

U.S. charges Assange after London arrest ends seven years in Ecuador embassy

LONDON (Reuters) - British police dragged WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange out of Ecuador's embassy on Thursday after his seven-year asylum was revoked, paving the way for his extradition to the United States for one of the biggest ever leaks of classified information.

Hours after the frail-looking Assange, with white hair and a long beard, was carried head-first by at least seven men out of the London embassy and into a waiting police van, U.S. officials announced he had been charged with conspiracy to commit computer intrusion.

As he was being hauled out of the embassy in a dramatic scene shortly after 0900 GMT, the Australian-born Assange was heard shouting, "This is unlawful, I'm not leaving."

British Prime Minister Theresa May hailed the news in parliament, to cheers and cries of "Hear, hear!" from lawmakers.

But in Washington, President Donald Trump, who in 2016 said "I love WikiLeaks" after the website released emails that U.S. authorities have said were hacked by Russia to harm his election opponent Hillary Clinton, told reporters he had no opinion on the charges against Assange.

Out of the embassy, straight into custody: Assange's court hearing

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Pamela Anderson outraged over arrest of Julian Assange, a 'hero'

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Backstory: A tip-off, a red light: how Reuters captured Assange's thumbs-up

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"I know nothing about WikiLeaks. It's not my thing," Trump said.

Assange gave a thumbs up in handcuffs as he was taken from a police station to a London court, where he pronounced himself not guilty of failing to surrender in 2012. District judge Michael Snow called Assange a "narcissist" and convicted him of skipping bail. Sentencing will be at a later date.

Police said they arrested Assange, 47, after being invited into the embassy following the Ecuadorean government's withdrawal of asylum. He took refuge there in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden over a sexual assault investigation that was later dropped.

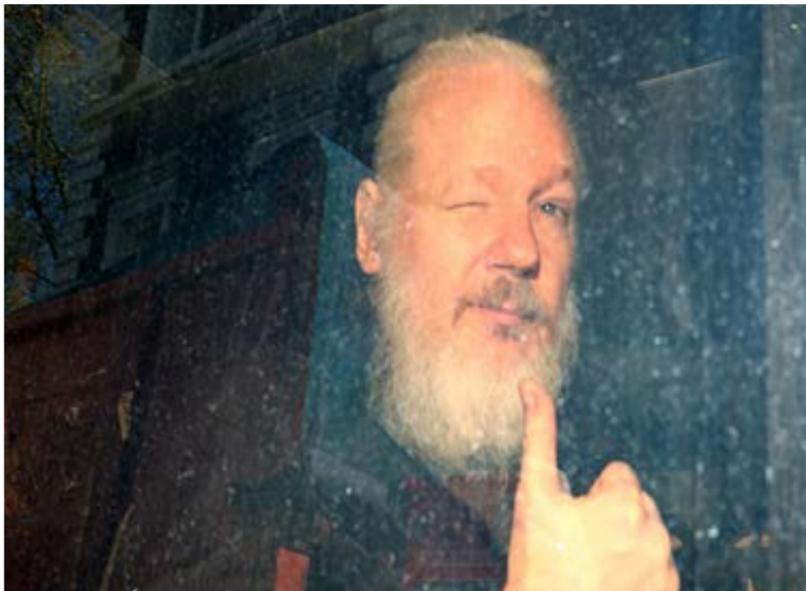
Assange was carried out of the building - located behind the luxury department store Harrods - carrying a copy of Gore Vidal's "History of The National Security State", which he continued reading in court.

In Washington, the U.S. Justice Department said Assange was charged with conspiring with former Army intelligence analyst Chelsea 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 and American diplomatic communications.

The indictment was made secretly last year and unsealed on Thursday. He faces up to five years in prison if convicted, with legal experts saying more charges were possible.

Ecuador suspended Julian Assange's citizenship and accused him and others at WikiLeaks of collaborating in attempts to destabilize the Andean nation's government, after years of offering him shelter.

Lawyers for Assange said he may risk torture and his life would be in danger if he were to be extradited to the United States.



