

Reporting by Sara Rossi; writing by Keith Weir; editing by Kevin Liffey

From [Yahoo](#) | Original Article

MILAN (Reuters) - Italy's former military intelligence chief was sentenced to 10 years in jail on Tuesday for his role in the kidnapping of an Egyptian Muslim cleric in an operation organized by the United States.

An American former CIA station chief was this month sentenced in absentia to seven years in jail after imam Abu Omar was snatched from a Milan street in 2003 and flown to Egypt for interrogation during the United States' "war on terror".

The Milan appeals court sentenced Niccolo Pollari, former head of the Sismi military intelligence agency, to 10 years in prison and his former deputy Marco Mancini to nine years.

The court also awarded a provisional 1 million euros in damages to the imam, the Ansa news wire reported, as well as 500,000 euros to the imam's wife.

Nicola Madia, a lawyer for Pollari, said he was disturbed by the decision and that his client would appeal to Italy's highest court. Pollari will not have to go to jail until the appeals process has been exhausted.

Madia said Pollari had not been able to defend himself properly because successive Italian governments had declared the case to be covered by state secrecy laws.

The sentences are part of the fallout from a campaign waged by then U.S. president George W. Bush after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

Abu Omar says he was tortured for seven months after being flown to Egypt in what was known as an "extraordinary rendition" operation. He was resident in Italy at the time of his abduction.

Former CIA Rome station chief Jeffrey Castelli and two other American officials were convicted in their absence by the Milan appeals court for their part in the plot, but are unlikely to serve their sentences.

Human rights groups have been fighting to expose heavy-handed tactics used by the CIA during the Bush administration.