Defense, Rome Raises Alert and Launches Shield Operations

Published on 07/03/2026

Italy is not at war and does not want to enter into war, reiterated Prime Minister **Giorgia Meloni** after the attack on Iran by the United States and Israel. But in light of the expanding crisis in the Middle East, the government has initiated a series of military and political measures to strengthen national security and prepare for potential developments in the conflict.

The first decision concerns the defense of airspace. Defense Minister **Guido Crosetto**, in coordination with allies and **NATO**, has asked the Chief of Staff **Luciano Portolano** to **raise the protection of national air and missile defense to the highest level**, with particular attention to the southern regions, considered more exposed to the range of Iranian missiles. According to reports, such a measure had not been adopted since **September 11, 2001**.

The measures include the **strengthening of crews for the scramble of Italian fighters**, meaning immediate takeoff in case of emergency, and the enhancement of air missile defense systems. Simultaneously, the Department of Public Security has sent a circular to prefects and

police chiefs to **increase surveillance on American military bases in Italy and on sensitive sites related to the military production chain**.

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Gulf Aid: Samp-T, Anti-Drone, and Logistical Support

On the international front, **Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait** have requested defensive support from Italy. At the top of the list is the **Samp-T**, the land-based missile defense system considered today **the main European capability able to counter ballistic and aerial attacks**. Italy, along with France, is indeed one of the few European countries to possess it.

The aid package could also include **C-Uas anti-drone systems**, radar and satellite equipment, the **Skynex** cannon, in the process of being delivered to Italian units, and the **Grifo** missile launcher, which has a shorter range compared to the Samp-T. On the front of close defense against unmanned aircraft, Italy could also provide **jammer-bazookas**, portable devices already in use by the Air Force riflemen and Army anti-aircraft artillery, capable of **intercepting radio frequencies, disrupting signals, and neutralizing hostile drones**.

The issue remains political as well as operational. The deployment of these systems requires a government measure and a subsequent parliamentary passage. There is also a technical issue: the **Samp-T requires highly specialized personnel**, and any transfer would also involve training times and an internal availability problem, given that Italy would have **only three to five**, while **one has already been delivered to Ukraine** and the updated version **Ng, New**

Generation is still awaited.

Alongside defensive armaments, Rome could also offer **logistics and supply solutions**, such as **tankers and transport aircraft**, thus strengthening support for Arab partners without direct involvement in combat.

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The Martinengo in Cyprus and the Issue of US Bases in Italy

On the Eastern Mediterranean front, **Italy has decided to send the missile frigate Federico Martinengo to the Cyprus area**, as part of a coordinated setup with **Italy, Spain, France, and the Netherlands**. Onboard will operate **at least 160 men of the Italian Navy**. The ship replaces the hypothesis circulated in the previous hours about the possible departure of the **Schergat**: in the end, the choice fell on the **Martinengo**, one of the most advanced platforms of Italian naval defense.

The **Federico Martinengo**, built by **Fincantieri** at the **Riva Trigoso** shipyard and delivered to the Navy on **April 24, 2018**, is the **seventh Italian Fremm unit** and the **third in multi-role configuration** after the **Carlo Bergamini** and the **Luigi Rizzo**. It is a frigate 144 meters long, 19.7 meters wide, with a full load displacement of 6,900 tons, a maximum speed of 27 knots, and a total capacity of up to 200 people between crew and personnel.

Operationally, the Martinengo is equipped with **sophisticated radar and sonar**, can **host SH90 and EH101 helicopters**, and is capable of detecting **drones or rockets up to about**

200 kilometers away. To neutralize threats, it is equipped with **Aster 15 and Aster 30 missiles**, active up to about 100 kilometers, in addition to a very extensive arsenal that includes **anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles, cannons, machine guns, and torpedoes**. Among the weapon systems are the **127/64 Vulcano cannon**, the **76/62 Davide-Strales**, the **SAAM-ESD missile system** with Aster 15-30, the **Teseo MK 2/A**, the **Marte system** embarked on a helicopter, the **25mm SRA machine gun**, and the **MU90 lightweight torpedoes**. Last year, the ship had already completed its European mission **Eunavfor Aspides** in the Red Sea, where it contributed to the protection of merchant traffic from Houthi threats.

The issue of **US military bases on Italian territory** remains open, starting with **Sigonella** in Sicily, one of the most sensitive nodes of the entire American system in the Mediterranean. Currently, US drones and aircraft use these facilities for **refueling, logistics, and surveillance**, based on existing international agreements. It would be different in the case of use for **offensive actions or bombings**: in that case, a political green light from the Italian government would be needed.

Meloni recalled that the presence of US bases is regulated by **bilateral agreements dating back to 1954**, updated over time, and that **currently there are no requests for use other than logistical and technical support**. But she also clarified that, if such a request were to arrive, **the decision would be shared with Parliament**.

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Evacuations, Military Repositioning, and Government's Political Line

The crisis has already had concrete effects on the Italian presence in the area. In **Kuwait**, **239 of the 321 Italian military personnel** present at the **Ali Al Salem** base have been transferred to **Saudi Arabia**, while **82 remain on site**. Also in **Qatar**, **7 of the 10 Italian soldiers** are reaching Saudi Arabia. In **Bahrain**, where five military personnel were present, the withdrawal of personnel is underway. In **Lebanon**, however, the situation remains under observation: if an evacuation is decided, **an Italian ship would already be ready to intervene**. Before the outbreak of the crisis, a total of **2,576 Italian military personnel** were present in the affected area.

Politically, Parliament has approved by majority a **resolution** setting three main lines of action: **defense of European countries, management of the use of bases granted to the United States, and support for Gulf countries**. The document commits the government to participate, within the European framework, in the **common effort to help any EU member states defend themselves from missile or drone attacks originating from Iran**, and to confirm that the use of military installations in Italy continues to respect the legal framework defined by international agreements.

The executive's line, therefore, remains to **strengthen defense, support allies, and maintain political control over any potential escalation**, trying to balance national security, international obligations, and the role of Parliament. In a phase where the conflict risks expanding, **Italy tries to act as a strategic rear and support actor, without becoming a belligerent party**.

News link: https://tg24.sky.it/mondo/2026/03/06/guerra-iran-ruolo-italia