

## **Piaggio Wins Avanti Evo+ Order for the Italian Air Force**

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Known as the VC-180A in Italian military service, the P.180 Avanti is operated by a number of government agencies, including the Aeronautica Militare (air force). This example wears the badge of 14° Stormo at Pratica di Mare, which parents the 71° Gruppo's liaison and calibration aircraft. (Photo: Italian air force)

Piaggio Aerospace has won a nearly \$221 million (€200 million) contract from the Italian Ministry of Defense for nine new P.180 Avanti Evo+ twin turboprops and the upgrade of 19 earlier Avantis. Under the order—which was outlined in April, committed to in July, and finalised on December 26—the aircraft will be delivered over the next four years. The July commitment was undertaken by the Italian government to increase the attractiveness of Piaggio to prospective purchasers.

"The order—just one year after the extraordinary administration started—is the result of the joint and generous effort of all parties involved: the Italian government, the armed forces, and local institutions," extraordinary commissioner of Piaggio Aerospace Vincenzo Nicastro said. "This represents, for Piaggio Aerospace, a turning point: with the restart of aircraft production, we will also be able to gradually reintegrate workers [who are] currently [on] temporary layoffs." He added that the restructured OEM continues to finalise new aircraft orders from the private market as well as prepare a plan to sell its assets.

Piaggio will deliver five of the twin turboprops in a passenger and ambulance Evo+ configuration for the air force and four in the Radio Misure (R.M.) configuration for flight inspection and calibration of the country's navigation and radio systems, including radar, instrument landing systems, and VORs. The latter will be operated by 71° Gruppo at Pratica di Mare, with which they will replace a similar number of first-generation Avantis in the R.M. role.

Additionally, the same agreement calls for the defence ministry to finalise a commitment in the next two years to retrofit 19 aircraft currently used by all four Italian armed services: the Carabinieri (military police, two), army (three), navy (three), and air force (11), pushing the total contract value to \$221 million. The upgrade mainly consists of new avionics to bring the aircraft into line with new air traffic regulations.

The P.180 has been in Italian military service since 1994, acting in the VIP/staff transport, liaison, multi-engine training, and surveillance roles. In addition to the four armed services, the type serves with other government agencies, such as the Guardia Costiera (coast guard), Guardia di Finanza (customs force), Polizia di Stato (federal police), Corpo Forestale dello Stato (forestry service), and Corpo Nazionale Vigili del Fuoco (national fire corps). International military/government Avanti operators have included the air forces of Bulgaria and the UAE and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.