

From WikiLeaks' Clinton Email Archive

# The New York Times' chief military correspondent met secretly with State Department in 2010 to bury Iraq War Logs

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A 2010 correspondence found in the WikiLeaks Hillary Clinton Email Archive reveals that Michael R. Gordon of the *New York Times* met secretly with US State Department officials prior to the newspaper's coverage of WikiLeaks' Iraq War Logs. The correspondence was made public by WikiLeaks' release of emails from a private, unsecured server used by Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton during her time as Secretary of State in the Obama administration.

In view of the *Times*' long record of parroting the official line of the Pentagon and the intelligence agencies, the revelation that the US government has become the paper's unofficial editor comes hardly as a surprise.

The purpose of Gordon's meeting with officials of the State Department was nothing other than damage control: to warn them of what to expect far enough in advance to adjust their press releases accordingly, while making every assurance that his paper would cherry-pick leaked documents to spin coverage in favor of American foreign policy while burying its most criminal offenses.

The hundreds of thousands of documents detailing war crimes in Iraq—now known as the Iraq War Logs—were obtained by WikiLeaks from whistleblower Chelsea Manning. A private in the US Army at the time of the leaks, Manning has been treated with marked cruelty and brutality at the hands of the US government. She is now serving a sentence of 35 years and may be kept in solitary confinement indefinitely.

The revelation of the correspondence again makes clear the degree to which the “fourth estate” is completely integrated into the capitalist state. Notwithstanding the sheer level of cynicism contained within the brief report, one is given a sense of just how much is the total

subservience of the so-called “free press” to Washington's military-intelligence apparatus. Names such as Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, John Brennan (director of the CIA) and Keith Alexander (director of the NSA) may as well be added to the masthead of every major American newspaper.

Gordon, the Chief Military Correspondent for the *Times*, has a long history of service to US imperialism. He gained notoriety in 2002 after co-writing a story with Judith Miller that put forward the bogus claim that Saddam Hussein was procuring aluminum tubes to further a nonexistent nuclear weapons program. During the first phase of the Iraq War, he was the only journalist embedded with the Allied Command.

For his part, Gordon's coverage of the WikiLeaks documents over the rest of 2010 was extraordinarily tame, focusing only on details that presented American foreign policy in a favorable light. In one article, he invoked WikiLeaks to accuse the government of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad of funneling weapons to Hezbollah. Others included stories which accused both Iran and Syria of “meddling” in Iraq, accused Ukraine (then under since-ousted President Yanukovich) of illegally selling arms to southern Sudan, and criticized France's attempt to sell a Mistral ship to Russia.

The email in question held the subject line “WIKILEAKS - OSD/PA MEETING WITH MICHAEL GORDON OF NYT” and was written on October 20, 2010, two days before the official release of the documents to the Internet. The email appears to have been written by a lower-level State Department official and was then forwarded to Clinton by Jake Sullivan, former Deputy Assistant to President Barack Obama, National

Security Advisor to Vice President Joe Biden, and Deputy Chief of Staff to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. He is now top foreign policy advisor to Hillary Clinton's 2016 election campaign.

The content of the original email consisted of a summary report of the meeting with Gordon. He began by informing officials the exact time the first round of stories would be posted online. He then assured officials that the *Times* was "not the major news player" for WikiLeaks and that the organization was "much more focused on European publications." In view of the fact that the *Times* was only one of a few major world publications given exclusive access to the documents before their release to the public, Gordon's statement can only mean that the paper was committed to covering up the full extent of the criminality exposed within them.

Gordon went on to describe, in detail, the official line the *Times*' coverage would take. The report states:

"[Gordon] confirmed the 5-6 themes we've been discussing that will be the focus of NYT stories

- More on civilian casualties than has been public so far
- More on detainee abuse than has been public so far
- Iranian involvement in Iraq
- More on contractors than has been public so far -

although on this one, he didn't

seem like there would be any great surprises here

- A small report on the US hikers"

Gordon also informed officials of two stories the State Department evidently had not anticipated at all: "The 'surrender to the helicopter' issue, which is the focus of a story his colleague is working on - and, apparently, the focus of other news stories (he said this a couple of times); Kurdish-Arab tensions, and the US role in deconflicting those tensions. Gordon said that for him, this was the most important topic long-term - but he also said this will be of much less interest to European papers doing stories."

The email concluded with the following statement: "NYT has adhered to the process followed after their first meeting at the WH (when the Af/Pak documents were released), and has gone to great efforts to redact names, as well as information regarding force protection and intelligence." This makes clear that not only had representatives of the *Times* (likely Gordon himself) aided in the cover-up of information deemed potentially harmful to the American ruling class, but that they had been meeting with government officials to discuss matters of the press for some time.

Gordon is by no means the only *Times* journalist

working overtime to downplay the revelations made by WikiLeaks. His colleague, Roger Cohen, penned a hack opinion-piece on WikiLeaks in December 2010 titled "American Diplomacy Revealed - As Good." Throughout the article, Cohen made the spurious claim that the only revelation WikiLeaks presented was the competency of the military-intelligence apparatus: "They are, to judge from the WikiLeaks dump of a quarter-million of their private or secret cables, thoughtful, well-informed and dedicated servants of the American interest who write clear, declarative English sentences.. . Overall, my longstanding admiration for America's conscientious diplomats has been redoubled."

Bill Keller, then the *Times*' Executive Editor, argued in favor of prior restraint in an extraordinary series of comments. In November of 2010, he made the infamous Orwellian statement: "We agree wholeheartedly that transparency is not an absolute good. Freedom of the press includes freedom not to publish, and that is a freedom we exercise with some regularity." This statement by Keller was clearly addressed not to the majority of the *Times*' readers, but meant to reassure the military-intelligence apparatus that uses the paper as a propaganda conduit.

The secret passing of information by Gordon to the State Department is Keller's dictum put into practice. Although this is but one piece of evidence, damning as it may be, it must be viewed in light of the contemporary political context. The *Times* continues to play a crucial role in the political life of the "liberal" American ruling elite that today is seeking to manipulate public opinion into supporting already far advanced preparations for war against Russia and China.



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