

# The Epic Hunt for One of the World's Most Wanted Men

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**He was one of Africa's richest moguls and helped unleash the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Then Félicien Kabuga vanished and stayed hidden for more than two decades – until recently, when the United Nations' war crimes detectives picked up his trail and began to close in.**

**Bob Reid** rubbed his eyes and stared again at the computer screen. Outside, daylight was fading, but the detective barely noticed. He'd been holed up in his apartment since the coronavirus had emptied the streets of Arusha, hushing the clamor of the otherwise vibrant east African capital. Reid was fine with the tranquility. He hadn't come to Tanzania for the safaris or the day trips to Kilimanjaro. The window in his study faced a concrete wall. He was locked in on his laptop.

As he scrolled with his mouse, Reid watched phone numbers zip past. Thousands and thousands of them, alphabetized by the relay stations from which they had originated in Europe. Amid the blur of data, he found himself adrenalized by a hunch. The mystery that had consumed him for months suddenly felt solvable, and if it was, Reid let himself believe, the epic hunt for one of the world's most wanted criminals—a search that had quietly been under way for nearly a quarter of a century—might finally come to an end.

Among the small coterie of specialists who track the world's most monstrous fugitives, Bob Reid has a well-earned reputation for finding his man. Even when the trail grows cold for years. A decade ago, as chief of operations at the U.N.'s International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Reid directed the search for the Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladic, the so-called Butcher of Bosnia, who

was responsible for the murder of more than 7,000 Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica in 1995. Mladic had been running for 16 years when Reid tracked him to a shabby farmhouse in northern Serbia. Masked agents hauled him away to face the tribunal, which convicted Mladic of genocide and crimes against humanity, sentencing him in 2017 to life in prison.

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There had been others, of course : During his nearly 25 years chasing war criminals for the U.N., Reid had helped round up a litany of fugitive outlaws—from military commanders to homicidal strongmen—who'd fled the scenes of some of the most depraved episodes in recent memory. He had come to this highly specialized line of work after a storied law enforcement career in New South Wales, in his native Australia, where he pursued murderers and drug lords. But Reid is not of the breed of swashbuckling detectives. He is genial in his dealings with colleagues, gregarious in a way that belies the focused attention he must summon to confront the perpetrators of heinous atrocities. His success depends on a rare obsession for detail and a deep commitment to teamwork. He is clever and he is careful, and perhaps not surprisingly, Bob Reid is uncommonly patient—a particularly advantageous trait in a line of work that requires endurance.

All fugitives want to stay hidden, but the criminals Reid has hunted can be especially good at doing so. Often they have at their disposal the sorts of assets that common absconders lack : small armies or vast fortunes. Loyalists and sycophants and true

believers can make disappearing easier. But nothing helps more than time. Years wash by and people forget. Memory becomes history and the hard edges of human wickedness are somehow sanded off. This is what the fugitive hopes, at least.

On that day in March, thousands of miles from Bob Reid's home office, an old man sat in a forgettable building on an unremarkable street—unaware of the phone numbers filling Reid's computer screen, untroubled by the notion that his past might finally be catching up with him. Félicien Kabuga had been in hiding since the late 1990s, flushed from the life of extravagance and privilege he had enjoyed as one of Rwanda's richest citizens after the extraordinary spasm of violence that tore apart the country in three terrorizing months in 1994.

Kabuga had been considered a key culprit in the genocide that left nearly a million people dead. As a powerful member of the ruling Hutu elite, he helped fan a virulent hatred of the minority Tutsi. He turned his commercial properties into training grounds for a marauding militia—the so-called Interahamwe—and he transformed a radio station he owned into a propaganda outlet bent on inciting the slaughter of Tutsi civilians. When the gruesome murdering spree was unleashed, Kabuga allegedly supplied the killers with hundreds of thousands of machetes, the crude tools that soon became emblems of the entire tragic period.

In the chaotic days following the atrocities, Kabuga had slipped out of Rwanda and, for a short while, had managed to live openly in exile—protected by powerful government sympathizers in Zaire (now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Kenya.

But in 1998, when the U.N.'s International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda charged him with crimes against humanity, he went underground. Suddenly, the mogul who had become a monster turned into something new—a kind of ghost who'd slipped into the fog.

Initially the United Nations pursued him in fits and starts, as the hunt, forced to depend on a network of unreliable informants, was disrupted by internal debates about whether he might be in Europe or Africa. The search lapsed into lethargy and clues were missed.

