

## Surveillance

## Caught on film and stored on database

Police footage obtained by the Guardian has revealed the crude monitoring methods deployed across the country against protesters, thousands of whom have their personal details stored on criminal intelligence systems for up to seven years

Paul Lewis and Marc Vallée

**NYOKSP** At 11:37am on August  
**ALBTR** 8 last year, two police  
**EDATAF** surveillance officers  
**OPSYTX** sat in a patrol car in  
**RDENER** Kent and switched on their Sony digital video camera.

When the tape started to roll, they stated they were "evidence gatherer" surveillance officers and explained the purpose of the operation. A lead surveillance officer and his assistant, they were on duty to help police the Climate Camp demonstration, an environmental protest against the nearby Kingsnorth coal-fired power station.

What the pair did not know when, 20 minutes later, they stood on a grass verge at the entrance to the camp and started work, was that their surveillance footage would be obtained by the Guardian. It would provide evidence of the crude monitoring methods used to glean information about campaigners and would prove that journalists are being targeted by police surveillance units.

This was no rogue operation. An investigation by the Guardian has established that surveillance footage such as that shot

by the Kent officers is routinely uploaded onto a police database. In fact it seems that thousands of activists - from campaigners against Heathrow's third runway to anti-racism marchers - have their personal details stored on criminal intelligence systems for as long as seven years.

The Metropolitan police's Forward Intelligence Teams (FITs) and Evidence Gatherers (EGs) have over the last decade pioneered the controversial use of "overt surveillance", a technique now widely used by forces across the country at political demonstrations. It is designed to "record identifiable details" of protesters who may commit crime or anti-social behaviour and gather intelligence that could help police a public order event.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo) recently commissioned the National Police Improvements Agency (NPIA) to establish a "national standard" for overt surveillance, to which all forces in England and Wales have signed up.

Surveillance officers receive briefings before protests about key targets and are handed "spotter cards" containing the images of individuals police want to monitor.

The operations are normally carried out by regular police officers who have received additional training in surveillance. The human rights watchdog Liberty - which did not know about the database - is challenging police surveillance tactics in a judicial review at the court of appeal.

#### Privacy rights

However police appear not to have disclosed to the court they were transferring the private details of campaigners to a database. Lawyers believe the transfer makes it more likely the technique is in violation of privacy rights under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act.

"The time is now 11.57 hours," said the lead officer. "We're up at point three, the front entrance to the climate camp site."

The camera panned to show officers from West Yorkshire police, among thousands drafted into Kent from across the country in the £5.9m policing operation, searching activists as they entered the camp.

Kent police, which was in command of the operation, had activated an order under section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, authorising officers to search anyone in the area for dangerous weapons. The film shows how police zoomed in on virtually any protesters in the area, noting down items of clothing or other distinctive features. They also appeared to have knowledge of some activists' past political activity, on one occasion noting that a protester had "spent a lot of time" at a different part of the camp. Others seemed to have been targeted for standing beside, or near, prominent environmental campaigners.

But whenever journalists were in the area, the lens was almost exclusively pointed at them. In total 10 journalists were monitored emerging from the camp, where they had been interviewing protesters.



'Just think they can bloody wander in and out of the field. It's wrong, I think'

The officers zoomed in to pick out the logo on the back of a Sky News cameraman's jacket, monitored several photographers and followed an ITV Meridian news crew, including the anchor of the evening show, Ian Axton.

"A lot of press officers aren't there. Just think they can bloody wander in and out of the field. It's wrong, I think," the lead officer remarked when the ITV crew was in shot. "I trust them less than the protesters."

Later, referring to ITV cameraman Pete Lloyd Williams, he said: "The time is now 13:19 hours. Same date. Same location. Press cameraman here. Being awkward a little. Being asked to stand back by officers on at least two occasions and then asked to stand by the inspector. Or asked by the inspector to stand out of the road. Coming out with witty comments."

After spotting a videographer and photographer across the road, the assistant officer said: "Inquisitive, ain't they - these two, by the pole."

The lead added: "He don't like having his photograph taken - that one there with the bald head."

The surveillance lens returned to the ITV crew after the pair overheard a discussion between an officer and Lloyd Williams.

"He's giving him a ticket if you want to record any of that? As to whether or not he wants to give his details," the assistant officer said.

The officers walked closer, to within earshot. "Did he give details?" asked the assistant officer. "Don't know if he did or not," replied the lead. "Think he just said he was from ITV Meridian. Don't know if he gave personal details." This was not a one-off event; the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) has documented eight occasions over the last year when, it says, police surveillance officers photographed and filmed journalists.

In May the general secretary of the NUJ,



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