Artificial Intelligence, Strategic Autonomy and Recruitment: French Army Priorities

Published on 03/09/2026

General Jacques de Montgros, who officially took office as Chief of Staff of the French Army (*Chef d'état-major de l'armée de terre*) on July 26, has charted the course for the future of the armed force through the publication of his first programmatic document. Shared publicly on X and dated August 24, the text sets out a clear and ambitious objective: to shape **"an Army that is feared, proud and bold"**.

The strategy outlined by the Alpine military leadership is founded on three fundamental pillars, designed to respond to the profound changes in the international security context and the needs of technological modernization.

The Accelerated Integration of Artificial Intelligence

The most urgent priority identified by de Montgros concerns the large-scale adoption of autonomous systems and artificial intelligence-based solutions within land operations. However, the Chief of Staff has emphasized that digitalization and technological transition must not ignore the traditional human factors that ensure superiority in the field, placing particular emphasis on the commander's critical judgment and the strength of collective cohesion.

Artificial Intelligence, Strategic Autonomy and Recruitment: French Army Priorities

Adaptation to the New European Strategic Landscape

The second major test for the armed forces lies in the ability to grasp what is defined as Europe's "strategic awakening," a central theme that already emerged during the celebrations of the national holiday on July 14 in Paris. The army must demonstrate that it can master the combination of maneuver, surprise and attrition, thereby ensuring decisive action at the moment deemed most opportune.

This doctrinal and operational evolution finds crucial financial support in the new regulatory framework: on August 18, Paris formally adopted the revised military programming law, allocating an additional **36 billion euros** (approximately 42 billion dollars) for defense for the five-year period 2026-2030. These resources will make it possible to support the gradual transition away from low-intensity counter-insurgency missions toward preparation for complex scenarios and the defense of European sovereignty.

The Demographic Challenge and Recruitment

Alongside technological and strategic transformations, the document emphasizes a long-term obstacle represented by the management of the human factor. Current demographic dynamics compel the military institution to rethink recruitment and personnel retention strategies, an essential element for maintaining the operational combat capabilities of the entire armed force..