Then, after years of futility, a new prosecutor—a

charismatic Belgian named Serge Brammertz—took charge of the case at the U.N.'s International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals and shook things up. He reached out to Reid in 2016, asking the detective to help reinvigorate the hunt for the now elderly Kabuga. The pair realized that the passage of time had created new urgency to catch a fugitive who would certainly soon be dead. And so Reid joined Brammertz in The Hague, and he began taking a hard look at where the luckless search had gone wrong. He scrutinized European police files, and he reviewed the work of the Africa-based task force that the previous tribunal had assembled in the late '90s. He scoured a decade's worth of communications and dead ends and slowly started to glimpse the faint traces of Kabuga's footprints.

Finally, with the world hunkered down last spring, Reid was working into the sultry evening—processing those phone numbers and suddenly feeling the thrill of a breakthrough. From what he could tell, an unusual number of calls had been bouncing off a particular cell tower outside Paris, in an unremarkable stretch of exurban sprawl. He had stumbled onto something. Though Reid wasn't yet sure just what.

**The terrors and tumults** of the 20th century have a way of feeling distant to us—especially the worst atrocities, the mass slaughter of innocents perpetrated by criminal regimes. The genocide and expulsions of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire during World War I, the starvation of millions of Ukrainians in 1932 and 1933 under Joseph Stalin, the Nazi-led Holocaust of the 1940s, the Khmer Rouge's murders of over a fifth of Cambodia's population in the late 1970s, and the Rwandan genocide seem almost mythical in their horror, the scale of suffering paradoxically blurred by the sheer number of victims. And yet it was all too harrowing and real for those who endured the devastation.

As a Newsweek correspondent, I traveled with the Rwandan Patriotic Front, a Tutsi rebel group, in early May 1994, through parts of the country that had been seized from the genocidal Hutu government. The memories from that journey, and from several subsequent trips before the genocide ended, remain ingrained in my psyche, a vision of barbarity, evil, and grim, low-tech efficiency. I recall the beautiful mor-

ning in front of an imposing brick church in Rukara, two hours from the capital of Kigali, when I stepped gingerly past hundreds of bodies rotting in the sun, the faces frozen in agony. I remember the light inside the sanctuary that filtered through the church's shattered stained-glass windows, illuminating corpses sprawled on straw mats or under blankets. In an adjacent library, grenade fragments pocked the ceiling and walls, and beneath a framed portrait of Pope John Paul II, the desiccated remains of a man and a woman were locked in a final embrace. The cleaved skulls of some victims made clear that many of these people had been dispatched by machetes. It was a homicidal scene that belonged to ancient or medieval times, certainly not to the 1990s. The essential implement of Rwanda's subsistence-farming economy had become a hideous tool of mass murder. I tried to imagine the final moments of these many victims, the screams, the explosions, and yet the serenity of the current day—the chirping birds and the warm sun—seemed to mock my attempts to conjure up the crime. Still, the chilling proof was all around.

After the genocide ended, the top killers tried to make their escape. Well-heeled génocidaires within Kabuga's clique dispersed around the world. They bribed government bureaucrats for fake travel documents and references, obtained protection from allies within the domestic intelligence services, found anonymity in safe houses and drab apartment blocks, and moved from country to country when the heat got too intense. Sometimes they were hidden in vehicles driven by friends or relatives, sometimes they took seats on commercial flights.

Often the meticulously planned escapes conformed to a familiar pattern. In the ashes of World War II, the Argentine authoritarian Juan Pern, a sympathizer of Adolf Hitler's, and his counterparts in Brazil and Paraguay had welcomed Nazi war criminals into the country. While Allied forces captured some of the principal architects of the Final Solution, including Hermann Göring, Heinrich Himmler, and Rudolf Hess, the so-called ratlines funneled others—Adolf Eichmann, Josef Mengele, and thousands of peripheral war criminals—to comfortable lives in South America. In those days, the odysseys might begin with a perilous hike from Germany over

the Alps into Austria and Italy and then involve a welcoming hand from, say, a powerful official within the Catholic Church, who might arrange false papers and safe passage across the Atlantic.

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The Rwandan killers, too, relied on sympathizers and subterfuges to make their getaways. The Rwandan Armed Forces and Interahamwe militia, which helped organize the killings, reconstituted a Hutu fighting force in Zaire, under the protection of the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, a longtime ally, and led cross-border attacks on Tutsi. Others disappeared into the Republic of the Congo, Zambia, Cameroon, Kenya, and Madagascar. France, which had also been a staunch supporter of the Hutu regime, became home to mayors, prefects, military officers, and Catholic priests. "They studied in France, they had friends in the French military and high up in the government. They had so many contacts," said Alain Gauthier, a retired schoolteacher in Reims, who, with his Rwandan wife, Dafroza, has compiled dossiers on roughly 30 suspected participants of the genocide living in France, many under their own names.

