The Boys of Colonel Gaetano Farina Protect Estonian Airspace

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Ämari Air Base (Estonia) – Three Russian MiG-31 fighters with transponders off crossed Estonian airspace, skirting the capital Tallinn, before being intercepted by two Italian F-35s on quick alert duty.

The incident, which occurred last Friday, represents one of the most serious violations recorded in recent months and marks a new point of tension between NATO and the Russian Federation.

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The Italian Response

The alarms went off a few minutes after the Alliance's radars detected the approaching MiGs from the Baltic. The Italian F-35s of the 32nd Wing, stationed at the Estonian base of Ämari as part of the **Enhanced Vigilance Activity** mission, took off within minutes, taking over from the Finnish fighters already on patrol.

After twelve minutes, the Russian planes were escorted out of Estonian borders, heading towards Kaliningrad.

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"The situation remained under control," explained Colonel **Gaetano Farina**, commander of the 32nd Wing. "It is a procedure we handle with professionalism every day. The interception was carried out in an orderly manner, and even the Russian pilots maintained an apparently calm

attitude."

According to NATO sources, the MiGs were not carrying bombs but were still armed with air-to-air missiles, a detail that made the intervention particularly delicate.

Tallinn Demands Firmness, Rome Extends the Mission

The incursion sparked immediate political reactions. The Estonian Foreign Minister, speaking at the United Nations, called the episode "an outrageous act."
Words of solidarity came from Warsaw and Prague, while in Washington, attention remains high: U.S. President Donald Trump urged European allies to "defend every inch of their sky."

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In Italy, the Ministry of Defense confirmed the extension until spring 2026 of the deployment of the **SAMP/T** missile battery – capable of detecting and engaging targets up to 93 miles away – and the **CAEW E-550A** aircraft, an advanced airborne surveillance radar platform of the Gulfstream series with integrated **ELTA** radar.

This is a significant increase in air defense capabilities on the eastern flank of the Alliance, adding to the network of ground sensors and radars deployed between Estonia, Latvia, and Poland.

A Delicate Balance Between Deterrence and Prudence

The episode raises questions about Russian strategy and the Alliance's response.
Despite pressure from some European leaders for a tougher stance, NATO has kept its cool: no

shots were fired, but the response was clear and coordinated.

"It is essential to remain calm," declared an Alliance spokesperson in Brussels. "Deterrence is not only measured by firepower but also by the ability to react professionally and consistently."

According to industry analysts, airspace violations represent **operational tests** with which Moscow assesses NATO's reaction times and cohesion among member countries.
In recent months, there has been an increase in similar episodes on the Polish and Baltic fronts, often accompanied by electronic activities and drone incursions without transponders.

Towards a Strengthening of the “Eastern Sentry” Mission

The allied command will evaluate in the coming days, during a meeting in **Riga (Latvia)**, new reinforcements as part of the **Eastern Sentry** mission, launched in September to counter the increase in Russian aerial provocations.
Among the hypotheses under discussion are the deployment of additional long-range radars, integrated air defense systems, and new rotations of combat aircraft from Southern European countries, including Italy and Spain.

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Conclusion

The incident over Estonian skies confirms that the **“signal war”** continues to be played mainly in the aerial dimension.
Every unauthorized flight is a test of nerves, but also a political message. The professionalism of the Italian pilots and the coordination of the Alliance avoided an escalation, demonstrating how

NATO's strength lies not only in missiles but also in the discipline and readiness of its men.

As Colonel Farina reminded: "Our task is to protect the Alliance's airspace. And we do it calmly, but with the utmost determination."

News link: https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2025/09/inside-natos-response-russias-violation-estonian-air-space/408353/?oref=d1-homepage-river