

Cheney Uses Hard-Core Fascists For Illegal CIA Operations

by Claudio Celani

Two parallel investigations in Milan have produced the broadest documentation and evidence so far of a case of CIA “extraordinary rendition,” i.e., the practice of kidnapping foreign citizens on foreign soil and “outsourcing” their imprisonment, interrogation, and torture. This illegal practice, violating the Geneva Conventions and all provisions of international law, has been implemented by the U.S. government, especially through the efforts of Vice President Dick Cheney’s legal counsel and chief of staff David Addington. The Italian case has brought indictments and warrants against 26 U.S. citizens, as well as the arrest of Marco Mancini, the number two of Italy’s military intelligence service SISMI, and a group of Mancini’s accomplices in private intelligence structures who have assisted special operations teams deployed by the CIA. In the background of such structures, the figure of the old spy and P-2 (Propaganda Due) puppetmaster Licio Gelli has surfaced, indicating that in order to carry out his illegal operations abroad, Dick Cheney needs help from convicted felons and *bona fide* fascists.

The Kidnapping of Abu Omar

In July 2005, prosecutors in Milan issued extradition requests for 26 U.S. citizens, including former CIA station chief in Italy Jeff Castelli and Milan CIA station chief Robert Seldon Lady. Castelli and Lady are accused of having planned and executed the kidnapping of Nasr Osama Mustafa Hassan, an Egyptian citizen better known by his religious name, Abu Omar. Omar was kidnapped in broad daylight in Milan’s Via Guerzoni, on Feb. 17, 2003, as he was leaving his flat. A witness, an Egyptian woman, reported to Omar’s wife that she had seen two men throw him into a van and drive away. A few days later, Omar’s wife filed a complaint with the

police. One year later, on April 20, 2004, she received a phone call from her husband, who reported that he had been kidnapped, flown to Egypt, where he is today, and imprisoned and tortured. Omar told the same story, with more detail on his tortures, in another phone call to a friend, a teacher in the Via Quaranta Islamic center, in Milan. Omar, who said that he was now free, but so physically damaged by torture that he can hardly walk, ordered his wife and his friend not to speak to anyone—police, journalists, etc.—as this was the precondition for him to obtain permission to call his family.

Unbeknownst to Abu Omar’s wife and the teacher, however, state attorneys in Milan were wiretapping their phones. So, by mid-2004, prosecutors knew that Omar had been kidnapped, and decided to push the investigation ahead. A thorough study of the records of mobile-phone conversations in Via Guerzoni, on the day of the kidnapping, prosecutors Armando Spataro and Ferdinando Pomarici could identify 66 of the callers as connected to the kidnapping. Seventeen cell phones were on site, in Via Guerzoni. Eleven of them accompanied the hostage as far as the highway. Six different phones travelled with the hostage on the highway, to the U.S. military base in Aviano. One cell phone number, starting with 335 and ending with 1143, communicated with the two groups, the one active in Via Guerzoni and the one who received the hostage at the highway, and drove him to Aviano: The user of the first phone is believed to be the head of the commando unit. And the CIA link was also established: Many of the cell phones were also in contact with Robert Seldon Lady, CIA station chief in Milan. This is the evidence that Abu Omar had been kidnapped by the CIA.

Spataro and Pomarici were aided by incredible carelessness on the part of the CIA command, indicating that they felt

themselves protected by Italian authorities: The agents flown in from the U.S.A. used their personal credit cards to pay for hotels, meals, and rental cars. They were even caught speeding through the streets of Milan by police cameras. From license plates, police could trace back the rented cars, and from the credit cards used, they obtained the names of the agents. Investigators could also identify the flights used to transfer the hostage: jet executive LJ35, flight code Spar 92, took off at 18:20 hours on Feb. 17, 2003, from Aviano to the U.S. military base in Ramstein, Germany. Next, Abu Omar was put on a Gulfstream (code N85VM), which flew from Ramstein to Egypt. This is the first time that an “extraordinary rendition” was precisely documented.

However, investigators suspected that Italian agents also participated in the operation. Abu Omar in fact told his wife that at least two of his kidnappers spoke Italian, and described the one who stopped him on the street as a “blond, tall man with blue eyes.” One of the cell phones active on the crime scene was owned by an Italian policeman, Giuliano Pironi, corresponding to that description, and nicknamed “Ludwig” because of his Teutonic appearance. Prosecutors interrogated Pironi, and he confessed.

