

Defense, the 2039 plan: a shield against drones and missiles and €5.2 billion for cybersecurity

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ROME – An integrated air and space defense system capable of neutralizing drone swarms and ultra-fast missile threats by 2039, coupled with a major boost to cybersecurity to counter new forms of "hybrid warfare." This is the strategic direction outlined in the new **2026-2028 Defense Multi-Year Planning Document (DPP)** (and its Annex), submitted to Parliament by Defense Minister Guido Crosetto.

The air shield and the war on drones

The ministry's plan aims to develop, over thirteen years, a multidomain, multilayer protection infrastructure fully interoperable with NATO and multinational standards.Particular attention is being paid to countering remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) and to very-short-range air defense for critical national assets — including Carabinieri stations, which must be protected against state, parastatal, and organized crime actors.

Specifically, for the drone and counter-drone sector, the DPP allocates:

- **More than €2.8 billion** for remotely piloted aircraft, including €1.32 billion for the European *EuroMale* program (medium-altitude, long-endurance drones for intelligence and reconnaissance), €774 million for upgrading the Air Force's *MQ-9* fleet (plus €65 million for other remotely piloted aircraft), €617 million for Army drones and the *«Combat Dome»* project, and €31 million for the Navy.
- **€380 million** for counter-drone systems, divided between €180 million for defense in urban environments and €200 million for protecting naval units against individual drones and swarms.
- **€141 million** earmarked for underwater vehicles.

The cyber challenge and infrastructure

Against a backdrop of growing hybrid threats — from bomb threats at airports and schools to the dissemination of sensitive data — the Defense Ministry is allocating **€5.2 billion** (over the 2026-2039 period) for digitalization, cybersecurity, and simulation systems.
Additional funding for innovation and logistics support includes:

- **€1.4 billion** for the space sector (primarily concentrated over the next five years) and a further **€1.4 billion** for research and development — a category led by **G-Cap**, the sixth-generation fighter being developed with the United Kingdom and Japan (funded through 2037 for a total of more than €8.7 billion across the various tranches).
- **€8.5 billion** for bases, logistics hubs, medical facilities, and Armed Forces installations.
- **€13.4 billion** through 2039 for material stockpiles, maintenance, and various modernization programs.

Allocation of major investments and budgets

Looking at major military platforms, the largest share of planned resources is allocated to the aviation sector, followed by land and naval systems:

- **€42.5 billion** for combat, transport, and training aircraft, helicopters, and drones.
- **€22.3 billion** for tanks, armored vehicles, and ground vehicles.
- **€20.3 billion** for ships, submarines, and maritime systems.

- **€14 billion** for weapons, ammunition, and missiles (a category which, adding together the various projections in the annex beyond 2031 for ballistic systems, *Samp-T*, *Grifo*, and artillery, exceeds €22 billion overall).

At the macro-financial level, the **integrated Defense budget** (which includes Mimit funding for investments, Mef funding for international missions, and Pnrr resources) rises to **€37.5 billion** in 2027.The NATO-calculated budget — which includes additional items such as INPS pensions and other interministerial expenditures — stands at **€48.31 billion** for 2026 (up from €47.183 billion the previous year), equivalent to **2.1% of GDP**.