

Julian Assange back in court to fight extradition

July 11 2011, By RAPHAEL G. SATTER , Associated Press

(AP) -- WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was due back in court Tuesday for the latest installment of his fight against extradition to Sweden, where the 40-year-old Australian is accused of rape and molestation.

Assange's disclosures of classified U.S. documents has infuriated the Pentagon, embarrassed State Department diplomats and energized critics of American foreign policy, but allegations of sexual misconduct during a trip to Scandinavia last year have tarnished his reputation.

Assange denies any wrongdoing, and he and his supporters have suggested that the Swedish prosecution is being manipulated to political ends - possibly with an eye toward sending him to the United States, where a [federal grand jury](#) is investigating WikiLeaks' activities.

Swedish authorities reject the charge, and on Feb. 24 a British judge found in their favor, saying that there was no reason to believe he wouldn't receive a fair trial in Sweden.

Assange vowed to fight the decision, and meanwhile has continued to work from a wealthy supporter's mansion in eastern England, where he lives under virtual house arrest.

In an interview last month, Assange complained that the strict bail conditions - he's under an overnight curfew, must wear an [electronic tag](#) and report to police daily - had hampered his activities.

His website has not accepted any new material in months, although WikiLeaks' latest release in April - hundreds of detainee assessment forms covering the inmates at Guantanamo Bay - offered never-before-published information on those being held at the U.S. military prison.

Assange's appeal hearing was due to last until Wednesday. Judgment is expected to be reserved, which means that a ruling might not be made public for days or weeks. Assange has vowed to take his case to Britain's Supreme Court or the European Court of Human Rights if his appeal is rejected.

Protests are planned in front of the neogothic Royal Courts of Justice, where Assange's case was due to be heard.

Online, there were hints from a high-profile member of Anonymous - an amorphous, loosely organized group of hackers sympathetic to [WikiLeaks](#) - that confidential U.S. data might be leaked online to coincide with the hearing.

More information: WikiLeaks: <http://wikileaks.ch/>

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