

CN Radio—Episode 7: Francis Boyle on Extradition of Julian Assange

With Julian Assange facing an extradition hearing on May 2, **Consortium News Radio** speaks with international law expert Francis Boyle, professor at the University of Illinois.

Francis Boyle on the U.S.-UK extradition treaty and the way forward for Assange. (30 minutes).

Julian Assange's Nightmarish Future

The *WikiLeaks* publisher is in a maximum-security prison that has been called the UK's Guantanamo Bay, Elizabeth Vos reports.

By **Elizabeth Vos**

Special to Consortium News



While Julian Assange waits for what comes next – sentencing on skipping bail in England and a U.S. extradition request – he is being held in a maximum-security prison in London that has been called the **“UK's Guantanamo Bay”** and has been used to **detain alleged terrorists**, sometimes **indefinitely**.

The reputation of **HM Prison Belmarsh** raises natural concerns

about the wellbeing of the *WikiLeaks* publisher there.

“While many prisoners at Belmarsh say it’s difficult to see a doctor or a nurse, these services are available at the facility,” reports *Bloomberg News*, regarding the possibility of Assange receiving overdue medical attention.

Her Majesty’s Prison Belmarsh had been used to detain high-profile national security prisoners indefinitely without charge under the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act of 2001, passed six weeks after 9/11, until the House of Lords ruled it violated the British Human Rights Act.

Assange was found guilty on Thursday of skipping bail. On May 2 he is scheduled to participate in a court hearing via video link on the U.S. extradition request.

Assange’s name now tops the alphabetical roster of notables who have done time at Belmarsh or who are still there. The list includes notorious gangsters, serial killers and drug traffickers. Ronnie Biggs of the 1963 Great Train Robbery was imprisoned there. Others are subjects of high-profile scandal, such as Richard Tomlinson, imprisoned for six months in 1997 after he gave a synopsis of a proposed book detailing his career with MI6 to an Australian publisher. Andy Coulson, a former press secretary to Prime Minister David Cameron, was imprisoned for a few months for the phone hacking scandal that engulfed *News of the World* while he was editor there.

One mainstay of the inmate population are convicted terrorists. Abu Hamza al-Masri, an Egyptian cleric, was at Belmarsh until his extradition to the United States where

he is serving life in prison on 11 counts of terrorism. Rams Mohammed, Muktar Said Ibrahim and Yasin Hassan Omar were all incarcerated there for their roles in the 2005 attempted bombings of the London underground. Anjou Choudhry completed his sentence at Belmarsh for promoting the [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant](#). Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale are identified as Islamic terrorists convicted of the murder of British soldier [Lee Rigby in London](#).

There is legitimate concern about how Assange will fare inside Belmarsh. A 2018 survey by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons found that “91 percent of men said they had problems when they arrived at Belmarsh, which was higher than at other local prisons and more than at our last inspection,” [Business Insider](#) reported.

In 2009, the same prison authority had found “[extremely high](#)” amount of force used to control inmates at the prison.

Detainees were “unable to see the intelligence evidence against them and are confined to their cells for up to 22 hours a day. Their solicitors say they have been ‘entombed in concrete,’ [BBC](#) reported in 2004.

The 2018 chief inspector’s report said the prison contains a “High Security Unit (HSU) within the already-high-security premises, which the report described as a ‘prison within a prison.’” The report went on to state that:

“The role of the high security unit (HSU) remained unclear. We were told it was for high risk category A prisoners, but such men are held in main locations in other high security prisons and we did not understand why

the approach was different at Belmarsh. We noted that two of the men held were only standard risk category A prisoners and that in December 2017 two men from the main prison had been held in the HSU segregation unit. The conditions and the regime in the HSU provided prisoners with an intense custodial experience in which they could exercise little self-determination, and we were concerned that prisoners could be located there without any oversight process or redress.”

Describing the use of solitary confinement, the chief inspector’s report found: “Conditions in the unit were reasonable, but some prisoners could not have a shower or exercise every day. Those who could only be unlocked in the presence of several officers were most affected.” The report repeatedly described concerns that arose due to staff shortages, and added in a separate section: “We remained concerned about this use of designated cells, where men were held in prolonged solitary confinement on an impoverished regime.”

Individual accounts from former Belmarsh inmates published by CAGE, an advocacy group against human rights abuses that occurred as a result of the “war on Terror,” described their experiences. An anonymous prisoner who was later acquitted said: “The prison system is run in such a way as to humiliate and degrade the inmate as much as possible. The process of dehumanisation starts immediately.” In the wake of Assange’s imprisonment, CAGE published a statement, saying in part: “The UK is doing the U.S.’s dirty work by persecuting a man who exposed war crimes.”

Vigils and protests in support of Assange were held outside the prison on April 14 and April 15.

The last time Assange was held in a British prison, in 2010, he says that he was given food containing metal objects that severely damaged a tooth. This was at London's HM Prison Wandsworth. The incident caused serious injury and he did not receive proper medical treatment during the six and a half years of his confinement in the Ecuadorian embassy. A medical report published by *WikiLeaks* in 2015 describes Assange's version of the event:

Mr. Assange reports that the broken tooth (UR4) was initially fractured when he was in the SCU at Wandsworth Prison in December 2010. Mr. Assange showed me contemporaneous Wandsworth prison reports regarding Mr. Assange's receiving the attention of a dentist after a hard object had broken his his upper first premolar (UR4). (Mr. Assange reports that the piece of fractured tooth disappeared from Mr. Assange's cell while he was in the showers; immediately after Mr. Assange complained to CSU staff about the object in his food). Mr. Assange says that the episode not only caused physical pain and distress, but also, in conjunction with the segregation, caused him to feel targeted and persecuted. A series of dental complications have resulted from the fracture.

'This is Unlawful, I'm Not Leaving'

Uniformed British police officers, aided by what appeared to be plain-clothes secret police, had entered the embassy on Thursday morning when the Ecuadorian ambassador "indicated he was preparing to serve upon Mr Assange documentation revoking his asylum," attorney James Hines, Queens Counsel, who represented the U.S. government, told the court during Assange's bail-skipping hearing. *The Guardian* quoted Hines as later telling the court that day:

"Officers tried to introduce themselves to him in order to execute the arrest warrant before he barged past them,

attempting to return to his private room.

“He was eventually arrested at 10.15 am. He resisted that arrest, claiming ‘this is unlawful’ and he had to be restrained.

“Officers were struggling to handcuff him. They received assistance from other officers outside and he was handcuffed saying, ‘this is unlawful, I’m not leaving’.

“He was in fact lifted into the police van outside the embassy and taken to West End Central police station.”

Assange was likely referring to the 1951 Convention on Refugees that forbids a nation that has granted someone asylum from returning that person to a country where the asylee is likely to be persecuted.

Police were then filmed forcibly dragging the handcuffed, physically ill Assange from the steps of the embassy. During the arrest, Assange was seen holding a copy of Gore Vidal’s “The History of the National Security State,” as he shouted: “The UK must resist this...the UK must resist.”

Fears of U.S. Mistreatment

In view of then CIA Director Mike Pompeo’s comparison of *WikiLeaks* (46:00 minutes into the above video) with Al Qaeda, while calling it a “non-state hostile intelligence service,” concerns are mounting in Assange’s camp about the harsh treatment he may face by British, and if he’s extradited, U.S. authorities.

