



Beyond UNIFIL: Italy's Strategic Repositioning in Lebanon

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The delicate Lebanese chessboard is undergoing a phase of profound change. As the expiration of the UNIFIL mandate approaches (end of 2026), the debate on how Italy intends to maintain its role as a stabilizer in the region is moving beyond the purely diplomatic perimeter to enter the more concrete realm of force restructuring. Rome, aware that a total withdrawal would risk creating a dangerous power vacuum, is preparing a strategy aimed at balancing its historic participation in international missions with a presence increasingly oriented towards capacity building.

The Changing of the Guard: Pozzuolo del Friuli Prepares

On the operational level, the continuity of commitment remains the main signal sent by the military leadership. While the "Sassari" Brigade is preparing to close its current command cycle in the western sector, planning is already underway for the handover with the **"Pozzuolo del Friuli" Cavalry Brigade**. The transfer of authority will not be just a routine logistical operation,

but represents the confirmation of Italy's willingness to maintain intact its maneuver and control capabilities on the ground, despite the worsening security climate in the southern quadrant of the country.

The Backbone: MIBIL and MTC4L

If the future of UNIFIL appears uncertain from a political mandate perspective, the heart of Italy's stability projection in Lebanon rests on pillars that prescribe a long-term commitment: the **MIBIL (Italian Bilateral Military Mission in Lebanon)** and the **MTC4L (Military Training Center for Lebanon)** project.

MIBIL continues to represent a model of excellence in the landscape of international defense cooperation. The targeted training activity in favor of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) has never ceased, demonstrating the resilience of the Italian training system. At the same time, the MTC4L hub assumes increasing strategic value: the goal is to provide the LAF with the necessary skills to operate in complex urban contexts and high-intensity environments, making the Lebanese army an increasingly reliable and professional interlocutor in countering internal threats and destabilization at the borders.



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Towards a New European Vision

Rome's intention, supported by the Defense and Foreign Ministry leadership, is to lead a transition towards a "new European initiative." Moving beyond the traditional peacekeeping model towards a more robust commitment in the *Train & Assist* sector is the path indicated to

protect national and regional interests.

Italy, strengthened by the prestige acquired in the field, does not intend to abandon Lebanon, but to transform its presence into a mission of structural support. The integration between the experience acquired by "Pozzuolo del Friuli" in the operational theater and the training infrastructure consolidated by MIBIL and MTC4L outlines a "variable geometry" approach capable of adapting to the changing Lebanese reality.

Ultimately, if 2026 marks the end of a chapter for UNIFIL, the Italian strategy suggests that the commitment in Lebanon is destined to evolve, not to end. The focus shifts from interposition to resilience building, confirming Italy as an indispensable protagonist for the stability of the wider Mediterranean.