Leonardo, the Government Shake-up: with Mariani Towards a Pragmatic Defense

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The transition from Cingolani to Mariani marks Italy's return to industrial reality. While the country looks to the models of Israel, Poland, and Germany, the priority shifts from technological dreams to air defense batteries and combat-ready armored vehicles.

The decision by the Meloni government to replace Roberto Cingolani with **Lorenzo Mariani** at the helm of **Leonardo** is not just a change in leadership, but a paradigm shift. In a global context marked by high-intensity conflicts, Italy's credibility can no longer rest solely on conceptual paradigms — interweavings of words and futuristic visions lacking an immediate military base — but must translate into **real kinetic capability**.

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Air Defense as a Credibility Parameter

Today, a nation's relevance is measured by its ability to protect its skies. In this, Italy must look to those who have made "substance" their doctrine:

- **The Israel Model:** Systems like *Iron Dome* and *David's Sling* were not born from theoretical slides, but from the brutal necessity to intercept physical threats. Israel demonstrates that true innovation is that which produces thousands of ready-to-use interceptors, not that which theorizes abstract digital architectures.
- **The** pragmatism of Poland and Germany**:** Warsaw has become the new center of European defense not thanks to visionary programs, but by purchasing and producing critical masses of Patriot and CAMM systems. Berlin, with the *European Sky Shield* (ESSI) initiative, has chosen to focus on already existing hardware (like the Israeli Arrow 3) to ensure immediate protection.

Italy, with the appointment of a "man of action" like Mariani (already at the helm of MBDA), signals to international partners that the season of paper projects is over. **Italian air defense must become a tangible asset, made of deployed batteries and accelerated production lines.**

The Army Accelerates: the Lynx Changes the Way the Ground Force Operates

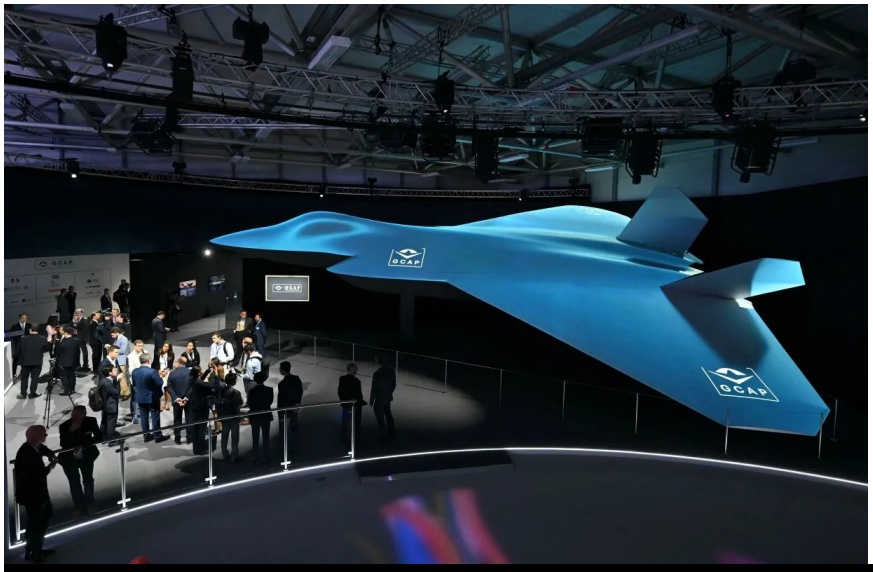
More Steel, Less Theory: The Challenge of Armored Vehicles

While discussing the future, concreteness manifests today through the **Joint Venture between Leonardo and Rheinmetall**. This is the model of "real substance" that the government demands:

- **Production Started:** Unlike long-term visions, here the tracks are already on the ground. In January 2026, the first four Lynx KF-41 were delivered, and between 2026 and early 2027, production will ramp up with the delivery of another 16 vehicles equipped with Italian technology.
- **Clear Objectives:** The plan is for the serial production of the Lynx and the development of the new **Panther** tank to achieve operational results by the end of the decade, ensuring that the Italian Army does not only have "mobility concepts," but heavy vehicles ready for action.

The GCAP: An Ambition to Anchor to Reality

In this scenario, the **GCAP** (the sixth-generation fighter) remains an extraordinary but risky endeavor. While it represents the pinnacle of aerospace technology, its feasibility without the heavy support of the **United States** or a structural involvement of Germany remains a financial and industrial unknown. The risk is that it remains a technological dream if not inserted into a critical mass logic that only major allies can guarantee.



The GCAP, the sixth-generation fighter-bomber developed by Italy, the United Kingdom, and Japan.

Conclusion: The Return to Military Manufacturing

The challenge that even the USA cannot easily win — that of mass industrial production in wartime — imposes a choice on Italy. The appointment of Mariani is the signal that Leonardo must return to being a defense workshop.

To be credible in Washington, Berlin, or Tel Aviv, it is not necessary to explain what the world will be like in fifty years; it is necessary to demonstrate the ability to produce and deliver today the missiles and tanks needed to defend it. Less futuristic "tentacles," more steel and operational batteries: this is the new course of Italian defense.

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