



Joint Stars 2026: the Initial Planning Conference of Italy's main joint defense exercise held at COVI

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The **Joint Operational Command (COVI)** hosted the **Initial Planning Conference (IPC)** for **Joint Stars 2026 (JOST26)**, Italy's most significant joint defense exercise. The event was attended by over **110 representatives** from the Italian Army, Navy, Air Force, Carabinieri, Guardia di Finanza, National Fire Brigade, Italian Red Cross Military Corps, Civil Protection Department, and the National Cybersecurity Agency.

Also present for the Defense were the **Space Operations Command**, the **Network Operations Command**, and the **Special Forces Operations Command**, confirming the increasingly multi-domain nature of modern exercises.

Structure of JOST26: CPX in October and LIVEX between November and December 2026

During the conference, the structure, objectives, and requirements of JOST26 were defined, which will unfold in two phases:

- **Command Post Exercise (CPX)** – scheduled for **October 2026**, dedicated to operational planning and managing complex scenarios in a simulated environment;
- **Live Exercise (LIVEX)** – planned between **November and December 2026**, during which field units will implement the procedures and dynamics developed in the previous phase.

For the first time, **COVI** will be employed as the **Primary Training Audience**, aiming to verify national defense capability, the level of joint integration, and full interoperability with NATO allies. Special attention will also be given to the **cognitive dimension**, a central element in modern strategic competition.

The scenarios developed in the CPX will form the basis for the LIVEX and will also be preparatory for **Joint Stars 2027**, which will be federated with the main training event of the Atlantic Alliance.

On the final day, **Major General Nicola Piasente**, Head of Planning and Exercises Department at COVI, emphasized the importance of joint and inter-agency integration, made possible by joint planning, a fundamental element to ensure the readiness of the Defense Instrument.

What is COVI

The **Joint Operational Command (COVI)** is the pinnacle of the operational area of the Italian Armed Forces and serves as the staff structure of the Chief of Defense Staff, overseeing the planning, coordination, and direction of military operations and exercises across the five domains: land, sea, air, space, and cyber.

It contributes to the development of NATO doctrine and other international organizations of which Italy is a member, develops simulation methodologies for complex scenarios, and represents the entry point for operational support requests from national authorities – such as Civil Protection and Ministries – in case of natural disasters or emergencies.

The current Commander is **Lieutenant General Paratrooper Giovanni Maria Iannucci**.

News link: <https://www.difesa.it/smd/news-italia/joint-stars-2026-covi-linitial-planning-conference/84515.html>