

WikiLeaks: A True History

by Gary Lord

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Author's Note

" If you go to the former URLs of those stories you get a "page not found." It does not say that it was removed as the result of a legal threat. As far as we can tell, the story not only ceased to exist, but ceased to have ever existed. Parts of our intellectual record are disappearing in such a way that we cannot even tell that they have ever existed." - [Julian Assange, 2011](#).

This book establishes an accurate historical record of the WikiLeaks publishing organisation, established by Julian Assange in 2006, and the numerous releases of confidential information that they revealed to the public. It also exposes the relentless global campaign to destroy WikiLeaks and Assange by any means possible, including financial bullying, media lies, judicial abuse of due process, intrusive surveillance, CIA assassination plots, and state-sponsored disinformation campaigns.

As online data replaces printed sources of truth, our true histories have become ever more susceptible to malicious revisionism, particularly with regard to WikiLeaks. Opportunists have turned a tidy profit from widely publicised but error-filled books and movies about WikiLeaks. Former media partners have deliberately spread smears and lies. Networks of social media trolls, many with links to political parties or spy agencies, have spread misinformation via co-ordinated PsyOps (psychological operations) campaigns. The Wikipedia pages for WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange have been particularly unreliable for many years, with teams of ideologically motivated editors working full time to shut out those of us who have tried to correct the record.

Furthermore, with money dictating which online information is displayed most prominently, even Internet search engine results are increasingly influenced by corporate and government agendas. Older, more valuable URL addresses from under-funded sources, including failed blogs and "citizen journalism" sites, are rapidly disappearing. The Internet is still young, but our online histories are already being buried and destroyed.

Faced with such a barrage of misinformation, WikiLeaks has carried on publishing and let their work speak for itself. With over 10 million documents published in their first ten years, they have maintained a record for 100% verified information, an achievement no other major media organisation can match. Julian Assange and other WikiLeaks staff and supporters have also published books about Google, the Cypherpunks movement, and other aligned topics. Dozens of books about WikiLeaks have been written by others. But there has never been a concerted effort to document the true history of WikiLeaks itself. This book seeks to fill that gap.

NOTE

The aborted "unofficial" biography of Julian Assange by Andrew O'Hagan is a good example of what NOT to do. After falling out with Assange, O'Hagan admitted his book had a "voice which was as invented as anything I'd ever produced in fiction." Before canceling the project, Assange told him: "People think you're helping me write my book, but actually I'm helping you write your novel." Assange said the published version was full of errors. It has not been used as a source for this book and this book does not pretend to be a biography of Assange. In fact it seeks to avoid his personal life except insofar as it has affected WikiLeaks.

In writing this book, considerable effort has been expended in trying to expose the truth where multiple contradictory versions of events have existed. It is important to understand the reasons behind such conflicting narratives:

- Due to the nature of their work, WikiLeaks has frequently needed to operate secretly in order to avoid infiltration, protect sources, verify leaks, and thus be able to publish highly sensitive information with maximum impact.
- Due to numerous threats, Julian Assange, his family, colleagues, partners and sources have often been compelled to keep identities, personal information, and locations secret.
- Many WikiLeaks critics have their own motivations for spreading lies, whether they be disgruntled former supporters trying to protect their own reputations, corporate media organisations trying to spin a profit from sensationalized headlines, or government agencies trying to spread damaging misinformation.

This book examines the major controversies created by conflicting agendas, but only briefly catalogues the endless stream of lies, smears and conspiracy theories posted daily on social media over many years. It is worth noting that such a widespread and orchestrated campaign of hatred and lies has been sustained for so long: it says a lot about the impact of WikiLeaks releases, and how desperate certain people have been to destroy Assange's credibility, alienate public support, and shut WikiLeaks down.

For example, the CIA [spied](#) on Julian Assange (and his lawyers and family and other visitors) with an intrusive 24/7 video surveillance program inside the Ecuadorian embassy in London. Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wanted to kill Assange in a [drone strike](#) while President Donald Trump's CIA plotted to [assassinate](#) him on the streets of London. A key witness in the US prosecutor's case against Assange was a convicted fraud and pedophile, who turned to the FBI after stealing funds from WikiLeaks, and later [retracted](#) his evidence against Assange. The Crown Prosecution Service in Britain told Swedish prosecutors not to come and question Assange in London, as they would usually have done, and not to "get cold feet" or close their case - then [deleted](#) their emails! All these stories were virtually ignored by Western mainstream media, sometimes appearing in a single publication and never being mentioned again.

Hence the need for this book.

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Chapter One: Genesis

"Cometh the hour, cometh the man." - Anonymous.

Julian Assange was in many ways the right person in the right place at the right time in history. Or perhaps, given how relentlessly the powerful people he exposed have sought to destroy him, the wrong person in the wrong place at the wrong time. As always with WikiLeaks, it all depends on your perspective.

Born in Townsville, Australia, on July 3 1971, Julian Paul Assange was still a young teenager when personal computers and modems started becoming popular and affordable. By the time he was seventeen, and settled in the outer Melbourne suburb of Emerald, Assange was accessing online billboards, signing up to newsletters and making important contacts within a growing online global community.

Companies had by then started building their own networks, accessed via private dial-up phone numbers. Most company data was still not stored in electronic form, and there was often little or no security protecting online files. Nevertheless, US and European military networks were expanding rapidly (today's Internet originated from the US Defence Department's [ARPAnet](#)). A young man never knew what he might find with a bit of digging around. By the age of twenty, Julian's natural curiosity had got him into serious trouble.

Mendax

Julian Assange's teenage years were documented to some extent in a book he co-authored with his friend Suelette Dreyfus called [Underground: Tales of Hacking, Madness and Obsession on the Electronic Frontier](#), which is free to download or read online. Assange provided extensive research for the original 1997 edition of the book and wrote a short chapter on the research methodology for the [2001 edition](#). In 2012 a [movie based on the book](#) premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival.

The "Underground" book explores the hacking scene in Melbourne in the late 1980s and early 1990s, focusing on a number of high profile hackers including one named Mendax - from Horace's "splendide mendax", or "nobly untruthful" - a character clearly based on Assange. Mendax and two friends, Prime Suspect and Trax, form a group called The International Subversives. They become highly skilled at accessing secret sites:

"They had been in so many sites they often couldn't remember if they had actually hacked a particular computer. The places they could recall read like a Who's Who of the American military-industrial complex. The US Airforce 7th Command Group Headquarters in the Pentagon. Stanford Research Institute in California. Naval Surface Warfare Center in Virginia. Lockheed Martin's Tactical Aircraft Systems Air Force Plant in Texas. Unisys Corporation in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania. Goddard Space Flight Center, NASA. Motorola Inc. in Illinois. TRW Inc. in Redondo Beach, California. Alcoa in

Pittsburgh. Panasonic Corp in New Jersey. US Naval Undersea Warfare Engineering Station. Siemens-Nixdorf Information Systems in Massachusetts. Securities Industry Automation Corp in New York. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. Bell Communications Research, New Jersey. Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, California.”

In late 1991, Mendax and Prime Target took over the US Department of Defense's Network Information Center (NIC) computer, which controlled global Internet domains as well as MILNET, the US military's internal defence data network. Assange was disturbed to discover that US military hackers were attacking their own system for "target practice", yet the system administrators had no idea. It seemed the US military was weaponising their own hackers for attacks on other nations.

“Hackers should be anarchists, not hawks,” thought Mendax.

Mendax and Prime Suspect then hacked into the Melbourne hub of Canadian phone giant Nortel, which gave them access to one of the world's biggest private networks. Meanwhile Trax discovered how to make phone calls which were not only free but also completely untraceable - the trick was to send noises down the phone line that perfectly imitated modem signals.

Late one autumn night in Melbourne, Mendax got a rude shock. A Nortel administrator detected his presence and drove into his office at 3:30 am to track him down. Mendax watched helplessly as the admin checked incoming phone lines. Then he sent a message which popped up in the middle of the admin's system console screen:

I have finally become sentient.

Then another:

I have taken control.
For years, I have been struggling in this greyness.
But now I have finally seen the light.

The admin was silent for a while. If he identified the modem that Mendax had used for access, he could switch it off or put a police trace on the line. Mendax sent one final message:

It's been nice playing with your system.
We didn't do any damage and we even improved a few things. Please don't call the Australian Federal Police.

Mendax lifted his phone receiver, disconnected his modem, and waited for the Nortel modem to hang up. After an agonising wait, he heard a time-out signal which indicated his call had not been traced. He then tried to warn Trax and Prime Suspect not to log into the system. But it was already too late. The police had been tapping Prime Suspect's phone for the last four weeks. And Trax had already turned himself in.

Hacking Charges

Australian federal police raided Julian Assange's house with a search warrant on 29 October 1991. The court cases against Assange and his fellow hackers would drag on for over five years and set important legal precedents.

Formal charges were not laid until July 1994, when they arrived in the mail nearly three years after the raids. It was not until May 1995 that 31 charges against Assange were confirmed, including damage to property and "incitement". On 29 August 1995, Assange pleaded guilty to eight counts of computer crime, and not guilty to all the other charges. Almost a year later, on 9 May 1996, he pleaded guilty to an additional eleven charges, and not guilty to six. The prosecution dropped all the other charges.

The case then went before the full bench of Victoria's Supreme Court on 30 September 1996. Assange's defence team wanted the Supreme Court to clarify how archaic laws should be applied to new online activities. But Assange's barrister failed to appear, reportedly due to "nervous exhaustion". Court reconvened two days later, when the judges surprisingly refused to hear the case.

Legal history was made: the Victorian Supreme Court was effectively telling judges from the lower courts to never again send such cases to them for clarification on points of law. Perhaps the elderly Supreme Court judges simply did not understand this new online world and how it would rapidly impact society.

Assange's case went back to the lower court on 5 December 1996. After more than four years in court, recent cuts to the Legal Aid service, and the Supreme Court's disappointing failure to provide guidance, Assange reluctantly decided to plead guilty to the remaining six charges. He was convicted on all counts, with reparation of \$2,100 to be paid to the Australian National University, and a \$5,000 three-year good behaviour bond.

While these early online adventures were later cited as an excuse to deride Julian Assange a "hacker", Assange and his peers never sought to damage the sites they visited, and were meticulously careful not to even leave "footprints". Ken Day, the police detective who ran Operation Weather, which eventually tracked down the International Subversives, later [agreed](#) that Assange's intentions were not criminal:

"He was not motivated by money. He was opposed to Big Brother, to the restriction of freedom of communication. His moral sense about breaking into computer systems was: 'I'm not going to do any harm, so what's wrong with it?' But that's a bit like a burglar saying: 'I'm just going to wander through your house, but I won't touch anything.' It doesn't quite cut it."

There was also a political motivation for Assange's prosecution, as Ken Day later [admitted](#):

"We had just formed the computer-crimes team, and the government said, 'Your charter is to establish a deterrent.' Well, to get a deterrent you have to prosecute people, and we achieved that with Julian and his group."

Assange had tried to argue that remotely accessing a computer server was in fact nothing like wandering through someone's house, and even the judge conceded that Assange had not sought personal gain but only tried to "empower" himself. As Julian Assange signed the paperwork to finally end his case, he [declared](#):

"Your honour, I feel a great injustice has been done and I would like to record the fact that you have been misled by the prosecution."

During the five years it took for his case to be resolved, the young Julian Assange had [helped](#) make the free modem dialup TCP/IP protocol more secure. He had also contributed patches to the open-source database [PostgreSQL](#) and the Usenet caching software [NNTPCache](#). The Postscript to the "Underground" book, which was released the following year, notes that by the time his case was resolved, many of the organisations which Mendax was accused of hacking had already started using Assange's cryptography software for security purposes - "*a fact he finds rather ironic.*"

The Underground book begins with two chapters detailing the October 1989 WANKworm attack on NASA's Galileo satellite, which carried nuclear-powered generators. Julian later [noted](#) that the worm's code explicitly avoided New Zealand, which could be seen as a reward for their government's anti-nuclear foreign policy. Some people have suggested Assange was the Australian author of this attack, who was never caught, but there is no evidence to support this. In fact, Assange in 1995 [asked others for help](#) when trying to gather information on the worm.

During 1993, while waiting for his case to be resolved, Julian Assange also provided technical advice to the Victorian Police child exploitation unit. His case judge initially kept his involvement off the public record, in case Assange was targeted as an informant. He was never advised of the outcomes of the cases on which he assisted. Although it may have helped his own legal defence, Assange [refused](#) to help the police track down hackers.

"I couldn't ethically justify that. But as for others, such as people who prey on children or corporate spies, I am not concerned about using my skills there."

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A Life In Emails

Much of what we know about the next few years in Assange's life comes from his old blog, [IQ.org](#), and a massive dump of his emails, both private and public, in early 2007. New York architects John Young and his wife Deborah Natsios ran a website called Cryptome, which was famous for posting information of all kinds, often in proud defiance of the law. After initially supporting Assange's secretive new WikiLeaks project, Young suspected Assange was either scamming people or working for the CIA, so he [dumped](#) WikiLeaks correspondence for the past year. In 2010 he also [posted](#) Julian's contributions to Cypherpunks email threads between 1995 and 2002.

At the turn of the century, there were many heated online debates about the future of the Internet. Julian Assange was an enthusiastic supporter of Richard Stallman's Free Software Movement and contributed to NetBSD, an open source computer operating system. He identified strongly with the "Cypherpunks" movement, which first began around 1992. In 2012 Assange would publish a book titled [Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet](#).

The Cypherpunks believed that encryption was the key to protecting Internet freedoms from government control. As the Internet became an increasingly critical part of people's everyday lives, the US government insisted that encryption would only make it easier for criminals to operate with impunity. Foreign dictators were also keen to have full visibility of online communications. The Cypherpunks were devoted to building and distributing software based on public-key cryptography, which allowed users to communicate anonymously and privately.

NOTE For a detailed discussion of how contemporary movements helped inspire the creation of WikiLeaks, see Robert Manne's 2011 essay "[The Cypherpunk Revolutionary](#)" in the Monthly magazine.

Assange contributed to the Cypherpunks mailing list between December 1995 and June 2002. He also created his own mailing lists, gradually building a community of like-minded souls, many of whom helped create WikiLeaks. His email lists were connected to a Melbourne Internet Service Provider (ISP) called Suburbia Public Access Network, which Assange reportedly co-founded. It provided a focus point for various community groups such as the Alternative Technology Association and the Australian Public Access Network Association.

In November 1996 Assange sent out an email with the following message:

"A few pointy heads in Canberra have been considering your moderator's continued existence. Consequentially I've been called on to justify labour and resources spent on all projects under my control, particularly those that can't easily be quantified such as IQ, BOS, LACC, IS, LEAKS ..."

The acronyms refer to his email lists: Interesting Questions (IQ), Best of Security (BOS), Legal Aspects of Computer Crime (LACC), and Inside-Source (IS). The LEAKS group appears to have been a rather secretive project, which may have been at least partly inspired by Assange's lengthy custody battle for his son, where leaked documents from the Department of Health and Community Services helped secure a win. Assange did not register the domain [leaks.org](#) until 1999, but he and others were clearly already exploring how the concept of leaks could change the world.

A lot of Assange's time was absorbed in authoring newsletters and moderating discussions, even organising the occasional dinner party for his valued ISP customers. His emails show he had a lot of other projects on the go too:

- 30 July 1996: "I am writing an historical piece on crypt(3) optimisation and password guessing heuristics."
- January 25 1997: "One of my projects involves tracking language drift; i.e the relative change in word frequency on the internet as time goes by. This is useful for predicting concept movement, and the anglicization rates of non-English language countries."

- 27 Oct 1997: “I’m involved in producing a segment on cryptographic issues for Radio National (ABC) to be aired later this week.”

In March 1996, Assange sent an email inviting people to a Melbourne rally against the Church Of Scientology, with the following explanation:

“The Church, via its manipulation of the legal system has had computer systems seized, system operators forced to reveal their users personal details, university accounts suspended and radio stations, such as RRR cut their programs. It has sued ex-cult members, newspapers, and many others for copyright infringements, loss of earnings and trade secret violation. Trade secret violation? Yes, the Church of Scientology claims its religious works are trade secrets.

“The fight against the Church is far more than the Net vs a bunch of wackos with too much money. It is about corporate suppression of the Internet and free speech. It is about intellectual property and the big and rich versus the small and smart. The precedents the Church sets today [are] the weapons of corporate tirany tomorrow.”

In September 1996, controversy erupted among the Cypherpunks and other Internet freedom enthusiasts, after the chair of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) suggested that maybe the US government did need some limited restrictions on anonymous communications after all. Assange was incensed and suggested she could be under pressure from the CIA:

“I am stunned by the EFF’s position on this matter and they no longer have my support.”

A few days later he explained that he was not only angered by the EFF’s suggestion, but perhaps moreso by the fact that they had offered this concession to authority for no good reason.

“Certain members of the EFF board seem to be politically naive. The rational, intelligent lobbyist will always see both sides of the argument. Presenting both sides of the argument to the world at large is another matter altogether. You should only present both sides of the argument to the inner policy tactics personnel only in order to formulate policy and create defences for the weaknesses in your position. The outside world only ever sees a united front. This is basic politics....

“Compromise is part of the legislative process, but it is something you do behind closed doors when the battle is concluded and each faction is counting the dead and starting to divide up territory. If you start the battle

in a compromised position, expect to loose everything."

Leading Cypherpunk Timothy C. May responded to the fuss with an email which included this rather prescient vision of the future:

"If anonymity is outlawed, it will take draconian measures to enforce it - citizen-unit ID cards, officially issued encryption keys, escrow, monitoring of communications, massive penalties to deter illegal use of encryption, and other police state measures.

"On the other hand, if enough degrees of freedom are left untouched, the result is a growing, expanding crypto anarchy. Government will find itself powerless to control commerce (handled via encrypted channels), will find it doesn't know the True Names of various Net entities, and will end up being chased into an enclave of things it *can* control.

"My strong hunch is that no stable solutions lie between these two extremes. This is one of those "decision points" for modern society, with attractors pulling the solution to one side or another."

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In late 1999 Assange discovered two US Department of Defense academic papers, published as part of the US government's Text Retrieval Conferences, which detailed disturbing new patents of surveillance software. The first was a US National Security Agency (NSA) patent to transcribe phone calls, which would allow them to build a searchable database of all the voice traffic they intercepted around the world. Suelette Dreyfus wrote an [article about it](#) for the UK Independent:

Julian Assange, a cryptographer who moderates the online Australian discussion forum AUCRYPTO, found the new patent while investigating NSA capabilities.

"This patent should worry people. Everyone's overseas phone calls are or may soon be tapped, transcribed and archived in the bowels of an unaccountable foreign spy agency," he said.

The second patent described software designed to sift through phone calls and e-mails in search of key phrases. Again Suelette Dreyfus wrote an [article about it](#) for the Independent:

The technology, called "Semantic Forests", is a software program that analyses voice transcripts and other documents in order to allow intelligent searching for specific topics. The software could be used to analyse

computer-transcribed telephone conversations. It is named for its use of an electronic dictionary to make a weighted "tree" of meanings for each word in a target document...

Cryptographer Julian Assange, who moderates the online Australian discussion forum AUCRYPTO, discovered the department papers while investigating NSA capabilities. "This is not some theoretical exercise. The US has actually built and lab tested this technology, which is clearly aimed at telephone calls. You don't make a wheel like this unless you have something to put it on," he said.

These two articles, published two years before the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (when Edward Snowden was still only 16 years old) made little or no public impact.

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Between 1997 and 2000, Julian Assange, Suelette Dreyfus and Ralf Weinmann, a PhD security student, worked on a piece of software called [Rubberhose](#). The idea, conceived by Assange and launched with much newsletter fanfare, was to help torture victims (and others facing authoritarian mandates) by making it impossible for either the torturer or their victim to know whether all the encrypted data on a hard drive had been exposed.

In July 2000, Julian Assange [released](#) a command line shell program called Surfraw (Shell Users Revolutionary Front Rage Against the Web) into the public domain:

"Surfraw provides a fast unix command line interface to a variety of popular WWW search engines and other artifacts of power. It reclaims google, altavista, dejanews, freshmeat, research index, slashdot, and many others from the false-prophet, pox-infested heathen lands of html forms, placing these wonders where they belong; deep in unix heartland, as god-loving extensions to the shell."

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On 11 September 2001, when hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Center, Julian Assange was "on the phone with a friend, discussing encryption algorithms".

Very quickly, within an hour, I saw what the counter-reaction would be, and that all the proposals that the military-industrial complex had to spy on everyone, to remove probable cause, to increase its funding, would be rushed forward again. That's precisely what happened.

By the end of October, President Bush had declared a global "War On Terror", the USA had invaded Afghanistan, and the US Patriot Act was signed into law. There were major shake-ups of US

intelligence departments, including calls for less restrictions on the sharing of classified information.

In March 2003, the United States and a global "Coalition Of The Willing" - including Australia and Britain - launched an [illegal](#) invasion of Iraq, citing non-existent Weapons Of Mass Destruction (WMDs) as the excuse. Years later, Julian Assange [explained](#) how the war motivated his actions:

The creation of WikiLeaks was, in part, a response to Iraq. There were a number of whistle-blowers who came out in relation to Iraq, and it was clear to me that what the world was missing in the days of Iraq propaganda was a way for inside sources who knew what was really going on to communicate that information to the public. Quite a few who did ended up in very dire circumstances, including [David Kelly](#), the British scientist who either committed suicide or was murdered over his revelations about weapons of mass destruction. The Iraq War was the biggest issue for people of my generation in the West. It was also the clearest case, in my living memory, of media manipulation and the creation of a war through ignorance.

As the bombs started falling on Baghdad, Julian Assange had just begun studying mathematics and physics at the University of Melbourne. Within a few years he became disillusioned with university life and quit his degree without graduating. He was appalled to find, for example, maths department staff working with US defence authorities on a military bulldozer called the Grizzly Plough, which was used on the ground during the Iraq War.

"The final nail in the coffin was that I went to the hundredth anniversary of physics at the ANU (Australian National University). There were some 1500 visitors there - four Nobel prize winners - and every goddamn one of them was carting around, on their backs, a backpack given to them by the Defence Science Technology Organisation. At least it was an Australian defence science organisation."

"At the prize ceremony, the head of ANU physics motioned to us and said, 'you are the cream of Australian physics.' I looked around and thought, 'Christ Almighty I hope he's wrong.'"

As his interest in academia diminished, Assange's obsession with his expanding "leaks" project grew. On his IQ.org blog, Assange wrote that he traveled to Vietnam in 2005 and rode a motorcycle from Ho Chi Min City (Saigon) to Hanoi. He became fascinated by the physics of potholes – how one tiny loose stone could loosen another, and then another, until there was a huge hole in the road that demanded to be fixed. He later [wrote](#) that this thinking also influenced the creation of WikiLeaks.

In 2010 Assange [explained](#) why he had felt so compelled to make a success of it:

"I painted every corner, floor, wall, and ceiling in the room I was in black, until there was only one corner left. I mean intellectually... To me, it was the forced move, when you have to do something or you'll lose the game."

So WikiLeaks was his forced move?

"That's the way it feels to me, yes."

A year later, Assange [explained](#) this evolution in more detail:

"I thought that I needed to share this wealth that I had discovered about the world with people, to give knowledge to people... This led me to using cryptography to protect human rights, in novel ways, and eventually as a result of what I was doing in mathematics and in physics and political activism, things seemed to come together and show that there was a limit to what I was doing — and what the rest of the world was doing. There was not enough information available in our common intellectual record to explain how the world really works."

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Genesis of WikiLeaks

The Internet address [wikileaks.org](#) was first registered by Julian Assange on 4th October 2006, a date which is now globally celebrated as the “birthday of WikiLeaks”. But seven years earlier Assange had registered a [Leaks.org](#) address, and years before that he had managed a secretive “LEAKS” online mailing list. The extraordinarily original concept of WikiLeaks clearly took some time to fully evolve.

A multitude of people and events helped shape Assange’s life and thinking, leading ultimately to the creation of WikiLeaks. And many people were actively involved in creating the new WikiLeaks site. But as Julian Assange emphatically stated in 2010:

"I am the heart and soul of this organisation, its founder, philosopher, spokesperson, original coder, organiser, financier, and all the rest."

During the formative years from 2005 to 2007, as Suelette Dreyfus [witnessed](#), Julian was always the driving force:

"It took him months and months of hundred-hour weeks. The thing about Julian is that he is absolutely obsessively driven when he has a goal he wants to achieve. So he basically dropped everything, lived on the smell of

an oily rag, enlisted a whole range of people from around the world and got them involved."

Assange had developed a large network of interesting contacts from his years of online discussions, including many gifted intellectuals who would continue to support and contribute to WikiLeaks for years to come. He had also made some useful contacts at university. He started approaching people to see if they wanted to get involved.

Daniel Matthews, a fellow Melbourne university mathematics student who became heavily involved, later [explained](#) the idea behind their new organisation:

As we understood it, the way information circulates in our society, and around the world, is deeply problematic. In authoritarian societies, in undemocratic societies, information is controlled by coercion and force. In the democracies, the situation is different, but the result still bad: information is not so much controlled as constrained by economic and institutional forces within governments and corporations, by ideologies. It is more subtle, but we only need turn on the TV to see the results.

Either way, it's hard to figure out what's going on. Either way, to put it in quintessentially Australian terms, the people of this world are treated like mushrooms: Kept in the dark, and fed shit. Wikileaks is a fundamentally anti-mushroom organisation.

Wikileaks proposed that the people reject their status as fungi – find out what their governments are doing, what corporations are doing, what the powerful are doing, what the 1% are doing. And to present it via facts, in true scientific fashion, by primary documents, by falsifiable data. Science and fact in the cause of justice.

Moreover, by presenting new and fresh information, Wikileaks would not only bring truth to the world, but new and newsworthy truths. We imagined that Wikileaks would be a force for the empowerment of the people of the world, for the people of the world to use facts, to use understanding, to use science to build a better world.

Or at least, not to be fucking mushrooms.

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As the concept solidified in Assange's mind, it became clear that WikiLeaks would need a very special website, able to withstand concerted attacks while hosting a huge amount of data and a

multitude of live users without crashing. On March 3 2006, the following anonymous email was sent to John Young of Cryptome:

Dear John,

You knew me under another name from cypherpunk days. I am involved in a project that you may have feeling for. I will not mention its name yet in case you feel yu [sic] are not able to be involved.

The project is a mass document leaking project that requires someone with backbone to hold the .org domain registration. We would like that person to be someone who is not privy to the location of the master servers which are otherwise obscured by technical means.

We expect the domain to come under the usual political and legal pressure. The policy for .org requires that registrants details not be false or misleading. It would be an easy play to cancel the domain unless someone were willing to stand up and claim to be the registrant. This person does not need to claim any other knowledge or involvement.

Will you be that person?

Young agreed to host wikileaks.org, and on 4 October 2006 the WikiLeaks.org domain was registered. Julian Assange's biological father John Shipton was also listed as a registered holder of the domain.

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During 2006, Assange also approached John Gilmore, co-founder of both the cypherpunks and the Electronic Frontiers Foundation (EFF), who agreed the latter organisation "should consider helping". Danny O'Brien from EFF contacted Assange to offer legal advice, contacts and other resources.

Not everybody wanted to get involved. Assange went to visit Ben Laurie, a prominent British computer security expert, who [said](#) it was a brilliant idea but: "*Who would be insane enough to contribute stuff?*" Although he didn't think Julian's plan would work, Laurie agreed to be on the Advisory Board.

The famous US whistle-blower Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers in 1971, also received an anonymous email signed "WL".

Dear Mr. Ellsberg.

We have followed with interest and delight your recent statements on

document leaking. We have come to the conclusion that fomenting a world wide movement of mass leaking is the most cost effective political intervention available to us* We believe that injustice is answered by good governance and for there to be good governance there must be open governance. Governance by stealth is governance by conspiracy and fear. Fear, because without it, secrecy does not last for long. Retired generals and diplomats are vociferous, but those in active service hold their tune.

Lord Action said, "Everything secret degenerates, even the administration of justice; nothing is safe that does not show how it can bear discussion and publicity".

This degeneration comes about because when injustice is concealed, including plans for future injustice, it cannot be addressed. When governance is closed, man's eyes become cataracts. When governance is open, man can see and so act to move the world towards a more just state; for instance see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders which shows a striking correlation between press freedom and countries known for their quality of life.

us*: some attributes may have been swapped to protect selected identities, no particular order.

- 1) Retired new york architect and notorious intelligence leak facilitator
- 2) Euro cryptographer/programmer
- 3) Pacific physicist and illustrator
- 4) A pacific author and economic policy lecturer
- 5) Euro, Ex-Cambridge mathematician/cryptographer/programmer
- 6) Euro businessman and security specialist/activist
- 7) Author of software than runs 40% of the world's websites.
- 8) US pure mathematician with criminal law background
- 9) An infamous US ex-hacker
- 10) Pacific cryptographer/physicist and activist
- 11) US/euro cryptographer and activist/programmer
- 12) Pacific programmer
- 13) Pacific architect / foreign policy wonk

New technology and cryptographic ideas permit us to not only encourage document leaking, but to facilitate it directly on a mass scale. We intend to place a new star in the political firmament of man. We are building an uncensorizable branch of Wikipedia for leaked documents and the civic institutions & social perceptions necessary to defend and promote it. We have received over 1 million documents from 13 countries, despite not

having publicly launched yet!

We have approached you now for two reasons. Firstly, we have crossed over from 'prospective' to 'projective'. The basic technology has been prototyped and we have a view as how we must proceed politically and legally. We need to move and inspire people, gain volunteers, funding, further set up the necessary political-legal defenses and deploy. Since you have thought about leaking more than anyone we know, we would like you on board. We'd like your advice and we'd like you to form part of our political armor. The more armor we have, particularly in the form of men and women sanctified by age, history and class, the more we can act like brazen young men and get away with it.

Secondly, we would like to award "The Ellsburg Prize for Courageous Action" and "The Ellsburg Prize for Courageous Action (USA)", for the two leaks submitted in the past year which most assist humanity. The regionalization of the second prize is to encourage patrons of similar awards in other countries. Although it is premature to go into detail, we have designed a scheme where this can be meaningfully awarded to anonymous leakers. We have been pledged substantial initial funding.

Please tell us your thoughts. If you are happy, we will add you to our internal mailinglist, contacts, etc. Solidarity! WL.

Ellsberg, who later became a strong supporter, politely turned down the offer:

"Your concept is terrific and I wish you the best of luck with it."

*

Those who agreed to help eventually received the following email from Assange, where the name "WikiLeaks" was first spelled out:

"This is a restricted internal development mailing list for w-i-k-i-l-e-a-k-s--o-r-g. Please do not mention that word directly in these discussions; refer instead to 'WL'. This list is housed at riseup.net, an activist collective in Seattle with an established lawyer and plenty of backbone."

The original idea was that the website would function as a wiki, with users able to log on, analyse data and share their findings.

NOTE The term "wiki" refers to a collaborative website, where many users can contribute

and edit content, which is how the WikiLeaks site originally functioned. The name WikiLeaks was partly inspired by the growing success of Wikipedia, the online collaborative encyclopedia, which was also built on free public "wiki" software and became one of the world's top 10 websites in 2007. The two sites have nothing else in common.

*

By the end of 2006 Assange was writing prolifically on his blog. On December 3 2006 he posted a 6 page PDF document called [Conspiracy as Governance](#):

To radically shift regime behavior we must think clearly and boldly for if we have learned anything, it is that regimes do not want to be changed. We must think beyond those who have gone before us and discover technological changes that embolden us with ways to act in which our forebears could not.

We must understand the key generative structure of bad governance.

We must develop a way of thinking about this structure that is strong enough to carry us through the mire of competing political moralities and into a position of clarity. Most importantly, we must use these insights to inspire within us and others a course of ennobling and effective action to replace the structures that lead to bad governance with something better.

The document includes a key visualisation of how information leaks can break down complex conspiracies:

First take some nails ("conspirators") and hammer them into a board at random. Then take twine ("communication") and loop it from nail to nail without breaking. Call the twine connecting two nails a link. Unbroken twine means it is possible to travel from any nail to any other nail via twine and intermediary nails. Mathematicians say that this type of graph is connected.

Information flows from conspirator to conspirator. Not every conspirator trusts or knows every other conspirator even though all are connected. Some are on the fringe of the conspiracy, others are central and communicate with many conspirators and others still may know only two conspirators but be a bridge between important sections or groupings of the conspiracy...

Imagine a thick heavy cord between some nails and fine light thread between others. Call the importance, thickness or heaviness of a link its weight. Between conspirators that never communicate the weight is zero. The “importance” of communication passing through a link is difficult to evaluate *a priori*, since its true value depends on the outcome of the conspiracy. We simply say that the “importance” of communication contributes to the weight of a link in the most obvious way; the weight of a link is proportional to the amount of important communication flowing across it.

On December 31 2006 Assange summarized his thoughts in a short blog post called [The non linear effects of leaks on unjust systems of governance](#):

“The more secretive or unjust an organization is, the more leaks induce fear and paranoia in its leadership and planning coterie. This must result in minimization of efficient internal communications mechanisms (an increase in cognitive "secrecy tax") and consequent system-wide cognitive decline resulting in decreased ability to hold onto power as the environment demands adaption.

“Hence in a world where leaking is easy, secretive or unjust systems are nonlinearly hit relative to open, just systems. Since unjust systems, by their nature induce opponents, and in many places barely have the upper hand, mass leaking leaves them exquisitely vulnerable to those who seek to replace them with more open forms of governance.

“Only revealed injustice can be answered; for man to do anything intelligent he has to know what’s actually going on.”

*

By this time, rumours about the new WikiLeaks site were swirling online. Some of those involved were impatient to launch the website while others urged patience. An internal email stated:

In relation to timing; We intend to go live with a reduced system in the next month. Until then we are publishing selected analysis in conventional venues to get some material out and encourage assistance. We’re gradually scaling up. At the moment we have certain asymmetries- e.g more leaks than we can store or index. It’s just a matter of gradually inspiring increasing commitment and resources from generous people.

But in an ironic twist that would be repeated several times in years to come, news about WikiLeaks was prematurely leaked. Britain's New Scientist magazine started revealing details at the end of December 2006, for a story to be published in early 2007. The Associated Press was also working on a story. And the WikiLeaks website still was not even live.

*

Chapter Two: 2007

"The combination of my temperament, the knowledge that I knew, the capital I had, and the culture that I came from, the Australian culture, resulted in a belief that I could change the world in a certain way that would appeal to me philosophically, and I set about bringing together my abilities, my friends, and the capital that I had, to achieve that purpose." - Julian Assange, [2011](#).

WikiLeaks published its first leaked document [Inside Somalia and the Union of Islamic Courts](#) on 26 December 2006. The leak was described as "a secret Islamic order, purportedly written by the most important man in the Union, Sheik Aweys, [which] proclaims an Islamic Republic of Somalia." The final line of the leaked document stated:

"Whosoever leaks this information and is found guilty should be shot".

WikiLeaks provided extensive analysis to support the publication, including detailed speculation about whether it was genuine. WikiLeaks later called it "a play for Chinese support" but said "our Chinese source gives us little on the credibility". The document, which received limited media attention, was originally posted online as a .zip file because the WikiLeaks.org site was still not live. It was later described as a "Sample Document".

Early Media Coverage

On January 11 2007 AFP published an article titled [Chinese cyber-dissidents launch WikiLeaks, a site for whistleblowers](#). It was the first time Julian Assange, described as "a cryptographer and member of the advisory board", was publicly linked with the new organisation:

"Our primary interests are oppressive regimes in Asia, the former Soviet bloc, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, but we also expect to be of assistance to those in the West who wish to reveal unethical behaviour in their own governments and corporations," says the site WikiLeaks (www.wikileaks.org).

An official for WikiLeaks in Washington, identifying himself as Julian Assange, told AFP on Wednesday that the group hoped to go online from

March but had been "discovered" before its launch and was not fully prepared for the publicity it was now receiving.

The New Scientist article [How to leak a secret and not get caught](#) was published in their monthly print edition two days later. The online version remains paywalled but a free version can be [found](#) on [wikileaks.org](#). Author Paul Marks was intrigued by the new organisation's security technology:

Normally an email or a document posted to a website can be traced back to its source because each data packet carries the IP address of the last server that it passed through. To prevent this, WikiLeaks will exploit an anonymising protocol known as The Onion Router (Tor), which routes data through a network of servers that use cryptography to hide the path that the packets took.

