

1986: The Bombing of Libya

On April 15, 1986, U.S. war planes bombed the Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi. Two hours later, President Ronald Reagan justified the unprecedented attack on a sovereign country and its head of state in a national television address. The U.S., Reagan claimed, had “direct, precise and irrefutable” proof that Libya was responsible for a bomb blast in a West Berlin discotheque. The explosion 10 days earlier at the disco La Belle, a favorite nightspot for U.S. soldiers, had killed three people and injured 200.

Beginning November 1997, five defendants were on trial in a Berlin court for their alleged involvement in the La Belle attack.

A documentary broadcast on August 25, 1998, by German public television (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen - ZDF) presents compelling evidence that some of the main suspects in the 1986 Berlin disco bombing, the event that provided the pretext for a U.S. air assault on Libya, worked for American and Israeli intelligence.

The report by ZDF television’s political magazine *Frontal* concluded:

- (1) The lead defendant, Yasser Chraidi, is very possibly innocent, and is being used as a scapegoat by German and U.S. intelligence services.
- (2) At least one of the defendants, Musbah Eter, has been working for the CIA over many years.
- (3) Some of the key suspects have not appeared in court, because they are being protected by Western intelligence services.
- (4) At least one of those, Mohammed Amairi, is an agent of Mossad, the Israeli secret service.

The man charged with being the mastermind of the La Belle attack, 38-year-old Yasser Chraidi, was a driver at the Libyan embassy in East Berlin in 1986. He later moved to Lebanon and was extradited to Germany in May 1996.

Frontal interviewed the two Lebanese responsible for extraditing Chraidi: the former public prosecutor, Mounif Oueidat, and his deputy, Mrad Azoury. Both confirm that German authorities used deceit to extradite Chraidi.

According to Azoury, he received no evidence that Chraidi was actually involved in the attack; there were only “hints.” Oueidat said the Germans showed tremendous interest in getting Chraidi. “The Americans were behind this demand,” he says. “This was obvious. They spurred on the Germans to speed up the extradition.”

Eventually Chraidi, declared to be a “top terrorist,” was flown to Germany in a spectacular security operation. But a Berlin judge found the evidence presented by the prosecution so weak, he threatened to release Chraidi within three weeks unless more proof was presented.

Another man was then brought into the case, who, according to *Frontal*, “was obviously supposed to be spared by the prosecution until then.” On September 9, 1996, the very day the Berlin judge threatened to release Chraidi, Berlin public prosecutor Detlev Mehliis, Berlin police inspector Uwe Wilhelms and a Mr. Winterstein of the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND) met Musbah Eter in Malta.



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CIA involvement

The meeting had been prepared by the BND, which maintains close connections to its U.S. counterpart, the CIA. Musbah Eter was running an international business in Malta, which, according to *Frontal*, served as a cover for extensive intelligence operations on behalf of the CIA.

The German authorities wanted him on a murder charge. But during the Malta meeting a deal was struck: “Immunity for Eter, if he incriminates Chraidi for La Belle.” The next day Eter went to the German embassy and testified. As a result, the warrant against him was scrapped and he was allowed to travel to Germany.

In the words of *Frontal*, Eter is “the key figure in the La Belle trial.” At the time of the disco bomb attack he worked for the Libyan embassy in East Berlin. But he paid regular visits to the U.S. embassy. According to Christian Ströbele, the lawyer for Chraidi, this highly unusual fact is proven by extensive notes of the East German secret police, who watched Eter very closely at the time.

There are many indications that Eter was actively involved in the La Belle bombing. According to interrogation transcripts studied by *Frontal*, he had the detailed knowledge of a participant. He even admitted that he brought the operating instructions for the bomb to the flat of a codefendant.

Frontal asserts that besides the defendants in the present trial, another group was involved in the La Belle bombing – a group of professional terrorists, working for anybody who paid them, led by a certain “Mahmoud” Abu Jaber. Members of this group, according to *Frontal*, “have

barely been bothered by the prosecution and live securely in other countries.”

