UN chooses an Italian for UNIFIL: General Abagnara new Commander

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On June 5, 2025, the United Nations Secretary-General, **António Guterres**, appointed the Italian Army Major General **Diodato Abagnara** as the new commander of the **UNIFIL** (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) mission. The general succeeds Spanish Lieutenant General **Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz**, taking on the responsibility of one of the world's most complex peace operations: maintaining stability along the fragile border between **Lebanon and Israel**.

The appointment comes amid strong regional tensions, with **Israel and Hezbollah** engaged in a dangerous escalation threatening the already precarious balance of the Middle East. The mandate of UNIFIL – established in 1978 and strengthened in 2006 after the Israeli-Lebanese conflict – consists of **monitoring the ceasefire**, supporting the Lebanese government in controlling the southern territory, and **collaborating with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)**. The **UN Security Council Resolution 1701**, the legal reference for the mission, also includes countering illicit arms trafficking and supporting local institutions.

Italy has always played a significant role in UNIFIL, contributing significantly in terms of personnel, resources, and leadership. With Abagnara at the helm, our country reaffirms its **concrete commitment to peace and stability in the region**.

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The profile of General Abagnara: operational experience and international vision

Born in 1970, originally from **Pagani**, in the province of Salerno, General **Diodato Abagnara** is a veteran of international operations and a well-known figure in peacekeeping contexts. After commanding the **“Lancieri di Novara” Regiment** during the “Leonte 5” operation in 2009, he held managerial positions in the Army, including head of the **Officers Employment Office**.

Between 2018 and 2019, he led the **Bersaglieri Brigade “Garibaldi”**, deployed in Lebanon, and took on the responsibility of the **Western sector of UNIFIL**, a key role for cooperation between the Italian contingent and local authorities. In **July 2024**, he took the lead of the **Military Technical Committee for Lebanon (MTC4L)**, a multilateral initiative promoted by Italy with the involvement of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Canada, aimed at **strengthening the Lebanese army** through training, logistics, and interoperability programs.

General Abagnara is also **highly educated** (ten academic degrees between bachelor's and master's), with specializations in **law, cybersecurity, strategic sciences**, and **digital leadership**, obtained from prestigious Italian universities such as Turin, Rome, Teramo, and the

Luiss Business School. A polyglot (speaks Italian, English, French, and Spanish), he is a strong advocate of **intercultural dialogue** and **inclusive leadership**, having chaired the **Joint Council for Gender Perspective** in the Defense Staff.

His new role sees him as **Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNIFIL**, with responsibility for all military and civilian components of the operation. A role that requires strategic competence, political balance, and diplomatic sensitivity.

An appointment that strengthens Italy's international credibility

Abagnara's appointment was welcomed with satisfaction by Italian institutions. Defense Minister **Guido Crosetto** described the role as “of great responsibility in a crucial region,” praising the choice as “further recognition of Italy's important role in the international community.” Deputy Minister **Matteo Perego di Cremnago** also expressed his congratulations, highlighting the value of Italy's commitment “in favor of peace and stability, in a strategic area for global balance.”

Foreign Minister **Antonio Tajani** reiterated that the appointment is “a confirmation of Italy's credibility and its weight in contributing to Middle East security.” Pride was also expressed locally: the mayor of **Avigliano**, where the general has family roots, spoke of “a great source of pride for the entire community.”

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In a world marked by increasingly interconnected conflicts, the appointment of an Italian general at the helm of UNIFIL is not only a reward for personal merit but a **message of trust** in Italy's operational, moral, and diplomatic capabilities. With Abagnara in command, UNIFIL strengthens its mediation efforts, while Italy confirms itself as a **reliable partner for peace**, in a strategic region for global security.

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