



## MEPs in US Congress to debate CIA renditions and counter-terrorism measures

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**Nine MEPs took part in the first formal joint briefing for members of two US Congress subcommittees on Tuesday to discuss CIA renditions and other counter-terrorism measures with transatlantic implications. "We were delighted that Congress took this initiative and encouraged by the robust support and thanks voiced by Congressmen for Parliament's report and for the year-long work that its committee on CIA renditions had undertaken" said EP Delegation Chairman Jonathan Evans (EPP-ED, UK).**

International organisations subcommittee Chairman William Delahunt (Democrat, Massachusetts) introduced the hearing by advocating stronger transatlantic co-operation. "In the wake of the terrific attacks in 9/11, I remember a headline in Le Monde claiming: 'Today we are all Americans'. Sadly that support has eroded drastically. Our government accountability office has concluded that these trends of opinion against the USA have profound negative consequences for the Americans", he said, adding that "this is the result of other unnecessary excesses of Bush administration practice, like the so-called 'extraordinary renditions'".

Mr Evans felt that revelations about extraordinary rendition had had a highly detrimental impact upon wider transatlantic relations. "Debates concerning the legality of detentions and other activities in Guantanamo, coupled with the well-publicised instances of abuses in military prisons, have already served to create an adverse climate in which our constituents both in Europe and the US view renditions as yet further evidence of an abuse of the due process of law", he said.

Mr Evans also noted that "opinion polling by an American university last year found that fully 66% of respondents from Britain considered it likely that those who were participants in the rendition had been subjected to torture, a figure which rose to 76% in Germany and 78% in the United States", and "Among US correspondents, there was two to one majority in favour of the proposition that those suspected of terrorism should be entitled to rights of due process—although 10% of US respondents were prepared to waive these rights if the suspects were not US citizens".

Sarah Ludford (ALDE, UK), representing the European Parliament's temporary committee on CIA renditions, commented that "some people made the charge of anti-Americanism, implying that it was somehow disloyal to call into question the methods that our primary ally employed to fight terrorism. My response is that the scope of the challenge is to specific policies of the present administration, not to America in general, nor the American people".

Temporary committee rapporteur Claudio Fava (PES, IT) welcomed the opportunity to address Congressmen, pointing out that: "Congress is the first national parliament to ask us to come and brief it on our work on extraordinary renditions". He explained that the committee's work had elucidated over 19 rendition cases of rendition, including those of Italian cleric Abu Omar and a Canadian citizen of Syrian origin, Maher Arar. He felt these two examples showed that "renditions are usually not only dangerous, but useless". Mr Fava applauded the support voiced by most congressman for the thrust and content of the European Parliament report on CIA renditions. "The debate has been a fruitful one, showing that most congressmen don't approve of the intelligence activities undertaken by the US Administration", he said.

### Democratic control

Mr Delahunt completely agreed with MEPs on the need for better oversight of national anti-terrorism policies by Congress and European Parliament. "Congress has a right to ensure that our laws and values are respected by all administrations, Democratic or Republican", he said.

With this in mind, Mr Evans referred to the evaluation undertaken by Congress of the Patriot Act, and added that "the instruments for transatlantic cooperation with regard to the movement of persons, the judiciary sector and exchanges of information for security purposes, should be framed within international agreements, to be negotiated under oversight of Congress and of the European Parliament, as elected representatives of US and EU citizens".

### Renditions: "a useful tool"

Dana Rohrabacher, (Republican, California), a ranking minority member of the same subcommittee, gave a very different opinion on the CIA extraordinary renditions programme. "We are at war against terror", he said, defending renditions as a preventive tool against terrorism: "a few mistakes in rendering innocent suspects can well be justified if the final result is a safer country for our children. We don't take any initiative away and we should not take this tool away from the intelligence community in the middle of this battle. Renditions have been historically used and must be preserved", he said.

Ms Ludford replied that: "you can't cherry pick and press others to observe multilateral instruments in the trade and industry sectors without expecting to be pressed to respect human rights conventions, like the torture convention or

the international convention on civil and political rights. The world needs US leadership in upholding those vital legal instruments too”.

The MEPs delegation was formed by:

- Jonathan Evans (EPP-ED, UK), Chair of the delegation
- Giusto Catania (GUE/NGL, IT), Vice-chair of the Civil Liberties Committee
- Sarah Ludford (ALDE, UK), Vice-chair of the CIA renditions temporary Committee
- Patrick Gaubert (EPP-ED, FR)
- Martine Roure (PES, FR)
- Frieda Brepoels (EPP-ED, BE)
- Luis Herrero-Tejedor (EPP-ED, ES)
- Claudio Fava (PES, IT)
- Sophie In't Veld (ALDE, NL)


*Formal joint briefing for members of two US congressional subcommittees to discuss CIA renditions*


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