

First person

Claude Moniquet is founder of the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center. A pro-American neocon, he likes to needle the French

“ I’m a neoconservative. I even belong to a club for neoconservatives. We’re not widely liked in Belgium, but we’re not that bad. Rather than all being born-again Christians, most of us started out as progressive activists but were let down by the left.

I got my start as a political activist when I was a teenager in Saint-Gilles in the 70s and I used to hang out with neo-Marxists. My dad was in the insurance business, so I thought this was a cool and rebellious thing to do. We were on a mission. Belgium hadn’t yet completed its 1968 liberation phase, and we wanted to finish the job: change society, give the power to the people and all that. I was only a suitcase carrier, running errands for groups like the Red Army Faction. Still, I was part of a terrorist organisation, and I’ve written about my experiences. I’m not proud of them now.

I changed my mind about politics when I saw how the European left supported killers like Pol Pot or Palestinian terrorists. I knew I couldn’t continue to support people or movements that murdered civilians.

After a long career in journalism, mostly in France, I recently became a consultant on terrorism and security for media, government and business. One of my clients is CNN. I write reports for it, 85 percent about Islamic terrorism. In May 2002, I launched the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center (ESISC), an independent supplier of information on terrorism and security to governments, businesses and universities. The new security era is about the privatisation of intelligence, and we’d like to work on the cutting edge. I want us to be a sort of Rand Corporation in the capital of Europe.

We have a full-time staff of three and our turnover last year was around €100,000. In a few years, I think we’ll be making five times that amount, and have 10 staff members. We counsel the Belgian government on how to fight industrial espionage. Our sources include everybody from university lecturers and secret agents to judges and ministers from abroad. I’m building up a top-notch network of sources.

I offer not just information but inside

DANICA OCVIRK-KUS



**I offer knowledge
about how
terrorists work. I
used to be one**

expertise and knowledge of how terrorist operations work – I know them because I used to be one of them. In my youth, I learned how cells recruit and retain their operatives, preying on the impressionable. So I can help people evaluate if somebody is vulnerable to joining one of these organisations.

During my career as a journalist, I worked for French and Belgian TV stations and newspapers, and published books on the history of espionage, Soviet Jewry (I’m a non-practising Jew), Dutroux and corruption in Belgium.

I like Belgium, despite the corruption. The scandals that scarred the Socialist party a decade ago – the murder of

André Cools and the Agusta bribing episode – are examples of that. I don’t believe in the conspiracy theories, but on Dutroux, I think the police were incompetent because they were underfunded. Political parties had an interest in keeping law enforcement weak.

Outside my job, I take care of my four cats. I work at home in Forest and don’t have children. I love going to the movies, especially spy films, and I collect military relics from the Warsaw Pact countries: guns, uniforms and ID cards.

Obviously not everyone in Belgium shares my beliefs, but I think it’s OK to needle people. When I meet with French intelligence services, I like to wear an American flag. Last April, friends and I laid flowers in front of the US embassy in Brussels to thank the coalition troops for their sacrifices.

Interview by John Miller
Moniquet’s latest book, *La Guerre sans visage*, is a history of modern terrorism. **Michel Lafon, €19.95**