

TARGETING CITIZENS - WHEN THE WHITE HOUSE WANTS TO PUNISH WHISTLE-BLOWERS

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Sabrina de Sousa: Part I - Targeting Americans

An insider's view on Crossfire Hurricane and Brennan and company outsourcing their spying and dirty deeds to overseas intelligence services.



[AND MAGAZINE](#)

Sabrina de Sousa is a former CIA undercover officer who resigned from her position following the issuance of Italian arrest warrants for her and other U.S. officials. She was [convicted](#) by the Italian government of helping with the abduction of Egyptian cleric Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr in Italy as part of a CIA "extraordinary rendition" program to snatch terrorism suspects in various countries and transfer them in secret to undergo interrogation in third countries.

She was one of 26 people convicted but **the only one to spend any time in prison for the operation.**

The Italian president commuted her four-year prison sentence but she was to carry out community service for three years, ending 8 November 2020.

De Sousa has always claimed her innocence, saying she was not in Milan on the day of the abduction and had no involvement in the kidnapping.

The views and insights expressed below are hers.

In May 2016, with the Trump - Russia collusion operation well underway, former CIA director John O. Brennan traveled to Lisbon, Portugal to personally oversee a spy swap.



Nuno Rogeiro @nrogeiro
@nrogeiro

Ex-CIA head Brennan came to Lisbon. No one noticed, except us at SIC. We reported. He came to seal the so called «Top Secret» operation, through which we caught an alleged mole in our services (now serving sentence) and alleged SVR agent Sergei N. Podznyakov. Lisbon wanted...



1:17 PM · May 2, 2020

A Russian - Sergei N. Podznyakov - had just been arrested in Rome, Italy, along with a Portuguese foreign intelligence service (SIS) officer. European national security officials described Podznyakov as a senior officer in Russia's foreign intelligence service (SVR). Podznyakov was operating as an "illegal," a spy without diplomatic cover, serving as a handler for the Portuguese intelligence officer, whom he paid to obtain NATO's intelligence secrets. The Portuguese Intelligence officer was soon repatriated to Lisbon to stand trial, while the Russian remained in detention in Italy, resisting extradition to Portugal.

Leveraging foreign allies

Brennan's presence in Portugal signaled his approval for the spy swap deal. The **Italians agreed to swap Podznyakov, on condition the Portuguese would agree to swap me - a former CIA intelligence officer**, who had incurred Brennan's wrath. "*Bad things would happen to me, I was warned by a former colleague.*"

That either Portugal or Italy agreed to a deal involving my extradition was a surprise.

My entry into Portugal in April of 2015 was coordinated at the highest levels of the Portuguese government, since I had a decade long, active Europe-wide arrest warrant issued by Italy against me.

The underlying case is called the "Abu Omar case" or the "Imam Rapito affair." Abu Omar, also known as [Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr](#) and Osama Moustafa Hassan Nasr, is a Muslim cleric, who on February 17, 2003 was abducted by the CIA, transported to the [Aviano Air Base](#)...^{[7][8]} The case involves "kidnapping charges in Italy for the seizure of a suspected terrorist."^[9] The Italian government originally denied having played any role in the abduction, but Italian prosecutors Armando Spataro and Ferdinand Enrico Pomarici indicted two dozen American and Italian government employees and agents.^[10]

[Wikipedia.org](#)

Per emails from both of my attorneys, on 23 March 2015, the Portuguese Attorney General and two members of her staff met with both my attorneys and a Portuguese member of the EU parliament (EUMEP) to discuss my case. Not only did the Portuguese AG *not* voice her disapproval given the political nature of my case, but instead referred my attorneys to an official at the "Gabinete de Documentação e Direito Comparado da Procuradoria Geral da República" to fine tune my arrival into Portugal. Evidently all agreed that there would be no paper trail for the "project."

Consequently, I entered Portugal without incident. The Italians were well aware of my presence in Portugal, *yet did not order my extradition. Five months later*, on the heels of a meeting between U.S. and Portuguese officials, the Portuguese arrested me. My arrest forced the Italians to issue the extradition notice which arrived several days later.

It's possible that Brennan was flying under the Obama White House radar. It was unclear what the White House knew about the Podznyakov case, or the extradition swap that Brennan

had worked out with Portugal and Italy. Podznyakov's arrest did not get much media coverage, despite the press noting that the Russian would have had access to "Vladimir Putin's foreign secrets." His name was conspicuously absent in media reports.

