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German’s Claim of Kidnapping Brings Investigation of U.S. Link
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MUNICH -- On the afternoon of Dec. 31, 2003, Khaled el-Masri was traveling on a tourist bus headed for the Macedonian capital, Skopje, where he was hoping to escape the “holiday pressures” of home life during a weeklong vacation.

When the bus reached the Serbia-Macedonia border, Mr. Masri said, he was asked the usual questions: Where are you going? How long will you be staying? Mr. Masri, a German citizen, did not think much of it, until he realized that the border guards had confiscated his passport.

The bus moved on, but an increasingly panicked Mr. Masri was ordered to stay behind. A few hours later, Mr. Masri, a 41-year-old unemployed car salesman, said he was taken to a small, windowless room and was accused of being a terrorist by three men who were dressed in civilian clothes but carrying pistols.

“They asked a lot of questions -- if I have relations with Al Qaeda, Al Haramain, the Islamic Brotherhood,” recalled Mr. Masri, who was born in Lebanon. “I kept saying no, but they did not believe me.”

It was the first day of what Mr. Masri said would become five months in captivity. In an interview, he said that after being kidnapped by the Macedonian authorities at the border, he was turned over to officials he believed were from the United States. He said they flew him to a prison in Afghanistan, where he said he was shackled, beaten repeatedly, photographed nude, injected with drugs and questioned by interrogators about what they insisted were his ties to Al Qaeda.

He was released without ever being charged with a crime. The German police and prosecutors have been investigating Mr. Masri’s allegations since he reported the matter to them last June, two weeks after his return to Germany.

Martin Hofmann, a senior national prosecutor in Munich who handles terrorism cases and is in charge of the Masri investigation, and another official, a senior organized crime investigator in southern Germany, say they believe Mr. Masri’s story. They said investigators interviewed him for 17 hours over two days, that his story was very detailed and that he recounted it consistently. In addition, the officials said they had verified specific elements of the case, including that Mr. Masri was forced off the bus at the border.

Still, much of Mr. Masri’s story has not been corroborated. His assertion that he was held by Americans in Afghanistan, for example, is solely based on what he said he observed or was told after he was taken off the bus in Macedonia.

Mr. Masri said he was confounded by his captors’ insistence that he was a Qaeda operative. He attends a mosque in Ulm, Germany, that has been closely watched by the authorities because several suspected terrorists have worshiped there. But those authorities say Mr. Masri has never been a
suspect.

Mr. Masri's lawyer, Manfred R. Gnjidic, said he suspected that his client was swept into the C.I.A.'s policy of "renditions" -- handing custody of a prisoner from United States control to another country for the purposes of interrogation -- because he has the same name, with a slightly different spelling, as a man wanted in the Sept. 11 attacks. The policy has come under increasing criticism as other cases have come to light recently.

Although the German authorities say they have no specific suspects in the Masri case, they say they are looking into the possible role of the United States and other countries.

"It is an unusual case," Mr. Hofmann said. "The political dimension is huge. Under German law, we can charge a person with kidnapping, but not a country. Countries cannot kidnap people."

Officials at Germany's national intelligence agency said they are also investigating. They said they asked the F.B.I. for assistance last fall but have received little help.

A senior administration official said the Bush administration had been aware of these allegations for some time, but he referred questions to the F.B.I. and the C.I.A.

In a series of interviews, neither the C.I.A. nor the F.B.I. would deny or confirm Mr. Masri's allegations. A C.I.A. spokeswoman said the agency would not comment at all. Senior F.B.I. officials in Washington acknowledged that they received a request for help from the Germans last October, and said they were assisting in the investigation. The officials disputed that they had not worked aggressively on the case.

"This is a very ongoing thing, and we are working together with the Germans to resolve it," a senior official said. "Our hope is we can get to the bottom of it." The official declined to discuss whether the bureau had had any contact with the C.I.A. or Pentagon about the allegations.

Golan Pavlovski, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Macedonia, said he had no information about Mr. Masri's case.

When he returned home last June, Mr. Masri said, he felt relief but also rage. Asked whom he blames, Mr. Masri, a burly, soft-spoken man, looked at his hands for a long moment before saying, "Of course, I blame the Americans first."

Similar Cases

Mr. Masri's allegations bear similarities to the case of Maher Arar, a Canadian born in Syria who was suspected of being a Qaeda operative. Mr. Arar, who was detained in New York in 2002, says he was sent by the United States to Syria, where he says he was repeatedly tortured during 10 months in prison.

A second detainee, Mameddouh Habib, an Australian, has asserted in court papers that he was tortured in an Egyptian prison for nearly six months in 2001 before being transferred to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The allegations were contained in a motion filed with a federal court recently. Mr. Habib's lawyer has asked the federal district court in Washington to block the Bush administration from sending him back to Egypt, asserting that he would be tortured again there.
The C.I.A. began the renditions program in the early 1990's, but its use has increased since the Sept. 11 attacks. Human rights organizations, who say the policy is tantamount to government-sponsored kidnapping, estimate that dozens of "high value" detainees are being held in secret locations around the world. C.I.A. officials have acknowledged that the agency conducts renditions, but say they do not condone the use of torture during interrogations.

Mr. Masri, who had not gone public with his case, agreed to give an interview last month after being approached by The New York Times. During the interview, he spoke without notes, and in great detail, about his case. He said he was able to recount his time in captivity because he wrote down his experiences right after he was released.

The timeline was corroborated by documents, including a bus ticket and a stamp on his passport in Albania on May 29, the date he said he was released. He returned to Germany on June 3. His account also matched details in a report about his case written by Amnesty International, whose officials interviewed Mr. Masri on June 21.

"Mr. Masri had been questioned twice for a lot of hours, and he always said the same things, he never changed details," Mr. Hofmann said in an interview about his country's investigation. "Therefore I don't think it would be possible that someone could invent such a story."

Mr. Masri said his ordeal began after he decided to go on a short vacation without his family after arguing with his wife, choosing Skopje because it was inexpensive and friends had recommended it.

