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Italian Counterterrorism: Policies and Capabilities



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An Intelligence Assessment



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May 1984

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Italian Counterterrorism: Policies and Capabilities



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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by 
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European Issues Division, EURA, 

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**Italian Counterterrorism:
Policies and Capabilities**

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Key Judgments*Information available
as of 1 April 1984
was used in this report.*

Italy's counterterrorist effort has improved markedly in the last few years. The assassination of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro in the spring of 1978 sparked important changes in policy on counterterrorism. The rescue of General Dozier in January 1982 was the result of better tactics and methods and the cause of further improvements. The more effective investigative, analytic, and operational counterterrorist capabilities that have emerged since 1978 include:

- Significant institutional reforms, such as the development of special counterterrorist units and an overhaul of the intelligence and security services.
- Extraordinary legal measures broadening police powers, mandating stiff penalties, permitting lengthy detention, and encouraging terrorists to "repent."

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Such changes have gone far, in our judgment, to offset the administrative inefficiency, interservice rivalries, and political indecision which previously hindered a coordinated counterterrorist effort. In addition, public support for a stepped-up government campaign against terrorism proved important in a society conscious of civil liberties and long familiar with politically motivated violence. As a result of these factors—along with dissension among the terrorists themselves and a deterioration in the quality of new recruits—the power and capabilities of terrorist groups have eroded, and the level of terrorist violence has declined.

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Although public and party support for tough counterterrorist measures remains strong, opinion polls show that terrorism has slipped in the hierarchy of perceived national problems. Moreover, political parties have begun to disagree over the legality of some antiterrorist measures, and the government is showing signs of diverting resources from counterterrorism to other programs. Nevertheless, we believe that the terrorism problem will remain serious enough to maintain public support, political consensus, and government funding for tough and effective counterterrorist programs.

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Key Judgments	iii
Catalysts for Counterterrorist Advances	1
Institutional Reforms	2
Counterterrorist Components: Functions and Capabilities	4
Policy Formulation and Oversight	4
The Role of the Intelligence Services	5
Principal Operational Units	5
Competition and Competence	6
Legal Measures: Effectiveness and Implications	7
Penalties and Incentives	7
Preventive Detention	9
Impact of Reforms on Terrorism	9
Prospects for Counterterrorist Policies	11
Troubling Trends	12

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Italian Counterterrorism: Policies and Capabilities



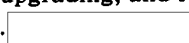
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Catalysts for Counterterrorist Advances

Among West European countries, Italy has experienced an unparalleled level and intensity of indigenous, urban political terrorism. The spate began in the late 1960s, peaked in 1978, and abated sharply after some 2,100 recorded terrorist incidents in 1979 (figure 1). The violence was instigated in part by neofascists, but the Red Brigades and other groups of the radical left quickly outstripped the extreme right in organizational efficiency, frequency of incidents, and particularly the significance of their targets.

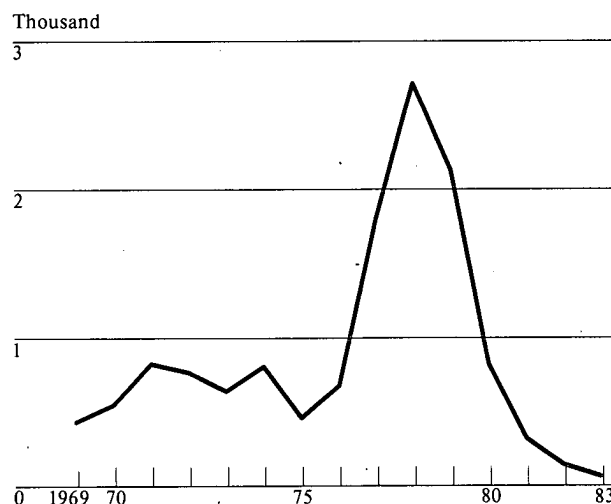


Institutional and operational responses to domestic terrorism evolved initially in a halting and piecemeal way owing to a lack of agreement among political parties and the public that terrorism threatened the stability of the state. Complacency turned to concern only when the Red Brigades tried to "strike at the heart of the Italian state" in 1978 by abducting one of the country's most prominent political figures, former Prime Minister Aldo Moro. Moro's death enabled the Christian Democratic-controlled government of Prime Minister Andreotti to enlist the parliamentary support of the major political parties, including the Communists, for expanding, upgrading, and refining Italy's counterterrorist effort.



