



Italian Army, after Masiello in 2027: what profile will be needed for the new Chief of Staff

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In February 2027, the Italian Army will face one of the most important changes in recent years: the three-year term of General Carmine Masiello, Chief of Staff of the Army since February 27, 2024, will come to an end.

His successor will inherit an Armed Force profoundly different from that of just a few years ago and, above all, a transformation process that will hardly be slowed down.

Masiello also represents a particular figure in the history of the Italian Army: he was **the first officer from the paratroopers of the "Folgore" to reach the top of the Armed Force**, after a career that began in the 185° Gruppo Artiglieria Campale Paracadutisti, continued through numerous assignments of increasing responsibility and which saw him, among other things, also commanding the "Folgore" paratroopers brigade.

From February 2024 to February 2027

Masiello's appointment was deliberated by the Council of Ministers on February 15, 2024, at the proposal of Defense Minister Guido Crosetto. The change with General Pietro Serino took place officially on the following **February 27, 2024**.

Since then, the Chief of Staff has accelerated the process of adapting the Army to new operational scenarios.

The underlying concept has been repeatedly stated by Masiello himself: contemporary conflicts are imposing a revision of weapons systems, training, structures and operational procedures. Technology and innovation must therefore rapidly enter the units, without losing sight of what the Chief of Staff considers the Army's main weapons system: **the soldier**.

A path that over the past two years has translated into very concrete programs.

The Army has accelerated the spread of **mini and micro drones**, already reaching over a thousand trained operators by 2025. At the same time, Counter-UAS capabilities, new training procedures, programs related to cybersecurity and artificial intelligence, and experiments directly aimed at lessons learned from contemporary conflicts have been developed.

In 2026, the first Army Doctrinal and Training Conference was also organized, dedicated to the role of the Division in modern warfare and to **Cognitive Warfare**, further evidence that the transformation concerns not only new equipment, but also doctrine, organization and military culture.

The next Chief of Staff cannot simply administer what exists

This is precisely the central point of the change expected in February 2027.

The new Chief of Staff will hardly be able to be merely an excellent commander with extensive field experience. Above all, he will need to be an officer capable of **completing a transformation already underway**, while simultaneously maintaining balance between technological innovation, conventional capabilities, and personnel quality.

The future head of the Army must therefore possess some characteristics that the new strategic scenario now makes decisive.

First of all, he will need to have **solid operational experience**. The return of high-intensity warfare to Europe has brought back to the forefront capabilities that for many years had remained in the background: artillery, air defense, ground mobility, logistics, command and control capabilities, force protection, and availability of large quantities of ammunition.

At the same time, a commander capable of truly understanding new technologies will be needed.

Drones, autonomous systems, artificial intelligence, distributed sensors, electronic warfare, and battlefield digitalization can no longer be considered isolated specialized sectors. They are progressively becoming ordinary tools of ground combat.

Masiello's successor will therefore need to be able not only to approve technological programs, but to understand **their tactical and doctrinal impact on units**.

NATO and joint dimension

Another characteristic that will be difficult to forgo will be significant international experience.

The Italian Army now operates permanently within NATO and multinational structures, and the Italian ground component will need to be increasingly interoperable with allied forces.

It is no coincidence that Masiello himself reached the head of the Army after gaining experience in the Army General Staff and the Defense General Staff, at the Office of the Prime Minister, and in intelligence matters, as well as in various international theaters of operation.

The next Chief of the Army General Staff will also need to possess a vision that goes beyond the boundaries of a single Armed Force.

The Chief of Staff of the Army operates within a Defense structure in which the joint dimension has assumed increasing importance. The Chief of the Defense General Staff is hierarchically superior to the Chiefs of Staff of the individual Armed Forces and, based on the directives of the Defense Minister, is responsible for the planning, preparation, and employment of the Armed Forces as a whole.

The Chief of DGS is also responsible for providing the Minister with guidance regarding the appointment of the Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces. A configuration that makes it

increasingly important for whoever leads the Army to think not only in terrestrial terms, but according to a joint, NATO, and multinational perspective.

The Personnel Challenge

There is then an issue that is probably even more complex than technology: **the men and women of the Army**.

Recruitment, training, retention in service, quality of life in barracks, infrastructure and the ability to attract new skills will inevitably be among the main dossiers of the next Chief of the General Staff.

The modernization process carried out in recent years has continued to place human capital at the center of the Armed Force's transformation. In June 2026, during a visit to the three Volunteer Training Regiments, the Army General Staff explicitly identified the quality of human capital as one of the cornerstones of the Armed Force's innovation process.

In this same direction are also the interventions dedicated to the well-being of personnel and their families. A recent example is the **new Recreational Center of the Army at Tor di Quinto**, over 4,000 square meters dedicated to services, sports activities, catering and leisure spaces. On the occasion of the start of construction, General Carmine Masiello himself emphasized how the well-being of the Soldier and his family also represents an element of operational readiness.

The future Chief of the General Staff will therefore have to succeed in a particularly difficult task: creating a technologically more advanced Army without transforming it into a structure in which technology replaces individual military training, keeping personnel, their training and the conditions in which they live and work at the center.

Continuity or Change of Course?

The real question of February 2027 will probably be this.

Masiello's successor will represent substantial **continuity with the transformation process initiated in recent years**, or will he introduce a different approach?

Much will depend on the international strategic framework, on Defense investment programs and on the evolution of the war in Ukraine, which continues to represent an enormous laboratory from which all Western Armed Forces are drawing lessons.

But some elements now appear difficult to reverse.

The Army of the next decade will need to be larger or at least capable of generating greater operational mass, rapidly deployable, heavily digitalized, protected from the threat of drones and capable in turn of employing them on a large scale.

It will also need to have logistics adequate to sustain high-intensity operations and training built not only on the stabilization missions of the last thirty years, but on the concrete possibility of confronting a technologically advanced adversary.

A heavy legacy but also a great opportunity

The handover will inevitably also have a symbolic value for the world of paratroopers.

With Carmine Masiello, for the first time in the history of the Italian Army, an officer from the **Parachute Brigade "Folgore"** has reached the highest position of the Armed Force.

But the point, looking to the future, will not be the specialty of origin of the next Chief of Staff. Whether he comes from the infantry, the alpine troops, the bersaglieri, the paratroopers, the artillery or another component of the Army, the question will be above all another one: **vision**.

The next Chief of the General Staff will need to be able to read the evolution of warfare, understand technological change, integrate personnel, equipment and new capabilities and keep the Army fully engaged in the joint and multinational dimension.

In February 2027 it will not be simply a matter of choosing the 52nd Chief of the General Staff of the Army. It will be a matter of identifying the general called to lead the Armed Force in the second part of a transformation that could determine **what the Italian Army will be like in the next twenty years**.