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WikiLeaks pulls off biggest intel leak in Afghan war records

A massive set of 90,000 leaked US military records have provided one of the most revealing insights into the US-led war in Afghanistan, including unreported civilian killings by coalition forces and raids by a special force to hunt down Taliban leaders.

The leaked documents called the "The War Logs," posted on Sunday, map the US war in Afghanistan from 2004 to 2009, and with it WikiLeaks has pulled the biggest leaks in intelligence history.

The documents include plans of US operations, threat reports from intelligence sources, descriptions of meeting between politicians, military officials and insurgents and plans hatched by the militants.

Of particular importance are detailed descriptions of covert raids carried out by a secretive US special operations unit called 'Task Force 373' to hunt down 'high-value' Taliban targets in "kill or capture" operations without trial.

It also reveals that the special forces have targeted civilians in hundreds of incidents and some of the covert operations resulted in the killings of Afghan civilians, including children.

The current documents were made public in advance to three publications -- The New York Times, Guardian, and the German weekly Der Spiegel — several weeks ago by the whistleblower's website.

These publications sifted through troves of documents to reveal several secrets about the war, including indications that intelligence agencies in Pakistan and Iran may be fueling the insurgency in Afghanistan.

The leaked papers document assessments by military officers that the ISI, considered an ally, may actually be supporting the Afghan insurgency.

The White House condemned the disclosures, and contended that they "put the lives of Americans and our partners at risk". It also defended Pakistan's role and lauded its contribution in the war in Afghanistan.

WikiLeaks Australian founder Julian Assange told The NYT that an additional 15,000 documents would also be revealed until WikiLeaks could redact names of individuals in the reports whose safety could be jeopardised.

WikiLeaks.org, the online organisation, which was founded in 2006, says that "transparency in government activities leads to reduced corruption, better government and stronger democracies".

"If journalism is good it is controversial by its nature," Assange told the Guardian.

He said it was the role of good journalism to take on "powerful abuses," a move that always prompts a back reaction.

He especially pointed out the existence of "Task Force 373", a US-based assassination squad that goes around killing people in a 'kill or capture list'.

In April, another video called "Collateral Murder" made in 2007 was published by WikiLeaks.

It showed American soldiers in Iraq firing on a group of people comprising Iraqi children and journalists.

The appearance of the video led to a federal probe and last month, 22-year-old military analyst, Bradley Manning, was arrested by US authorities for leaking the tape and is being held in a US military detention facility in Kuwait.

James Jones, US National Security Advisor, issued a statement noting that WikiLeaks did not inform the US government about the leak, which learnt about it from the media.

"The United States strongly condemns the disclosure of classified information by individuals and organizations which could put the lives of Americans and our partners at risk, and threaten our national security," Jones said.

The Pentagon Papers, released in the seventies exposed how the US was conducting the war in Vietnam, were around 10,000 pages.

"In this case it will show the true nature of this war and then the public from Afghanistan and other nations can see what is really going on and take steps to address the problem," he said.

Assange pointed out that this leak is unprecedented not only because of the much greater volume of material compared to the Pentagon Papers but also due to the possibility that many more people around the world will be able to access it and comment on it because of the Internet.

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