

Moroccan Mob

He hears the shots being fired at Said behind him. Rida is running. He is throwing up. The spit on his face and on his clothes is no reason to hold back. He keeps running. He hears shots being fired again, far away in the distance. They killed Said, shot him at close range.

Just a few years ago they robbed jewelry shops all over the country together. Now they kill each other using AK 47's in the battle for cocaine and millions of dollars. In the port of Antwerp 200 kilos of cocaine disappears and they are all accusing each other. It's a war, not just in Amsterdam, but all over the Netherlands, Belgium and even Morocco. But who is battling whom and why exactly?

Moroccan Mob tells the inside story about the rise of a new generation of criminals. A story about money, ambition, hubris and treachery.

Specifics

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Moroccan Mob

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Prologue

Amsterdam is preparing for a dull New Year's Eve. It is 29 December 2012 and the sale of fireworks has taken off. In the narrow streets of the working class neighbourhood *Staatliedenbuurt* in the western part of Amsterdam, now and then a bang can be heard, but there is almost no-one about. A black Range Rover drives through the neighbourhood. Behind the wheel of the four wheel drive is 21-year old Said el Yazidi. He is the youngest person in the car; a happy kid with a lot of friends. The boys, whose families come from the Rif Mountains, sometimes tease Said with his alleged stinginess. He is a 'Susi' – a South Moroccan. His family comes from around the city of Ouarzazate.

Next to him in the car is his friend, 28-year old Youssef Lhkorf. He is a genial Ajax fan who is always game for a practical joke. It is typical that he often jokingly introduces himself as 'Peter'. He lives in the eastern part of the centre of Amsterdam, next to the Maritime Museum. He can often be found out on the streets. When he shows his face at squares in the neighbourhood in summer, kids gather around him because they know there might be a chance of an ice cream. He comes from big family with twelve

kids and spends a lot of time with his younger brother, Omar, who is six years his junior. In the predominantly white neighbourhood, the inseparable brothers are known as 'Ant and Deck'.

He is studying to be an accountant but actually wants to become a social sciences teacher. This is why he will start a new course in two months. In the meantime he drives the cab of one of his brothers and works as a courier. And he has also recently been working at a restaurant in the city centre. He has been in trouble with the police before. Well, who hasn't? There was a conflict between police officers and some local boys. Youssef tried to calm the situation down and was taken to the police station. Within two hours he was back on the streets again.

On the back seat of the Range Rover is 28-year old Benaouf. The barge is registered in his half-sister's name. Even though Benaouf was born in Leeuwarden, in the Northern Dutch province of Friesland, his family lives down south, in Eindhoven. Not so long ago, he divorced after a two year marriage. But the handsome Benaouf has had no shortage of female attention since.

Nobody really notices the car when it turns into the residential area. The people in this neighbourhood do not think anything of it when some young Moroccans drive around in a big fat four wheel car with a listed value of almost 80,000 euros.

The Range Rover drives through the small streets. The houses all look the same. At night it is like a maze. Finally,

the car pulls up in the Schaezmanstraat and the passengers get out.

Benaouft has arranged to meet a Moroccan boy here. Together, they walk through the neighbourhood for a while, talking. At first, everything seems fine. But then the foursome arrive at the corner of the Van Rappardstraat and the Van Bossepad. There, Benaouf, in his own words, suddenly sees two men rushing toward him. And then, out of nowhere, there is the sound of a revving engine and screeching tyres. A car comes roaring towards the men. For a millisecond, time stands still.

A heartbeat later, the adrenaline is rushing through the boys' bodies, and their survival instincts kick in. By then, the death squadron has opened fire with a deafening noise. Benaouf, Said and Youssef with all their might, sprint to a safe place while the shooters chase after them in their stolen Audi Quattro RS4. This car was a huge favourite among gangsters for really big jobs. Then a second car turns up: a black Volkswagen Golf GTI 5. In a panic, Youssef and Said run into the Van Bossestraat, the fastest route back to the Range Rover. That is a fatal error. The street is wide enough for their attackers and it is impossible to escape from the super fast car on foot. Shoots from the machine guns echo through the streets, just like the sound of breaking glass. In their thirst for blood, the men even shoot through their own windscreen. They open fire on Youssef and he collapses in front of a row of doors, fatally hit. He has only managed to cover a few yards.

Said is faster and flies across a square where cars cannot

come. Youssef's killers have to take a turn. They lose sight of Said for a moment, and he sprints to the four wheel drive via this short cut. He does not think straight anymore, jumps behind the wheel and he reverses the car with screeching tyres. He hits something and smashes the back of the Range Rover. He changes gear and accelerates, but before he can drive off, out of nowhere the Audi Quattro appears in front of him.

