

The Italian SAMP-T Arrives in Estonia: NATO Mission and Baltic Defense

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Italy has formalized its commitment to deploy the **SAMP-T air and missile defense system** in **Estonia** by 2025, at the **Ämari Air Base**, thereby strengthening the **NATO presence on the eastern flank**. The decision, announced in a **joint statement** by Defense Ministers **Guido Crosetto** and **Hanno Pevkur**, is part of the Atlantic Alliance's **rotation model** and complements the activities of the **Baltic Air Policing** mission, active in the Baltic region since 2004.

The deployment of the SAMP-T represents a **concrete response** to the deterioration of European security following the Russian war against Ukraine. Crosetto and Pevkur described this operation as a "practical demonstration of **unity and solidarity** among allies," emphasizing the need for a **360-degree approach** to collective defense. The system will operate in parallel with the Italian fighter jets patrolling Estonian skies, enhancing integrated protection against **air and missile threats**.

The **Ämari base**, already a pivotal point for NATO operations in the region, will thus become a hub for **advanced missile defense**, expanding deterrence capabilities against potential aggressions and contributing to the **stability of the Baltic quadrant**.



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The SAMP-T – A Strategic Asset in Euro-Atlantic Defense

The **SAMP-T** (Sol-Air Moyenne Portée-Terrestre), jointly developed by **Italy and France**, is one of the most advanced systems available in European air defense. Also known as **MAMBA** in the French context, it is capable of **intercepting tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, drones, and combat aircraft**, protecting extensive areas, critical infrastructures, and strategic points. It has an effective range of over **600 kilometers** and can operate in high-intensity environments.

Italy currently manages **three SAMP-T batteries**, one of which was deployed in February 2025 in **Lithuania**, confirming the operational readiness of the Italian Armed Forces and their active role in NATO's most sensitive theaters. The deployment in Estonia will mark the **first presence of the system in the country**, integrating with the air mission and joint training between Italian and Estonian troops.

The effectiveness of the SAMP-T has also been demonstrated in a **real operational context**: according to reports from the Ukrainian Air Force, a Franco-Italian SAMP-T system shot down a **Russian Sukhoi aircraft**, confirming its ability to operate in complex and changing war scenarios.



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Beyond the technical aspect, the arrival of the SAMP-T in Estonia represents a **tangible sign of interoperability** among NATO forces. It is indeed a step forward in building an **integrated defensive architecture** in Europe, capable of responding in a coordinated and timely manner to multifaceted threats.

Baltic Air Policing and Italian-Estonian Cooperation

The Italian contribution is not limited to missile deployment alone: Italy has been a key player for years in the **Baltic Air Policing** mission, a key component of NATO's **air surveillance and security system**. Active since 2004, this mission ensures the defense of the airspace of **Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania**, Baltic countries that do not have sufficient air capabilities for national defense.



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To date, **17 NATO countries** have participated in this mission on a rotational basis. Italy has played a central role by providing **aircraft, personnel, and support means**, demonstrating a constant commitment to the **defense of the Alliance's eastern borders**. The integration between the air and missile components significantly strengthens NATO's military posture in the region.

Crosetto and Pevkur emphasized the **excellent level of bilateral cooperation** achieved between Italy and Estonia, stating that the new deployment not only increases operational readiness but also serves as a symbol of the **coherence and determination** of allies in countering any form of threat. At a time when European security is once again being challenged, NATO reaffirms its role as an **irreplaceable guarantor** of collective defense.

Ultimately, the Italian presence in Estonia – with the SAMP-T and with the patrol fighters – is not just a tactical response, but a **political and strategic message**: the Alliance is united, ready, and determined to **defend every inch of its members' territory**.

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