

# Italy restricts US military access as crisis deepens within NATO and Meloni government amid rising opposition

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On March 31, Italy's far-right government, headed by fascist Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, denied the United States access to the Sigonella airbase in Sicily during the March 2026 escalation against Iran, in a move aimed at cultivating an image of "national autonomy."

Defense Minister Guido Crosetto confirmed that the refusal took place 'a few nights ago' after it became clear that the required authorization had not been granted in time for a parliamentary vote.

This decision, widely reported as a sign of friction between Rome and Washington, has been cynically presented as evidence of an independent Italian foreign policy that rejects war. It is nothing of the sort. It is an expression of the growing disintegration of NATO and the breakdown of the postwar equilibrium long anchored in the uncontested hegemony of the United States.

The refusal was not based on any principled opposition to the imperialist war drive against Iran. It rested on two interrelated factors: a narrow procedural dispute over authorization protocols, and, far more significantly, the explosive growth of anti-war sentiment within the Italian working class, which has begun to destabilize the Meloni government itself.

While all parties hypocritically invoke Article 11 of the Italian Constitution which rejects war as an instrument of national policy, Italy remains deeply integrated into the US-led war machine. Its territory hosts a dense network of bases, logistical hubs and intelligence facilities central to operations across the Mediterranean and Middle East.

Sigonella has long functioned as a key node for surveillance drones, refueling and weapons transfers, alongside installations such as Aviano Air Base, Camp Darby and naval facilities in Naples and Taranto.

The Meloni government has not curtailed this cooperation. On the contrary, it has expanded Italy's role

in imperialist operations, providing logistical support, including overflight permissions and intelligence-sharing. Italian bases and airspace continue to be used routinely for military staging.

On the same day that Meloni made the "reassuring" statements over Iran, Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani joined his European counterparts in Kyiv to reaffirm Italy's support for Ukraine's accession to the European Union.

The denial of access to the US is selective and tactical, not strategic. It reflects a widening divergence within NATO between the global imperatives of US imperialism and the domestic and geopolitical constraints confronting its European allies.

At the immediate level, the dispute centered on the failure of US authorities to follow formal procedures required under Italian law. These mechanisms, nominally involving parliamentary oversight, are typically treated as rubber stamps. Their sudden invocation is an effort to shield the government from mounting opposition. That such procedural frictions can assume significance underscores the fragility of an increasingly unstable alliance.

Beneath this pretext lies the decisive factor: fear of the working class. Opposition to war has reached unprecedented levels in Italy, especially since Israel's genocide in Gaza. Years of austerity, declining living standards and social decay have sharpened awareness of the link between militarism abroad and attacks on social conditions at home.

The escalation against Iran has provoked deep hostility among workers and youth. This is not confined to Italy, but extends across NATO countries, undermining the alliance's cohesion and its capacity to sustain military operations.

This opposition erupted in an explosion of mass demonstrations, particularly from last summer onward. Most recently, a massive wave of mobilization swept the country on March 28, mirroring the No Kings protests in the United States. Hundreds of thousands took to the streets, with an estimated 300,000 in Rome alone. Such mobilizations emerged across multiple NATO countries, underscoring that the crisis is systemic, rooted in the global breakdown of the postwar order.

The Meloni government is acutely aware of this mood. Its refusal to grant access to Sigonella is a defensive maneuver aimed at defusing opposition while maintaining alignment with imperialist policy. It tries to balance its obligations to NATO and Washington with mounting pressure from below. This dilemma confronts ruling classes across Europe, which are increasingly at odds with US leadership and face increasing difficulty securing domestic consent for its policies.

This balancing act is compounded by fractures within the ruling coalition. Sections of Meloni's allies have expressed unease over the consequences of open participation in the war effort. Regional figures, including those linked to Liguria under pressure from Genoa's dockworkers, have raised objections reflecting electoral concerns and internal rivalries. These tensions expose the fragility of the government's base and mirror, in concentrated form, the centrifugal tendencies within NATO itself.

Opposition parties have sought to exploit the situation. Giuseppe Conte, leader of the Five Star Movement, has postured as a critic, calling for transparency and parliamentary oversight. Yet his record as former prime minister (which in his second term included the Democratic Party) demonstrates full support for NATO operations in Libya, Afghanistan and Lebanon, as well as austerity.

The government's crisis has been further exposed by the recent judicial referendum, which delivered a political blow to the ruling coalition and revealed mounting opposition among working-class voters.

The broader European context underscores the reactionary character of these developments. Italy's posture is part of a wider pattern of divergence within NATO. Governments in Spain, France and across the continent combine rhetorical caution with practical support for imperialist aims. While differences persist over tactics, there remains broad agreement on confronting Iran and defending strategic interests. Yet these divergences point to a deepening structural crisis

within the alliance.

This crisis is bound up with the accelerating rearmament of Europe. Governments are increasing military spending, expanding defense industries, and preparing for large-scale conflict. These measures aim to secure resources abroad and prepare for social unrest at home. But rearmament intensifies internal contradictions, heightening conflicts over resources, strategy and the social burden imposed on the population.

Workers across Europe increasingly recognize that resources for healthcare, education, housing and wages are being diverted to finance war. This awareness is fueling renewed class struggle, expressed in strikes and protests.

In Italy, these processes intersect sharply. Economic hardship, political disillusionment and opposition to war have created a volatile situation.

The Italian ruling class, on the other hand, remains an imperialist power. All major political forces defend capitalist interests. But the weakening of US hegemony is blowing apart the socio-economic foundations of the stability of Italian capitalism in an earlier epoch.

The mass demonstrations point to a different perspective: the emergence of an international movement of the working class against militarism and capitalism. Their scale indicates a growing understanding that the struggle against war is inseparable from the struggle against the system that produces it.

The task that emerges is the development of an independent political movement of the working class, based on a socialist program, to oppose war and capitalism. The convergence of struggles across borders demonstrates the objective basis for such a movement.

The demonstrations in Italy and internationally are not isolated events, but the early stages of a broader process. They point toward the possibility of a unified international struggle against war and capitalism. What is now decisive is the development of a common strategy within the working class, grounded in the necessity of overthrowing capitalism itself. On no other basis can the catastrophic trajectory pursued by the ruling classes be halted and a socialist alternative advanced.



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