

New revelations in assassination of Haitian president point to conspiracy of high-ranking government officials

Alex Johnson
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New revelations in last July's assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse add to evidence that the plot was orchestrated by powerful political figures within Moïse's cabinet, representing rival sections of the country's corrupt ruling elite and backed by US authorities.

Following the execution of Moïse at the hands of gunmen who broke into his residence, recently appointed prime minister and longtime US stooge Ariel Henry was tapped as the new head of the government by the so-called Core Group, foreign diplomats from North America and Europe, including the US ambassador to Haiti, along with representatives from the United Nations and the Organization of American States. Henry was hand-picked after a brief power grab by acting PM Claude Joseph, Henry's predecessor, was shot down by Washington and its allies.

Henry and other Haitian authorities overseeing the murder investigation have concocted an official narrative attributing the killing to some 40 suspects, including Moïse's security officers, several native businessmen and Haitian Americans, as well as 18 Colombian mercenaries who have been arrested for carrying out the assault on Moïse's residence.

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Although the investigation has been ongoing for several months, and more than half of those accused in the murder plot were arrested immediately following the assassination, little to nothing has been revealed from high-ranking officials on who exactly ordered the president's killing and what figures financed and directed plot. In fact, the investigation, which has been mired in evidence-tampering since it began, has fueled popular hatred against leading authorities such as Henry and Joseph, who are widely believed to have been intimately involved in carrying out the assassination, with the blessing of American intelligence.

New details into the assassination plot point to a massive cover-up from the highest levels of the state. A report in the *New York Times* this week confirmed allegations of a connection between Henry and Joseph Felix Badio, a former justice ministry official now wanted by the government on suspicion of having organized the attack. Phone records revealed by the *Times*, as well as interviews with Haitian officials and Rodolphe Jaar, a Haitian businessman and former drug trafficker with ties to Henry, point to incriminating evidence of Henry's role in the assassination.

The phone records showed Badio spoke to Henry before and after the killing, including in two calls for a total of seven minutes the morning after the assassination. Even after plans to arrest Badio were well underway, the murder suspect visited Henry, according to two

Haitian officials close to the investigation.

Four months after the assassination, Badio traveled to Henry's personal residence twice and was able to enter the complex unmolested by the PM's security detail, despite being wanted by the police.

The phone conversations between Henry and Badio had been initially exposed in September by the nation's chief prosecutor, Bedford Claude, who declared the calls established evidence linking the acting prime minister to the assassination.

Claude issued a police summons for the prime minister, ordering him to testify about his connections in the assassination plot. Henry then refused to meet with the chief prosecutor to answer questions and denounced the requests for testimony as politically motivated. The chief prosecutor subsequently issued an order to the judge overseeing the case to institute a travel ban prohibiting Henry from leaving the country, and demanded that Henry be charged in the murder investigation because of his alleged connections to the prime suspect.

Hours after Claude's overture to the lead judge, Henry reportedly asked the minister of justice, Rockefeller Vincent, to fire Claude. Vincent claims that after he refused, both of them were sacked under orders from Henry based on fraudulent accusations of "serious administrative fault." Henry has since then repeatedly denied any involvement in the murder but has not directly addressed the phone calls.

Other major details came from an interview the *Times* conducted with Jaar, who not only admitted to helping finance and plan the assassination, but also said he was assured by Badio that Henry would whitewash the investigation and protect the killers. Shortly before the assassination, Badio informed Jaar that Henry would serve as a "useful ally after the president was overthrown," according to the *Times*. According to a senior security official, Jaar was detained in the Dominican Republic on Friday after six months in hiding.

Jaar recounted in the interview with the *Times* the words of Badio and the lengths to which he went to assure him of Henry's loyalty. Referring to Henry, Badio told Jaar, "He is my good friend, I have full control of him."

After police officers arrested the Colombian mercenaries accused of carrying out the assault, Jaar said Badio had sought help from Henry to escape capture by the police. Henry, according to Jaar, responded that "he would make some calls" to ensure Badio's safety. According to the *Times*, several Haitian officials involved in the investigation also confirmed that Henry was in touch with Badio on multiple occasions, and argued that Henry would be a formal suspect in the

investigation if he weren't the head of the nation's government.

Jaar also claimed that he thought the goal of the plot had been to overthrow President Moïse in a coup instead of killing him outright.

