



Steadfast Dagger 2026: a key step for the Italian Joint Force Air Component (ITA JFAC)

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A crucial phase of the exercise **Steadfast Dagger 2026** concluded recently at the **Comando Operazioni Aerospaziali (COA)** in Poggio Renatico, in the province of Ferrara, marking a central moment in the **certification process of the Italian Joint Force Air Component** as part of NATO's **Allied Reaction Force**.

The so-called **“C-Block” phase** was a decisive testing ground, focused on *Crisis Response Planning (CRP)*, namely the **planning of responses to complex crisis scenarios**. In this context, ITA JFAC personnel worked closely with the **evaluation team of the Atlantic Alliance**, developing operational options and strategies in **multi-domain environments**, increasingly characterized by hybrid and high-intensity threats.

The activities highlighted the Italian Command's ability to **plan a comprehensive air campaign**, from scenario analysis to the definition of operational objectives. This complex

process required the **integration of capabilities from multiple domains - air, space, and cyber** - in line with NATO's doctrinal evolution.

The conclusion of the C-Block phase thus represents a **fundamental step towards the full certification of ITA JFAC**, ready to operate within the ARF, NATO's **rapid reaction force**. In an increasingly unstable geopolitical context, the ability to **respond promptly to crises** is one of the key elements of deterrence and collective defense.



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The role of the Italian Air Force and operational leadership

During the exercise, **Silvano Frigerio**, Commander of the **Comando Squadra Aerea - 1ª Regione Aerea**, visited the personnel engaged in the activities, participating in planning sessions and observing the work of the various functional cells up close.

In his speech, the General emphasized the **high level of professionalism** demonstrated by the personnel and the **sustained operational pace**, highlighting how these standards are an essential requirement for facing future responsibilities within NATO. In particular, he reiterated the importance of **interoperability among allied forces**, or the ability to operate according to **common procedures and standards**, an essential element for acting as a single cohesive force.



Planning phase during *Steadfast Dagger 2026* at COA, with Air Force General Silvano Frigerio and Air Division General Luca Maineri. Source difesa.it

At the end of the certification phase, **Luca Maineri**, Commander of COA and ITA JFAC, also expressed satisfaction with the **positive feedback from the NATO evaluation team**. The General highlighted the **commitment, professionalism, and cohesion** demonstrated by the personnel, emphasizing how exercises of this type are fundamental for **maintaining high levels of operational readiness**.

The contribution of the Italian Air Force thus fits into a broader framework of **strengthening the Alliance's capabilities**, in which Italy assumes an increasingly significant role in the field of **aerospace command and control**. The certification of ITA JFAC will indeed be a **recognition of the national capability** to significantly contribute to NATO operations.

The COA and ITA JFAC: pillars of Italian aerospace power

The **Comando Operazioni Aerospaziali di Poggio Renatico** is one of the **key nodes of national defense**. From this structure, active **24 hours a day throughout the year**, the **surveillance and defense of Italian airspace** is ensured, along with coordination with NATO structures.

Within this system, ITA JFAC represents the component dedicated to the **planning and management of complex air operations**. Activated in case of crisis, the command is responsible for the **planning, assignment, and conduct of air missions**, in accordance with Defense directives. In peacetime, its permanent structure is called **“Core JFAC”**, maintaining a

high level of readiness.



Moments of the NATO exercise *Steadfast Dagger 2026* at the COA in Poggio Renatico. Source difesa.it.

The COA, on which ITA JFAC depends, also plays a **leading doctrinal role**, contributing to the development and employment of **Italian aerospace power**. Its ability to provide an **integrated view of the aerospace spectrum** makes it a key element not only for national security but also for **Italy's credibility within NATO**.

The conclusion of the C-Block phase of Steadfast Dagger 2026 thus confirms the **level of maturity reached by the Italian command and control system**. A result that does not represent an endpoint, but rather an **intermediate step towards full integration into the Alliance's operational capabilities**, in a constantly evolving strategic context.

News link: <https://www.difesa.it/smd/news-italia/nato-allied-reaction-force-al-comando-operazioni-aerospaziali-conclusa-la-fase-c-block-dellesercitazione-steadfast-dagger/95872.html>