Beat: News

Senior aide to UK PM Cameron quits after child porn arrest

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USPA News - Patrick Rock, a senior aide to British Prime Minister David Cameron, resigned last month after being arrested on child pornography charges, the government confirmed on Tuesday, sparking criticism over the time it took for the case to be made public. The prime minister`s office said it was first made aware of possible child pornography offenses involving Rock, 62, on the evening of February 12. "Patrick Rock was arrested at his home in the early hours of February 13th, a few hours after Downing Street had reported the matter," a Downing Street spokesman said.

The arrest was made by the National Crime Agency`s Child Exploitation and Online Protection Center (CEOP), but details of the allegations were not immediately released. After last month`s arrest, the government arranged for officers to come into Downing Street to access any systems and offices they considered relevant to their investigation. "This is an on-going investigation so it would not be appropriate to comment further, but the Prime Minister believes that child abuse imagery is abhorrent and that anyone involved with it should be properly dealt with under the law," the Downing Street spokesman added. Asked about the arrest and commenting on criticism over the time it took for the case to be made public, Cameron said he believed his office had handled the issue "in an absolutely correct way." He said he was informed about the child pornography investigation "pretty much as soon as it was discovered." "First of all, I have to be careful about what I say about this issue because obviously a criminal investigation is underway," Cameron said, responding to a reporter`s question at a press event. "Obviously, when I heard these allegations, I was profoundly shocked and I remain profoundly shocked today." The prime minister added: "In terms of the release of this information, I don`t think it would be right to preemptively brief out a criminal investigation and that`s why we did not do that but as soon as questions were asked, as questions would inevitably be asked, we have given very full and straightforward answers, which is absolutely the right way to handle this." But Labour Member of Parliament John Mann said the delay was unacceptable. "This is a man in the heart of 10 Downing Street, in the heart of government, couldn`t be closer to power, he is part of power, and the fact that they`ve withheld that information for three weeks is all in all unacceptable," he told ITV News. Patrick Rock was one of nearly two dozen Special Advisors to the Prime Minster, receiving a salary of approximately 6,500 British pounds ($10,838) per month, according to a transparency document released by the government in October. He had also been working with other officials on policies to rid the internet of child pornography.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:
United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local

(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com