# Julian Assange Pleads Guilty in Single Spy Charge, Secures Return to Australia



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Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks, pleaded guilty to a single count of conspiring to obtain and disclose classified U.S. national defense documents. The plea deal, finalized on June 26, 2024, in a U.S. District Court in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, concludes a 14-year legal ordeal encompassing multiple countries, including the U.S., UK, and Australia.

Assange, 52, had been fighting extradition from the UK while imprisoned at London’s Belmarsh prison since 2019. Prior to that, he spent seven years in the Ecuadorian embassy in London seeking asylum. His release in the USA precedes his return to Australia, fortifying a diplomatic resolution emphasized by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

Assange will avoid U.S. prison time; his 62-month sentence is deemed served based on his time in Belmarsh. His plea deal concludes an extensive legal battle starting with the 2010 WikiLeaks' disclosures of classified materials related to U.S. military operations, originally supplied by former Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning.

Assange's plea and agreement bring an end to a protracted legal and diplomatic saga, allowing him to reunite with his family in Australia.