



Defense: General Iannucci (COVI) visits the Horn of Africa and Saudi Arabia: Red Sea security directly affects Italy's interests

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Roma, 30 set – Stability in the Horn of Africa and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea are crucial issues for national security. This was the key message at the heart of the official mission conducted by the Comandante Operativo di Vertice Interforze (COVI), Lieutenant General **Giovanni Maria Iannucci**, who from 22 to 24 September visited **Djibouti, Mogadishu and Ta'if (Saudi Arabia)** to meet local authorities and Italian contingents engaged in national and European Union missions.

Djibouti: Regional cooperation and protection of maritime routes

The first leg of the visit took place in Djibouti, where General Iannucci met with local political and military leaders – including Acting Minister of the Interior and Defense Omar Abdi Said and

Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Ali Hassan – to review the regional security situation and bilateral cooperation.

- **MIADIT Somalia:** At the "Idriss Farah Abaneh" Police Academy, the COVI commander observed training activities conducted by the Arma dei Carabinieri for Somali and Djiboutian police forces, which are essential to strengthening the self-sufficiency of local institutions.
- **Base Militare Italiana di Supporto (BMIS):** The facility serves as the logistical hub of the national posture in the region, providing support to local forces and naval units engaged in ongoing operations.
- **Operazione EUNAVFOR ASPIDES:** In the port of Djibouti, the General met the crews of the Italian units assigned to the European mission – the mine countermeasure vessels *Rimini* and *Crotone* (returning home) and the frigate *Bergamini*.

"About 35% of maritime traffic bound for Italy passes through this route.

Defending freedom of navigation here means defending Italy", General Iannucci stressed, addressing the service members.

Mogadishu: Strengthening Somali institutions

The mission continued in Somalia, where the focus shifted to supporting local institutions and the strategic partnership with the European Union."In Mogadishu, Iannucci met with Somali Defense Minister Ahmed Moalim Fiqi and Italian personnel serving in the **EUTM Somalia** and **EUCAP Somalia** missions.

The two initiatives work in synergy to:

- Strengthen the Somali Armed Forces through training, mentoring and advisory activities (*Training, Mentoring and Advice*).
- Develop the capabilities of the local police, bolstering the rule of law as well as internal and maritime security.

The Saudi Arabia stop and thanks to the contingent

The itinerary concluded in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, at *King Fahd Air Base*, home to the **Task Force Air - Arabia**. Welcomed by the base commander, General Iannucci visited the operational area and met with Italian service members, praising their professionalism and dedication in complex environments far from home.