

Soldier attacked while on security patrol in Paris

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At 5:54 pm on Saturday, a lone assailant stabbed a uniformed French soldier in the throat at La Défense, near Paris, only three days after the gruesome murder by machete of an off duty British soldier by two jihadists in London.

In Paris, the assault took place in broad daylight and in full view of the public. The assailant ran off into a crowd of shoppers and has not yet been identified.

The assault took place in the business quarter of La Défense in a space known as *La Salle d'échange* which leads from the shopping area to the subway station, regularly patrolled by three-man joint police/army units as part of the emergency anti-terrorist operation known as Vigipirate. This plan was activated out of fear of terrorist retaliation against France's neo-colonial military interventions in Mali, Syria and Libya.

The 23-year-old soldier, Cédric Cordier, walking just behind his two colleagues, was attacked from behind with a blade and received a superficial wound close to his carotid artery—which would have been fatal if the artery had been severed. Cordier was able to leave hospital on Monday.

Though the space is full of surveillance cameras, there are still conflicting descriptions of the apparently lone assailant. *Le Parisien* spoke of “a man of North African appearance in his thirties, with a beard and wearing a jackets and a *djellab a* [Muslim African robe]”. These details were denied by the *Le Journal du dimanche*, however.

Le Figaro reports: “Questioned by Reuters, the prefect [i.e., top police chief] of the Hauts-de-Seine department, Pierre-Andre Peyvel, refused to deny or confirm this information. The UNSA police union claimed that the aggressor was a tall, athletic man.

The Monday morning edition of *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France* reported the existence

of a video showing the supposed aggressor wearing a small hat and in black clothing praying minutes before the attack. The police also reportedly found a plastic bag near the scene containing a bottle and a knife.

Predictably, the unpopular Socialist Party (PS) government of President François Hollande is trying to seize upon the horrible killing in London and the assault in Paris to boost police powers and stoke a right-wing, law-and-order atmosphere. Hollande's poll ratings are at an historic low of 23 percent, due to the deep unpopularity of his austerity measures and overseas wars.

This took place even though, as of this writing, there is no clear evidence of a political motive behind the stabbing at La Défense.

Interior Minister Manuel Valls stated on Monday morning that Criminal Brigade investigators had some “serious clues”. Speaking on *France 5 TV*, Valls said that “some elements” suggested that the attack was a terrorist act, though he called for “prudence as regards any lumping together or comparison.”

Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, who visited the soldier in hospital, asserted that “they wanted to kill him because he was a soldier,” stressing his determination to carry out together with Valls “an implacable struggle against terrorism.”



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