CAEX 2025: advanced training and joint force integration in the spotlight

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As part of the **Joint Stars 2025** exercise, the most important **joint, inter-agency, and multi-domain** maneuver organized at the national level, the **Army Aviation** conducted the **Complex Aviation Exercise – CAEX I/2025**, a high-intensity training activity involving airlifted assets, air-mobile infantry, and logistical and technological support units.

Held at the **Capo Teulada** range in Sardinia, the exercise validated the **operational readiness** of the **Airmobile Brigade "Friuli"**, employed as a **Combat Aviation Brigade**, and represented a concrete demonstration of the effectiveness of the Italian Army's operational model in contemporary operations.

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More than **400 soldiers** were involved, supported by **13 Army Aviation (AVES) helicopters**, including models like the UH-90, used in both day and night missions. Operations took place in complex environments characterized by **conventional and unconventional threats**, including the simulation of contaminated areas, in a scenario requiring flexibility, speed, and adaptability.

The entire exercise setup aimed for maximum realism, highlighting the importance of preparing military units to operate in a **dynamic and symmetrical** context typical of modern conflicts.

An integrated model: cooperation between infantry, helicopters, and tactical support

One of the key aspects of **CAEX I/2025** was the **deep integration between the different Army units**, demonstrating increasingly effective synergy between operational and specialized components.

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The Airmobile Brigade “Friuli” was indeed reinforced by highly specialized units:

- **152nd Infantry Regiment “Sassari”**, operating as light infantry for territorial control and urban operations;
- **186th Paratroopers Regiment “Folgore”**, specialized in airborne landings and rapid maneuvers;

- **185th Paratroopers Reconnaissance Target Acquisition Regiment “Folgore”**, a unit with surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting skills;
- **5th Engineer Regiment**, active in ordnance neutralization, breaching, and infrastructural support;
- **11th Signals Regiment**, responsible for the advanced communications network and information flow management;
- **87th Command and Tactical Support Unit “Friuli”**, employed as a **Brigade Support Group**, with coordination, logistics, and command tasks.

This configuration allowed for testing **integrated air and ground maneuvers**, showcasing the operational efficiency of the Brigade in a context where **cooperation between various Armed Forces components is essential**. The activity confirmed how **joint and inter-agency integration is key to ensuring reactivity and operational superiority**, especially in complex and multi-domain crisis contexts.

The strategic value of joint training also emerges in the ability of these units to collaborate effectively with other Armed Forces and State Armed Corps, enhancing the readiness and response capability of the entire national defense system.

Evolving technologies and capabilities: Army Aviation looks to the future

CAEX 2025 also confirmed the **central role of technology** in ensuring an operational advantage, from logistics to data collection, protection to communications. The combined use of **multifunction helicopters**, like the UH-90, allowed for missions of **infiltration, evacuation, fire support, and mobile command**. The use of advanced sensors and digital systems facilitated dynamic and real-time management of units on the ground.

The contribution of the **11th Signals Regiment** was fundamental, ensuring **communication continuity even in degraded environments**, providing the command with the ability to effectively maneuver forces and adapt strategies according to the evolving threats.

At the end of the activity, **Major General Salvatore Annigliato**, Commander of Army Aviation, expressed great satisfaction with the operation:

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> *“The CAEX I/2025 once again confirmed the ability of the ‘Friuli’ Brigade to operate in complex contexts, in full integration with the other Armed Forces. This result is the fruit of the preparation, commitment, and team spirit that the personnel put into play every day. To all of them goes my sincerest thanks.”*

This recognition highlights not only the success of the single exercise but also the strategic direction taken by the Army: a modern, **highly mobile, technologically advanced, and integrated** armed force.

The **CAEX I/2025** thus stands as a **benchmark for the evolution of Italian defense**, demonstrating how realistic training, joint integration, and the intelligent use of technology are indispensable pillars for facing future operational challenges.