Following ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and the Rwandan slaughter in the 1990s, international courts were convened to prosecute war criminals for the first time since the trials that followed World War II. The United Nations' Rwanda tribunal tracked down nearly 100 suspects during its two-decade run, putting many of them on trial at the U.N. court in Arusha. But Kabuga, along with a tiny handful of other high-value fugitives, managed to elude capture. He faded from memory. People had a difficult time recalling what he looked like. Some thought he had died.

**Of course**, Kabuga was alive. He was being quietly abetted by a sophisticated and vigilant cadre of supporters—a network that included some of his 13 chil-

dren. Over the years, his sons and daughters maneuvered him across borders and kept him forever one step ahead of his pursuers. This required constant attention as well as the resources and the connections of a once powerful magnate. His children rented apartments for him, presented fake passports, and otherwise shielded his identity. As he aged, they cared for him. Inevitably they were drawn into his web of lies.

One of those trusted protectors was Kabuga's son Donatien Nshimyumuremyi, who believed he was helping an innocent man escape unjust prosecution—and, possibly, Tutsi enemies bent on murdering his father.

Not long ago, on a warm night in Paris, I met Donatien in an outlying arrondissement. As we sat at a sidewalk café, he talked warily of the deceptions that he and his family had engaged in for two decades. Eventually he would explain how it all came apart. “We never had confidence he would be safe,” Donatien told me. “There were moments when you could be normal and not think about it. It wasn't always on our minds. But I can swear to you that we were never at ease.”

**Staying hidden** for more than two decades requires a determination few can muster. But for Kabuga, dedication had never been a problem. He'd been born in 1935, when what is now Rwanda was still a Belgian colony—a rigidly stratified place where ethnic identity determined one's lot in life. The white colonizers favored the Tutsi and provided them with privileged access to education and jobs. Kabuga's ethnic group, the Hutu, made up more than 80 percent of Rwanda's population but was relegated to second-class status. Thus he grew up poor—the child of illiterate subsistence farmers who toiled in the country's green hills. Deprived of a formal education, Kabuga nonetheless had drive and wiles. He hawked cigarettes and salt in a market, taught himself to read and write, and scrambled upward as quickly as he could. As a young man, he cultivated tea and, when he'd made enough money, moved to Kigali, where he began selling anything he could. This was a fortunate moment for an enterprising Hutu with big ambitions: Rwanda had won its independence in 1962, and the Tutsi ruling class was being dismantled.

Kabuga made connections with Indian merchants

in neighboring Uganda, who sold him goods on credit—including farm tools. “He was a big importer of machetes from the early days,” said Boniface Rucagu, an elected official in Kabuga's region at the time. When the dictator Idi Amin expelled the Indian population from Uganda in 1972, the tradesmen unloaded their inventories on Kabuga at fire-sale prices; he resold them at huge profits. “He became very rich,” Rucagu told me. When Uganda became an international pariah, the country's coffee growers turned to Kabuga to disguise their beans as a Rwandan product—and his fortune grew. He got his hands on supermarkets and warehouses and, piece by piece, became a business and real estate magnate. After a while, Kabuga was reputed to be the country's richest citizen. His name became synonymous with wealth. “If a person aspired to become rich, we would say that he wanted to be ‘the next Kabuga,’” recalled Etienne Nsanzimana, a Tutsi from Kigali who was 18 when the killing began. As Kabuga enlarged his business empire, he married off two daughters to sons of President Juvénal Habyarimana, a fellow Hutu who had seized power in a 1973 coup, cementing Kabuga's prized place within the Hutu elite.

But among the high rungs of Hutu establishment, a dangerous radicalization was being fomented against the Tutsi and the notion that they could return to power. Across the border in Uganda, the Tutsi mustered a rebel force called the Rwandan Patriotic Front, invading Rwanda in 1990 and advancing to within 25 miles of Kigali. When Habyarimana, under pressure to find a peace with the Tutsi, agreed in 1993 to share power with the rebels, Hutu hardliners denounced the concession—and accelerated a plot to eradicate the Tutsi.

That year Kabuga cofounded a broadcast network, Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines, or RTLM, that began spreading the message that Tutsi were a mortal threat. Kabuga would visit the studio of the radio station every couple of weeks to provide ideological encouragement to his broadcasters. In early 1994, when the country's minister of information, a Hutu, suggested that the station was going too far, Kabuga issued a rare public statement, insisting that his network “only tells the truth” and that its role was to “enlighten the population.” The broadcasts conti-

nued and the carnage escalated; two months later, the information minister would be executed by the presidential guard.

