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## CIA tried to silence EU on torture flights

Germany offered access to prisoner in Morocco if it quelled opposition

**Richard Norton-Taylor**  
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[The Guardian](#)

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A Boeing 737 BBJ with registrations N313P and N4476S, which may have carried terror suspects, has been seen at UK airports and is seen here at Palma, Majorca. Photograph: Toni Marimon/Airliners.net

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The CIA tried to persuade Germany to silence EU protests about the human rights record of one of America's key allies in its clandestine torture flights programme, the Guardian can reveal.

According to a secret intelligence report, the CIA offered to let Germany have access to one of its citizens, an al-Qaida suspect being held in a Moroccan cell. But the US secret agents demanded that in return, Berlin should cooperate and "avert pressure from EU" over human rights abuses in the north African country. The report describes Morocco as a "valuable partner in the fight against terrorism".

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The classified documents prepared for the German parliament last February make clear that Berlin did eventually get to see the detained suspect, who was arrested in Morocco in 2002 as an alleged organiser of the September 11 strikes.

He was flown from Morocco to Syria on another rendition flight. Syria offered access to the prisoner on the condition that charges were dropped against Syrian intelligence agents in Germany accused of threatening Syrian dissidents. Germany dropped the charges, but denied any link.

After the CIA offered a deal to Germany, EU countries adopted an almost universal policy of downplaying criticism of human rights records in countries where terrorist suspects have been held. They have also sidestepped questions about secret CIA flights partly because of growing evidence of their complicity.

The disclosure is among fresh revelations about how the CIA flew terrorist suspects to locations where they were tortured, and Britain's knowledge of the practice known as "secret rendition". They are contained in Ghost Plane, by Stephen Grey, the journalist who first revealed details of secret CIA flights in the Guardian a year ago. More than 200 CIA flights have passed through Britain, records show.

He describes how one CIA pilot told him that Prestwick airport, near Glasgow, was a popular destination for refuelling stops and layovers. "It's an 'ask-no-questions' type of place and you don't need to give them any advance warning you're coming," the pilot said.

The CIA used planes of Air America, a group of private companies it secretly owned, and a second company, Aero Contractors. A CIA Gulfstream V jet, frequently used for the secret rendition of prisoners, flew to Diego Garcia, the British Indian Ocean territory where the US has a large base, the book says. Grey plans to publish more than 3,000 logs of the CIA flights on the internet this week.

CIA pilots, sometimes using false identities and whose planes regularly passed through Britain, ran up huge bills in luxury hotels after flying terrorist suspects to secret locations where they were tortured. But they revealed their whereabouts and identities by indiscreet use of mobile phones and allowed outsiders to track their aircraft's flights.

On one occasion, CIA pilots and crew lived it up in Majorca after rendering Benyam Mohammed, an Ethiopian brought up in Notting Hill, west London, to Afghanistan where he was tortured. Benyam was detained in Pakistan early in 2002, and then flown to Morocco, where he says he suffered appalling torture. He is being held at Guantánamo Bay.

Benyam has said in a statement to his lawyer that he was tortured for more than two years after being questioned by US and British officials. He says that while in Morocco he was shown photos of people he knew from a west London mosque, and was asked about information he was told was supplied by MI5.

The government has consistently denied it has ever actively cooperated in the CIA's "extraordinary rendition" programme". The Foreign Office said yesterday that the government had "not approved and will not approve a policy of facilitating transfer of individuals through the UK to places where there are substantial grounds to believe they face a real risk of torture".

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