The abduction of US Gen. James Dozier in December 1981 provided the first thorough test of the legal and institutional innovations. Dozier's kidnaping, the first targeting of an important non-Italian, was a profound embarrassment because it impugned Italy's image as a competent ally. It galvanized Italian counterterrorist resources more decisively than had any attacks against Italian targets. The effort to recover Dozier led to an unprecedented manhunt and dragnet that paid handsome and unexpected dividends well beyond his rescue. Not only were hundreds of suspects arrested and imprisoned, but the new laws encouraging the cooperation of arrested terrorists netted additional arrests, as well as information on safehouses and arms caches. A subsequent decline in the caliber of terrorist recruits and the emergence of internal disputes in

Figure 1
Italy: Terrorist Incidents, 1969-83^a



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^a Italian statistics on terrorist actions vary considerably from one source to another. These figures, compiled for the Italian Communist Party and covering all types of terrorist actions, have been considered valid by non-Communist experts. Source: Mauro Galleni, *Rapporto Sul Terrorismo*, 1981, supplemented by press figures for 1981-82.

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many groups contributed to the success of bolder counterterrorist initiatives.



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This assessment examines the steps taken by the Italian Government to combat domestic terrorism and weighs their significance and overall effectiveness. It also considers the outlook for continuation of special



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measures and laws which have proved useful against terrorism but are the subject of juridical and political controversy. [redacted]

Institutional Reforms

The Italian Government first formally signaled its intention to resist the spread of terrorism by establishing the Antiterrorist Inspectorate in June 1974. Attached to the Ministry of the Interior, the Inspectorate combined investigative and operational elements drawn mainly from the ranks of the national police (Polizia di Stato). Many officials, however, had no experience in their new areas of responsibility, according to US Embassy and military reports. We believe this inexperience, coupled with organizational problems, accounted for the Inspectorate's limited initial effectiveness. [redacted]

The government's recognition that terrorism demanded special measures was a major impetus for its decision in July 1977 to build *supercarceri*, or maximum security prisons, under the direction of Carabinieri Gen. Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa. Italy's poorly managed, obsolete, and overcrowded prisons were experiencing an average of one escape per day, according to Italian press reports, with convicted or suspected terrorists among the escapees. Another concern was the prospect of terrorist assaults on prisons to free incarcerated terrorists. In view of several assaults and escapes at regular prisons, the *supercarceri* were designed to be resistant to breaches, and we know of no successful escapes from them. Most *supercarceri* are in isolated areas—such as the Alcatraz-style Asinara prison just off Sardinia. The inmates include other dangerous criminals, as well as unrepentant terrorists and terrorists who need protective isolation because they testified against former comrades. [redacted]

A desire to improve overall counterterrorist capabilities was part of the reason for Parliament's decision in 1977 to restructure Italy's intelligence and security services. As late as 1976, after several years of urban terrorist activity, US Embassy reports indicate that economic intelligence had a higher priority than counterterrorist measures for the intelligence service that had primary authority in terrorist matters. [redacted]

Parliament's decision abolished the scandal-plagued services and created two new intelligence and security agencies: the *Servizio per le informazioni e la sicurezza militare*, known as SISMI, and the *Servizio per le informazioni e la sicurezza democratica*, or SISDE (figure 2). SISMI, under the command of the Ministry of Defense, is charged with collecting intelligence on international terrorism in Italy and any terrorist operations aimed at the Italian military. As the service responsible for foreign intelligence collection, however, SISMI has a broad mandate of which counterterrorism is only a part. SISDE, the domestic intelligence service, is technically part of the Ministry of the Interior and is responsible for investigating all other aspects of terrorism in Italy. As such, SISDE allocates the preponderance of its resources to counterterrorism. Neither service per se, however, has the authority to conduct police actions. Both are accountable to the cabinet and to Parliament for their activities. [redacted]

The government was slow to implement the reorganization, despite its obvious significance for combating terrorism. Authorities dragged their heels so much that, a year and a half after SISDE's creation, [redacted]

[redacted] the organization suffered from unqualified leadership, was understaffed by 50 percent, and had failed to carry out its mission. SISMI was similarly censured and was reported, furthermore, to be using most of its resources illegally in trying to encroach on SISDE's antiterrorist domain. Moreover, SISMI reportedly accepted tasking from other agencies in violation of the law. [redacted]

The appointment of General Dalla Chiesa to head all the counterterrorist forces in spring of 1978 signaled the government's determination to try to upgrade further its operational capabilities, particularly against leftist terrorist groups. With terrorism on the rise and the newly reorganized security services not yet functioning, the government bypassed normal lines of authority by turning to Dalla Chiesa, who reported directly to the Prime Minister. Dalla Chiesa had established a reputation for effectiveness in combating terrorism while leading an anti-Red Brigades

