Rome fortified for Pope Francis' funeral: unprecedented inter-agency security deployment

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April 26, 2025 will be a date that goes down in history. It is the day the world bids a final farewell to **Pope Francis**, in the majestic setting of St. Peter's Square. But it's not just spirituality that dominates these hours: the **security apparatus** is moving with surgical precision to ensure a globally significant event in **total protection**.

For days, images of armed soldiers with strange rifles have sparked curiosity: these are the so-called **anti-drone bazookas**, advanced defense systems adopted for high-risk events, just like this one.

The "bazookas" that neutralize drones

Their technical name is **Unmanned Aerial System Countermeasure**, but to everyone, they are the “anti-drone bazookas.” They don't fire bullets, but rather **radio waves capable of**

inhibiting communication between the drone and its pilot, rendering it uncontrollable or forcing it to a controlled landing.

The device – often resembling a futuristic rifle – **is not a traditional weapon of war**, but a tool of **electronic defense**. It can identify drone control frequencies and interrupt them in real-time, preventing unauthorized aerial footage or – in the worst-case scenario – **air attacks via kamikaze drones or explosive payloads**.

This is not the first time these systems have been employed: already **in 2021** the Italian Air Force used them in Qatar during the **Arab Cup**, and **in 2023** they appeared during the visit to Rome of Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelensky**. Today, however, their use is **massive and systematic** like never before in Italy.

International participation will be impressive: confirmed attendees include the **royals of Spain** and **Belgium**, **British Prime Minister Keir Starmer**, **Prince William**, **US President Donald Trump**, **German Chancellor Olaf Scholz**, **Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni**, **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky** with his wife, and even the **Vice President of Taiwan**.

Absent, however, will be **Vladimir Putin** (who will send the Minister of Culture) and **Benjamin Netanyahu**.

Italian Army soldier with C-UAS anti-drone defense system – @Esercito Italiano

The C-UAS Task Force and the control of sensitive areas

A Task Force of the Italian Defense, called **C-UAS (Counter-Unmanned Aerial System)**, is in charge of managing the anti-drone systems. These are soldiers specifically trained to control airspace in urban, crowded, and complex scenarios like that of St. Peter's.

Many of them move with **portable controllers** and **special backpacks** that power the devices, ensuring **maximum mobility among the crowd**. The goal: to intervene promptly in case of suspicious flyovers.

In addition to manual devices, there are also **mobile units mounted on military vehicles**, capable of covering larger areas. The **law enforcement**, **anti-terrorism units**, **snipers**, and **secret services** complete a **complex defense apparatus** that is at the same time **meticulously planned**.

On April 26, an unprecedented inter-agency security arrangement is expected in the Italian capital – @Polizia di Stato

The numbers of an unprecedented event

According to what was communicated by **Fabio Ciciliano**, coordinator of security activities, **thousands** of operators will be involved:

- **3,000 Civil Protection volunteers**
- **2,000 law enforcement officers, armed forces soldiers, and firefighters**
- **55 medical teams**
- **52 additional ambulances**
- **11 advanced medical stations**

- **170 foreign delegations**
- **200,000 faithful** expected just for the ceremony, not counting the pilgrims from previous days
- **1,500 accreditation requests** from journalists worldwide

The **Italian State Railways** have already made **260,000 seats** available, while **private, commercial, and state flights** will head to Fiumicino, Ciampino, and even Pratica di Mare, to facilitate the arrival of delegations.

The Prefecture of Rome has also established **a no-fly zone over the entire Capital**, starting from April 23. The C-UAS systems are ready to spring into action should anyone attempt unauthorized flyovers.

Maxi-screens will be positioned on Via della Conciliazione, Piazza Pia, and Piazzale Risorgimento to allow attendees to follow the ceremony even outside the square, which has been full for hours. **Pedestrian flows** will be managed with millimetric precision to avoid overcrowding or critical issues.

A no-fly zone has already been activated over Rome since April 23; however, commercial routes to and from nearby airports are allowed, barring last-minute communications.

A procession between security and devotion

After the funeral, Pope Francis' body will be transported in procession to the **Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore**, where it will be buried next to the **Pauline Chapel**, one of his most cherished places.

The procession will pass through **the heart of Rome's historic center**, with routes barricaded and monitored. Law enforcement will ensure the safety of the faithful and authorities throughout the journey. An event that will be both **liturgy and logistics**, **spirituality and strategy**, requiring the **utmost attention from security apparatuses**.

The final farewell to Pope Francis is not just a religious and symbolic event: it is **an extraordinary test for Italian security**. The use of advanced technologies like anti-drone systems, the logistical coordination of thousands of operators, diplomatic attention, and Rome's hospitality capabilities showcase **the modern and capable face of our country**.

A fortified city, yes, but ready to open up to the world for **the last embrace to the Pope from the end of the world**.