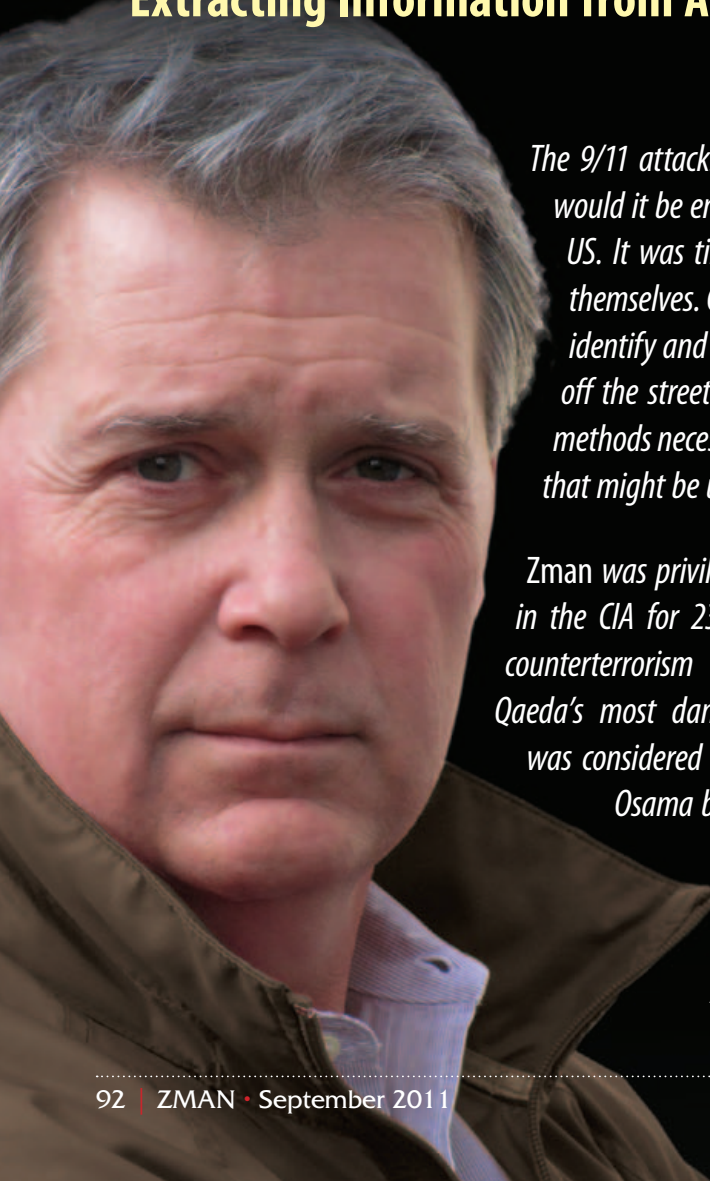




# Terrorizing Terrorists – CIA Style

**Interview with a former CIA Operative Instrumental in Extracting Information from Al Qaeda Terror Suspects**



*The 9/11 attacks changed America forever. No longer would it be enough to wait for terror to come to the US. It was time to take the battle to the terrorists themselves. Central to this effort was a campaign to identify and abduct terror suspects, whisking them off the street to secret locations and employing all methods necessary to extract information from them that might be used to save innocent lives.*

*Zman was privileged to interview a man who worked in the CIA for 23 years, many of them exclusively in counterterrorism units charged with interrogating Al Qaeda's most dangerous accomplices. Before 9/11 he was considered one of America's foremost experts on Osama bin Laden. Glenn Carle candidly shared with us not only his feelings about his personal successes and failures, but the successes and failures of America's War on Terror.*

*- Shimon Rosenberg  
- Rachel March*





It was a sunny day in Milan, a city in northern Italy. The date was Monday, February 17, 2003. Abu Omar left his home and like he did every day, set out for the half-mile trek to his mosque where he led the noontime Islamic prayers.

Omar didn't notice anything out of the ordinary as he passed the quaint little shops on Guerzoni Street – with the exception of a white delivery van which seemed a little out of place as it sat parked at the side of the road.

Before he had a chance to contemplate its significance, a red model 127 Fiat suddenly pulled up and screeched to a halt inches from the curb. A member of the Italian Carabinieri (national paramilitary police force) sprang out of the vehicle, shouting at Omar in Italian.

"I don't speak any Italian," a surprised Omar said in heavily accented English.

The officer repeated his command in English: "Stop right there! Let me see your papers!"