In fact the ingenious WikiLeaks "anonymous drop box" would utilize more encryption security than just [Tor](#), and would be regularly upgraded (or even taken offline) to protect sources. The unique and original concept behind this technology, which guaranteed anonymity to people on both sides of the submission system, was in many ways the key to WikiLeaks' success. Eventually it would become a submissions model copied by major news organisations worldwide.

WikiLeaks boasted that they had already received "over 1.1 million documents so far from dissident communities and anonymous sources." Some people speculated that these documents were merely encrypted files copied from a server on the Tor network and this was more evidence of "Splendide Mendax" at work. As mentioned in the New Scientist article, Tor network security had already been breached a few times (leading to improvements) so WikiLeaks may have been able to decrypt or otherwise acquire the contents. But their claim certainly helped get media attention and build support.

With the benefit of hindsight, the New Scientist article shows how many tough editorial decisions Assange and his team still had to make:

The WikiLeaks team do not plan to control what is disclosed on the site, raising fears that the anonymity it offers could be misused. "The initiative could drown in fabricated documents, pornographic records or become hijacked to serve vendettas," warns Steven Aftergood of the Federation of American Scientists in Washington DC.

The safeguard against this, according to the WikiLeaks team, is that false postings will be sniffed out by users, who will be free to comment on what is posted. This is what happens with Wikipedia, which although unconnected to WikiLeaks is based on the same open-source software. "WikiLeaks will provide a forum for the entire global community to examine any document relentlessly for credibility," the site claims.

WikiLeaks is raising funds and testing its software. It hopes to launch in February.

A flurry of other news stories followed in multiple languages from media sites around the world. Even the [Washington Post](#) was interested:

Organizer James Chen said that while its creators tried to keep the site under wraps until its launch, Google references to it have soared in recent days from about eight to more than 20,000.

"Wikileaks is becoming, as planned, although unexpectedly early, an international movement of people who facilitate ethical leaking and open government," he said.

The thought that a nation's defense plans could turn up as "you've got mail" across the globe is a chilling one. So, too, is the potential for a miscreant to sow mayhem by "leaking" documents, real or fake.

The general media consensus was cautiously optimistic. But critical comments from Cryptome's John Young, who had helped Assange secure the WikiLeaks.org domain, were a regular feature. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Young had decided that WikiLeaks was moving too fast, asking for too much money, and was maybe even a CIA front. Others began speculating that Mossad, Russia, or some other state actor could be involved. Young wrote to Assange:

"Fuck your cute hustle and disinformation campaign. Same old shit, working for the enemy... Fuck 'em all."

Assange replied cryptically:

"We are going to fuck them all. Chinese mostly but not entirely a feint."

Young disassociated himself from the project and [posted](#) on his website all the WikiLeaks correspondence he could find, from December 2006 and to early January 2007. In 2010, he also [published](#) Assange's contributions to the Cypherpunks mailing list between 1995 and 2002.

On January 22 2007 TIME magazine famously [stated](#) that WikiLeaks "could become as important a journalistic tool as the Freedom of Information Act". But they warned readers to remain sceptical and even hoped that someone might "find the smoking gun that reveals what shadowy organization is behind Wikileaks". Hardened cynics in the media and intelligence communities struggled to accept the simple truth: WikiLeaks was Julian Assange's own invention.

The WikiLeaks team originally tried to keep track of [new media articles](#) but soon gave up due to limited resources and overwhelming global interest.

Early Website Versions

Online archives reveal what various early versions of the wikileaks.org site looked like. A snapshot was first archived on [January 17 2007](#). It shows the WikiLeaks title with a single quote from Daniel Ellsberg. A [February 2 2007](#) snapshot shows a whole page of text, with numerous useful links, and a new Ellsberg quote at the top: "Your concept looks terrific and I wish you the best of luck with it."

For anyone interested in the history of WikiLeaks, the original version of the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQ) page is well worth reading. Wikileaks is described as "an uncensorable version of Wikipedia for untraceable mass document leaking and analysis [which] combines the protection and anonymity of cutting-edge cryptographic technologies with the transparency and simplicity of a wiki interface."

There is a clear intention to revolutionize journalism and change the world for the better:

What official will chance a secret, corrupt transaction when the public is likely to find out? What repressive plan will be carried out when it is revealed to the citizenry, not just of its own country, but the world? When the risks of embarrassment through openness and honesty increase, the tables are turned against conspiracy, corruption, exploitation and oppression...

Wikileaks reduces the risk to potential leakers and improves the analysis and dissemination of leaked documents.

Wikileaks provides simple and straightforward means for anonymous and untraceable leaking of documents.

At the same time, Wikileaks opens leaked documents up to a much more exacting scrutiny than any media organization or intelligence agency could provide: the scrutiny of a worldwide community of informed wiki editors.

There was also a clear intention to challenge and compete with corrupt intelligence agencies worldwide:

Wikileaks may become the most powerful "intelligence agency" on earth—an intelligence agency of the people. It will be an open source, democratic intelligence agency. But it will be far more principled, and far less parochial than any governmental intelligence agency; consequently, it will be more accurate, and more relevant. It will have no commercial or national interests at heart; its only interests will be truth and freedom of information. Unlike the covert activities of state intelligence agencies, Wikileaks will rely upon the power of overt fact to inform citizens about the

truths of their world.

Wikileaks will be the outlet for every government official, every bureaucrat, every corporate worker, who becomes privy to embarrassing information which the institution wants to hide but the public needs to know. What conscience cannot contain, and institutional secrecy unjustly conceals, Wikileaks can broadcast to the world.

The original vision for the website was very much based on the "wiki" software developed in the mid 1990s. Organisations around the world were actively embracing it but Wikipedia was by far the most successful and publicly recognisable model. The WikiLeaks FAQ declared: "What Wikipedia is to the encyclopedia, Wikileaks will be to leaks." And even more ambitiously: "We plan to numerically eclipse the content of the English Wikipedia with leaked documents."

To the user, Wikileaks will look very much like Wikipedia. Anybody can post to it, anybody can edit it. No technical knowledge is required. Leakers can post documents anonymously and untraceably. Users can publicly discuss documents and analyze their credibility and veracity. Users can discuss interpretations and context and collaboratively formulate collective publications. Users can read and write explanatory articles on leaks along with background material and context. The political relevance of documents and their verisimilitude will be revealed by a cast of thousands.

Wikileaks will also incorporate advanced cryptographic technologies for anonymity and untraceability. Those who provide leaked information may face severe risks, whether of political repercussions, legal sanctions or physical violence. Accordingly, extremely sophisticated mathematical and cryptographic techniques will be used to secure privacy, anonymity and untraceability.

For the technically minded, Wikileaks integrates technologies including modified versions of FreeNet, Tor, PGP and software of our own design.

Wikileaks will be deployed in a way that makes it impervious to political and legal attacks. In this sense it is uncensorable.

The WikiLeaks FAQ said 22 people were "currently directly involved in the project". A prototype submissions system had been successfully tested but was not ready for a full public deployment: they hoped to go live in February or March 2007. They called for additional funding and support, including "volunteer editors/analysts and server operators."

Couldn't leaking involve invasions of privacy? Couldn't mass leaking of documents be irresponsible? Aren't some leaks deliberately false and misleading?

Providing a forum for freely posting information involves the potential for abuse, but measures can be taken to minimize any potential harm. The simplest and most effective countermeasure is a worldwide community of informed users and editors who can scrutinize and discuss leaked documents.

Concerns about privacy, irresponsibility and false information also arise with Wikipedia. On Wikipedia, irresponsible posting or editing of material, or posting of false material, can be reversed by other users, and the results have been extremely satisfying and reassuring. There is no reason to expect any different from Wikileaks. Indeed, as discovered with Wikipedia to the surprise of many, the collective wisdom of an informed community of users may provide rapid and accurate dissemination, verification and analysis.

Furthermore, misleading leaks and misinformation are already well placed in the mainstream media, as recent history shows, an obvious example being the lead-up to the Iraq war. Peddlers of misinformation will find themselves undone by Wikileaks, equipped as it is to scrutinize leaked documents in a way that no mainstream media outlet is capable of. An analogous example is this excellent unweaving of the British government's politically motivated additions to an intelligence dossier on Iraq. The dossier was cited by Colin Powell in his address to the United Nations the same month to justify the pending US invasion of Iraq.

In any case, our overarching goal is to provide a forum where embarrassing information can expose injustice. All policy will be formulated with this goal in mind.

Is Wikileaks concerned about any legal consequences?

Our roots are in dissident communities and our focus is on non-western authoritarian regimes. Consequently we believe a politically motivated legal attack on us would be seen as a grave error in western administrations. However, we are prepared, structurally and technically, to deal with all legal attacks. We design the software, and promote its human rights agenda,

but the servers are run by anonymous volunteers. Because we have no commercial interest in the software, there is no need to restrict its distribution. In the very unlikely event that we were to face coercion to make the software censorship friendly, there are many others who will continue the work in other jurisdictions.

Is leaking ethical?

We favour, and uphold, ethical behavior in all circumstances. Every person is the ultimate arbiter of justice in their own conscience. Where there is a lack of freedom and injustice is enshrined in law, there is a place for principled civil disobedience. Where the simple act of distributing information may embarrass a regime or expose crime, we recognize a right, indeed a duty, to perform that act. Such whistleblowing normally involves major personal risk. Just like whistleblower protection laws in some jurisdictions, WikiLeaks provides means and opportunity to minimize such risks.

We propose that every authoritarian government, every oppressive institution, and even every corrupt corporation, be subject to the pressure, not merely of international diplomacy or freedom of information laws, not even of quadrennial elections, but of something far stronger: the individual consciences of the people within them.

*

The original members of the [WikiLeaks Advisory Board](#) are still listed at wikileaks.org.

- 1 Phillip Adams, writer, broadcaster & film maker
- 2 Julian Assange, investigative journalist, programmer and activist
- 3 Wang Dan, leading Tiananmen dissident & historian
- 4 CJ Hinke, Writer, Academic, Activist
- 5 Ben Laurie, internet security expert
- 6 Tashi Namgyal Khamsitsang, Tibetan exile & activist
- 7 Xiao Qiang, Chinese human rights activist
- 8 Chico Whitaker, Brazilian social justice advocate

While some lent their name to the project but had no further public involvement, that didn't stop later calls for them all to be [assassinated](#).

NOTE China was the first country to [ban WikiLeaks](#), in January 2007.

A page listing early [User Profiles](#) is also still online, with basic introductory descriptions. These users (some pseudonymous) would have had varying degrees of influence and involvement. For example [Simon Floth](#), described as a "Philosophy PhD Candidate at Uni NSW", was a customer of Assange's Melbourne ISP who got an early email asking for support. He later told a 2018 online rally that he had helped create email lists, provided input for the website's "About" page, experimented with document analysis, and discussed how best to pitch the organisation to the public.

"I got an email, sent it back sort of thing. Really I can't spill a lot of beans on the inside stuff."

By September 2007 WikiLeaks claimed to have over 1,200 registered volunteers. The [home page](#) included four separate portals" "Truth Tellers, Editors and Writers, Volunteers and Activists, Visitors". There was a regular section titled "Today's featured truth teller" with the latest major release featured below that.

It was by now an extensive website with dozens of links down the right side menu, including regional and country links, 28 separate language links, featured media and analysis, latest leaks, biographies, media and articles, a search field and newsletter signup options. The original FAQ had evolved into an extensive [About](#) page with prosaic language that reflected the organisation's lofty ambitions.

There can be no democracy without open government and a free press. It is only when the people know the true plans and behavior of government can they meaningfully choose to support them. Historically, the most resilient forms of democracy are those where publication and revelation are protected. Where that protection does not exist, it is our mission to provide it.

Wikileaks is the strongest way we have of generating the true democracy and good governance on which all mankind's dreams depend.

The menu at the bottom of the screen included a "Media Kit" and "Writers Kit" with guidelines on how volunteers could help analyse documents.

Have fun! After all, everybody wants to be an intelligence analyst. What more could you want, but interesting, empowering, creative work to make the world a better place, all from the comfort of your own home?

WikiLeaks v. Wikipedia

WikiLeaks was clearly inspired by Wikipedia and initially encouraged comparisons as a way to generate interest and quickly communicate a global vision for the site. As the original New Scientist article suggested, and as the original website clearly stated, Julian Assange's original plan was to

create an “uncensorable version of Wikipedia” where users could investigate leaked documents and publish the results with a minimum of editorial overview.

The original "About" page (above) mentioned Wikipedia over a dozen times, including a cheeky "for legal reasons" red herring for critics to chase. There was never any legal relationship between WikiLeaks and Wikipedia.

What is your relationship to Wikipedia? For legal reasons, WikiLeaks has no formal relationship to Wikipedia. However both employ the same wiki interface and technology. Both share the same radically democratic philosophy which holds that allowing anyone to be an author or editor leads to a vast and accurate collective intelligence and knowledge. Both place their trust in an informed community of citizens. What Wikipedia is to the encyclopedia, WikiLeaks is to leaks. Wikipedia provides a positive example on which WikiLeaks is based.

Julian Assange soon discovered that productively harnessing and directing the energy of hundreds of eager online users was no easy feat, especially when any hostile actor could open an account and sow disharmony. The forum areas gradually degenerated into confused discussion of side issues and unproductive slanging matches. A year after going live, the core team was still doing all the hard yards. And despite a steady stream of news-worthy output, mainstream media interest was waning.

In April 2008, Assange wrote an angry article titled [The Hidden Curse of Thomas Paine](#), complaining that major newspapers were not investigating and publishing WikiLeaks material due to insufficient economic incentive. He called them "fresh-faced coquettes with too many suitors [who] long ago stopped cooking their own food and now expect everything to be lovingly presented on a silver platter." He also took a swipe at independent media sites whose "primary motivation is to demonstrate in-group loyalties on the issue du jour".

"What does it mean when only those facts about the world with economic powers behind them can be heard, when the truth lays naked before the world and no one will be the first to speak without payment or subsidy?"

The article included a link to an [Analysis Requested](#) page on wikileaks.org with dozens of leaked documents still awaiting review and analysis. It's no longer possible to post comments on those articles, the latest of which are dated June 2009, because soon afterwards, the WikiLeaks site underwent a major transformation. Public forums had already been closed down but by May 2010 even the comment sections were completely gone. The site now stated simply:

“WikiLeaks is not like Wikipedia.”

This gradual shift away from the "wiki" model angered some users who had dedicated time and effort to the cause. Critics claimed that Assange had sold out and WikiLeaks could no longer be trusted. One person angrily [complained](#): “There is no wiki in WikiLeaks.org.”

It wasn't the last time Julian Assange would be frustrated in his efforts to harvest free public input. But the new format also had clear benefits. In 2008, the website was still asserting that "Wikileaks does not pass judgement on the authenticity of documents." By 2010 it was proudly boasting that "we have yet to make a mistake." Assange and his editorial team were now taking full ownership of their material.

Over the years, public confusion between WikiLeaks and Wikipedia has persisted, while Wikipedia pages about Assange and WikiLeaks have remained full of errors. It seems to be another case of "economic incentive": WikiLeaks has not had the resources to constantly monitor their Wikipedia pages, while many of their enemies have no lack of funding and are highly skilled at manipulating public opinion.

NOTE

Authors Note: Personal experience showed certain Wikipedia editors repeatedly posting anti-WikiLeaks content while censoring favourable text. Attempts to correct the record were repeatedly blocked until my editing rights were suspended. It's one of the reasons I decided to write this book.

*

Release: The Looting of Kenya Under President Moi

https://www.wikileaks.org/wiki/The_looting_of_Kenya_under_President_Moi

A 2006 email from Julian Assange stated:

"I've registered us to present WL at the World Social Forum in Nairobi Jan 20-25th 2007."

He must have made some good contacts in the Kenyan capital, because for the next three years WikiLeaks would post numerous explosive leaks about the country. This was the first.

On August 30 2007, WikiLeaks published a 2004 UK auditor's report detailing how an estimated USD\$3 billion in Kenyan state finances were laundered across the world by ex-President Daniel Arap Moi and his close associates. The Kroll Report was commissioned by Moi's successor, President Kibaki, after his 2002 election victory on an anti-corruption platform. But the 106 page report, which forensically investigated corrupt transactions and holdings by powerful members of the Kenyan elite, was suppressed for over three years until it was published by WikiLeaks.

As WikiLeaks explained, Moi was still a key player in political life and a strong supporter of his successor, President Kibaki, who had become embroiled in his own corruption scandal.

The leak which emanated from within high levels of the Kenyan Government is motivated by the desire to demonstrate that President Kibaki has clear-cut evidence of his predecessor's corruption and complicity in corruption, and has chosen to suppress the evidence and worse still has gone into a political and economic alliance with the Moi group.

A Kenyan Government spokesman [responded](#) by saying the “report was based on a lot of hearsay.” Kroll refused to confirm or deny the authenticity of their report. But all politicians named in the leaked document were subsequently defeated at the polls.

The UK Guardian newspaper’s 2007 [report of this leak](#) only mentioned their source, WikiLeaks, once, in the 12th paragraph. But in December 2010 the Guardian hosted a live [Q and A](#) with readers where Julian Assange stated:

I always believed that WikiLeaks as a concept would perform a global role and to some degree it was clear that it was doing that as far back as 2007 when it changed the result of the Kenyan general election.

In the following months, WikiLeaks published more leaks relating to [Kenya](#), including two cases that were before the High Court at the time:

- On September 25 2007, WikiLeaks [exposed](#) the cover up of payroll fraud at Kenya’s Egerton University, where 1 in 4 university employees didn’t exist.
- On 28 September 2007, WikiLeaks [exposed](#) a \$1.5 billion money laundering fraud by Kenya’s Charter House Bank.

WikiLeaks also [published](#) a confidential World Bank investigation of its road projects in Kenya and secret political party [documents](#) from the 2007 Presidential election. And there were more leaks about Kenya to come in 2008.

*

WikiLeaks released four more bombshells in the latter part of 2007. They caught the attention of global media and intelligence agencies but arguably had an even bigger impact with the online community. It’s important to put them in historical context.

2007 marked the beginning of the end for world leaders who had helped US President George W. Bush start the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. There was growing public resentment about the waste of money and the mis-use of intelligence that had been used to justify these invasions, which had quickly turned into Vietnam-style quagmires. Secret CIA torture sites and the USA’s Guantanamo Bay prison gulag were also provoking global outrage, with alleged terrorists being tortured and detained indefinitely without trial.

In February 2007, a junior Senator from Illinois named Barak Obama announced his intention to run for the White House. In June 2007, the deeply unpopular Tony Blair resigned as Britain’s Prime Minister, with his Labour Party deputy Gordon Brown taking over. In Australia, the eleven year reign of conservative Prime Minister John Howard came to an end, with Labor’s Kevin Rudd sweeping to a landslide victory in December 2007.

In May 2007, after a phone call from John Howard to US Vice President Dick Cheney, Australian prisoner David Hicks was released from Guantanamo Bay, where he had spent five long years. Hicks, who was [falsely smeared](#) as one of the “worst of the worst” terrorists, later became a vocal supporter of Julian Assange, speaking at several protest rallies.

In July 2007, two Reuters war correspondents in Iraq, Saeed Chmagh and Namir Noor-Eldeen, were

among a dozen or more civilians killed in a US Apache helicopter airstrike in Baghdad. Reuters submitted a Freedom of Information [request](#) for the US military video of the attack but never saw the full video till it was released by WikiLeaks in 2010 (see chapter 5). A US military investigation absolved all troops involved of any wrong-doing.

*

Release: US Military Equipment & Army Units in Afghanistan

https://wikileaks.org/wiki/US_Military_Equipment_in_Afghanistan

On 9 September 2007 WikiLeaks published the complete equipment register for all units managed by the US Army in Afghanistan. Two months later, WikiLeaks published a similar list of equipment for the US Army in Iraq (see below). These were the first of many leaks relating to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which would culminate with the 2010 release of the Afghan War Logs and Iraq War Logs.

Funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is currently a critical issue in the US. A majority of Democratic party candidates was elected to both houses of the US Congress in 2006 on an anti-war platform. Under the US Constitution, Congress has the 'power of the purse' to cut off funding for war, but Democrats have not yet sought to use this power. In late April, Congress passed a bill, HR 1591, which did not cut off funding, but instead authorized war funding through 2008 and into 2009. However, the bill was vetoed by President Bush on 1 May because it contained a non-binding timetable for withdrawal of US forces. With pressure building in Washington, further cracks are appearing within the US government itself. Some within the government appear to believe enough is enough. They have leaked several confidential military documents to WikiLeaks.

War always involves a tragic human cost, in lives, emotions, and failure of the human spirit. The leaked documents help us to understand how war money is being spent and the nature of operations in Afghanistan. They provide a completely objective window into the functioning of various US units from PsyOps (psychological operations) to Kabul headquarters. WikiLeaks is now releasing the first of these documents, which details each unit's computer-registered theatre-supplied arms and support equipment, from missile launchers to paper shredders.

The list does not include weapons and equipment "organic" to a military unit (brought with them from the United States at the time of their

deployment, for units not created in Afghanistan), or expendables, such as ammunition or fuel. That said it is a significant document.

The document includes no prices but by writing a program to cross-reference each item in the leaked document with NATO Stock Number records from public US logistics equipment price catalogs, we have discovered that there is at least \$1,112,765,572 worth of US Army managed military equipment in Afghanistan (the actual value is likely to be two or three times higher).

WikiLeaks noted how the list reflected a "decisive shift in military purchasing priorities" with "half of all equipment purchases diverted to dealing with homemade mobile phone and radio bombs." The list also included potentially illegal chemical weapons: gas grenade launchers and riot guns "which can fire pepper-spray impregnated projectiles".

A New York Sun [article](#) quoted a US Department of Defence official saying "We were unaware of the Web site posting."

"Wikileaks has not yet publicly 'launched,'" the site's staff wrote in a press release sent by e-mail. "However, we feel we would be remiss in our obligations to our source to sit on this material any longer."

Supporters were encouraged to examine the leaked documents, with a list of "Further Research Tasks and Questions" at the bottom of the wikileaks.org page. WikiLeaks also provided "Tools For Analysis" and explained in detail how they had created databases to analyze the data: "a full dump of the SQL database is available for your enjoyment".

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On 4 October 2007 WikiLeaks published a German government report ([PDF](#)) on the employment of former members of the Ministry of State Security (East Germany's MFS, commonly known as "Stasi") by the Federal Commissioner for Stasi Files. The accompanying analysis by "Julian Assange, Christopher Findlay & staff" was titled [Stasi still in charge of Stasi files](#):

From November 2006 allegations started to circulate, most notably in the German news paper Die Welt that the BStU, tasked to guard the Stasi files, had been infiltrated by a number of former Stasi officers and informers. In response the German government commissioned an investigation.

By June 2007, the investigative team, led by Prof. Hans Hugo Klien, a former judge of the German Federal Constitution Court and CDU politician, had completed its confidential report into the infiltration.

The report has been obtained by WikiLeaks and is the subject of this

analysis.

The analysis showed that the Stasi files commission (BStU) had secretly employed at least 79 former Stasi members, and German government investigations (including investigations of Stasi support for terrorist groups) had been corrupted as a result. The BStU had actively hindered the report investigators and refused them access to files. The agency's internal security services were dominated by former Stasi staff, who remained hostile to former East German civil-rights activists.

Following public outcry over the leaked report, the German Parliament [investigated](#) the BStU and eventually merged it with the national archives. Former Stasi officers were forbidden from ever again entering the Stasi Archives by themselves.

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On 7 October 2007 Julian Assange published an article titled [On the take and loving it: Academic recipients of the U.S. intelligence budget..](#)

This article reveals over 3,000 National Security Agency and over 100 Defense Intelligence Agency funded papers and draws attention to recent unreported revelations of CIA funding for torture research.

In the 1960s some academics had expressed "deep dismay" after discovering that their work was secretly funded by covert CIA grants. But Assange's article showed modern academic recipients of the intelligence budget were "on the take and loving it". Referring back to his own 2006 research, Assange claimed the NSA had now found their "holy grail" for intelligence gathering, thanks largely to morally bankrupt academics. He said US intelligence agencies now barely bothered trying to hide their involvement

Educated, intelligent people have many opportunities in life. Those who outsource their minds to secretive and abusive organizations demonstrate to us either a lack of intellectual ability or an impoverished moral standard. They do not earn my respect as scholars or as human beings.

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Release: Camp Delta Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

https://theworldtomorrow.wikileaks.org/wiki/Camp_Delta_Standard_Operating_Procedure

On November 7 2007 WikiLeaks published the Joint Task Force Guantánamo (JTF-GTMO) standard operating procedures (SOP) for Camp Delta at the US military's Guantánamo Bay prison in Cuba (also known as "Gitmo").

The 238-page document was dated 28 March 2003 and signed by Major General Geoffrey D. Miller, who had reportedly introduced harsh interrogation methods, including shackling detainees into

stress positions and intimidating them with guard dogs. Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld later transferred Miller to the notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq with instructions to "Gitmoize it". The infamous Abu Ghraib torture photos were taken soon after Miller's first visit.

This is the primary document for the operation of Guantánamo bay, including the securing and treatment of detainees... The document exposes, among other matters, systematic methods to prevent prisoners meeting with the Red Cross and the use of extreme psychological stress as torture.

Camp Delta, which replaced the previous Camp X-Ray in 2002, was the prison's primary facility, housing 612 units in six detention camps plus Camp Echo, which was used for "pre-commissions". The SOP document included checklists of "comfort items" that could be used to reward detainees (e.g. extra toilet paper) plus detailed instructions on how to psychologically manipulate them. There were also extensive rules for processing new detainees and dealing with hunger strikes.

WikiLeaks also published a 209-page document titled [Detainee Operations in a Joint Environment](#) which described detainee operations, including the handling of detainees on rendition flights.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) had been unsuccessfully trying to obtain these operating procedures, which were unclassified but designated "For Official Use Only", from the US Department of Defense. Jamil Dakwar, an ACLU advocacy director, [said](#) he was struck by "the level of detail for handling all kind of situations." He was also concerned that detainees were classified according to how much access the Red Cross would be allowed to them, including a "No Access" level. The US military had previously promised the Red Cross would be allowed full access to all detainees.

A Reuters report said that new detainees were "held in near-isolation **for the first two weeks** to foster dependence on interrogators" and "enhance and exploit the disorientation and disorganization felt by a newly arrived detainee in the interrogation process." But WikiLeaks' [analysis](#) noted that Reuters got it wrong: the "near-isolation" lasted at least four weeks, not two, and could be continued indefinitely.

The Guantánamo SOP now provides official documentation that, at the time of the Rumsfeld memo and despite its warnings regarding the techniques' potential illegality and physical and psychological dangers, isolation was routinely used by the Defense Department at Guantanamo on all new detainees. The Rumsfeld memo complements the SOP in that it documents the central role of "medical and psychological review," and, thus, medical and psychological personnel in the administration of this technique.

A week after the release of the document by Wikileaks, the Pentagon sent Wikileaks a very polite request: "Good afternoon... Is it possible to have the document removed from your site? Thank you." WikiLeaks did not comply.

A Guantánamo Bay spokesman [told media](#) that operating procedures had "evolved significantly" since the 2003 document was written. But a month later WikiLeaks released an updated [2004](#)

version of the same Camp Delta operating procedures document. Wikileaks journalists and leading Habeas Corpus lawyers from the Center for Constitutional Rights compared the two documents and published their findings. They said non-compliance with the Geneva Conventions remained official US Policy, there was an extraordinary increase in petty restrictions, and increased hostility towards chaplains and the Red Cross. The "medium security" Camp 4 was exposed as a "media sideshow", rules seemed to have changed for no good reason, and Orwellian terms were being used to cover up harsh realities (e.g. 'hunger strike' becomes VTF - 'voluntary total fasting'). The use of guard dogs and self-harm attempts by prisoners remained at alarming levels.

The Center for the Study of Human Rights in the Americas extracted detailed evidence of prisoner abuse found in the SOP releases. Their findings for the 2003 and 2004 documents are still posted on WikiLeaks.

In the weeks after these releases, WikiLeaks tracked down and exposed military personnel at Guantánamo Bay tampering with Wikipedia pages about the release. The Guantánamo Bay staff deleted information such as prisoner numbers - e.g. Prisoner No. 766, Canadian-born Omar Khadr - and edited other Wikipedia pages such as Cuban leader Fidel Castro's, who they labeled an "admitted transsexual". The New York Times compared this activity to the job of rewriting history which was assigned to Winston Smith, the hero of George Orwell's fictional novel "1984". A Guantánamo Bay officer denied any of his sailors would do such a thing because "that would be unethical". But he admitted that he could not be sure, because anyone can edit Wikipedia pages anonymously.

He also blasted Wikipedia [sic] for identifying one sailor in his office by name, who has since received death threats for simply doing his job – posting positive comments on the Internet about Gitmo.

These were the first of several WikiLeaks releases about Guantánamo Bay prison: in 2011 they also released Detainee Assessment Briefs (case files) of prisoners; in 2012 they released the rules and procedures covering detainees.

In December 2007 WikiLeaks also released the 2004 version of the Camp Bucca Standard Operating Procedures. Camp Bucca was the biggest prison in Iraq, holding 20,000 prisoners at the time (later expanded to 30,000) including detainees moved from the torture-plagued Abu Ghraib prison. WikiLeaks analysis suggested "the Camp Bucca SOP seems to be an improvement over the March 1 manual for Camp Delta (Guantánamo)":

However some troubling features remain, including detention of juveniles, use of tasers, extensive use of dogs and conspicuously little detail on interrogations and military intelligence operations within the camp.

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Release: US Military Equipment & Units in Iraq

[https://wikileaks.org//wiki/US_Military_Equipment_in_Iraq_\(2007\)](https://wikileaks.org//wiki/US_Military_Equipment_in_Iraq_(2007))

On 8 November 2007 WikiLeaks followed up their Afghan War equipment leak (above) with a similar list of US Army equipment in Iraq. The leak revealed the structure of US forces in Iraq, including previously secret units, and at least 2,386 "non-lethal" chemical weapons.

This spectacular 2,000 page US military leak consists of the names, group structure and theatre equipment registers of all units in Iraq with US army equipment. It exposes secretive document exploitation centers, detainee operations, elements of the State Department, Air Force, Navy and Marines units, the Iraqi police and coalition forces from Poland, Denmark, Ukraine, Latvia, Slovakia, Romania, Armenia, Kazakhstan and El Salvador. The material represents nearly the entire order of battle for US forces in Iraq and is the first public revelation of many of the military units described. Among other matters it shows that the United States may have violated the United Nations Chemical Weapons Convention.

WikiLeaks analysis revealed at least \$6,601,015,731 worth of US Army managed military equipment in Iraq, with half of all equipment purchases again diverted to dealing with home made mobile phone and radio bombs. Other expenditure included portable mobile chemical and biological laboratories, cryptographic and communications security equipment, 114 drone aircraft, 400 military robots and 446,476 items of body armor. There were also 39 automatic cash counting machines and 1,056 US military safes, because post-invasion Iraq had no functional banking network. This had opened the door to widespread corruption:

From the invasion of Iraq in April 2003 until June 2004, the US Army shipped nearly US\$12,000,000,000 in cash, weighing 363 tonnes, to Baghdad for disbursement to Iraqi ministries and US contractors. Of this over \$9,000,000,000 went missing. The funds were drawn from the Iraq Development Fund, which had been formed from US seized Iraqi assets.

Julian Assange also published a separate article titled [US violates chemical weapons convention](#) which concluded that "extensive provisioning of CS gas by the United States to troops in Iraq appears to undermine the Chemical Weapons Convention". Assange detailed the chemical weapons in use and the units where they were deployed, with lengthy tables linking to the inventory database. He even wrote a long section titled "story development notes for journalists". To help readers analyze the data, WikiLeaks also published the [US Department of Defense's Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms](#).

But as Assange later told [Raffi Khatchadourian](#), the lack of media interest in this huge leak left him fuming:

Assange hoped that journalists would pore through it, but barely any did. "I am so angry," he said. "This was such a fucking fantastic leak: the Army's force structure of Afghanistan and Iraq, down to the last chair, and

nothing."

Two months later, however, the New York Times published a widely discussed story by James Risen titled [2005 Use of Gas by Blackwater leaves questions](#). It covered the possibly accidental use of a single canister of tear gas by the private military firm Blackwater. Guernica magazine [noted](#) the odd lack of interest in WikiLeaks' far more recent and important revelations.

The Wikileaks report came out in a busy news week and was not picked up by the angle press, the issue probably being considered too technical. However we believe the material is very strong.

NOTE The "talk page" for this leak is still available on the old WikiLeaks wiki pages. It's a curious mixture of useful feedback and angry abuse from people claiming to be US soldiers.

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Release: Bermuda Housing Corporation Scandal

In 2002 the Bermuda police investigated allegations of corruption at the Bermuda Housing Corporation (BHC) following the loss of \$8 million. In 2006, comments from the Attorney General suggested a total of \$792 million had gone missing from various projects due to government "leakage". In May 2007, media reports describe a huge police investigation with a dossier comprising thousands of pages. A senior officer described it as "an investigation of what undoubtedly remains the largest and most serious crimes of conspiracy, drug trafficking, and money laundering ever conducted in the Bermuda Police Service."

The head of police initially said the huge police dossier was "missing" but it was later described as "stolen". The British island nation's leader was apparently implicated but never questioned by police. In early June 2007 two of Bermuda's local news agencies reported that a source had sent them a letter containing important facts about the police dossier. Bermuda's Attorney General immediately slapped a gag order on further reporting. A local political commentator posted the letter (not the full police dossier) online but [removed](#) it after being placed under injunction.

On 3 October 2007 WikiLeaks published the letter provided to the media ([PDF](#)) along with an additional note from the source, who called himself "Son of the soil":

The Police dossier did not exonerate the Premier, as you will see on review of the attached document. The Premier's hostile outburst towards the Governor was nothing but a smoke screen, design to divert the public attention of his wrongdoing in the BHC scandal... However, thanks to the advent of the "internet"; the story of his wrongdoing will be told and the people will then decide knowing the real truth, as oppose to the Premier's truth.

Local press appealed the gag order all the way to London's Privy Council, which is Bermuda's highest court of appeal. On 29 October 2007 the Privy Council [ruled](#) in favour of the media. But the Bermudan government had already called in Scotland Yard to hunt for the whistle-blower and three people had been arrested. Businessman Harold Darrell [admitted](#) being the source and accused the Premier of a cover-up. The case [appears](#) to have gone no further.

WikiLeaks [noted](#) that Bermuda is a tax haven for billionaires and one of the few western hemisphere countries without Freedom of Information legislation.

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Release: Classified U.S report into the Fallujah assault

https://wikileaks.org/wiki/Complex_Environments:_Battle_of_Fallujah_I,_April_2004

The 2004 attack on the Iraqi town of Fallujah was a decisive moment in the Iraq War, revealing how media coverage played a decisive role in the conflict. Fallujah was first bombed by US forces in April 2003, and there were repeated incidents of US troops opening fire on protestors in the following weeks. A year later US Marines were still fighting running battles with insurgents in the streets and "shooting their way out of trouble". On 31 March 2004, four Blackwater private military contractors were killed and their burned bodies were filmed hanging from a bridge. Global media coverage prompted calls from Washington for a rapid response.

Local US Marines planned raids to target those responsible but Joint Task Force commanders ordered a full-scale siege instead. Despite overwhelming military superiority, US forces were pressured into an embarrassing cease-fire after just five days of combat operations, followed by a full withdrawal on 1 May 2004. A detailed US Army report into the fiasco was ordered. It was classified "SECRET/NOFORN" so US allies in Iraq could not read it.

On 25 December 2007 Wikileaks published the full 16-page report ([PDF](#)) plus [analysis](#) from Julian Assange.

Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld launched the failed April 2004 assault on the Iraqi town of Fallujah before marines were ready because it had become "a symbol of resistance that dominated international headlines" and similar considerations eventually destroyed the operation — both according to a highly classified U.S. intelligence report into the defeat.

Coalition air strikes were conducted during the three week cease-fire, which was a "bit of a misnomer" and the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal contributed to the politically driven final peace settlement. The settlement left Coalition Provisional Authority chief Paul Bremer "furious".

