



Julian Assange Arrested on Sexual Charges

Yesterday, Wikileaks founder Julian Assange surrendered to London police as part of a Swedish sex-crimes investigation. The arrest followed a meeting between Assange's lawyer Mark Stephens and British police, who revealed that they had an arrest warrant from Sweden for Assange. Prior to the arrest, Assange had been hiding out at an undisclosed location in Britain.



The [Wall Street Journal](#) writes, "London's Metropolitan Police said Assange appeared by appointment at a London police station at 9:30 a.m. local time Tuesday. Early in the afternoon, he arrived at London's Westminster Magistrates' Court in a black sedan that was swamped by photographers before disappearing into a garage."

Stephens explains that Assange was "in good spirits" and was "cordial" with the police.

The arrest was based on charges made by two women in Sweden, who accused Assange of rape, sexual molestation, and unlawful coercion — charges that Assange denies. Stephens explains that the allegations stem from "a dispute over consensual but unprotected sex last summer."

Since the charges are related to events that took place in Sweden, Assange may need to be [extradited](#) to Sweden. Fox News reported, "[Assange's] Swedish lawyer told the [Associated Press](#) his client would challenge any extradition from Britain to Sweden." Told that he maintained the right to consent to being extradited to Sweden, Assange responded, "I understand that and I do not consent."

The [Associated Press](#) explains what the process may be if Assange does legally challenge extradition: "If that is the case, Assange will likely be remanded into U.K. custody or released on bail until another judge rules on whether to extradite him, a spokeswoman for the extradition department said on customary condition of anonymity."

The process of extradition could take anywhere from a week to two months, particularly as the United Kingdom has a reputation for carefully assessing extradition requests, and often rejecting them in high-profile cases such as this one.

If Assange is extradited to Sweden, however, he will be kept in detention solely for questioning, according to Assange's Swedish lawyer Bjorn Hurtig.

Assange has provoked the anger of the United States government in recent months by releasing tens of thousands of secret U.S. military documents. As a result, Wikileaks has witnessed an attack on its website, the closing of its bank accounts, and the launch of a criminal investigation against the website. Likewise, U.S. Internet companies Amazon.com, Inc., EveryDNS, and PayPal, Inc. dissolved their ties with the website, and Mastercard pulled the plug on payments to Wikileaks.

According to the Associated Press, "The attacks appeared to have been at least partially successful in



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stanching the flow of secrets. Wikileaks has not published any new cables in more than 24 hours, although stories about them have continued to appear in the *New York Times* and Britain's *The Guardian*, two of the newspapers given advance access to the cables."

Because of the intense international scrutiny of Wikileaks, however, some assert that Assange's arrest is politically motivated. According to a spokesman for Wikileaks, the arrest is an attack on media freedom, but he contends that the arrest will not prevent the release of more secretive documents. "This will not change our operation," Kristinn Hrafnsson told the Associated Press.

That is not to say, however, that the group plans to release the damaging "insurance" documents put aside to deter an emergency, such as the killing of Julian Assange or the total shutdown of the Wikileaks website.

Swedish prosecutor Marianne Ny rejected claims that the prosecution was manipulated by political reasons.

Meanwhile, officials in the United States are celebrating the arrest, even though it is unrelated to Assange's role in Wikileaks. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, upon learning of the arrest, remarked, "That sounds like good news to me."

Photo of Julian Assange: AP Images



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