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PRESS RELEASE

30 to 50 extraordinary renditions undertaken according to intelligence sources, say MEPs

Senior sources from the US intelligence community admitted the CIA has operated extraordinary renditions: This was one of the main conclusions at the press conference given today by rapporteur Claudio Fava (PES, IT), following the visit of 13 MEPs to Washington on 8-12 May. The president of the Committee investigating alleged CIA activities in Europe Carlos Coelho (EPP-ED, PT) considered the visit to be *"very positive and productive"*.

Mr. Fava said today --at a press conference aimed to summarise the delegation activities in Washington-- that *"Senior sources from the US intelligence community confirmed that between 30 to 50 extraordinary rendition operations have been undertaken in the world since 2001. We also got a list from Human Rights Watch with the names of 27 presumed terrorists held under US custody in unknown places"*. He did not have information, however, as to whether or not any of these detainees were European citizens.

The rapporteur also explained that the State Department Legal Advisor John Bellinger -- one of the American guests to appear before the committee -- *"neither confirmed nor denied the existence of extraordinary renditions"*. All the same, Mr. Bellinger did seem to justify them politically, added Mr. Fava. *"Without confirming individual cases Mr. Bellinger said that renditions are 'probably indispensable' "*, he continued. *"All of that shed some light, even if the usual response was 'no comment' "*.

Detention centres

Asked by journalists about the existence of detention centres in Europe, Mr. Fava said that *"a first hand source"* confirmed *"the existence of seven black sites operated by the CIA in countries of Asia, Europe and Africa"*. According to that same person, he added, *"the secret centres in Europe were closed down following the public pressure exerted by the media, but there is a black site still operating in a North African country"*.

The fact that the White House *"called the editor of the Washington Post and told him not to name the countries"* allegedly involved in the practice of secret detentions, claimed Mr. Fava, is *"very strong confirmation of the existence of clandestine prisons"*.

EU governments involved?

The president of the delegation and TDIP committee Mr. Coelho described the trip to Washington as very productive and underlined that the availability of congressmen and US officials was *"much better"* than during the 2001 visit of the temporary committee on Echelon to the United States.

"All our guests", remarked the Committee chairman, *"suggested or confirmed that the extraordinary renditions programme carried out in Europe could only be achieved with the knowledge and support of European national governments"*. He then elaborated: *"State Department officials said, in a diplomatic manner, that the United States never violated the sovereignty of EU Member States; others admitted the involvement of European governments in a more straightforward way."*

The press conference was a follow up of the extraordinary meeting held by the temporary Committee last Monday 15, where they discussed the information obtained during the series of meetings with US government representatives, congressmen, CIA former members, lawyers and NGO members and gave their first assessment of their visit.

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