

Beat: Vips

Husband of NSA-leak reporter detained under UK anti-terror law

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USPA News - The husband of the Guardian journalist who worked with American whistleblower Edward Snowden to expose details about the U.S. government's secret surveillance programs was detained at a London airport on Sunday and questioned under British anti-terror legislation. David Miranda, who lives with journalist Glenn Greenwald, was detained at around 8 a.m. local time on Sunday when he landed at Heathrow Airport following a flight from the German capital of Berlin.

He was scheduled to pass through the London airport on his way to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. An unidentified spokesman for the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), which is better known as Scotland Yard, said Miranda was detained at 08:05 a.m. under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000. "He was not arrested. He was subsequently released at 17:00," the spokesman said on Monday. Under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000, British police have the authority to detain and question a person for up to nine hours to determine whether that individual is involved in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism. The person must be released after nine hours unless charges are filed or a court allows more time for questioning. British authorities emphasized that the anti-terrorism law is used "appropriately and proportionally," but Scotland Yard declined to provide further details about Sunday's incident. "We're not going into any further detail [regarding] the reasons for the stop, I'm afraid," the spokesman said in an e-mail. Greenwald, who has worked extensively with Snowden as he revealed classified and previously unknown details about the U.S. government's secret surveillance programs, said his husband had spent the week in Berlin. Miranda had spent time there with American filmmaker Laura Poitras, who has worked with Greenwald on stories about the National Security Agency (NSA) leaks. "They obviously had zero suspicion that David was associated with a terrorist organization or involved in any terrorist plot," Greenwald said on Monday in a blog post on the Guardian website. "Instead, they spent their time interrogating him about the NSA reporting which Laura Poitras, the Guardian and I are doing, as well the content of the electronic products he was carrying." The journalist, who condemned the detention of his partner, said British authorities had seized numerous possessions that Miranda was carrying, including his laptop, his cellphone, various video game consoles, DVDs, and USB sticks. It was not clear when, or if, the possessions would be returned to Miranda. "They completely abused their own terrorism law for reasons having nothing whatsoever to do with terrorism: a potent reminder of how often governments lie when they claim that they need powers to stop 'the terrorists,' and how dangerous it is to vest unchecked power with political officials in its name," Greenwald said. The journalist said he believes the British action was "obviously designed" to send a message of intimidation to journalists reporting on the NSA and its British counterpart, the GCHQ. "This is obviously a rather profound escalation of their attacks on the news-gathering process and journalism," he said. Greenwald added: "It's bad enough to prosecute and imprison sources. It's worse still to imprison journalists who report the truth. But to start detaining the family members and loved ones of journalists is simply despotic. Even the Mafia had ethical rules against targeting the family members of people they felt threatened by." But the journalist, who is originally from the U.S. but lives in Rio de Janeiro with his partner, vowed to continue his work. "If the UK and US governments believe that tactics like this are going to deter or intimidate us in any way from continuing to report aggressively on what these documents reveal, they are beyond deluded," he said. "If anything, it will have only the opposite effect: to embolden us even further." The Brazilian government expressed its "grave concern" about the incident in a statement released by the country's foreign ministry. "This measure is without justification since it involves an individual against whom there are no charges that can legitimate the use of that legislation," it said. "The Brazilian government expects that incidents such as the one that happened to the Brazilian citizen today do not repeat." Human rights group Amnesty International also condemned Miranda's detention, describing it as unlawful and unwarranted. "It is utterly improbable that David Michael Miranda ... was detained at random, given the role his husband has played in revealing the truth about the unlawful nature of NSA surveillance," said Widney Brown of Amnesty International. Brown added: "David's detention was unlawful and inexcusable. He was detained under a law that violates any principle of fairness and his detention shows how the law can be abused for petty vindictive reasons. ... The only possible intent behind this detention was to harass him and his husband, Guardian journalist Glenn Greenwald, for his role in analyzing the data released by Edward Snowden."

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