

## Man tied to hacking group Anonymous back in court

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DALLAS — A Dallas man who once acted as a de facto spokesman for the hacking group Anonymous has new attorneys who say the case against him raises questions about free speech and Internet freedom.

Barrett Brown appeared briefly in federal court Wednesday, accompanied by Seattle attorney Charles Swift, University of Texas law instructor Ahmed Ghappour and Dallas attorney Marlo Cadeddu. The three attorneys replace a lawyer from the public defender's office.

Brown was originally accused of making Internet threats and retaliating against law enforcement. Later indictments accused him of making public an Internet link to stolen credit card information and concealing two laptops containing evidence.

Swift represented Salim Ahmed Hamdan, a Guantanamo Bay detainee who once served as Osama bin Laden's driver. Hamdan's case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which issued a key decision invalidating George W. Bush's administration's plans for special military courts for Guantanamo detainees.

Ghappour said a website supporting Brown has raised about \$20,000 so far that will be used for Brown's defense, after a ruling by U.S. Magistrate Judge Paul Stickney.

Brown landed in prison last year after posting Twitter messages and YouTube videos that ripped opponents and the FBI, which he said was investigating him. In one YouTube video, he named someone who he said was an agent, suggested the agent's life was "over" and posted an email address for viewers who wanted to submit information against him.

"But when I say his life is over, I don't say I'm going to go kill him," Brown said. "But I am going to ruin his life and look into his (expletive) kids."

The prosecution of Brown has received attention from Internet activists and those interested in Anonymous, the global hacking collective that has staged cyber-attacks on government agencies, private companies and others.

Brown linked himself to Anonymous before his arrest, described himself as an author and granted interviews about the group's activities – although others involved dismissed him as a poseur interested in his own fame.

Swift said some of Brown's behavior in the videos could be explained as that of a son simply worried about his mother, Karen Lancaster McCutchin, who he thought was being investigated as well. McCutchin in March signed a guilty plea agreement to one count of obstructing the execution of a search warrant, as well as documents admitting to helping Brown hide laptops from FBI agents.

"When it comes to your family, it's hard to be rational," Swift said.

Swift said he was drawn to the case due to the issues it potentially raises, from a person's free speech rights to what constitutes a crime on the Internet.

"There are some cutting-edge issues in the case," he said.

Prosecutors did not comment as they left the courtroom.

The 31-year-old Brown is scheduled for trial in September.