

Smearing Assange: The US Government's Plan to Silence Its Critics and Criminalize Journalism

By Pepe Escobar, 23 April 2019

The Made-by FBI [indictment](#) of Julian Assange does look like a dead man walking. No evidence. No documents. No surefire testimony. Just a crossfire of conditionals.

But never underestimate the legalese contortionism of US government (USG) functionaries. As much as Assange may not be characterized as a journalist and publisher, the thrust of the affidavit is to accuse him of conspiring to commit espionage.

In fact the charge is not even that Assange hacked a USG computer and obtained classified information; it's that he may have discussed it with Chelsea Manning and may have had the intention to go for a hack. Orwellian-style thought crime charges don't get any better than that. Now the only thing missing is an AI software to detect them.

Assange legal adviser Geoffrey Robertson – who also happens to represent another stellar political prisoner, Brazil's Lula – [cut straight to the chase](#) (at 19:22 minutes); “The justice he is facing is justice, or injustice, in America... I would hope the British judges would have enough belief in freedom of information to throw out the extradition request.”

That's far from a done deal. Thus, the inevitable consequence; Assange's legal team is getting ready to prove, no holds barred, in a British court, that this USG indictment for conspiracy to commit computer hacking is just an hors d'oeuvre for subsequent espionage charges, in case Assange is extradited to US soil.

All about Vault 7

John Pilger, among few others, has already [stressed](#) how a plan to destroy WikiLeaks and Julian Assange was laid out as far back as 2008 – at the tail end of the Cheney regime – concocted by the Pentagon's shady Cyber Counter-Intelligence Assessments Branch.

It was all about criminalizing WikiLeaks and personally smearing Assange, using “shock troops...enlisted in the media — those who are meant to keep the record straight and tell us the truth.”

This plan remains more than active – considering how Assange's arrest has been covered by the bulk of US/UK mainstream media.

By 2012, already in the Obama era, WikiLeaks detailed the astonishing “scale of the US Grand Jury Investigation” of itself. The USG always denied such a grand jury existed.

“The US Government has stood up and coordinated a joint interagency criminal investigation of Wikileaks comprised of a partnership between the Department of Defense (DOD) including: CENTCOM; SOUTHCOM; the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA); Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA); Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA); US Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) for USFI (US Forces Iraq) and 1st Armored Division (AD); US Army Computer Crimes Investigative Unit (CCIU); 2nd Army (US Army Cyber Command); Within that or in addition, three military intelligence investigations were conducted.

Department of Justice (DOJ) Grand Jury and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of State (DOS) and Diplomatic Security Service (DSS). In addition, Wikileaks has been investigated by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), Office of the National CounterIntelligence Executive (ONCIX), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); the House Oversight Committee; the National Security Staff Interagency Committee, and the PIAB (President's Intelligence Advisory Board).”

But it was only in 2017, in the Trump era, that the Deep State went totally ballistic; that’s when WikiLeaks published the [Vault 7](#) files – detailing the CIA’s vast hacking/cyber espionage repertoire.

This was the CIA as a Naked Emperor like never before – including the dodgy overseeing ops of the Center for Cyber Intelligence, an ultra-secret NSA counterpart.

WikiLeaks got Vault 7 in early 2017. At the time WikiLeaks had already published the DNC files – which the unimpeachable Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) systematically proved was a leak, not a hack.

The monolithic narrative by the Deep State faction aligned with the Clinton machine was that “the Russians” hacked the DNC servers. Assange was always adamant; that was not the work of a state actor – and he could prove it technically.

There was some movement towards a deal, brokered by one of Assange’s lawyers; WikiLeaks would not publish the most damning Vault 7 information in exchange for Assange’s safe passage to be interviewed by the US Department of Justice (DoJ).

The DoJ wanted a deal – and they did make an offer to WikiLeaks. But then FBI director James Comey killed it. The question is why.

It’s a leak, not a hack

Some theoretically sound [reconstructions](#) of Comey’s move are available. But the key fact is Comey already knew – via his close connections to the top of the DNC – that this was not a hack; it was a leak.

Ambassador Craig Murray has stressed, over and over again (see [here](#)) how the DNC/Podesta files published by WikiLeaks came from two different US sources; one from within the DNC and the other from within US intel.

There was nothing for Comey to “investigate”. Or there would have, if Comey had ordered the FBI to examine the DNC servers. So why talk to Julian Assange?

The release by WikiLeaks in April 2017 of the malware mechanisms inbuilt in “Grasshopper” and the “Marble Framework” were indeed a bombshell. This is how the CIA inserts foreign language strings in source code to disguise them as originating from Russia, from Iran, or from China. The inestimable Ray McGovern, a VIPS member, stressed how Marble Framework “destroys this story about Russian hacking.”

No wonder then CIA director Mike Pompeo accused WikiLeaks of being a “non-state hostile intelligence agency”, usually manipulated by Russia.

Joshua Schulte, the alleged [leaker](#) of Vault 7, has not faced a US court yet. There's no question he will be offered a deal by the USG if he agrees to testify against Julian Assange.

It's a long and winding road, to be traversed in at least two years, if Julian Assange is ever to be extradited to the US. Two things for the moment are already crystal clear. The USG is obsessed to shut down WikiLeaks once and for all. And because of that, Julian Assange will never get a fair trial in the "so-called 'Espionage Court'" of the Eastern District of Virginia, as [detailed](#) by former CIA counterterrorism officer and whistle-blower John Kiriakou.

Meanwhile, the non-stop demonization of Julian Assange will proceed unabated, faithful to guidelines established over a decade ago. Assange is even accused of being a US intel op, and WikiLeaks a splinter Deep State deep cover op.

Maybe President Trump will manoeuvre the hegemonic Deep State into having Assange testify against the corruption of the DNC; or maybe Trump caved in completely to "hostile intelligence agency" Pompeo and his CIA gang baying for blood. It's all ultra-high-stakes shadow play – and the show has not even begun.