

# BERLUSCONI TO TESTIFY IN ABU OMAR TRIAL

This could be interesting. Nicolo Pollari—the right wing former head of Italian intelligence—is calling Silvio Berlusconi to testify as a defense witness in the Abu Omar rendition trial.

Berlusconi's testimony had been requested by lawyers for Nicolo Pollari, a former intelligence chief who is one of the defendants in the case.

Pollari hopes the testimony might help prove that he was against the rendition, lawyers said. He could face from one to 10 years in jail if convicted.

Pollari has denied any involvement by Italian intelligence in the abduction.

Berlusconi, one of the United States' close allies in its battle against terrorism, has expressed support for Pollari and has maintained his government was not informed about the operation and did not take part in it.

I haven't followed the trial closely enough to know what Pollari intends to achieve. This could be a bid—similar to that of the AIPAC spying trial defendants—to provide the government with a big disincentive to continuing the trial (Pollari already tried a state secrets defense). Or it may be a bid to argue that, since the Italians were tracking Abu Omar themselves, they had no incentive to help the CIA in its rendition plans. (Here's a NYT story reporting on Pollari getting charged.)

I just wish we could get eriposte to Italy to cross-examine Berlusconi about what he knew of Pollari's involvement with American GWOT efforts. Pollari was, almost certainly, involved in the plot to propagate the Niger forgeries. He

also should have informed Stephen Hadley that the aluminum tubes that the US claimed were nuclear centrifuge parts were clearly intended to support Iraqi reverse-engineering of Italian missiles; either he did, and Hadley proceeded to claim the tubes were for nukes anyway, or Pollari willfully let the Americans make claims he knew were false. In short, Nicolo Pollari has close ties to those Americans (people like Michael Ledeen) who were flogging this war from the start. And he did it, by most accounts, because Silvio wanted to curry favor with the Bush Administration.

I'm not sure we'll get really astute questioning of Silvio Berlusconi's knowledge of Pollari's close ties with the most hawkish elements in America. But it would be fun if we did.