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is seen as he leaves a police station in London



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Editor's Choice



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U.S. President Donald Trump receives a picture from Allen Jones, National Chief of Staff of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, while greeting World War II veterans in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, U.S., April 11, 2019. REUTERS/Carlos Barria



Turkish riot police prevent supporters of pro-Kurdish HDP to gather outside Baglar Municipality to protest against YSK in Diyarbakir



Spain's People Party (PP) kicks off of the general election campaign in Madrid



A supporter of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, displays a placard outside the Westminster Magistrates Court in London



Kristinn Hrafnsson, editor in chief of Wikileaks, and barrister Jennifer Robinson talk to the media outside the Westminster Magistrates Court in London

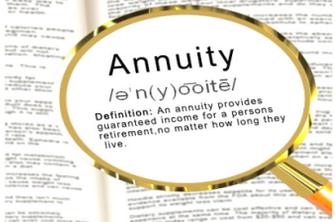


WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange arrives at the Westminster Magistrates Court, after he was arrested in London



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is seen in a police van in London

A friend of mine, “Mr. H.”, suggested that I write a simple article on annuities. He bought an annuity awhile back which made him enough money that had him worrying about tax-related questions. So let’s see if we can point him to some good resources, since there really is no such thing as a “simple annuity!” Simply and generally speaking, annuities are not investments, but rather more like insurance. Insurance companies started the annuities business as a product and outsourced the sales. I attended several free seminars in the past that were presented by financial advisors, and they almost always wound up suggesting annuities as the central part of any retirement strategy. Why? Because the financial advisors get paid handsomely to sell annuities. According to the Insured Retirement Institute, the 2016 sales of annuities were \$211.4 billion.



At their simplest, annuities offer a guarantee. If invest money in an annuity, you’ll be guaranteed to get a regular check for a certain period of time starting at a certain point. How much of the guaranteed money you receive will depend on which type of annuity you picked; i.e., Fixed, Variable or Indexed, as well as whether the starting point of payments to you are immediate or deferred. The products get confusing and complicated very fast. The website <https://www.investopedia.com/university/annuities/> has an excellent primer on it. For now, let’s tackle some questions.

So, when should you consider annuities? If your combined pensions, social security and other income can support your monthly expenses and you have some extra cash laying around to afford one. The website <https://money.cnn.com/2016/11/16/retirement/retire->

What Are Annuities?



By Guest Writer Abraham Mathis

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

ment-savings/index.html suggested in 2016 that a 65 year old man investing \$100,000 would expect to receive \$525 a month for his lifetime. In future articles, we will go into other options.

So what happens if I suddenly need some or all of my money back? Remember, there are hefty penalties and fees for withdrawing any amounts. How much commission that the financial advisor receives will partially determine these fees and penalties. See the problem with the sales?

Remember Mr. H’s questions about his taxes? Taxes are very complicated and situation- dependent. The website <https://www.irionline.org/government-affairs/annuities-regulation-industry-information/taxation-of-annuities> will get you pointed in the right direction for your questions on taxes.

Annuity contracts can also be daunting to read and understand. Some important questions to ask include the following: What are all the circumstances under which I might not get back my money? What part of the contract might limit or change how much money I eventually receive? What can change during the term of the contract?



While inflation is supposedly officially low right now, the dollar store is now \$1.49 from \$1.09 in one year! Is there any possibility that payments could increase with inflation? What are the options of taking the payments? What are tax implications (see link above).

The biggest “pro” of an annuity is the guaranteed income stream, but there are many “cons.” Taxes: You will pay more in taxes than on other investment types, especially if you choose a variable annuity. Your heirs will also pay more taxes in any amount left in the annuity at your death. All income is taxed as ordinary income (the link above on taxes has more information). Annuities are also not liquid, remember the penalties and fees?

Annuities are a viable financial option if you are not sure you have the skills to manage your retirement portfolio and want to be certain you won’t run out of funds during your lifetime. I have been given slick pamphlets with all kinds of graphs on annuities, but rarely was I given straight answers in simple language. You should demand simple written answers to your questions. For your annuity related questions, you can contact me at moderator@juststreetsense.com with your feedback and questions. Note that I am not a financial advisor sales person, but am rather an academic who has studied the field of finance.

Related

2018 Annuity Sales Up 10%, Beacon, Morningstar Find

“Fixed indexed annuities continue to set

records, providing consumers with an instrument that can help them diversify their portfolios, protect principal, and provide guaranteed lifetime income,” said Beacon Research CEO Jeremy Alexander, “and we expect all fixed annuity product types to continue showing robust growth in 2019 as millions of Americans seek solutions that can help them feel secure during retirement.”

