

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

(Criminal Procedure Rules, r.27.2
Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9, Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, S.5B)

STATEMENT OF: CASSANDRA FAIRBANKS

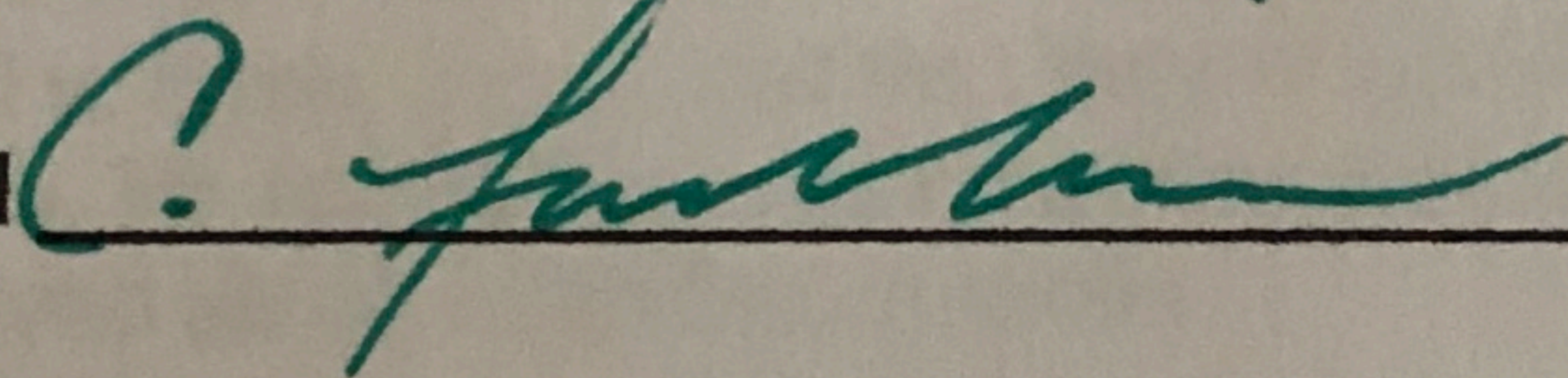
Age of Witness: Over 18

Occupation: Journalist

Address: (Made known to legal firm Birnberg Peirce)

This statement consisting of 8 pages is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Dated the 6/7/20

Signed 

Signature witnessed by BRETT MACDONALD

1. I make this statement in connection with proceedings in the United Kingdom in which the United States is requesting the extradition of Julian Assange.
2. I am a working journalist in Washington DC; my areas of work involve online commentary on current affairs, with particular focus on politics and social issues. Throughout the time period to which this statement relates I was employed by the "Gateway Pundit", a news organisation based in Washington D.C. Until I began with the Gateway Pundit approximately three years ago, I was involved in similar areas of work.
3. The Gateway Pundit is regarded as a generally "pro-Trump" organisation. I have myself endorsed his presidency over a number of years. I have, and believe I am known to have an interest in a wide range of issues which

include strong support for the principles of free speech and an interest in and support for Julian Assange and for WikiLeaks. My professional history has involved the investigation and promotion of many liberal and libertarian causes.

4. In addition to my work for the Gateway Pundit I was during the same time period referred to in this statement, in a direct message group containing multiple people who either worked for President Trump or were close to him in other ways – along with several other reporters and political commentators. The people in this group included German Ambassador Richard Grenell, and Arthur Schwartz, a wealthy GOP donor who does communications for the Ambassador and works as an informal adviser to Donald Trump Jr.
5. People frequently post links to things they wish to share in this group. I have long admired the plight of WikiLeaks as part of my commitment to free speech so on October 30, 2018, I posted an interview with WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange's mother, Christine Assange, hoping that someone would see it and be moved to help. This was in the run up to the US mid-terms, a time when Democrats were campaigning to win control of the House of Representatives.
6. Approximately 10 minutes after I shared the article in the group, I received a phone call from Arthur Schwartz. He was outraged at what I had done. I did not agree that our conversation was off record, though he did tell me not to tell anyone about the call.
7. Arthur Schwartz was extremely angry. The record of behaviour towards journalists is widely documented, as are his close ties with the Trump administration.
8. Arthur Schwartz warned me that people would be able to overlook my previous support for WikiLeaks because I did not know some things which he claimed to know about, but that they wouldn't be so forgiving now that I was informed. He brought up my nine year old child during these comments, which I perceived as an intimidation tactic.
9. He repeatedly insisted that I stop advocating for WikiLeaks and Assange, telling me that "a pardon isn't going to fucking happen." He knew very specific details about a future prosecution against Assange that were later made public and that only those very close to the situation then would have been aware of. He told me that it would be the "Manning" case that he would be charged with and that it would not involve the Vault 7 publication or anything to do with the DNC. He also told me that they would be going after Chelsea Manning. I also recollect being told, I believe, that it would not be before Christmas. Both of these predictions came true just months later.
10. He also told me that the US government would be going into the Embassy to get Assange. I responded that entering the embassy of a sovereign nation and kidnapping a political refugee would be an act of war, and he responded "not if they let us."
11. I did not know at the time that Ambassador Grenell himself had that very month, October 2018, worked out a deal for Assange's arrest with the Ecuadorian government.

