



Italy's New Centauro II Tank Shown Off in Rome

By: [Tom Kington](#), October 20, 2016 (Photo Credit: Iveco – Oto Melara Consortium)

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ROME — Italy's new tank, the Centauro II, was shown off at a military test range Wednesday, as the country's Parliament continued to decide whether to fund the vehicle.

Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff Lt. Gen. Danilo Errico and Leonardo CEO Mauro Moretti were among guests who gathered Oct. 19 at the Cecchignola Army range on the fringes of Rome to watch a prototype of the wheeled tank being put through its paces.

The Army hopes to buy 150 of the vehicles, which is built by a joint venture between Leonardo and Italian truck-maker Iveco.

Managers and generals watched as the vehicles tackled steep climbs and plunged into ditches.

With a 120mm cannon, digital communications and a 720 horsepower engine, the new Centauro II is bigger, more powerful and better wired than its predecessor, the Centauro, which it will replace.

Speaking at the event, Army procurement chief Lt. Gen. Francesco Castrataro said the lightweight tank was a perfect fit as the service creates medium brigades based around the Centauro's stablemate, the new Freccia armored troop carrier.

"The new Centauro is a tank destroyer which protects troops, rather than a tank, which would be weigh[ed] in at double the maximum 30 ton weight of a Centauro," he said.

"It is essential to combine the new Centauro with the Freccia, which is a troop transporter. It is agile, flexible and can do more than 100 [kilometers per hour] on a road," he added. "This vehicle is cheaper, lighter and more flexible than a tank, with the same destructive power as a tank."

The eight wheels of the new Centauro extend further out from the hull of the vehicle than its predecessor to give it greater stability.

“The second reason is that any mines triggered by the pressure of the tire will detonate further from the hull,” according to an official from the joint venture building the tank.

Castrataro said the old Centauro lacked the digital capabilities to work alongside the Freccia, which was introduced in 2009.

“We need both the Freccia, with its 25mm gun, and the Centauro, with its 120mm gun, working together on the battlefield. The new model allows this,” he said.

Designed to function in temperatures ranging from minus 32 to 49 centigrade, the Centauro II engine provides 24 horsepower per ton compared to 19 for the old Centauro.

Extra protection is added following three years of testing on ballistic, ceramics and composites, while seven cameras are mounted on the hull.

Italian lawmakers are debating approval for a €530 million (US \$582 million) order for a first tranche of 11 pre-series Centauro II tanks and 39 production vehicles, along with 10 years of logistics service.

Castrataro said that if 200 export orders followed, the Italian Ministry of Defence would recoup its €46.8 million investment in the program thanks to royalties.

Italy has in the past launched ambitious multiyear procurement plans, only for annual budgets to take unforeseen dips, leaving the plans in disarray.

To remedy this, three-year budget plans have been introduced, but they have proven hard to stick down as funding falls short.

This year, launch-funding for the Centauro II stood at only €9.4 million, putting the onus on planners to find the cash to reach the €530 million needed in coming years.

Funding for a second planned brigade of Freccia vehicles is already falling behind.

In January, Errico optimistically said he was pushing for spending plans spanning 18 years for the Army.