

Altantuya in Paris
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The murdered woman went to France with the man previously accused of her murder

Although French officials have said they had no record that a murdered Mongolian woman connected to Malaysia's long-running submarine scandal ever entered France, the one man who knew she did was Abdul Razak Baginda, who accompanied her there. The political analyst was absolved of ordering her murder in October of 2007.*

In a sworn affidavit recorded on Oct. 31, 2006, and read to the High Court in Kuala Lumpur by Razak Baginda's lawyer, Wong Kian Kheong on Jan. 19, 2007, the political analyst said he had carried on a romance with Altantuya Shaariibuu, who died at age 28. The couple went from Hong Kong to China to Singapore, Malaysia – and France – from the end of 2004 to sometime in August of 2005, when he dumped her. Altantuya apparently entered France under the name Shaariybuu Bayasgalan, born on 26 February 1979 in Mongolia, according to documents obtained by Asia Sentinel. She was issued a temporary residency card on the French territory valid from 27 August 2004 to 26 November 2004. The address declared was 18 rue Houdon in Paris 18."

A Malaysian website alleged that documents in a trove of 133 official French court records made public by Asia Sentinel in the sub case supposedly show that investigators had no record that Altantuya had ever entered France, and no record that she had anything to do with the case. As Asia Sentinel reported on June 25, the investigators are pursuing allegations of bribes, kickbacks and other corruption against officials of the French defense company DCN and its subsidiaries as well as both French and Malaysian authorities.

However, the records show, Razak Baginda and Altantuya took at least one sojourn to Macau which was paid for by mystery man Jean Marie Boivin, the former chief international finance officer of the French company DCN. In Document D000136, a former DCNS financial director told French investigators that ""Mr. Jean-Marie Boivin told me that Mr. Souvageot from Armaris asked him to take charge part of Mr. Baginda's expenses via Gifen because Thales couldn't take them into account. I don't know for what reason, these expenses did not fit Thales. According to Mr. Boivin, it was about the trip expenses of Mr. Baginda with his interpreter Madame Altantuya Shaariibuu".

Questions over whether Altantuya had ever been in France have become a sideshow in the wider scandal of the two-decade campaign by DCN and its subsidiaries to sell submarines to the Malaysian Ministry of Defense. The matter has resulted in a long tangle of allegations of blackmail, bribery, influence peddling, misuse of corporate assets and concealment, among others. Malaysia's mainstream media, owned by the country's major ruling political parties, have trumpeted erroneous stories over whether she had visited the country, and pro-government blogs have featured it prominently.

On Dec. 5, 2007, Asia Sentinel published 10 pictures of Altantuya in a variety of poses on a variety of locations in Paris including in front of Louis Vuitton's iconic store as well as the Eiffel Tower, the Cathedral de Notre Dame, the Place de Concorde and other locations. At least one blogger questioned whether the pictures were faked. They were

transmitted to Asia Sentinel by the Mongolian Honorary Consul to Malaysia, who would hardly have been suspected of faking them.

Altantuya was murdered between 10 pm on Oct 19 and 1 am on Oct 20 of that year, police said. Her body was found in a patch of jungle near the Kuala Lumpur suburb of Shah Alam after she had been shot twice in the head and torn apart with C4 explosives. Two bodyguards of then Defense Minister Najib Tun Razak were convicted of the slaying for hire and remain on death row.

Although Razak Baginda acknowledged in his affidavit that he had asked the two defendants to "do something" about the woman, who was harassing him for a US\$500,000 payment, he was absolved of the slaying without having to put on a defense.

Altantuya was described as a freelance translator in stories at the time. According to a letter left behind after her death, she said she had been offered the payment by Razak Baginda. The letter was made public after her death, saying she regretted she was attempting to "blackmail" the married Razak Baginda although she did not say what she was blackmailing him for.

In his affidavit, Razak Baginda said Altantuya had demanded money from him and blackmailed him.

Defense Chief: No News

In a related matter, any expectation that Malaysian Defense Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi would provide a government explanation of the submarine case, it disappeared when Ahmad Zahid told Parliament in a brief five-minute address that his ministry knows nothing about allegations that state secrets had been sold to foreign countries by a company wholly owned by Razak Baginda, according to the Malaysian news website Malaysiakini.

The Hong Kong-based Terasasi HK Ltd., whose only two officers are Razak Baginda and his father, is alleged to have received €36 million from DCNS for among others, the 'sale' of a highly confidential report comprising the Malaysian Navy's evaluation for the order of the submarines.

"As far as the ministry knows, to date there has been no detection of information being leaked out of Malaysia," he said in his adjournment speech to Parliament about 10 minutes before midnight.

"The ministry also does not have any information about claims that Terasasi received periodical payments from Thint Asia," he said. His comments were the first official response given to Parliament close to a month after the alleged sales of Malaysian defense secrets was revealed by human rights group Suaram in Bangkok.

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