

LAMO'S TWO (?!) LAPTOPS

In the original story about Adrian Lamo's involuntary hospitalization, he loses his medication and calls the cops.

Last month Adrian Lamo, a man once hunted by the FBI, did something contrary to his nature. He picked up a payphone outside a Northern California supermarket and called the cops.

Someone had grabbed Lamo's backpack containing the prescription anti-depressants he'd been on since 2004, the year he pleaded guilty to hacking *The New York Times*. He wanted his medication back. But when the police arrived at the Safeway parking lot it was Lamo, not the missing backpack, that interested them. Something about his halting, monotone speech, perhaps slowed by his medication, got the officers' attention.

But in Ryan Singel's telling of it, Lamo lost his laptop.

For instance, you make it sound creepy that Poulsen wrote a long profile about Lamo. Huh. Read the story again. Basically, it goes like this. A convicted hacker, now gone legit, calls the police to report a stolen laptop. When the police arrive, instead of focussing on the crime, they 5150 the victim.

I find that rather interesting for several reasons.

First, because the larger story ends with Lamo losing his laptop, too.

Agents from the Army's criminal and counter-intelligence units and the

Diplomatic Security Service met with Lamo on Friday night, Lamo said. The agents asked for files related to the communications between him and Manning, Lamo said, and he gave them a laptop and the hard drive from another laptop, as well as encrypted e-mails that had been stored on a remote server. Lamo said he is scheduled to give a sworn statement to authorities on Sunday.

So is the laptop the authorities took (and the hard drive from another one) a new laptop, purchased to replace the one that got taken? Another one that Lamo had lying about at home?

And then there's this detail: the PGP key Lamo "no longer had access to" when Bradley Manning first tried to contact Lamo via encrypted email.

GREENWALD: And so the first contact he made with you, was that be email or was that some other way?

LAMO: [Sound of rustling papers] First contact was by email.

GREENWALD: And can you tell me generally what he said?

LAMO: I can't unfortunately. It's cryptographically impossible since he encrypted it to an outdated PGP key of mine.

GREENWALD: So were you unable to understand what he said in that first email?

LAMO: Correct. First, second, and third at the very least. I get a lot of random email and the hassle of decrypting it even if I had the key would be enough to push it back about a week or so in my "to read" stack.

GREENWALD: Right. So when you got this email that you were incapable of deciphering did you respond to him in

some way, or what did you do?

LAMO: I ignored it for the first couple of hours and then I received a few subsequent emails and then I finally replied, "Hey I can't read your emails encrypted to a PGP key I no longer have access to. Why don't we chat via AOL IM instead?"

And finally there are the number of hackers who have had their laptops confiscated (though usually as part of a border crossing) of late.

It's just a data point. But the story of Lamo being involuntarily hospitalized in response to reporting having his laptop taken is a whole lot different than it is if he has just had his drugs taken away.