

Army Aviation, flight excellence targeted by (false) maintenance allegations after the Bosnia tragedy

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The tragedy of **October 29, 2026, in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, which claimed the lives of four Italian service members during an activity conducted as part of Operation EUFOR Althea, deeply affected the Esercito Italiano, the Corpo Militare Volontario della Croce Rossa Italiana, and the entire country.

In the CH-47 Chinook helicopter crash, which occurred in the Brčko area, Sergeants **Simone Ruggia and Claudio Marchesi**, members of the Aviazione dell'Esercito, Lieutenant **Franco Adriano Zecchillo**, and Sergeant **Laura Procacci**, both from the Corpo Militare Volontario della Croce Rossa Italiana, lost their lives.

There were a total of fifteen people on board. The other eleven occupants were injured.

While investigative bodies are working to determine the causes of the accident, the incident has already sparked political controversy over maintenance of Esercito Italiano helicopters.

The controversy makes it necessary to examine the workings of one of the Armed Force's most specialized components, reviewing fleet data, resources allocated to logistical support, and the flight safety system.

How much does Italy actually invest to keep its CH-47F helicopters operational? How does the Italian fleet compare with its European and U.S. counterparts? And what can be said, based on available statistics, about the safety of the Aviazione dell'Esercito?

The answers emerge from official documents issued by the Ministry of Defense, parliamentary records, and data published by leading international military organizations.

The political controversy over CH-47 maintenance

On October 30, the day after the accident, the leaders of the Movimento 5 Stelle in the Defense Committees of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate, **Arnaldo Lomuti and Bruno Marton**, issued a statement denouncing what they viewed as a disproportion **between resources allocated to acquiring new weapons and those reserved for maintaining equipment already in service**, claiming that they receive ongoing reports to this effect from military personnel.

According to Lomuti and Marton, while more than €10 billion is invested annually in the purchase of new weapon systems, only “a few” hundred million would be allocated to maintaining Armed Forces equipment. According to the lawmakers, this situation would lead to maintenance difficulties, the use of so-called **“cannibalization” of equipment to recover spare parts**, and low levels of operational availability, resulting in risks to personnel safety.

The statements prompted a strong response from **Minister of Defense Guido Crosetto** and other members of the governing majority, particularly because they linked alleged general shortcomings in the maintenance system to a tragedy whose causes had yet to be established.

In particular, the minister stated:

> *«The maintenance of those aircraft exceeds that of any civilian vehicle».*

The request to ascertain the maintenance condition of an aircraft involved in an accident is, of course, legitimate. Indeed, it is an integral part of any aviation investigation.

It is another matter, however, to turn a hypothesis that has yet to be verified into a general judgment on the reliability of maintenance across the entire Aviazione dell'Esercito.

At present, no maintenance shortcomings have been established as the cause of the accident in Bosnia. **Only technical investigations will determine whether any mechanical issues, procedures, human factors, or environmental factors contributed to the tragedy.**

In the meantime, it is possible to examine objective evidence documenting the organization and investments allocated to Italy's Chinook fleet.

Italy operates 16 CH-47F Chinooks: a strategic fleet for the Esercito

Before the accident in Bosnia, the Aviazione dell'Esercito Italiano operated a nominal fleet of **16 CH-47F Chinook helicopters**, acquired under the SMD 02/2008 multiyear modernization and renewal program.

Delivery of the sixteen aircraft was completed in January 2019, as confirmed by the Defense Ministry in a parliamentary response dated 29 April 2021.

The CH-47F is one of the most important heavy-lift transport helicopters in the international military landscape.

Featuring two tandem rotors, it has personnel, materiel, and equipment transport capabilities that make it particularly suitable for supporting ground forces.

It can be employed for tactical transport, logistics support, medical evacuation, materiel recovery, and rescue missions.

The Italian fleet is assigned to the CH-47 component of the Aviazione dell'Esercito, with a central role played by the **1° Reggimento AVES “Antares” di Viterbo**.

The Chinook also represents an especially valuable capability for joint operations, in which the rapid movement of personnel and equipment is often an essential requirement.

Its operational importance is also confirmed by the aircraft's widespread international use by numerous Armed Forces and by modernization programs that will extend its service life for several decades.

Nearly 700 million euros for maintenance and logistics support for Italy's Chinooks

A particularly significant figure emerges from official documentation issued by the Defense Ministry's **Directorate of Aeronautical Armaments and Airworthiness**.

