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“The human brain cannot easily cope with very high levels of power. I doubt the Fifa president feels himself constrained by anything that is bigger than his ego

Ian Robertson
Opinion&Analysis



DOLLY
PARTON'S
PARTING GIFT
TO A DIVIDED
UNITED STATES

Keith Duggan
World News

Swiss politician alleged to have raped Irish teenager and mother

CONOR GALLAGHER

A prominent Swiss politician is alleged to have repeatedly drugged and raped an Irish teenager and her mother.

Prosecutors say Patrick Frei (57) recorded the incidents which allegedly occurred while Paula – 14 at the time – and her mother Iwona were living with him in the Swiss town of Unterggenthal.

After the alleged abuse came to light in 2023, Swiss immigration authorities attempted to de-

port the two women. That decision was reversed earlier this month.

The alleged abuse and subsequent treatment of the mother and daughter have sent shock waves through Switzerland. Authorities have now announced an independent investigation into the handling of the women's case.

Frei was a member of the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) and sat on the government body in the Canton of Aargau. Before resigning from his

position after the allegations came to light, he was known for taking a hard stance against immigration and calling for tougher sentences.

Pelicot comparison

The nature of the alleged offences have caused Swiss media to compare the case to that of Gisèle Pelicot, a French woman who went public after being drugged by her husband and raped by dozens of men.

Police found dozens of videos which prosecutors say showed

Paula and Iwona being raped and sexually abused over the course of 15 months.

The first alleged incident involving Paula occurred 12 days after she arrived in Switzerland, the videos show. Prosecutors alleged Frei abused Paula for a total of 40 hours over the course of 40 different nights.

Both victims were unconscious throughout the incidents and have no memory of them.

Prosecutors alleged Frei administered powerful date-rape drugs to knock them out before

abusing them. This led authorities to charge Frei with attempted murder as well as sexual offences. The alleged drugging of the mother and daughter could have caused suffocation at any time, prosecutors say.

A year after police began to investigate Frei, Swiss immigration authorities issued a deportation order against Paula and Iwona. They argued the work visa arranged by Frei for Iwona was fraudulent. They also ruled the mother and daughter, who had no income after Frei's ar-

rest, were only entitled to emergency financial assistance rather than full social welfare payments.

Department aid

Police also investigated Iwona after Frei alleged she had stolen items from his house. The charges were later dropped.

As an Irish citizen, Paula sought help from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs. Iwona, who is from Poland, sought assistance from the Polish embassy.

The Irish embassy said it could not get involved in legal matters. It later suggested other legal remedies. Paula said she is unhappy with the level of assistance offered by Irish officials. "That broke my heart a little bit," she said.

A Department of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman said it provided consular assistance.

This month, a Swiss appeals court reversed the deportation decision against the women, allowing them to remain in Switzerland for now.

They were granted the normal rate of social welfare too.

Frei will stand trial in February. His lawyer says he "disputes substantial parts of the allegations and, in particular, the legal characterisation of several of the charges". He "expressly" denies using date-rape drugs on the women.

➔ **The Swiss politician and the alleged drugging and sexual abuse of an Irish girl and her mother: page 2**

Warships to protect EU meetings face curbs

French and British ships providing missile cover must stay 22km off Irish coast

CONOR GALLAGHER

French and British warships providing air defence to Ireland during the EU presidency must remain 22km out to sea on foot of legal advice received by the Government.

While the assistance of the French and British navies was formally requested by Ireland to provide security during the six-month presidency, officers were told their ships cannot enter Irish territorial waters during these operations.

The unusual arrangement, which was described by three military and Government sources, is in response to advice from the Attorney General that it would likely be unconstitutional for foreign military forces to deploy within Irish territory while on active operations, even if these operations had been officially requested.

Such operations would be in breach of Article 15 of the Constitution, which states only the Oireachtas has the right to raise a military force on Irish territory, the Government was advised.

Another legal headache emerged when officials asked if a foreign power's ship sitting outside Ireland's territorial waters could take lethal action against airborne threats over Irish soil. Under Defence Forces rules of engagement, only Irish military officers can authorise the use of force in such circumstances. In response, another workaround was developed.

An Irish naval officer would be posted on the bridge of the ships to give final authorisation for deadly force. On July 1st, when Ireland took over the

presidency, the French frigate Aquitaine was stationed in Dublin Bay, just outside the 22km limit, where it provided air defence. An Irish naval officer sat on the bridge.

European ships will continue to provide air defence during major events for the rest of Ireland's term in the EU presidency, including next week during a meeting in Co Wicklow when a Royal Navy air defence frigate will be deployed in the Irish Sea.

This month, the Irish Naval Service publicised a joint training operation involving the Aquitaine and LE Samuel Beckett. The Government has refused to confirm the presence of the French ship in a security role.

A Department of Defence spokesman referred questions to the Garda.

A Garda spokeswoman said the force has no knowledge of Operation Fianna, the military security operation mounted for the presidency.

Another issue is the fact that Ireland does not use Nato-level radio communications, meaning French forces must use Irish radios borrowed from the Naval Service.

There has also been difficulty in co-ordinating the location of Irish military assets. Irish forces use a system called Sitaware to co-ordinate air and sea assets, while the French use Nato technology called Link 16 and Link 22.

Nevertheless, the first test of the arrangement last month passed off without major complications. "There had been a lot of training and things went very smoothly," said a military source.



FLASH FLOOD
ON NEPAL-TIBET
BORDER
TWO IRISH
AMONG MISSING

Two Irish people are among hundreds of people missing after a catastrophic flash-flood sent torrents of mud and water sweeping through the Nepal-Tibet border region yesterday, killing at least 150 people.

Report: page 6
Photograph: Prabin Ranabhat/Getty Images

Irish couple found dead at villa in Spanish coastal resort

GERARD COUZENS
and GUY HEDGECOE

Police are investigating the deaths of an Irish couple whose bodies were found in a Jacuzzi at a Spanish coastal resort.

Their two children reportedly alerted the homeowner after finding their bodies inside the hot tub at their rented villa.

Police are investigating whether the pair, aged 50 and 45, were the victims of foul play, although the possibility they suffered an accident while they were in the Jacuzzi has not been ruled out.

The couple were reported to have puncture marks on their skin when their bodies were found, but the cause was unknown.

The discovery was made on Tuesday on a residential estate called Cap Blanc in Cullera, a town of about 25,000 people,



“Their children discovered the bodies in a Jacuzzi and alerted the authorities

40km south of the east-coast city of Valencia.

A spokesman for the civil guard in Valencia said: "The bodies of a man aged 50 and a woman aged 45 were found yes-

terday at a residential property in the municipality of Cullera. Both were Irish.

"Their children discovered the bodies in a Jacuzzi and alerted the authorities."

Homicide unit

A local homicide unit is handling the case. "That does not mean this was a homicide," Pablo Cea, a spokesman for the civil guard in Valencia said.

"It could be an accident – every hypothesis is open for investigation."

The two children, aged 14 and 16, are being cared for by social workers, assisted by a psychologist.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said it was "aware of this case" and providing consular assistance.

"The department does not comment on the details of individual cases," it said.

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Weather

Today will start dry. However, heavy rain will develop in the afternoon. Highest temperatures 18-20 degrees.

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