After being interrogated the first night in Macedonia, Mr. Masri, who speaks German and Arabic, was taken to a motel on the outskirts of Skopje, where he said several men held him for 23 days. "They told me: 'You are not arrested. You aren't handcuffed, are you?" Mr. Masri recalled. But he said he was not permitted to leave.

Questions About Al Qaeda

He said the men continued to question him about Al Qaeda. After several days, Mr. Masri said he lost his temper, demanded to speak with officials from the German government and tried to escape. "One man put his pistol in his hand and showed it to me, to stop me from leaving," Mr. Masri said.

Another week went by, he said, before another man arrived to question him. "He was nice to me," he recalled. "He said we'll make a deal -- you say you are an Al Qaeda member, and sign a paper saying that, and we'll put you back on a plane and you will be deported to Germany."

Mr. Masri said he refused. The man left but returned two days later, he said, and this time he was more combative. "He said I'm not cooperative, I bring problems on myself, they know everything about me," Mr. Masri said.

He said the man asserted that Mr. Masri was originally from Egypt and had been to a Qaeda training camp in Pakistan -- allegations that Mr. Masri said he repeatedly denied.

After three and a half weeks, Mr. Masri said he was told that he could return to Germany. The Macedonians took a statement from him on videotape to show he was in good health when he left their country, he said. Afterward, Mr. Masri said, he was permitted to leave the motel, but a few steps down the road, a pickup truck pulled up next to him, and several men grabbed him.
Mr. Masri said that a hood was put over his head but that he believed he was driven to the airport because he could hear the roar of planes. He said he was taken to a room and beaten. He said his clothes were cut off with knives, and he heard the sounds of cameras taking pictures. "After I was naked they took off my mask so I could see, and all the people were in black clothes and black masks," he said. "There were seven or eight people."

Mr. Masri said a couple of men put him in a blue warm-up suit, handcuffed him and tied his hands to his belt, put plugs in his ears and blindfolded him. He said he was put on a plane, where he was forced to lie on the floor. Someone injected his arm, he said, and he fell into a deep sleep.

After an unknown number of hours, he said, he awoke to find that the plane had landed. He said he was taken to a building and imprisoned in a tiny, cold cell. "Everything was dirty -- a dirty blanket, dirty water, like from a fish aquarium," he said.

On the walls in his cell were words written in Arabic and what he believed was Farsi. Mr. Masri said that his captors and fellow prisoners told him he was in Kabul, Afghanistan.

That first evening in prison, Mr. Masri said, a man he assumed was a doctor, wearing a thin black mask, came to his cell to take a vial of blood. He said he believed that the doctor was American because he spoke English. Mr. Masri said he was repeatedly punched in the head and neck by several guards who accompanied the doctor. He also said he was forced to run up and down stairs with his arms shackled behind his back.

The following morning, Mr. Masri said, an interrogator walked into his cell and, in a thick Lebanese accent, began shouting at him. "He told me, 'Where you are right now there is no law, no rights, no one knows you are here, and no one cares about you.'"

Mr. Masri said the man had a stack of documents and told him they knew "everything" about him, including that he was an associate of Mohamed Atta, one of the Sept. 11 hijackers, and Ramzi bin al-Shibh, who is believed to have helped the hijackers. They also accused him of being a senior Qaeda operative who was trained in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, he said. "I denied everything -- I kept saying, 'No, no, no.'"

His lawyer, Mr. Gnjdic, said he thought that his client had been confused with the Sept. 11 suspect Khalid al-Masri, because that man is believed by American authorities to have had contact with Mr. bin al-Shibh and Mr. Atta and to have been partly responsible for directing them to a Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan. It was there that the two men met Osama bin Laden, who enlisted them for the Sept. 11 mission.

More weeks went by, and Mr. Masri said he then met a man who presented himself as a top lieutenant at the prison. He believes that man was also an American, based on his accent.

"They asked me about Umm, how many people go to the mosque, how often do they pray," he said. "I told them. When I asked why I was there, I never got an answer."

A Hunger Strike

In March, Mr. Masri said he began a hunger strike. On the 35th day, he said an Afghan prison guard told him, "The Americans don't care if you live or die."
Two days later, he said, he was beaten again and forcibly fed liquid through a tube shoved down his throat.

Mr. Masri said he then ended his hunger strike. He said he was getting to know his fellow prisoners -- there were two Pakistani brothers and a man from Tanzania who had been there for several months. He also said there was a Pakistani man who had been there nearly two years.

"I'm sure those men will take revenge, after what was done to them," Mr. Masri said. "Some said to me -- we hope to get out of here and then have the power to make something happen against the Americans."

Weeks went by. In May, Mr. Masri said he met a man he believed was German and who was introduced as "Sam." The man posed the same series of questions -- mostly about any dealings he may have had with Mr. Atta and Mr. bin al-Shibh. "He was friendly," Mr. Masri said. "So I said, 'Can you please tell me if my family knows where I am?' And the German said, 'No, they don't know.'"

The German authorities said they were unable to confirm Mr. Masri's account of a German agent.

The Return Home

A week later, Mr. Masri said, he was blindfolded, taken to the airport and put on a flight, and then placed on a bus and driven for six or seven hours. His blindfold was removed, and a man told him to walk down a deserted, winding mountain road, he said. "I had the feeling after a few steps, they'd shoot me in the back."

He walked around the bend and came upon a border crossing, where three men in uniforms waited for him, he said. Mr. Masri said he told one of the men about his five months in captivity. "The man was laughing at me," he said. "He said: 'Don't tell that story to anyone because no one will believe it. Everyone will laugh.'"

Mr. Masri asked where they were; the man said in northern Albania, near the Macedonian border. The border officer handed Mr. Masri a plastic box containing the belongings that were taken from him on the first day of his captivity, including his passport and cash, he said. The man told him he was free to go, and his passport was stamped by the nation of Albania, on May 29, 2004.

