

German TV exposes CIA, Mossad links to 1986 Berlin disco bombing

A German correspondent
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A documentary broadcast August 25 by German public television presents compelling evidence that some of the main suspects in the 1986 Berlin disco bombing, the event that provided the pretext for a US air assault on Libya, worked for American and Israeli intelligence.

The report, aired by *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen* (ZDF television), is of the greatest relevance to events of the past three weeks, in which attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania have become the justification for US missile strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan, and a shift in American foreign policy to an even more unbridled use of military force internationally.

With Washington declaring 'war against terrorism' and arrogating to itself the right to use its military might unilaterally against any target anywhere in the world, the German TV report raises the most serious and disturbing questions. All the more so, since the US media and leading Republican politicians, within hours of the American embassy bombings, began citing Reagan's 1986 air attack on Libya as an exemplary response to terrorist attacks, and pressed Clinton to carry out similar military action.

The air strike on Libya

On April 15, 1986 US war planes bombed the Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi. They destroyed the home of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and killed at least 30 civilians, including many children. Gaddafi himself, the main target of the air strike, was not hurt.

Two hours later President Ronald Reagan justified the unprecedented attack on a sovereign country and its head of state in a national television address. The US, Reagan claimed, had 'direct, precise and irrefutable' proof that Libya was responsible for a bomb blast in a West Berlin discotheque. The explosion 10 days earlier at the disco La Belle, a favorite nightspot for US soldiers, had killed three people and injured 200.

Since November of 1997 five defendants have been on trial in a Berlin court for their alleged involvement in the La Belle attack. But in the course of more than half a year the case has proceeded very slowly. ZDF television, which carried out its own investigation into the case, explained why in the August 25 documentary produced by its political magazine *Frontal*.

What the German documentary reveals

Frontal report arrives at the following conclusions: The

1) The lead defendant presently on trial, Yasser Chraidi, is very possibly innocent, and is being used as a scapegoat by German and American intelligence services.

2) At least one of the defendants, Musbah Eter, has been working for the CIA over many years.

3) Some of the key suspects have not appeared in court, because they are being protected by Western intelligence services.

4) At least one of those, Mohammed Amairi, is an agent of Mossad, the Israeli secret service.

The man charged with being the mastermind of the La Belle attack, 38-year-old Yasser Chraidi, was a driver at the Libyan embassy in East Berlin in 1986. He later moved to Lebanon, from whence he was extradited to Germany in May 1996.

Frontal interviewed the two Lebanese responsible for the extradition of Chraidi: the former public prosecutor Mounif Oueidat and his deputy Mrad Azoury. Both confirm that the German authorities used deceit to have Chraidi extradited.

According to Azoury, he received no evidence that Chraidi was actually involved in the attack; there were only 'hints.' Oueidat states that the Germans showed tremendous interest in getting Chraidi. 'The Americans were behind this demand,' he says. 'This was obvious. They spurred on the Germans to speed up the extradition.'

Eventually Chraidi, declared to be a 'top terrorist,' was flown to Germany in a spectacular security operation. But a Berlin judge found the evidence presented by the prosecution so weak, he threatened to release Chraidi within three weeks unless more proof was presented.

At this point another man was brought into the case, who, according to *Frontal*, 'was obviously supposed to be spared by the prosecution until then.' On September 9, 1996, the very day the Berlin judge threatened to release Chraidi, Berlin public prosecutor Detlev Mehlis, Berlin police inspector Uwe Wilhelms and a Mr. Winterstein of the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND) met Musbah Eter in the Mediterranean island state of Malta.

CIA involvement

The meeting had been prepared by the BND, which maintains close connections to its American counterpart, the CIA. Musbah Eter was running an international business in Malta, which, according to *Frontal*, served as a cover for extensive intelligence

operations on behalf of the CIA.

The German authorities wanted him on a murder charge. But during the Malta meeting a deal was struck: 'Immunity for Eter, if he incriminates Chraidi for La Belle.' The next day Eter went to the German embassy and testified. As a result, the warrant against him was scrapped and he was allowed to travel to Germany.

