# Julian Assange released from UK prison, heading to Australia after US plea deal



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been released from Belmarsh Prison in the UK and has departed the country. Assange, 52, took a flight from Stansted Airport on the afternoon of Monday, June 24, 2024, and landed at Don Mueang International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand, for refueling on Tuesday.

Assange is set to return to his home country of Australia following a plea deal with US authorities. He will plead guilty to a single espionage charge of conspiring to unlawfully obtain and disseminate classified US national defense information. This charge stems from his involvement in the release of hundreds of thousands of documents related to the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. The plea and sentencing are scheduled for Wednesday morning in the US District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, a location chosen for its proximity to Australia.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese expressed a desire for Assange to return home, noting that the case had dragged on for too long. Assange's wife, Stella Assange, and his mother, Christine Assange, also expressed their relief and gratitude.

Before his release, Assange spent over five years in custody fighting extradition from the UK to the US. A High Court ruling earlier blocked his extradition due to mental health concerns, but US authorities later overturned this decision. Assange was held in London’s Ecuadorean Embassy from 2012 until his arrest in 2019.

Assange is expected to return to Australia following his plea and sentencing, reuniting with his family after years of legal battles.