Paratrooper General Mandolesi is the new JTF - UNIFIL Commander

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The former Commander of the 187th Paratrooper Regiment Folgore, **Brigadier General Nicola Mandolesi**, has officially assumed command of the Italian contingent in Lebanon as part of the UNIFIL mission. The handover ceremony took place at the "Millevoi" base in Shama, in the presence of the head of mission and UNIFIL commander, **Spanish Lieutenant General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz**, the Italian ambassador to Lebanon Fabrizio Marcelli, the Chief of Defense Staff General Luciano Portolano, and numerous Lebanese civil and military authorities.

In his speech, General Portolano highlighted the fundamental contribution of the Italian Armed Forces in southern Lebanon, emphasizing that since 2006, about 29,000 Italian soldiers have operated within the "Leonte" operation. He also expressed deep gratitude for the commitment and professionalism demonstrated by the Italian blue helmets, underscoring their impartiality and sensitivity towards the local population.

General Lázaro praised the Italian soldiers for their dedication and adaptability in a complex and constantly evolving context. He highlighted the mission's success thanks to the adoption of preventive measures and the constant commitment to the security and protection of UN bases.

General Nicola Mandolesi, the new commander of the Italian contingent, boasts extensive operational experience in the Armed Forces. Born in Massa Marittima in 1972, he attended the Military Academy of Modena and the Army Officers' School in Turin, obtaining the rank of Lieutenant and the maroon beret of the Paratroopers. He served in the Folgore and Nembo units, holding command and staff positions.

He operated at the Joint Operational Command, held a liaison position at the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command in Virginia, and commanded the 1st Paratrooper Battalion "Grizzano" and the 187th Paratrooper Regiment "Folgore" in Livorno. He also attended the National Defence College in Israel and assumed the role of Head of the Preparation Office of the Land Operational Forces Command and Army Operational Command in Rome. In July 2023, he took command of the cavalry brigade "Pozzuolo del Friuli".

He participated in operational missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, South Sudan, and Lebanon. Among his honors are the Mauriziana Medal for merit, the Silver Medal for long command, the Gold Cross for service seniority, and various NATO, UN, and national decorations.

His education includes a degree in Political Science, a postgraduate Master's in Strategic Sciences, and a second-level Master's in Strategic Studies, as well as advanced training courses in NATO and international contexts.

Currently, the Italian contingent in Lebanon consists of about 1,000 soldiers, integrated within the Western sector of UNIFIL, where a total of 3,800 blue helmets from 17 nations operate. With the handover, a new phase of the mission begins, characterized by operational challenges that will be faced with determination and professionalism under General Mandolesi's leadership.

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