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Obama's Sinister Crackdown on the Press

by DAVE LINDORFF

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It is becoming perfectly clear that the outrageous detention of American journalist Glenn Greenwald's Brazilian partner David Miranda by British police during a flight transfer at London's Heathrow Airport was, behind the scenes, the work of US intelligence authorities.

British police and the British Home Office (the equivalent of America's Department of Homeland Security) are claiming that the action was taken by them on the basis of an anti-terrorist statute, passed in 2000, with the Orwellian name "Schedule 7." The give-away that this was not something that the British dreamed up on their own, however, is their admission that they had "notified Washington" of their intention to detain Miranda, a Brazilian national, *before* the detention actually occurred.

Note that they did not notify Brazilian authorities. It was the Americans who got the call.

And why was that? Because, clearly, Miranda was on one of America's "watch lists" and the British police needed instructions from their superiors in the US regarding what to do with him.

Miranda was subsequently detained and held, without access to a lawyer, for nine hours — the maximum amount of time allowed under the draconian terms of Schedule 7 — and was during that time questioned by at least six security agents, whom Miranda says asked him about his "entire life." Never was there any suggestion that he was a terrorist or that he had any links to terrorism. Rather, the focus was on journalist Greenwald's plans in relation to his writing further

articles about the data he had obtained from US National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden, now living in Russia under a grant of political and humanitarian asylum.

British police confiscated Miranda's computer, his computer games and memory storage devices he was carrying. (In a related action, police also went to the offices of the UK *Guardian* newspaper, which is where Greenwald works, though from his home in Brazil, and, in an act of wanton destruction reminiscent of Nazi storm troopers or Chinese public security bureau thugs, destroyed hard drives of the newspaper's computers containing leaked documents provided by Snowden. The paper's editors said that this particularly ugly police action against the news media was pointless since the paper has copies of those documents elsewhere, but then, the "point" was the act of destruction, not elimination of the leaked information itself.)

It makes no sense that British authorities would have taken these outrageous police-state actions against Miranda, against Greenwald and against one of the UK's most prestigious newspapers, on their own. The issue after all is Snowden's leaks, which are primarily of concern to the US and the NSA — the source of the documents.

US intelligence authorities these days maintain enormous files on American and foreign citizens, and track their movements by air. Many people are regularly subjected to special searches at US airports, and in some cases have their computers confiscated and searched by immigration authorities. Some are also detained for hours and are denied the right to get on a plane, though they are never charged with any crime. When I investigated the TSA's watch lists and its "no-fly" list, I learned that there is no way to find out if you are on such a list, or to get your name removed if you are on one. There is not even a right to learn how such lists are compiled, or which agency might be the source of information that is putting you on a watch list.

No doubt Miranda was placed on such a watch list by the US because of his relationship with Greenwald. No journalist himself, Miranda had just met in Germany with journalist/filmmaker Laura Poitras, who has been working in collaboration with Greenwald on the Snowden documents exposé. According to the *Guardian*, which was paying his airfare, he was bringing back to Rio de Janeiro some materials in her position for Greenwald's use in writing further articles. (Knowing that the NSA is monitoring their every electronic communication, Poitras and Greenwald understandably preferred to use a trusted courier, rather than sending the records electronically.)

We have entered a very dark period in terms of freedom of the press, not to mention the basic freedom of travel, association and privacy, when people like Miranda are detained in this manner. No one has suggested that Miranda, Poitras or Greenwald has broken any law. They are doing what good journalists in a free society are supposed to do. But the US security state, which has its tentacles now spread through most of the world, with client state secret services, such as the police in Britain, doing its bidding.

"Terrorism" laws are now being overtly used to repress basic freedoms without the state even bothering to pretend that the police actions taken have anything to do with combating "terror." The only terrorism at this point *is* the actions state. The only terrorists are government authorities.

What started out as universal monitoring by the NSA of all electronic communications is now metastasizing into arrests of journalists and their assistants at the airport. This will no doubt in no time metastasize further to night-time SWAT raids on journalists' homes and offices. We've already seen such things being visited upon political activists, so the new development should not come as much of a surprise.

This latest escalation of the US government's assault on truth and journalism exposes the puerile sham of President Obama's claim to want to "reform" the National Security Agency's spying program and to limit the "Justice" Department's invasive actions against journalists. The detention of Miranda was an act of war on the whole concept of press freedom.