From there, he bought an airplane ticket and flew to Frankfurt. Once in Germany, Mr. Masri said he returned to his hometown, Ulm, but his wife and four sons, ages 2 to 6, were not at home. "I feared the worst -- I feared something happened to my family," he said. Four days later, he found them at his wife's mother's home in Lebanon.

In an interview, Mr. Masri's wife, Aischa, said she had moved back to Lebanon after not hearing from her husband. She said she began thinking, "Maybe he has gone to marry another woman."

Mrs. Masri, 29, said she did not expect to see him again. "The boys have cried a lot in Lebanon. They always have asked me, 'Why are we here, Mom, and where is Daddy?'" she said, and then began to weep. "From time to time, I called his friends in Germany and asked them if they heard anything from him or about him. But no one knew anything."

Mr. Masri said he was still trying to rebuild his life. He said he had no steady employment, and almost no friends. "The phone doesn't ring -- people
> have heard, and they don't want to see me," he said.
>
> It was not until last August that Mr. Masri was told by his lawyer that he
> had the same name as the Sept. 11 suspect.
>
> Mr. Masri said he was bedeviled by questions that he and the German
> authorities still could not answer. "There are so many questions," he
> said. "How did it happen? Why did it happen? I don't know."
>
> Photo: Khaled el-Masri said he left his wife and children for a weeklong
> vacation and returned to them after five months of captivity. (Photo by
> Dieter Mayr for The New York Times)(pg. 6)
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> Artikel 2

> Germany linked to U.S. abduction inquiry opens near Munich on suspect taken
> to an American prison in Kabul
> Don Van Natta Jr., Souad Mekhennet and Nicholas Wood
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> Don Van Natta Jr. reported from Munich, Souad Mekhennet from New Ulm,
> Germany, and Nicholas Wood from Skopje, Macedonia. This article was written
> by Van Natta.
> *
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> For more than a year, the German government has been openly critical of the
> United States for its role in the abduction of a German man who was taken to
> an American prison in Kabul, where he said he was held and tortured for five
> months after being mistaken for a terrorism suspect.
>
> German officials said they knew nothing about the man's abduction and have
> repeatedly pressed Washington for information about the case, which has
> sparked outrage here. At a meeting in Berlin in December, Chancellor Angela
> Merkel demanded an explanation of the incident from Secretary of State
> Condoleezza Rice.
>
> But on Monday in nearby New Ulm, the police and prosecutors opened an
> investigation into whether Germany served as a silent partner of the United
> States in the abduction of the man, Khaled el- Masri, a German citizen of
> Arab descent who was taken off a bus on New Year's Eve 2003 in Macedonia and
> flown to the Kabul prison.
>
> The action came after a two-and-a-half-hour meeting at police headquarters
> in which Masri told the police that he was "90 percent" certain that a
> senior German police official was the interrogator who visited him three
> times inside the prison in Kabul but identified himself only as "Sam."
The German prosecutors said Monday that they were also investigating whether
the German Embassy in Skopje, Macedonia, had been notified about Masri's
kidnapping within days of his detention there, but did nothing to try to
help him.

In broadening its criminal inquiry into the abduction of Masri to the
activities of its own government, the prosecutors are trying to determine
whether German officials worked secretly with the United States in a
practice known as "rendition," in which terror suspects are sent to be
interrogated in other countries where torture is commonly used.

"I feel deceived and betrayed by my own country," Masri, a 42-year-old
unemployed car salesman from Ulm, said in an interview.

The German police official Masri identified as "Sam" denied that he had
visited Masri in Afghanistan and said he was "on holiday" at the time.

In a surprise to Masri and his lawyer, the man was present Monday afternoon
at the police station, where Masri picked him out of a 10-person lineup.
After meeting with him and speaking with him, Masri said his voice was
similar but his hairstyle was not. Masri said he was "90 percent sure" that
the man was "Sam."

Prosecutors said they were not sure whether the German police official had
visited Masri in prison. "We do not assume that this man is Sam," Martin
Hofmann, a prosecutor in Munich said Monday afternoon. "But we will still go
forward with our investigation."

A senior German official familiar with the case also said that Masri was "at
best mistaken" and that the police official "cannot be Sam."

The New York Times is withholding the name of the official Masri thought was
"Sam" because he often does undercover intelligence work. He frequently gets
"sensitive" assignments and helps clean up "dirty work" for the German
foreign intelligence service, said one of his long-time colleagues, who
spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A senior Macedonian government official who was directly involved in Masri's
case told The Times that not long after Masri's detention Macedonian
officials notified the German Embassy in Skopje.

CIA officers in Macedonia conducted the interrogation of Masri, Macedonian
officials said. A CIA spokesman declined to comment.

August Stern, the federal prosecutor here who is leading the criminal
investigation of Masri's kidnapping, said his investigators were trying to
determine whether the German Embassy was told about Masri's detention and
then sent a German agent to the U.S. prison in Kabul to talk with him.

August Hanning, state secretary for the Interior Ministry, denied in an
interview that any member of Germany's secret services had visited Masri
while he was held captive. "He has never been to Afghanistan," Hanning said
of the police official.

Two other senior officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because
of the case's sensitive nature, denied that the German Embassy in Skopje
had been told about Masri's detention.

"The German Embassy in Skopje was not informed by Macedonian authorities
while German citizen el-Masri was in custody in Macedonia," a Foreign Office
>spokesman said.

>A second official said that Germany did not learn about Masri's detention until May 31, 2004, when the U.S. ambassador to Germany at the time, Daniel Coats, informed German officials about Masri's detention and eventual release.

>Later this week, the German government is expected to turn over a report to Parliament about Masri's case.

>Meanwhile, investigators at the Council of Europe, led by Dick Marty, a Swiss lawmaker, are investigating whether there was cooperation between the CIA and their counterparts in European countries.

>"I have no explanation for the whole case," said a senior German official.

>"To bring such a man like el-Masri from Europe to Afghanistan and to ask him some questions and six months later, the explanation that it's a terrible error is not terribly convincing."

