

WikiLeaks cables reveal crimes of French imperialism in Africa

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Documents published by WikiLeaks reveal important details about the crimes committed by French imperialism in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Rwanda, and the existing ties between French and African politicians.

The cables published by WikiLeaks confirm that 50 years after “decolonization,” corrupt networks—binding together the banks, oil companies, the French armed forces and the African regimes—have continued to function in order to plunder Africa as well as attack French workers by contributing to the maintenance of the Chirac and Sarkozy governments.

In its article “WikiLeaks: ‘French African’ finances misappropriated for the benefit of Chirac and Sarkozy”, the Algerian newspaper *El Watan* published a translation of an American diplomatic cable that indicated: “According to a diplomatic note dated July 7, 2009 and classified confidential, from the American embassy in Yaoundé (Cameroun), not less than €36 million were embezzled from the Central African States Bank by the deceased Gabonese president Omar Bongo.” It added that “an important portion of these funds also profited French leaders, in particular ‘Chirac, but also Sarkozy’”. [See “Gabonese President Omar Bongo (1935-2009)”]

American diplomats speak in the telegram of a common practice. Omar Bongo, president of Gabon who died in 2009, was a creature of French colonialism. Such forces formed a network with politicians like Chirac and Sarkozy, utilizing these arrangements to pillage African countries for their personal benefit as well as that of the ruling elite in France, where they finance political parties of the right and the bourgeois “left”.

WikiLeaks also shows how French, US, and Rwandan political leaders wished the Rwandan genocide of 1994, which was carried out by the Hutu government supported by France, to be forgotten. This ethnic genocide against the Tutsi and Hutu opponents of the Rwandan regime

stemmed from the ethnic rivalries encouraged by French and Belgian colonial leaders, as well as the Franco-American rivalries in this strategically mineral-rich African state. Together with the Interahamwe militia, the Rwandan government allied to France carried out a genocide resulting in 800,000 deaths between April and June of 1994.

Revelations concerning the desire on the part of the French elite for an inquiry to conceal France’s role in these events are particularly noteworthy. On April 6, 1994, Rwandan president Juvénal Habyarimana, Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira, and three French aircrew members were killed in a terrorist attack on the Rwandan presidential aircraft.

The 1994 genocide took place as Rwanda was faced with a devastating economic recession due to the collapse of coffee prices, its main export crop, and the massive devaluation of its currency, the Rwandan franc, instigated by the IMF.

The Rwandan regime in 1994 was also confronted with an invasion led by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (PPR), the Tutsi movement of Paul Kagamé supported by the US.

French imperialist forces were determined to hide their role in the 1994 events. While a parliamentary mission in 1998 was preparing to investigate the role of France in Rwanda, French mercenary Paul Barril lodged a complaint in the name of the French co-pilot of the Rwandan presidential airplane. The investigation was entrusted to the French “anti-terrorist” judge Jean-Louis Bruguière, who allowed the assassinated Rwandan president’s family to take part in the proceedings for damages.

The French government then tried to incriminate the Kagamé regime by investigating accusations that Kagamé’s forces had played a role in triggering the genocide by ordering the shooting down of the Rwandan president’s plane.

Throughout this political operation, the bourgeois press and politicians were declaring that French justice was “independent” from the state. However, the investigation was carried with the participation of the French government while American diplomats were kept informed of its progress. The Rwandan government, closely connected to the US, collaborated in the proceedings. The cables expose the myth of an independent judiciary.

The headline of a September 12, 2010 article in *Le Monde* reads: “WikiLeaks: In France the Rwandan investigation was followed in high places.” The author reveals that American diplomatic cables dated January 27, 2007 and classified “secret” indicate that the judge informed the US “that he had presented his decision to French officials, including President Chirac, as that of an independent judge, but had chosen to consult them because he was convinced of the need to coordinate his schedule with the government.” The article adds: “Bruguière presented his dossier in a very professional way, but he did not hide his personal wish to see the Kagamé government isolated.”

A highly placed French diplomat confided that “the government had given a green light to Bruguière to tender his report [the arrest warrants] [and] that France had wanted to hit back at the Rwanda decision to lead an inquiry into the implication of France in the 1994 genocide and its consequences”. In November 2006, judge Bruguière handed down nine arrest warrants against Rwandan leaders, including President Kagamé.

Rwanda broke off diplomatic relations with France in January 2007.

Jean-Louis Bruguière's statement was made between the breaking off of Franco-Rwandan relations and the election of Nicolas Sarkozy. The desire to coordinate the investigation in line with this schedule arises from the fact that the candidacy of Nicolas Sarkozy signified a shift in the strategic orientation of French imperialism toward closer ties with American imperialism. These manoeuvres served to quietly put an end to the judicial investigations, allowing for a Franco-Rwandan rapprochement.

In May 2007, candidate Sarkozy was supported by Judge Jean-Louis Bruguière, who himself stood as a candidate in the parliamentary elections. The blog *Afrikarabia* comments: “Under these conditions, is ‘the Bruguière investigation’ still a judicial investigation led by an independent judge or a political operation obligingly relayed through the judiciary? The question is sharply posed when in 2007 the judge gives his public

support to candidate Nicolas Sarkozy and presents himself as a parliamentary candidate for the third constituency in the Lot and Garonne.”

The WikiLeaks documents relayed by *Le Monde* indicate that the 2008 arrest in Europe of Kagamé's chief of protocol, Rose Kabuye, was a manoeuvre to restore diplomatic relations between France and Rwanda: “The arrest of Mrs. Kabuye and her transfer to France has allowed Rwanda to enter into the French proceedings on the terrorist attack of 1994, and to prepare a legally opportune response to re-establish diplomatic relations.”

The published WikiLeaks cable adds: “According to this memo, Rose Kabuye herself had confided to some ‘embassy contacts’ that ‘it would be better to go to France to combat the accusations and be auditioned ... [the president] Kagamé has himself expressed his weariness of having to manage the visits to different capitals for formal accusations ... and suggested to Kabuye that other protocol officers start to acquire more experience to organize his trip’.”

These dealings allowed a Franco-Rwandan rapprochement to take effect based on France's refusal to admit any responsibility whatsoever for the genocide. Kabuye was released in April 2009. In 2009, Nicolas Sarkozy visited Rwanda where he refused to recognize France's role in the genocide.

US diplomats were informed of this manoeuvre by the French Foreign Office, and they made no criticisms. The Americans clearly felt that any denunciation of French dealings risked damaging American imperialist interests. This underlines the cynicism of the imperialist powers and the Rwandan regime, who have all manipulated the Rwandan genocide to facilitate diplomatic manoeuvres.



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