

US preparing more charges against Julian Assange

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On Wednesday, CNN reported US federal prosecutors confirmed there is an “ongoing criminal investigation” of Julian Assange, the 47-year-old founder of WikiLeaks. Prosecutors also indicated “affiliates” of Assange are under investigation, this according to another newly unsealed document. According to the CNN report, at least one document related to this investigation has been withheld from the public due to “ongoing activity.”

The revelation, CNN reported, “confirms CNN and other news outlets’ reporting in recent days that WikiLeaks is connected to at least one probe that could result in more criminal charges.”

The report confirms the warnings made by the WSWS and others that the charges related to computer hacking leveled against Assange are merely a pretext for his extradition to the United States, after which additional charges would be brought against him.

On April 11, Assange was expelled from the Ecuadorian embassy in London and arrested by British officials on the public charge of conspiracy to bypass a password. That charge dated back to events in the 2011 WikiLeaks’ publication of the Iraq and Afghanistan War Logs. Chelsea Manning turned over more than half a million documents exposing US war crimes and corruption to WikiLeaks for publication.

The expulsion and arrest of Assange has been accompanied by an unrestrained campaign of media vilification aimed at transforming Assange into a non-person, undeserving of democratic rights.

But since Assange has been imprisoned in the maximum-security Belmarsh prison, public comments made by leading Democrats and US media officials indicate that charge was not the primary aim of the US investigation.

Democratic Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer

tweeted, “Now that Julian Assange has been arrested, I hope he will soon be held to account for his meddling in our elections on behalf of Putin and the Russian government.” Democratic chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Eliot Engel tweeted that Assange “time after time compromised the national security of the United States and our allies by publicly releasing classified government documents and confidential materials related to our 2016 presidential election.”

US, British and Ecuadorian governments have claimed Assange’s extradition is proper because the US is indicting on a single charge: attempting to help Chelsea Manning bypass a password. But this has now been revealed to be only the pretext. The real reason the US wants custody of the whistleblower was stated by Schumer and Engel.

On April 15, the WSWS wrote that these statements demonstrate the extradition proceedings are being conducted under false pretenses: “The single public charge is a cover. The government is planning to interrogate Assange, compel him to provide testimony and further prosecute him for exposing US war crimes.” (“Stop the extraordinary rendition of Julian Assange!”)

In December 2017, US prosecutors told a federal judge they wanted to keep secret the charges Assange might face because learning of them might have caused him to flee the Ecuadorian embassy. According to CNN, the recently unsealed documents indicate that a grand jury in Virginia indicted Assange in 2018 and prosecutors again demanded the charges be kept secret for the same reason, and added their worries about evidence tampering and witness intimidation.

Cassandra Fairbanks, of the right-wing outlet the *Gateway Pundit*, visited Assange more than once

during his imprisonment in the London embassy offices. She confirmed her visits with Assange have been the subject of the recent investigation.

She told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “I was informed on Monday that there is a secret grand jury against Julian and two witnesses were questioned about me meeting with him, though they have not subpoenaed or questioned me directly.

“The witnesses told me that they were both asked, separately, if they knew any US persons who had met with Assange. When they didn’t really answer the question, they were asked specifically about me and also a list of other people who have visited Assange.”

Since Assange’s arrest, CIA whistleblower John Kiriakou, who was prosecuted by the Obama administration in 2012 for exposing the torture of detainees, has taken to social media to emphasize that Assange has no chance of a fair trial in the US. “A fair trial in the Eastern District of Virginia, under Judge Leonie Brinkema, is utterly impossible. They don’t call EDVA the ‘Espionage Court’ for nothing,” he wrote.



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