

The Niger Uranium Dossier: Italian Spy Discusses Own Role in Iraq-Niger Traffic Hoax

By [Global Research](#)

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [FAKE INTELLIGENCE, IRAQ REPORT](#)

Interview with Italian former SID Defense Intelligence Service agent Rocco Martino by Gian Marco Chiocci; place and date not given:

“Former 007 Rocco Martino Speaks Out: ‘Here Is the Truth About Nigergate’” — first two paragraphs are Il Giornale introduction

(FBIS Translated Text) [FBIS is the CIA’s Foreign Broadcast Information Service.]

Rome — After growing a mustache, he has now also grown a beard, and a thick one at that, but it is not phony like the ones that stereotype secret agents are alleged to sport. “Giacomo o’ spione” (“James the spy” in southern Italian dialect) is the name favored by newspapers engaged in telling the spy story (previous two words in English in original) in which he is the leading player in connection with a hoax dossier on alleged uranium trafficking between Niger and Iraq. After being questioned by Assistant Public Prosecutor Franco Ionta, he agreed to make a confession to Il Giornale in a downtown bar. Almost as though he were organizing an (illegal) rave party (previous two words in English in original), 66-year-old Rocco Martino from Tropea, a “free-lance intelligence” (previous three words in English in original) agent as he likes to style himself, constantly shifted the venue of our rendez-vous, in keeping with his need to put people off the scent after a month of dangerous living around the world, in his capacity as a much-wanted key player in a mystery story involving the 007’s of Italy, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and which is partly responsible for the US military operation in Iraq.

There was to be no beating about the bush. Former SID (Italian Defense Intelligence Service, now defunct) agent Martino went straight to the point: “I do not have much time, and even though I have quite a few things to say about this damned Nigergate business, I would like to start by pointing something out.”

(Chiocci) Go ahead.

(Martino) I have not been on the run from the Italian law; I simply moved away for reasons that are easy to comprehend — let us say, for personal security reasons and also so as not to become cannon fodder for the national media. I traveled abroad and that is where I stayed pending a summons from Prosecutor Ionta who had been contacted and urged to issue a summons by my lawyer, Giuseppe Placidi. When the magistrate asked to meet with me, I landed in Rome in the space of a few hours in order to provide my version of events, borne out by various documents and recordings that confirm my total good faith in this murky story — a story which is much bigger than me, and in which I turned out to be the

weak link.

(Chiocci) You speak of total good faith, but the file which you slipped to Panorama and which the weekly failed to publish after checking the affair out, was a spectacular hoax.

(Martino) I did not know that it was a hoax, and there is proof of what I say. I have been engaged in intelligence (previous word in English in original) for many years, offering my cooperation to various intelligence services including the French, about whom a great deal has been said and about whom we will be talking later on. The hoax began one day when a Nigerian (as published) Embassy source who had proven to be reliable on previous occasions and who had contacts also with the collaborator of a SISMI (Intelligence and Military Security Service) aide, passed on to me a whole lot of information. It is true that that information included some references to a uranium traffic between Niger and Iraq. What did I do at that juncture? I passed it on to the French secret service, with which I am in touch and by which I was remunerated. I passed it on also to Panorama, which assessed it in order to study it, dispatching a reporter to Niger and turning the file over to the US Embassy in Rome for cross-checking.

(Chiocci) What happened then?

(Martino) The female journalist told me that the trip to Niger had not produced any real confirmation, and also the French confirmed to me that the reports I had passed on to them were groundless. But at that juncture the beans had been spilled. The file was circulating, the reports contained in it were going around the world, and Bush and Blair were talking about those documents, albeit without actually mentioning them. I turned the television on and I did not believe my ears...

(Chiocci) The suspicion is that you may have played France's game, opposed as it was to intervention in Iraq and planning to cook up a "poisoned meat ball" to give the lie to the United States and to the United Kingdom, which were hunting around for any kind of excuse to justify the invasion of Iraq: Nigergate.

(Martino) I do not know what you are talking about. These are lunatic ravings, among other reasons because the documents in question originated back in 2000, a year before the attack on the Twin Towers in New York and three years before Bush's decision to proceed with the war against Saddam.

(Chiocci) Someone may have remembered those documents, picked them up out of the waste basket, and released them back into circulation at the right moment.

(Martino) Anything is possible. And in any case, I am the victim, the tool used by someone for games much bigger than me.

(Chiocci) When did you realize that you were in trouble?

(Martino) When I read an article in a British newspaper that more or less called me a hardened criminal, pointing the finger of accusation at me as a double-crosser working for the French, who were clearly interested in what we were talking about just now.

(Chiocci) But you were followed, photographed, and recorded while speaking with French agents.

(Martino) So? I told you, I cooperate with them. And not only with them. But I did not plot against Italy or against the United States.

(Chiocci) The British 007's think otherwise.

(Martino) That is their business.

(Chiocci) You told the Sunday Times in an interview that also the Italian Government and the SISMI were involved in the Nigergate affair. Then you backtracked when talking with Prosecutor Ionta the other day. Where does the truth lie?

(Martino) I reached a preliminary agreement with the Sunday Times for interview that was never conducted. We talked about this and that, including the SISMI, but only to say that my source on the uranium traffic was the same as the source of an Italian intelligence service aide. As far as I know, the SISMI has nothing to do with it. I never, and I repeat never, said that Forte Braschi (SISMI's Rome headquarters) was involved, and certainly not that the Italian Government was involved.

The truth is that I have been duped, manipulated, used. I would like to figure out why they chose me; I do have some idea, but without any evidence one gets nowhere.

(Chiocci) Whom were you duped, manipulated, used by?

(Martino) If I knew that, I would dash off to report it to the magistracy, to whom indeed I have already handed over important documents and revealed the names of all the players in this murky business.

(Chiocci) People have written things about your previous misadventures...

(Martino) I have read them. What lies! To mention but two of them, I was never thrown out either of the Carabinieri Corps or of the SID.

(Chiocci) I do not wish to harp on about it, but if you had nothing to hide, why have you yourself been in hiding for all this time?

(Martino) Because the game, for those who are familiar with certain mechanisms, had become too dangerous. I do not know whether, as some people have written, there were any secret agents of various nationalities hunting me down in order to eliminate me. I do not even know in whose interest it would really have been for me not to open my mouth. The fact remains that, thanks to my lawyer, Giuseppe Placidi, and to my contacts with the public prosecutor over my giving a statement, also that veiled propensity for suicide that had begun to oppress me has disappeared.

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