>Manfred Gnjidic, Masri's lawyer, said he was convinced that Germany "stood by like a little schoolboy, watching what was going on with my client and doing nothing."

>After more than five months in captivity, the United States released Masri without filing charges against him.

>His case was first revealed in The Times in January 2005. In December, Masri filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Virginia, against the former director of the CIA, George Tenet, three private airline companies and unnamed CIA officials.

>At the December meeting in Berlin between Merkel and Rice, the kidnapping of Masri was discussed privately, but the two leaders seemed to disagree about the substance of the conversation afterward.

>Merkel said that the Bush administration had admitted it had mistakenly abducted Masri. But Rice declined to discuss with reporters anything about Masri's case. She only said she pledged to Merkel: "When and if mistakes are made, we work very hard and as quickly as possible to rectify them."

>In late 2003, Masri left his wife and five children in Ulm for a trip to Macedonia. Prosecutors here have confirmed from witnesses that Macedonian border guards removed Masri from a tourist bus at a border checkpoint on Dec. 31, 2003. Macedonian and German officials said Masri was detained because his name was on an Interpol terror list. But they said the name referred to another Khaled el-Masri.

>Masri was held in a nearby hotel in Macedonia for several weeks, where he was questioned by the CIA, senior Macedonian and U.S. government officials said. A senior Macedonian official said that the German Embassy was notified about Masri within days of his detention. "Unofficially, they knew," the official said of the Germans.

>Two senior Macedonian officials said the Americans had requested that Masri be detained in Macedonia for 23 days. "We consider the Americans as our partners," another senior Macedonian official said. "We cannot refuse them."

>Masri said he pleaded with his captors to let him go. "Call the German Embassy," Masri recalled telling them repeatedly. "I'm a German citizen. Please tell them I am here!"
"They don’t want to talk to you," Masri said one of his captors replied.

In a recent interview, Masri said: "I thought it was strange that they kept telling me the Germans didn’t care about me. Now I know why they said that because it was true."

At the hotel, Masri said he was asked whether he was struck by the many questions that he was asked about his time in Germany.

A German official, however, disputed that assertion, saying that Germany had often shared information with their American counterparts about suspected terrorists. But the official acknowledged that Masri was not considered by the German police to be an "important" suspect.

Publicly, Macedonia has denied that Masri was held illegally. Hari Kostiv, interior minister at the time and later the prime minister, said in an interview: "There is nothing the ministry has done illegally. The man is alive and back home with his family. Somebody made a mistake. That somebody is not Macedonia."

In late January 2004, Masri was sent to Afghanistan, where he was held and beaten for five months.

For Masri, one of the biggest mysteries was the identity of the interrogator who identified himself as "Sam" and who spoke in fluent German with him at Kabul prison.

The man visited three times during Masri’s final month in jail.

During the first meeting, Masri said he asked the man if he was from Germany, but the man declined to answer. Masri recalled asking him, "Do the Germans know I’m here?"

"He said he did not want to answer," Masri recalled. "I asked him if my wife knew I was there. ‘Sam’ said she doesn’t know. He then said I shouldn’t ask questions, I should only answer them."

During their second meeting, the man was no longer belligerent, Masri said, bringing him cookies, chocolates and a copy of the German newsmagazine Focus.

In their last meeting, a week before Masri’s release, the man told him that he would be going home soon.

On Dec. 12, 2005, Gnjidic, Masri’s lawyer, received an e-mail message from a German freelance journalist named Frank Kruger, who suggested that "Sam" might be a German police official.

When Masri first saw a photograph of the man, he was "80 to 90 percent sure" that it was the police official.

After meeting with the police official, Masri said, "The man was very nervous and he could not look at me into my eyes. He looks very different from the picture the hair is different but the voice sounded very similar."

Gnjidic said he found it hard to believe that, other than the prosecutors in Munich, no one in the German government has sought Masri’s testimony about his ordeal.

"The scandal for me is that the Germans did nothing when they heard a German
"had been captured," he said. "They should have protested very hard and tried
to stop this."
Masri will „Sam“ identifiziert haben

Staatsanwalt: Nicht eindeutig


Eoi Weltmarkt

Düsseldorfer Energiekonzernt bietet 29 M


Meldungen über Offenbar Verhandlungen in Belgrad /!


Es sei nicht klar, ob Mladic aufgeprügelt wurde oder ob er sich nach Verhandlungen mit der serbischen Regierung freiwillig gestellt habe, meldete der unabhängige Belgrader Sender B92. Die EU hatte ihren Druck auf die serbische Regierung in
They beat me from all sides

This German car salesman says that a year ago he was kidnapped in Europe, beaten and flown to a US-controlled jail in Afghanistan. Now the German government is collecting evidence to back up his story. James Meek hears Khaled el-Masri's account of life in America's secret offshore prison network.

A man is walking along a remote path in the darkness. He is carrying a suitcase. He seems frightened, tired and confused. He has long hair and a long beard, but they are untidy, as if he did not grow them voluntarily. He turns a bend and meets three men carrying Kalashnikovs.

The man shows them his passport. It indicates that he is a German citizen, born in Lebanon, called Khaled el-Masri. Giving poor English, he tells them that he does not know where he is. They tell him that he is on the Albanian border close to Skopje and Mavrovo, and that he is there illegally since he does not have an Albanian stamp in his passport.

The story of el-Masri kicks down by way of explanation, on this evening in late May 2003, extraordinary; a story of how an unremarked German car salesman from the town of Ulm went on a New Year's holiday to Macedonia, was seized by Macedonian police at the border, held incommunicado for weeks without charge, then beaten, stripped, shackled and blindfolded and flown to a jail in Afghanistan, run by Afghans, but controlled by Americans. Five months after first being seized, he says, still with no explanation or charge, he was flown back to Europe and dumped in an unknown country which turned out to be Albania.

