

Julian Assange reportedly asked to give secret interview to US Senate Intelligence Committee

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On its Twitter account, WikiLeaks yesterday reported that its founder Julian Assange was “considering” a request by the US Senate Intelligence Committee to provide its staff with a “closed interview” about alleged Russian interference in the 2016 US elections.

The Twitter post published a copy of the purported letter of invitation, dated August 1. But there was no immediate confirmation from the committee or the letter’s two signatories, committee Chairman Richard Burr, a Republican, and Vice Chairman Mark Warner, a Democrat.

The letter, as posted, states that the committee is conducting a “bipartisan inquiry” into the allegations against Russia and calls on Assange to “make yourself available for a closed interview with bipartisan committee staff at a mutually agreeable time and location.”

The exact form such an interview would take, and by whom it would be conducted, remains unclear. However, the letter specifies that it would be “closed”—that is, kept from public scrutiny—not any type of public testimony.

The Twitter post added: “WikiLeaks’ legal team say they are ‘considering the offer but the conditions must conform to a high ethical standard.’”

The post reported that the letter was delivered to Assange via Ecuador’s embassy in London, where he was granted political asylum in 2012 to protect him from extradition to the US to face concocted espionage-related charges that could carry the death penalty.

Since then, the WikiLeaks editor has been trapped, in increasingly intolerable conditions, in a tiny room inside the embassy. That is because of the insistence of the British authorities that they will arrest him as soon

as he steps outside the building. Although he would be detained ostensibly for breaching bail, he could be imprisoned for months, pending extradition to the US.

An accompanying WikiLeaks Twitter post yesterday said it was “of note” that a month before the Senate committee letter arrived, ten Democratic senators sent a petition to US Vice President Mike Pence demanding that he press the Ecuadorian president, Lenin Moreno, to revoke Assange’s asylum. Those signatories included Warner, who is now asking Assange to assist the committee’s inquiry.

The petition said the prominent Democratic senators were “extremely concerned” that Ecuador still provided asylum to Assange. It was “imperative” that Pence object to Ecuador’s asylum for Assange at a time when WikiLeaks “continues its efforts to undermine democratic processes globally.”

Pence visited Ecuador shortly after the petition and met with Moreno to pursue that demand as part of the price for Washington to fully restore economic and military relations with Ecuador.

Since then, Moreno has issued repeated public threats to terminate the asylum, describing Assange falsely as a “hacker” and branding him a “problem” that he inherited from his left-posturing predecessor Rafael Correa.

Moreno made a further such statement yesterday, as the news of the US committee’s invitation emerged. In an interview with national TV channel NTN24, he said Ecuadorian authorities are currently in talks with Assange’s lawyers to work out an agreement that would terminate Assange’s political asylum “in line with the norms of international law.”

“If we come to an agreement, we’ll be happy to ask

Mr. Assange to leave the embassy and surrender himself to legal investigation,” Moreno said.

In other words, despite the token reference to international law, Moreno’s government is preparing to hand Assange over to the British authorities, who are working in close collaboration with their US counterparts.

In recent statements, Moreno has said that the only condition for a deal would be a worthless pledge by the British and US agencies that Assange’s life would not be threatened, that is, that he would not be assassinated or face execution.

Any such agreement would violate the very principle of political asylum and therefore international law, not to speak of Assange’s fundamental legal and democratic rights. Both a UN human rights committee and a Latin American human rights tribunal have ruled that Assange’s treatment breaches the law of asylum.

To this day, the WikiLeaks founder has not been charged with a single crime in any country. Instead, the Trump administration, together with the US Democrats, is intent on silencing him and WikiLeaks for good because of the hundreds of thousands of top-secret files that WikiLeaks has published from whistleblowers exposing the atrocities, anti-democratic political interventions, mass surveillance and war plans of the US and its allies.

These documents have provided the people of the world with a revealing picture of the operations of the US military machine and “deep state” agencies, such as the CIA and National Security Agency, to subvert or overturn democratic process globally.

In the run-up to the 2016 US presidential election, WikiLeaks performed another invaluable public service. It published documents apparently leaked from Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton’s campaign.

The documents proved that Clinton’s campaign, backed by the Democratic National Committee, was underhandedly sabotaging the campaign by her rival Bernie Sanders, who had won millions of votes by presenting himself as a socialist, and that Clinton gave speeches on Wall Street assuring the financial elite that she would protect their interests, regardless of what she said on the campaign trail.

Without providing any verifiable evidence, US intelligence chiefs and the Democrats have blamed Russia for the alleged theft of the documents, which

they say was part of a deliberate attempt to hurt Clinton’s chances. They claim WikiLeaks knowingly acted in concert with Russian intelligence, despite repeated denials by WikiLeaks, whose system for receiving leaked information is designed to ensure that the sources remain anonymous, unknown even to WikiLeaks itself.

The *World Socialist Web Site*, which is fighting to develop the widest possible political campaign throughout the working class to demand Assange’s freedom, strongly urges him not to take part in any such closed-door Senate committee “interview.”

Any in-camera proceedings will inevitably be exploited to further and legitimise the hysterical anti-Russian campaign now being waged by the US military-intelligence, media and political establishment without a shred of evidence.

It would be legitimate to testify before a congressional committee only if the proceedings were public, both in order to protect Assange’s interests and advance the broader interests of defending democratic rights.

In our opinion, Assange should also insist that American authorities clarify his legal position in the United States and make public the secretive plans to extradite and charge him.



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