

Kagame cleared of involvement in plane crash by French report

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A French judicial report on Tuesday cleared Rwandan President Paul Kagame of involvement in the shooting down of a plane that sparked the 1994 genocide. The report was welcomed by Rwanda as a vindication of Kagame. Interview : Rwandan Justice Minister Tharcisse Karugarama.

Do you think these findings leave the case open in terms of the possible French complicity in the attack on the plane?

I am not in the business of speculation. I deal with evidence and records. I deal with what is available judicially. What is clear from the report, that it's really consistent with all the previous reports. I think there are about five other reports that have said the same thing, but these were not judicial reports. What it says is that the plane was shot within the precinct of the Kanombe military

barracks, then under the hands of the loyalist forces of President Habyarimana. Now, whether there is complicity or not, is not something that has been talked about in the report. If we can limit ourselves to the content of the report I think it's more professional. What I can say, simply, is that this report has been very welcomed in Rwanda.

Members of Rwanda's opposition are demanding further investigation into this matter.

What we are talking about is not further investigation. Of what? The Rwandan opposition are a bunch of people that have survived on those lies. That have become part of the genocide-deniers. That have become part of those that trade lies. Those that have set up industries, all over the world, industries of lies and industries of liars. Those are out there in total shame, who have denied the genocide. Who have negated it. Who

are using every opportunity. This is not a simple report. It's a report of experts. Let me remind you. First of all you have Mutsinzi's report, the Independent Commission of Rwanda. That investigated this matter and put out a report. To date, nobody has been able to contradict that report, including the worst critics. All they did was to make sure they don't report about it, to make sure they brush it aside. But nobody has challenged its findings. Two, there was a French parliamentary commission. They came here. They investigated. The French parliamentarians. They gave a report. What does that report say? It says that the allegation that the missile that was used, allegedly used by RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Forces), is not even explored. That they had found no evidence to link the shooting with RPF. That was immediately after the genocide. Three, there was a UN experts' report of eminent persons. That concluded the firing was in Kanombe. That is there. There's the Carlsson Report that concluded the same thing. There's the ICTR (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda) report, it has made a lot of reference to that. Most recently there is the British military academy expert that made a report. So, what are they calling for – because they've been telling lies to the world – they want a further report because they're embarrassed.

The truth of the matter – can you change the speed of an airplane, can you change the direction, can you change the speed of the missile – this is scientific evidence, by people who are impartial. Now that we know this, at least we know who didn't shoot. There can be a few things that can be ironed out. Where is that black box? We shall want to know. Who took it, where is it? Who took the equipment, aviation equipment? We want to know who stopped the UN mission from accessing it. We want all that information. Then you can very easily point to the actual killer, the actual person that shot.

Do you think then that a further international enquiry could answer some of these questions?

International enquiry? I don't understand. Please, there are people here that have been accused of shooting down the plane. Evidence has shown that they didn't. So what kind of international enquiry are we talking about? There are people that have suffered under those [accusations]. I talked of manipulation. So, those are guys that still want to manipulate, to blackmail a nation. All this is hollow. There is a case that has gone to court, it's not an international enquiry, it's a court of law. That has gone into judicial process. We are involved in a judicial process. So how then do you set up an international enquiry? I have said already

that there are five others that have taken place and some of them have been international. We should not mix judicial process with a political game, an international commission. The UN set up a commission. It did a report. But it was not accepted, I mean it is there, you can read it. It says the same thing as this one says. It was an international commission that was set up by the UN, it has a report. But the difference is that this kind of report, where we are at now, it's a judicial report, it's a court process.

How significant do you think it is that this new judge traveled to Rwanda as part of his investigation? Something that the previous judge never did.

It's extremely significant. It's what Rwanda was calling for all the years. We had even asked the former judge, Judge Bruguière, to visit Rwanda and he refused. Because he did not want to investigate. He

wanted just to push. He was an arrogant judge acting as a judge in the third century. Not a judge in the 21st century. How can a judge sit in a room in Paris and make conclusions about what happened in Rwanda? Doesn't Europe feel embarrassed to have such a judge? Doesn't the international community of jurists, lawyers, feel embarrassed that we still have in France a judge like that? Or in Europe? If he had come here he probably would have arrived at the same findings as Judge Trevi-
dic and Poux did. Because the evidence is there. All you needed was somebody to scientifically get people to look at these places, look at the venue, look at the crash site, to look at all the positions where these allegations were made. But the judge just sits in Paris and orders the arrest of another country's leaders without ever investigating.