



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on November 18, 2013

Activist Hacker Hammond Slams Government Crimes at Sentencing

Hacker Jeremy Hammond, a so-called “hacktivist,” or an activist who uses hacking to further a cause, was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison on Friday for his role in stealing documents and financial data from the private intelligence-gathering outfit Stratfor and [handing the material he obtained to WikiLeaks](#) — part of an effort he says was aimed at exposing government criminality to the world. Hammond accepted responsibility for his actions by pleading guilty to the charges against him, but despite an outpouring of support, the federal judge overseeing the case handed down the maximum possible sentence.



Apparently, the fact that an FBI operative, Hector Xavier Monsegur, known online as “Sabu,” allegedly stood beside and directed Hammond throughout the hacking exploits was not enough to avoid a lengthy prison term. However, like his legions of followers and supporters across the political spectrum and around the world, Hammond is now publicly wondering how long it will take for the government to be held accountable for its own crimes.

“The acts of civil disobedience and direct action that I am being sentenced for today are in line with the principles of community and equality that have guided my life,” Hammond [said](#) in a prepared sentencing statement offered to media outlets and widely published across the Web. “I took responsibility for my actions, by pleading guilty, but when will the government be made to answer for its crimes?”

Perhaps the most significant article produced by *The New American* so far based on the material obtained through Hammond’s “hacktivism” involved the revelation that the U.S. government was [deliberately allowing Mexican cartel assassins into the United States](#). According to senior law enforcement sources cited in stolen Stratfor e-mails, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was letting its “informants” cross the border knowing full well that they planned to murder.

“They [ICE] were handling big hit men from Juarez and letting them kill in the U.S.,” explained the federal law enforcement supervisor quoted in the e-mail, a claim the agency would neither confirm nor deny in a [statement](#) to *The New American*. The Stratfor source, identified only as “US714,” whom the firm described as a “US law enforcement officer with direct oversight of border investigations,” also confirmed that [U.S. troops were in Mexico](#) working with Mexican forces in a variety of controversial schemes.

Other explosive revelations from the massive hack included more evidence that federal authorities in the United States have been quietly supporting certain Mexican criminal empires — especially the Sinaloa drug cartel. According to Stratfor e-mails from a U.S.-based Mexican diplomat, the goal was to



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solidify the syndicates' reign as dominant powerbrokers in particular territories. If cartel chiefs cooperate with authorities, "governments will allow controlled drug trades," the [diplomatic source added](#) in the leaked document.

Hammond's rhetoric against what he apparently sees as the products of "capitalism" and "imperialism" has dampened support among conservative and libertarian elements, though his supporters come from across the political spectrum. In his statement, Hammond said he hacked into dozens of high-profile corporations and government institutions for what he believed in: Exposing the truth.

All of it was done even though Hammond understood "clearly" that it was against the law and that the actions could land him back in prison, he said. "But I felt that I had an obligation to use my skills to expose and confront injustice — and to bring the truth to light," he added in the statement, quoting Frederick Douglass. "Yes I broke the law, but I believe that sometimes laws must be broken in order to make room for change."

In his sentencing remarks, Hammond also wondered rhetorically whether or not he could have achieved the same goals through legal means. His short answer appears to be a resounding "no." Noting that he had already tried voting, petitions, peaceful protests, and more, Hammond said he consistently found that "those in power do not want the truth to be exposed."

"When we speak truth to power we are ignored at best and brutally suppressed at worst," Hammond continued. "We are confronting a power structure that does not respect its own system of checks and balances, never mind the rights of its own citizens." More specifically, he slammed the U.S. government's unconstitutional wars and the fact that protests against the lawlessness were allegedly met with beatings, arrests, and accusations of treason.

While his rage was originally focused on the crimes of the George W. Bush administration, Hammond soon realized that the problem was actually bipartisan in nature. "The Obama administration continued the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, escalated the use of drones, and failed to close Guantanamo Bay," he said in the sentencing statement.

Soon, Hammond said, he became inspired by WikiLeaks, the loosely knit "Anonymous" hacktivist network, and convicted leaker Pfc. Manning, who publicly released hundreds of thousands of State Department cables and other official documents to expose war crimes and other criminality. So, despite his previous run-ins with the law, Hammond decided to target law enforcement, the military-industrial complex, and more.

"I targeted information-security firms because they work in secret to protect government and corporate interests at the expense of individual rights, undermining and discrediting activists, journalists and other truth seekers, and spreading disinformation," he said. While Hammond had never heard of Stratfor, the FBI informant "Sabu," who had been arrested and apparently coerced into government service, proposed and facilitated the hacking operation, he argued.

After successfully breaking into the Texas-based intelligence firm's systems, Hammond stole millions of its e-mails, "which is where all the dirty secrets are typically found," he said. Eventually, Stratfor customers' hacked credit card details were used to donate huge sums of money to charities around the world, causing major disruptions for the company, its customers, and the non-profit organizations involved. The e-mails were [published by WikiLeaks](#) as part of what it called the "Global Intelligence Files."

Working with the FBI informant, and allegedly at the government's insistence, Hammond was also



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inadvertently manipulated into helping to hack multiple foreign governments, he said. While U.S. authorities had imposed a “protective order” forbidding disclosure surrounding the targets, Hammond alleged that they included the regimes in Brazil, Iran, Turkey, and others before being cut off by the judge.

According to Hammond’s backers and Hammond himself, who collaborated with “Anonymous” and has been in detention for 20 months, the government criminality uncovered in recent years is infinitely more serious than hacking computers to expose official lawlessness. In sentencing, however, U.S. District Court Judge Loretta Preska disagreed.

Blasting Hammond as a self-styled “modern-day Robin Hood,” the federal judge said his actions could not be compared with Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, who has been an outspoken supporter of Hammond and other high-profile transparency activists. The sentencing judge, citing Hammond’s comments, also claimed there was “nothing high-minded or public spirited about causing ‘mayhem.’”

At the November 15 sentencing hearing, with the courtroom reportedly packed with his supporters, Hammond also noted that his activities were aimed only at exposing the truth. He also apologized to innocent victims caught in the crossfire whose privacy he invaded. “I believe in the individual right to privacy — from government surveillance, and from actors like myself, and I appreciate the irony of my own involvement in the trampling of these rights,” he said.

Hammond claimed in his note that, even though he is committed to making the world “a better place for all of us” and he still believes in the “importance of hactivism as a form of civil disobedience,” he plans to seek other avenues for change going forward. The now-notorious 28-year-old hacker had already found himself in legal trouble before the latest incidents, but he now says he understands that he is needed at home. “Stay strong and keep struggling,” his sentencing statement concluded.

In a Twitter post, WikiLeaks argued that the 10-year sentence was part of a pattern. “Hammond is just the latest to be targeted in [a] global witch-hunt against brightest minds of a generation,” the transparency group said. Indeed, as *The New American* has been documenting, the Obama administration and the U.S. government more broadly have fiendishly pursued leakers and whistleblowers with unprecedented ferocity. Hammond, former NSA contractor [Edward Snowden](#), and [Pfc. Manning](#) are simply among the most high-profile recent targets.

Despite their contributions to public awareness, all of the whistleblowers — or leakers from critics’ point of view — have stirred controversy in their choice of methods. However, with out-of-control governments around the world perpetrating ghastly crimes every day while acknowledging no limits on their power, it is hard to legitimately compare the actions of some hackers and whistleblowers with the gross abuses perpetrated under the guise of legitimate authority. Plus, if governments have nothing to hide, transparency should be welcomed.

Photo of Hammond supporters outside a courthouse in 2012: AP Images

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