# New drama series explores the tragic shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes and police failings



On 22 July 2005, Jean Charles de Menezes, a 27-year-old Brazilian electrician living in London, was fatally shot by firearms officers on the London Underground shortly after boarding a train at Stockwell station. The Metropolitan Police initially claimed that De Menezes had jumped over the ticket barriers at the station while wearing a bulky coat, leading officers to suspect he was carrying a bomb. This incident unfolded just two weeks after the deadly 7/7 bombings on London’s transport network, which claimed 52 lives, and a day after a failed copycat attack involving four men attempting to detonate devices on multiple underground trains and a bus.

Subsequent investigations revealed that Jean Charles de Menezes was innocent of any wrongdoing and that police intelligence had been flawed. Evidence later showed that he had walked calmly into the station, collected a newspaper, and boarded the train without incident—contradicting the initial police narrative. Despite this, the early portrayal of De Menezes as suspicious has remained the dominant memory of the incident over the past two decades.

This complex and tragic case is the subject of the new drama series Suspect: The Shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes, written by Jeff Pope, known for his work on Philomena and Stan & Ollie, and directed by Paul Andrew Williams. The series explores the events leading up to the shooting, the moment itself, and the subsequent official responses, laying bare the police misidentification, rushed operation, and the inconsistent information presented to the public.

The drama stars newcomer Edison Alcaide as Jean Charles de Menezes, portraying his daily life working two jobs—electrician by day and restaurant dishwasher by night—and his communication with his concerned mother back in Brazil. The series also features prominent portrayals of Metropolitan Police officials involved in the case, including Ian Blair, the commissioner at the time played by Conleth Hill; Cressida Dick, the gold commander of the surveillance operation portrayed by Emily Mortimer; and Brian Paddick, the deputy assistant commissioner played by Russell Tovey, who publicly challenged the false narratives about De Menezes.

Russell Tovey, who met Brian Paddick prior to filming through LGBTQI+ advocacy events, described Paddick as “a bit of a hero figure” for his combination of high-ranking police work with outspoken support for LGBTQI+ rights. Paddick’s evidence after the shooting contradicted Ian Blair’s statements, leading to tension within the police and ultimately Paddick’s departure from the force. Tovey noted, “So you see what sticking your neck on the line and making sure the truth is upheld does to someone’s career.”

The series depicts a tense confrontation between Paddick and Blair, highlighting the conflict over the truth behind the shootings and police conduct. Conleth Hill, speaking about his role as Blair, emphasised a balanced portrayal, saying, “The responsibility is to tell the story, not his story,” while acknowledging the heavy pressures Blair faced during the chaotic days after the shootings.

In preparation for his role, Edison Alcaide connected closely with the De Menezes family to ensure their experiences were represented authentically. Reflecting on his initial impressions of the case when moving to London in 2008 and seeing the memorial mosaic at Stockwell station, Alcaide said, “The first thing I heard was: ‘Oh, he reacted to the police. He ran away.’” Filming the violent shooting scene—where De Menezes was shot seven times at close range in the head—was especially difficult. Alcaide remarked, “None of us wanted to avoid the tough reality of what happened.” Jeff Pope added that the depiction was made with careful consideration: “We wanted to show exactly what happened, how violent his death was.”

The series also highlights the role of Lana Vandenberghe, a Canadian secretary at the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) who became a whistleblower after noticing the disparity between official accounts and the evidence. Despite the risk to her career, she copied evidence and gave it to a journalist, prompting a police raid on her home and an attempt to charge her with stealing office supplies—a move Pope described as “pathetic” and indicative of the desperation to suppress her revelations. Actress Laura Aikman, portraying Vandenberghe, remarked on the courage required, noting her character’s fear of the consequences.

Suspect: The Shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes is presented as a thoughtful examination of the serious consequences of misinformation and flawed police procedures. Jeff Pope commented on its timeliness, saying, “In the world we live in now, there are so many grabs on the truth, so I think that makes this piece really relevant.” Russell Tovey added, “The truth doesn’t matter any more … so we have to make these shows because art can educate and bring about change.”

The drama series is available for streaming on Disney+ from 30 April.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing_of_Jean_Charles_de_Menezes> - This page provides detailed information about the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes, including the circumstances leading to his death and the subsequent inquest. It supports claims about the Metropolitan Police's actions and their initial narrative of the event.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/jean-charles-de-menezes-documentary-death-police-stockwell-b2643779.html> - This article discusses the context of Jean Charles de Menezes's death, including the timeline and how he was mistakenly identified by police, which aligns with the narrative in the drama series about the shooting.
* <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/de-menezes-what-are-lessons-need-be-learnt> - This commentary highlights the lessons learned from the de Menezes incident, focusing on the need for improved police procedures and communication. It supports discussions about the aftermath and implications of the shooting.
* <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/11/15/ohrn-n15.html> - This article mentions a documentary exploring the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes, emphasizing the wrongful identification and the broader implications of the incident on public perception and trust in law enforcement.
* <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29768402> - This article offers an academic perspective on the killing, discussing themes of hyper-militarism and the impact on public perception following the event. It supports the broader social and political context depicted in the drama series.