

Thordarson's Fabrications: Another Hole in the Julian Assange Prosecution

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The tyrannical, brutal cynicism of keeping Julian Assange in Belmarsh prison remains one of the more inglorious marks of the British legal system and, it should be said, its sponsors and colluders. Having won his case against extradition to the US, if only in deeply qualified terms, the UK keeps the WikiLeaks publisher banged up as the appeals process stutters.

The case against Assange could have been thrown out under any number of grounds. Unfortunately, the judgment halting his extradition to the US on 17 charges based on the Espionage Act and one charge of computer intrusion was framed in purposely narrow terms, ignoring the patently political nature of the proceedings. Were it not for District Judge Vanessa Baraitser's [January 4 ruling](#) accepting the state of his precarious health, risk of suicide and the dangerous conditions he would face in the US legal system, the publisher would no doubt be facing special administrative measures and, most likely, the life-sucking interior of a supermax.

A central, and impairing problem in the ruling, was its comfortable acceptance of virtually everything submitted by the prosecution, including the contention that Assange was no journalist, and that he conspired with various associates to hack and make off with classified material. The judgment also refused to consider – given the ongoing investigation in Spain against the security firm UC Global – that the Central Intelligence Agency had compromised the legal credibility of proceedings by bugging Assange's privileged conversations in the Ecuadorian embassy. "This court has no access to the information discovered from this investigation," reasoned a dismissive Baraitser. Sordid proposals by US intelligence officials to abduct or assassinate Assange, adduced in court by two anonymous witnesses formerly in the employ of UC Global, could be dismissed as having no bearing on the case.

As if this was not sufficient to sink the matter and open the prison doors of Belmarsh to the founder of WikiLeaks, [another dire revelation was made](#) in the Icelandic biweekly *Stundin* on June 26. A vital prosecution witness wished to come clean on his testimony. **Sigurdur "Siggi" Thordarson**, that sketchiest of characters, admitted that the testimony gleefully used by US prosecutors had been riddled by fabrications.

In 2011, Thordarson piqued the interest of the FBI after planning a DDoS attack on an

Icelandic website in concert with Hector Xavier Monsegur (“Sabu”). Monsegur, posing as a member of the hacking outfit LulzSec, had become an informant for the FBI. With touted links to WikiLeaks and Assange (Thordarson was not the shy, retiring type), the FBI [sought the teenager’s services](#). Thordarson had, in fact, been a noisy volunteer tasked with raising money for the organisation. During the course of his revenue raising operations, he embezzled over \$50,000.

Not content with these additions to his resume, the teenager shamelessly rode the WikiLeaks reputation train, making contacts with journalists, being subsidised on trips where he could claim to be an official representative of the organisation. During this time, he pilfered material from WikiLeaks, copying the documents of Renata Avila, a lawyer assisting Assange and the organisation.

The DoJ [indictment](#) does not explicitly name Thordarson or the Icelandic nexus, but little is left to the imagination, given that Assange was visiting Iceland “in early 2010” to aid the country’s politicians and media outlets prepare the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative. The IMMI resolution, unanimously adopted in the Icelandic Parliament on June 16, 2011, aimed to make Iceland a safe haven for journalists and whistleblowers by protecting freedom of expression and freedom of information.

The indictment alleges that Assange, in early 2010 and while in contact with Chelsea Manning for reasons of obtaining “classified information [...] met a 17-year old in NATO Country-1 (‘Teenager’), who provided [him] with data stolen from a bank.” The indictment goes on to claim that Assange asked the “Teenager” in question “to commit computer intrusions and steal additional information, including audio recordings of phone conversations between high-ranking officials of the government of NATO Country-1, including members of the Parliament of NATO Country-1.”

This nasty filling to the superseding indictment expanded the allegedly conspiratorial nature of Assange’s conduct, a measure undoubtedly designed to tag a few more years to any prison sentence that would be handed down. This would also blacken Assange’s journalistic credentials and any claims to free speech protections.

No longer a callow teenager and having served time for financial fraud and sexually abusing minors, Thordarson [told *Stundin*](#) “that Assange never asked him to hack or to access phone recordings of MPs.” He now insists that he had “received some files from a third party who claimed to have recorded MPs and had offered to share them with Assange without having any idea what they actually contained.” Thordarson failed to go through the files, or even verify whether they had audio recordings as claimed by the third party source. The allegation that Assange instructed him to access computers in order to find such recordings is also dismissed as false.

The *Stundin* article also delves into the chat logs and new documents “never before published”. While Thordarson did gather them himself – a warning of self-partiality there – they do cover conversations with WikiLeaks staff and his unauthorised contact with various hacking groups, connections made when moderating the online IRC WikiLeaks forum.

The logs are not flattering. They reveal a person prone to embellishment and mendacity. The big headed “Siggi” considered himself a “chief of staff”, the fictional director of communications in WikiLeaks, and second in pecking order in terms of finding recruits for

the organisation. Independently of WikiLeaks, he urged hackers to target Icelandic entities and websites with distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks. Thordarson, roguishly, gives the impression that such conduct was expected of him by Assange, though there is no evidence that he was ever spurred on to do so. Further to that point, any purported instructions by Assange to pursue such an enterprise would have been at odds with his fruitful relationship with Icelandic politicians and press outlets at that point.

The sinister conclusion to draw here, notably through the FBI link, is that a DDoS attack was conducted against the websites of several Icelandic government entities with the approval of US authorities. Linking Monsegur to the supposedly WikiLeaks-directed Thordarson would be one way of implicating Assange. The US authorities, [reasons](#) Ögmundur Jónasson, Iceland's Interior Minister at the time, "were trying to use things here [in Iceland] and use people in our country to spin a web, a cobweb that would catch Julian Assange."

Despite having chalked up a decent prison record and possessing the profile of a fully-fledged sociopath, Thordarson was revisited by US authorities in 2019. The prosecution of Assange, seen as a legal and risky cul-de-sac by Obama era officials, became a priority for President Donald Trump's Attorney General William Barr. In May 2019 Siggí was offered an immunity deal by the DoJ's deputy assistant attorney general in the department's National Security Division, Kellen S. Dwyer. In addition to giving Thordarson immunity from prosecution by US authorities for his testimony, *Stundin* [revealed](#) the guarantee by the DoJ that they "would not share any such information to other prosecutorial or law enforcement agencies." Iceland's law enforcement authorities would be kept in the dark.

The *Stundin* exposé might have been an early birthday present of sorts for Assange, who turned 50 on July 3. But instead of hearing news of an impending release, the Australian publisher had to content himself with faithful commemorations held in his honour and sketchy coverage about these latest revelations in the mainstream press. The UK continues to remain Washington's deputised jailor, while Thordarson, emboldened by his agreement with the DoJ, continues his habitual forgeries.

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