In the hours following the arrest, Reuters reported: “Lawyers for Assange said he may risk torture and his life

would be in danger if he were to be extradited to the United States.”

On the same day, human-rights organizations and press-freedom advocates argued against the prosecution of the *WikiLeaks* founder. These groups included the [ACLU](#), The Freedom of the Press Foundation, the [Center for Investigative Journalism](#), Amnesty Ireland, [Committee To Protect Journalists](#), Reporters Without Borders, [Human Rights Watch](#), the Center for Constitutional Rights, the [National Union of Journalists](#), the [The Knight First Amendment Institute](#) and [Digital Rights Watch](#).

The Intercept's [Glenn Greenwald](#) was quick to note the widespread mischaracterization of the charge against Assange as one of “hacking,” writing that the charging document and related materials indicate Assange may have attempted to help Chelsea Manning, a U.S. Army whistleblower then known as Bradley Manning, use a different username to access classified material she was legally allowed to access at the time. In other words, Greenwald says Assange is charged with helping a source preserve anonymity, a common practice by investigative reporters.

Greenwald also [points out](#) that this action has been on public record since 2011, but that U.S. authorities under the Obama administration refused to use it as a basis of prosecution due to the chill it could put on press freedom.

Honor Bob Parry's legacy by [donating](#) to our Spring Fund Drive.

UN Visitor

The UN independent expert on the right to privacy, [Joe Cannataci](#), issued a statement following Assange's arrest. "This will not stop my efforts to assess Mr. Assange's claims that his privacy has been violated," he was quoted by the United Nations' [news service](#). "All it means is that, instead of visiting Mr. Assange and speaking to him at the Embassy. I intend to visit him and speak to him wherever he may be detained."

[Shortly before Assange's expulsion](#), UN Special Rapporteur on Torture [Nils Melzer](#) expressed alarm at reports that an arrest was imminent. If extradited, Melzer said Assange could be exposed to "a real risk of serious violations of his human rights, including his freedom of expression, his right to a fair trial, and the prohibition of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Assange's supporters likewise fear for his treatment in Belmarsh.

[Matthew Hoh](#), a senior fellow with the Center for International Policy and a former Marine, visited Assange at the embassy. He worries about the mistreatment Assange might face in custody. He believes, "When they get their hands on him, they will do things that will be criminal, it will be immoral, it will be torture," he said during an online [Unity4J](#) vigil held days before Assange's expulsion.

The online [Assange vigils](#) are co-hosted by **Consortium News** and have been held for over a year, to maintain public awareness about Assange after Ecuador withdrew his internet access.

Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist Chris Hedges, during

a [Unity4J panel](#), offered his fear of what he believes will happen to Assange if he is extradited to the United States :

“He will have a hood over his head, he will be shackled and chained, he’ll be put on a black flight, he will be taken to the U.S., put into solitary confinement – which is a form of torture, it is how people break, and often break very quickly. He will be relentlessly interrogated, there will be all sorts of psychological techniques – it will be very hot in his cell and then very cold. They will constantly wake him every few hours so he will be sleep deprived. They will maybe even put him into a dry cell, where there is no water, so he will have to ask for water to go to the bathroom or wash his hands.”

Hedges continued:

“Everyone has a breaking point, and they will attempt to psychologically destroy him, and we have seen with Guantanamo that several of these detainees, most of whom were just sold to the U.S. by warlords in Afghanistan or Pakistan, are emotionally crippled for life. It will be scientific torture. I used to cover the Stasi state in East Germany, and the joke in the Stasi state was that the Gestapo broke bones and the Stasi break minds, and that’s what they’ll do. That’s what will happen. I’ve seen it with Muslims who have been entrapped in the U.S. in so-called terrorism plots, and by the time they shuffle into court, they are a zombie.”

Hedges [added](#): “There will be a veneer of legality: it will

be the figment of law. But he will be treated like all of the people who have been disappeared into that system from around the world.”

Micol Savia, representative of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers at the United Nations, drew on Chelsea Manning’s experience of [torture in U.S. custody](#) when raising concern that Assange may be likewise abused, writing via [Twitter](#):

“#Assange’s eventual extradition to the US would expose him to a substantive risk of human rights violations. The likely treatment he would receive can easily be inferred from the unjust trial and detention of [Chelsea Manning] @xychelsea, who faced life in prison and was subjected to torture.”

Elizabeth Vos is a freelance reporter and regular contributor to *Consortium News*. She co-hosts the #Unity4J online vigil.

If you value this original article, please consider [making a donation](#) to Consortium News during our Spring Fund Drive so we can bring you more stories like this one.

Assange’s Lynch Mob Commenters in the NYT

The Gray Lady now seems to be against press freedom, writes

James Howard Kunstler.

By **James Howard Kunstler**

Clusterfuck Nation



And so now Julian Assange of *Wikileaks* has been dragged out of his “sanctuary” in the London embassy of Ecuador for failing to clean his cat’s litter box. Have you ever cleaned a litter box?

The way we always did it was to spread some newspaper – say, *The New York Times* – on the floor, transfer the used cat litter onto it, wrap it into a compact package, and put it in the trash.

It was interesting to scan the comments section of the *Times*’s stories about the Assange arrest: Times readers almost uniformly presented themselves as a lynch mob out for Assange’s blood. So much for the spirit of liberalism and the old “Gray Lady” who published *The Pentagon Papers* purloined by Daniel Ellsberg lo so many years ago. Reading between the lines in that once-venerable newspaper – by which I mean gleaning their slant on the news – one surmises that the *Times* has actually come out *against* freedom of the press, a curious attitude, but consistent with the neo-Jacobin zeitgeist in “blue” America these days.

Anyway, how could anyone expect Assange to clean his cat’s litter box when he was unable to go outside his sanctuary to buy a fresh bag of litter, and was denied newspapers this past year, as well as any other contact with the outside world?

U.S. government prosecutors had better tread lightly in

bringing Assange to the sort of justice demanded by readers of *The New York Times* – which is to say: lock him up in some SuperMax solitary hellhole and throw away the key. The show trial of Julian Assange on U.S. soil, when it comes to pass, may end up being the straw that stirs America's Mickey Finn as a legitimate republic.

Symptom of Mass Confusion

The bloodthirsty hysteria among *New York Times* readers is a symptom of the mass confusion sown by agencies of the U.S. government itself when its own agents ventured to meddle in the national election of 2016 and then blame it on “the Russians.” As you will learn in the months ahead, it was the *Times* itself, and other corporate news organizations, who *colluded* with officers of the FBI, the Department of Justice, the CIA, and the Obama White House to concoct a phony narrative about Trump being in cahoots with Vladimir Putin, thus depriving Hillary Clinton of her “turn” in the White House; and then to join those agencies, and the grotesquely dishonest two-year investigation of Special Counsel Robert Mueller, in a cover-your-ass operation to hide their nefarious and criminal acts.



