



The Threat of Russian Migs and the European Response: Italian F-35s in Action in Baltic Skies

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Tallinn, September 19, 2025 – Tension in the Baltic skies continues to rise. Three Russian Mig-31 fighters violated Estonian airspace for about 12 minutes, triggering an immediate NATO reaction. From the Ämari base, two Italian F-35s from the **Task Force Air** took off in *scramble* mode to intercept the unauthorized aircraft, forcing them to retreat.

This is the **third violation of European airspace in a few days**, following incidents recorded in Poland and Romania. Episodes that confirm the increasing level of military provocation by Moscow along the eastern flank of the Alliance.

NATO's Response and the Italian Role

The allied air command emphasized how the intervention of the Italian F-35s – belonging to the 32° Stormo of Amendola and the 6° Stormo of Ghedi – represents a concrete signal of NATO's

readiness. The **Task Force Air**, as part of the *Baltic Eagle III* operation, is on rapid alert 24/7 and ensures the surveillance of the Baltic countries' airspace.

«It is a swift and decisive response», stated NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte. For its part, Tallinn has invoked **Article 4 of the Atlantic Treaty**, which provides for immediate consultations when a member state considers its integrity or security threatened.



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A Crucial Mission: Baltic Air Policing

Italy, along with other allied countries, has been participating in the **enhanced Air Policing (eAP)** mission since 2004. It is a collective task aimed at preserving the security of the Alliance's skies with a continuous presence of aircraft and personnel ready to react.

On August 1st, the **Portuguese Air Force** handed over the baton to the Italian Air Force with [an official ceremony in Ämari](#). **Defense Minister Guido Crosetto** highlighted how this assumption of responsibility represents «a concrete signal of Italy's strategic commitment to collective defense and deterrence along the eastern flank».

The ceremony was also attended by **General of the Army Corps Giovanni Maria Iannucci**, Commander of the COVI (Joint Operational Command), who emphasized the value of multinational cooperation.



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The European Union Raises Its Voice: New Sanctions Against Moscow

On the political front, the European Union's reaction was swift. Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen** firmly condemned the incident: «We will respond to every provocation with determination, investing in strengthening the eastern flank».

In parallel, Brussels announced the **19th package of sanctions against Russia**, which includes:

- the **total stop of Russian gas by January 1, 2027**, including LNG, anticipating the previous plan by a year;
- the **block of 118 ships of the “ghost fleet”** used to export hydrocarbons evading sanctions;
- a **total ban on transactions with Rosneft and Gazpromneft**;
- sanctions on refineries in third countries, including China;
- restrictions on **cryptocurrencies and alternative banking channels** used by Moscow.

European Council President **António Costa** called the air violation «another unacceptable provocation», announcing that the issue will be at the center of the **EU summit in Copenhagen on October 1**.

The Energy Issue and Internal EU Challenges

Despite the political agreement, some member states remain reluctant. **Greece, Slovakia, and Hungary** continue to heavily depend on Russian gas through the TurkStream pipeline, while countries like Belgium, France, and Spain still import LNG from Moscow.

The Commission has also proposed a **“reparation loan” to Ukraine** financed with frozen Russian assets. However, the idea raises concerns: **Italy and the ECB** have expressed doubts about the legal and economic feasibility of the operation.



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A Context of Growing Instability

For EU High Representative **Kaja Kallas**, former Estonian prime minister, the incident «contributes to increasing tensions in the Baltic region» and demonstrates the Kremlin's willingness to test the Alliance's responsiveness.

NATO, meanwhile, reiterates the **defensive nature of the Air Policing mission**, an integral part of Air Shielding, a device created to ensure the protection of the Alliance's airspace.

Conclusions

Russian incursions in the Baltic are not isolated episodes but part of a strategy of military and diplomatic pressure. The Italian response with its F-35s demonstrates not only NATO's operational readiness but also Italy's growing role in collective defense.

In parallel, the EU seeks to hit Moscow on the economic and energy front, accelerating the **disengagement from Russian gas** and strengthening military deterrence. However, internal

divisions among member countries risk weakening the cohesion necessary to face an adversary that, once again, uses provocation as a political weapon.

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