Presentation of the Eagles: Twelve New Helicopter Observer Pilots for the Italian Army

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On August 5, 2024, at the Unified Circle of the Dante Chelotti Barracks in Viterbo, a prestigious ceremony was held for the Italian Army. Twelve officers and non-commissioned officers, from different units of the Armed Forces, received the long-awaited "Helicopter Observer Pilot" (POE) license, symbolically represented by the "Eagles" that now adorn their chests. The event marked the end of the 81st Flight Course for Officers and the 71st Flight Course for Non-Commissioned Officers. The ceremony, presided over by General of the Army Corps Salvatore Cuoci, was attended by high military authorities, including the Commander of the Army Non-Commissioned Officers School, Gen.D. Maurizio Taffuri, and the Chief of Staff of the Army Aviation Command, Gen.B. (ret.) Antonio Giovanni Villani.

This presentation of the "Eagles" represents a fundamental milestone in the training path of the new pilots, who have passed a series of challenging theoretical and practical tests. The course,

which began in October 2024, saw the attendees undergo a training program that led them to develop advanced skills in helicopter flight, aerial navigation, and tactical flight operations. In particular, the pilots completed about 80 flight hours aboard an AB206 C1 helicopter, experiencing different operational modes, including daytime and nighttime flight, and instrumental flight. Not least, the experience includes complex missions that involved cooperation with ground assets, in accordance with current doctrine.

A Comprehensive and International Training

The training path of the new pilots was divided into three distinct phases, each aimed at consolidating the participants' skills, providing an integrated preparation between theory and practice. The first phase took place at the Air Force Academy in Pozzuoli, where candidates underwent a theoretical program that allowed them to obtain the Airplane Pilot License (BPA). Subsequently, the course included practical flight training at the 70th Wing Flight School of the Air Force in Latina, where participants completed their airplane flight training.

The next phase was particularly crucial. The officer pilots obtained certification at the US Army Aviation Center of Excellence (USAACE) in Fort Rucker, Alabama, a recognition that provides them with international-level preparation. The non-commissioned officers, on the other hand, received the Military Helicopter Pilot License (BMPE) at the 72nd Wing of the Air Force in Frosinone, further consolidating their helicopter flight skills.

The course also included an advanced tactical training phase, during which the pilots conducted very low altitude flights, both day and night, and operated in particular environments, such as

high altitude, thanks to the collaboration with the 4th AVES Regiment "Altair". The operational missions carried out during the course allowed participants to apply in the field the navigation and flight techniques acquired, immersing them in realistic scenarios that simulate operational deployment situations.

A Path of Excellence for Italian Defense

General Cuoci, during the ceremony, expressed appreciation for the training path of the new aviators, emphasizing that this achievement represents only the beginning of a professional career destined to grow and evolve constantly. The skills acquired by the pilots, in fact, will be made available to the operational units of the Italian Army, where they will have to demonstrate not only technical competence but also great adaptability and cooperation during complex operations.

The ceremony also had a strong symbolic significance, representing the culmination of a long and challenging training path, but also the beginning of a new phase for the new pilots, ready to face future challenges in the service of national defense. The path that has led them to this moment, and that will now lead them to operate as highly qualified aviators, is a testament to the excellence of Italian military training, which continues to strengthen the operational capabilities of the Armed Forces.