

Behind the Screen of The ‘Dirty War’ in Iraq

Luigi Malabarba is a member of the Italian Senate from the Communist Refoundation party (Rifondazione Comunista, PRC). Before entering politics, he worked at the Alfa Romeo automobile factory in Arese, near Milan, where he was a leader of the trade union factory council. As president of the PRC group in the Senate, Malabarba was named to the Parliamentary Control Commission on Secret Service activities. He has launched a number of initiatives against the Bush preventive war policy, and against Italian military participation in Iraq. On May 5, he posed parliamentary questions to the government, concerning U.S. Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte’s “Operation Salvador” operations, and parallel intelligence warfare in Iraq and elsewhere (see EIR, May 27). In documentation prepared for a public discussion on Iraq, he reprinted an analysis written on Jan. 25, 2005 by Scott Ritter, the former senior United Nations weapons inspector in Iraq, entitled “The Salvador Option,” in which Ritter stated that special Pentagon units have created “death squads” in Iraq that are being used against resistance leaders.



In late May, Malabarba spoke with EIR’s Paolo Raimondi in Rome, who briefed him on Lyndon LaRouche’s activities against the neo-cons and the war policy in Iraq, and about LaRouche’s ongoing campaign for the impeachment of Dick Cheney. Malabarba then gave this report on his own efforts in the case of Italian intelligence agent Nicolà Calipari, who was killed by U.S. soldiers at a checkpoint on March 6, while attempting to free journalist Giuliana Sgrena. The interview with Raimondi has been translated from Italian.

Malabarba: The effort to understand what is happening in Iraq, including in light of the Calipari case, forced me to set aside a somewhat fixed ideological idea for somebody looking at the events from a leftist standpoint, regarding the phenomena of war, the U.S., and secret services; to put aside a type of preconceived belief about the United States. I tried to do this in order to make a positive contribution with my activity on the Parliamentary Control Commission on Secret

Service activities (Copaco). This is a small commission formed by eight parliamentarians—four Senators and four Representatives—which is the only institutional point of discussion between the secret services and the Parliament and Italian citizens. For many months, I tried to avoid linking the presence of John Negroponte, then the American Ambassador in Iraq . . . to what had happened in Iraq, and in particular with what happened regarding the Italian secret services in Iraq.

However, all the events I had directly experienced in Central America in 1980 recently came to mind. I began to follow the events in Central America after the assassination of Archbishop Romero in March 1980. I knew a fair amount about the organizational structure of “Orden,” built up since the 1960s by Maj. Roberto D’Aubuisson on the basis of a theoretical orientation provided by certain American networks, and also by John Negroponte [who had been the U.S. Ambassador in El Salvador]. Orden was a political-military agency based on military and intelligence networks which did not answer to the official hierarchy of the military command and the government of that period. This network later produced the infamous “death squads.”

Unfortunately, I have also seen this type of mechanism in the Iraq War. Not only with what happened in the last months of the “dirty war,” with the physical elimination of farmers and other people carried out by special American and Iraqi agencies, as was done in El Salvador and in Nicaragua by the Contras, but also the organizational structure set up by Negroponte, who himself called these special operations “Operation Salvador.” This was also reported in *Newsweek* on Jan. 19, 2005, and has clearly provoked a strong reaction in the circles of the U.S. Democratic Party, and also from [former UN weapons inspector in Iraq] Scott Ritter. These groups have expressed serious concerns, because we have begun to carry out “dirty war operations” in an attempt to win a war which is becoming more and more complicated every day. We are trapped; it’s like being in a swamp.

I also see something similar to Central America in the organizational structure proposed and implemented: There is a military intelligence structure, and there is a well-defined political command, but there is also a network which cuts across all three sectors—intelligence, military, and political—with its own structure and command. This type of structure is the most worrying.

When Anti-Terrorist Action Goes Too Far

I say this, because even in Italy there is a reflex which became operational in the context of the G-8 summits and [violent] demonstrations in 2001. I am speaking of the Naples conference in March 2001 and the Genoa summit in July 2001.

