



Fioravanti on Repubblica: «Mines and Unexploded Bombs, the Challenge of Clearing an Area as Large as Half of Italy»

Published on 26/08/2025

The future of Ukraine also depends on the clearance of its lands devastated by war. An immense challenge: 139,000 square kilometers, equivalent to half of Italy's surface, are now covered with mines, cluster bombs, and unexploded ordnance. A lethal legacy that endangers the daily lives of millions of civilians and hinders economic recovery, starting with the agricultural sector.

Italy has already formalized its commitment, as announced by Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, within the framework of security guarantees for Kiev. A project that, according to UN estimates, will require investments close to 30 billion dollars and a long time, but which fits into the path of stabilization and peace.

The Words of General Fioravanti, Formerly “Aquila 1”

Explaining the scope of the mission is **General Maurizio Fioravanti**, former commander of the Folgore and Special Forces, known as “Aquila 1” in operational theaters. «In the last twenty-five years – he emphasizes – the capabilities of the Army and the entire Defense in this sector have been greatly increased through interaction with the realities in which we have intervened.

Already in Nassiriya, we had to deal with IEDs, the hidden devices along the roads, later used in Afghanistan. Today we have technological innovations and remote-controlled means that reduce risks, along with increasingly high personnel training».

Fioravanti on Repubblica: «Mines and Unexploded Bombs, the Challenge of Clearing an Area as Large

Fioravanti on Repubblica: «Mines and Unexploded Bombs, the Challenge of Clearing an Area as Large as Half of Italy»

Fioravanti recalls the experience in Lebanon, where he led the Italian contingent: «Since 2006, a continuous clearance operation has been active along the border strip with Israel, a scenario very similar to Ukraine: anti-personnel mines, cluster bombs, and all kinds of ordnance layered on the territory».

The general also warns about the maritime front: «In the Black Sea, the threat of old “hedgehog” mines and modern ordnance with sonar or pressure sensors, capable of exploding only at the passage of certain ships, should not be underestimated».

Italian Technologies and International Cooperation

Operating in the depths, the Italian Navy has *Gaeta* class minehunters, made of fiberglass and equipped with advanced sonars. A national technology so effective that it has also been adopted by the U.S. Navy. The means employ the wire-guided mini-submarine **Pluto Gigas**, capable of neutralizing mines with a programmed explosive charge.

Fioravanti on Repubblica: «Mines and Unexploded Bombs, the Challenge of Clearing an Area as Large

Fioravanti on Repubblica: «Mines and Unexploded Bombs, the Challenge of Clearing an Area as Large as Half of Italy»

These systems integrate perfectly with NATO standards, allowing Italian crews to cooperate with other European and Atlantic fleets. Not surprisingly, for years Italian and Turkish officers have alternated at the helm of the NATO minehunter group, now led by the patrol vessel *Foscari*.

The future, meanwhile, lies in drones: terrestrial, underwater, and aerial. The new platforms reduce risks for engineers and allow large-scale operations to be tackled with greater speed and efficiency. The Air Force, with the **Caew** radar aircraft, can also offer a valuable contribution in air surveillance and operational coordination.

The Political and Diplomatic Challenge

The most delicate issue remains that of **boots on the ground**. To clear Ukrainian territory, it is necessary to operate directly on the ground, and this involves the presence of foreign military in still contested areas. A prospect that Moscow is not willing to easily accept.

«I believe that with this formula – observes General Fioravanti – the Meloni government pursues two objectives: to stand alongside the willing like France and Germany and at the same time confirm to Kiev direct support with the presence of our military. We must not forget that in the end, it is the Quirinale that indicates the main path».

A Titanic Undertaking

To date, with the help of international organizations and NGOs, about **35,000 square kilometers** of territory have been cleared. But more than **100,000** remain infested with mines and ordnance, especially in the regions of Kherson, Kharkiv, Sumy, and along the banks of the Dnipro.

The Italian mission promises to be long, costly, and dangerous, but it also represents a concrete contribution to European security. As General Fioravanti emphasizes, «it's not just about helping Ukraine: it's a decisive step to ensure stability for the entire area and to confirm Italy's role as a credible protagonist in peace and international security operations».

News link: https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2025/08/26/news/sminatori_italiani_ucraina_tregua_marina_esercito-424807462/https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2025/08/26/news/sminatori_italiani_ucraina_tregua_marina_esercito-424807462/