The USA has a lot of sorting to do and, of course, the new Democratic-led Congress is already trying as hard as possible to prevent that from happening, the latest being their piling on Attorney General William Barr for testifying under oath that he believed the government ran a spying operation on candidate Donald Trump. The existence of FISA warrants establishes that as a fact, as does the million-dollar payment by the CIA and U.S. Defense Department to international man of mystery Stefan Halper, the secret agent (posing as an Oxford professor) commissioned to entrap Trump campaign associate Carter Page. The ugly cascade of truth about that ploy, and many other seditious subterfuges run by U.S. officials, will eventually bury the Jacobin "resistance" under more used cat litter than the Ecuadorian embassy staff could ever dream of.

The official charges so far against Julian Assange include skipping bail in the U.K. and supposedly attempting to assist the U.S. soldier then known as Bradley Manning to find a password for entering certain U.S. government computer data bases. The U.K. bail matter revolved around Assange's extradition to Sweden on a bullshit rape charge that was subsequently dropped as having no merit by Swedish authorities.

The U.S. supposedly reserves the authority to lob additional charges at Assange, though they may face a lengthy extradition battle with his attorneys to lever him out of the U.K. and into U.S. custody. In the meantime, Assange may receive a Nobel Prize as a symbol of a lone conscience standing up against the despotic deceits of the world's Deep

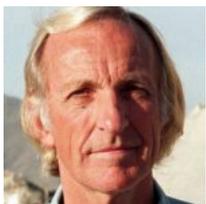
States. Wouldn't that gum up the works nicely? I'd like to see *The New York Times's* front page headline on that story: "Russian Colluder Wins Nobel Prize, Put on Trial in Federal Court." By then, the United States of America will be so completely gaslighted that it will pulsate in the darkness like a death star about to explode.

James Howard Kunstler is author of "The Geography of Nowhere," which he says he wrote "Because I believe a lot of people share my feelings about the tragic landscape of highway strips, parking lots, housing tracts, mega-malls, junked cities, and ravaged countryside that makes up the everyday environment where most Americans live and work." He has written several other works of nonfiction and fiction. Read more about him [here](#). This article first appeared on his blog, [ClusterfuckNation](#).

JOHN PILGER: Assange Arrest a Warning from History

Real journalism is being criminalized by thugs in plain sight, says John Pilger. Dissent has become an indulgence. And the British elite has abandoned its last imperial myth: that of fairness and justice.

By [John Pilger](#)



The glimpse of Julian Assange being dragged from the Ecuadorean embassy in London is an emblem of the times. Might against right. Muscle against the law. Indecency against courage. Six policemen manhandled a sick journalist, his eyes wincing against his first natural light in almost seven years.

That this outrage happened in the heart of London, in the land of Magna Carta, ought to shame and anger all who fear for “democratic” societies. Assange is a political refugee protected by international law, the recipient of asylum under a strict covenant to which Britain is a signatory. The United Nations made this clear in the legal ruling of its Working Party on Arbitrary Detention.

But to hell with that. Let the thugs go in. Directed by the quasi fascists in Trump’s Washington, in league with Ecuador’s Lenin Moreno, a Latin American Judas and liar seeking to disguise his rancid regime, the British elite abandoned its last imperial myth: that of fairness and justice.

Imagine Tony Blair dragged from his multi-million pound Georgian home in Connaught Square, London, in handcuffs, for onward dispatch to the dock in The Hague. By the standard of Nuremberg, Blair’s “paramount crime” is the deaths of a million Iraqis. Assange’s crime is journalism: holding the rapacious to account, exposing their lies and empowering people all over the world with truth.

The shocking arrest of Assange carries a warning for all who, as Oscar Wilde wrote, “sow the seeds of discontent [without which] there would be no advance towards civilization.” The warning is explicit towards journalists. What happened to the founder and editor of WikiLeaks can happen to you on a newspaper, you in a TV studio, you on radio, you running a podcast.

Assange’s principal media tormentor, *The Guardian*, a collaborator with the secret state, displayed its nervousness this week with an editorial that scaled new weasel heights. *The Guardian* has exploited the work of Assange and WikiLeaks in what its previous editor called “the greatest scoop of the last 30 years.” The paper creamed off WikiLeaks’ revelations and claimed the accolades and riches that came with them.

With not a penny going to Julian Assange or to WikiLeaks, a hyped *Guardian* book led to a lucrative Hollywood movie. The book’s

authors, Luke Harding and David Leigh, turned on their source, abused him and disclosed the secret password Assange had given the paper in confidence, which was designed to protect a digital file containing leaked US embassy cables.

Revealing Homicidal Colonial Wars

When Assange was still trapped in the Ecuadorian embassy, Harding joined police outside and gloated on his blog that "Scotland Yard may get the last laugh." *The Guardian* then published a series of falsehoods about Assange, not least a discredited claim that a group of Russians and Trump's man, Paul Manafort, had visited Assange in the embassy. The meetings never happened; it was fake.

But the tone has now changed. "The Assange case is a morally tangled web," the paper opined. "He (Assange) believes in publishing things that should not be published ... But he has always shone a light on things that should never have been hidden."

These "things" are the truth about the homicidal way America conducts its colonial wars, the lies of the British Foreign Office in its denial of rights to vulnerable people, such as the Chagos Islanders, the exposé of Hillary Clinton as a backer and beneficiary of jihadism in the Middle East, the detailed description of American ambassadors of how the governments in Syria and Venezuela might be overthrown, and much more. It is all available on the [WikiLeaks site](#).

The Guardian is understandably nervous. Secret policemen have already visited the newspaper and demanded and got the ritual destruction of a hard drive. On this, the paper has form. In 1983, a Foreign Office clerk, Sarah Tisdall, leaked British Government documents showing when American cruise nuclear weapons would arrive in Europe. *The Guardian* was showered with praise.

When a court order demanded to know the source, instead of the editor going to prison on a fundamental principle of protecting a source, Tisdall was betrayed, prosecuted and served six months.

If Assange is extradited to America for publishing what *The Guardian* calls truthful “things,” what is to stop the current editor, Katherine Viner, following him, or the previous editor, Alan Rusbridger, or the prolific propagandist Luke Harding?

What is to stop the editors of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, who also published morsels of the truth that originated with WikiLeaks, and the editor of *El Pais* in Spain, and *Der Spiegel* in Germany and *The Sydney Morning Herald* in Australia. The list is long.

David McCraw, lead lawyer of *The New York Times*, wrote: “I think the prosecution [of Assange] would be a very, very bad precedent for publishers ... from everything I know, he’s sort of in a classic publisher’s position and the law would have a very hard time distinguishing between *The New York Times* and WikiLeaks.”

Even if journalists who published WikiLeaks’ leaks are not summoned by an American grand jury, the intimidation of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning will be enough. Real journalism is being criminalized by thugs in plain sight. Dissent has become an indulgence.

In Australia, the current America-besotted government is prosecuting two whistle-blowers who revealed that Canberra’s spooks bugged the cabinet meetings of the new government of East Timor for the express purpose of cheating the tiny, impoverished nation out of its proper share of the oil and gas resources in the Timor Sea. Their trial will be held in secret. The Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, is infamous for his part in setting up concentration camps for refugees on the Pacific islands of Nauru and Manus, where children self harm and suicide. In 2014, Morrison proposed mass detention camps for 30,000 people.

