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CIA agents to stand trial for kidnapping

Fri Feb 16, 2007 7:20am ET



MILAN (Reuters) - A Milan judge on Friday ordered 26 Americans, most of them thought to be CIA agents, to stand trial with Italian spies for the kidnapping in 2003 of a terrorism suspect, who was flown to Egypt where he says he was tortured.

Among those indicted are the former heads of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in Rome and Milan, Jeff Castellani and Robert Lady, and the former head of Italy's SISMI military intelligence agency, Nicolo Pollari, court sources said.

It is expected to be the first criminal trial anywhere over "renditions", one of the most controversial aspects of U.S. President George W. Bush's war on terrorism. The Americans will almost certainly be tried in absentia.

Prosecutors say a CIA-led team, with SISMI's help, grabbed Muslim cleric Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, also known as Abu Omar, off a Milan street in February 2003, bundled him into a van and drove him to a military base in northern Italy.

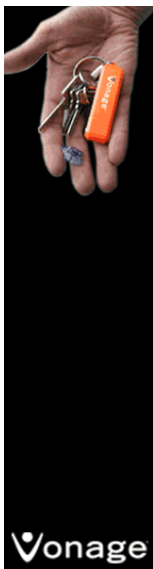
From there, prosecutors allege they flew him via Germany to Egypt where he says he was tortured with electric shocks, beatings, rape threats and genital abuse.

The trial was scheduled to begin on June 8.

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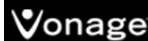
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