



Steadfast Dagger 2025: NRDC-ITA leads the certification of the Allied Reaction Force

Published on 11/12/2025

The exercise **Steadfast Dagger 2025** has concluded at NATO's Joint Warfare Centre (JWC), a training activity of primary importance to test and validate the capabilities of the upcoming **components of the Allied Reaction Force (ARF)**, the Alliance's high readiness force as outlined in the *NATO Force Model*. Leading the entire certification process was the **NATO Rapid Deployable Corps - Italy (NRDC-ITA)**, which, since July 2024, has been entrusted with the responsibility of the ARF, confirming Italy's central role in the collective deterrence and defense apparatus.

The exercise, in **computer-assisted command post exercise** mode, involved about **1,200 military and civilian personnel** distributed across multiple European locations. Primary objective: to enhance the high readiness force's ability to operate in **a complex crisis scenario**, exacerbated by regional instability and terrorist threats. The simulation reproduced a

multi-domain and multi-dimension context, in which the ARF components had to integrate effects, synchronize operations, and collaborate with external actors such as the **United Nations** and the **European Union**.

The Steadfast Dagger confirms itself as a crucial piece in building a **rapid, flexible, and interoperable** response model, capable of addressing the full spectrum of contemporary crises. The ARF represents a true **innovation platform** intended to test the technologies and systems that will characterize NATO forces in the coming years.

The exercised components and the value of distributed command

Among the main units employed were the **3rd French Division** (Land Component Command), the **UK Strike Force** (Maritime Component Command), the **UK Special Operations Component Command**, the **French Joint Force Air Component Command**, and the **Joint Logistic Support Group**. Their presence ensured a high training level and real **multinational integration**, essential for the interoperability of the ARF.



One of the most innovative aspects of the 2025 edition was the use of a **distributed command**, with part of the ARF Command at the JWC and another operational at **Solbiate Olona**. This model allowed testing the interconnection and **resilience of command and control**, ensuring **decision-making continuity** and **reactivity** even in degraded contexts. Ensuring command redundancy is a decisive element in modern crisis management.

The adoption of a distributed command represents a significant step in the **digital transformation of NATO**. The focus of the exercise was indeed on **technological innovation, digitalization, and interconnection**, elements that make the ARF an advanced laboratory for the entire Alliance.

Digitalization, interoperability, and the future projection of the ARF

A key element of the activity was the use of modern **command and control (C2) platforms** and advanced NATO systems, including **SitaWare, TOPFAS, LOGFAS**, and other **NATO FAS** tools. These technologies allowed maintaining an **accurate and updated common operational picture**, improving decision-making capability and synchronization of effects across various domains: land, maritime, air, cyber, and space.

This **multi-domain** approach is indispensable today. Contemporary crises develop in environments characterized by **hybrid threats**, strategic competition, and increasing use of new technologies. The ARF thus represents NATO's most credible response in terms of **speed, effectiveness, and interoperability**.



ARF HQ personnel during a moment of the exercise in Stavanger, Source Italian Army.

The Steadfast Dagger 2025 demonstrated how the Alliance is capable of evolving through realistic scenarios and complex training, in which **the human factor** — staff competence, command quality, cooperation between nations — integrates with new generation digital platforms.

At the end of the exercise, NRDC-ITA confirmed its **full readiness** to lead the ARF and operate in an integrated multinational context, ensuring NATO a force capable of being deployed **in very rapid times** wherever necessary. The outcome of Steadfast Dagger 2025 strengthens the Alliance's credibility and reaffirms a fundamental principle: **“together we are stronger.”**

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