

WikiLeaks founder was warned of CIA “dirty tricks” campaign

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The Age, a daily newspaper in Melbourne, Australia, reported Wednesday that WikiLeaks had been told last August 11 that co-founder Julian Assange was the subject of investigations by US and Australia security organizations.

According to the article, “Sources within WikiLeaks have told *The Age* that an Australian intelligence official privately warned WikiLeaks on August 11 last year that Assange was the subject of inquiries by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, and that information relating to him and others associated with WikiLeaks had been provided to the US in response to requests through intelligence liaison channels.”

The Australian intelligence official “specifically warned that Assange could be at the risk of ‘dirty tricks’ from the US intelligence community, including the possibility of sexual entrapment,” the newspaper said.

Nine days after this warning, a Swedish newspaper revealed that Swedish police wanted to question Assange on sexual assault allegations by two women. Assange told the Al Jazeera television network August 23 about the warning from Australian intelligence earlier in the month, a direct confirmation of the story carried in the Melbourne newspaper yesterday.

Assange is fighting extradition from Great Britain to Sweden under a European Arrest Warrant issued by one Swedish prosecutor after another refused to bring charges, contending there was no evidence Assange had committed any crime. A London judge ruled in favour of extradition last month, and lawyers for Assange have filed papers with the court seeking leave to appeal. Assange is under virtual house arrest in Britain while the court case proceeds.

The report in *The Age* underscores the likelihood that

the prosecution of Assange in Sweden was organized by the Central Intelligence Agency, for the twofold purpose of disrupting WikiLeaks' ongoing exposures of US war crimes and creating the conditions where Assange could eventually be extradited to the United States for prosecution under “war on terror” procedures that make a mockery of due process.

On Tuesday, the high commissioner for human rights of the Council of Europe, Thomas Hammarberg, called the European Arrest Warrant a “threat to human rights,” citing its highly publicized use against Assange. He said the procedure was frequently subject to abuse by prosecutors. EAWs were introduced in 2002 as an alleged anti-terrorism measure, but instead of being used only for those suspected or convicted of the most serious crimes, the process is now being used indiscriminately.

“Human rights organizations have expressed concerns about the imprisonment of innocent persons, disproportionate arrests, violations of procedural rights and the impossibility in some countries for an innocent person to appeal against a decision to be surrendered,” Hammarberg said in Brussels. “The problems appear to have worsened with the increase of the number of EAWs—there are now an average of more than one thousand per month, the overwhelming majority of which relate to minor crimes.”

The human rights commissioner singled out the fact that the only condition for executing an EAW is that the suspect be accused of a crime carrying a minimum prison sentence of 12 months. There is no requirement that there be significant evidence against the suspect, let alone an actual conviction.

In a statement to the press, Catherine Heard of the British non-profit Fair Trials International said there was an extensive record of EAW abuses. “We have

seen the lives and futures of many ordinary people—teachers, firemen, chefs and students—blighted by the European Arrest Warrant, a system that infringes basic rights and fails to deliver a fair and efficient extradition system,” she said.

European Union Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding told the website EUObserver.com that the European Commission was currently reviewing the EAW procedure and would publish proposals for amendment next month. These are unlikely to affect the case of Assange, however, she indicated.

Meanwhile the WikiLeaks website continues to publish thousands of US diplomatic cables, mainly from the decade ending in 2009. On Thursday, the Turkish *Daily Taraf* began publishing the 11,000 documents relating to Turkey from that period. Julian Assange announced an agreement with the newspaper, which does not provide for any monetary transaction.

The Turkish newspaper said it would disguise the names of powerless individuals who might be victimized by the Turkish military or government or by other political forces in Turkey. However, it maintained that “people who have the power to defend themselves in an impartial legal process or by employing their political and financial power will not be redacted no matter what judicial system they answer to.”



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