Integrated Air Defense: The Strategic Pillar for the Army of the Future

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The Italian Army has recently published the first issue of **RecaP – Rapporto Procurement**, a new thematic series curated by the **IV Reparto Logistico** of the Army General Staff. This inaugural issue is entirely dedicated to **Integrated Air Defense**, a capability today considered "enabling and essential" to ensure freedom of maneuver, protect command lines, and ensure the resilience of the military instrument.

A change in strategic paradigm

For over twenty years, the Army has focused on peacekeeping and crisis management scenarios, contexts in which the air threat was often limited or mitigated by allied superiority. However, the return of peer competition and the emergence of multidimensional threats — from low-cost drones to ballistic and hypersonic missiles — has necessitated a profound revision of operational doctrine. Today, the protection of airspace is the prerequisite for any effective ground operation.

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The technological shield: SAMP/T NG and SKYNEX

The modernization path is structured on a multi-layered and stratified architecture featuring cutting-edge new weapon systems:

- **SAMP/T New Generation (NG):** Represents the core of medium-range air defense (MRAD) and ballistic missile defense (BMD). Thanks to the new **ASTER 30 Block 1 NT** missile and the **Kronos Grand Mobile High Power** radar, the system can intercept targets over 100 km away and track threats up to 250 km, also operating against supersonic missiles. A key milestone was the successful "hot" qualification launch conducted on December 3, 2025.
- **SKYNEX:** Delivered on December 18, 2025, this system specializes in short-range defense (C-RAM and C-UAS). It is based on 35 mm automatic cannons with a firing rate exceeding 1,000 rounds per minute and the use of programmable **AHEAD** ammunition, extremely effective against swarms of drones and loitering munitions.

Towards a widespread and comprehensive defense

In addition to large missile systems, the Army is investing in tactical-level protection:

- **GRIFO:** A decisive layer between medium and very short range, delivered in January 2026 for operational validation.
- **FULGUR:** A new generation VSHORAD (Very Short Range) system, developed in Italy, available in both vehicle-mounted and "man-portable" versions.

- **Tactical Self-Defense:** Protection extends down to the individual soldier level with solutions like the passive detector **RFPatrol MK2**, jammers for electronic countermeasures (soft kill), and even **Beretta 1301 Tactical** rifles with specific anti-drone ammunition (hard kill).

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Procurement as a strategic lever

As emphasized by the Head of the IV Reparto Logistico, **procurement** is no longer merely a support function but a strategic lever to translate operational vision into tangible capabilities. This transformation process aims to create an Army fully interoperable with NATO allies and resilient in the face of modern challenges.

The next issue of RecaP, scheduled for April, will delve into another crucial sector for the Armed Forces: procurement initiatives related to the **heavy and medium component** (contact maneuver), in light of lessons learned from recent conflicts.

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