What really happened? With no way to prove his story, el-Masri's account remains in the balance, a terrifying account of America's war on terror. It is certain that he returned home to Ulm from Albania in May 2004, and that he was taken off a train from Germany at the Macedonian border on New Year's Eve 2003. The only person who has offered a clear explanation for what happened in the five months in between is el-Masri himself. Yet that may change. The German authorities are now taking his allegations very seriously. They are subjecting a sample from el-Masri's hair to DNA analysis, which can reveal, down to a particular country, the source of a person's food and drink over a period of time. Discussions are also under way about bringing to Germany two men whom el-Masri has identified as being with him in the Afghan prison, and who were subsequently released. The fact that the German authorities do regard Ulm as an area of potentially dangerous radical Islamic activity—a number of prisoners were radicalised and alleged Islamic extremists were arrested on Wednesday—only emphasises the concern that Germany has over the el-Masri case.

So far the US authorities have neither confirmed nor denied el-Masri's story, although German investigators first requested information about the case in autumn. The FBI office in the US embassy in Skopje did not return calls yesterday.

On Tuesday the Guardian was the first European news organisation to interview el-Masri, at the Ulm office of his lawyer, Manfred Geoffrue. In a conversation lasting more than four hours, el-Masri conveyed a powerful impression of sincerity: if this story is not true, he must be an actor of genius. He broke down in sobs as he described the moment he was abducted by masked men and put on a plane, accused himself of racism who rocketed him forward, the blindfold came off and he saw the buildings. He was given a drink of water and then clearance, before being held in a cell. He was later flown to Afghanistan, and then back to Europe. He said he was afraid to return to Afghanistan for fear of not leaving.

If true, the abduction would add a clear understanding of a pattern of US behaviour: frightening events to implausible ends for America and for the rest of the world. The former
El-Masri was kept prisoner in the room for 23 days. Macedonian civilian police were constantly present, and he was subjected to repeated interrogations about his links to Islamic organizations — he says he has none — and about the mosque in Ulm where he worshiped.

After about 10 days, a Macedonian and a Nicer appeared. "He said it was taking a long time, but it was worth it. They were making a deal. We have to say you are a member of Al-Qa'ida. Then we will put you on a plane and take you back to Germany. I refused, naturally. It would have been suicide to sign."

El-Masri says he was then taken to an empty house to hide, and there were reports of having been to a torture training camp in Jalalabad. Of having a fake passport, and being in reality a citizen of Egypt. On the evening of January 29, he was handcuffed, blindfolded, in a car and told he was going to Germany. He was driven to a place where he heard the sound of a plane, then heard the voice of one of the Macedonian saying he would have a medical examination.

"I heard the door being closed," said El-Masri. "And then they took me from all sides, from everywhere, with hands and feet. With knives or scissors they took away my clothes. In silence. The beating, I think, was just to humiliate me, to hurt me, to make me afraid, to make me silent. They탑ed and nudged me. I was terrified. They tried to take off my pants. I tried to stop them so they beat me again. And when I asked, I heard a camera," El-Masri breaks as he recalls the moment when the men carried out an intrusive search.

He was dressed in a cross, short-sleeved, short-legged suit and a belt. His feet were shackled and his hands were chained to the wall. His ears were plugged and ear defenders placed over them and a clip put on his nose. A hood was put over his head. With his arm raised painfully high behind his back, he was forced to walk, his knees forward and a retractable knife was placed behind him as he walked down on a bare metal floor, chained and bound, and given an injection. He was dazed aware of a landing and taken off to a second interrogator, to a man in a room, where he was thrown back on to a bare metal floor, chained and bound, and given an injection. He was dazed.

El-Masri arrived in what he later found to be his cell by being pushed violently against the wall, thrown to the floor, having feet placed on his head and his back and having his chains removed. The cell was to be his home for the next four months. From the graffiti on the wall in Arabic script, but not Arabic and the Azerbaijani language, the guards believed he was in Azerbaijan. The broadcast was nothing in the cell except a Clarinet, a floppy disk and a bottle of rainwater so vile that the memory of it makes him violently sick.

El-Masri soon discovered that the prison, though technically Afghan, was run from behind the scenes by the US. His first encounter with an American was with a masked individual who spoke English with what El-Masri believes was an American accent. He had a Palestinian translator. The American took a blood sample and photographed El-Masri naked again.

"I asked him if I could have fresh water," said El-Masri. "And he added, 'It's not our problem. It's a problem of the Afghan people.' I said: 'Afghanistan doesn't have planes to kidnap people in Europe and bring them here, so it's not the problem of the Afghan people.'"

By whispering through the door, and exchanging messages on pieces of toilet paper.

"Kabul is a country without laws and nobody knows that you are here. Do you know what this means?"
Macedonia implicated in ‘abduction’ case

A German national has claimed that he suffered months of abuse in a Kabul jail after being arrested on a visit to the Macedonian capital of Skopje.

By Ana Petrusева and Miomir Serafinovic in Skopje for IWPR (24/01/05)

The Macedonian authorities were involved in the kidnapping and illegal detention of a German national following a “request” from the CIA, local police and intelligence sources have told IWPR. State prosecutors in Berlin have confirmed that they are “investigating unnamed parties on suspicion of abduction” following complaints by Khaled el-Masri, a German national of Lebanese origin. The unemployed father of six claims that, after being kidnapped and illegally detained while traveling in Macedonia, he suffered months of abuse in a US-controlled secret prison in the Afghan capital Kabul. A number of police and intelligence sources confirmed the claims to IWPR, saying that Macedonian officers were acting on a request from Washington. And enquiries at Skopje airport have revealed that a US Boeing 737 left for Kabul at the time el-Masri claims he was transferred. Few Macedonian police officials are willing to discuss this case on the record. Interior Ministry spokesperson Goran Pavlovski would only say “no comment” when IWPR asked him about el-Masri’s allegations. However, the Interior Ministry has not denied that Macedonian police were involved in the alleged abduction. Police and intelligence sources have told IWPR that el-Masri was held for 23 days by agents from the Macedonian directorate for security and counter intelligence - in response to information and a request from the CIA. “We did not look for him, we just acted upon information we had received. In other words, we just followed a request from an intelligence agency of a friendly country,” one police source said. An Interior Ministry official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, stressed, “While in Macedonia [el-Masri] was not beaten or tortured. Our people acted in a strictly professional manner.”