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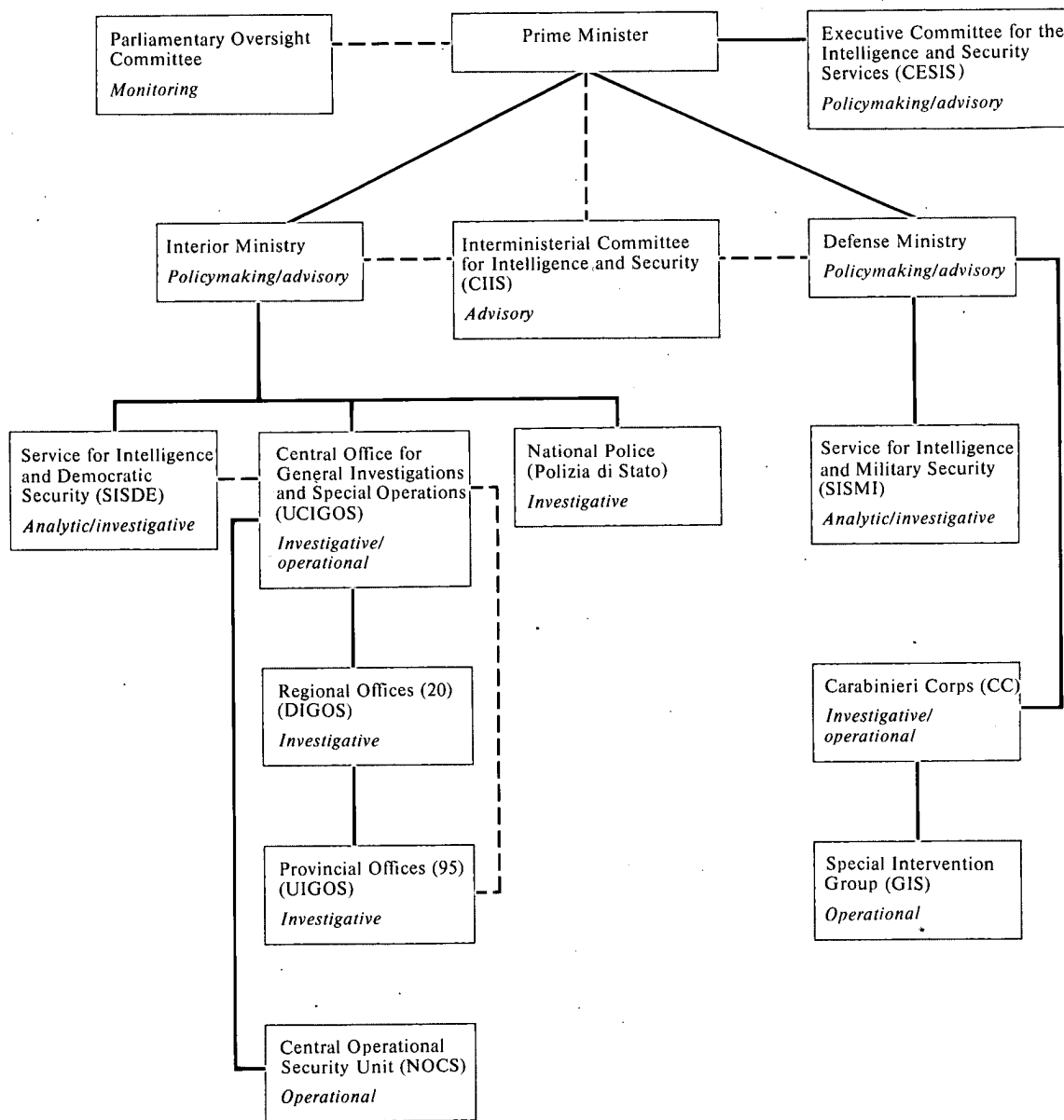
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Figure 2
Italy: Principal Counterterrorist Components



Note: Solid line indicates formal lines of authority. Broken line indicates informal communications, advisory (but not binding) contacts, or ad hoc consultations. Other informal contacts undoubtedly exist—for example, between the Carabinieri and the National Police—but for clarity we have not denoted all of those relationships.

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squad with the Carabinieri Corps in Turin, and his handling of the *supercarceri* had proved successful. According to US Embassy and press reports, his approach to counterterrorism included:

- Abandoning the improvised and violent “blitz” formerly used to nab terrorist suspects in favor of extended surveillance designed to yield more arrests and greater insights into terrorist methods and operations.
- Requiring his agents to become familiar with the revolutionary literature of leftist terrorist groups.
- Persuading regular criminal inmates to be “recruited” by Red Brigades’ prisoners and, upon release from prison, to act as informers.
- Working outside the law when necessary—particularly with regard to obtaining evidence—and backing his people fully in such activities. [redacted]

