



35,000 Men and Women - The Reserve for the Future of Defense

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The **national reserve, a fundamental resource for strengthening the Italian armed forces**, is about to evolve into a model that aims to integrate the operational component with a focus on strategic specializations, such as cyber warfare. This project, developed by the Defense General Staff, involves the employment of about 35,000 reservists divided into **three areas: operational, territorial, and specialist**.

The Vision of the Chief of Defense Staff

General Luciano Portolano, Chief of Defense Staff, recently presented the study on the national reserve, defining it as "**indispensable**" for **integrating and supporting the regular Italian forces**. The plan, still in its embryonic stage, marks a new phase for the Italian defense system, with the goal of responding to modern challenges, including the cyber threat.

Portolano outlined three key components of the reserve:

1. **Operational Reserve:** mainly composed of young reservists, intended to be deployed in operational missions. This part of the reserve is designed to integrate the capabilities of the armed forces.
2. **Territorial Reserve:** a geographical reserve, which will operate in more limited areas and support tasks that are currently partially covered by regular forces.
3. **Specialist Reserve:** composed of highly specialized professionals in complex areas such as cyber security. This sector is crucial for responding to the growing digital threats and technological challenges of the future.

According to General Portolano, the plan envisages the creation of about 35,000 reservists, with a distribution that should contribute to the goal of 160,000 units, the number foreseen for the new Italian defense model. The number of reservists is designed to integrate the capabilities of the armed forces, in a context where threats, including cyberspace, are becoming increasingly relevant. However, as emphasized by the general, this is only a preliminary project that requires political approval to be implemented.



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Regulatory and Political Implications

The project also foresees **a series of regulatory changes**. The draft delegation law to the government, currently under discussion, could introduce amendments to the Military Organization Code, allowing the structured creation of the national reserve. **This legislative intervention will also include exemptions to public employment regulations, allowing**

for more flexible management of military personnel.

One of the anticipated innovations concerns the economic and pension treatment of reservists, with compensatory measures for those who will be called into service. Additionally, legal protections for personnel will be expanded, including support for relocation once active service is completed.

The Role of Cyber Defense

A fundamental aspect of the new reserve model is the integration of **cyber defense**. With the evolution of technologies, the protection of digital infrastructures has become one of the highest priorities for national security. The specialist reserve will therefore be crucial for strengthening Italy's cyber capabilities, particularly in countering digital threats, which today represent a risk as serious as physical threats.



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Future Prospects

If approved, the project will see Italy strengthen its national defense system with a leaner and more modern reserve component, ready to respond to all needs, from traditional conflicts to cyber warfare. However, it remains to be seen what the timing of the next developments will be and how political institutions will move to translate this new vision of the military reserve into law.

The future of Italian defense thus appears increasingly oriented towards a **synergy between regular forces and reservists**, with a strong focus on new technologies and future challenges, in an increasingly complex and dynamic geopolitical context.

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