitoring. These measures underscore the hybrid nature of contemporary threats, where digital disruption can carry strategic consequences comparable to physical security breaches.

The involvement of international security personnel has, however, generated domestic political debate. Reports regarding the presence of officers from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement prompted protests in Milan, reflecting wider European sensitivities around U.S. immigration enforcement policies. Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi clarified that Homeland Security Investigations personnel would serve solely in an advisory capacity within U.S. diplomatic premises and would not conduct operations on Italian territory. The controversy has exposed fractures within Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's governing coalition, despite public defence of the arrangement by Tajani, highlighting the delicate balance between operational cooperation and domestic political optics.

These internal tensions mirror broader strains in U.S.–European relations. The attendance of Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio has drawn scrutiny amid European unease over President Donald Trump's rhetoric on NATO and his stated ambitions regarding Greenland. Protests in Denmark ahead of the Games, coupled with diplomatic friction over trans-Atlantic defence commitments, have reflected how geopolitical tensions extend into the sporting arena. In this environment, Milan–Cortina 2026 has become not only a test of security preparedness, but also a stage upon which evolving alliance politics and diplomatic sensitivities are visibly playing out.

PROTEST PERCEPTIONS

The opening ceremony of the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics was marked by a stark division between its high-fashion spectacle and an atmosphere of intense political dissent. While the San Siro stadium hosted a celebration of Italian culture, the mood shifted when U.S. Vice President JD Vance and the Israeli delegation were met with loud boos and jeers from sections of the 60,000-strong crowd. Outside the arena, nearly a thousand demonstrators marched through Milan, setting off flares and brandishing "No ICE" banners to protest the deployment of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel for Olympic security. This friction highlights a fractured start to the Games, as local leaders like Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala and various student activists expressed concern that the event's security measures and political alliances are at odds with the "spirit of harmony" the organizers aimed to project.

- **Security & Policy Controversy:** Protesters expressed deep-seated opposition to the presence of U.S. ICE agents on Italian soil, viewing the agency as an "armed militia" and criticizing the Meloni government for legitimizing U.S. enforcement policies that activists associate with human rights abuses.

- **Environmental Impact:** Groups like the Unsustainable Olympics Committee and Greenpeace targeted the Games' ecological footprint, denouncing the destruction of old-growth forests for venues like the Cortina bobsled track and the massive diversion of Alpine water for artificial snow.

- **Urban Affordability & Debt:** Demonstrators highlighted the social cost of the event, arguing that the "Olympic project" has accelerated gentrification and soaring rent prices in Milan, while expressing fears of long-term public debt similar to that seen in previous host cities.

The dynamics surrounding the Games have been shaped not only by state-level coordination but also by organized protest movements that have gained significant traction. Pro-Palestinian groups, including organizations such as BDS Italia, have called for a boycott and demanded Israel's exclusion, attempting to disrupt segments of the Torch Relay and signaling plans for flash mob-style demonstrations in Piazza del Duomo. From environmental activists to housing rights groups, these collective actions have added a layer of political and reputational complexity to the security environment. With further strikes also scheduled throughout the competition period, significant disruptions are expected for those attending the events. Authorities now face the ongoing challenge of balancing public order management with the protection of lawful protest rights as the competition moves into the mountain venues.

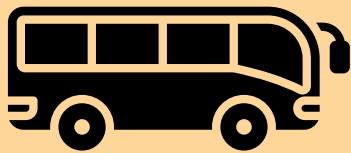
STRIKES PLANNED



Date: 11 Feb 2026
Type: Como Municipalty Workers Strike
Location: Como, Lombardy
Duration: 24 Hours

Risk Level

Medium



Date: 13 Feb 2026
Type: Local Public Transport Strike
Location: Bolzano, Trentino-Alto Adige
Duration: 24 Hours
Trade Unions: OSR FILT-CGIL/UGL/USB Private Work/ORSA Transport

Risk Level

Medium



Date: 16 Feb 2026
Type: Airline and Airport Industry Workers Strike
Location: Nationwide
Duration: 24 Hours
Trade Unions: CUB/FILT-CGIL/FIT-CISL/UILT-UIL/UGL-TA/ANPAC

Risk Level

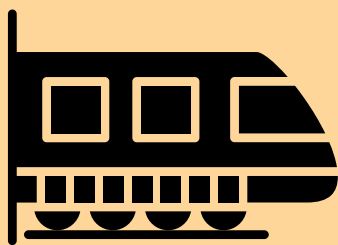
High



Date: 16 Feb 2026
Type: ITA Airways and Ground Staff Strike
Location: Linate (LIN) and Malpensa (MXP)
Duration: 24 Hours
Trade Unions: FILT-CGIL/FIT-CISL/UILT-UIL/UGL-TA/ANPAC

Risk Level

High



Date: 27-28 Feb 2026
Type: National Railway Strike
Location: Linate (LIN) and Malpensa (MXP)
Duration: 2100-2059 HRS (local time)
Trade Unions: Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane

Risk Level

High

MEDICAL MANAGEMENT & PUBLIC HEALTH

The Health & Medical landscape of the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics has been heavily influenced by the immediate challenge of managing infectious diseases within high-density environments. A significant focal point has been the rapid transmission of gastrointestinal illnesses, most notably norovirus, which caused substantial disruption to the women's ice hockey tournament early in the schedule. With multiple teams facing isolation and the postponement of high-stakes matches, the situation underscored the operational vulnerability of mass gatherings. While officials have worked to prevent a "village-wide" epidemic, these incidents have highlighted how quickly the "sprinter of viruses" can impact competition schedules, requiring rigorous containment and sanitization protocols across all athletic quarters.