The driver of the Audi has driven around the square. He has arrived just in time to stop the fleeing Range Rover. And he is not very subtle about it. The cars collide head-on. Said is trapped. A neighbour, who looks out of the window upon hearing all the noise, sees two men get out of the Audi with their Kalashnikovs at the ready. He dives to the ground when they open fire at the Range Rover. The windscreen of the four wheel drive is riddled with bullet holes within minutes.

Surprisingly, Said gets off scot-free again. He opens the door of the Range Rover and runs for his life. Now he flees into another part of the Van Bossestraat.

The two shooters remain where they are, with their AK-47's at the ready. They are facing the Van Bossepad, a pathway along the water that runs parallel with the Van Bossestraat. That is the pathway that Benaouf disappeared in a moment ago. The shooters seem to wait if he will come out and run toward the Range Rover too.

When that does not happen, the murder squad jumps back into the car and goes after Said. It does not take long before they have overtaken him. One of the shooters is

hanging out of the window and fires several rounds. This time he does not miss. Said collapses on a street corner, about 100 yards from the Range Rover. Witnesses see how his masked executioner gets out of the car and shoots several more bullets at Said's body at close range. The boy is left on the street lifeless, his body twisted in a strange position. Then the killers race off at full throttle.

'It was weird. I look out of my window and see firing machine guns sticking out of car and a boy running away fast', a local woman tweets. When the smoke has cleared, the Range Rover is still standing where Said began his last sprint, its lights still flashing. There are nine bullet holes in the windscreen. The bullet-riddled car will later become the iconic image of these brutal killings and the surrounding conflict. The streets are strewn with cartridges.

The cracking sound of machine guns and screeching tyres have led to a huge panic in the neighbourhood. The incident room of the Amsterdam police has been inundated with calls about the shooting from 10.30 pm onwards. Cars, and also houses, have been hit by flying bullets. A wall of a child's bedroom in one of the houseboats, too, has been hit. The missile has gone right through the wood. It soon becomes clear that it is a miracle there are not more victims.

By now, dozens of local residents have left their homes and are out on the streets. Initially, most of them thought the sounds they heard were fireworks. But when

they realised the bangs seemed to be moving around the neighbourhood, they decided to look of the window. Some people saw how the two boys were butchered.

A female police officer who is the first to arrive at the scene, sees the scale of the violence and Said's dead body. She is completely panic-stricken. Like a fishwife she screams orders at the neighbours. But they find it incomprehensible that Said does not receive first aid. He may be saved yet.

A motorcycle officer, who has actually ended his shift that night, rushes toward the scene with a fellow officer. Along the way they hear over the radio that automatic weapons may have been used. They understand there will be a lot of police officers in the Staatsliedenbuurt and decide to station themselves 1,5 mile further along a busy road (the Haarlemmerweg) to look out for the getaway car. And low and behold, they see an Audi driving by. Instinctively they know that it is their car. The car is in a hurry. One of the motorcycle officers has to accelerate to 90 miles an hour in order to keep up with the target. He switches on his flashlights and sirens. At the next junction, another motorcycle officer arrives. When the Audi arrives at the traffic lights, his brake lights light up. The first motorcycle officer slowly drives around the other cars waiting in front of the traffic lights.

When the second officer arrives, he sees the barrel of a gun sticking out of the Audi's window. There is no warning, and shots are fired straight away. The second

officer goes down and the barrel turns to his colleague. Again, a volley of shots. The officer who is behind the Audi can feel the bullets whizzing past. In a split second he falls to the ground and pulls his motorcycle on top of him. Now it's my turn, he thinks. He sees how the Audi accelerates and then brakes. Again, shots are fired. This time the rounds bounce off the road. Shooting back is not an option for the officers. They know they are no match for the men shooting at them.

Over the radio, a message can be heard that will give every officer the shivers: 'Officer down! Officer down!'

In the meantime, the killers have left the crime scene in a hurry. The death squad's silver grey Audi is now driving at great speed in the direction of Haarlem. The two police officers can hardly believe they are unharmed. They take off their motorcycle clothing and check each other for possible gunshot wounds. Meanwhile a sea of flashlights can be seen approaching fast via the Haarlemmerweg. One of the officers who have been shot at, wants to pursue the shooters again. His fellow officers pull the key from the lock of his motorbike and put him in a van.

The passengers of the Audi seem to be in a panic. It takes too long; they need to dump the car. The police helicopter that criminals on the run fear so much is now hovering in the air, but the shooters are lucky. With all the chaos that has ensued, the chopper first goes after the other Audi. They hit the gas and drive to the edge of the neighbourhood of Geuzenveld. They cannot go into the

area, since there is a police officer on every street corner. Whole streets have been cordoned off. It feels like a war has broken out.