The Italian Side

Through Pironi’s help, Spataro and Pomarici were able to reconstruct the operation in all its details. Pironi, like most members of the Carabinieri anti-terror team in Milan, knew CIA chief Bob Lady well; they shared a close cooperation and friendly relations. Lady, a veteran of CIA operations in Honduras, chose Pironi for the most delicate aspect of the kidnapping: The CIA group needed an Italian police official to stop Abu Omar without arousing his suspicion, and also to keep other police, who might have cruised into via Guerzoni that day, out of the area.

In his interrogation, Pironi told prosecutors on April 14, 2006: “Today, I intend to tell the truth. I admit to having been present on Feb. 17, 2003, in Via Guerzoni and to having asked Abu Omar to show his ID papers. . . . I was convinced to participate in an intelligence operation that, according to what Robert Lady told me, had been organized and prepared in agreement with SISMI and the Interior (Police) Department.”

Pironi also reported that he had hoped to join SISMI, and had considered the Abu Omar operation a sort of “test” for his admission. He had spoken about his aspirations to his friend Giuliano Tavaroli, a former Carabinieri officer, who had made a career, first as security chief for Pirelli, then for Telecom, Italy’s national telephone and communications network. Pironi knew that Tavaroli, in turn, was almost a “twin brother” of Marco Mancini, the head of the counterintelligence division of SISMI. But all Tavaroli could offer him was a job in Telecom. Disappointed, Pironi felt he had been “used.”

Prosecutors’ suspicions that Italian agencies, and ultimately the government, had passively or actively supported

the CIA operation were now being confirmed. Suspicions grew when they realized that SISMI’s Marco Mancini had replaced three SISMI station chiefs who were key to the operation—in Milan, Padua, and Trieste. When they interrogated one of them, Stefano Ambrosio, suspicion became evidence. Ambrosio, who is a friend of Robert Lady, reported Lady’s confidential remarks: Abu Omar’s kidnapping was “a project elaborated by Jeff Castelli, CIA station chief in Rome and responsible for the whole of Italy, in the context of precise orders issued from the United States, by the CIA office in Langley.” Bob Lady himself was skeptical about the operation, but he carried out the orders. He had also a very bad opinion of Mancini, whom he considered “a jerk who . . . would act only in his personal interest.”

At that point, Spataro and Pomarici decided to tap Mancini’s phone, and collect more evidence. On July 5, 2006, Mancini and his predecessor, Gen. Gustavo Pignero (Mancini’s superior in 2003), were arrested. At that point, it was not clear whether SISMI director, Gen. Nicolò Pollari, had authorized, or had been aware of, the kidnapping operation. This is still unclear today, as Pollari has denied it and even indicated that evidence in his favor is in the hands of the government, but classified as a state secret, as such evidence, if revealed, would “compromise Italy’s relations with other governments.” This is now a matter of an ongoing review by the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Secret Services, which is putting pressure on the government.

Everything converges on the hypothesis that already in October 2001, when Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi visited his “good friend” George W. Bush in Washington, promising him “full assistance in the war on terrorism,” the seeds were sown for U.S. assistance in illegal operations. Possibly, since it was too hot for everyone involved to officially deploy SISMI or other law enforcement agencies to help in the “extraordinary rendition” of Abu Omar, it was decided to deploy a private structure.

The ‘Beagle Boys’

Meanwhile, a parallel investigation by another Milan prosecutor on illegal wiretappings has brought another piece of the conspiracy to the surface. It has been discovered that Mancini and his buddy Tavaroli were running a system of illegal spying on prosecutors’ activity, as well as collection of dossiers on hundreds of Italian citizens, including a few national politicians and businessmen. The system would work in the following way: Mancini would ask Tavaroli to collect information on “Mister X”; Tavaroli would turn the request over to a third member of the group, Emanuele Cipriani, owner of a private detective agency in Florence. Cipriani, whose agency had virtually no staff, pulled the strings of dozens of police agents and state officials who had access to police and judiciary records, and would (illegally) supply sensitive information. Dossiers provided by Cipriani to Mancini via Tavaroli were then richly paid for by Tavaroli’s

Cheney-Addington Set Up Rendition Policy

Five days after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, Vice President Dick Cheney publicly announced the outlaw regime that he was already instituting for U.S. military and intelligence operations. In an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press," Cheney declared that "lawyers always have a role to play, but . . . this is war." He elaborated in this chilling manner:

"We also have to work, though, sort of the dark side, if you will. We've got to spend time in the shadows in the intelligence world. A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies . . . and so it's going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective. . . . It is a mean, nasty, dangerous, dirty business out there, and we have to operate in that arena. I'm convinced we can do it; we can do it successfully. But we need to make certain that we have not tied the hands, if you will, of our intelligence communities in terms of accomplishing their mission."

