



USA-Italy: Four Italian Military Personnel Receive U.S. Armed Forces Honors

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The United States Embassy in Italy is pleased to honor four outstanding Italian military partners with U.S. Armed Forces decorations for exceptional service, a testament to the strong bilateral relationship: Air Force General **Maurizio Cantiello** of the Aeronautica Militare and Brigadier General **Pietro Carrozza** of the Arma dei Carabinieri have been awarded the **Legion of Merit**, while Lieutenant Colonel **Vigilio Gheser** and Captain **Matteo Vampo** of the Aeronautica Militare have received the **Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal**.

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What is the Legion of Merit

The **Legion of Merit** is a U.S. military decoration awarded for **exceptionally meritorious conduct** and noteworthy achievements in the performance of service.

When awarded to military personnel from allied or partner countries, the Legion of Merit is considered, according to U.S. Department of Defense guidelines, **the highest U.S. military decoration that can be awarded to foreign military personnel** for exceptionally meritorious service or achievements.

Unlike many other medals, for foreign recipients, it can be awarded in **four degrees** (linked to rank and position held): *Chief Commander, Commander, Officer, Legionnaire*. The statement does not specify the degree awarded to the two Italian officers.

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What is the Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal

The **Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal** (often abbreviated as **NAM**) is a United States Department of the Navy decoration intended to recognize:

- a **specific achievement** (a well-defined operational or organizational milestone), or
- **sustained meritorious service**,

when the performance is **clearly above** what is normally expected, but **not sufficient** to justify a higher-level decoration.

According to the awarding rules, the NAM is typically awarded to personnel up to the rank of **O-4 and below** (which, in Italian terms, corresponds approximately to **Lieutenant Colonel** for officers), and it can also be awarded to foreign military personnel.

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The Significance in the Context of Bilateral Cooperation

Beyond the ceremony, the awarding of U.S. honors to Italian officers generally communicates:

- a **formal recognition** of tangible contributions to cooperation and interoperability;

- a **signal of institutional trust** between Armed Forces and command structures;
 - a further strengthening of the message of **continuity and solidity** of the USA-Italy relationship in the defense sector.
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