They see a police car approaching in the back mirror. It seems that the shooters, still driving, are throwing their weapons into a ditch. Two AK-47s and two Glock and Colt pistols. A witness sees how the killers leave their car behind a sports park. Normally, people who carry out liquidations set fire to their cars in order to eliminate all traces. These killers fail to do so, and the police car is closing in on them. They sprint away just in time. The police arrive only seconds too late and the killers get away.

The Golf is nowhere to be seen again that night. Two days later, the burning car is found around the corner from where the Audi was left behind.

The Moroccan underworld has given out its business card. The shooting in the Staatsliedenbuurt causes shock waves through the entire country. The mayor of Amsterdam, Eberhard van der Laan, who is quite used to revenge killings in the criminal world by now, is clearly shocked. 'This was the Wild West,' he says the following day.

Profile of Rida Bennajem

'Rida Was Completely Trapped'

With every murder, the death of the Moroccan hitman came a little closer

There is a full blown war going on in the Moroccan underworld in Amsterdam. Very young criminals kill each other at an alarming rate. The latest victim is 21-year old Rida Bennajem. In just a few years, he has worked his way up from a ruffian from the western part of Amsterdam, to one of the most wanted criminals of the Netherlands. This is his story.

'I heard arguing and shouting. Then I heard someone yell: 'Come on! Come on!,' and then I heard eight or so shots.' At first she thought it was fireworks, she says. When the local girl then looks out of the window, she sees two men walking calmly away. A third man is bleeding heavily and lying on the pavement of the Comeniusstraat in the Amsterdam suburb of Slotervaart. Although paramedics try and reanimate him, he dies of his injuries later that Saturday night.

When police officers take a closer look at the victim, they do not recognize him immediately, as he has been

shot in the head at close range. His hair is longer than on the photographs the police has distributed. But it is him, undeniably. Rida Bennajem, the young robber from the Western part of Amsterdam.

When this edition appears on March 27th, 2012, Rida would have been 22.

Now, ten days before his birthday, he is lying in a pool of blood: one of the most wanted gangsters in the Netherlands. The 21-year old made a rapid career in heavy crime. As such he has the dubious honour of being the youngest person on the Dutch list of most wanted persons ever. The police has been looking for him feverishly, as he was involved in a violent robbery in Leiden. Bennajem's name also comes up in other police investigations. Investigations into revenge killings in the Moroccan underworld.

'Rida was trapped,' says an anonymous source who is familiar with the goings on in the Moroccan underworld when asked why Rida stayed in Amsterdam even though the police was looking for him. Instead of fleeing to Morocco or go into hiding in another town, he seems to have stayed put in the area he grew up in: the Amsterdam neighbourhood of Bos en Lommer.

Just go inside

'Come with me,' says a Moroccan man. Around forty hours after Rida's death we are walking around the neighbourhood he grew up in. 'This is his house. Go inside. Yes, just go. His brothers and sisters speak Dutch.'

The front door to the building is open. A group of older black-clad Muslim women is just coming out of the house. Is it true that Rida Bennajem lived here? 'Yes. Upstairs. You can go upstairs, to the third floor,' one of the women says. Are they sure his family wants journalists in their house now? 'Yes. It's fine. Third floor. Just go up. Third floor,' the ladies chirp in unison. The door upstairs is also open. Around ten pairs of shoes are neatly displayed at the threshold. In the kitchen a woman is busy cooking. There is a large pan on the stove. There will be many more visitors today. A young brunette comes to the door. 'Yes, Rida lived here,' she says. This girl does seem to understand that it is strange to invite journalists at a wake for a deceased gangster, and we apologize.

Outside, two detectives of the Major Investigation Team are just pulling up in their car. They go inside, with a folder under their arms. They too have a lot of questions.

Rida Bennajem's life starts off reasonably stable. He grows up in the Gulden Winckelstraat, around the corner from the Bos en Lommer-square in the western part of Amsterdam. It's a drab street with four story apartment buildings and many satellite dishes on the balconies.

When he walks out the door, he can see his elementary school and a little further down, the mosque. There is not much for him outside the 250 meter radius around his house. 'He was a boisterous child,' one of the nursery teachers of the local state school remembers. That morning, Rida's liquidation has been talked

about endlessly in the staff room. Only ten years earlier a young Rida ran around the school's playground. 'This hits us very hard,' she says. 'Nobody raises a kid to end up like this.'

Rida's bloody death is not only a topic of discussion among the teachers, the mothers bringing their children to school are also talking about it. Various stories are going round. It is said he was involved in the double murder in the neighbourhood of Staatsliedenbuurt in the western part of Amsterdam in late December, when another boy from that area was also shot dead.

