Italian Navy: Operational Readiness and Special Forces at the Core of Maritime Security

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In the context of increasing instability in the maritime domain, characterized by hybrid threats, sabotage, and terrorism, the **Italian Navy** maintains a high and continuous level of readiness to ensure the security of **commercial routes**, maritime communication lines, and critical offshore infrastructures.
An attack on a merchant ship or an energy platform is not an isolated incident, but an event potentially capable of producing **systemic effects on national security** and the country's economy.

The core of these capabilities is the **Comando Raggruppamento Subacquei e Incursori "Teseo Tesei" (COMSUBIN)**, based in the Gulf of La Spezia, an elite command of the Navy in the field of **maritime special operations**.
COMSUBIN is divided into the **Operational Raiders Group (GOI)**, specialized in maritime

counter-terrorism and high-intensity operations, and the **Operational Divers Group (GOS)**, responsible for underwater activities, clearance, and neutralization of explosive devices.

The training of COMSUBIN is conceived as a **continuous and permanent process**, aimed at ensuring rapid and flexible intervention capability in complex and dynamic scenarios, both nationally and internationally, with strong integration between naval, air-naval, and underwater assets.

The Gold Finger and Black Shadow Exercises

In this framework, the maritime counter-terrorism exercises **Gold Finger** and **Black Shadow** are included, considered operational reference models for crisis management at sea.

Gold Finger simulated an assault operation on an offshore platform of **ENI** in the Upper Adriatic, reproducing a realistic threat scenario to a strategic energy infrastructure.
The training objective was to verify the ability to neutralize the hostile action and quickly regain control of the facility, minimizing the impact on security, production continuity, and energy stability.

Black Shadow, on the other hand, recreated a crisis situation on board a cruise ship sailing in the Lower Adriatic, involving a unit of **MSC Cruises**.
The scenario allowed testing intervention procedures in the presence of numerous civilians, a context in which decision-making speed, execution precision, and interforce coordination are crucial.

Maritime counter-terrorism exercise Black Shadow, Source Italian Navy.

According to the Italian Navy, both activities were conducted by the GOI with the support of the Fleet Command and high operational value specialist assets: **AW101** helicopters, the High-Speed Multipurpose Naval Unit “Tullio Tedeschi”, a GOS IEDD team, and a **P-72A aircraft from the 41st Wing of Sigonella** with a mixed Navy–Air Force crew.
The exercises demonstrated a **solid command and control capability** and full interforce integration.

Operational Projection and Future Capabilities

Alongside maritime counter-terrorism, the GOI maintains a **marked operational projection capability** thanks to the **Maritime Craft Aerial Delivery System (MCADS)**.
This system allows the simultaneous insertion of operators and light naval means via airdrop from **C-130J** aircraft, enabling rapid intervention even in areas far from the mainland.

In complex training scenarios, the MCADS has demonstrated the possibility of conducting hostage rescue operations on merchant ships seized in international waters, thanks also to the contribution of personnel from the **Brigata Paracadutisti Folgore** for the preparation of launch platforms.

Heavy load airdrop by the 46th Air Brigade of the Air Force and the Air Battalion of the Paratrooper Training Center (CAPAR), part of the Paratrooper Brigade "Folgore", Source Italian Navy.

An additional significant element is the **Delfino** exercise, which strengthens the integration between the GOI Raiders and the submarine component of the Navy, particularly with **U212A air-independent propulsion (AIP) units**.

This cooperation expands discreet infiltration options and increases operational flexibility in highly complex scenarios.

Looking ahead, the Navy has announced that COMSUBIN will have a dedicated naval capability with the future **Special Operations and Submarine Rescue Ship *Olterra***, designed to serve as a command and control platform up to the Task Group level.
Overall, the activities outlined confirm the **central role of naval Special Forces** in protecting maritime routes, critical infrastructures, and national interests, in an increasingly contested and strategically significant maritime domain.

News link: https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2026/01/italian-navy-discloses-maritime-counter-terrorism-training-and-more-sf-activities/