

**Boeing unit to face suit in CIA seizures**  
**By Claudio Gatti**

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**NEW YORK:** to file a lawsuit Wednesday alleging that a subsidiary of Boeing aided the Central Intelligence Agency in the forced transportation of three plaintiffs who say they were captured and flown to overseas prisons and in some cases tortured.

The civil suit is to be filed in San Jose, California, under the Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789. This law specifies that U.S. government agencies and U.S. corporations can be held responsible for human rights abuses against foreigners resulting from activities in a foreign country.

The legal action against Jeppesen, a flight-support services unit of Boeing based in San Jose, will represent a fresh attempt to shed light on a practice known as extraordinary rendition, under which the CIA arrested, transported and interrogated terrorist suspects after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

"Evidence points to Jeppesen as a major player in the extraordinary rendition program," said Steven Watt, staff lawyer for the ACLU.

"European flight logs identifying Jeppesen reveal that over a four-year period, the company was actively involved in the provision of flight and logistical support services to at least 15 aircraft which, European investigations confirm, were used by the CIA in its program of extraordinary rendition."

Watt added, "The evidence here also points to Jeppesen contracting to profit from torture."

Jeppesen referred any request for comments to Boeing. Tim Neale, director of communications at Boeing, declined to respond "because to do so would mean commenting on the work Jeppesen does for clients under contracts that call for confidentiality."

"It seems to me you are asking a question about an issue that involves the U.S. government," Neale said. "Jeppesen, as with the rest of the Boeing company, operates in accordance with the laws."

Asked about Jeppesen's role in the rendition program, Mark Mansfield, CIA director of communications, said, "We don't comment on such matters."

Companies like Jeppesen typically provide flight-support services like weather forecasts, flight plans, landing permits, overflight exemptions, refueling, ground handling of the aircraft, catering arrangements, hotel accommodations and payment of airport fees.

An investigation conducted by an Italian business daily, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, also independently found evidence that two of the three plaintiffs in the ACLU lawsuit and another individual who was also a victim of an extraordinary rendition were transported aboard a Gulfstream V and a Boeing 737 with the logistical support from Jeppesen.

The four men were Kassim Britel, a Moroccan-born Italian citizen; Khaled el-Masri, a German citizen of Lebanese origin who was mistaken for a terrorist and abducted from Macedonia; an Egyptian who had asked for asylum in Sweden; and an Ethiopian citizen with resident status in Britain.

"Without Jeppesen's services, the planes would never have been able to make those flights," said Francesca Longhi, the Italian lawyer for Britel, one of the plaintiffs in the ACLU lawsuit. "If Jeppesen hadn't serviced the CIA's Gulfstream V, my client would never have been illegally deported to Morocco, where he has endured months of torture and years of illegal detention that is still going on."

Longhi said Jeppesen was involved in what many legal experts, the British Foreign Office and a special European Parliament commission consider an illegal act under international law.

Britel was arrested in 2002 in Pakistan, where the authorities claimed that he was traveling on a false Italian passport, according to Longhi. Britel was handed over to about six men, Americans he presumes were CIA operatives, who forced him onto of a Gulfstream V jet, Longhi said.

During the nine-hour flight to Morocco, Longhi said, Britel was kept hooded, with his hands and feet bound. After landing in Rabat, he was taken to a special jail run by local intelligence. Eighteen months later, he was tried and convicted on charges of being a member of a local terrorist cell and for "participating in unauthorized meetings" - although he had not been in Morocco for five years.

Britel, 39, is in Aïn Borja prison, in Casablanca, serving a nine-year sentence. Longhi said his conviction was based on a confession that followed weeks of torture.

Neither the Moroccan Ministry of Justice nor the Ministry of Communications, contacted by Il Sole 24 Ore, answered a request for comment.

In Italy, Britel fell under suspicion in 2001 when a booklet containing a transcript of an Osama Bin Laden's interview on Al Jazeera television and an electronic file with a statement of support for the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas were found in his home near Milan. But last September, the Italian authorities cleared him of any terrorism charges.

"The fact is that Britel never committed any crime," Longhi said. "Not in Morocco, not in Italy, not anywhere."

Before the CIA began extraordinary renditions, companies like Jeppesen were in the business of enabling wealthy people to fly smoothly around the globe.

After Sept. 11, 2001, according to human rights organizations and European investigating commissions, new customers appeared - charter companies operating planes on behalf of the CIA.

The first documentary evidence bearing Jeppesen's name was retrieved in June 2005 by the Spanish Guardia Civil, when it investigated reports in a newspaper, Diario de Mallorca, of CIA planes flying into local airports. The Spanish authorities found that four planes - two Boeings and two Gulfstreams - had repeatedly landed and refueled in Mallorca and that they were serviced by two local companies on behalf of Jeppesen and Air Routing International.

Similar documents were uncovered in Portugal by a newspaper, Diario de Noticias, which found the name of Jeppesen in communications related to rendition planes that used the airports in Porto and Santa Maria de Azores.

Jeppesen UK was also named in British newspapers as the company that arranged for ground support services to a rendition plane that landed at Glasgow Prestwick Airport in June 2004.

Specific mention of the Gulfstream V jet that European investigators and Longhi say was used to transport Britel to Morocco first surfaced in October 2001. On Oct. 23 that year, at the airport in Karachi, Pakistan, masked men handed an individual to a group of Americans who had just landed on a Gulfstream V executive jet.

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