

French Interior Ministry blocks probe of Charlie Hebdo-Hyper Cacher attacks

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In September, the *Médiapart* news web site revealed that Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve cited the state secrets privilege to block an investigation of the attack on the Hyper Cacher kosher grocery that took place at the same time as the terrorist attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, on January 7.

The silence of French media and political parties on this issue is deafening. However, it is easy enough to confirm the report, by consulting the text of Cazeneuve's decision, discreetly inscribed in the Official Journal of the French Republic on June 18.

The decision blocks a request for declassification of documents issued on April 10 by judicial investigators in Lille, who have launched a probe of the origins of the weapons used by Amédée Coulibaly to attack the Hyper Cacher on January 7.

The resort to the state secrets privilege constitutes a declaration by Cazeneuve and the ruling Socialist Party (PS) that it is in the fundamental strategic interests of the French state to hide from the public the identity of the networks that prepared the January 7 attacks. This underscores the significance of reports in May that this network consists of police forces and far-right operatives serving the PS' policies in France and in Syria.

The latest reports in *Médiapart* support *La Voix du Nord's* allegations that policemen and an informer tied to the neo-fascist National Front (FN), Claude Hermant, armed Coulibaly.

According to *Médiapart*, "Lille police and one of their informers were at the heart of a weapons trafficking network that supplied Amédée Coulibaly, who carried out the attack on the Hyper Cacher at the Porte de Vincennes [in Paris]. If they indeed know nothing of what happened to the weapons, it appears they let the buyers go or lost their scent. Their position

was shaky enough that, in April, they invoked the state secrets privilege," a decision backed up by Cazeneuve in June.

Coulibaly and the Kouachi brothers—who met in prison before carrying out the attacks on the Hyper Cacher and *Charlie Hebdo*, respectively—were members of the networks that Paris uses to train Islamist fighters and send them into combat in Syria.

For motives that remain to be determined, however, in the run-up to the January 7 attacks, these networks sent weapons to Islamist fighters not in Syria, but in France. It is already possible, however, to evaluate the criminal political imperatives dictating the policies of the French ruling elite and in particular of the PS, hated by working people due to its reactionary policies of austerity and mass unemployment.

The PS exploited the attacks to accelerate its moves to transform France into a police state, claiming falsely that this would help prevent Islamist terrorism. The January 7 terrorist attacks were exploited to justify the retroactive legalization of illegal mass electronic spying on the population by French intelligence, by passing a draconian surveillance law, and the dispatching of 10,000 troops onto the streets of France.

This is not a struggle against Islamist terrorism, which is in fact closely bound up with the foreign policy of the French ruling elite, but a politically criminal attempt to reinforce the repressive power of the state within France itself.

Beginning immediately after the attacks, French investigators have worked to obscure the identity of the network that had provided Coulibaly with his weapons.

Médiapart reveals that "On January 20, officials of the Criminal Brigade and of the Sub-Directorate on Anti-Terrorism (SDAT) issued a report to the Paris prosecutor's office summarizing checks run on the

weapons Coulibaly had used with mentioning Europol's response dated January 16. Europol nevertheless said it had 'positively traced three weapons' and had 'approximate tracing for two weapons,' adding that the five weapons had been purchased by Hermant's company in Lille from the Slovak company AFG Security."

Already on January 14, Slovak intelligence and Europol had reportedly warned French authorities that Coulibaly had obtained his weapons from a firm run by Hermant, a former intelligence asset and police informer. According to investigators, he had bought 200 weapons on the web site of AFG Security, a Slovak online arms retailer, then resold them afterwards. Anti-terrorist investigators in Paris sat on this information and apparently blocked attempts of investigators in Lille to access it.

The latter also suspect that Hermant acquired 90 other weapons with a Belgian contact in Charleroi. Though purchases of weapons are illegal in France, Hermant could purchase decommissioned weapons via his firm without getting into any trouble with police and then fix them to return them to a fully functioning state. It would be impossible to buy such weapons without the complicity of sections of intelligence or of police, a point that *Médiapart's* report confirms.

An email exchange between Hermant and police shows that he contacted a "target" who had posted an ad in 2013 on the Delcampe weapons-retailing web site. This "target" was in fact a Belgian detective, living near Charleroi, who has also been interrogated in this affair.

The latter has stated, according to *Médiapart*, that "Claude Hermant was his main client" and "purchased 95 percent of the decommissioned weapons he obtained from the AFG Security web site," that is, "several dozen, where he did not know what the suspect did with them afterwards." Hermant's associates denied this, however, stating: "The deliveries were at most 4 to 6 weapons in two deliveries covered by police."

According to *Médiapart*, the arms sold by Hermant also reportedly were used to kill the policewoman murdered in Montrouge and in an assault on a jogger. The latter accuses Amar Ramdani of having carried out the assault.

Ramdani, a close friend of Coulibaly, was the partner of a policewoman, Emmanuelle C., who apparently

works as a trainer in operational methods for intelligence, Hermant's specialty. Though she partnered with Ramdani, investigators did not make the connection between her and Hermant. The PS' attempt to cover up of these criminal networks to facilitate the bourgeoisie's policy of imperialist war abroad and attacks on democratic rights at home underscores the fundamentally reactionary character of the class interests it represents.



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