The ‘abduction’

El-Masri, a 41-year-old unemployed car salesman from the German town of Ulm, claims that he was taken off a tourist bus by police on the Macedonian side of the border with Serbia on his way to Skopje on 31 December 2003. His luggage was searched and he was questioned for a few hours before being taken to a large town - he assumes Skopje - by armed police. Local intelligence sources in the Kumanovo area - which also covers the Tabanovce border crossing with Serbia, where el-Masri was allegedly taken off the bus - told IWPR that they had heard about the abduction, insisting it was conducted by Macedonian counter intelligence agents from Skopje. “We knew that there was an operation, but we did not get any details as it was not related to our [work] at a local level,” one source from Kumanovo told IWPR. Police sources confirm that el-Masri was detained in Macedonia, but insist that the local intelligence services were only following orders from Washington. Asked why el-Masri was allegedly held without any charges, one police source replied that “in these cases the rules do not apply” noting that request from the CIA have absolute priority. Normally, suspects must be charged within 24 hours of their arrest, or released. But el-Masri claims that he was held for questioning in a hotel for 23 days without charge before being handed over to what he believes were Americans, and then flown to Kabul. A source at Skopje airport, who spoke on condition of anonymity, has told IWPR that official records do contain data about a special flight - a US Boeing 737 - that landed in Skopje from Palma de Majorca and then departed for Afghanistan. “According to airport records the American Boeing landed in..."
Skopje on 23 January at 9:30pm. It left Skopje few hours later, at 2am, with only one passenger. The name of the passenger is not listed. The plane's destination was Kabul,"" the source said. IWPR's official request for information from Skopje airport had not been answered at the time we went to press. But Kabul is not a regular destination for flights leaving the Macedonian capital. In Kabul, el-Masri claims that he was tortured and abused for a further four months, in an attempt to force him to confess to being an Islamic militant. He said that he was eventually released in Albania at the end of May 2004. His lawyer, Manfred Gnjidic, claims that el-Masri was the innocent victim of a controversial CIA policy known as "rendition" - where suspects are handed over to countries with poor human rights records so that information can be extracted from them using torture, while leaving the US' reputation unharmed. The lawyer told The New York Times that his client was taken because he has the same name - albeit with a slightly different spelling - as an al-Qaida-linked extremist who is wanted in connection with the September 11 attacks on the US.

Macedonia's role not to be overlooked

The British newspaper The Guardian, which has interviewed el-Masri extensively about his ordeal, has reported that the Berlin authorities are now subjecting a sample of his hair to radiosotope analysis - a procedure that can reveal the source country of all food and drink consumed by a person over a period of time. The seriousness with which the German authorities are treating the allegations has led some analysts to warn that Macedonia's alleged role in the events will not be overlooked. Former interior minister Pavle Trajanov told IWPR that el-Masri's case was "unique" and noted that "it is highly unusual to hand over people to other foreign intelligence services in this manner". "There is little doubt that [el-Masri] was held illegally," he said. "There were no grounds to keep him for such a long time, especially since no court placed him in custody. If el-Masri proves his case it is likely the US will [have to] take responsibility. "However, that does not mean that Germany will not react over Macedonia's role in the abduction." Law professor Vlado Popovski, former head of Macedonia's state intelligence agency, told IWPR that the law enforcement authorities had a duty of care to check the identity of any suspect they apprehend. "Hypothetically speaking, if the courts decide that this was a case of mistaken identity, the Macedonian authorities would not be relieved of their responsibility even if they thought [el-Masri] was the [right] man when they handed him over the another country's intelligence agency," he said. The Macedonian interior ministry and the German embassy in Skopje said that they were not aware of any official request made by Berlin for assistance from Macedonia in their enquiries. The US embassy in Skopje was approached about the allegations, but refused to comment. Macedonia has long expressed a willingness to aid the US's so-called war on terror, with mixed results. Former interior minister Ljube Boskovski is still on the run after being charged with the murders of seven economic migrants, passed off as Islamic extremists, in an apparent effort to impress Washington.

Ana Petrusheva is IWPR's project manager in Skopje. Miomir Serafinovic is a Skopje-based journalist.

This article originally appeared in Balkan Crisis Report, produced by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). Balkan Crisis Report is supported by the UK Foreign Office and the US State Department.
Germans Investigate Kidnapping Allegations

A CIA official declined to comment on the case, saying, “We are not involved in any other case involving allegations of this nature.”

The Germans have been in touch with the CIA and other intelligence agencies about the case.

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German Sues Over Abduction Said to Be at Hands of C.I.A.

By SCOTT SHANE
Published: December 6, 2005

WASHINGTON, Dec. 6 - A German citizen who says he was abducted, beaten and taken to Afghanistan by American agents in an apparent case of mistaken identity in 2003 filed suit in federal court today against George J. Tenet, the former C.I.A. director, and three companies said to have been involved in secret flight operations.

The suit came three days after Khaled el-Masri, a 42-year-old Lebanese-born former car salesman, was refused entrance to the United States after arriving Saturday in Atlanta on a flight from Germany with the intention of appearing at a news conference today in Washington. He spoke instead by video satellite link, describing somberly how he was beaten, photographed nude and injected with drugs during five months in detention in Macedonia and Afghanistan.

"I want to know why they did this to me," Mr. Masri said, speaking in German. He said that he had been reunited with his wife and children and was seeking work in Germany but that he had not fully recovered from the trauma of his experience.

"I don't think I'm the human being I used to be," he told
German Sues Over Abduction Said to Be at Hands of C.I.A. - New York Times

reporters through an interpreter.

