

Britain warned Sweden not to drop Assange extradition proceedings

By Paul Mitchell
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Confidential Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) emails published by the *Guardian's* Sunday sister paper, the *Observer*, reveal that British prosecutors warned their Swedish counterparts not to drop extradition proceedings against Julian Assange on trumped-up “sexual assault” allegations as early as 2013.

Ever since, the British government has continued its vendetta against the WikiLeaks founder even though Swedish prosecutors finally abandoned their investigation in May 2017 and sought to revoke the European Arrest Warrant against him.

The UK is determined to arrest Assange for breaching his bail conditions in 2012 and seeking refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy, where he remains confined, cut off from his family and friends and suffering from mounting health problems.

Last week a British court upheld prosecutors' demands that Assange be arrested should he try to leave the embassy. Today it is expected to rule on an appeal by his lawyers that the government's actions are “disproportionate” after so many years (absconding bail typically receives a fine or short jail term) and that the UN has declared Assange to be unlawfully and arbitrarily detained.

According to the emails, as soon as Assange took refuge in the embassy the CPS “advised” Swedish prosecutors not to interview him there. The unknown CPS lawyer, who was dealing with the Assange case and whose name is redacted, told his Swedish counterpart, Marianne Ny, “It is simply amazing how much work this case is generating. It sometimes seems like an industry. Please do not think this case is being dealt with as just another extradition.”

Assange was quite prepared to be questioned about the allegations against him, but he was wary of

returning to Sweden, fearing he would end up being extradited to the United States and tried for espionage and treason, crimes carrying a potential death penalty. It is clearer now why the Swedish prosecutors did not take up his offer of being interviewed in London or by a video link.

The emails then reveal that in August 2012 the CPS lawyer told Ny, “Don't you dare get cold feet!!!” in relation to a newspaper article suggesting Sweden was about to drop the case.

In October 2013, Ny once more appeared to be considering dropping the case and emailed the CPS lawyer, “There is a demand in Swedish law for coercive measures to be proportionate.”

“The time passing, the costs and how severe the crime is to be taken into account together with the intrusion or detriment to the suspect. Against this background, we have found us to be obliged to lift the detention order ... and to withdraw the European arrest warrant. If so this should be done in a couple of weeks. This would affect not only us but you too in a significant way,” Ny concluded.

The CPS lawyer replied in December 2013, “I do not consider costs are a relevant factor in this matter”—a reference to the Metropolitan Police revealing they had spent over three million pounds by that point on its operation around the Ecuadorian embassy.

“All we can do is wait and see [and perhaps be eternally grateful that neither of us have to share a room in the embassy with him over Christmas!]”

The emails are a devastating indictment of the British government, which has played a critical role in the US “dirty tricks” operation aimed at silencing WikiLeaks and exacting revenge on Assange for having exposed US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan and its diplomatic intrigues and crimes around the world.

They also stand as an indictment of the *Guardian's* own role as cheerleader for the conspiracy undertaken by the US, British and Swedish governments against Assange.

At first it selectively published and edited cables released by WikiLeaks that exposed US war crimes and conspiracies, but it quickly turned on Assange, leading attempts to discredit him and demanding his return to Sweden.

Britain's pseudo-left groups fell into line, echoing the propaganda of the liberal media that the allegations of sexual assault have nothing to do with the campaign to silence Assange and destroy WikiLeaks. For more than a year, the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party refused to defend Assange, finally and briefly breaking their silence to argue that he "must face rape charges," or that the accusations against him "should be properly investigated." Neither party has printed more than a passing reference to Assange since 2012.

The publication of the *Observer* story has all the elements of a damage limitation exercise on the eve of today's court case. The emails quoted were released on the CPS website (see here and here) in August 2017 as a result of a freedom of information request by the Italian journalist Stefania Maurizi, who had asked for the full correspondence between the CPS and the Swedish Prosecution Authority, Ecuador, the US Department of Justice and US State Department.

The CPS only released the correspondence with Sweden saying, "On balance, the CPS considered that the public interest factors were in favour of maintaining the exemptions." The publication of other emails it insisted would have "a definite and deep chilling effect" on relations with "Requesting States," that is the US, and "would inhibit the ability of the CPS to conduct extradition proceedings."

Not only did the CPS refuse to release correspondence with the US administration, but it was also revealed in a court case brought by Maurizi in November 2017 that the CPS had destroyed key emails after the CPS lawyer retired in 2014.

To date it is clear only a small fraction of the Assange case file, which the CPS has admitted comprises "mainly 55 lever-arch files, one A4 file and a selection of other paper files," has been published.

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