

French government accused of ordering Libyan leader Gaddafi's assassination

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Former leaders of the Libyan National Transitional Council (NCT), which fought as a NATO proxy in last year's war against Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya, have accused then-French President Nicolas Sarkozy of ordering the assassination of the Libyan leader on October 20, 2011.

In an interview on the French news site *Médiapart* October 2, Rami El Obeidi, former coordinator of the NTC's foreign intelligence services, asserted that "French foreign agents directly assassinated Gaddafi." He said this was because of Gaddafi's threats, shortly before France launched the war on Libya with NATO backing, to reveal secret donations he had made to Sarkozy in 2007 to finance Sarkozy's presidential election campaign.

Obeidi added, "The threat of a revelation of the funding of Sarkozy in 2006-2007 was taken seriously enough for anyone in the Elysée to want Gaddafi dead very quickly."

Shortly after the story broke, on October 1, *Le Monde* journalist Barbouch Rachid noted on a blog that the spokesman for France's Foreign Ministry under the new Socialist Party (PS) government had refused to confirm or deny Obeidi's allegations and related reports. Nonetheless, French officials and media have largely buried the story. On October 2, *Le Parisien* noted: "This weekend the French authorities have abstained from any comments on these revelations."

On September 29, the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* confirmed Obeidi's assertions, writing: "Mahmoud Jibril, the former premier of the transitional government has...re-launched the story of a plot ordered by a foreign secret service. 'It was a foreign agent infiltrated into the revolutionary brigade who killed Gaddafi,'" he had told an Egyptian TV channel on September 27.

The paper quoted Western diplomats in Tripoli as saying that if a foreign agent was involved, "he was almost certainly French."

On October 1, the British *Daily Mail* spoke of a foreign agent: "He is said to have infiltrated a violent mob mutilating the captured Libyan dictator last year and shot him in the head."

It added, "In another sinister twist to the story, a 22-year-old who was among the group which attacked Gaddafi and who frequently brandished the gun said to have killed him died in Paris last Monday." Press reports identified the man as Omran ben Chaaban, a 22-year-old "rebel" fighter who died on the evening of October 1. He was in several photos and videos of Gaddafi's killing.

Available information suggests that he had connections to the French state and might have been the agent referred to by Obeidi. French officials took in Ben Chaaban after he was captured and tortured by Gaddafi supporters and shot twice in an attempt to escape. He was then transferred to a French hospital in September, where he died.

Obeidi said it was Syrian President Bashar el-Assad who gave Gaddafi's satellite phone number to the French secret service and military in the first week of October, allowing them to pinpoint his location and monitor his movement. Then, "The French *Direction générale de la sécurité extérieure* [General Directorate of Exterior Security, DGSE, French foreign intelligence] carried out the execution."

According to the British *Daily Telegraph*, Obeidi added: "In exchange for this information, Assad had obtained a promise of a grace period from the French and less political pressure on the regime, which is what happened."

Obeidi added that a report by his intelligence service on France's role in Gaddafi's death was censored, "because Mr. Sarkozy controlled the policies of the NTC along with the Emir of Qatar."

This is not the first time that allegations have emerged of French intelligence involvement in Gaddafi's murder. On October 26, 2011, five days after Gaddafi's assassination, the satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné*, reported that "on Wednesday October 19 in the late afternoon, a Pentagon colonel telephoned one of his contacts in the French secret service...The American announced that the Libyan leader, tracked by US predator drones, was trapped in a Sirte neighbourhood and could not now be 'missed.'"

In *Le Canard Enchaîné*'s account, the American official added that if Gaddafi got away, he would become a "real atom bomb."

The *Canard* wrote that the White House had said, "We must avoid giving Gaddafi the international platform that a possible trial would give him." It added, "At the Elysée, they knew that since the middle of October, Gaddafi and one of his sons had been holed up in Sirte. ... And Sarkozy had charged General Benoît Puga, his special military chief of staff, with supervising the hunt for the former dictator. ... At the DGSE and the DRM [military intelligence], they were not bashful about speaking of 'the physical elimination' of the Libyan leader."

The Sarkozy government at the time refused to comment and the political elite and media in France kept quiet. The Hollande government is continuing the cover-up.

Nonetheless, these revelations underscore the criminal character of the extrajudicial murder of Gaddafi—who had had close relations with the heads of state of all the major NATO powers before the Libyan war—and, more broadly, of the war itself. Waged cynically in the name of "democracy," it was fought by NATO Special Forces and air power that carpet-bombed Tripoli and Sirte, put a collection of right-wing militias in power, and culminated in Gaddafi's assassination.

Media coverage and comments from the bourgeois and ex-radical "left" have been minimal. These forces themselves are politically implicated by their political support for the war. The PS endorsed Sarkozy's neo-colonial war in Libya in 2011, as did the New Anti-

capitalist Party, the Left Front of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the Greens.

Only Sarkozy's former defense minister, Gérard Longuet has provided defensive bluster in *Le Parisien*: "Gaddafi killed by a French spy? It's totally far-fetched! Absolutely not credible. It was never an issue."

In fact, these allegations are entirely credible, especially given the deafening silence on the issue from the French government. Not only was it widely publicized that French Special Forces had extensive presence and contacts inside Libya during the war, but Gaddafi also had extensive financial holdings in Western banks. At the beginning of the war, these banks froze \$100 billion to \$160 billion that Gaddafi had invested there.

There would have been every opportunity for Libyan officials to send some of this money to fund French presidential elections. There have been repeated revelations of how French conservative and bourgeois "left" parties were funded by payments from African dictators in former French colonies, such as Gabon, as part of "Françafrique" neo-colonialism.



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