In a separate interview in Germany, Mr. Masri said his weekend encounter with federal immigration officers in Atlanta made him briefly fear that the ordeal might be repeated or that he might be taken to the American detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"My heart was beating very fast," he said. "I have remembered that time, what has happened to me, when they kidnapped me to Afghanistan. I have remembered and was afraid."

The lawsuit, filed by lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union in Alexandria, Va., came on a day of talks between Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, who said Ms. Rice had admitted that Mr. Masri's detention had been a mistake.

Since it was first reported in January, the Masri case has become an oft-cited example of tough American counterterrorism policies gone awry.

His lawsuit is the latest development in a series of challenges by human rights groups on the Central Intelligence Agency's clandestine operations to transport, detain and interrogate suspected terrorists since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Under particular scrutiny are secret detention centers, including some reported to be in Eastern Europe; the use of harsh interrogation methods by American intelligence officers; and the delivery of more than 100 suspects to other countries, including some where torture has been routine, in a practice known as rendition.

http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/06/international/europe/06cnd-detain.html?adxnnl=1&emc=eta1&adxn... 12/7/2005
The lawsuit appears to be the first to target a web of companies that own and operate a fleet of aircraft used by the C.I.A., including many based at the rural Johnston County Airport in Smithfield, N.C. The companies named in the suit were Aero Contractors Ltd., a Smithfield company that provides crews and maintenance; Premier Executive Transport Services of Dedham, Mass., which previously owned the Boeing business jet used to take Mr. Mastri from Macedonia to Afghanistan; and Keeler and Tate Management L.L.C., of Reno, Nev., which owns the jet today.

The lawsuit could force the C.I.A. to acknowledge its secret relationship with the companies, said Anthony D. Romero, executive director of the A.C.L.U. "That's what's novel here," he said. "What we learn of these three companies will be as interesting as the outcome of the case."

A spokesman for Mr. Tenet, who served as C.I.A. director from 1997 to 2004, said he had no comment, as did a spokesman for the C.I.A. Initial attempts to reach executives of the three air companies named in the lawsuit were unsuccessful.

Mr. Romero of the A.C.L.U. said the lawsuit was an attempt to counter the "culture of impunity" in the Bush administration for human rights violations and to force the C.I.A. to abandon practices in conflict with American values. The organization has obtained 77,000 pages of government documents on detention and interrogation under the Freedom of Information Act that have been the basis for thousands of news reports.

Mr. Romero took issue with a statement Ms. Rice made on Monday before leaving for Germany denying accusations of human rights violations and declaring that "the United States does not transport, and has not transported, detainees from one country to another for the purpose of interrogation using torture."

"Unfortunately, as our lawsuit shows today, those statements are patently false," Mr. Romero said.

*Souad Mekhennet contributed reporting from Germany.*
December 7, 2005

Germany's Merkel Under Pressure After Rice Debacle

By REUTERS

Filed at 8:16 a.m. ET

BERLIN (Reuters) - German Chancellor Angela Merkel faced mounting domestic pressure and her first big foreign policy challenge on Wednesday after a messy diplomatic spat with the United States over a German man held as a terrorist suspect.

Opposition politicians accused Merkel of failing to get answers from visiting U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on the case of the German man, Khaled el-Masri, and on wider concerns about U.S. methods in the war on terrorism.

"We heard only general explanations...I don't think yesterday brought us a single step forward," Heinz Lanfermann, a liberal member of parliament, told n-tv news.

His Free Democrat party and the fellow opposition Greens called for a parliamentary debate on Wednesday next week on the case of Masri, who was held for five months as a terrorist suspect by the United States in an Afghan prison last year.

A visit from Rice on Tuesday, intended as a bridge-building trip with Merkel's new government, veered badly from the intended script when the Masri case was raised.

While Merkel told reporters Washington had acknowledged it made a mistake in detaining him, a senior U.S. official said Rice had said no such thing.

"We are not quite sure what was in her head," he said, referring to Merkel.

German media seized on the embarrassing contradiction.

"CIA Affair: Chancellor Merkel angers the USA," headlined the Berliner Morgenpost.

The Financial Times Deutschland said: "Not only is there no apology, but even the word 'mistake' is too much for the United States when it comes to a concrete case."

The disagreement soured Merkel's first foray into transatlantic diplomacy since taking office two weeks ago.

She had hoped to open a new chapter in relations with the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush, which has not forgiven her predecessor, Gerhard Schroeder, for his outspoken opposition to the invasion of Iraq.

ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

The Masri affair has become an explosive political issue in Germany and attracted world attention as the United States faces renewed allegations of illegal tactics and human rights abuses while waging its war on terrorism.


12/7/2005
Prominent members of Merkel's coalition government, including her foreign minister, were also senior figures in Schroeder's administration and are coming under pressure to say what they knew about the Masri case and how they acted on it.

Former interior minister Otto Schily denied hushing up the affair and said he had pressed for a U.S. explanation.

"Unfortunately, this did not happen in an adequate manner," Schily told Die Zeit newspaper.

The Lebanese-born German, who was flown to Afghanistan after being arrested in Macedonia on December 31, 2003, filed a lawsuit in the United States on Tuesday against former CIA director George Tenet and other officials, alleging wrongful imprisonment.

He said he was beaten, kicked, photographed naked and confined to a cement cell with a filthy blanket for a bed, brackish drinking water and boiled chicken bones for food.

Masri said in a German television interview that his interrogator in Afghanistan had told him: "You are in a country where there aren't any laws. We can forget about you here for 20 years or bury you here and no one will know anything about it."
CIA said to have wrongly held German suspect

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - CIA operatives held a German citizen in a prison in Afghanistan for six weeks even after determining he was not an Osama bin Laden associate and despite an order from then-national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, NBC News reported Thursday.

Authorities in Germany have been investigating complaints by Khaled el-Masri, a Lebanese-born German who says he was abducted in Macedonia on New Year's Eve in 2003 and flown to Afghanistan.

