

Portugal Set to Extradite CIA Operative to Italy



Lisbon, January 5 (RHC)-- Portugal is poised to hand over to Italy Sabrina de Sousa, a former U.S. spy convicted of the abduction of an Egyptian cleric. De Sousa, a Portuguese-American dual who was a former agent of the CIA, said that the extradition process was due to start during the first week of January. She further noted that the decision to proceed with her extradition had been expected, adding, "I will have to explore options, if any are available to me."

De Sousa, who was born in India, was arrested at Lisbon Airport in October 2015 on a European warrant while on her way to visit her family in the South Asian country. Back in 2009, an Italian court convicted her in absentia over the kidnapping of Egyptian cleric Abu Omar in Milan in 2003 when she was working in Italy under diplomatic cover.

De Sousa said she served as an interpreter for the CIA team and denied any direct involvement in Omar's kidnapping. Asked if she felt betrayed by Washington, she said: "Betrayal was a sentiment I felt many years ago."

Omar's abduction operation was allegedly led jointly by the CIA and the Italian intelligence services. Omar was flown to the Egyptian capital, Cairo, via the U.S. Ramstein Air Base in Germany. He was then imprisoned, interrogated and tortured in the North African country.

He was abducted as part of the CIA's contentious extraordinary rendition, a practice of transferring presumed terror suspects to countries where torture is allowed. The practice has been condemned by rights groups as a violation of international agreements.

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