Strategic Visit to the Balkans: General Iannucci Meets Italian Contingent in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina

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General Giovanni Maria Iannucci, Commander of the Joint Operational Command (COVI), recently concluded a two-day visit to the Western Balkans, a strategic yet extremely delicate region for European geopolitical balances. During his stay, General Iannucci had the opportunity to meet with Italian soldiers engaged in NATO operations "Joint Enterprise" in Kosovo and the European Union Force (EUFOR) "Althea" in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This visit was a valuable opportunity for the COVI Commander to closely monitor field operations and strengthen cooperation ties with international forces and local authorities.

Italy's Strategic Contribution to International Missions

The visit began with General Iannucci's arrival at the Slatina military airport in Pristina, where he was welcomed by KFOR Commander, Major General Enrico Barduani, and Colonel Cristian

Margheriti, Defense Attaché in North Macedonia and Kosovo. After receiving an update on the general situation and ongoing operations, the COVI Commander had the opportunity to meet with the Carabinieri of the MSU Regiment (Multinational Specialized Unit), led by Colonel Alberto Santini. The General also met with the Italian Ambassador to Pristina, Maurizio Antonini, and the Commander of the EULEX mission (European Union Rule of Law Mission) in Kosovo, Major General Giovanni Pietro Barbano. In these meetings, the challenges of the region and the importance of continuing international commitment to ensure stability and peace were emphasized.

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A significant moment of the visit was the meeting with the Kosovar Minister of Defense, Ejup Maqedonci, and the Commander of the Kosovo Security Forces, Lieutenant General Bashkim Jashari. On this occasion, General Iannucci emphasized the importance of cooperation between international forces and local authorities, recognizing that the stability of Kosovo is crucial not only for the region but also for international balances. The COVI Commander also had the opportunity to convey greetings from the Minister of Defense Guido Crosetto and the Chief of Defense Staff, General Luciano Portolano, to the KFOR personnel and the Regional Command West, expressing gratitude for their commitment.

General Iannucci then continued his journey to Sarajevo, where he met with the EUFOR "Althea" mission Commander, Major General Florin-Marian Barbu, at Camp Butmir. Here, the COVI Commander expressed words of appreciation towards the men and women of the Italian

contingent, composed of about 330 soldiers, who operate both at the NATO Headquarters in Sarajevo and in the EUFOR mission. The Italian soldiers are engaged in a complex region where the presence of international forces is essential to maintain peace and stability. In this context, General Iannucci thanked the contingent for their professionalism, commitment, and dedication, highlighting how their mission is strategically relevant for the security of Italy and the entire Europe.

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The Message of Support to Italian Forces in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina

One of the most touching moments of the visit was General Iannucci's speech to the Italian personnel engaged in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Addressing the men and women of the Italian armed forces, he wanted to express a message of concrete support: “In Italy, the importance of what you do is recognized. Your presence, along with that of your colleagues, is an essential piece of our security.” The COVI Commander added: “I do not thank you for your work – because it is your duty – but I thank you for how you perform it. You can represent your country in many ways, and you do it in the best way: with professionalism, respect, dignity, and commitment.”

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These words of appreciation had a strong impact on the morale of the personnel, who face difficult challenges every day in a high-intensity operational context. General Iannucci emphasized how the uniform worn by Italian soldiers is a strong symbol, carrying a powerful message of commitment, security, and stability. In this way, the Italian mission in the Balkans is not just a peacekeeping operation but a concrete demonstration of how Italy represents its values in challenging international contexts.

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