



Defense Budget 2026: The Metamorphosis of the Military Instrument between Constraints and New Threats

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2026 opens with unprecedented pressure on the accounts of the Italian Defense. **The achievement of the fateful 2% of GDP**, required by NATO commitments, is no longer an optional political choice, but an **operational necessity dictated by the deterioration of the international security framework**. The latest data indicate that Italy is laboriously climbing back up, but the real issue remains the quality of spending. It's not just about purchasing new assets, but ensuring the maintenance and operability of existing ones. **The challenge for the Ministry is to free Defense investments from the rigid parameters of the European Stability Pact**, treating them as strategic investments for the resilience of the entire national system. Without this "exclusion clause", the risk is to have an excellent fleet, like the new F-35s or PPA ships, but with insufficient ammunition stocks for a high-intensity conflict, a lesson

harshly learned from recent Eastern European scenarios.

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The Organic Revolution: Reserve and National Service

One of the pillars of the reform discussed in the last 48 hours is the overcoming of the purely professional and "closed" Armed Forces model. **The proposal for an Operational National Reserve is taking shape: a body of 10,000-15,000 men and women, former military or civilians with high technical specializations, ready to be mobilized in case of crises or national emergencies.** This paradigm shift responds to the need for "critical mass", a concept that was thought to be outdated but has instead become strongly relevant again. In parallel, the debate on the six-month mini-conscription, oriented towards civil protection and cyber-security, aims to bridge the gap between Generation Z and military institutions. This "National Service" is not seen as a return to the past, but as an incubator of skills: young people would be trained to face hybrid attacks, manage logistics in emergencies, and understand the dynamics of cognitive warfare, effectively becoming the first line of civil defense of the future.

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Technological Sovereignty: The Space Shield and the Underwater Domain

The 2026 budget decisively focuses on emerging domains: Space and Underwater. **Italy is investing heavily in the "Multilevel Shield", an integrated architecture that sees synergy between ground radars and satellite constellations for monitoring debris and potential orbital threats.** The defense of assets in space has become vital, as our payment systems, GPS, and secure communications depend on them. Below the sea surface, **the National Underwater Hub is coordinating the development of underwater drones (UUV)** intended for the protection of gas pipelines and transoceanic data cables. These investments not only ensure national security but also act as a catalyst for the high-tech industry, positioning Italy as a technological leader in the European and Atlantic context. The defense of 2026 is thus a complex ecosystem, where the soldier on the ground is supported by

an invisible but omnipresent network of sensors and algorithms that protect national sovereignty in every known dimension.