



July 27, 1942: The Paratrooper Division takes the name “Folgore”

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July 27, 1942 represents a fundamental date in the history of Italian military parachuting. On that day, in view of deployment on the North African front, the Paratrooper Division of the Royal Army officially assumed the name **185th Paratrooper Division “Folgore”**.

The Great Unit had been established on **September 1, 1941** in Tarquinia, home of the Royal Parachuting School, initially with the 1st and 2nd Paratrooper Regiments and the Paratrooper Artillery Regiment. In March 1942, the 3rd Paratrooper Regiment was also added.

The Division had been primarily prepared for **Operation C3**, the project for the invasion of the island of Malta. On July 20, the operation was shelved, and it was decided to employ the paratroopers as ground infantry on the North African front.

Thus, on July 27, 1942, the Division received the name destined to enter Italian military history.

With the change of name, the Division's units also assumed new numbering:

- the **1st Paratrooper Regiment** became **185th Infantry Regiment “Folgore”**;
- the **2nd Paratrooper Regiment** became **186th Infantry Regiment “Folgore”**;
- the **3rd Paratrooper Regiment** became **187th Infantry Regiment “Folgore”**;
- the Paratrooper Artillery Regiment became **185th Artillery Regiment “Folgore”**.

The origin of the name “Folgore”

The name **“Folgore”** has its origins in the Latin motto **“Ex Alto Fulgor”**, translatable as **“from above, the lightning”**, initially coined for the 1st Paratrooper Regiment.

This formula was chosen by then-Major **Alberto Bechi Luserna**, one of the most important figures in the birth and establishment of Italian military parachuting. The inspiration would have come, almost unintentionally, from **Father Augusto Moglioni**, chaplain of the paratroopers, who had concluded a letter of his by signing with the greeting formula **“Ex Alto Fulgor”**.

Bechi Luserna immediately understood the power of those words. The motto perfectly encapsulated the essence of the new airborne troops: men destined to suddenly arrive from the sky, swift and overwhelming like lightning.

From that formula, the name destined to identify first the Regiment and then the entire Division was born. On July 27, 1942, with the official assumption of the name **185th Infantry Division “Folgore”**, that term definitively entered Italian military history.

“Folgore” was therefore not just an evocative name, but the synthesis of a new concept of combat: striking from above, by surprise, with speed, daring, and strength. A name that the men of the Division would consecrate a few months later, among the sands of El Alamein, forever transforming it into a symbol of valor and sacrifice.

From training to the African desert

The men of the Folgore had been selected and trained to fight as paratroopers, with particularly strict criteria and preparation based on discipline, physical endurance, esprit de corps, and initiative.

In North Africa, however, they were predominantly employed as infantry, in an environment completely different from the one for which they had originally been prepared.

Deprived of much of the equipment necessary for airborne operations, the paratroopers reached the Egyptian front and were deployed in the southern sector of the El Alamein line.

Here the Folgore would write, between the summer and autumn of 1942, one of the most famous pages in the history of the Italian Army.

The Folgore at El Alamein

During the second battle of El Alamein, fought between October 23 and the early days of November 1942, the Division's units faced British and Commonwealth forces vastly superior in men, armored vehicles, artillery, and logistical availability.

Despite losses, scarcity of ammunition, food, and water, the paratroopers held their positions and repelled repeated enemy attacks.

The motivation for the Gold Medal for Military Valor awarded to the Regiments' Banners recalls how the men of the Folgore continued to fight until the total exhaustion of all means, earning the respect and admiration of the enemy itself.

The Division, worn out by combat but not defeated on the field, withdrew only after the general retreat order of the Axis forces. The few survivors continued to fight until, lacking transport and supplies, they were surrounded and forced to lay down their arms.

A name that became a symbol

The name **“Folgore”**, officially assumed on July 27, 1942, thus became the symbol of the valor, discipline, and spirit of sacrifice of the Italian paratroopers.

That name, born on the eve of deployment in North Africa, crossed history and was later adopted by the Paratrooper Brigade established in Pisa on **January 1, 1963**.

Even today, the name Folgore identifies one of the most prestigious units of the Italian Army and represents a historical and moral heritage passed down by generations of paratroopers.

Thus, **July 27** does not only recall a formal change of name, but the birth of a name destined to become legend:

Folgore!