



INTELLIGENCE NOTES

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EUROPEAN AUTHORITIES LOOKING INTO RENDITIONS

Law enforcement authorities in Italy, Germany and Sweden are examining whether CIA operatives may have broken local laws by detaining terrorist suspects on European soil and subjecting them to abuse or maltreatment through renditions, the Washington Post reported on 13 March.

The CIA usually carries out such operations with the help or blessing of friendly local intelligence agencies, the Post said, but Milan Investigators have gone to the joint U.S.-Italian Aviano Air Base in northern Italy and demanded records of U.S. planes that have flown into or out of the military installation as well as logs of vehicles entering it.

The investigation concerns an Islamist Egyptian cleric, Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, known as Abu Omar, snatched off a Milan street in February 2003 and never seen again. He was wanted in Egypt for belonging to an outlawed Islamist militant group. The Italians suspect Abu Omar was the object of a CIA rendition. European lawmakers and prosecutors raise the question of whether rendition is a blatant violation of local sovereignty and human rights.

Investigations are producing new information about suspected U.S. involvement in the disappearances of four men, other than Abu Omar, who claim they were physically abused and later tortured.

In Germany, Khaled Masri, told authorities he was seized during a vacation in the Balkans and flown to Kabul, Afghanistan, in January 2004. There he was held as a suspected terrorist for four months. He said that only after his captors realized he was not an al-Qa'ida suspect they were seeking was he taken back to the Balkans and dumped near the Albanian border.

He recalled his captors spoke English with an American accent. German prosecutors have confirmed key parts of Masri's story and are treating it as a case of kidnapping.

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Cia Renditions

A Swedish parliamentary investigation found that CIA personnel wearing hoods coordinated the forced removal in December 2001 of two Egyptian nationals aboard a U.S.-registered airplane. Flown to Cairo, the men claimed they were tortured in prison there. Egyptian police exonerated one of the men of being a terrorism suspect. The other remains in prison.

Although Swedish authorities had secretly invited the CIA to assist in the operation, Klas Bergenstrand, director of Sweden's security police, has said his agency would never again let foreign operatives take charge in such a case. (DKR)

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