From Staff and Wire Reports

Overall annuity sales rose 9.7 percent in 2018, with the combined sales of fixed and variable annuities reaching \$218 billion, according to the Insured Retirement Institute (IRI), which today announced final 2018 market data for the U.S. annuity industry based on data reported by Beacon Research and Morningstar. The highlights:

Total Annuity Sales

- \$58.8 billion - industry-wide annuity sales in the fourth quarter of 2018
- o 7.1 percent increase from sales of \$54.9 billion in the third quarter of 2018
- o 23.5 percent higher versus fourth quarter of 2017 sales of \$47.6 billion
- \$218.0 billion – full year 2018 total annuity sales
- o 9.7 percent increase versus 2017 total annuity sales of \$198.6 billion



Fixed Annuity Sales

- \$35.9 billion – 2018 fourth quarter fixed annuity sales
- o 12.7 percent increase over third quarter sales of \$31.8 billion
- o 51.6 percent higher versus 2017 fourth quarter sales of \$23.7 billion
- o \$125.0 billion in fixed annuity sales is an increase of 17.0 percent over 2018 fixed annuity sales of \$106.8 billion

Variable Annuity Sales

- \$22.9 billion – 2018 fourth quarter variable annuity total sales
- o Down 0.7 percent versus 2018 third quarter sales of \$23.0 billion
- o 4.3 percent lower than 2017 fourth quarter VA sales of \$23.9 billion
- o \$92.9 billion in 2018 sales is an increase of 1.2 percent over 2017 VA sales of \$91.8 billion

“It’s encouraging to see annuity sales rising, particularly as we continue to witness large numbers of the baby boom generation retire each day,” said IRI President and CEO Wayne Chopus. “These products offer retirees and near retirees the ability to create secure, guaranteed lifetime income from their investments – protection that is both sorely needed and unavailable in any other retirement product.”

According to Beacon Research, fixed annuity sales were robust across all product types.

About The Author

Abraham Mathis has had varied and concurrent careers that span four decades in several industries. He achieved his goal to retire early. He was a USAF officer, worked as an Investment Banker, Chief Information Officer for a publicly traded Engineering company, executive product development and marketing positions in the software industry, and Business Unit Manager at a Semi-Conductor manufacturer. He had licensed Real Estate and Mortgage brokerages and an Insurance consulting company. He is a founder of a Veteran non-profit support organization, as well as the creator of www.JustStreetSense.com. He has several advanced degrees including Aerospace, Industrial Technology, Military Sciences and Health Care administration. He is currently working on several new books including one entitled, “Where Have All The Good Men Gone?”

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Half of Older Americans Have Nothing in Retirement Savings



Half of Older Americans Have Nothing in Retirement Savings

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

(Bloomberg) -- The bad news is that almost half of Americans approaching retirement have nothing saved in a 401(k) or other individual account. The good news is that the new estimate, from the U.S. Government Accountability Office, is slightly better than a few years earlier. Of those 55 and older, 48 percent had nothing put away in a 401(k)-style defined contribution plan or an individual retirement account, according to a GAO estimate for 2016 that was released Tuesday. That's an improvement from the 52 percent without retirement money in 2013. Two in five of such households did have access to a traditional pension, also known as a defined benefit plan. However, 29 percent of older Americans had neither a pension nor any assets in a 401(k) or IRA account. The estimate from the GAO, the investigative arm of Congress, is a

brief update to a more comprehensive 2015 report on retirement savings in the U.S. Both are based on the Federal Reserve's Survey of Consumer Finances. The previous report found the median household of those age 65 to 74 had about \$148,000 saved, the equivalent of an inflation-protected annuity of \$649 a month. "Social Security provides most of the income for about half of households age 65 and older," the GAO said.

