July 2, 1993: The Day That Changed Everything

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On July 2, 1993, under the sun of Mogadishu, Italy ceased to be just a peacekeeping force.

On a fearless Friday in July, our soldiers faced a violent and prolonged ambush, amidst enemy fire, barricades, anti-tank rockets, and civilians used as human shields.

It was the **first real firefight for the Italian Army since the end of World War II**. A return to a combat reality, in the heart of a "humanitarian" mission.

It was the battle of Check Point Pasta.

Hours and hours of fighting forever swept away the collective image of the post-war Italian soldier: the one good for smiles and offering the best meals to guests visiting an Italian base, but leaving the real war to others.

That July 2, in Mogadishu, Italy rediscovered valiant soldiers, ready to sacrifice themselves to the utmost.

In that battle, three Men died: **Corporal Paratrooper Pasquale Baccaro**, **Second Lieutenant Andrea Millevoi**, and **Sergeant Major Paratrooper Incursor Stefano Paolicchi**. Other soldiers returned to Italy bearing deep wounds, both visible and invisible.

Wounds that, for many, would never heal.

Among them was Second Lieutenant Gianfranco Paglia, Gold Medal for Military Valor, severely wounded while trying to save his comrades and still serving the Country today despite severe physical impairments. **A living example of courage and total dedication to the Homeland.**

A real battle. But too often forgotten.

It is not a page in school books. It is not a date celebrated by the State.

It is a living memory only for those who were there, for those who lost a brother in arms, for those who heard the screams over the radio from an immobilized armored vehicle. Those same voices, over thirty years later, still echo in the minds of those who lived them and, perhaps, will do so forever.

Yet, the battle of Checkpoint Pasta was a proving ground: **everything changed there**.
It changed the way Italian missions abroad were conceived, the coordination between units, the equipment, the training, but above all the mentality.

It was not an unprepared army, but an army put to the test.
And it was precisely that sacrifice that brought out, in all its strength, the true meaning of being a Soldier. From that July 2, a more aware army was born, forged by a solid and unyielding military identity. An army that could bend, yes, but never break in the face of an enemy.

Today, July 2, 2025, exactly 32 years later, our duty is to remember not only the hero

Honor to the Fallen. Respect to the survivors. Memory for all.