The next day, President Bush signed a top-secret "Presidential Finding," undoubtedly authored by Cheney's legal counsel David Addington, which authorized U.S. intelligence agencies to establish the "extraordinary rendition" program, to create a network of secret prisons abroad, and to use interrogation methods that violated domestic U.S. law and international treaty obligations.

The Cheney-Addington legal theory, sometimes given an academic veneer by Justice Department lawyer John Yoo, asserted that the President, when acting as Commander-in-Chief in wartime, cannot be constrained by any

Congressionally enacted laws, or by any treaties signed by the United States and ratified by the Senate. It was a doctrine lifted straight out of the "Crown Jurist" of the Nazi Third Reich, Carl Schmitt.

Addington, sometimes called "Cheney's Cheney," shares with Cheney the view that the Presidency has been too constrained by Congress since the post-Watergate intelligence reforms of the 1970s were enacted to curb CIA and military spying and abuses against American citizens. Addington hooked up with Cheney during the Iran-Contra investigations of the mid-1980s, where they fought what they called Congressional encroachment on President powers, in connection with the Reagan-Bush covert action program in Central America. When Cheney became Defense Secretary in 1989, he brought Addington into his office, where Addington became enamored of military special operations, which he saw as a model for the more "timid" CIA.

Cheney and Addington seized the opening created by the shock of the 9/11 attacks to implement their doctrine of dictatorial Presidential power, with Addington providing the legal cover for Cheney's demand for unfettered Executive powers in the days following the attacks.

During that time, the overall covert counter-terrorism program, including the creation of "hunter-killer" squads combining military special operations forces and CIA special operatives, was placed under the control of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. But aspects of it, such as the "extraordinary rendition" program, were formally placed under the CIA, reportedly because that agency was not constrained by the Uniform Code of Military Justice which governs the conduct of military personnel. But whether it's under the Pentagon or the CIA, everyone knows that Dick Cheney is the ultimate Commander-in-Chief of all these "dark side" operations.

—Edward Spannaus

Telecom. Prosecutors could prove the transfer of at least 20 million euros from Telecom to Cipriani's accounts in London and in Switzerland. Additionally, Tavaroli had developed a spy system which alerted him to orders for eavesdropping on suspects; he was thus able to warn friends who were targets of such investigations in real time. Tavaroli, Mancini, and Cipriani were apparently called the "Beagle Boys" in their milieu.

When, on Sept. 20, 2006, Tavaroli, Cipriani, and 19 police and state officials were arrested, and the "Telecom spy system" was revealed, Italians had a *deja vu*. The story had too strong a resemblance to the P2 secret Masonic Lodge, whose Grand Master Licio Gelli had collected thousands of dossiers with which he was able to blackmail half the country's leading

figures. And indeed, the connection of the "Beagle Boys" to the P2 is not only on the question of method. Tavaroli, Mancini, and Cipriani are linked by old friendships, cemented during the years when all three were engaged in anti-terrorism police operations in the 1980s, at the Carabinieri "Pastrengo" division in Milan. In the Pastrengo division, which was highly infiltrated by the P2, Marco Mancini made a parallel career with Gustavo Pignero, his predecessor as head of SISMI counterintelligence division, under the protective wing of a person who has been in the middle of several key terrorism investigations, all of which are affected by intelligence manipulations and cover-ups. This person was Col. Umberto Bonaventura, whose team Mancini joined in the early 1980. Eventually, Mancini followed Bonaventura to SISMI, where

Bonaventura became head of the First Division (counterintelligence). When Bonaventura left SISMI, he was replaced by Pignero, who was then replaced by Mancini in 2005.

It happens that Bonaventura was involved in key terrorism investigations, all of which involved manipulations of some sort. The most important is the case of the “Moro Memorial,” the records of former Prime Minister and Christian Democratic chairman Aldo Moro’s kidnapping and interrogations by the Red Brigades terrorists, which were found by Gen. Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa’s men in Milan, in 1978, a few months after the Moro assassination. Bonaventura, a captain on Dalla Chiesa’s team, removed the papers before they could be put on the record, copied them, and gave them back with a number of pages missing. It was Bonaventura himself who confessed this before the Parliamentary Investigating Committee chaired by Sen. Giuseppe Pellegrino in May 2000. Bonaventura acted on behalf of circles who feared that Moro could have revealed NATO or other military secrets in those writings. Bonaventura’s action was unknown to Dalla Chiesa, a respected law enforcement officer who was killed by the Mafia in 1984.

