



## ITA ARMY RESPONSE TO COVID-19

3<sup>rd</sup> newsletter - 8<sup>th</sup> May 20 update

Almost two months after the country went into lockdown in response to the Covid-19 outbreak, a limit "**Phase 2**" reopening commenced on 4<sup>th</sup> May and will be enforced until 18<sup>th</sup> May. This will allow the impact of this reopening phase to be assessed in terms of the spread of the virus and allow us to take appropriate measures if required.

The Italian Army (ITA Army) contribution to counter the escalation of the emergency will remain constant, with more than 8200 soldiers<sup>1</sup> already deployed around the country in support of civilian authorities to patrol streets, disinfect public spaces, support national and regional border control and many other specific tasks.

### ITA ARMY POSTURE

As the emergency entered "Phase 2", the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) confirmed the adoption of a **dispersed force posture** within given readiness states to protect the force and increase resilience.

The Army has outlined the five core principles (so called "5Ds") that will guide this transitional phase where lockdown restrictions have been eased, before a full return to normal conditions. They are the result of the experience the Army gained up to now in the fight against the virus and should guide the organization and conduct of all Army activities from now onwards. They include:

- **DISPERSION** and **DIGITALIZATION**. All units will continue to operate at reduced manning (mission essential personnel on rotating shifts) and the use of electronic devices and technology will be implemented across the entire Army structure (simulation systems, web seminars, video demonstrations, etc...);
- **SOCIAL DISTANCING** and **INDIVIDUAL PROTECTION DEVICES** (personal protective equipment - PPE). Social distancing and workplace precautionary measures will remain in place and the use of PPE will be further encouraged. Wearing masks and gloves correctly will have to pair with the most basic hygiene measures (hands washing among all);
- **DIAGNOSIS**. Testing for the virus aids the identification of those who are infected, and subsequently the management of patients, and implementation of mitigation strategies for preventing the spread of the disease. For this reason, considering all personnel potentially infected, the access to military infrastructures will be allowed only after individual screening by thermal cameras or close-range thermometers.

These principles will have to guide the organization and conduct of all future operational and training activities until normal living conditions are restored.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures as at 08<sup>th</sup> May 2020.



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### ITA ARMY COVID-19 MAIN TASKS

To maintain unchanged all its homeland and overseas duties while focusing on combating the pandemic, the Army has partially adjusted its national commitments. The new footing will enable the Army to protect the force, maintain global operational readiness and support the national effort to fight against COVID-19. More specifically, besides assisting the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Civil Protection Department (CPD), the Army will continue to support the National Health System (NHS) with both medical task forces and sanitization teams.

#### SUPPORT TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ENFORCE LOCKDOWN

During "Phase 2", now that a gradual easing of COVID-19 lockdown is in place, the ITA Army will continue its effort in assisting authorities in preventing people's unauthorized movements.

#### SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM

The ITA Army has long played a key role helping Italian communities respond to natural disasters and other public health emergencies. However, the work it is doing during the coronavirus crisis is unique and may lead to a new blueprint for the way soldiers provide civilian assistance during a pandemic. The Army has deployed dozens of soldiers trained as health care professionals across the country over the past two months to support the state's medical response to COVID-19, with doctors, nurses and other clinicians now serving in both field stations and at hard-hit community hospitals. Among the numerous initiatives undertaken in this specific sector, the most important are listed below:

- after having recently been identified as the COVID-19 specialized medical hub for the Italian central regions (150 beds of which 50 for intensive or sub-intensive therapy), the Military General Hospital "CELIO" in Rome has been inaugurated on the 29<sup>th</sup> April by the Italian Defence Minister, Lorenzo GUERINI, and, since then, is fully operational. The building of the facility, coordinated by the Army Logistics Command, was completed in just three weeks thanks to the tireless work carried out by 80 Army/Air Force military engineers. The initiative is part of the Framework Agreement for cooperation on public health between the Ministry of Defence and the Lazio Region;
- as the crisis eases and permanent hospitals can better manage the load, Piacenza's field hospital was shut down. The facility, put up in a few days by the Italian Army Engineers Corps and opened on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, played a crucial role increasing the number of emergency rooms. With the peak having passed, the region's intensive care units were again able to manage the situation. All materials and equipment have been donated by the Italian Defence Department to the city of Piacenza in case of possible future emergencies;



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– as part of the activities aimed at containing and countering the spread of Covid 19, the 7<sup>th</sup> CBRN Defence Regiment (the Army unit responsible for specialized CBRN defence tasks) is currently being used in support of the National Health System and the CPD across the national territory for decontamination and disinfection operations. In the province of Bergamo, the activities, initially conducted jointly with Russian CBRN units, have been focused on the disinfection of various nursing homes. As the Russian units progressively began withdrawing, the 7<sup>th</sup> CBRN Defence Regiment extended the area of own activities to the surroundings of the city of Brescia.



In addition, the regiment deployed two field biological laboratories to support the “CELIO” Hospital conducting swab analysis and a decontamination team to Camp Pristina (Kosovo) to support KFOR in sanitizing the military compound.

As of 6<sup>th</sup> May, 71 disinfection teams are deployed across the entire national territory supporting local authorities in the decontamination of public infrastructures and more than 200 buildings have already been sanitized by military specialized personnel. Starting from 13<sup>th</sup> May Italian Army decontamination units will begin sanitizing over 300 churches in Rome.

### TRANSPORTATION

As part of the military's response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Italian Army provides land and aviation capability in support to civil authorities. Due to their strategic geographical position, the helicopter units based in Viterbo are at the forefront of the government's emergency responses as they are providing transportation in urgent response missions across the country. They have been equipped with an "Isoark N36" bio-containment stretcher which allows COVID patients to be transported in a high bio-containment environment.



More generally, the Army aviation support includes the sustainment of the national storage/transportation capabilities in close coordination with a fleet of 250 heavy trucks. So far the



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Army transportation capability has enabled the delivery of more than 350 tons of Personal Protective Equipment and other medical materials across the Italian territory.

In addition, upon a Civil protection department (CPD) request, the Army supported the movements of the Department's personnel to and from different areas of operation.

Finally, the Italian Railway Engineer Regiment, the only Army unit specialized in the construction, restoration and management of railway lines/hubs, supported the Regional Railway Movement Coordination Centre (RRMCC) in Bologna in the management of railway traffic control.

### 4<sup>TH</sup> MAY ITA ARMY FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY

On the occasion of the 159<sup>th</sup> Army anniversary of the founding of the Italian Army, no military ceremony was held to commemorate and honour the event.

The CGS, Gen. Salvatore FARINA, addressed the Army personnel with a video message on social channels. After remarking upon the central role played by the Army in support of the country, the General underlined how the core values that drive the daily actions of all soldiers have remained unchanged in time, as testified by the huge efforts made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He concluded extending a warm greeting and heartfelt thanks to the Army women and men for their daily commitment.



Further useful information at the following links:

"5D" Video (Internet website) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfa-mKV-PCY&feature=youtu.be>

"5D" Video (internal website) <https://intranet.esercito.difesa.it/it/iosonounsoldato.page>

General FARINA's video message (internal website) [https://intranet.esercito.difesa.it/it/anniversario\\_ei.page](https://intranet.esercito.difesa.it/it/anniversario_ei.page)

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