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Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NRD No.

785016

ACC

10000/143/819

UN
NO

10000/143/819

UNLAWFUL SALE OF ITALIAN MILITARY VEHICLES
NOV. 1944 - JAN. 1945

5A

COPY

SUBJECT : Unlawful Sale of Italian Military Vehicles.

AMG Rear Fifth Army.
GA/118

15 January, 1945

HQ. Allied Commission.

1. Reference your AC/14129/PS of 11 Nov. 44 (forwarded by Fifth Army AMG) it is regretted that on the information given it has not been possible to trace the persons concerned in the Division mentioned.
2. Southern Region A C have been asked by this HQ whether any additional information was available to further the enquiry and have replied in the negative.
3. Enclosures returned as requested.

Major, SCAPO.
for Group Captain
Officer Commanding
AMG Eighth Army.1st IND

AC/14129/PS

21 January, 1945

FROM HEAD QUARTERS ALLIED COMMISSION PUBLIC SAFETY SUB-COMMISSION APO 394
TO : Regional Commissioner Southern Region, attention RPSO.

Forwarded in reference to your PS/2.5.4. dated
7 November 1944.

JP
JOHN W. CHAPMAN
Colonel, J.A.C.D.
Director Public Safety
Sub-Commission.

NR

BP/G.

5110

3A

HEADQUARTERS
AND FIFTH ARMY
APO 464 U.S. Army

20th November 1944. cc.

SUBJECT: Unlawful sale of Italian Military Vehicles.

1/2.

TO : S.C.A.P.O., Eighth Army.

1. Reference attached file, AG/14129/PS dated 11th November, 1944.
2. Will you please make the necessary enquiry as 56 Division are in your territory.

For the Commanding General:

Walter Doherty

W. DOHERTY,
Lt. Colonel,
Chief of Public Safety,
A.M.C. Fifth Army.

Encl.

Copy to:

Public Safety Sub-Commission, A.C. (for information)

/exp

TO	INIT	DATE
COL. CHAPMAN		
COL. YOUNG		
LT. COL. WILCOX		
MAJ LUCKMAN		
MAJ WILSON		
MAJ HANBU Y		
MAJ BALANCE		

511+

2A

HEADQUARTERS ALLIED COMMISSION
Public Safety Sub-Commission
APO 394

AC/14129/PS

11 Nov 1944

SUBJECT : Unlawful sale of Italian Military Vehicles.

TO : Headquarters, AMG.. 5th Army.
(Attn: C.P.S.).

IA/B

The attached correspondence from R.P.S.O. Southern
Region is passed to your for action as suggested in para 2 please.

Would you please return the correspondence with your
reply.

JOHN W. CHAPMAN
Colonel, J.A.C.D.
Director Public Safety
Sub-Commission

EW/jmf

Copy to: R.P.S.O. Southern Region.

5110

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS

SOUTHERN REGION, ALLIED COMMISSION
PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISION

Ref: PS/2.5.4

Date 7 November 1944

SUBJECT: Unlawful sale of Italian military vehicles.

TO : HQ. Allied Commission,
(for attention of Public Safety Sub-Commission).

1. Reference the enclosed extract from a report received from the Zone Public Safety Officer, Bari.

2. It is respectfully requested that the Public Safety Officer, 5 Army, be asked to have enquiries made with a view to tracing Sgt "LESLIE" and the Lieutenant who are alleged to have been concerned in this sale. If located, it would be appreciated if they could be interviewed and statements obtained giving their version of the transaction.

For the Regional Commissioner:

LWT/jag.

TO	INIT	DATE
COL. CHAPMAN		
COL. YOUNG		
LT COL WILCOX		
MAJ MASON		
MAJ WILSON		
MAJ HENBORY		
MAJ HARVEY		
MAJ BRILLANCE		
CAP POWELL		10/11

G. Richardson
G. RICHARDSON
Major,
Regional Public
Safety Officer.

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS
SOUTHERN REGION, ALLIED COMMISSION
Public Safety Division

1A

Ref. PS/2.5.4.

date 7 November 1944

Subject : Unlawful sale of Italian military vehicles

To : H.Qs Allied Commission
(for attention of Public Safety Subcommittee)

- 1) Reference the enclosed extract from a report received from the
None Public Safety Officer, Bari.
- 2) It is respectfully requested that the Public Safety Officer, 5 Army,
be asked to have enquiries made with a view to tracing Sgt "LESLIE"
and the Lieutenant who are alleged to have been concerned in this sale.
If located, it would be appreciated if they could be interviewed and
statements obtained giving their version of the transaction.