We saw that there was a particular individual coordinating the events on behalf of the government forces present at the G-8 summits: the head of the national police, Gianni De Gennaro, who was responsible for public order at both events,

under different governments. He used a form of coordination that was similar to that in real war areas, although clearly not with the same consequences. For the first time, operational teams trained specifically for these events were created, and then dissolved immediately afterwards. This includes the Caterini squad, which was probably wrongly blamed for beating the demonstrators at the Diaz School in Genoa.

Another manifestation of the problem, is the creation of squads made up of elements of various different forces, that no longer answer to the traditional command structure, but rather to some other control center. As was reported in the trial hearings on these events, you cannot find a specific person responsible for what happened; we can't find out where the orders came from, and this is not because people don't remember; it is because this specific type of network was created.

This is a worrying sort of reflex that De Gennaro, I believe, learned during the two years he spent in the United States. The general reorganization of the secret services is not aimed at making them more efficient. The old secret services had two different orientations—for internal and external affairs—and efficiency and coordination are logical and necessary when you have to deal with organized crime, terrorism, and other things on a supranational scale. But in exploiting this need for better coordination of these forces, there has been an attempt to put them in “safer hands.”

This process is also very evident in the U.S., from my experience when I went to the States along with Nicolà Calipari and other members of Copaco. There, we had the opportunity to meet all 15 existing secret services, and the need for coordination was obvious. But we could also see that there are frictions and differences over how to solve this problem; we could already sense that there was an attempt to freeze out people with good capabilities and professional qualities, but who did not fit certain special criteria, and which later—with the recent nomination of John Negroponte—became hegemonic. The same thing is also happening in Italy, where there is a violent clash among the different agencies, as we had in the recent Copaco hearings. I can't say anything about the hearings though, as they are confidential. But one gets the sense of who should be in charge of certain specific things.

The Kidnappings in Iraq

In the case of the kidnapping in Iraq, this turbulence came clearly to light: Some military people, for example, spoke out directly about the case and gave out information publicly, as opposed to how the SISMI military intelligence people acted. The question of John Negroponte and his philosophy is one of the ways the United States has intervened abroad, particularly in certain areas of the world; and this risks becoming the theoretical and actual practice of the U.S. and its allies. Since Sept. 11, there has been a strong push to conform to a certain model and conception. I also see that there is a resistance to this process in Europe, very visible in Italy and France.

For example, in the kidnapping cases, there was a biparti-



Nicolà Calipari, the Italian intelligence agent killed by U.S. troops while freeing a hostage. The case has created a rift between Italy and the United States.

san alliance between the government and the opposition to reach a positive outcome, a sort of national unity required to solve a serious problem, where you put aside all other political differences in order to succeed in freeing the hostages, by any possible means. Regarding this attitude, there is clearly American interference, which has been evident since the first kidnapping of the four Italian contractors (one was immediately killed), when negotiations were immediately begun by SISMI, with the support of the Italian government. The Italian Foreign Minister and other high-level government personalities were deployed to the Middle East to establish a network of relations to make it easier to free the hostages, while the Americans intervened to try and stop this process. This even led to a situation where the first three living hostages were not delivered directly to SISMI or any other Italian authority, but a special operation was concocted: an American military blitz to free the hostages and thus claim credit for the fact they were freed. This was done by the so-called “Hostage Center” created by Negroponte, which serves the whole coalition, but everybody knows the American Embassy has total control over it. There was evident friction here, because to contact the kidnappers, the Italian secret services also had to work with the intelligence services of all the other countries in the region, including those considered “rogue states,” or with certain organizations and associations that are at times considered pro-terrorist. Such relations also have historical justification, because of the particular location of Italy as a country, and its own security needs.

