



WikiLeaks Condemned by Governments on Three Continents

The publication of nearly 400,000 secret U.S. military documents about the Iraq war by the whistleblower WikiLeaks earned condemnation from governments on three continents within hours of their posting on the Internet. The U.S. government, the British defense ministry, and the Iraqi prime minister's office all quickly condemned the documents being revealed to the public.



The October 22 [WikiLeaks posting](#) of 391,832 secret U.S. government intelligence reports on the Iraq war from 2004 through 2009 was a follow-up on the nearly 90,000 secret documents revealed by WikiLeaks on the Afghan war back in July. The "Iraq War Diary," as WikiLeaks called its most recent group of documents, reveals that the U.S. government kept detailed files on civilian casualties in Iraq (despite claims to the contrary) and allowed the press to [underestimate civilian casualty numbers by more than 15,000](#).

According to the U.S. government, the WikiLeaks posting endangers American lives. "This is an extraordinary disservice to America's men and women in uniform," Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell charged in a [government press release](#). "That danger is now exponentially multiplied as a result of this leak because it gives our enemies the wherewithal to look for vulnerabilities in how we operate and to exploit those opportunities and potentially kill our forces. That is just shameful."

The British Defense Ministry [claimed](#) that WikiLeaks "can put the lives of UK service personnel and those of our allies at risk and make the job of armed forces in all theatres of operation more difficult and more dangerous."

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's office also [released a statement](#) that the WikiLeaks posting was an attack "against national parties and leaders, especially against the prime minister."

Asked if he is worried that the release of so many secret documents could cause the deaths of U.S. military personnel, WikiLeaks Founder Julian Assange [replied](#): "No, I'm worried that the press chooses to credibly report statements like that from the Pentagon.... Most wars that are started by democracies involve lying. The Vietnam War and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution involved lying. The start of the Iraq war involved very serious lies that were repeated and amplified by some parts of the press."

The Pentagon charged that WikiLeaks had endangered U.S. service personnel or informants after it posted information in July on the U.S. war in Afghanistan, but has since made no mention of any actual



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deaths resulting from the public posting of the documents.

The condemnation of WikiLeaks by governments seems largely to have been because the documents reveal crimes by these governments. “Britain’s role in the alleged torture and unlawful killing of Iraqi civilians may be the subject of legal action,” the British Manchester *Guardian* [reported](#) October 23. The *Guardian* [noted](#) that Phil Shiner of the British group Public Interest Lawyers claimed the WikiLeaks-released documents have exposed prosecutable war crimes. “Some of these deaths will be in circumstances where the UK [has] a very clear legal responsibility,” Shiner contended. “This may be because the Iraqis died while under the effective control of UK forces — under arrest, in vehicles, helicopters or detention facilities.”

Meanwhile, the government condemnations have forced WikiLeaks Founder Julian Assange into a virtual life on the run. “Julian Assange moves like a hunted man,” the *New York Times* [reported](#) October 23. “He demands that his dwindling number of loyalists use expensive encrypted cellphones and swaps his own as other men change shirts. He checks into hotels under false names, dyes his hair, sleeps on sofas and floors, and uses cash instead of credit cards, often borrowed from friends.” Assange is being investigated for [anonymous accusations of rape](#) in Sweden, a nation with strong free press laws where the WikiLeaks website is hosted, and he has been [denied residency in the country](#).

Photo of WikiLeaks Founder Julian Assange: AP Images

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