



## From the Wheels of 1916 to the Logistics of the Future: The Tramat Corps Celebrates Its Day

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On May 22, 2025, at the “G. Rossetti” barracks in Cecchignola, headquarters of the Logistics Support Command and the Army Transport and Materials School, the **109th anniversary of the Battle of the Plateaus** was celebrated, a symbolic event that coincides with the **Transport and Materials Corps Day**. The ceremony was attended by the Army Logistics Commander, General of the Army Corps Angelo Michele Ristuccia, and numerous military, civil, and religious authorities.

The commemoration represented an important moment of reflection on the **crucial role of military logistics**, highlighting the direct connection between past and present. The Battle of the Plateaus, also known as the *Strafexpedition*, was fought between May 15 and June 27, 1916, on the Vicentine plateaus. It was one of the toughest of the Great War, costing over 230,000 total casualties. The Austro-Hungarian offensive, led by General Conrad von Hötzendorf, aimed to strike hard at Italy, seen as a traitor to the Triple Alliance.

The Italian response proved to be one of the most impressive logistical operations of the war: **the transfer of 120 battalions from the Isonzo front to the Trentino front**, organized in a very short time and with cutting-edge means at the time, such as Pavesi-Tolotti tractors and Lancia IZ motor columns. It was from this extraordinary mobilization that the seed of the Transport and Materials Corps was born, which today continues to ensure support for military operations in Italy and abroad.

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## The handover between Santamaria and Petroni

During the celebration, the ceremony of the **change of command of the Tramat Command** also took place. Lieutenant General Sergio Santamaria handed over the leadership of the Corps to Major General Tommaso Petroni, in an atmosphere of emotion and pride. General Santamaria emphasized the importance of the professionalism of the personnel and the cohesion of the Corps, thanking everyone for the work done during his tenure. General Petroni promised continuity and innovation, reaffirming Tramat's commitment to the evolution of military logistics.

The ceremony saw the participation of numerous representations: from the Medals and Banners of the Combatant Associations to the Officers of the AUC courses of the Automotive Corps (129th, 133rd, 158th), up to a large group of Non-Commissioned Officers and Graduates of the Corps. Further enriching the event, a **static exhibition of historical and modern vehicles**, set up by the Historical Museum of Military Motorization, visually recounted the evolution of the Corps from World War I to the present day.

The connection with the Battle of the Plateaus was particularly felt. During those tragic days of 1916, it was precisely the Italian logistical efficiency that prevented the collapse of the front. Despite the initial breakthrough of the Italian lines by the Eleventh and Third Austro-Hungarian Armies, Cadorna's organizational response – with the creation of the 5th Army and the mobilization of reserves – was timely and effective. The Italian troops, despite difficulties and losses, managed to contain the advance and, with the counteroffensive of June 2, to regain control of many key positions.

Lieutenant General Sergio Santamaria, on the left, handed over the leadership of the Corps to Major General Tommaso Petroni

## Logistics as a strategic lever for today and tomorrow

The Transport and Materials Corps of the Italian Army today presents itself as a modern and strategic component of the Armed Force. A direct descendant of the Automotive Corps born during the Great War, it inherits its spirit, values, and operational efficiency. The motto **“Fervent rotae, fervent animi”** – the wheels burn, the spirits burn – summarizes the essence of the work carried out every day by men and women committed to ensuring **mobility, supply, and support** to operational units.

The example of 1916, when entire divisions were moved along the Venetian lines with almost industrial precision, represents a still valid model. Even today, in a complex and often unstable international scenario, the **capacity for logistical planning** constitutes a crucial advantage. Tramat operates both in national contexts (training, civil emergencies, exercises) and in operational theaters abroad, demonstrating versatility, reliability, and readiness to intervene.

The sacrifices and lessons of the Strafexpedition remain relevant. Then as now, it is **logistics that decides the outcome of operations**: the timely transport of materials, weapons, and supplies can turn the tide of a battle. The Tramat Command, with its School, continues to invest in **technical training, technological updating, and innovation of means**, to face the challenges of the 21st century.

The Transport and Materials Corps Day on May 22, 2025, once again united **history and present, memory and future**. It is not only the commemoration of a defensive victory of World War I but also and above all the celebration of a solid and proud professional identity, forged in effort and service, and today more than ever crucial for the effectiveness of the Italian military instrument.