



Leonardo C-27J Spartan: Why Italy Should Focus on the Next Generation

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The announcement by the Peruvian Air Force, which has ordered its fifth Spartan (the first in Next Generation configuration), marks a historic milestone: 100 aircraft ordered worldwide. While international operators continue to invest in this platform born in Turin, a necessary reflection emerges on the Italian fleet: it is time for an increase and technological upgrade, both for civil security and support to our elite forces.

The Italian Air Force was among the first launch customers of the C-27J Spartan, an aircraft that has demonstrated unparalleled reliability over the years in the most complex operational theaters. However, the evolution of the current geopolitical scenario and the growing needs for rapid defense projection today require an even more modern and efficient tool.



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The Spear of Defense: Support to the "Folgore" and Special Forces

In addition to its well-known civil versatility, the C-27J Spartan represents an irreplaceable asset for the special operations sector and military air transport. Increasing the Next Generation Spartan fleet would drastically enhance the operational capabilities of elite units such as the **Paratroopers Brigade "Folgore"** and the Italian **Special Forces (FS/TI)**.

- **Covert Infiltration and Exfiltration:** Thanks to its exceptional STOL (Short Take-Off and Landing) capabilities, the Spartan can land and take off again in a few hundred meters on semi-prepared, dirt, or improvised runways, often the only ones available in high-risk operational theaters. This allows Special Forces to penetrate hostile territory, strike, and retreat quickly.
- **Maximum Precision Drop:** The design of the cabin and the onboard systems of the Spartan allow the drop of Folgore paratroopers both in controlled opening (low altitude) and in HALO/HAHO mode (high altitude with oxygen), essential for strategic insertions behind enemy lines without being intercepted by radar.
- **The "Praetorian" variant and tactical support:** The robustness of the Spartan allows its configuration as a fire support platform (Gunship) or for electronic warfare. An increase in these assets would ensure close air escort and immediate cyber protection for our operators on the ground.

A "Dual Use" Asset for National Emergencies

The strength of the Spartan lies precisely in its dual nature: lethal in wartime, indispensable in peacetime. The aircraft can be reconfigured in less than an hour to meet very different civil operational needs:

1. **Wildfire Fighting:** With the *MAFFS II* module, the Spartan can drop 7,500 liters of water and retardant. In an Italy increasingly affected by severe climate emergencies, integrating the Canadair fleet with fast tactical aircraft would be a strategic breakthrough.
2. **Medical Rescue and MEDEVAC:** Thanks to its large cargo hold (the most spacious in its category), the Spartan acts as a true "flying ambulance" for biocontainment or urgent transport of intensive care patients from minor airports.



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The "Next Generation" Innovation: Efficiency and Savings

The new variant chosen by Peru introduces innovations that Italy cannot ignore. The **winglets** at the wingtips and the complete renewal of the digital avionics offer:

- **Greater aerodynamic efficiency:** Lower fuel consumption, greater autonomy and range, a crucial factor when projecting Special Forces over long distances.
- **State-of-the-art avionics:** A new mission radar, advanced navigation systems, and encrypted communications that ensure full interoperability with NATO allies and maximum safety during low-level flights (nap-of-the-earth) to evade anti-aircraft defenses.

Conclusions

The milestone of 100 global orders confirms that the Spartan is the world benchmark in medium tactical transport. For Italy, investing today in the C-27J Spartan Next Generation is not only a support to the national industry of Leonardo but a strategic responsibility act.

Having a larger fleet means providing our paratroopers and Special Forces with the best possible means to defend the country, and the Civil Protection with a formidable tool to save lives. It is time for Italy to decisively bet again on its "Warrior of Caselle".