

Follis Disappearance Stirs Fears of Foul Play

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A National Institutes of Health official said last night that Dutch authorities are investigating the possibility that Dr. Richard H. Follis Jr., the Washington pathologist who vanished in Holland last Sunday, may have been the victim of foul play.

Dr. Follis, scientist for the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology here and an internationally recognized expert on thyroid diseases and nutrition, arrived in the Netherlands on Friday, Dec. 3.

Dutch police officials last Tuesday reported that the 56-year-old pathologist was presumed to have fallen into an Amsterdam canal during a gale Sunday.

Follis had stopped in Amsterdam to call on a Dutch scientific colleague. He was en route to a medical conference in Iran — a mission that was jointly sponsored by the Armed Forces Institute and the nutrition section of the Office of International Research at NIH.

2nd Scientist Sent

The section chief, Dr. Arnold Schaefer, said that NIH officials last week dispatched another scientist, Dr. Lawrence Hursch of the University of Illinois, to Amsterdam to report on, and, if possible, assist in the police investigation of Follis's disappearance.

Dr. Hursch, who flew to Holland from Turkey, is a friend

of the missing scientist. He has communicated to NIH officials here that Amsterdam police have located witnesses who saw Follis at 4:30 a.m. Sunday about 50 yards from a canal and 100 yards from his hotel, the Schiller.

Schaefer said NIH officials were told that the witnesses who saw Follis also reported seeing three men known to police as "shady characters" near him.

Earlier press reports from Amsterdam quoted Piet Landman, the police commissioner there, as saying that the city was swept by high winds Sunday and that he believes Follis apparently fell into a canal. Later, Landman said police know the identity of the three men seen near Follis but have not been able to locate them.

Spying Rumors

European newspapers have played up the Follis mystery and have speculated that he was—or is—engaged in intelligence work.

Follis's home here is at 4915 Albemarle St. NW. His wife, Edith, and four children are there, waiting for word from or about the scientist.

His colleagues and Mrs. Follis say that the notion he was involved in intelligence activities is "absurd."

"I can't believe it," Mrs. Follis said. "Dick is a completely dedicated medical scientist."

I sit here day after day and I try to figure it out."