

# Hands off WikiLeaks!

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14 June 2010

Pentagon officials have announced the detention of Army private Manning, as well as stepped-up efforts to locate Julian Assange, the founder of the WikiLeaks web site, in a security crackdown sparked by the release of politically damaging video of a US military massacre in Iraq.

On June 7, Defense Department officials confirmed that Manning was in confinement in Kuwait “for allegedly releasing classified information.” Three days later, Pentagon investigators told the web site Daily Beast that they were looking for Assange in connection with the Manning investigation. The Australian-born WikiLeaks founder had scheduled speaking engagements in New York City and Las Vegas last week, but canceled them, citing “security considerations.”

WikiLeaks, which solicits leaks of government and corporate criminality worldwide and makes them public to a global audience on the Internet, published a decrypted and edited version of the video footage in April, using a special web site entitled “Collateral Murder.” The original video was shot by the US military in 2007 in the course of a helicopter assault in eastern Baghdad which left some 15 people dead, including two Reuters journalists.

The video and the accompanying voiceover of radio traffic, in which American soldiers joked about exterminating Iraqis, sparked widespread international outrage and a furious counterattack by the American military/intelligence apparatus. Defense Secretary Robert Gates denounced the release of the video, although he conceded that the footage was produced by the US military and had not been doctored.

According to press accounts, Manning was detained May 26 after he made the mistake of confiding in an online acquaintance, Adrian Lamo, an experienced hacker. Manning told Lamo that, in the course of his work as an Army military intelligence analyst at

Forward Operating Base Hammer, east of Baghdad, he had been able to acquire a vast stockpile of internal military and State Department documents and communications, including the original footage from which “Collateral Murder” was produced. Lamo turned Manning in to the Army and FBI.

Manning is reportedly being held at a military facility in Kuwait. Several computer hard drives taken from him arrived in Washington Thursday and are now being analyzed by government computer experts to determine what documents Manning downloaded and what he did with them.

Manning enlisted in the Army in 2007 and held a Top Secret/SCI clearance. He reportedly told Lamo that he had been looking through military and government networks for more than a year and found “incredible things, awful things... that belonged in the public domain, and not on some server stored in a dark room in Washington DC.”

Besides the video which became “Collateral Murder,” Manning said he supplied WikiLeaks with a second video showing a May 2009 US air strike near the village of Garani in Afghanistan, in which more than 100 people were killed, including many children.

The main focus of the military/FBI investigation is Manning’s claim to have downloaded some 260,000 secret diplomatic cables, which he described as showing “almost criminal political back dealings.” Manning added, according to an e-mail to Lamo, “Hillary Clinton and several thousand diplomats around the world are going to have a heart attack when they wake up one morning and find an entire repository of classified foreign policy is available, in searchable format, to the public.”

WikiLeaks has denied being in possession of the 260,000 secret cables. Assange has reportedly offered to help finance Manning’s legal defense.

The detention of Manning and the pursuit of Assange

must be opposed by all those who defend democratic rights. The American people, and the people of the entire world, have a right to know of the crimes committed by the American military/intelligence apparatus under the orders of the American president.

The attack on WikiLeaks and its collaborators is part of a broader security crackdown by the Obama administration. As reported by the *New York Times* this week, the White House has decided to go ahead with the prosecution of Thomas Drake, a whistleblower at the National Security Agency, who sought to expose financial mismanagement at the NSA by providing information to a reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*.

According to the *Times* article, “The indictment of Mr. Drake was the latest evidence that the Obama administration is proving more aggressive than the Bush administration in seeking to punish unauthorized leaks. In 17 months in office, President Obama has already outdone every previous president in pursuing leak prosecutions.”

This stepped-up crackdown on leaks came the same week as the issuance of a report by Physicians for Human Rights that doctors working for the CIA collaborated with interrogators who conducted torture of prisoners. The doctors monitored the torture sessions to make sure the prisoners did not die—so they could be interrogated and tortured further—and to refine the methods used to make them more painful and effective. The report’s title speaks for itself: “Experiments in Torture: Human Subject Research and Evidence of Experimentation in the ‘Enhanced’ Interrogation Program.”

The Obama administration is striving to plug leaks, not out of concern that the lives of American soldiers could be endangered, as it habitually claims, but for the same reasons that motivated the Bush administration: top government officials—in the Pentagon, CIA, NSA and in the White House itself—could face war crimes charges, either in the United States or before an international tribunal, based on the evidence produced by such revelations.

Relatives of those killed in the helicopter gunship attack in Iraq criticized Manning’s detention. Nabil Noor-Eldeen, whose brother Namir was one of the Reuters employees killed in the assault, told the press, “Justice was what this US soldier did by uncovering this crime against humanity. The American military

should reward him, not arrest him.”

Manning is not a criminal, but someone evidently motivated by revulsion against the crimes committed by “his” military and “his” government. The *World Socialist Web Site* joins with all those demanding that Manning be released without any charges being brought against him. We further demand the dropping of all efforts to investigate and suppress the activities of Julian Assange and other WikiLeaks activists.



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