A little further down the street there is a group of thirty-something men with beards in front of the Badr-mosque. 'No, we do not know him. He never came here,' they claim. 'We probably passed him in the street now and then, but we only know his face from tv.' One of them does know Rida's parents' house was watched by the police day and night.

It is easy to say that Rida could have done very different things in his life. After all, a career as a moped criminal is pretty common here. But it is not only this area. Rida comes from a broken home, has learning difficulties and does not always get along with the other kids. After elementary school, Rida goes to a special needs school for a while in 2005. After a short time there, he is admitted to Altra College, a school for students who have difficulties dealing with their peers, teachers or parents, or who are struggling with mental problems.

Go your own way

As a teenager, Rida joins the ‘Gulden Winckelpark-group’, a party of young troublemakers, who have been named by the police after their favourite hang-out. Other groups are the ‘Bestevaer-group’ and the ‘Chassé-group’ in the western part of Amsterdam.

These are not rival gangs, but ordinary Moroccan boys from the neighbourhood who have nothing better to do at night other than gulping down energy drinks on the streets. One youngster goes to school, another robs late night shops at knifepoint, and yet another is busy with his own company. Rida is out on the street a lot. When he plays football, this rather quiet boy lights up. With his hands casually in his pockets he is able to keep the ball in the air for long stretches of time, to the great thrill of the younger boys on the square. He does not like school at all. He works at a local street market for a while, but seems to be doing his own thing more and more. He associates with the bad boys who commit robberies or deal drugs. He adopts the wide posture of the bad guys from the underworld; chest expanded and chin up high. And he has a certain look in his eyes. A look that says: no-one can touch me. This gives him a certain standing in the area. ‘He was a real soldier. A guy with balls. Everyone knew that,’ a neighbour recalls.

When he is not with his mates on the streets, young Rida can often be found in the community centre Connect, where social workers try and keep youngsters on the straight and narrow by offering activities like watching

films. Connect was founded by Said Bensellam, who was voted Amsterdam Citizen of the Year 2006. He remembers Rida, but does not give away much about him. ‘The boys grow up and by the time they are sixteen or seventeen they go their own way. What has happened is terrifying, of course.’

Rida is the second murder victim in a short time that comes very close for Connect. Said el Yazidi, one of the victims of the shooting in the Staatsliedenbuurt on December 29, went there often too. He was even good friends with Rida. Said Bensellam: ‘Two boys from this area have died a tragic death. That really hits home hard. At a certain moment, boys like Rida and Said become lads, and you lose them, you know. You don’t just die, right?’

Stabber

As a young boy Rida Bennajem gets into trouble with the police. When asked how they have come into possession of a mugshot of a boy who the police are still looking for, a spokesman answers: ‘He had been detained before.’ It is not clear what his earlier offences were. Rida is a ‘stabber’, that much they know in Bos en Lommer. He is small (just over 5 foot 6) and scrawny. He cannot survive on his fists alone, and therefore he relies on knives as a teenager. Even at a young age he has already stabbed several people, we hear. And it doesn’t take long before he gets hold of a gun. One of the first bullets Rida fires makes the national headlines straight away. It happens on June 6, 2011, in his own

street, less than 60 yards from his own front door. Rida gets into a fight with a local boy. Rida walks back home, goes upstairs and returns with a gun in his hands. 'No, not here on the street!' someone yells. But Rida is angry and shoots immediately. The bullet enters the lower leg of his victim. 'The shooter is thought to be known locally. He fled on foot and is still on the run' is the last thing the media report on the case.

Less than six months later, Rida is standing in front of a jeweller's in Leiden, Has Gold. This is not his first robbery, but it will change his life forever. It is midday, on January 11, 2012. Rida enters the shop with two accomplices. It is Rida's task to hold the jeweller at gun point. The other two fill their bags with jewellery and they are back outside within minutes. But then all goes wrong. The jeweller sets off in pursuit of the robbers. The three of them sprint towards the getaway moped, but its engine refuses to start. As the jeweller approaches, the boys shoot at him. In the meantime, the police arrive and Rida shoots at the policemen as well.

All bullets, however, miss their target. The threesome then flees on foot, in separate directions. Boys from Amsterdam-West still tell each other the story of how Rida succeeded in shaking off the policemen by going into a McDonald's where he ordered fries and stayed put for a while.

The robbery is a complete disaster. Rida's accomplices, Hacı Y. and Issam E. are soon caught, and are sentenced to twelve and eight years imprisonment respectively. Most

of the loot is recovered by the police, who, on the basis of telephone records, know that Bennajem was involved in the robbery. And this is how Rida's face has come to be shown on television, in the Dutch version of *Crimewatch*. 'Violent and unpredictable,' is what the police call him. They offer a reward of 5,000 euros for the first person to grass on Rida. He also ends up on the national list of most wanted persons.

