

UK police say they won't charge hacker

December 14 2012



In this July 14, 2009 file photo Gary McKinnon, accused of hacking into U.S. military computers and facing extradition to the U.S. to stand trial, leaves the High Court in London. British authorities say Friday Dec 14 2012 they've opted not to charge the computer hacker who waged a decade-long struggle to avoid trial in the U.S. Prosecutors had to decide whether Gary McKinnon should be tried in Britain over alleged breaches of military and NASA networks, after he successfully fought extradition to the United States. (AP Photo/Sang Tan, File)

(AP)—British authorities opted Friday not to charge a computer hacker who waged a decade-long struggle to avoid trial in the U.S. for breaking

into military computers.

Gary McKinnon, who has been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, was accused of one of the largest-ever breaches of military networks, carried out soon after the Sept. 11 attacks. U.S. officials have said McKinnon's hacking shut down the U.S. Army district responsible for protecting Washington, and caused about \$900,000 worth of damage

British prosecutors had to decide whether McKinnon, 46, should be tried here over alleged breaches of U.S. military and NASA networks, after he successfully fought extradition to the U.S. But they said Friday the appropriate place for trial would have been the U.S., and they were recommending that police take no further action. That means no further charges will be leveled.

"The potential difficulties in bringing a case in England and Wales now should not be underestimated, not least the passage of time, the logistics of transferring sensitive evidence prepared for a court in the U.S. to London for trial, the participation of U.S. government witnesses in the trial and the need fully to comply with the duties of disclosure," prosecutors said in a statement explaining their decision.

McKinnon claims he was scouring sensitive U.S. computer networks in an attempt to uncover concealed evidence of extraterrestrial life.

After years of legal wrangling, The British government ruled in October that McKinnon was unfit to face charges in the U.S. Medical experts concluded he was depressed and at risk of suicide if he was extradited.

McKinnon's lawyer, Karen Todner, said Friday she was disappointed by the British decision, because it meant the extradition warrant against her client was still outstanding. She said McKinnon had been willing to plead guilty to charges in Britain.

She said lawyers would now "seek to explore other ways in which Mr. McKinnon can receive complete closure on this long saga"—including, potentially, a pardon from President Barack Obama.

Copyright 2012 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: UK police say they won't charge hacker (2012, December 14) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-12-uk-police-wont-hacker.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.