



A Kidnapping in Milan: The CIA on Trial

Steve Hendricks

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A book so compelling it deserves to become one of the nonfiction classics of our time.

As propulsively readable as the best “true crime,” *A Kidnapping in Milan* is a potent reckoning with the realities of counterterrorism. In a mesmerizing page-turner, Steve Hendricks gives us a ground-level view of the birth and growth of international Islamist terrorist networks and of counterterrorism in action in Europe. He also provides an eloquent, eagle’s-eye perspective on the big questions of justice and the rule of law.

“In Milan a known fact is always explained by competing stories,” Hendricks writes, but the stories that swirled around the February 2003 disappearance of the radical imam Abu Omar would soon point in one direction—to a covert action by the CIA. The police of Milan had been exploiting their wiretaps of Abu Omar for useful information before the taps went silent. The Americans were their allies in counterterrorism—would they have disrupted a fruitful investigation?

In an extraordinary tale of detective versus spy, Italian investigators under the leadership of prosecutor Armando Spataro unraveled in embarrassing detail the “covert” action in which Abu Omar had been kidnapped and sent to be tortured in Egypt. Spataro—seasoned in prosecutions of the Mafia and the Red Brigades and a passionate believer in the rule of law—sought to try the kidnapers in absentia: the first-ever trial of CIA officers by a U.S. ally. An exemplary achievement in narrative nonfiction writing, *A Kidnapping in Milan* is at once a detective story, a history of the terrorist menace, and an indictment of the belief that man’s savagery against man can be stilled with more savagery yet.

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