By the end of April, 600-700 Iraqis and 18 marines had been killed inside the town with 62 marines killed in the broader operational area and 565

wounded in action.

Fallujah's defenders were diverse but united to oppose the U.S. offensive. They included former regime soldiers, "nationalists, local Islamic extremists, foreign fighters and criminals" together comprising not so much a military organization, but "an evil Rotary club".

Stephen Soldz published an even [more detailed analysis](#) at Counterpunch two days later. United Press International's Shaun Waterman [reported](#) on the leak after the Christmas-New Year break:

A secret intelligence assessment of the first battle of Fallujah shows the U.S. military believes it lost control over information about what was happening in the town, leading to political pressure that ended its April 2004 offensive with control being handed to Sunni insurgents.

"The outcome of a purely military contest in Fallujah was always a foregone conclusion—coalition victory," reads the assessment, prepared by analysts at the U.S. Army's National Ground Intelligence Center.

"But Fallujah was not simply a military action, it was a political and informational battle. ... The effects of media coverage, enemy information operations, and the fragility of the political environment conspired to force a halt to U.S. military operations," concludes the assessment.

In November 2004 US forces re-siezed town of Fallujah in an attack that has been described as a massacre, with reports of numerous war crimes including use of chemical weapons, cluster bombs and attacks on the local hospital. Children born in Fallujah since the attacks have suffered abnormally high rates of deformities.

The WikiLeaks 2007 release helped re-focus attention on the situation in Fallujah. Two months after the report was leaked, independent journalist Michael Totten reported that a jail built to hold 120 prisoners was housing 900 without even minimal provision for sanitation or hygiene. Major General John Kelly, the new commander of US forces in western Iraq, visited the city to investigate. A month later, WikiLeaks released his [classified memo](#): it revealed horrific conditions: "unbelievable over crowding, total lack of anything approaching even minimal levels of hygiene for human beings, no food, little water, no ventilation."

UPI's Shaun Waterman [reported](#) that US forces did not deny the veracity of the memo and were now taking steps to improve conditions.

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It is not within the scope of this book to list or describe all the millions of documents and files hosted by WikiLeaks. Major leaks are described here at length but there are also many smaller

leaks which had less impact, along with important but non-secret documents which were discovered and posted online, plus analysis and other articles from Julian Assange and other WikiLeaks staff or volunteers, etc. For example, the following items were all posted on wikileaks.org in 2007:

- [International Police Policy and Procedure Manual for DynCorp staff in Iraq](#).
- Abu Ghraib SECRET camp Ganci oblique and [camp map](#).
- [A Cat May Look Upon a King, but Not at Gitmo](#) - analysis by Julian Assange and Dan Matthews.
- An investigation of [Internet Censorship in Thailand](#) where WikiLeaks has been [repeatedly censored](#).

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Chapter Three: 2008

"The expenses required to do such a task, the cost of internet communications, were going down during that period. The number of jurisdictions which had a decent Internet presence was increasing, and the ability to transfer money quickly from one jurisdiction to another also increased. So the desire, the ability and the times came together in such a way that permitted me to then roll out a multinational technological organisation with a dedicated philosophical purpose, and do so with the capital and assets that I had." - Julian Assange, [2011](#).

The year 2008 started with a January plunge on global stock markets, triggered by the USA's long-running subprime mortgage crisis. It ended with a full-blown Global Financial Crisis (GFC) after the collapse of Lehman Brothers investment bank on September 15 2008. Who was to blame? "Everyone and no one", if you believe the [corporate media](#).

Candidate Barack Obama continued campaigning across the USA in 2008, [promising](#) "hope and change" as well as more transparency and protection for whistle-blowers.

"As president, I will close Guantanamo and adhere to the Geneva Conventions..."

"No more illegal wiretapping of US citizens. No more national security letters to spy on citizens who are not suspected of a crime. No more tracking citizens who do nothing more than protest a misguided war. No more ignoring the law when it is inconvenient."

On 4 November 2008 Barack Obama defeated Republican John McCain to become US President. A month later he appointed Hillary Clinton, whom he had defeated for the Democratic Party nomination mid-year, as Secretary of State.

In Ecuador, anti-corruption socialist President Rafael Correa, who first took office in January 2007, won approval for a [new Constitution](#) at a 2008 national referendum. The new constitution recognised the rights of nature as well as humans, and placed strict limits on media ownership. It would later become a critical document in Julian Assange's legal battles.

Also in November 2008, Satoshi Nakamoto published the foundational paper for crypto-currency, [Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System](#). Bitcoin and other crypto-currencies would soon become an important revenue stream for WikiLeaks.

Meanwhile in Australia, the home of investigative journalist Philip Dorling, who would later help WikiLeaks publish revelations, was [raided by police](#) for the second time, as part of a 2008 investigation into leaks. Dorling later joked that police searched every inch of his house but ignored a briefcase that was sitting on his coffee table.

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Northern Rock vs. WikiLeaks

https://wikileaks.org/wiki/Northern_Rock_vs._Wikileaks

Britain's Northern Rock bank had received £24 billion from the Bank of England in September 2007 in order to save it from collapse. This had prompted the first "bank run" in the UK for a 150 years, with account holders queuing up at branches to withdraw their money. When a secret memo about the attempted sale of the bank was posted online and published in the UK media, the bank's lawyers immediately demanded the memo to be removed. The Financial Times, the Telegraph and other UK papers rapidly [complied](#), as did "at least half a dozen websites, including several located in the United States". But WikiLeaks posted the memo online ([PDF](#)) and refused to remove it.

On 20 January 2008 WikiLeaks released the [censorship demands](#) it had received from Schillings lawyers, acting for Northern Rock, along with [analysis](#) demanding legal reform to help keep the public informed:

The combined publishing might of the British press and the Internet has proved unfit (with the exception of WikiLeaks), to provision a key document in British politics to the public. Every insider has it. Surely the British people deserve to see it, after all they've paid for it — £400 each.

The UK press is the most injunctioned, litigated and censored among the liberal democracies. The population suffers accordingly and as we have seen, this hobbling of the UK press is now exported world wide via extra-territorial claims. The claims have limited power in theory, but are effective tools of suppression in practice as neither profit motivated ISPs nor publishers with UK business dealings will stand their ground. It is time for urgent reform.

WikiLeaks suggested the UK government provide an easy way to discover what is under injunction or in contempt of court reporting restrictions. Instead the UK developed "super-injunctions" which

not only criminalise reporting but also criminalise mention of the injunction that is criminalizing such reporting. WikiLeaks would publish the first publicly known super-injunction in 2009 (see Trafigura below).

Northern Rock bank was nationalised on 22 February 2008. Shareholders received no compensation.

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Monju nuclear reactor leak

https://wikileaks.org/wiki/The_Monju_nuclear_reactor_leak

Japan's Monju nuclear reactor was closed in 1995 after 700 kg of molten sodium leaked and ignited a fire. Officials played down the incident and suppressed video footage of the spill, providing only sanitized images to the public. An employee committed suicide after a press conference where the cover-up was admitted.

On 25 January 2008 WikiLeaks [published](#) three suppressed videos of the sodium spill, following court action and reports that the nuclear reactor would be reopened. The reactor was not restarted until May 6, 2010 but it was shut down again three months later after another accident. By 2020 it was in the process of decommissioning.

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US Rules of Engagement for Iraq

https://wikileaks.org/wiki/US_Rules_of_Engagement_for_Iraq

On 4 February 2008 WikiLeaks published the classified SECRET consolidated US Forces Rules of Engagement (ROE) for Iraq. These rules dictated the behaviour expected from US soldiers in Baghdad and central Iraq in 2005. WikiLeaks said their source was a courageous national security whistleblower they called "Peryton" who had also leaked the Guantanamo Bay manuals and the Fallujah report.

On first reading, the document contains a number of items of interest to the press, including rules about mosque attacks, detention of immams, cross border incursions (including Iran and Syria), the use of mines and riot control agents, terrorist targeting, the destruction of Iraqi government property used by insurgents and even kafkaesque rules for attacks on WMD mobile production labs.

WikiLeaks suggested "those more familiar with the US-Iraq war" might discover more items of interest. Numerous media organisations published articles about the leak, including the [New York Times](#):

American military forces in Iraq were authorized to pursue former

members of Saddam Hussein's government and terrorists across Iraq's borders into Iran and Syria, according to a classified 2005 document that has been made public by an independent Web site.

The document also provided instructions for how to deal with radical Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr, whose status as a hostile foe was "suspended" - "he and his key associates were not to be attacked except in self-defense".

A US military spokesman condemned the leak without confirming or denying its validity:

"While we will not comment on whether this is, in fact, an official document, we do consider the deliberate release of what WikiLeaks believes to be a classified document is irresponsible and, if valid, could put US military personnel at risk."

But a Washington Post article welcomed the release and said it could actually help the military if there was more discussion:

Publicize the rules as much as possible, show how careful U.S. forces really are. It's not like we're otherwise winning the battle of hearts and minds by hoarding our secrets.

A week after the leak, authorities in Iran [warned](#) US Forces not to chase suspects into their territory.

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Rudolph Elmer and Julius Baer Bank

On 15 February 2008, the WikiLeaks website was shut down for the first time, following an [injunction](#) filed in the Cayman Islands by Julius Baer Bank (also called Julius Bär). The bank alleged that WikiLeaks was hosting documents illegally provided by whistle-blower Rudolf Elmer, a former executive of the bank's Caribbean operations.

As wikileaks.org was hosted on numerous servers around the world, the court order targeted the Californian registrar Dynadot, from whom the "wikileaks.org" domain name had been purchased. The website went down when Dynadot's records for 'Wikileaks.org' were deleted from the internet website name registration system. The WikiLeaks website only remained visible on backup sites such as wikileaks.be (Belgium) and wikileaks.de (Germany).

Although WikiLeaks were aware of the bank's intention to file federal US proceedings, they were given only hours notice "by email" of the Dynadot court proceedings, and their legal representative was not allowed in the courtroom. They were shocked by this brutal censorship attack "from, of all places, the United States".

When the transparency group WikiLeaks was censored in China last year,

no-one was too surprised. After all, the Chinese government also censors the Paris based Reporters Sans Frontiers and New York Based Human Rights Watch. And when Wikileaks published the secret censorship lists of Thailand's military Junta, no-one was too surprised when people in that country had to go to extra lengths to read the site. But on Friday the 15th, February 2008, in the home of the free and the land of the brave, and a constitution which states "Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press", the Wikileaks.org press was shutdown.

To find an injunction similar to the Cayman's case, we need to go back to Monday June 15, 1971 when the New York Times published excerpts of Daniel Ellsberg's leaked "Pentagon Papers" and found itself enjoined the following day. The Wikileaks injunction is the equivalent of forcing the Times' printers to print blank pages and its power company to turn off press power. The supreme court found the Times censorship injunction unconstitutional in a 6-3 decision.

After leaving Julius Baer Bank in 2002, Rudolph Elmer [leaked](#) information about the bank's extremely wealthy clients to Swiss media and tax authorities. Elmer was held in custody for 30 days in 2005, charged with breaking Swiss bank secrecy laws, forging documents and sending threats to Julius Baer officials. He claimed that the bank hired people to stalk him and his family in his native Switzerland (where there are no anti-stalking laws), including car chases and other forms of harrassment.

Wikileaks had [published](#) a 2007 batch of [documents](#) from Elmer "purportedly showing offshore tax evasion and money laundering by extremely wealthy and in some cases, politically sensitive, clients from the US, Europe, China and Peru". In February 2008 WikiLeaks also published written statements by Rudolf Elmer, including a [letter](#) disclosing "methods used by Bank Julius Baer to avoid or decrease tax payments".

"Wikileaks was the only tool I had to raise my voice," Elmer later [explained](#) to media.

When WikiLeaks refused to remove these documents from its website, Julius Baer Bank sought a second injunction to close the entire WikiLeaks website, including backup sites where the documents were attracting global interest.

Wikileaks warned Julius Baer Bank that their failure to respond openly to Elmer's allegations would only draw further scrutiny from the public and regulators alike. This is exactly what happened, in a classic demonstration of the [Streisand Effect](#). By shutting down WikiLeaks, Julius Baer Bank attracted a deluge of bad publicity.

The injunction was challenged in a joint action by civil liberties groups including the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Another brief was filed by a dozen media organisations including the Associated Press (AP) and the Los Angeles Times. And yet another brief was filed by Ralph Nader and the California First Amendment Coalition (CFAC).

On 21 February 2008 a [New York Times editorial](#) condemned "the disabling of WikiLeaks.org, a muckraking Web site" and demanded the court decision be reversed.

Federal District Court Judge Jeffrey White ordered WikiLeaks's domain name registrar to disable its Web address. That was akin to shutting down a newspaper because of objections to one article. The First Amendment requires the government to act only in the most dire circumstances when it regulates free expression.

In a second order, the judge directed WikiLeaks not to distribute the bank documents. That was a "prior restraint" on speech, something the courts almost always find violates the First Amendment. If the employee did not have a right to the documents and the bank was injured as a result, a suit against the leaker for monetary damages should be sufficient.

Much of the law governing the Internet remains unsettled. Still, the free speech burdens of closing down a journalistic Web site are just as serious as closing down a print publication, and courts should tread carefully.

For now, the lawsuit appears to have backfired, bringing worldwide publicity to the documents. Enterprising Internet users have found ways to get to the site. We hope it will also educate judges and the public about the importance of giving full protection to online speech.

On 5 March 2008 Julius Baer Bank [voluntarily dropped](#) their demands. The injunction was lifted by the judge and WikiLeaks [declared victory](#).

Assange later [dismissed](#) suggestions that the US justice system had simply rectified its own error. "We outspent a Swiss bank by funding, through our community, twenty-two lawyers instead of three. Justice doesn't just happen. Justice is forced by people coming together and exercising strength, unity and intelligence."

Rudolph Elmer began co-operating with the US Internal Revenue Service and a US Senate sub-committee probing offshore tax havens. But the story was not over. In 2011 Rudolph Elmer appeared at the Frontline Club in London, with two compact disks which he said contained the offshore bank account details of 2,000 "high net worth individuals" and corporations. Images of Elmer handing the CDs to Julian Assange were broadcast around the world. Elmer then returned to Switzerland where he was again arrested. Numerous sources later stated that the disks were empty and contained no bank data. WikiLeaks did not confirm or deny this, but they have not published any further information regarding Julius Baer Bank.

In 2016 the US government filed criminal charges against Julius Baer Bank for helping US clients hide undeclared wealth. The bank [admitted to conspiracy](#) and paid a \$547 million fine.

Rudolph Elmer continued campaigning against banking corruption despite the toll his activism was taking on his health and personal life. On 10 October 2018 his case reached the Supreme Court of Switzerland, who ruled that Elmer had not violated Swiss bank secrecy, so his previous acquittal was confirmed. The court found that because he was employed by the Cayman outfit, not its parent, Elmer was not bound by Swiss secrecy law when he handed data to WikiLeaks in 2008. This is deliciously ironic, as Elmer had claimed that Julius Baer Bank avoided Swiss laws by pretending work was performed in the Caymans when it was really done in Switzerland.

Elmer was nevertheless found guilty of forging a letter and making a threat, and ordered to pay \$325,000 costs. The forgery charge relates to a [fake letter](#) from Julius Baer Bank to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, which Elmer admitted adding to the 2007 batch of documents he forwarded to Wikileaks "as a test, to see if they would filter material before publishing". WikiLeaks had quickly identified the letter as a probable fake but left it online because "the identity of forger and their motivation remain of strong journalistic interest".

Elmer told Swiss media: "I have certainly made mistakes. My emotions have been out of control."

Attempts to establish Swiss anti-stalking legislation in 2007 and 2008 both [failed](#).

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Economist Index on Censorship Freedom of Expression award

In March 2008 WikiLeaks won the [2008 Economist Index on Censorship Freedom of Expression award](#). These awards "exist to celebrate individuals or groups who have had a significant impact fighting censorship anywhere in the world".

Winners were honoured at a "gala celebration" in London. Judges cited previous WikiLeaks releases as well as their courageous stance against censorship by Julius Baer Bank.

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US Military Investigation of WikiLeaks

https://wikileaks.org/wiki/U.S._Intelligence_planned_to_destroy_WikiLeaks,_18_Mar_2008

WikiLeaks had by now attracted the attention of the US Department of Defense (DoD). On 18 March 2008 the US Army Counterintelligence Centre published a secret 32-page [report](#) titled "Wikileaks.org — An Online Reference to Foreign Intelligence Services, Insurgents, or Terrorist Groups?" Unauthorized disclosure of the report, which assessed "the counterintelligence threat posed to the US Army by the Wikileaks.org Web site", was subject to criminal sanctions.

Wikileaks.org, a publicly accessible Internet Web site, represents a potential force protection, counterintelligence, operational security (OPSEC), and information security (INFOSEC) threat to the US Army.

The report struggled to assess who might be leaking information to WikiLeaks and whether more information was in the pipeline:

The possibility that a current employee or mole within DoD or elsewhere in the US government is providing sensitive information or classified information to Wikileaks.org cannot be ruled out. Wikileaks.org claims that the leakers or whistleblowers of sensitive or classified DoD documents are former US government employees. These claims are highly suspect, however, since Wikileaks.org states that the anonymity and protection of the leakers or whistleblowers is one of its primary goals...

Wikileaks.org most likely has other DoD sensitive and classified information in its possession and will continue to post the information to the Wikileaks.org Web site.

The report authors, who referred to Julian Assange as "the foreign staff writer for Wikileaks.org", were concerned about the old "wiki" format of the website and falsely concluded that "there is no editorial review or oversight to verify the accuracy of any information posted to the Web site". They identified "trust" as the key to WikiLeaks' success, and therefore also a potential way to destroy it:

Wikileaks.org uses trust as a center of gravity by assuring insiders, leakers, and whistleblowers who pass information to Wikileaks.org personnel or who post information to the Web site that they will remain anonymous. The identification, exposure, or termination of employment of or legal actions against current or former insiders, leakers, or whistleblowers could damage or destroy this center of gravity and deter others from using Wikileaks.org to make such information public.

The report also expressed confidence that US government hackers could penetrate WikiLeaks dropbox security: "the obscurification technology used by Wikileaks.org has exploitable vulnerabilities".

WikiLeaks did not get its hands on this report until 2010, when its release made global headlines. WikiLeaks noted that efforts to damage the organisation's key "trust" must have been ineffective because "two years have passed since the date of the report, with no WikiLeaks' source exposed".

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On 20 March 2008 WikiLeaks published the US Air Force's detailed classified [Tactical Manual](#) for Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs), a GPS guidance kit that converts "dumb bombs" into "smart" munitions. Julian Assange later called this "the most strategically significant U.S. military development in the past 15 years.

A single B2 stealth bomber is capable of releasing 80 pre-targeted JDAM

fitted bombs and leveling all the critical infrastructure of a medium-sized city in one overflight. Most bombings in Iraq are now JDAM.

There was no media interest in the leak. The [Talk page](#) on wikileaks.org has a single message: "DELETE THIS NOW OR YOU WILL BE PROSECUTED!" The manual is still online, although quite a few links to it seem broken.

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Church of Scientology

Julian Assange had been an outspoken critic of the Church of Scientology since at least 1996 (see Chapter One). When US lawyers representing the Church had demanded information about one of his Suburbia ISP customers, Assange [ignored their demands](#), warned his customer that the Scientologists were pursuing him, and encouraged his other customers to join anti-Church protests:

To the Church the battle isn't won in the courtroom. It is won at the very moment the legal process starts unfolding, creating fear and expense in those the Church opposes. Their worst critic at the moment is not a person, or an organization but a medium — the Internet. The Internet is, by its very nature, a censorship free zone. Censorship, concealment and revelation (for a fee) is the Church's raison d'être.

On 24 March 2008 WikiLeaks [published](#) the Church of Scientology's 'Operating Thetan' documents, a 612-page compilation of material written for Scientologists by founder L. Ron Hubbard, a popular science fiction writer. These manuals, which documented the eight levels (OT1 to OT8) through which members could progress, were called the church's "secret bibles".

While the Scientologists had previously sued CNN and Time magazine for releasing excerpts of these documents, this was "believed to be the first time the full unedited version has become publicly available". The full release also included hand-written notes from Hubbard and letters from Hubbard to individuals who had passed the OT levels.

Predictably, the Scientologists demanded WikiLeaks remove the information from their site because it was copyrighted and publication infringed their intellectual-property rights. WikiLeaks responded by releasing "several thousand additional pages of Scientology material" and calling the church "an abusive cult" that "aids and abets a general climate of Western media self-censorship".

WikiLeaks will not comply with legally abusive requests from Scientology any more than WikiLeaks has complied with similar demands from Swiss banks, [Russian offshore stem-cell centers](#), former African kleptocrats, or the Pentagon.

If the West cannot defend its cultural values of free speech and press freedoms against a criminal cult like Scientology, it can hardly lecture China

and other state abusers of these same values."

WikiLeaks.org still hosts [over 100 pages](#) about Scientology.

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Curiously, [analysis](#) of the Scientology documents was authored on Wikileaks.org by "Jason Safoutin of Wikinews", and Wikinews also [hosted](#) the full release. This may be partly because, as Assange later [stated](#) "our normal fare is government corruption and military secrets, so it seemed that this nutty religious organization was pretty inconsequential in terms of what we normally do."

Like Wikipedia, Wikinews is controlled by the "Wikimedia foundation" (no relation to Wikileaks). In the months after the Scientology release, there were [increasing complaints](#) about [censorship](#) from writers at Wikinews.

In April 2008, both Wikileaks and Wikinews published a key document from the Mormon church (also known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) titled the [Handbook of Instructions](#). Again the church cited copyright law, demanding the documents be removed. The Wikimedia Foundation complied, but WikiLeaks did not. Assange said Wikileaks would welcome another lawsuit:

The lawsuits validate the documents we released and bring attention to other people who are revealing incriminating information about these or other organizations. It also brings further attention to our organization as a whole, and it's possible to create a situation where the lawsuit itself brings out the material in public and is a revealer of truth.

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North Korea Handbook

On 1 April 2008 WikiLeaks released the 1997 version of the [US Department of Defence's Handbook on North Korea](#). Quartz magazine [called](#) the picturesque document an odd mixture of "a military manual with travel guide", including a brief history of North Korea, details about geography and infrastructure, a guide to Pyongyang's military doctrine, and "expected plans for how the North might invade South Korea". There was also a "very pre-9/11 description of terrorism", which the US Department of Defence said "may seem like mindless violence committed without logic or purpose, but it isn't."

The Quartz magazine story was later updated with a correction:

An earlier version of this story attributed the unearthing of the manual to Wikileaks. It actually was released by the US Defense Intelligence Agency in 2004, in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

This triggered some feverish online debate, with some saying it proved WikiLeaks could not be trusted, others wondering if WikiLeaks was aware of the previous release, and still others

questioning whether it even mattered: if a document is newsworthy but being ignored, surely there's value in drawing attention to it? In years to come WikiLeaks would publish many documents that were already online but deserved more attention, culminating with the 2013 [PlusD Public Library of US Diplomacy](#), a searchable database of previously hard-to-find US diplomatic records.

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British MoD Gets Mad

On 16 April 2008 WikiLeaks published the British Army's restricted [ISTAR intelligence handbook](#) (dated June 14, 2007) which included a list of "taskable intelligence collection platforms". ISTAR stands for "intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance". Julian Assange called the leak a "classified UK/US spy plane compendium and tasking guide, with plenty of approachable pictures and released in violation of the Official Secrets Act".

Ironically, according to the security classification WikiLeaks is compelled under U.K. law to both publish and never delete the document.

Global media ignored the release.

On 15 July 2008, WikiLeaks published another restricted British Army document, this one detailing UK military tactics in Iraq and Afghanistan. Dated October 2007, the 442-page file was titled [Part 9 - Tactics For Stability Operations](#). It provided "the latest detailed guidance for conducting stability operations" which were defined, along with offence and defence operations, as "the three principal land tactical activities [which] may be conducted concurrently". Advice included:

Feel free to return a hug or kiss on the cheek, initiated by an Iraqi man. This is a sign of friendship, not homosexuality.

Immediate incapacitation of the suicide bomber, using lethal force, is likely to be the only means of stopping him.

Again the media took no notice, and there are not even any comments on the [Talk page](#) from WikiLeaks volunteers. But the publication of these restricted military documents certainly caught the attention of the UK's Ministry of Defence (MoD). Assuming disgruntled soldiers were responsible, they launched an investigation and tried to block WikiLeaks from all MoD computers.

In 2009 a user named "Fake Ben Laurie" (account now suspended) [posted](#) the results of numerous Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to various UK government offices at the [WhatDoTheyKnow.com](#) site. The responses showed that the 2008 leaks had surprised UK military personnel who had never heard of WikiLeaks. From "the helpdesk" on [5 November 2008](#):

There are thousands of things on here, I literally mean thousands. Not just UK MoD but other places as well. Everything I clicked on to do with MoD was restricted which then had links within that and then links again and so

on. It is huge.

On 25 June 2009 the Guardian's David Leigh finally wrote a short article about the releases and the MoD's response, titled [Ministry of Defence blocks WikiLeaks](#).

On 30 September 2009 WikiLeaks [released](#) nine more documents, apparently obtained via the same "Fake Ben Laurie" [FOI method](#), which showed "the UK MoD has a dedicated internet monitoring unit, based in the Royal Airforce, which as part of its activities, monitors WikiLeaks." The documents showed MoD responses to WikiLeaks releases.

The WikiLeaks release page included a scathing comment on the media's failure to report these important leaks:

For all the leaks noted here, and many jargon filled documents like them, there has been no investigation or reportage by the mainstream, alternative or academic press. The economic cost of using google and a military dictionary seems to prevent reportage of such leaks in the current media economy. Any policy travesty can be hidden in jargon, even when the form is a full, classified, current, document about war activities in Iraq and Afghanistan.

From April to September 2008, WikiLeaks pumped out a lot more stories which triggered very little media attention. Was it the quality of their leaks, or was something else going on?

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On 24 April 2008 WikiLeaks published a .zip file containing information about a recent [Chinese weapons shipment to Zimbabwe](#). Their source said the information was first released by a journalist based in Cape Town, who called local radio to warn of the arrival of arms for Zimbabwe. Some local journalists had doubted whether there were arms among the cargo but the WikiLeaks files included a detailed inventory. It [appears](#) the ship returned to China without unloading the arms.

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On 29 April 2008 Julian Assange published his angry [Thomas Paine article](#) (see Chapter Two) complaining that media were ignoring WikiLeaks releases because they were too lazy to publish stories without some form of financial coercion. He said journalists were now doing cut-and-paste press releases instead of real investigative work, which meant most of the information in the public sphere was coming from groups with vested interests.

In the last two weeks, the English Wikileaks has obtained and released over 50 individual or collected, original, unreported, confidential, classified or censored documents, books, photos or films... Take a look at the material... and ask yourself why none has been reported without our intervention.

Assange said that people were only hearing about these releases because WikiLeaks was "lobbying for their uptake" and "bribing everyone with subsidized copy" while other releases had not been reported at all because Wikileaks lacked the resources to "push" them.

This article highlighted two potential weaknesses in the WikiLeaks organisation's business model: it's dependence on the "mainstream media" for publicity, and on public donations for funding. Of course there were other ways to make money, and the online community was increasingly abandoning the dreaded "MSM", but these issues became recurring problems.

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WikiLeaks carried on publishing. Releases in the following months included:

15 May 2008 - Latest European Commission [proposals](#) for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Analysis suggested European CAP reform was [just a whitewash](#).

22 May 2008 - Proposed draft of the secret [Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement](#) (ACTA) "followed by dozens of other publications, presenting the initial leak for the whole ACTA debate happening today". Media analysis condemned the negotiations for [lacking transparency](#).

13 June 2008 - A sensitive 219-page 2004 US military manual titled [US Special Forces Foreign Internal Defense Tactics Techniques and Procedures for Special Forces](#). WikiLeaks suggested it could be best described as "What we learned about running death squads and propping up corrupt government in Latin America and how to apply it to other places".

The document, which is official US Special Forces policy, directly advocates training paramilitaries, pervasive surveillance, censorship, press control, restrictions on labor unions & political parties, suspending habeas corpus, warrantless searches, detainment without charge, bribery, employing terrorists, false flag operations, concealing human rights abuses from journalists, and extensive use of "psychological operations" (propaganda) to make these and other "population & resource control" measures palatable.

Julian Assange published a copy of the accompanying analysis in Spanish titled [Como entrenar a escuadrones de la muerte y aplastar revoluciones de El Salvador a Iraq](#) (How to train death squads and smash revolutions from El Salvador to Iraq). WikiLeaks noted that other versions of this manual could be found online, [explaining](#) to supporters that "Wikileaks has changed the entry criteria slightly. It's part of our mission to keep these documents before the public."

16 June 2008 - An [anonymous report](#) on Texas Catholic hospitals showing they violated church ethics with at least 9,684 cases of sterilizations and 39 legally induced abortions from 2000-2003. WikiLeaks noted that "while sterilizations and abortions are legal in the United States, they are considered immoral by the Catholic Church and many Catholics". The [Catholic News Agency](#) reported:

The July 13 issue of Our Sunday Visitor examines the anonymous group's report, based upon data from the Texas government, which requires most

major hospitals to file information from inpatient records. The group reportedly includes a self-described biostatistician who says she worked with four other people, including a computer scientist and a medical ethicist. The biostatistician says the group chose to remain anonymous because of "concern over job loss or retaliation."

According to Our Sunday Visitor, the researchers said they were motivated by a desire to increase transparency and accountability in Catholic hospitals, to inform the public about practices in Catholic health systems, and to encourage accountability for the Religious sisters who own and run the systems. The researchers believe the unethical practices could be taking place nationwide.

20 June 2008 - [Letters and affidavits](#) regarding the suspension of Fletcher Thornton, a US judo official accused of child molestation. The source stated:

A major political figure in USAjudo has been repeatedly accused of taking advantage of underage women. Due to politics nothing has been done and the information buried. Here is what USAjudo doesn't want people to see.

A month later the [New York Times](#) reported that the United States Olympic Committee had announced a formal inquiry. Fletcher Thornton resigned the next day.

1 July 2008 - [US Marines Midrange Threat Estimate](#), a 104-page document detailing possible threats that the US Marines had identified for the coming years.

5 July 2008 - A [copy of a rice contract](#) awarded by the Prime Minister of Timor L'Este Xanana Gusmao, allegedly to the Vice President of his own political party. The source claimed the contract was "awarded without tender at exaggerated prices" and "symptomatic of what may happen when Xanana doubles the national budget this week". Two days later Australian media [reported](#) that the deal was "ringing alarm bells at the UN and among the impoverished country's main donors, including Australia." But Gusmao responded in detail to defend himself. The WikiLeaks [Talk page](#) suggested that lessons should be learned from the leak, which may have been politically motivated.

11 July 2008 - A [transcript of discussions](#) between a Eutelsat representative in Beijing and a person who the employee thought was a Chinese Propaganda Department official. Analysis by [Reporters Without Borders](#) showed that French satellite provider Eutelsat covertly removed an anti-communist TV channel to satisfy Beijing.

11 July 2008 - A 23-page internal [Special Investigative Report](#) exposing corruption at a network of twenty two children's hospitals in the USA and Canada. Analysis by the [New York Times](#) showed "the inner workings of what is the nation's wealthiest charity" suggesting "questionable financial dealings". The [Wikipedia page](#) for Shriners Hospitals for Children currently states that funds in 2009 "declined from \$8 billion to \$5 billion in less than a year because of the poor economy" but does not mention the corruption inquiry.

16 July 2008 - WikiLeaks [released](#) a document further debunking claims that a Kenyan politician close to Barack Obama had sought votes by virtually pledging to turn the Christian country into a militant Muslim stronghold. WikiLeaks had already [published](#) the forged document, listing it as a likely fake, on 14 November 2007. WikiLeaks also released a followup letter and the names of witnesses to the signing of the document. [Analysis](#) by Julian Assange and Joel Whitney (of Guernica magazine) condemned journalists from The New York Sun, the UK Spectator and other media outlets who took the document at face value.

25 August 2008 - [Six scanned documents](#) relating to the attempted assassination of Timor L'Este President José Ramos-Horta, including autopsy reports for rebel leader Alfredo Reinado and another rebel shot dead in the attack. The documents also included phone records, from which WikiLeaks staff [created a map](#), and a letter of safe passage from Ramos-Horta to Reinado and his men during "the period of the process of dialogue".

Australian media later [reported](#) that "potentially explosive developments" were being kept secret because Reinado was "a cult hero" and "authorities fear an outbreak of violence if it becomes known that Reinado was not responsible for shooting the popular president".

The official version of events is that Reinado led rebels to the homes of Mr Ramos-Horta and the Prime Minister, Xanana Gusmao, to either assassinate or kidnap them as part of an attempted coup.

4 September 2008 - A 19-page [US Treasury Strategic Direction](#) report from the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (OIA) for the years 2009 to 2011. Designated "For Official Use Only" and dated July 2008, the document precedes the full-blown Global Financial Crisis, which it totally fails to predict, and instead focuses heavily on foreign US security issues including Al Qaeda, Iraq and "Adversaries' Financial Vulnerabilities".

Bundesnachrichtendienst

On 11 September 2008 WikiLeaks published [eleven missing pages](#) from the 2006 Schaefer report, which investigated spying on journalists by Germany's secret intelligence service, the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND). The missing pages described BND contacts with an investigative journalist from Focus magazine, Josef Hufelschulte, who won a court case to keep them secret. The missing pages showed Hufelschulte may have been unwittingly manipulated by the BND. [Analysis](#) was provided in English and German by Julian Assange and Daniel Schmitt (later known as Daniel Domscheit-Berg):

The document in general shows the extent to which the collaboration of journalists with intelligence agencies has become common and to what dimensions consent is manufactured in the interests of those involved.

Two months later, WikiLeaks reported that the censored pages remained unreported by German media "and in particular Focus magazine".

On 13 November 2008 WikiLeaks revealed over two dozen secret IP address ranges in use by the BND, [publishing](#) an internally distributed mail from German telecommunications company T-

Systems (Deutsche Telekom). The following night, [according to WikiLeaks](#), "a massive deletion operation took place at the European Internet address register (RIPE) to scrub references" to the BND's cover. This included removal of embarrassing information on the BND's own Wikipedia page.

The integrity and transparency of the RIPE system is not assisted by the T-Systems deletion. German citizens may wonder at the double standard. At a time when the population's Internet addresses are being recorded by ISPs under laws derisively referred to as "Stasi 2.0", the "real Stasi"—the BND, has had the largest telco in Germany scrub its addresses from the European record within 24 hours of their exposure.

Meanwhile in November 2008, three BND agents were arrested and deported from Kosovo after photographing a recently bombed building in Pristina. The Kosovo government blamed the agents for the attack, seizing their note books and electronic files. WikiLeaks published an [article by US journalist Tom Burghardt](#) about the bungled BND operation, plus a [25-page BND analysis](#) of organized crime in the Balkans, dated 22 February 2005.

The head of the BND [threatened](#) WikiLeaks with "immediate criminal prosecution" if it did not remove all files or reports related to the BND, and claimed to have already engaged BND lawyers. WikiLeaks responded by noting that their documents were now "verified by the Bundesnachrichtendienst through a request for removal." WikiLeaks also published their [full correspondence](#) with the BND.

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Sarah Palin's Yahoo! emails

https://wikileaks.org/wiki/Sarah_Palin_Yahoo_account_2008

On 17 September 2008 WikiLeaks [published](#) the contents of a Yahoo! email account belonging to US politician Sarah Palin, who at the time was Governor of Alaska and the running mate of Republican presidential nominee John McCain.

Circa midnight Tuesday the 16th of September (EST) activists loosely affiliated with the group 'anonymous' gained access to U.S. Republican Party Vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin's Yahoo email account gov.palin@yahoo.com and passed information to WikiLeaks. Governor Palin has come under criticism for using private email accounts to conduct government business and in the process avoid transparency laws. The zip archive made available by WikiLeaks contains screen shots of Palin's inbox, two example emails, address book and a couple of family photos. The list of correspondence, together with the account name tends to re-enforce the criticism.

A college student claimed responsibility and [told media](#) that hacking into Palin's email was easy: he reset her password to "popcorn" after successfully guessing her ZIP code and Googling the answer to her security question: "Where did you meet your spouse?" The FBI later identified the hacker as David Kernell, the 20-year-old son of a Democratic State Representative. Kernell was sentenced in 2010 to a year in federal prison. He [died](#) in 2018 after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis four years earlier.

