

Britain blocks hacker's extradition

LONDON: Britain has blocked the extradition to the US of a British computer hacker accused of accessing US military computers and proposed changes to its system of handing over suspected criminals, raising questions about extradition arrangements between the two allies.

British Home Secretary Theresa May said yesterday Britain would not extradite Gary McKinnon, 46, to the US on human-rights grounds, citing his battles with Asperger's syndrome and de-

pression. The decision frustrates a 10-year effort by US authorities to prosecute Mr McKinnon, who they allege hacked into computers belonging to the US military and deleted critical files.

The US Justice Department blasted the decision. Department spokeswoman Rebekah Carmichael said the US "is disappointed by the Home Secretary's decision not to extradite Gary McKinnon."

Mr McKinnon has admitted to hacking into the US government

computers in 2001 and 2002 from his bedroom in London. He said he was looking for evidence of UFOs he believed the US was suppressing. The US District Court in Eastern Virginia issued an indictment against Mr McKinnon in 2002, charging him with seven counts of fraud.

The indictment alleged Mr McKinnon hacked into computers belonging to the US army and navy, NASA, the Department of Defence and the US Air Force.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Australian

18 October 2012

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