C. [Signature]
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B. [Signature]

12. At some point I began to cry. This led to Schwartz softening his tone and saying that Assange would "probably" only serve life in prison. His tone on this would later change in text messages. He told me that the US government had said they will not pursue the death penalty, something that would have prevented the UK and Ecuador from extraditing him here.

13. I am trying to be exact about the sequence of events and visits. I believe it was January 7th 2019 when I visited and spoke to Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. Although I was shaken up by the call from Arthur Schwartz, I went to visit Assange in the Embassy in January 2019 and informed him of everything I had been told. I know that he was concerned about being overheard or spied on and he had a little radio to cover up the conversation. I had also met with Chelsea Manning in person and told her that I feared that they might come after her again.

14. Although I believed the information to be true, and so did Assange when I told him, I could not understand Arthur Schwartz's role in this at the time. When later Assange was in fact charged with the "Manning" 2010 case and Chelsea Manning was put in front of a grand jury, I understood that the information Schwartz had had come from accurate and official sources.

15. I visited Assange again on the 25th March 2019. Although the January visit was difficult and Assange and I had to take steps to communicate with each other to try not to be within the sight or hearing of surveillance cameras or microphones, by turning up a background of white noise and writing notes, I had been able to tell him about the US plans. This visit was very different. I was shocked at the way in which both Assange and I were treated and I wrote about it for an article published on the Gateway Pundit on the following day, March 26th 2019.

16. In my report I described the extraordinary circumstances where I was locked in an cold meeting room for an hour while Embassy staff demanded Assange be subjected to a full body scan with a metal detector before allowing him in the room. I described it at the time as "eerily similar to visits I have made to inmates at federal penitentiaries in the US". I considered at the time "it seemed our government was getting what they wanted from Ecuador, as a former senior State Department official told BuzzFeed in January "As far as we're concerned, he's in jail". I noted "[i]n an interview with El Pais in July, President Moreno also said his "ideal solution" is that Assange may "enjoy" being "extradited" if the UK promises that the US will not kill him. A major issue was that Assange wanted to bring a small radio into the conference room to muffle our voices so that microphones undoubtedly surveilling the room would not pick up what we were saying as easily. Only eight minutes of our two hour scheduled visit were in the end available because of the conflict with security staff at the Embassy. We were told if we wanted to talk it must be done in the conference room and only two minutes were left.

17. About this time and roughly two weeks prior to his arrest, WikiLeaks began to sound the alarm - that they were told by someone in the Ecuadorian government that Assange was soon going to be kicked out of the Embassy.

18. Since Schwartz seemed to know so much about what was going on, and had close proximity to the White House, I messaged him on March 29th 2019 and asked him if he knew anything about the rumours that Assange was soon going to be kicked out of the Embassy, and if this is what he had told me was going to happen back in October 2018.

