Julian Assange should be protected from US ‘Rocket Docket’

It is no coincidence that the original 2012 indictment of Assange was handed down by the US Eastern District of Virginia, which as the following article documents, comprises a nest of Anglophiles closely connected to the highest levels of the British establishment. The Alexandria court has become infamous for ramming through convictions in record time, regardless of evidence, including the railroad of US economist Lyndon LaRouche in 1988. It has become known as the "Rocket Docket". If extradited, this is what Assange will face.

Alarms over the physical well-being of



Campaigners to stop Assange being extradited, outside the Home Office. Photo: Twitter

Australian citizen Julian Assange, journalist and anti-war activist in his capacity as founder and chief editor of WikiLeaks, have been raised with increasing urgency in recent weeks. On 23 November scores of physicians released an open letter to UK Home Secretary Priti Patel and Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott, “to express our serious concerns about the physical and mental health of Julian Assange”. They cited the eyewitness accounts of former Ambassador Craig Murray and others, of Assange’s apparent conditions during a 21 October case management hearing in Westminster Magistrates Court. (Murray’s report was excerpted in “Assange in Court”, *AAS*, 30 Oct. 2019.)

On 28 November at St. Pancras Church in London, Murray and others reported on the immediate danger to Assange’s life. Links to video clips of the presentations are at Consortium News.

Assange is incarcerated in a maximum-security British prison, awaiting a February 2020 hearing on extraditing him to the USA to stand trial on espionage charges. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, when he was Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director for President Donald Trump earlier, described WikiLeaks as a “non-state hostile intelligence service”.

Assange has been in confinement for nine years following allegations in 2010 that he had raped two women during a visit to Sweden. It was understood from the outset, that the Swedish charges were fake and had an ultimate goal of the extradition of Assange to the USA, because WikiLeaks had released thousands of pages of classified material on the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Swedish authorities, after investigating the rape charges against Assange three times, in 2010, 2017 and 2019, on 19 November terminated that case, declaring the evidence “not strong enough to form the basis for filing an indictment”.

Assange, meanwhile, his 2012-19 safe haven in the Ecuadorian embassy in London having been terminated in April, is being held in Britain’s Belmarsh maximum-security prison. He was arrested on charges of failing to appear to address the Swedish charges that were never filed. The day of that arrest in the UK, the US Department of Justice announced an indictment of Assange on charges of publishing classified US intelligence. A grand jury had handed down the indictment on 6 March 2018, the last day before the statute of limitation ran out on the 2010 WikiLeaks data disclosures, but it was kept under seal until Assange was arrested by the British authorities. On 23 May 2019, the same grand jury in the Eastern District of Virginia handed down an 18-count superseding indictment, this time under the *Espionage Act*.

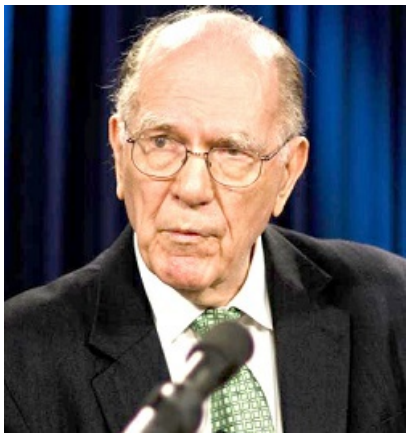
While still in the Ecuadorian embassy, Assange’s physical conditions and health had deteriorated. He has been held in maximum-security conditions thereafter, but was recently moved to the prison’s hospital facilities, although there are no public details about what kind of medical services are available. On 1 November 2019 UN Special Rapporteur Nils Melzer, who deals with torture cases, warned that Assange was in danger of death as the result of the inhuman conditions he endured for the past seven years. Melzer had visited Assange in prison with two medical doctors who are experts on torture.

If Assange manages to stay alive under conditions the UN defines as “torture” but is extradited to the United States, he will face rigged proceedings in a court known as the “rocket docket”, with judge and jury predisposed to convict.

The Eastern District of Virginia

The US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, based in the city of Alexandria across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, is notorious as the “rocket docket”, because it functions as a speedy and well-oiled machine to dispense with politically sensitive cases. The jury pool in this district is dominated by Federal government workers, and the District Court’s judges generally have ties to the “deep state” structures within the US intelligence community. The Court is notorious for flagrant bias in favour of prosecutors, denying the right of accused persons to muster exculpatory evidence, and willingness to upend the Constitutional right to a fair trial.

In recent years, the conviction of US economist Lyndon LaRouche and six co-defendants in 1988, on trumped-up charges of “mail fraud”, exemplifies the work of the rocket docket. Their race-to-judgment trial began with a ruling by presiding Judge Albert V. Bryan, Jr, prohibiting any defence attempt to prove the political targeting and frameup of the defendants by the government.


American statesman and economist, Lyndon LaRouche.

Bryan’s ruling came despite the interruption of an earlier trial of LaRouche and a larger group of defendants, in Boston, by the discovery of evidence of precisely such a targeting of LaRouche by the notorious Lt. Col. Oliver North, a major player in the George H.W. Bush-run Iran-Contra scandal, which LaRouche and his associates had exposed. The five-month Boston trial had ended in a mistrial, after which jurors told the press they believed there had been government wrong-doing and they would have acquitted the defendants. Because it was clear to Federal prosecutors, including Robert Mueller (of more recent fame as Special Counsel for “Russiagate”), that a retrial in Boston would not produce a conviction, a new indictment was engineered in Alexandria, Virginia. This was a violation of the Constitutional protection against double jeopardy—being tried for the same alleged crimes twice— and was aimed at securing a conviction and silencing LaRouche and his movement at all costs. The rocket docket was the jurisdiction in which that outcome could be preordained.

