

Italy Outraged: Charge Freed Journo Shooting Deliberate [UPDATE]

Posted by

Saturday, 05 March 2005 10:04 - Last Updated Saturday, 05 March 2005 10:04

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The United States military has pursued shoot to kill policies on independent journalists at least since the opening days of the Iraq war. [Dozens have been killed](#) - all regrettable "accidents of war." As Bush Himself says: "It's a dangerous place." Now, they've been outed by a survivor.

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{lex}

US Soldiers Try To Murder Another Journalist

Posted by Lew Rockwell at 01:57 PM

[\[UPDATE\]](#)

[Mar 6th, 2005 17:15 GMT](#)

[AFP](#)

Initial shock at the shooting dead by US forces of top Italian secret service agent Nicola Calipari, a key player in Ms Sgrena's liberation, has given way to anger and polemic. - BBC

The Italian press are [not letting this one go](#) . Even Bush loyalist, Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi's hammer lock on the electronic media in that country can't stay the story there. And now, the [U.S. press is piling on](#) .--*{lex}*

Italian ex-hostage suggests she may have been US target

ROME (AFP)

Freed Italian hostage Giuliana Sgrena is helped out of the plane at Ciampino airport in Rome. Sgrena fanned a growing diplomatic rift between Rome and Washington by suggesting the US soldiers deliberately tried to kill her.

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The Italian journalist wounded by US troops shortly after her month-long kidnap ordeal ended, fanned a growing diplomatic rift between Rome and Washington by suggesting the US soldiers deliberately tried to kill her.

Giuliana Sgrena, wounded when the convoy taking her to safety was riddled by US fire near Baghdad airport on Friday, said she may have been a target because the Americans opposed negotiations with her kidnappers.

"Everyone knows that the Americans don't want hostages to be freed by negotiations, and for that reason, I don't see why I should rule out that I was their target," Sgrena told Sky Italia news channel on Sunday.

The comment comes amid fears that Friday's incident, in which Italy's top intelligence officer in Iraq, Nicola Calipari, was killed, could lead to a full-scale diplomatic rift between the two allies.

"The incident could have very serious political consequences," Italy's La Stampa daily said in a front page editorial, adding that relations between the two governments had "suffered an immediate deterioration"

Hour by hour, Washington's version of events was unravelling, the Turin-based newspaper said.

The US military said their forces had given ample warning to the driver of Sgrena's car, which they said was approaching at speed when they opened fire, but Sgrena said they had not been travelling fast.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld called his Italian counterpart Antonio Martino **"to express the regret of the American administration and his personal regret"** over Calipari's death, Italy's defence ministry said Sunday.

Washington has pledged a full inquiry into the incident and President George W. Bush has

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personally expressed his regret over what happened.

Martino said he was sure that ***"the ongoing investigation will fully clarify the circumstances which led to the tragic end of this incident"***.

Meanwhile, hundreds of mourners lined up outside the Vittoriano national monument in central Rome to pay their respects to Calipari, whose body was repatriated late Saturday.

The crowd -- many carrying flowers and waving Italian flags -- applauded as his coffin was borne inside the monument where it was to lie in state until a funeral with full military honours on Monday.

Italy's President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi hailed Calipari as a "hero" who had used his body to shield Sgrena after the US patrol opened fire. Sgrena was wounded in the shoulder and was being treated at a military hospital in Rome.

Friday's incident is likely to rekindle debate in Italy over when to withdraw Italy's 3,000 strong military contingent from Iraq, the key condition laid down by Sgrena's kidnappers for her release.

Much of the country opposed the original decision by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in June 2003.

Ruling party member Raffaele Costa said Sunday that parliament, which is due to debate an extension to the mission on March 14, should set a clear date for withdrawal.

"It's time now that the responsible political forces define a way out that everybody can agree on."

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Communist leader Fausto Bertinotti said withdrawal of the troops would be a ***"act of public health, of real and political hygiene for our country"***.