In the spring of 2016, my U.S. attorney had approached the Obama White House about my case. A senior White House official acknowledged to him that they were not informed about any specifics and that the CIA, i.e. Brennan, was point person for all things related to me and Italy.

The Portuguese [press](#) trumpeted the excellent cooperation between two European Union states for the spy swap, citing the various legal justifications for the extraditions, as "an instrument with a very strong legal weight in safeguarding the sovereignty of the countries of the European Union." And that "*European rules are above any political argument or political alliance.*"

Despite all the EU cooperation justifications, former Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi – a huge Obama ally – chose Putin over Brennan and released the Russian from custody allowing him to travel back to Moscow.

The Italian Ministry of Justice then took the unusual step of sending Portugal a letter providing justification for **not** extraditing me, which Portugal might have agreed to, but for Brennan. He would return to Portugal to finish the job.

What had baffled many former CIA officers at the time, was Brennan's posture towards me. It was sometimes characterized as plain "vindictive," and was possibly the result of my numerous attempts to defend myself from prosecution in both U.S. and Italian courts – for a counter-terror operation authorized at the highest levels of the U.S. and Italian governments. More on this in Part II.

Or perhaps there was a larger issue at stake? Extensive international media coverage on my extradition case brought the CIA's Rendition, Detention and Interrogation (RDI) program up for renewed scrutiny, at the time when former DCIA Gina Haspel was serving as Chief of Station (COS) in London. She is documented as having a managerial role in the RDI program. Both Italy and the U.K. played significant roles in the now debunked Russia Collusion operation to target then candidate Donald J. Trump.

So what exactly was Brennan hoping to attribute to Podznyakov if he was indeed extradited to Portugal? By summer of 2016, Brennan was well aware that the information in the now infamous [Steele Dossier](#) which was used as the basis to launch the Russian Collusion investigation, could not be verified.

Could the select subcommittee on the weaponization of the federal government be in possession of Brennan's notes regarding Podznyakov and the spy swap?

Outsourcing the job

The [Durham Report](#) omits the origins of the Russia Collusion operation, despite *foreign intelligence* being the predicate for the FBI opening an investigation into the Americans in Trump's orbit.

The U.K.'s role. In the summer of 2016, Robert Hannigan, head of Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with Brennan regarding communications between the Trump campaign and Moscow. Oddly, Hannigan bypassed his U.S. counterpart, NSA Director Mike Rogers.

Therefore, it's entirely possible that Hannigan was responding to Brennan's tasking, requesting signals intelligence (electronic surveillance) on members of the Trump campaign. Depending on how the tasking was couched, Hannigan may have been unwitting of Brennan's intentions to specifically target Trump.

A number of European countries also passed GCHQ electronic intelligence on Trump's associates. The raw intelligence was uncorroborated and unverified and used in the now [debunked](#) Steele Dossier.

The British are our closest foreign allies. The U.S. - U.K. cooperation is critical to our respective nation's national security priorities. No U.S. intelligence or law enforcement activity takes place on British soil without the express approval of the COS London.

In fact, Senator Chuck Grassley's declassification of some FBI texts, reveal travel and coordination plans involving the U.K., including during the transition period in late November 2016. There were attempts to protect the identities of foreigners used in the entrapment operation against some of Trump's campaign officials. A few of the same Americans would later be prosecuted in the U.S.

Senator Rand Paul's letter to DCIA [Gina Haspel](#) asked some pretty pointed questions regarding her knowledge of possible CIA involvement while Haspel was in the U.K.

So I sent a letter to Gina Haspel asking her did the CIA eavesdrop on the Trump campaign **when they were in England?**"

"It is supposed to be illegal for the CIA to spy on Americans – so the question is **did John Brennan ask the British intelligence to spy on Americans for him?** Did he ask them to spy on President Trump's campaign?"

Rand Paul via [NBC News](#)

Former Attorney General Bill Barr, who [believed](#) that the CIA "stayed in its lane," imposed limitations on special counsel John Durham by only allowing the investigation to "narrowly focus on the conduct of FBI's Crossfire Hurricane" (CH) investigation. In early 2017, Mike Pompeo, then DCIA, appointed Barr to the CIA's advisory board.

Secretary Pompeo ...
@SecPompeo

AG Barr first served our Administration as a member of my Advisory Board at the CIA. He made me a better Director and the Agency a stronger espionage force.

12:17 PM · Dec 15, 2020

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In 2020, Haspel, who Pompeo picked to lead the CIA when he was named Secretary of State, refused Trump's order to declassify documents related to the Russian collusion operation.

