



Paratrooper Mutilated in Service: Justice After 15 Years

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Verona, Italy – After a long and complex legal battle lasting fifteen years, a Warrant Officer of the Italian Army, who was severely injured during an exercise, has finally obtained the adjustment of his pension, now equated to that of terrorism victims. The decision was made by the Verona Court, bringing a glimmer of justice for the soldier, currently serving with the Paratrooper Regiment of Legnago.

The incident dates back to **2009**, when the soldier, then thirty years old, was involved in an explosion that caused the partial loss of his left hand, with severe bone, tendon, and vascular injuries. Despite the severity of the injuries and his involvement in numerous international missions (Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Kosovo), where he was exposed to extreme risks including asbestos, carcinogens, and radiation, the State had delayed recognizing what was due to him.

In **2014**, the Ministry of Defense formally recognized the soldier as a **victim of duty**, but awarded him a pension of only 258.23 euros, a figure significantly lower than that established

for terrorism victims. This disparity in treatment persisted despite a ruling by the United Sections of the Court of Cassation in **2017** that had already established the principle of economic equivalence between the two categories.

The turning point came thanks to the support of the **Observatory for Duty Victims**, an organization committed to the legal and social defense of those who have suffered permanent damage in the service of the State. The Verona Court has now ordered the adjustment of the monthly pension to **500 euros**, equating it to that provided for terrorism victims, in addition to the recognition of approximately **20,000 euros** in arrears.

"For years the Ministry denied the legal evidence, ignoring a clearly sanctioned right," declared lawyer Ezio Bonanni, the soldier's legal representative and president of the Observatory for Duty Victims. "Finally, after a long judicial battle, our client has obtained what is rightfully his: the correct pension amount and all arrears. It is time for the State Attorney's Office to cease all forms of hostility towards those who have served the country with extreme sacrifice."

The Observatory for Duty Victims wanted to emphasize that this paratrooper's case is not isolated. Hundreds of soldiers, recognized as victims of duty, continue to receive discriminatory treatment compared to terrorism victims, despite being united by the same level of risk, exposure, and loss. This ruling therefore represents an important precedent and a hope for all those still awaiting full recognition of their rights.

Definitions: Victim of Duty and Victim of Terrorism

To fully understand the scope of this ruling, it is essential to clarify the distinctions and equivalences between the different categories of victims recognized by the Italian State.

Victim of Duty:

"Victims of Duty" are defined under Law 23 December 2006 no. 266 art. 1 paragraph 563 - 564, as those belonging to the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Carabinieri), Police Forces (State Police, Guardia di Finanza, Penitentiary Police, Municipal Police, Fire Brigade) and other public employees or equivalent subjects who have suffered a permanent disability or have died:

- **In service activities:** as a direct result of wounds or injuries sustained due to terrorist or criminal actions, or in public order service, or in the performance of rescue activities, or in

events related to the fulfillment of institutional functions and dependent on risks specifically related to preventive or repressive police operations or the performance of rescue activities.

- **In general, other public employees:** who have died or suffered permanent disability in the performance or fulfillment of institutional functions as a direct result of injuries sustained due to events occurring:
 - in the fight against all types of crime;
 - in the performance of public order services;
 - in the surveillance of civil and military infrastructures;
 - in rescue operations;
 - in activities to protect public safety;
 - due to actions taken against them in international employment contexts not necessarily characterized by hostility.
- **Equivalent subjects:** include those who have contracted permanently disabling illnesses or which result in death, on the occasion or as a result of missions of any nature, carried out inside and outside national borders and recognized as service-related due to particular environmental or operational conditions¹. This status, crucial in the case of the paratrooper, recognizes the sacrifice made in the service of the State.

Victim of Terrorism and Organized Crime:

In Italy, a "victim of terrorism" is anyone, Italian citizen, foreigner, or stateless person, who has died or suffered permanent disability due to acts of terrorism or mafia-type organized crime. This includes people injured or wounded by such acts, both on national territory and abroad.

Benefits and Recognition:

Victims of terrorism and organized crime, or their families, can request significant benefits, including economic grants, pensions, exemptions from health ticket fees, scholarships for children, the right to mandatory placement, and pension benefits. Applications must be submitted to the competent prefecture or consulate, demonstrating the causal link between the event and the damage suffered.

Italian law, through the United Sections of the Court of Cassation (as highlighted by the 2017 ruling mentioned in the article), has established a principle of economic equivalence between victims of duty (in particular environmental or operational conditions) and victims of terrorism, recognizing that both groups face extreme risks and suffer severe losses in the service of the community. It is precisely on this principle that the long legal battle won by the paratrooper was based.

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