Journalism: a Major Threat

Real journalism is the enemy of these disgraces. A decade ago, the Ministry of Defense in London produced a secret document which

described the “principal threats” to public order as threefold: terrorists, Russian spies and investigative journalists. The latter was designated the major threat.

The document was duly leaked to WikiLeaks, which published it. “We had no choice,” Assange told me. “It’s very simple. People have a right to know and a right to question and challenge power. That’s true democracy.”

What if Assange and Manning and others in their wake – if there are others – are silenced and “the right to know and question and challenge” is taken away?

In the 1970s, I met Leni Reifenstahl, close friend of Adolf Hitler, whose films helped cast the Nazi spell over Germany.

She told me that the message in her films, the propaganda, was dependent not on “orders from above” but on what she called the “submissive void” of the public.

“Did this submissive void include the liberal, educated bourgeoisie?” I asked her.

“Of course,” she said, “especially the intelligentsia When people no longer ask serious questions, they are submissive and malleable. Anything can happen.”

And did. The rest, she might have added, is history.

John Pilger is an Australian-British journalist and filmmaker based in London. Pilger’s Web site is: www.johnpilger.com. In 2017, the British Library announced a John Pilger Archive of all his written and filmed work. The British Film Institute includes his 1979 film, “Year Zero: the Silent Death of Cambodia,” among the 10 most important documentaries of the 20th century. Some of his previous contributions to Consortium News can be [found](#)

[here.](#)

Please honor the legacy of Bob Parry with a donation to our Spring Fund Drive.

Moreno Withdraws Asylum as Assange is Arrested

The WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been arrested after the Ecuadorian president, Lenin Moreno, withdrew Assange's asylum, in a move that runs counter to international asylum law.

Charged With Conspiracy to Hack Government Computer; Not Espionage

WikiLeaks tweeted that Ecuador allowed British police into the London embassy to arrest Assange at around 10:30 am British time, 5:30 am in Washington.

The U.S. charged Assange with conspiracy to hack a computer government computer related to the 2010 release of classified information, according to the criminal complaint unsealed hours after his arrest. The indictment does not charge Assange with espionage.

URGENT

Julian Assange did not "walk out of the embassy". The Ecuadorian ambassador invited British police into the embassy and he was immediately arrested.

– WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) [April 11, 2019](#)

This is the moment when Assange was dragged out by police. He was heard to say, “The UK must resist this...the UK must resist.”

BREAK: Full [@Ruptly](#) video of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange’s arrest by British police this morning pic.twitter.com/tdBw1Kbpxn

– Barnaby Nerberka (@barnabynerberka) [April 11, 2019](#)

Assange was taken with an arrest warrant for skipping bail when he entered the Ecuadorian embassy in June 2012, fearing extradition to the United States, where there is a sealed indictment with his name on it. Assange lawyer Jennifer Robinson tweeted that he has been arrested for breach of bail conditions and also because of a request for extradition from the U.S.

Just confirmed: [#Assange](#) has been arrested not just for breach of bail conditions but also in relation to a US extradition request. [@wikileaks](#) [@khrafnsson](#)

– Jen Robinson (@suigenerisjen) [April 11, 2019](#)

From [#Assange](#): The US warrant was issued in December 2017 and is for conspiracy with Chelsea Manning [@xychelsea](#) in early 2010.

– Jen Robinson (@suigenerisjen) [April 11, 2019](#)

Assange was taken to a police station and will later be brought to [Magistrate’s court](#), according to a tweet from Christine Assange, Julian’s mother.

I have just spoken to one of Julians lawyers.

Julian is likely to appear before a UK Magistrate within 24 hrs re (old defunct) "bail warrant"

UK likely to seek max prison term of 12 months in higher court.

Our focus is as always to STOP a U.S. Extradition!

Let's get to it!

– Mrs. Christine Assange (@AssangeMrs) [April 11, 2019](#)

Former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correrá reacted by calling Moreno the “greatest traitor in Ecuadorian and Latin American history.”

Full translation: “The greatest traitor in Ecuadorian and Latin American history, Lenin Moreno, allowed the British police to enter our embassy in London to arrest Assange. Moreno is a corrupt, but what he has done is a crime that humanity will never forget.”

El traidor más grande de la historia ecuatoriana y latinoamericana, Lenín Moreno, permitió que la policía británica entre a nuestra embajada en Londres para arrestar a Assange.

Moreno es un corrupto, pero lo que ha hecho es un crimen que la humanidad jamás olvidará. <https://t.co/GwZ40Lreuo>

– Rafael Correa (@MashiRafael) [April 11, 2019](#)

Moreno made a national television address to announce his decision. While the expulsion of a refugee to a country that could harm him for political reasons, known as [refoulement](#), is against international law, Moreno accused Assange of “repeated violations to international conventions and daily-life protocols.”

Ecuador decidió soberanamente retirar el asilo diplomático a Julian Assange por violar reiteradamente convenciones internacionales y protocolo de convivencia. [#EcuadorSoberano pic.twitter.com/V02pvvtPY0](https://twitter.com/V02pvvtPY0)

– Lenín Moreno (@Lenin) [April 11, 2019](#)

Unity4J will hold an emergency vigil under the hashtag [#FreeJulian](#) beginning at noon U.S. Eastern Standard Time that will be webcast live on ***Consortium News***.

NSA whistleblower Ed Snowden reacted on Twitter:

Images of Ecuador's ambassador inviting the UK's secret police into the embassy to drag a publisher of—like it or not—award-winning journalism out of the building are going to end up in the history books. Assange's critics may cheer, but this is a dark moment for press freedom. <https://t.co/ys1AIdh2FP>

– Edward Snowden (@Snowden) [April 11, 2019](#)

Journalist and filmmaker John Pilger tweeted:

The action of the British police in literally dragging Julian Assange from the Ecuadorean embassy and the smashing of international law by the Ecuadorean regime in permitting this barbarity are crimes against the most basic natural justice. This is a warning to all journalists.

– John Pilger (@johnpilger) [April 11, 2019](#)

Spanish Police Probe Extortion Scheme Involving Surveillance on Assange

UPDATED: Suspects are being investigated in Spain for having tried to extort €3 million from WikiLeaks in exchange for a huge cache of documents and surveillance videos of Assange inside Ecuador's London embassy, including with his doctors and lawyers.

By [Joe Lauria](#)

Special to Consortium News

A Spanish judge is investigating an alleged extortion scheme in which suspects in Madrid offered video and audio surveillance to the editor of WikiLeaks in exchange for €3 million, WikiLeaks said on Wednesday.

The surveillance was taken over the past year inside the Ecuador embassy in London where WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has legally been granted political asylum since 2012, said Kristinn Hrafnsson, the WikiLeaks editor, at a press conference in the British capital. Included in the "trove" of material was a copy of a legal document regarding Assange's defense strategy that was briefly left behind in a conference room in the embassy, Hrafnsson said.

“It is a grave and serious concern when legal meetings are being spied upon and legal documents are stolen,” he said. “That is something that not even prisoners have to endure.”

Assange was also filmed being examined by his doctor in the embassy, Hrafnsson said. “Nobody expected that this was recorded and stored and found its way to some dubious individuals in Spain,” he said.