**Many survivors regarded “*Chez Kabuga*”—a roadblock in front of Kabuga’s enormous commercial complex—as one of bloodiest sites in Kigali. “It became a butchery,” a survivor named Thérèse Gasengayire said.**

Then, on the evening of April 6, 1994, Habyarimana’s plane was struck by surface-to-air missiles as it approached Kigali’s airport, killing everyone on board. The assassination—blamed by Hutu hardliners on the Tutsi rebels—set the plot to exterminate the Tutsi minority in motion. (A U.S. State Department intelligence report would blame Hutu extremists—members of Habyarimana’s elite presidential guard—for shooting down the jet.)

Across Kigali, barricades were quickly erected to stop and corral Tutsi, separating them from the population so they could be killed in the streets. Many survivors regarded “*Chez Kabuga*”—a roadblock in front of Kabuga’s enormous commercial complex—as one of bloodiest sites of all. “It became a butchery,” said Thérèse Gasengayire, a survivor who lived yards down the road. Many suspected that Kabuga was lodging the Hutu fighters as well as storing weapons inside his complex.

Meanwhile, Kabuga’s radio station began directing militiamen to churches, schools—anywhere large groups of Tutsi had taken refuge. The broadcasters shared the names of prominent Tutsi targets and guided killers to their last known whereabouts. “Encircle them and kill them because they are there,” the broadcasters urged the armed Hutu in one instance.

On April 12, the voices on the radio directed the marauders to the Islamic Cultural Center compound in southern Kigali, where between 300 and 500 men, women, and children had sought refuge in the large, modern mosque.

The next morning, soldiers, in their black berets and camouflage fatigues, joined the Hutu militiamen

at the compound, surrounded the building, and began herding the besieged out to be slaughtered. At least 300 were murdered that day, many of the bodies left strewn in the equatorial heat.

**But the Hutu** regime knew its days of impunity were numbered. The Rwandan Patriotic Front was sweeping across the country, driving the government army toward the border. As the Hutu grip on control grew more tenuous and desperate, the mayhem increased, with Kabuga’s RTLM whipping up the hysteria. The radio station warned the Hutu that Tutsi rebels would soon sweep across the country to exact revenge. The broadcasts urged the Hutu to flee—and in the crowded exodus, the génocidaires melted into the throngs of terrified peasants making their exit.

When I arrived in the border town of Goma, Zaire, as a correspondent in July 1994, about 1 million people were encamped in flimsy shelters to the north of town, near an active volcano. A cholera epidemic was killing thousands a day. I watched steam shovels dump corpses into mass graves dug at the edges of the camps.

Kabuga was spared such dystopian horrors. Well-connected and flush with cash, he obtained a visa from the Swiss Consulate, where, in the confusion and chaos of the early postwar days, officials were apparently clueless about his role during the killings. Joined by his wife, Joséphine Mukazitoni, and seven of their children, Kabuga found his way to the charming Swiss capital of Bern. After a short stay in a refugee-processing center, he and the family moved into a comfortable hotel. But he was soon outed by Rwandan refugees who begged the government to arrest him. Instead the authorities—reportedly uninterested in a drawn-out legal battle—simply put Kabuga and his family on a plane back to Zaire.

It was the first of many fortunate breaks Kabuga would experience during his decades on the run. He remained in Zaire only a few months before moving with his family to Kenya, ruled then by Daniel arap Moi, a corrupt authoritarian who had been a close ally of the assassinated president Habyarimana and who had, at the time, refused to hand over Rwandan war criminals to the United Nations to face justice. Kabuga lived openly at first with his wife and many of his children in Nairobi, running an import-export

business, accumulating real estate, and almost certainly paying off Moi's domestic security team and other high officials for protection.

But outrunning the past wasn't easy. In 1997, the political climate in Kenya changed and the country's intelligence services began combing the city for génocidaires, arresting some half a dozen major criminals, including Kabuga. But his formidable network of political contacts, lawyers, and friends inside the Kenyan security services helped him secure his release within a week—and he promptly went into hiding. “He didn't want to, but he had no confidence in the international justice system,” his son Donatien told me. “And he saw quite well that the power in place [in Rwanda] was killing Hutu. He was terrified of being sent back to Kigali.”

