Cavo Dragone: “We are considering a preventive hybrid attack against Russia”

Published on 01/12/2025

NATO is considering the possibility of adopting a more incisive and proactive approach in response to hybrid threats from Russia: cyberattacks, sabotage, airspace violations, below-threshold operations. This was revealed by Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, in an interview with the *Financial Times*.

A statement that sparked immediate international reactions, with Moscow openly speaking of “provocation” and “seeking escalation.”

Cavo Dragone: “Being more aggressive could be an option”

According to Cavo Dragone, the Alliance is at a strategic crossroads: continue with a predominantly reactive approach, or consider more incisive measures to prevent hostile Russian

actions.

> *We are studying everything: on the cyber front, we are reactive. Being more aggressive or proactive instead of reactive is something we are considering," declared the admiral.*

In the cyber field — where many NATO countries already have significant offensive capabilities — a preventive intervention could be considered as a **defensive action** if aimed at neutralizing an imminent threat. More complex, however, would be acting similarly against physical sabotage or drone intrusions.

Cavo Dragone, however, highlighted the structural limitations that hold back the Alliance:

> *We have many more constraints than our counterpart: ethical, legal, jurisdictional. It is not a losing position, but certainly more difficult.*

Some eastern NATO members have long been calling to abandon the simple defensive posture. On the operational level, Cavo Dragone recalled how the **Baltic Sentry** mission has worked so far:

> *Since the beginning of Baltic Sentry, nothing has happened. It means that deterrence is working.*

Moscow's furious reaction: "Irresponsible step, seeks escalation"

The Kremlin's response came within minutes.
The Russian Foreign Ministry called the idea of a possible preventive attack by NATO "extremely irresponsible":

> *A similar statement demonstrates a clear desire for escalation.*

Moscow interprets Cavo Dragone's words as a political rather than operational signal, accusing the Alliance of wanting to "legitimize hostile actions in advance" against the Russian Federation.

Tajani: “Hybrid war? Central theme for NATO. Italy is strengthening cyber security”

According to Sky TG24, when asked about the hypothesis raised by the admiral, Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani maintained a cautious but clear line:

> *The issue concerns NATO. It is not up to us to decide. Hybrid war is a fundamental theme and we must adopt countermeasures.*

The minister recalled that the reform of the MAECI also includes a **General Directorate for Security and Cyber Security**, demonstrating how hybrid threats are now considered a strategic priority even for Italy.

> *We are committed to protecting the security of data, our country, and our embassies.*

Towards a more proactive NATO? A delicate doctrinal shift

Cavo Dragone's words open the debate on a profound change in the posture of the Alliance: no longer mere reaction, but **active prevention** of hybrid threats.

A paradigm shift that raises crucial questions:

- **When can a preventive action be considered defensive?**
- **What is the legal and political boundary?**
- **Who decides and who executes?**
- **How to prevent a preventive move from being perceived as provocation?**

NATO seems headed towards a season where managing below-threshold threats will be as central as conventional defense.

But the step is extremely delicate: every nuance, today more than ever, can make the difference between deterrence and escalation.

News link: https://tg24.sky.it/mondo/2025/12/01/nato-russia-cavo-dragone-intervista