

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

Q Why was the United States given a heads-up by the British government on this detention?

MR. EARNEST: Again, that heads-up was provided by the British government, so you can direct that question to them.

Q Right. But was this heads-up given before he was detained or before it went public that he was detained?

MR. EARNEST: Probably wouldn't be a heads-up if they would have told us about it after they detained him.

Q So it's fair to say they told you they were going to do this when they saw that he was on a manifest?

MR. EARNEST: I think that is an accurate interpretation of what a heads-up is.

Q Is this gentleman on some sort of watch list for the United States? Can you look that up?

MR. EARNEST: You'd have to check with the TSA because they maintain the watch list. And I don't know if they'd tell you or not, but you can ask them.

Q If he's on a watch list for the U.K., would it be safe to assume then that he's been put on a watch list in the United States?

MR. EARNEST: The level of coordination between counterterrorism and law enforcement officials in the U.K. and counterterrorism and law enforcement officials in the United States is very good. But in terms of who is on different watch lists and how our actions and their actions are

coordinated is not something I'm in a position to talk about from here.

Q Did the United States government – when given the heads-up, did the United States government express any hesitancy about the U.K. doing it – about the U.K. government doing this?

MR. EARNEST: Well, again, this is the British government making a decision based on British law, on British soil, about a British law enforcement action.

Q Did the United States, when given the heads-up, just said okay?

MR. EARNEST: They gave us a heads-up, and this is something that they did not do at our direction and it's not something that we were involved with. This is a decision that they made on their own.

Q Did the United States discourage the action?

White House Deputy Spokesperson Josh Earnest wants you to know that the decision to detain Glenn Greenwald's partner David Miranda was done by the British on their own.

Q Josh, you've talked about the Mubarak detention as being a Egyptian legal matter. You've talked about Morsi's politically motivated detention. And then with regard to Mr. Greenwald's partner, you called it a "mere law enforcement action." Given that the White House has never been shy about criticizing detention policies overseas, do you have any concerns at all about the U.K.'s law enforcement actions in this case?

MR. EARNEST: Well, what I can say is I don't have a specific reaction other than to observe to you that this is a decision that was made by the British

government and not one that was made at the request or with the involvement of the United States government.

But he's not going to tell you anything about the secret conversations the US have with the British.

MR. EARNEST: To be honest with you, Steve, I don't have a way to characterize for you any of the conversations between the British government and the U.S. government on this matter other than to say that this is a decision that they made on their own and not at the request of the United States. But in terms of the kinds of classified, confidential conversations that are ongoing between the U.S. and our allies in Britain, I'm not able to characterize that for you.

Q But there are consultations on this matter taking place?

MR. EARNEST: I'm telling you I'm not able to provide any insight into those conversations at all.

Ah well, perhaps this "US security official," rather bizarrely given anonymity to pass on this British thuggish comment, offers better insight into those conversations.

One U.S. security official told Reuters that one of the main purposes of the British government's detention and questioning of Miranda was to send a message to recipients of Snowden's materials, including the Guardian, that the British government was serious about trying to shut down the leaks.

Josh Earnest may not want to admit to the close collaboration here, but American security officials sure seem privy to the message being

sent.