**The informant offered to lure Kabuga into a trap in exchange for a \$5 million reward. But in January 2003, U.S. security officers found the man dead on a blood-soaked mattress, a hole in his temple.**

Meanwhile, Kabuga's family, who'd resettled in Europe, tried to repair his reputation. Boniface Rucagu, the former assemblyman, who met with me recently in Kigali, told me he was lobbied in 2000, during a meeting in Brussels he took with Kabuga's wife, Joséphine, and a daughter and a son. “‘You know that Monsieur Kabuga is a good man,’ ” Rucagu said Joséphine told him. “‘Could you plead for him in Rwanda and say that he was falsely accused?’ ”

Kabuga had reason to worry that authorities were hard on his trail—and were hiring informants to stir him from hiding. In 2002, William Munuhe, a struggling freelance journalist, secretly approached FBI agents at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi with an offer to help. Munuhe told the agents that he moonlighted as a fixer for Kenya's internal security chief, Zakayo Cheruiyot, and had had a hand in helping Kabuga move among safe houses. He offered to lure the accused génocidaire into a trap at his home in exchange for a \$5 million reward. Munuhe's hope for

a financial windfall backfired tragically : In January 2003, when U.S. security officers entered Munuhe's house, they found the journalist dead on a blood-soaked mattress, a hole in his temple and bruises on his wrists and ankles suggesting he'd been tied up. Kenyan officials ruled the death a suicide.

Soon after that, Kabuga left the country. “We told the Kenyans, ‘You need to tell us when he left, how he left, and in what direction,’ ” said Hassan Bubacar Jallow, a Gambian judge who, for more than a decade, had served as Brammertz's predecessor as the prosecutor for the U.N.'s Rwanda tribunals. “The intelligence agencies never answered those questions, but I'm sure somebody knew.”

Kabuga ended up in Frankfurt, sharing an apartment with his son-in-law Augustin Ngirabatware, Rwanda's former minister of planning and another top fugitive. Again there would be no long-term security for him. On September 17, 2007, German police nabbed Ngirabatware in a Frankfurt electronics store. Ngirabatware used his one permitted phone call to contact his wife—Kabuga's daughter—who set off a family scramble to extract their father from danger.

U.N. investigators, who haven't previously revealed details of their hunt, say Kabuga's children sprang into action : Donatien, they say, citing the German police's investigation, drove in from Belgium ; a daughter, Séraphine, came from London. Séraphine allegedly cleared the apartment of Kabuga's things while Donatien spirited his father to Luxembourg and then Belgium. There, said Serge Brammertz, “the trail went cold.”

**For the next decade**, U.N. investigators made virtually no progress on the Kabuga case. A four-man tracking team continued to travel across Africa, paying informants for tips that led nowhere. Investigators occasionally eavesdropped on the phone calls of Kabuga's children—one lived in London, four in Belgium, and eight in Paris—but the approach was scattershot. “We asked for the cooperation of police in several countries, and they helped us tap phone lines, but it wasn't continuous tapping, and they had other things to do,” said Jallow. Moreover, the children, possibly aware they at 5were being listened to, never said anything revealing.

In 2016, Brammertz replaced Jallow as the U.N.

prosecutor charged with resolving the Rwanda cases, and he brought in Bob Reid, with whom he had hunted the perpetrators of war crimes in the Balkans. “Let’s go tracking again,” the Belgian told Reid. Brammertz added a squad of analysts to study financial transactions, telephone traffic, and travel patterns; restructured the team of fugitive hunters; and changed the way the investigators worked with informants. He also persuaded the police in Britain, France, and Belgium to launch a coordinated effort with the U.N. to scrutinize the lives of Kabuga’s offspring. If Kabuga followed the pattern of most long-time fugitives, like Mladic, Brammertz and Reid reasoned, his contacts were shrinking as he grew older. And as an octogenarian, he was also presumably in increasing need of assistance. Trusted relatives seemed like the logical place to focus the search.

For two years the investigation looked for inroads. There was a possible near miss in 2017, at the funeral of Kabuga’s wife in Belgium, when a tip claimed that Kabuga had been sneaked into town to attend the burial; a raid on a family house failed to uncover anyone. Then, in late 2019, Reid noticed an intriguing piece of intelligence.

Counterterrorism officers with the London police had taken a look at travel records for Séraphine, Kabuga’s London-based daughter, who was thought to have helped cover Kabuga’s tracks in Frankfurt back in 2007. Passport entry records showed an unusual number of visits to Europe over the past year: Séraphine had spent a considerable amount of time in 2018 on the Continent—including what amounted to months in France.

Reid phoned French police, the National Gendarmerie, which runs its own unit devoted to tracking war criminals on French soil, and asked for some assistance from the bureau’s lead investigator, an agent named Estelle (out of concern for security, I’m using only her first name). Reid wanted to see if he could get information on phone calls Séraphine made while in France.

