

US draws up secret charges against Assange: media

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WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is pictured through a camera viewfinder as he speaks at a press conference in central London on February 27. US prosecutors have drawn up secret charges against Assange, Australian media reported Wednesday, citing a confidential email.

US prosecutors have drawn up secret charges against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, Australian media reported Wednesday, citing a confidential email.

The email is one of a huge number from the US-based global intelligence company Stratfor that the whistleblowing organisation began publishing Monday.

Internal correspondence to [Stratfor](#) analysts from vice-president of intelligence Fred Burton said: "We have a sealed indictment on

Assange," according to the Sydney Morning Herald.

The newspaper, which has access to the emails through an investigative partnership with Wikileaks, said the comment on January 26 last year was made in response to a media report about US investigations targeting WikiLeaks.

The information comes with the request to protect the information and not to publish, it said.

The Herald said Burton was well known as an expert on security and counterterrorism with close ties to the US intelligence and [law enforcement agencies](#).

Assange, an Australian citizen, is awaiting a British Supreme Court decision on his appeal against extradition to Sweden on sexual assault allegations.

He strongly denies the claims, saying they are politically motivated and linked to the activities of WikiLeaks.

Assange fears being sent to Stockholm would open the way for his extradition to the US to face charges of spying linked to the leaking of classified [military documents](#) by US soldier Bradley Manning.

Manning was formally charged last week for allegedly turning over a trove of classified US documents to WikiLeaks in one of the most serious [intelligence](#) breaches in US history.

Australian Greens Senator Scott Ludlum Wednesday demanded to know whether Canberra knew about any secret US charges.

"What we need to know is whether the [Australian government](#) was

tipped off, or whether the prime minister read about this in The Sydney Morning Herald this morning," he told reporters.

The Australian government needed to take "a very straight line" with the US on the issue, he added.

"That we will not permit, and we will not tolerate his transfer to the US, to face [charges](#) that could potentially land him in prison, potentially for decades."

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