Exclusive Interview with Incursore Luca Fois: From Special Forces to Conquering the Dolomites

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From Paratrooper of the Folgore to Incursore of the Special Forces, up to an extreme project: the **86 peaks over 3000 meters of the Dolomites in 86 days**. The story of **Sergeant Major Paratrooper Incursore (retired) Luca Fois** is a thread stretched between professional evolution and the search for one's limits.

Here is a brief excerpt from the interview conducted by **DifesaNews.com**, in collaboration with **BrigataFolgore.net**, for the podcast *"Debriefing Talks – Storie di Soldati"*, which you can listen to in full on **YouTube** and **Spotify**. Fois explains what drove him to "raise the bar" in his military life, how units and technologies have changed, why today brains and study are as necessary as muscles, and why the word that sums it all up is: **unrepeatable**.

From the 186th Folgore to the 9th Col Moschin, passing through the 185th RAO: what was the initial trigger?

Fois. «At the beginning, there was a romantic idea: traveling, being outdoors, being a Paratrooper. I had friends who had served in Somalia in the Folgore and their stories sparked my curiosity. Once in, I discovered that I could continuously professionalize myself: like a chef who starts as a kitchen assistant and then seeks increasingly complex ingredients and courses. Passion naturally pushes you a step higher.»

You served in the toughest units of the Army

F. «“Toughest” is debatable. Let's say the most selective: statistically, those with the most dropouts and unfit. Toughness is personal; the difficulty of access is in the numbers.»

In the heart of special operations for 14 years. How has that world changed?

F. «Materials and technology have accelerated impressively: goggles, thermal imaging, sensors, then drones and countermeasures. Italy, especially in special forces units, is **in line** with allies: we test and introduce the latest innovations into service. We are a great organization: the rest of the Army follows (at its own pace), but it keeps up.»

Will drones and AI change the soldier?

F. «Technology evolves, there's no going back, but it will remain **man-centric**. Automation and autonomy will grow; however, the field, in the end, reduces everything to the essentials: decision, responsibility, presence.»

Two fronts, one generation: Afghanistan vs Ukraine

F. «I speak from experience and from the numbers I receive from friends engaged in Ukraine as medical support. In Afghanistan, in a predominantly asymmetric scenario, the **MEDEVAC** chain was robust. Under normal conditions, **within 60 minutes** you were in **Role 2** with advanced assistance. It's not just efficiency: it's **operational psychology**. You fight knowing that if you hit an IED or take enemy fire, in an hour you'll find a surgeon, anesthetist, blood, everything.

In **Ukraine** it's different: a **predominantly symmetric** war, continuous fronts, artillery, drones, stressed logistical lines, trenches, and rear areas on multiple levels. It has become much more complex. Often **before seeing a medic, hours pass** — even **six or more**. Technology has advanced (sensors, thermal imaging, drones, countermeasures), but in terms of **logistical coverage** and **medical timeliness** we have taken a step back. It's hard to say, but the battlefield there is a horror movie: **I hope Italy never has to see it**.»

To a young person dreaming of the Special Forces today, what would you say?

F. «Arrive **aware**. The work today is less “kinetic” and much more **educational**. You need topography, trigonometry, physics, chemistry, applied mathematics. You have to study. The special forces operator is not the Schwarzenegger of *Commando*: he is a hybrid element capable of studying and doing, with a balance between mind and body.»

80/B and OBOS, yesterday and today: myth and reality.

F. «To access the 185th RAO, I did one of the first OBOS open to troops outside the 9th. The 80/B of the '90s was **more physical**; today's OBOS has been “optimized” and requires **more mental endurance**. The men change, the selection updates.»

Recruitment and transition: how to make them attractive?

F. «A **training pact** is needed: good years in the Armed Forces in parallel with a **study path** (degrees/qualifications **usable outside**). Then a **re-employment chain** with public and private companies. The advantage is for everyone: Armed Forces, businesses, society.»

The toughest moment in your career?

F. «Not my injuries, but those of others. In a detachment of 10–12 people, you are a family: **serious injuries or bereavements hit like at home**. And the sense of guilt is a real risk.»

“86 Dolomites”: how did the idea come about?

F. «I wanted to show that we can do well even outside the military profession. I put together a team: a small “detachment” (logistics, materials, nutrition). **60 peaks** completed: very harsh weather (18 days lost out of 53), late starts (some peaks require winter conditions). We might have reached 70, but we looked at each other and stopped. Too risky. I wouldn't do it again: some peaks are **dangerous and little “protected”**.»

And now?

F. «Other projects, **cycling and swimming** in the medium term. The goal is not to “beat someone,” but to show that at 40—with discipline—you can perform in different sports. New records? Yes, but looking for **something that no one has done yet**.»

“Ardito Gin”: why a gin (actually, three) with your unit friends?

F. «To **stay united**. A project more of friendship than business: from a *London Dry* base, three products (“Ardente”, “Audace”, “Amante”) are born with different processes. It's our excuse to keep in touch and remain a team.»

One word to sum it all up?

F. «**Unrepeatable**. I've had injuries, strokes of luck, extraordinary companions. Many planets aligned. Hard to repeat. Today I assess risks more: I have a family. I've done 60 peaks. Some were truly “50-50”.»

Listen to the interview on YouTube:

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Photographs courtesy of Luca Fois