Whenever someone uses a mobile phone, the signal locks onto the closest cellular base station, creating a digital footprint that, for detectives like Reid, can become quite useful. Séraphine’s records, he could see, revealed a number of calls that bounced off a tele-

communications tower in Asnières-sur-Seine, a gritty suburb five miles north of central Paris. The location was noteworthy to Reid, but so was the time of day. Many of Séraphine’s calls were placed late in the evening or early in the morning, suggesting that she was sleeping over. Eight of Séraphine’s siblings lived in southern Paris, Reid knew. Why isn’t she staying with her siblings? he wondered.

Acting on a hunch, Reid asked Estelle to provide the data for four of the eight Kabuga children living in Paris—one son and three daughters. The records didn’t show the son placing calls from the area, but they did show the daughters, including one named Bernadette, bouncing calls off the cell tower—and the patterns suggested that they too were visiting the area overnight.

To Reid, this seemed odd. All three women lived roughly 25 minutes away. Why sleep over? He probed deeper, securing the cell phone records of another Paris-based son of Kabuga’s, Alain Habumukiza. He, too, had made frequent calls from Asnières-sur-Seine. Reid wanted to visualize what the data was telling him, so he had the analytics team draw a chart that showed all five siblings and the dates and times of their visits. That’s when he could see that over the past 12 months, there were only a handful of days when none of the siblings visited the neighborhood—and many days when two overlapped. The patterns suggested attentiveness. It’s as if they’re looking after somebody, Reid thought.

He wanted to know everything he could about the lives of Kabuga’s kids and began looking into where they’d been on key dates, like holidays. Reid consulted the phone records and discovered that Bernadette had been in Asnières-sur-Seine all night on Christmas Eve 2019. He also discovered that the rest of the family had congregated together on the other side of town. Bernadette loves Christmas, he thought, so why wasn’t she at the party? Reid knew that she had always been especially close with her father. For instance, he believed, she had helped him escape across the border to Zaire in 1994 and had remained behind in Kenya in 1998 after Kabuga went underground. The widow of Jean-Pierre Habyarimana, the Rwandan president’s son, Bernadette had also been the lone sibling on Kabuga’s Kenyan bank accounts, over-

seeing “millions of dollars,” Reid said.

Reid could see that Bernadette’s last call hit the cell tower early in the morning on Christmas Day; almost immediately thereafter, one of her brothers registered a call nearby. It was as if one sibling was taking over for the other, Reid thought, caring for somebody who couldn’t be left alone for even an hour.

The data Reid was scouring in his apartment in Arusha was a few months old, but his hunch was hardening into a conclusion. He rang Brammertz on a Friday evening in April.

“I think we’re onto something,” Reid told his boss.

“Oh, yeah? What have you got?”

“I think he’s in Paris.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, I’ll send you a chart,” Reid said. “Tell me what you think.”

Brammertz took a look at it and called Reid back two minutes later.

“That’s compelling,” Brammertz told him. “It looks like they’re at this cell site all the time. Where are the premises?”

To figure that out, Reid called Estelle in Paris the next morning and described his breakthrough. After years without progress, Estelle was skeptical, Reid said. But her attitude changed when she saw his chart.

“We need to know where the apartment is,” he told her.

Estelle knew there must be thousands of apartments and homes within the dense tangle of streets crisscrossing the area covered by that cell tower. She began sifting through municipal records for a connection to the case. She studied arrest reports, registration documents, utility bills. Soon she hit pay dirt: Tax records showed that a third-floor apartment on a street called rue du Révérend Père Christian Gilbert had been leased to Alain Habumukiza. But city real estate records showed that Habumukiza lived 20 kilometers across the city. “We have it,” Estelle told Reid.

Still, doubts remained. Paris had gone into lockdown because of the coronavirus pandemic. The government was restricting the movements of Parisians. For weeks, with the exception of several calls made by Bernadette in a single day in late March, none of the

children had used their cell phones in Asnières-sur-Seine. They had suddenly stopped traveling there, it seemed.

Shit, Reid thought. If Kabuga was living in the apartment, ailing and dependent on round-the-clock care, who was visiting him now? Reid was beginning to think that maybe Kabuga didn’t reside there after all. Maybe the apartment was simply a northern Paris pied-à-terre. My theory is wrong, he thought.

The team needed to know more. Eric Emeraux, then director of the National Gendarmerie’s war crimes division, a veteran fugitive chaser who moonlights as an electronic-music producer, had ordered surveillance on the street in front of Kabuga’s suspected home. But they caught nothing out of the ordinary—nobody was moving during the lockdown—deepening Reid’s concern.

