Gazza Ladra 2025: COFS Tests the Capabilities of Special Forces

Published on 13/04/2025

Grazzanise (CE), April 13, 2025 – Today, at the 9th Wing base of the Italian Air Force, one of the most significant days of the exercise **Gazza Ladra 2025 (GL25)** took place, the flagship training activity of the **Joint Command for Special Forces Operations (COFS)** for the current year. The event was attended by the **Undersecretary of Defense**, Hon. **Matteo Perego di Cremnago**, and the **Joint Operational Command Chief**, Army Corps General **Giovanni Iannucci**, who were able to observe the ongoing operations live, appreciating the level of integration and realism.

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The exercise, taking place from **March 31 to April 11, 2025**, aims to verify the readiness and efficiency of the COFS in implementing the **National Contingency Plan** in case of international crises. The simulated situations are extremely realistic and complex: evacuation of nationals in danger, operations for the release of hostages, protection of national strategic interests in unstable areas. This type of training is essential to ensure a rapid and coordinated response by the Special Forces in high-criticality contexts, where time, precision, and joint coordination make the difference.

The general scenario of Gazza Ladra 2025 is embedded in the strategic-operational level exercise **Joint Stars 25**, organized by the **Joint Operational Command (COVI)**. In this context, GL25 represents a key event of the so-called **"Road to Crisis"**, a simulated escalation sequence that could lead, within the NATO framework, to the **declaration of Article 5**, i.e., the activation of the collective defense clause. This demonstrates how national training is perfectly integrated with multinational and allied planning, enhancing the credibility of the Italian military instrument on the international stage.

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Joint Deployment of Special Forces in Key Strategic Areas

The activity takes place in a very large geographical area, demonstrating the truly **joint and interregional** dimension of the exercise. The nerve centers of the operations include **Rome**, where the main command is located, **Pisa**, **Poggio Renatico (FE)**, and especially **Grazzanise (CE)**, which serves as the operational hub for the Intervention Forces. The target areas are located in Southern Italy, particularly in **Jacotenente (FG)** and **Martina Franca (TA)**, while the advanced intermediate bases available are those of **Amendola (FG)** and **Gioia del Colle (BA)**, essential for logistical and air support.

Gazza Ladra 25 simultaneously involves **all Special Forces units** of the four Italian Armed Forces under the operational control of the COFS. For the Army, the **9th Paratrooper Assault Regiment "Col Moschin"**, a historic and excellent unit in high-risk operations, the **4th Alpine Paratrooper Regiment "Ranger"**, and the **185th Reconnaissance and Target Acquisition Regiment "Folgore"**, specialized in advanced surveillance and targeting operations, participate. The **Navy** is represented by the prestigious **Operational Raiders Group (GOI)**, while the **Air Force** deploys the **17th Raiders Wing**, an elite unit for deep operations in non-permissive environments. The **Carabinieri**, finally, participate with the **Special Intervention Group (GIS)** and the **1st Paratrooper Regiment "Tuscania"**, contributing unique capabilities in counter-terrorism and close protection of sensitive targets.

Air and logistical support is provided by numerous specialized assets: **CH-47F** and **NH-90** helicopters of the **3rd REOS** of the Army, **HH-101 Caesar** of the **9th Wing** of the Air Force, **C-**

130J and **C-27J Spartan** transport aircraft of the **46th Air Brigade**, as well as teams from the **3rd Wing of Villafranca** employed for delicate refueling operations in the operational environment (**ALARP**). Also present are personnel from the **16th Force Protection Wing** of Martina Franca, an **SH-90** helicopter of the Navy, and assets of the **11th Transmission Regiment**, essential for ensuring real-time coordination and communications.

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COFS: Elite Command for Italian Special Operations

The Joint Command for Special Forces Operations (COFS), established on **December 1, 2004**, represents a fundamental element in the modern architecture of Italian Defense. Directly under the **Chief of Defense Staff**, the COFS is responsible for planning, coordinating, and conducting all **special operations** carried out by the SF units of the four Armed Forces, ensuring maximum interoperability and rapid deployment.

The visual identity of the COFS recalls Italian historical and cultural roots: its symbol, inspired by the famous painting *The Oath of the Horatii* by Jacques-Louis David, depicts the **father's hand** handing over the three swords to his sons, symbols of the three operational domains – **land, sea, and sky** – in which the Special Forces operate. The Roman shield enclosing the image represents the absolute commitment to the **defense of the Homeland**. The Latin motto, **"Etiam si omnes, ego non"**, translatable as “Even if all (yield), I will not”, is a declaration of moral determination, reflecting the willingness to face the toughest challenges, even alone, in the name of duty and responsibility.

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In this context, the exercise **Gazza Ladra 2025** confirms itself not only as a moment of technical-tactical verification but as a concrete demonstration of the capability of the Italian Special Forces to **operate jointly, credibly, and proactively**. A clear message of readiness, synergy, and professionalism, reinforcing Italy's role as a reliable actor in international security dynamics.

News link: https://www.difesa.it/smd/news-italia/esercitazione-gazza-ladra-visita-on-matteo-perego-di-cremnago-e-gen-ca-giovanni-iannucci/68695.html