



From Lithuania to Yemen: Italy Holds the Line – Awaiting Europe.

Published on 18/09/2026

The Italian Armed Forces confirm a primary role in the projection of Euro-Atlantic security, operating simultaneously on **two critical fronts at the highest risk**. If on the **eastern flank of NATO** Italy responds with promptness and concreteness to the Russian threat — as demonstrated by the recent **scramble** of **Eurofighter F-2000** fighters of the Task Force Air *Baltic Thunder III* taking off from Šiauliai, in Lithuania, to intercept Moscow jets in Baltic airspace — on the **southern quadrant** the situation takes on the contours of a systemic and structural crisis that requires a radical change of pace by the entire European Union.

The Southern front and the Houthi threat: the silent abandonment of the Red Sea

The gravity of the southern quadrant is exacerbated by the offensive of Yemeni Houthi militias. The occupation of the **Hanish islands (Greater and Lesser) and the island of Zugar**, combined with the conquest of the port of Mokha, has handed the rebels (supported by the

Tehran axis) a devastating tactical control over the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb.

As strongly denounced by the Minister of Defense **Guido Crosetto**, the advance of Yemeni militias and continuous attacks — culminating in the episode that saw an Italian F-2000 aircraft hit in a peripheral area of the Ta'if base in Saudi Arabia (where personnel engaged in *Inherent Resolve* operate, with no casualties among our military personnel) — demonstrate how the crisis is no longer confined to a local dynamic.

The fusion between coastal control and the island outposts of the Hanish directly puts at risk:

- **Global trade routes and energy flows** connecting the Gulf to the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal.
- **The competitiveness and economy of Italian and European ports**, strangled by a maritime interdiction that forces merchant ships to circumnavigate Africa or risk transit under threat of ballistic missiles and kamikaze drones with an operational range of up to 2,000 kilometers.
- **Broader regional stability**, with the risk of a chain reaction that could see the activation of joint defense pacts between Pakistan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.

The hour of responsibility: the hope for active engagement by Northern Europe

Faced with this scenario, the Italian strategic response highlights a painful asymmetry in the architecture of continental security. While Italy and a few other Mediterranean partners bear the operational and diplomatic burden — leading at sea with the frigate *Bergamini* and Captain Frigate Sarah Arrighi the *Eunavfor Aspidos* mission, and planning timely interventions to ensure merchant transit without waiting for the lengthy procedures of European bureaucracy — **the nations of Northern Europe continue to show a culpable inertia.**

The security of maritime flows that feed the markets of the entire continent cannot rest solely on the Mediterranean countries. The strategic hope that emerges forcefully is that **Northern Europe finally recognizes that the Red Sea and the Mediterranean are the vital economic frontier of the entire Union**, overcoming geographical divisions and taking on a military and political commitment equal to that pursued with conviction on the eastern flank.

Towards an autonomous and responsible posture

The Italian government, through the pragmatic line traced by Crosetto, has reiterated that Defense will not remain blocked by community indecisions. Autonomous operational plans are being evaluated and the recall of national capacities for the protection of merchant shipping, balancing firmly:

1. **Indispensable support for NATO in the east**, to guarantee collective deterrence.
2. **The inflexible protection of maritime projection to the south**, while at the same time demanding that continental partners move beyond the logic of delegation and fully share the strategic burden of euro-Mediterranean security.