According to Jaar, the plotters intended to swear in a former Supreme Court judge, Windelle Coq-Thélot, as the new president. Jaar suggested that they expected support from key elements of the Haitian state, including the security forces, in their coup attempt. This lends credibility to the belief that Moïse's security guards had been accomplices in the attack, since not a single member of Moïse's security detail was injured during the shootout, and the mercenaries were allowed to cross multiple security checkpoints to enter the president's palace.

The most explosive element of Jaar's testimony was his allegation of direct involvement of American officials, who he says green-lighted and helped orchestrate the conspiracy against Moïse. Jaar said he only agreed to be involved in the assassination because he was reliably informed by Badio and other plotters that it had the full support of the United States. "If the U.S. government was involved, then it was safe," Jaar noted.

Jaar claimed the US organized the plot out of nervousness over Moïse's supposed connections to terrorists and drug traffickers. Last November, the US Senate Judiciary Committee criticized the Drug Enforcement Administration for corruption surrounding its Haiti operations, citing a *Times* investigation in August connecting Moïse's head of palace security to Caribbean-based drug smuggling.

After hiding out in Haiti, Jaar escaped to neighboring Dominican Republic, where he was arrested last weekend at the request of US authorities.

The Moïse regime was notable for its rampant corruption and for being widely hated by the Haitian population. Moïse repeatedly confronted outbreaks of mass protests since 2018, while only clinging to power due to Washington's support of his government. Then-President Donald Trump backed Moïse during weeks-long protests involving tens of thousands during the fall of 2019. They were sparked by the impoverished nation's worsening social conditions and Moïse's own involvement in a massive corruption scandal that saw the siphoning of billions of dollars in aid from Venezuela by his allies in Haiti's venal ruling elite.

Coming into office as a result of fraudulent elections in 2016, in which barely 23 percent of the electorate participated, Moïse repeatedly sought to consolidate a dictatorship. He refused to step down in the early months of 2021 despite his five-year term as president expiring in February.

In the weeks before his assassination, Moïse was also preparing to ram through an illegal constitutional referendum aimed at further cementing a presidential dictatorship and protecting presidents from prosecution for any crimes committed while they were in office. The Biden administration decisively reaffirmed its backing of the president even as Moïse intensified his dictatorial policies.

Rival sections of Haiti's corrupt kleptocracy grew bitter over Moïse's lurch towards authoritarianism, and saw his attempts to consolidate power as an opportunity to enrich his cronies. Moïse's presidency was embroiled in clashes between powerful political and business figures, with some suspected of narcotics and arms trafficking.

In police interrogations of the captured plotters, some confessed that a top priority of the attack was retrieving a list that detailed suspected drug traffickers that Moïse was planning on handing to the US government, according to a *Times* report citing three senior Haitian

officials with knowledge of the investigation. One of the central figures in Moïse's dossier was Charles Saint-Rémy, a Haitian businessman with links to the country's drug trade.

Significantly, Saint-Rémy is also the brother-in-law of former President Michel Martelly, a figure with close political ties to former members of the US-backed Duvalier dictatorship. He was installed to head a puppet regime under the aegis of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Martelly tapped Moïse to be his successor as president. Both Martelly and Saint-Rémy exerted huge influence in Moïse's government, dictating which of their business associates and the country's oligarchs would receive lucrative contracts.

Although a political protege of Martelly, Moïse had become increasingly resentful of Martelly's influence, with one report claiming that Moïse was unable to choose his own cabinet members without the approval of Martelly's family or that of Mr. Saint-Rémy. Moïse also deeply mistrusted an important member of Martelly's security force, Dimitri Hérard, who would eventually continue his role under Moïse's regime. According to presidential advisors, Hérard was found on at least one occasion spying on the president for Saint-Rémy, informing him about Moïse's meetings.

Notwithstanding US imperialism's nominal backing of the Moïse regime, the claim made by the *Times* that "no evidence has emerged" of any of the murder suspects having collaborated with the American government or "that the United States was involved in or aware of the plot" is dubious at best. Even in the wake of Henry's purge of the chief prosecutor and justice minister following their questioning his incriminating phone calls with Badio, the US government has stood faithfully by Henry.

Meanwhile, of the 39 people arrested in connection with the assassination, several previously served as informants for the FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration, according to CNN. No one arrested has yet been formally charged.

The working class and destitute peasantry are the true victims of the Haitian ruling-class's political intrigues, which are, in the final analysis, aimed at defending a system of exploitation and grinding poverty which is rooted in centuries-long oppression at the hands of American and world imperialism.



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