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## Son of Italy's last king faces trial over claims he said escort needed a 'good slapping'

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The son of Italy's last king who was allegedly taped telling a friend that an escort girl needed a 'good slapping' has been sent for trial on corruption charges.

Prince Vittorio Emanuele, 72, who spent more than 50 years in exile, was initially arrested in June 2006 and held in custody for a month as part of the probe before being released.

During his time in prison the heir to the House of Savoy told prosecutors he was a 'sex maniac' and urged them not to tell his wife, Marina Doria, 'because I have been happily married for 45 years. It's just that I am a hunter, and from time to time I like to shoot.'

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**Secrets: Prince Vittorio Emanuele, with wife Marina Doria, is said to have told prosecutors that he was 'a sex maniac' and ordered them not to tell his spouse**

He was questioned over allegations of rigged slot machines installed in casinos with back-handers and that he also supplied glamorous East European escorts to Mafia mobsters.

Prosecutors in Potenza, southern Italy, produced transcripts of a telephone conversation in which he told a friend one escort needed a 'good slapping' for failing to fulfill her duties.

Grainy pictures of him pocketing a brown envelope which allegedly contained his 10,000-euro cut of profits were also published in several Italian newspapers.

A parallel investigation was opened in Rome but the case was dropped although prosecutors in Potenza, led by half-British magistrate John Henry Woodcock continued the probe.

Judge Luigi Barrella decided that there was enough evidence to send the prince and five others, including his private secretary Gian Niccolino Narducci for trial.

Judge Barrella agreed with prosecutors that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the prince was 'the head of a holding of crooks' and he should be tried for conspiracy to commit crime and corrupting public officials.

Today Prince Emanuele's lawyer Francesco Murgia said: 'My client regrets this decision but he expected nothing less - however he remains confident that the truth will emerge in the face of such painful accusations.

'There is very little consistence to these allegations.'

The trial is due to begin in Potenza in December and it will not be the first time he has appeared in court.

In 1978 he was cleared by a French of shooting dead German tourist Dirk Hammer, after he swam to close to his boat off the coast of Corsica.

The Savoy family is thought to have assets worth at least £76million and the prince has used his connections to forge a successful business career, once selling a fleet of helicopters to the Shah of Iran.

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The prince was exiled in 1946, when he was nine, after his father, Umberto II, left Italy for Portugal after a vote to replace the monarchy with a republic.

In 2003 the family were allowed to return to Italy.

But Prince Emanuele spends most of his time in Switzerland where he has homes in G'staad and Geneva.

The House of Savoy ruled over the north of Italy, and part of Switzerland.

In 1861, King Victor Emmanuel I was proclaimed ruler of a unified Italy.

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