# UK judge recommends extradition of Israeli investigator over US climate activist hacking case



A UK judge has recommended the extradition of an Israeli private investigator, Amit Forlit, to the United States, where he faces charges of orchestrating a hacking campaign targeting American climate activists. The extradition hearing took place at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London, and Forlit has two weeks to appeal the decision. Speaking outside court, Forlit’s lawyer, Edward Grange, described the ruling as "one-nil to the U.S." and noted, "This is the beginning of a long road."

According to an indictment filed by the U.S. Justice Department in the UK, the hacking campaign was commissioned by a lobbying and consulting firm based in Washington, D.C., which worked for a major oil and gas company headquartered in Texas. The alleged operation aimed to discredit individuals and groups involved in climate-change litigation within the United States. Forlit has been charged with conspiracy to commit computer hacking, conspiracy to commit wire fraud, and wire fraud. He has denied any involvement in ordering or funding the hacking activities.

The indictment and supporting affidavit detail that the lobbying firm identified targets it wished to discredit on behalf of the Texas oil company client. Forlit, or an associate, then supplied lists of these targets to Aviram Azari, another Israeli private investigator linked to the case. Azari subsequently hired hackers to infiltrate the systems of American climate activists, government officials in Africa, members of a Mexican political party, and critics of the German payment company Wirecard. Azari pleaded guilty to related charges in late 2023 and was sentenced to prison in the U.S.

The affidavit further alleges that the lobbying firm shared stolen documents, or altered versions of them, with the oil company. These documents appeared in media reports intended to undermine legal proceedings against the company, with the oil firm using the news articles based on the hacked materials in court to defend itself in climate-related litigation.

While the names of the oil company and the lobbying firm are anonymised in the indictment, part of the affidavit identifies the lobbying firm as DCI Group, a long-standing lobbyist for ExxonMobil. A court filing from Forlit’s defence counsel states the hacking was commissioned by DCI, representing ExxonMobil. ExxonMobil has denied involvement in any hacking activities, while a DCI executive, Craig Stevens, dismissed the claims as "false and unsubstantiated" and described them as part of a conspiracy theory promoted by anti-oil activists.

The broader context involves numerous lawsuits against ExxonMobil and other fossil fuel companies, filed by states and local governments, accusing them of misleading the public about the impacts of fossil fuel use on climate change. These lawsuits seek financial support to help communities manage the consequences of global warming, such as increased storms, floods, and heatwaves. The fossil fuel sector disputes the validity of these lawsuits and argues that climate change policy should be legislated rather than litigated.

Among those affected by the hacking campaign is Lee Wasserman, director of the Rockefeller Family Fund. He told Oregon Public Broadcasting that the attacks were aimed at silencing critics of the fossil fuel industry and represented a broad assault on the freedom of citizens to participate in governmental processes. Kathy Mulvey, climate accountability campaign director at the Union of Concerned Scientists, commented to OPB, "This is an important step toward accountability and to bring into the light the evidence that the U.S. government has." Mulvey added that continued legal proceedings could help clarify who was behind the hiring of Forlit and hold those responsible to account.

The U.S. Justice Department has not immediately responded to requests for comment on the matter.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

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* <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/us-senators-green-groups-call-accountability-over-hacking-exxon-critics-2024-12-12/> - This piece discusses the calls for accountability from U.S. senators and environmental groups regarding the hacking of environmentalists' emails, highlighting the involvement of ExxonMobil's consultant, DCI Group.
* <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/exxon-lobbyist-investigated-over-hack-and-leak-environmentalist-emails-sources-say-2024-11-27/> - This article details the FBI's investigation into ExxonMobil's consultant, DCI Group, for its alleged role in a hack-and-leak operation targeting environmental activists and critics of ExxonMobil.
* <https://www.npr.org/2025/01/24/nx-s1-5271530/hacking-investigation-climate-change> - This NPR report covers the U.S. investigation into a hacking campaign targeting climate activists, including the alleged involvement of DCI Group and ExxonMobil.
* <https://www.ucsusa.org/about/news/exxonmobil-lobbyist-dci-cyberattack-investigation> - This article from the Union of Concerned Scientists discusses the FBI's investigation into DCI Group, a longtime ExxonMobil lobbying firm, for its potential involvement in a cyberattack targeting climate accountability advocates.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/israeli-private-eye-appears-london-court-over-alleged-hacking-offences-2024-07-26/> - This Reuters report details Israeli private investigator Amit Forlit's appearance in a London court to contest his extradition to the U.S. over alleged hacking offenses.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiqAFBVV95cUxPZ2prZjNRQ2EtMlFuam9uX1ZiTWxLcmM1ajFkWHhxZ2RDRlFSekhWdGczcXZJTGwwUlczdHdocGRCaXdrWmN1U1R0QlRRRlhfTl84aDhwQjVDYXFkR1dJSTZUMHdFMUFpMlhCR3VrbEFpMl9hWC1LcHZwVG1BYjdDTF9GaXI1SktuYkhrNkJWRGtqRVVWRlRTY0VBSEs0OVgtNzFfWUpBWnI?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data