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US Eyes ‘Conspiracy’ Charges Against Assange

By Jason Ditz

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In a growing effort to find something, anything, with which to charge WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, the Justice Department is reportedly studying a collection of chat logs from ex-hacker Adrian Lamo as possible evidence of “conspiracy” against Assange.

Officials are said to be [hoping that they can find some evidence from the chat logs that Pfc. Bradley Manning was “encouraged” by Assange to produce the leaks](#). Assange has made general calls for people across the planet to leak information, but specifics regarding any contacts he may have had with Manning have not been made public.

And even if the chat logs contained some hint at this, experts say it would likely be challenged as hearsay evidence. Barring their convincing Manning to testify against Assange, which seems extremely unlikely at this point, such evidence might not even be accepted.

The ability to prosecute Manning is not in serious doubt, as he is an active duty member of the US Army and subjected to the military’s legal code. The claims that they could successfully prosecute Assange, or indeed random journalists covering the leaks, under the Espionage Act seems unclear at best. The effort to find a “conspiracy” charge may be an effort to avoid such a constitutional challenge.

Reports from Assange’s lawyer suggest that a grand jury [may have already been empaneled in the US to try to prosecute Assange for something or other](#), and it seems the US has already approached Sweden in the hopes of acquiring Assange from them in case they can secure him from Britain.