In the words of *Frontal*, Eter is 'the key figure in the La Belle trial.' At the time of the disco bomb attack he worked for the Libyan embassy in East Berlin. But he paid regular visits to the US embassy. According to Christian Ströbele, the lawyer for Chraidi, this highly unusual fact is proven by extensive notes of the East German secret police, who watched Eter very closely at the time.

There are many indications that Eter was actively involved in the La Belle bombing. According to interrogation transcripts studied by *Frontal*, he had the detailed knowledge of a participant. He even admitted that he brought the operating instructions for the bomb to the flat of a codefendant.

Frontal asserts that besides the defendants in the present trial, another group was involved in the La Belle bombing--a group of professional terrorists, working for anybody who paid them, led by a certain 'Mahmoud' Abu Jaber. Members of this group, according to *Frontal*, 'have barely been bothered by the prosecution and live securely in other countries.'

In the months preceding the La Belle attack they lived in East Berlin and met, almost on a daily basis, with the present defendants. Hours before the attack they moved to West Berlin, where the bomb exploded. Their movements were monitored by the East German and Russian secret services, who concluded that they were working for Western intelligence.

The Russian KGB, in a document cited by *Frontal*, gave the opinion that American counterintelligence planned to use 'Mahmoud' to concoct a case for the involvement of Libyan terrorists in the attack. According to the same KGB document, 'Mahmoud' had warned West Berlin intelligence two days before the explosion.

Frontal followed the traces of Mohammed Amairi, the right-hand man of 'Mahmoud' Abu Jaber, who, according to the documents it has studied, 'was particularly involved in the preparation of the La Belle attack.'

An agent of Mossad

Amairi left Germany for Norway in 1990, when a warrant was issued for his arrest. He now lives in the Norwegian town of Bergen, where *Frontal* found and interviewed him. He stopped the interview when he was asked what secret service he had been working for. His lawyer, Odd Drevland, finally told the story.

When Amairi moved to Norway he was arrested and branded 'a danger to the country' on the front page of tabloids. But then the Israeli secret service Mossad took charge of him and 'everything changed.'

'Was Amairi a Mossad agent?' asked *Frontal*. 'He was a Mossad man,' answered Drevland.

In the meantime, Norway has granted asylum to Amairi and he will soon receive Norwegian citizenship. The Berlin prosecutor has lifted the warrant against him.

'These secret service intrigues present a task for the Berlin court that is almost insoluble,' concludes the *Frontal* report. 'But one thing is certain, the American legend of Libyan state terrorism can no longer be maintained.'

There are striking parallels between the 1986 bombing of Libya and last week's missile strikes against targets in Sudan and Afghanistan. Once again Washington claims to have 'proof' to justify its use of deadly force. But as the *Frontal* report shows, such claims cannot be trusted. Twelve years after the bombing of Libya, Reagan's proof turns out to be anything but irrefutable. Instead there is powerful evidence that the La Belle attack was a carefully prepared provocation.

It may come as a shock to many Americans, all the more so given the utterly venal and lying role of the US media, but US intelligence services are well versed in the most unscrupulous and bloody methods, not excluding those that result in injury or death to Americans. No serious consideration of the August 7 East African bombings can rule out the possibility of a provocation, organized either directly or indirectly by US agencies.

Certainly the US embassy bombings, with their terrible human toll--for the most part, African--provided a welcome pretext for forcing through a desired shift in policy and obtaining public support for unilateral military action. Indeed, within hours of the US embassy bombings, the *International Herald Tribune* had published a column declaring the attacks were 'acts of war and the United States could take reprisals against the bombers under international law without the approval of the United Nations.'

We wait with interest to see whether any of the American television networks--CBS, NBC, ABC, CNN--or any of the establishment newspapers will even take note of the German exposé of the events surrounding the bombing of Libya. We have no expectation that they will.

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