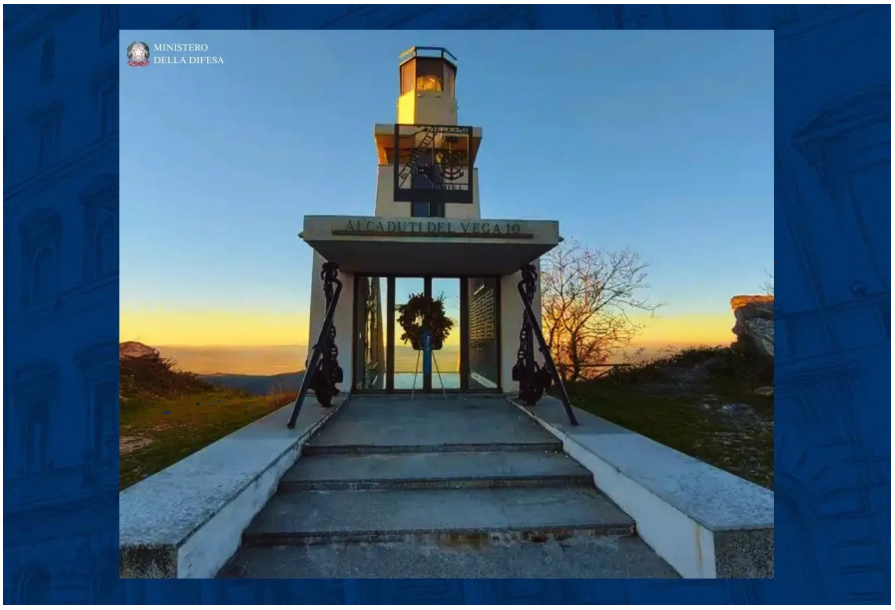

March 3, 1977: The Sacrifice of Vega-10. An Open Wound in the Heart of Defense

Published on 04/03/2026

There are dates that remain etched in the DNA of a nation not for victories, but for the weight of silence they have left. **March 3, 1977** is one of these. Today, **49 years** later, the memory of that foggy afternoon on the slopes of **Monte Serra**, near Calci (Pisa), is not just an act of commemoration, but a pillar of identity for the Navy, the Air Force, and the entire Defense sector.

The Last Takeoff

It was 3:05 PM when the **C-130H Hercules**, radio call sign **"Vega-10"**, belonging to the 46th Air Brigade, lifted its wheels off the runway at Pisa-San Giusto airport. On board, the enthusiasm of youth: **38 Cadets of the First Class** of the Naval Academy of Livorno. Young men barely over eighteen, engaged in an orientation flight that was supposed to be a baptism of the air, a

formative moment towards a life dedicated to the service of the Country.

With them, Sub-Lieutenant **Emilio Attramini**, training officer, and the **5 crew members** of the Air Force, experienced professionals who shared the same fate that day.

March 3, 1977: The Sacrifice of Vega-10. An Open Wound in the Heart of Defense

Only five minutes after takeoff, at 3:10 PM, the tragedy. For reasons never fully clarified — including the thick fog enveloping the Pisa hills and a sudden turn — the winged giant crashed against the slopes of Monte Serra. There were no survivors.

Forty-four lives cut short in an instant. A generation of future officers who would never see the sea from the bridge of a ship, but who would remain forever "Invicta", like the name of the course their companions left on the ground chose to honor them: the **Corso Invicti**.

A Legacy of Values

The pain of that March 3 united all of Italy. The solemn funerals were attended by the then President of the Republic Giovanni Leone, but it was the embrace of ordinary people that testified how deep the wound was.

Today, the Shrine erected at the site of the impact is a destination for silent pilgrimage. Those names carved in marble are not dust, but roots. The tragedy of Vega-10 teaches that service to the Homeland involves extreme risks, accepted with a dignity that deserves eternal respect.

> "*Their memory is part of our identity. Also for them, our daily commitment.*"

Almost half a century from that day, the bond between the Naval Academy and the community of Calci remains indissoluble. Remembering the boys of Vega-10 means renewing every day the promise to serve the Country with the same purity and dedication that those cadets carried in their hearts as the Hercules took off for the last time.

On that tragic afternoon on Monte Serra, fate cut short the lives of 44 servants of the State. Here are their names and the profound meaning that their sacrifice has left as a legacy to the Navy.

March 3, 1977: The Sacrifice of Vega-10. An Open Wound in the Heart of Defense

The Fallen of Vega-10

Crew (Air Force - 46th Air Brigade):

- Major Pilot **Massimo Proietti**
- Captain Pilot **Simone Murri**
- Sub-Lieutenant Pilot **Paolo Casella**
- Sergeant Mechanic **Antonio Semplici**
- Sergeant Assembler **Silvio Pieretti**

Training Officer (Navy):

- Sub-Lieutenant **Emilio Attramini**

The 38 Cadets of the 1st Class (Naval Academy):

Salvatore Caputo, Giovanni Castaldi, Giuseppe D’Alì, Sandro De Angelis, Antonio Giallonardi, Vincenzo Gaglio, Corrado Verdone, Guido Verna, Davide Tomatis, Alberto Ganu, Matteo Carnevale, and their companions who today rest together in the Shrine of Monte Serra.

March 3, 1977: The Sacrifice of Vega-10. An Open Wound in the Heart of Defense

The Corso Invicti: "Never Defeated, Never Divided"

The most touching human aspect of this story lies in the reaction of the survivors, the classmates who remained on the ground or were engaged in other activities that day.

1. **The Name:** In September 1977, while aboard the training ship *Amerigo Vespucci* for their first summer cruise, the remaining cadets decided to name their course **"Invicti"** (*Never Defeated*). A name that emphasized how death had not broken the bond with the fallen companions.
2. **The Flag:** The course's emblem bears the marks of that tragedy. The flag features a symbolic "wound" or mutilation on the right side, representing the irreplaceable void left by the 38 cadets. The prow of a Viking ship symbolizes the strength of those who continue to sail, carrying the memory of the lost.
3. **The Indissoluble Union:** Every year, the members of the Corso Invicti (including officers who have reached the top of Defense, such as Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone) gather on Monte Serra. For them, the 38 boys are not "former companions," but an integral part of the course, forever young while time passes for those who remain.

Their sacrifice has transformed Monte Serra into a sacred place: the **Lighthouse-Shrine**, inaugurated in 1979, continues to shine every night, reminding sailors and aviators that duty and memory are lights that no fog can extinguish.

News link: https://www.difesa.it/primopiano/3-marzo-1977-la-tragedia-del-monte-serra/90912.html