

Three French soldiers killed during secret military operations in Libya

Anthony Torres
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Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian reported the deaths of three agents of the General Directorate of Exterior Security's (DGSE) Action Service, which is carrying out black ops on Libyan soil. The incident underscores the illegal character of the French government's ongoing military operations in Libya, which are being carried out behind the backs of the French people.

The Brigade for the Defense of Benghazi, an Islamist militia, claimed responsibility for the destruction of the helicopter carrying the soldiers earlier this month. According to the Associated Press, militants fired a surface-to-air missile and shot heavy weapons at the aircraft, bringing it down and killing the soldiers.

President François Hollande praised “the courage and devotion of the soldiers” active in fighting terrorism, whereas Le Drian simply referred to a “helicopter accident” in an attempt to obscure France's military intervention in Libya, which has never officially been approved.

The revelation of the presence of clandestine French forces provoked an angry reaction from the Libyan puppet regime, installed after NATO's bloody war in Libya in 2011 and backed by the UN, which claimed to not be aware of the French operations.

In a communiqué published a week ago, the national unity government led by Fayeze el-Serraj described its “profound unhappiness concerning the French presence in the east of Libya, organized without coordination with us.” Serraj claimed that his government had contacted the French government to demand an explanation.

The French presence on the ground is officially an intelligence and support mission. From the Sahel countries to the south of Libya, where it has maintained a military presence even since formal decolonization in

the 1960s, France is engaged in surveillance operations and military interventions.

Hasni Adibi, a political scientist and analyst of Arab countries at the Study and Research Center for the Arab and Mediterranean World (CERMAM) in Geneva, explained France's intervention in Libya to the *Atlantico* web site: “Hollande has chosen an intermediate option, a targeted but discreet presence. But France's presence in Libya is not new. Immediately after the fall of Gaddafi and the spread of the jihadists across the Sahel, the French reinforced their presence in Chad, that is to say very close to the border, and since then they have been monitoring Libyan skies. France fears a movement of men and weapons from Libya towards its positions in the Sahel countries. The reinforcement of the Islamic State [IS] in Derna, in the east of the country, in 2015 and its sudden growth in Syria forced a turn in French policy in Libya.”

Adibi added, “The third element that motivated France's involvement is the intensification of coalition air strikes in Syria and Iraq, IS might decide to look for a place to retreat and take refuge. Libya, which has collapsed into instability, is well situated to become this place. France cannot allow a return of the jihadists to the Mediterranean's southern flank.”

This is a damning admission of the responsibility of French imperialism, together with the other NATO powers, for the bloody chaos in Libya, the Middle East, and across northern Africa. In 2011, the imperialist powers responded to revolutionary struggles of the working class in Egypt and Tunisia by launching a violent military offensive seeking to recolonize the entire region.

During the war in Libya five years ago, waged under the pretext of defending a revolution that would bring down Muammar Gaddafi's regime, NATO provided

massive air support to Islamist militias tied to Al Qaeda. These Islamist groups were the main proxy forces on the ground in the war organized by NATO to install a puppet regime and seize the strategically-located, oil-rich country.

Libya subsequently served as a base for Islamist fighters and weapons which US, French and other European intelligence agencies funneled into Syria in order to fuel a sectarian civil war there aimed at overthrowing the government of President Bashar al Assad.

In Libya, the chaos created by the NATO war and the conflicts that broke out between the different Islamist factions sank the country into an entrenched civil war and provoked a vast migrant crisis. Thousands of refugees have died in the Mediterranean on boats which they boarded in Libya.

Libya's UN-backed national unity government has proven incapable of controlling these conflicts and consequently is not considered reliable by the imperialist powers, including France.

The French special forces' clandestine operations have exposed the double game France is playing.

Paris officially supports the Serraj regime, but at the same time backs General Khalifa Haftar, the self-proclaimed military chief of the east, where the French military presence is deployed.

The French-backed general reportedly aims to imitate Egypt's dictator, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Sisi installed a military dictatorship in Egypt after a coup against the Islamist government of President Mohamed Morsi, who repressed social opposition based in the working class through assassinations and mass torture. France sees Haftar as the best option to set up a bloody regime that can ensure the stability of Libya and thus French imperialism's interests in the country.

Haftar is seeking to build and deploy his own army in the region, but due to his close ties with the US and French governments, the Misrata militias and the military forces in Tripoli have refused to officially recognize him.

Ultimately, France's military intervention in Libya exposes the anti-democratic character of Hollande's Socialist Party (PS) government, which covertly sends soldiers to fight in Libya without informing the public, which is largely hostile to France's external military operations.



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