Masri said he was beaten and injected with drugs by interrogators, who suspected he had ties to bin Laden's al Qaeda network. He was released in May 2004 in Albania.

NBC said he had been picked up because his name matched someone trained in bin Laden's camps and his German passport was thought to be fake.

The network, citing unnamed senior U.S. officials, said CIA officers concluded Masri was the wrong man after his passport proved legitimate. The network said then-CIA Director George Tenet had been alerted to the error.

But Masri was held at a CIA-run prison dubbed the Salt Pit for another six weeks "while officials debated how to handle the mistake," NBC said.

It said the matter reached Rice, now secretary of state and then President Bush's chief national security adviser. She ordered Masri's immediate release, twice, before he was finally let go, the report said.

A CIA representative had no comment. The CIA's inspector general is investigating, NBC quoted intelligence sources as saying.

In January, Munich prosecutor Martin Hofmann told Reuters state prosecutors were investigating unnamed parties on suspicion of abduction of Masri, then 41.

German officials had verified the details of Masri's journey up to the Macedonian border, where he was taken off a tourist bus, Hofmann said. He said they were working with overseas counterparts to establish what happened next.
U.S. may make mistakes in "war on terror" - Rice
Tue Dec 6, 2005 12:24 PM GMT

By Saul Hudson and Lou Charbonneau

BERLIN (Reuters) - Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice admitted on Tuesday that the United States may make mistakes in its "war on terrorism" and promised to put them right if they happened.

"We recognise any policy will sometimes result in errors, and when it happens, we will do everything we can to rectify it," Rice said at the start of a European tour overshadowed by allegations of illegal CIA methods against terrorist suspects.

Speaking in Berlin, she declined to comment on the case of a German man, Khaled el-Masri, who was allegedly abducted to Afghanistan and imprisoned there for five months last year until the CIA realised it had got the wrong man.

But German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the U.S. government had acknowledged it blundered over Masri, who plans to sue the CIA in a case to be filed in the United States later on Tuesday.

"I'm pleased to say that we spoke about the individual case, which was accepted by the United States as a mistake, and so I'm very pleased the foreign minister (Rice) has reiterated that if mistakes are made, they must immediately be rectified," Merkel told a joint news conference.

Masri's case has caused a furore in Germany, fuelled by a U.S. newspaper report that the former interior minister was told of the case in May 2004 and agreed to a request from the U.S. ambassador to keep it quiet.

Merkel said she would ask her foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to report on the Masri case to the parliamentary committee responsible for supervising the security services.

"MASS MURDER"

Rice was not challenged directly over reports that the United States had run secret prisons in Eastern Europe, which Washington has refused to confirm or deny.

But she reiterated her vigorous defence of U.S. methods in its war on 21st century militants.

"If you don't get to them before they commit their crimes, they will commit mass murder," she said. "We have an obligation to defend our people and we will use every lawful means to do so."

Rice said combating terrorism required close security cooperation, but intelligence methods could not be made public nor specific cases discussed.

"Without good intelligence, you can simply not protect innocent civilians from the kind of attacks we have experienced around the globe," she said.

She stressed that the United States operated strictly "within the context of laws and our international obligations", an assurance welcomed by Merkel.

Europe's leading human rights watchdog is probing the press reports on CIA secret prisons, as well as flights by CIA planes across the continent which it believes may have been used to transport terrorist suspects covertly.

http://today.reuters.co.uk/PrinterFriendlyPopup.aspx?type=worldNews&storyID=uri:2005-12-06T122400... 12/7/2005
The European Union and at least eight member states have sought clarification from Washington.

A new television report on Monday cited current and former CIA officials saying al Qaeda suspects had been held in Europe until last month but were then transferred to north Africa.

U.S. channel ABC news added that interrogation techniques used included sleep deprivation and a practice in which the subject feels they are being drowned, but that these were not classified as torture. The CIA declined comment.
Ein Opfer der

Es gibt neue Belege, dass der Deutsche Khaled el-


El-Masri gibt an, er habe sein Zuhause in Neu-Ulm Ende 2003 verlassen und sei nach Mazedonien gereist, wo er festge- nommen und verhört worden sei, bis er Ende Januar 2004 von mutmaßlichen CIA-Agenten nach Afghanistan geflogen wurde. Damit wäre er Opfer jener gefürchteten Praxis geworden, die in den USA rendition genannt wird und darin besteht, Terrorverdächtige in Staaten mit schwachen Menschenrechtsakti-
Verhältnisse

-Masri vom US-Geheimdienst verschleppt wurde
**Merkel verlangt Aufklärung von Steinmeier**

Der Außenminister soll berichten, was die frühere Regierung von der Entführung eines Deutschen wusste.

**Affäre um geheime Gefangene: Anspurende der CIA**


**Knast mit beschränkter Haftung**

Das Rätsel um „Sam“

Der von der CIA entführte Khaled el-Masri sagt, ein Beamter des Bundeskriminalamts habe ihn in Afghanistan verhört

Es ist schon gut zwei Jahre her, dass CIA-Agenten den Deutschen Khaled el-Masri nach Afghanistan entführt haben, wo sie ihn monatelang verhörten und misshandelten, doch bis heute ist der Fall mysteriös geblieben. Trotz strafrechtlicher Ermittlungen und einer umfangreichen Untersuchung durch die Bundesregierung bleiben die beiden zentralen Fragen des Falls unbeantwortet. Warum wurde Masri, einer der kurdischen Nationalisten, ein Jahr lang in Afghanistan gefangen gehalten? Warum wurde er dann wieder freigelassen, ohne dass eine offizielle Erklärung erfolgte?


Khaled el-Masri konnte in den Zeiten nachlesen, was er in Deutschland berichtet hat und was die deutschen Behörden dazu gesagt hatten. Fotograf AP

„Es wird hemmungslos gegen das Gesetz verstoßen“

Bundesrichter Nesovitch, der für die Linke im Bundestag sitzt, übt Kritik an der Geheimdienstkontrolle des Parlaments

Von Annette Ramelserger
