

# Julian Assange Extradition: Britain's Crown Prosecutor Has Conveniently Destroyed All Records of Keir Starmer's Four Trips to Washington

By [Matt Kennard](#)

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*US records show Starmer met with Attorney General Eric Holder and a host of American and British national security officials in Washington in 2011, when he was in charge of Julian Assange's proposed extradition to Sweden.*

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), England and Wales' public prosecutor, has deleted all records of its former head Keir Starmer's trips to the US, it can be revealed.

Starmer served as Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) from 2008-13, a period when the body was overseeing Julian Assange's proposed extradition to Sweden to face questioning over sexual assault allegations.

Starmer, who became a MP in 2015, is now leader of the Labour Party. Assange, meanwhile, faces imminent extradition to the US to face up to 175 years in prison under charges mostly related to the US Espionage Act.

While DPP, Starmer made trips to Washington in 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2013 at a cost to the British taxpayer of [£21,603](#). It was his most frequent foreign destination while in post. Max Hill, the current DPP, has made just [one trip](#) to Washington during his five-year tenure.

During Starmer's time in post, the CPS was marred by irregularities surrounding the case of the WikiLeaks founder.

The organisation has [admitted](#) to destroying key emails related to the Assange case, mostly covering the period when Starmer was in charge, while the CPS lawyer overseeing the case advised the Swedes in 2010 or 2011 not to visit London to interview Assange.

An interview at that time could have prevented the long-running embassy standoff.

Assange and WikiLeaks began publishing classified US diplomatic cables – in alliance with some of the world’s largest newspapers – in [November 2010](#). In the same month, Sweden [issued](#) an international arrest warrant for Assange over allegations of sexual misconduct, leading to a protracted legal battle, in which the CPS was heavily involved.

Italian journalist Stefania Maurizi has been waging a years-long legal fight to [access documents](#) related to the CPS and Assange case. However, the role of its then head, Keir Starmer, in the episode has always remained unclear.

## Starmer in Washington

Using the Freedom of Information Act, *Declassified* requested the itinerary for each of Starmer’s four trips to Washington with details of his official meetings, including any briefing notes.

“The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not hold any information falling within the scope of your request,” the public body told *Declassified*. “Information held has been destroyed in line with retention schedules.”

When asked by *Declassified* what these retention schedules are, the CPS pointed to its retention and disposal schedule [policy](#). But that document contains no references to time-limits on the preservation of CPS documents.

Asked for clarification – and whether the destruction of Starmer’s Washington documents was routine – the CPS did not respond.

But while there is no longer any official record of what Starmer did on these four trips on the British side, some information has come to light on the US side.

US records show that on 9 November 2011, then US Attorney General Eric Holder met with Starmer at his office at the US Department of Justice (DoJ) for 45 minutes.

Starmer’s CPS was then handling Assange’s proposed extradition to Sweden. In December 2010, Holder had [been asked](#) about WikiLeaks’ cable releases. “We are doing everything that we can,” he said.

Asked if he might mount a prosecution under the Espionage Act, Holder added: “That is certainly something that might play a role, but there are other statutes, other tools at our disposal.”

He continued that he had given the go-ahead for a number of unspecified actions as part of a criminal investigation into WikiLeaks. “I personally authorised a number of things last week and that’s an indication of the seriousness with which we take this matter and the highest level of involvement at the department of justice.”

**November 09, 2011 Continued**

Wednesday

12:50 PM - 1:00 PM

En route DOJ

In Limo: Margaret Richardson

1:00 PM - 1:30 PM

OFFICE TIME

1:30 PM - 2:15 PM

Meeting with UK's Director of Public Prosecutions, Keir Starmer

AG's Conference Room

DOJ: Gary Grindler, Denise Cheung, Bruce Swartz, Lisa Monaco, Matt Axelrod

UK POC: Gary Balch [REDACTED] and Amy Jeffress

[REDACTED] ← Personal Contact Information

Delegation:

Keir Starmer QC, Director of Public Prosecutions, Crown Prosecution Service

Susan Hemming, Head of Counterterrorism Division, Crown Prosecution Service

Sue Patten, Head of Central Fraud Group, Crown Prosecution Service

Patrick Stevens, Head of International Division, Crown Prosecution Service

Gary Balch, UK Liaison Prosecutor to the United States

US Attorney General Eric Holder's diary for 9 November 2011. (US Department of Justice)

## Meeting at the DoJ

The personnel involved in the Starmer-Holder meeting at the DoJ indicates it had a national security focus. It is possible that some of the unspecified actions against WikiLeaks and Assange referenced by Holder the previous year were discussed.

Starmer was part of a five-person British delegation. This included Gary Balch, then UK liaison prosecutor to the US, who dealt with [extradition](#).

Also present was Patrick Stevens, then head of the international division at the CPS, in which he [developed](#) and led CPS activities worldwide "in support of UK national security". Stevens states that, at the time, he was "at the heart of the UK government's national security and international justice strategy".

Alongside them sat Susan Hemming, then head of counterterrorism at the CPS, who was in charge of issues [related](#) to – among other things – "official secrets".

On the US side, the point of contact was listed as Amy Jeffress, then the DoJ's [attaché](#) at the US embassy in London, a role which involved [coordinating](#) with the CPS. Before that role, she had been national security counsellor to Attorney General Holder which involved ["interfacing regularly"](#) with the US intelligence community.

Jeffress moved from the DoJ in Washington to the US embassy in London in [September 2010](#), two months after WikiLeaks began [publishing](#) the Afghan War Logs. She would stay in London until 2014.

When Assange was seized at the Ecuadorian embassy in London in April 2019, Jeffress [told](#) the *Washington Post*: "It will be some years before a final decision is reached – at least a year and probably longer." She added: "These cases can become very political in the UK."

## National security

Another US official present at Starmer's DoJ meeting was Denise Cheung who would go on

to be [deputy chief](#) of its National Security Section. Also present was Bruce Schwartz, then the DoJ's counsellor for international affairs, who [would go on](#) to win the department's award for excellence in furthering the interests of US national security.

Lisa Monaco, another DoJ official at the meeting, had recently been [appointed](#) assistant attorney general for national security, leading the DoJ [division](#) overseeing its intelligence functions.

Monaco, who is now deputy US Attorney General, was in London in February [this year](#) to "reaffirm and build upon the strong partnership between the United States and Great Britain in countering threats to our national security."

She met with Matthew Rycroft, permanent secretary at the Home Office, "to continue the strong working relationship between the Home Office and the Justice Department."

Declassified has [previously shown](#) that the UK Home Office deployed eight staff on the secret operation to seize Assange from his asylum at the Ecuadorian embassy in London. This was a highly irregular move as Ecuador is a friendly country and asylum is a right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The CPS's lack of disclosure of documents related to Assange may raise suspicions of a cover-up. While Starmer was still in charge, in April 2013, the CPS [rejected](#) Assange's request for the personal data it had on him "because of the live matters still pending".

Even GCHQ, the UK's largest spy agency, had granted Assange's request for the personal information it held on him, which [revealed](#) one of its intelligence officers calling the Swedish case a "fit-up".

Keir Starmer did not respond to a request for comment.

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*Matt Kennard is chief investigator at Declassified UK. He was a fellow and then director at the Centre for Investigative Journalism in London. Follow him on Twitter @kennardmatt*

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