Hitman

By April, Rida has still managed to keep out of the hands of the police, but his money is running out. The following stories come from the streets of Bos en Lommer, where facts and rumours are compiled, improved and updated like a Wikipedia page type Moroccan grapevine. What follows next is the story that is often told on the streets. The Moroccan hitman Redouan Boutaka has to die. There is a price on his head. Rida is approached by members from the organised crime, recruited rather; for the murder. 'You are trapped, anyway,' he is told. Rida is persuaded and on the evening of Sunday 22 April, he calmly walks into a shisha bar in the Van Woustraat in Amsterdam. He goes downstairs, where Boutaka is sitting with his friends, walks up to the victim and pumps several bullets in his body, with tens of witnesses looking on.

Rida has become a foot soldier for the big boys, the story goes. The police have never found the shooter in the café and do not say whether Rida is a suspect. The description of the suspect that the police circulates, does match

Rida's however: Moroccan, remarkably small (between 5'3' and 5'7') and slight. Shortly after the liquidation in the shisha bar, the police also put Rida on a list of wanted persons of Interpol. Rida is a hitman, a killer and 'most wanted'. For his next assignment he has to travel to Antwerp. He has been given a role in a conflict over 200 kilos of cocaine, between the renowned Amsterdam criminal Gwenette M. and 'Ben', the target of the shooting in the Staatsliedenbuurt. Allegedly, Rida pockets around 30,000 euros from 'Ben' to kill Najib Bouhbouh, one of Gwenette's boys. And so it happens. On October 18 of that same year, in broad daylight, Bouhbouh receives two bullets in the head and another two in the chest, in front of the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Antwerp.

On 29 December, 'Ben' himself is the target of a revenge killing in the western part of Amsterdam. 'Ben' flees, but his nephews, Youssef Lkhorf and Said el Yazidi, are killed. Rida's name is mentioned everywhere; it is not only the mothers at the playground of his old elementary school that speculate on his involvement. Two conflicting stories are going round in Bos en Lommer. The first, a slightly older story, goes as follows: Rida is the one who lured the black Range Rover with 'Ben', Said, Youssef and a fourth, blonde passenger in it to the place of the liquidation on 29 December. The foursome have no idea there are foot soldiers waiting for them with AK-47s at the ready. Rida takes 'Ben' into an alley where they talk for a while, and when the target gets back into the Range Rover, Rida flees.

Moments later a heavy burst of gunfire is heard. Rida

has defected and does not only lure 'Ben' into a trap, but by doing so, also signs the death warrant of his good friend Said. On the streets it is suggested that Rida felt he had to wait too long for his reward for the liquidation in Antwerp. This version is not accepted by many of the boys in the western parts of Amsterdam, however. As it happens, Said and Rida really were very good friends, so Rida could never have done it, they argue. They oppose the story as it can be read on crime blogs. Rida was in fact there during the shooting incident of December 29, they say, but it was actually him who was sitting in the Range Rover with his good friend. The fourth, so far unknown, passenger is Rida, they claim. In order to be able to walk the streets incognito, he was wearing a blonde wig, or he had dyed his hair. Just like 'Ben,' the blonde man succeeds in escaping. When a panicking 'Ben' jumps in the water and later climbs out 'dazed and confused', it is Rida who helps him flee.

Days are numbered

Whatever the story, after the violence of December 29, Rida's days seem numbered.

In Bos en Lommer more murders are expected and it would not surprise anyone if Rida is next. The assignment to kill Rida could have come from several directions. Rida only had a few confidants left, was sought by the police internationally and was not safe in the criminal underworld anymore either. That is something that can happen to old hands, but now that a new generation has stood up in the

world of organised crime, also to a 21-year old Moroccan boy. His family is suffering. Someone who knows the family well: 'His mother dreamt he would be put behind bars, so she would at least know he was alive.'

That is the story one also hears on the street: if only he had turned himself in after the robbery in Leiden. That would have meant he would have been released when he was in his thirties. Then he could have made something of his life, instead of ending up in a cemetery in the north of Morocco, at the age of 21.

Article in *The Independent*
*Violent Dutch Gang-War Spreads
Across Europe*

The feud over a missing shipment of cocaine has already claimed at least 14 lives around the continent

Death came swiftly and without mercy for Stefan Eggermont when he parked near his Amsterdam home. The 30-year-old father of one had parked after spending the evening with brother Jordi watching Netherlands beat Brazil 3-0 in the World Cup in July this year. After opening his car door, a gunman killed him with a burst of automatic gunfire.

