

Police, far right linked to attack on kosher grocery during Charlie Hebdo shooting

By Anthony Torres
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The arrest of an arms dealer linked to the neo-fascist National Front (FN) and the French police points to the possible role of the state and the far right in the terrorist attacks carried out in January in Paris by Amedy Coulibaly on the Hypercacher kosher supermarket, and by the Kouachi brothers on *Charlie Hebdo* magazine.

In late January, Claude Hermant, his partner, and another man were arrested for having repaired “many” decommissioned weapons from Eastern European countries. According to *La Voix du Nord*, the local paper near Lille, where Hermant lives, these weapons “were then delivered to criminal gangs, and not only those in Lille.”

Hermant reportedly sold Coulibaly, directly or through third persons, the weapons which he used to carry out the Hypercacher killings, according to the same newspaper: “It’s a very serious lead, which we hope to confirm soon.” The trail points to Belgium, where “Hermant apparently had ties in the context of his broader network. Let us recall that Coulibaly obtained his weapons at Charleroi,” in Belgium, the newspaper said.

La Voix du Nord published some extracts of emails sent between Hermant and police in November 2014. In one email, the policeman writes: “Hi Claude, we discussed things with our superiors. ... We are OK with the two subjects you raised with us (weapons, Charleroi).”

These emails strongly suggest that Hermant could have received the support of intelligence services or of police to deliver weapons to Coulibaly or other Islamists. The newspaper continues, “Suppose that you found such messages (a dozen in all) that a policeman sent to Hermant, on November 21, 2014, at 8:47 a.m. Suppose that a close associate of the accused certified, ‘Claude Hermant has covered his bases’.”

Police officials were thus aware that Hermant was trafficking weapons and who he was selling them to. This again raises, very directly, the question of the role of the state in the deadly attacks of January 2015 in Paris.

It is already documented that Coulibaly and the Kouachi brothers were known to the intelligence services and to police. The Kouachi brothers were under intelligence surveillance from November 2011 to June 2014; they were also placed on British and US surveillance lists. From 2011 to 2013, one of the brothers repeatedly traveled to Islamist training camps in Yemen.

As for Coulibaly, he was convicted for having plotted the jailbreak of an Islamist activist. He met Cherif Kouachi in prison.

The French state is complicit in the arming of the Islamist networks that are active in this social layer in France, and which Paris is using as part of its proxy war to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In an interview with *Le Monde*, President François Hollande even insisted that France had been arming Syrian Islamist forces as far back as the spring of 2013. Such forces, when deployed in Syria, can rely on training and operational assistance from French soldiers and CIA agents.

These Islamist groups are used to foment terrorist attacks and wage a neo-colonial war aimed at installing a pro-imperialist regime in Syria.

The reports of Hermant’s weapons-dealing activities raise the most serious questions: did sections of the state with ties to the far right encourage or at least tolerate the preparation of the January attacks for political reasons? Hollande exploited the attacks to shift the political atmosphere, place 10,000 soldiers in the streets, accelerate attacks on democratic rights and

promote the FN as indispensable to mainstream politics. After the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and Hypercacher, Hollande invited FN leader Marine Le Pen to the Elysée presidential palace.

Hermant's comments suggest that he believed he was acting on behalf of the state. The weapons trafficker and police informant insists that he "will not be the next Marc Fievet," referring to a former customs inspector tasked with infiltrating organized crime circles, but arrested by Canadian authorities and abandoned by his superiors.

Hermant's ties with the police point to the growing integration of the FN in the security forces, who emerged politically strengthened from the attacks carried out by the Kouachi brothers and Coulibaly. Since then, the Socialist Party (PS) government has voted new intelligence law and boosted the defense budget, while the FN is continuing its normalization in mainstream bourgeois politics.

These events constitute a warning to the working class. A reactionary milieu tied to the security services, involving both far-right operatives and Islamist terrorists, is being brought forward as shock troops to attack the working class.

Hermant was trained as a paratrooper in the 1980s and reportedly went on to fight in Croatia. In the 1990s, he joined the FN's security service, the Department of Protection and Security (DPS), a paramilitary group modeled on the special forces. It was led by Bernard Courcelle, the former captain of a parachute regiment and informer for military intelligence. The DPS was reportedly financed by weapons sales, according to *Libération*, including to Chechen forces through Croatia.

The gun dealer was thus connected to paramilitary organizations composed of former soldiers carrying out missions involving critical interests of the French state, both at home and internationally.

Hermant reportedly infiltrated activist groups such as SOS-Racism, and led punitive actions in impoverished French suburbs. He left for Congo-Brazzaville in 1999, tasked with a mission by the Congolese government of President Denis Sassou Nguesso, who is closely tied to French interests. Hermant was incarcerated there before being released by a presidential pardon and leaving the DPS.

He led the Flemish House at Lambersart, a far-right association that was shut down in 2012. He reportedly

now works in a restaurant in the Lille metropolitan area.

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