

CONFIDENTIAL



United Kingdom Delegation
To the North Atlantic Council OTAN/NATO 1110 Brussels

Telephone 242.67.75

cc News Dept (letter only) p.2
Mr [unclear]
Ms [unclear]
5
9

Nigel Cox Esq
WED
FCO BY FAX

Your reference

Our reference

Date 9 November 1990

DZNO6/115

RECEIVED IN REGISTRY		
03 JAN 1991		
DESK OFFICER	REGISTRY	
INDEX	FILE	Action Taken

Dear Nigel,

OPERATION GLADIO

1. Our Telno 551 reported on a discussion of "Operation Gladio" at the weekly PermReps lunch on 6 November. We have since seen Rome Telno 950 and John Ashton's letter of 5 November.

2. Discussion of the issue continued at a super-restricted (Secretary General and PermReps only) session of the North Atlantic Council on 8 November. Wörner said that he had discussed the matter with General Galvin (SACEUR). Wörner and Galvin had agreed that no SHAPE or NATO spokesman would comment further on the matter unless Wörner decided otherwise.

3. Wörner went on to explain that "these matters" (ie stay behind groups) were handled on a need to know basis. Wörner had only asked Galvin about SHAPE's role. He had agreed with Galvin the following line for use with PermReps:

"There are unconventional warfare units in some countries. SHAPE has a history of collaboration through bilateral and multinational agreements. Everything else is highly sensitive; it should stay like that; and should be handled on a need to know basis. It is also compartmentalised. Your national authorities know about the situation in your own countries."

4. Fulci (Italian PermRep) circulated an aide memoire (copy enclosed) on Operation Gladio. He said this was based on a note sent by Prime Minister Andreotti to the Head of the Italian Parliamentary Commission investigating terrorist incidents in recent years. Fulci said that weapons used in some terrorist incidents had come from stores established by Gladio. In answer to a question as to whether Gladio had deviated from its proper objectives, Fulci said he could not add to what was in the aide memoire.

/ 5.

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

5. Fulci went on to say that the uproar and confusion in Italy was enormous. This would not have arisen had SHAPE stuck to the golden rule of never commenting on security issues. Wörner's action on Tuesday had helped to defuse a serious constitutional crisis in Rome.

6. To add a bit of local colour, I might mention that my Ambassador heard from the new Canadian PermRep, who was paying an introductory call on Fulci at the time, that President Cossiga had telephoned Fulci twice within half an hour on Tuesday. Fulci was holding the receiver at three feet from his ears and was evidently threatened with immediate recall if he did not sort things out at this end immediately!

7. Frederick Forsyth is doubtless well into his first draft of the novel.

yours ever
Jeremy

Jeremy Cresswell

PS: I understand that the NATO Spokesman is drawing on the following line on an "if asked" basis:

"The statement of the SHAPE spokesman on the Gladio Operation in Italy was an error, based on incorrect information.

NATO's established practice on matters of military secrecy is not to provide information or to comment in any way."

cc: T C Wood Esq CMG, ROME (BY FAX)
Mrs K Colvin RAD, FCO
C Wood Esq, SCD
PUSD
G Barrass Esq, Cabinet Office
✓ P F Ricketts Esq, Sec Pol Dept, FCO
COS

RESTRICTED

AIDE MEMOIRE

Immediately after the Second World War, the fear of Soviet expansionism and the inferiority of NATO forces against those of the COMINFORM led the Western nations to devise new unconventional means of defence, by creating in their territories a "hidden network of resistance" aimed at operating, in case of enemy occupation, through information gathering, sabotage, propaganda and guerilla warfare.

which ones?

Like other NATO countries, Italy began to study in 1951 the setting up of a clandestine resistance organization that would also make use of the experience of the partisan war against Nazi-fascism, to harmonize and link into a single, homogeneous defensive operational system the Italian military structures with those of the Allied countries.

While the setting up of the Italian clandestine resistance structure was in an advanced stage, the SIFAR (Italian Military Intelligence Service) and a corresponding allied Service reached an agreement on November 26, 1955 concerning the organization and the activities of a "post-occupation clandestine network", commonly known as "STAY BEHIND". This agreement established the conditions for the operation code-named "GLADIO".

In 1959 Italy was invited to participate in the C.C.P. (Clandestine Committee for Planning) operating within SHAPE. This Committee was tasked to study how to conduct information-offensive

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

activities in case of war, especially in territories likely to be occupied by the enemy. Subsequently in 1964, the Italian Intelligence Service was invited to join the A.C.C. (Allied Clandestine Committee), a body aimed at studying and resolving problems of collaboration among the different countries.

