

Beat: Vips

Dutch Prince Friso dies 18 months after ski accident in Austria

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USPA News - Dutch Prince Johan Friso, who remained in a coma for one-and-a-half year after being critically injured in an avalanche in western Austria, died Monday after suffering unexpected complications, the royal palace said. He was 44 years old.

Friso died at Huis ten Bosch royal palace in The Hague where he was taken to last month after more than a year of treatment at a hospital in England. "Prince Friso died of complications which occurred as a result of the brain damage caused by oxygen deficiency during his ski accident," the Netherlands Government Information Service (RVD) said in a communique. The prince was skiing in the Austrian town of Lech in February 2012 when he was hit by an avalanche and buried under the snow for about 25 minutes before being rescued and resuscitated at the scene. Doctors said the oxygen deprivation caused extensive damage to his brain, leaving him in a coma. Friso, who is the son of former Queen Beatrix and the youngest brother of King Willem-Alexander, died unexpectedly on Monday morning as Willem-Alexander and his wife Queen Maxima, along with their three daughters, were on holiday in Greece. They immediately called off their holiday and arrived back in the Netherlands by the end of the day. The government statement said Willem-Alexander announced the news of his brother's passing with "great regret," but gave no other details. Princess Beatrix, who abdicated as queen on April 30, was at Huis ten Bosch royal palace when her second son passed away on early Monday. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who is also on holiday, described the death of the prince as "intensely saddening." It came just a day after Friso's wife, Princess Mabel, celebrated her 45th birthday. "It must be hard to comprehend for Princess Mabel and their two daughters that they will now definitively have to continue without their husband and father," he said. "For Princess Beatrix the loss is also indescribable. Losing a child is the worst that can happen to a parent," Rutte, who is expected to return to the Netherlands on Tuesday, added. "Prince Friso will remain in our thoughts as a man with broad interests who put his diverse talents in service of society. Professional and passionate, that was his style. We remember Prince Friso with the deepest respect." On July 9, the prince was discharged from London's Wellington Hospital where he had been cared for after receiving initial intensive care treatment at Landeskrankenhaus in Innsbruck, Austria. He left the facility in England because doctors decided hospital care was no longer required for his condition, and Friso's family was in the process of examining long-term options for his care. Little news had been released since the initial accident in February 2012, but South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu revealed late last year that Friso had moved when Princess Mabel kissed him. "On another day, she said she kissed him and he moved a bit," Tutu said in an interview in September 2012, although there was no confirmation from the royal family. But in a statement in November 2012, the Dutch government said Friso had begun to show signs of "extremely minimal consciousness." "The prognosis remains very uncertain and the medical team is still very concerned. It will take many months before there is more clarity," the statement said. The government had previously emphasized that it would only make an announcement in the event of medically significant changes in the condition of Friso, but doctors who were not involved in the treatment of the prince cautioned that minimal consciousness does not necessarily mean a patient will eventually recover and regain full consciousness. In the statement in November 2012, the royal family also asked the media to continue to respect their privacy and thanked those who sent messages of support. "This is the worst period of my life," Mabel said. "My love for Friso, the support of family and friends, and the many messages of sympathy give me strength in this difficult time." Friso was not in line for the throne since marrying Mabel without permission from the Dutch government. At the time of their marriage in April 2004, Friso was second in line to the throne but would now have been fourth after Willem-Alexander and Maxima's three young children.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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