

Espionage for Russia: Who Are the Key Figures in the Investigation That Shook Italian Intelligence

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The operation conducted by the Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale (ROS) of the Carabinieri has uncovered a complex espionage system that, for over a year, drained state secrets and sensitive information to the Russian secret services. At the center of the affair are two former members of Italian intelligence, placed under house arrest, and a network of complicity involving five other individuals, including several active-duty military personnel.

The Two Faces of the Operation: The Arrested

The investigations identified two former 007 agents as the main actors in the illicit exchange of information:

- **Gavino Raoul Piras (59 years old):** Originally from Sassari, a former non-commissioned officer of the Carabinieri and expert in national intelligence, he is considered by

investigators to be the pivot of the system. Piras allegedly acted as the sole interlocutor of a presumed Russian secret service agent – covered by diplomatic immunity – establishing a direct and constant contact with him. The collected evidence includes videos documenting exchanges of "pizzini", SD memory cards hidden in road cracks, and cell phones concealed inside microwave ovens. Piras, decorated in 2012 with the prestigious U.S. "Legion of Merit", presented himself as an "independent analyst".

- **Vincenzo Di Pasquale (59 years old):** Originally from Matera, also a former Aisi agent in retirement, is the second individual subjected to the precautionary measure of house arrest. Together with Piras, he is accused of espionage and unauthorized access to computer systems.

The Network of Complicity: The Other Suspects

The investigation is not limited to the two former 007 agents. According to the Rome Prosecutor's Office, Piras allegedly drew from a pool of six sources to obtain the confidential information then passed on to Moscow. Among these are **four active-duty military personnel**, whose names have been entered in the register of suspects along with a fifth civilian individual.

The suspects, who will have to answer for various charges of revealing military secrets, political-military espionage, and procuring confidential information, are:

- **Davide Piantanida (46 years old, Foggia)**
- **Gianluca Nardella (47 years old, Foggia)**
- **Giuseppe Tempesta (55 years old, Bari)**
- **Sergio Romeo (57 years old, Messina)**
- **Antonio Guerra (69 years old, Bari)**

A System of "Hybrid Weapons"

According to investigators, the flow of information concerned critical areas for national security, including the names of agents engaged in Italian counter-espionage and the country's anti-terrorism strategies. The "price" for this information varied: exchanges often took place in cash, with installments reaching up to 4,000 euros per delivery. During searches, investigators found

a total sum of twenty thousand euros in cash in the possession of one of the suspects.

The affair prompted the Italian government to a firm diplomatic reaction: the expulsion of two military attachés of the Russian Federation in Italy, described by Deputy Prime Minister Antonio Tajani as a necessary response to a "serious and unacceptable interference" perpetrated through the "hybrid weapons" used by Moscow to target the West.