

# Britain: Police to be investigated after wrongful arrest of Cardiff man

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4 May 2009

An investigation is to be conducted into the arrest of a jazz musician, Victor Frederick, in Cardiff, Wales, on February 17. The arrest was carried out by the police as a military-style operation.

Frederick, who is aged 63, was arrested by armed police outside his house in the Riverside district of the city. He was returning home at about 9:30 p.m. after having practiced with his band.

Police had blocked off local streets prior to the arrest. Utilising a helicopter and armed with machine guns, police strip-searched Frederick in the middle of the street with infra-red sights trained on him.

The police said that he was arrested on suspicion of “possessing materials likely to be used for making explosives”. Frederick was held for 24 hours in a police station before being released without charge.

As well as subjecting Frederick to the ordeal, the police also threatened to shoot his partner, Andrea Heath. Both her and their daughter were in the family home at the time. According to a press report, during the arrest the police trained their infra-red sights on Andrea Heath and shouted, “Stay where you are or you will be shot”.

Recalling the incident last month, Frederick said, “I was stopped by armed police officers as I was very close to my home. They had automatic weapons and were very jumpy. I was worried they were going to shoot. I didn’t know what was happening—they just grabbed me and strip-searched me in the street. They told me I was being arrested on suspicion of making explosives and took me off to Rumney Police Station, where they held me.

“Later, when I was being questioned, I was told they had found nothing and they would be letting me go”.

He added, “This was a really terrifying experience. I

can only think that the police received a malicious call suggesting there was some kind of a bomb factory in the recording studio I use with my band, the Cougars”.

Andrea said of the events, “I heard a key in the front door of our home and thought it was Victor returning. But he didn’t come in. I then heard some scuffling sound and shouting. When I opened the door there were four police officers armed with machine guns which had infra-red sights. The whole street had been cordoned off. I could see Victor in his underpants outside with police training guns on him. Other officers trained guns on me. I was told I would be shot if I moved. It was absolutely terrifying.

“Our 12-year-old daughter was upstairs. She told me later that she had a camera and thought about taking pictures of the police activity and commotion. It’s awful to think what might have happened if the police had seen a camera flash from the upstairs window and assumed it was a gun”.

Heath is currently being treated for post-traumatic stress and it has been reported that their daughter is also finding the aftermath of the ordeal very difficult to cope with.

The police have said they arrested Frederick as a “precaution to ensure the safety of the public”.

Aside from this most cursory of statements, police have refused to comment further on exactly why they arrested Frederick with such a show of force and on what information this was based.

It is clear that the arrest had been planned for some time and that Frederick was the victim of ongoing police surveillance.

Last month Frederick recollected how, “I’d had a sense that I was under surveillance 3 days before I was arrested. On the Saturday I drove up to Radyr (in North Cardiff) to do a workshop, and I was aware of a car

following me.

“Then there was a strange incident where on the Sunday one of the other guys who uses the [recording] studio thought there had been a break-in, but found a note from the police saying they had been in the building”.

Two days prior to his arrest, the recording studio where Frederick worked at in the Grangetown district was raided by the police. Among the items they seized were a broken circuit board, a video tape about the boxer Muhammad Ali, and a non-alcoholic Caribbean drink.

In an apparent attempt to portray having such a drink as being in some way suspicious, the police originally claimed that what they had found was an “ethnic” container holding a “colourless, odourless liquid found in the fridge”.

The drink taken by the police is a popular West Indian drink called Mauby, which is sold in many shops in Cardiff and is widely available in supermarkets.

The police described the video as being “video tape relating to Pakistan”. Frederick said after his arrest that the only video tape in the studio was one about Muhammad Ali. No explanation has been given as to why owning a video tape “relating to Pakistan” is now deemed by the police to endanger “the safety of the public”.

Frederick and his partner have demanded a full explanation of his arrest and the circumstances leading to it. He said, “This must have been ordered from very high up in the force, and we think South Wales Police should give a full explanation about why they decided it was necessary to mount an operation of this scale”.

It wasn't until the family held a press conference on March 25 in which they stated that they had not received an apology or an explanation for the raid, that the police issued an “unreserved apology” to Frederick and his family. The police made their apology two days later on March 27, more than 5 weeks after the arrest had occurred.

On April 9, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) announced that it was to hold an inquiry into the arrest of Frederick. In its statement the IPCC said it “is to manage the investigation into the issues raised by Victor Frederick’s Member of Parliament Kevin Brennan and Assembly Member

Leanne Wood about the police operation on 17 March 2009”.

The operation against Frederick is the latest in a series of high profile and military style raids that have been carried out by armed police officers.

In the last months, dozens of arrests have been made by the police in Plymouth, Manchester and Nottingham. In Nottingham, the police arrested 114 environmental protesters in the middle of the night, solely on the basis that they may have been planning a protest.

The arrest of Frederick has disturbing parallels to that of Jean Charles de Menezes, the Brazilian man who was executed by police officers inside Stockwell Tube station in London in July 2005. As with Frederick, who was followed to his home, de Menezes had been followed by the police for some distance to where he was killed.



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