Jennifer Robinson, Assange’s lawyer, called it a breach of attorney-client privilege. “The documents you have seen [presented at the press conference] demonstrates just how much surveillance he has been under and it is a breach of confidence for us, his lawyers, and his doctors to provide medical care in the embassy,” Robinson said. “This is a severe breach of attorney-client privilege and fundamentally undermines our ability to defend and provide defense to Julian Assange.”

Hrafnsson communicated with the alleged extortioners and was given samples of what they possessed, the WikiLeaks editor said. He then traveled to Spain and secretly videotaped a meeting with “four individuals” in which Hrafnsson learned the extent of the material that they possessed. They told him that €3 million was “a good deal” as they had had offers of €9 million for the material. Hrafnsson then went to the Spanish police who opened an investigation. He said he knew the identity of one of the four who had a prior conviction on similar charges and was seen as the “ringleader.”

Sting Operation

Aitor Martinez, the Assange lawyer who said he’d briefly left the legal document in the embassy conference room that

was copied, then took part in a sting operation with the police. He wore a wire as he met with the alleged extortioners in Madrid, Hrafnsson said. A full investigation by a special extortion team was then opened and the case is now in the hands of an investigative judge, he said.

“Extortion is a serious matter,” Hrafnsson said, “but of greater concern to me is that this is material gathered by spying by the government of Lenin Moreno and officials who work on his behalf against an individual who was granted diplomatic protection by the Ecuadorian government.”

In an apparent reference to Moreno, Hrafnsson said: “We know from reports that this is the work of one person to service the interests of the United States government who want to indict and imprison a publisher for the crime of publishing truthful material.”

Robinson said WikiLeaks would file a “fresh complaint” to the UN special rapporteur on privacy rights, who has said he will visit Assange on April 25. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer will also visit Assange that day, WikiLeaks said.

Robinson criticized the British government for being poised to arrest and extradite Assange to the United States. “That a government would cooperate with another state to extradite a publisher for publishing truthful information outside its territory sets a dangerous precedent here in the UK and elsewhere,” she said. “No one can deny that risk. That is why he sought asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy.”

Fidel Narváez, the former Ecuadorian consul at the embassy

who said he saw Assange everyday for six years, told the press conference: "I very much hope that what we presented today will break the shield that currently the Ecuadorian government has built in my country...aided by the Ecuadorian press that is not doing what it should do to challenge and question the government." He added: "There is lots of misinformation about Julian's asylum but one thing is clear: the new government of Ecuador is not protecting Julian Assange anymore as it should."

Diplomat Fired

On Friday WikiLeaks tweeted that a "high-level" source in the Ecuador government told WikiLeaks that Assange's expulsion and arrest would come in "hours to days." That set off a worldwide reaction of Assange supporters as well as by UN special rapporteurs. Heavily armed police have roamed the environs of the embassy, and people in unmarked cars have been parked outside, either as a form of intimidation or on standby waiting for orders to move in.

"The only reason it hasn't happened yet is because of the international shame that will be attached to Ecuador if it does so," Narváez said. "The government is clearly building a case to end the asylum and what we've seen here is the basis for that."

Walk up to one of the "undercover" cars staking out the Ecuadorian embassy in London. This particular car has seen three shifts of different pairs of people over the last twenty hours. Engines running, lights on. Watcher makes call under head cover. [pic.twitter.com/e778EN0nU6](https://t.co/cPfdib4kat) <https://t.co/cPfdib4kat>

– WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) [April 9, 2019](#)

WikiLeaks on Tuesday said that Ecuador had fired a diplomat from the embassy, accusing him of being “close” to Assange. The tweet implied that the diplomat may have been WikiLeaks’ source about Assange’s imminent expulsion and arrest.

Ecuador: we just fired an official "close to Assange" for not being loyal

Ecuadorian statement comes after a leak that it was planning to hand Assange over to be arrested, violating his asylum, after US pressure and inducements, within "hours to days".<https://t.co/TH1qTFxVbm>

– WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) [April 9, 2019](#)

The central question that remains is who had access to the surveillance material and then transferred it to the alleged extortioners. “I don’t know very much about that,” Hrafnsson said. “I assume that will be part of the investigation by the Spanish police authorities and by the Spanish lawyers. However we do have more material that I recorded in Spain and it will possibly cast more light on that chain—how it ended up in Spain. We will make it available online shortly. [But] I don’t want to speculate how that came about.”

The Ecuadorian government had prime possession of surveillance and the British and U.S. governments could have also obtained it, given their close contacts with Ecuador on Assange. However there would be little apparent motive for these governments to have made the surveillance known.

“Let’s remember that Julian Assange is not serving a sentence, he doesn’t have charges,” Narváez said. “He is a political refugee. Political refugees do not lose rights. On the contrary, they should have their rights protected.”

The following is the full video of the one-hour press

conference held in London on Wednesday:

Joe Lauria is editor-in-chief of Consortium News and a former correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, *Sunday Times* of London and numerous other newspapers. He can be reached at joelauria@consortiumnews.com and followed on Twitter [@unjoe](https://twitter.com/unjoe) .

Is Assange a Journalist?

When someone says “Assange isn’t a journalist”, they aren’t telling you what Assange is. They’re showing you who they are, says Caitlin Johnstone. Plus Ray McGovern answered the question on CNN nine years ago.

By [Caitlin Johnstone](#)

CaitlinJohnstone.com



As [discussed Saturday](#), whenever Julian Assange is in the news and people are defending him you always see a bunch of hyper-emotional empire loyalists running around online trying to manage the narrative about him. One of the most common talking points which comes up is that Assange is “not a journalist”.

The reason this talking point comes up, of course, is because the WikiLeaks founder is besieged by powerful forces who are attempting to imprison him for publishing inconvenient facts about them, and his defenders often voice their concerns about what this means for the future of press freedoms. The completely baseless claim that Assange is “not

a journalist” is used in an attempt to defuse the argument that his prosecution by the U.S. government could lead to the same fate for any news media outlet which publishes leaks on the US government anywhere in the world. If he’s not a journalist, then his prosecution sets no precedent for real journalists.

This argument, if you can call it that, is fallacious for a number of reasons. For starters, as *The Intercept*’s Glenn Greenwald explained last year, there’s not any legal distinction in the U.S. Constitution between news media outlets like the *The New York Times* and an outlet which solely focuses on publishing leaks. If you set the precedent with any publisher, you’re necessarily setting it for all of them. Greenwald writes the following:

To begin with, the press freedom guarantee of the First Amendment isn’t confined to “legitimate news outlets” – whatever that might mean. The First Amendment isn’t available only to a certain class of people licensed as “journalists.” It protects not a privileged group of people called “professional journalists” but rather *an activity*: namely, using the press (which at the time of the First Amendment’s enactment meant the literal printing press) to inform the public about what the government was doing. *Everyone* is entitled to that constitutional protection equally: there is no cogent way to justify why the Guardian, ex-DOJ-officials-turned-bloggers, or Marcy Wheeler are free to publish classified information but Julian Assange and WikiLeaks are not.