C. Fawcett
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B. MacDonnell

19. Schwartz called and informed me that he knew I had told Assange what he had told me, and that there was now an investigation into who leaked me the information that I had told Assange in person in October 2018, when we had passed notes and a radio had been playing during the meeting to avoid the extreme surveillance suspected in the Embassy. Apparently those measures had not been enough to ensure that my conversation with Assange was private. Schwartz said that because I had warned Assange, he could no longer trust me with information related to WikiLeaks and although he knew things, he wasn't going to share them with me. I said that I had been treated badly – like a prisoner when I had visited Assange in the Embassy three days before. He said he knew "Some of the back story" on that too.
20. The call ended and that was that, or so I thought. It was obvious that the US was involved, including the State Department, and that Schwartz had been made a party to the information.
21. On April 11 2019, Assange was arrested. I was devastated by this news. I considered it to be a blow to the free press. I asked Schwartz again if he knew anything. He responded with a series of messages about how Assange deserved a lethal injection and how both he and Manning should die in prison.
22. Soon, ABC News reported that Ambassador Grenell had indeed been involved in the deal to arrest Assange back in October, when I got that first call from Schwartz.
23. I sent a screenshot of the news report to Schwartz and asked him if this was how he knew everything that he had told me. He sent me lots of messages about how everyone involved with WikiLeaks deserved the death penalty. I noted in our conversation that it had been reported that Grenell only got a verbal agreement that there would be no death penalty, nothing in writing. Schwartz's response to this was to send me a shrug emoji and he continued his tirade about how Assange deserved to die.
24. I could not understand why the German Ambassador was involved in a case involving the US, UK, and Australia and so I tweeted the ABC article.
25. This provoked a response from Ambassador Grenell himself. He messaged my boss attempting to get me in trouble, and tried to get my boss to force me to delete the tweet. I refused.
26. The next exchange with Arthur Schwartz occurred on September 10, 2019, when President Trump announced that he had fired his National Security Adviser, John Bolton. Grenell's name was being floated everywhere as a very likely candidate to take over the position, including by many who support WikiLeaks.
27. I posted a tweet on Twitter that Grenell was involved in Assange's arrest and had attempted to get me fired for tweeting about it.
28. Within hours I received another phone call from Arthur Schwartz.

C. Grenell

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By Maria J...

29. This time he was frantic. He was ranting and raving that he could go to jail and that I was "tweeting classified information". I did not understand this, because I had read the information in a public source. I repeatedly told him that everything I said was from the ABC News article. He didn't calm down. I told him I would delete the tweet, which I archived. On having listened since to the call (which I recorded) I believe that he probably considered that the reminder of my interest in Assange's case and knowledge that he and I spoke, would confirm that it was he who had warned me of Assange's future extraction from the Embassy.
30. Schwartz informed me that in coordinating for Assange to be removed from the Embassy, Ambassador Grenell had done so on direct "orders from the President". I believed this connected President Trump to those who have been reported as having secured the deal to arrest Assange. I believed Schwartz's statement to be correct because his close personal ties to both President Trump and Grenell are well-known. (I produced a transcript of the telephone call, **Exhibit 1**).
31. I have been asked if I can provide any further information as to how all of the above different characters and actions fit together. I have tried to understand but can only confirm the following, that when in October 2018 I learned from Schwartz that there was a plan to take Assange out of the Ecuadorian Embassy and charge him with the "Manning" releases, and this later proved to be exactly what happened, Schwartz's information must have come from official sources. When on March 29th 2018 I texted Schwartz to ask if he knew more about what WikiLeaks was warning of (Assange's imminent arrest) he called and said he knew I had told Assange what he, Schwartz, had told me. When he said there was now a State Department enquiry into who had told me about what must have been a monitored meeting, I believe it must have been an official US enterprise to spy on meetings in the Embassy.
32. The other persons who Schwartz said might also be affected included individuals who he described as "lifelong friends". Arthur Schwartz is very well known and is publicly reported to be a right hand man or "fixer" for Donald Trump Junior and part of a circle extremely close to the White House which includes Richard Grenell, Sheldon Adelson and others. I am aware that Schwartz has frequented the White House all the time (his presence is recorded on many videos there) and is extremely close to the inner circle of people who are very close to the President.
33. Looking back at the last visit I made to the Embassy in March 2019, when extreme steps were taken by Embassy staff concerning the conditions under which the meeting could be held (including with no mechanism for obscuring sound) I now consider those steps were being taken because of knowledge of the previous meeting I had with Assange during which I had given him valuable information. I believe that the contents of that meeting had been fed directly back to the US authorities and, those with close connections, including Arthur Schwartz.
34. I made this information known to an extremely limited number of people. I have had significant concerns, not least because of my previous experiences with Ambassador Grenell which gave me cause for concern: Grenell had personally attempted to get me fired from my job in April 2019.
35. Having been asked by the UK lawyers for Julian Assange whether I might reconsider my ongoing reluctance to provide formal confirmation of the events

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described in this statement, I agreed to do so after very careful thought in the hope that it could contribute to some understanding of the complicated close relationships and related actions that I have observed, professionally and privately, that operate under the present administration and especially within a small circle very close to the President himself. Having agreed to provide a statement in the ongoing proceedings if it could assist in clarifying some issues in the case, one of the few individuals aware of this took steps to make the information, in particular the recordings, public without my consent and without any surrounding explanation. In consequence, and reluctantly, I took the decision for the first time to publicly, briefly, explain what I knew. This statement contains what I believe to be as accurate an account as I can provide.

Signed C. [Signature]
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..... 6/7/20

Signature witnessed by B. [Signature]