

Official story of assassination in Haiti begins to unravel

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Glaring inconsistencies in the official narrative of the assassination of Haiti's President, Jovenel Moise, are fueling suspicions that powerful figures within the impoverished country's corrupt ruling elite were involved in the July 7 murder. As evidence grows linking far-right figures with ties to the former Duvalier dictatorship to the crime, US imperialism is intensifying its intervention with the aim of covering up what happened so as to bring about an accommodation between the warring factions within the Haitian elite.

Moise was executed in his residence in Pétionville, a suburb of the capital Port-au-Prince, in the early morning hours of July 7. His body was found riddled with 12 bullets, and his eye had been gouged out. The authorities have blamed a commando unit made up of 26 ex-Colombian military personnel and two Haitian-Americans for the crime. Eighteen of them have been captured, three have been killed, and the remainder are still being sought.

The authorities have focused their interest on 63-year-old Christian Emmanuel Sanon, a preacher and failed businessman living in Florida, and John Joel Joseph, a political rival of Moise, as the chief suspects. Sanon, who has never held political office, is improbably accused of having plotted Moise's demise so as to return to Haiti and become president.

One of the most striking facts undermining the official narrative is that not a single member of Moise's security detail was injured during the attack. The president's residence is accessible only via a single road from Port-au-Prince, meaning that the commando unit would have had to pass through security checkpoints. As one retired Colombian special forces soldier, who claimed to have been offered a position to provide security for the Haitian president by a Florida-based security firm, put it, "How can you have this type of assassination and not have a single dead but the President himself? If my fellows had done the job, they would have had to enter the residence

and kill the guards before killing the President. You would have seen a combat scene."

Other reports have noted that many of the Colombians were not aware of the mission they were signing up for. According to relatives, they were offered monthly salaries of up to \$2,700 and told they would be providing security for important dignitaries and investors in Haiti.

In comments to Colombian radio station La FM, Colombian President Ivan Duque stated that only a handful of the mercenaries knew what was going on. "Once they were over there, the information they were given changed," he added. "They ended up involved in these unfortunate events."

Suspicions are growing over the role of far-right forces with ties to the former Duvalier dictatorship, as well as former assets of US imperialist agencies. Of the 39 people arrested in connection with the assassination to date, several previously served as informants for the FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration, according to CNN.

Dimitri Herard, head of security at Haiti's presidential residence, was placed in police custody Wednesday in connection with the investigation of the assassination. The Colombian National Police confirmed that Herard was in Bogota in late May, but it remains unclear whether he met with any of the Colombian suspects. A total of four security personnel are reportedly in custody, including former police officer Gilbert Dragon. Both Herard and Dragon are associates of Guy Philippe, who led the US-backed coup against elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004. The fact that figures with such close ties to the faction of the Haitian ruling elite linked to the Duvalier dictatorship had such important positions in the Moise regime underscores just how right-wing his government was.

The most spectacular allegation to date came from Colombian television channel Caracol, which claimed to have information from the FBI and Haitian authorities

proving that interim president Claude Joseph was involved in the assassination. Joseph, who was prime minister under Moïse, was informed that he would be removed from his post two days before the assassination when Moïse appointed Ariel Henry to take over as prime minister. Henry had not yet taken office when Moïse was assassinated. Claude Joseph subsequently claimed to be in charge and declared himself interim president.

According to a WikiLeaks cable, Joseph was a leader of a student group that received funds in 2004 from the National Endowment for Democracy, a US agency created to carry out political operations previously run by the CIA in Latin America and around the world. Joseph's Grand Front National des Etudiants Haitiens was described in the cable as "an active, responsible pressure group."

Underscoring the concern among the Haitian authorities over powerful political figures being implicated in the assassination plot, the Haitian national police promptly issued a strongly-worded denunciation of the accusation against Joseph, labelling it a "lie."

Whether or not Claude Joseph was involved, observers are increasingly calling into question the narrative that Sanon and John Joel Joseph are the primary suspects. "If you look at the profile of these people, and I know some of them very well, I don't think they are the big fish responsible for or behind this murder," Haiti's minister of elections Mathias Pierre told *Bloomberg*. An anonymous US source told the Colombian daily *El Tiempo*, "(s)uch a plan can only be made with high level government officials."

There is no shortage of bitter conflicts within the venal and corrupt Haitian ruling elite that could have served as the pretext for Moïse's assassination. The president, who was widely despised by the Haitian masses for his loyal enforcement of IMF-dictated austerity measures, was viewed as a threat by factions of the ruling establishment. They feared that Moïse's efforts to cling to power beyond his constitutionally-mandated five-year term and to assume dictatorial presidential powers would allow him to secure important sections of the economy for his cronies. In the months prior to his assassination, Moïse removed some of his political opponents by firing mayors and senators. In September, he had intended to hold a referendum to abolish the constitutional ban on two consecutive terms for president. The existing constitution also includes a limit of two presidential terms in a person's lifetime.

Powerful sections of the ruling elite traditionally

enjoyed a virtual monopoly on highly-profitable sectors of the economy, including gasoline distribution and cell phone coverage. Bitter conflicts have also raged in recent years for control of lucrative public works contracts.

The US imperialist intervention in Haiti, which is being stepped up in the wake of the assassination of Moïse, has always been aimed at cobbling together some sort of agreement within the venal Haitian ruling elite so as to facilitate the ruthless imperialist exploitation of the Western Hemisphere's poorest country. Although President Joe Biden has asserted that the deployment of US military personnel is "not on the agenda," the US Marine contingent tasked with guarding the American embassy in Port-au-Prince is being augmented.

Moreover, the investigation into Moïse's assassination is being led by FBI and Department of Homeland Security officials. At least eight FBI agents have reportedly been in Haiti as part of the investigation, and they have already completed an initial report.

Haiti's long and bitter encounter with US imperialism and its Canadian and French allies demonstrates that nothing good can come from investigations led by Washington. Between 1915 and 1934, US Marines occupied the island nation and brutally suppressed a nationalist rebellion. The same imperialist interests were behind Aristide's ouster in 2004, which inaugurated a 13-year military intervention under the mantle of the United Nations that included widespread human rights abuses and the triggering of a devastating cholera outbreak that claimed over 10,000 lives.

Haiti's workers and impoverished masses can take forward a struggle against the social misery and grinding poverty they confront only by refusing to support any faction within the country's corrupt pro-imperialist ruling elite. What is required is the unification of the fight by the Haitian masses to put an end to the imperialist domination of their country with the struggles of the working class throughout the Caribbean and the Americas on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program.



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