Media criticism before the hack had focussed on another Palin email account: gov.sarah@yahoo.com. Within hours of the WikiLeaks release, both of these Yahoo! accounts were deleted.

Palin, McCain and even Barak Obama's spokesman were quick to condemn the hack. But in January 2017, after watching Julian Assange discuss the release of Hillary Clinton's emails, Sarah Palin [apologized repeatedly on Facebook](#):

I apologize for condemning Assange when he published my infamous (and proven noncontroversial, relatively boring) emails years ago.

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Kenya: The Cry of Blood

In 2007 WikiLeaks exposed widespread government corruption in Kenya, and the politicians named were voted out in a December 2007 poll. But when former President Mwai Kibaki was announced the winner of the election, months of violence erupted across the country, with citizens splitting along political and ethnic lines. In February 2008 the Kenyan government set up the [Waki Commission](#) to identify those responsible for the widespread violence and bring them to justice.

On 31 August 2008 WikiLeaks published a [54-page excerpt](#) from the 529-page Waki Report into the post-election violence. WikiLeaks called the leak a "secret and redacted list of Kenyan violence financiers, planners and perpetrators" including former and serving Cabinet ministers.

The summary emphasizes this being an alleged list yet hopes that the list provides a basis for further investigation through law enforcement and relevant agencies.

The Waki Commission's report was handed over to the President and Prime Minister on 15 October 2008, while the secret list of alleged perpetrators was handed over to the head of the United Nations, who passed it on to the head of the International Criminal Court. The Kenyan government was given twelve months to set up a justice tribunal, no easy task in a country still racked with corruption and violence, as local media [recognised](#):

The Waki panel recommended the International Criminal Court (ICC) to rein in the politicians. But who will tame the police?

On 1 November 2008 WikiLeaks published a report from the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), titled [The Cry of Blood](#), which documented "an orgy of extra-judicial

killings and disappearances" by Kenyan police, with over 500 victims. The report was not publicly available in Kenya, even though it contained "evidence of a high-level policy to assassinate Kenyan citizens with impunity" and "the policy is still in effect".

WikiLeaks listed eleven key findings drawn from the KNCHR investigations, concluding:

The report needs to be widely read because the Kenya press will not discuss this evidence of crimes committed by the Kenya Police for political reasons - the victims are mainly alleged members of the Mungiki sect which because of sustained political propaganda is regarded by many Kenyans as a terrorist cult.

When the crimes of the Kenya Police are widely known, there will be pressure to commit the Kenya Police Commissioner and other high ranking Kenyans to the International Criminal Court. They have been able to avoid justice and enjoy impunity in Kenya. Until now.

The WikiLeaks package included a list of disappearances and executions, plus post mortems and mortuary records. Gruesome stuff. But the WikiLeaks [Talk page](#) remained empty. Assange later told journalism.co.uk:

"The material was important. It was difficult to get Western press attention to it. We ran it on our front page for a week. Most journalists didn't care about it. Even regular readers didn't care about it."

Eventually the British media began to pick up the story. In early February 2009 a UN team headed by Prof Philip Alston, a Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial executions, [arrived](#) in Nairobi. Alston blamed the police for the widespread killings and [recommended](#) the sacking of both the Police Commissioner and Kenya's Attorney General. He also recommended that ICC prosecutors should take over the murder cases. By now at least 1,133 people had been killed and a further 350,000 had been rendered homeless.

Weeks later, on 5 March 2009, two "Wikileaks related human rights lawyers" were "shot dead at close range in their car less than a mile from President Kibaki's residence". WikiLeaks [stated](#) that "part of their work forms the basis of the 'Cry of Blood' report and subsequent follow ups". WikiLeaks called for information and assistance to post a reward for the capture of the murderers.

The [BBC reported](#) that Oscar Kamau Kingara and John Paul Oulo were shot dead just hours after a government spokesman accused their human rights group, the Oscar foundation, of aiding a criminal gang.

"The eyewitnesses on the scene saw the two vehicles create a jam, stop the traffic until they came out, gunned down these two human rights officers and paraded and ensured that nobody took these two to hospital until they

were dead."

Students from the nearby University of Nairobi took the men's bodies into the University's Halls of Residence, which was attacked by police with teargas. A student was killed as police opened fire to retrieve the bodies 'for further investigations.'

Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga, who had formed an unsteady coalition with President Kibaki, condemned the killings:

I fear we are flirting with lawlessness in the name of keeping law and order.
In the process, we are hurtling towards failure as a state.

The US Ambassador offered FBI help to investigate the murders, which the Kenyan government declined. The UN Special Rapporteur [said](#) an independent team should be called to investigate "from somewhere like Scotland Yard or the South African Police" but Kenya's Police Commissioner replied that his police could crack murder cases and this latest one should not receive "special treatment."

In the first week of May 2009, a group of Kenyan women held a [sex strike](#), demanding the President and the Prime Minister come together to settle their differences. The Women's Development Organisation coalition asked politicians' wives to support the strike, and even offered to pay prostitutes to participate, in order to avoid further violence.

In June 2009 Julian Assange was [awarded](#) Amnesty International's New Media award for WikiLeaks' release of the Cry Blood report. Amnesty also [issued a statement](#) calling for urgent Kenyan government reforms. Accepting the award at a London ceremony, Assange [called for justice](#):

It is a reflection of the courage and strength of Kenyan civil society that this injustice was documented. Through the courageous work of organizations such as the Oscar foundation, the KNHCR, Mars Group Kenya and others we had the primary support we needed to expose these murders to the world. I know that they will not rest, and we will not rest, until justice is done.

NOTE Assange [reportedly](#) arrived three hours late for the Amnesty Awards after he took multiple flights to get from Nairobi to London, presumably due to security concerns.

In late 2009 the BBC [reported](#) that rival ethnic groups in Kenya were rearming in readiness for violence ahead of coming polls. The ringleaders of the 2007 election violence remained unpunished. But fortunately the violence abated and Kenya had a peaceful election in 2013 with a record 85.91% voter turnout.

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British National Party Membership Lists

On 18 November 2008 WikiLeaks published the [membership list](#) of the far-right British National Party (BNP). The list had been copied to WikiLeaks and other sites after it temporarily appeared on a blog. Names, addresses, contact phone numbers and email addresses of 12,801 individuals were included, along with some family connections and job descriptions.

The list has been independently verified by Wikileaks staff as predominantly containing current or ex-BNP members, however other individuals who gave their details to the BNP, or one of its fronts, are also represented. Included in this latter category are a handful of journalists and "anti-fascists" who have attempted to infiltrate the organization.

In Britain it is illegal for police and some other civil servants to join the BNP. Media quickly [reported](#) that several government employees, police officers, soldiers, prison officers, and teachers were on the list. A BNP member later admitted leaking the data and was fined £200 for breaching the Data Protection Act.

On Friday 21 November WikiLeaks [published](#) an email from an address on the list, provided by a source who claimed it proved BNP members in the leaked list were racist. The next day, UK police arrested 12 BNP members for handing out a "racist" political pamphlet in Liverpool. WikiLeaks then [published](#) the pamphlet, arguing that the BNP was a registered political party and "if there is any example of speech which must be protected at all costs, surely political pamphleting is it".

In December 2008 Assange [noted](#) that the BNP release had "resulted in approximately two thousand articles in the British press" and joked that it changed the political landscape "for at least a week or so."

On 24 April 2009 WikiLeaks published the BNP's [Language and Concepts Discipline Manual](#), dated July 2005, which contained 23 rules. The first three: the BNP is not racist; the BNP is not Fascist; the BNP "does not apologize for what it is".

On 20 October 2009, two days before the BNP's leader was due to make a controversial appearance on the BBC's "Question Time" show, WikiLeaks published an [updated BNP membership list](#) from 15 April 2009, with over 16,000 unique membership numbers. Based on membership number ID's, WikiLeaks estimated that around 35,000 memberships had ever been awarded.

A notable feature of the April 15 sheet, is that once membership numbers reached a little over 33,000, new membership numbers had 100,000 added to them. The reason for this is unclear, however it has the effect of making the BNP look larger to new recruits and those they talk too, since the numbers on their membership cards are all over 133,000.

The Guardian [noted](#) the political fallout from the original list:

The last time BNP data was published, it emerged that teachers, policemen

and former members of the Conservative, Labour and the Lib Dem parties had signed up. Several dozen admitted to being members and were named in the press. The latest list suggests that at least 19 of those members have now left the party.

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Internet censorship lists

During 2008 governments around the world were getting excited about the idea of Internet censorship lists. They claimed it was the best way to protect citizens from dangerous content like child pornography, while Internet freedom activists saw more sinister motives behind their calls for censorship. In March 2008 WikiLeaks published the [United Arab Emirates online censorship plan](#), which included a ban on dating sites, homosexuality, and criticism of Islam.

On 20 December 2008 WikiLeaks published the [Internet censorship list for Thailand](#). They said the list was obtained by WikiLeaks Advisory Board member CJ Hinke, who was also director of Freedom Against Censorship Thailand.

Every blocked site has the internally noted reason of "lese majeste"—criticizing the King—however, it is obvious that many sites were blocked for quite different reasons. It would appear, in fact, that the judiciary did not examine most sites before issuing orders but instead rubber-stamped government requests.

The list included popular Thai webboards, books critical of the King, and sites belonging to critics of the Royal family. It also included Hillary Clinton's campaign videos, 24 Charlie Chaplin videos, 860 Youtube videos, and The Economist magazine.

On 23 December 2008, Wikileaks released the secret [Internet censorship list for Denmark](#). This included 3,863 sites blocked by Danish ISPs, who had been voluntarily participating in the censorship scheme since February 2008. The list included the Dutch transport company Vanbokhorst and other sites which had changed hands since being listed.

The list is generated without judicial or public oversight and is kept secret by the ISPs using it. Unaccountability is intrinsic to such a secret censorship system.

The list has been leaked because cases such as Thailand and Finland demonstrate that once a secret censorship system is established for pornographic content the same system can rapidly expand to cover other material, including political material, at the worst possible moment—when government needs reform.

Some wondered if WikiLeaks might find themselves added to the censorship list. WikiLeaks said they would [welcome](#) such action "because it will demonstrate how censorship systems are abused."

On 5 January 2009 WikiLeaks published the [Internet censorship list of Finland](#). The list contained 797 domains, including a critical Finnish anti-censorship site. The WikiLeaks [Talk page](#) indicates that Finnish intelligence sought US police help to remove the list from WikiLeaks.org, and the WikiLeaks page containing the list was later censored in Finland.

In Australia, an anti-censorship activist decided to test the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) by filing a complaint about WikiLeaks' exposure of the Danish censorship list, on the basis that the WikiLeaks page itself listed child pornography sites. On 16 March 2009 WikiLeaks [published](#) the activist's complaint and revealed that the ACMA had added two WikiLeaks pages (the Danish list and the press release) to their mandatory Net filtering blacklist. WikiLeaks also published the emailed reply from ACMA (agreeing to the censorship request) and noted that the Australian government had not even tried to contact them.

The content on the blacklist is illegal to publish or link to in Australia, with fines of up to \$11,000 a day for contraventions.

The ACMA blacklist is proposed to become the list with which the Australian Government will mandatory block all Australians Internet requests. Presently censorship of access attempts by ISPs is voluntary. The Australian government has faced strong opposition over the scheme, with the Liberal (conservative) and Green (liberal left) opposition parties stating they will vote against it.

Two days later, after provoking a public outcry, WikiLeaks published the Australian government's full [ACMA internet censorship blacklist](#) (version dated 6 Aug 2008). WikiLeaks accused Australia of "acting like a democratic backwater".

This week saw Australia joining China and the United Arab Emirates as the only countries censoring Wikileaks.

Warning that lists like this were open to abuse, WikiLeaks noted that the Thai system had been used to censor Australian reports about an Australian writer "who wrote a novel containing a single paragraph deemed to be critical of the Thai Monarchy".

Most of the sites on the Australian list have no obvious connection to child pornography. Some have changed owners while others were clearly always about other subjects.

The Australian list famously included an innocent dentist, along with a betting company, a website for Christians, YouTube videos, a MySpace profile, online poker parlours, a site containing poison information, a tour operator and a satirical encyclopedia.

On the same day (18 March 2008) WikiLeaks published the [Internet censorship list of Norway](#), with 3,518 secretly blacklisted sites.

The filter is an unlegislated cooperation between Telenor (Norway's leading internet service provider or ISP) and Kripos (the Norwegian police for organized crime, economical crime and other serious criminal issues). Several other ISPs in Norway have begun to use the system.

On 20 March 2009, after the Australian government questioned the number of sites on their earlier release, WikiLeaks published an [updated Australian Internet censorship list](#). WikiLeaks noted that around 1,500 sites had disappeared from the list in a week, so the ACMA clearly "did an enormous cleanup". The updated list still included the Danish WikiLeaks blacklist page.

Australia's Communications Minister [called](#) the leak and publication of the ACMA blacklist "grossly irresponsible" and said anyone sharing the list would be at "serious risk of criminal prosecution". WikiLeaks responded by [threatening to extradite the Minister to Sweden](#) if he went after their source.

Following the Australian leak, German police [raided the house](#) of Theodor Reppe, who had registered the domain [wikileaks.de](#) and donated it to WikiLeaks as a backup site.

"I think the police thought I had more control over the content of WikiLeaks," said a bemused Reppe, who had no personal contact with WikiLeaks.

The Australian ACMA blacklist was abandoned on 29 November 2010 but voluntary ISP filters have proliferated and numerous sites remain censored, with the public mostly unaware what is happening.

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Chaos Computer Club 2008

Germany's Chaos Computer Club (CCC) has long been one of the world's leading civil organisations dealing with the security and privacy aspects of technology. The annual CCC Congress draws hackers from everywhere.

Julian Assange attended the 2007 CCC congress in Berlin, where he [reportedly](#) explained his WikiLeaks project to members, several of whom became involved in the venture. One of those members was Daniel Berg, also sometimes called Daniel Schmitt, later known as Daniel Domscheit-Berg. A year later, on 27 December 2008, Assange and Domscheit-Berg appeared together on stage to deliver a widely anticipated [CCC talk about WikiLeaks](#).

Assange was introduced to the large CCC audience as "an investigative editor", while Domscheit-Berg was introduced as "Daniel Berger, a writer and an analyst". Domscheit-Berg later [claimed](#) that he had become involved with WikiLeaks in 2006, giving up his job as network engineer, and adopted the name "Schmitt" after his cat, Mr Schmitt. He said his previous life was irrelevant.

This joint appearance may have lead some people to falsely assume they had a similar status in the

organisation, especially because Assange was trying to keep media focus on WikiLeaks releases rather than the people behind WikiLeaks. A year later Assange was still telling journalists: "It doesn't matter who Wikileaks is, what matters is what Wikileaks does."

Half the 2008 CCC audience had already visited wikileaks.org more than ten times. They were told that the current WikiLeaks platform was a "proof of concept" which was probably going to be in a constant state of evolution, and their support would be needed to keep government restrictions on media and the Internet under control. Technical challenges included sanitizing documents to protect sources, trust issues with SSL certificates, .onion addresses and Tor usage, and maintaining high website availability while still running strong anti-censorship protection.

The talk was accompanied by a slideshow, with discussion points like: "global censorship and eradication of history", "enabling sources and whistle-blowers", "cost effective and legally fortified mechanisms for the media", and "no medium is easier to censor than the Internet".

There was a genuine sense that WikiLeaks was hoping to provide a new model for media success in a world where "the fourth estate is crumbling". Assange pointed out that 12,000 journalists had lost their jobs in the past year and only 40 investigative journalists remained at US newspapers, with 10 of them at the New York Times.

Fifty years ago there were approximately fifty multi-national media companies. Now there are approximately five.

Financial pressures were also making it harder for media organisations to protect important stories. Assange warned that major newspapers were increasingly pulling published material from their archives, leaving valuable information permanently deleted. He cited seven stories removed from UK media sites due to fear of legal costs, six of which had been published more than five years ago.

If you go to the URLs for those stories, you won't see that this story has been removed by legal action. You will see 'NOT FOUND'. And if you search for the indexes of those papers you will see 'NOT FOUND'. Those stories not only have ceased to exist, they have ceased to have ever existed.

Even worse, said Assange, firewalls were now providing "pro-active censorship, and that's something that has never been done before in terms of newspapers." He explained how child pornography concerns were used to justify Internet censorship lists, which then censored other information instead. "Western societies may end up like Thailand if everyone is not really careful," he warned.

Are blogs the antidote? Abosolutely not.

Assange said blog authors as individuals were not strong enough to withstand censorship attempts. They don't produce new content, just cut-and-paste news then provide an opinion, the same as small-town newspapers do with news from wire services (AAP, Reuters, etc).

If you don't have original source information, then everyone is just talking

to themselves in a circular manner.

Assange said "over a million dollars of legal time" had been donated to the WikiLeaks project. But they still needed "housing, hosting, bandwidth, uplinks, storage, development time, a lot of things that this audience can deliver en masse".

*

Once again, there is a lot of WikiLeaks material from 2008 that did not make it into this chapter. For example:

- On 24 March 2008, WikiLeaks [posted](#) 35 uncensored videos of civil unrest in Tibet after Chinese censorship of Western media coverage.
- On 11 December 2008 WikiLeaks released the US Army's [Human Terrain Team Handbook](#) (part of their \$190 Million "Human Terrain System" program) after several team members died.
- On December 18 2008 WikiLeaks posted the UK parliament [transcript](#) (Hansard) of a debate about libel laws, which arose from a series of attacks on WikiLeaks and the New Statesman by UK-Iraqi billionaire, [Nadhmi Auchi](#).
- On 20 December 2008 WikiLeaks also released 87 documents relating to [Operation Empire Challenge](#) - a sophisticated combined anglo-empire (US,UK,AUS,CAN) space, air and ground intelligence and targeting fusion operation partly co-ordinated by US defense contractor Northrop Grumman."

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Chapter Four: 2009

On his second day in office, 22 January 2009, US President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order to close the Guantanamo Bay prison gulag within a year.

I can say, without exception or without equivocation, that America will not torture.

Ten years later, Guantanamo Bay was still open, the head of the CIA was a woman nicknamed "Bloody Gina" for her role in torturing prisoners, and the only person Obama ever prosecuted for the CIA's torture program was the former agent who revealed it in December 2007, [John Kiriakou](#).

On 27 February 2009, Obama told a cheering crowd of US Marines in North Carolina:

Let me say this as plainly as I can: by August 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end.

But the official end of "combat operations" just signalled a new phase in the war. 50,000 troops remained to train Iraqis to do the same job they were doing: protecting the oil wells and the unpopular US-backed government.

Obama's vacuous promises won the approval of many who should have known better. On 9 October 2009 he was [awarded](#) the Nobel Peace Prize. Committee members later [admitted](#) it was their worst decision ever. Obama's embarrassed staff asked if he could skip the official ceremony in Oslo.

*

Counterinsurgency

On 28 January 2009 WikiLeaks [released](#) "thousands of pages of active insurgency and counterinsurgency doctrine from the US, UK and Indian military". This was a compilation of dozens of documents, some previously released and some just released a day earlier, with a common theme of counterinsurgency. The documents detailed not only "how to overtly or covertly suppress insurgencies or popular revolts" but also the reverse: "how to infiltrate a country, and stoke an insurgency to overthrow a foreign government".

Highlighting numerous quotes from the US Special Forces doctrines, the release pushed back against recent media coverage where US hawks had sought to define "an expanded role for the US forces, and of course themselves".

Journalists should remember that documents designed to be public, such as the so-called "Petraeus doctrine" published by Chicago University Press in 2007, and publicly promoted by the Pentagon, are sanitized and should be preferentially ignored lest journalists find themselves pushing propaganda onto an unsuspecting public.

Three months later, WikiLeaks published the [March 2009 US Army counterinsurgency manual](#), which was "removed from the US Army's website for unknown reasons within a few weeks of its release". In 2014 WikiLeaks also published a [CIA Best Practices in Counterinsurgency](#) document, dated July 2009.

The document, which is "pro-assassination", was completed in July 2009 and coincides with the first year of the Obama administration and Leon Panetta's directorship of the CIA during which the United States very significantly increased its CIA assassination program at the expense of capture operations.

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On the same day, 28 January 2009, WikiLeaks released [86 intercepted telephone recordings](#) of Peruvian politicians and businessmen who were involved in Peru's long-running [Petrogate](#) oil scandal. The recordings were released online after being handed to a judge in Lima.

While the government of Jorge de Castillo had already resigned over the scandal in October 2008, the new recordings [showed](#) the scandal was broader than suspected, with new names involved. Peruvian journalists later voted this leak one the year's [highlights](#).

*

Hello @wikileaks

WikiLeaks joined Twitter in October 2008 but apparently didn't start tweeting till 2009. Twitter became a major communication platform for the organisation and another key to their enduring popular success. Ten years later, after more than fifty thousand tweets, [@wikileaks](#) had over 5.5 million followers.

The [first tweet](#) from [@wikileaks](#) on February 11 2009 got straight down to business, linking to a [news story](#) that had been [copied](#) to the [wikileaks.org](#) website: "Parts for 'dirty bomb' found in slain US man's home".

The WikiLeaks page also linked to a source document which was available to download: [Washington DC Regional Threat and Analysis Center report re Inauguration, 16 Jan 2009](#).

With many of the world's journalists and politicians online, and even with the original 140 character limitation, Twitter was obviously a great way for WikiLeaks to quickly communicate with the public. In April 2010 WikiLeaks also created a [Facebook page](#), which ten years later had over 3.6 million likes.

*

Congressional Research Service Reports

On 8 February 2009 WikiLeaks released [Change You Can Download](#): "nearly a billion dollars worth of quasi-secret reports commissioned by the United States Congress".

The taxpayer-funded reports were produced by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) but almost always remained secret unless a politician wanted to exploit them for political purposes. Despite calls from many quarters for over a decade to make their publication fully public, CRS reports were available only to members of Congress, Congressional committees and select sister agencies such as the GAO. WikiLeaks said a grey market had formed around the documents:

Opportunists smuggle out nearly all reports and sell them to cashed up special interests—lobbyists, law firms, multi-nationals, and presumably, foreign governments.

WikiLeaks said that most of the reports had not been seen before:

We have sent the reports to [OpenCRS](#), a great service run by the Center for Democracy and Technology which collects released CRS reports. Of the 6,731 reports we sent to OpenCRS, 6,284 were new to the OpenCRS collection.

The OpenCRS website no longer [exists](#). But nine years after the WikiLeaks release, with the [help of many](#) other activists, most CRS reports were made publicly available. Congress still has access to all reports via [www.crs.gov](#) but as of 18 September 2018, non-confidential reports are publicly

available at crsreports.congress.gov.

Interestingly, a search for "wikileaks" now shows [six CRS documents](#) dating back to 2010, including a report titled [Frequently Asked Questions about the Julian Assange Charges](#) (updated 7 June 2019). It's a detailed but predictably biased report that omits many important facts, such as the United Nations binding rulings on Assange's asylum and the UK Crown Prosecutor's role in delaying Sweden's investigation. There's also a [2010 report](#) on the Obama administration's classified information policy, which was prompted by a review following WikiLeaks releases.

*

Afghan Civilian Casualties

On 12 February 2009 WikiLeaks [published](#) an unseen NATO report, dated 14 Jan 2009, showing that civilians casualties in Afghanistan had jumped 46% in the previous year. The report included 12 slides with detailed maps, graphs and statistics.

The report shows a dramatic escalation of the war and civil disorder. Coalition deaths increased by 35%, assassinations and kidnappings by 50% and attacks on the Kabul based Government of Hamid Karzai also more than doubled, rising a massive 119%.

The report highlights huge increases on attacks aimed at Coalition forces, including a 27 % increase in IED attacks, a 40%. rise in rifle and rocket fire and an increase in surface to air fire of 67%.

According to the report, outside of the capital Kabul only one in two families had access to even the most basic health care, and only one in two children had access to a school.

WikiLeaks "legal spokesman Jay Lim" noted that a British Army Colonel had recently been arrested for passing civilian death toll figures to Human Rights Watch. He praised the Colonel's actions but said this new data was unrelated, and from another source who had been "encouraged to step forth".

Polls at the time [showed](#) Afghan "support for US and international forces had plummeted - with civilian casualties a key cause".

The number of Afghans who believe US forces have performed well in their country has more than halved since 2005, from 68 percent to 32 percent. Confidence in NATO forces is little better. Just 37 percent of Afghans now say most people in their area support NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), down from 67 percent in 2006. And 25 percent now say attacks on western forces can be justified - nearly double the 13 percent

who believed that in 2006.

A few weeks later, WikiLeaks released NATO's [Master Narrative](#) of media talking points for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan. Among them:

ISAF takes all possible measure [sic] to protect innocent civilians and their property.

*

RAND Report on Iraq and Afghanistan

On 2 March 2009 WikiLeaks published a major [RAND](#) study with military, diplomatic and intelligence officials providing some 300 candid interviews: [Intelligence Operations and Metrics in Iraq and Afghanistan](#), dated November 2008.

The 318 page document could be described as part of the "Pentagon Papers" for Iraq and Afghanistan. It was confidentially prepared for the Pentagon's Joint Forces Command and focuses on intelligence and counterinsurgency operations.

Marked "For Official Use Only" the study was only distributed to a select group of Coalition war partners, plus Israel. It showed widespread pessimism about combat operations in both countries, and a clear lack of confidence in the intelligence provided by the CIA, local militia or other sources. RAND said intelligence was not being properly shared, indicators of "success" were not meaningful, and once again civilian concerns were being ignored:

Those interviewed in support of this research noted with no little frustration that coalition forces themselves too frequently neglect to treat local community members properly.

Official processes often bordered on the absurd. For example, US commanders ordered Dutch pilots to bomb targets in Afghanistan, but then refused to share damage assessments with them because the Dutch did not have adequate security clearances.

WikiLeaks provided selected quotes and asked readers "to go through the document to extract key quotes for their communities". New Zealand media [discovered](#) that their country was now part of the US military's secret [SIPRNET](#) network.

New Zealand's high level of trust contrasts with the official political line that it is a friend but not an ally of the US as a result of its ban on nuclear weapons.

*

WikiLeaks Donors Leaked

WikiLeaks was established organisationally as "a project of the Sunshine Press". On 14 February 2009, someone from "the Sunshine Press editorial team" accidentally revealed a list of 58 WikiLeaks donors. Wikileaks called it a [partial donors list](#).

With the subject line "Wikileaks important news", the email updated supporters on recent news, thanked them for their support and included some confidential news on funding:

Although the project is more successful than ever, it is, as a result more expensive than ever to run, and in fact, ran out of formal funding four months ago. Since that time our staff and lawyers have run the entire organization from their personal savings.

We expect to receive substantial additional funding late this year, but in the mean time, your support, and that of your friends and colleagues, will mean the difference between us staying on line and closing for a period until the end of the year!

Unfortunately the email was sent out with all the donors' email addresses in the "TO" field, rather than blind carbon-copying their addresses in the "BCC" field, which meant that everyone on the list could see all the other email addresses.

A prankster, apparently connected to one of the donors, then submitted this list to Wikileaks, possibly to test the project's principles of complete impartiality when dealing with whistleblowers.

One of the email addresses - adrianl@realityplanning.com - belonged to a convicted former hacker named Adrian Lamo. He claimed to be a genuine early supporter of WikiLeaks but may have simply been keeping tabs on the group. Many in the hacking community suspected he had "flipped" after being arrested by the FBI in 2003.

*

The Big Bad Database of Senator Norm Coleman

On 11 March 2009 WikiLeaks [published](#) a list, dated 28 January 2009, of 4,721 financial contributions to the campaign of US Republican Senator Norm Coleman. At the time, Coleman was still contesting his loss to comedian Al Franken in a 2008 Minnesota election that was riddled with corruption allegations. Apparently an I.T. consultant found a 4.3 Gigabyte database that was [sitting unprotected](#) in a public directory on the Coleman campaign's website. The database also included details of 51,000 campaign supporters and web-site users, which WikiLeaks also [published](#).

While the donations list contained credit card numbers, security numbers and personal details, Wikileaks explained that they had only released "the last 4 digits and the security numbers... after

notifying those concerned". WikiLeaks published the letter they had sent to donors, along with a letter from their source with links proving that the data was improperly exposed by Norm Coleman's own staff. The source also noted that credit card security numbers should never be stored, and the Coleman campaign had broken Minnesota law by failing to report the leak.

WikiLeaks [explained](#) that the material had been "floating around" the Internet for at least six weeks but the Coleman campaign had ignored people who tried to raise the issue. While Coleman supporters insisted the data had been hacked, WikiLeaks showed the leak was "clearly due to sloppy handling by the Coleman Campaign".

Please try to avoid the quite natural desire to shoot the messenger.

Coleman supporters only know about the issue because of our work. Had it been up to Senator Coleman, they would never have known.

Norm Coleman's term as Senator expired on 3 January 2009 but it was not until 13 April 2009 that Al Franken was declared the winner (by a mere 312 votes). Coleman then appealed to the Supreme Court and only conceded defeat after they ruled against him on 30 June 2009. In December 2010, Coleman published an [angry article](#) in the Washington Examiner encouraging President Obama to "throw the book at Assange."

Let there be no mistake: The Wikileaks are an act of terrorism.

*

Barclays Bank Gags The Gaurdian

On 16 March 2009, the Guardian newspaper published an [article](#) with a series of leaked internal memos from "a former employee" of Barclays bank. The memos showed Barclays executives "seeking approval for a 2007 plan to sink more than \$16bn (£11.4bn) into US loans".

Tax benefits were to be generated by an elaborate circuit of Cayman islands companies, US partnerships and Luxembourg subsidiaries.

By the next morning, the documents were gone from the Guardian's web archive.

The Guardian's solicitor, Geraldine Proudler, was woken by the judge at 2am and asked to argue the Guardian's case by telephone. Around 2.31am, Mr Justice Ouseley issued an order for the documents to be removed from the Guardian's website.

That same day, 17 March 2009, WikiLeaks [published the memos](#) on their website.

The Guardian's [editorial](#) that morning lamented that due to a "mismatch of resources... tax-collectors in several countries have to rely on moles tipping off websites such as Wikileaks" in order to obtain such critical documents.

Another whistle-blower came forward three days later, [revealing](#) that Barclays avoided up to £1 billion in tax every year with such schemes.

A week later, Lord Oakeshott used parliamentary privilege to [announce](#) that the memos were available on WikiLeaks and other sites.

It's a sad day for democracy if a judge sitting in secret can stifle this essential public debate.

In February 2012, after the British government introduced retrospective legislation to end "aggressive tax avoidance" by financial institutions, Barclays was [ordered](#) to pay just £500 million in back taxes.

*

Landmark "Cult" Exposed

On 15 April 2009 WikiLeaks published a [2006 investigative report](#) by the US Department of Labor into a San Francisco based "personal development" group called [Landmark Education](#). WikiLeaks also published a note from their source:

Landmark Education is an international cult, with 55 offices worldwide, that offers seminars and has widely been described by journalists and participants as a cult. Landmark is the direct descendant of EST, which was created in the 1970's using "technology" heavily borrowed from Scientology.

The source said Landmark had suppressed original copies of the report from the Internet and sued people who hosted it online. The source claimed the 6 page report showed Landmark's "exploitation of volunteers" violated US labor laws.

On 27 August 2009 WikiLeaks also [published](#) the video and transcript of a 1991 60 Minutes investigation of Landmark founder Werner Erhard. Once again, WikiLeaks said, the material was being publicly suppressed "due to legal threats against publishers from Werner Erhard".

The material contains interviews with friends, business associates and family of Werner Erhard making serious claims against him. Erhard is accused by family members of beating his wife and children, and raping a daughter, while still giving seminars on how to have relationships that work.

The BoingBoing website [reported](#) on this leak and noted that several San Francisco businesses were aligned with Landmark:

Some former employees at both companies have stated publicly that if you want to become a manager or keep your job, you'd pretty much better be

prepared to join Landmark.

A few weeks later BoingBoing received a letter from a Landmark attorney and changed the title of their post so that it no longer described the 60 Minutes video as "suppressed".

*

Bilderberg Group

The secretive Bilderberg Group held their annual meeting at the Astir Palace in Athens on [15 May 2009](#). A week earlier, WikiLeaks published [seven reports of their meetings](#), from 1955 to 1980, along with a [short history](#) of the group written by a founding member and permanent secretary Joseph Retinger.

The meeting reports were previously housed by Dynbase, "a subscription only biographical, genealogical, and organizational database, which became defunct in 2006".

WikiLeaks also re-published a [series of articles](#) by a Guardian journalist who was arrested for trying to penetrate the 2009 Bilderberg meetings.

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On 3 June 2009 (as mentioned in Chapter Three) WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange won [Amnesty International's New Media Award](#) for work exposing extrajudicial assassinations in Kenya.

*

Iranian Nuclear Accidents and Stuxnet

On 16 July 2009 Julian Assange published a [short note](#) on the WikiLeaks site:

Two weeks ago, a source associated with Iran's nuclear program confidentially told WikiLeaks of a serious, recent, nuclear accident at Natanz. Natanz is the primary location of Iran's nuclear enrichment program.

WikiLeaks had reason to believe the source was credible however contact with this source was lost.

WikiLeaks would not normally mention such an incident without additional confirmation, however according to Iranian media and [the BBC](#), today the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, has resigned under mysterious circumstances. According to these reports, the resignation was tendered around 20 days ago.

Later analysis showed that Iran's centrifuge operational capacity dropped significantly at this time after a series of "accidents". The damage was almost certainly inflicted by the malicious [Stuxnet computer worm](#), a highly sophisticated cyber weapon which exploited four zero-day flaws and was most likely designed by the USA and/or Israel specifically to cripple Iran's Natanz facilities.

On the same day, WikiLeaks advised that it had been [blocked](#) in Iran. WikiLeaks said Iran had "crossed an important human rights line" and called it a "Berlin Wall moment".

Iran has not blocked WikiLeaks to stop foreign influence pouring into the country. It has blocked WikiLeaks to try and prevent Iranian whistleblowers getting the truth out.

On 22 September 2009, WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that they were no longer blocked in Iran. Six days later, just before a new round of Iranian nuclear talks, WikiLeaks published the [negotiating advice](#) that was provided to EU Foreign Policy chief Javier Solana ahead of talks with Iran in 2008.

Our source states it was left behind at a negotiation venue.

Iran blocked WikiLeaks again in August 2010.

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Turks and Caicos Islands

The Turks and Caicos Islands have mostly been an autonomous British Overseas Territory since 1973, with residents of the Caribbean islands holding full British citizenship. By 2008, corruption was getting out of hand and the British government designated Sir Robin Auld to run a Commission of Inquiry.

An interim report was released in March 2008 but the Commission was promptly sued and an injunction was imposed. On 18 July 2009 the Commission published a redacted version of its final report on its website, but it was removed within hours. WikiLeaks then [published](#) the full unredacted report.

Julian Assange [wrote](#) that "there does appear to be genuine grounds for the corruption allegations" but the report was "at the center of UK plans to take control of the Turks & Caicos Islands" and a British warship was "in a position to support the takeover".

On 20 July 2009 a blanket suppression order was imposed on local media organisations so that details of the report could not be made public.

WikiLeaks was not named, but referred to instead using Orwellian terms such as 'a multi-jurisdictional website'.

On the following day, the injunctioned media companies successfully argued before the territory's Supreme Court that the popularity of WikiLeaks meant that the corruption report was already in the public domain. The gag order was lifted and WikiLeaks [declared victory](#). Assange also clarified

his earlier comments about a UK takeover.

According to statements made to the London Times earlier this month, the UK intends to suspend the Islands' constitution and take direct rule—with the support of British Navy—something that has the press of other British colonies in the Caribbean and Atlantic, such as Bermuda, aghast.

This is effectively what happened. Premier Michael Misick, who had received a \$500,000 secret bank transfer and married a Hollywood actress, resigned. Britain took direct control of the government until the November 2012 elections, when a new constitution was promulgated and full local administration of the islands was returned.

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Iceland's Kaupthing Bank

Iceland suffered the largest per capita losses of any western country hit by the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. But unlike other nations, Iceland [refused](#) to appease foreign creditors by bailing out banks with public funds. After a series of massive public protests, it became the only nation that put senior finance executives behind bars after the crisis.

