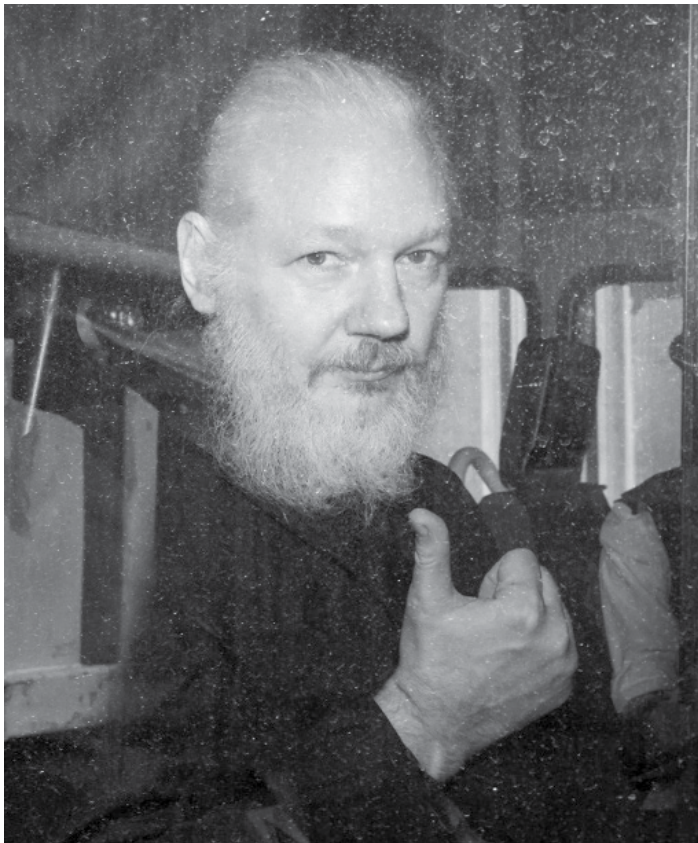


# Assange will cooperate with Sweden, but fight US warrant



Wikileaks founder Julian Assange arrives at Westminster Magistrates Court in a police escort. (Courtesy of Rolling Stone)

London, United Kingdom

Julian Assange would cooperate with Swedish authorities if they reopen a rape case against him but will continue to resist any bid to extradite him to the United States,

his lawyer said yesterday.

"We are absolutely happy to answer those queries if and when they come up," Jennifer Robinson told Sky News television about the rape claims.

"The key issue at the moment is US extradition, which we have

warned about for many years," she added.

The WikiLeaks founder is in custody in London awaiting sentencing for breaching his British bail conditions in 2012 by seeking refuge in Ecuador's London embassy to avoid extradition to Sweden.

He was arrested at the embassy on Thursday after Ecuador gave him up, and is now also fighting a US extradition warrant relating to the release by WikiLeaks of a huge cache of official documents.

The Australian has always denied the claims of sexual assault and rape in Sweden. The first expired in 2015 and the other was dropped in 2017, but the alleged rape victim has now asked for the case to be reopened.

If Stockholm makes a formal extradition request, the British government will have to decide whether to consider it before or after that of the United States.

Robinson said Assange would seek assurances from Sweden that he would not be sent on to America, saying: "That is the same assurance we were seeking in 2010 and the refusal to give that is why he sought asylum."

## 'Not above the law'

She added: "He's not above the law. Julian has never been concerned about facing British justice or indeed Swedish justice. This case is and has always

been about his concern about being sent to face American injustice."

The US indictment charges Assange with "conspiracy" for working with former US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to crack a password stored on Department of Defence computers in March 2010.

He faces up to five years in jail. Manning passed hundreds of thousands of classified documents to WikiLeaks, exposing US military wrongdoing in the Iraq war and diplomatic secrets about scores of countries around the world.

The conspiracy charge against Assange seems intended to sidestep limits on prosecution potentially arising from the US Constitution's First Amendment guarantee of press freedom.

But Robinson insisted: "This indictment clearly engages newsgathering activities and the kinds of communications that journalists have with sources all the time."

The lawyer condemned as "outrageous" claims made by Ecuador about Assange's behaviour in the embassy, including that he smeared his faeces on the wall, saying: "That's not true." Quito also accused him of failing to care for his cat. WikiLeaks said Assange had asked his lawyers to "rescue him (the cat) from embassy threats" in October, adding: "They will be reunited in freedom."

