

US, UK governments defend police-state spying

By Patrick Martin
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The US and British governments have stepped up their campaign of repression and victimization against Edward Snowden and his allies for exposing the worldwide police-state spying by the US National Security Agency and the British GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters).

The British press reported Saturday that government officials claimed that journalistic activity in support of Snowden's revelations fell under the legal definition of "terrorism." A newly released document prepared by Scotland Yard used that term to describe the actions of David Miranda, the domestic partner of journalist Glenn Greenwald, who is one of Snowden's principal collaborators in the campaign to expose illegal spying by the NSA.

In August, Miranda was detained for nine hours and interrogated by British intelligence and police officers when he sought to pass through Heathrow Airport outside London. He was traveling from Berlin, where he had met with filmmaker Laura Poitras, another close associate of Snowden, and was carrying materials from Poitras to the home in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil that he shares with Greenwald.

The British police released Miranda but confiscated all his electronic gear and other materials. A court hearing was held in London last week on a legal action filed by Miranda seeking recovery of the seized items.

According to the Scotland Yard document, "Intelligence indicates that Miranda is likely to be involved in espionage activity which has the potential to act against the interests of UK national security... We assess that Miranda is knowingly carrying material the release of which would endanger people's lives."

The document continues: "Additionally the disclosure, or threat of disclosure, is designed to influence a government and is made for the purpose of

promoting a political or ideological cause. This therefore falls within the definition of terrorism."

This statement has the most ominous implications, since the US government has explicitly declared its right to assassinate any individual anywhere in the world whom the president deems to be engaged in "terrorism" directed against the United States or any allied power. Media pundits in the US have publicly called for the killing of Snowden and suggested that Glenn Greenwald could be targeted as well.

Greenwald condemned the British police declaration. "For all the lecturing it doles out to the world about press freedoms, the UK offers virtually none," he wrote in an e-mail to Reuters news service. "They are absolutely and explicitly equating terrorism with journalism."

In the United States, a bipartisan bill was introduced Thursday that would not only rubber-stamp the existing NSA operations against Americans, such as the collection of phone records, but would give the agency expanded authority for e-mail record collection.

The bill, co-sponsored by Democrat Diane Feinstein and Republican Saxby Chambliss, the chairman and ranking minority member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, would give legislative sanction to the decisions of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act court, which has adopted an anything-goes interpretation of a law that was originally enacted to set limits on the activities of the NSA.

Feinstein said she would do "everything I can" to prevent any interruption in the NSA collection of the phone records of Americans. The bill would explicitly authorize the collection of all "business records" maintained by telecommunications companies, terminology that courts have repeatedly interpreted to include all information collected by these companies

outside of the actual content of phone calls and e-mail messages.

Feinstein and her Republican counterpart, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers, appeared back-to-back Sunday on the CBS interview program "Face the Nation." The two adopted indistinguishable positions against any concessions to calls for "reining in" the NSA, in the wake of the Snowden exposures.

Both Feinstein and Rogers rejected suggestions that the US government respond favorably to the appeal issued by Snowden, published Sunday in the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, under the headline, "A Manifesto for the Truth."

Snowden appealed for the US government to treat him as a dissident and not a criminal, and grant him clemency. He wrote, "Citizens have to fight against the suppression of information about affairs of essential importance for the public. Those who speak the truth are not committing a crime." Rather, he argued, it was "criminal surveillance programs" by the US and other governments which threatened privacy, freedom of opinion and democratic rights.

On the ABC interview program "This Week," top White House adviser Dan Pfeiffer dismissed any possibility of clemency, saying the White House would not consider it.

Feinstein and Rogers both lauded the National Security Agency (NSA), the largest component of the US intelligence apparatus, which plays a central part in the preparations for an American police state.

Feinstein gushed, "I believe the NSA is filled with good patriotic people who want to do the right thing."

Perhaps saying more than she intended, she echoed the defense given by leading Nazis at the Nuremberg Tribunal. "They follow the orders they're given," she said. "The administration controls intelligence. The national intelligence framework is put together by the administration. It begins with the director of national intelligence, it goes to the White House, it's the president, it's the NSC, it's the cabinet and then the framework is formed."

It is no doubt true that the responsibility for police-state surveillance and other crimes by the US military-intelligence complex goes right to the top. The NSA is not a rogue agency; it is the principal instrument of American imperialism for spying on the

people of the United States and of the world.

Rogers, a former FBI agent, was even cruder in his demand for unlimited powers for the spy agency. As far as Snowden's revelations, he said, "the only investigation here is to what extent he knew about the material that he stole and who else he worked with."

Like Feinstein, he emphasized the bipartisan character of the surveillance state: "It's happened ... when the Democrats controlled the Congress, when the Republicans controlled the Congress, when a Republican controlled the White House, when a Democrat controlled the White House."

Calling for an end to the exposures of the NSA, he concluded, "We need to focus on who the bad guys are. And the bad guys, candidly, are not U.S. intelligence agencies. They're the good guys, at the end of the day."

Meanwhile, the former head of the NSA and CIA, retired General Michael Hayden, appearing on the ABC interview program "This Week," warned the German government against moves to allow Snowden to testify before a parliamentary committee.

Hayden said, "I know one German parliamentarian is suggesting that Germany give Mr. Snowden a platform from which he could reveal even more American secrets. And my view on that, that would kind of tend to moot the whole debate here about whether or not we're spying on a friend."

In other words, Hayden was suggesting that any gesture towards Snowden would cause the US government to shift Germany from the category of friend to that of enemy.

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