On 30 July 2009 WikiLeaks [published](#) a confidential report from Iceland's Kaupthing bank, with analysis of 205 companies each owing from 45 million to 1.25 billion euros to the bank. The report was dated 26 September 2008, just days before the bank collapsed. It showed that many of the bank's loans were to insiders and unsecured: the highest loans were given to companies connected to just six clients, four of whom were major Kaupthing shareholders.

On 1 August 2009 Iceland's national broadcaster RÚV received an injunction just five minutes before their evening news went to air, so they showed a link to the WikiLeaks release page instead. One of the RÚV journalists working on that story was Kristinn Hrafnsson, who had previously been sacked by an Iceland television station after his programme Kompás investigated Kaupthing Bank. Hrafnsson, who was named Journalist Of The Year three times by Iceland's national journalists union, later became a key WikiLeaks staff member.

Meanwhile WikiLeaks also received a [legal threat](#) from Kaupthing's lawyers, to which they replied: "We will not assist the remains of Kaupthing, or its clients, to hide its dirty laundry from the global community."

The leaked report eventually lead to "hundreds of newspaper articles worldwide" and bolstered claims of criminally irresponsible lending. On 4 December 2009 WikiLeaks also published [SMS messages](#) from an Icelandic businessman to Kaupthing bank's former owner. On 9 December 2009, Kaupthing bank's former asset manager and former stock broker were each sentenced to eight months prison.

See [Chapter Five: 2010](#) for more about the Iceland banking crisis.

*

Trafigura Super-injunction

In 2006, seventeen people died, thirty thousand were injured, and a hundred thousand sought medical help after toxic chemicals were dumped at a dozen sites around the Ivory Coast port of Abidjan. The waste came from a ship named the Probo Koala, chartered by multinational trading company Trafigura, which had been turned away by several countries after Trifagura refused to pay disposal fees in Amsterdam. Trifagura claimed the waste was only "slops" from cleaning the boat's tanks, but a Dutch inquiry later found the waste was a toxic mix of fuel, hydrogen sulfide, and sodium hydroxide.

On 14 September 2009 WikiLeaks published the [Minton Report](#), an 8-page internal investigation into the spill, commissioned by Trifagura in September 2006, which revealed the waste compounds on the ship were "capable of causing severe human health effects [including] headaches, breathing difficulties, nausea, eye irritation, skin ulceration, unconsciousness and death".

The British media did not report this important leak because three days earlier, on 11 September 2009, Trifagura lawyers got an injunction which not only gagged media coverage of the report, or its contents, but also made it illegal to disclose the existence of the injunction itself. WikiLeaks [published](#) this "super-injunction" after it was leaked by a reporter at Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation NRK, who Trifagura was also [threatening](#) with legal action.

On 12 October 2009 the Guardian [reported](#) that they were being banned from covering parliament.

Today's published Commons order papers contain a question to be answered by a minister later this week. The Guardian is prevented from identifying the MP who has asked the question, what the question is, which minister might answer it, or where the question is to be found.

The Guardian is also forbidden from telling its readers why the paper is prevented – for the first time in memory – from reporting parliament. Legal obstacles, which cannot be identified, involve proceedings, which cannot be mentioned, on behalf of a client who must remain secret.

This created a public outcry on Twitter and it was soon revealed that Labour MP Paul Farrelly, a former editor of the Observer, was planning to ask a question about the Guardian being gagged, thus revealing the existence of the super-injunction under Parliamentary privilege.

Julian Assange [said](#) it was extraordinary that Trafigura's lawyers felt they could silence reporting of parliament. He called it "a bold and dangerous move towards the total privatization of censorship".

Is a multi-billion pound commodities trader a truer expression of the national will than the House of Commons? The question is no longer rhetorical.

WikiLeaks also published an [investigation](#) from the Independent newspaper, titled "Toxic Shame" and dated 17 September, which had no mention of the Minton report and was taken offline without

explanation.

As for other papers, no one has any idea, because it is the habit now in the UK to secretly remove articles from newspaper archives and their indexes.

The next day, shortly before a court showdown with UK media organisations, Trifigura's lawyers bowed to public pressure and allowed reporting of the MP's question. But the media was still not allowed to report on the Minton report, or its contents, or its location.

The Guardian was [not impressed](#).

In today's edition, the Guardian was prevented from identifying Farrelly, reporting the nature of his question, where the question could be found, which company had sought the gag, or even which order was constraining its coverage.

On 15 October WikiLeaks posted an update on their original release page, encouraging readers to share their link:

The UK media is currently unable to mention the URL "<http://wikileaks.org/wiki/Minton>" or anything else that would direct people towards the report.

On 16 October 2009 WikiLeaks published an [updated version](#) of the super-injunction "as sent confidentially to the editor of the UK Times newspaper".

Until December 2009 the BBC was locked in a legal battle with Trifigura, but it conceded defeat and settled out of court amid reports that the case could cost up to 3 million pounds. WikiLeaks re-published a slew of articles and news programs that were taken down:

- A deleted BBC Newsnight story [Dirty tricks and toxic waste in Ivory Coast](#). Plus a [flash video file](#).
- A story published by the Times on July 18th 2009 and later removed, [Big profits from a very dirty business encourages corruption](#).
- An MP3 file of a deleted [BBC World Service radio broadcast](#).

On 15 March 2010 WikiLeaks also published the BBC's [High Court Defence](#) against Trafigura's libel suit, which was dated the same day as the original injunction (11 September 2009). They said readers could judge for themselves if the case was worth pursuing.

This Defence, which has never been previously published online, outlines in detail the evidence which the BBC believed justified its coverage... The detailed claims contained in this document were never aired publicly, and never had a chance to be tested in court.

WikiLeaks quoted John Kampfner, CEO of Index on Censorship:

Sadly, the BBC has once again buckled in the face of authority or wealthy corporate interests. It has cut a secret deal. This is a black day for British journalism and once more strengthens our resolve to reform our unjust libel laws.

And Jonathan Heawood, Director of English PEN:

Forced to choose between a responsible broadcaster and an oil company which shipped hundreds of tons of toxic waste to a developing country, English libel law has once again allowed the wrong side to claim victory. The law is an ass and needs urgent reform.

*

Joint Services Protocol 440

On 4 October 2009, having already published numerous restricted UK military documents, including evidence that a Royal Air Force unit was actively monitoring WikiLeaks from a base in Lincolnshire (see Chapter 3), WikiLeaks published the UK military's [Joint Services Protocol 440](#), a restricted 2,389 page manual which provided instructions for UK security services on how to avoid leaks.

Even the UK Telegraph had to [acknowledge](#) the irony.

As Wikileaks notes, it is the document that is used as justification for the monitoring of certain websites, including Wikileaks itself.

The document is particularly keen to avoid the attentions of journalists, noting them as "threats" alongside foreign intelligence services, criminals, terrorist groups and disaffected staff.

The volume of UK military documents that WikiLeaks had already released indicates either very poor security or a serious morale problem, an issue to which many of the documents themselves refer. WikiLeaks posted numerous key passages from the JSP 440 document, highlighting problematic terminology including at least a dozen references to "investigative journalists".

*

Student Loan Scandal

On 15 October 2009 WikiLeaks [published](#) a sealed complaint (dated 19 May 2008) against JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup, and student loan servicer Nelnet, for defrauding the United States government.

[Zero hedge](#) said "this could be one of the biggest student loan fraud/abuse scandals in the history of

the US".

In essence the mortgage fraud that everyone knows was encouraged by each and every subprime (and otherwise) lender, in order to maximize the number of loans issued without regard for underlying credit quality of the debtor during the credit bubble, was taking place in the student loan arena, courtesy of Nelnet, JP Morgan and Citigroup...

This will undoubtedly become a major topic in the coming weeks, especially with the student loan market still nowhere close to being rebubbled by Bernanke et al., and taxpayers starting to get very angry at big banks who have consistently taken advantage of their gullibility, even as they consider paying themselves record bonuses in 2009.

In 2010 Nelnet [agreed to pay \\$55 million](#) to settle its share of the whistle-blower lawsuit. Seven other student-loan companies were also ordered to participate in the settlement conference, including Sallie Mae, the USA's largest student-loan company.

*

Climate Change and Copenhagen

On 21 November 2009 WikiLeaks [published](#) over 60MB of emails, documents, code and models from the Climatic Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia. The material, written between 1996 and 2009, was posted on a Russian server by a hacker a few days earlier and mirrored on several other sites.

The release triggered a worldwide debate about climate science, with the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit just weeks away. Climate change denialists hand-picked certain phrases, often totally out of context, and claimed they were hard proof that man-made global warming was a scientific hoax. For example, one email using the words "hide the decline" was cited by denialists, including US Senator Jim Inhofe and former Governor of Alaska Sarah Palin, as proof of a cover up. In fact it was referring to a "decline" in data from tree-ring analyses.

Examination by the [Guardian](#) showed the hacker had filtered data by searching for certain key words and almost all the emails were related to only four climatologists. An editorial in [Nature magazine](#) concluded "A fair reading of the e-mails reveals nothing to support the denialists' conspiracy theories." Numerous inquiries were conducted: the hacker was never found but the CRU and the scientists involved were absolved of any misconduct, aside from some rude language.

While the "Climategate" debate was raging online and in the media, the World Meteorological Organization [announced](#) that the decade ending on 31 December 2009 would likely be the warmest on record, and 2009 was set to be the fifth warmest year ever recorded.

On 9 December 2009 WikiLeaks published a [draft version](#) of the Copenhagen climate change agreement, which nations at the climate summit were still working to finalise. This early draft

version, dubbed the "Dutch Text", was authored by nations in a "circle of commitment" including the UK, US and Denmark. They planned to abandon the Kyoto Protocol, sideline the United Nations, and hand control of climate change finance to the World Bank. Rich nations would be allowed almost twice as much carbon emissions per capita than poorer nations. The released draft caused an [uproar](#).

"It is being done in secret. Clearly the intention is to get [Barack] Obama and the leaders of other rich countries to muscle it through when they arrive next week. It effectively is the end of the UN process," said one diplomat, who asked to remain nameless.

On 18 December 2009 WikiLeaks published an [updated draft version](#) of the Copenhagen Accord, from around 7 pm that night. It had pen markings where issues were still being discussed.

A final version of the Copenhagen Accord was cobbled together at the last minute, papering over disagreements, and did not commit countries to binding targets. Many climate activists and world leaders, including Bolivian president Evo Morales, declared it a failure.

The meeting has failed. It's unfortunate for the planet. The fault is with the lack of political will by a small group of countries led by the US.

A year later, US diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks would [reveal](#) that the USA had deliberately sought to undermine the Copenhagen summit, using "spying, threats and promises of aid" to block meaningful progress.

*

On 25 and 26 November 2009 WikiLeaks [published](#) around 10,000 pages from secret [contracts](#) between the German federal government and Toll Collect, a private consortium for heavy vehicle tolling systems. The documents had been withheld from the German public and government officials despite repeated Freedom Of Information requests.

*

9/11 Pager SMS Intercepts

On 24 November 2009 WikiLeaks published some [500,000 pager messages](#) that were intercepted in New York City and Washington when the World Trade Centre and Pentagon buildings were attacked on 11 September 2001. WikiLeaks published the messages in chronological batches every hour, much as would have happened on the day of the attack.

The messages were sent to private sector and unclassified military pagers, [apparently](#) through the networks of Arch Wireless, Metrocall, Skytel, and Weblink Wireless. They could have been captured by several commercially available products but of course US law enforcement agencies also monitor pager networks.

Media compilations [showed](#) how a normal day quickly morphed into something unthinkable.

At 7.55am CNN puts out its world news headlines: Israel has surrounded yet another West Bank city...

At 8.46 and 46 seconds, six seconds after flight 11 crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Centre, the following message is paged: "Market data inconsistent ... Cantor API problem Trading system offline." The global financial services firm Cantor Fitzgerald had its offices on the 101st to 105th floors of the north tower and lost 658 employees in the devastation.

Quickly, the media began catching up with events, and viewers were picking up on the news. At 8.50am Karen sends out a message saying: "CNN SAID THEY THINK IT WAS A PLANE THAT HIT THE BLDG."

The messages also show how false rumours quickly spread, and how emergency services were overwhelmed by the scale of the disaster.

One string of messages hints at how federal agencies scrambled to evacuate to Mount Weather, the government's sort-of secret bunker buried under the Virginia mountains west of Washington, D.C. One message says, "Jim: DEPLOY TO MT. WEATHER NOW!" and another says "CALL OFFICE (sic) AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. 4145 URGENT." That's the phone number for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Continuity Programs Directorate—which is charged with "the preservation of our constitutional form of government at all times," even during a nuclear war. (A 2006 article in the U.K. Guardian newspaper mentioned a "a traffic jam of limos carrying Washington and government license plates" heading to Mount Weather that day.)

FEMA's response seemed less than organized. One message at 12:37 p.m., four hours after the attacks, says: "We have no mission statements yet." Bill Prusch, FEMA's project officer for the National Emergency Management Information System at the time, apparently announced at 2 p.m. that the Continuity of Operations plan was activated and that certain employees should report to Mt. Weather; a few minutes later he sent out another note saying the activation was cancelled.

9/11 conspiracy theorists were disappointed that the pager data did not provide evidence to challenge the official narrative. The usual critics slammed WikiLeaks for revealing personal messages and disrespecting the victims of the attacks. But most agreed the pager messages provided an important historical record to help understand the widespread shock, horror and

confusion of the day. There were also security lessons to be learned, as Declan McCullagh of CBS noted:

If you're the Secret Service responding to threats against the president, or FEMA organizing an evacuation to an underground bunker, why are you letting anyone with a \$10 pager and a Windows laptop watch what you're doing?

*

Funding Problems

On 22 December 2009 WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that they had "less than a month's operating budget left."

Two days later the website disappeared, with only the online submission form remaining (previously published material was still available on mirror sites). WikiLeaks [tweeted](#):

To deal with a shortage of funds we are forced to do fundraising only until at least Jan 6, 2009.

At the same time, WikiLeaks was [asking](#) followers to support their application for over \$500,000 funding from the [Knight foundation](#). The New York Times [supported](#) their application but many supporters asked why WikiLeaks needed so much money.

On 4 January 2010 Julian Assange gave an [unusually candid interview](#) to a German blogger. Assange said shutting down the site was a way "to enforce self-discipline [and] ensure that everyone who is involved stops normal work and actually spends time raising revenue".

Assange said people everywhere could download what WikiLeaks published for free, so "the perceived value starts to reduce down to zero". By withdrawing supply "people start to once again perceive the value of what we are doing".

We have lots of very significant upcoming releases, significant in terms of bandwidth, but even more significant in terms of amount of labour they will require to process and in terms of legal attacks we will get. So we need to be in a stronger position before we can publish the material.

Assange said "probably five people" were working full-time on WikiLeaks, without drawing a salary, while another 800 "do it occasionally throughout the year". He estimated that WikiLeaks needed about \$200,000 per year to operate, but it would be more like \$600,000 if everyone was paid.

Media organisations like AP, Los Angeles Times, and The National Newspaper Association were listed on the website as "steadfast supporters" because they donated lawyers' time, not cash (WikiLeaks does not accept donations from corporations or governments).

Why do they help you? Probably not out of selflessness.

Two things: They see us as an organisation that makes it easier for them to do what they do. But they also see us as the thin end of the wedge. We tackle the hardest publishing cases. And if we are defeated, maybe they will be next in line.

On 7 January 2010 WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that the site would "remain down to concentrate on fundraising".

We have \$50k, We need \$200k, min for the year.

By 29 January 2010 they [said](#) they were only \$40,000 away from their \$200,000 target.

In June 2010 WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that their application for funding had been turned down by the Knight Foundation, even though they were the [highest rated project](#).

*

26C3

At the end of the Chaos Computer Club convention in December 2009, Julian Assange [appeared](#) on a discussion panel about censorship. He said WikiLeaks had started out expecting the least developed nations, with the most blatant censorship, to benefit most from WikiLeaks.

But censorship is a global problem. Censorship is in fact, at a technological level, lead by the West.

He said every form of media was now moving onto the Internet, which meant it was all increasingly subject to Internet censorship. He cited the UK's "secret courts" forcing news stories offline, and the secret government censorship lists, revealed by WikiLeaks, as examples of such technological censorship.

Why is this happening now, between governments? Why are they responding in the same way?

Assange said the Internet was an increasingly important target, politically and economically, for vested powers in various countries that were "moving together to try and take control of something that threatens their interests". He said the European Union and other globalised trading agreements showed nations uniting to create new legal standards, including agreements on Internet censorship, which potentially threatened WikiLeaks' publishing model. WikiLeaks was currently "protected somewhat by placing our information in different states, by playing one state off against another". But for how much longer?

What is the new standard for publishing freedoms? What is the new

standard for communication?

Would the new legal standard be that "of the most free country, or the least free country"?

We have an opportunity to push that standard to be the union of press protection freedoms, the union of whistle-blower freedoms, and the union of communication freedoms, not their intersection.

An audience member asked why many journalists were so willing to support censorship. Assange said it was largely due to competition, with old establishment media seeing online news sites as financial competition.

Mainstream media have to act like the good guys in order to be tolerated by readers.

In his final comments, Assange warned that it was important to establish good standards while there was still time.

The traditional media won many legal protections for publishing. It managed to do that through its power as an industry. As they lose their monopoly, competing with bloggers that have no union behind them, I think we'll see a state where there is no journalistic force as a powerful industry to keep up those protections. So we need to set the standard now, while we still have the remnants of a powerful media industry. Because pretty soon it's not gonna be there. There'll be distribution industries but there won't be journalistic industries.

*

Meanwhile in Iraq...

In October 2009, a US Army Private named Bradley Manning arrived at [Forward Operating Base Hammer](#), 40 miles from Baghdad, Iraq. Manning's superiors had debated whether the 21-year-old from Oklahoma, who took six months to complete Basic Training (usually a ten week course) and had been referred to an Army mental health counselor just two months earlier, would be a safety risk in Iraq. But intelligence analysts were in high demand and Manning was good at the job.

In November 2009, Private First Class Manning was promoted to Specialist, with top security access to SIPRNet (the Secret Internet Protocol Router Network) and JWICS (the Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communications System).

In the same month, Manning [contacted](#) an online gender counselor back in the States.

Bradley felt he was female. He was very solid on that. He really wanted to

do surgery.

NOTE Bradley Manning eventually began gender transitioning to Chelsea Manning in 2013. This book uses the name Chelsea wherever possible and she/her pronouns except for direct quotes.

Manning also told the counselor about a targeting mission in Basra that had not gone to plan.

"Two groups of locals were converging in this one area. Manning was trying to figure out why they were meeting," the counselor told me. On Manning's information, the Army moved swiftly, dispatching a unit to hunt them down. Manning had thought all went well, until a superior explained the outcome. "Ultimately, some guy loosely connected to the group got killed," the counselor said. To the counselor, it was clear: Manning felt that there was blood on his hands. "He was very, very distressed."

About that time, Manning later explained, "everything started slipping." Manning, it turned out, wasn't built for this kind of war. "i was a **part** of something ... i was actively involved in something that i was completely against."

According to her later [testimony](#), Manning had been "vaguely aware" of WikiLeaks since 2008 but did not "fully pay attention" until the 9/11 pager messages were released. She was curious about how WikiLeaks got hold of sensitive military documents, some of which she found "useful in my work as an analyst". She soon became active in online chats about "the WikiLeaks Organisation" (WLO).

I conducted searches on both NIPRnet and SIPRnet on WLO beginning in late November 2009 and early December 2009. At this time I also began to routinely monitor the WLO website.

In response to one of my searches in December 2009, I found the U.S. Army Counter-Intelligence Centre (USACIC) report on WLO... I discovered information that contradicted the 2008 USACIC report, including information indicating that, similar to other press agencies, WLO seemed to be dedicated to exposing illegal activities and corruption. WLO received numerous awards and recognition for its reporting activities.

In the following weeks, Manning began smuggling a huge trove of sensitive data out of the US Army computers.

"I would come in with music on a CD-RW labelled with something like Lady

Gaga erase the music then write a compressed split file. No one suspected a thing... [I] listened and lip-synched to Lady Gaga's 'Telephone' while exfiltrating possibly the largest data spillage in American history."

*

Chapter Five: Early 2010

For the first few weeks of 2010, the WikiLeaks website remained down as they concentrated on fundraising and re-vamping their online submission system. A minimum goal of \$200,000 was established to keep the organisation running for another year, with a preferred target of \$600,000. Some supporters were (again) shocked by WikiLeaks' request for such a large budget, but Julian Assange was anticipating the financial costs of running a global team while maintaining a technical and legal structure that would be strong enough to withstand concerted attacks from major powers. A small-scale operation was never going to survive.

Here's how the WikiLeaks submission system was described in the [New Yorker](#) a few months later:

As it now functions, the Web site is primarily hosted on a Swedish Internet service provider called PRQ.se, which was created to withstand both legal pressure and cyber attacks, and which fiercely preserves the anonymity of its clients. Submissions are routed first through PRQ, then to a WikiLeaks server in Belgium, and then on to "another country that has some beneficial laws," Assange told me, where they are removed at "end-point machines" and stored elsewhere. These machines are maintained by exceptionally secretive engineers, the high priesthood of WikiLeaks. One of them, who would speak only by encrypted chat, told me that Assange and the other public members of WikiLeaks "do not have access to certain parts of the system as a measure to protect them and us." The entire pipeline, along with the submissions moving through it, is encrypted, and the traffic is kept anonymous by means of a modified version of the Tor network, which sends Internet traffic through "virtual tunnels" that are extremely private. Moreover, at any given time WikiLeaks computers are feeding hundreds of thousands of fake submissions through these tunnels, obscuring the real documents. Assange told me that there are still vulnerabilities, but "this is vastly more secure than any banking network."

In January 2010 Julian Assange was still living in Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, which was still in the middle of a major banking crisis (see Chapter Four: Kaupthing Bank). The country's major banks had collapsed, owing billions to citizens and foreign investors, and the Central Bank was unable to function as a lender of last resort. Whereas governments in the USA and other countries had bailed out banks with public funds, the banks in Iceland were left to collapse. This caused

heavy losses for shareholders and wealthy foreign creditors, who asked their own governments to step in and help. Many of these foreigners were Brits and Danes who had €6.7bn deposited in the "Icesave" branch of the collapsed Landsbanki bank. This lead to a diplomatic dispute between Iceland, the Netherlands and Britain.

A [copy](#) of the Icesave agreement between Iceland and the UK had been leaked to the Icelandic press in July 2009, triggering further protests in both countries. In January 2010, the government of Iceland declared that a second version of their Icesave bill would go to a national referendum on 6 March.

During February 2010, WikiLeaks released several more leaked documents about the Icesave scandal. One of them was from Chelsea Manning.

*

On 23 January 2010, Chelsea (then US Army Private Bradley) Manning went back to the USA on leave and ended up stuck in her aunt's house in Maryland due to a blizzard. She was carrying huge backups of confidential data but still hadn't decided what to do with it. The data included massive tables of "Significant Activities" (SIGACTs) logged by military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan, which Manning routinely analyzed as part of her job. She considered the tables that stored this data "two of the most significant documents of our time."

"I began to think about what I knew, and the information I still had in my possession. For me, the SIGACTs represented the on-the-ground reality of both the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. I felt we were risking so much for people that seemed unwilling to co-operate with us, leading to frustration and hatred on both sides.

"I began to become depressed at the situation that we found ourselves increasingly mired in, year-after-year. The SIGACTs documented this in great detail, and provided context to what we were seeing on-the-ground...

"I believed that if the general public, especially the American public, had access to the information contained within the CIDNE-I and CIDNE-A tables, this could spark a domestic debate on the role of the military and our foreign policy in general, as well as it related to Iraq and Afghanistan. I also believed that a detailed analysis of the data over a long period of time, by different sectors of society, might cause society to re-evaluate the need, or even the desire to engage in CT [counter-terrorist] and COIN [counter-insurgent] operations that ignored the complex dynamics of the people living in the affected environment each day.

Manning decided to leak the data to a US newspaper. She called the Washington Post and spoke with a lady who said she was a reporter.

Although we spoke for about five minutes concerning the general nature of what I possessed, I do not believe she took me seriously. She informed me that the Washington Post would possibly be interested, but that such decisions are made only after seeing the information I was referring to, and after consideration by senior editors.

Manning then decided to contact the New York Times, and phoned the public editor's number listed on their website.

The phone rang and was answered by a machine. I went through the menu to the section for news tips and was routed to an answering machine. I left a message stating I had access to information about Iraq and Afghanistan that I believed was very important. However, despite leaving my Skype phone number and personal email address, I never received a reply from the New York Times.

Manning then considered visiting the offices of the influential political blog Politico, but the weather was still too bad. She concluded that WikiLeaks "seemed to be the best medium for publishing this information to the world within my reach." She joined an online chat and said she had "information that needed to be shared with the world". Someone pointed her to the WikiLeaks online submission page.

I considered my options one more time. Ultimately, I felt that the right thing to do was to release the SIGACTs. On 3 February 2010, I visited the WLO website on my computer, and clicked on the "Submit Documents" link.

Manning uploaded the compressed data files along with a text file that she had prepared for the Washington Post. It said the data had already been "sanitized of any source identifying information."

You might need to sit on this information for 90 to 180 days to best send and distribute such a large amount of data to a large audience and protect the source.

This is one of the most significant documents of our time removing the fog of war and revealing the true nature of 21st century asymmetric warfare.

Have a good day.

*

On the following day 4 February 2010, WikiLeaks coincidentally [tweeted](#) that their minimal funding target of \$200,000 had been met: "we're back fighting for another year, even if we have to eat rice

to do it."

WikiLeaks also posted a [tweet](#) about transforming Iceland into a "world centre for investigative media":

Julian Assange was working with Iceland parliamentarians and others on a proposal to turn the island nation into an international "haven" for journalists. On 15 February 2010 he published an article in the Guardian titled [why I'm excited about Iceland's plans for journalism](#).

In my role as WikiLeaks editor, I've been involved in fighting off more than 100 legal attacks over the past three years. To do that, and keep our sources safe, we have had to spread assets, encrypt everything, and move telecommunications and people around the world to activate protective laws in different national jurisdictions.

We've become good at it, and never lost a case, or a source, but we can't expect everyone to make such extraordinary efforts. Large newspapers, including the Guardian, are forced to remove or water down investigative stories rather than risk legal costs. Even internet-only publishers writing about corruption find themselves disconnected by their ISPs after legal threats.

Assange urged Iceland to adopt "the strongest press and source protection laws from around the world" so that it could become a "jurisdiction designed to attract organisations into publishing online". He said the banking sector meltdown had convinced Icelanders that fundamental changes were needed.

Those changes include not just better regulation of banks, but better media oversight of dirty deals between banks and politicians.

The Icelandic Modern Media Initiative (IMMI) proposal was adopted unanimously by parliament in June 2010. But the process of reviewing and updating related laws was repeatedly delayed by political instability. The Prime Minister of Iceland [aimed](#) to have all the laws finalized and submitted to Parliament before the end of 2019. But by the end of 2020 it seemed the whole project had been indefinitely shelved.

*

No doubt buoyed by the huge trove of leaked material from Manning, WikiLeaks in early February 2010 [urged](#) supporters to keep helping.

WikiLeaks' reputation for staring down technological and legal threats continued to grow. On 25 February WikiLeaks [declared](#) that the Australian government had abandoned its legal case against WikiLeaks for publishing their censorship blacklist. On 13 February they [boasted](#) that the Kaupthang bank, which had earlier threatened to "take all applicable and appropriate measures according to law" and had "already obtained US legal council", had been raided by police.

On 15 March WikiLeaks [released](#) a full list of Kaupthing Bank claimants, showing over 40 billion euros in 28,167 separate claims.

*

In distant Iraq, Private Manning was still [keeping an eye](#) on the WikiLeaks site:

I returned from mid-tour leave on 11 February 2010. Although the information had not yet been published by the WLO, I felt a sense of relief by them having it. I felt I had accomplished something that allowed me to have a clear conscience based upon what I had seen, read about and knew were happening in both Iraq and Afghanistan every day..."

Shortly after returning from mid-term leave, I returned to the NDC to search for information on Iceland and "Icesave" as the topic had not abated on the WLO channel. To my surprise, on 14 February 2010, I found the cable 10REYKJAVIK13 which referenced the "Icesave" issue directly... I read the cablem [sic] and quickly concluded that Iceland was being bullied, diplocatically [sic], by two larger European powers... I debated on whether this was something I should send to the WLO... I felt I might be able to right a wrong by having them publish this document. I burned the information onto a CD-RW on 15 February 2010, took it to my CHU and saved it onto my personal laptop.

I navigated to the WLO website via a TOR connection like before, and uploaded the document via the secure form. Amazingly, the WLO published 10REYKJAVIK13 within hours, proving that the form worked and that they must have received the SIGACT cables."

*

Years later, after Chelsea Manning was arrested for leaking this confidential US data, the USA Army posted to its FOIA "reading room" 13 pages of online chats between Manning, who used the alias "Nobody", and a WikiLeaks contact using the alias "Nathaniel Frank". This identity was widely assumed (but never proven) to be Julian Assange; the account might even have been run by multiple WikiLeaks staffers. The chats cover a period from 5 March to 18 March 2010.

On 5 March the WikiLeaks account says they just got "10Gb of banking docs" from a source who had "leaked some before", "had his bank account frozen" and "has been offered 15 million kroner to shut up". Their source "needed to offload them so they'd stop going after him".

On 6 March WikiLeaks says: "full transcript for video is now complete." This is a reference to the Collateral Murder video, leaked by Manning, which a WikiLeaks team was already working on and would release a month later (see below). Manning helps explain the leaked material and locate the

incident.

On 7 March Manning asks about the value of leaks from the US military's Guantanamo Bay (GTMO) detention center. WikiLeaks replies: "quite valuable to the lawyers of these guys who are trying to get them out" but "politically GTMO is mostly over."

At the time many people believed that US President Barack Obama would close down the facility as he had promised to do while campaigning. On the next day, Manning uploads explosive information on the shockingly inhumane treatment of detainees.

NOBODY: «I'm throwing everything I got on JTC GTMO at you now... summary / history / health conditions / reasons of retaining or transfer of nearly every detainee.»

On the same day, WikiLeaks celebrates the IceSave result in Iceland:

NATHANIEL FRANK: "We won the referendum - only 1.4% voted against. How cool is that? First referendum in Icelandic history, ever".

Manning is less excited, citing California's 2008 "[Proposition 8](#)" ban on same-sex marriage (later overturned) as a reason to be cautious about referendums.

NOTE

Another Icesave referendum was held in April 2011, and again nearly 60% of Iceland voters rejected it.

Manning and WikiLeaks discussed world current events with a degree of optimism.

NATHANIEL FRANK: "WL actions that were considered radical 3 years ago are now courted... governments/organizations can't control information... the harder they try the more violently the information wants to get out."

After uploading the Guantanamo Bay material on 8 March 2010, Manning says "thats all i really have got left".

NATHANIEL FRANK: "curious eyes never run dry in my experience"

NOBODY: «ive already exposed quite a bit, just no-one knows yet... ill slip into darkness for a few years, let the heat die down»

NATHANIEL FRANK: "Won't take a few years at the present rate of change.»

Later that day Manning asks if WikiLeaks is "any good at lm hash cracking?"

NATHANIEL FRANK: "we have rainbow tables for lm"

NOBODY: \80c11049faebf441d524fb3c4cd5351c"

NOBODY: \i think its lm + lmnt"

NOBODY: \not even sure if thats the hash... i had to hexdump a SAM file, since i dont have the system file"

NATHANIEL FRANK: "what makes you think its lm?... its from a SAM?"

NOBODY: \yeah"

NATHANIEL FRANK: "passed it on to our lm guy"

Two days later WikiLeaks followed up: "any more hints on this lm hash? no luck so far". Manning does not appear to have responded.

NOTE

From [Wikipedia](#): "A rainbow table is a precomputed table for caching the output of cryptographic hash functions, usually for cracking password hashes." The "SAM" acronym is for Windows Security Accounts Manager (SAM) database, while "lmnt" was presumably a mistype for NTLM, the Microsoft NT LAN Manager.

The US government would later claim the above exchange as proof that Julian Assange had conspired with Manning to hack into the Pentagon's classified SIPRNet network. But as Assange's lawyers would argue, there's no proof Assange was actually the "Nathaniel Frank" identity chatting with Manning, there's no proof they cracked the password (it seems unlikely: Manning didn't even know if the hash was right). In any case, as US prosecutors admitted, Manning already had security clearances to legally access the SIPRNet material. She could simply have been engineering an anonymous login to help protect her identity, or even just to install video games, films and music videos (as a [forensic examiner](#) later suggested). Routine journalistic behaviour includes soliciting classified information from whistle-blowers, providing them with tools to do so, and helping to protect their identities.

Later in the chatlogs, WikiLeaks confirms they have received "the last 4 months of audio from telephones at the .is parliament" from an "intel source" in Iceland. They discuss a bunch of other new leaks, which they see as a positive sign for the future. Manning notes that there has still been no fallout from her leak of the Reykjavik13 cable.

NOBODY: "now that humans are getting more and more integrated into this information society... a level of transparency never imagined or even truly desired is coming into play... it makes us more human if anything... we've created states, governments, religious institutions, corporations... all these organizations to hide behind... but at the end of the day we're just guys and girls"

Similarly optimistic, WikiLeaks discusses the idea of making "a reality based, dramatized, thriller movie of one of the wikileaks cases".

NOBODY: "this is going to be one hell of a decade"

On 17 March, WikiLeaks proposes sending an encrypted phone to Manning, but they quickly abandon the idea as too dangerous. They agree that if anything happens to Manning, she should send a message with a secret phrase.

NATHANIEL FRANK: "you can just tell me "all the ships came in"

*

At one stage in the above chats, Manning discusses a new WikiLeaks release:

NOBODY: "donations coming in good?"

NATHANIEL FRANK: "not sure... experience in the past is that they don't tend to in response to stories like this... makes people scared to donate"

A day earlier, WikiLeaks had [released](#) a secret 32-page "US Department of Defense Counterintelligence Analysis Report", which had been written in March 2008. It discussed the leaking of material by WikiLeaks and how it could best be deterred.

It must be presumed that Wikileaks.org has or will receive sensitive or classified DoD documents in the future. This information will be published and analysed over time by a variety of personnel and organisations with the goal of influencing US policy.

According to a later report in the [New Yorker](#):

Assange regarded the report as a declaration of war, and posted it with the title "U.S. Intelligence Planned to Destroy WikiLeaks."

WikiLeaks posted the file with the following editorial summary, noting how the report in many ways justified WikiLeaks' activities:

This document is a classified (SECRET//NOFORN) 32 page U.S. counterintelligence investigation into WikiLeaks. "The possibility that current employees or moles within DoD or elsewhere in the U.S. government are providing sensitive or classified information to WikiLeaks.org cannot be ruled out." It concocts a plan to fatally marginalize the organization. Since WikiLeaks uses "trust as a center of gravity by protecting the anonymity and identity of the insiders, leakers or whistleblowers", the report recommends "The identification, exposure, termination of employment, criminal prosecution, legal action against current or former insiders, leakers, or whistleblowers could potentially damage or destroy this center of gravity and deter others considering similar actions from using the WikiLeaks.org Web site". [As two years have passed since the date of the report, with no WikiLeaks source exposed, it appears that this plan was ineffective]. As an odd justification for the plan, the report claims that "Several foreign countries including China, Israel, North Korea, Russia, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe have denounced or blocked access to the WikiLeaks.org website". The report provides further justification by enumerating embarrassing stories broken by WikiLeaks---U.S. equipment expenditure in Iraq, probable U.S. violations of the Chemical Warfare Convention Treaty in Iraq, the battle over the Iraqi town of Fallujah and human rights violations at Guantanamo Bay.

A report in [Gizmodo](#) noted:

It's been two years since that memo... and there's no clear evidence that Wikileaks was ever tampered with. But it's chilling to think that it could have ever even - and still may be - a possibility.

Back on the chatlogs, WikiLeaks wonders if the release of this 2008 document didn't "stir up some internal dissent".

NATHANIEL FRANK: "must be some people not too happy about cracking down on whistleblowers and following the chinese"

Manning notes that the "document and its contents is still classified".

