

By Great North News staff reporter

It's a bad day for Gary McKinnon who today lost his battle in the European Court of Human Rights and faces extradition to the US in the next fortnight after allegedly hacking into dozens of US military computers looking for proof of extraterrestrial intelligence, or at least a CIA cover-up.

It is reported that he broke into the Pentagon's system from his London flat and left a message saying 'your security is crap.'

US officials allege that McKinnon caused around £354,000 worth of damage and severely threatened national security, rendering 200 computers unusable at a US navy weapons station immediately after 9/11. If extradited, he faces up to 70 years in prison and his lawyers have warned that he could even be given the death penalty. It is said that, using the codename Solo, McKinnon hacked into 97 US military and NASA computers.

In addition, his legal team have announced that he has recently been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome causing more legal headache.

McKinnon has said his motives were harmless and innocent. He denies any attempts at sabotage and that he wanted to find evidence of UFOs he thought was being held by the US authorities, and to expose what he believed was a cover-up.

He claimed to have downloaded a low-resolution image of "something not man-made" and "cigar shaped" floating above the northern hemisphere. He said that unfortunately he did not manage to get a screenshot or recording of the image because he was "bedazzled" to see the image, could not remember the capture function in the software RemotelyAnywhere, and that he was "cut off" from his connection.

"The US is making a clear stand that anyone making any attempts to compromise its computers and data will face the consequences," said Graham Cluley of the IT security company Sophos.

McKinnon's extradition was brought under the controversial Extradition Act 2003, which was designed to deal with terrorist suspects but has been applied in cases where terrorism has not been the primary concern.

Under the Act, America authorities are able to demand a Briton's extradition without having to provide evidence. However, Britain has to prove its case in a US court to extradite US citizens to the UK.