

Hacker to be sent to face trial in US despite relatives' suicide fear

LONDON: A British computer hacker who has Asperger's syndrome is at serious risk of suicide, relatives say, after a last-ditch attempt to prevent his extradition to the US was rejected.

In a letter the Home Secretary, Alan Johnson, ordered Gary McKinnon's removal to the US on charges of breaching American military and NASA computers, despite claims by his lawyers that extradition would make the 43-year-old's death "virtually certain".

The decision, described by lawyers as callous, has prompted fresh fears about Mr McKinnon's wellbeing. Thursday's letter rejected new expert medical evidence that Mr McKinnon's health had

deteriorated dramatically since he lost his case in the High Court in July, and meant that extradition would violate his right to life.

His mother, Janis Sharp, said: "Gary is at risk of suicide. I'm extremely worried about him. This government is terrified of speaking up to America, and now they are allowing vulnerable people to be pursued for non-violent crime when they should be going after terrorists."

Mr McKinnon was accused in 2002 of using his home computer to hack into 97 American military and NASA computers, causing damage that the US Government says will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to repair.

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