Omar obediently pulled out his passport, residency permit and I.D. card, and handed them over. As the police officer reviewed his papers, Omar could hear the engine of the white van behind them revving up and approaching at high speed. Suddenly, a side door opened, and before Omar could so much as turn around, two tall, muscular men jumped out, grabbed him under the arms and dragged him into the dark confines of the van.

Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, or as he was known among his followers, Abu Omar, had been a thorn in the side of American espionage agencies for years. The Egyptian imam was a virulent agitator who spewed venom and hatred in his sermons against the "Great Satan," the United States. He consistently urged his followers at the mosque to engage in jihad against the West and exhorted them to join the fighting in Afghanistan. Abu Omar himself had done a stint in Afghanistan, the cradle of Al Qaeda.

Before the catastrophic events

of September 11, 2001, the United States made do with keeping Omar on its radar by observing his activities from afar. But the horrific attacks on the Twin Towers spurred a radical change in the American attitude toward terrorism. There would be no more sitting around and waiting for the enemy to attack. Instead, the United States would become proactive, searching for and rooting out terrorist enclaves throughout the world before they had the chance to act.

For a while now, Abu Omar and his wife had begun suspecting that something was amiss. They noticed unknown cars following them and often picked up their ringing home phone, only to be greeted by eerie silence on the other end.

Omar believed that members of the Italian intelligence agency were on his trail. And he was right—only it wasn't just Italian investigators on his trail, but a team of American agents as well.

The Italian counterterrorism agencies believed he was a member of a terrorist cell involved in recruiting would-be terrorists. They tapped his phone lines and trailed his every move. The CIA, however, was eager to get its hands on Omar before the Italians arrested him. Several weeks earlier, a CIA team, under the direction of CIA station chief in Italy, Jeffrey Castelli, arrived in Milan for the express purpose of abducting Abu Omar. Only a select few from within Italy's counterterrorism police force were informed of the planned operation.

CIA agents spent weeks acquainting themselves with all the nooks and crannies of Guerzoni Street. They noted the exact route Abu Omar took on his daily walk to the mosque and decided on the best time to make their move. Finally, on February 17, agents took up positions along the street and waited for their man. Just before noon, the scouts relayed the information to agents in the white van. The "target" was on its way. The operation could begin.

As soon as Abu Omar was securely inside the van, a cloth was pulled over his head. The captors did not utter a word. Omar was

subdued, handcuffed and shoved to the floor of the van where he lay writhing, wondering where in the world he was being taken.

## Secret CIA Holding Cells

Abu Omar was just one of many suspected Al Qaeda members and terror promoters reached by the long arm of American counterterrorism forces after 9/11. The CIA set their sights on terrorist hideouts in countless countries around the world and quietly snatched suspects off the streets to be carted off to holding cells around the world. Many of them underwent torture by America's proxies in countries where torture was permitted. Others were taken to secret CIA prisons known as "black sites" in Afghanistan, Iraq, Thailand, Poland and Romania where they were tortured, or "semi-tortured" by CIA counterterrorism officers.

The aim of these operations was to sow terror and chaos among the ranks of the terrorists themselves, chief among them Al Qaeda. Many who were known or suspected of playing prominent roles in Al Qaeda suddenly disappeared. They were forced onto airplanes and secretly flown off to various countries where they were grilled for information on Al Qaeda and other terror organizations.

Abductions such as these were often



Armando Spataro, an Italian prosecutor, presenting his case during a symbolic trial and conviction of the CIA agents who were involved in the kidnapping of Abu Omar.



Image from the CIA's surveillance of Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr (Abu Omar) recovered during investigations by the prosecuting authority of Milan.



Abu Omar speaking about his ordeal, at an "Anti-Torture Forum" in Cairo.

conducted before 9/11 as well, under presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton. At first, the captives were all brought to the United States. But during the Clinton administration the CIA implemented a program wherein suspected terrorists were transferred to countries like Egypt, where they were subjected to various tortures outlawed in the US.

To sanitize the procedure – or at least the sound of the procedure – the CIA referred to these operations not as abductions or kidnappings, but renditions. When a terrorist was taken, he wasn't abducted or kidnapped, but "rendered."

With the country still reeling from the 9/11 terror attacks, then- President George W. Bush ordered the CIA to use every means at its disposal to prevent future attacks. On September 17, 2001, Bush signed a classified presidential order giving the CIA wider discretion in terrorist "rendition" operations. It wasn't