The general’s appointment itself was seen by some Italian officials, [redacted] as having a salutary effect on the forces under his command, and as showing both the public and terrorists a new seriousness of purpose. In fact, his style of operation led to the arrest of the chiefs of the Turin and Genoa columns of the Red Brigades and the recapture of Red Brigades’ founder Renato Curcio after he had escaped from prison in 1975. A sweeping operation by Dalla Chiesa’s forces in Padua in the spring of 1979 netted leading members of the leftist Autonomist group, including Antonio Negri and Oreste Scalzone. [redacted]

Counterterrorist Components: Functions and Capabilities

Responsibility for the formulation and execution of counterterrorist policy is shared by three committees at the national government level, the two intelligence and security services created under the reform law of 1977, and special components of the national police and the Carabinieri for the formulation and execution of counterterrorist policy. Two coordinating committees of cabinet ministers and senior officials have advisory and supervisory responsibility for counterterrorism, intelligence, and security policies, as well as for the services charged with executing them; a third parliamentary committee has an oversight function.

The two intelligence and security services established by the reform law are responsible for collection and analysis of intelligence on domestic and international terrorism. Specialized units within the intelligence services, the national police, and the Carabinieri are charged with carrying out counterterrorist investigations and operations, such as the freeing of General Dozier. Most of these antiterrorist units, after uncertain starts, have developed considerable competence.

Policy Formulation and Oversight. Three governmental entities currently have legal authority to develop and monitor counterterrorist policy:

- The *Comitato Interministeriale per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza* (Interministerial Committee for Intelligence and Security, known as CIIS) advises the Prime Minister on the general directions and fundamental objectives of the services, including their counterterrorism missions. Members of CIIS are the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Justice, Defense, Industry, and Finance.
- The *Comitato Esecutivo per i Servizi di Informazione e Sicurezza* (the Executive Committee for the Intelligence and Security Services, known as CESIS) consists of officials appointed by the Prime Minister or by an under secretary of state named by him. The directors of the two services are committee members ex officio. CESIS members assist the Prime Minister in carrying out his supervisory responsibility for intelligence and security matters. By law, CESIS must submit a written report to Parliament every six months on intelligence and security policies and their results.
- A parliamentary oversight committee of four deputies and four senators is appointed by the speakers of both chambers roughly proportional to the major parties’ representation in Parliament. Membership thus includes legislators from the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which enjoys the support of some 30 percent of the electorate. The committee monitors the services’ compliance with their legal mandates and may also make recommendations to the Prime Minister and the CIIS regarding intelligence and security procedures. [redacted]

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As the highest level permanent working committee and the more task oriented of the two coordinating committees, CESIS has emerged as the overall head of the revamped intelligence system and the organ most responsible for counterterrorist policy formulation. In addition, CESIS is less likely to have to contend directly with the vested interests or "turf" sensitivities of individual ministries which may cause disagreements or rivalries among the members of the interministerial CIIS. [redacted]

The Role of the Intelligence Services. Both SISMI and SISDE are charged with collection and analysis of counterterrorist information. The mandate for SISDE's staff of approximately 800 is almost exclusively counterterrorism. SISMI, however, has additional intelligence responsibilities and thus devotes only part of its 2,200 personnel to counterterrorist matters. Most of SISMI's personnel are military and Carabinieri officers on rotation from their services, but SISDE's staff is mainly civilian, with some Carabinieri on temporary assignment. [redacted]

Although neither service has the authority to arrest, detain, search, or interrogate terrorist suspects, both may engage in domestic surveillance. [redacted]

[redacted] SISDE agents may detain suspects and turn them over immediately to the police for formal arrest. Prior to this arrangement, some SISDE agents reportedly arrested suspects who were led to believe the agents were regular police. [redacted]

Principal Operational Units. The *Ufficio Centrale Investigazioni Generali ed Operazioni Speciali* (Central Office for General Investigations and Special Operations, or UCIGOS) is the antiterrorism and antisubversion section within the Interior Ministry and has bureaus throughout Italy. UCIGOS, established in 1978, has 20 regional offices (known as DIGOS) and an office (known by the name UIGOS) in each of the 95 provincial capital cities. UCIGOS is structured into four divisions:

- First Division (Divisione Informativa) is responsible for intelligence and reports.

- Second Division (Divisione Operativa) is responsible for police activities.
- Third Division (Divisione Anti-Terrorismo di Sinistra) is responsible for investigating leftist terrorism.
- Fourth Division (Divisione Anti-Terrorismo di Destra) is responsible for investigating rightist terrorism.

