



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on November 19, 2019

Sexual Assault Charges Dropped Against WikiLeaks Founder Julian Assange, But He Still Faces Extradition to U.S.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has cleared one more hurdle in his ongoing legal battles: The original sexual-assault charge against him in Sweden has been dropped owing to lack of evidence. With this behind him, Assange still faces likely extradition to the United States on espionage charges for receiving and publishing thousands of classified documents linked to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Assange's troubles began when WikiLeaks published the classified Iraq and Afghanistan War logs and U.S. diplomatic cables. Those leaks included documents showing illegal and unethical behavior in the "War on Terrorism," including the infamous ["Collateral Murder" video](#). That video includes footage of a U.S. *Apache* helicopter firing on civilians. The video was shot by the gun-sight of the Apache helicopter and clearly shows what the WikiLeaks site describes as "the indiscriminate slaying of over a dozen people in the Iraqi suburb of New Baghdad — including two Reuters news staff." Victims also included children.

The U.S. diplomatic cables leak — known as [CableGate](#) — embarrassed the U.S. State Department and then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton by including unguarded comments and previously unknown information about a litany of abuses and corruption in countries around the world. Those revelations included U.S. diplomats gathering personal information about top UN officials, including then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, political manipulation regarding the topic of climate change, questionable activities in the "War on Terrorism," and more.

The [Afghanistan War Logs](#) were published by WikiLeaks in July of 2010. In October of 2010, WikiLeaks followed with the [Iraq War Logs](#). Then in November, 2010, the diplomatic cables were published. In the midst of all of this, Assange visited Sweden in August, 2010. He was accused of sexual assault by two women. After he was questioned, the case was closed and he was told he was free to leave the country.

Then, in November, 2010 — as the above leaks were being made public by WikiLeaks — the case was suddenly reopened and an international arrest warrant was issued via Interpol for Assange's arrest. Assange stated that he believed the reopened case was a ploy to extradite him to the United States. After initially turning himself in to British police and posting a £340,000 bail, Assange skipped his bail in June 2012 and sought asylum at the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

He remained at the embassy until April 2019, when the embassy terminated his asylum and turned him over to British police. As this writer [reported](#) at the time of his arrest:

After Assange was arrested, Ecuadorian President Lenín Moreno — of whom Assange has been critical — released a statement saying that his government takes seriously international law regarding asylum, but had "reached its limit on the behavior of Mr Assange." Moreno said he had



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“asked Great Britain for the guarantee that Mr Assange will not be extradited to any country in which he could suffer torture or face the death penalty” and that the “British government has confirmed it in writing.”

Moreno’s assurance of the U.K.’s assurance is not — after all — very reassuring. Bloomberg is reporting that in an indictment unsealed mere hours after his arrest, the United States accused Assange of assisting Manning in “hacking a password stored on United States Department of Defense computers.” The United States appears to be seeking extradition and — if successful in that attempt — will likely charge Assange with a litany of crimes under the Espionage Act. A conviction for those charges could bring a sentence of death.

Also:

Assange’s claims that the charges against him were trumped up to allow his extradition to the United States seem to have some credibility. It was widely reported in mid-November 2018 that a mistake in a run-of-the-mill court filing revealed that U.S. prosecutors in the Eastern District of Virginia had secretly charged Assange in connection with WikiLeaks’ damning publication of classified documents and videos.

And in May, Assange was formally [charged under the Espionage Act](#) in the United States for his part on receiving and publishing those thousands of classified documents linked to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the United States began the process of requesting that Assange be extradited to face those charges.

Assange is charged with 17 separate violations of the Espionage Act and faces 175 years in prison if convicted.

Moreno’s assurance of the U.K.’s assurance has since proven worthless. In June, U.K. Home Secretary Sajid Javid confirmed that he had signed an order allowing Julian Assange to be extradited to the United States, saying, “I want to see justice done.” Javid went on to say, “We’ve got a legitimate extradition request so I’ve signed it, but the final decision is now with the courts.”

Much time has passed since Assange published those documents. Much more is now known about both the Warfare State and the Surveillance State. Many — even in public office — readily admit that WikiLeaks, as a legitimate media organization, provided a public service in bringing dark secrets to light. There is a new president in the White House. Much has changed, but too much remains the same. It will not likely go well for Assange if he is extradited.

Assange’s April arrest was celebrated by the usual suspects. As noted in the previous article linked above:

Representative Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) tweeted, “I’m glad to see the wheels of justice are finally turning when it comes to Julian Assange,” adding, “In my book, he has NEVER been a hero.” Graham’s gleeful tweet went on to say, “His actions — releasing classified information — put our troops at risk and jeopardized the lives of those who helped us in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

And Senator Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) tweeted, “I commend British police for the arrest of Julian Assange after nearly 7 yrs in self-imposed exile inside the Ecuadorian Embassy. I call for the immediate extradition of Assange to the US where he’ll answer for aiding & abetting a foreign power to undermine US democracy & laws.”

With their hyperbole duly noted, the reality is that Assange did not “put our troops at risk and



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jeopardized the lives of those who helped us in Iraq and Afghanistan” or rise to the level of “aiding & abetting a foreign power to undermine US democracy & laws.” What Assange did was to reveal to the world the secret actions of the Military Industrial Complex in the United States.

Given the degree to which Assange and WikiLeaks have been a thorn in the side of the establishment, it is not surprising to see the likes of Graham and Gardner trotting out over-the-top language calling for his extradition. After all, a harsh punishment of Assange would go a long way as a warning to anyone else who might consider exposing the illegal activities of the establishment.

So, while Assange has cleared the hurdle of the sexual-assault charges in Sweden, his worst — and most dangerous — battle is still ahead of him. And it may take months or years. Under British law, even if the United States and the U.K. agree on the terms of extradition, Assange can fight it all the way to the U.K. Supreme Court.

Photo: AP Images

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