The Employee Benefit Research Institute estimated earlier this month that 41 percent of U.S. households headed by someone age 35 to 64 are likely to run out of money in retirement. That's down 1.7 percentage points since 2014. EBRI found these Americans face a combined retirement deficit of \$3.83 trillion. (Courtesy <https://finance.yahoo.com>)

Related
A Different View: Half of Older Americans Are Not Without Retirement Savings

If you were a government agency that produced a study whose headline result was repeatedly misinterpreted, what would you do when you updated that study? Maybe hold back on the headlines that were misinterpreted? Not if you were the federal Government Accountability Office, which in an update to previous work



declared this week that 48% of U.S. households aged 55 and over in 2016 "had no retirement savings." That claim is factually incorrect, and the way it will be interpreted by politicians and the press will only make it less true.

Senator Bernie Sanders has repeatedly cited the GAO's past results, rephrasing them in ways that are entirely rational for a non-specialist but which lead to radically incorrect results. A recently as January 2019 Sanders tweeted:

"Today, in America, more than half of older workers have no retirement savings -- zero. That is unacceptable. We must create an economy that works for all of us, not just the wealthy few."



Photo of a retired couple using a digital tablet while relaxing at home. (Photo/Getty Images) But, as FactCheck.org and others have noted, this statistic -- derived from the Federal Reserve's Survey

of Consumer Finances -- excludes anyone who has only a traditional defined benefit pension. If we count both retirement accounts and traditional pensions, 72% of households aged 55 and over have retirement savings. That's up from only 64% in 1989 -- so things are getting better, not worse. But you wouldn't know that from the press coverage.

Excluding traditional pensions from "retirement savings" defies common sense, and it isn't even justifiable on a technical level. In the National Income and Product Accounts and the Federal Reserve's Financial Accounts of the United States, household wealth includes both defined contribution retirement plan assets such as IRAs and 401(k)s and the future benefits owed to employees via traditional defined benefit pensions. I can't see why the GAO's headline number would categorize this group -- most of whom are public sector employees with generous pensions -- as "non-savers," especially when that limited definition of retirement savers has already caused confusion. (Courtesy forbes.com)

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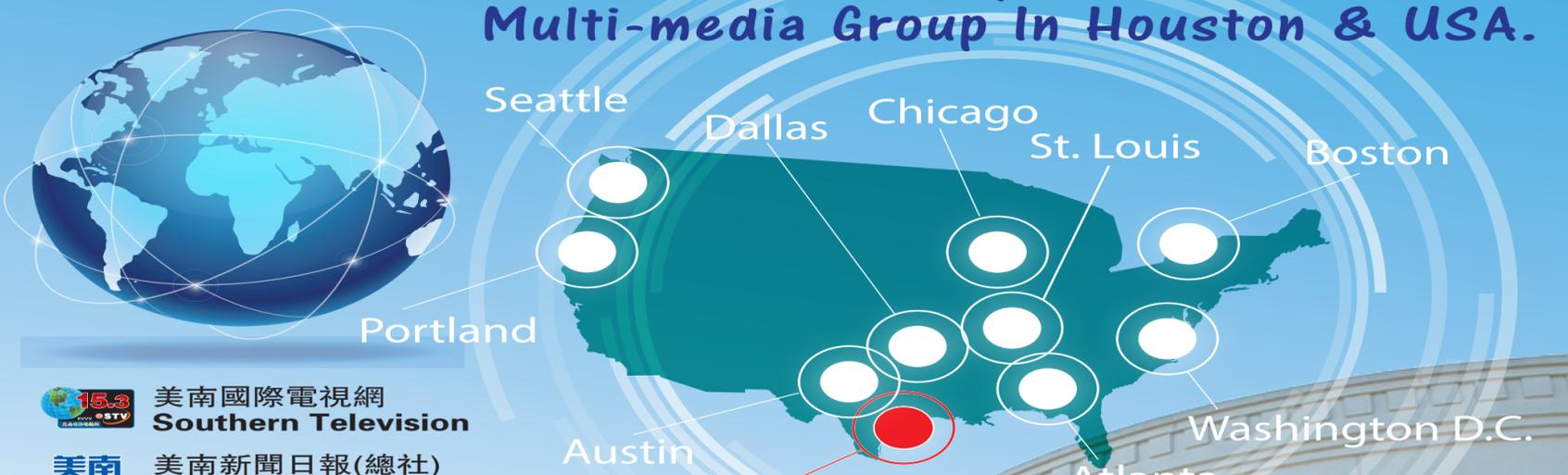
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