WikiLeaks exposes crimes of German imperialism

Gregor Link
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WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is currently locked up in a UK high-security prison. He faces possible life imprisonment or the death penalty in the United States for making Washington's war crimes public. This has not prevented the German media from remaining silent or even slandering him. In line with the US and British media, they are doing their utmost to denigrate the journalist and justify this frontal attack on press freedom.

The basic motivation is the intimate symbiosis between the media, government and big business interests. They also cannot forgive Assange and WikiLeaks for exposing crimes committed by German imperialism.

German war crimes—as revealed by WikiLeaks

Back in 2009, WikiLeaks published an internal Bundeswehr (German army) field report on a massacre in the Afghan province of Kunduz, which resulted in the deaths of up to 142 people, including "children and adolescents." The bombardment of two fuel trucks was the bloodiest military action by the modern Bundeswehr, and marked a turning point in German post-war history.

The secret report published by WikiLeaks, written a few days after the bloody deed, proved that the Bundeswehr had taken no measures to avoid civilian casualties in the run-up to the air strike. It spoke of "several hundred civilians in the vicinity," and concluded that the death of innocent bystanders was "very likely."

In fact, the Bundeswehr personnel tasked with the investigation reported that "probably around 14 civilians were killed and 4 civilians injured." These numbers then soared in subsequent reports from a commission of inquiry carried out by the Afghan government.

Not only did the report unmask the German government's disinformation campaign, which, for days after the bombing, denied any civilian casualties. It also testified to the arrogance and ruthlessness with which the Bundeswehr leadership and its commander on the ground, Colonel Klein, accepted the deaths of innocent people and then sought to cover the army's tracks.

According to the report, the Bundeswehr command allowed several hours to pass before soldiers moved in to secure the bomb crater. In so doing, serious violations of official guidelines were committed.

The report stated: "The FJg/MP forces presented a location for the event which had obviously been significantly changed, leaving a virtually clean impression. There are only minimal traces of human material to be found, neither dead nor injured are on site." Therefore, the report concludes, it was no longer possible "to conclude today, if, who and how many people had been at the scene." The tracks of the Bundeswehr bombardment had been obscured.

The internal military police report was part of the "war diaries" from Afghanistan published by WikiLeaks, which revealed the murderous nature of the American and European military occupation.

Among the more than 90,000 US Army reports was an internal NATO report from 2009, according to which the number of civilian deaths increased by 46 percent in the course of 2008. Overall, according to current estimates, the neo-colonial campaign has cost the lives of 111,000 Afghan men, women and children, including at least 31,000 civilians.

The German government promptly condemned the publication of the documents by WikiLeaks and declared that it could endanger the 4,600 German soldiers stationed in Afghanistan at that time.

In addition to thousands of German troops, the German government was also responsible for other soldiers. Documents scanned by WikiLeaks in 2010 show that around 300 elite soldiers from the American "Task Force 373" were stationed for years in the northern Afghan region around Masar-i-Sharif, which was under the command of the Bundeswehr. From there, the US Capture-or-Kill squadron—operating outside of the UN mandate—planned and carried out the ruthless assassinations of alleged "Taliban leaders," involving repeated massacres of children and other innocent bystanders.

The German government also placed names on the "arrest list" of the US special forces and, in addition, maintained its own elite force in Afghanistan—"Task Force 47," which is also repeatedly mentioned in the WikiLeaks documents. This unit obtained the personal data of "targets" of the German government and handed them over to the American killer commandos to do the dirty work. One was grateful for "any help from the US Army," German sources reported.

According to a statement from the German defence ministry, following a request from the *Tagesspiegel* newspaper, the Bundeswehr's top secret unit consists of 120 soldiers drawn from Special Forces (KSK), Special Operations (DSO) and Military Intelligence units. Their tasks include the "seizure" of alleged "Taliban leaders." "No reliable information" is available regarding the number of people who die when the TF 47 undertakes "self-defence measures."

The WikiLeaks documents, however, provide a further clue to the modus operandi of the unit in connection with the Kunduz affair: Colonel Klein carried out the entire operation together with three other members of TF 47 from the remote command post of the "Task Force."

The secret and illegal cooperation between the Bundeswehr and the

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US Army in kill missions in Afghanistan is not the only example of how German imperialism cooperates with the US military in order to realise its own interests.