The Third and Fourth Divisions investigate specific terrorist activities and personnel, and they employ the Second Division for arrests, searches, seizures, and surveillances. The First Division collects and analyzes intelligence on terrorism. The regional DIGOS offices are structured similarly, but the provincial UIGOS, with smaller staffs, distinguishes less among responsibilities. [redacted]

UCIGOS, with its operational and investigative sections, is one of the most effective counterterrorist forces in Italy. The "SWAT" unit, in particular, has demonstrated competence and dedication. The *Nucleo Operativo Centrale di Sicurezza* (Central Operational Security Unit, or NOCS) is the squad that freed General Dozier (figure 3). The NOCS is based at the Central Police Barracks in Rome and consists of 40 to 50 men from the ranks of the national police. NOCS agents, who range in age from their early twenties to late thirties, undergo rigorous medical and psychological evaluations before receiving extensive training in terrorist psychology, weapons, explosives, martial arts, climbing buildings, rappelling from helicopters, and evasive driving. [redacted]

The Carabinieri Corps has the largest, best trained, and best equipped operational counterterrorist unit in Italy, according to US Embassy reports. The *Gruppo Intervento Speciale* (GIS), which is headquartered at Livorno under cover of the First Airborne Carabinieri Battalion, was organized in May 1978, and selected members have trained with the West German GSG-9, the British SAS-22, and Israeli counterterrorist units. The GIS's three commissioned and 47 noncommissioned officers are organized into four 10-man reaction teams—each with an assault group and snipers—and one 10-man cadre-and-training team. The GIS is strictly volunteer, and, like the NOCS, all members undergo extensive physical and psychological testing.

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Figure 3. The NOCS in training. This special force took part in the rescue of General Dozier in January 1982.

Training for a range of terrorist situations includes marksmanship, demolition, explosives, breaching and obstacle clearance, hand-to-hand combat, rappelling, and mountain climbing. Teams are capable of assault and rescue operations against many types of aircraft and are armed with a variety of weapons. Despite such exhaustive training, each man may serve only four years, presumably because of the rigors of the job and the risk of "burnout." This limit results in an approximate 25-percent annual turnover in force.

Competition and Competence. Rivalries among ministries and security services with counterterrorist missions took a toll on overall effectiveness for several years from the mid-1970s until the early 1980s. Recently, these rivalries have abated somewhat because of:

- The maturing of young institutions, such as SISDE and SISMI.
- A greater political willingness on the part of the government to exercise control over the services.
- Increased confidence among all concerned as a result of antiterrorist successes.

At the same time, rivalries have not disappeared altogether. Institutional loyalties and some overlapping of mandates will continue, in our estimation, to be the basis for turf disputes. Indeed, the US Embassy

stated last summer that Carabinieri officers assigned counterterrorist duties with other services frequently pass leads and information to their own organization and delay dissemination to their rotational service. Similarly, multiple units may converge on the scene of a terrorist incident in an unnecessary duplication of effort.

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What one military observer has called "healthy if not fratricidal" competition among counterterrorist elements nonetheless may occasionally have a positive outcome. During the final stage of the operation to free General Dozier, for example, competition among forces was so keen that the operation's commander informed one tactical unit it had one hour to show results or another unit would be called in—an option that proved unnecessary. We believe that the services have learned to accommodate such competition as a circumstance of their work, but that the effect of so much rivalry often is still counterproductive.

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The efforts of counterterrorist analytic and investigative elements have shown a particular improvement in quality and timeliness in the last few years. A study on the status of terrorism in Italy at the end of 1982 by the Carabinieri General Command concluded—correctly, as events showed—that elements of the Red Brigades militarist wing were reorganizing and were most likely to resume an offensive in Rome.

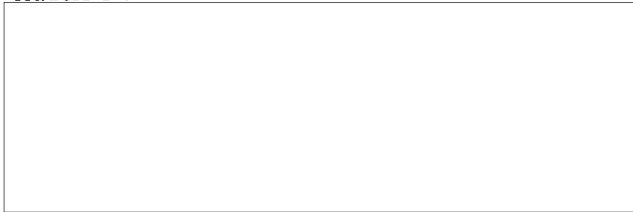
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We believe the ability of the services to make inroads against terrorism has been enhanced not only by greater experience and the confessions of "repentants," but also by the use of informers who, according to press accounts, infiltrated groups as far back as the early 1970s. Indeed, informers contributed to the capture in 1976 of first-generation Red Brigades leaders Renato Curcio and Alberto Franceschini.

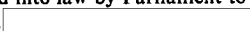


The use of infiltrators remains a legal "gray area," however, and recent Italian press accounts of infiltration efforts reflect continuing controversy. Infiltrators are legally accountable for any crimes they might be required to commit to establish their terrorist credentials. Members of the parliamentary oversight committee have said in the past that they would be hard pressed to condone criminal actions committed in the interest of the state. Nonetheless, the services probably will continue to make use of infiltrators, in our view, so long as some protection can be discreetly arranged. 