Secondly, anyone with a functioning brain can see that

Julian Assange is indeed a journalist. Publishing facts so that the citizenry can inform themselves about what's going on in their world and what's happening with their government is the thing that journalism is. Duh. The need for an informed citizenry is the entire reason why press freedoms are protected so explicitly under the U.S. Constitution, and publishing facts about the most powerful institutions on earth indisputably does create a more informed citizenry.

You can look at any conventional dictionary definition of the word and come to the same conclusion. Merriam-Webster offers "the public press" and "the collection and editing of news for presentation through the media". The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers, "The activity or profession of writing for newspapers, magazines, or news websites or preparing news to be broadcast." *Your Dictionary* offers, "the work of finding, creating, editing and publishing news, or material written and presented for a newspaper, magazine or broadcast news source." These are activities that WikiLeaks is undeniably involved in; they collect and publish newsworthy information to be circulated by themselves and other news sources. The fact that they do their part differently (and better) than other outlets doesn't change that.

Which explains why the WikiLeaks team has racked up numerous awards for journalism over the years, including the Walkley Award for Most Outstanding Contribution to Journalism (2011), the Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism (2011), the International Piero Pasetti Journalism Prize of the National Union of Italian Journalists (2011), the Jose Couso Press Freedom Award (2011), the Brazillian Press Association Human Rights Award (2013), and the Kazakstan Union of

Journalists Top Prize (2014).

The claim that Assange is “not a journalist” is both an irrelevant red herring and a self-evident falsehood. It is made not by people with an interest in maintaining a small and specific linguistic understanding of what the word journalism means, but by people who want to see Julian Assange imprisoned by the same government which tortured Chelsea Manning because he made them feel emotionally upset. It’s a fact-free argument made entirely in bad faith for inexcusable motives: the desire to see a journalist imprisoned for telling the truth.

When someone says “Assange isn’t a journalist”, they aren’t telling you what Assange is. They’re showing you what they are.

As early as Dec. 2010, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern on CNN answered the same question, arguing that Assange is a journalist, not a “high-tech terrorist.” McGovern was never invited back to CNN domestic service after this interview and only once more on CNN International.

Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly [at Medium](#). Follow her work on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or her [website](#). She has a [podcast](#) and a new book [“Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers.”](#) This article was re-published with permission.

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. A CIA analyst for 27 years and Washington area resident for 56 years, he has been attuned to these

machinations. He is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

We got Russia-gate right. Help us to keep on going.

Please make a tax-deductible donation to our Spring Fund Drive!

Consortium News' Record on Russia-gate—How CN Covered the 'Scandal': No. 5—'Spooks Spooking Themselves'

On Thursday Daniel Lazare wrote a review of a book about how intelligence agents set up aspects of the "collusion" story. But in May 2018 Lazare had already begun figuring out the story for himself.

By Daniel Lazare

Special to Consortium News



With the news that a Cambridge academic-cum-spy named Stefan Halper infiltrated the Trump campaign, the role of the intelligence agencies in shaping the great Russiagate saga is at last coming into focus.

It's looking more and more massive. The intelligence agencies initiated reports that Donald Trump was colluding with Russia, they nurtured them and helped them grow, and then they spread the word to the press and key government

officials. Reportedly, they even tried to use these reports to force Trump to step down prior to his inauguration. Although the corporate press accuses Trump of conspiring with Russia to stop Hillary Clinton, the reverse now seems to be the case: the Obama administration intelligence agencies worked with Clinton to block "Siberian candidate" Trump.

The template was provided by ex-MI6 Director Richard Dearlove, Halper's friend and business partner. Sitting in winged chairs in London's venerable Garrick Club, according to *The Washington Post*, Dearlove told fellow MI6 veteran Christopher Steele, author of the famous "golden showers" opposition research dossier, that Trump "reminded him of a predicament he had faced years earlier, when he was chief of station for British intelligence in Washington and alerted US authorities to British information that a vice presidential hopeful had once been in communication with the Kremlin."

Apparently, one word from the Brits was enough to make the candidate in question step down. When that didn't work with Trump, Dearlove and his colleagues ratcheted up the pressure to make him see the light. A major scandal was thus born – or, rather, a very questionable scandal.

Besides Dearlove, Steele, and Halper, a bon-vivant known as "The Walrus" for his impressive girth, other participants include:

- Robert Hannigan, former director Government Communications Headquarters, GCHQ, UK equivalent of the NSA.

- Alexander Downer, top Australian diplomat.
- Andrew Wood, ex-British ambassador to Moscow.
- Joseph Mifsud, Maltese academic.
- James Clapper, ex-US Director of National Intelligence.
- John Brennan, former CIA Director (and now NBC News analyst).

In-Bred

A few things stand out about this august group. One is its in-bred quality. After helping to run an annual confab known as the Cambridge Intelligence Seminar, Dearlove and Halper are now partners in a private venture calling itself “The Cambridge Security Initiative.” Both are connected to another London-based intelligence firm known as Hakluyt & Co. Halper is also connected via two books he wrote with Hakluyt representative [Jonathan Clarke](#) and Dearlove has a close personal friendship with Hakluyt founder Mike Reynolds, yet another MI6 vet. Alexander Downer [served](#) a half-dozen years on Hakluyt’s international advisory board, while Andrew Wood is linked to Steele via Orbis Business Intelligence, the private research firm that Steele helped found, and which produced the anti-Trump dossier, and where Wood now serves as an [unpaid advisor](#).

Everyone, in short, seems to know everyone else. But another thing that stands out about this group is its incompetence. Dearlove and Halper appear to be old-school paranoids for whom every Russian is [a Boris Badenov or a Natasha Fatale](#). In February 2014, Halper notified US intelligence that Mike Flynn, Trump’s future national security adviser, had grown overly chummy with an Anglo-Russian scholar named Svetlana Lokhova whom Halper suspected

of being a spy – suspicions that Lokhova convincingly argues are absurd.

In December 2016, Halper and Dearlove both resigned from the Cambridge Intelligence Seminar because they suspected that a company footing some of the costs was tied up with Russian intelligence – suspicions that Christopher Andrew, former chairman of the Cambridge history department and the seminar's founder, regards as “absurd” as well.

As head of Britain's foreign Secret Intelligence Service, as MI6 is formally known, Dearlove played a major role in drumming up support for the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq even while confessing at a secret Downing Street meeting that “the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the [regime-change] policy.” When the search for weapons of mass destruction turned up dry, Clapper, as then head of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency, argued that the Iraqi military must have smuggled them into neighboring Syria, a charge with absolutely no basis in fact but which helped pave the way for US regime-change efforts in that country too.

Please make your tax-deductible donation to our Spring Fund Drive today!

Brennan was meanwhile a high-level CIA official when the agency was fabricating evidence against Saddam Hussein and covering up Saudi Arabia's role in 9/11. Wood not only continues to defend the Iraqi invasion, but dismisses fears of a rising fascist tide in the Ukraine as nothing more than “a crude political insult” hurled by Vladimir Putin for his own political benefit. Such views now

seem distressingly misguided in view of the alt-right torchlight parades and spiraling anti-Semitism that are now a regular feature of life in the Ukraine.

