

Madeleine's Favourite 'Cuddle Cat' Toy was 'Placed out of her Reach'

August 12, 2007, Daily Mail

Madeleine's favourite toy, her pink 'Cuddle Cat, was taken from her arms and placed beyond her reach by her kidnapper, according to new reports.

This important evidence could point to the fact that Madeleine was actually taken alive.

According to a report in the Sunday Mirror, Kate McCann knew instantly that Madeleine had been abducted when she saw that the toy had been moved from her sleeping daughter's arms and placed on a ledge way beyond the four-year-old's reach.

The paper quotes a police source as saying: "When Kate tucked Madeleine up in bed earlier in the evening she had the toy tightly in her arms as she did every night.

"So Kate was terrified when she spotted it had been left in a place too high for her to reach.

"Kate also noticed the window was wide open and the shutters jammed up.

"It was because of these things that she had no doubt Madeleine had been kidnapped and she ran out to scream for help."

There was no sign of DNA or fingerprints left on the toy.

This morning the couple went to the church in Praia da Luz for Sunday mass.

They have defended themselves against accusations that their publicity campaign in the wake of Madeleine's disappearance has been counter-productive.

In a video specially recorded for a new section on the YouTube website to help find missing children, the couple spoke of their fears that their strenuous efforts to trace Madeleine might be counter-productive.

Mrs McCann said: "A few people have said to us, too much publicity might not be good because whoever's got her might keep her hidden.

"Obviously everything we're doing at the moment has a slight risk to it, which is a horrible situation to be in when you're dealing with your daughter.

"But overall we felt rather than sit back and not do anything this was the way to go."

Experts at the US National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in Washington, DC, told Mr McCann that publicising Madeleine's image was the right thing to do, she said.

Mrs McCann added: "The laws in the States are very different to here, and well ahead of the game.

"They've got their Amber Alert, so within two hours of a child getting taken a police report has to be filed. Obviously the response time in Europe has to be quicker."

Her husband said: "The problem is, and this applies to the child pornography laws as well, that if you make regulations tight in one country the perpetrators don't know any boundaries and they will move to a country where the legislation is less tight.

"So you might be exporting your problem. And that's why it has to have an international dimension.

"And that's why the laws need to be tightened up, not just in the UK, the United States or anywhere else - it's where children can be abused or be likely to be abused."

The short film shows the couple printing out posters of Madeleine in their holiday apartment in Praia da Luz, then showing them to taxi drivers and members of the public.

They also hand out Find Madeleine wristbands and put up the posters in shop windows.

Filmed at the wheel of his car, Mr McCann said: "In terms of the abduction of a foreign child in another country, it's really very rare.

"The only case like this, certainly with British children, that we know of is Ben Needham, which was in 1991. That's 16 years ago.

"So that aspect is incredibly rare, and certainly when we're talking to people in Portugal and Spain, they're not aware of any other EU nationals having children abducted on the Iberian peninsula.

"When you think about the tens of millions of tourists that come to Spain and Portugal every year, this really was a bolt out of the blue.

"In terms of what's happened to us, I think also the circumstances of a child being abducted from the bedroom is pretty rare as well."

Mr Sousa's comments came just hours after Mr McCann spoke of how police had "encouraged" his and his wife's conviction that Madeleine could be located.

The huge effort the McCanns have poured into the Find Madeleine campaign - which has seen them travel all over Europe to publicise her disappearance - has been driven by their belief that she was alive, he said.

If the current police activity reveals new evidence that Madeleine has been seriously harmed, he and his wife should be the first to know, he added.

Mr McCann wrote on his internet blog: "We have always been told that the police had an open mind about Madeleine's abduction and that all scenarios were possible.

"In the first few days after Madeleine's disappearance it was so difficult for us not to imagine the worst case scenario - that she had been taken and murdered, particularly in light of the statistics on child abduction.

"However as the massive investigation and extensive search did not find any evidence of serious harm to Madeleine, we started to hope that she would be found alive.

"This belief has been encouraged by the police."

He went on: "Everything we have done... in the campaign to help find Madeleine has been driven by the fact that all our family and friends feel that there is a reasonable chance Madeleine is still alive.

"Kate and I, like all parents of missing children will always have that hope unless we see concrete evidence to the contrary.

"It is this hope that has sustained us along with the overwhelming support we have received from family, friends and well-wishers.

"As parents, we have always said we need to know what has happened to our daughter who has been such a massive part of our life.

"If the current police activity does uncover new evidence that Madeleine has been seriously harmed we should be the first to know."

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-474844/Madeleines-favourite-Cuddle-Cat-toy-placed-reach.html#ixzz4fQPm45Mp>