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## **Killer Steps**

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**By Jerry Lawton**

Madeleine McCann died after tumbling down steps outside her family's holiday apartment, a team of British police claim.

They think she stumbled and cracked her head on the floor after waking up and looking for her missing parents.

That is the shock judgement of Brit officers brought in to search the family's apartment in Praia da Luz, Portugal, with sniffer dogs specially-trained to detect blood and death.

Last night it was alleged that it was UK detectives – and not their Portuguese counterparts – who first raised suspicions about the possible involvement of Madeleine's parents.

And after their report last week, Portuguese detectives are said to be "100% certain" the four-year-old died at her family's Algarve flat on May 3.

They had thought Madeleine and her two-year-old twin siblings, Sean and Amelie, were given sedatives to help them sleep while parents Kate and Gerry, both 39, dined out with pals at a tapas bar 40 yards away.

But, according to Brit police information leaked to a Portuguese paper, Madeleine woke up and went to look for her parents.

There are "strong suspicions" the dazed youngster stumbled down 10 steps outside the door.

The paper claims: "The death was due to traumatic shock to the back of the head against ceramic tiles on the stairs.

"The only thing left to investigate now is how the body disappeared."

Portuguese detectives now plan to send a letter to British police with more than 40 key questions they say the McCanns must answer.

British officers will then decide how and where those questions will be posed.

The move was ordered by prosecutor Luis Bilro Verao, who also wants the couple's holiday pals re-questioned too.

And, according to Portuguese newspapers, at least some of them may be named as official suspects – like the McCanns.

Earlier this month Mr Verao said the pair would not be re-quizzed unless new evidence arose but the British findings have prompted a rethink.

Results of the latest forensic tests at the apartment are due within days. And detectives have been searching in fridges and cool spots where the body may have been hidden.

It also emerged last night that suspicion fell on Maddie's parents back in mid-July, after Portuguese detectives said the case had stalled and first appealed to the UK for help.

A Brit police source said: "Our detectives use a mantra in big investigations – 'clear the ground under your feet'.

"Here, that meant look at the apartment and the circle closest to Madeleine – her family.

"They should have been the first to be looked at properly."

The McCanns deny any involvement in Maddie's disappearance and say she could still be alive. They say they are being framed by Portuguese police desperate to solve a case they have bungled.

Source:

<http://3as.madeleinemccann.org/viewtopic.php?p=131106&sid=9102543d31e09f888a17ec37738b824b>