Despite his violent death, Stefan was no gangster. He was a respected, hard-working customer service manager at a web-based marketing firm. His only crime was that he lived near to and drove the same make and colour of car as the gunman's intended target.

He had become the first civilian casualty in a bloody war currently raging between two Dutch gangs over a missing £14 million cocaine shipment, most of which was destined for the UK, which has now claimed at least 14 lives across Europe.

Dutch detectives believe he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Finding no criminal or other motive to explain his killing, they now believe the intended target was the brother of a man caught up in the feud, who drove the same car, lived nearby and often used Stefan's parking spot.

According to the Dutch justice ministry which is investigating the murders, the origin of this murder and mayhem stems from a stolen batch of cocaine in 2012. Experts believe much of the cocaine coming through Antwerp, estimated by the authorities to be 200 tonnes in 2012, is bound for the UK and Ireland where it will sell at around €50,000 per kilo in the UK compared to €30,000 in Netherlands.

In March 2012, Antwerp customs seized 200 kilos of cocaine. Unknown to them, the massive seizure was but part of the full load. They now believe another large consignment of the drug had already been stolen and was turning up in kilo quantities, selling for a lower than usual price.

Investigators believe a Dutch gang calling themselves the Turtles stole part of the consignment from a rival gang. Dutch journalist and author Wouter Laumans, explained: 'The seizure in Antwerp was not reported in the media until recently, so the gang thought all of it had been ripped. Then all hell broke loose. There is no doubt in my mind that a lot of this cocaine was on its way to the UK where they can get a higher price for it. These guys are working with the British without a doubt. It's like some kind of Guy Ritchie film except its not funny.'

At least two of the victims had links to a British criminal currently believed to be in Spain. Robert Dawes, 43, has been described as a 'highly significant international criminal wanted for murder in Holland and drug importation in the UK' in documents written by the Serious Organised Crime Agency, which later became part of the UK's National Crime Agency.

Dawes was named in a Dutch court as the man who ordered the murder of innocent Dutch schoolteacher Gerard Meesters in November 2002. Mr Meesters had been targeted because the criminals believed his sister Jannette and her friend Madeline Brussen had absconded with a shipment of drugs belonging to Dawes. Dutch phone taps later picked up the British gang saying the 'f***ing Thelma and Louise' pair had been taught a lesson. Briton Daniel Sowerby, who worked for Dawes, is currently serving life for the shooting but refused to say in court who had ordered it for fear of reprisals against his own family in the UK.

One of the first victims in the latest feud which erupted after the Antwerp drugs were stolen was a notorious Dutch criminal Gwenette Martha. Martha is known to have worked closely with Dawes. He was previously convicted of threatening Gerard Meesters after the 2002 Dawes shipment vanished.

After the row over the Antwerp shipment erupted, Martha is thought to have been called in to contact the Turtles gang and extract a fine of several million euros in lieu of the missing cocaine. Whatever deal he struck did

not appear to meet the expectations of his employers who appear to believe he had double crossed them.

Martha, who had survived one attempt on his life, was killed last May. Two days after being released from police custody after being caught with firearms - police believe he was on the way to kill a rival - he was shot dead in an Amsterdam suburb as he came out of a kebab shop. Despite wearing a bullet proof vest he was hit by 80 rounds from two or more AK47 rifles. So many rounds were fired that police said it was a miracle no-one else was hit.

A second British link to the victims emerged in August this year when Samir Bouyakhrichan, 36, said to be a major figure in the Dutch-Moroccan underworld and believed to be one of the investors in the missing Antwerp cocaine, was shot dead near Marbella, Spain. Bouyakhrichan was also a business associate of Dawes - he is reputed to have been an investor in £300 million worth cocaine shipment seized in Southampton in 2011, the largest seizure to date in the UK.

Several tit-for-tat shootings have continued to take place since Bouyakhrichan's murder, the latest being last week when the Brazilian girlfriend of a Dutch criminal, who had been accused of luring another criminal to his death, was herself shot dead.

The shootings have shocked the Dutch public because of their brazen quality, violence and brutally. Automatic weapons have been used in several incidents. In one failed assassination attempt in an Amsterdam cafe two months ago two innocent bystanders were seriously injured.

Last month Dutch police arrested a 26-year-old man in connection with Stefan's death after confirming the firearm which killed him had been found at the suspects home. But he has told detectives he was holding the weapon for someone he will not name. The suspect does not fit the description of the assassin and he has only been charged with possession of a firearm.

