



September 17, 2009 - September 17, 2024: remembering the fallen of Kabul

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September 17, 2009 will remain etched in the collective memory as one of the most tragic days for the Folgore Paratroopers Brigade. In a suicide attack in Kabul, six valiant Paratroopers lost their lives, leaving an indelible void in the hearts of their families and comrades.

In Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, at 12:10 local time (9:40 in Italy), a patrol of the 186th Paratroopers Regiment Folgore was transporting some soldiers back from a short leave in Italy to the ISAF headquarters, picked up directly from the Afghan capital's airport.

Upon reaching the Massud roundabout, Lieutenant Fortunato's Lince stopped to allow the second vehicle to overcome an obstacle. At that moment, an old white Toyota Corolla, driven by a suicide bomber, wedged between the two vehicles and exploded. The explosion was devastating. The first Lince withstood the impact, but the Paratrooper at the turret, **First Corporal Major Gian Domenico Pistonami**, slumped inside the vehicle: he was dead.

The wounded, **1st Air Force Marshal Felice Calandriello** and Paratroopers **1st Corporal Major Paratroopers Rocco Leo, Sergio Agostinelli, and Ferdinando Buono** were stunned by the explosion. They exited the vehicle and were immediately fired upon: they returned fire, securing the area by erasing the frequencies set on the radios, as dozens of civilians quickly approached the vehicles and the bodies of the soldiers killed in the explosion.

Paratrooper Rocco Leo [later declared in the Sky docufilm 'Reduci'](#) that he thought only they had been caught in the explosion and that the first vehicle had managed to enter the Italian embassy.

The second Lince was projected a hundred meters away by the force of the explosion. Inside, **five paratroopers died instantly: Lieutenant Antonio Fortunato, Sergeant Major Roberto Valente, and First Corporal Majors Massimiliano Randino, Davide Ricchiuto, and Matteo Mureddu.**

The devastation around was total. The streets were littered with debris and destroyed vehicles. The suicide bomber's car contained 150 kg of explosives, as later determined by ROS investigations. The attack, claimed by the Taliban a few minutes later, marked one of Italy's most severe losses internationally since Nassiriya.

The news immediately reached Italy and deeply affected the families of the fallen and the entire nation. Defense Minister Ignazio La Russa strongly condemned the attack, while the Folgore Paratroopers Brigade suspended all activities in Italy as a sign of mourning. The bodies of the fallen were repatriated on September 20, received at Ciampino airport by their families and the highest state officials.

On September 21, 2009, a national day of mourning, the solemn state funerals were held in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome. It was a sad day, where an entire nation gathered around six young lives deprived of their future for having fully carried out the tasks assigned to them by the State.

Despite the severity of the attack, the Folgore does not stop. As always, the Paratroopers will show courage and determination, [continuing their mission in Afghanistan](#) with the same skill and efficiency that has always distinguished them.

And it went on, because as always, as happened at [El Alamein in 1942](#), and in [Mogadishu on July 2, 1993](#), Italy's Paratroopers have shown that they may bend, but never break.

Yet, despite the supreme sacrifice of those who are no longer with us, we too often forget. **Their sacrifice demands constant memory and respect, from everyone, not just from the**

Today, 15 years after those events, we are here to remember them. Those who fall for the Fatherland must never be forgotten.