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AP Shocked by Cameraman's Further Detainment for 'Security' Reasons

AP Associated Press

Published: July 09, 2008 10:22 AM ET

BAGHDAD, Iraq An Associated Press television cameraman who was detained by U.S. and Iraqi forces in early June was ordered held for at least six more months Tuesday for "imperative reasons of security," the U.S. military said.

The decision came as a surprise to the AP, which had earlier been led to believe that the cameraman, Ahmed Nouri Raziak, was likely to be released because of lack of any evidence against him.

Raziak, 38, who has worked for AP Television News since 2003, was detained by U.S. and Iraqi soldiers at his home in Tikrit on June 4. He was transferred last month to the U.S. military's detention facility at Camp Cropper near Baghdad International Airport.

The AP has been in regular contact with U.S. military officials about his case. In notifying the AP that Raziak would continue to be held, the military provided no details about any allegations against him.

Raziak's arrest occurred seven weeks after the release of AP photographer Bilal Hussein, who was held without charge for two years and four days by the U.S. military. Hussein was freed shortly after receiving amnesty from two Iraqi judicial panels.

"We are shocked that another AP journalist is to be held for at least six months without charges, and are awaiting information that could shed light on this strange decision," said John Daniszewski, AP Managing Editor for International News.

The U.S. military had told the AP on June 30 that the Central Criminal Court of Iraq had decided not to prosecute Raziak because "it did not have sufficient evidence" and that his case would be examined soon by the Combined Review and Release Board, a joint U.S.-Iraqi body that has the authority to recommend release.

On Tuesday, however, the U.S. military's Task Force 134, which operates coalition detention facilities, informed the AP that the board had voted for "continued internment based on imperative reasons of security."

Lt. Col. Kenneth Plowman, spokesman for the task force, said the next review would be in six months.

The arrest of Raziak was the latest in a series of arrests of journalists by U.S. forces in Iraq in recent years.

Another locally prominent journalist in Tikrit, Ahmed al-Majun, was arrested on June 23 but was released without charge four days later. Al-Majun, a free-lancer who is also the president of the local branch of the Iraq Journalists Union, said he was interrogated during his confinement but refused to

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say more, according to the Journalistic Freedom Observatory.

Raziak had been detained once before, in August 2004, when he was stopped at a checkpoint near Tikrit. He was held for two months at that time and then released without charge.

Three AP employees have been detained in Iraq by U.S. or Iraqi forces since the April 16 release of Hussein. The other two were released without charge.

U.S. authorities freed Hussein, who had been arrested in Ramadi in 2006, after two Iraqi panels reviewed his case and ordered his release under an amnesty law enacted this year to encourage reconciliation among the country's ethnic and religious groups.

At the time of his release, U.S. officials said Hussein was no longer considered a security threat.

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