These clashes got worse during the subsequent kidnappings. (The killing of journalist Enzo Baldoni was so rapid that, apparently, there was no possibility for such interference, even though the way the matter ended left us with many serious doubts. I also do not know much about this case, as we received very little information during the Copaco hearings.) However, during the kidnapping of Simona Pari and Simona Torretta, and in the case of Giuliana Sgrena, I can say that American interference in the Italian attempts to free them was very strong. We know that there was interference at least four

The Calipari Story

Nicolà Calipari, a high-ranking official of the Italian military intelligence agency, SISMI, was killed on the evening of March 6 in Baghdad by a U.S. patrol, which opened fire on the car in which he was escorting Giuliana Sgrena, a liberated hostage, to the airport. *EIR* on May 20 published the two differing versions of what occurred.

The Italian government's report maintains that the car was driving at a low speed of 40-50 kilometers per hour; that the lights inside the car were turned on to give maximum visibility to possible checkpoints; that the U.S. patrol did not give a warning before opening fire; and that the head of airport security, U.S. Captain Greene, had been

informed of the approach of the vehicle at least half an hour earlier. The U.S. command's report claims that the car was driving at 95 km per hour; that the driver did not stop at the warning light; and that U.S. authorities had not been informed of the arrival of the car.

Numerous disparities have emerged. The ostensible reason for the checkpoint was that Ambassador John Negroponte was going to be travelling along the road, to the Baghdad airport. In fact, he had already arrived there, travelling by helicopter, which had landed a few minutes *after* the set-up of the checkpoint. Also important is that the U.S. forces destroyed evidence; they removed the car from the scene, and removed and eliminated the cartridges used in the shooting.

When Rome prosecutor Franco Ionta made a formal request to U.S. authorities that he be allowed to interrogate U.S. witnesses, his request went unanswered.

times in the case of the two French journalists, even to the point of aborting an ongoing operation to free them. For the two Simonas, the positive outcome appeared to be a humanitarian solution, without payment of ransom or such things, because there was direct intervention by the Red Cross, which is actually only what certain people wanted everyone to see.

The personal intervention by Red Cross director Maurizio Scelli had a propaganda effect also, in terms of his personal ambition to become a political figure in Italy. But we know that in this case, there were negotiations involving SISMI and Nicolà Calipari. As for the case of Giuliana Sgrena, we reached the high point with this method, and I believe the Americans did everything they could to block it, so this is part of the reason why Calipari himself did not want others to know everything about the method which led to her liberation.

The Sgrena Case

With this case, I tried to retrace all the steps, including through the reports of the Investigative Commission on both the American and Italian sides. The most obscure point about what happened is not the speed of the car as it approached the checkpoint, which everyone wants to concentrate attention on—[Italian Prime Minister Silvio] Berlusconi also concentrated on this in his speech in Parliament. The key point is why that improvised checkpoint was even there, since it was established for the passage of Negroponte towards the airport, and this passage never took place. No communication was made as to why it didn't take place, even to the Italian command at the airport, or to Captain Green, the soldier responsible for the checkpoint. There were several sources that could have given the information [about the approach of the car carrying Calipari and Sgrena] to the squads at the checkpoint; the squads had even complained about the situation several

times, because it was extremely risky. These improvised checkpoints can last only for 10-15 minutes, because they do not have the required protection. We know that in the same area, hand grenades had been thrown on other occasions, including when the Italian commission was investigating the scene.

But the checkpoint was there for almost two hours. So here, we already have a series of contradictions.

And then there's the question of the "lack of knowledge" regarding the trip. How is it possible? The Americans had been informed, and they had approved Calipari to move through the territory with a pass and a rented car. It was known that the SISMI mission was linked to the liberation of Sgrena, and we also know very well that the Americans control the territory electronically, including through the company in charge of all mobile phone communications. Thus, they were able to monitor all of Calipari's moves.