In the months preceding the La Belle attack they lived in East Berlin and met, almost on a daily basis, with the defendants. Hours before the attack they moved to West Berlin, where the bomb exploded. Their movements were monitored by East German and Russian secret services, which concluded they were working for Western intelligence. The Russian KGB, in a document cited by *Frontal*, gave the opinion that American counterintelligence planned to use “Mahmoud” to concoct a case for the involvement of Libyan terrorists in the attack. According to the same KGB document, “Mahmoud” had warned West Berlin intelligence two days before the explosion.

Frontal followed the traces of Mohammed Amairi, the right-hand man of “Mahmoud” Abu Jaber, who, according to the documents it has studied, “was particularly involved in the preparation of the La Belle attack.”

Agent of Israel's Secret Service, Mossad

Amairi left Germany for Norway in 1990, when a warrant was issued for his arrest. He stopped the *Frontal* interview in Norway when asked what secret service he had been working for. His lawyer, Odd Drevland, finally told the story. When Amairi moved to Norway he was arrested and branded “a danger to the country” on the front page of tabloids.

But then the Mossad took charge of him and “everything changed.” “Was Amairi a Mossad agent?” asked *Frontal*. “He was a Mossad man,” answered Drevland.

“These secret service intrigues present a task for the Berlin court that is almost insoluble,” concludes the *Frontal* report. “But one thing is certain, the American legend of Libyan state terrorism can no longer be maintained.”

Source: “German TV exposes CIA, Mossad links to 1986 Berlin disco bombing,” World Socialist Web Site, Aug. 27, 1998. <www.wsws.org/news/1998/aug1998/bomb1-a27.shtml>

La Belle Disco: Debunking the “Libya did it” Theory

By David Hoffman, reporter, photographer and former editor/publisher, *Haight Ashbury Free Press*.

Angry over recent terrorist bombings, frustrated by the CIA’s failure to eliminate Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, and still smarting from Israeli rumors of a Libyan hit squad sent to assassinate him, President Ronald Reagan opted for a military-style assault. All the White House needed was an excuse, and this came in the form of an attack on the La Belle Discotheque in Germany. Nine days later, Reagan ordered U.S. planes to attack Libya, resulting in over 37 dead, including Qaddafi’s infant daughter.

But had Libya actually bombed the disco? The White House was adamant. The National Security Agency (NSA) had intercepted coded exchanges between Tripoli and the East Berlin Libyan Peoples Bureau that purportedly said, “We have something that will make you happy.” Interestingly, under orders from the National Security Council, the raw coded intercepts were sent straight to the White House, bypassing normal NSA analysis channels, drawing criticism from at least one NSA officer. A West German intelligence official who later saw the cables, said they were “very critical and skeptical” of U.S. intelligence blaming the Libyans.

The U.S.’s evidence hinged on



West German officials reportedly concluded that the CIA was responsible for bombing La Belle disco. The Berlin official responsible for the investigation said: “When I add it all up, I think the Yanks did this thing themselves.”

reports in Stassi (East German police) files passed to West German officials. The Stassi reports indicated that the attack was planned a group that had met in Tripoli a month earlier.

Yet the “Libya did it” theory quickly fell apart during the trial of Imad Mahmoud, another member of Nuri’s group, as the Stassi informants’ contradictions and inconsistencies cast doubts on the case. One informant, Mahmoud Abu-Jabber was, according

to KGB files, a CIA informer. One KGB report indicated that Faysal met with his CIA contact two days prior to the attack, and told them the price of the bombing would be \$30,000, and not \$80,000 as previously agreed.

Stassi defector Colonel Frank Weigand, based on a PLO Security Report, concluded that Nuri was a West German police agent. Other evidence which seemed to back this up was that while Nuri was wanted for the murder of a Libyan CIA informer, he managed to repeatedly cross the East-West Berlin border, one of the most tightly-guarded border crossings in the world. When German authorities finally located Nuri in Lebanon in 1994, U.S. officials failed to provide the evidence needed to extradite him, despite repeated pleas by West German officials.

Ultimately, West German officials concluded that the CIA was responsible for the bombing.

Weigand recalled one phone conversation intercept where a high-ranking West German intelligence officer spoke with the Berlin official responsible for the La Belle investigation. According to Weigand, the investigator, when pressed for his conclusion, told the West German spook, “Well, when I add it all up, I think the Yanks did this thing themselves.”

Source: Excerpt, *The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Politics of Terror* (1998). <www.constitution.org/ocbpt/ocbpt.htm>