



46th Air Brigade and Paratrooper Brigade “Folgore” test new air-drop capabilities of transport aircraft

Published on 15/11/2025

Between October 13 and 17, the Flight Test Wing (RSV) of the [Aeronautical and Space Experimentation Air Division \(DASAS\)](#) in Pratica di Mare completed a complex testing activity dedicated to verifying the combined air-drop capabilities of the C-130J and C-130J-30 transport aircraft of the Italian Air Force. The initiative was conducted in close synergy with the personnel of the 46th Air Brigade of Pisa and the [Paratrooper Brigade “Folgore”](#) of the Italian Army, once again confirming the strong inter-force integration in the Defense sector.

Towards the certification of the “combo” air-drop

The aim of the testing is to acquire the necessary technical evidence for the granting of the combined air-drop capability – also known as “combo” – which will allow the launch, in **a single pass over the operation area, of personnel equipped with EPC-C parachutes and materials equipped with T-10C parachutes.**

An operationally significant capability, able to significantly increase the speed of deployment of forces and means, especially in complex, hostile contexts or characterized by the need for timely interventions.

The experimental phase was divided into two main parts:

- **Ground tests**, conducted at the 46th Air Brigade in Pisa, during which document checks, material installation verifications, and air-drop procedure simulations were carried out.
- **Flight tests**, conducted over the Altopascio (Lucca) drop zone, where combined air-drops were performed to verify the effectiveness, safety, and coordination between personnel and materials.

Engineers, pilots, and test technicians from the RSV, flight crews from the 46th Air Brigade, paratrooper personnel, and technicians from the [Study and Experience Office of the “Folgore” Brigade](#) participated in the activities.

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A strategic contribution to the Defense sector

The full acquisition of the “combo” capability will represent a significant operational multiplier for the Air Force and the Army's Airborne Troops. The ability to combine the launch of men and materials in a single flyover will improve the timeliness of operations and logistical efficiency, speeding up the deployment of forces even in scenarios characterized by high criticality.

The RSV, one of the six units under DASAS, is responsible for the testing, validation, and integration of new weapon systems or those undergoing modification. In recent years, in response to the evolving geopolitical context and operational needs, the Unit has intensified activities in support of Operational Units, especially through operational technical certification, which allows for faster and more autonomous implementation of innovative technological solutions.

The Aeronautical and Space Experimentation Air Division brings together all the study and experimentation entities of the Air Force. It represents the main technical advisory body of the Armed Force for:

- flight tests of aircraft and weapon systems
- chemical-physical analysis of materials
- experimentation and training in the field of aerospace medicine
- management of operational software
- operational evaluation of weapon systems

The Division also provides technical-logistical support to other Armed Forces and State Armed Corps, and manages – through the Air Terminal Operation Center (ATOC) – flights in support of operations outside national borders.

The Pratica di Mare airport thus confirms itself as the main Italian military air base for traffic and movements, as well as the only national military health entry point.

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The 46th Air Brigade and the “Folgore”: the core of national projection capability

The 46th Air Brigade, with its C-130J and C-27J, carries out missions in all the main operational theaters where the Italian Armed Forces are deployed and, when necessary, operates in cooperation with State civil agencies. It played a crucial role during the Covid-19 emergency and in numerous humanitarian and civil protection relief operations.

The Study and Experience Office of the Paratrooper Brigade “Folgore” is instead the national technical reference for everything related to air-drop: it studies, develops, and evaluates materials and procedures, actively collaborating with the RSV and the 46th Brigade to ensure the effectiveness of systems and the achievement of the objectives of the entire Defense sector.

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