

Informant Claude Hermant implicates French state in Charlie Hebdo attacks

Anthony Torres
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Claude Hermant, a police informant arrested in the case of the January 7, 2015 attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris, has implicated the French state in the preparation of the attack. Hermant, who allegedly sold weapons used by Amédée Coulibaly and the Kouachi brothers to commit the attacks, is reportedly charging that three *gendarme* military policemen and two customs officials, as well as organized crime circles, were involved.

The case shatters the official narrative, according to which terror attacks in France, Belgium, and Germany since 2015 have been the work of isolated Islamists.

Hermant's lawyer, Maxime Moulin, does not dispute the fact that weapons that passed through the hands of his client, who was acting for the customs' intelligence agency until 2013 and then worked for the *gendarmérie*, reached Coulibaly. The media and established political parties covered up this fact, together with Hermant's arrest after the attacks due to his relations with Coulibaly. The interior minister in 2015, Bernard Cazeneuve, even invoked the states secrets privilege in regard to investigations of the relations between Hermant and the Islamists.

Moulin filed a suit with the state prosecutor's office in Lille on May 2, accusing the interior minister of endangering his client's life. He stated, "We are demanding the lifting of the states secrets privilege. Things are being hidden, this was the solution that we found to obtain the truth. ... We want to have access to this information. We are officially asking that the Interior Ministry lift the states secrets privilege on all contact reports [between the *gendarmérie* and Claude Hermant]. We want to know what reports were handled, what information was not transmitted, what reports were ignored, and why."

Moulin said that Hermant had acted purely in the

interests of the customs service and of the *gendarmérie*: "We cannot accept when the *gendarmérie*'s work is really borderline. When things work out, they are happy, but when things don't, they hang you out to dry in the ruins. They can't abandon a soldier in the field like this."

According to the daily *Libération*, Moulin justified his client's suit by citing "a *Médiapart* article of March 2017. Claude Hermant had warned the *gendarmérie* that a convoy with weapons was passing through the tollbooths on the Lille to Paris highway, but the *gendarmérie* only succeeded in intercepting half of the vehicles. The second convoy, which had been warned that the *gendarmes* had been alerted, managed to evade them. And those weapons were used by Coulibaly."

The *Voix du Nord* daily published a few extracts of emails exchanged between Hermant and a *gendarme* in November 2014: "Hey Claude, we talked it over with our superiors. ... We're giving you a green light for the two cases you showed us (weapons—[the city of] Charleroi) ..."

These emails suggest that Hermant may have received official approval from some intelligence agency for his actions in the Coulibaly-Kouachi affair. The *Voix du Nord* encourages its readers to draw their own conclusions: "Suppose you ran across this type of message (of a dozen or so in total), that a *gendarme* allegedly sent to Claude Hermant on 20 November 2017 at 8:47 a.m., and that a close friend of the accused insists that 'Claude Hermant has all his bases covered.'"

It is by now quite clear that far broader forces besides a few Islamist networks were involved in the processes that led up to the attacks. The government's recourse to the states secrets privilege and the deafening silence of the major media has produced a false and one-sided

narrative of the attacks, which incites anti-Islamic racism and whitewashes the role of the state and far right.

The state of emergency, imposed after the November 13, 2015 attacks in Paris, is based on this lie, which the capitalist media do not challenge because it is at the heart of official politics in France. The attacks served to justify former President François Hollande's shift towards relations with far-right forces—with the state of emergency, creating a new 'national guard' police agency, the electronic spying law, and legitimizing neo-fascism by inviting National Front leader Marine Le Pen to the Elysée presidential palace.

The 2015 attacks were carried out by Islamist networks known and followed by French intelligence, who were using them as foot soldiers in the NATO war in Syria. The Kouachi brothers, Coulibaly, and the leader of the November 13 attack squad, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, were all known to the intelligence services for their ties to Al Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS) militia.

The Kouachi brothers were closely followed from 2010 to 2015 and considered extremely dangerous due to their direct contacts with leaders of Al Qaeda in the Arabia Peninsula. Chérif Kouachi and Amédy Coulibaly repeatedly visited Djamel Beghal, a member of Al Qaeda in Algeria, who was under house arrest in France.

Abaaoud, a leading IS member well known as the public face of its Facebook recruitment campaign, was allowed to freely travel across Europe to prepare the November 13 attacks.

Salah Abdeslam, one of the survivors of the attack squad, supposedly Europe's most wanted man, was in fact located in December 2015 by a policeman in the city of Malines. His report was inexplicably lost by his superiors, and police only arrested him in March 2016, a few days before the March 22, 2016 attacks in Brussels.

As for the terrorists who planned those attacks, they were allowed to organize the attacks even after Turkish, Israeli and Russian intelligence had warned their European counterparts of their identity as well as their targets.

Commentary on these various attacks by the media and the established political parties was manipulated in order to terrorize the public and push the political

atmosphere further and further to the right.

Hermant's revelations emerged between the two rounds of the French presidential elections, a few days after the murder of a policeman by IS sympathizer Karim C. The latter had been in prison for attempted murder against policemen in 2001 and was known both to police and counterterrorism officials. According to press reports, he had remained in prison until shortly before the attack and, after leaving prison, he soon began threatening police again.

It is impossible to understand how the security and intelligence services decided to leave such a figure at large, unless it was by a conscious decision, assuming he would commit a crime that would prove politically useful.

The media and the political establishment reacted to the murder of the policeman, Xavier Jugelé, with law-and-order hysteria that cut across rising antiwar and anti-austerity sentiment among youth and workers after the April 7 US strikes in Syria. In this climate, Emmanuel Macron, the preferred candidate of the dominant factions of the ruling class, was falling in the polls as Jean-Luc Mélenchon rose. The attack thus served to shift the political and media atmosphere to the right, stabilizing Macron and the neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen in the polls.

The state of emergency is not aimed at the terrorists, but to suspend democratic rights and undertake unpopular policies through repression of opposition, as during the police attacks on last year's protests against the labor law and the arbitrary searches and seizures in immigrant suburbs.



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