



Hybrid defense, Italy moves ahead of Europe: Crosetto-backed joint-service hub launched.

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During a hearing before the Senate Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on the bill to strengthen and modernize national defense capabilities, Defense Minister **Guido Crosetto** outlined the guidelines for establishing the new **Centro interforze per l'addestramento e il contrasto alla minaccia ibrida**.

A strategic initiative that, in addition to reorganizing the country's internal capabilities, aims to become a **benchmark and trailblazer for the entire European Union**.

Key Elements of the Project

- **Overcoming fragmentation:** The center will consolidate the expertise and resources that have so far been scattered and disconnected across the different Armed Forces.
- **Beyond the cyber domain:** It will not be limited to cybersecurity, but will actively address **disinformation, psychological operations (PsyOps), and strategic communications**

(StratCom) to counter hostile campaigns and information manipulation.

- **A distributed “brain” function:** The organization will serve as a primary hub for analysis, development, and training, with the aim of disseminating specialized expertise throughout every regiment, brigade, and operational unit.
- **European ambition:** Taking the lead will enable Italy to position itself as a leader in the field, laying the groundwork to attract and lead a future continental structure dedicated to hybrid defense.

Toward Non-Conventional Defense and the NATO COE Model

The bill – strongly backed by military leadership to adapt to a rapidly changing geopolitical environment – responds to the evolving nature of modern conflicts, which are increasingly less tied to the patterns of traditional warfare. Sabotage, cyber interference, pressure on critical infrastructure and supply chains require a systemic, rapid, and integrated response.

The architecture outlined by the minister is broadly modeled on NATO **Centres of Excellence (COEs)** — such as the *NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence* in Riga —, established to centralize research, analysis, and doctrinal development in specific security areas. However, compared with a traditional COE, which typically operates along a single vertical pillar (such as StratCom alone), the new Italian center goes further: it takes a **multi-domain and holistic** approach, integrating counter-disinformation efforts, cyber defense, psychological operations, and critical infrastructure protection under a single joint “brain.”

Reporting directly to the Chief of Defence Staff, the new center will also plan exercises involving complex scenarios that combine cyberattacks, cognitive threats, and conventional military operations. The same measure also strengthens the cyber domain through the introduction of the **military cyber specialist** role and financial incentives designed to retain highly qualified personnel within the Defense establishment.