



September 1, 1941: The Parachute Division is born. 85 years ago the history of Folgore began

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There are dates that simply mark the birth of a unit and others that end up representing the beginning of a tradition.

September 1, 1941 belongs to the second category.

That day, in **Tarquinia**, the **Parachute Division** was officially established, initially formed by the **1st and 2nd Parachute Regiments** and the Parachute Artillery Regiment. The 3rd Regiment would be added in March of the following year.

It was the decisive step in transforming Italian military parachuting from a still-young specialty into a true Major Unit capable of operating organically.

From that Division would be born **Folgore**.

Tarquinia, the cradle of Italian Paratroopers

The roots of Italian military parachuting predate September 1941.

After Alessandro Tandura's jump in 1918 and, a few days later, Pier Arrigo Barnaba's, Italian military parachuting began to take organizational form about twenty years later. The first units were established in 1938 at Castel Benito, in Libya, while in Italy the decisive turning point came with the establishment of the Tarquinia Parachute School.

It was precisely here that the units destined to form the future Division began to take shape.

The Italian Army still identifies today in the cities of **Tarquinia and Viterbo** the roots of the specialty and remembers **September 1, 1941** as the date of constitution of the Parachute Division.

Within a few months that young force would have been prepared for one of the most ambitious military projects of the time: the airborne deployment in the operation for the conquest of Malta.

But history would decide otherwise.

From the sky to the desert

The Division was born and trained as an air-transported major unit.

The planned deployment in the operation against Malta did not materialize and, in the summer of 1942, the needs of war imposed a radical change of destination.

The paratroopers were sent to **North Africa** and employed as ground infantry.

On **July 27, 1942** the Major Unit assumed the denomination of **185th Infantry Division "Folgore"** and its regiments were renumbered.

The name destined to become inseparable from the history of Italian Paratroopers was born:

Folgore.

September 1st also marks the birth of the future 186th

September 1, 1941 represents a particularly significant date also for one of the units that still today form the backbone of the Parachute Brigade.

On that very day the **2nd Parachute Regiment** was established at Tarquinia, structured with a Command, 47/32 Gun Company and the **V, VI and VII Parachute Battalions**.

With the reorganization of July 1942, the 2nd Regiment became the **186th Infantry Regiment "Folgore"**.

It is the direct ancestor of the current **186th Parachute Regiment "Folgore"**.

For the 186th, therefore, **September 1, 2026 represents the 85th anniversary of its origins**.

Its motto, **"Impetuousness and daring"**, still synthesizes today a history that would find its consecration in the Egyptian desert.

The thread that also leads to Special Forces

The commemoration of September 1st also runs through the history of another particularly significant unit.

The **1st Parachute Regiment**, established at Tarquinia in April 1941, indeed became part of the new Division precisely on **September 1, 1941**.

In July 1942 it assumed the number **185**.

From that historical line descends today the **185th Parachute Regiment Reconnaissance Target Acquisition "Folgore"**, unit of the **Special Forces of the Italian Army**.

The 185th RAO officially recognizes as its predecessor the 1st Parachute Infantry Regiment established at the Tarquinia School in April 1941.

A history that, through the **"Folgore" Reconnaissance Squadron - Squadron F**, would continue during the Liberation War with reconnaissance, infiltration and sabotage activities behind German lines, up to the **Operation Herring of April 20, 1945**.

Folgore towards El Alamein

In North Africa the Division's units were deployed in the southern sector of the **El Alamein front**.

They were no longer destined to jump from aircraft.

They fought on the ground, often against numerically and materially superior forces, in extremely harsh conditions and with limited means.

Between October and November 1942 the name Folgore entered history definitively.

The Division withstood the impact of the British offensive and, consumed by the fighting and the subsequent general retreat of the Axis, finally ceased to exist as a Major Unit.

The Italian Army recalls that Folgore emerged from the battle "**worn but not defeated**" and was officially dissolved on **November 23, 1942**.

The survivors were subsequently regrouped in the 285th Formation Battalion and continued to fight in Tunisia until Takrouna.

Twenty-two individual Medals of Gold for Military Valor and three for the colors, awarded to men of Folgore, testify to the price and value of that brief but extraordinary operational cycle.

A history that does not end in 1942

Reducing Folgore to El Alamein would mean telling only part of its story.

After the war Italian military parachuting was rebuilt.

In **1947** the Military Center for Parachuting was born and on **January 1, 1963**, in Pisa, the new **Parachute Brigade** was established, collecting and reviving traditions that war had not erased.

Since then Italian Paratroopers have gone through decades of transformations of the Armed Forces, international missions, out-of-area operations, deployments on national territory and continuous technological and doctrinal adaptations.

Today's Folgore is profoundly different from the Division born in 1941.

Different are the men, the means, the scenarios and above all the historical and institutional context in which it operates.

But there exists a thread that runs through those **85 years of history**.

It is that of the parachute specialty and identity, the preparation required of its men and the ability to be deployed with very short notice, even at great distance. A guiding thread made of values, esprit de corps and an identity that has remained firm over time.

September 1, 1941 - September 1, 2026

85 years have passed.

The world in which the Parachute Division was born no longer exists.

But that September 1st remains one of the fundamental dates in the history of Italian military parachuting.

From Tarquinia departed men and units that would write pages destined to become part of national military memory.

From that Division would come **Folgore, its glorious Units**, and a tradition that, through subsequent transformations, continues today in the parachute units and Special Forces of the Army.

September 1, 1941.

Eighty-five years later, that date continues to represent the beginning of a story.

The story of Folgore.

Folgore!