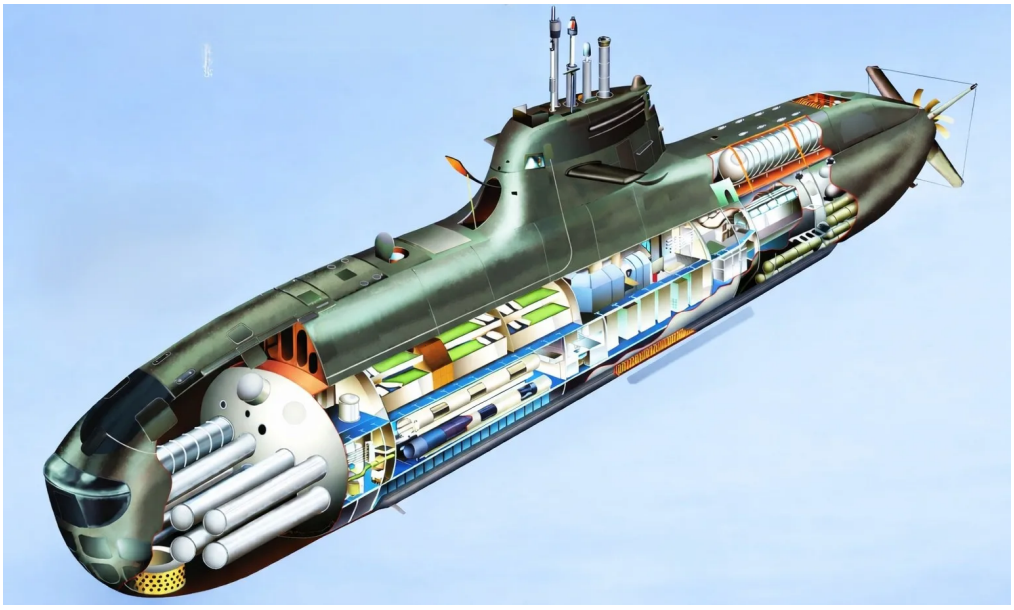

Italian Navy: Fourth U212 Near Future Submarine

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The *First Steel Cut* ceremony of the fourth submarine **U212 Near Future Submarine (NFS 4)**, held at the Fincantieri shipyard in **Muggiano (La Spezia)**, marks a new and significant milestone for the Italian Navy and the national naval industry. With the official start of construction of the fourth unit, the U212 NFS program enters a phase of full industrial maturity, with **four submarines simultaneously in production**.

The achievement of this level of production parallelism demonstrates Fincantieri's high organizational and technological capacity, the constant commitment of the Navy, and the effectiveness of **OCCAR**'s role in managing one of the most complex programs in the European naval field. The construction of submarines, in fact, represents one of the greatest engineering challenges, comparable in complexity to the creation of space systems, and only a limited number of countries in the world possess the necessary skills to face it.

The Muggiano shipyard, with a tradition of over **100 submarines built**, continues to represent a strategic asset for Italian underwater capability, consolidating Italy's role among the leading nations in the sector. The first two U212 NFS units will be delivered in **2028 and 2029**, replacing an equal number of Sauro-class submarines, which entered service in the mid-eighties and are no longer adequate for future operational challenges.

Italian Navy: Fourth U212 Near Future Submarine

Origin of the Program and Strategic Value for the Navy

The **U212 NFS** program has its roots in the strategic decision to renew and enhance the national underwater component, ensuring the Navy cutting-edge means capable of operating effectively in the contemporary geopolitical scenario. On **February 26, 2021**, in Rome, the contract was signed between **OCCAR** and **Fincantieri** for the construction of **two new submarines**, with **an option for two additional units**, intended for the Italian Navy.

On the occasion of the signing, the Chief of Staff of the Navy, **Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone**, expressed great satisfaction, emphasizing how the agreement represents a step of extraordinary strategic importance. According to the Navy leadership, the new submarines will ensure excellent operational capabilities in the underwater dimension, a crucial element for safeguarding national interests and maintaining a credible deterrent tool.

The underwater vehicle, thanks to its ability to remain at sea for long periods and its intrinsic **“invisibility”**, is able to gather information without altering the operational environment, also acting in contexts characterized by high threat levels. This combination of discretion, autonomy,

and operational readiness makes the submarine one of the most effective military tools for national security and the protection of critical underwater infrastructure.

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Technological Innovation, Made in Italy, and Industrial Impact

The **U212 NFS** class represents a profound evolution compared to the previous U212A and even compared to the more modern Todaro class, acting as the *trait d'union* between the proven Italian-German project and the **emerging technologies of the new century**. The acronym NFS, *Near Future Submarine*, reflects precisely this future-oriented design philosophy.

The program is characterized by a strong **Made in Italy** imprint, involving **large, medium, and small national enterprises** both in the development phase and in the supply of advanced components. Among the main innovations are the **lithium battery propulsion system** and the **new combat system**, both of national conception, which ensure greater energy efficiency, reduced acoustic signature, increased stealth, and superior cyber resilience.

As highlighted by Admiral Cavo Dragone, submarines are among the most advanced means ever conceived by man, and their development constitutes a true **technological driver**. The industrial and scientific skills developed within the U212 NFS program generate significant impacts in other high-tech sectors, strengthening the national industrial fabric and producing a significant return for the **Country System**.

Overall, the U212 NFS program will ensure Italy a **credible and effective deterrent capability**, essential for the security of national maritime basins and for the protection of strategic infrastructures that develop along the seabed, often far from common perception but increasingly central to the country's security and prosperity.

News link: https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2025/12/fincantieri-cuts-first-steel-for-4th-u212-nfs-submarine/