

The French Republic as killing machine

The Killers of the Republic, by Vincent Nouzille

Anthony Torres
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Les Tueurs de la République, published this year by independent journalist Vincent Nouzille, is a detailed exposure of the criminal assassination campaign carried out by the French state. Under President François Hollande, French intelligence is carrying out murder on a scale unprecedented since the war against Algerian independence initiated by Prime Minister Guy Mollet.

Based on detailed interviews with political, military and intelligence officials, as well as former spies and killers, Nouzille shows that Hollande has carried out more “targeted killings” than any prime minister since the end of the Algerian war in 1962. He has a “kill list,” supposedly made up of people accused of terrorism, whom Hollande and the security services have decided to assassinate without trial.

According to Nouzille, “The list is ultra-secret. François Hollande keeps it preciously not far from him, in his office in the Elysée presidential palace. It holds the names of people whose elimination has been secretly approved. Depending on the circumstances, it can be targeted killings assigned to soldiers or to secret agents of France or of friendly countries. The Action Service (SA) of the General Directorate of External Security (DGSE) and the Special Forces of the armed services have never had so much work to do, according to well-informed sources.”

Hollande draws up this list of murders to be committed behind the backs of the population, thanks to the complicit silence of the media and the petty-bourgeois forces of the Left Front and the New Anti-capitalist Party, who back Hollande’s Socialist Party (PS).

Nouzille adds, “François Hollande decides alone on these extraordinary operations. The president shares his list of targets only with a handful of trusted associates who advise him and know how to be silent, three people mainly: his chief of staff, General Benoît Puga; Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian; and DGSE director Bernard Bajolet, a diplomat.”

This points to the advanced state of degeneration of French

bourgeois democracy. The French constitution outlaws the death penalty. No one has elected Puga, Le Drian or Bajolet to do anything, least of all to decide arbitrarily if someone who has received no trial will live or die. Hollande is giving a blank check to the most reactionary forces, the army and the intelligence services, who carry out massive electronic espionage on the people of France and of the world.

Nouzille cites operations in Afghanistan, Somalia and Mali to murder targeted individuals or entire organizations. He cites Ange Mancini, the Elysée palace’s national intelligence coordinator: “It is good for everyone throughout the world who might be concerned to know that France will always react to aggression against the State or its citizens.”

As France and its NATO allies invade large sections of France’s former colonial empire and its surroundings (including Libya, Ivory Coast, Syria, Mali and the Central African Republic), the French intelligence agency has set up a parallel series of “homo operations,” homo standing for “homicide.” The “homo operations” are designed to “avenge” terrorist attacks or kidnappings targeting France. In fact, they help terrorize entire populations targeted by imperialism.

Nouzille’s book reviews the long history of “homo operations” since the Algerian war and the establishment of the Fifth Republic through a 1958 putsch by units of the French army against the Mollet government. He recounts how first Mollet and then De Gaulle, brought to power by the putschists in 1958, called upon killers drawn from far-right “French Algeria” circles to murder hundreds of Algerians.

This war, which had the support not only of the political right but also of the Stalinist French Communist Party under Mollet’s social democrats, discredited the entire political establishment. The French state was obliged, for a time, to distance itself from routine, large-scale use of targeted killings.

Nevertheless, Nouzille shows the violent methods French

imperialism used against the Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi, which threatened its interests in Africa. In the 1970s and 1980s, under the presidencies of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and François Mitterrand, there were numerous attempts to overthrow the Libyan regime by organizing right-wing revolts, particularly in Benghazi. These facts underscore the longstanding imperialist interests that pushed French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the NATO powers to wage a devastating war in 2011 to topple Gaddafi.

The number of “homo operations” started to rise under Mitterrand, a former official of the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime and minister under Mollet who became the first president elected from the Socialist Party (PS), established in 1969. He called upon the Action Service and the Special Forces to murder targets in Africa and the Middle East.

Mitterrand also modernized the Action Service, creating the Alpha Squad to carry out operations more discreetly, after French agents were caught bombing Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior* vessel in 1986 as it protested French nuclear trials in the Pacific. The Alpha Squad is still tasked with targeted killings.

Nouzille also reveals how, in these secret operations, Mitterrand relied on far-right forces, such as the neo-fascist Groupe Union Défense (GUD) that had specialized in assaulting left-wing students in France. One such was Olivier D (“Naf-Naf”) a former GUD member who fought for the Falangists in Lebanon. In his operations, he mobilized a cadre of supporters of French Algeria, “including former paratroopers and Foreign Legionnaires and ex-members of the OAS [the anti-Gaullist Secret Armed Organization].”

The relaunching of “homo operations” under Mitterrand in the early 1980s corresponded to his PS-PCF government's “austerity turn,” which discredited both the PS and the PCF in the working class. The PCF's ongoing loss of its working class base accelerated rapidly. Under these conditions of escalating popular alienation and disaffection with the political establishment, ruling circles felt free to return to large-scale state murder as a strategy of their ever more warlike foreign policy. Hollande has clearly gone well beyond his predecessor in terms of the scale of the killings he orders.

Having integrated French imperialism's military interventions in Africa and the Middle East with those of Washington after his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy brought France back into NATO's integrated command, Hollande is carrying out massive electronic spying and targeted killing operations modeled on those of American imperialism.

Nouzille writes, “Visibly, François Hollande is not shy about this [kill] list and the operations that it involves,

recalling therefore a certain Guy Mollet. ... François Hollande's determination brings back many memories in military and intelligence circles. ‘Frankly, we haven't seen this since the Algerian war. A president who takes responsibility for such operations, it's rare,’ says a high-ranking officer acquainted with these operations.”

According to Nouzille, “Beyond the 600 to 1,000 jihadist fighters killed during Operation Serval [i.e., the Mali war], heads are rolling among the high-value targets... At least 15 HVTs were liquidated in Mali on the Elysée's orders.” Nouzille adds that there are frequent new arrivals on the kill list.

The fact that experts in clandestine operations draw parallels between the current period and the Algerian war, when the state murdered political opponents, including Frenchmen, underscores the political bankruptcy of French and European capitalism. Having nothing to offer the working class amid an escalating crisis of world capitalism, it turns instead to cultivating a right-wing climate based on war and state murder.

Nouzille cites a member of Hollande's entourage at the Elysée palace: “If Hollande cannot be popular or get results on the domestic front, Hollande at least wants to build up an image as a true war chief. He is mainly under the influence of a few neoconservative diplomats and warmongering generals.”

Well aware that he is carrying out a hated policy of austerity, Hollande, the Fifth Republic's most unpopular president, is taking refuge in criminality, wars of aggression and an unconstitutional campaign of murder. The different laws on intelligence surveillance of the population and on increasing military budgets are used to develop a killing machine directed against anyone opposed to the interests of the French capitalist class.

This book is a warning to the working class: the crimes committed by SA and the other pro-French Algeria forces during the Algerian war, a half century ago, are not only a thing of the past. The state can consider carrying out such crimes again, and has already begun to do so.



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