



Milan, Folgore springs into action. Eighteen years ago, the challenge to the Casalesi

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Five hundred Italian Army personnel from the Brigata paracadutisti “Folgore” have been deployed in Milan to strengthen the city’s security posture as part of Operation “Strade Sicure”. The measure, ordered by the Ministry of Defense in response to recent incidents of violence and unrest in the Lombard capital, marks a further domestic deployment of the Paratrooper Branch.

The contingent, which arrived extremely quickly thanks to the Brigade’s rapid-deployment capability, will join the Raggruppamento Lombardia, already engaged in the operation. Folgore has been assigned command of the new unit, which will operate in close coordination with law enforcement agencies.

The decision, approved by the Council of Ministers on October 20, is intended to strengthen the state’s presence in the most sensitive areas, also in light of the unrest that took place in Milan on October 17 and 18.

Fixed posts, patrols and protected vehicles: the Folgore deployment

The contingent will be employed at fixed posts and on mobile patrols in the historic center and the main sensitive areas, with teams of military personnel equipped with protected vehicles.

One component will remain on standby to ensure a prompt response if needed, while a smaller force will be assigned to guarding the main railway stations.

The deployment, coordinated with the Ministry of the Interior, will be overseen by the Prefecture of Milan and implemented by the Police Headquarters, in accordance with the respective responsibilities of the various institutions.

The paratroopers will operate under the same legal authorities already provided for military personnel engaged in “Strade Sicure”, without the ordinary judicial-police powers reserved for police forces.

The new contingent, arriving from Siena, is expected to remain in Milan until the end of the year. Available capabilities may also include personnel specialized in the use of drones.

The 2008 precedent: when Folgore arrived in the land of the Casalesi

The deployment of paratroopers in Milan recalls a particularly significant precedent in Folgore’s recent history.

It was October 4, 2008, when 500 paratroopers from the 186° Reggimento, based in Siena, arrived in the province of Caserta, an area caught up in one of the most violent periods of organized crime in Campania.

Italy had been shaken by the terrorist strategy of the Camorra group linked to Giuseppe Setola, a leading figure in the massacre wing of the clan dei Casalesi. A series of murders, intimidation and armed attacks had left 17 people dead in just a few months.

The culmination of that escalation was the Castel Volturno massacre of September 18, 2008, in which six African immigrants were murdered by an armed commando. The massacre starkly demonstrated organized crime’s ability to impose its control through violence.

The government led by Silvio Berlusconi, with Roberto Maroni at the Ministry of the Interior and Alfredo Mantovano serving as Undersecretary, decided to respond by increasing the military presence across the region.

A measure dated September 23, 2008 authorized an additional 500 service members under Operation “Strade Sicure,” launched in August of that same year.

The paratroopers of the Folgore were the ones called upon.

Checkpoints, patrols, and the State’s response to the Camorra

In the Caserta area, the paratroopers were deployed at key locations, manning checkpoints and conducting security operations alongside law enforcement agencies.

The objective was not to replace the Police and Carabinieri in investigative activities, but to strengthen territorial control and make the State’s presence visible in areas where organized crime had imposed its influence for years.

Carabinieri patrols operated alongside the military checkpoints, with responsibility for judicial police functions.

At the time, the Carabinieri in the Caserta area were led by Colonel Carmelo Burgio, a paratrooper officer from the 1° Reggimento Carabinieri Paracadutisti “Tuscania”, later promoted to General.

The operation helped consolidate what would come to be known as the “Caserta model,” based on cooperation between the military component and police forces.

Yet one of the most significant episodes of that mission did not involve a roadblock or a security operation.

A group of young people from Casal di Principe, gathered around Father Paolo Dell’Aversana at the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Briano, decided to write a letter to the paratroopers.

They were young people who refused to see their homeland identified solely with the Camorra. In the military presence, they recognized a tangible sign of attention from the institutions and an opportunity for their community to reclaim its future.

The letter was delivered directly to the paratroopers manning the checkpoints.

At the end of the first hundred days of deployment, during the contingent rotation, Colonel Aldo Zizzo, Commander of the 186° Reggimento Paracadutisti, recalled that gesture of gratitude, emphasizing how important it had been to the service members, deployed away from their families even during the Christmas holidays.

The episode illustrates an often overlooked aspect of military operations on national territory: the human bond that can develop between soldiers and the communities in which they are called upon to operate.

Eighteen years later: two different emergencies, the same branch

The parallel between Caserta in 2008 and Milan in 2026 is meaningful, but requires some distinctions.

In the first case, military intervention was ordered to address an extremely serious emergency caused by organized crime, in an area where the clans exerted constant pressure on the population.

In Milan, however, the strengthening of the security posture follows episodes of urban unrest, clashes, and tensions that required increased surveillance measures.

The contexts are therefore profoundly different, as are the threats to be addressed.

What they have in common is the decision to deploy Folgore, the size of the contingent – 500 service members in both cases – and the need to rapidly have trained, organized personnel capable of operating in complex situations.

In 2008, the paratroopers of the 186° Reggimento were specifically called upon. Today, the contingent is assigned to the Brigata paracadutisti “Folgore”.

It is not merely a numerical coincidence. It also confirms the Speciality's ability to provide, when required, a timely response to the needs of the Defense Ministry and national institutions.

The professionalism of the paratroopers and the delicate relationship with the civilian population

Tenente Colonnello Paracadutista Gianfranco Paglia, Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare, also commented on the deployment of paratroopers in Milan. In an interview reported by Avvenire, he rejected interpretations suggesting that paratroopers are deployed because they are accustomed to fighting and using weapons.

Paglia pointed to the professional training of Italian service members, stressing that weapons training also entails a rigorous understanding of the limits and responsibilities associated with their use.

A fundamental distinction, especially when discussing activities carried out in contact with the civilian population.

Setting aside the controversy over the appropriateness of employing elite troops in public security and public-order duties – moreover, with significant limitations on their judicial-police powers, which prevent service members from making arrests while performing ordinary police functions – an issue we have already addressed in the article [Milan: Crosetto defends the safety and dignity of his Paratroopers](#), one element deserves particular attention: the paratroopers' ability to adapt to profoundly different operational environments without losing the rigor and discipline that characterize their training.

The Caserta precedent also shows that a military presence on the ground does not necessarily end with its deterrent role. Under certain circumstances, it can help rebuild a relationship of trust between citizens and institutions, especially where the perception of security has been deeply undermined.

Crosetto to the paratroopers: «Good work to all of you!»

Defense Minister Guido Crosetto addressed a message to the 500 paratroopers deployed in the Lombard capital, expressing confidence in their professionalism and sense of responsibility.

The Minister recalled that the troops will serve alongside law enforcement agencies, making a concrete contribution to protecting public safety, and concluded his message by wishing the entire contingent every success in its work.

Eighteen years separate the checkpoints in the Caserta area from patrols on the streets of Milan. In the meantime, emergencies, operational environments, and the country's security needs have changed.

What has remained constant is Folgore's ability to respond to the State's requirements, even when they take it beyond the traditional duties of airborne troops.

In 2008, paratroopers from the 186° Reggimento helped reassert the presence of state institutions in an area marked by clan violence. Today, in the Lombard capital, other paratroopers from the same Brigata have been assigned a different task, but one that is equally sensitive because of its direct contact with the public.

Two missions, eighteen years apart, and one constant: whenever the State needs to rapidly deploy reliable, disciplined, and well-trained personnel, Folgore continues to be called upon to respond.