

# CHET UBER CONTACTED HBGARY BEFORE HE PUBLICIZED HIS ROLE IN TURNING IN BRADLEY MANNING

A reader found a very interesting email among the HBGary emails: Chet Uber emailed—after having tried to call—HBGary CEO Greg Hoglund on June 23, 2010.

> Sir,

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> I would like to speak to Mr. Hoglund.  
My name is Chet Uber

> and I was given his name by common  
associates as someone I should speak  
with.

> The nature of our work is highly  
sensitive so no offense but I cannot  
explain

> the details of my call. I was given a  
URL and a phone number. I was not given

> his direct line and every time I try  
to get an attendant you phone system

> disconnects me. Would you please  
forward him this email to him. The links  
below

> are new and as much information as we  
have ever made public.

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> Sorry for the mystery but in my world  
we are careful about

> our actions and this is something  
interpreted as rudeness. I am being  
polite,

> so any cooperation you can provide is  
greatly appreciated.

Uber copies himself, Mark Rasch, George Johnson,  
and Mike Tomasiewicz, and sends links to two  
stories about Project Vigilant, which had been  
posted on the two preceding days.

In response to the email, Hogleund asks Bob  
Slapnick to check Uber out with someone at DOD's  
CyberCrime Center.

Chet Uber, as you'll recall, is the guy who held  
a press conference at DefCon on August 1 to  
boast about his role in helping Adrian Lamo turn  
Bradley Manning in to authorities. Mark Rasch is  
the former DOJ cybercrimes prosecutor who claims  
to be Project Vigilant's General Counsel and who  
says he made key connections with the government  
on Manning.

Mind you, the multiple versions of Uber's story  
of his involvement in turning in Manning are  
inconsistent. At least a couple versions have  
Lamo calling Uber in June, after Manning had  
already been arrested.

So there are plenty of reasons to doubt the Lamo  
and Uber story. And security insiders have  
suggested the whole Project Vigilant story may  
be nothing more than a publicity stunt.

Furthermore, this email may be more of the same.  
Uber may have been doing no more than cold-  
calling Hogleund just as he was making a big  
publicity push capitalizing on the Manning  
arrest.

But consider this.

Lamo's conversations with Manning have always  
looked more like the coached questions of

someone trying to elicit already-suspected details than the mutual boasting of two hackers. Because of that and because of the inconsistencies and flimsiness of the Project Vigilant story, PV all looked more like a cover story for why Lamo would narc out Bradley Manning than an accurate story. And Uber's email here and his DefCon press conference may well be publicity stunts. But then, that's what Aaron Barr's research on Anonymous was supposed to be: a widely publicized talk designed to bring new business. But a key part of the PV story was the claim that Adrian Lamo had volunteered with the group working on "adversary characterization."

Uber says Lamo worked as a volunteer research associate for Project Vigilant for about a year on something called adversary characterization, which involved gathering information for a project on devising ways to attribute computer intrusions to individuals or groups. He helped define the roles, tools and methods intruders would use to conduct such attacks.

While it is described as more technical, that's not all that different from what Aaron Barr was doing with social media on Anonymous.

One more thing. Consider what DOJ has been doing since the time Lamo turned in Manning and now: asking social media providers for detailed information about a network of people associated with Wikileaks. That is, DOJ appears to have been doing with additional legal tools precisely what Barr was doing with public sources.

That's likely all a big coinkydink. But these security hackers all seem to love turning their freelance investigations into big publicity stunts.