On 10 July 2025, a preliminary report and determination to contract concerning logistics support for the Esercito Italiano's CH-47F Chinook fleet was prepared.

The document, subsequently updated through supplementary notes, provided for **total multiyear funding of 697.540.000 euros for the 2025–2032 period**, intended for technical, logistics, and maintenance support for the helicopters.

On September 29, 2025, the Ministry of Defense formally entered into Contract No. 1186 in the register with Leonardo Helicopters S.p.A., for a total amount of €696,202,907.67.

The signing of the contract is **explicitly confirmed by official measure No. M_D A4B89B9 DE12026 0000021 of February 6, 2026**, issued by the Directorate of Aeronautical Armaments and Airworthiness, which appoints the Contract Performance Director.

It is therefore not merely a projected expenditure or a procurement procedure still underway, but **a contract already signed for nearly €700 million**.

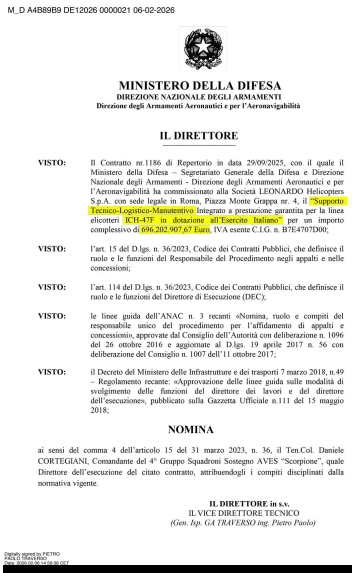
The program includes:

- **Overhaul, maintenance, and repair of aircraft.**
- **Procurement of spare parts and replenishment of stocks.**
- **Maintenance support for turboshaft engines and related components.**
- **Technical and engineering support.**
- **Updates to technical publications and manuals.**
- **Availability of specialized ground support equipment.**
- **Direct support at Armed Force facilities through specialist maintenance teams.**

The stated objective is to preserve aircraft functionality and efficiency, ensuring continued support for operational activities.

The document recognizes **Leonardo Elicotteri** as the system manager for the Italian CH-47F fleet, with regard to configuration expertise, technical documentation, fault analysis, and system upgrades.

The data show that logistical support for the Chinook fleet is subject to structured, long-term financial planning.



M_D A4B89B9 DE12026 0000021 06-02-2026

MINISTERO DELLA DIFESA
DIREZIONE NAZIONALE DEGLI ARMAMENTI
Direzione degli Armamenti Aeronautici e per l'Aeronavigabilità

IL DIRETTORE

VISTO: Il Contratto nr.1186 di Repertorio in data 29/09/2025, con il quale il Ministero della Difesa – Segretariato Generale della Difesa e Direzione Nazionale degli Armamenti - Direzione degli Armamenti Aeronautici e per l'Aeronavigabilità ha commissionato alla Società LEONARDO Helicopters S.p.A. con sede legale in Roma, Piazza Monte Grappa nr. 4, il "Supporto Tecnico-Logistico-Manutentivo Integrato a prestazione garantita per la linea elicotteri ICH-47F in dotazione all'Esercito Italiano" per un importo complessivo di 696.202.707,67 Euro, IVA esente C.I.G. n. B7E4707D00;

VISTO: l'art. 15 del D.lgs. n. 36/2023, Codice dei Contratti Pubblici, che definisce il ruolo e le funzioni del Responsabile del Procedimento negli appalti e nelle concessioni;

VISTO: l'art. 114 del D.lgs. n. 36/2023, Codice dei Contratti Pubblici, che definisce il ruolo e le funzioni del Direttore di Esecuzione (DEC);

VISTO: le linee guida dell'ANAC n. 3 recanti «Nomina, ruolo e compiti del responsabile unico del procedimento per l'affidamento di appalti e concessioni», approvate dal Consiglio dell'Autorità con deliberazione n. 1096 del 26 ottobre 2016 e aggiornate al D.lgs. 19 aprile 2017 n. 56 con deliberazione del Consiglio n. 1007 dell'11 ottobre 2017;

VISTO: il Decreto del Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei trasporti 7 marzo 2018, n.49 – Regolamento recante: «Approvazione delle linee guida sulle modalità di svolgimento delle funzioni del direttore dei lavori e del direttore dell'esecuzione», pubblicato sulla Gazzetta Ufficiale n.111 del 15 maggio 2018;

NOMINA

ai sensi del comma 4 dell'articolo 15 del 31 marzo 2023, n. 36, il Ten.Col. Daniele CORTEGIANI, Comandante del 4° Gruppo Squadroni Sostegno AVES "Scorpione", quale Direttore dell'esecuzione del citato contratto, attribuendogli i compiti disciplinati dalla normativa vigente.

