# Julian Assange Returns to Australia After Striking US Plea Deal



**Julian Assange Lands in Australia Following US Plea Deal**

Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks, arrived in Australia on June 26, 2024, after being released from a US court on Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. Assange, 52, pleaded guilty to violating US espionage law in exchange for his freedom, concluding a 14-year legal battle that included asylum in the Ecuadorean embassy in London and imprisonment in a UK facility.

Assange's charges related to WikiLeaks' 2010 publication of classified US military documents about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In a three-hour hearing, Chief US District Judge Ramona V. Manglona accepted his guilty plea and ruled that time already served justified his immediate release. The plea deal was orchestrated with efforts by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and former PM Kevin Rudd, leading to Assange’s return to Australia.

Assange expressed belief his actions were protected under the US Constitution’s First Amendment but acknowledged violating espionage laws. The plea deal followed extensive diplomatic lobbying, particularly intensifying since Albanese took office in 2022.