

Paris judge issues report on Diana probe

by Jeffrey Steinberg

One year after the collision in Paris that took the life of Princess Diana, Dodi Fayed, and Henri Paul, investigating magistrate Hervé Stephan is still hard at work. Days before the first anniversary of the Aug. 31, 1997 crash, Judge Stephan issued a terse public statement through the prosecutor's office — only the third official statement issued by the French investigators — indicating that his probe would continue until at least October, and highlighting some of the remaining areas of inquiry.

Judge Stephan confirmed a report, first published in *EIR* in June, that further blood tests on driver Henri Paul, revealed a level of carbon monoxide at the time of his death that could be fatal. Such high levels always cause severe disorientation, intense headaches, and loss of balance. The blood tests also showed a presence of alcohol and two prescription drugs.

It remains unclear how Paul could have even gotten behind the wheel of the Mercedes under the influence of such a near-lethal combination. The fact that the other passenger in the car who died instantly in the crash, Dodi Fayed, had no carbon monoxide in his blood, rules out the possibility that the Mercedes was leaking carbon monoxide. Moreover, security camera footage of Paul in the Ritz Hotel, prior to the fatal ride, gave no indication that he was at all disoriented or under the influence of intoxicants. Back in June, this had prompted Independent Television (ITV) in England to question: Is it possible that the blood sample did not come from Henri Paul, or was somehow doctored?

Judge Stephan also confirmed that he is still awaiting the completion of the forensic tests on the Mercedes 280S in which Paul was driving Diana and Dodi. There are reports that the car was in need of serious repairs; that the air bags were activated *prior* to the car's crashing into the pillars inside the Place de l'Alma tunnel, incapacitating driver Paul; and that there was water in the brake fluid.

The Paris investigation has yet to turn up the white Fiat Uno that collided with the Mercedes as the two cars were entering the tunnel. That collision caused Paul to lose control of the Mercedes. The Fiat sped out of the tunnel, and, for the past year, the car has been missing and its driver remains unknown. French police interviewed more than 3,000 Fiat Uno owners, but have so far been unsuccessful in finding the driver. In June, French police official David Laurent gave his

own eyewitness account of the Fiat lying in wait near the tunnel entrance, just seconds before the crash.

Judge Stephan's brief statement also confirmed that there is an ongoing probe of the emergency rescue effort for Princess Diana, who had initially survived the crash, but did not receive adequate emergency treatment, probably sealing her fate. From the moment the ambulances arrived, it took nearly two hours to deliver Princess Diana, who was bleeding internally, to a hospital less than four miles from the tunnel. She died moments before being wheeled into an operating room at the Hôpital La Pitié Salpêtrière.

Disagreements

According to a report published in the Aug. 31, 1998 issue of *Time* magazine, there is a dispute between Paris prosecutor Maude Coujard and Judges Stephan and Marie-Christine Devidal, over whether to go ahead with criminal prosecutions against nine paparazzi and a photo-agency motorcycle driver, for involuntary homicide. Reportedly, Coujard is opposed to prosecuting the paparazzi. Both judges, according to *Time*, not only favor prosecution of those nine, but have widened the investigatory net to determine which other paparazzi may have been involved. Judge Stephan has reportedly subpoenaed the mobile phone records of all the suspected paparazzi, to determine who was in phone contact with them as the evening's events played out. *Time* magazine Paris bureau chief Thomas Sancton and Middle East correspondent Scott McLeod, who co-authored a well-researched book, *Death of a Princess: The Investigation*, say that Judge Stephan is convinced that some of the paparazzi "may know more about the Fiat Uno than they let on, and that its driver could possibly have been a photographer."

And now, Mohamed Al Fayed, Dodi Fayed's father, who has fought to ensure that the questions surrounding Dodi and Diana's deaths are resolved, has come out, for the first time, criticizing the two bodyguards who accompanied Diana and Dodi to Paris. Both Trevor Rees-Jones, who was seriously injured in the crash, and Kes Wingfield, resigned from the staff of Harrods last spring, and have been increasingly trying to lay the blame for the fatal crash on the management of the Paris Ritz Hotel, which, like Harrods department store in London, is owned by Al Fayed. *EIR* was alerted by a well-placed U.S. intelligence source at the beginning of 1998 that there would be an effort to turn the two men against Al Fayed, in order to protect the joint effort by the British monarchy and the French government to cover up the truth about the crash.

Al Fayed told Sancton and McLeod that he is "not on good terms" with Rees-Jones and Wingfield. "I didn't want them to leave, because the investigation is still running and I need them. But they are the people who caused the devastation and the accident through their incompetence and unprofessional practices. They had rules, and they moved away from the rules. They let me down."