



Army in Action in Empoli: WWII Bomb Defused

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Sunday, September 7, 2025, Empoli and Vinci experienced a historic day: over **5,000 people**, precisely 5,195, were **evacuated** to allow the removal and neutralization of a **WWII-era aerial bomb**. The bomb, American-made and weighing **500 pounds** (about 240 kg, with 128 of TNT), was discovered during work at the **Theater Il Ferruccio** in Piazza Guido Guerra, in the heart of Empoli.

The **red safety zone**, with a **radius of 468 meters**, also included part of Vinci's territory. From 7 a.m., access was prohibited, and from 8 a.m., the Prefecture of Florence activated the Rescue Coordination Center, initiating evacuations. By 9 a.m., the area was completely cleared, thanks also to the use of drones to verify the absence of people.

The engineers of the **Reggimento Genio Ferrovieri di Castel Maggiore** (Bologna) were then able to start the technical phase. At 9:30 a.m., the clearance operations began: the bomb was defused at 11 a.m. and subsequently loaded for transfer to a quarry in Calenzano, where at 1:46

p.m. it was detonated “without issues.” Once the procedure was completed, citizens were gradually allowed to return to their homes, restoring normality to a Sunday marked by apprehension.

Special care was given to vulnerable people: 70 elderly individuals were assisted, 30 of whom were housed in RSA facilities. About twenty citizens found shelter in reception centers set up in Empoli (Busoni school gym) and Vinci (Falcone e Borsellino Sports Hall in Sovigliana). Overall, over 120 volunteers supported Civil Protection, Law Enforcement, and healthcare workers in the most delicate phases.

A Bomb as a Legacy of the Conflict

The discovery in Empoli is not an isolated incident, but yet another confirmation of how **World War II** continues to leave material traces in Italy. The **aerial bombings** that severely hit the peninsula between 1943 and 1945 scattered **thousands of bombs**, many of which still resurface today during construction or excavation work.

The **Reggimento Genio Ferrovieri**, the protagonist of the Empoli operation, is **constantly engaged in land clearance**. Since the beginning of 2025 alone, in the area of competence that includes Marche, Umbria, and the provinces of Bologna, Forlì Cesena, Rimini, and Florence, the bomb disposal experts have completed about **200 interventions, neutralizing 710 bombs**, including three aerial bombs. Numbers that highlight the scope of an activity that is far from residual.

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Movement of the WWII aerial bomb

The **discovery at the Theater *Il Ferruccio***, in a place dedicated to culture and social life, is particularly symbolic: it shows how the wounds of war can resurface in spaces now devoted to civil and community life. Each defusal thus becomes an act of memory and collective liberation, definitively closing a painful chapter of the past.

Collaboration, Responsibility, and Safety

The Empoli intervention highlighted not only the **technical competence of the Army** but also the **ability to collaborate between institutions and citizens**. The mayor of Empoli, Alessio

Mantellassi, emphasized: “There was great collaboration from the citizens who acted responsibly.” Similarly, the mayor of Vinci, Daniele Vanni, stated: “I won't hide that there was some concern, but there was tremendous collaboration from the citizens, and then the Civil Protection system worked at its best. For us, this is a historic event, but our organizational system proves to be an excellence.”

These words well capture the spirit of the day: safety was the result of a collective effort, which saw **the Army and the Genio Ferrovieri** at the forefront, but also the Prefecture, the municipalities, Law Enforcement, Firefighters, the Red Cross, the ASL, Civil Protection, and the many volunteers mobilized.

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Detonation of the bomb in the Calenzano quarry

The **successful detonation** in the **Calenzano quarry** marked not only the end of a technical operation but also the victory of an organizational model that combines military professionalism, institutional readiness, and civic sense of the citizens. **The day of September 7** will thus remain in memory not only as **the “great evacuation”** but also as a concrete example of how an entire territory, faced with a hidden threat underground, was able to react united and orderly.

Each defused bomb represents one less threat and one more step towards a safer Italy. Thanks to the professionalism of the bomb disposal experts and the collaboration of the citizens, the past is slowly being removed, making way for a future free from the burden of yesterday's bombs.

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