

French officers back far-right generals' letter threatening military coup

Will Morrow
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The political crisis is mounting in France since the April 21 publication of a letter by more than 20 retired generals, since signed by over 7,000 military personnel, threatening a coup d'état.

The political and media establishment has attempted to cover up the significance of the letter and conceal from the population the existence of fascist networks at the highest levels of the state and military apparatus, and their preparations for dictatorship.

The most widely read daily, *Le Monde*, has written almost nothing on the letter, after having maintained silence on it for days. Its first article, published on April 26 on page 10 of its print edition, focused on the reply by Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Rally, hailing the letter and calling on the generals to support her election campaign in 2022. Since then, *Le Monde* has devoted a further two articles to the subject.

The political establishment is consciously working to downplay what has taken place. Socialist Party (PS) senator H el ene Conway-Mouret, a member of the Senate commission on foreign affairs, set the tone, claiming that the letter was a "storm in a teacup. It's important to put things into relation to one another, in a world where every little change is seen as an upheaval. There is no coup d' tat being prepared in France."

Jean-Marc Todeschini, the PS Senator from Moselle and a former state secretary for veterans, complained that the letter "poses a problem, above all for the image that it sends about the military forces."

President Emmanuel Macron has maintained a total silence on the letter, choosing to instead allow ministers to respond to it. No member of the government has suggested that the authors should be criminally charged for threatening a coup, or that there should be an investigation of what networks already exist and what preparations they have already made.

Florence Parly was the first representative to address the issue on Sunday night, four days after its publication and more than a day after Marine Le Pen's public appeal. Her comments were largely an attack on Le Pen from the right, for undermining the military apparatus and its ability to function as an instrument for the defense of French imperialist interests around the world.

"Madame Le Pen's words reflect a serious misunderstanding of the military institution, which is worrying for someone who wants to become head of the armed forces," she wrote. "The politicisation of the armed forces suggested by Madame Le Pen would weaken our military tool and therefore France."

Parly has repeatedly emphasized the fact that the signatories of the letter are retired, to emphasize its political insignificance. Yet it is well known that "retired" generals and high-level military officials maintain close ties with their active-duty counterparts and act as the public face for them in precisely such overtly political declarations. In a further comment on Monday to *France Info*, Parly announced that there would be sanctions against any actively serving military officers who had signed the letter.

The Place Armes website, maintained by letter's publicly identified editor, former Captain Jean-Pierre Fabre-Bernadac, includes a list of the first 1,500 signatories of the letter. It claims that the number of signatories has since increased to more than 7,000 in the days since it was published.

The letter, an overt threat to launch a military coup, combines hatred of Muslims with working class neighbourhoods, warning that "Islamism and the hordes of the *banlieues* [working class suburbs], [are] leading to numerous schisms in the nation, transforming it into territories with ideologies contrary

to our constitution.”

Military representatives, it states, as “servants of the nation, who have always been ready to put our skin on the line for our actions, as was required by our military status, cannot be passive spectators before such actions.”

If nothing is done by the government, “complacency will continue to spread inexorably throughout society, provoking in the end an explosion and the intervention of our active-duty comrades in a perilous mission to protect our civilisation’s values and safeguard our compatriots on the national territory.

“We see that there is no more time to procrastinate, or else tomorrow civil war will put an end to the growing chaos, and the deaths, that you will be responsible for, will number in the thousands.”

If such overt threats of a military coup are circulating, it is because preparations for a coup are being discussed, and made, at high levels in the state machine. In neighboring Germany, it has already been revealed that fascist networks in the military have made far-reaching preparations for a “day X,” compiling lists of left-wing politicians to be assassinated and stockpiling arms and supplies.

The Macron government is far more fearful of a movement of the working class than it is of a fascistic coup d’état. That is why it is determined to cover up the significance of the generals’ letter. Moreover, the fascist letter largely bases itself on the anti-Muslim campaign waged by the Macron administration. Its argument denouncing the supposed danger of a Muslim “separatist” movement in France mirrors the thrust of Macron’s “anti-separatist” law, which is directed against the more than five million Muslims in France.

Amid the pandemic, Macron’s anti-Muslim campaign is aimed at dividing the working class and diverting attention from his homicidal policy of permitting the virus to spread throughout the population unchecked, in order to prevent any restriction on corporate profit-making.

Macron himself is rapidly moving to build up the forces of a police state. The government recently passed its “global security” law, which opens up the possibility of criminally persecuting civilians who film acts of police brutality and make the evidence public. Throughout 2018, riot police used tear gas, stun grenades, rubber bullets and attack dogs to repress the

“yellow vest” protests against social inequality. Macron himself infamously hailed the wartime fascist dictator Pétain as a “great soldier.”

There is no progressive faction of the political establishment opposed to the turn toward dictatorship. Capitalist democracy, riven by historically unprecedented levels of social inequality, is breaking down around the world. In the United States, former President Trump sought to launch a coup d’état on January 6 and overturn the results of the presidential elections. In Spain, retired generals openly call for a military government and the massacre of “26 million” left-wing voters and their families.

The only answer to this drive to dictatorship lies in the political mobilization of the working class as a unified force on an international scale in the fight for socialism. This Saturday, May 1, the *World Socialist Web Site* is holding an international online rally, to outline a program of action for the working class to organize its struggle against the ruling class’ homicidal response to the coronavirus pandemic and the drive to war and dictatorship. We urge all our readers to register and make plans to attend.



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