Merops, the system that stops drones: why it can also serve Italy

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The United States is preparing to send **Merops**, an anti-drone system that has already proven useful against Russian aircraft used in Ukraine, to the Middle East. The choice stems from an increasingly evident problem: stopping cheap drones with very expensive missiles is unsustainable both militarily and financially.

Merops addresses the threat with a different logic than traditional air defense systems. It is a platform that uses **drones against drones**, capable of detecting, tracking, and neutralizing targets even in environments disrupted by electronic jamming. It is a more flexible response to threats like the Iranian Shahed, which Moscow has used en masse in Ukraine and which are increasingly concerning in the Middle East as well.

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The NATO solution already tested on the eastern flank

The most interesting aspect is that Merops is not a theoretical experiment, but a solution already employed in a NATO context. The system was deployed in **Poland and Romania** after repeated incursions of Russian drones into allied airspace. In other words, the war in Ukraine has already pushed the Alliance to field-test new defenses against a threat that classic systems struggle to manage.

The lesson is clear: drones are difficult to intercept, can blend with minor radar traces, and impose an unfavorable cost-benefit ratio on defenders. Striking a drone worth tens of thousands of dollars with an interceptor costing hundreds of thousands, or even over a million, risks becoming an economic trap before a military one. For this reason, the “NATO solution” based on more mobile, distributed, and less expensive systems appears increasingly interesting.

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Why Italy should also look at Merops

And this is where Italy comes into play. Due to its geographical position and centrality in the Mediterranean, our country is exposed to hybrid and asymmetric threats that do not only concern a conventional conflict but also the protection of **bases, airports, ports, energy plants, and critical infrastructure**. In this scenario, drones represent an ideal tool to strike economically, quickly, and in a way that is difficult to prevent.

For this reason, the experience gained by Ukraine, the United States, and NATO's eastern flank deserves attention in Rome as well. Merops is not necessarily the only answer, but it indicates a precise direction: to complement traditional systems with a dedicated, agile, and sustainable anti-drone defense. If Washington has decided to transfer this lesson from the Ukrainian front to the Middle East, Italy would do well to consider it with greater urgency. Because the threat is already present, and the response cannot arrive late.

News link: https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2026/03/07/us-to-send-anti-drone-system-to-mideast-after-successful-use-in-ukraine-officials-say/