Military Alone is Not Enough: Masiello Calls on Industry and Academia

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From trench warfare to hypersonic drones. The battlefield of the future is no longer just a prediction, but a rapidly changing reality that demands immediate and coordinated responses. This is the message that emerged from the conference *"A Look Upwards on the Battlefield of the Future"*, organized by the CeSI - Centro Studi Internazionali chaired by Andrea Margelletti, in collaboration with Rheinmetall Italia.

A multi-voice reflection among representatives of the Armed Forces, industry, and academia, held on March 26, which outlined a clear picture: technological warfare has already begun and Italy must equip itself in time if it wants to keep up.

Masiello: "The Focus is Upwards"

The event was opened by General **Carmine Masiello**, Chief of Staff of the Army, who highlighted how the posture of the modern soldier has changed: "A few years ago, in

Afghanistan, we were terrified of what was hidden beneath our feet. Today, in Ukraine, the focus is upwards.” Drones have made airspace a hostile environment, radically changing the perception of danger.

For Masiello, the return to trench warfare coexists with a technological race: “We are retraining soldiers to fight in trenches, but at the same time we are working to bridge the technological gap with other armed forces. We can no longer be just boots and backpacks.”

The general made an appeal to industry and academia for full synergy: “Today more than ever, a national system is needed. The Army has launched a substantial rearmament program, but we cannot do everything alone. In war, it is not just the military who go: the whole country goes.”

Ercolani (Rheinmetall): “The Threat Comes from the Sky”

The industrial sector also took stock of the new challenges. **Alessandro Ercolani**, CEO of Rheinmetall Italia, highlighted the emergence of new players on the international scene, capable of innovating at speeds unimaginable for traditional industry. “It's not just Palantir and Leonardo. We are mapping startups like White Stork, founded by former Google CEO Eric Schmidt, and Helsing, which is already worth 5 billion.”

Ercolani reiterated the urgency of adapting production: “We used to produce 500,000 155 mm shells a year. Now we need 5 million, but the demand is still higher. Russia can launch 10,000 drones a day. No Western industry is ready for these numbers.”

Particular attention was paid to the topic of drones, with new unprecedented threats: “Today there are wire-controlled drones, never seen before. China is developing drones that mimic the flight of birds, capable of deceiving our sensors.”

Cossiga (MBDA): “Europe Cannot Afford Delays”

Also **Giuseppe Cossiga**, director of institutional relations at MBDA Italia and president of AIAD, pointed the finger at the slowness of the European system. “We are moving too slowly. In France, they openly talk about a war economy. In Italy, no, but the situation is the same. We need engineers, we need investments, we need a new defense culture.”

Cossiga also recalled the risks of the current scenario: “A battery designed to counter hypersonic threats can be disabled by a swarm of small drones. We need to change the paradigm.”

Tomassetti: “A Long-Term Vision is Needed”

Admiral Marco Tomassetti, Head of the III Department of Industrial Policy of the General Secretariat of Defense, insisted on the need to anticipate threats. “It's easy to say today that drones are a threat. But defense is built in peacetime. Industrial planning based on clear requirements is needed.”

Tomassetti also defended the principle of **technological sovereignty**, based on three pillars: *freedom of use*, *freedom of modification*, and *freedom of export*. And he criticized the fragmentation of the European industrial system: “Cooperation is essential, but it must start from common bases. Otherwise, it remains only on paper.”

Pisciotta: “Integrated Planning is Needed”

From the side of military planning, General **Bruno Pisciotta**, Head of the General Planning Department of the Defense Staff, announced the imminent publication of the new strategic planning: “We will provide the industry with quantitative and qualitative requirements. We need to know what we need, and with what timing. Only in this way can we have a true industrial ramp-up.”

According to Pisciotta, the future battlefield will require the ability to operate not only on the surface but also underground. “It's time to provide the industry with guidelines to build the systems of tomorrow.”

Margelletti: “There is No More Time”

To close the proceedings, **Andrea Margelletti**, president of CeSI and advisor to the Minister of Defense, issued a clear warning: “We have no more time. The industry must not wait for it to rain to start building umbrellas. The money is there, the threats too. Now vision and courage are needed.”

Margelletti reminded that recent past conflicts had a logic, but today the scenario has changed: “Heavy warfare has returned. We can no longer procrastinate.”

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