Colonel Bonaventura also managed the “Mitrokhin Dossier” on alleged KGB spies in Italy, received through the British intelligence service MI6. A couple of days before his planned testimony to the Parliament’s “Mitrokhin” Committee, Bonaventura was found dead of “natural causes” in his apartment, on Sept. 7, 2002.

Bonaventura’s protégé Mancini has had an astonishing career, considering that he is a non-commissioned officer and has nonetheless become the number two of military intelligence. This is highly unusual and has raised some questions. Journalist Guido Olimpio, a counterterrorism expert, wrote in the daily *Corriere della Sera* that, “former CIA head George Tenet allegedly wrote a letter to support Mancini’s promotion.”

The Gelli Dynasty

Through Emanuele Cipriani, however, the ties of the “Beagle Boys” to the P2 and its Grand Master Licio Gelli become even more concrete. Cipriani, in fact, is an intimate of the Gelli family. In particular, he is a close friend and possibly a partner of Gelli’s son Raffaello. Cipriani has not hidden his friendship with Gelli Jr., which in itself is not a crime. But Raffaello Gelli is not just Licio’s son; he has been a collaborator of his father, whom he has defended and helped throughout Gelli’s judicial prosecutions. Additionally, one of Cipriani’s private investigative firms, Worldwide Consultants Security, is based in Montecarlo, 20 Boulevard Princesse Charlotte, which happens to be the address of Raffaello Gelli’s wife, Marta Sanarelli. Prosecutors have calculated that Pirelli and Telecom (Tavaroli) have channelled at least 17.5 million euros through the Barclays Bank accounts of WCS. It takes more than a friendship to lend your address for such a business, doesn’t it?

Indeed, a first circle closes through Cipriani and Raffaello Gelli. The Gelli connection easily explains how freemason Cipriani could pull the strings of police and judiciary officials to collect his dossiers.

It would take too long here to explain who Gelli has been, and what the P2 conspiracy was. Suffice to say, that Gelli is an hard-core Mussolini fascist, and that his secret freemasonic lodge has played a key role in major terrorist events, such as the 1978 kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro and the 1980 Bologna bombing. The P2, through its estimated 2,000 members among Italy’s political, military, judicial, business, and media elite, was a “state within the state,” able to manipulate and steer Italian politics. Gelli, however, was a low-level puppetmaster; the P2 was an extension of Anglo-American freemasonic networks and an instrument of global synarchist power.

Today, Raffaello Gelli seems to be on his way to become his father’s proud successor in the underworld of conspiracies, manipulations, and dirty money. He is already well placed in a network of murky international activities, centered around an organization that has a seat at the United Nations: the United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation. Gelli joined UTA in 1996 through its founder, Henry Bandier, described by many as a “collaborationist” under the fascist Vichy government in France. Bandier, now dead, was “maybe a sympathizer of my father,” said Raffaello in an interview with the daily *La Nazione* in May 2001.

Through Bandier, Raffaello succeeded in becoming a member of the UN Committee on Human Rights, the Subcommittee on Promotion and Protection of Minorities, to be exact. However, Bandier’s and Gelli’s operations through the UN suffered a setback when, on request from the Cuban government, one of their organizations, the Asopazco (Association for Peace Among Continents), was expelled from the UN in 2000. The Cuban government had accused Asopazco of conducting subversive operations against Cuba.

Investigative journalists who have dug into the complicated network of organizations founded and run by Raffaello have found an interesting connection with Macedonia. In Skopje, there is a First Embassy of the Children in the World Megjashi (FECWM), run by a certain Dragi Zmijanac, who in 1999, was a member of the UN Subcommittee on Promotion and Protection of Minorities, together with Raffaello Gelli and his wife Marta. Until October 2005, among the “ambassadors” listed on the website of FECWM, was one Riccardo Sindoca, who was arrested in July 2005 by Italian police. Sindoca, a neofascist, had founded an organization called Dipartimento di Studi Strategici Antiterrorismo (Department of Antiterrorism Strategic Studies), suspected of being a sort of mercenary police, active also in Iraq.

Another “ambassador” of FECWM is Antonio Diletto, whose “diplomatic economic-legal advisor” Giovanni Pascone was also the legal counsel for former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.