



President Mattarella at Monte Romano among Paratroopers and Raiders: "You are the shield defending the Republic".

Published on 17/09/2026

The President of the Republic **Sergio Mattarella** attended today, September 17, at the Monte Romano Military Range, the exercise "**Aegis 26**", conducted by the Italian Army. At his side were Defense Minister **Guido Crosetto**, Undersecretary of Defense **Isabella Rauti**, the heads of the Defense and Army General Staffs and civil authorities.

A day that also featured the **Folgore Parachute Brigade**, the **Army's special operations forces**, airdrops and the new technological capabilities that are transforming the land instrument.

To welcome the Head of State were the honor guard, the **Band of the Folgore Parachute Brigade** and the **War Flag of the 186th Folgore Parachute Regiment**. Official images from the Quirinal document Mattarella reviewing the unit together with Minister Crosetto and the Chief of Staff of the Army, General of Corps **Carmine Masiello**.



Airdrops and reinforcements from the sky

After the initial honors, the President was briefed on the exercise's objectives: to verify the level of capabilities achieved by the Armed Force and to test materials, procedures and new technologies.

The demonstration quickly moved into the operational phase.

In the sky above Monte Romano, a formation was shown consisting of a **C-27J Spartan**, deployed for cargo airdrops, and **three C-130J** aircraft, used for personnel drops.

The arrival of airborne forces represented in the simulation the rapid strengthening of the ground deployment, demonstrating the capability to project personnel and materials directly into the operational area.

A capability that remains one of the distinctive elements of airborne troops and continues to play an important role in contemporary operational scenarios.



Army special operations forces enter action

Among the most spectacular moments of the day was also the insertion of the **Army's special operations forces**.

Mattarella watched a demonstration using the **fast rope** technique, with personnel rapidly reaching the ground by descending along a rope from the helicopter.

Fast rope indeed allows for rapid insertion of a squad into an area where the aircraft cannot or should not make a normal landing.

Aegis 26 thus demonstrated, in the same scenario, airborne capabilities, Special Operations and air support, different components called to operate within an integrated deployment.

Drones, sensors and satellite capabilities

A significant part of the visit was dedicated to new technologies.

The President was presented with a **laboratory dedicated to drones** and the observation and information acquisition capabilities from different sensors, including satellite capabilities, were illustrated.

The principle demonstrated during the demonstration is the one that is increasingly characterizing the modern battlefield: collecting data from different platforms, integrating it and making it available in the shortest possible time to the person called upon to make a decision.

Drones, observation systems, digital communications and command and control capabilities thus become part of a single information network.

Mattarella: «You are the shield defending the Republic»

Once the demonstration concluded, the President of the Republic addressed the deployed military personnel.

His speech started right with the name of the exercise.

«Aegis in mythology was the shield of Zeus and Athena», Mattarella recalled, connecting the meaning of the ancient shield to the mission of the Armed Forces: to be a **«shield defending the Republic, its free institutions, the security of our country, of Italy»**.

The President then expressed appreciation for the commitment, preparation and professional level shown during the exercise, emphasizing the value of training and the ability to operate in highly complex contexts.

During his speech Mattarella also emphasized the Army's ability to operate simultaneously **in the air, on land and in cyberspace**, highlighting the ongoing process of transformation and technological development in the Armed Force. The statements were made during today's activity at Monte Romano, documented by the Quirinal.



A technologically advanced military instrument

The Head of State then broadened the discussion to the international scenario.

Mattarella spoke of a **historical phase of particular criticality**, characterized by the aggravation of conflicts and wars that continue to cause innocent victims and devastation.

In this context, he emphasized, the defense of peace must be able to rely on a military instrument that is **technologically advanced, cohesive and integrated at the inter-forces level**, but also interoperable with allies and partners.

The President also emphasized the importance of a European dimension capable of producing synergies, economies of scale and greater common capabilities.

«At the center of everything remains the human person, the soldier»

After emphasizing the value of new technologies, Mattarella nevertheless recalled what must remain the central element of the military instrument.

«At the center of everything remains the human person, the soldier».

The President recalled human value, courage, sense of duty and spirit of sacrifice, defining them as elements capable of ensuring the true strength of the Italian military instrument.

It is a concept that found an evident parallel also in the words spoken shortly after by Minister Crosetto.

Crosetto: «The true capital of Defence is women and men»

Defence Minister **Guido Crosetto** first thanked Mattarella for the closeness demonstrated to the Armed Forces and to men and women in uniform.

According to Crosetto, each exercise represents **«the testing ground of daily commitment»** necessary to maintain Armed Forces that are effective, modern and ready.

The Minister also stressed that Aegis 26 is the result of the Army's preparation and **full inter-force integration**, with the participation of personnel and aircraft from the Air Force as well.

The operational framework, he explained, is increasingly complex: to conventional threats are added hybrid ones, while new technologies are profoundly transforming the battlefield.

For this reason, according to Crosetto, preparation means not only being able to react, but also seeking to **foresee and anticipate challenges and pitfalls**, testing capabilities, procedures, technologies and interoperability with allies.

Despite this transformation, the Minister too placed emphasis on the human element:

«The true capital of Defence is women and men, with their professionalism and ability to understand, manage and use technologies».

Crosetto: «I have the duty to think about the worst-case scenario»

In the sharpest passage of his speech, Crosetto directly recalled the responsibilities linked to the international situation.

«As Defence Minister, I have the duty to think about the worst-case scenario, with the hope that it never materializes», he stated.

The Minister then recalled that in many areas of the world force still attempts to prevail over law and that security constitutes the premise of freedom and democracy.

Hence the concluding message:

«Peace is never acquired once and for all: it must be built and defended every day», also through Armed Forces that are prepared, modern and credible, capable of protecting Italy, its institutions and its citizens.

«The Republic knows it can count on you»

Mattarella concluded his speech by thanking the Army structures that contributed to the planning and carrying out of the activity and also extending his thoughts to the families of military personnel for the sacrifices linked to service.

Finally, the direct message to men and women in uniform:

«The Republic knows it can count on you».

The President stressed how the Country looks upon their work with pride and gratitude.

Aegis 26 thus offered the Head of State a concrete snapshot of the Italian Army's transformation process: **paratroopers from Folgore, special forces from Col Moschin, airborne operations, drones, sensors, cyber capabilities and inter-service integration**, with a common message reiterated by both Mattarella and Crosetto: technology changes the way of operating, but at the center of the military instrument continue to be the men and women who serve it.

Sources

[Presidency of the Republic – Mattarella at the Monte Romano Range for the "Aegis 26" exercise](#)

[Presidency of the Republic – Official video of the "Aegis 26" exercise](#)

[Presidency of the Republic – Official photo gallery Aegis 26](#)

[Ministry of Defense – "Aegis 26" Exercise at the Monte Romano Range](#)