For the Regional Commissioner

G. RICHARDSON
Major,
Regional Public
Safety Officer

Extracto from Monthly Report from Bari Zone, dated 30 October 1944 10

"On the 19th Oct. 1944 62nd Section S.I. was present at Court of Enquiry with regard to alleged Unlawful Sale of Italian military Vehicles and the following facts were brought out briefly:

Hq 220 Composite Section D.C.R.R., impounded two "Fiat" 621 motor vehicles and one "Gilera" three wheeled motorcycle, suspected to be Italian Military property, and drew an open charge against DE VETERIS Nicola, 42 Via S. Agostino, Altamura for being in possession of the same. The Italian produced documents from which it appeared that the vehicles had been sold to them by Sgt. Douglas SMITH, of H.Q. British Military Security and Information Service.

These documents were signed by Sgt. SMITH and witnessed by an Italian notary Dr. Vernice Severo, of Bari. Enquiries were made which disclosed that Sgt. Smith belonged to the 315 F.S.S. and on 18th Sept. 1944, a court of Enquiry was held to enquire into the alleged sale of vehicles by Sgt. Smith.

This Court of Enquiry disclosed an entirely different story, it was then alleged that the two Italians, DE VETERIS and SIMONE, bought the three vehicles from a Sergeant of the "Black Cat" Unit who were stationed during May 1944, at the farm of CALDERONI Giuseppe, Contrada Capotenda, Gravina, paying 240,000 lire for same. This Sergeant had told the Italians that they would be given receipt at a later date, but when they went for it they found that the Unit had moved to Molfetta. They went to "Molfetta", but were unable to contact the Sergeant. The difficulty of registering the vehicles then arose, they were told that an authorisation showing sale of the vehicles by a British Unit would be sufficient proof of ownership for the registration to be carried out. De Veteris and Simone then contacted FAVIA Giuseppe, 82 Via Andrea, Bari, and asked his assistance to this end. Favia was a friend of Sgt. Smith, 315 F.S.S. and approached him on the subject, asking him if he would sign papers saying that he (Sgt. Smith) certified that the vehicles had been sold to the Italians by the British Authorities.

Sgt. Smith did not immediately agree, but a week later, he was asked again and agreed to sign the papers. They went to the Notary's office, where Sgt. Smith signed three papers, written in Italian, certifying the sale of the vehicles. One of these papers was later produced by the Italians when the registration of the vehicles was queried by the Italian War Ministry and enquiries were made which lead to the sitting of the Court of Enquiry.

Statements have been taken from all persons concerned, De Veteris and Simone (who were only traced after many enquiries had been made in the Gravina and Altamura Districts) were interrogated at length, but insist that they bought the vehicles from the Sergeant of the "Black Cat" Unit and not from Sgt. Smith.

It would appear that the Sergeant referred to is known as "LESLIE", of an R.A. Unit of 56th London Division, who are now in the 5th Army Order of Battle. The description given of Sgt. LESLIE is as follows: Medium height, fat face, small moustache, brown hair, wearing a side cap, with the "Black Cat" formation sign on his battle-dress blouse. A lieutenant who might be concerned, is described as: Medium height, ginger hair and moustache, wears spectacles.

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- 2 -

Enquiries have been made in the Gravina district with a view to obtaining further particulars of this Unit, but to no good result. The responsible Town Major has been contacted for the allocation of billets in this particular district, but he has no record of any Unit being billeted at Contrada Capotenda, Gravina, during May 1944, or at any other time. It is possible that such billeting was done through "Q2 Branch, 56th Div., direct.

No. 1440984 Local Sgt (P/L/LOpl.) Smith D.H., 315 F.S.S., was interviewed. He was told the nature of the enquiry and he stated that he wished to tell me all the facts which lead up to him signing the papers at the notary's office. He was cautioned and he made a detailed statement, in which he states that he signed the papers, which were written in Italian, which he did not then properly understand, not knowing that it was set forth in them that his own, or any other particular Unit, was specified as having sold the vehicles.

No charge, as yet, has been preferred against Sgt. Smith or the Italians, it may be considered that they could be charged with conspiring together to obtain the registration of vehicles by means of false documents. During the course of my enquiries, no suggestion has been received that Sgt. Smith profited in any way for his services.

The vehicles concerned are now held by the C.C.R.R. Gravina, their particulars being as follows:-

1. Fiat 621 Goods vehicle. Engine N. 324-003543
Chassis 621 PW 000896
2. Fiat 621 " " Engine N. 363336
Chassis N. 1049708
3. Moto Gilera. Motor cycle Engine N. 1049708

No registration plates are on any of the three vehicles. Enquiries have been made at the 9th Italian Army HQ Inspectorate of Motorisation, with a view to tracing the original owners of the vehicles, but it was learnt that such information cannot be given on account of the vehicles not bearing a registered number.

It is respectfully suggested that the enquiry, so far as the alleged sale of the vehicles by Sgt. "LESLIE" is concerned, be continued in the 5th Army, with a view to ascertaining the Unit of the 56th Division who were billeted at Contrada Capotenda, Gravina, and who went to Molfette in May 1944, and if possible the interviewing of the described Sergeant and Lieut.

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