The Papal Swiss Guard is traditionally an armed force guard of honour, maintained by the Holy See to protect the Pope and the Vatican City State. It was established in 1506 under Pope Julius II. Its mission extends to the Pope's travels, the pontifical palace of Castel Gandolfo and the College of Cardinals.

However, it is said that since the "Islamic" assassination attempt on the late Pope John Paul II in 1981, the Swiss Guard has invested greater training in anti-irregular military, counter-intelligence, commando-style raids, diffusing and disposal of bombs, and hostage rescue, to mention just some.

Unlike recruitments for ordinary military units, all candidates for the Swiss Guard must be young and tall single males of the Catholic religion. That established, contrary to what most people believe, the connection between the Swiss and the Vatican did not end in 1648.

Much like the majority of its European neighbours, Switzerland developed gradually over the centuries into the federal state it is today. Before becoming a unified nation state, it was ruled by several foreign powers, such as Celtic, Roman, Germanic and French.

The territory was also shaped in the Early Middle Ages by Christianity, being part of the Frankish Empire under Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire.

In the Late Middle Ages, the Old Swiss Confederacy, the political alliance from which the modern federal Switzerland emerged in 1848, is said to have been founded.

In the year 1291, the cantons of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden signed a mutual defence pact, *Rutli Oath,* to defend themselves against foreign tyranny, specifically the Habsburg Dynasty.

The alliance gradually expanded to include other cantons, whose military victories eventually led to independence in 1499 with the *Treaty of Basel*.
Complete independence from the Holy Roman Empire was formally recognized in the *Peace of Westphalia* in 1648.
However, in 1798 the revolutionary French armies invaded the Old Swiss Confederacy to support the local revolutionaries. They replaced it with a centralized, French-controlled Helvetic Republic, which existed from 1798 to 1803.
It is said Napoleon did not personally order or direct the initial creation of the Helvetic Republic, since he was occupied with other military expeditions in Egypt and the Middle East at the time.
He intervened directly later, in 1802, during the Swiss *War of Sticks*, acting as a mediator and replacing the Helvetic Republic with a decentralized Swiss Confederation through the *Act of Mediation* in 1803.
But even though the centralized republic was abolished and the traditional confederation of self-governing cantons restored, many of its core democratic principles survived and influenced the Swiss Federal Constitution of 1848 and beyond, as did the term *Confoederatio Helvetica*.
This word originates from *Helvetii,* the ancient Celtic tribe that inhabited the region before Julius Caesar conquered it in the first century B.C.
Switzerland adopted Latin for its official title and still uses it today to remain neutral and avoid showing political preference on official state documents and licence plates to any of its four official languages - German French, Italian, and Romansh.