The Chief of SME visits Finnish military excellence: focus on Arctic and special forces

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From September 2 to 4, 2025, the **Chief of Staff of the Army**, **Corps General Carmine Masiello**, made a significant institutional visit to Finland, accepting the invitation of the **Commander of the Finnish Army, Lieutenant General Pasi Välimäki**. This meeting, held in Helsinki and other strategic nodes of the Finnish military apparatus, represented a high-level moment for strengthening bilateral relations within the NATO framework, to which Finland officially joined in 2023.

The summit between the two senior officers focused on strategically relevant issues for both countries, such as international security challenges, the development of operational capabilities of their respective armies, and cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic context. In particular, attention was focused on the increasingly deep integration of the Finnish armed forces into the Atlantic Alliance, at a time when NATO is redefining its defensive postures, especially along its northern

and eastern flanks.

Corps General Carmine Masiello emphasized the importance of direct and operational dialogue with the Armed Forces of allied countries, with the awareness that European security is built not only with treaties but also with full interoperability between armies. For his part, General Välimäki expressed great interest in gaining greater knowledge of the southern flank of the Alliance – where Italy plays a key role – and in initiating structured collaborations in areas of common interest.

Finnish excellence in the Arctic domain and new operational synergies

One of the central themes of the discussion between the Italian and Finnish military leaders was the Arctic and sub-Arctic operational scenario, which has returned to the center of NATO's strategic agendas today. The visit of Corps General Carmine Masiello included several stops at leading Finnish Army facilities, including the **Defense Command**, the **Guard Jaeger Regiment**, the **Utti Jaeger Regiment** – where the multinational exercise “Southern Griffin 25” focused on special forces took place – and the **South-Eastern Finland Border Guard District** .

In particular, Italy was able to closely observe Finland's highly specialized approach to operations in extreme environments, based on advanced technologies, specific training, and a deep knowledge of the territory. Corps General Carmine Masiello praised “the high competence of the Finnish Army in the Arctic domain,” noting how these capabilities are “fully consistent with the needs dictated by emerging scenarios.” In a global context marked by climate change, energy crises, and geopolitical competitions, the Arctic is emerging as a theater of growing relevance for collective security.

Finnish Army in exercise

The cooperation prospects include the exchange of **best practices**, the organization of joint exercises, and the strengthening of preparedness for high-intensity missions in extreme climatic conditions. For Italy, this partnership represents a concrete opportunity to expand its ability to operate in complex environments and strengthen its contribution to the defense of the entire Euro-Atlantic space.

Collective defense and NATO deterrence: a shared vision

The visit to Finland reaffirmed the strategic value of military cooperation between Rome and Helsinki as a **deterrence and security tool** in the context of today's challenges, characterized by the coexistence of conventional, hybrid, and cyber threats. Finland's entry into NATO has radically transformed the geography of the Alliance's defense, strengthening the northeastern flank and opening new integration prospects for the armed forces of member states.

Italy and Finland, although different in geographical location, share a complementary vision of security. While Italy is traditionally oriented towards the Mediterranean, with strong experience in asymmetric and multidimensional contexts, Finland brings to the NATO system a deep expertise in winter warfare, territorial defense, and infrastructural resilience. The combination of these two approaches constitutes a strategic multiplier for the overall credibility of the Alliance.

Flags Italy NATO Finland

During the talks, the desire to continue along the path of **strengthening bilateral relations** emerged, going beyond the operational level to also embrace the cultural and educational level, through exchanges between military academies, joint studies, and participation in NATO centers of excellence.

In conclusion, the visit of Corps General Carmine Masiello to Finland represented **much more than a mere protocol event**: it was a concrete step towards a more cohesive NATO, ready to face dynamic and unpredictable scenarios. A testament to the fact that Italy intends to play a leading role in European security, not only in the South but also in the far North of the continent.

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