# New drama series revisits the tragic shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes to reveal the full story



On 22 July 2005, Jean Charles de Menezes, a 27-year-old electrician, was fatally shot by firearms officers on the London Underground shortly after boarding a train at Stockwell station. The Metropolitan Police initially reported that De Menezes had leapt over ticket barriers wearing a bulky coat, leading officers to believe he was concealing a bomb. This tragic incident occurred during a tense period, just two weeks after the 7/7 London bombings that killed 52 people, and one day after a failed copycat attack involving explosives on several London transport vehicles. It later became clear that De Menezes was innocent and that the intelligence that led to his shooting was flawed.

Over the years, public perception of the event was shaped by early police narratives suggesting De Menezes had acted suspiciously, though investigations and inquests have challenged this portrayal. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) reports, the inquest transcripts, and a 2007 health and safety prosecution found that the Metropolitan Police had breached health and safety regulations, contributing to the circumstances of De Menezes’s death.

The Guardian reports on a new drama series, Suspect: The Shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes, written by Jeff Pope and directed by Paul Andrew Williams, which revisits the tragic event and its aftermath. The series aims to correct misconceptions and provide a detailed account of De Menezes’s life and the operation that led to his death. Edison Alcaide, a Brazilian actor making his debut in the role, portrays De Menezes, showing his daily life as a hard-working electrician who also worked nights washing dishes. The series also features portrayals of key Metropolitan Police figures, including commissioner Ian Blair (played by Conleth Hill), surveillance operation commander Cressida Dick (Emily Mortimer), and deputy assistant commissioner Brian Paddick (Russell Tovey), who was critical of the police’s handling of the case and the misinformation that followed.

Russell Tovey, who plays Brian Paddick, noted Paddick’s status as a vocal advocate for LGBTQ+ rights within the Metropolitan Police and expressed admiration for his courage in standing up for the truth despite the risk to his career. The series presents a tense confrontation between Paddick and Ian Blair, where conflicting accounts of when the police knew De Menezes was innocent come to light. Conleth Hill, who portrays Blair, emphasises that his role was to present the narrative within the pressures the commissioner faced rather than casting him as a villain.

During the development of Suspect, writer Jeff Pope maintained close contact with De Menezes’s family, who wished for an accurate retelling of Jean Charles’s story. Alcaide reflected on how his move to London in 2008 brought him into proximity with the memory of De Menezes, particularly the memorial mosaic at Stockwell station, and how prior public assumptions about De Menezes’s behaviour were challenged through his research and portrayal.

The series does not shy away from depicting the violence of the shooting itself, with De Menezes being shot seven times at close range. Both Alcaide and Pope have spoken about the emotional weight of recreating these scenes and the importance of portraying the stark reality of the event.

A notable storyline within the drama highlights Lana Vandenberghe, a Canadian secretary and whistleblower at the IPCC, who secretly shared evidence contradicting public police accounts with journalists. Played by Laura Aikman, Vandenberghe’s actions cost her her job and led to police raids and questioning, including accusations related to theft of ink and paper—charges described as “pathetic” by Jeff Pope.

The series underlines the long-lasting impact of misinformation, especially in a media environment increasingly challenged by the distortion of truth. Through its retelling of the Jean Charles de Menezes case, Suspect attempts to explore themes of accountability and the human cost of errors within law enforcement.

Russell Tovey commented, “The truth doesn’t matter any more … so we have to make these shows because art can educate and bring about change.” Suspect: The Shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes is available to stream 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 article provides comprehensive details on the circumstances of Jean Charles de Menezes' fatal shooting on 22 July 2005 at Stockwell station, including the fact that police officers believed he was a suicide bomber and fired seven shots at close range. It also covers the inquest findings and the flawed intelligence that led to the shooting.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/jean-charles-de-menezes-documentary-death-police-stockwell-b2643779.html> - This source corroborates the timeline around the shooting, including De Menezes' movements on the day, the police surveillance operation, and the confusion leading officers to mistakenly believe he was involved in the failed 21 July bombing attempt.
* <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/de-menezes-what-are-lessons-need-be-learnt> - This commentary confirms the 2007 Old Bailey ruling that the Metropolitan Police breached health and safety laws in connection with the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes, addressing police accountability and operational failures.
* <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/11/15/ohrn-n15.html> - This article discusses the Channel 4 documentary on the De Menezes case, reinforcing the portrayal of the event as a tragic case of mistaken identity and police error, and highlights the broader social and political impact of the incident.
* <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29768402> - This academic article discusses the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes within the context of hyper-militarism and police practices in London, providing background on his personal circumstances and the broader security environment following the 7/7 bombings.