

Dotcom's battle to avoid US trial goes live

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Megaupload founder Kim Dotcom leaves with his girlfriend Elizabeth Donnelly following his extradition appeal at the High Court in Auckland, on August 29, 2016

The protracted battle to have Megaupload founder Kim Dotcom face video piracy charges in the United States broke new ground on Wednesday with live-streaming of his appeal against extradition.

Dotcom won approval to live-stream his bid to avoid leaving New Zealand after successfully arguing that global interest required more than standard brief television clips.

The case, in the Auckland High Court, is expected to last six to eight weeks and while the verdict in at least one previous New Zealand trial has been broadcast live, this is the first time a hearing has been live-streamed in full.

"Show me a short video or picture of how you are watching the live stream right now. Here's mine," Dotcom tweeted during the lunch adjournment with a photo of himself watching his lawyers on TV.

Judge Murray Gilbert ruled the case could only be streamed with a 20-minute delay, to allow the court time to prevent any restricted material from being published, and all footage was to be removed from the internet when the hearing ends.

Dotcom, a German national with permanent residency in New Zealand, faces decades in jail if convicted in the United States of piracy, which US authorities say cost copyright owners hundreds of millions of dollars.



Live streaming equipment is installed ahead of the third day of internet mogul Kim Dotcom's extradition appeal at the High Court in Auckland, on August 31, 2016

He was first arrested nearly five years ago during a police raid on his mansion near Auckland after the FBI shut down Megaupload's servers.

After several legal battles, a court ruled in December last year there was "overwhelming" evidence to support extradition of the 42-year-old and three other Megaupload founders.

However, the case could rumble on for several more years with Dotcom vowing to continue legal challenges if he loses this appeal.

The prosecution has argued that Megaupload wilfully breached copyright by hosting illegally created movie, music and software files.

Dotcom claimed Megaupload was a genuine file-sharing site that did its best to police copyright infringement but had 50 million daily users and could not control every aspect of their activity.

Dotcom has denied any wrongdoing and accused US authorities of pursuing a vendetta against him on behalf of politically influential Hollywood studios.

The FBI alleges Megaupload netted more than US\$175 million in criminal proceeds and cost copyright owners more than US\$500 million by offering pirated content.

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