WHAT THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE AFTER WITH ITS TWITTER SUBPOENA

After a member of Iceland's Parliament and former Wikileaks volunteer, Birgitta Jónsdóttir, revealed on Twitter yesterday that Twitter has been subpoenaed for details on her Twitter account, Glenn got a copy of the subpoena. The subpoena was first submitted to Twitter on December 14, and asked for account information for six people as well as any account associated with Wikileaks, going back to November 1, 2009. Of particular note, they ask for:

> records of user activity for any connections made to or from the Account, including the date, time, length, and method of connections, data transfer volume, user name, and source and destination Internet Protocol address(es).
>
> non-content information associated with the contents of any communication or file stored by or for the account(s), such as the source and destination email addresses and IP addresses.

By getting the IP addresses, they might be able to tie a location to the Wikileaks activity (though I would imagine some of the subpoenaed people shield that kind of information).

Here's what they might be after.

There's a passage in the chat logs in which Manning describes how he confirmed he was communicating directly with Julian Assange. This passage comes on May 22, allegedly before Adrian Lamo was cooperating with investigators (but there are reasons to question that).

> (2:05:58 PM) Manning: it took me four
> months to confirm that the person i was
> communicating was in fact assange
>
> (2:10:01 PM) Lamo: how'd you do that?
>
> (2:12:45 PM) Manning: I gathered more
> info when i questioned him whenever he
> was being tailed in Sweden by State
> Department officials… i was trying to
> figure out who was following him… and
> why… and he was telling me stories of
> other times he's been followed… and they
> matched up with the ones he's said
> publicly
>
> (2:14:28 PM) Lamo: did that bear out?
> the surveillance?
>
> (2:14:46 PM) Manning: based on the
> description he gave me, I assessed it
> was the Northern Europe Diplomatic
> Security Team… trying to figure out how
> he got the Reykjavik cable…

While Manning doesn't say that these
conversations took place on Twitter (I'll come
back to this), we know that Wikileaks, at least,
was revealing details of the government's
surveillance of it on Twitter. A series of
Tweets from late March describe heavy State
Department surveillance. Several of the tweets
reference the production of the Collateral
Murder video. Now mind you, this was a month or
more after Manning would have leaked the video
itself. But this tweet makes me wonder whether
Manning didn't continue monitoring surveillance
and response.

> We know our possession of the decrypted
> airstrike video is now being discussed
> at the highest levels of US command.

In other words, this may be evidence on Twitter
of the Wikileaks team learning information that
Manning might have provided them.

As Glenn points out, three of the people covered

by the subpoena were involved in the production of the video.

> the three named producers of the "Collateral Murder" video — depicting and commenting on the U.S. Apache helicopter attack on journalists and civilians in Baghdad — were Assange, Jónsdóttir, and Gonggrijp (whose name is misspelled in the DOJ's documents). Since Gonggrijp has had no connection to WikiLeaks for several months and Jónsdóttir's association has diminished substantially over time, it seems clear that they were selected due to their involvement in the release of that film.

One of the things the government may be trying to do is to pinpoint what IP was involved in the tweets revealing the surveillance, to try to tie any conversation about that surveillance to conversations with Manning, and in turn tie those conversations to their theory that the Wikileaks team conspired to leak this information.

Manning says he tracked this kind of surveillance to confirm that he was contacting Assange directly. The government may be trying to retrace his tracks in confirming Assange's identity, too.

[This post was updated after it was first posted.]