

Ariete C1 ahead of Leopard: 132° Reggimento Carri takes silver at the Hellenic Tank Challenge

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An **outstanding operational and training achievement** for the heavy component of the Italian Army. From **14 to 20 November 2026**, at the **Petrohori training range** (in the Xanthi region of Western Thrace, Greece), the fifth edition of the **International Hellenic Tank Challenge (IHTC-26)**, the leading international competition for tank crews in the Balkan region, took place.

At the end of seven days of extremely demanding trials, the crew fielded by the **132° Reggimento Carri** — a leading unit of the **Brigata Corazzata "Ariete"** — secured a prestigious **second place overall out of twelve competing crews**, operating the national **Ariete C1** main battle tank.

The podium and the multinational challenge

According to Greek military sources (including the *AMNA* agency and specialist Greek and international outlets), the final standings saw a U.S. contingent prevail for the first time in the event's history — from **C Company, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment of the *1st Infantry Division***, operating **M1A2 SEPv2 Abrams** tanks — immediately followed by the **Italian crew in an Ariete C1** and, on the third step of the podium, the host nation's Greek **22° Battaglione Carri Medi (22 EMA)** of the 25ª Brigata Corazzata, equipped with **Leopard 2HEL** tanks.

The competition, established in 2020 and hosted at the training area of the Greek 25ª Brigata Corazzata (part of the 20ª Divisione Corazzata), brought together **12 crews from Italy, Greece, the United States and Cyprus**. Cyprus made its **historic debut** in the competition with a Cypriot National Guard crew, enabled to operate a **Leopard 1A5** tank provided by the Hellenic Army. The Petrohori training range was also attended by **military observers from Hungary, Bulgaria and Armenia**, confirming the event's **growing strategic importance** for the Alliance's southeastern flank.

Operational realism and interoperability in the field

Throughout the training week, the crews faced **complex tactical scenarios** designed to replicate modern battlefield conditions. The trials rigorously assessed **technical and tactical proficiency**, **gunnery accuracy**, **speed of engagement**, **maneuver capabilities** and **complete mastery of operating procedures** for their respective weapon systems.

On the Greek side, the Commander of the Comando Militare Supremo di Tracia, Lieutenant General **Panagiotis Kavidopoulos**, emphasized that the IHTC has now become an established event for measuring **operational readiness**.The 2026 edition also marked a significant development for the Greek armed forces: for the first time, an **entirely reserve crew** was fielded, a tangible sign of the **restructuring and strengthening of the active reserve** programs (under the *Agenda 2030* planning framework).

The significance of the result for Brigata "Ariete"

For the Italian Army, the **silver medal won in Xanthi** represents far more than a simple sporting result. Competing on equal terms — and **outperforming numerous teams equipped with platforms such as the Leopard 2A4 and 2HEL** — demonstrates the high level of **cohesion, training, and technical expertise** attained by the personnel of the **132°**

Reggimento Carri.

In a geopolitical context that has returned **high-intensity warfare** and armored formations to the heart of land warfare doctrine, the International Hellenic Tank Challenge 2026 provided a crucial test bed to **strengthen multinational interoperability**, refine **common procedures among allied forces**, and confirm the **reliability and professionalism of Italy's armored component**.

News link: https://www.esercito.difesa.it/comunicazione/international-hellenic-tank-challenge-2026/217281.html