## Assange's father calls on Australia to bring him home

Sydney, Australia

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's father yesterday called on Australia to bring his son home, saying he was shocked to see his son's condition after his arrest in London last week.

John Shipton -- who was secretary of the Wikileaks Party when his son tried to run for a senate seat in 2013 national elections -- reportedly visited Assange every Christmas at the Ecuador embassy in London after he sought refuge there in 2012. "DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs) and the prime minister should in a nuanced way do something," Shipton told Melbourne's *Sunday Herald Sun*. "It can be resolved simply to the satisfaction of all. There

has been some talk in a meeting between a senator and a senior DFAT official to extradite Julian to Australia."

Shipton said he was shocked to see the state of his son when he was arrested at the embassy on Thursday on allegations of skipping bail, and on a US extradition warrant related to a huge leak of official documents.

"I saw him, the way they dragged him down the steps, the coppers (police), he didn't look good. I'm 74 and I look better than him and he's 47. It's such a shock," he said.

"For months and months he has been living like a high-security prisoner, he can't even go to the toilet. There have been cameras watching his every move."

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Friday that



John Shipton (Courtesy of PerthNow)

Assange would receive "no special treatment" from Canberra.

The 47-year-old Australian had sought refuge in the embassy while on bail awaiting extradition to Sweden to face charges of sexual assault and rape, which he always denied.

British lawmakers on Saturday urged their government to prioritise any extradition bid Sweden might make for him over the allegations.

Swedish prosecutors dropped a preliminary investigation into the rape allegation in 2017.

## More than 120 killed in battle for Tripoli



Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (R) meeting Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar (L) at the Ittihadia presidential Palace in the capital Cairo

Tripoli, Libya

Fighting near Tripoli has killed 121 people since strongman Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive earlier this month to take the Libyan capital, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

In clashes between Haftar's forces and those of the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), both sides have proclaimed "advances" but neither appears to have taken a substantial lead on the ground in recent days.

With more than 560 people wounded since the fighting started on April 4, WHO said it was sending more medical supplies and staff to Tripoli.

The UN organisation denounced "repeated attacks on health care workers" and vehicles during the fighting, in messages on its Libya Twitter feed.

"Three medical personnel have been killed and five ambulances have been incapacitated by shrapnel," the UN's office for humanitarian affairs (OCHA) said in a Saturday statement.

The mounting violence has sparked global alarm about the oil-rich country that has been in turmoil since NATO-backed forces overthrew former dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011. Haftar, who leads the self-

styled Libyan National Army (LNA), has pushed from his power base in the country's east toward the Libyan capital in the west, the seat of the UN-backed unity government led by Fayeze al-Sarraj.

On Sunday he met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo, where the duo were "discussing the latest developments in Libya" according to state media.

## 'Great advances'

One air strike which the GNA blames on Haftar's forces hit a school in Ain Zara, south of Tripoli, which has been the scene of violent clashes for days.

On Sunday, the UN mission in Libya warned that international humanitarian law "prohibits the bombing of schools, hospitals, ambulances and civilian areas".

The mission warned that it would document all breaches in order to inform the UN Security Council and the International Criminal Court.

The LNA meanwhile accused the Tripoli-based forces of an air raid "targeting civilians" in the Gasr Ben Ghachir region, 30 kilometres (19 miles) south of Tripoli. GNA spokesman Mohamed Gnounou said his forces had carried out 21 air strikes targeting LNA positions and supply lines between Friday and Saturday.

## World's largest plane makes first test flight

Washington, United States

The world's largest airplane -- a Stratolaunch behemoth with two fuselages and six Boeing 747 engines -- made its first test flight on Saturday in California.

The mega jet carried out its maiden voyage over the Mojave desert.

It is designed to carry into space, and drop, a rocket that would in turn ignite to deploy satellites.

It is supposed to provide a more flexible way to deploy satellites than vertical takeoff rockets because this way all you need is a long runway for takeoff.



The world's largest airplane -- a Stratolaunch behemoth with two fuselages and six Boeing 747 engines -- made its first test flight in California.

It was built by an engineering company called Scaled Composites.

The aircraft is so big its wing span is longer than a football field, or about 1.5 times that of an Airbus A380.

Specifically, the wing span is 117 meters; that of an Airbus A380 is just under 80.

The plane flew Saturday for about two and a half hours, Stratolaunch said. Until now, it had just carried out tests on the ground.

It hit a top speed of 304 kilometers per hour (189 mph) and reached an altitude of 17,000 feet, or 5,182 meters.