



The 41st Italian Expedition to Antarctica Begins: Armed Forces at the Forefront

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The **41st Italian Expedition to Antarctica** has officially begun, a scientific and logistical commitment that once again sees the **Defense** and **ENEA** collaborating side by side to support Italian research on the white continent. On the occasion of the start of the new campaign, the two institutions signed an agreement confirming cooperation in the management of logistical activities, with a central role assigned to the **Italian Air Force**, tasked with ensuring the air transport of personnel, materials, and equipment between New Zealand and Antarctica for the entire duration of the mission.

A Strategic Agreement for Activities in Polar Areas

The agreement is the result of joint work between ENEA and the **Interforce Steering Committee for the Arctic, Sub-Arctic, and Antarctic Environment**, an organization

established by the Chief of Defense Staff, **General Luciano Portolano**, and tasked with coordinating national activities in polar regions. The Committee operates based on a Ministerial Decree that assigns the Undersecretary of State for Defense, **Sen. Isabella Rauti**, the task of implementing the Ministry's directives.

The agreement involves technical-specialist personnel from all the Armed Forces and officially began with the landing on the Antarctic pack of a **C-130J-30 of the 46th Air Brigade**, a symbol of Italy's ability to operate in one of the most hostile environments on the planet. The Defense thus reaffirms its strategic role in supporting the scientific community, contributing to the international projection of the “**Country System**” in areas of high geopolitical and scientific value.

A Multidisciplinary Mission to Understand the Planet

As every year, the Armed Forces support the **National Antarctic Research Program (PNRA)**, active since December 23, 1985, and funded by the **Ministry of University and Research (MUR)**. The program sees a consolidated collaboration model:

- **CNR** for scientific coordination
- **ENEA** for planning and logistics of activities at the bases
- **OGS** for the technical and scientific management of the icebreaker *Laura Bassi*

At the **Mario Zucchelli station**, on the Terra Nova Bay promontory, **about 200 researchers and technicians** will be engaged until the early months of 2026. Fourteen projects are planned, including research and permanent observatories, focused on:

- glaciology and interactions between Earth, ice, and climate
- global environmental dynamics and anthropogenic impact
- biodiversity and adaptation of organisms to extreme conditions
- geophysics, crustal movements, and ground deformations
- astronomy, astrophysics, and space meteorology

Some projects will also be conducted in collaboration with foreign research bases and ships, confirming the strong international dimension of the Italian scientific presence.

The Contribution of the Armed Forces

The 41st Expedition includes **20 military experts** from:

- Italian Army
- Italian Navy
- Italian Air Force
- Carabinieri

Their role is essential to ensure the safety and effectiveness of operations: they support external and underwater missions, contribute to the management of aerial activities, provide specialized weather forecasts, and ensure the coordination of flight traffic in an extremely complex environment.

Defense and Research: A Partnership Serving the Country

With the contribution to the Antarctic expedition, the Defense confirms its ability to operate well beyond strictly military fields. The assets and skills of the Armed Forces represent an indispensable added value to support the scientific community in challenging and strategically significant contexts.

The Antarctic continent, in fact, is not only a unique natural laboratory in the world but also an increasingly relevant geopolitical quadrant for international cooperation, environmental protection, and advanced research.

News link: <https://www.aeronautica.difesa.it/news/difesa-al-via-la-41a-spedizione-italiana-di-ricerca-in-antartide/>