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In Italy, There are 12,000 American Soldiers and 500,000 African Refugees: Connect the Dots

Dublin, Ireland.

Why? Because the Italians are unable to do so. Euro-skepticism is thriving in Italy. However NATO-skepticism or US-skepticism is missing. Trump, the individual, might be a concern but the presence of the US military on the Italian peninsula is a sacred cow.

The US war machine is expanding in Italy at the same rate as the expansion of the refugee numbers – the numbers that are infuriating Rome. However, the connection between one and the other is redacted from the Italian debate.

Indeed in Europe as a whole, the link between US military bases and refugees is ignored. Blindness, it seems, is the preferred response of official Europe to the refugee crisis. As a result, the vulgar hostility shown to the North African and the Middle Eastern migrants in Europe contrasts with the sacred silence surrounding the presence of the American army in Europe.

It's as if the refugee crisis is a metaphysical mystery – as if it has no cause. You would think that the wars that caused the movements of people into Europe would encourage the Europeans to question and check the war markers. But this thought is too rational for Europeans today. Instead, Europe questions the bona fides of the victims of war, rather than the intentions of the warmongering USA.

The latest political fiasco in Italy is exemplary. The latest general elections in Italy (March) eventually produced a government in May / June that is dominated by the anti-

establishment Five Star Movement. However, no sooner was this rebellion against the Italian status quo in power, than it turned into a racist rant.

Leading this rant was the Northern League – the coalition partner of the Five Star Movement. The leader of ‘the League’ – Matteo Salvini – is Italy’s latest tough guy. And as Italy’s new interior minister he gets to pick on whoever he wants. And without a word of protest from the Five Star Movement, Salvini picked on the weakest people in the world – the African refugees sailing on substandard boats across the Mediterranean – direction Italy.

In June, a boat called the Aquarius – chartered by a French NGO – had 630 African refugees on board and was looking to dock in an Italian port. Salvini said no. And the rest of the Italy agreed. Italy had officially turned its back to Africa’s war refugees.

The sinister fact, though, is that Italy continues to embrace the US war machine that creates Africa’s war refugees. Despite Italy’s new “rebel” leadership and new “tough guy” image, Italy continues to be a subservient third class member of the US Empire. In other words, Italy today may act the “hard man” in the Mediterranean when confronted with African refugees. But when face to face with America’s Mediterranean war machine: Italy is a coward.

The proof is in the numbers. A [2007 blog](#) listed 113 US military bases in Italy. Everything from submarines to bombers, and from radars to grunts, fill up these bases. And in 2017 the Pew Research Center released the numbers (as of 2016) of active duty US military personnel based in foreign countries. Italy had the fourth highest number of US soldiers present on its soil: 12,088. Only Japan (38,818), Germany (34,602) and South Korea (24,189) had a greater US military presence inside their borders. The latter three countries, however, have been on the frontline of the Cold War for decades. Italy has not.

So how come Italy houses the fourth largest US garrison in the world? Why does Italy have so much US military hardware and the US personnel needed to enable this firepower – on its soil? How come Italy, in the sense of US military numbers, is more important than Afghanistan, Iraq, Britain and Qatar? And why is only a minuscule few talking about it?

The subtitle of a 2013 [TomDispatch.com](#) article explains all. “How the Pentagon Is Using Your Tax Dollars to Turn Italy into a Launching Pad for the Wars of Today and Tomorrow”. The writer of this informative piece, David Vine, outlines the meaning for Italy – of America’s “War on Terror” and America’s “Pivot to Africa”. (Vine counts only 59 US bases in Italy).

Since the year 2000, the USA has basically turned the Italian peninsula into a dagger, that's stabbing at the Mediterranean in general, and at Africa in particular. The wars against Islam and AFRICOM changed America's relationship with Italy. In 2005, the US navy moved its European headquarters from London to Naples. In 2008, United States Army Africa (USARAF) set up shop outside Venice (Vicenza). And Sicily (the Sigonella base, near Catania) became a major center for US drones and other attack and surveillance aircraft – directed at Africa.

As the Soviet threat to Europe vanished in the 1990s – new enemies had to be found in the 2000s. New wars had to be invented. America couldn't just let Europe be free. And because of Italy's unique geopolitics (it's blessing and it's curse) the US military moved in like a parasite. Italy became Europe's 'Okinawa'.

It could be said that all this was written in the stars (the Five Stars?). The USA is in the DNA of contemporary Italy. The infamous American, Allen Dulles, no less, managed and manipulated the birth of post-World War II Italy. Dulles running around lake Como, in the north of Italy – in 1945 – saving the Nazis from the partisans, sums up that birth (see David Talbot's [The Devil's Chessboard](#)). And it has been downhill ever since.

Sixty six Italian governments later – a guy who wants African war refugees to drown in the Mediterranean is running the show. While the thought of desperate Africans entering Italy upsets Matteo Salvini – he seems unperturbed by the thought of a foreign army 'at war with Africa' basing itself in Italy. Something is amiss.

It's not logical to attack the symptom (refugees) and ignore the cause (war). Unless – of course – the cause is embedded into the structure. Then it is logical to protect the cause – otherwise the structure collapses. And that's the absurd situation Italy is in today. The sovereignty it wants to defend includes the presence of a nefarious foreign power, deep within the structure of the country.

So Salvini's slogan "Italians First" in truth means "US Military First", "Italians Second" and "African Refugees Last". That's the structure of Italy today. And the Five Star Movement and Salvini's League are part of the structure. These new political parties are not rebellious, but are structural. They do not represent a threat to the 'Italy' Allen Dulles created. And they don't represent a threat to 'the world' Allen Dulles created.

Stuck in a militarized structure that has 'Made in the US Empire' written all over it – in invisible ink, because the US bases are protected by the local media – ordinary Italians today misdirect their anger and confusion.

And because it is a deep structural problem, the solution is not a fake rebellion but a real revolution. One that sees African refugees as political allies rather than as social problems. One that has 'working class' written all over it.