

WikiLeaks secret-spiller free on bail in London



Pool photo by Adrian Dennis

"I hope to continue my work": Julian Assange, center, outside London's High Court. Sweden continues to press for his extradition and the U.S. mulls charges.

To stay at mansion of ally 'with good Internet' signal

The Associated Press

LONDON — WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was freed on bail Thursday as Sweden pushes its case for extradition and the United States considers its own criminal charges over his website's release of secret information.

The Australian emerged from London's High Court and said he would pursue his efforts to publicize government documents, many of which the U.S. says were passed on to him illegally and contain sensitive information that would endanger lives if made public.

"It's great to smell the fresh air of London again," he said to cheers from most-

ly anti-war supporters outside the court. "I hope to continue my work."

Assange was being held on a warrant for his extradition to Sweden, where prosecutors accuse him of rape. Assange's lawyers say the allegations stem from a dispute over "consensual but unprotected sex."

Lawyer Gemma Lindfield, acting for Sweden, told High Court Justice Duncan Ouseley that Assange's nomadic lifestyle and loose ties to those promising bond made him "a real risk" to flee.

But the judge said that when Assange arrived in Britain, he had asked his lawyers to contact police.

"That is not the conduct of a person who is seeking to evade justice," he said.

Swedish Prosecutor Marianne Ny said the bail decision would not change the ongoing investigation in Sweden, and the extradition case would be handled by British authorities. Assange's next extradition hearing is set for Jan. 11.

Assange was to stay at Ellingham Hall, a mansion northeast of London that belongs to Vaughan Smith, a WikiLeaks supporter and founder of London's Frontline Club for journalists.

Assange will have to observe a curfew and report daily to police.

WikiLeaks spokesman Kristinn Hrafnsson said Assange could use the 600-acre estate to continue coordinating the publication of U.S. diplomatic cables.

The classified cables are of private correspondences between diplomats and contain frank assessments of world leaders, the U.S. State Department says. The department says international partners have curtailed dealings with Washington as a result of Assange's publications.

WikiLeaks has published about 1,621 U.S. diplomatic cables — fewer than 1% of the 250,000 cables it claims to have. Hrafnsson said Assange would still be able to work. "There is a good Internet connection there," he noted.