



Strike Back 25: NATO Tests Readiness and Interoperability in Bulgaria

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The exercise “Strike Back 25” concluded on June 27, 2025, at the Novo Selo training area in Bulgaria, a multilateral training activity featuring the Multinational Battle Group (MN BG) currently deployed on the eastern flank of the Atlantic Alliance. The exercise, planned with the aim of testing the operational readiness of the Battle Group, allowed for the assessment of interoperability levels among participating contingents and the effectiveness of the combat systems employed.

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“Strike Back 25” focused primarily on simulating a high-intensity conventional combat scenario (warfighting), presenting participating units with complex and realistic challenges. The use of live fire provided the opportunity to consolidate operational capabilities in hostile environments, directly contributing to NATO's deterrence and collective defense.

About 400 military personnel from eight Alliance countries participated in the maneuver, supported by 60 combat platforms, including armored vehicles, digital Command and Control systems, “Raven” reconnaissance drones, and the C2 “IMPERIO” system, demonstrating an advanced and fully integrated technological setup.

Integrated Air Defense and Interoperability: An Example of Field Cooperation

One of the central moments of the exercise involved short-range air defense, in which the effective collaboration between the Turkish and Italian sections stood out. Deployed at the Novo Selo training area, the Turkish component used “Sungur” systems to simulate the engagement of enemy aircraft, while the Italian personnel, equipped with “Stinger” missiles, contributed to the defense of the Forward Command Post.

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The interaction between the two units allowed for the sharing of techniques, tactics, and procedures for neutralizing aerial threats, including those posed by drones and hostile aircraft. This training module highlighted how interoperability is not just a formal objective but a real operational condition that can make a difference in modern warfare scenarios.

The opportunity to compare respective doctrines and act in synergy strengthened the collective capabilities of the Battle Group, making it more flexible, responsive, and integrated, in line with NATO directives for advanced defense in the eastern front countries.

NATO Posture on the Eastern Flank: Italy as a Key Player in Collective Defense

Under the command of Colonel Salvatore Abbate, the Multinational Battle Group deployed in Bulgaria demonstrated efficiency, cohesion, and operational readiness, consolidating the Alliance's forward presence in the region. Italy, as the framework nation of the Battle Group, played a key role in organizing and conducting the exercise, confirming its concrete commitment to Euro-Atlantic collective security.

The military operations conducted during “Strike Back 25” are part of the activities coordinated by the **Comando Operativo di Vertice Interforze (COVI)**, the top body of the national military instrument that manages the Armed Forces' missions both at home and abroad. COVI ensures the full integration of joint capabilities and the readiness of national forces to operate in highly complex multinational contexts.

The recently concluded exercise represents a clear message of unity and determination from NATO: its member countries are ready to defend every area of the Alliance, with trained, interoperable forces equipped with advanced technological systems. In a world increasingly characterized by hybrid threats and regional tensions, activities like “Strike Back 25” not only enhance operational capabilities but also strengthen collective deterrence, an essential pillar for Europe's security.