



Italy, the Case of the 500 Sorties: Rutte's STRATCOM Error, Defense Denies

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The delicate balance of international diplomacy has been shaken by a communication misstep involving NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte. In an attempt to demonstrate transatlantic unity on the eve of crucial meetings at the White House, Rutte provided a distorted representation of Italy's commitment to the "Epic Fury" operation, citing alleged **"500 sorties"** that sparked a controversy as loud as it was unfounded. This statement turned into a real embarrassment for the Alliance's bureaucratic apparatus, guilty of ignoring the technical reality of the facts.

The Approximation of NATO Leadership

Rutte's statements to *Fox News* appear as a glaring strategic blunder. Attempting to establish himself as a strong mediator in front of the Trump administration, the NATO Secretary misrepresented the nature of the Italian contribution. Speaking of such a high number of sorties without making the fundamental and non-negotiable distinction between kinetic (combat)

activities and technical-logistical support activities demonstrates a lack of adherence to reality by the Alliance's leadership. A leader of such stature should have perfectly understood the limited nature of the international agreements governing the use of bases, avoiding lending himself to terminological confusion.

The Government's Firmness: Rigor and Truth

Faced with this inaccurate reconstruction, the Italian Government — through the Ministry of Defense — reacted with the necessary firmness, immediately restoring the truth. The official denial, which defines Rutte's words as "totally false," is an act due to protect the country's sovereignty and seriousness.

The Government acted with maximum transparency on three pillars:

- **Respect for the perimeter:** Italy granted the use of the bases exclusively for technical and logistical purposes, in full agreement with international commitments and the Constitution.
- **Decisional rigor:** Where allies' requests went beyond this boundary, they were systematically rejected.
- **Institutional clarity:** The Defense dismantled the distorted narrative endorsed by NATO leadership, reminding that "a deeper investigation at the source" would have been enough to avoid such blunders.



The Instrumentalization by the Opposition

While the Government works to maintain Italy as a reliable and serious pillar of the Alliance, the usual instrumentalization by the opposition has emerged. Trying to turn an evident error by NATO bureaucrats into a supposed "lie" by the executive is a propaganda operation that ignores the reality of the facts.

The leader of Fratelli d'Italia in the Chamber, Galeazzo Bignami, hit the point: Italy has maintained a firm line, to the extent of even attracting criticism from Washington for the lack of access to certain offensive uses of the bases. Thus, Italy not only respected the agreements but defended its position, even at the cost of tensions with the American ally, disproving the internal political pipers.

Conclusion

In foreign policy, precision is substance. The case of the alleged "500 sorties" demonstrates how the political narrative of NATO leadership can sometimes stray from technical reality, exposing the Alliance to an avoidable embarrassment. The Government has shown to have a clear and correct line; it is now up to NATO leadership to reflect on the importance of communication that does not sacrifice rigor on the altar of propaganda, avoiding creating diplomatic incidents that only serve to fuel unnecessary internal controversies.