Beyond localized outbreaks, health authorities are navigating a complex broader epidemiological environment characterized by the peak of Italy's seasonal winter viruses. The unique "multi-hub" model of these Games—spanning six different Olympic Villages—has presented both a challenge and an opportunity; while it risks spreading surveillance resources thin, it also provides a natural buffer to help insulate and contain potential clusters. In addition to norovirus, medical teams are monitoring elevated levels of seasonal influenza, RSV, and measles across the northern regions. To mitigate these risks, the IOC and local health departments have deployed 24/7 syndromic surveillance and specialized medical units to ensure that routine winter illnesses do not escalate into broader public health crises.

In parallel with immediate crisis management, the 2026 Games are striving to establish a lasting health legacy for the host nation. This is being channeled through initiatives like the GEN26 program, which leverages the Olympic spotlight to promote physical activity and values-based learning in schools and universities to combat sedentary lifestyles. On the clinical side, infrastructure improvements and observational studies at major facilities, such as Milan's Niguarda Hospital, aim to refine the management of mass-gathering medicine for future international events. By integrating proactive public health strategies with high-tech athlete care, organizers hope to demonstrate that the 2026 Games can support long-term wellness in the Italian social fabric, even while under the constant pressure of viral containment.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

The Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics are taking place across a starkly divided meteorological landscape, where the mild, humid lowlands of Milan contrast sharply with the volatile Alpine peaks. In the urban hub of Milan, the current forecast indicates a damp and overcast February with temperatures hovering between 8°C and 12°C, leading to "bone-chilling" humidity that complicates outdoor spectator logistics and medals ceremonies. Meanwhile, the mountain clusters in Cortina d'Ampezzo and the Valtellina valley are grappling with a significant "freeze-thaw" cycle. Long-term climate data shows that February temperatures in these regions have warmed by roughly 3.6°C (6.4°F) since they last hosted in 1956, resulting in nearly 20% fewer freezing days and a notable reduction in natural snow depth, which has fundamentally altered the baseline conditions for these Games.

Beyond the field of play, weather dynamics impose severe logistical and environmental strains on the host regions. The geographic dispersion of the venues means that a single weather system can trigger cascading delays, from icing on critical mountain arteries like the SS51 road to visibility-induced postponements in the biathlon and ski jumping arenas. Furthermore, the massive water and energy consumption required for snowmaking—necessitating the construction of new mountain reservoirs—has become a central point of contention. Local environmental groups have highlighted this as a "sustainability mirage," arguing that the intensive interventions required to combat a warming climate undermine the very ecological preservation the 2026 Games aimed to champion.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Political and Diplomatic

- We assess that domestic political controversy surrounding the presence of U.S. security personnel is unlikely to materially undermine operational security arrangements.
- Protests linked to U.S.–European tensions and sensitivities around immigration enforcement policies are possible in host cities.
- Escalation into sustained unrest or violent disruption affecting Games operations is unlikely on current indications.
- Broader trans-Atlantic geopolitical frictions may shape the diplomatic optics of the Games, but are unlikely to translate into direct security instability during the event period.

Probability

Medium

Medium

Impact

Cybersecurity

- We assess that cyber threats represent the most credible disruption vector facing the Winter Olympics 2026, particularly following reported Russian-linked targeting of Olympic-related and hospitality infrastructure.
- The hybrid threat environment increases the likelihood of medium-level but persistent probing activity against digital platforms and critical systems.
- Limited incidents, including website disruptions, data breaches, or temporary service outages, are possible despite reinforced monitoring and inter-agency coordination.
- A sustained or strategically significant cyberattack causing prolonged operational paralysis is unlikely under current defensive posture and intelligence-sharing mechanisms.