Italy's role. Italy stepped in to play a significant role by providing the individuals and locales for the entrapment part of the Russia Collusion operation. For example, George Papadopoulos an American and foreign policy advisor to then candidate Trump, was targeted by Joseph Mifsud a Maltese professor operating out of Link University in Rome. Mifsud gained some [notoriety](#) as he was apparently kidnapped by Italian Intelligence and subsequently just disappeared.

Conveniently, and perhaps intentionally, Mifsud – the central actor in the Russia Collusion operation – was now out of reach of U.S. law enforcement officials like Barr and Durham, who traveled to Italy twice hoping to interview him. Secretary of State Pompeo and DCIA Haspel quickly followed up with their own [trips](#) to Rome. Suddenly, all leads to Rome fizzled out.

Outsourcing the targeting of Americans - whether political candidates or rank and file government employees like myself - was indeed an effective and clever strategy on Brennan's part. Foreign intelligence officials who may have passed intelligence or provided logistical support to entrap or prosecute Americans, do not come under U.S. jurisdiction and therefore are under no obligation to testify, respond to FOIAs or subpoenas. Those officials cannot be forced to produce a central figure in the Russia-Trump collusion debacle, e.g. Mifsud, for questioning or testimony.

Brennan used his credentials, which came with almost unlimited power and resources to reward or destroy, in order to serve his own political ambitions.

For years my job in Italy involved working closely with Italian intelligence and law enforcement utilizing the same tools - intelligence leads, entrapment, prosecution - in our fight against a common enemy to keep Italians safe from terrorism.

The Italian government then turned around and used that same methodology against a few of us Americans selectively, to prosecute some while protecting others. Protecting foreign "bi-lateral relationships" became the go to excuse for not holding foreign officials accountable.

Portugal extradition 2.0. In November 2017 Trump won the Presidency. Unexpectedly. The Washington establishment moved quickly to remove the one obstacle in place to maintain influence in the Oval Office. General Michael Flynn, the incoming director of the NSC had to go. And soon.

End - November during the transition period, Brennan returned to Portugal. Again, he want me extradited to Italy asap, which the Portuguese immediately ordered, despite the fact that the Portuguese courts had not yet completed their review of my case.

I would have never known of Brennan's trip, (a DCIA's travel is closely held information) were it not for my Portuguese attorney who received a visit at his office from the head of Portuguese intelligence, SIS. While my attorney would not disclose any further details of their conversation, he did ask me if I thought Brennan would "come back to power." Fear.

The extradition would have gone forward during the transition period, were it not for a former Congressman who had been following the fallout from the Milan rendition since its early days and offered assistance. The CIA (Brennan) got wind of my communications and wanted to know who was involved and how they planned to stop the extradition. This was followed by a weird pause.

Trump was sworn in; Mike Pompeo [appointed](#) Haspel as deputy. (Haspel was enthusiastically endorsed by Brennan and some of the "spies who lied.")

On February 13, 2017 General Flynn was fired.

On February 13, 2017 the Portuguese proceeded with the extradition process, catching the Italians by surprise again. This time the Portuguese were taking no chances. They arrested me and imprisoned me for the 10 days required to complete the extradition process. Italy had no choice but to comply and dispatched three Italian Europol officers to Lisbon to transport me to prison in Italy. Close to midnight on the 9th day, Italy removed the extradition requirement, but ordered me to complete my sentence via probation.

Probation was baked into the plan to silence me. It was outsourced to Italy.

A former Congressman then on the intel committee, informed me about an agreement in place between the CIA (Pompeo/Haspel), Portugal and Italy (NFI). Based on Italy's subsequent actions, it appeared that the Milan rendition had to be memory holed and "never come up again." The renditions (RDI) program would take centerstage at Haspel's Senate confirmation hearings for the top spy position. Haspel deftly fielded questions about her role in the program. However, explaining away having a CIA officer spend time in foreign prison over the same program, would reflect badly on her and prove the CIA's willingness to scapegoat rank and file officers in the interest of self-preservation among the leadership.

Therefore, despite being in violation of [EU law](#), an Italian judge threatened me *with imprisonment* if I wrote my memoir or made any public comments that might change the decade plus narrative. Five carabinieri officers were stationed outside the court room ready to haul me to prison, in the event I refused. Deviating from standard protocol, U.S. Embassy Rome Legal Attache (FBI), not State Department's consular services, communicated with the Italian court. (Per email communication forwarded to my Italian lawyer).

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