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**UK Lottery:****US attacked Sgrena: companion**

05/03/2005 17:02 - (SA)

Rome - The companion of freed Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena on Saturday levelled serious accusations at US troops who fired at her convoy as it was nearing Baghdad airport, saying the shooting had been deliberate.

"The Americans and Italians knew about (her) car coming," Pier Scolari said on leaving Rome's Celio military hospital where Sgrena is to undergo surgery following her return home.

"They were 700m from the airport, which means that they had passed all checkpoints."


The shooting late on Friday was overheard by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's office, which was on the phone with one of the secret service agents, said Scolari. "Then the US military silenced the cellphones," he charged.

"Giuliana had information, and the US military did not want her to survive," he added.

When Sgrena was kidnapped on February 4 she was writing an article on refugees from Fallujah seeking shelter at a Baghdad mosque after US forces bombed the former Sunni rebel stronghold.

Sgrena told RaiNews24 television Saturday a "hail of bullets" rained down on the car taking her to safety at Baghdad airport, along with three secret service agents, killing one of them.

"I was speaking to (agent) Nicola Calipari (...) when he leant on me, probably to

print story on   
email story



**Injured Giuliana Sgrena is helped from the plane in Rome. (Gregorio Borgia, AP)**

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protect me, and then collapsed and I realised he was dead," said Sgrena, who was being questioned on Saturday by two Italian magistrates.

"They continued shooting and the driver couldn't even explain that we were Italians. It was really horrible," she added.

Sgrena, who was taken to hospital with serious wounds to her left shoulder and lung after arriving back in Rome on Saturday before noon, said she was "exhausted because of what happened above all in the last 24 hours".

"After all the risks I have been running I can say that I'm fine," she said.

"I thought that after I was handed over to the Italians danger was over, but then this shooting broke out and we were hit by a hail of bullets."

The chief editor of Sgrena's left-wing newspaper Il Manifesto Gabriele Polo meanwhile branded Calipari's death a "murder".

"He was hit in the head," he said.

Calipari will be given a state funeral on Monday.

*Edited by trs*

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