



Defense and Budget Cuts: Why the Italian Army Must Be the Priority for Renewal and Investment

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The debate over the Public Finance Planning Document and the **€7 billion in defense cuts** highlights a central issue for the country's security: maintaining force levels and strengthening land forces. In the current geopolitical and operational environment, the **Esercito Italiano not only forms the numerical backbone of Italy's military instrument**, but is also the service branch carrying the heaviest operational burden, both at home and in overseas theaters.

The numerical backbone of defense

When discussing military personnel and contract renewals for law enforcement and security forces — such as the recent agreement providing **€188 gross per month** and back pay for **430,000 uniformed men and women** —, it is essential to remember the composition of the military instrument. **The Army accounts for the clear majority of Armed Forces personnel.** Its operational components bear most of the day-to-day duties involving

surveillance, rapid response, and nationwide presence.

In this context, reduced resources risk having a disproportionate impact on the land component, which by its very nature requires **large numbers, continuous training, and constantly updated equipment**.

Strade Sicure and operational commitments: the burden on land units

The need to strengthen the Army is clear from an analysis of ongoing operations. The government plan aims to reinforce Operation "**Strade Sicure**", increasing the number of military personnel deployed across the country **from 6,800 to 10,000 personnel** (an increase of **3,200 troops** and an expansion to **61 provincial capitals**).

This operational effort falls almost entirely on Army regiments. Ensuring security at railway stations, in urban centers, and at sensitive sites, soldiers provide an irreplaceable presence. However, increasing domestic commitments without a parallel and **robust recruitment and reinforcement plan** risks straining the service branch's ability to simultaneously sustain international missions and collective-defense exercises within NATO.

Why priority strengthening is needed

As Defense Minister Guido Crosetto has repeatedly stressed, the issue of force levels and the Reserve (including the possibility of an **increase to as many as 40,000 personnel**) requires structural funding. **The Army is the service branch requiring the greatest strategic support** for several reasons:

1. **Force structure reconfiguration:** As the component with the highest personnel density, **any cuts or delays in recruitment affect the Army's operational units first and foremost.**
2. **Technological modernization:** The evolution of modern conflicts requires major investments in armored vehicles, short-range air defense, drones, and tactical communications systems for soldiers in the field.

3. **Meeting NATO commitments:** The Atlantic Alliance requires land forces to maintain a high state of operational readiness (**Prontezza 2030**), which can only be sustained through an appropriate balance between financial and human resources.

Conclusions

Public finance challenges and compliance with budgetary constraints must not obscure strategic priorities. **The Esercito Italiano, by virtue of its strength and the breadth of its tasks, is the fundamental pillar of our Defense.** Ensuring adequate resources for its personnel and **accelerating reinforcement and recruitment plans** is the only way to ensure that the country can meet both domestic security requirements and NATO's international commitments.