



General Vergori has arrived in Kosovo. He will lead KFOR XXXI from 14 October

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PRISTINA – A change of command at the helm of NATO's KFOR (Kosovo Force) mission. At Camp Film City's Headquarters in Pristina, outgoing Commander Major General Özkan Ulutaş welcomed Major General Roberto Vergori, who will formally assume command of KFOR XXXI. Over the coming days, the two Generals will work closely together during the transition phase to ensure the full operational continuity of the allied force's activities. The official change-of-command ceremony is scheduled for **14 October 2026** in Pristina. KFOR reaffirms its top priority in implementing the mandate granted by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999: ensuring a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement for all communities living in Kosovo, operating impartially and in close cooperation with the Kosovo Police and the European Union's EULEX mission.

KOSOVO'S RADICAL EVOLUTION AND NEW GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES

The transition in KFOR's leadership comes against a historical backdrop marked by the profound and radical transformation Kosovo has undergone over the past twenty-five years."Since the end of the 1999 conflict, the Balkan region has undergone gradual institutional, social, and economic development, moving from a phase of post-war emergency and international administration to a structured process of state consolidation and Euro-Atlantic integration. The evolution of the Kosovo framework has been marked by several key steps:

- **From emergency management to local institutions:** The gradual transfer of primary security and public-order responsibilities to local police forces and Kosovo's judicial institutions.
- **Regulatory and administrative development:** The adoption of European standards in the areas of law, local governance, and institutional transparency.
- **Regional and European integration:** The still-complex path toward international recognition and closer ties with the European Union and NATO structures.

NEW CHALLENGES TO SECURITY AND STABILITY

Despite structural progress, KFOR's operational environment now faces a rapidly changing political and security landscape, marked by emerging challenges:

1. **Tensions in Northern Kosovo:** Persistent ethnic and political friction in the Serb-majority municipalities of the north continues to represent the main source of instability, requiring a constant and balanced presence.
2. **Normalization of Pristina-Belgrade relations:** The European Union-facilitated dialogue has alternated between stalemates and periods of heightened verbal and diplomatic tensions, making KFOR's presence indispensable as an impartial and neutral guarantor.
3. **Hybrid Threats and Disinformation:** Beyond the traditional security dimension, the region is increasingly exposed to disinformation campaigns and external interference aimed at destabilizing the Balkan balance.
4. **Multilevel Coordination:** The need to maintain effective interoperability among KFOR (the third security responder), the Kosovo Police (the first responder), and EULEX (the second responder) in order to prevent escalation and promptly manage any crises.

The handover to **Major General Roberto Vergori reaffirms Italy's and NATO's steadfast commitment to ensuring the stability of the Western Balkans**, a strategic and essential

element for the security of all Europe.