



Bosnia, remembering the four Italian service members killed in the CH-47 Chinook crash: their stories and the Defense Ministry's grief

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They were called **Simone Ruggia**, **Claudio Marchesi**, **Franco Adriano Zecchillo** and **Laura Procacci**. Four lives, four personal and professional paths united by the choice to **serve their country**. They were the Italian service members who lost their lives on October 29, 2026, in the accident involving an Italian Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter near Brčko, Bosnia-Herzegovina, during activities conducted as part of the European EUFOR Althea operation.

Two belonged to the **Aviazione dell'Esercito (AVES)**, while the other two served in the **Corpo Militare Volontario della Croce Rossa Italiana**. They were assigned to different duties, ranging from flight support to medical care, as part of the same international mission.

There were 15 people aboard the helicopter. Four were killed and 11 were injured. **According to the Ministry of Defense, none of the survivors is in life-threatening condition,**

according to the initial official assessment. To ensure the best possible care, the Defense Ministry has arranged for an Italian medical team to be sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Behind the names released last night are stories of service, family ties, professional experience and personal plans abruptly cut short.

Simone Ruggia and Claudio Marchesi, the two Aviazione dell'Esercito sergeants

Sergeant **Simone Ruggia**, from Salerno, had served in Viterbo for at least eight years. He belonged to the 1° Reggimento AVES «Antares», a unit of the Aviazione dell'Esercito.

He had built his career in military aviation, where technical expertise, crew coordination and reliability are essential to operational safety. He is survived by his parents, a sister and his fiancée.

Sergeant **Claudio Marchesi**, 35, from Orvieto, was also killed. He too served with the 1° Reggimento «Antares» in Viterbo, where he had lived for about three years.

Marchesi is survived by his parents, a brother and a sister.

The two noncommissioned officers were part of a highly specialized component, tasked with operating in conditions requiring training, coordination and in-depth knowledge of onboard systems. Their deaths have deeply affected Viterbo's military community, a key hub for the Aviazione dell'Esercito.

Franco Adriano Zecchillo, a life dedicated to medical care

Lieutenant **Franco Adriano Zecchillo**, a member of the Corpo Militare Volontario della Croce Rossa Italiana, was born in Milan on October 31, 1961. He would have turned 65 just two days after the tragic accident.

A highly experienced healthcare professional, he was a **cardiovascular pathophysiology and perfusion technologist**, specializing in the management of extracorporeal circulation and technical support during complex cardiac surgery procedures. He had served at major hospitals in Lombardy, including San Raffaele in Milan, Humanitas in Rozzano, and Legnano Civil Hospital, where he held specialist and coordination roles. He also taught at the University of Insubria.

His commitment to the Italian Red Cross dated back to **June 1984**, when he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Military Corps. He had held the rank of Lieutenant since February 1990, ultimately serving in the Corps for more than forty years alongside his healthcare career.

During the **EUFOR Althea** mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he served as a nurse in the Italian Red Cross medical component, supporting personnel engaged in the international operation. He was part of the medical evacuation unit tasked with ensuring healthcare support as needed.

Laura Procacci and her first international mission

Laura Procacci was **24 years old, a Sergeant in the Italian Red Cross Volunteer Military Corps**, originally from Andria and raised in Montegrosso, a district of the Apulian city.

She had moved to Rome to study **Medicine and Surgery**, combining her university studies with healthcare volunteering and later service in the Italian Red Cross Military Corps.

Her experience of helping others had begun before joining the Military Corps. **From 2019 to 2022, she served as a volunteer with the Misericordia di Canosa di Puglia**, gaining experience in emergency response.

On **March 28, 2026**, she took the individual oath of allegiance to the Italian Republic.

Her city had also awarded her the **Premio Ebe**, in recognition of her commitment to volunteering and community service.

Her deployment to **Bosnia and Herzegovina was her first international mission**. It marked an important milestone in the personal and professional path of a young woman who had chosen to dedicate her studies and service to helping others.

As part of the **EUFOR Althea** operation, Laura Procacci served as a **rescue worker in the Italian Red Cross Volunteer Military Corps**, within the medical component deployed on the mission. She was part of the medical evacuation team, alongside Lieutenant Franco Adriano Zecchillo and a third operator who was injured in the incident.

Condolences from the Red Cross, the Chief of Staff of the Italian Army, and the Ministry of Defense

The deaths of the four service members sparked deep sorrow across the Armed Forces and the Italian Red Cross.

The national president of the CRI, **Rosario Valastro**, expressed the organization's sorrow over the loss of the two members of the Corpo Militare, assuring support for their respective families and solidarity with the third member of the medical team who was injured.

