

JULIAN ASSANGE TO PLEAD TO ONE COUNT OF ESPIONAGE ACT ON WAY BACK TO AUSTRALIA

Julian Assange has reached a plea deal.

He'll plead to one felony count of violating the Espionage Act, a count that combines conspiring to obtain and disclose Secret documents. The Information covers just 2009 to 2011, so leaves out four years of the charged CFAA conspiracy and his far worse conduct after 2015.

He'll plead guilty on Wednesday morning in the North Marianas Island, on his way back to Australia.

This plea gets Assange little more than a way to avoid US trial (and that's before we see the Statement of Offense). It still charges a foreigner with violating the Espionage Act, the key thing journalists fought to avoid. It's not clear if it immunizes anyone else.

DOJ could have built a felony plea around the charged hacking conspiracy, to avoid such problems. But they chose not to.

Update: I've corrected the description of the conspiracy, above. The Statement of Offense may do some interesting things in describing how Assange chose to disclose these documents, including mentioning Assange's preferential sharing of them with Israel Shamir.