82nd Anniversary of the Battle of El-Alamein Amidst a Thousand Emotions: The Remembrance of the Brave Lions, the Change of Brigade Commander, and the Tribute to Vincenzo Aiello

Published on 23/10/2024

Today, October 23, 2024, the Parachuting Training Center (CAPAR) of Pisa was the scene of a solemn and emotional celebration: the **82nd anniversary of the Battle of El-Alamein**, coinciding with the Paratroopers' Specialty Day and the change of command of the Brigade. The Gamerra barracks, crowded with thousands of serving and retired Paratroopers, became for a day an intergenerational meeting point. Paratroopers of every era and generation gathered around the values that have always distinguished the airborne troops of our Army.

The celebration was not only a tribute to one of the most significant battles of World War II but also a moment of reflection on how those values of tenacity, sacrifice, and willpower are still today the very essence of the Paratroopers' Specialty.

A moment of the ceremony - Copyright photo Italian Army

Deployment of Italy's Military Excellence

The day saw the participation of various military units: in addition to the units of the Folgore Paratroopers Brigade, also those of the COMFOSE (Army Special Forces Command), the 1st Carabinieri Paratroopers Regiment Tuscania, a representation of the Air Brigade and the 132nd Armored Brigade Ariete. The ceremony opened with the deployment of the war and institute flags of the units and associations, followed by the parade of the participating units. Civil and military authorities were also present, highlighting the importance of the event for both the Armed Forces and the Institutions.

Deployment of the units - Copyright photo Italian Army

The Change of Command: A Change in Continuity

One of the central moments of the ceremony was the handover at the command of the Folgore Paratroopers Brigade. Brigadier General Massimiliano Mongillo passed the baton to *General Federico Bernacca*. In an atmosphere of great respect and emotion, both commanders gave intense speeches, recalling how willpower is the most important weapon that Paratroopers possess. The reference to the battle of El-Alamein was constant, emphasizing how, even today, those values forged in the desert remain the beating heart of the Folgore.

The ceremony represented not only a formal change of leadership but also a moment of reflection on the role of the Brigade in an increasingly complex military and geopolitical world. The continuity of values, internal cohesion, and the ability to face new challenges were central themes in the speeches of the two generals.

Brigadier General Federico Bernacca, new Commander of the “Folgore” Brigade - Copyright photo Italian Army

The Authorities' Speeches: Pride, Memory, and Current Affairs

The **Chief of Staff of the Army, Paratrooper Corps General Carmine Masiello**, emphasized the strategic importance of the Folgore in contemporary international scenarios. His speech highlighted how the Brigade is, now more than ever, an essential resource for Italy and its allies in an increasingly unpredictable international context. He recalled that the ability to adapt and respond quickly is what makes the Folgore a unique unit.

Speech by the Chief of Staff, Gen. C.A. Carmine Masiello - Copyright photo Italian Army

The **Undersecretary of Defense, Senator Isabella Rauti**, expressed her gratitude for being welcomed into the "home of the Paratroopers" in the best possible way. In her speech, she proudly recalled: "*The Paratroopers have always distinguished themselves wherever they have been deployed, bringing honor to the tricolor. Be proud of your esprit de corps. The Folgore is an excellence.*"

The Senator then shared her personal memory related to her last visit to El-Alamein, e

Finally, Senator Rauti wanted to reaffirm Italy's role in international missions, such as UNIFIL, emphasizing that the country will not back down, even in light of the latest difficult and complex events.

Speech by Senator Isabella Rauti, Undersecretary of State for Defense - Copyright photo Italian Army

A Painful Memory: The Tribute to Vincenzo Aiello

The day was not only a moment of celebration but also of heartfelt remembrance. Mongillo, Bernacca, Masiello, and finally Senator Rauti, wanted to pay tribute to the memory of Sergeant Major Vincenzo Aiello, a soldier of the 185th Paratroopers Reconnaissance Target Acquisition Regiment Folgore (RRAO), tragically deceased on October 22 during an exercise in the waters of Lake Bolsena. The body of the non-commissioned officer was found just last night, adding a veil of sadness to the ceremony. His memory was honored with great respect and emotion during the speeches of the three Generals and the Senator.

The Final Jump and the Equipment Exhibition

The ceremony concluded with a spectacular moment: Paratroopers from the Army Sports Center performed a free-fall jump from a CH-47 helicopter, carrying several flags, including a 60 m² tricolor. This demonstration of great skill and professionalism sealed a day full of emotions, once again uniting all present under the sign of the courage and dedication that characterize the Folgore.

Subsequently, as the event continued, the Folgore units set up exhibition stands where visitors could closely observe the weapons and equipment used by the Paratroopers, offering a rare opportunity to better understand the work and commitment of these men and women who serve the country with great spirit of sacrifice.

Paratroopers of the Army Parachuting Sports Activities Department - Copyright photo Italian Army