Camp Darby: Celebrations in Italy for the 250th Anniversary of the U.S. Army

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PISA – In a climate of solemn emotion and heartfelt community spirit, the Darby Military Community hosted the celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States Army on June 11, 2025. An event that saw collaboration between American military personnel, diplomatic authorities, historians, and Italian reenactors, all united to honor a history spanning two and a half centuries.

The day's theme was the remembrance of the roots and heritage of the Army, embodied in the enthusiasm of soldiers like Sergeant Eric Troxler of the 529th Military Police Company, for whom the Army's birthday represented “a great opportunity to talk about history, learn about our lineage, and understand what we stand for.”

Founded in 1775, a year before the official birth of the United States of America, the U.S. Army has operated in all major American conflicts: from the War of Independence to the world wars, up to modern missions. A history that is not only American but also deeply intertwined with

European and Italian history.

The Value of Symbols and the Strength of Transatlantic Ties

During the ceremony, Command Sergeant Major Ricardo Moreno, the highest enlisted authority of the U.S. Army Garrison Italy, recalled the importance of the United States Army flag. It was displayed next to the stage, decorated with 190 “streamers,” symbolic banners representing each military campaign in the Army's history. “These streamers tell the story we are celebrating here today,” Moreno emphasized, expressing the symbolic and identity value of those banners.

One of the most heartfelt moments was the speech by historian and documentarian Ben Appleby, a lecturer in Torbole on Lake Garda. Appleby recalled the figure of Colonel William O. Darby, founder of the U.S. Army Rangers, who died in Torbole on April 30, 1945, exactly 80 years ago. The military camp that today bears his name preserves his memory and moral legacy.

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Particularly significant was also the participation of the United States Consul General in Florence, Daniela Ballard. Her presence symbolized the ongoing diplomatic commitment to strengthen the ties between the American community in Tuscany and Italian institutions, emphasizing respect for those who serve and the importance of international cooperation based on shared values.

Reenactment, Traditions, and Shared Memory: A Look to the Future

Making the link between past and present even more vivid was the contribution of local historians and members of the Associazione Linea Gotica of Pistoia and the 34th Infantry Division – Italian Section. Their displays of original World War II relics and reenactments in authentic uniforms – both U.S. military and wartime Carabinieri – added historical and cultural depth to the day.

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This type of collaboration between local communities and American military personnel represents a bridge between generations and nations, highlighting how the history of the U.S. Army is also an integral part of European memory. The Tuscan region, which was at the forefront of many events of 1944-45, remains a symbolic place to remember liberation, resistance, and shared sacrifice.

The celebrations concluded with a gesture full of meaning: the traditional cutting of the Army cake, performed by the oldest and youngest soldiers present at the ceremony, Major Tulsi Rogers (JAG Corps officer) and Soldier Charles Steele of the 529th Military Police Company. This rite, typical of official U.S. Army ceremonies, represents continuity and the passing of the torch between generations of soldiers.

Under the motto “**This We’ll Defend**” – “**Questo lo difenderemo**” – the 250th anniversary of the United States Army was celebrated not only as a tribute to the past but as a renewed commitment to the values of freedom, resilience, and cooperation. At Camp Darby, these

celebrations reminded everyone that history is not just a memory but a shared responsibility for the future.

News link: https://www.army.mil/article/286248/camp_darby_celebrates_u_s_armys_250th_birthday