Legal Measures: Effectiveness and Implications


Extraordinary and innovative legal measures have played an important role in shaping a more aggressive Italian antiterrorist posture. Beginning with the first of the so-called emergency laws in March 1978, a number of measures were developed specifically in response to terrorism: provisions permitting extended preventive detention; broader police powers for search, seizure, and wiretapping; stiff penalties for specific crimes; and incentives for cooperation with authorities. Some of the special laws used in the prosecution of suspected terrorists were temporary and have since lapsed. In addition, preventive detention laws have become controversial and may be altered as a result of parliamentary debate. 

Penalties and Incentives. The kidnaping of Aldo Moro prompted an emergency decree law ² in March

² A decree law may be enacted by the executive and is applicable for 60 days. It must be promulgated into law by Parliament to remain in force beyond that period. 

1978 which increased sentences for anyone found guilty of kidnaping and mandated life imprisonment in kidnaping cases where the victim dies. It also allowed lighter sentences for kidnapers who dissociate themselves from their comrades and assist the police. Although this decree law—the first of the emergency laws—did not deter the Red Brigades from killing Moro, it ensured the harshest penalty for all involved and introduced the concept of plea bargaining. The March 1978 measure, which subsequently passed into law, also:

- Broadens the powers of investigative authorities by easing restrictions on wiretapping.
- Permits anyone to be detained until his identity is confirmed.
- Requires that landlords notify the police as to the identity of purchasers or renters in order to root out properties used as terrorist safehouses.
- Allows police to interrogate suspects without a defense lawyer present. 

The emergency law enacted in December 1979, often referred to as the Cossiga Law, signaled the government's willingness to use plea bargaining—a legal innovation foreshadowed in the March 1978 decree law—and the threat of additional mandatory stiff sentences as counterterrorism tools. The Cossiga Law came at the end of Italy's two worst years of terrorist violence and laid the groundwork for subsequent "repentant" laws used in terrorist cases. It set forth specific penalties for a range of criminal acts committed in the context of terrorism and, moreover, detailed the amount by which particular penalties may be reduced in exchange for information and cooperation with authorities. 

Under the Cossiga Law, which is still in effect, murders committed during terrorist acts are punishable by life imprisonment, as are the killings of law enforcement personnel and magistrates. The sentence for any lesser terrorist offense is automatically doubled. The law also bars provisional liberty for terrorist suspects awaiting trial and extends the limit for pretrial detention to 10 years and eight months. On the other hand, the law provides the terrorist suspect

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with incentives to plea bargain by "repenting" for crimes and helping police with information on terrorist comrades and their activities. Thus, a life sentence may be reduced to 12 to 20 years, and incarceration for other crimes diminished by a third to a half. [redacted]

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By criminalizing subversive associations as well, the Cossiga Law ensures that, even if a suspect is not convicted of another crime, simply belonging to a terrorist group will result in a four-to-eight-year sentence; organizing or leading such a group is punishable by seven to 15 years. This point and others in the Cossiga Law updated and enhanced the terms of a 1975 law regarding the criminalizing of subversive associations which had been inspired by episodes of neofascist terrorist violence. [redacted]

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Subsequent "repentant" laws reaffirmed the government's decision to address terrorism by encouraging suspects to collaborate or face tough prosecution. Separate decree laws enacted in September 1981 and May 1982—each in force for only a few months because of their controversial nature—outlined in detail what is required to diminish set penalties for a variety of offenses, and advised that false information and refusing to cooperate were punishable. [redacted]

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terrorists have been rounded up as a result of the revelations of "repentants," and valuable information about the functioning of the Red Brigades and other groups obtained as well. [redacted]

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The "repentant" laws—since their inception the subject of public and judicial controversy—have been applied for the most part with care. [redacted]

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[redacted] A member of a far-left organization, Prima Linea, was sentenced in August 1982 to 12 years in prison despite the prosecution's request that he be given only three years because of his cooperation with authorities. In contrast, a Red Brigades member who confessed to the murder of prominent Milanese journalist Walter Tobagi and who subsequently "repented" received a sentence of probation in November 1983, thereby generating a public outcry at an apparent distortion of the law's intent. Use of the "repentant" laws has been accepted by a majority of the public, however, according to the results of a December 1983 poll in which 51



percent of respondents believed the overall effect of the laws was positive, in contrast to the approximately 34 percent who viewed the laws' impact negatively. [redacted]

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Preventive Detention. As significant as the Cossiga and "repentant" laws have been for the counterterrorist effort, such laws alone could not have overcome the inertia and inefficiency of the Italian judicial system. We believe the effectiveness of counterterrorist and other criminal laws has been dependent to a great extent on generous provisions for pretrial preventive detention. The average time for completion of criminal cases (from arrest to final verdict) is currently four to five years, according to Italy's chief prosecutor. So overburdened is the court system that the state's ability to detain defendants legally is crucial for cases in which a suspect would likely flee if not held. Although it has been a key factor in counterterrorism enforcement, preventive detention—as might be expected—has drawn considerable public and political criticism. [redacted]