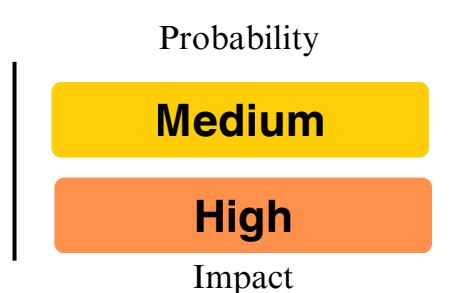
Probability

Medium

High

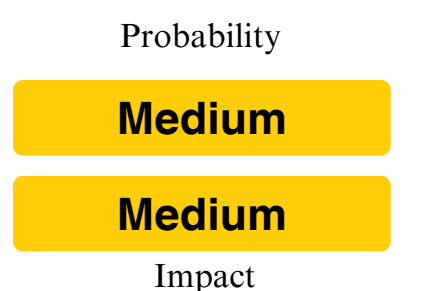
Impact

Physical Security



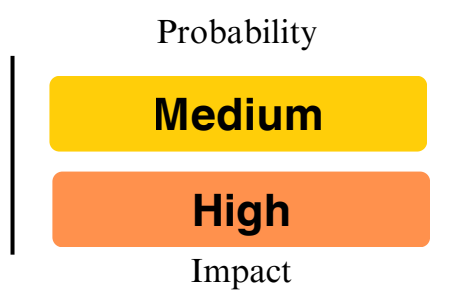
- We assess that the overall physical security posture surrounding the Winter Olympics 2026 remains robust following the incident-free opening ceremony, with layered deployments reducing the likelihood of a major attack.
- The geographically dispersed structure of the Games across Milan and alpine clusters increases operational complexity, elevating coordination risk; however, integrated command-and-control systems mitigate the probability of systemic security gaps.
- The continued presence of dignitaries, dense spectator concentrations, and ongoing demonstrations sustains an elevated threat baseline, particularly in high-visibility urban venues.
- Lone actors inspired by international terrorist organisations or domestic violent extremist narratives remain a persistent, though low-probability, threat vector.
- Isolated disruptive incidents or protest-related disturbances are possible as competitions continue, though a sustained or strategically significant security breakdown is unlikely under current force posture and counter-terrorism deployments.

Public Health



- We assess that infectious disease transmission, particularly norovirus and seasonal respiratory illnesses, presents a credible but manageable operational risk to the Winter Olympics 2026, given recent disruptions within athlete quarters.
- Additional isolated clusters and limited competition delays are possible; however, a village-wide outbreak or broader public health crisis affecting spectators is unlikely under current surveillance and containment protocols.

Venue Security



- San Siro remains the highest-risk venue due to the opening ceremony, VIP attendance, and protest activity. Heightened security, expanded police presence, layered screening, and strict access controls should be expected. Early arrival is essential, along with use of official shuttle services and close monitoring of police advisories. Other Milan venues (Santa Giulia, Rho, Speed Skating, Ice Skating) carry elevated risk linked to potential protest spillover, transport disruptions, and reported health concerns around ice hockey events. Attendees should allow 60–90 minutes of buffer time, maintain hand hygiene, and regularly check transport and fixture updates.
- The Verona Olympic Arena’s central urban setting increases exposure to potential demonstrations, traffic restrictions, and pedestrian security screening. Attendees should monitor municipal traffic notices, anticipate controlled access zones, and allocate additional time for entry and crowd management procedures. Cortina venues, Livigno parks, Predazzo/Tesero, Bormio (Stelvio), and Antholz-Anterselva primarily face weather-driven risks. Snowfall, icy roads, convoy traffic controls, and limited parking may cause delays. Severe cold and high-altitude exposure are additional factors. Visitors should rely on official transport and park-and-ride systems, dress in layered winter clothing with traction footwear, and build flexibility into schedules. Short-term operational pauses due to weather remain possible.

CONCLUSION

The Milano–Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics are not just a sporting showcase but a convergence point for digital systems, critical infrastructure, and geopolitics. Cloud platforms, broadcast networks, financial systems, and transport grids operate as one interconnected ecosystem, meaning disruption in one domain can quickly cascade into another. The Games therefore present a blended risk environment where cyber vulnerabilities, physical infrastructure, and political tensions intersect under intense global visibility.

Recent attempted intrusions, confirmed by Antonio Tajani and reportedly linked to Russian sources, reinforce that the threat landscape is both criminal and strategic. Past events—from the 2012 London Summer Olympics to UEFA Euro 2024—have shown how DDoS attacks, phishing campaigns, and online disruptions routinely accompany major tournaments. The growing accessibility of attack tools has widened the threat spectrum, enabling hacktivists and politically motivated actors to exploit the global spotlight, including controversies linked to the International Olympic Committee.

Compounding these risks is the Games’ dispersed Alpine footprint across Lombardy, Veneto, and Trentino-Alto Adige, where new tunnels, rail expansions, and extended transit corridors create logistical complexity and additional exposure. Milano–Cortina 2026 ultimately illustrates that modern mega-events demand integrated security—layered cyber defences, hardened supply chains, protected transit networks, and coordinated governance—to prevent routine threats, whether digital or physical, from escalating into strategic disruption.

Key Take: While there are no current indications of imminent extreme risk targeting the Milano–Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, the Games’ 22,000-square-kilometre footprint and deeply networked digital infrastructure demand sustained, integrated vigilance. Securing such a dispersed, high-profile event requires more than visible policing or perimeter controls; it calls for seamless coordination between monitoring, transport security, intelligence sharing, supply-chain oversight, and rapid cross-regional response mechanisms. In an environment where disruption can originate from a phishing email as easily as from physical sabotage, resilience will depend on bridging digital and physical risk into a unified, anticipatory security posture rather than reacting to threats in isolation.

About the Author

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