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INDEPENDENCE AND PLURALISM NEWS

USA: Congress must rein in Trump's war on press freedom after FBI raid on journalist



ORGANISATION:  RSF_en

Update on January 22, 2026: A federal judge has ruled that the government may not examine Natanson's devices until the court gives

it express authorization to do so. It is unclear if officials have already reviewed the data in the week they had access to her laptops, phone, and Garmin watch, potentially exposing hundreds of the journalist's sensitive and confidential sources.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is raising the alarm after the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) raided the home of Washington Post journalist Hannah Natanson and confiscated her personal and professional laptops, phone, and smart watch. This seizure is likely illegal and puts Natanson and her hundreds of sources at risk. This episode signals a new chapter in the Trump administration's war on press freedom. The US Congress should demand answers, including calling hearings to investigate the matter.

On January 14, the FBI served Natanson a [warrant](#) connected to its investigation of a federal contractor who is alleged to have leaked classified information. However, the government's [complaint](#) against the contractor makes no mention of secret documents being shared with a reporter, and the government has [admitted](#) that Natanson is not under investigation. The seizure of a journalist's devices in connection with a warrant against a third party is prohibited by the [Privacy Protection Act](#). The Supreme Court has long [reaffirmed](#) the First Amendment right of journalists to publish leaked classified information.

However, the law cannot protect the press when the executive branch is willing to flout it. Congress has an obligation to rein in these abuses and exercise its constitutionally mandated oversight. The House and Senate Judiciary Committees should hold hearings and demand the testimony of Attorney General Pam Bondi and FBI Director Kash Patel.

This disturbing escalation in the Trump administration's hostility towards the media came the same day that RSF published a comprehensive [timeline](#) of the US President's year-long war on the press since returning to the White House in 2025.

RSF and 30 other press freedom and free speech groups have published a [joint statement](#) condemning the government's invasion of Natanson's privacy.

"The FBI's search and seizure of a journalist's personal and professional devices is seriously dangerous and underscores why we need to enact greater federal protections for both journalists and their sources. A government that is openly hostile to the media is now in possession of sensitive communications between a reporter and her sources, all of whom are now at significant risk. It's time for Congress to step up and rein in an out-of-control judiciary. "

Clayton Weimers

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THE AMERICAS

United States

57 / 180
Score : 65.487

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