France Accelerates Defense: Artillery, Ballistic Missiles, and the Attrition Factor

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The landscape of **French defense** is undergoing a radical transformation. With the pressure of a possible **large-scale conflict** by **2030**, Paris faces a **race against time** to modernize its arsenal, balancing **operational urgency** with the need to maintain its **industrial sovereignty** .

The sovereignty dilemma in rocket artillery

The absolute priority of the **French Army** is currently the replacement of the nine surviving **Lance-Roquettes Unitaire (LRU)**, which will reach the **end of operational life** in **2027**. Just this week, **tests** began for an internally developed system, and preliminary results seem promising. France must now decide whether to focus on the **domestic product**, developed by the **Safran/MBDA** or **Thales/ArianeGroup** teams, or purchase **ready-made foreign systems** like the American **HIMARS**, the Israeli **PULS**, or the South Korean **Chunmoo**. The

ultimate goal remains the acquisition of **26 systems** and **300 munitions** to equip an entire battalion by **2030**. As emphasized by **Patrick Pailloux**, head of the **DGA**, it will be a necessary compromise between **sovereignty**, **costs**, and **delivery times**.

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The return of ballistic missiles and hypersonic technology

In parallel, France has allocated **one billion euros** this year to start the development of a land-based ballistic missile system with a range of **2,500 kilometers**. The missile will be equipped with a **hypersonic glide vehicle**, a technical choice that the **DGA** believes offers the best balance between **costs and military performance**. Although the official deployment target is **2035**, military leaders are seeking to **accelerate the timeline** to bring the date as close as possible to **2030**. To achieve this, it is proposed to initially deliver **simplified versions**, without advanced **anti-jamming** systems, which will be integrated only at a later stage.

Rafale F5: the future of air combat

The year **2026** also marks the beginning of work on the **F5** standard of the **Rafale** fighter jet, supported by a budget of **3.4 billion euros** allocated to combat aviation. The changes will include structural innovations such as the new **T-REX engine** from **Safran**, capable of a **9-ton thrust** compared to the current model's 7 tons. The entire suite of **sensors and radar** will also be updated. Regarding armament, the **DGA** aims to accelerate the development of the **Stratus RS** air-to-ground missile by **MBDA** and the creation of the **Comet**, a **very long-range air-to-air missile** that should surpass the performance of the current **Meteor** by **2030**.

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Preparing for attrition warfare and the Renault drone

Pailloux's strategic vision is clear: in an **attrition war**, the winner is the one who still has **ammunition** when the opponent has run out. For this reason, France has planned orders for over **6 billion euros** in various types of munitions, from **SCALP** cruise missiles to **Mistral** air defense systems. In this context, the **Chorus drone** project is included, a **"one-way"** aircraft with a range of **3,000 kilometers** and a payload of **500 kilograms**. Production will be entrusted to the car manufacturer **Renault**, with the aim of keeping costs around **120,000 euros** per unit, a figure that allows for **mass production** essential to face a war of attrition.