Italy Leading in Crystal Arrow 2025: Strengthening NATO Defense on the Eastern Flank

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The multinational exercise “Crystal Arrow 2025” successfully concluded, an important activity within the NATO Forward Land Forces (FLF) mission on the eastern flank of the Alliance. Held in the **Vidzeme region, Latvia, from May 5 to 11**, the exercise was coordinated by the Latvian Mechanized Infantry Brigade and **involved over 3,000 soldiers and 1,200 vehicles** from the Latvian armed forces and Allied countries.

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The Italian contingent, part of the Multinational Battle Group Latvia (MN BG LVA), operated in the role of OPFOR (Opposing Force). The Italian units, based on the 132nd Armored Brigade "Ariete", simulated a conventional enemy, allowing Latvian forces to test and improve their technical-tactical procedures in a high-intensity scenario. This type of training is essential to achieve full operational capability and enhance the effectiveness of command, control, logistics, and support operations in realistic combat environments.

Training Environment and Objectives

The exercise took place in a complex terrain, between wooded areas and inhabited centers, in the heart of central Latvia. This scenario reproduced difficult operational conditions, offering **the opportunity to train in integrated defensive systems, urban combat, close air support (CAS), medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), logistics, cyber protection, and joint communications.** The integration of indirect fire support and close air support in combat operations further emphasized the importance of close coordination among NATO allies.

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Italy's participation in “Crystal Arrow 2025” underscores its commitment to strengthening NATO's defensive capabilities, particularly along the eastern flank of the Alliance. The exercise allowed for the assessment of interoperability among multinational forces, ensuring that all participating forces, including Italian, Latvian, and allied ones, were ready to operate cohesively in future missions. The training highlighted the importance of joint defensive operations and tested the ability to maintain operational readiness in realistic conditions.

NATO's Role in Strengthening Regional Security

Italy continues to play a crucial role in the security of NATO's northeastern flank. Through its participation in the Baltic region, **Italy contributes to the NATO Forward Land Forces mission, strengthening the Alliance's presence in the Euro-Atlantic region.** The exercise confirmed that the Italian armed forces are capable of operating effectively in complex multinational environments, adhering to NATO's operational standards. The integration of Italian forces in “Crystal Arrow 2025” not only demonstrated their operational competence but also contributed to the credibility of NATO's deterrence strategy in the region.

The success of “Crystal Arrow 2025” confirms Italy's ongoing commitment to NATO's security objectives. The exercise allowed the Italian armed forces to demonstrate their tactical and logistical capabilities, contributing to the strengthening of the Alliance's defensive posture. As part of the NATO Forward Land Forces mission, Italy's support to the Baltic region continues to enhance the region's stability and security, providing a credible and effective response to potential security threats. The exercise is a testament to the principle of collective defense and

shared responsibility in protecting the Euro-Atlantic space.

News link: https://jfcbs.nato.int/page5964943/2025/crystal-arrow-2025-strengthens-regional-defence-capabilities