

UK lawyers appealed Assange bail - not Swedish

Written by AFP / The Swedish Wire

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LONDON, December 16, 2010 (AFP) - British prosecutors acting for Sweden took the decision to oppose bail for WikiLeaks boss Julian Assange and it was not a direct request from Sweden

, Britain's top state prosecutor said Thursday.

As Assange prepared to appear at London's High Court to hear an appeal against a lower court's decision to release him on bail, the Director of Public Prosecutions Keir Starmer was asked to comment on reports in The Guardian newspaper that Sweden has "not got a view at all on bail".

Starmer told BBC radio: "The general position and the nature of the arrangement is absolutely clear.

"The Crown Prosecution Service acts here as agents of the government seeking extradition, in this case the Swedish government.

"These proceedings are brought as agents of the Swedish government."

A spokesman for the Crown Prosecution Service told AFP: "We did take the decision to oppose bail without consulting the Swedish authorities, but that is absolutely standard practice."

He said it was common in extradition cases for British lawyers to take decisions on the course of action to be followed without consulting the country which issued the arrest warrant -- in this case Sweden.

"The reality is we take the bail decision for every case of this type, even though it is the Crown acting on Sweden's behalf in securing the extradition," the spokesman said.

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"Sweden lets us do the 'nuts and bolts' and this is standard practice."

A spokeswoman for the Swedish prosecutor's office, Karin Rosander, told AFP the decision to oppose bail was "a decision of the British prosecutor and that is what the British prosecutor's office has confirmed to me."

Assange was arrested in Britain last week on a European Arrest Warrant issued by Sweden, where two women allege they were sexually assaulted by the founder of the whistleblowing website.

If he is freed on Thursday he will have to live at the country estate of a supporter, pay 200,000 pounds (315,000 dollars, 235,000 euros) in bail plus an additional 40,000 pounds in sureties, wear a security tag and be subject to a curfew.