

Beat: Miscellaneous

Assange embassy stand-off costs London police \$4.5 million

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USPA News - The full cost of preventing WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange from escaping the Ecuadorian embassy in London has surpassed 2.9 million pounds (\$4.5 million), British police said on Saturday, almost nine months after he sought refuge there to prevent extradition to Sweden. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), which is better known as Scotland Yard, said the estimated cost of policing the Ecuadorian embassy between June 19, 2012, when Assange entered the Ecuadorian embassy to request political asylum from the Ecuadorian government, and January 31, 2013, is 2.9 million pounds (\$4.5 million).

A police spokesman described approximately 2.3 million pounds (\$3.5 million) of the total figure as "opportunity costs," which is normal salary for the officers who have been stationed outside the embassy in west London's Knightsbridge district. The additional 600,000 pounds (\$931,000) is police overtime as a direct result of deployment outside the mansion block housing the embassy. The officers are stationed outside the embassy round the clock in case Assange, who received political asylum from the Ecuadorian government in August 2012, emerges from the diplomatic compound. He is wanted by British police who want to extradite him to Sweden to face allegations of sexual molestation, unlawful coercion and rape. A London court dismissed Assange's appeal in November 2011 and the UK Supreme Court in June 2012 rejected his bid to reopen the case. Scotland Yard has said Assange will be arrested once he leaves the embassy compound, but officers are unable to enter the Ecuadorian embassy as it is diplomatic territory. The accusations in Sweden are unrelated to Assange's work for the whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks which brought diplomatic earthquakes to the United States when it began releasing classified documents it had obtained. Assange has claimed the cases have been politically-linked, arguing that the sexual encounters with the two women in Sweden were consensual. Wikileaks' first big scoop was on April 5, 2010, when it released a classified video which showed a 2007 U.S. helicopter attack in Iraq which left several civilians killed, including two unarmed Reuters journalists. Assange previously said he had been told to expect 'dirty tricks' from the Pentagon, including 'sex traps' to ruin his reputation.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-522/assange-embassy-stand-off-costs-london-police-45-million.html>

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