

El Pais reports proof that the CIA illegally spied on Julian Assange

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In a report on Saturday, the prominent Spanish publication *El Pais* reported the most direct evidence yet that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) illegally spied on Julian Assange when he was an internationally-recognised political refugee in Ecuador's London embassy.

The new evidence, adding as it does to a mountain of previous disclosures, underscores the criminality of the US pursuit of Assange. It again makes clear that the attempted US extradition and prosecution of Assange, for publishing evidence of US-led war crimes, is the pseudo-legal arm of a murderous campaign that has involved violations of innumerable laws within domestic jurisdictions and internationally.

Previously, there had been substantial indirect evidence of the CIA spying. On the one hand, a *Yahoo! News* article in late 2021 had indicated that the Trump administration and the CIA had conducted dirty tricks against Assange while he was in the Ecuadorian Embassy, up to and including discussions of a kidnap attempt or an assassination. Those revelations were based on the statements of 30 former US officials.

On the other hand, whistleblowing former employees of UC Global, the Spanish security firm contracted at the time by the Ecuadorian authorities to provide security for its London embassy, alleged that the company had essentially gone rogue.

Behind the backs of the Ecuadorian government, it had installed extensive surveillance equipment which it had transmitted to secret third parties in the United States. It was alleged that UC Global had entered into relations with the company of Trump ally and casino mogul, Sheldon Adelson, whose firm appeared to have played the role of a cutout for US intelligence in obtaining the material. That UC Global had conducted spying was clear from vast amounts of video and audio material of Assange in the embassy, including privileged discussions with lawyers.

The latest revelations bring the two threads together. They establish irrefutably that UC Global was acting as the essential ground force of the CIA campaign against Assange.

UC Global's owner, David Morales, is being criminally prosecuted in Spain on several interrelated charges, including for spying on Assange, his lawyers and other journalists.

As per *El Pais*, Spanish police had previously obtained electronic records of UC Global as part of the criminal investigation, but representatives of Assange had voiced concerns that the records were incomplete and thus did not tell the full story of the company's activities.

In consequence, with the assistance of Assange's lawyers and their technical experts, a far more extensive data set has now been obtained. Much of the new material is from Morales's own records and computers.

El Pais reported: "The difference in the size or volume of the two copies is substantial. The document dump from Morales' computers, flash drives and electronic devices provided by police was 213.1 GB less than the one recently obtained by Assange's defense — an equivalent of 551.616 files and 973 email files. Among the new files, a folder titled 'Operations & Projects' was saved, containing directories organized according to geographical area.

"Each region or country is specified, along with the details of the services to be provided. In the area corresponding to North America—within the 'USA' directory—there is a file called 'CIA.' Inside—in a folder marked 'Videos'—images of recordings are stored. These were obtained via the hidden cameras and microphones that UC Global installed in the Embassy of Ecuador in London to surveil the WikiLeaks founder. Each recording is dated and titled.

"Some examples are 'Pamela Anderson'—which contains the meetings with the actress, a friend of Assange—'Guest,' being the name that Morales' employees used to refer to the Australian; 'Ladies toilet,' a place where Assange held meetings with his lawyers for fear of being spied on; and 'Fidel,' the Ecuadorian consul who tried to get Assange out of the U.K. with a diplomatic passport."

According to the UC Global whistleblowers, Morales had previously told them he had "gone over to the dark side" and was secretly providing information to "American friends." It

is now demonstrably the case that these were references to the CIA.

As *El Pais* has previously reported, the spying was not passive surveillance. It was the foundation for active measures taken by the US authorities.

As 2017 progressed, Assange's health was deteriorating. The unviability of his indefinite enforced residence in the embassy was apparent. Sympathetic sections of the Ecuadorian state, moreover, were fearful that shifting winds in their country, including the coming to power of President Lenin Moreno in May, did not augur well for Assange.

It was thus decided that an attempt would be made for Assange to leave the embassy and to seek asylum in a third country. On December 21, Rommy Vallejo, the head of Ecuadorian intelligence and one of those in the state apparatus who was sympathetic to Assange, met with the WikiLeaks founder in the Ecuadorian embassy to discuss the final preparations for Assange's escape. It was to occur on or around Christmas Day, when British police and intelligence operations were expected to be lax.

Previous files have made clear that the meeting was spied on by UC Global. Within 24 hours of the meeting between Assange and Vallejo, the US had issued an international arrest warrant for Assange, in a clear bid to block him from securing asylum in another country. Less than three months later, on March 6, 2018, the first US criminal indictment of Assange was secretly issued.

In other words, all of the US legal efforts targeting Assange, including the superseding indictments adding Espionage Act charges and the extradition bid, can be traced back to illegal CIA operations targeting the WikiLeaks founder when he was a political refugee. That entirely refutes the assertions of the US Justice Department, which has said that even if the CIA did spy on Assange, it has no bearing on their case due to the supposed "Chinese walls" between different branches of the American government.

The frenzied US-CIA campaign against Assange in 2017, moreover, was not motivated by fears of any risks he and WikiLeaks posed to the population, or even of prior wrongdoings. Instead it was retribution for WikiLeaks' March 2017 publication of Vault 7, a vast trove of documents proving that the CIA was conducting illegal spying on a global scale and was one of the world's largest purveyors of computer malware.

Assange has not even been charged by the US for those publications, which plainly were the central motive of the campaign against him that culminated in his arrest, detention and prospective extradition.

Confirmation that UC Global was working for the CIA brands the US prosecution, even leaving all else aside, as hopelessly tainted. The UC Global surveillance covered

Assange's confidential legal meetings, something that should by all rights see the US case summarily dismissed.

The revelations have an even broader significance, providing a frightening window into the vast erosion of civil liberties. In the capital of Britain, the land of the Magna Carta and a purported "Western democracy," the diplomatic mission of a third country was effectively transformed into a centre of US spying and dirty tricks against a protected refugee.

In March 2018, the now-US aligned Moreno regime severed Assange's communications and most of his access to the outside world. The CIA had all but established one of its notorious black sites in an embassy building located in London's fashionable Knightsbridge.

The discussions in the Trump administration and the CIA about kidnapping or assassinating Assange were clearly not vague hypotheses. The very people talking about illegally killing him effectively controlled Assange's physical environment through UC Global and Morales.

Such an operation must have been broadly known. Many questions emerge: What was the knowledge of the British authorities, their spy agencies and governments? Or the Australian government and state apparatus?

And what about the official media? For years, publications such as the *New York Times* and the *Guardian* colluded with the intelligence agencies to blacken Assange's name, publishing whatever lie was fed to them by the CIA and other hostile entities. Could they really have been completely in the dark about the Knightsbridge operation?

The above-named publications, and many others that smeared Assange have been notably silent on all the revelations of CIA spying and dirty tricks against him. That forms part of a broader pattern, but it appears the CIA angle is a particularly sensitive point. No major US or British publication has yet reported on the latest *El Pais* exposure.



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