



Carl Gustaf M4: a Capability Multiplier for the Paratroopers Brigade “Folgore”

Published on 08/01/2026

In the framework of modernizing the close combat capabilities of the Italian Army, the Ministry of Defense has submitted to the competent parliamentary committees the request for an opinion on the draft ministerial decree related to the multi-year program **A/R n. SMD 31/2025** (A.G. 358), named «**Short-range anti-tank weapon system for the operational units of the Italian Army**». This is the continuation of a path already initiated with the Interministerial Decrees **SMD 22/2022** and **SMD 16/2024**, with the aim of consolidating and expanding the supply of shoulder-fired anti-tank systems intended for operational units.

For the **Paratroopers Brigade “Folgore”**, in particular, these systems are not an “extra”: they represent a **fundamental** resource. In modern contexts, characterized by rapid changes in the scenario, reduced predictability of contact, and an increasing presence of armored vehicles even in unconventional tasks, the ability to have a **short-range, lightweight, reactive, and versatile anti-tank** becomes an essential component of survival and tactical effectiveness.

Why a shoulder-fired anti-tank is decisive for the “Folgore”

Airborne and high-readiness units like the “Folgore” often operate with needs for **mobility, rapid deployment, and autonomy**. In these profiles, the shoulder-fired anti-tank is one of the few tools capable of providing **immediate firepower** without relying on heavy platforms or complex supports.

This aspect becomes crucial when combat occurs in “**compartmentalized**” environments – where lines of sight and maneuver are broken, and the enemy can appear suddenly at close distances. Two scenarios, in particular, highlight the value of the Carl Gustaf M4:

- **Urban areas:** streets, courtyards, buildings, and infrastructures fragment the battlefield. The threat of armored and armored vehicles can materialize quickly, and the response must be equally rapid, precise, and adaptable.
- **Woods and forests:** vegetation limits long-range observation and engagement, imposing short reaction times and favoring portable systems, with different ammunition depending on the target and occasion.

In both cases, what matters is the combination of **portability, readiness for use, and flexibility**: three characteristics that a modern shoulder-fired system can credibly offer at the tactical level.

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A continuous program: numbers and phases

The overall program confirms a burden of **426 million euros** (at 2022 economic conditions), with a multi-year plan that includes acquisition, ammunition, logistical support, and training.

From the data reported in the Acts:

- **SMD 22/2022 (A.G. 426):** planned start in 2023, duration 11 years (2023–2033), with planned acquisition of **2,720 anti-tank systems, 122,000 projectiles, Integrated Logistic Support (ILS) for 10 years**, and **training courses** for operators and

maintainers. The first phase (52 million) has been completed.

- **SMD 16/2024 (A.G. 205)**: second phase (75 million) aimed at an additional quota not less than **600 launchers**, with ammunition, ten-year logistical support, and training; phase in the process of finalization.
- **SMD 31/2025 (A.G. 358)**: third phase with a total value of **45 million** (at 2024 economic conditions), aimed at acquiring **about 300 weapon systems**, related ammunition, and logistical support, in addition to **training modules**. Planned start in **2028** and likely conclusion in **2034**.

The completion, for the remaining forecast value indicated, would allow closing the circle on the overall equipment and stabilizing a capability that is not “niche”, but transversal: useful to the **Combat (C)**, **Combat Service (CS)**, **Combat Service Support (CSS)**, and **Command Support** units, that is, to the entire device that makes a unit truly employable and sustainable.

The replacement of the Panzerfaust 3 and the quality leap

The system is not explicitly named in the reported text, but it is indicated as the **Carl Gustaf M4 recoilless rifle** produced by Saab (Sweden), intended to replace the **Panzerfaust 3** and the s.r. cannon “Folgore” (the latter long in reserve).

The meaning of this transition is clear: it is not just about “changing weapon”, but about **moving to a reusable and multi-purpose system**, capable of adapting to multiple needs with the same platform. The modernization concerns not only the terminal effect but also the organization of the unit:

- reduction of fragmentation of different systems for different tasks;
- increase in flexibility with a **wide range of ammunition**;
- greater training and logistical continuity.

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Carl Gustaf M4: tactical flexibility and modernity of use

The **Carl Gustaf M4** (caliber 84 mm) is described as a portable and multi-purpose system, **reusable**, with a weight of less than **7 kg** and a length of less than **one meter**. The maximum range can reach – depending on the ammunition – up to **2,100 meters**, while typical short/medium-range uses include anti-tank and anti-structure capabilities, as well as support ammunition (smoke and illuminating) and training.

Equally relevant, for high-readiness units and also night operations, is the predisposition for aiming systems: in addition to the supplied sight, the Picatinny rail allows the integration of **optics and devices** (thermal, intensifiers, modern aiming systems) based on needs. In practical terms, this means **better effectiveness in engagement windows**, greater adaptation to environmental conditions, and a potential increase in operator safety thanks to quicker and more reliable target acquisition.

Not just acquisition: the “invisible” part that makes the capability real

An often underestimated element in public debate is that a capability does not arise only from the delivery of launchers: it arises from the **combination of systems, ammunition, maintenance, spare parts, manuals, training, and sustainability over time**.

The program, in fact, structurally provides for:

- **Integrated Logistic Support (ILS)** over a ten-year horizon;
- **courses and training modules** for operators and maintainers.

For the “Folgore”, this is decisive: a high-availability unit must be able to rely on efficient materials, consolidated procedures, and trained personnel to maintain operational readiness even in intense cycles.

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An investment consistent with the needs of modern combat

The acquisition of additional Carl Gustaf M4 fits into a simple but stringent logic: today the threat is not linear, and armored vehicles can appear in contexts where only infantry would have been expected in the past. At the same time, “closed” environments – urban, peri-urban, wooded – reduce margins and reward those who possess **quick, flexible, and portable** tools.

For the Paratroopers Brigade “Folgore”, which makes maneuver, readiness, and the ability to react quickly its identity elements, a modern shoulder-fired anti-tank is not an option: it is **a guarantee of operational credibility**, an immediate deterrent, and a multiplier of effectiveness in situations where distance is short, space is fragmented, and the threat can be sudden.

In this sense, the continuation of the program should not be read as a mere expenditure chapter, but as the construction of a concrete and sustainable capability: **firepower where needed, when needed, with the level of flexibility required by the contemporary battlefield.**

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