



Italian Army: Commercial Satellite Constellations an Opportunity Not to Be Missed

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In the context of growing global threats and continuous technological innovations, the Italian Army faces new strategic challenges. One of the most critical areas concerns **satellite communication**, essential for command and control of operations, for the use of **unmanned systems** (aerial, terrestrial, and marine), and for **RISTA** activities (reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition). In this scenario, **commercial satellite constellations** are becoming a fundamental component of modern defensive capabilities.

Italy, aware of the need to evolve technologically, is increasingly focusing on advanced solutions like **Starlink** by **SpaceX**. Despite political challenges, the Italian Army is trying to integrate these technologies, recognizing that without advanced satellite connectivity, there would be no effective command and control, nor the possibility to operate unmanned systems for kinetic actions. **Secure communication** is crucial for real-time missions, as well as for **global surveillance** that allows operations in complex scenarios far from national borders.

The Adoption of Commercial Satellite Constellations: A Step Towards Self-Sufficiency

Commercial satellite constellations like **Starlink**, which now has nearly 7,000 satellites in orbit, are transforming the global communications landscape. For Italy, which needs immediate and high-performing solutions, SpaceX's technology could represent a crucial resource.

Leonardo, a leader in the Italian aerospace sector, has recognized that **Starlink** is one of the most advanced solutions available, but has also emphasized the importance of maintaining control over critical data. Leonardo, in fact, is ready to ensure that if Italy decides to purchase SpaceX's services, the signals would be **encrypted** and **protected**, thanks to Italy's cybersecurity management capabilities.

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Leonardo has reassured that, in the case of an agreement with **Starlink**, Italy would be able to guarantee **data security**: “Certainly. We buy a service, the bandwidth, and the satellites. Then it is up to our country to encrypt and protect the signals that are transmitted. We know how to do it and we can achieve this result through technologies we possess,” said Roberto Cingolani, CEO of Leonardo. This ensures that data and communication management will remain under Italian authorities' control, even if SpaceX provides the satellite network.

Italian Alternatives and Future Plans

While Starlink offers a quick and operational solution, Italy is also exploring other options, such as the **Ital-GovSatCom** project. This program, involving **Leonardo**, **Sitael**, and other Italian companies, aims to develop a constellation of satellites for secure telecommunications. The project, part of the European **GovSatCom** initiative, could allow Italy to reduce dependence on external actors, but requires time and significant investments.

Sitael, one of Italy's leading space companies, has emphasized that creating an Italian satellite constellation would be possible with less than a billion euros, but also warned that a single national constellation might not be sufficient to cover all needs. Therefore, using **Starlink** as a

temporary solution is seen as a viable path, at least in the short term.

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How the Italian Army Can Benefit from Starlink

The adoption of **Starlink** could be a way for Italy to quickly respond to the secure communication needs of the armed forces, especially in complex scenarios far from national borders. The **global coverage** offered by SpaceX's satellite constellation is essential to ensure continuous **command and control** of operations, crucial for mission success. Moreover, **unmanned systems** aerial and terrestrial, increasingly used for kinetic actions and real-time monitoring, directly depend on the **speed and security of satellite communications**.

The **low latency** and **redundancy** of the Starlink network are crucial for operational efficiency. Additionally, solutions like **Starlink** allow addressing the challenges posed by **rapid changes in modern operations**, giving the armed forces the ability to adapt in real-time to field situations.

Conclusions: Accelerating the Step Towards Satellite Capabilities

In conclusion, the Italian Army must accelerate the approach to **satellite capabilities**, without hesitation or preconceptions. **Secure communication, command and control** of units, the use of **unmanned systems** for kinetic actions, and **global surveillance** are all possible only with advanced and reliable satellite connectivity. **Starlink**, while raising political and strategic concerns, represents one of the most advanced solutions available and is essential to ensure operational security and mission efficiency.

Leonardo, with its experience in encryption and data protection, offers the assurance that, even if the Starlink service comes from an external commercial actor, the transmitted data will be secure and protected by Italian technologies. Italy must quickly equip itself with the necessary capabilities to operate in an increasingly connected and technologically advanced world. Only with a modern strategic vision, integrating technologies like Starlink and national solutions, can Italy remain competitive and secure in its military operations.