

Mueller probe accessed the Google account of Assange supporter Somerset Bean

Kevin Reed
5 December 2019

Graphic designer and political activist Somerset Bean reported on Monday that information related to his Google account was provided to the US government under a federal court order more than one year ago.

Bean posted a screenshot on his Twitter feed of a message from Google and wrote, “Finally received my badge of honour with notice that Google have handed over ‘information related to [my] Google account’ to the US DoJ. You think Assange case is just about Assange? Think again. #FreeAssange #DontExtraditeAssange.”

The message from Google’s Legal Investigations Support said, “A court order previously prohibited Google from notifying you of the legal process. We are now permitted to disclose the receipt of the legal process to you.”

The boilerplate message also provided a case number and explained that Google does not provide legal advice or “discuss the substance of the legal process” and suggested “if you have other questions regarding this matter, you may wish to contact an attorney.”

A subsequent search of the DOJ database revealed that Bean’s case pertained to the Mueller investigation of purported Russian meddling in the 2016 US elections and was one of the 500 search and seizure warrants issued by the Special Counsel during the probe that spanned nearly two years.

Although details of the order compelling Google to turn over Bean’s account information remain sealed, it is known that the warrant was issued on September 27, 2018. It is also not clear what is meant precisely by “information related” to Bean’s Google account that was turned over to the US government.

Was the content of his email messages or other account information accessed and reviewed by the Mueller probe? Was Bean’s email or other Google

account metadata (such as dates, times, email addresses, subject lines, etc.) accessed and reviewed? Was the entire content of Bean’s Google account searched for keywords and/or phrases?

These are important questions. Access to a Google account involves much more than access to a user’s Google email (Gmail) inbox, deleted, saved and sent items folders. Once a user has created a Google account and is logged into this account from a web browser, a massive amount of data is collected perpetually, depending on user activity settings.

By default, once a user logs into Google, the system’s activity tracking function records every subject searched, every web page visited, every geographic location traveled to, every YouTube video searched for and watched and every purchase ever made from the user’s computer or mobile device web browser. Even with a court order, it is obvious that granting the government open-ended and unlimited access to this information is a violation of fundamental democratic rights.

One of the most despicable falsifications circulated by the US intelligence establishment, the Democratic Party and the corporate media in the aftermath of the Mueller probe has been the unsubstantiated claim that WikiLeaks and Julian Assange collaborated with the Russian government of Vladimir Putin to release the contents of the hacked email servers of the Democratic Party.

The exposure by Somerset Bean of the warrant to gain access to his Google account by the US Justice Department reveals two things: first, that the gathering of “evidence” to prosecute Assange was central to the “Russian meddling” narrative of US intelligence and law enforcement and, second, that the Mueller probe went to great lengths to gather any and all information

on Assange and his supporters and associates.

Somerset Bean is an Australian citizen residing in Britain. He has been a defender of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange and freedom of the press for nearly a decade. Among his activities have been the design of posters, leaflets, informational graphics, petitions, placards, letters, banners, stickers, buttons and bumper stickers demanding the freedom of the WikiLeaks founder and editor.

Bean has also participated in rallies and vigils in defense of Assange and he had visited with the journalist on several occasions after he was forced to seek asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in London between August 2012 and April 2019.

When Assange was evicted from the Ecuadorian embassy and arrested by London authorities last April, Bean traveled to Australia and participated in a rally in Melbourne organized by the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) to protest the illegal treatment of the WikiLeaks publisher.

Saying he was shocked by Assange's eviction, Bean told the *World Socialist Web Site* at the time, "We must not keep quiet, for that is the end game of the psychopaths who rise to the top in our societies, where wealth is power. We need to organise and mobilise in our workplaces, our places of study and in our communities both online and offline, bypassing the ever-more powerful censorship algorithms.

"Everyone has some skill or passion that they can use to contribute to defending Julian Assange and a truly free press, and to promote the work of WikiLeaks.

"We must speak out about and support the principled dedication of whistleblowers such as Chelsea Manning, as solidarity nurtures courage, and courage is indeed contagious. And we need to continue to disseminate the brutal and deceitful workings of power that WikiLeaks' publications have exposed, to inspire others to act."



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)