

# WikiLeaks publishes documents from CIA director's private email account

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Over the past week, WikiLeaks journalists began releasing data from the private AOL email account of CIA Director John Brennan.

The data includes documents from the period of 2007 to 2009 when Brennan was working in the private sector as chairman of the Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA) and the CEO of The Analysis Corporation (TAC). In 2009, President Obama appointed Brennan to the post of Homeland Security Advisor and, in 2013, Obama promoted him to his current position as CIA chief.

The released data does not include the contents of any actual emails. Instead, the releases consist of a number of documents that were stored in the email account—possibly as email attachments—together with Brennan's contact list.

Perhaps the most significant of the released documents concern a debate that took place within the political establishment in early 2008 regarding torture, after a bill that would limit "interrogation techniques" to those set forth in the Army Field Manual was vetoed by President Bush. This bill was seen in the CIA and in other sections of the political establishment as unacceptable because it would outlaw many torture techniques and might even expose torturers to criminal prosecution.

Among the documents released this week was a letter that *Forbes* magazine dubbed the "torture letter." This letter, dated May 7, 2008 and authored by Christopher Bond, then vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, argued for "interrogation techniques" beyond those contained in the army field manual (AFM). Bond wrote, "Rather than authorizing intelligence agencies to use only those techniques that are allowed under the AFM, I believe the more prudent approach is to preclude the use of specific techniques that are prohibited under the AFM."

Bond emphasized that "this approach allows for the possibility that new techniques that are not explicitly authorized in the AFM, but nevertheless comply with the law, may be developed in the future." This formulation, by design, leaves open the use of torture techniques that are not mentioned in the army field manual as either authorized or prohibited. This was the formulation that was ultimately adopted.

As CIA director, Brennan played a significant role in defending the use of torture and in covering up the torture program. The Senate Intelligence Committee report on the CIA torture program, which was partially released in December of last year, proved not only the existence of the torture program in all its hideous detail,

but also the subsequent systematic efforts by the CIA to cover up the program and lie about its results.

The "torture letter" published by WikiLeaks this week could serve as yet another exhibit in the future prosecution of Brennan and his accomplices for war crimes. If nothing else, the letter establishes that political leaders were aware that torture was taking place, and that many were working to lend the practice a veneer of legality while shielding the perpetrators from accountability. It is not clear at this point how the Bond letter made its way to Brennan or whether he became involved in the debate.

Also published by WikiLeaks from Brennan's email account is an unfinished paper authored by Brennan titled "The Conundrum of Iran," which was apparently designed as advice to the incoming president in January 2009. The document refers in candid and Machiavellian language to the "US-Iranian Chessboard."

Brennan refers to Iran's "population of over 70 million, xx [sic] percent of the world's proven oil reserves, a geostrategic location of tremendous (enviable?) significance, and a demonstrated potential to develop a nuclear-weapons program." He argues for a policy of "co-existing" with the Iranian regime, on the grounds that "Tehran's ability to advance its political and economic interests rests on a non-hostile relationship with the United States and the West."

This document reflects the approach that the United States eventually took, shifting away from the "axis of evil" language used by the Bush administration and working instead during the period of the Obama administration to develop a "relationship" with sections of the Iranian ruling elite.

Another document, "Executive Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations on Afghanistan and Pakistan," delivers a scathing internal assessment of the disorganized bungling characteristic of Washington's imperialist adventures. The document begins with the blunt statement: "There is no United States Government (USG) comprehensive strategy being implemented in the Afghanistan-Pakistan (AF-PK) region."

The author(s) of this document, who may or may not include Brennan, complained that "individuals in various elements are working in their own lanes and mission sets, yet nothing ties their efforts together as a whole for an achievable victory." In Afghanistan, the document states, "economic development policy is in disarray."