The information given to us during our visit to CIA headquarters a year ago, regarding how communications are controlled in Iraq, forces me to say that if they were not able to follow Calipari, it would completely contradict the explanations given at that time. The road to the airport is controlled 24 hours a day, and even more so when Negroponte was to come through. To say that they were not in control would be to offend them: 33,000 people are involved in monitoring everything that moves. Fifty percent of all the military operations to fight terrorism are done with electronic and other such controls. In the U.S., they showed us all sorts of methods of control: If a person has a cellular phone, he can be followed anywhere.

EIR: Is your analysis endorsed by others in Italy, in the political field or in other sectors of society?



DoD/Staff Sgt. Ashley Brokop, USAF

Then-U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte greets Iraqi President Sheikh Ghazi Ajil al-Ywar at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, July 4, 2004. What does Negroponte, now the U.S. Director of National Intelligence, know about the Calipari case, that he's not telling?

Malabarba: When I presented this analysis in the parliamentary debate, putting together all the factors involved in the Calipari case, and stating that I thought it was a planned operation (initially I really did not want to think this way, but in putting together all these elements, I had to conclude that it was an planned operation), I found that many people, the majority of analysts and experts in secret services, who also work for newspapers, shared my view. Everybody told me: “We think the same thing but we cannot say it publicly.” Rarely have I seen such a convergence on these matters. Someone also told me that I was courageous to make these claims, because when you do so, you expose yourself to retaliation.

Among other things, Italian Ambassador Cesare Ragaglini, who is one of the two Italians sent by the Rome government to the American Investigative Commission on the Calipari case, had to admit that regarding the way the checkpoint was [supposedly] established and maintained, and other malfunctions, what happened cannot be explained; this, from a person who is very direct and precise on other points, like the definitive rejection of the [idea that the car was] going at a high speed on the road. Or at least he says that the explanations given are not at all convincing. I must say that Ragaglini is not in a position to create trouble for the Americans. The Investigative Commission was created as an attempt to find a compromise on a single version of the accident shared by the two countries. And on this key point, he himself has some doubts.

EIR: There was a long process of privatization of the secret services, leading to the creation of “parallel secret services,”

which are taken away from the control of the official agencies; or creating “private” agencies for special operations. This process has been going on for a long time in the United States and also elsewhere. This was already very evident with the Iran-Contra networks and their operations. These networks, which involved some key figures, including George Bush—the father—operated in Afghanistan, for example, using people like Osama bin Laden, and acted against the Constitution and without the control of the Congress, and even of the official agencies of the secret services. The Iran-Contra figures have been involved in weapons- and drug-smuggling operations, for example.

More recently, *EIR* has emphasized the crucial role of Dick Cheney in these operations, who has a higher role than that of Negroponte. This is not only about his dirty operations with Halliburton, but the role he has played for ten years, with Paul Wolfowitz and other neo-cons in the Pentagon, in defining a complete strategy, a strategy of preventive war and the use of “parallel secret services.” In Iraq, we have seen special sectors of military intelligence, such as the Office of Special Plans, operate outside any Constitutional mandate, in the interest of special groups. We have also indicated the crucial role played by Negroponte. Now, you were in the United States, with Calipari, about one year ago—

Malabarba: Please let me have more *EIR* material on these matters.

On Calipari, I can only mention some impressions I had. Recently, I learned that he had some clashes with De Gennaro when he was working with a department of the police. Many people highly respected his work in the Immigration Department of the police, particularly in Rome. He developed a

certain competence in this field, and then was integrated into SISMI, rapidly becoming responsible for certain activities in the Middle East, because of various important contacts he had built up over the years. He was considered somewhat anomalous: A policeman who ends up with these positions and responsibilities is something rare. It was well known, it was in the air, that this was not welcomed by certain sectors of military intelligence, and by the head of the police himself, who has long been thinking about a restructuring of SISMI. The role played by SISMI in Iraq, including in the liberation of the hostages, gave it more room for maneuvering, and greater importance.

