



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on January 29, 2011

U.S., British Govts Keep Pressure on WikiLeaks

Five British citizens were [arrested](#) on January 27 in the anti-WikiLeaks government probe, and the U.S. government [issued 40 search warrants](#) the same day in a related move. The British [arrests](#) all involved young men aged 15 to 26. ABC News [reported](#) that many of the U.S. searches were “conducted in the San Francisco Bay area and the Boston area as part of an ongoing investigation that involved 26 FBI field offices executing search warrants.”



One of the search warrants issued in the United States was served against Georgia Tech freshman Zhiwei Chen on January 27. According to the college newspaper *Technique*, Chen [wrote](#): “I was a passive admin for Operation Payback and quit early to avoid complications with the law, but it seems the FBI has gotten the better of me.”

Visa, Mastercard and Paypal — the corporations targeted by hactivists in Operation Payback — had denied cardholder donations to WikiLeaks. An internal Visa investigation concluded January 27 that WikiLeaks had not broken any laws, but Visa continues to ban its customers from using their credit cards to donate to WikiLeaks.

Frequent [cyber-attacks against WikiLeaks](#) — which have shut down the site off-and-on for months — have received no proportionate prosecutorial attention from U.S. or British officials, presumably because the attacks against WikiLeaks are assumed to come from U.S. government military computers as a different type of payback.

WikiLeaks has embarrassed U.S. government policymakers on an almost daily basis for the past year, releasing classified documents that reveal corruption in America’s foreign wars and diplomatic affairs. The embarrassment continued this week, as WikiLeaks [revealed](#) January 27 that U.S. diplomats had casually referred to “routine and pervasive” torture by Egyptian police in diplomatic cables. The revelations not only helped to stoke anti-government fervor in the [current Egyptian unrest](#), but they were posted on the WikiLeaks website the same day Vice President Joe Biden [continued to defend](#) the 30-year-long Mubarak regime as an “ally” of the United States. “I would not refer to him as a dictator,” Biden [told](#) PBS’s Jim Lehrer. Asked by Lehrer whether Mubarak should step down, Biden replied “No.” Mubarak, who has ruled Egypt since his predecessor Anwar Sadat was cut down by an assassin’s bullet in 1981, has apparently chosen his son Gamal as his successor. Indeed, WikiLeaks cables reveal that U.S. officials [met with Gamal Mubarak in a semi-official capacity](#), apparently grooming him for the post. But many media outlets reported January 26 that Gamal Mubarak and his family have fled the nation’s chaos for exile in Britain.

Egypt remains a prime recipient of U.S. military foreign aid, so the weapons used against pro-



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democracy protesters by police and the military may actually have been purchased by U.S. taxpayers. In addition, the United States has used the torturing Mubarak regime in Egypt as a destination for interrogation of detainees in the war on terror through the [Clinton and Bush administration's policy of "extraordinary rendition."](#)

In other WikiLeaks news, the Pentagon says journalists have distorted the prison treatment of alleged WikiLeaks source, Bradley Manning. Pentagon press spokesman Geoff Morrell [claimed](#) Manning was not being punished in his pre-trial detention, and that he was being treated no differently from other prisoners. Morrell told the press January 26 of Bradley Manning's incarceration: "He is not in solitary confinement. He is not in isolation," adding, "He is in a cell by himself."

Morrell [continued](#): "So assertions by liberal bloggers, or network reporters or others that he is being mistreated, or somehow treated differently than others, in isolation, are just not accurate." But he also [acknowledged](#) that Manning was under an unusual "protective order" that set him apart from the rest of the prison population because the computer hacker was a threat to the nation:

The protective order — I would — I would imagine that one — when one is confined in the brig, it is not just for their protection that we are worried. We are always worried about our protection. He is charged with very serious crimes. That's why you isolate someone behind bars. That's why you confine someone, so that they cannot escape, cannot possibly commit the crimes that they are alleged to have done again.

So it's not — he is — I think you have it a little backwards. I think you have it that he is being held for his own protection in the manner [in] which he's being held. That may be, that there — there are reasons that they think that it is for his own benefit that he be held so. But it can also be that he's being held behind bars because he is a — deemed a threat, that he has been alleged to have committed a very serious crime that potentially undermines our nation's security, and therefore he needs to be confined during the course of a trial.

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