



## La Mare Aperto 2025 - Countering CBRN Threats

Published on 24/04/2025

La Mare Aperto is the most significant annual exercise of the Italian Defense, planned and conducted by the Italian Navy. It is an event that involves all the forces of the Navy, including ships, submarines, air assets, landing forces, as well as advanced telecommunications and cyber defense systems. The peculiarity of the 2025 edition is its joint and interagency setup, where military and civilian forces operate together to tackle complex threats in realistic scenarios. **The exercise took place from April 8 to 14, focusing on countering CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear) threats.**

A fundamental aspect of this edition was the training in managing CBRN emergencies. The activities extended from the center of the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Tiber River, with close collaboration between the Italian Navy, the Italian Army, the Carabinieri, the Red Cross, Civil Protection, and other institutional actors. An emblematic example of this cooperation was the alarm raised on April 8 by the ferry *Rosa dei Venti*, reporting a terrorist attack on board,

followed by the discovery of radioactive material. The response to this threat involved numerous units, including the **Multirole Exploitation and Reconnaissance Team (MERT)** of the 7th Regiment Cremona of the Italian Army, engaged in contamination analysis and management.

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## The Response to the CBRN Threat - Joint Collaboration

The exercise demonstrated the capability of the Italian Defense to manage CBRN threats with a highly integrated approach. The collaboration between various armed forces, institutions, and civilian agencies was crucial for the success of the operations. After the discovery of contaminated material on the *Rosa dei Venti* ship, rescue forces transported the injured to safety and initiated search operations to neutralize those responsible for the theft of chemical substances. The synergy between the San Marco Marine Brigade, the Italian Army, and other involved forces allowed for an effective emergency response, with the identification and discovery of a map indicating the area of the planned chemical spill along the Tiber.

The core of the operation shifted to a “riverine” action, conducted in a nighttime environment along the Tiber River, where the San Marco Marine Brigade executed a swift and effective intervention. Simultaneously, the scientific analysis of the contamination was entrusted to the Carabinieri's Radioactive unit, who collaborated with the Italian Navy to complete decontamination operations and evidence acquisition.

This complex operation highlighted not only the ability to respond to CBRN emergencies but also the importance of cohesive and integrated resource management in complex scenarios, testing joint procedures and strengthening collective response capability.

## CBRN Defense and the Role of the 7th Regiment Cremona

The countering of CBRN threats in Italy also relies on the experience and capabilities of the Italian Army's specialized units, including the 7th CBRN Defense Regiment Cremona. This regiment is equipped with cutting-edge technologies and specialized tools to tackle chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats, both in national and international operations. Founded in 1923, the regiment has roots that go back to World War I, when Italian units were

victims of toxic gas use by the German army. Since then, the Italian Army has developed skills and technologies to face chemical, biological, and nuclear warfare.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the 7th Regiment played a crucial role in supporting the National Health Service, performing molecular swabs and ensuring the sanitation of healthcare facilities. Its ability to operate in the civilian sphere has been further consolidated with its involvement in CBRN protection and emergency management activities, thanks to continuous updates of technologies and operational procedures.

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Internationally, the regiment participates in NATO exercises and operates with other armed forces to test sampling and identification capabilities of biological, chemical, and radiological agents. Additionally, the unit is involved in the creation of CBRN Multirole Exploitation and Reconnaissance Teams (MERT), specialized teams that combine the capabilities of military forces with those of civilian and interagency entities to manage complex emergency situations.

With the evolution of modern operational scenarios, CBRN units are called to constantly develop new capabilities to respond to emerging challenges, collaborating not only with the armed forces but also with the scientific and industrial sectors. The commitment of the 7th Regiment Cremona, which today continues to train personnel and innovate its equipment, represents a concrete example of the importance of CBRN defense for national and international security.

## Conclusion

La Mare Aperto 2025 and CBRN operations in Italy are examples of the increasing complexity of challenges that the Italian Armed Forces must face in multidomain scenarios. The cooperation between different entities, both military and civilian, and the use of advanced technologies are essential to ensure the protection of national security. Specialized units like the 7th Regiment Cremona continue to evolve to respond to CBRN threats, demonstrating the effectiveness of training and preparation in complex operational contexts.

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