A message of profound condolence also came from the **Chief of Staff of the Army, Lieutenant General Carmine Masiello**, who, on behalf of the entire Armed Force, expressed his solidarity with the families of the four fallen personnel.

«On behalf of the entire Esercito Italiano and myself personally, I express my deepest and most heartfelt condolences for the tragic loss of our two servicemembers and the two personnel of the Corpo Militare Volontario della Croce Rossa Italiana», General Masiello stated.

The Chief of Staff emphasized the bond between the Army and the Croce Rossa Italiana, describing the Corpo Militare Volontario as a **«historic and fraternal ally in all operational theaters»**.

Particularly significant was his reference to the sacrifice of the four fallen personnel:

«Their ultimate sacrifice, made far from home for international stability and security, will remain etched in the memory and history of the Army and the nation».

Masiello also wished the 11 people injured in the incident a speedy recovery, expressing gratitude to all Italian servicemembers deployed on overseas missions for the courage and dedication they demonstrate every day in carrying out their duty.

The **Minister of Defense Guido Crosetto** also remembered the four servicemembers, explaining that official notification of their identities was released only after their families had been informed.

The minister also announced changes to the celebrations scheduled for November 4. The opening ceremony of the **Villaggio Difesa al Circo Massimo di Roma**, scheduled for October 30, has been canceled.

The Villaggio will nevertheless open to the public at 14:00, also serving as a place of reflection and remembrance for the fallen.

The Chinook incident: General Paolo Riccò suggests a technical issue

As investigations continue to reconstruct the circumstances of the incident, this morning, October 30, **Lieutenant General Paolo Riccò**, commander of AVES from 2017 to 2021, told RaiNews24 that he had made an initial technical assessment based on images of the helicopter's crash.

According to the general, the sequence visible in the footage suggests a technical malfunction, potentially linked to the failure of a mechanical component.

Riccò noted that the CH-47 was in the vertical takeoff phase when control was reportedly lost.

Based on the images examined, **the general ruled out, in his preliminary assessment, the possibility that the incident was caused by human error**, while stressing the need to await the findings of the commissions tasked with determining the causes of the tragedy.

«It is now clear that a flight safety board will be appointed, as is customary, normally managed by the Aeronautica Militare, specifically to determine whether this was a human or technical factor», Riccò explained.

The General added that, based on the available footage, he believes human error can be ruled out, and also outlined the Armed Force's internal investigative procedures.

«At the same time, the Aviazione dell'Esercito also establishes its own board to determine what caused the helicopter to crash, the loss of control of the helicopter», he said, explaining that the inquiries could also involve the manufacturer should technical issues emerge that need to be addressed in order to prevent similar situations involving other aircraft of the same type.

During the interview, Riccò also discussed the maintenance system for military helicopters, which involves scheduled work based on flight hours and calendar deadlines, at varying levels of complexity. The activities are carried out by specialized technical personnel from the Aviazione dell'Esercito, in accordance with established procedures and inspections.

He also drew attention to the growing presence of electronic and automated systems in modern aircraft, stressing that the investigation will also have to consider any electronic anomalies, in addition to mechanical ones.

The assessments expressed by General Riccò constitute a preliminary analysis based on footage of the accident and do not represent an official determination of the causes, which remain under investigation.

Four names, four stories to remember

The October 29 accident cut short four different life paths.

Simone Ruggia and Claudio Marchesi had chosen the Aviazione dell'Esercito, dedicating their service to a specialty in which technical expertise and individual responsibility are essential to the work of the entire crew.

Franco Adriano Zecchillo had extensive experience in healthcare and with the Croce Rossa Italiana. Laura Procacci, just 24 years old, had begun building her future between medical studies and service with the Croce Rossa, undertaking her first international assignment.

Four people who had each chosen, in their own role, to place their skills and professionalism at the service of others.

Our thoughts are with Simone, Claudio, Franco and Laura. Our deepest condolences go to their families, their fellow service members, the wider Defense Family, and all those who served alongside them.

Sources

- [Ministry of Defense – Press Release No. 44 of October 29, 2026](#)
- [Ministry of Defense – Minister Crosetto's condolences](#)
- [Italian Red Cross – Statement by President Rosario Valastro](#)
- [RaiNews – The four service members killed in the Chinook crash](#)
- [Corriere della Sera – Laura Procacci's career with the Red Cross](#)
- [La Nazione – Profile of Claudio Marchesi](#)
- [Sarajevo Times – Profiles of the four victims](#)