**The team feared that if Kabuga’s kids got wind of the surveillance monitoring the apartment building, they could extricate their father at a moment’s notice.**

In May, while he was in the throes of doubt, Reid said he got a call from Estelle. She shared a Belgian cell number. “Do you recognize this?”

“This is Donatien’s number,” Reid replied.

“Does he have a son or a daughter studying in Paris?”

“No, why?” asked Reid. Donatien wasn’t married. He had no girlfriend, no children. His main role in life was to look after his mother in Waterloo until she died.

“He’s logged on to that tower at Asnières-sur-Seine.”

That explained everything, Reid thought. They’d been looking for a caregiver who might be coming and going. They hadn’t considered that one might have holed up with Kabuga.

By mid-May, France was moving toward lifting its lockdown. That added urgency to the team’s plans. If the kids got wind of anything suspicious—noting the surveillance monitoring the apartment building, for example—they could possibly extricate their father



at a moment's notice. They had seemingly done it before.

But the authorities in France still needed confirmation. It came on Friday, May 15. Emeraux said that Estelle managed to locate a bill from a nearby hospital that had been paid by Bernadette the previous summer. The patient, the invoice claimed, had been an octogenarian named Antoine Tounga, bearing a passport from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The gendarmerie retrieved a sample of Antoine Tounga's DNA from the hospital. As luck would have it, Brammertz, who had for months been lobbying Germany's Ministry of Justice for help getting around the country's strict privacy laws, had recently obtained an old but verified sample of Kabuga's DNA from a hospital in Frankfurt. The two samples matched perfectly.

"Let's move," Emeraux said.

**At 5 :30 on** the morning of Saturday, May 16, 2020, 16 officers from the gendarmerie gathered in front of headquarters in eastern Paris under a brightening sky. All had been briefed the previous evening; two had made an overnight reconnaissance trip to Asnières-sur-Seine. In several vehicles, led by Emeraux, the SWAT team traveled through empty streets toward the northern suburb. As he drove, Emeraux, who'd been up most of the night, felt a surge of adrenaline. He chatted with his only passenger, the magistrate who had authorized the operation. She'd asked to come along to observe the momentous occasion.

After 20 minutes, the convoy reached Asnières-sur-Seine, a working-class, largely immigrant community on the left bank of the Seine. The officers rolled through the center of town, past a hodgepodge of modern four- and five-story apartment blocks, crumbling old town houses, vacant lots, beauty salons, and cheap restaurants. They turned slowly onto rue du Révérend Père Christian Gilbert, named after a resistance fighter executed by the Nazis. The gendarmes stopped in front of a cream-colored apartment complex with steel-railed balconies, and one officer jimmied open the ground-level glass door. When the crew slipped inside, Emeraux was second in line, behind the SWAT commander. Along with Estelle, they all crept silently up a staircase, moved down a dimly lit hall, and positioned themselves before the

brown door of an apartment. The commander attached a hydraulic blaster and, without warning, blew open the door. The officers burst inside.

Donatien Nshimyumuremyi sat, frozen, on a sofa in the living room of the one-bedroom apartment. "This was a complete shock," he would later tell me. "It's a day you always think might come, but you can never be prepared for it."

According to Emeraux, Estelle continued to the rear bedroom, where an old man lay on his back under a thin bedspread. "That's him, he's here," she cried out to the team.

She asked him his name.

"Antoine Tounga," he replied.

Estelle walked toward him, inspecting his neck for a telltale scar.

"No," she said. "You are Félicien Kabuga."

In the living room, Donatien looked at Emeraux indignantly.

"My father is innocent," he said.

After the gendarmes searched the apartment and got a positive ID from a quickly run DNA test, they led Kabuga down to a van. Later, as Reid told me, Estelle called him in Arusha. "Guess who was behind the door?" she said. "Our man."

**Eleven days after** his arrest, on May 27, Félicien Kabuga was wheeled into a bail hearing in a small courtroom in Paris. The seats were filled with journalists, Tutsi survivors, and human rights activists, including Alain and Dafroza Gauthier, the Rwandan-criminal hunters who have compiled evidence against 30 or so alleged génocidaires living in France and helped to send three of them to French prisons. Many of Kabuga's children were also present (they aren't expected to face charges related to their father's evasion of justice). Donatien sat quietly, saying little.

Bernadette, who had remained by Kabuga's side much of his 20-plus years on the run, shook her fist in defiance.