The result is a diplo-espionage gang that is very bad at the facts but very good at public manipulation – and which therefore decided to use its skill set out to create a public furor over alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

It Started Late 2015

The effort began in late 2015 when GCHQ, along with intelligence agencies in Poland, Estonia, and Germany, began monitoring what they said were “suspicious ‘interactions’ between figures connected to Trump and known or suspected Russian agents.”

Since Trump was surging ahead in the polls and scaring the pants off the foreign-policy establishment by calling for a rapprochement with Moscow, the agencies figured that Russia was somehow behind it. The pace accelerated in March 2016 when a 30-year-old policy consultant named George Papadopoulos joined the Trump campaign as a foreign-policy adviser. Traveling in Italy a week later, he ran into Mifsud, the London-based Maltese academic, who reportedly set about cultivating him after learning of his position with Trump. Mifsud claimed to have “substantial connections with Russian government officials,” according to prosecutors. Over breakfast at a London hotel, he told Papadopoulos that he had just returned from Moscow where he had learned that the Russians had “dirt” on Hillary Clinton in the form of “thousands of emails.”

This was the remark that supposedly triggered an FBI investigation. *The New York Times* describes Mifsud as “an enthusiastic promoter of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia” and “a regular at meetings of the Valdai Discussion Club, an annual conference held in Sochi, Russia, that Mr. Putin attends,” which tried to suggest that he is a Kremlin agent of some sort. But WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange later tweeted photos of Mifsud with British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and a high-ranking British intelligence official named Claire Smith at a training session for Italian security agents in Rome. Since it’s unlikely that British intelligence would rely on a Russian agent in such circumstances, Mifsud’s intelligence ties are more likely with the UK.

After Papadopoulos caused a minor political ruckus by telling a reporter that Prime Minister David Cameron should apologize for criticizing Trump’s anti-Muslim pronouncements, a friend in the Israeli embassy put him in touch with a friend in the Australian embassy, who introduced him to Downer, her boss. Over drinks, Downer advised him to be more diplomatic. After Papadopoulos then passed along Mifsud’s tip about Clinton’s emails, Downer informed his government, which, in late July, informed the FBI.

Was Papadopoulos Set Up?

Suspicious are unavoidable but evidence is lacking. Other pieces were meanwhile clicking into place. In late May or early June 2016, Fusion GPS, a private Washington intelligence firm employed by the Democratic National Committee, hired Steele to look into the Russian angle.

On June 20, he turned in the first of eighteen memos that would eventually comprise the Steele dossier, in this instance a three-page document asserting that Putin “has been cultivating, supporting and assisting TRUMP for at least 5 years” and that Russian intelligence possessed “kompromat” in the form of a video of prostitutes performing a “golden showers” show for his benefit at the Moscow Ritz-Carlton. A week or two later, Steele briefed the FBI on his findings. Around the same time, Robert Hannigan flew to Washington to brief CIA Director John Brennan about additional material that had come GCHQ’s way, material so sensitive that it could only be handled at “director level.”

One player was filling Papadopoulos’s head with tales of Russian dirty tricks, another was telling the FBI, while a third was collecting more information and passing it on to the bureau as well.

On July 7, 2016 Carter Page delivered a lecture on U.S.-Russian relations in Moscow in which he complained that “Washington and other western capitals have impeded potential progress through their often hypocritical focus on ideas such as democratization, inequality, corruption, and regime change.” Washington hawks expressed “unease” that someone representing the presumptive Republican nominee would take Russia’s side in a growing neo-Cold War.

Stefan Halper then infiltrated the Trump campaign on behalf of the FBI as an informant in early July, weeks before the FBI launched its investigation. Halper had 36 years earlier infiltrated the Carter re-election campaign in 1980 using CIA agents to turn information over to the Reagan campaign.

Now Halper began to court both Page and Papadopoulos, independently of each other.

On July 11, Page showed up at a Cambridge symposium at which Halper and Dearlove both spoke. In early September, Halper sent Papadopoulos an email offering \$3,000 and a paid trip to London to write a research paper on a disputed gas field in the eastern Mediterranean, his specialty. "George, you know about hacking the emails from Russia, right?" Halper asked when he got there, but Papadopoulos said he knew nothing. Halper also sought out Sam Clovis, Trump's national campaign co-chairman, with whom he chatted about China for an hour or so over coffee in Washington.

The rightwing Federalist website speculates that Halper was working with Steele to flesh out a Sept. 14 memo claiming that "Russians do have further 'kompromat' on CLINTON (emails) and [are] considering disseminating it." Clovis believes that Halper was trying "to create an audit trail back to those [Clinton] emails from someone in the campaign ... so they could develop a stronger case for probable cause to continue to issue warrants and to further an investigation." Reports that Halper apparently sought a permanent post in the new administration suggest that the effort was meant to continue after inauguration.

Please make your tax-deductible donation to our Spring Fund Drive today!

Notwithstanding Clovis's nutty rightwing politics, his description of what Halper may have been up to makes sense as does his observation that Halper was trying "to build something that did not exist." Despite countless hyper-

ventilating headlines about mysterious Trump Tower meetings and the like, the sad truth is that Russiagate after all these months is shaping up as even more of a “nothing-burger” than Obama administration veteran Van Jones said it was back in mid-2017. Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller has indicted Papadopoulos and others on procedural grounds, he has indicted former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort for corruption, and he has charged a St. Petersburg company known as the Internet Research Agency with violating US election laws.

But the corruption charges have nothing to do with Russian collusion and nothing in the indictment against IRA indicates that either the Kremlin or the Trump campaign were involved. Indeed, the activities that got IRA in trouble in the first place are so unimpressive – just \$46,000 worth of Facebook ads that it purchased prior to election day, some pro-Trump, some anti, and some with no particular slant at all – that Mueller probably wouldn’t even have bothered if he hadn’t been under intense pressure to come up with anything at all.

The same goes for the army of bots that Russia supposedly deployed on Twitter. As *The Washington Post* noted in an oddly, cool-headed Dec. 2 article, 2,700 suspected Russian-linked accounts generated just 202,000 tweets in a six-year period ending in August 2017, a drop in a bucket compared to the one billion election-related tweets sent out during the fourteen months leading up to Election Day.

The Steele dossier is also underwhelming. It declares on one page that the Kremlin sought to cultivate Trump by throwing “various lucrative real estate development business

deals" his way but says on another that Trump's efforts to drum up business were unavailing and that he thus "had to settle for the use of extensive sexual services there from local prostitutes rather than business success."

Why would Trump turn down business offers when he couldn't generate any on his own? The idea that Putin would spot a U.S. reality-TV star somewhere around 2011 and conclude that he was destined for the Oval Office five years later is ludicrous. The fact that the Democratic National Committee funded the dossier via its law firm Perkins Coie renders it less credible still, as does the fact that the world has heard nothing more about the alleged video despite the ongoing deterioration in US-Russian relations. What's the point of making a blackmail tape if you don't use it?

Even Steele is backing off. In a legal paper filed in response to a libel suit last May, he said the document "did not represent (and did not purport to represent) verified facts, but were raw intelligence which had identified a range of allegations that warranted investigation given their potential national security implications." The fact is that the "dossier" was opposition research, not an intelligence report. It was neither vetted by Steele nor anyone in an intelligence agency. Opposition research is intended to mix truths and fiction, to dig up plausible dirt to throw at your opponent, not to produce an intelligence assessment at taxpayer's expense to "protect" the country. And Steele was paid for it by the Democrats, not his government.

