Defence Procurement Forum - Portolano: Industry must act as a partner, not as a leader

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Rome, September 16, 2025 — Italian Defense enters a new era, marked by leadership with unprecedented experience. For the first time in history, Italy has a **Chief of Defense Staff** who has previously held the position of **Secretary General of Defense and National Armaments Director**. This dual expertise, clearly evident during the **Defence Procurement Forum**, allows the military leadership to have a comprehensive and strategic vision both on the operational side and the needs of the Armed Forces as well as on the industrial side and acquisition programs.

This unique combination of roles provided the context for a strong statement, elegant in its formulation but clear in its meaning, which is redefining the relationship between the Defense Department and the national industry.

A Concrete and Determined Guide

The Minister of Defense, Guido Crosetto, emphasized the urgency of bridging a "20-year gap" and Italy's commitment to the NATO mission "Sentinel of the East", for which **SAMP-T** systems and **radar aircraft** are already available. But it is in managing the relationship with companies that the real turning point manifests. The **Chief of Defense Staff**, in a move of pragmatism and clarity, reiterated the fundamental principle that the industry "must act as a partner, not as a leader".

This phrase, translated into clear terms, means that the Defense Department will no longer accept programs that are not a priority or that do not meet the expectations of the Armed Forces. The experience at the top of the industrial sector allows the **Chief of Defense Staff** to fully understand the dynamics and needs of companies, but also to recognize when their commercial interests are not aligned with the country's operational needs.

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The message is unequivocal: being a national company does not guarantee privileged access to "push" unwanted or unrequested products. The major Italian defense companies are called to strictly align with what is truly needed by Defense. The acquisition process will be guided by an approach based on real military needs, ensuring that every investment contributes to bridging the capability gap and strengthening national security in a targeted and effective way.

The New Roadmap for the Future

This change of course is also reflected in the voices of other forum participants. The need for "projects complementary to those of NATO" and for multi-year planning emerged, as highlighted by **Antonio Mazzotta**. The same aspiration to sign a joint venture with **Airbus** and **Thales**, expressed by **Pasquale Pontecorvo**, highlights how the industry itself is looking at strategic partnerships and greater international cooperation, in line with the directives of the new course.

In conclusion, Italian Defense is consolidating its decision-making power. Under the guidance of a professional who knows both the battlefield and business dynamics in depth, the future of military acquisitions will be based on strict criteria of effectiveness and necessity, ensuring that resources are used to build an adequate and modern defensive capability, without compromise.

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