

The X Hour of the Balkans: General Roberto Vergori in Command of KFOR to Manage the Scale-Down

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The news is official: Major General Roberto Vergori**, of the Italian Army, is the future Commander of the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) mission**. The transfer of command was formally inaugurated in Pristina, at the headquarters of Camp Film City, where the current commander, Major General Özkan Ulutaş, welcomed the delegation of the imminent KFOR XXXI rotation.

This is not a routine changeover. **Vergori assumes the position at the most delicate and strategic moment in the recent history of the mission**, having to manage not only operational continuity in a historically complex area, but above all the transition toward the much-discussed *scale-down* of allied forces.

- **4,600** — Total KFOR Personnel

- **800** — Italian Contingent deployed
- **31** — Contributing Countries to the mission

The Key Leader Training program and continuity

Accompanied by **Brigadier General Onur Çakıcı** (Turkish Army), designated as the next Vice Commander, General Vergori participated in the rigorous *Key Leader Training* program. This intensive course, designed to familiarize the new leadership with KFOR's complex operational procedures and staff, aims to **secure operational readiness and ensure a smooth transition** ahead of the formal transfer of authority (*Transfer of Authority*) scheduled for autumn.

Italy's Key Role: Italy confirms itself as the backbone of stability in the western Balkans. With **approximately 800 military personnel deployed on the ground** — surpassing even the United States contribution — and leadership of the mission's general command entrusted to high-profile officers such as General Vergori, Rome solidifies a leading role in the Balkans.



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The "Scale-Down" turning point: gradual but secure reduction

General Vergori's appointment fits within the announcement issued from Brussels: **NATO will progressively reduce its presence over the next twelve months**. The decision, made under the auspices of Secretary General **Mark Rutte** and SHAPE command led by General

Alexus G. Grynkewich, is based on a fundamental observation: **the security situation in Kosovo has objectively improved and stabilized** compared to previous years.

However, from the halls of Mons come crystal-clear directives to prevent any distorted interpretation: **NATO will not allow any security vacuum to form**. The *scale-down* plan will be gradual, measured, and constantly monitored. **Should conditions on the ground deteriorate** — recalling the fierce clashes of 2023 in Zvečan that necessitated an additional reserve of nearly 1,000 personnel — **the Alliance is ready to halt or even reverse course in real time**.

Prospects for the "Vergori mandate"

The task awaiting General Vergori is one of military strategic engineering: **to lighten the force posture in close coordination with Kosovo Police and the EULEX mission**, while maintaining intact deterrence capacity and the strict impartiality enshrined in the **UN Security Council Resolution 1244**.

At a time when the world's attention is focused on multiple global chessboards, the stability of the western Balkans remains a crucial test for NATO's credibility, and Italy, with **General Vergori at the helm**, once again positions itself at the center of command.

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