Executive Intelligence Review (*EIR*) magazine profiled the rocket docket and its leading family, the Bryans, in a 15 December 1995 article, edited highlights of which follow here.

Alexandria’s racist Tory establishment

Albert Vickers Bryan, Jr (1926-2019), who as senior judge for the Eastern District of Virginia personally commanded the railroading of LaRouche in 1989, was a seasoned operative of an Alexandria, Virginia-based clique of wealthy families. The Alexandria power nexus is a closeknit group, whose treasonous activities date back to before the US Civil War (1860s). In the post-Civil War period, there was a unified oligarchical network, extending from the Potomac River to the Blue Ridge Mountains, with connections into the Old South.


Judge Albert V. Bryan, Jr. Photo: openjurist.org

The Bryan family’s activity within this group dates to no later than the early 20th century, when Albert Bryan, the grandfather of Judge Albert V. Bryan, Jr, became a powerful lawyer in Alexandria, a Democratic Party chairman, and a director of First and Citizens Bank, the region’s largest financial institution. His son, Albert V. Bryan, Sr, inherited his father’s mantle as lawyer, banker, and Democratic Party power broker. From 1947 to 1961 he served as a judge of the Federal Court in the Eastern District of Virginia, and it was he who established the infamous “rocket docket”, where it is more important for the railroad to run on time, than for justice to be delivered. In 1961 Bryan, Sr was elevated to a judgeship on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, where he saw that “rocket docket” practices were enforced. The federal courthouse in Alexandria is named in his honour.

Albert V. Bryan, Jr continued the family tradition. Before following his father onto the federal bench, he trained as a facilitator for the Anglophile Alexandria establishment. In 1955, at the age of 29, he helped to create Interarms, an international arms supply company based in Alexandria and London. Interarms was a private intelligence firm, which supplied rifles and small arms to foreign governments and insurgency movements alike. Its first contract moved a half-million rifles purchased from the British War Ministry to the government of Argentina. Other Interarms projects included selling arms to the government of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, and then to Fidel Castro. Nominally headed by Samuel Cummings, who had worked for CIA head Allen Dulles in Guatemala and the Caribbean, Interarms was a project of Gardner L. Boothe and his friend Clarence J. Robinson. Boothe was then

president of First and Citizens National Bank, which financed the creation of Interarms and many of its projects. Both Robinson and Bryan, Jr were officers of the bank. Bryan was co-counsel for First and Citizens, along with Boothe's law firm. He was the registered agent for Robinson's Terminal Warehouse, the Alexandria depot in which Interarms stored its weapons for shipment.

After establishing Interarms, Bryan, Jr followed his father into the judiciary. In 1962 he was appointed to a state court judgeship, and, in 1971, President Richard Nixon appointed him to the federal court. In 1978 Bryan, Jr was appointed to the panel of judges on the newly created court established under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), a secret court which approves Justice Department requests for national security warrants, wire-taps, and other surveillance techniques.

In December 1955, the same year that Interarms was crafted, Gardner Boothe's son Armistead travelled to London as a trustee of Colonial Williamsburg to present its first "Freedom" award to Winston Churchill. At the dinner honouring Churchill at Grovesnor Hall, Boothe sat at the head table next to then-Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan and the Earl of Crawford. During the trip Boothe, chairman Winthrop Rockefeller, and the three other trustees of Colonial Williamsburg held a private meeting with Churchill at his home; Rockefeller had a private audience with the Queen. This was only one of many occasions throughout the 20th century, on which the Virginia clique hobnobbed with British royalty.

A close family friend of the Bryans was Judge Howard W. Smith, Sr., who in 1930 won election to the US Congress with backing from the Bryans. Smith remained in Congress for 36 years, 12 of them as chairman of the powerful Rules Committee. Pro-Confederates, "Tories" as such Anglophile would-be oligarchs were known in the USA, the Smiths and Bryans also shared a hatred of fundamental American ideals, defined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Both vehemently opposed giving US citizens of African-American descent their lawful rights. Smith led the opposition to the 1964 *Civil Rights Act*. He defended slavery and publicly declared that "southern people have never accepted the coloured race as a race of people who had equal intelligence and education and social attainments as the white people of the South".

Smith's closest friends, the Bryans, were racist obstructionists, too. The senior Bryan issued rulings in favour of the "separate but equal" doctrine, which kept the races apart in American schools and condemned African-American children to inferior education. Albert V. Bryan, Jr, who would be the judge in LaRouche's case, did not let the 1954 Supreme Court decision in favour of school integration deter him from carrying on the fight to deny full citizenship to African-Americans. In 1955, he endorsed Virginia's Gray plan, which flaunted its opposition to the Supreme Court and which explicitly stated that its aims were to resist court-ordered integration.

The US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, with its Bryan-shaped legacy of Anglophilia and catering to the wishes of the political oligarchy, and its record of "rocket" summary judgments, is not a venue for obtaining justice, nor is it a safe place for Julian Assange.

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