



## A Symbol of Dignity: The Identification Tag of Italian Military Personnel

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The recognition of military personnel, especially during wartime operations or missions abroad, is a fundamental aspect to ensure their identity and dignity. In emergency situations, such as accidents, captivity, or death, the ability to quickly identify a soldier and gather vital information can make a difference. In the context of the Italian armed forces, the identification tag plays a crucial role. This small and simple tool, which accompanies the soldier during service, contains essential information such as name, date of birth, blood type, and, if requested, the soldier's religion. Its usefulness is evident, but it is not limited to functionality alone: the tag is a symbol of belonging and sacrifice.

According to the [Ministerial Circular of March 28, 2025](#), signed by the Deputy Director General, Colonel Fabrizio Ratto Vaquer, "**the identification tag/medallion has been confirmed as a fundamental tool for identifying military personnel of the Armed Forces and the Carabinieri Corps, in case of captivity, death in wartime, or missions abroad**". This

small object, which seems almost trivial in its simplicity, is actually a testament to the care and attention with which the Italian armed forces consider the safety and identity of their soldiers.

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## Characteristics and usage of the tag

The identification tag is a device that must be worn by military personnel around the neck, using a chain, and is made of stainless steel resistant to extreme temperatures. **Its standard dimensions are 34x45x0.8 millimeters, with a predetermined fracture line that makes it divisible into two parts. This division is crucial in the event of the soldier's death: the upper part, attached to the chain, is left on the body, while the lower part is sent to the command or the designated entity for the necessary administrative and documentary formalities.** The information engraved on it includes the name, surname, place and date of birth, service number, blood type and Rh factor, and religion (if requested).

Another important aspect is the accuracy of the data contained in the tag. According to the circular's provisions, the accuracy of the blood type and Rh factor is fundamental, and for this reason, the Armed Forces personnel must ensure that all information is correct. Additionally, religion is information that is engraved only upon the explicit request of the soldier, and in case of missions in particularly critical areas, such as conflict zones, the decision to include this data may be reserved.

The circular confirms that, despite the suspension of compulsory military service and the abolition of military districts, the tag remains one of the most important tools for the documentation and identification of military personnel in service. Its function, beyond being operational, also has a strong symbolic value, representing a bond between the soldier and their country, and a commitment to the protection of the individual.

## Symbolic significance

Over the years, the tag has had various meanings, but it always remains a symbol of recognition and honor. It is not just an identity document, but a witness to the life and sacrifice of those who have chosen to serve their nation. Its primary function is to ensure identification in

case of an incident, but in the context of the Italian armed forces, it also represents a point of pride and a sign of respect for those who serve.

The historical significance of this object dates back to distant times. During the world wars, the need to identify soldiers became increasingly urgent. Italian soldiers, like those of other nations, began to carry with them a small piece of metal containing essential personal information. These tags were often used to identify the fallen in battle and ensure that their families could obtain the necessary information in case of death. The tag, therefore, represents the historical memory of an era when every soldier had to face the risk of never returning home.

In the more modern context, the importance of the tag has not changed. Although the modes of warfare have evolved, and the technologies for identifying soldiers have advanced, the tag remains an irreplaceable part of the military kit. It fits into a security system that today also includes other forms of identification, but its simplicity and symbolism are what make it a timeless object.

Beyond its identification function, the identification tag has become an emblem of courage and sacrifice, a silent witness to the millions of soldiers who have served and continue to serve worldwide. Its presence attests to a deep commitment to the protection and security of one's nation, even at the cost of life.

The Ministerial Circular of March 28, 2025, confirming the use of the tag as "completion of the service record documentation", also emphasizes how its importance goes beyond the practical function. It is a sign of identity, but also of respect, for those who have dedicated their lives to the defense of the country, confirming that, although technologies may change, certain symbols remain unchanged.

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