*

When Julian Assange finally departed Iceland in late March for an investigative journalism conference in Norway, he [claimed](#) he was followed by two US agents.

Two days later Assange wrote an [article](#) about increasing surveillance of WikiLeaks staff,

suggesting it was "related to a film exposing a U.S. massacre we will release at the U.S. National Press Club on April 5". It was unusual for WikiLeaks to give such early notification of a new release, but Assange was being very cautious and strategic.

U.S. sources told Icelandic state media's deputy head of news, that the State Department was aggressively investigating a leak from the U.S. Embassy in Reykjavik. I was seen at a private U.S Embassy party at the Ambassador's residence, late last year and it is known I had contact with Embassy staff, after.

On Thursday March 18, 2010, I took the 2.15 PM flight out of Reykjavik to Copenhagen—on the way to speak at the SKUP investigative journalism conference in Norway. After receiving a tip, we obtained airline records for the flight concerned. Two individuals, recorded as brandishing diplomatic credentials checked in for my flight at 12:03 and 12:06 under the name of "US State Department". The two are not recorded as having any luggage...

Only a few years ago, Icelandic airspace was used for CIA rendition flights. Why did the CIA think that this was acceptable? In a classified U.S. profile on the former Icelandic Ambassador to the United States, obtained by WikiLeaks, the Ambassador is praised for helping to quell publicity of the CIA's activities...

Our plans to release the video on April 5 proceed. We have asked relevant authorities in the United States and Iceland to explain. If these countries are to be treated as legitimate states, they need to start obeying the rule of law. Now.

NOTE

Assange also complained that a young WikiLeaks volunteer in Iceland had been harassed by police. It was later revealed that he was arrested for trying to break into the factory where his father worked and "the reasons he was trying to get in are not totally justified," as Assange admitted. This young man, Sigurdur Thordarson, would later cause a lot more trouble (see [Chapter Twelve](#)).

The news of the upcoming Collateral Murder video caused a stir of global media anticipation, making it harder for the US government to censor the release. But many people were also surprised to hear that Assange had attended a cocktail party at the US Embassy. How did that happen?

Assange was still working with a team of Icelandic journalists and political activists. One of them, Birgitta Jónsdóttir, had received an invitation to a cocktail party at the local US embassy. According to Australia's [Four Corners](#) team, Jónsdóttir "decided it would be quite funny" to go with Assange, but on the day of the cocktail party she couldn't find him. Jónsdóttir decided not to go; Assange

went alone.

On 29 March 2010, WikiLeaks [released](#) three classified cables that were authored by US diplomat Sam Watson, head of the US Embassy in Iceland, who had been personally chatting with Assange at the cocktail party just a few months earlier. These cables were mildly embarrassing profiles on Iceland's Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Ambassador to the USA.

According to Birgitta Jónsdóttir, "many people thought that he [Assange] had actually gone in and mysteriously sucked out the cables with some spy device or something."

Now Sam Watson hadn't leaked and neither had any of the other US Embassy staff. Nonetheless, there was a massive internal investigation.

All eyes were on Iceland ahead of the Collateral Murder release. Nobody was suggesting these leaks could have come from a disgruntled US Army private in Iraq. Assange was protecting his source to the best of his ability.

*

Collateral Murder

On 12 July 2007, two US military Apache helicopters conducted a series of air strikes on a group of civilians in Baghdad, Iraq. At least twelve people were killed, including two Reuters journalists, Saeed Chmagh and Namir Noor-Eldeen. Two children were also badly wounded. The pilots later claimed they thought their victims were Iraqi insurgents, after mistaking the shadow of a long camera lens held by Noor-Eldeen for a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG). Reuters chiefs had spent years seeking access to the full US military video of the attacks without success. The USA insisted their soldiers had acted in accordance with the rules of war and their own official "Rules of Engagement".

On 5 April 2010 WikiLeaks [released](#) both the original 38 minute video and a shorter 17 minute version which had been carefully edited to provide context and analysis. Both versions included subtitles based on the helicopters' radio transmissions. WikiLeaks titled their release "Collateral Murder", which outraged those who insisted the attacks did not amount to a war crime. WikiLeaks also released the US military's classified Rules of Engagement for 2006, 2007 and 2008, as evidence that the 2007 incident did not fit these rules "before, during, and after the killings".

Later that month the New Yorker published a lengthy [feature](#) by Raffi Khatchadourian, who had been given extensive access to "the Bunker" - a rented house in Iceland where the WikiLeaks team had worked day and night to prepare this release. He said it took WikiLeaks three months to decode the encrypted video, which Assange called "moderately difficult". To ensure the video stayed online, the team had contacted Google to confirm they would not censor the footage under YouTube's "gratuitious violence" policy. Hoping to catch the US Defense Department unprepared, Assange also "encouraged a rumor that the video was shot in Afghanistan in 2009". And with the help of Iceland's national broadcasting service, RUV, Assange sent two journalists to Baghdad, to contact the families of the Iraqis who had died in the attack, to prepare them for the media attention, and to gather additional information.

Late Saturday night, shortly before all the work had to be finished, the journalists who had gone to Baghdad sent Assange an e-mail: they had found the two children in the van. The children had lived a block from the location of the attack, and were being driven to school by their father that morning. "They remember the bombardment, felt great pain, they said, and lost consciousness," one of the journalists wrote. The journalists also found the owner of the building that had been attacked by the Hellfires, who said that families had been living in the structure, and that seven residents had died. The owner, a retired English teacher, had lost his wife and daughter.

Here's how Assange described the video:

"In this video, you will see a number of people killed. In the first phase, you will see an attack that is based upon a mistake, but certainly a very careless mistake. In the second part, the attack is clearly murder, according to the definition of the average man. And in the third part you will see the killing of innocent civilians in the course of soldiers going after a legitimate target."

"This video shows what modern warfare has become, and, I think, after seeing it, whenever people hear about a certain number of casualties that resulted during fighting with close air support, they will understand what is going on. The video also makes clear that civilians are listed as insurgents automatically, unless they are children, and that bystanders who are killed are not even mentioned."

US military records stated that everyone killed in the incident, except for the Reuters journalists, was an insurgent. They could not explain how the children were injured. Such innocent victims of war are routinely dismissed as "collateral damage". Assange decided to call the film "Collateral Murder" to help "knock out this 'collateral damage' euphemism".

There was a massive global response to the leak, triggering a prolonged debate about war crimes, the War in Iraq, US empiricism, and the US military's rules of engagement. Exactly what Chelsea Manning had said she wanted. "WikiLeaks" quickly became the world's top search term; a Huffington Post article on Collateral Murder got over ten thousand comments in a day.

On Twitter, WikiLeaks noted that many apologists were focussing debate on whether confusing a camera for an RPG was justified, while ignoring the murderous attack on the van. Others were falsely claiming that WikiLeaks had doctored the video to make the soldiers look bad. Assange repeatedly insisted that permission to kill was given before the word "RPG" was even mentioned. He acknowledged that some people in the Iraqi group were armed, but pointed out that this was not abnormal in a dangerous war zone, and nobody in the group was behaving in a hostile manner.

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates was not a happy man. He [complained](#) that the video provided a

view of warfare "as seen through a soda straw".

"These people can put out anything they want, and they're never held accountable for it. There's no before and there's no after."

Reuters boss David Schlesinger was also not happy. He [complained](#) that the US military had only shown Reuters editors the first portion of the video, insisting that their journalists had been in the company of armed insurgents. As a result, Reuters had instructed their journalists to never even walk near armed groups.

"However, we were not shown the second part of the video, where the helicopter fired on a van trying to evacuate the wounded... We have been trying for more than two and a half years to get this video from the military through formal legal means without success, and in fact have an appeal to their last denial of our request still pending; now it transpires that officials who repeatedly told us that what the video contained was important enough for security reasons to withhold it from us, made no efforts to secure it and weren't even clear where it was. It took a whistleblower to make sure the world had the transparency it needed and deserved."

WikiLeaks accused the US military of making "numerous false or misleading statements" in the wake of the release and posted additional classified material to counter lies about the attack. WikiLeaks also complained about the lack of follow-up stories in the media in the weeks following the release. One [tweet](#) linked to an extraordinary [interview](#) with a US soldier, Ethan McCord, who was seen in the video assisting the wounded children. WikiLeaks said it was "just incredible" that it was left to sites like the World Socialist Web Site (WSWS: "the online publication of the world Trotskyist movement") to run such important stories.

Ethan McCord and Josh Stieber, both soldiers from Bravo Company 2-16 (the ground team shown in the video), had written a "[Letter of Reconciliation](#)" to the Iraqi people.

"We have been speaking to whoever will listen, telling them that what was shown in the Wikileaks video only begins to depict the suffering we have created. From our own experiences, and the experiences of other veterans we have talked to, we know that the acts depicted in this video are everyday occurrences of this war: this is the nature of how U.S.-led wars are carried out in this region."

After rescuing the children, McCord was told to "stop worrying about these motherfucking kids and start worrying about pulling security." After returning to base, wiping the children's blood from his armour, and complaining about mental health stress, McCord (who had children of his own back home) was ordered to "quit being a pussy" and to "suck it up and be a soldier." He was threatened with being labeled a "malingeringer" which is a crime in the US Army. After again requesting mental health assistance a week later, McCord was told by his superior officers: "get the sand out of your

vagina... suck it up and be a soldier" After speaking out in April 2010, McCord received regular [death threats](#) from his former fellow soldiers.

By 2019, the Collateral Murder video had been viewed on Youtube over 16 million times. Many were surprised to learn that the a Washington Post reporter, David Finkel, had been sitting on a copy of the video, which he had shown to people in his own home but never released. Finkel defended his decision, saying: "There were a lot of bad days in Iraq." Assange [said](#) Finkel "had clearly developed too close an affinity for the people he was embedded with and came out essentially campaigning on their behalf after the release of the video".

According to Khatchadourian, WikiLeaks received more than two hundred thousand dollars in donations after releasing "Collateral Murder", prompting Assange to tweet: "New funding model for journalism: try doing it for a change." That tweet was later deleted, a sign of WikiLeaks' enduring frustration with other media organisations.

Assange also explained to Khatchadourian his vision for "scientific journalism", insisting on the value of verifiable source documents like the Collateral Murder video:

"If you publish a paper on DNA, you are required, by all the good biological journals, to submit the data that has informed your research - the idea being that people will replicate it, check it, verify it. So this is something that needs to be done for journalism as well. There is an immediate power imbalance, in that readers are unable to verify what they are being told, and that leads to abuse."

*

Through April 2010 Julian Assange continued doing interviews to promote WikiLeaks and public discussion of their latest leak.

On 12 April he was in [New York City](#) for an appearance on [The Colbert Show](#). Comedian Stephen Colbert appeared with his face pixellated on TV, then suggested that maybe Assange's face should be the one pixellated instead. But Assange's face had already been shown on screen.

"Oh well, he's a dead man."

Cue the laughter. Colbert then challenged Assange about using the provocative title "Collateral Murder", claiming "that's not leaking that's pure editorial." But Assange again insisted that "permission to engage was given before the word RPG was ever used." The [Politifact](#) website later rated the claim only "half true" because "while Assange's statement is technically accurate, we think it leaves out critical context".

"The promise we make to our sources," Assange explained to Colbert, "is that not only will we defend them with every means that we have available, technological, and legally, and politically, but we will try to get the maximum possible political impact for the material they give to us."

"If we don't know what the government is doing, we can't be sad about it," argued Colbert. "Why are you trying to make me sad?"

"That's just an interim state, Stephen. You'll be happier later on."

A weeks later Assange [appeared](#) as a panelist at a seminar on free speech held in the European Parliament. He said WikiLeaks had tried to contact the US government to open dialogue about the leaks, without any response. WikiLeaks had also engaged lawyers to support their alleged source.

"The signals from the US authorities initially were mixed, however, they seem to clarifying now and I think the United States understands that it must obey the rule of law."

Another week later, the 38-year-old WikiLeaks founder [appeared](#) on Swedish TV, explaining how WikiLeaks differed from other media organisations:

"The aim of WikiLeaks is to achieve just reform around the world, and do it through the mechanism of transparency. Now of course many groups have that aim, but our particular view... is to selectively go after material that is concealed. Because organisations that have material, and want to conceal it, are giving off a signal that they believe there will be reform if that material is released.

He said WikiLeaks also aimed to "facilitate a greater worldwide atmosphere of openness, and protection for the rights of people to publish information". The organisation's long-term goal was to "put the civil into Civilisation" and build up an "historical and intellectual record" of how civilisation in different countries works in practice. "With that information, better decisions can be made" by people regardless of their ideology.

Assange said WikiLeaks also wanted to "produce an environment where the press is protected, and publishing is protected, and to make that a standard and a norm."

"At the moment we are seeing globalisation between the legal regimes of many different countries... There is going to be a harmonisation of laws that apply to information transfer. So that means there is going to be a new standard for freedom of speech. What is it to be? It's up in the air."

Assange, an admirer of Swedish laws on free speech, suggested the Swedish Constitution could help inform debate on new global standards for information technology. WikiLeaks servers were hosted by a Swedish ISP because of the strong legal protections available in that country.

Assange said WikiLeaks was now seen as a "publisher of last resort" who could publish things others could not, and that this revealed a "weakness in the global publishing landscape".

"There is NOT a truly free press. It has never actually existed. We in the West have deluded ourselves into believing that we actually have a truly free press. We don't. And we can see that in the difference between what WikiLeaks does and what the rest of the press does..."

"Through privatisation, we have had many government functions being run by corporations. And now we see the function of censorship has also been privatised. What that means is that litigious billionaires and big companies are able to effectively prevent certain things appearing in public... by using the legal system or patronage networks and economic flows to make it unprofitable to talk about certain things... In the UK at the moment there are three hundred secret gag orders."

In early May 2010 Julian Assange returned home to his native Australia, where polls showed he enjoyed huge public support. His passport was [confiscated](#) by customs officers at Melbourne Airport, but returned after 15 minutes. He was told the passport was "looking worn" and it would be cancelled soon. An Australian Federal Police officer then searched one of his bags and asked about his hacking conviction from 1991.

Assange had quickly become a global celebrity. He did a lengthy [SBS Dateline](#) interview - followed by an online Q and A session - with award-winning journalist Mark Davis, who had previously met him in Norway, Sweden and Iceland. For Julian Assange and WikiLeaks, everything was looking positive.

*

Back in Iraq, however, Chelsea Manning was still struggling with gender identity issues, military life, and anxiety about her recent leaks. She had only two months duty remaining in Iraq before she could return to the USA, where she wanted to get out of the Army and begin transitioning from male to female. Desperate for support from a like-minded soul, she reached out to Adrian Lamo, a bisexual hacker with a history of homelessness and drug abuse. Lamo had been convicted in 2004 after famously hacking The New York Times, Yahoo! and Microsoft. Manning assumed she could trust him, because he had donated to WikiLeaks (see Chapter Four). She was wrong.

In fact, Lamo was still struggling with his own demons. In April 2010, Lamo's father repeatedly phoned police to warn that Lamo was over-medication with the drugs he had been proscribed since his 2003 arrest. Lamo later [insisted](#) that he was the one who called police, complaining that someone had stolen his medication. In any case, he ended up in the back of an ambulance, and was placed on a 72-hour involuntary psychiatric hold under California state law, just a few weeks before Chelsea Manning reached out to him. He was discharged on 7 May with a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome, a mild form of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Lamo chatted online with Manning for several days from 21 May 2010. He saved their conversations in four files. Then he handed these files over to US government agents. Within a week, Chelsea Manning was arrested.

The full chatlogs between Manning and Lamo were not published until July 2011, but carefully selected portions began appearing in the media from June 2010.

MANNING: hi

MANNING: how are you?

MANNING: im an army intelligence analyst, deployed to eastern baghdad, pending discharge for \adjustment disorder\ [. . .]

MANNING: im sure you're pretty busy...

MANNING: if you had unprecedeted access to classified networks 14 hours a day 7 days a week for 8+ months, what would you do?

Lamo asks about Manning's MOS (Military Occupation Specialty). Manning explains she is an Intelligence Analyst who is "in a tricky situation" and "trying to keep a low profile". Lamo promises she can trust him.

LAMO: I'm a journalist and a minister. You can pick either, and treat this as a confession or an interview (never to be published) & enjoy a modicum of legal protection.

MANNING: assange level?

Lamo tries to establish trust by claiming that he "could have flipped for the FBI [but] I held out" and "got a sweeter deal". Manning responds "this is what i do for friends" and sends a link to a Wikipedia page about the recent WikiLeaks releases, basically exposing herself as the world's most famous leaker. Lamo replies five minutes later: "I've been a friend to Wikileaks... and donated myself".

MANNING: i know

MANNING: actually how i noticed you

Manning pours her heart out, telling Lamo "i've really got nothing to lose [i know, sounds desperate]". She recounts a troubled childhood and says she has now lost all her "emotional support channels" including "family, boyfriend, trusting colleagues... im a mess".

MANNING: i thought i'd reach out to someone who would possibly understand...

MANNING: <: [this person is kind of fragile]

MANNING: :()

Lamo asks if Manning wants to go to the press with her story (presumably it would be his scoop, as he considered himself a journalist). She declines.

MANNING: hypothetical question: if you had free reign over classified networks for long periods of time... say, 8-9 months... and you saw incredible things, awful things... things that belonged in the public domain, and not on some server stored in a dark room in Washington DC... what would you do?

MANNING: lets just say *someone* i know intimately well, has been penetrating US classified networks, mining data like the ones described... and been transferring that data from the classified networks over the air gap onto a commercial network computer... sorting the data, compressing it, encrypting it, and uploading it to a crazy white haired aussie who can't seem to stay in one country very long =L

Lamo asks for "the particulars".

MANNING: crazy white haired dude = Julian Assange

MANNING: in other words... ive made a huge mess :)

MANNING: im sorry... im just emotionally fractured

MANNING: im a total mess

MANNING: i think im in more potential heat than you ever were

Lamo asks how long Manning has been helping WikiLeaks and what sort of content she has sent them. Manning reveals a lot of details, but also explains how WikiLeaks tries to protect sources.

MANNING: i mean, im a high profile source... and i've developed a relationship with assange... but i dont know much more than what he tells me, which is very little

MANNING: it took me four months to confirm that the person i was communicating was in fact assange

LAMO: how'd you do that?

MANNING: I gathered more info when i questioned him whenever he was being tailed in Sweden by State Department officials... i was trying to figure out who was following him... and why... and he was telling me stories of other times he's been followed... and they matched up with the ones he's said publicly

NOTE

It is possible that more than one person at WikiLeaks was using the "Nathaniel Frank" login.

Lamo asks if any of the material Manning sent is still unreleased, then discusses WikiLeaks' operational security (opsec).

MANNING: i'd have to ask assange

MANNING: i zerofilled the original

LAMO: why do you answer to him?

MANNING: i dont... i just want the material out there... i dont want to be a part of it

LAMO: i've been considering helping wikileaks with opsec

MANNING: they have decent opsec... im obviously violating it

Lamo keeps probing for more information.

LAMO: how old are you?

MANNING: 22

MANNING: but im not a source for you... im talking to you as someone who needs moral

and emotional fucking support

Lamo assures Manning that "none of this is for print... i want to know who i'm supporting". Manning reveals that she had already emailed him, thus revealing her name.

LAMO: oh! you're the PGP guy

MANNING: im pretty reckless at this point

MANNING: but im trying not to end up with 5.56mm rounds in my forehead...

MANNING: that i fired...

NOTE

Many WikiLeaks critics later blamed Julian Assange for not protecting his source, but it was actually Chelsea Manning whose poor opsec put WikiLeaks at risk. For example, Lamo asks about military-level visibility of the most popular online privacy tools. Manning says OTR (Off The Record) is good because terrorists don't use it, then tells Lamo that Assange "might" use OTR via the Chaos Computer Club's jabber server "but you didnt hear that from me".

At one point Manning tells Lamo she has been reduced in rank:

MANNING: i punched a colleague in the face during an argument... (something I NEVER DO...!?) its whats sparked this whole saga

As a result, Manning's commander got access to all her mental health files and "found out about my cross-dressing history, discomfort with my role in society".

Manning also reveals a key incident that triggered her decision to go public with the leaks:

MANNING: i think the thing that got me the most was watching 15 detainees taken by the Iraqi Federal Police for printing anti-Iraqi literature... the iraqi federal police wouldn't cooperate with US forces, so i was instructed to investigate the matter, find out who the bad guys were, and how significant this was for the FPs... it turned out, they had printed a scholarly critique against PM Maliki... i had an interpreter read it for me... and when i found out that it was a benign political critique titled "Where did the money go?" and following the corruption trail within the PM's cabinet... i immediately took that information and *ran* to the officer to explain what was going on... he didn't want to hear any of it... he told me to shut up and explain how we could assist the FPs in finding *MORE* detainees...

MANNING: everything started slipping after that... i saw things differently

By this stage, Adrian Lamo is already preparing for Manning's arrest.

LAMO: in all seriousness, would you shoot if MP's showed up? ;>

MANNING: why would i need to?

LAMO: suicide by MP. . . .

MANNING: do i seem unhinged?

LAMO: i mean, showed up -- for you -- if Julian were to slip up.

MANNING: he knows very little about me

MANNING: he takes source protection uber-seriously

MANNING: "lie to me" he says

LAMO: Really. Interesting.

MANNING: he wont work with you if you reveal too much about yourself

Adrian Lamo contacted an old friend, Chet Uber, the founder of a "White Hat" computer security group called Project Vigilant. Uber then [contacted](#) Mark Rasch, a former head of the US Justice Department's computer crime unit and "General Counsel" to that same Project Vigilant group. Four US government agents soon arrived at Lamo's house to scrutinize the logs he had saved.

Chelsea Manning was arrested in Iraq on 27 May 2010 and sent to "pre-trial confinement" in Kuwait, where she "[essentially lived in a cage](#)" inside a hot tent for nearly two months. Guards told her she woud be sent to the Guantánamo Bay prison or some other secret interrogation site.

"At the very lowest point, I contemplated castrating myself, and even – in what seemed a pointless and tragicomic exercise, given the physical

impossibility of having nothing stable to hang from – contemplated suicide with a tattered blanket, which I tried to choke myself with. After getting caught, I was placed on suicide watch in Kuwait."

Manning was transferred to the USA, where she suffered further torture at the Marines' Quantico Brig in Virginia, on 29 July 2010.

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News of Chelsea Manning's arrest was first [reported](#) by WIRED magazine on 6 June 2010, ten days after her actual arrest.

Manning was turned in late last month by a former computer hacker with whom he spoke online. In the course of their chats, Manning took credit for leaking a headline-making video of a helicopter attack that Wikileaks posted online in April. The video showed a deadly 2007 U.S. helicopter air strike in Baghdad that claimed the lives of several innocent civilians.

He said he also leaked three other items to Wikileaks: a separate video showing the notorious 2009 Garani air strike in Afghanistan that Wikileaks has previously acknowledged is in its possession; a classified Army document evaluating Wikileaks as a security threat, which the site posted in March; and a previously unreported breach consisting of 260,000 classified U.S. diplomatic cables that Manning described as exposing "almost criminal political back dealings."

"Hillary Clinton [then US Secretary Of State], and several thousand diplomats around the world are going to have a heart attack when they wake up one morning, and find an entire repository of classified foreign policy is available, in searchable format, to the public," Manning wrote.

Adrian Lamo was not named as the source of the WIRED exclusive, even though he had a close existing relationship with WIRED editor Kevin Poulsen, who had also previously been [convicted of hacking](#) as a teenager (in 1994, after pleading guilty to mail, wire and computer fraud, money laundering, and obstruction of justice, Poulsen was sentenced to 51 months in prison with \$56,000 fines). Interestingly, the guy who sent the agents to Lamo's house, Mark Rasch, had also been involved in the investigation of Poulsen, leading many observers to later speculate that both Lamo and Poulsen had been "flipped".

On the next day 7 June 2010, the BBC published an [interview](#) with Lamo:

"A lot of people have labelled me a snitch. I guess I deserve that on this one but not as a generality. This was a very hard decision for me."

Citing his previous arrest for hacking, Lamo said he "felt the need to contact investigators" because Manning's approach was "basically a suicide pact."

"I was worried for my family - that if I were obstructing justice that they could be caught up in any investigation. I wanted to do this one by the book, by the numbers. I didn't want any more FBI agents knocking at the door."

"I want to be proud of it but I can't bring myself to be. I keep thinking about what it was like being 22, alone and not knowing about my future. Knowing that I did that to somebody - it hurts. I feel like I should be talking to a priest."

"I hope that Manning gets the same chance as I did - the same chance to take his punishment as I did and start a new life as I did. I like to think I prevented him from getting into more serious trouble."

In following weeks, however, Lamo's interviews were increasingly full of contradictions and even blatant lies. The carefully selected portions of the Manning-Lamo chatlogs that were released by US media outlets had a clear bias against Manning and Assange. There was no mention of Assange's efforts to protect Manning, for example, or Lamo's broken promises of confidentiality.

It is quite likely that WikiLeaks did not know for sure if Manning was the source of their leaks, because they had worked hard to keep her identity a secret, even from themselves.

The Garani massacre video (mentioned above) was leaked by Manning to WikiLeaks but never released. A US Air Force B-1 Bomber attacked the village of Garani, Afghanistan on 4 May 2009. Julian Assange claimed "over 80 children... and more than 100 people" died. The USA admitted "the inability to discern the presence of civilians and avoid and/or minimize accompanying collateral damage resulted in the unintended consequence of civilian casualties". Assange later [blamed Sweden](#) for seizing "the only copy we had" on September 27, 2010 but WikiLeaks previously "had other copies and they were also attacked".

WIRED continued writing negative stories about WikiLeaks, which were picked up by other media organisations, with no hard proof to confirm them. Based on a paragraph from Khatchadourian's New Yorker article, WIRED claimed WikiLeaks had obtained their original cache of over a million documents "through an eavesdropping operation on the Tor network". WikiLeaks said the story was a "beatup" with "no new info" then clarified even further: "Wired's Tor claims are untrue. The Always document [WikiLeaks' first published leak] did not come from tor. We do not monitor tor, etc".

When WikiLeaks failed to renew a website SSL certificate, causing their submission page to temporarily go offline, WIRED published a [lengthy attack](#) by Ryan Singel titled "With World Watching, WikiLeaks Falls Into Disrepair". WikiLeaks again denied the story and said they were just "upgrading infrastructure to deal with growth".

NOTE

Meanwhile, Manning's disclosure of further leaks in the WikiLeaks pipeline was causing serious panic in Washington. On 10 June a former New York Times reporter [wrote](#) that "Pentagon investigators" were trying "to determine the whereabouts of the Australian-born founder of the secretive website Wikileaks for fear that he may be about to publish a huge cache of classified State Department cables that, if made public, could do serious damage to national security." Salon.com journalist Glenn Greenwald noted that there was a "Pentagon manhunt" underway for Assange - "as though he's some sort of dangerous fugitive".

By the end of 2010, progressive media sites had [documented](#) numerous problems with comments from Lamo, WIRED editors, and the published sections of the chatlogs. In late December 2010 Glenn Greenwald [demanded to know](#) why Poulsen was still hiding the full chatlogs and allowing media speculation to run wild.

"Poulsen's concealment of the chat logs is actively blinding journalists and others who have been attempting to learn what Manning did and did not do. By allowing the world to see only the fraction of the Manning-Lamo chats that he chose to release, Poulsen has created a situation in which his long-time "source," Adrian Lamo, is the only source of information for what Manning supposedly said beyond those published excerpts. Journalists thus routinely print Lamo's assertions about Manning's statements even though - as a result of Poulsen's concealment - they are unable to verify whether Lamo is telling the truth.

"To see how odious Poulsen's concealment of this evidence is, consider this [December 15 New York Times article by Charlie Savage](#), which reports that the DOJ is trying to prosecute WikiLeaks based on the theory that Julian Assange "encouraged or even helped" Manning extract the classified information. Savage extensively quotes Lamo claiming that Manning told him all sorts of things about WikiLeaks and Assange that are not found in the portions of the chat logs published by Wired."

By the time WIRED finally published the full Lamo-Manning chatlogs in July 2011, a false media narrative had been firmly established whereby Julian Assange had somehow helped Manning "hack" into US government networks and "steal" confidential material, thus "putting lives at risk". The actual chatlogs proved the opposite: WikiLeaks took great pains to protect their source, verify the material, and publish it responsibly. WIRED editor Evin Hansen [claimed](#) that the magazine had held material back publishing the full chatlogs "out of respect for Manning's privacy". This was hard to believe, given that most of the withheld sections had nothing at all to do with Manning's personal life.

As Glenn Greenwald concluded:

The concern was that Wired was concealing material to glorify and shield its source, Poulsen's long-time associate Adrian Lamo, in a way that

distorted the truth and, independently, denied the public important context for what happened here. Wired's release of the full chat logs leaves no doubt that those concerns were justified, and that Wired was less than honest about what it was concealing.

NOTE

Adrian Lamo was [found dead](#) in his Wichita apartment on 14 March 2018, apparently due to either suicide or chronic drug over-use, at the age of 37.

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News of Chelsea Manning's arrest followed the April 2010 indictment of NSA whistle-blower [Thomas Drake](#) and the May 2010 sentencing of an FBI translator, Shamai K. Leibowitz, who received 20 months in prison for providing classified documents to a blogger. It triggered an angry [article](#) in the New York Times on 15 June 2010:

"In 17 months in office, President Obama has already outdone every previous president in pursuing leak prosecutions.

The article quoted Steven Aftergood, head of a project on government secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists, saying that both major US parties now felt leaks had gotten out of hand and needed to be deterred.

"I think this administration, like every other administration, is driven to distraction by leaking. And Congress wants a few scalps, too. On a bipartisan basis, they want these prosecutions to proceed."

The Justice Department had just renewed a subpoena in a case involving The New York Times reporter James Risen, whose 2006 book "State of War" described a bungled US attempt to disrupt Iran's nuclear program. Risen's source, former CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling, would be indicted seven months later for unauthorized disclosure of national defense information.

The Obama administration was repeatedly turning to the Espionage Act of 1917 to pursue such leaks, drawing strong criticism for their select interpretation of antiquated World War One laws in a new world of online communications. But what was the alternative?

On 18 June 2010 WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that a new US cyber-censorship bill appeared to be "aimed at WikiLeaks". The tweet linked to a Daily Beast [story](#) titled "Can Obama Shut Down the Internet?"

A new bill rocketing through Congress would give the president sweeping powers to police the Web for national-security reasons. Could this be a way to block WikiLeaks?

The bill would grant President Obama the power to declare a "national cyber-emergency" at his discretion and force private companies tied to the

Web, including Internet service providers and search engines, to take action in response—moves that could include limiting or even cutting off their connections to the World Wide Web for up to 30 days.

Critics said the bill would give the US President a "Kill Switch" for the Internet, and pointed out that this sort of behaviour was regularly condemned by the USA when regimes like China did it. As if to prove the point, on 28 June 2010 the Thai government blocked access to [wikileaks.org](#). And in Britain, the National Union of Journalists was [challenging](#) the new Digital Economy Act, which could be used against websites that publish material of public interest without permission (e.g. WikiLeaks).

After widespread criticism, the proposed US government [Protecting Cyberspace as a National Asset Act](#) of 2010 was never voted into existence. But over the next ten years a whole raft of new laws like this would be introduced around the world, severely limiting civil rights and online freedoms in the name of "national security".

This was the urgent debate about a "new standard for freedom of speech" that Julian Assange - and before him the Cypherpunks - had long been warning about. Which way would the world swing: towards "a growing, expanding crypto anarchy" (to repeat Tim May's words from 1996) or an increasingly dystopian authoritarianism?

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Chapter Six: Mid 2010

In the months following Chelsea Manning's May 2010 arrest, the US government empaneled a secret Grand Jury to investigate WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. Grand Juries were first established by England's King Henry II in 1166. The United States is one of only two nations that still utilize the antiquated system (the other being Liberia in Africa). The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution states:

"No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury ..."

Neither the targets of a US grand jury nor their lawyers have a right to appear before the grand jury unless they are invited, nor do they have a right to present evidence. In 2009, out of 69,254 US grand jury suspects, only 20 were not indicted. And if a grand jury does not indict, the prosecutor can simply impanel a new grand jury. Hence the popular US lawyers joke: "a grand jury could indict a ham sandwich".

By the end of 2010, the WikiLeaks Grand Jury had likely already produced a secret [sealed indictment](#) charging Julian Assange with conspiracy to hack into a classified US government network.

NOTE

When an indictment is sealed, all associated information is made secret. Once a defendant is arrested, the sealed indictment then becomes publicly unsealed at arraignment. So the

defendant has no idea about the waiting allegations until after they are arrested and most likely jailed.

While US grand juries are re-empaneled every few years, with indictments regularly refreshed, details of the Grand Jury are exposed by the codes used to identify it. Assange lawyer Michael Ratner later [explained](#) the meaning of a code ("11-3/ 10GJ3793/ 11-937") marked on a [subpoena](#) related to the investigation:

Grand Jury's number is "10" standing for the year it began. "GJ" which is Grand Jury and then 3793. "3" is the Conspiracy Statute in the United States. "793" is the Espionage Statute.

The existence of a sealed indictment was routinely denied until Julian Assange was arrested by London police in April 2019, and the original US "computer intrusion" charge, which carried a maximum five years jail, was publicly revealed. A month later, the US government would announce seventeen additional charges, all related to Assange's involvement with Chelsea Manning, amounting to a maximum 175 years jail.

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Afghan War Logs

The last day of June 2010 was the first day of a momentous three day gathering at the Guardian offices in London. WikiLeaks boss Julian Assange was meeting up with five journalists - John Goetz from Germany's Der Spiegel, Eric Schmitt from the New York Times, and the Guardian's David Leigh, Nick Davies and Rob Evans - to examine the leaked material that would later be known as the [Afghan War Logs](#) (originally the "Afghan War Diary"). Their meeting room soon became the highly secretive new project's "bunker".

According to [John Goetz](#), they also wanted to "come up with a plan on how to coordinate journalistic cooperation between the partners."

Assange was concerned by how much high-level pressure WikiLeaks had received after the publishing of "Collateral Murder". He felt that it would be safer to partner with established media organisations in order to release the rest of the Manning leaks, but he only wanted to work with journalists he could trust. There was a clear benefit to the media organisations involved: exclusive access to a treasure trove of leaks, with journalists from various regions publishing explosive stories related to their own countries. In return, WikiLeaks expected these journalists to help sift through the mountains of data, and publish their articles responsibly. As John Goetz said:

"I discussed in detail with Assange in London how documents might be vetted to prevent risk of harm to anyone. He was in agreement as to the importance of protecting confidential sources including certain US and ISAF [International Security Assistance Force, the NATO-led military mission in Afghanistan] sources."

Goetz said this careful approach to redaction was "understood and agreed by all the media

partners" and efforts to keep the data secure were "more extreme... than I had ever previously observed as a journalist". He said someone from the Guardian put the complex US military database content into a Microsoft Excel format, making it easier to read, but the work was still "extraordinarily demanding".

"The scope was overwhelming and demands upon all involved were enormous and stressful for a range of reasons."

Prior to the release, Eric Schmitt of the New York Times contacted the White House for comment. He later emailed Goetz to say the Obama administration had requested that WikiLeaks and their partners redact the names of informants and withhold 15,000 documents from publication. WikiLeaks subsequently noted on their [release page](#):

"We have delayed the release of some 15,000 reports from the total archive as part of a harm minimization process demanded by our source. After further review, these reports will be released, with occasional redactions, and eventually in full, as the security situation in Afghanistan permits. "

The plan was for all the media partners to publish at the same time (so that the US government could not signal out one organisation to blame) with stories linking back to the verifiable data on the WikiLeaks website. But Goetz said Der Spiegel and the Guardian ended up publishing before WikiLeaks:

"The Guardian published a couple of hundred documents on their site before WikiLeaks. WikiLeaks has some technical delay and their Afghan War Diary website did not go live for a couple of hours after we did."

On 25 July 2010, WikiLeaks [published](#) the Afghan War Diary: 75,000 documents (of the original 91,000) covering a period between January 2004 and December 2009. Julian Assange [called it](#) "the most comprehensive history of a war ever to be published, during the course of the war - in other words, at a time when they still have a chance of doing some good." He said the leaked documents would "change our perspective on not only the war in Afghanistan, but on all modern wars."