While Sgrena's suspicion she may have been a target for US firepower was not generally shared by Italy's press Sunday, an indignant La Stampa said the US government had been informed about her impending release.

"And the presence of an American colonel at Baghdad airport along with the Italian officers who were waiting for Sgrena and her liberators, demonstrates that the operation was being conducted in harmony," the newspaper said.

It said however that a ransom was "almost certainly" paid to the kidnapers, even though any payment was "very probably" opposed by the Americans.

Sgrena, a 56-year-old correspondent for the Italian communist daily **Il Manifesto**, confirmed on Sunday that she had been voluntarily released by her kidnapers, but said she had no knowledge of any ransom payment.

With most attention on the dramatic aftermath, little has been said about the circumstances of her actual release. Sgrena's account in her newspaper made it clear however that no force was involved, and that her kidnapers drove her to an obviously pre-arranged handover point.

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Italy Outraged: Charge Freed Journo Shooting Deliberate Lew Rockwell (and 1 Posts) Mar. 5th, '05

Despite the universal [reprinting of Pentagon press releases](#) by the US media--the Italian car carrying the hostage and her rescuers was speeding towards the checkpoint and refused to stop despite warning shots--the foreign press reports the truth. When the USG soldiers opened fire, the car was 700 yards from the airport and [had passed all checkpoints](#)

. Giuliana Sgrena had helped expose Abu Graib and other US military crimes, including massacres in Fallujah, and she has much more to say. She is hated for not being embedded and FOXified, so they opened fire. One can never rule out a snafu--this is the government, after

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all--but the rest of the world sees it as an attempted hit. Thanks for the link to

[Kevin Thomson](#)

and the link and translation to

[Christopher Manion](#)

US attack against Italians in Baghdad was deliberate: companion 3/5/2005

[Latest wire from AFP](#) Latest world news at 01h02 3/6/2005

[US under pressure to explain Italian convoy shooting in Iraq](#)

Pressure has increased on the United States to explain its troops firing on a convoy carrying freed Italian hostage Giuliana Sgrena, that wounded her and left one of her rescuers dead.

[More from AFP wire](#)

ROME - The companion of freed Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena on Saturday leveled serious accusations at US troops who fired at her convoy as it was nearing Baghdad airport, saying the shooting had been deliberate.

"The Americans and Italians knew about (her) car coming," Pier Scolari said on leaving Rome's Celio military hospital where Sgrena is to undergo surgery following her return home.

"They were 700 meters (yards) from the airport, which means that they had passed all checkpoints."

The shooting late Friday was witnessed by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's office which was on the phone with one of the secret service agents, said Scolari. "Then the US military silenced the cellphones," he charged.

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"Giuliana had information, and the US military did not want her to survive," he added.

When Sgrena was kidnapped on February 4 she was writing an article on refugees from Fallujah seeking shelter at a Baghdad mosque after US forces bombed the former Sunni rebel stronghold.

Sgrena told RaiNews24 television Saturday a "hail of bullets" rained down on the car taking her to safety at Baghdad airport, along with three secret service agents, killing one of them.

"I was speaking to (agent) Nicola Calipari (...) when he leant on me, probably to protect me, and then collapsed and I realized he was dead," said Sgrena, who was being questioned on Saturday by two Italian magistrates.

"They continued shooting and the driver couldn't even explain that we were Italians. It was really horrible," she added.

Sgrena, who was hospitalized with serious wounds to her left shoulder and lung after arriving back in Rome Saturday before noon, said she was "exhausted because of what happened above all in the last 24 hours".

"After all the risks I have been running I can say that I'm fine," she said.

"I thought that after I was handed over to the Italians danger was over, but then this shooting broke out and we were hit by a hail of bullets."

The chief editor of Sgrena's left-wing newspaper Il Manifesto Gabriele Polo meanwhile branded Calipari's death a "murder".

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"He was hit in the head," he said.

Calipari will be given a state funeral Monday.

03/05/2005 13:43 GMT

AFP and Turkish Press