

Targeting Giuliana

Posted by

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A former U.S. Air Force intelligence officer argues that the American attack on Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena and Italian intelligence officer Nicola Calipari could not have been an accident.

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by Anon.; March 11, 2005

from Zmag

The top U.S. general in Iraq, Army gen. George Casey, has stated that the US had no indication that Italian officials gave advance notice of the route of the vehicle in which Giuliana Sgrena and slain officer Nicola Calipari were riding. As a former Air Force intelligence officer, I would argue that this statement is absolutely ludicrous. Based upon intelligence collection capabilities of even 28 years ago, it is reasonable to assume that the US intercepted all phone communication between Italian agents in Iraq and Rome, monitored such traffic in real time and knew precisely where Sgrena's vehicle was at all times, without advanced notice being provided by Italian officials.

During the early 1970s, it was my job to monitor intelligence collected on the Korean peninsula. It was my responsibility to report serious anomalies to the White House by means of a secure phone.

At that time, satellite photographic collection capability was in its infancy; however, the joke, often told at briefings, was that while "we can identify a golf ball anywhere on planet earth, we cannot tell you the brand." In addition to satellite photography, I would assume, as in Korea, that there would be numerous other sources of photography from "manned" and "unmanned" aircraft that are regularly positioned over key areas, such as the airport in Baghdad, which are capable of providing real time imagery of vehicle traffic.

Work was also being conducted to monitor voice conversation, in real time, by detecting the vibrations that the human voice creates in window panes in a particular room or more easily, in an automobile. But most important, the US, by 1974, had the capability to intercept any and all ground to air phone conversations. It is inconceivable to me that the US would not be monitoring all conversations between Italian agents and Rome, particularly cell phone conversations in a hostile environment where cell phone communications are used to trigger explosives. Are we to believe that in an area near the airport, an area that is intensely hostile according to the US, that they would not be monitoring cell phone signals? Even if such

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conversations were electronically scrambled, the position of such signals would be of enormous intelligence value.

One can only assume that the intelligence capability of the US during the past 28 years has improved significantly. Thus, the wrong questions are being asked. It is reasonable to assume that 1) satellite and aircraft intelligence (photographic and electronic) intelligence was being collected in real time and 2) that my contemporary counterpart in Iraq was monitoring this intelligence and vehicular traffic (and possibly the conversations within such vehicles) within a radius of several kilometers around the airport if not the entire city. Anomalies would be reported immediately to those in command. The question, then, becomes what communication occurred between those in command and those who fired upon Sgrena's vehicle.

I also believe that a clear motivation for preventing Sgrena from telling her story is quite evident. Let us recall that the first target in the second attack upon the city of Fallujah was al-Fallujah General Hospital. Why? It was the reporting of enormous civilian casualties from this hospital that compelled the US to halt its attack. In other words, the control of information from Fallujah as to consequences of the US assault, particularly with regard to civilians, became a critical element in the military operation.

Now, in a report by Iraq's health ministry we are learning that the US used mustard, nerve gas and napalm in the manner of Saddam against the civilian population of Fallujah. Sgrena, herself, has provided photographic evidence of the use of cluster bombs and the wounding of children there. I have searched in vain to find these reports in any major corporate media. The American population, for the most part, is ignorant of what its military is doing in their name and must remain so in order for the US to wage its war against the Iraqi people.

Information, based upon intelligence or the reporting of brave journalists, may be the most important weapon in the war in Iraq. From this point of view, the vehicle in which Nicola and Giuliana were riding wasn't simply a vehicle carrying a hostage to freedom. It is quite reasonable to assume, given the immorality of war and of this war in particular, that it was considered a military target.