

# PULLING SOME THREADS ON LAMO'S INCONSISTENCIES

In her post laying out the many inconsistencies in Adrian Lamo's account of turning in Bradley Manning, Jane says:

I only see two possibilities. One, Wired had the chat logs before Lamo made any calls to authorities, and was a party to whatever subsequently happened. Or two, the copies of the chat logs that have been given to the press have been done so at the instigation of the US government, and with their full approval.

Of course there's always c) all of the above, which is what I'm guessing is the most likely scenario.

I'm not entirely sure those are the only possibilities.

To my mind, there are several questions that remain entirely unanswered:

- When did Lamo and Manning start communicating?
- When and through whom did Lamo contact authorities (or, did authorities find him and not vice versa)?
- How does that relate to other dates, such as Manning's arrest, and when did the arrest happen?

Just as a threshold issue, I think the only source dating the beginning of the Lamo-Manning conversation to May 20 is Lamo, claimed in his conversation with Glenn and with the NYT.

Particularly given his squirrelness about the encrypted emails Manning sent him before they started chatting on AIM, not to mention some odd details about their earliest chats, I see no reason to treat that claim uncritically.

Then there's Manning's arrest date, which Lamo claimed to be May 26 based on a conversation he described to Wired having with the FBI on May 27. But Manning's charging documents seem to say Manning's alleged actions continued until May 27 and he was arrested on May 29. Moreover, the time lapse on the chat logs may well suggest that Lamo and Manning were chatting past the time Lamo claims the FBI told him Manning had been arrested. If, as seems almost certain, Lamo was wrong about Manning's arrest date, we need to ask whether he is hiding his own actions (perhaps, at the direction of the Feds, Lamo got Manning to send him classified documents on May 27, but he doesn't want to admit that publicly) or whether the Feds misled Lamo.

There seem to be at least four or five versions of how and through whom Manning contacted authorities:

Version 1: Lamo told his father that Manning was the source for the Collateral Murder video (not the diplomatic cables) and his father pressured him to contact the government (the subsequent contact may or may not have been done through Chet Uber).

Version 2: In response to learning about the 260,000 State cables (which the chat logs portray as happening on May 22), Lamo reached out to his "ex" who "worked" for Army counterintelligence.

Version 3: In response to learning about the 260,000 cables, Lamo contacted Chet Uber (as one of a number of people he contacted) one or two days before he first met with the Feds on May 25. CJR's timeline based on conversations with Kevin Poulsen dates Lamo's first contact

with the Feds before May 24, his first meeting with them on May 25, and his second meeting on May 27.

Version 4: Another version of Uber's story says Lamo first contacted him in early June, which would have placed it after Manning's arrest.

Version 5: Lamo contacted Timothy Webster (who is not explicitly identified as Lamo's ex and who is portrayed as formerly, not currently, working in counterintelligence) on May 26 and told him that Manning was the source for the Collateral Murder video. Of course this scenario would put his Webster contact after his first contacts with the Feds, per Wired.

And none of these versions make any mention of the top secret ongoing op that Manning reportedly leaked to Lamo.

Now, I lay all these versions out not to impugn anyone's reporting. After all, only Webster claims to be certain when his contact with Lamo happened. Uber admits he is uncertain (though the May and June dates obviously conflict significantly). And Lamo has been careful to note he had contacts with people outside of the Project Vigilant chain, which presumably includes but may not be limited to Webster.

But it does open up the possibility that there were several levels of contact here: a first one from his father, encouraging him to go to the Feds about the Collateral Murder video, a second one—of indefinite time frame—that went through Project Vigilant, and a third (and possibly fourth) that went through counterintelligence people. Furthermore, remember there are at least four investigative agencies: Army counterintelligence, Army CID, which is reported to have the lead on the Manning investigation, Diplomatic Security, which according to Manning was investigating the Rejkjavik cable going back

to February, and the FBI. Note, too, that another version of Lamo's story describes him worried about the FBI agents "knocking at the door" and implication in obstruction of justice; if any of these investigative agencies were investigating Lamo, the FBI would seem to be the most logical one.

So let's just imagine another scenario. This is just a thought exercise, mind you, that might explain these inconsistencies but would also explain why there are so many inconsistencies. I'm not claiming this is the truth—just advancing it as one possible chronology.

Suppose that Lamo and Manning started talking via encrypted email much earlier, closer to the time on April 10 when Wikileaks published the Collateral Murder video. This would have interesting implications for Lamo's institutionalization in May. But given that one version of the story has Lamo's father learning of that leak and pressuring Lamo to go to the authorities and given that Lamo was released to his parents' custody after his institutionalization, it might make sense on many levels. Suppose that, rather than going to the authorities, Lamo went to the vigilantes at Project Vigilant, with whom he had previous ties. And suppose they were the ones who suggested Lamo move the conversations onto AIM chats. And suppose, once Lamo got Manning to admit to the 260,000 cables on the chats, the Project Vigilant guys advised him to go to the authorities.

Now, at some point Manning allegedly told Lamo about even more secret things, not least the investigation into the Google hack (though it's possible that happened on email). What if that took place on the encrypted emails, and not on the chats?

In any case, I think it possible that Lamo was not entirely forthcoming with the Feds at first, that he shielded some information, possibly even that top secret information. If so, Lamo's interactions with Kevin Poulsen might well make

sense. Maybe Lamo realized he had exposed himself stupidly, and he used Poulsen to buy himself space and time to come clean to the Feds and to make his cover story public. Further, if Lamo some more secret part of his alleged contacts with Manning, the later contact with Project Vigilant might reflect Lamo's recognition that by not being completely forthcoming, he was in legal jeopardy himself. Which might explain the later date—early June—cited by Uber at one point. And it might explain the June 11 meeting between the Feds and Lamo, at which they asked for Lamo's computers and the encrypted emails he had stashed on a remote server.

In other words, it may be that Lamo outed Manning based on his IM chats, but something (either forensic work on Manning's computer or Lamo's blabbing to people even including Glenn, to whom he admitted the encrypted emails) made the Feds realize that Lamo hadn't been entirely forthcoming, which led them to return to him for more information. That might explain why Lamo's story is so inconsistent.

Now, I don't pretend to know what the real story is.

But if I had to hazard a guess, I'd say the AIM chat logs are just a cover that Lamo—with or without assistance—orchestrated for some reason, perhaps even to provide a basis to get Manning arrested without, at first, turning over the real goodies he had collected via encrypted email. So while it is still important for Wired to release the parts that are substantive to this story (there are gaps that almost certainly include substantive information), the chat logs may well be a distraction from conversations that took place on another medium that may be of more interest and may explain some of the wild inconsistencies with Lamo's story.