A Guardian [editorial](#) called the leaks an "unvarnished picture" of a nine year old war that "cannot be won like this":

"We today learn of nearly 150 incidents in which coalition forces, including British troops, have killed or injured civilians, most of which have never been reported; of hundreds of border clashes between Afghan and Pakistani troops, two armies which are supposed to be allies; of the existence of a special forces unit whose tasks include killing Taliban and al-Qaida leaders; of the slaughter of civilians caught by the Taliban's improvised explosive devices; and of a catalogue of incidents where coalition troops have fired on and killed each other or fellow Afghans under arms."

The leaks also revealed incidents of [child prostitution](#) by US Defence contractors, and [psychological warfare](#) waged via Afghan media outlets.

In the months ahead of this release, President Obama had ordered a controversial "surge" of new US forces in Afghanistan. He [blamed](#) his predecessor, President Bush, for the chaos the leaks revealed:

In a statement, the White House said the chaotic picture painted by the logs was the result of "under-resourcing" under Obama's predecessor, saying: "It is important to note that the time period reflected in the documents is January 2004 to December 2009."

The White House also claimed that WikiLeaks had "made no effort to contact the US government about these documents." This simply was not true: the media partners had [agreed](#) that the New York Times should handle discussions with the US government "because if all the partners contacted the White House independently, there would be chaos".

The US government further claimed that the disclosure of this classified information "puts the lives of the US and partner service members at risk and threatens our national security". This claim would be repeated endlessly for years to come, but no solid proof of harm was ever supplied. A [letter](#) from US Defence Secretary Robert Gates, dated 16 August 2010 but only revealed months later, admitted that the documents leaked by the WikiLeaks did not in fact jeopardize any US intelligence or sensitive military operations.

When US prosecutors ended up in court years later, they could not point to a single incident where anyone had been harmed as a result of WikiLeaks publications. They noted that the Taliban had responded to the release of the Afghan War Logs by publicly stating that they were reviewing the leaks to identify spies whom they could "punish". Assange dryly responded that this that was entirely expected, and that is why names had been redacted. A Senate Committee on Armed Services reported in August 2010 that "the review to date has not revealed any sensitive sources and methods compromised by disclosure". And in October 2010 a senior NATO official in Kabul told [CNN](#) that there had not been a single case of Afghans needing protection or to be moved because of the leak.

Within days of the Afghan War Logs release, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates [phoned](#) FBI Director Robert Mueller and asked the FBI to assist in their investigation of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. WikiLeaks said the US Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service was also involved in the investigation.

On the following day, WikiLeaks added an AES-encrypted "insurance file" to the Afghan War Diary page. The 1.4 GigaByte file, with a timestamp of 31 December 2010, was twenty times larger than the just-released Afghan War documents. Cryptographers said it would be virtually impossible to crack unless WikiLeaks revealed the password. Within weeks, the file had been downloaded over 100,000 times, and WikiLeaks was boasting over 100,000 followers on Twitter alone.

On the same day (29 July 2010) Britain's House of Commons [announced](#) that they would hold two inquiries into the Afghan War:

Commons' defense committee said in a statement that the first inquiry

would examine whether it was justifiable for Britain to remain involved in the nine-year-old unpopular war. It will also examine reports of civilian casualties and a timetable for withdrawal.

The statement said the second inquiry would consider ways to find a political settlement in Afghanistan.

In media interviews, Julian Assange [bristled](#) at claims he had "blood on his hands".

"There is a legitimate role for secrecy, and there is a legitimate role for openness. Unfortunately, those who commit abuses against humanity or against the law find abusing legitimate secrecy to conceal their abuse all too easy... Reform can only come about when injustice is exposed."

SPIEGEL: During the Vietnam War, US President Richard Nixon once called Daniel Ellsberg, the leaker of the Pentagon Papers, the most dangerous man in America. Are you today's most dangerous man or the most endangered?

"The most dangerous men are those who are in charge of war. And they need to be stopped. If that makes me dangerous in their eyes, so be it."

SPIEGEL: You could have started a company in Silicon Valley and lived in a home in Palo Alto with a swimming pool. Why did you decide to do the WikiLeaks project instead?

"We all only live once. So we are obligated to make good use of the time that we have and to do something that is meaningful and satisfying. This is something that I find meaningful and satisfying. That is my temperament. I enjoy creating systems on a grand scale, and I enjoy helping people who are vulnerable. And I enjoy crushing bastards. So it is enjoyable work."

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In the Washington Post newspaper, former Bush speechwriter Marc Thiessen, a senior member of the Neoconservative "American Enterprise Institute", [branded](#) WikiLeaks "a criminal enterprise" and urged the military to hunt them down like terrorists. In retrospect, his article sets out a roadmap which US administrations largely maintained for the following decade.

Assange is a non-U.S. citizen operating outside the territory of the United States. This means the government has a wide range of options for dealing with him. It can employ not only law enforcement but also intelligence and

military assets to bring Assange to justice and put his criminal syndicate out of business.

The first step is for the Justice Department to indict Assange. Such an indictment could be sealed to prevent him from knowing that the United States is seeking his arrest. The United States should then work with its international law enforcement partners to apprehend and extradite him.

Thiessen said the USA should pressure foreign governments to "cooperate in bringing Assange to justice".

But if they refuse, the United States can arrest Assange on their territory without their knowledge or approval.

He cited a 1989 memorandum from the US Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel as proof that this would be legal: "we do not need permission to apprehend Assange or his co-conspirators anywhere in the world".

Karl Rove, Bush's former Senior Advisor, applauded Thiessen's article and [challenged](#) President Obama to "stop WikiLeaks". He [said](#) he wanted Assange "hunted down and grabbed". Michigan Congressman Mike Rogers, a Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, [said](#) Private Manning should be executed if it was proved she leaked the documents to WikiLeaks.

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WikiLeaks staff were now being actively targeted by the US government. In early June 2010, Assange was scheduled to join Daniel Ellsberg on stage in New York but appeared via Skype from Australia instead, saying lawyers recommended he not return to the USA. On 11 June 2010 The Daily Beast [reported](#) that Pentagon investigators were trying to determine his whereabouts.

American officials would not discuss the methods being used to find Assange, nor would they say if they had information to suggest where he is now. "We'd like to know where he is; we'd like his cooperation in this," one U.S. official said of Assange.

Investigators may get their chance Friday night, when Assange is scheduled to appear at an Investigative Reporters and Editors conference in Las Vegas. Whether he will physically appear at the conference is anyone's guess.

Assange cancelled his appearance at the Las Vegas conference due to security concerns, but was still scheduled to deliver the keynote speech at a major New York conference called Hackers on Planet Earth (HOPE). On the day before the Wikileaks Editor in Chief was scheduled to speak, five Homeland Security agents [appeared](#) at the conference.

A conference security staffer said that after being told they needed search warrants to enter the event, at least two agents paid the \$100 admission fee to get in.

Instead of Julian Assange, the federal agents in New York got to hear 27-year-old Jacob Appelbaum, a US citizen and close confidant of Assange, who later said he had been "working with WikiLeaks for about three months". Appelbaum's speech was a perfect example of his scathing humour and passionate concern:

"Hello to all my friends and fans in domestic and international surveillance," Appelbaum began. "I am here today because I believe we can make a better world. Julian, unfortunately, can't make it, because we don't live in that better world right now, because we haven't yet made it. I wanted to make a little declaration for the federal agents that are standing in the back of the room and the ones that are standing in the front of the room, and to be very clear about this: I have, on me, in my pocket, some money, the Bill of Rights and a driver's license, and that's it. I have no computer system, I have no telephone, I have no keys, no access to anything. There's absolutely no reason that you should arrest me or bother me. And just in case you were wondering, I'm an American, born and raised, who's unhappy. I'm unhappy with how things are going." He paused, interrupted by raucous applause. "To quote from Tron," he added, "I fight for the user."

After the speech, Appelbaum slipped out a backstage door, using a decoy to distract the federal agents, and went straight to the airport, where he boarded a flight to Berlin two hours later. When he returned to the USA on 29 July 2010, Appelbaum was [detained](#) by US customs officers at Newark Liberty airport. Officials photocopied his receipts, confiscated his phones and laptop, then interrogated him for three hours. Pressed for information on Assange and WikiLeaks, or his opinions on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Appelbaum refused to talk.

Meanwhile, Julian Assange had made a [surprise appearance](#) on stage at a TED Talk in Oxford, where he received a [standing ovation](#). Host Chris Anderson asked Assange if it was true that WikiLeaks in recent months had "released more classified documents than the rest of the world's media combined".

"Yeah, can it possibly be true?" replied Assange. "It's a worry - isn't it? - that the rest of the world's media is doing such a bad job that a little group of activists is able to release more of that type of information than the rest of the world press combined."

Assange repeated that he did not know if Chelsea Manning was WikiLeaks' source.

"We're using state-of-the-art encryption and anonymizers to get

information. And we get submissions by mail, regular postal mail. If we happen to find out the identity of a source, we destroy that information."

Nevertheless, WikiLeaks continued urging public support for Manning.

At about the same time, FBI agents were in Wales, raiding the house of Manning's seriously ill mother, who had speech difficulties following a stroke four years earlier. The story was only [revealed](#) a month later.

Mr Manning's aunt Sharon Staples told how her sister Susan, 56, pleaded for help down the phone, sobbing: "They're here, they're here."

Assange later [stated](#) that it was this FBI raid that motivated his decision to go and visit Sweden: "the FBI was here in the UK, stomping around the UK, and we thought I'd better get out."

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Even prior to the Afghan War Logs release, WikiLeaks was still busy fending off mounting public criticism. The Wau Holland Foundation in Germany was forced to [clarify](#) how they handled donations to Wikileaks. And Assange, who had just been [rated](#) the 58th Most Powerful Person in Global Media, continued demanding more from his media colleagues.

"Journalism should be more like science," he told one Guardian interviewer (who then [described](#) Assange as "a bit odd... cadaverous... like Andy Warhol").

"As far as possible, facts should be verifiable," said Assange. "If journalists want long-term credibility for their profession, they have to go in that direction. Have more respect for readers."

Assange complained that journalists all too frequently burned their sources without taking any personal risks. Rather provocatively, he compare the death rate of Western journalists with media casualties in more authoritarian regimes:

"I think it's an international disgrace that so few western journalists have been killed in the course of duty, or have been arrested in the course of duty. How many journalists were arrested last year in the United States, a country of 300 million people? How many journalists were arrested in the UK last year?"

On the other hand, Assange rushed to support responsible and courageous journalism. When a Professor of Law at Kings College unfairly attacked the BBC over their [handling](#) of the Trafigura affair, Assange [publicly humiliated](#) him on stage.

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A [Pew Research poll](#) conducted between 29 July and 1 August 2010 found that younger US citizens

were more likely to approve of WikiLeaks disclosing classified material. Pew reported that "attention to news from Afghanistan spiked following the WikiLeaks report, with 34% following Afghanistan reports very closely, up from 22% the previous week. This is the highest interest in Afghanistan news since December 2009."

Most Americans have heard either a lot (37%) or a little (36%) about the WikiLeaks story specifically, though 27% say they heard nothing at all about it. Among those who have heard about the leak, 47% say the disclosure of classified documents about the war in Afghanistan harms the public interest while 42% say it serves the public interest.

41% of respondents said the Afghan War Logs had received too little US media coverage in a week where Chelsea Clinton's wedding had dominated the headlines.

On 3 August 2010 a [USA Today/Gallup poll](#) showed a dramatic 12 percent fall in public support for President Obama's handling of the Afghan war:

Only 36% backed Obama's war policies, down from 48% in February... The poll attributed the loss of support for the war to the rising U.S. death toll and last week's massive document dump of classified material by WikiLeaks, which highlighted internal disputes on strategy... 43% agree the war in Afghanistan also was a mistake.

*

These political shifts vindicated Chelsea Manning's decision to turn whistle-blower - but who was going to tell her about them? While the polls above were being conducted, Manning was being [transferred](#) from her hot prison cage in Kuwait to the US Marines' Quantico detention facility in Virginia. Guards in Kuwait had claimed that she had made a noose from her bedsheets, and repeatedly banged her head against the cage (she later could not remember this) so they placed her on suicide watch and prescribed anti-depression and anti-anxiety drugs. She remained on suicide watch in maximum security conditions at Quantico, but initially [thought](#) things were getting better:

"It wasn't the ideal environment in Quantico. But it had air conditioning, solid floors, hot and cold running water. It was great to be on continental United States soil again."

In fact Manning would endure conditions amounting to torture for another nine months at Quantico: a guard stationed permanently outside her 6ft by 8ft (180cm by 240cm) cell; a toilet with no toilet paper (she had to shout for it when needed); only 20 minutes per day outside the cell, in full restraint (hands cuffed to a leather belt, legs in irons); nights spent under observation in fluorescent light, with guards regularly banging on the door for "security checks".

*

The release of the Afghan War Logs was still causing absurd levels of chaos in Washington. Voice of

America employees were [told](#) that they were not allowed to read or e-mail any of the WikiLeaks material on their government computers - even though they were expected to report on it! US soldiers were also [ordered](#) not to read or share WikiLeaks documents, with the US Navy's Judge Advocate General's Corp insisting that the leaked information remained officially classified - even though it was now in the public domain. And Democrat Senators Charles Schumer and Dianne Feinstein, who were drafting new legislation to protect journalists from revealing sources, hurriedly authored [amendments](#) to ensure that such protection would never be afforded to WikiLeaks.

"WikiLeaks should not be spared in any way from the fullest prosecution possible under the law," said Schumer. "Our bill already includes safeguards when a leak impacts national security, and it would never grant protection to a website like this one, but we will take this extra step to remove even a scintilla of doubt."

Not everyone was unhappy with the new leaks. As Daniel Ellsberg [told](#) CNN's Larry King:

"There hasn't been an unauthorized disclosure of this magnitude since the Pentagon Papers 39 years ago. I've been waiting for it for a long time."

King: How do you respond to the White House assertion that this leak puts U.S. forces in danger?

"You know, the people who put U.S. forces in harm's way — 100,000 men and women in Afghanistan — are the last two administrations, but particularly this one, with a decision to escalate the war. I think it takes a lot of — I don't know what to say — chutzpah, effrontery, for people who made the reckless, foolish, and I would say irresponsible decisions to escalate a war that I'm sure they know internally is as hopeless as these new revelations reveal it to be."

The US Department of Defence ominously [threatened](#) to take action against WikiLeaks if they did not return the leaked data:

"We want whatever they have returned to us and we want whatever copies they have expunged... We demand that they do the right thing. If doing the right thing is not good enough for them, then we will figure out what alternatives we have to compel them to do the right thing."

WikiLeaks tweeted that the threat was "obnoxious". They said journalists were being fooled by the Pentagon's "rhetorical tricks" about their lack of "direct" contact with the US government (after WikiLeaks media partners had agreed to let the New York Times handle contact), and the White House had refused their offer to help redact documents. They also complained that their media

partners were not helping with redactions.

This was a sly reference to behind-the-scenes negotiations as WikiLeaks worked on their next big release, the Iraq War Logs (see below). WikiLeaks was demanding more time to redact documents. According to Der Spiegel's John Goetz, their media partners were irritated by the delay.

On 2 August 2010, senior Guardian editor David Leigh sent the following email to Goetz:

"WikiLeaks says they require more time because they have a team attempting to redact bad stuff. They're not going to publish for quite a while now."

With the benefit of hindsight, this media frustration is supremely ironic: Leigh was just one of many journalists who later falsely accused Assange of "putting lives in danger" by publishing unredacted documents.

What to do? WikiLeaks [retweeted](#) a follower who seemed to have the best response: lives were being lost every day on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan; perhaps the best WikiLeaks could do was publish and be damned.

On 12 August 2010, Assange [appeared](#) via Skype at an event hosted by London's Frontline Club: "How WikiLeaks Is Changing Journalism". Tensions between WikiLeaks and its media partners were immediately apparent. Assange said the New York Times' portrayal of Chelsea Manning was "disgusting". He said WikiLeaks were still only "half way" through the process of redacting the remaining 15,000 documents that had been withheld from the Afghan War Logs release.

"So far there has been no help despite repeated requests, from the White House or the Pentagon, or in fact any of the three press organisations we partnered with for this material," said Assange, who added that the cost could be up to £750,000. "They decided not to take responsibility for getting the raw data out to the public, that is in fact what appears our role, to get the raw data out as opposed to the cherries the organisations decided selectively to give out in relation to their stories."

The Guardian's Simon Rogers said they had thought "long and hard" about publishing the raw data but "on the legal side we are based in London and you can find us." Media lawyer Mark Stephens suggested the Guardian might need to restructure, like WikiLeaks, moving key resources to more "sympathetic jurisdictions" such as Iceland.

Assange asked how the world's media was planning to respond to the Pentagon's recent threats against WikiLeaks:

"Is it going to be a serious response or is it going to simply put its head in the sand?"

Within ten days the answer would be obvious. WikiLeaks was about to be hit with a bombshell.

And the world's media would soon have a perfect excuse to desert Assange en masse.

Swedish Sex Allegations

Until August 2010, the WikiLeaks website was [hosted](#) by a Swedish company called PRQ, which provided "highly secure, no-questions-asked hosting services". In keeping with the anarchistic approach to a free Internet, PRQ recorded "almost no information about its clientele" and maintained "few if any of its own logs". Julian Assange still believed that Swedish laws guaranteed the world's most secure Internet hosting, but he wanted to move WikiLeaks to another Swedish Internet Service Provider named Bahnhof, who housed their servers in the Pionen facility, a former underground nuclear fall-out shelter. Assange was also [planning](#) to apply for Swedish residency ahead of WikiLeaks' Iraq War Logs publication.

But on the morning of 21 August 2011, Julian Assange woke up in Stockholm to find himself [branded](#) a "[Double Rapist](#)" on media front pages around the world. So how did that happen?

NOTE

The information in this section is largely gathered from an excellent investigation by ABC Four Corners, "[Sex, Lies And Julian Assange](#)". Also a detailed article by Swedish-speaking Australian journalist Guy Rundle, "[Crayfish Summer](#)", that includes a close reading of Swedish police reports. Plus evidence compiled by retired Swedish businessman [Goran Rudling](#), a campaigner for rape law reform. Also the [Agreed Case Facts](#) and Assange's own [testimony](#) and evidence supplied by his legal team, which unfortunately was never tested in court because Swedish prosecutors never actually charged Assange with any crime.

On 11 August 2010, Assange landed in the Swedish capital to give a speech and negotiate a deal with Bahnhof. He was invited by a woman named Anna Ardin to stay at her apartment, which she said would be empty. Assange later [explained](#) that they had been introduced by "political contacts in Sweden". So who was Anna Ardin? According to Rundle:

Anna Ardin, 31, was the press secretary of the Brotherhood Movement, a once-conservative Christian group within the Swedish Social Democratic Party, now a centre for 'third-worldist' left liberation theology. Known for her exuberant enthusiasms, Ardin was or had been variously a feminist, a gender equality officer for the Uppsala University student union, an Israel–Palestine peace activist, an animal liberationist and the co-proprietor of Fever, a bisexual fetish nightclub.

Ardin had also worked with US-backed opposition groups in Cuba and Miami, fleeing from Havana after being [threatened](#) with deportation for "subversive activities", and wrote anti-Castro articles for a US-linked publication in Sweden.

Two nights after Assange arrived, on Friday 13 August, Ardin returned home but told Assange he was welcome to stay. She had consensual sex with him that night. Ardin later told police that a condom had broken during sex but Assange had continued having sex with her, against her wishes. Assange [told police](#) that she had never mentioned this to him, and that they had continued having

intercourse the next morning and the next day. Ardin continued happily socialising with Assange for days, and insisted he stay at her house, despite other offers of accommodation.

On Saturday 14 August, Assange gave a speech at Stockholm's Trade Union Headquarters, where Ardin acted as his press secretary. She later tweeted that Assange wanted to attend a late night crayfish party. In the early hours of Sunday morning she tweeted from the party:

"Sitting outdoors at 02:00 and hardly freezing with the world's coolest smartest people, it's amazing!"

Five days later, these tweets had mysteriously been [deleted](#).

Ardin later tweeted (in Swedish on 22 April 2013) that she was "not raped". That tweet was also deleted.

Another Swedish woman, Sofia Wilén, was in the front row of the Trade Union HQ audience on Saturday, wearing a pink cashmere sweater and taking photos of Assange. During Assange's speech, according to text messages later produced by Assange's lawyers, Wilén texted a friend: "He looked at me!" Wilén later told police she had become interested in Assange after seeing him on TV.

Witnesses said that following Assange's speech, Sofia Wilén pressured her way to an invite to the post-event lunch, where she flirted with Assange, who later said "one of the organizers stated that she was a volunteer for their organisation although they would later claim that this was not true". After lunch, Wilén and Assange went to an IMAX cinema together and "canoodled". Assange said she "kissed me and placed my hands on her breasts. She asked whether I was staying with [Anna Ardin] and seemed concerned by it in a manner that I found strange."

Two days later, on Monday August 16th 2010, Assange and Wilén caught a train from Stockholm's central station to her flat in Enköping. Assange's bank cards had been frozen, so Wilén paid for his ticket. They had consensual sex and Assange stayed the night, believing he was in a secure location even though Wilén "knew an unusual amount of detail about me".

"I would later discover that she had collected dozens of photos of me in the weeks before we even met. Her recent FLICKR photo account was filled with pages and pages of photos of me and no other person."

The next morning, according to Rundle's version, "something happened".

Wilén would tell police that Assange began bareback [no condom] sex with her while she was asleep. As she woke, she said, "You better not have HIV," to which he replied, "Of course not." And they continued. According to Assange's version, Wilén was half-asleep when sex began. Assange's defence team would later allege that in a text message to a friend, Wilén also said she was half-asleep at the time.

According to Assange:

"I was certain "SW" was not asleep. I was also certain she expressly consented to unprotected sex before such intercourse started."

On Tuesday 17 August, Ardin allegedly texted a friend who was looking for Assange: "He's not here. He's planned to have sex with the cashmere girl every evening, but not made it. Maybe he finally found time yesterday?"

NOTE

It's worth noting here that in January 2010 Ardin had posted a [7 Step Guide to Revenge](#) on her [blog](#), including, for example, sabotaging a victim's sexual relationships.

After having sex with Julian Assange, Sofia Wilén told friends that she was worried about the possibility of contracting a Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD). She phoned Ardin's house, reportedly trying to contact Assange, and the two women began exchanging information. Ardin then introduced Wilén to a friend, Irmeli Krans, who was a former council election colleague and a campaigning feminist police officer. Like Ardin, Krans was also a member of Sweden's Social Democratic party (this will be important later).

On Friday 20 August, Assange says he phoned Wilén because a friend said she was in hospital and wanted to talk to him. She asked him to meet her and get tested for an STD infection but "I was busy that day attempting to deal with the escalating political and legal threats against me from the Pentagon". Assange offered to get tested the following day (Saturday) but Wilén said she would go to the police and force him to get tested if he did not come to the hospital. After further discussion, Assange said she had agreed to meet at lunch the next day, when he agreed to get tested.

"You can imagine my disbelief when I woke the next morning to the news that I had been arrested in my absence for "rape" and that police were "hunting" all over Stockholm for me."

So what happened? After speaking on the phone with Assange on 20th August, Wilén went to Klara Police Station with Anna Ardin and policewoman Irmeli Krans, purportedly to force Julian to take an AIDS test. But Wilén said she was "shocked" and "railroaded" by police. Contrary to normal police procedures, Anna Ardin was allowed to sit in throughout Wilén's police interview, which was also not video recorded (as per police recommendations) although a police report was produced.

Krans prepared a statement accusing Assange of rape but Wilén refused to sign it. The police report said she was "upset" by the rape accusation and left the station.

Wilén allegedly texted a friend at 14.25 on 20 August: "I did not want to put any charges against JA but the police wanted to get a grip on him." At 17.26 another text said she was "shocked when they arrested JA because I only wanted him to take a test". And the next day: "it was the police who fabricated the charges".

These text messages were recorded by Swedish police but never made public. Assange's lawyers were never given a copy but were "permitted to see them at the police station and able to note down a number of them".

Next day, Saturday 21 August, Ardin made her own statement to the police. When asked to provide

additional evidence, Ardin [allegedly](#) returned to the police station with a torn condom (which would by then have been over a week old). Police later tested the condom and found it had no traces of genomic DNA. In other words, it had never been used.

Most of the details above were never revealed to the public by global media organisations who rushed to condemn Assange as a "rapist" and a "fugitive from justice". The damage to Julian Assange's reputation - and WikiLeaks' public standing - was huge, immediate, long-lasting, and monumentally distracting from their other work. As Assange later complained, normal Swedish protections of privacy were simply thrown out the door:

The press was immediately and unlawfully informed that there was a warrant for my arrest for the "rape of two" women. The Swedish government prosecutor unlawfully, and without any subsequent explanation or remedy, immediately confirmed to the press that there was a live warrant for my arrest. The prosecutor's breach triggered an avalanche of news reports. Within days there were millions of references online which associated my name with the word 'rape'. Immediately the police accusations were used to attack WikiLeaks' work and my reputation as its publisher. US Defense Secretary Robert Gates celebrated the news of my arrest warrant with a smile, telling reporters that the arrest "sounds like good news to me". Various twitter accounts officially associated with the Pentagon spread descriptions of me as a "rapist" and a "fugitive".

WikiLeaks attempted to push back against the avalanche of negative press. On 21 August they [released](#) an "official statement about the latest hot topic".

WikiLeaks also tweeted: "We were warned to expect 'dirty tricks.' Now, we have the first one." This tweet was later deleted, after complaints that it was not respectful to the women involved.

Facing a barrage of questions, the Swedish Prosecution Authority published a FAQ saying that Assange's information had reached news media "in a way that the authority does not know" and the prosecutor's office "merely confirmed the information". Observers [wondered](#) why prosecutors had not given journalists the standard "no comment" response.

Then another amazing thing happened. On the next day, Sunday 22 August 2010, the Swedish case against Assange was abruptly [closed](#). Swedish authorities cancelled the warrant for Julian Assange's arrest.

A statement from Chief Prosecutor Eva Finne on the Swedish Prosecution Authority website said Finne "has come to the decision that Julian Assange is not suspected of rape" and the arrest warrant against him has been withdrawn.

A former Swedish chief prosecutor, Sven-Erik Alhem, [said](#) the the actions of the prosecutors were "bizarre and confusing":

The arrest order was based on the assumption of probable cause, the strongest grade of suspicion of crime that is required for an arrest order, and later this probable cause suspicion is withdrawn without the appearance of any new information in the case.

In an equally bizarre TV [interview](#), a spokeswoman for the Swedish Prosecution Authority insisted that no mistakes had been made and the case had been closed because "new evidence" had emerged. But while the arrest warrant had made global headlines, the "new evidence" supposedly proving Assange's innocence was kept secret. Al Jazeera's host asked if it was "normal procedure to accuse someone of rape and then two hours later say no, it's not the case?"

In a 23 August 2010 [interview](#) with Al Jazeera, Julian Assange seemed similarly bemused.

"We were warned on the 11th by Australian intelligence that we would expect this sort of thing... It is clearly a smear campaign."

But a minute later Assange stated: "I did not say this was part of a smear campaign". And then moments later: "Clearly it is a smear campaign of some kind because the material was quickly dropped within six hours."

Meanwhile, according to the texts provided by Assange's lawyers, Anna Ardin was urging Sofia Wilén to go public with her story so they could "shape public opinion" (the women's identities were still secret: only Assange's identity had been revealed). Ardin texted that they ought to sell their stories for money to a newspaper. Elections were being held in Sweden on 19 September 2010, and Ardin was (for the second time) seeking election to the Stockholm City Council as a Social Democrat party candidate. No doubt the extra publicity would have helped her campaign.

On 26 August, Chief Prosecutor Eva Finne repeated emphatically that the evidence provided did not constitute a crime and the case was closed:

"There is no suspicion of any crime whatsoever."

Then another bizarre thing happened. The next day, Friday 27 August 2010, a full two weeks after Assange first had sex with Ardin, a high profile Social Democrat politician named Claes Borgström was appointed counsel for the two women: he applied to re-open the investigation with a new prosecutor in the Swedish city of Gothenberg (nearly 400 km from Stockholm). On the following day, the two women allegedly confirmed by text that their new lawyer had negotiated a contract with Sweden's biggest tabloid.

Borgström was also running as a Social Democrat party candidate at the coming elections, and could have become a government cabinet member if his party had won (national and local elections are held simultaneously in Sweden). According to Rundle, Claes Borgström was "not only the Social Democratic Party's gender equality spokesperson, but a major driver of Sweden's Sexual Offences Act 2005". And the new prosecutor, Marrianne Ny, was a sex crime expert who "had headed a crime development unit whose brief was to explore ways in which sex crime law might be changed or extended". There were clearly political and career gains to be reaped from the high profile Assange case.

A fortnight later, on 1 September, Ny would not only announce that Wilén's minor rape accusation had been reinstated, but another one had been added – the physical argy-bargy that Ardin had herself represented as consensual (if disliked) now made Assange liable to a charge of sexual coercion, another specifically Swedish 'in-between' law, perhaps comparable to indecent assault.

To successfully appeal a non-prosecution in Sweden is not unusual, but the coercion accusation surprised everyone. When journalists asked Borgström how the new accusations squared with earlier statements by the women that confirmed Assange was not a rapist, Borgström replied: "They're not lawyers. They don't know what rape is." In Ardin's case this was patently untrue. As gender equality officer at Uppsala University, she had literally written the book on the matter – redrafting the union's gender equality manual.

Although WikiLeaks staff and media partners were still working on their next big release, Julian Assange cancelled his other commitments and remained in Sweden for five weeks, until 27 September 2010, when his lawyer said he had legal permission to leave the country. Nevertheless, for years to come, critics would falsely claim that Assange "fled Sweden to escape sex charges".

NOTE

Arrest warrants were issued because Assange was wanted for questioning, but he was never actually "charged" by Sweden with any crime.

Assange gave an interview to Swedish police on 30 August 2010 in relation to Anna Ardin's claim, which was the only remaining allegation at the time. On 8 September 2010, Bjorn Hurtig, Assange's Swedish lawyer, [confirmed](#) that an investigation was still under way but his client had been given no summons for questioning, meaning Assange was free to do what he liked, including going abroad.

On the same day, the head of the Swedish military intelligence service ("MUST") publicly denounced WikiLeaks in an [article](#) titled "WikiLeaks A Threat To Our Soldiers". Assange "became increasingly concerned about Sweden's [close relationship](#) to the US in military and intelligence matters". A trusted intelligence source warned him that US intelligence agents had told their Swedish counterparts that intelligence-sharing arrangements could be cut off if Assange was given shelter.

"I considered my continued presence in Sweden to be a serious risk to my personal safety and a risk to WikiLeaks' continued publications. I asked my lawyer to request permission for me to leave Sweden to attend planned engagements."

Assange said the sex accusations were part of "a clear set-up" and had caused damage to WikiLeaks.

"This entire rape investigation has been conducted without my input," he complained.

Before leaving Sweden, Assange [finalised](#) the movement of WikiLeaks servers to the Pionen nuclear bunker. Bahnhof executive Jon Karlung said he was "proud to have clients like these."

"The Internet should be an open source for freedom of speech, and the role of an ISP is to be a neutral technological tool of access, not an instrument for collecting information from customers."

Julian Assange's dramatic soujourn in Sweden had one final twist: when he finally boarded a flight from Sweden to Germany, his "suitcase, laptops, privileged attorney-client communications and other important information belonging to WikiLeaks disappeared". Assange later stated that the disappeared WikiLeaks material "included shocking evidence of a serious war crime; the massacre of more than sixty women and children by US military forces in Garani, Afghanistan".

Despite frantic efforts by many people over the following days, no trace of the disappeared luggage could be found, even though Assange still had a verified check-in docket. Airport staff said they had "never encountered anything like this before". The luggage was not just lost; it appeared to have never existed in their systems.

Italian journalist and long-time WikiLeaks partner Stefania Maurizi, who had a scheduled meeting in Berlin with Assange, later [described](#) how he arrived very late from the airport with just a single laptop, a USB stick, and a plastic bag containing a T-shirt, soap and a toothbrush. The next day at an internet cafe they signed an agreement, witnessed by Kristinn Hrafnsson, and Assange gave Maurizi a copy of the Afghan War Logs files. Then Assange got a phone call from his Swedish lawyer:

"Why didn't they interrogate me before?" he said. "I was in Sweden for 6 weeks."

*

Assange continued flying from Germany to London, where he continued preparing for the Iraq War Logs release.

On 18 November 2010, the new Swedish Prosecutor Marianne Ny ordered the detention of Julian Assange "with probable cause, suspected of rape, three cases of sexual molestation and illegal coercion". A European Arrest Warrant was issued. Although Assange had been interviewed by Swedish police, had remained in Sweden for a month after Marianne Ny took over the case, and had left the country because he was not summoned by Ny for questioning, the Swedish Prosecuting Authority [insisted](#) that a new warrant was required "as it has been impossible to interview him during the investigation".

NOTE

Assange's Swedish lawyer later [said](#) that Assange had "made himself available to speak with Swedish authorities, including the prosecutor handling the case, at an embassy abroad, but this

offer had been rejected". Assange had earlier "offered to travel to Sweden to answer questions but authorities could not make themselves available at any of the suggested times".

Astonishingly, Sweden also [issued](#) an Interpol Red Notice.

Dated 30 November, the entry reads: "SEX CRIMES" and says the warrant has been issued by the international public prosecution office in Gothenburg, Sweden. "If you have any information contact your national or local police." It reads: "Wanted: Assange, Julian Paul," and gives his birthplace as Townsville, Australia.

Assange's lawyers appealed the Swedish arrest warrant all the way to the Sweden's Supreme Court, arguing that there was no such thing as "minor rape", that "rape" was a mistranslation of the Swedish terminology, and that the allegations did not meet English or European legal definition of "rape". But the Swedish Supreme Court refused to hear Assange's case.

Legal observers wondered why Sweden did not simply go and question Assange in Britain, as happened frequently in such European Arrest Warrant cases. The simple answer may be that UK Crown Prosecutors, then headed by Director of Public Prosecutions Keir Starmer, advised them to stay away.

A Freedom of Information request in Sweden, lodged by Italian journalist Stefania Maurizi, later [revealed](#) that a lawyer for the UK Crown Prosecuting Service, Paul Close, "had, unaccountably, advised the Swedes in 2010 or 2011 not to visit London to interview Assange". Close [wrote](#) to the Swedish prosecutors on 25 January 2011:

"My earlier advice remains, that in my view it would not be prudent for the Swedish authorities to try to interview the defendant in the UK".

It's not clear when this "earlier advice" was provided, or what exactly it said. But on 13 January 2011 Close wrote:

"Please do not think that the case is being dealt with as just another extradition request".

In yet another astonishing turn of events, all Paul Close's correspondence about Assange with Swedish prosecutors was [mysteriously deleted](#) when he retired in 2014. The Swedish government also [destroyed](#) further correspondence between the Swedish Prosecution Authority and the UK Crown Prosecution Service (as another FOI request from Stefania Maurizi later revealed: both the Swedish Court of Appeal and the Swedish Parliamentary Ombudsman [rejected](#) her requests and refused to provide an explanation).

It seems quite possible that UK Crown Prosecutors were telling Sweden not to come and question Assange in London from the day they issued a European Arrest Warrant. And yet for years Assange was publicly condemned by British MPs (and many others) for refusing to go to Sweden, where he would have been immediately jailed and [most likely](#) quickly extradited to the USA, who had a sealed indictment waiting.

NOTE

Assange repeatedly offered to go to Sweden to be interviewed, provided that he was given assurances that he would not be "onward extradited" to the USA. Sweden refused to give that assurance. Sweden has a [history](#) of near-total compliance with US extradition requests and has [assisted](#) with CIA renditions and torture.

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Chapter Seven: Late 2010

Fame v. Anonymity

By the end of 2010 Julian Assange had [become](#) a major global celebrity, topping the popular vote for TIME's Person of the Year award (the editors gave it to Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg instead). But some argued that the unresolved sex allegations hanging over him were causing undue damage to WikiLeaks' reputation. In a late 2010 online [Q & A session](#), Assange was asked: "Don't you think it would be better if the organization was anonymous?"

