

# US military, intelligence agencies press attack against Wikileaks

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3 August 2010

A volunteer for Wikileaks, the Internet-based organization that has exposed US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, says he was detained at Newark airport last Thursday and questioned by agents of Army intelligence and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a division of the Department of Homeland Security.

Jacob Appelbaum, a 27-year-old software developer from the Seattle area, said he was taken aside by ICE agents as he returned through Newark, New Jersey from an overseas trip. He was questioned for three hours about his relations with Wikileaks and its founder, Julian Assange, and his opinions on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. His laptop computer and three cell phones were seized, although the laptop was later returned, presumably after its contents were copied.

Appelbaum told the press that the ICE agents refused to allow him access to a lawyer during the interrogation, and threatened a similar detention for questioning any time he travels abroad, which he does regularly for his job developing software to improve online privacy.

The developer spoke in place of Assange at a Las Vegas information technology conference last month, after Assange decided that a trip to the United States might be dangerous. "It seems the only reason they're bothering me is that Julian is beyond their reach," Appelbaum told the *New York Times*.

The British newspaper the *Independent* reported FBI agents at a Las Vegas conference questioned Appelbaum again Saturday, where he was giving a talk "on how to subvert Chinese government Internet surveillance." Appelbaum refused to talk to them.

In comments to the newspaper, Appelbaum expressed contempt for the hypocritical criticism of Wikileaks by US Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Admiral

Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who accused Wikileaks of having "blood on its hands" because Afghan spies and informants for the US military might be endangered. "When you have been waging war for 10 years, who are you to say that?" he asked.

Appelbaum reiterated his support for the actions of Wikileaks in exposing information that governments around the world want suppressed. "All governments are on a continuum of tyranny," he told the *Independent*. "In the US, a cop with a gun can commit the most heinous crime and be given the benefit of the doubt," he said, "In the US, we don't have censorship but we do have collaborating news organizations."

The harassment of Appelbaum took place amid a growing crackdown on supporters of Wikileaks, which last week released 92,000 secret military files detailing thousands of unlawful killings by US forces in Afghanistan.

The military has already jailed Private First Class Bradley Manning, an Army intelligence analyst, charging him with being the source of an earlier Wikileaks exposure of US atrocities in Iraq. Manning was transferred July 28 from a military facility in Kuwait to a prison on the Quantico, Virginia Marine Corps base, where he is being held in solitary confinement. Pentagon spokesmen have suggested that he is their prime suspect in the leak of the Afghanistan documents as well.

FBI investigators have begun interrogating students at MIT and Boston University, and others in the Boston area, on their possible ties to Manning. The US media has given heavy coverage to unsupported allegations about a Boston connection to the leaks, coming from unnamed government sources and from the former

computer hacker who ratted out Manning to military intelligence, Adrian Lamo.

At least five men in the Boston area are targets, according to reports on CNN, and in the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*. Several may have exchanged emails with Manning about computer security issues, but they reportedly denied any connection to Wikileaks and none of their names were made public.

The *Washington Post* reported that US government investigators offered cash to a Boston area computer expert to infiltrate Wikileaks, but he turned them down.

The British press has published far more detail about Private Manning. He was born in Oklahoma, but his mother Susan is British. After a divorce, she moved back to Britain in 2001, when Manning was 13, and he completed his education there, before returning the United States in 2006. He joined the army in October 2007.

The *Mail on Sunday* reported that FBI agents had visited Susan Manning at her home in Wales.

British press accounts have included excerpts of Facebook postings in which Bradley Manning criticized the US Army, military intelligence, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He identified himself as gay, and was harshly critical of the treatment of gays in the military. He also is an avowed atheist who had his military dog tag embossed with “Humanist” as his religion.



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