

U.S. announces 17 new charges against Julian Assange



Washington, May 24 (RHC)-- The U.S. Justice Department has announced 17 new criminal charges against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, saying he unlawfully published the names of classified sources and conspired and assisted ex-Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning in obtaining access to classified information.

The superseding indictment comes a little more than a month after the Justice Department unsealed a narrower criminal case against Assange. He was initially charged with conspiring with Manning to gain access to a government computer as part of a 2010 leak by WikiLeaks of hundreds of thousands of U.S. military reports about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, some of which exposed potential war crimes.

In response to new charges, Wikileaks tweeted: "This is madness. It is the end of national security journalism and the First Amendment."

Assange is currently fighting extradition to the U.S., after Ecuador revoked his seven-year asylum in the country's London embassy back in April. He was arrested on April 11th by British police, who unlawfully entered the Ecuadorean diplomatic mission and forcibly carried him out to the embassy.

He is now serving a 50-week sentence in a London jail for skipping bail when he sought asylum in the Ecuadorean embassy in June 2012. If extradicted to the United States and found guilty of these 17 new charges, Julian Assange would be facing 172 years in prison.

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