

Sweden's investigation into Julian Assange was a political frame-up from the outset

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On Friday, Swedish authorities announced they were dropping their investigation into sexual misconduct charges against WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange. In fact, they have no case whatsoever and never did. The entire affair was a “dirty tricks” operation from the outset, aimed at discrediting and paralyzing WikiLeaks and creating conditions under which Assange could be extradited or abducted to the US, to be executed or condemned to a lifetime in prison.

WikiLeaks' sole “crime” was to shed light on the illegal and murderous activities of American imperialism and its allies in Iraq, Afghanistan and around the globe.

The fraudulent “rape” charge campaign against Assange has been conducted over the past seven years by the combined forces of the American military-intelligence apparatus and media, on the one hand, and pseudo-left politics, on the other. The former has provided the muscle, while the latter has contributed the “brains” of the operation, legitimizing the attack against Assange every step of the way in the name of supposedly defending women from abuse.

The dropping of the Swedish investigation does not mean that the drive to suppress exposures of Washington's criminality will come to a halt. Far from it. The terrain and conditions have simply shifted. The US authorities and their allies have not for one instant given up on the notion of making WikiLeaks an example.

The US has let it be known that it has prepared charges against Assange, and Washington would like to see Assange extradited to the US. The British authorities, moreover, said they would still arrest Assange if he left the Ecuadorian embassy, where he has been trapped for five years, for a breach of bail offense.

In his fascist rant delivered at the Center for Strategic and International Studies on April 13, Donald Trump's CIA director, Michael Pompeo, asserted that “WikiLeaks walks like a hostile intelligence service and talks like a hostile intelligence service... It is time to call out

WikiLeaks for what it really is—a non-state hostile intelligence service often abetted by state actors like Russia.” He further proclaimed, “We have to recognize that we can no longer allow Assange and his colleagues the latitude to use free speech values against us.”

Threats of violence against Assange and WikiLeaks are nothing new. While former US Vice President Joseph Biden likened Assange to a “hi-tech terrorist,” former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich said that the WikiLeaks founder “should be treated as an enemy combatant.”

Bob Beckel, Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale's campaign manager in 1984 and a Fox News commentator, suggested subtly, “This guy's a traitor, he's treasonous, and he has broken every law of the United States... There's only one way to do it: illegally shoot the son of a bitch.”

Apologists for the persecution of WikiLeaks like to sneer at the notion of a “conspiracy” against the organization. Of course, there was a conspiracy, although there was hardly anything secret about it.

At the time of the opening of the investigation by Swedish authorities into Assange's alleged misdeeds in 2010, a small army of FBI and Pentagon operatives, directed by Obama administration officials, was already working overtime figuring out how to shut down WikiLeaks and neutralize its leading personnel.

A *Daily Beast* article in September 2010 explained: “Dubbed the WikiLeaks War Room by some of its occupants, the round-the-clock operation is on high alert this month as WikiLeaks and its elusive leader, Julian Assange, threaten to release a second batch of thousands of classified American war logs from Afghanistan.”

An international arrest warrant was issued for Assange's detention two months later, in regard to a case that had been appropriately dropped in August 2010 within 24 hours by Stockholm's chief prosecutor Eva Finne. She had found there was no “reason to suspect that

he [Assange] had committed rape.” Then, however, more powerful political forces intervened.

The facts are even more damning when the chronology is examined closely. On November 28, 2010, WikiLeaks began releasing 250,000 classified cables sent to the US State Department by consulates, embassies and missions between December 1966 and February 2010. The US government responded with outrage and threats. WikiLeaks was hit with financial and other kinds of systematic attacks.

Two days later, on November 30, Interpol, at the request of Swedish prosecutor Marianne Ny, issued a Red Notice to 188 countries for Assange’s arrest in relation to the Swedish “preliminary investigation” (for which no charges or indictment existed). Interpol made the request public. Assange was detained by police in London on December 7.

Anyone with a shred of honesty or political acumen can put two and two together. The various US government agencies organized or took advantage of a sexual scandal, one of the very favorite methods of settling accounts in the American political establishment. News reports noted in December 2010 that “a smiling US Defense Secretary Robert Gates told reporters that the arrest [of Assange in London] ‘sounds like good news to me.’”

Naturally, cynical, self-satisfied idiots like Marina Hyde of the *Guardian*, the mouthpiece of the dregs of English liberalism, continue to insist that the case had merits. “I think we all learned a really important lesson here, which is that if you wait a really long time and absolutely refuse to face up to them, bad things go away,” she wrote Friday.

Hyde speaks for the feminist and ex-left elements who have junked their opposition, which never went terribly deep, to war and imperialism. The Assange case is yet another mechanism through which a layer of affluent former radicals has peeled off and made its way to the “other side,” a process that has been under way since the early 1990s.

One of the principal instigators of the attack on Assange in Sweden was lawyer and politician Claes Borgström, a member of the Social Democratic government from 2000 to 2007, the government that supported the US invasion of Afghanistan. Borgström, who became the lawyer for Assange’s accusers, served as the Social Democrats’ spokesperson on gender equality. He argued that all men were collectively responsible for violence against women and compared the entire gender to the Taliban. Borgström is now a member of the Left Party in Sweden.

Katha Pollitt of the *Nation* joined the campaign against Assange in 2010, arguing that “when it comes to rape, the left still doesn’t get it.”

Socialist Worker, in “Defend WikiLeaks, don’t trivialize rape charges” (August 2012), claimed that “Assange and some of his supporters have refused to take the rape allegations seriously. His own lawyers have endorsed conspiracy theories calling the women a ‘honeytrap’... The rape accusations should never be trivialised or brushed aside.”

International Viewpoint, in September 2013, argued that “The call for Assange to face questioning on sexual assault allegations in Sweden is legitimate in itself.”

For the past several years, the international pseudo-left has barely mentioned Assange’s name. To appease their reactionary gender politics constituency, they would happily throw him to the wolves.

These “left” and liberal forces play an objective social role. The realities of neo-colonial invasion, occupation and war are far from pretty. If the thugs of the Pentagon and CIA were left to their own devices, forced to face the American public and justify their actions without any intermediaries or interpreters, they would be seen through almost immediately.

The services of the liberal media, like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and a host of now well-to-do “leftists,” with credentials as one-time opponents of the system, are needed to sanctify the brutal process of imperialist subjugation—or political persecution in the case of WikiLeaks—by grounding it in “democracy,” “human rights” or “women’s rights.”

Discrediting all these elements is an essential political-educational task of the day.

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