

Imperialist Gangsterism and the CIA Plot to Kill Julian Assange

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Revelations that the CIA discussed the assassination of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange confirm the staggering criminality of the US and British ruling class. By rights, they should see the US extradition case against Assange still proceeding through the UK High Court thrown out, and the investigation and prosecution of the conspirators up to the highest level of the US and UK governments and their intelligence agencies.

According to an investigation by *Yahoo News* published Sunday, President Donald Trump’s CIA director Mike Pompeo christened WikiLeaks a “non-state hostile intelligence service” in 2017 to make its employees and associates a legitimate target for CIA “offensive counterintelligence” activities.

Pompeo then asked for plans to be drawn up for Assange’s kidnap or assassination. The report is based on information from more than 30 US sources. Both Pompeo and the CIA have refused to comment.

These sources, former top US officials, explain that the US manhunt of Assange escalated dramatically after the publication of the “Vault 7” leaks in March 2017, exposing intimate details of CIA spying operations. Three sources stated that plans were discussed to kill the WikiLeaks founder, with Trump reportedly asking for “options” from the agency on how this could be done. CIA heads apparently requested and were provided “sketches” of assassination plans and discussions were had on “whether killing Assange was possible and whether it was legal,” according to one source.

Plans for Assange’s kidnap, in the event of a Russian-backed escape from the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where Assange had claimed asylum, included ramming a Russian diplomatic vehicle, shoot-outs with Russian agents in the streets of London and, as a last resort, shooting the tyres of any Russian plane trying to carry Assange out of the country. A senior official told *Yahoo* that Britain agreed “to do the shooting if gunfire was required.”

Yahoo’s investigation confirms and substantially expands on claims subject to a current

court case in Spain that the firm UC Global, which provided security for Ecuador's London embassy, worked with the CIA to spy on Assange and discussed his kidnap and assassination.

There is nothing the least surprising about the existence of plans for Assange's murder. US imperialism has despatched its professional assassins all over the world to secure its interests for decades. The Assange plot recalls the murder of Chilean dissident Orlando Letelier in 1976, whose car was blown up in Washington D.C., just a mile from the White House. Organised by Augusto Pinochet's secret police, the killing was facilitated by US intelligence under Operation Condor—though this has always been denied.

What is new today is the increasingly unguarded character of ruling class violence and repression. Plots once organised through accomplices, kept closely under wraps and strenuously denied are now carried out in ever more open fashion.

The admitted murder and dismemberment of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, in the Saudi consulate in Turkey in 2018 by agents of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, elicited only the most token "condemnation" by the US and UK governments.

Just over a week ago, the *New York Times* gloried in the US-Israeli assassination of Iranian physicist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

Assange's own killing was widely discussed shortly after the Iraq and Afghanistan war logs and US diplomatic cables leaks. In 2012, WikiLeaks produced a video, titled "Assassinating Assange," collecting the threats made against his life by prominent figures in the previous two years.

Commentators on Fox News called for the then Obama administration to "illegally shoot the son of a b****," "have the CIA take him out" and say, "if we catch you, we're gonna hang you." Former Republican speaker of the house Newt Gingrich said Assange had "engaged in terrorism" and "should be treated as an enemy combatant." He was agreed with by then Vice President Joe Biden, who labelled Assange a "high-tech terrorist." Secretary of State Hilary Clinton reportedly asked in private, "Can't we just drone this guy?"

There is no doubt that high-level discussions regarding Assange's possible assassination took place under Obama. Sunday's revelations demonstrate that the Trump administration, in response to continued WikiLeaks releases causing serious damage to US imperialism and an explosion of domestic class tensions, sought ever more recklessly to realise this aim. Moreover, their leaking by so many sources must be related to the escalating factional warfare in ruling circles regarding Trump's January 6 coup plot.

The close involvement of the British state in these plans sheds light on the January 4 surprise ruling by District Judge Vanessa Baraitser that Assange should not be extradited to the US due to the "substantial risk" of his suicide. That ruling was challenged by the US, which this August was granted expanded grounds to appeal the decision in a hearing before the High Court scheduled for October 27-28.

Clearly, the type of "suicide" Baraitser had in mind was a murder orchestrated by the US state. The pseudo-legal pursuit of Assange was an ancillary operation to the kill or capture mission discussed by the CIA. Once Assange was in the clutches of the US prison system, he could meet a similar fate to that of Jeffrey Epstein—who supposedly hanged himself in his

cell in August 2019 before being called to testify in a sex trafficking case implicating dozens of the most powerful figures in American society.

In the knowledge of this plot, the UK ruling class evidently felt it lacked sufficient deniability in January for such a barefaced murder of a journalist whose imprisonment it has overseen for the past decade. Every action taken by the British judiciary since the original denial of extradition, however, has been in the US government's favour. By proceeding with the case, the British state is knowingly complicit in an ongoing conspiracy to murder or otherwise silence Assange forever.

Also complicit are the world's media, above all the "liberal" *Guardian* in the UK and the *New York Times* in the US. At the time of writing, the *Times* had not reported on the *Yahoo News* revelations at all. The *Guardian* only published an article late on Monday evening (9 pm BST) and buried it in its media section.

Despite feeling belatedly forced to make a show of opposition to Assange's extradition, these papers continue to do all in their power to obscure the full implications of a case that reveals the total, unreformable criminality of US, British and world imperialism. They have painted the extradition proceedings as a case of ill-advised overreach by embarrassed governments, which should be ruled against by a wiser judiciary.

These latest exposures blow this fraud apart. The only conclusion to be drawn is that Assange's extradition must be dropped immediately. The US has not even the formal right to seek his extradition—under UK law, no one can be extradited to a country where they have a chance of facing the death penalty—and the UK has no right to hear his case. Both governments are party to kidnap and murder plots against him.

These facts alone do not offer any guarantee of Assange's safety. In her ruling against extradition, Baraitser said of the defence's evidence on UC Global and CIA surveillance that "there is no reason to assume this related to these proceedings" and that "fruits of any surveillance would not be seen by prosecutors assigned to the case."

Baraitser's statement proves there is no purely judicial route to Assange's freedom. What is necessary is the construction of a mass international movement, rooted in the working class.

Building such a movement requires a complete rejection of the appeals made by those like the official Don't Extradite Assange campaign to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, President Joe Biden and even, when he was president, Trump. All of these figures, together with their heads of intelligence and their deputies, are implicated in a plot to kill the WikiLeaks founder. The fight to free Assange is bound up with the struggle to put these imperialist gangsters in the dock in his place.

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