

Britain signs request to extradite Julian Assange to U.S.



London, June 13 (RHC)-- The British Home Secretary Sajid Javid announced on Thursday that he signed Washington's extradition request for Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. Javid said he signed the papers almost immediately after the U.S. Justice Department asked the UK to extradite the journalist.

"First of all, I am very pleased the police were able to apprehend him and now he is rightly behind bars because he broke UK law," Javid told BBC Radio 4 on Thursday. "There is an extradition request from the U.S. that is before the courts tomorrow but yesterday I signed the extradition order and certified it."

The UK Home Office said in a statement: "Mr Assange was arrested in relation to a provisional extradition request from the United States of America. He is accused of offences including computer misuse and the unauthorized disclosure of national defense information." The statement continued: "We have received the full extradition request, which has been certified by the Home Secretary."

The U.S. will detail all of the charges against Assange on Friday when they seek his extradition in a UK court. U.S prosecutors initially charged Assange with a single count of "computer intrusion," but last month added 17 new counts, including controversial charges under the Espionage Act for encouraging, receiving and publishing national defense information in concert with former Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning.

According to legal observers, such a charge under the Espionage Act has never been successfully prosecuted. Assange's initial indictment sparked a debate over the First Amendment and whether his alleged role in procuring secret U.S. material constituted protected journalistic activity.

Assange lived inside the Ecuadorian embassy in London for nearly seven years until April, when Ecuadorean President Lenin Moreno revoked his protection and he was arrested by British police who entered the embassy at the invitation of Moreno.

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