Justice official Franklin Wattimena said: 'This all started with the missing cocaine in Antwerp and the subsequent murder of Najeb Bouhbouh. We are warning all potential targets when intelligence is received as is our duty. We are also in a difficult situation because the people we are investigating have technology which is beating us. We thought the end to this feud came with Gwenette Martha's death. That has not been the case and we do not think it is at an end yet'

Breakout: The death toll

18 October 2012: Najeb Bouhbouh, 34, gunned down outside the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Antwerp

29 December 2012: Youseff Lkhorf, 28 and Said El Yazidi, 21, were shot dead in an AK 47 wild west shootout near an Amsterdam canal in which gang boss Benaouf Adaoui survived. It was in response to the murder of Najeb Bouhbouh. Pursuing police were also shot at by the assassins.

16 March 2013: Rida Bennajem, 21, shot dead Amsterdam. Believed to be one of the hitmen involved in murder of Bouhbouh

26 May 2013: Souhail Laachir, 26, shot dead Amsterdam. He was involved in the finances of Benaouf Adaoui

24 August 2013: Chris Bouman, 36, involved in luring Najeb Bouhbouh to the Crowne Plaza, committed suicide in prison awaiting charges on October 18 2012 murder. Police believe he had been threatened while in custody.

20 February 2014: Alexander Gillis, 30, friend of Gwenette Martha shot dead Amsterdam

22 March 2014: Mohammed El Mayouri, 30, a hitman for the Benaouf group shot dead Amsterdam

22 May 2014: Gwenette Martha, best friend of Najeb Bouhbouh, shot dead Amsterdam

13 July 2014: Stefan Eggermont shot dead in case of mistaken identity. Investigators believed that the shooters were targeting Omar Lkhorf brother of Youseff Lkhorf killed in December 2012. Omar Lkhorf drove the same car as Stefan, often parked in a similar spot and lived nearby.

16 August 2014: Derkiaoui Van Der Meijden, 34, shot dead Amsterdam. Associate of Gwenette Martha and hit man believed to be involved in the December 29 2012 shootings. Wearing a bullet proof vest he was gunned down by two men brandishing AK 47's

28 August 2014: Samir Bouyakhrican, 36, head of another organised crime group and friend of Benaouf group shot dead Marbella, Spain

3 September 2014: Massod Amin Hosseini, 30 shot dead Amsterdam. Massod was known on the periphery of both groups.

Article in *The Guardian*

*Severed Head Found outside Amsterdam
Cafe Linked to Drugs Gang War*

Gruesome find comes one day after discovery of decapitated corpse of known gang member in suburb of Dutch capital

A day after a decapitated corpse was discovered in a burning car in south-east Amsterdam, the severed head that belonged to it has been found outside a cafe near the city centre.

In a gruesome new development in an increasingly violent war between rival Dutch drug gangs, police told local media the body parts were those of Nabil Amzieb, 23, a known gang member.

Amzieb's headless corpse, identified from its fingerprints, was found early on Tuesday morning inside a stolen Volkswagen van that had been set ablaze on a housing estate in the south-eastern suburbs.

His head was discovered at 7.30am on Wednesday on the pavement outside the Fayrouz cafe, a shisha or water-pipe lounge on the busy Amstelveenseweg street, not far from the popular Vondelpark.

‘It seemed to have been placed in such a way that the head was staring in through the windows of the cafe, like a kind of signal,’ Stan Koeman, who runs a snack bar just along the street, told *Het Parool* newspaper.

‘It looked really bizarre. Not something you expect to see on a Dutch street. It made me think of the middle ages, or the Middle East. I’m OK now, but I don’t think I’ll be sleeping very well tonight.’

Koeman said police, who arrived on the scene within minutes of the head’s discovery, covered it with a blue wheelie bin and ordered passersby who had taken photos with their phones to delete them.

At least 16 people have died in the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain in related underworld killings since March 2012, when a Dutch gang known as the Turtles is believed to have stolen cocaine worth £14m, part of a larger shipment – much of it reportedly destined for the British market – entering Europe through the Belgian port of Antwerp.

At least one of those killed, a 30-year-old customer services manager, Stefan Eggermont, who died in a burst of automatic gunfire as he was getting out of his car outside his Amsterdam home in July 2014, was the victim of mistaken identity.

But most of the dead have been known Dutch criminals and gang members shot dead in a series of tit-for-tat killings, including several public shootouts that began with the murder of Najeb Bouhbouh, 34, who was gunned down at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Antwerp in October 2012.

The Fayrouz cafe was a known gangland hangout, according to Wouter Laumans, a Dutch crime reporter who has published a book on the ‘Moroccan Mob’ – so called because of the Moroccan or Dutch Caribbean background of many of the gang members.

The shisha lounge was linked to the notorious Dutch mobster Gwenette Martha, who was shot dead in central Amsterdam in May 2014 – three months after two hitmen gunned down fellow gang member Mohammed el Mayouri just around the corner from the cafe.

