1st Special Operations Air Brigade, Colonel Verdolini is the new Commander of the 9th Wing "Francesco Baracca"

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On December 3, 2025, at the hangar of the 9th Wing "Francesco Baracca" in Grazzanise, the official handover ceremony of the command of the Unit took place. Colonel Pilot **Salvatore Florio** handed over the position to Colonel Pilot **Davide Verdolini**, in the presence of the Commander of the **1st Special Operations Air Brigade**, Air Brigade General **Diego Sismondini**.

Numerous military and civilian authorities, institutional representatives, and local military associations attended the event. During the ceremony, a solemn tribute was paid to the **War Flag of the 9th Wing**, emblem of the traditions, history, and operational commitment of the Unit.

In his farewell speech, the outgoing Commander extended a heartfelt greeting to the personnel, highlighting their professionalism and spirit of service:

> *"In these years, the 9th Wing has once again proven to be a solid, competent team capable of facing any operational scenario with professionalism and a spirit of service. The credit goes to the personnel: a machine of men and women who, with dedication and competence, have made every result possible. I leave a Unit in full growth, strong in synergy with the territory and with all components of the Armed Forces. It has been a privilege to lead it."*

Colonel Pilot Davide Verdolini, the new Commander of the 9th Wing, emphasized the value of operational continuity and the central role of the Unit in the landscape of **Special Air Operations**. In his speech, he highlighted the importance of capabilities related to **Personnel Recovery**, **emergency medical evacuation**, and support to **Special Forces**, particularly ensured by the use of the **HH-101A "Caesar"** helicopter:

> *"Assuming command of the 9th Wing is an honor and a responsibility that I accept with determination. I find a mature, prepared Unit perfectly integrated into the operational framework of the Air Force. The evolution of the HH-101A's capabilities and the professional growth of the personnel are the foundations on which to build the next objectives. We will continue to work with realism, cohesion, and ambition to further strengthen our operational capabilities."*

In his concluding remarks, General Diego Sismondini expressed appreciation for the strategic role played by the 9th Wing in the national aeronautical setup and for the future prospects of the Unit:

> *“The 9th Wing represents a strategic asset of the Armed Forces, capable of ensuring readiness, flexibility, and high-level skills in complex operational contexts. The work carried out by the personnel has consolidated unique capabilities on the national scene and has prepared the Unit to credibly face any future deployments outside the area. The command transition occurs at a time of growth and opens new operational prospects for the Unit's contribution to the country's security.”*

The **9th Wing “Francesco Baracca”**, equipped with **HH-101A** helicopters and **S.T.O.S. (Tactical Support to Special Operations)** operators, carries out Special Air Operations missions, high-value personnel search and recovery in hostile environments (Personnel Recovery – PR), surface force support, and emergency medical evacuation. The Unit also contributes to national and international security arrangements, participating in out-of-area operations, peacekeeping missions, humanitarian interventions, and protection activities during major events on national territory.

The 9th Wing reports directly to the **1st Special Operations Air Brigade** and is under the **Air Team Command** headquartered in Milan, confirming itself as a key asset for the security and operational projection of the Air Force.

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