

CIA coder who allegedly leaked classified material begins trial

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Prosecutors say Joshua Schulte leaked classified information because of a workplace dispute; he says he is being framed.

New York, June 15 (RHC)-- U.S. government prosecutors are making the case that a former CIA coder shared classified information with the website WikiLeaks after a personal dispute with a colleague. The former coder, 33-year-old Joshua Schulte, has said he is being framed.

Schulte's trial began on Tuesday at a federal court in Manhattan, where he faces charges that include obtaining classified US government information without authorization and illegally passing that data on to WikiLeaks. His first trial, which took place in 2020, came to an end with the jury deadlocked over the main charges.

Prosecutor David Denton said in his opening statement that Schulte obtained software in 2016 used by the CIA to target foreign countries, then sent that data to WikiLeaks, which posted it in 2017. WikiLeaks has become well known for publishing classified U.S. information on a range of topics, including potential US war crimes.

The Reuters news agency reported that Denton called Schulte's alleged actions the "ultimate act of betrayal" and said that he was motivated by spite for CIA management and other workers in his unit.

Schulte, representing himself, has said that the CIA and FBI chose him as a scapegoat for an embarrassing leak because of previous disagreements with management. Schulte left the CIA in 2016.

"The CIA had to save face, they faced tremendous political pressure to identify the leaker," Schulte told jurors. "The FBI simply worked backwards from me as their selected patsy."

U.S. District Judge Jesse Furman will oversee the trial, which is expected to go on for about five weeks and include testimony from clandestine CIA officers.

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