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## Revealed: police databank on thousands of protesters

Films and details of campaigners and journalists may breach Human Rights Act

Paul Lewis and Marc Vallée

Police are targeting thousands of political campaigners in surveillance operations and storing their details on a database for at least seven years, an investigation by the Guardian can reveal.

Photographs, names and video footage of people attending protests are routinely obtained by surveillance units and stored on an "intelligence system". The Metropolitan police, which has pioneered surveillance at demonstrations and advises other forces on the tactic, stores details of protesters on Crimint, the general database used daily by all police staff to catalogue criminal intelligence. It lists campaigners by name, allowing police to search which demonstrations or political meetings individuals have attended.

Disclosures through the Freedom of Information Act, court testimony, an interview with a senior Met officer and police surveillance footage obtained by the Guardian have established that private information about activists gathered through surveillance is being stored without the knowledge of the people monitored.

Police surveillance teams are also targeting journalists who cover demonstrations, and are believed to have monitored members of the press during at least eight protests over the last year.

The Guardian has found:

- Activists "seen on a regular basis" as well as those deemed on the "periphery" of demonstrations are included on the police databases, regardless of whether they have been convicted or arrested.
- Names, political associations and photographs of protesters from across the political spectrum - from campaigners against the third runway at Heathrow to anti-war activists - are catalogued.
- Police forces are exchanging information about protesters stored on their intelligence systems, enabling officers from different forces to search which political events an individual has attended.

Lawyers said last night they expect the Guardian's investigation to form the



Police surveillance officers at work. The footage is stored on a database for at least seven years Photograph: Jason Parkinson

basis of a legal challenge against the use of police surveillance tactics.

Liberty, the human rights group, is challenging the police surveillance tactics in a judicial review at the court of appeal. But police appear not to have disclosed to the court that they were transferring private details of campaigners to a database.

Corinna Ferguson, Liberty's legal officer, said: "A searchable database containing photographs of people who are not even suspected of criminal activity may well violate privacy rights under article 8 of the Human Rights Act. It is particularly worrying if peaceful protesters are being singled out for surveillance."

Police surveillance footage from the climate camp demonstration in Kent last August, obtained by the Guardian, reveals how journalists are monitored as well as the often clumsy nature of the surveillance.

It shows police are interested in the names, clothing, whereabouts, and personal details of protesters and journalists. Three members of an ITV news crew, a Sky News cameraman and several photographers were among members of the press monitored as they left the camp. Later in the day journalists at a protest against the Kingsnorth coal-fired power station, were followed by surveillance

officers to a McDonald's restaurant. Police filmed them as they used the restaurant's Wi-Fi connection to file their material.

Kent police have already apologised after official complaints about the incident and intrusive stop and searches of journalists covering the demonstration.

The National Union of Journalists has been assured that members of the press were not being targeted after it took concerns to the Home Office and senior police officers. The union documented at least eight protests

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## We agreed deal with Thatcher government - Scargill

Becky Gardiner

Arthur Scargill has never written about his role in the strike which convulsed Britain 25 years ago, but today he reveals in the Guardian that a negotiated settlement was actually agreed by the Thatcher government - and further argues that Neil Kinnock would have become prime minister if as Labour leader he had thrown his weight behind the miners.

Scargill insists that the National Union of Mineworkers in fact negotiated five separate settlements, four of them "sabotaged or withdrawn following the intervention of Thatcher". In a fifth instance, in the watershed month of October 1984, Scargill says he was later told by a former



'If Kinnock had backed the miners, Thatcher would have fallen and he'd have been PM'

minister in the Thatcher government that the cabinet had already agreed "to settle the strike on the union's terms" - until the pit deputies' union inexplicably abandoned its pledge to join the walkout.

Scargill has for weeks been pressed to comment on the year-long coal miners strike which shook Britain. For the past few days his home near Barnsley has been staked out by journalists, and his family and friends have been doorstepped to get them to talk about the man that former Tory cabinet minister Norman Tebbit yesterday said had declared "war on democracy". The Daily Express claimed Scargill was a "recluse" who refused to discuss the dispute.

But today the leftwing former miner, still honorary president of the NUM, has

for the first time written his own account of the strike he led against the Thatcher government in an exclusive article for the Guardian. In it Scargill rejects claims that he refused to hold a national ballot, defends his decision to concentrate mass picketing on the Orgreave coking plant in Yorkshire where the strike's most violent confrontation took place in June 1984, and accuses his critics, including Kinnock, of criticising his tactics to "cover up their own guilt" over failing to give the miners the support that would have "changed the political direction of the nation".

The 1984-5 strike, called in an attempt to halt pit closures and the run-

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