At the beginning of 1983, some 43 percent of prison inmates—including an unspecified number of terrorist suspects—were being held in extended pretrial detention, according to official figures. The popular view that suspects are entitled to prompt trials has led to opposition to the emergency law enacted in 1979 that allows up to 10 years and eight months of pretrial detention. Thus, the small Radical Party last year listed Antonio Negri, the leftist political theorist who had been detained for four years without a trial, as a candidate for Parliament in order to focus attention on the perceived abuse of preventive detention.³ The length of Negri's detention was not exceptional, and civil libertarians continue to press for legal revisions. [redacted]

One of the goals of the Socialist-led Craxi government's bill on legal reforms presented to Parliament early this year is to place greater limits on the authority of magistrates to use preventive detention and reduce its maximum allowable duration. [redacted] the reform bill, which includes stiff penalties for terrorism and Mafia-related activity, is designed to maintain the effectiveness of the government's antiterrorist powers while signaling a move away from the "state of emergency" of the last several years [redacted]

³ He was subsequently elected, released on the basis of statutory immunity, had his immunity rescinded by Parliament, and fled to France. [redacted]

Impact of Reforms on Terrorism

The government's successes in combating terrorism have substantially eroded the power and capabilities of indigenous terrorist groups and stemmed the tide of terrorist violence (see figure 1). This has been possible, in our view, primarily because of the improved training and testing of specialized counterterrorist strike forces; the reorganization of the security services and formation of special analytic and investigative counterterrorist units; the adoption of extraordinary legal measures and the means to enforce them; and a political consensus that terrorism unchecked is a threat to Italy's social and political stability. [redacted] 25X1

These measures, however, only partially explain counterterrorist successes. The internal weaknesses of terrorist groups have also helped official antiterrorist efforts. [redacted] There has been a decline in the quality, dedication, and ideological conviction of terrorist recruits. In many cases, new members moved from smaller, less disciplined terrorist groups to larger, better organized ones, but lacked the loyalty and commitment of other longtime group members. Subsequent factional and ideological disputes, particularly among leftist terrorists, have seriously debilitated the operational capacity of many groups. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

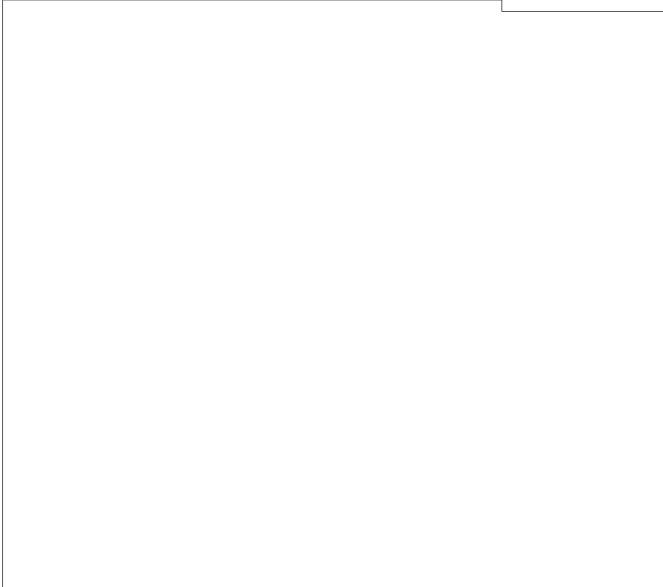
Internecine disputes and rivalries about strategy and tactics also have prompted confessions by terrorists willing to implicate former comrades. Even terrorist chiefs have not been immune to the temptation to "repent"; the Turin column of the Red Brigades and the Prima Linea organization, for example, were devastated by the revelations of their own "repentant" leaders. Along with official moves, the confessions of participants in the Dozier kidnaping alone contributed to more than 1,000 arrests of terrorist suspects. The increased risk of apprehension as a result of involvement in terrorist activities probably made association with groups like the Red Brigades less attractive to prospective recruits. [redacted] 25X1 25X1 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

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Nevertheless, we believe there is still a terrorist threat to Italian targets, and to US and other foreign personnel and interests as well. The assassination of Hunt, claimed by reactivated Red Brigades remnants in Rome, may portend renewed attempts against politically symbolic, poorly guarded targets in general, and, [redacted] against US military targets in particular. [redacted]



for terrorist groups, which were documented in Italian polls during the mid-to-late 1970s, have all but evaporated. Recent opinion polls show that, while many Italians still say they understand the societal and political grievances that compel terrorists to act, the public roundly condemns terrorist violence and is more supportive of government attempts to rout terrorism. [redacted] 25X1