Another is the establishment of the Pentagon's United States Africa Command (US AFRICOM) in Stuttgart. With the exception of Egypt, which is part of the Central Command's territory, the base has coordinated all US military operations on the African continent since beginning operation in 2008.

In a confidential dispatch published by WikiLeaks, the US embassy in Berlin reports that "the German government strongly supported the US decision" to establish the US military command in Germany. The document was part of the Cablegate release of over 250,000 diplomatic dispatches from 274 US embassies and consulates in 2010.

The representative of the German government, Ulrich Brandenburg, advised the American side to remain silent because the decision could provoke "headlines" and unleash an "unnecessary public debate." A confidential note from Brandenburg to the German foreign office, which became public a few years later via WikiLeaks, confirms that the German government had drawn up its own imperialist plans.

"The location of AFRICOM in Stuttgart does not oppose German interests. On the contrary," writes the foreign office diplomat. The locating of two regional commands of the US Army, AFRICOM and EUCOM, responsible for Europe, served to illustrate the role of Germany as one of "the most important partners of the United States." One should therefore "respond positively to the US plans."

In particular, WikiLeaks refuted the official propaganda that Germany was not involved in the war against Libya: operational orders for the launching of Tomahawk cruise missiles, which helped to reduce the country to rubble, came directly from Stuttgart.

The German police state and its secret services

In August 2008, WikiLeaks published the missing pages of the so-called "Schäfer-Report," which reported on illegal ties between German journalists and the Federal Intelligence Service (BND). In 2006, a former federal judge, Gerhard Schäfer, drafted a report for a parliamentary commission dealing with the illegal activities of the BND.

The file published by WikiLeaks highlights the role of Focus journalist Josef Hufelschulte (BND codename "Jerez"), who was in close contact with leading intelligence agencies. The German foreign intelligence service used such contacts to influence public reporting on its activities and to trace internal sources and leaks.

In December 2016, WikiLeaks published all the minutes of the NSA Committee of Inquiry of the German parliament (Bundestag) from the preceding year. The WSWS reported on the revelations at the time. The documents show that the German foreign intelligence service had access to the NSA's databases, which supplied mass data to US intelligence agencies, and that at least one BND employee developed the XKeyscore NSA software, which scans and analyses the mail traffic of millions of people worldwide.

Between 2011 and 2014, WikiLeaks annually published extensive material on the cooperation between private and state agencies in monitoring the population—the so-called "Spy Files." One of the key components of the revelations was the business connections and product portfolio of the German FinFisher GmbH, a subsidiary of the British Gamma Group. The inconspicuous company from Munich, which, according to its homepage, "works exclusively with intelligence services and law enforcement authorities," is the world's leading provider of state spy trojans.

The current version of FinFisher's Cyber Weapon FinSpy no longer requires user interaction to gain access to a device. Instead, the malware manipulates the download of updates to existing programs. Among other material, WikiLeaks published parts of the FinSpy source code to "help the technical community develop tools to protect the population from FinFisher."

The WikiLeaks documents led to a further investigation. It turned out that FinSpy has been used by the governments of Ethiopia, Bahrain and Turkey to monitor civil rights activists and opponents. On every occasion the spyware was sold to dozens of other reactionary regimes, including Qatar, South Africa, Vietnam, and Hungary, it was awarded an official German export license.

Commenting on these exposures (in 2014), WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange said: "FinFisher continues to operate unhindered from Germany and sells weapons-grade surveillance malware to some of the world's most ruthless regimes. The Merkel government claims to value privacy—but its actions speak a different language. Why is the Merkel government still protecting FinFisher?"

The answer is evident: if it had not done so the German government would have imperiled one of its own suppliers. As is now known, the German criminal police office (BKA) had already acquired a FinSpy license in 2013, but it was allegedly not used for years because of "constitutional concerns." With the adoption of the new security laws introduced by the current interior minister Horst Seehofer—at the latest—these concerns have been swept aside. With reference to security circles, the newspaper *Die Welt* reported that the German interior ministry gave the BKA a green light to use FinSpy for telecommunication surveillance on January 10, 2018.

Julian Assange and WikiLeaks have done the work every self respecting journalists should do, i.e., revealing the secret activities and crimes of the ruling elite. For this they are not only being pursued and persecuted by the same elite, they are also under attack from the bought-and-paid-for hacks sitting in editorial offices. This underlines the fact that only a movement of the working class can defend Assange.

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