

**Interview by Maurizio Molinari of La Stampa (Italian Newspaper)**

**Marc Grossman, Under Secretary for Political Affairs**

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**NEWS INTRODUCTION:** If Colin Powell is America's number one diplomat then Marc Grossman is his right-hand man. They both work on the seventh floor of the State Department, in adjacent offices, not far from the Treaty Room, where ceremonies for the investiture of ambassadors are held. Grossman, in his fifties, slim build and prominent features, is the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs in Europe. The main issues on his agenda are the anti-terrorism coalition, Iraq and the ICC – all important topics that make a difference in relations with the allies. Washington considers Italy a partner on each of these issues. One year after Sept. 11 and the start of the war against terrorism, Italy is one of the few allies with which America holds privileged relations.

**QUESTION:** What has changed in the last year, in terms of bilateral relations?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** America is grateful to Italy and to the Italian people for the accomplishments of this past year in the war against terrorism. Italian actions and decisions within the Nato, on a bilateral level and in Afghanistan, have had determining effects. The decision of the U.S and Italy last Thursday to freeze numerous assets is only the latest joint effort. All of this has concretely shown Italy's solidarity following the Sept. 11 attacks. When the Twin Towers collapsed, the Italian people imagined it happening in Rome or Milan. We are united in the will to defeat terrorism."

**QUESTION:** Have September 11 and the war against terrorism diminished Europe's strategic importance for the United States?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "No, relations between Europe and the U.S. are more essential than ever. After September 11, our priorities are to protect ourselves, to protect our allies and friends and to fight terrorism. In all three cases, we need to consolidate our relations with Europe, at the NATO level, with the European Union and bilaterally with single countries, beginning with countries like Italy."

**QUESTION:** Why did you ask Italy to deploy 1000 additional soldiers in Afghanistan?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "Italy already has a high profile in Enduring Freedom with the Garibaldi and the 3,500 men deployed in the field. Italy is also a leader in recovery efforts, especially with respect to the judicial system. We have

requested additional military forces, but it is up to Italy and to its people to decide. If you would like to do more in Afghanistan, we will be grateful."

**QUESTION:** The Europeans stood behind you in Afghanistan, but now they are perplexed by a possible military action against Saddam Hussein. How do you think you can change their minds?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "The perception that the U.S. has 'requests' and 'demands' for its allies is illusory. Our objective is that countries throughout the world recognize the threat that Iraq poses to the international system. At times the Iraq issue is depicted as a problem strictly between Washington and Baghdad, whereas the problem concerns Baghdad and the civilized world. I'm certain that the Italians and the Europeans realize that Iraq has, for the last 11 years, consistently failed to respect the Security Council's Resolution 687 on disarmament and 688 on the rights of its citizens. It is our hope that talks with the other countries continue and that the world realize that Saddam is oppressing the Iraqi population."

**QUESTION:** When you say "talks," do you mean political consultations?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "Yes, certainly. On numerous occasions President Bush, who is a very patient man, has said that he would like to confer with his allies and friends, as well as with Congress. The President has not made a final decision on how to topple Saddam Hussein. He will listen to allies and he will particularly listen to Italy's opinion."

**QUESTION:** Is Europe's criticism causing you any difficulties?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "Our countries are democracies and this is certainly not a Politburo. It is not surprising that a debate on Iraq is underway both inside and outside the United States. The more people examine the facts and bear in mind who Saddam is, the more they will support our position which calls for a regime change."

**QUESTION:** Do you hope to keep the anti-terrorism coalition together to topple Saddam as well?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "If you're asking me if we expect countries that are strongly working together against terrorism to continue to do so, then my answer is yes. The term 'coalition against terrorism' is a diplomatic and journalistic expression, and doesn't consist in people meeting in a room in Geneva, but rather in countries united by a common cause – the defeat of terrorism. Since September 11, 90 States have arrested 2400 terrorists and confiscated \$130 million in assets worldwide. I think this coalition will remain united in the future, too. The war will be long and hard. Perhaps the Italians know better than anyone else because they successfully have fought terrorism for many years."

**QUESTION:** Will Bush use the good rapport he has with Berlusconi to make a breach in European dissent?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "The Italian government will draw its own conclusions and then make them known. America will do its best to make it clear that Iraq is everyone's problem. For example, let's take the threat of missiles, especially if armed with weapons of mass destruction. If one day Iraq should launch a missile, Italy would be halfway between Iraq and the U.S. I hope everyone realizes just how dangerous a threat this is."

**QUESTION:** Washington has also requested that European nations sign bilateral agreements exempting American citizens in their territories from the ICC's jurisdiction. What was their answer?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "I would say that it has been positive so far. I've spoken with various ministers and our legal experts have contacted the counterparts. We respect the decision of other countries to adhere to the International Criminal Court. We are not asking anyone to change their idea and in no way do we want to jeopardize the Court's work. But we would like to be respected for our decision not to adhere. Article 98 of the Treaty establishes the possibility to sign these agreements and we are looking to resolve the issue on that basis. We have accepted the allies' request to find a solution within the Treaty."

**QUESTION:** The European Commission, however, accuses you of wanting to delegitimize the Court. How do you respond to Brussels?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "We do not accept this position. Our jurists and those of the other nations retain that Article 98, contained in the Treaty, cannot be considered a violation of the Treaty itself."

**QUESTION:** Why do you want to sign the bilateral agreement?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "We believe that the ICC lacks any kind of control, which is much different from the judicial systems in our countries. This Court risks politicization, it risks raising unjustified cases, it risks putting the United States on the defendant's bench. We are great supporters of international tribunals to punish crimes against humanity, as those established in Rwanda and ex-Yugoslavia. But a Tribunal must be created by the Security Council, so that it can be held accountable."

**QUESTION:** The Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, John Bolton, came to Rome in August to ask for Italy's signature and Prime Minister Berlusconi in Denmark showed his willingness to do so. Do you feel Rome will sign?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "Italy will have to decide. We asked all countries, on the same day, to sign."

**QUESTION:** One of the reasons the United States refused to adhere to the Court was for fear of legal actions against U.S military operating abroad. If the European Union should refuse to sign the agreement, would you withdraw your troops from Europe?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "Let's not speculate. I'm sure that once European countries will have read our proposal they will sign it because they will have understood that we respect the Treaty and that we are not delegitimizing it."

**QUESTION:** The fact remains that all EU leaders have two requests on their desks, one from Powell and the other from Brussels, asking them to consider two opposite positions. Are you asking the Fifteen to choose between the EU and the US?

**UNDERSECRETARY GROSSMAN:** "The United States is not part of the European Union. Everyone must stand behind their priorities. We feel that it is necessary to sign agreements. Each country will make its own choice. We feel that an objective analysis of article 98 will bring people around to our way of thinking. If we would have said 'sign, but not on the basis of the Treaty,' that would have been hard to accept. Let's not make this into a crisis, a solution is at hand."

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