Using it Anyway

Nonetheless, the spooks have made the most of such pseudo-evidence. Dearlove and Wood both advised Steele to take his “findings” to the FBI, while, after the election, Wood pulled Sen. John McCain aside at a security conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to let him know that the Russians might be blackmailing the president-elect. McCain dispatched long-time aide David J. Kramer to the UK to discuss the dossier with Steele directly.

Although Kramer denies it, *The New Yorker* found a former national-security official who says he spoke with him at the time and that Kramer’s goal was to have McCain confront Trump with the dossier in the hope that he would resign on the spot. When that didn’t happen, Clapper and Brennan arranged for FBI Director James Comey to confront Trump instead. Comey later testified that he didn’t want Trump to think he was creating “a J. Edgar Hoover-type situation – I didn’t want him thinking I was briefing him on this to sort of hang it over him in some way.”

But how could Trump think otherwise? As *Consortium News* founding editor Robert Parry observed a few days later, the maneuver “resembles a tactic out of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover’s playbook on government-style blackmail: I have some very derogatory information about you that I’d sure hate to see end up in the press.”

Since then, the Democrats have touted the dossier at every opportunity, *The New Yorker* continues to defend it, while *Times* columnist Michelle Goldberg cites it as well, saying it’s a “rather obvious possibility that Trump is being blackmailed.” CNN, for its part, suggested not long ago that the dossier may actually be Russian

disinformation designed to throw everyone off base, Republicans and Democrats alike.

It sounds more like CIA paranoia raised to the *nth* degree. But that's what the intelligence agencies are for, i.e. to spread fear and propaganda in order to stampede the public into supporting their imperial agenda. In this case, their efforts are so effective that they've gotten lost in a fog of their own making. If the corporate press fails to point this out, it's because reporters are too befogged themselves to notice.

Daniel Lazare is the author of *The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution Is Paralyzing Democracy* (Harcourt Brace, 1996) and other books about American politics. He has written for a wide variety of publications from *The Nation* to *Le Monde Diplomatique*, and his articles about the Middle East, terrorism, Eastern Europe, and other topics appear regularly on such websites as *Jacobin* and *The American Conservative*.

We got Russia-gate right. Help us to keep on going.

Daniel Ellsberg, John Kiriakou, Lee Camp and Many More in Marathon Assange Vigil

Unity4J held an online vigil from Friday and through Monday morning after two sources in the Ecuadorian government told WikiLeaks it can expect Julian Assange to be expelled from

the London Embassy within “hours or days.”

Among the guests who joined the #ProtectJulian webcast to discuss the latest threat from Ecuador, were famed Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg; CIA whistleblower John Kiriakou; comedians Lee Camp and Ron Placone; former U.S. Senator Mike Gravel; journalists Jose Rivera, Dmitry Babich, Gareth Porter, Cassandra Fairbanks (from outside the embassy), Margaret Kimberley and Patrick Henningsen; former CIA analyst Ray McGovern; activists Margaret Flowers, Kevin Zeese, and Niko House; academics Piers Robinson and many more. The hosts were Elizabeth Vos, Suzie Dawson, Vivian Kubrick and Joe Lauria. The vigil can be seen here:

BREAKING: Assange ‘Will Be’ Arrested in ‘Hours to Days,’ WikiLeaks Says

WikiLeaks has quoted a “high-level” Ecuadorian government source as saying that Julian Assange could be imminently expelled from Ecuador’s London embassy and that Quito has an agreement with the UK to arrest him.

By Joe Lauria

Special to Consortium News

WikiLeaks warned Thursday that its founder “will be expelled within ‘hours to days’” from Ecuador’s London embassy and that Ecuador has an agreement with Britain to have him arrested.

President Lenin Moreno will use the pretext of a scandal engulfing his presidency to oust Assange, a “high level source” in the Ecuador government told WikiLeaks.

BREAKING: A high level source within the Ecuadorian state has told [@WikiLeaks](#) that Julian Assange will be expelled within "hours to days" using the [#INAPapers](#) offshore scandal as a pretext—and that it already has an agreement with the UK for his arrest.<https://t.co/adnJph79wq>

– WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) [April 4, 2019](#)

Moreno has [accused WikiLeaks](#) of leaking documents allegedly implicating him and his family in a corruption scheme with a Panamanian investment firm, INA Investments Corp. WikiLeaks has denied being behind the leaks and no documents related to the scandal appear on its website.

Moreno said the alleged leak by WikiLeaks is a breach in a “protocol” with Assange that allows him to remain in the London embassy in exchange for his public silence on all political matters. Assange has never agreed to the protocol. His social media accounts were shut down by Ecuador in March 2018.

Because of this so-called “breach,” Assange will be made to leave the embassy and would be arrested by British authorities. Assange has been a refugee inside the embassy since 2012, fearing that if he were to be arrested the UK would extradite him to the United States to stand trial for publishing classified information.

Last week Assange engaged in a [shouting match](#) with Ecuador’s ambassador inside the embassy. The move to expel Assange has been building for months. Last week Defend Assange, a

publication of WikiLeaks-linked Courage Foundation, reported:

“On 28 March, Communications Minister Andrés Michelena told CNN Español that the INApapers were part of a plot [by] Julian Assange, Venezuelan President Maduro and former Ecuadorian President Correa to bring down Moreno’s government. [Michelena] added, ‘You have to understand how these people are connected, Mr. Assange is the Troll Center, the hacker for former President Correa, [Assange] handles the technological and social media side.’

That same day, the national assembly, in which Moreno’s party and other right parties command a majority, passed a resolution inviting the Foreign Ministry to take action against Assange’s asylum on the basis of the INApapers leak “in the national interest” if it considers it pertinent to do so.”

Supporters of WikiLeaks and Assange rapidly called for an increased presence at the Ecuadorian Embassy, located at Number 3, Hans Crescent in London.

Julian Assange’s mother, Christine Assange, tweeted:

URGENT

Julian about to be expelled from Embassy into hands of UK (US)!

NEEDED NOW!

* 24/7 Citizens Vigil

*24/7 Livestreaming using hashtag #ProtectJulian

WHERE:#Ecuador Embassy

3 Hans Cres

LONDON

(Knightsbridge Railway Station/Piccadilly line)

Please RT/share widely <https://t.co/SARV6m7p4Z>

– Mrs. Christine Assange (@AssangeMrs) [April 4, 2019](#)

A live stream of what is happening outside the embassy can be found [here](#):

Award-winning journalist and filmmaker [John Pilger](#) wrote via Twitter: “WikiLeaks reports that Julian Assange is on the verge of being expelled from the Ecuadorean Embassy in London. Please fill the street outside the embassy and protect him, and show solidarity with a courageous man, whose struggle ought to touch us all.” A marathon online vigil for Assange will begin Friday at 4 pm EST, to be webcast by ***Consortium News***.

Christine Assange, whose Twitter account has twice been [restricted](#) in the past two weeks, is expected on the vigil.

Elizabeth Vos contributed to this story.