I got to know Calipari last year, before the kidnappings, and I got an idea of how the relations between the American and Italian services might be. This also led to what the Americans say about the Italians, that there was a complementary relationship functioning in the war situation. The role and contacts developed by the Italians in the Arab world, especially before the war, were important for the Americans; and these included contacts with people in the Saddam Hussein regime. But there was also some mistrust in this process. At the press conference that I just participated in, to present a book on the Iraq War [see review, below], I said that when we entered the CIA headquarters for discussions with the various secret services, we were asked to deposit our cellular phones. I immediately gave them mine, because it didn't work in the U.S. anyway. Calipari privately said, "I'm not going to give them my phone, just to find out later that it was cloned." This was the day they told us about the way electronic monitoring is done.

Collaboration between American and Italian intelligence is extremely close in these sectors, maybe even closer than with allies like the British. There is competition between the Americans and the British in the Middle East. But there is jealousy between the intelligence services: It even happens among the different services in our country. The attitude of not giving out sources of information, like his cell phone, also revealed the feeling that such information could be used against your interests. This was my sense; this was the atmosphere, even if Calipari never explicitly said it this way.

EIR: You know that every time there is a discussion on preventive war and the Iraq War, when pro-war spokesmen have difficulties, they always raise the question of Sept. 11: "Where do you stand? With the terrorists or with the war on terrorism?" We have seen it hundreds of times in television debates. The supporters of the Iraq War say: We are at war because we were attacked. Lyndon LaRouche and *EIR* have questioned the official story about the 9/11 attacks, from the very beginning. LaRouche even said on live radio that morning, that such a sophisticated operation required the complicity of someone inside the United States. Recently, even the association of victims has raised many questions, because it is unsatisfied with the official explanation.

Now, we know that a dossier was produced right after 9/11 and sent to all the allied governments, including the Italian government, and it was immediately classified. This dossier is the basis for Italy's participation in the general war on terrorism and also in the Iraq War. I collaborated with some Senators a few months ago in preparing a parliamentary question, which you also signed, asking the Italian government to lift the secrecy on this dossier, particularly after we learned about Cheney's lies on the weapons of mass destruction, Abu Ghraib, and so on.

What more can be done to find out the truth?

Malabarba: I agree completely on the necessity of knowing more about these documents and dossiers, but I fear there is not much of a chance that we'll get them, including the information given to the allies. In general, we have serious difficulties in obtaining them, not only because of the incompetent answers you get when you ask, but also because parliamentary debate on these matters is explicitly blocked. Even now, there are open differences with the U.S., where Italian magistrates are investigating Calipari's death. The Italian government is now pushing for this, even with the request for investigations and information officially made by the Justice Ministry. Thus, I do not expect much from Italy in this respect. It would be good to have an international court which is universally recognized; but we know the U.S. has completely rejected such an idea. Other international organizations are also impotent when faced with a question like this. Who could obtain the requested information from the United States?

One consideration: I do not know any specific elements that allow me to speak about domestic responsibility, although many things certainly lead us to consider certain options, such as the neo-conservative group's push for world domination. Indeed, even what we see in official documents is worrying; the "Patriot Act" is almost inconceivable, even for a traditionally conservative culture in Europe. During one Copaco hearing, a Milan anti-terrorism magistrate, D'Ambrosio, said: I am looking for more efficient means to be used in the fight against terrorism, but when I see the methods and the rules included in this Act, I am shocked.

This philosophy justifies Guantanamo, torture, and many other things; so it clearly tells me they want to achieve their aims by any means possible. It also implies that someone could allow certain provocations to take place in order to justify a specific response.

I don't know if we can achieve concrete results, but we can create a democratic sensitivity that can put pressure on the U.S., and Europe could play a positive role in such a process, although in Europe as well, economic interests usually take over in such dramatic situations, and many are ready to forget the existence of human rights. . . . I doubt that Europe wants to discover the truth and actually challenge the present dangerous neo-conservative forces and their plans. But I believe that every single case is important, to keep open the possibility of searching for the truth.