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Nearly 40 percent of respondents in a December 1983 poll, for example, indicated that the most important factor in the decrease in terrorist acts has been the increased effectiveness of police and security forces, while nearly one-fourth of respondents gave primary credit to the innovative "repentant" laws. We cannot estimate with assurance the number of terrorists arrested and imprisoned as a result of "repentant" comrades, [redacted]

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We believe that, to justify so many abbreviated sentences, Italian authorities had to have gained considerable information for use against terrorists. [redacted]

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In our view, the broad political consensus among the principal political parties in favor of a strong counterterrorist posture will remain intact. Prime Minister Craxi has too much at stake politically to appear less than resolute in the face of a possible renewal of terrorist activity—as do the Christian Democrats who hold the Interior Ministry portfolio in the current cabinet. Moreover, although the opposition Communists are at odds with the Socialist-led government on many issues, the PCI firmly favors stern action against terrorism of the left and right and has repeatedly cautioned against complacency. Indeed, in the wake of the Hunt assassination, the PCI's official newspaper criticized the Italian press for dismissing the perpetrators as "amateurs" and suggesting that a new wave of terrorism is unlikely. As long as the PCI believes itself to be threatened by terrorism as much as—or more than—other Italian institutions and feels the political need to distance itself from the terrorists, we believe it will maintain a tough stance. [redacted]

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We believe Italian counterterrorist and law enforcement authorities are sufficiently experienced and have the intelligence capabilities to inflict once again significant losses on reactivated terrorist groups. Within a month of the Hunt murder, police rounded up nearly 40 suspects, gained leads on others, and searched more than 80 locations—including possible safehouses, where they reportedly seized incriminating material. Although solution of the Hunt case probably will prove more difficult as time passes, the investigation itself may yield—like the Dozier case—additional, incidental antiterrorist gains. [redacted]

Prospects for Counterterrorist Policies

The government has a vested interest in maintaining its tough counterterrorist policies, which have earned it political capital both at home and abroad. Widespread public and political party support for tough counterterrorist measures has been the foundation of government policy. In a significant evolution, the reservoirs of overt public sympathy and tacit support

Troubling Trends. Despite significant government inroads and a decline in terrorist activity from previously high levels, recent events and reports indicate that the terrorist problem is far from solved. A period of enforced clandestinity apparently has allowed regrouping in several regions and enabled some groups to regain operational capability. Moreover, [redacted] [redacted] fugitive Italian terrorists in Paris, who operate through various front organizations and are not subject to extradition, maintain contact with leftist terrorists in Italy and probably provide them some degree of support, details of which are obscure. [redacted]

unemployment, drug abuse, and health care. A dilution of public support and pressure may hinder the efforts of authorities to muster additional resources, if necessary, for a stepped-up counterterrorist offensive. [redacted]

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An exception to the across-the-board, nonpartisan support for a tough counterterrorist policy is public opinion about preventive detention. Mainstream parties have joined those of the far left and right in calling for restraints on abuse of preventive detention laws out of concern for civil liberties. While some reform is required and probably inevitable, passage of the current legal reform bill before Parliament could lead to the release of as many as 300 terrorist suspects, according to Italian press and US Embassy reports. [redacted]

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A pending judicial challenge also has implications for counterterrorist policy. In February, a Genoa court referred the cases of four Red Brigades members to the Constitutional Court for a decision on the constitutionality of several provisions of the "repentant" laws and their possible conflict with the penal code. Although the "repentant" laws have been criticized before, this is the first time they have been challenged in the courts. Should the Constitutional Court strike down specific articles of the laws, the provisions of any such future laws would be similarly circumscribed. [redacted]

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There are signs that the Italian public as well as political and law enforcement officials have become somewhat complacent. Although terrorism is still viewed as a serious national problem, the public's perception of a grave terrorist threat has diminished somewhat. According to a reputable polling firm, terrorism ranked as the leading problem confronting the country in a series of seven national polls from early 1980 through early 1982, but fears of terrorism began to decline as early as 1981. Perceptions of a terrorist threat increased slightly in early 1982 after General Dozier's rescue, but, by late 1983, after the counterterrorist successes surrounding the Dozier case and some highly publicized trials of "repentants," terrorism receded somewhat in the hierarchy of perceived national problems. In the most recent poll last October, only 31 percent of respondents named terrorism as one of the three most pressing national concerns, for an overall ranking of fourth place after

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In sum, the greatest potential threat to the Italian counterterrorist effort is the impression that there is not a clear and present terrorist danger. Under such circumstances, the public is tempted to shift its attention to other issues, parties begin to squabble, and the government gradually diverts resources to other programs. While these trends are present now, they are not so highly developed as to undermine counterterrorist policy. Such events as the Hunt slaying may be sufficient to maintain public and party support for tough counterterrorist measures and to ensure ample funding for counterterrorist programs.



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