



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Key witness in Assange case admits to lies. Why isn't PM Morrison demanding Assange's release?

This release was first published as an article by Jeremy Beck in the 28 July 2021 Australian Alert Service.

The Icelandic newspaper [Stundin on 26 June reported](#) that a key US witness in the indictment of Julian Assange for conspiracy to commit computer intrusion had changed his story. The witness in question, Sigurdur Ingi Thordarson, was a US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informant who in Iceland participated in a sting operation on Assange. Despite Thordarson being a diagnosed borderline sociopath, convicted serial paedophile and financial fraudster, US prosecutors have long sought to use his "evidence" to pursue Assange's extradition. Now, in several hours of interview with *Stundin*, Thordarson has admitted this "evidence" is a lie.

The sting operation run by the FBI sought to frame Assange in a criminal case of hacking—conspiracy to commit computer intrusion—in Iceland. US prosecutors clearly wanted such a computer charge to bolster the flimsy allegation that Assange hacked computers in the USA. There is a reason why the hacking charge is so vital: Charging a journalist with espionage for unauthorised possession and dissemination of secret documents runs the risk of violating the First Amendment of the US Constitution, which states that no US law may infringe "freedom of speech, or of the press". US prosecutors have still pushed this line on the flimsy pretext that Assange is not a US citizen, but a charge of criminal hacking is far more desirable for them.

Prosecutors were always on shaky constitutional ground in pursuing charges under the US *Espionage Act*. How could the US government prosecute Assange, but not other news organisations which also published classified material from WikiLeaks? Several human rights and press freedom organisations made this point in a [19 June 2014 letter](#) to US Attorney General Eric Holder. They stated: "In a recent meeting with media representatives, you promised that 'as long as I am attorney general, no reporter who is doing his job is going to go to jail'. Yet, the continued criminal investigation and other persecution of WikiLeaks and Mr Assange puts them at serious risk. Well-respected legal scholars across the political spectrum have stated that a prosecution of WikiLeaks or Mr Assange for publishing classified material or interacting with sources could criminalise the newsgathering process and put all editors and journalists at risk of prosecution."

A [Consortium News webcast](#) on 9 July 2021 reveals the nature of the FBI sting operation on Assange and how Iceland's then-Interior Minister Ögmundur Jónasson resisted this US foreign interference. "Now in the summer of 2011, we got word from American authorities, through Icelandic police and the Icelandic Foreign Office, that American intelligence had obtained information that Icelandic institutions, key institutions, might be under imminent computer attack", said Jónasson. "We of course were alarmed, and contacted all the major institutions that we could think were under such a threat, the Icelandic energy, power industry and then government institutions. Now, this was in June 2011.

"The American police, the FBI and the prosecutor of New York police, they asked if we were interested to share information and to cooperate on the investigation of this matter. Of course, we were interested to receive all information they might have on such a serious matter. ... A planeload of FBI agents, between seven and nine of them, landed at Reykjavik airport, in the evening of 24th of August [2011]." But as Jónasson explained, the FBI came to Iceland for "completely different purposes".

"What was the purpose of the visit? And then I learned what really was happening. And what was that? Well, they were in Iceland to try to frame WikiLeaks and Julian Assange in particular. ... That was the purpose of the visit. When I knew this, I said ... they had no permission to stay on in Iceland. And when I heard that they were on the way to the Icelandic police headquarters for a meeting on the matter, I stopped this immediately and said there will be no, should be no further cooperation with this mission. And they were made to understand that they were not wanted in Iceland. ... And then we made it clear to the US Embassy that they were not wanted here, and they left the country."

WikiLeaks Editor-in-Chief Kristinn Hrafnsson, who is also from Iceland, provided valuable insights to the Consortium News webcast. He referred to the two parts in Assange's indictment: "of course we have all the espionage charges, [in] which everybody sees the serious implication of the threat to press freedom and the First Amendment. But then you have the so-called hacking charges, which is

mostly a PR stunt in many ways. It is the attempt to depict Julian not as a journalist but as a hacker. So it's based on this alleged conspiracy that Julian took active part in in Chelsea Manning's attempt to get information out, so he is a co-conspirator. But it was already known in the first half of the hearing in London last year, in February, how thin that case was."

The FBI sting operation used Thordarson, who had repeatedly inflated his position within WikiLeaks, describing himself as chief of staff, head of communications, No. 2 in the organisation or responsible for recruits. But as Hrafnsson explains, Thordarson was merely a volunteer for a brief time and was put in charge as a moderator of a chat line. He abused this position, stole about \$50,000 from WikiLeaks, and when facing legal action over this theft, he went to the US embassy to offer himself as an FBI informant in exchange for immunity.

Thordarson told the FBI lies that Assange directed hacking operations in Iceland. The FBI surely knew this story was farfetched because Assange had good relations with the Icelandic authorities. And the fact that Thordarson has been sentenced for violating nine under-age boys and is a known conman and thief doesn't seem to faze US prosecutors. The aim was never true justice, and the UK and US authorities continue to push for extradition. This latest revelation should be enough for the Morrison government to demand they stop persecuting this Australian citizen.