

French Foreign Minister Accused of Falsifying Reports on Syria “To Provoke a War”

By [Voltaire Network](#)

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On 19 March 2012, a high French official invited Arab journalists based in Paris to inform them of the internal battle being waged within the French government and, in particular, the Quai d'Orsay [the French Foreign Ministry] regarding Syria. According to this person, the French Ambassador in Damascus, Eric Chevallier, whose embassy had just been shut down and who had returned to Paris, challenged Minister Juppé in front of his colleagues. He accused Alain Juppé of having ignored his embassy reports and of having falsified summaries of them to provoke a war against Syria.

In March 2011, at the beginning of the events currently besetting Syria, the Foreign Ministry hurriedly dispatched fact finders to Deraa to appraise what was happening. Their report, submitted to Paris, indicated that tensions had dissipated following several demonstrations, information that contradicted Al-Jazeera and France 24 reports that the city of Deraa was being violently torn apart. The ambassador requested the mission be extended in order to follow developing events. The Foreign Minister, furious about the first report, telephoned him and demanded that he alter it to state that a bloody repression of the city was occurring. The Ambassador then arranged a teleconference between the Chief of Mission in Deraa and the Minister and had him repeat that no such repression had occurred. The minister then threatened the ambassador and the conversation ended icily.

Immediately afterwards, Alain Juppé's cabinet pressured Agence France Press to publish cables aligned with the view of the Minister. During the months that followed, altercations between Ambassador Eric Chevallier and Alain Juppé continued to multiply, until the moment of the Iranian hostage crisis in January 2012 and the death of “journalist” Gilles Jacquier. At this moment, the Ambassador was ordered to pull the covert DGSE agents working under press cover out of Syria, at which point he realized the importance of the secret operation being carried out by Alain Juppé.¹

As former Minister of Defense, Alain Juppé appears to have maintained tight friendships within the armed services and to be able to rely on agents loyal to him.

The same source affirms that the ambassadorial reports were either ignored or falsified which led the ambassador himself to shore up his position by having forwarded to the Foreign Ministry equivalent European diplomatic reports attesting that Syria was not in the throes of a cycle of protest and crackdown but was rather being destabilized by armed groups coming from outside the country. On his arrival back in Paris, Ambassador Chevallier allegedly requested an internal administrative inquiry to confound his own Minister.

These revelations led to still others. Another high official revealed that Alain Juppé was not

only in conflict with his administration but also with his colleagues at both the Defense and Interior Ministries. Their respective ministers, Claude Guéant and Gérard Longuet had not only negotiated the exfiltration of the French intelligence agents present in the Islamic Emirate of Baba Amr with General Assef Chawkrit, as previously reported by Voltaire Network,² but had also arranged the release of three French commandos detained by Syria.³

On Sunday, 18 March, the pro-Syrian daily Ad-Diyar, edited in Beirut, confirmed that three French prisoners had been released to Admiral Edouard Guillaud, Chief of Staff of the Military of France (CEMA), during a trip to Lebanon supposedly undertaken as the French contingent of the U.N. Interim Force for Lebanon was being reorganized. According to a high-ranking Syrian source, the Admiral had in exchange personally overseen the complete dismantling of the French military's rear operating base in Lebanon.

The conflict between Ambassador Chevallier and Minister Juppé had been simmering for a long time. On 4 April 2011, the online journal *Rue 89* published an article attributed to an anonymous Franco-Syrian author.⁴ It reported that the Ambassador "had become a mouthpiece of the regime, asserting that the revolts of Daraa and Lattaquie were fomented by foreign forces and that the media were lying about reality." Ten days later, George Balbrunot on his blog at *Le Figaro* followed suit, claiming that the Ambassador had been "completely Bashirized."⁵ Finally, on 5 May, France 24, a station owned by the French Government and under Alain Juppé's supervision, accused the Ambassador of "minimizing the revolt."⁶

The conflict between Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Admiral Edouard Guillaud and Alain Juppé has also been in the public eye for a long time. The Admiral did not appreciate that Alain Juppé, while Minister of Defense, had planned in advance the overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi. With veiled support of his new Defense Minister Gérard Longuet, he publicly manifested his disagreement when commanded to mobilize French troops against Libya.

In addition, relations between Guéant and Juppé are notoriously bad. In one of his usual displays of arrogance, Alain Juppé stipulated as a condition of his entering the Fillon government that Claude Guéant leave the General Secretariat of the Élysée because he didn't want to speak to him. After the agreement reached by Washington, London and Moscow to calm the situation in Syria, Alain Juppé can still count on the support of Ankara, Riyadh and Doha along with that of the mainstream media. He now finds himself isolated in France and deprived of the means to enact his policies, unless of course President Sarkozy starts pushing for war to boost the poll numbers for Sarkozy the candidate.

1. *Translated from French by Michele Stoddard.*

1. "[Le fiasco des barbouzes français à Homs](#)," by Boris V., Komsomolskaïa Pravda, Réseau Voltaire, 17 January 2012. [[↪](#)]
2. "[The journalist-combatants of Baba Amr](#)," by Thierry Meyssan, Voltaire Network, 4 March 2012. [[↪](#)]
3. "France restores military censorship," Voltaire Network, 5 March 2012. [[↪](#)]
4. "[A Damas, le régime de Bachar el-Assad prépare un bain de sang](#)," by Sadik H., Rue89, 4 April 2011. [[↪](#)]
5. "[Syrie: quand l'ambassadeur de France déjeunait avec la bête noire des frondeurs](#)," by Georges Malbrunot, L'Orient indiscret/Le Figaro, 14 April 2011. [[↪](#)]
6. "[L'ambassadeur de France en Syrie a clairement minimisé la révolte](#)," by Julien Pain and Peggy Bruguière, France24, 5 May 2011. [[↪](#)]

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