



CASD Defence Summit – Italian Defence Becomes a Strategic Axis

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Rome, December 4 – General of the Army Corps MANNINO hosted the **CASD Defence Summit** promoted by the Institute of International Affairs and Sole 24 Ore, in collaboration with CASD, showcasing a country-system at a critical juncture: either **Defence** becomes a **strategic axis** of national and foreign policy, doctrinal transformation, and industrial rethinking, or Italy will accept a **structural delay** in global competition. From the discussions among institutional, military, and industrial leaders, three central axes emerge: **politics-Defence relationship**, **multi-domain conflict approach**, and **new role of the defence industry**.

National policy, foreign policy, and Defence: from “cost” to system pact

In the opening, Ambassador **Michele Valensise**, President of IAI, reiterated that **security** is no longer a separate agenda item, but the **enabling condition** for freedom of action and international credibility. In a context marked by the **war in Ukraine**, regional crises, and

competition among great powers, Defence is presented as a **structural theme of domestic and foreign policy**, to be interpreted in a **multi-domain** key and interdependence with **economy, energy, and technology**.

This line was reinforced by the Minister of Defence **Guido Crosetto**, who rejected the view of Defence as a **“cost”** and defined it as an **investment for development, stability, and international credibility**. Hence the idea of a **“system pact”** among politics, Armed Forces, industry, and civil society, where **security** becomes a **collective responsibility**. The **cyber domain**, described by the National Cybersecurity Agency and the Undersecretary of Defence as a **“domain of continuous conflict”**, makes it clear that **protecting networks and data** means **protecting the country**.

The constant reference to **NATO** and **European cooperation** on major programs confirms an Italian Defence anchored in a **Euro-Atlantic framework**, where **interoperability, technological sovereignty, and industrial critical mass** are levers of foreign policy.



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Contemporary conflict according to Masiello, Portolano, and Iannucci: multi-domain and preventive deterrence

The Chief of Staff of the Army, General **Carmine Masiello**, described the Ukrainian conflict as **“three wars in one”**: a **conventional war** (artillery, trenches, fortifications), a **technological war** (sensors, precision fires, robotics, drones), and an **informational war**, where **narrative** becomes a tool of power. The risk, he warned, is **preparing for the wrong war**, focusing only

on the East and neglecting threats from **Africa, the Middle East, and the Arctic**, where **instability** and **hybrid actors** prevail.

For Masiello, the Army must become **profoundly technological**, integrating **electronic warfare, multi-level anti-drone defense**, and **cyber capabilities** with the **reconstruction of heavy assets** weakened by twenty years of expeditionary postures. On the **artificial intelligence** front, the general highlighted a crucial issue: the Italian Armed Forces want to keep **“man in the loop”**, while the adversary might not. This **asymmetry** in reaction times and responsibilities requires a revision of **doctrine, rules of engagement**, and **regulatory framework**.

Masiello's vision integrates with that of the [Chief of Defence Staff Luciano Portolano](#) and the [Commander of COVI Giovanni Iannucci](#), who place everything within the paradigm of **multi-domain operations**. The IAI study “Multi-domain operations: towards an integrated doctrine” emphasizes that conflict is no longer won by **summing capabilities**, but by **integrating them in real-time** through **resilient networks, sensors, and data**.

Portolano calls for Armed Forces that are **more connected** (integrated command chains and permanent, distributed sensors), **more agile** in decision-making times, and oriented towards **preventive deterrence**, capable of **preventing and deterring** before escalation. Iannucci insists on the need for a **continuous and shared situational framework** among domains and Armed Forces, through an **integrated command and control system**.

Overall, Masiello, Portolano, and Iannucci propose a **conflict approach** that combines **high-intensity conventional, hybrid warfare, informational dimension**, and **cyber domain**, based on **joint integration, inter-agency cooperation**, and direct involvement of **industry** and **civil society** as components of the security ecosystem.



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Defence industry: supply chain, human capital, and technological sovereignty

The third direction of the Summit is the need to rethink the **industry-Defence relationship**. The President of AIAD **Giuseppe Cossiga** reminded that the goal of **2% of GDP** alone does not guarantee greater capabilities: if **orders double**, the industry must be able to **double production**, have **qualified personnel**, **adequate facilities**, access to **credit**, and **strategic raw materials**. Without a **strengthened supply chain**, the risk is an increasing **dependence on foreign countries** for components and systems that Italy and Europe should produce, affecting **technological sovereignty** and **strategic resilience**.

From Iveco Defence Vehicles, Avio Aero, Rheinmetall Italy, MBDA Italia, Fincantieri, and the entire sector emerges the request for a more rooted **European defence supply chain** less exposed to extra-EU delocalization. **Deterrence** is also seen as the industrial capacity to produce **strategic technologies** in **quantities, quality, and times compatible with the threat**. Major common programs – from the **new battle tank** to initiatives on **artillery, missile systems, naval and underwater platforms** – require **critical mass, long-term planning**, and a **coordinated industrial strategy** at the continental level.

On this, the theme of **human capital** is grafted. **Pierfederico Scarpa** highlighted a structural shortage of **technicians, engineers, analysts, cyber operators, and advanced specialists**. Without these figures, even the most sophisticated systems remain **underutilized**.

or **vulnerable**.

To make the sector attractive to young people, stable **training programs**, integrated **technical and academic paths**, **competitive careers**, and a decisive change in **public narrative** are needed, overcoming the demonization of the sector and recognizing its **social and strategic role**. The industry is therefore called to transform from a simple episodic supplier to a **structural partner** in building **technological sovereignty** and **national and European deterrence capabilities**.

Conclusions: a single agenda, three pillars

The common thread of the Defence Summit is the convergence of three plans that have often been separate in the past:

- **National and foreign policy**: assuming Defence as a **strategic axis**, not as a residual budget variable.
- **Operational doctrine**: interpreting conflict in a **multi-domain**, continuous, and high-intensity key, integrating the visions of **Masiello, Portolano, and Iannucci**.
- **Defence industry**: moving to a **stable and structural relationship** with the Defence system, strengthening **supply chain**, **production capacities**, and **human capital**.

In this framework, the choice is no longer whether to **invest or not** in Defence, but whether to do it **now**, in a **coherent and systemic** way, or to **suffer** the effects of future strategic shocks. The message from the Summit is clear: for Italy, the window for an **urgent and accelerated political, military, and industrial transformation** is open, but it will not remain so for long.

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