IL DIRETTORE in s.v.
IL VICE DIRETTORE TECNICO
(Gen. Isp. GA TRAVERSO ing. Pietro Paolo)

Digitally signed by PIETRO PAOLO TRAVERSO
Date: 2026.02.06 14:49:35 CET

Official measure by the Ministry of Defense dated February 6, 2026, confirming the signing, on September 29, 2025, of the €696.2 million contract with Leonardo Helicopters for technical, logistical, and maintenance support for the CH-47F Chinook fleet of the Esercito Italiano. Source: https://www.difesa.it/assets/allegati/87336/dd21del06022026.pdf

How much is allocated each year to the CH-47F fleet?

Supplementary Note No. 2, dated November 4, 2025, specifies the distribution of funding across the individual fiscal years.

Year	Planned funding
2025	56.000.000 €
2026	145.000.000 €
2027	82.176.644,60 €
2028	83.208.907,64 €

2029	82.654.447,76 €
2030	68.000.000 €
2031	90.000.000 €
2032	90.500.000 €
Total	**697.540.000 €**

The largest allocation is scheduled for 2026, with **€145 million**.

Across the eight fiscal years, the program amounts to an arithmetic average of approximately **€87.19 million per year** for the entire fleet.

Dividing this sum among the sixteen aircraft nominally in service yields a theoretical average of **€5.45 million per helicopter per year**.

This is an accounting allocation for the multiyear program, not the actual annual maintenance cost of each aircraft.

The figure includes a range of services that go beyond routine inspections and repairs, including engineering support, spare parts, equipment, and specialist activities.

Moreover, the annual distribution of resources is not uniform: planned funding varies significantly from one fiscal year to the next.

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How much does the United Kingdom spend on its Chinooks?

A particularly interesting international comparison can be made with the United Kingdom.

On **May 17, 2024**, in response to a parliamentary question, the British Ministry of Defence stated that the annual routine support costs for its Chinook fleet amounted to approximately **£160 million**.

British program documentation indicates a departmental inventory of sixty aircraft, which is set to be gradually reduced.

Using the fleet of sixty aircraft as the basis for calculation, the theoretical average cost of routine support is approximately **£2.67 million per helicopter per year (equivalent to approximately €3.20 million) per helicopter per year**.

.The comparison with Italy therefore presents the following figures.

Parameter	Italy	United Kingdom
Reference fleet	16	60
Annual support considered	87,19 million €	160 million £
Theoretical annual average per aircraft	5,45 million €	2,67 million £
Timeframe	2025–2032 plan	2024 annual figure

While not a perfectly like-for-like comparison, **the data highlight Italy's substantial financial investment in maintaining the operational readiness of its CH-47F Chinook fleet**.

With nearly **€700 million programmed over eight years for a fleet of just 16 helicopters** , the Esercito Italiano is allocating particularly significant resources to the logistical support of its Chinooks, amounting to a theoretical average of approximately **€5.45 million per aircraft per year**.

This financial commitment becomes even more significant when compared with that of the United Kingdom.

Although the two programs include different spending categories and do not allow for a direct comparison of maintenance costs, **the Italian figure demonstrates the significance of the resources allocated to technical support, maintenance, spare-parts availability, and engineering assistance**.

These are therefore not marginal investments, but rather a multi-year financial plan that assigns a leading role to maintaining the operational readiness of the CH-47F fleet.

This documented reality deserves consideration in the debate over the "alleged maintenance shortcomings", without, of course, preempting the findings of the investigations into the causes of the accident in Bosnia.

Italian maintenance investments began well before 2025

The nearly €700 million in funding does not represent the Esercito Italiano's first initiative in the field of Chinook logistical support.

An official response from the Ministry of Defense to the **Chamber of Deputies Defense Committee on April 29, 2021**, in fact, documents earlier programs.

In September 2019, the multi-year **SMD 32/2019** program was approved to fund engine maintenance activities for the CH-47F fleet.

In the same parliamentary response, the Ministry referred to additional resources for maintaining the operational capabilities of the rotary-wing component, with funding measures also planned for subsequent fiscal years.

