# Erbil, Kuwait: lessons for those who are against everything.

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In the hours following the attack on the Italian base in Erbil, part of the public debate focused on the definition by Minister Guido Crosetto, who stated that the action was “deliberate.” But, in reality, this was never the central point. **An attack on a military base is, by its nature, deliberate.** Missiles, drones, or rockets do not hit such a target by chance.

The real issue is another: **who struck, with what capabilities, with what freedom of action, and against what defensive architecture.** It is on this ground that the seriousness of the technical-tactical reflection is measured, not on the observation of the obvious.

The Erbil episode indeed confirms a lesson now evident in all modern theaters: **low-altitude aerial threats — drones, loitering munitions, improvised vectors — are today among the most widespread, accessible, and insidious.** They cost little compared to the effects they can generate, saturate surveillance, force the consumption of precious resources, and put pressure on alert, passive protection, and engagement procedures.

From this point of view, Iraq and Kuwait can no longer be considered areas where base protection relies solely on traditional systems, generic alert, or the belief that the threat can be managed “in another way.” **Today, base protection also and above all depends on the concrete ability to counter drones and very low-altitude threats.**

And it is precisely here that a fundamental political and military point must be recognized. **Crosetto, the Chief of Defense Staff Luciano Portolano, and the Chief of Army Staff Carmine Masiello are realistically addressing a problem they did not create but inherited.** The capability framework found at the beginning of their work was marked by delays, deficiencies, and programs too slow compared to the evolution of threats. Today, however, the issue of anti-aircraft, anti-drone, and anti-missile defense is back at the center, and this is already a significant change of pace.

**The merit of this leadership is having put operational reality back at the center, not illusions.** And operational reality says that our contingents are exposed, that the theaters are dangerous, and that the force must be protected with tools appropriate to the times.

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## Skynex is an important step forward, but the real issue is bringing capabilities where they are needed

In recent months, a concrete signal has arrived: the Italian Army has received the first battery of the Skynex system, one of the most advanced European systems for short-range air defense and drone counteraction. **This is an important result because it shows that something is**

**finally moving in the right direction after years in which the C-UAS issue had been treated with delay compared to the speed at which the threat was growing.**

It must be said clearly: **managing to enter the German Skynex program was an extremely valuable achievement for Italy.** It allowed us to hook onto a concrete, modern, credible capability at a time when the need was already evident for some time. It is a choice that must be recognized and valued because it was by no means certain to achieve such a result in useful times.

But precisely for this reason, the next question becomes inevitable: **such a capability, if it exists, must also be thought of for places where the risk is real.** A modern system is important on the industrial, training, and doctrinal level, but its full value emerges only when it can truly contribute to the protection of deployed forces.

And this is where the reflection on Iraq and Kuwait opens up. **The Italian bases and detachments in the area live in an operational environment where low-altitude aerial threat is no longer episodic but structural.** Consequently, the availability of systems like Skynex requires a serious evaluation of their use, their deployment, and the possibility of integrating them into a multi-level force protection network.

Of course, no one should fall into the opposite error of thinking that a single system solves everything. **Skynex is fundamental, but alone it is not enough.** Italy is still behind in other segments of C-UAS defense and short-range air defense, as shown in recent years by numerous specialist insights and the same trend of programs. The recovery is underway, but not completed.

For this reason, the point is not to engage in sterile polemics. The point is another: **today there finally exists a line of capability reconstruction, and this line must be accelerated.** Those leading Defense today are trying to fill gaps that have layered over time. The gap between the current threat level and the state of inherited capabilities cannot be ignored. It would be unfair and also not very serious.

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## Honoring those who serve Italy means protecting them, respecting them, and knowing the risk

Finally, there is a point that must be said strongly, and that is often lost in the Italian public debate. **Our military operates in contexts where the risk cannot be zeroed out.** There are no real missions in unstable areas that automatically guarantee “zero human cost.” Demanding it means not understanding the very nature of armed service.

Those who leave for Iraq, Kuwait, or other sensitive theaters know they are entering an environment where the threat exists, evolves, and can strike even when the mission appears “stabilized.” Yet these men and women continue to operate with discipline, professionalism, and a sense of duty, representing Italy in conditions that require composure, training, and courage.

**For this reason, preserving our military is not just an operational need: it is a moral and national duty.** It means equipping them with adequate means, building credible defenses, updating procedures and rules of engagement, strengthening alert and integration between sensors, electronic warfare, and hard-kill systems. But it also means talking about them with respect, without superficiality, and without reducing everything to bureaucratic formulas or distracted chronicles.

There is a passage that should be common heritage: **those who swear to defend Italy must always be respected.** Always. Not only when they fall, not only in commemorations, not only when an attack produces strong images. They must be every day, because the value of their service does not arise from the exceptionality of the final sacrifice, but from the daily willingness

to expose themselves for the Nation's security.

And this is what many other Nations understand well: **the soldier is not respected because war is beautiful, but because sacrifice, risk, and service have a very high value for the national community.** Where this awareness is strong, the armed forces are supported not rhetorically, but concretely: with investments, public attention, institutional culture, and social recognition.

Italy should also consolidate this maturity more. Because discussing Skynex, C-UAS, air defense, and base protection does not mean talking only about technology. **It means deciding how much the life of those who carry the Italian flag in the most difficult theaters is worth to us.**

And then the conclusion is clear. **Crosetto, Portolano, and Masiello are doing important work of recovery and reconstruction compared to a situation that had been left too far behind.** But precisely because the work is serious, it must now be supported to the fullest, with speed, coherence, and clear priorities. Because every delay in defense against drones and low-altitude threats is not an abstract issue: it is an additional risk for our military.

**Honoring our soldiers means first of all doing everything possible to protect them.** And it means remembering, with respect and without hypocrisy, that serving Italy in uniform has never been, nor will it ever be, a zero-risk task.