



AW249 Fenice, the new attack helicopter for the Italian Army is coming

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The Italian Army has officially started the acquisition of the first batch of [AW249 Fenice](#) attack helicopters, a new generation platform intended to replace the now outdated **AW129 Mangusta**, in service for over thirty years. This first group of aircraft is part of an initiative that foresees the production of **up to 48 units**, developed by [Leonardo Agusta](#), with the aim of modernizing the Italian army's assault fleet. The AW249 Fenice was first presented in **2017** and its initial phase includes **17 units**, with deliveries starting in **2027**.

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AW249 Fenice: the new generation combat helicopter

The AW249 is a state-of-the-art assault helicopter, designed to operate in modern and ever-evolving war scenarios. It represents the only helicopter currently in the design phase that

combines cutting-edge technologies, high performance, and a high survival capability, while maintaining low operating costs. Designed to meet new tactical needs and integrate with other platforms, the AW249 can operate in synergy with air and ground resources, including unmanned aerial systems (UAS).

This helicopter combines advanced communication technologies, a sophisticated battlefield management system, and an evolutionary capability that will allow it to integrate future equipment and armaments. The advanced avionics and mission systems enhance operational awareness, reducing pilot workload and thus increasing safety during operations.

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Protection and combat survival

The AW249 is equipped with an advanced integrated self-defense system, designed to ensure high survivability in the most challenging operational theaters. Among its protection features are a reinforced transmission, capable of continuing to operate for 50 minutes even without lubricant, armored seats to ensure crew protection, fuel tanks with high ballistic tolerance capable of withstanding direct impacts, and a reinforced structure designed to absorb high impacts and reduce detectability to enemy radar.

With a maximum takeoff weight of 8.3 tons, **the AW249 is capable of operating with drones and unmanned aircraft**, ensuring high speed, range, and versatility. Its capabilities make it ideal for armed escort missions, close air support, air interdiction, reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition. Thanks to its powerful engines, it can operate in extreme weather conditions and conduct naval missions, with integrated functionalities to operate from naval units already in the design phase.

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Performance and operational capabilities

The AW249 Fenice has been developed to ensure high-level performance. It has a length of 18 meters, a wingspan of 15 meters, a two-seat cockpit, and a maximum payload of about 1,800 kg. It is powered by two General Electric CT7-8E6 turboshaft engines, each with 2,500 horsepower, and is capable of reaching **a maximum speed of 155 knots (287 km/h - 178**

mph) with a range of up to 430 nautical miles (796 km – 495 miles).

It can operate up to an altitude of 6,096 meters (20,000 feet) with a maximum operational duration of about four hours. The AW249 Fenice is a natural evolution of the AW149 model, which in turn derives from the AW129 Mangusta. One of the most significant updates concerns the range, extended to three hours, allowing coordinated operations with the NH-90 and CH-47 of the Italian army, maintaining a coherent formation during missions.

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Armament and warfare capability

The AW249 is equipped with a flexible weapon system, capable of adapting to different operational scenarios and mission configurations. Its armament includes a 20 mm Gatling TM197B cannon with a high rate of fire, 70 mm guided and unguided rockets ideal for precision attacks and close support, infrared-guided air-to-air missiles for engaging aerial targets, and radio frequency or fiber optic-guided air-to-ground missiles, designed to destroy armored vehicles with millimeter precision. Thanks to the combination of firepower, speed, range, and endurance, the AW249 is configured as a leading asset for the Italian armed forces, ready to respond to future operational challenges with unprecedented combat capability.

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News link: <https://helicopters.leonardo.com/it/products/aw249>