This point is particularly relevant to the current debate: **financial and programmatic attention to Chinook logistical support has been documented for years and does not represent a response following the tragedy in Bosnia**.

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Flight safety in the Aviazione dell'Esercito

The Aviazione dell'Esercito is a highly specialized component of the Italian Armed Forces.

Crews carry out operational activities that require particularly high levels of technical expertise, from tactical navigation and night operations to operating in complex environmental conditions.

The training of aircrew and specialists follows a comprehensive program that includes the Centro Addestrativo Aviazione dell'Esercito in Viterbo and, for certain qualifications, international training facilities.

Flight safety encompasses every phase of aviation activity: mission planning, crew preparation, aircraft checks, risk management, flight execution, and the subsequent analysis of any anomalies.

The maintenance system is an integral part of this organization.

Documentation concerning Italian CH-47Fs describes configuration-control activities, incident analysis, manual updates, and engineering support.

These are all elements of a complex aviation system, in which prevention does not end with the inspection conducted immediately before takeoff.

AVES professionalism is also reflected in its ability to sustain prolonged overseas missions.

A concrete example is the **Airmobile Task Group “Griffon” dell'Aviazione dell'Esercito**, operational in Iraq since March 30, 2016, as part of Operation Prima Parthica. By December 2024, the unit's UH-90A helicopters had reached **6,500 operational flight hours**, carrying out personnel, materiel, and equipment transport missions in support of the Italian contingent and the multinational coalition engaged against Daesh.

This result relates to a specific mission and a different helicopter fleet, but it helps illustrate the sustained commitment required of Army Aviation crews and technical support organizations.

The Bosnia accident: the investigation will determine the causes

The October 29 tragedy requires a thorough and rigorous investigation.

Rome's military prosecutor's office has opened an inquiry, and a Defense technical commission has been deployed to reconstruct the circumstances of the accident.

The investigation will need to clarify the aircraft's condition, any malfunctions, the operational circumstances, and every other relevant factor.

At present, there are no official conclusions that would allow the accident to be attributed to maintenance deficiencies.

Likewise, the documented investments and procedures provided for the entire fleet do not make it possible to rule out in advance any issues involving the individual aircraft.

This is precisely the fundamental distinction that should guide public debate.

The search for the truth about the causes of the accident must be rigorous and free of prejudice.

A military excellence that deserves respect and fact-based analysis

The documents reviewed portray an aviation component embedded in a comprehensive training, maintenance, and logistics support system.

The Italian fleet of sixteen CH-47Fs represents a strategic capability, supported by dedicated investment programs and specialized facilities.

Multi-year funding of **€697.54 million**, previous measures to support the engines, the role of technical facilities, and industrial cooperation with Leonardo demonstrate a significant commitment to keeping this capability operational.

It can therefore be stated that **the maintenance of Italian CH-47F helicopters is not an unplanned activity, but a function to which the Ministry of Defense devotes dedicated resources, expertise, and facilities**.

The tragedy in Bosnia cannot and must not be exploited through premature allegations that, at present, lack objective evidence.

Four service members lost their lives while serving their country. Their families and colleagues deserve truth, respect, and support.

At the same time, a single accident, however dramatic, cannot alone serve as the measure of the professionalism of an entire specialty.

Army Aviation continues to represent a fundamental component of Italy's operational capabilities, supported by the daily work of pilots, specialists, technicians, and logistics personnel.

Determining the causes of the tragedy is a duty. It is equally important to recognize the value and professionalism of those who work every day to ensure flight safety, as well as the State's considerable financial and organizational commitment to ensuring the efficiency and safety of its equipment.

Public debate should develop with respect for these responsibilities, far from premature allegations and close to the reality of one of the most specialized components of the Italian Army.

Sources

1. Ministry of Defense – Official statement on the CH-47 accident in Bosnia, October 29, 2026
2. ANSA – Investigation into the Chinook accident and political controversy, October 31, 2026
3. Ministry of Defense – Contracting decision of July 10, 2025, CH-47F logistics support
4. Ministry of Defense – Supplementary note no. 2, CH-47F funding 2025–2032
5. Chamber of Deputies – Defense Committee, response to parliamentary question of April 29, 2021
6. Boeing Italia – CH-47F programs and Italian fleet
7. British Parliament – Annual Chinook support costs, answer of May 17, 2024
8. British Ministry of Defence – Chinook program and fleet size