‘The bar is well known to police as the headquarters of one of the Amsterdam drugs gangs,’ Laumans told the Dutch public broadcaster *NOS*. Mayouri had been in the bar ‘just before he was shot dead,’ Laumans said, while others ‘have been arrested outside on suspicion of preparing attacks’.

Laumans told the broadcaster the decapitation marked a new and worrying escalation in the drugs war, comparing the killing to the kind of violence seen in countries such as Mexico, where drug cartel kingpins demonstrate their authority by leaving severed heads on doorsteps.

‘I don’t know what the precise meaning of this decapitation is,’ he said. ‘Maybe a warning not to speak, or not to betray. But it makes you wonder what to expect next.’

Article in *The Independent*
*Dutch Thug Nabbed in Kinahan
Sting Linked to Grisly Murder of
Cocaine Trafficker*

A Chubby Dutch mobster jailed this week has been linked along with the Kinahan Cartel, to the murder of one of Europe's biggest drug traffickers in Spain.

Naoufal Fassih (35), was sentenced to one month in Cloverhill District Court in Dublin on Thursday for possession of a counterfeit passport and minor drugs charges at a luxury apartment in the capital's Baggot Street area.

The raid came as part of an operation targeting the Kinahan Cartel.

The Sunday World can reveal that Gardai believe that mobster Fassih was brought to Ireland by the Kinahans, who are involved in drug trafficking with his gang.

Fassih, also known as Noffel F, is a member of a gang of Moroccan-Dutch criminals involved in a vicious internal feud which has seen 16 people gunned down in less than five years.

It has been reported that Fassih is a suspect in the murder of one of Europe's biggest drugs traffickers in Benahavis, near Marbella, in August 2014.

Samir 'Scarface' Bouyakhrichan (36), was regarded as one of the continent's main cocaine suppliers and had an extensive property portfolio with homes in Dubai, Spain and Holland.

Known as 'Scarface', he is said to have marked his cocaine blocks with stamps such as 'AK', 'Mitsubishi', and 'Vuitton', which served as quality indicators.

Spanish police are investigating if the murder was carried out by the 'Moroccan Mob' in collaboration with the Kinahan Cartel.

Dutch newspapers have repeatedly claimed the Kinahan mob arranged Scarface's murder, and have nominated enforcer Gerard 'Hatchet' Kavanagh as being involved.

However, this has not been confirmed by Gardaí.

Days before Bouyakhrichan's murder, Fassih is said to have been spotted meeting with associates of Christy Kinahan in Marbella. Fassih has never been arrested in connection with the murder.

Fassih was previously investigated in connection with one of the most infamous assassinations of the feud, dubbed the 'Wild West' shooting.

In December 2012, Youseff Lkhorf (28), and Said El Yazidi (21), were shot dead in an AK47 gunfight near an Amsterdam canal, in which gang boss Benaouf Adaoui narrowly escaped with his life.

The shooting was a response to the murder of Najeb

Boubouh. Pursuing police were also shot at by the assassins.

Fassih was formally accused of involvement in the shooting, but he was never convicted of any offence.

Fassih was a close associate of Dutch crime boss, Gwenette Martha, who was assassinated in Amsterdam in May 2014. Despite wearing a bullet-proof vest, he was hit by 80 rounds from two or more AK47 rifles.

The same group has been at war with another Dutch Moroccan group headed by Adaoui over the theft of €20m worth of cocaine – most of it destined for the Irish and British market.

Last March, the gang linked to Fassih were responsible for the shocking murder of criminal Nabil Amzieb (23), whose severed head was left in a bucket outside a cafe.

The Moroccan Mob was also responsible for shooting dead a mother in front of her children. Luana Luz Xavier (34), the girlfriend of an Amsterdam criminal involved in the feud, was shot dead in front of her daughter and son in December 2014.

Six months earlier, innocent custom services manager Stefan Eggermont (30), was shot dead in a case of mistaken identity as part of the feud.

This week, Dublin District Court heard that Fassih is also awaiting extradition to the Netherlands on other charges.

He has 12 previous convictions including two counts of unauthorised use of weapons, ammunition and explosives, as well as extortion, attempted extortion and embezzlement.



Biography

Wouter Laumans is a writer, journalist and tv editor. He writes about crime for *Panorama* and *Nieuwe Revu*.

Marijn Schrijver is a journalist and editor in chief for *Nieuwe Revu*.

Quotes

‘Very detailed, filmic and with a good sense for drama’
Vrij Nederland

‘Laumans and Schrijver present their findings as an exciting story, laced with underworld jargon’ **** *Het Parool*

‘A very insightful book, thanks to the praiseworthy work ethic of the authors’ *De Telegraaf*