# WikiLeaks document points to US contractor role in “dancing boys” incident

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One of the cables released by WikiLeaks documents a discussion between US Embassy officials and the Afghan government over the role of US contractor DynCorp in the crime of “purchasing of a service from a child"—apparently a reference to child prostitution.

The cable, dated June 24, 2009, records a discussion the day before between then-US Assistant Ambassador Joseph Mussomeli and Afghan Minister of Interior Hanif Atmar. It deals in part with a scandal surrounding a party thrown by and apparently for members of the US contractor DynCorp, the largest contractor for the State Department.

It states, “On the Kunduz Regional Training Center (RTC) DynCorp event of April 11 (reftel), Atmar reiterated his insistence that the U.S. try to quash any news article on the incident or circulation of a video connected with it.”

Atmar predicted, according to the cable, that publicity would “endanger lives.” The cable goes on to state, “He disclosed that he has arrested two Afghan police and nine other Afghans as part of an MoI investigation into Afghans who facilitated this crime of ‘purchasing a service from a child.’…[US Ambassador] Mussomeli counseled that an overreaction by the Afghan government…would only increase chances for the greater publicity the MoI is trying to forestall.”

There is a tradition of hiring boys to dance at parties, and at least in some cases this is followed by prostitution. The cable does not describe the incident in detail, but it goes on to note that “a widely-anticipated newspaper article on the Kunduz scandal has not appeared but, if there is too much noise that may prompt the journalist to publish.”

“Atmar then disclosed the arrest of two Afghan National Police (ANP) and nine other Afghans…as part of an MoI investigation into Afghan ‘facilitators’ of the event. The crime he was pursuing was ‘purchasing a service from a child,’ which is illegal under both Sharia law and the civil code…” The cable also indicated that there were drugs involved in the incident.

“Atmar said that President Karzai had told him that his (Atmar’s) ‘prestige’ was in play in management of the Kunduz DynCorp matter and another recent event in which Blackwater contractors mistakenly killed several Afghan citizens. The President had asked him ‘Where is the justice?’”

Both DynCorp, which is one of the major US contractors in Afghanistan, and the US State Department have claimed that there was no illicit activity at the party.

A spokesperson for the State Department declared, “We did not find anything that there was any kind of misconduct of that kind at all.” A DynCorp manager claims that the party was halted halfway through after “recognizing that the situation was culturally insensitive.”

If this was the case, however, it does not explain why eleven Afghans were arrested or why the incident was brought up as the first item on the agenda in a meeting between one of the highest-ranking Afghan officials and the second-ranking official at the US Embassy. Nor does it explain why the incident came to the attention of the Afghan president, who compared it to the killing of Afghan civilians by Blackwater.

The incident was in fact reported in a *Washington Post* article published on July 27, 2009, in the context of a revamping on the part of DynCorp of its “ethics practices.” The news article, which generally downplays the significance of the incident, also sites a State Department investigation that found “no criminal activity has been discovered.”

However, the *Post* also reported, “DynCorp fired four

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senior managers in Afghanistan over the party and other incidents.”

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