

Wednesday, 26 September 2007 - Strasbourg

## Secret detentions and unlawful inter-state transfers involving member states of the Council of Europe (reports Fava and Marty) (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE ). - (PT) Before the day in September 2006 when President Bush confirmed the existence of secret prisons in third countries, the Portuguese Government had regarded as reliable the guarantees given by Washington that the sovereignty or legality of its European allies had not been violated.

However, after this date, once it had been proven that various renditions had taken place across Europe, it became essential to investigate whether Portugal or Portuguese agents had been involved and, in particular, to prevent their continued involvement. To my sorrow and shame, however, the Socialist Party, my party, the party in government, voted against the formation of a parliamentary committee of inquiry on 10 January 2007. However, it has now been proven that over 100 stopovers were made at Portuguese airports by aircraft involved in the rendition programme. The passenger and crew lists of the most suspicious flights that the SEF (Portuguese Foreign Nationals and Borders Service) has managed to identify have never been provided by the Portuguese Government to the national parliament or to this Parliament, despite repeated requests.

Nor did the Portuguese Government permit the director of the secret service or his predecessors from 2002 to be heard by the European Parliament mission that went to Lisbon in December 2006. The Portuguese Government did not provide the national parliament or the European Parliament with the oft-requested list of civilian or military flights to and from Guantanamo that passed over Portuguese territory. Until December 2006 the government denied the existence of such flights. However, they were recorded and the list compiled included 94 overflights and 17 stopovers specifically by US civilian and military aircraft between January 2002 and the end of June 2006.

There is evidence that several of these flights were carrying prisoners from the Incirlik base in Turkey to Guantanamo, including the 'Bosnian Six'. Once the list reached the European Parliament, the Portuguese Government did not deny its authenticity, but instead alleged that the Guantanamo detention centre was not the same as the Guantanamo military base and that flights to this military base were supposedly 'normal' and under the auspices of the United Nations or NATO. The Secretary-General of NATO subsequently denied this in writing.

In January 2006 I obtained evidence that chained prisoners had been sighted at the Lajes base in the Azores during their transfer to US aircraft. This evidence was confirmed by journalists and reports were published including photographs of the buildings.

Mr President, a judicial investigation is currently being conducted in Portugal. Unfortunately this was not instigated by the Portuguese Government, but on my initiative. However, the truth must come to light given the worrying facts discovered by this Parliament dating from the time of Mr Durão Barroso's Government to the current one.