"In one area we visited, we observed a multi-million dollar unfinished road to nowhere cut into the side of a mountain," the

document stated. “The project was constructed at considerable risk to the U.S. engineers who took fire during its construction. When asked why the project was started and then left unfinished, the answer was telling. The Army built the road because President Karzai asserted that roads were high priority in Afghanistan. The Army thought that a road in this particular area would help the locals get crops to market and thus contribute to their economic well-being. The problem was that the locals were subsistence farmers and did not want or need a road—they wanted a well for clean drinking water. Because the Army built something the locals did not want, the locals did not protect it. Rather, they allowed the Taliban to come to the area and take shots at the engineers until the Army realized the project’s futility and stopped construction.”

“While such a comprehensive strategy for the region may exist, no one in Washington or on the round with whom we spoke, including our ambassadors, is aware of it,” the document concluded. “U.S. personnel point to disparate priorities that sometimes have resulted in counter-productive actions and programs that have not always been tailored to local conditions. In short, the greatest contributor to the USG’s failure to achieve stability in the region thus far has been uncoordinated activity.”

The author advocates expanding the war on terror into the “AF-PK” region, bemoaning the fact that “insurgents are free to retreat and regroup in sanctuaries across the AF-PK border in the Pashtun tribal belt of Pakistan.”

Finally, the document recommends “partnership” with “agro-business (sic)” to develop profitable agricultural projects in Afghanistan. “For example, pomegranate trees are highly coveted in Afghanistan and there is a market for them in Afghanistan and overseas.”

Another document argues that intelligence agencies should have more autonomy and “must never be subject to political manipulation and interference.”

The circumstances of the release of these documents are not entirely clear. According to one report, the documents were obtained by a group of teenage hackers within the United States who tricked telecom workers into resetting Brennan’s email password. Other reports describe one hacker acting alone.

The CIA denounced WikiLeaks’s publication of the emails as an invasion of Brennan’s privacy, declaring that the hack was a “crime” committed with “malicious intent.” Of course, the hackers did nothing more than the US intelligence apparatus does on a daily basis to ordinary individuals around the world, which includes gathering and storing their personal emails, phone calls, text messages, Internet browsing history, photos, lists of contacts, and more, pursuant to numerous overlapping programs exposed by National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden.

The media coverage of the Brennan email leaks has focused on the question of whether it was appropriate for Brennan to use his private email account to store or transmit sensitive information. Parallels have been drawn with the ongoing political episode surrounding Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server while she was secretary of state, as well as with the forced resignation of former general and CIA director David Petraeus after he provided classified information to his mistress. Certainly, from the standpoint of the ruling class, the CIA chief using an AOL account

is remarkably sloppy and embarrassing.

According to one report, the hackers who obtained Brennan’s emails contacted Brennan before releasing the documents. When Brennan asked them what they wanted, they replied, “We just want Palestine to be free and for you to stop killing innocent people.”

While the media has focused on the issue of protecting sensitive information, there has been virtually no mention of Brennan’s involvement in the major constitutional crisis that developed last year around the Senate investigation into the CIA torture program, culminating in an extraordinary speech by Senate Intelligence Committee chairwoman Dianne Feinstein. In that speech, Feinstein accused the CIA of illegally spying on the very legislative body that was charged with overseeing the CIA.

Feinstein declared that the CIA’s actions “may have undermined the constitutional framework essential to effective congressional oversight of intelligence activities or any other government function.” Feinstein took to the floor of the Senate to denounce Brennan after Brennan provocatively called for the prosecution of Senate staffers who had gained “unauthorized” access to incriminating CIA documents.

At the time, the *World Socialist Web Site* noted: “Brennan’s position raises the obvious question: if the Senate Intelligence Committee is not entitled to know what the CIA is up to, then who is?”

After the Justice Department announced that neither the CIA nor Congress would be prosecuted, Feinstein dropped the issue. Not even a year has passed since the publication of portions of the Senate report on the CIA torture program, and the American media has forgotten all about it.

As of this writing, it is not clear whether WikiLeaks has additional data from Brennan’s email account that it intends to publish. The publication of Brennan’s emails, including documents related to torture, is a reminder that there are torturers and war criminals who remain at large, and who have yet to be brought to justice.



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