Dafroza Gauthier told me that Bernadette had shouted to her father: "Courage, Papa."

Kabuga, who faced the prospect of being handed over to the U.N. to face five counts of genocide and two counts of crimes against humanity, was dressed in a plaid shirt and dark jeans. He admitted nothing. "I

am innocent,” he mumbled in Kinyarwanda, the language of his homeland. “Everything they’re accusing me of is false.”

After the proceedings, outside the courtroom, Dafroza Gauthier said, she encountered one of Kabuga’s daughters, Winnie Musabeyezu.

“I am the daughter of Kabuga,” Winnie announced to Gauthier, who is well known to alleged Rwandan criminals and their families. “Can I ask you a question?”

“Of course.”

“Do you really think that my father is capable of doing the things that he’s accused of doing?”

“Listen,” Gauthier said, “I’m not the judge.”

Then Winnie tossed in what seemed like a non sequitur. “Do you know that it was me who had a store in Kigali that sold machetes?” Winnie said. Everything the business dealt in, she elaborated, was intended for farming, not for killing. Stories about Kabuga distributing machetes to the Interahamwe in advance of the massacres, she insisted, were false. “I can swear to you,” she said, “that I never gave a single machete away for free.”

**On a warm autumn** evening, I boarded the Paris Métro and rode to the Quartier Asiatique, a lively neighborhood in the city’s 13th arrondissement. I had obtained an address for Alain Habumukiza, one of Kabuga’s sons, and I followed a narrow, winding street to his shabby apartment building. A neighbor let me in through an outer set of glass doors. I scrolled through a digital directory in front of the locked inner entrance, quickly finding his name. I pressed the buzzer, and a high-pitched male voice answered.

“Oui?”

I introduced myself, explained that I had spent months in Rwanda in 1994 and 1995, and told him that I was interested in hearing his family’s side of the story.

After a pause, the voice said, “Hold on.”

**“Of course we knew that it was risky. It was something that we thought about, but what can one do?” Kabuga’s son told me. “All you can do as a family is say, ‘We made mistakes.’ ”**

Five minutes later, I stood face-to-face with a slim, handsome man in horn-rimmed glasses, jauntily attired in a black-banded straw fedora, khaki shorts, and a pale blue oxford shirt. He introduced himself as Donatien Nshimyumuremyi. He was in town visiting his father in jail and staying with Alain.

Later, as we sat at a table on a busy sidewalk, I prodded Donatien for details about his father’s two and a half decades in hiding. “I can’t really talk about this period,” he said in French. He admitted that the family had dropped their guard in recent years. They had known that talking on cell phones was potentially dangerous but had weighed the hazard against the need to communicate about their father. “Of course we knew that it was risky. It was something that we thought about, but what can one do?” he said. “All you can do as a family is say, ‘We made mistakes.’ ”

His father had been ailing for years before his capture, Donatien told me, his life reduced to slow walks around the block each morning, accompanied by the son or daughter who was caring for him, then an afternoon and evening watching television. “He’s extremely fragile,” Donatien said. “His cognitive health is not good. His memory is going. The day of his arrest, he was asked when he was born, and he said 1993. That would make him 27 years old. It’s inhumane to put someone so weak—who walks so slowly, who can barely remember when he was born—in a jail cell.”

After his appearance in Paris, the court ruled that there was no legal or medical obstacle to turning Kabuga over to the tribunal. He was handed off and transferred to The Hague, where, at a hearing in November, he pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Twenty-six years after the genocide, Donatien remained convinced of his father’s victimhood and the world’s injustice toward him. Tutsi rebels, he insisted, had fired the missiles that had destroyed President Habyarimana’s plane, unleashing “chaos.” In the ensuing anarchy and fog of war, the two ethnic

groups had turned on each other and Hutu and Tutsi had both become victims, he claimed.

It was clear that nothing at this point, least of all a guilty verdict at the tribunal in Arusha, would ever shake the family's belief in their father's innocence. They inhabited a bubble of alternative facts, impervious to skepticism, held together by ethnic solidarity, relentless propaganda, denialism, and family love and loyalty. I asked Donatien, who had been a student in Belgium at the time of the genocide, if he had ever asked his father point-blank what he did during that

period. "Of course," he replied. "He told me, 'I was a businessman, nothing but a businessman. I didn't do anything wrong.' "

**Joshua Hammer** is the author of *'The Falcon Thief,'* in paperback this month. His last story for *GQ*, about the rescue mission that followed a New Zealand volcano eruption, appeared in the May 2020 issue. A version of this story originally appears in the February 2021 issue with the title "The Hunt for One of the World's Most Wanted Men."