To implement the understandings reached within NATO, the SIFAR began setting up the clandestine organization by creating a structure, code-named "GLADIO". It was:

?
- formed by agents active in the territory who, by virtue of their age, sex and activities, could reasonably avoid eventual deportation and imprisonment by the foreign occupiers;

- easy to manage even from a command structure outside the occupied territory;

- at a top secret level and hence subdivided into "cells" so as to minimize any possible damage caused by defections, accidents or network "penetration".

In case of occupation, the clandestine resistance network was to be subdivided into the following branches:

- information;
- sabotage;
- propaganda and overall resistance;
- radio communications;
- cypher;
- reception and evacuation of people and equipment.

Each of these structures was to operate autonomously, with liaison and coordination ensured by an external base.

According to SIFAR's operational plan, the setting up and organization of the resistance structure involved:

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- training of top level personnel through "ad hoc" courses of instruction;
- recruitment of the network heads and agents;
- geographical and operational planning of the different branches in Northern Italy, to be agreed with the operations bureaus of the three Armed Forces;
- choice of materials.

In 1956 a training Section called SAD (Special Studies and Personnel Training), was established within SIFAR bureau "R", through which SIFAR was to assume command of the secret network.

This section, whose chief acted as general coordinator of operation "GLADIO", was divided into four groups: general support; permanent secretariat and activation of operational branches; transmissions; air, logistical and operational support. Another structure available to the section was the C.A.G (Sappers Training Centre), responsible for operational training. The section's activities included:

- planning;
- training;
- transmissions;
- eventual activation of operational branches including intelligence, sabotage, propaganda, escape and guerrilla groups (among which five ready deployment guerrilla units in areas of special interest, respectively designated as Stella Alpina, Stella Marina, Rododendro, Azalea e Ginestra;
- preparation and deployment in peripheral areas of materials needed by operational sectors;
- land and air reconnaissance of areas of special interest;
- gathering of relevant documentation (cartographic, monographic, photographic);

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- experimental activities at the C.A.G. (air, parachuting, sea, submarine and difficult ground).

In 1959, the C.A.G. was provided with operational materials to be used as an initial stock of supplies for ready deployment groups and units, and to be concealed, during peacetime, in special hiding places buried in the various areas of operation.

The above mentioned materials were later protected with special coverings in order to ensure their conservation and in 1963 the placement of the containers began. The materials included the following: portable armaments, ammunitions, explosives, hand grenades, daggers, knives, 60 mm mortars, 57 mm guns, optical rifles, transmitters, bicoculars and various tools.

From April 1972, in order to improve security, all materials were dug out and placed in Carabinieri Stations near the original sites. The explosives, which could not be kept in barracks, were all stored at the Sappers Training Centre and at the ammunition depot of Campomele (Nuoro, Sardinia).

The digging out operations, which were completed in 1973, led to the recovery of 127 containers out of 139. Of the missing containers:

- two (with light armaments) were very likely taken away by unknown persons at the time of the burying in operations (31.10.1964);

- eight (with light armaments and various materials) were left in the original sites since they could have been recovered only through demolitions considered too difficult;

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- two (one with light armaments and one with explosives) could not be recovered since they were located near cemeteries that had been considerably enlarged meanwhile.

In the 1980's, the international conditions of the immediate past-war period that had led to the creation of embryonic structures in various Allied countries, aimed at facilitating the organization of resistance movements in territories occupied by the enemy, began to change, leading to a review of their implementation.

*And this
was an update
for the 80's?*

The implementation of SHAPE directives and of the agreements reached within the Allied Coordination Committee, led to the establishment within SISMI of highly qualified staff groups, capable of instructing external personnel to perform, in case of invasion, clandestine military operations, such as:

- a) information and propaganda
- b) evasion and escape
- c) guerrilla warfare
- d) sabotage and countersabotage

The command of the operations, both logistic and operational, was entirely the responsibility of SISMI (the new denomination of the Italian Military Intelligence Service, following radical restructuration in 1977) personnel. In the event of an emergency, SISMI personnel were to activate a national base already set up in Italian territory.

In peacetime, this base would also have training capabilities.

The new guidelines provided for the recruitment and training of personnel for information, propaganda, evasion and escape.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

Training and involvement in sabotage, countersabotage and guerrilla warfare were the sole task of the members of the Service.

Today it can be said that, on the whole, the operation was to be organized and implemented as follows:

- it was to be carried out under SHAPE guidelines and included in NATO planning;

- it was to be implemented and perfected, even if in a limited way, in conditions of absolute security, with the aim of resisting eventual foreign occupation of the national territory, which could jeopardize the democratic institutions and the free exercise of the constitutional rights of the citizens.

In the light of the recent, momentous events in Eastern Europe and of the profound changes in the political balance that, for years, compelled several nations to live in two opposing, rigid blocks, the Italian government is now reviewing all the relevant dispositions.

RESTRICTED