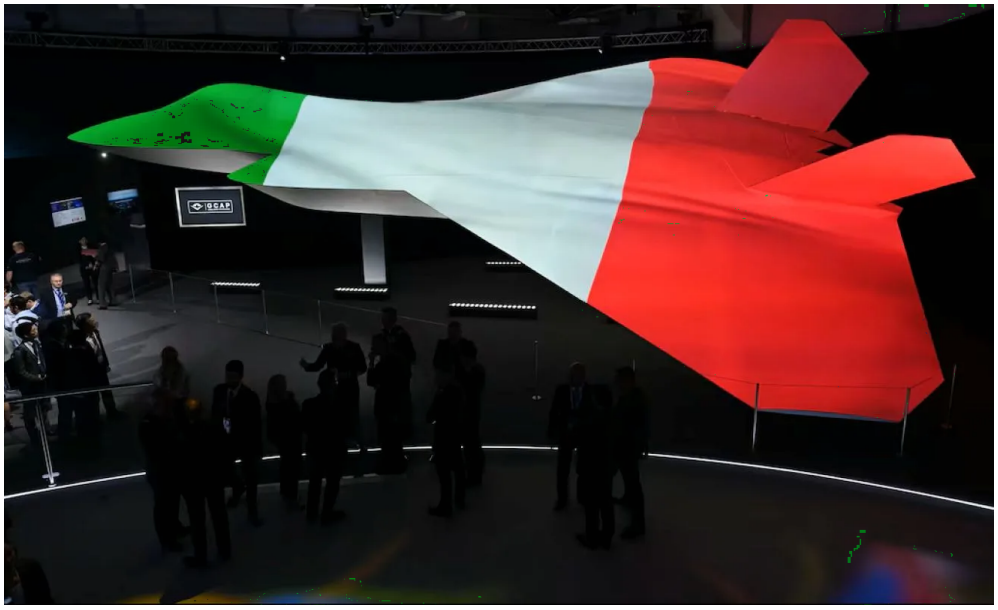

The cost of the GCAP fighter for Italy rises to 21 billion dollars

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The Italian Ministry of Defense has presented to Parliament a cost review for the **Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP)**, the sixth-generation fighter jointly developed with the United Kingdom and Japan. The projected expenditure for the design and development phase has almost tripled, sparking heated political debates.

The numbers of the increase

According to the document sent to the Senate Defense Committee, the investment required from Italy has risen from the **6 billion euros** estimated in 2021 to the current **18.6 billion euros** (about 21.8 billion dollars).

- **Funds already allocated:** €2 billion (already covered for part of Phase 1).
- **Additional requirement:** €16.6 billion to complete the "Concept Assessment" and "Full Development" phases.

- **Immediate request:** The government has requested approval of **€8.8 billion** in annual payments until 2037.
- **Future remainder:** The remaining €7.8 billion will be planned in a later phase.

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The reasons for the increase

The sharp rise in costs, calculated at 2025 prices, is attributed to several critical factors in the development of cutting-edge technologies:

1. **Technological maturation:** Costs higher than expected for the development of advanced radar and AI systems.
2. **Testing and Design:** Greater complexity in the prototyping and testing phases of integrated systems.
3. **Program ambitions:** The need to integrate drones (collaborative combat aircraft) and next-generation weaponry while maintaining the operational deadline of **2035**.

Political reactions

The announcement provoked a strong reaction from the opposition, particularly from the **Movimento 5 Stelle**, which pointed out that the GCAP has become the most expensive military program in Italian history, even surpassing the F-35 (which cost about 18 billion for 90 aircraft).

> *"We do not question the value of the program, but it is unacceptable that parliamentary committees are used as ATMs issuing billions as if they were peanuts, without detailed explanations," declared the M5S parliamentarians.*

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Strategic perspectives

Despite the criticisms, the Meloni government aims for a swift approval of the text, bolstered by the majority in the committee. The strategic importance of the project was reiterated in the recent meeting in Tokyo between **Giorgia Meloni** and the Japanese Prime Minister **Sanae Takaichi**, confirming the commitment of the three partners to deliver the first aircraft by 2035.

News link: https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2026/01/20/italy-faces-gcap-warplane-price-tag-topping-21-billion/