Visit of General Portolano to Baku: Italy and Azerbaijan Strengthen Strategic Understanding in Defense, Technology, and Security

Published on 30/07/2025

On July 23 and 24, 2025, General Luciano Portolano, Chief of the Italian Defense Staff, undertook an official mission to Azerbaijan, where he met with Colonel General Karim Valiyev. The visit took place in a climate of strategic understanding and operational harmony, with the declared aim of strengthening bilateral defense cooperation between Rome and Baku. The initiative is part of the political directives set by the Minister of Defense, Hon. Guido Crosetto, aimed at strengthening Italy's positioning in the Caucasian geopolitical space.

During the meeting, there was a joint willingness to move from dialogue to the concrete realization of common projects, both in terms of military training and education, and on the technical-industrial and technological front. The geopolitical context of the region, marked by tensions in the Nagorno-Karabakh area and the recent repercussions of the conflict between

Iran and Israel, has given further urgency and relevance to cooperation in security matters.

The joint analysis of the **lessons learned from the 44-day war** was a key moment to strengthen strategic understanding, consolidating a common vision on asymmetric threats and the multi-level countermeasures to be implemented in the coming years.

Critical Technologies and Multidomain Security

The discussions included a wide range of technical and operational topics. The discussions touched on the land, maritime, air, space, and cyber domains, highlighting a clear openness towards the development of shared capabilities, also in a NATO context.

Of particular note was the interest in developing cooperation in the **underwater** sector, to strengthen coastal surveillance and the defense of critical infrastructure in the Caspian Sea. General Portolano also highlighted Italy's availability in the **cyber security** sector, a central aspect of modern defense. The visit to the **Cyber Security Centre** and the **Air Force Combat Control Centre** confirmed the high technical level of the Azerbaijani forces and their interest in benefiting from experiential exchange with their Italian counterparts.

A special mention was reserved for the topic of **humanitarian demining**, an issue still open in Azerbaijan following territorial conflicts. Colonel General Valiyev hoped for the intervention of Italian companies specialized in the sector, as a concrete expression of industrial cooperation for humanitarian and stabilization purposes.

In parallel, Azerbaijan's willingness to collaborate with Italy on **CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear)** technologies was reiterated, given the concerns generated by regional instability. In this field too, Italian industrial excellence, recognized for innovation and reliability, could find a significant outlet in the Azerbaijani market.

Mutual interest also extended to the **satellite** sector, to promote the development of dual-use capabilities for both civilian purposes and strategic surveillance, as well as to the **cyber exchange** between command structures and analysis centers.

Concrete Understandings and Future Prospects

The visit concluded with a high-level meeting between General Portolano and the Azerbaijani Minister of Defense, General Zakir Hasanov, in the presence of the Italian Ambassador to Azerbaijan, H.E. Luca Di Gianfrancesco. The latter emphasized the key role of integrated diplomacy between MAECI and the Ministry of Defense in strengthening strategic relations.

Among the already operational results of the cooperation between Italy and Azerbaijan, mention should be made of the **recent supplies in the aeronautical sector**, with Azerbaijan's adoption of Italian helicopters **AW139, AW109 SP, and AW189**, as well as **C-27J Spartan** transport aircraft, symbols of Italian industrial excellence.

A further step forward is represented by the agreement for the **training of 19 Azerbaijani military personnel at Italian military institutions**, which represents not only a gesture of trust but also a long-term investment in creating a common operational language.

General Portolano's visit thus marked a new phase in the bilateral relationship between Rome and Baku: a phase made of **concrete projects, strategic sharing, and technological integration**. Italy confirms itself as an authoritative actor in the Caucasus, contributing to the stability of the region and promoting its national system through attentive, pragmatic, and future-oriented defense diplomacy.

News link: https://www.difesa.it/smd/casmd/eventi/visita-capo-di-stato-maggiore-difesa-in-azerbaijan/75779.html