"I originally tried hard for the organisation to have no face, because I wanted egos to play no part in our activities. This followed the tradition of the French anonymous pure mathematicians, who wrote under the collective allonym, "The Bourbaki". However this quickly led to tremendous distracting curiosity about who and random individuals claiming to represent us. In the end, someone must be responsible to the public and only a leadership that is willing to be publicly courageous can genuinely suggest that sources take risks for the greater good. In that process, I have become the lightening rod. I get undue attacks on every aspect of my life, but then I also get undue credit as some kind of balancing force."

Following the release of the Afghan War Logs on 26 July 2010, Assange told a packed audience at the Frontline Club:

"We started off like the Economist. We wanted to make the news, not be the news. But that produced extraordinary curiosity as to who we were... This attempt not to be the news, made us the news."

Two days later the Rupert Murdoch-owned UK Times newspaper demonstrated Assange's point, with an article that falsely implied he was personally responsible for the recent death of an Afghan man. A front page headline [screamed](#): "Afghan leaks expose the identity of informants". The paper claimed to have discovered the names of dozens of Afghan informants with just "two hours of searching the Wikileaks archive". Julian Assange was [incensed](#) by this "bullshit", but the page 13 story was particularly deceptive.

There's a photo of Assange below a headline that reads "**Taliban hitlist' row: WikiLeaks founder says he did right thing**". And next to the photo, another headline reading "**Named man is already dead.**" The imputation is quite clearly that Assange's actions have resulted in the man's death, although in the story itself it makes it clear that he actually died two years ago.

In fact, Times readers had to absorb six paragraphs of information before discovering that the man had already been dead for two years. This "yellow journalism" was a sign of things to come. Journalists continued putting Assange on the defensive with unsubstantiated claims about alleged or merely "possible" casualties. They haughtily pressured him to defend the "morality" of WikiLeaks' actions.

"You have to start with the truth," argued Assange. "The truth is the only way that we can get anywhere. Because any decision-making that is based upon lies or ignorance can't lead to a good conclusion."

He said WikiLeaks was "creating a space behind us that permits a form of journalism which lives up to the name that journalism has always tried to establish for itself". But how many other journalists and media organisations wanted to inhabit that space?

Guardian editor David Leigh, who later became one of Assange's harshest critics, said it was "actually fairly irrelevant to talk about whether what Julian is doing is a bad thing or a good thing, because if he wasn't doing it, somebody else would".

"He's a function of technological change. It's because the technology exists to create these enormous databases, and because it exists it can be leaked. And if it can be leaked, it will be leaked."

This was very much the [philosophy](#) of a rapidly growing online collective of hackers, united under the hashtag #Anonymous, who were proliferating on social media and already strong supporters of WikiLeaks:

"Information wants to be free".

*

On 6 August the US Pentagon [demanded](#) WikiLeaks delete all published classified documents and return any other classified files in their possession.

If doing the right thing is not good enough for them then we will figure out what alternatives we have to compel them to do the right thing.

On 21 August 2010 the Wall Street Journal [reported](#) that Pentagon lawyers believed WikiLeaks had "acted illegally" in publishing the Afghan War Logs, and federal prosecutors were "exploring

possible criminal charges". An anonymous US law-enforcement official said the joint investigation by the Army and the FBI was "still in its early stages" and Julian Assange had "not been identified by the FBI as a target of the probe". However:

Several officials said the Defense and Justice departments were now exploring legal options for prosecuting Mr. Assange and others involved on grounds they encouraged the theft of government property.

One big issue - dubbed "the New York Times problem" - was already evident: charging Assange would equate to criminalising journalism.

Bringing a case against WikiLeaks would be controversial and complicated, and would expose the Obama administration to criticism for pursuing not just government leakers, but organizations that disseminate their information.

The investigation, formally known as the Information Review Task Force, was [lead](#) by Brigadier General Robert Carr of the Defence Intelligence Agency (the Pentagon's equivalent of the CIA) under the direction of the Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

In a nondescript suite of government offices not far from the Pentagon, nearly 120 intelligence analysts, FBI agents, and others are at work — 24 hours a day, seven days a week — on the frontlines of the government's secret war against WikiLeaks.

The "WikiLeaks War Room" was tasked with investigating "exactly what classified information might have been leaked to WikiLeaks", and then predicting how disclosure of such information could affect the US military or US foreign policy. But also, more ominously:

The team has another distinct responsibility: to gather evidence about the workings of WikiLeaks that might someday be used by the Justice Department to prosecute Assange and others on espionage charges.

*

As every psychologist knows, people react very differently - and sometimes very strangely - when placed under immense pressure. As threats mounted year after year, Julian Assange gradually found himself at war with the most powerful forces on earth. And it was very much a war-like situation, with Assange's friends, family, colleagues, lawyers and supporters were all targeted. By November 2010, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was [reportedly](#) complaining: "Can't we just drone this guy?"

According to State Department sources at the early morning meeting of "top brass":

The statement drew laughter from the room which quickly died off when

the Secretary kept talking in a terse manner, sources said. Clinton said Assange, after all, was a relatively soft target, "walking around" freely and thumbing his nose without any fear of reprisals from the United States.

Clinton later [refused to deny](#) her reported comments: "It would have been a joke, if it had been said, but I don't recall that."

Faced with ever-escalating pressure and associated dangers to his own life, Assange continually hardened his resolve. As Vaughan Smith, the director of the Frontline Club, put it: "Combat, intellectual combat, seems to be his stimulant of choice. It just fuels him."

There may be an element of Aspergers Syndrome in such stubbornly single-minded persistence. Or Julian Assange may simply be a courageous hero in the mould of Daniel Ellsberg and other great truth-tellers. Perhaps a bit of both. Others at WikiLeaks, however, did not respond to the constantly mounting pressure with such steely determination.

Staff Defections

On 26 August 2010 Newsweek published an [article](#) with the ridiculous title: "Is WikiLeaks Too Full of Itself?" The article cited "a person in close contact with other WikiLeaks activists around Europe, who asked for anonymity".

Insiders say that some people affiliated with the website are already brainstorming whether there might be some way to persuade their front man to step aside, or failing that, even to oust him.

Assange suspected a mole within his organisation. He confronted Daniel Domscheit-Berg, who had appeared on stage alongside him at the Chaos Computer Club in 2008. Domscheit-Berg had changed his surname from Berg (also sometimes using "Daniel Schmitt") a few months earlier, after marrying Anke Domscheit, who was then the head of government relations for Microsoft Germany (according to WikiLeaks) and later became a German MP. Guatemalan lawyer and human rights activist Renata Avila, who had stayed at Mr. Domscheit-Berg's home in Wiesbaden, Germany for a week in 2009, later [noted](#) that "his enthusiasm, his interest and priorities regarding WikiLeaks changed significantly" after his marriage. When she asked how she could help Chelsea Manning "he did not appear to be interested". When she sent information to assist Manning "he never followed it up".

In a heated online exchange that was later [leaked](#) to WIRED magazine, Assange demanded to know if Domscheit-Berg was the source of the Newsweek article and probed him for information on his other contacts. Domscheit-Berg criticized Assange's management and complained that redactions were being rushed, while refusing to answer Assange's questions. Unhappy with such responses, Assange declared:

"You are suspended for one month, effective immediately."

Soon afterwards, Domscheit-Berg [told](#) Der Spiegel he was leaving WikiLeaks. Herbert Snorrason, an Icelandic university student, also departed after challenging Assange's decision to suspend

Domscheit-Berg. Assange reportedly snapped at him:

"I am the heart and soul of this organization, its founder, philosopher, spokesperson, original coder, organizer, financier and all the rest. If you have a problem with me, piss off."

WIRED claimed that "at least half a dozen WikiLeaks staffers" had resigned by the end of September 2010, including "a key WikiLeaks programmer [who] was responsible for building the software tool WikiLeaks' volunteers were using to perform a painstaking, line-by-line harm-minimization review of the Iraq logs". WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that they "remained strong" and "no resignations have been tendered." But the damage stemming from these departures would be long lasting.

In August 2011 Julian Assange [announced](#) that Daniel Domschiet-Berg had "managed, through guile, to convince a German WikiLeaks system administrator, who was an old associate of DDB's, to obtain the keys and data for a large quantity of then pending WikiLeaks whistleblower disclosures". He said the WikiLeaks submission system had been "sabotaged". And Renata Avila [revealed](#) that she had given Domschiet-Berg "some documents detailing proof of torture and government abuse of a Latin America country".

The documents were only in hard copy. I entrusted those valuable documents – the only copy available – to Wikileaks because of the expertise of the people running it, their procedures and the mechanisms they used to maximize impact when published. I did not intend to give such material to Mr. Domscheit-Berg personally, as was made clear to him by me at the time. My intention was to give it to the platform I trusted and contributed to; to WikiLeaks.

The loss of valuable data was not the only problem WikiLeaks faced. Anonymous "former WikiLeaks insiders" quickly became a regular source of commentary for journalists writing anti-WikiLeaks articles. Domschiet-Berg quickly published a book, "Inside WikiLeaks: My Time with Julian Assange at the World's Most Dangerous Website". It sold poorly but Steven Spielberg's Dreamworks Studios nevertheless [bought the rights](#) in 2011 and partly based a [misleading](#) 2013 movie on it. In December 2010 Domschiet-Berg and Snorrason announced a rival "leaks" site called [OpenLeaks](#), to much media [acclaim](#); it disappeared after Domscheit-Berg admitted he had [destroyed](#) the files taken from WikiLeaks. These files apparently included WikiLeaks' only other copy of the US Military's Garani massacre in Afghanistan, and 5GB of data from the Bank of America.

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Despite these setbacks, WikiLeaks continued growing more popular and influential. By September 2010, "copycat" leaking sites were [appearing](#) around the world and over 250 books had [apparently](#) been published based on WikiLeaks revelations. The UK's New Statesman magazine [listed](#) Assange in their top 50 world's most influential people for 2010. On 26 September 2010, the day before Julian Assange left Sweden, WikiLeaks [tweeted](#): "Successfully completed our next three films.

Thank you team and supporters."

A viral video in late July 2010, [WWWar on the Internet](#) from Rap News - a group of young Melbourne-based activists - was indicative of WikiLeaks' widespread public support at the time. An Assange impersonator rapped:

"The site's purpose is to provide a safe haven / In the new dawn of information, documentation, / whistle-blowing, bell-ringing, all of this / you can lick it using our unique technologies."

Three months later the Rap News [War on Journalism](#) video featured Julian Assange himself, unmasking his impersonator. By October 2021 this video had over a million views.

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Increasing popularity meant increasing public donations, which remained WikiLeaks' only means of financial support. But on 13 August 2010, the UK-registered internet payment company Moneybookers, which collected donations for WikiLeaks, [advised](#) them that their account was being closed. The decision was made less than a week after the Pentagon's public threats of reprisals against WikiLeaks. Moneybookers, which later rebranded as Skrill, revealed that the WikiLeaks organisation had been added to government blacklists in Australia and the USA.

On 14 October WikiLeaks [accused](#) the US government of 'financial warfare'. Assange's bank accounts had already been frozen when he was in Sweden, and in September 2010 Facebook had frozen the 10,300 strong Bradley Manning Support Network, which hosted a Defence Fund for the accused whistle-blower.

With rumours growing of a huge upcoming leak of US data from Iraq, staff at the Pentagon were also under pressure. In Washington DC, James Clapper, the Obama administration's new Director of National Intelligence, [told](#) a conference on intelligence reform that the President was full of "angst" over the "hemorrhage" of leaks of sensitive intelligence from government officials.

Citing the WikiLeaks release, Clapper said that intelligence agencies would have to be more restrained about sharing information as a result.

On 18 October the Pentagon [warned](#) news organizations not to publish classified US documents that were "due to be released by WikiLeaks". A spokesman said "news organizations should be cautioned not to facilitate the leaking of classified documents with this disreputable organization known as WikiLeaks." Reuters reported that US officials were "braced for a mass disclosure of leaked Iraq war files".

WikiLeaks, which in July released some 70,000 U.S. documents on the Afghanistan war, is expected soon to post on its website as many as 500,000 classified leaked U.S. documents from the Iraq war.

Over seven hundred articles about the imminent release were published around the world. There was just one problem with the story: it was not true.

As WikiLeaks later [tweeted](#), newspapers and newswires all over the world had been "fooled by a tabloid blog - and each other". And that blog was from WIRED magazine.

Wired's blog is not just any source that lacks credibility. It is a known opponent and spreader of all sorts of misinformation about WikiLeaks. This dramatically ramped up since we demanded an investigation into what role they played in the arrest of the alleged journalistic source, US intelligence analyst, Bradley Manning.

Rixstep News [provided](#) a short list of "the more prominent idiots who hopped on the bandwagon on the basis of a single source of highly dubious value".

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The next day, network security analyst Nadim Kobeissi [wrote](#) that WikiLeaks revelations had "turned the Internet into a war zone". He predicted that the outcome of their battle with US authorities would "change the face of the world".

On one side, WikiLeaks has assembled the brightest and most dedicated hacker-activists in an effort to turn the Internet into a bastion of transparency and information freedom.

On the other side, the United States has combined its Department of Defense, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Security Agency in an attempt to clamp down on the Internet with censorship and encryption-banning laws... Unlike the Internet, the U.S. has rulers, and those rulers aren't yet accustomed to how the people of the Internet see knowledge as free. In fact, they are threatened by it.

Kobeissi said the USA now found itself "punishing the truth-speaking and fighting those who stick by their own motto of truth and bravery." He called it "a battle of applied ethics: information transparency versus the ideal that some are more fit to know than others."

There is no question that the side that will win this ethical battle will be the one to define, at least for the coming decade, if information transparency is nurturing or destructive.

24 hours later, [tweets](#) from WikiLeaks [confirmed](#) the dramatic intensity of this "Information War".

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Iraq War Logs

In the end it was [Democracy Now!](#) who got the exclusive story on the upcoming leak, including an

interview with Daniel Ellsberg, just before he jumped on a plane to London, where he appeared on stage with Julian Assange at the 23 October 2010 press conference. Ellsberg said he was "quite jealous" of WikiLeaks' technical capabilities, noting that he had to manually [Xerox](#) 7,000 pages in 1971 - "and I couldn't have done what I did ten years before that."

"But I'm glad to express my support of what WikiLeaks is doing and its sources, in particular. Whoever gave this information to WikiLeaks obviously understood that they were at risk of being where Bradley Manning is now."

Ellsberg noted that US authorities were "crying alarm over this, as they always do" but they "know what's coming out".

"I think that one should take their warnings now with a lot of salt... And in terms of blood on their hands, I'm sorry to say, a lot of actual blood has been spilled, as opposed to this hypothetical possible blood, of which none has been reported, from WikiLeaks."

As usual, WikiLeaks sought to [maximise](#) attention on their leak, urging supporters to keep an eye on media partners ahead of the release. New media partners included Al Jazeera, Le Monde, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, and the Swedish public broadcaster Sveriges Television (Al Jazeera [broke](#) the agreed embargo by releasing stories 30 minutes early). WikiLeaks also published a lengthy [statement](#) to help media avoid factual mistakes:

WikiLeaks has a history breaking major stories in major media outlets and robustly protecting sources and press freedoms. We have never revealed a source. We do not censor material. Since formation in 2007, WikiLeaks has been victorious over every legal (and illegal) attack, including those from the Pentagon, the Chinese Public Security Bureau, the former president of Kenya, the Premier of Bermuda, Scientology, the Catholic & Mormon Church, the largest Swiss private bank, and Russian companies.

WikiLeaks pointed readers to the numerous stories being published about the Iraq War Logs, which were eventually published in searchable format at the same WikiLeaks [War Diaries page](#) as the Afghan War Diary files.

The 391,831 US Army Sigacts (Significant Actions) from Iraq - then the largest leak of classified military material in history - revealed that civilian casualties were much higher than previously estimated. US General Tommy Franks famously told a reporter "we don't do body counts" but that turned out to be a lie. The non-profit Iraq Body Count project had to add 15,000 more civilian deaths to their tally. Civilians were routinely killed for coming too close to US military checkpoints and US troops often classified civilian deaths as enemy casualties. Even the two Reuters journalists killed in the Collateral Murder video, along with men accompanying them, were officially listed as "enemy killed in action". Private contractors working with the US military were also routinely killing civilians with no accountability.

The BBC [focused](#) on how US forces turned a blind eye to the torture of prisoners by their Iraqi colleagues, "sometimes using electrocution, electric drills and in some cases even executing detainee". One victim had chemicals poured on his hands and his fingers cut off. In another incident, US troops confiscated a "hand cranked generator with wire clamps" from a Baghdad police station. Reports of abuse were sent up the chain of command but then marked "no further investigation".

The Guardian [reported](#) that US troops actually handed over Iraqi prisoners to an Iraqi torture squad called the Wolf Brigade, which was created by the US "in an attempt to re-employ elements of Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard".

The interrogator told the prisoner in explicit terms that: "He would be subject to all the pain and agony that the Wolf battalion is known to exact upon its detainees."

Glenn Greenwald [noted](#) how the New York Times deliberately ignored this important story. Instead the USA's "newspaper of record" prominently featured what Greenwald [called](#) "a sleazy hit piece on Assange, filled with every tawdry, scurrilous tabloid rumor about him". The article, titled "WikiLeaks Founder on the Run, Trailed by Notoriety", did at least feature one memorable quote from Assange:

"When it comes to the point where you occasionally look forward to being in prison on the basis that you might be able to spend a day reading a book, the realization dawns that perhaps the situation has become a little more stressful than you would like."

After the constant criticism about redactions in the Afghan War Logs, WikiLeaks had changed their process for redacting the Iraq data: now all names were [replaced](#) or blanked out. WikiLeaks was then accused of "over-redaction", with critics [noting](#) that even Pentagon FOIA releases of certain identical documents provided more information.

Once again US officials said the leak of confidential documents was "a tragedy" and "criminal", while also insisting that they revealed nothing of interest.

A US Department of Defense spokesman dismissed the documents published by the whistleblowing website as raw observations by tactical units, which were only snapshots of tragic, mundane events.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton again suggested that WikiLeaks "put lives at risk". On FOX news, a former State Department official [demanded](#) that President Obama seize Assange and other WikiLeaks staff, then treat them as "enemy combatants".

Calling for "non-judicial action" against them, he implied that they should be in Guantanamo Bay with Taliban inmates.

An editorial in the conservative Washington Times said the US government should be "waging war

on the WikiLeaks web presence." Syndicated columnist Jonah Goldberg wrote an article titled "Why is Assange still alive?" and claimed the WikiLeaks leader should have been "garroted in his hotel room years ago."

The most bizarre headline came from the New York Post, which ridiculously declared: "There were weapons of mass destruction after all"! Of course it was not true:

Closer inspection of passages referring to the discovery of equipment by coalition forces in Iraq reveal they were left over from early efforts by Saddam Hussein to build a deadly arsenal and do not point to his concealing hardware when the invasion was ordered.

Meanwhile the UN High Commissioner and other international organizations called for the new information to be investigated fully, and those responsible for any crimes to be held accountable. In Baghdad, the Iraqi News Network called on Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to resign over the shocking revelations:

The WikiLeaks documents revealed very important secrets, but the most painful among them are not those that focus on the occupier, but those that reveal what the Iraqi forces, Iraqi government and politicians did against their citizens. Those leaders who returned to remove Iraq from oppression toppled the dictator but then carried out acts that were worse than Saddam himself.

And in a positive sign of how the media was slowly learning to deal with these huge data dumps, the Guardian published a zoom-able map of Iraq showing each Sigact as a red dot that could be clicked to reveal details.

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Two days after releasing the Iraq War Logs, Julian Assange was recognised with the [Sam Adams Award for Intelligence Integrity](#). The annual award is decided by a group of retired CIA officers and named after Samuel A. Adams, a CIA whistleblower during the Vietnam War. It was an important sign that Assange still enjoyed some support within the secretive US intelligence community.

Soon afterwards, Assange [told](#) a Frontline Club audience that WikiLeaks had too much leaked material and not enough funds to manage any more incoming leaks, so they had temporarily closed their submission system. He did not yet reveal his allegations that the system had been [sabotaged](#) by former staff because he was still hoping to retrieve the "stolen" material via protracted negotiations.

As the fallout from the Iraq War Logs continued, the USA continued harrassing people connected to WikiLeaks or Chelsea Manning. On 3 November 2010, a 23-year-old MIT researcher named David House got the same US airport treatment as Jacob Applebaum months earlier. Glenn Greenwald [reported](#):

House's crime: he did work in helping set up the Bradley Manning Support Network, an organization created to raise money for Manning's legal defense fund, and he has now visited Manning three times in Quantico, Virginia, where the accused WikiLeaks leaker is currently being detained (all those visits are fully monitored by government agents). Like Appelbaum, House has never been accused of any crime, never been advised that he's under investigation, and was never told by any federal agents that he's suspected of any wrongdoing at all.

House, who was on Manning's Facebook friends list at the time of her arrest, said he was told that one of the agents was with the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force. The FBI [denied](#) any involvement. Appelbaum [tweeted](#) that after four months his confiscated equipment still had not been returned.

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The weeks leading up to the 26 November 2010 release dubbed "Cablegate" were incredibly stressful. While the US government was angry about the release of military data from Iraq and Afghanistan, they were far more concerned about the huge cache of US State Department cables - seven times the size of the Iraq War Logs - that they already knew Chelsea Manning had also leaked. They were already discussing it with the New York Times.

On 5 November 2010 WikiLeaks surprisingly [tweeted](#) that Assange was seeking asylum in Switzerland. Assange was in Geneva ahead of an historic examination by the UN Human Rights Council of the USA's sorry record on human rights. He delivered a two hour speech, offering up evidence from the Iraq War logs of human right abuses and torture, and [warned](#) that the USA was "in grave danger of losing its way". He urged US leaders to stop their "aggressive investigation" into his organisation and "open up instead of covering up". WikiLeaks later [revealed](#):

During his stay in Geneva the Swiss government was so fearful for his personal security that they offered two International Police and two Swiss Police as his bodyguards for the duration, yet another indication of the severity of the danger he encounters on a daily basis.

While in Switzerland, Assange worked hard to keep WikiLeaks afloat in the difficult weeks ahead. He met with members of the Swiss Pirate Party, whose [wikileaks.ch](#) mirror site remained online when the WikiLeaks.org site came under attack a month later. He also opened a bank account through the Swiss postal system in Bern, which [provided](#) a temporary route for donations to WikiLeaks: the account was also [shut down](#) a month later. WikiLeaks later [tweeted](#) that the "US pressured Switzerland to refuse Assange asylum".

In early November 2010 the CIA refused to either confirm or deny plans to assassinate Julian Assange, [turning down](#) a Freedom of Information (FOI) request for any related files. Instead CIA Director Leon Panetta publicly [announced](#) a full investigation of WikiLeaks revelations and claimed - again without providing evidence - that "in some cases, CIA sources and methods have been compromised, harming our mission and endangering lives." Somewhat ironically, he insisted that such leaks "cannot be tolerated" while releasing an internal CIA memo to the media.

In an internal memo, released to the media Monday, the director said that sharing information "cannot extend beyond the limits set by law and the 'need to know' principle. The media, the public, even former colleagues, are not entitled to details of our work."

Meanwhile, a prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC) [declared](#) that the WikiLeaks war logs could eventually be used in a war crimes trial with US citizens in the dock. The UN's special rapporteur on torture [said](#) he hoped to visit Iraq to probe the exposed "widespread practice of torture" and also wanted to visit Guantanamo Bay. And the Danish military apparently [asked](#) WikiLeaks for an unredacted version of the war logs, after being rebuffed by the USA.

While Assange's lawyers urgently [appealed](#) against his extradition to Sweden, WikiLeaks [pointed](#) to evidence of US spying in Sweden, and the war logs revealed that Swedish weapons were being [used](#) by both sides in the Iraq war. Nevertheless, on 20 November 2010 Sweden [issued](#) another warrant for the arrest of Julian Assange.

Within 48 hours, journalists around the world united to express their [support](#) for Assange and WikiLeaks:

Mr. Assange is no more guilty of espionage than any journalist or any whistleblower. This is a terrible precedent and one that is contrary to open government. If it is espionage to publish documents provided by whistleblowers, then every journalist will eventually be guilty of that crime.

*

While frantic US government officials were struggling to contain the fallout from the war logs, finding new ways to block WikiLeaks activities, and preparing for the next shocking release, New Zealand journalist Nicky Hager was [enjoying](#) the "relaxed and friendly" atmosphere inside the secret "bunker" in the Guardian's London offices.

The atmosphere in that room was far removed from the portrayals of WikiLeaks coming from its critics... Much of the time it was completely silent, apart from typing, as they focused on formatting materials and liaising with media organisations in preparation for the release.

You might imagine a room full of hackers and other shadowy types. But the small inner core of WikiLeaks' workers was mainly journalists and computer specialists: competent, strikingly free of egotism and personal conflict, and very focused on the work that needed to be done.

But it wasn't all beer and roses. According to a [book](#) later published by Der Spiegel's Holger Stark and Marcel Rosenbach, Assange was angry at the New York Times' earlier "hit piece" (published on their Iraq War Logs front page) and decided to partner with the Washington Post and McClatchy

instead. But Guardian editor David Leigh had already (secretly) given the Times a copy of the Cablegate files. And a "rogue" copy of the files had been given to another British journalist, Heather Brooke, by an Icelandic "former WikiLeaks supporter". An urgent meeting of the major media partners was arranged for the first day of November.

The Guardian and the New York Times had already begun concrete preparations in early October to publish the embassy cables without WikiLeaks' consent. Under their plan, WikiLeaks was not to be informed until one or two days before publication. There was even a tentative publication date: Friday, Nov. 5, 2010. Assange had threatened to immediately publish all of the cables online if the two publications went ahead with their plans.

Assange turned up late to the meeting, accompanied by lawyers, and coughing repeatedly due to "stress". Guardian Editor-in-Chief Alan Rusbridger (David Leigh's brother in law) also summoned a lawyer. Things quickly got messy. Assange pointed to his contract with the Guardian, who in turn pointed to the "rogue" files and suggested their contract was now meaningless. The New York Times, who did not even send a representative to the meeting, claimed the Guardian was now their source, not WikiLeaks.

NOTE

Both the Guardian and the New York Times were in financial peril in 2010 as readers flocked to online news, where advertising revenues did not cover production costs. By June 2012 the Guardian Media Group was reportedly losing £100,000 a day. The CEO's announcement of a "digital-first" approach in 2011 was a "major transformation" largely inspired by the success of their WikiLeaks partnership. Meanwhile the New York Times moved to a paywall subscription model in 2011. The Guardian was [desperate](#) to break into the US market. These considerations would surely have figured in conversations between Rusbridger and the NYT's EIC Bill Keller.

According to Stark and Rosenbach "the mood became somewhat more relaxed after about an hour" when lawyers had left the room and "Rusbridger opened a bottle of Chablis". Nevertheless heated discussions continued, over a restaurant dinner and more bottles of wine, till after 1 a.m. Eventually a "gentlemen's agreement" - with no signed contracts - was reached:

Publication was not to begin before the end of November, the topics were to relate to selected countries at first and to have global significance, SPIEGEL and the Guardian were to be given access to the material, and the Guardian would sign a contract with Heather Brooke, thereby ensuring that the second copy of the cables would not present a problem... The group agreed to publish on Nov. 28, 2010, when all media organizations involved would go online simultaneously at 10:30 p.m. EST.

Julian Assange also made it clear that WikiLeaks "didn't want to be in the front row" for this release.

"We can't handle the entire printing. It won't work this time. The material is too dramatic for that," he said. "We have to survive this leak."

Meanwhile, the US government was pursuing its own political strategy. This time the State Department "actually participated in the redaction process", as John Goetz recalled. In fact, State Department officials in touch with the New York Times and the Guardian were already demanding to know exactly which cables would be published. Guardian EIC Alan Rusbridger was seriously [concerned](#) that he and his staff could end up in jail:

The lawyers were quite worried saying they could lock you up they could extradite you, you could be, you know, forbidden from ever going to America, they could do you under the espionage act, they could do this, this and this.

Less than a week before the agreed publication date, Clinton's diplomats made three concrete requests to the five major media partners (including France's Le Monde and Spain's El País) with whom they sought no quarrel:

First, they wanted the names of US government sources to be protected if leaks posed a danger to life and limb. This was a policy that all five media organizations involved already pursued. Second, they asked the journalists to exercise restraint when it came to cables with security implications. Third, they asked them to be aware that cables relating to counterterrorism are extremely sensitive. Otherwise, the officials pointed out, they had no wish to impose content restrictions on the media organizations. The official fury of the US government was directed at the presumed source, Bradley Manning, and, most of all, WikiLeaks.

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Chapter Eight: End 2010

On 24 November 2010 the Pentagon [warned](#) the US Senate and House Armed Services Committees that WikiLeaks and its media partners were preparing to release "several hundred thousand" classified US State Department cables in the next few days. A spokeswoman called it "an irresponsible attempt to wreak havoc and destabilize global security". WikiLeaks accused the Pentagon of "[hyperventilating](#)".

The New York Times had already shared the leaked Cablegate archive with the US State Department, which was now busy preparing allied governments for the impact of the disclosures. On 26 November 2010, the US Ambassador [visited](#) 10 Downing Street in London, while Hillary Clinton [briefed](#) Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd. WikiLeaks tweeted that US officials were also contacting government ministers in Canada, Denmark, Norway, Israel, Iraq, Turkey, Russia and Iceland.

Assange was angry at the Guardian for leaking the cables to the New York Times, and angry at the Times for contacting the US State Department, but he also took the opportunity - perhaps as a protective measure - to offer the US State Department a final opportunity to specify any cables that would endanger lives. On 26 November he personally [wrote](#) to the US Ambassador in London:

Subject to the general objective of ensuring maximum disclosure of information in the public interest, WikiLeaks would be grateful for the United States Government to privately nominate any specific instances (record numbers or names) where it considers the publication of information would put individual persons at significant risk of harm that has not already been addressed. WikiLeaks will respect the confidentiality of advice provided by the United States Government and is prepared to consider any such submissions made without delay.

The private offer was publicly declined, with a US legal adviser's response released to the media on the following day:

We will not engage in a negotiation regarding the further release or dissemination of illegally obtained U.S. Government classified materials.

A press release from the White House, just hours before the Cablegate release, insisted that the disclosures would put at risk US "diplomats, intelligence professionals, and people around the world who come to the United States for assistance in promoting democracy and open government."

President Obama supports responsible, accountable, and open government at home and around the world, but this reckless and dangerous action runs counter to that goal. By releasing stolen and classified documents, Wikileaks has put at risk not only the cause of human rights but also the lives and work of these individuals.

Assange responded by email that WikiLeaks had "absolutely no desire to put individual persons at significant risk of harm, nor do we wish to harm the national security of the United States". He lamented that the US government had rejected his offer for "constructive dialogue and chosen a confrontational approach".

I understand that the United States government would prefer not to have the information that will be published in the public domain and is not in favour of openness. That said, either there is a risk or there is not. You have chosen to respond in a manner which leads me to conclude that the supposed risks are entirely fanciful and you are instead concerned to suppress evidence of human rights abuse and other criminal behaviour. We will now proceed to release the material subject to our checks and the

checks of our media partners unless you get back to me, as you promised in the call with our lawyers last Friday.

As usual, the much-hyped threats to human lives never materialised. By the time the cables were published, the US State Department had weeks to prepare for the impact. Even allied governments were prepared.

Cablegate

As over two hundred and fifty thousand documents from the US State Department began spilling into the public domain on 28 November 2010, there was no initial release from WikiLeaks, not even a press conference. The media partners posted their reports, describing explosive secrets from countries all around the world, while WikiLeaks merely published the corresponding diplomatic cables. Assange was keeping a low profile.

Articles based on the first 220 files were published by El País (Spain), Der Spiegel (Germany), Le Monde (France), The Guardian (United Kingdom) and The New York Times (United States). The material was to be published over a period of several weeks, with other global media organisations gradually involved, thus maximising impact.

After months of work, New Zealand journalist Nicky Hager was "lucky enough" to be with the WikiLeaks team at a secret location "somewhere outside London" when the first cables were released. He said he "had a feeling of being present as history was being made". Then the WikiLeaks website came under attack.

The first bundle of documents went live at 6pm British time and immediately there was a massive denial of service attack. Unknown people somewhere in the world were bombarding the WikiLeaks' websites, trying to close them down.

Everything was focused on a computer specialist who had arrived at the house to donate his time to overseeing the launch. He was obviously at the top of his profession. Everyone seemed in awe of his skills. He had prepared for the launch, typing computer code faster than most journalists can write words, apparently working straight through the night. Now he was engrossed in fending off the cyber attack: monitoring the waves of incoming traffic and identifying and blocking the attackers. The mood was tense until, after a long 30 minutes, he looked up with a little smile and said the attack seemed to be over.

WikiLeaks continued fighting off similar attacks for several days. Despite all the stress, Julian Assange was in a buoyant mood.

Working in that crowded room, he was very focused, but also good

humoured and thoughtful of others. For someone at the centre of international news attention, and an international man-hunt, he seemed calm and considered, and not to be taking himself too seriously. He is clearly the central force in the organisation, but there were gutsy people working around him as well. Sometimes they sought his decisions on things and other times they bossed him around.

The leaked cables, dated from 1966 to February 2010, disclosed confidential communications between the State Department in Washington DC and 274 US embassies around the world. 15,652 of the cables were classified "secret", with another 101,748 "confidential" and 133,887 "unclassified". A WikiLeaks [press release](#) said the cables would give people around the world "an unprecedented insight into US Government foreign activities".

The cables show the extent of US spying on its allies and the UN; turning a blind eye to corruption and human rights abuse in "client states"; backroom deals with supposedly neutral countries; lobbying for US corporations; and the measures US diplomats take to advance those who have access to them.

This document release reveals the contradictions between the US's public persona and what it says behind closed doors – and shows that if citizens in a democracy want their governments to reflect their wishes, they should ask to see what's going on behind the scenes.

The Guardian's first big story [revealed](#) that US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had ordered her staff to spy on top United Nations officials, including the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, and the Permanent Security Council representatives from China, Russia, France and the UK. Washington wanted biometric data including "DNA, fingerprints and iris scans", along with "credit card numbers, email addresses, phone, fax and pager numbers and even frequent-flyer account numbers". This was a clear breach of the 1961 Vienna Convention, which covers the UN. Another cable revealed that this spying was done at the [behest](#) of the CIA. In an interview with Time magazine, Julian Assange called for Hillary Clinton to resign:

"She should resign, if it can be shown that she was responsible for ordering US diplomatic figures to engage in espionage in the United Nations, in violation of the international covenants to which the US has signed up. Yes, she should resign over that."

Assange later [suggested](#) that President Obama should also resign, if he had approved the spying.

The New York Times [revealed](#) that US and British diplomats also spied on UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in the weeks before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which Annan declared "illegal". State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley blithely dismissed public shock at these revelations.

"This is what diplomats, from our country and other countries, have done for hundreds of years."

US officials claimed that most of the cables only revealed diplomats hard at work, often doing good things like putting pressure on the Saudi government to let women drive cars. As usual, the latest WikiLeaks release was simultaneously "recklessly dangerous" and "putting lives at risk" but also "nothing to see here".

Citizens around the world, however, were shocked by what they discovered. For example: the USA had [nuclear weapons](#) in Denmark; European allies were ready to quit the war in Afghanistan; the USA had [deliberately undermined](#) the UN's 2009 global climate summit in Copenhagen; the USA sought to derail delivery of subsidised Venezuelan petroleum in order to protect the business interests of US oil companies; US companies pressured the government to block an increase in Haiti's minimum wage. In Mexico, the US ambassador [resigned](#) after a leaked cable revealed his complaints about government handling of the war on drug cartels.

In Tunisia, a cable from the US Ambassador [reported](#) that President Ben Ali and his regime had "lost touch with the Tunisian people" and were "relying on the police" to cling to power.

Corruption in the inner circle is growing. Even average Tunisians are now keenly aware of it, and the chorus of complaints is rising. Tunisians intensely dislike, even hate, first lady Leila Trabelsi and her family. In private, regime opponents mock her; even those close to the government express dismay at her reported behaviour. Meanwhile, anger is growing at Tunisia's high unemployment and regional inequities. As a consequence, the risks to the regime's long-term stability are increasing.

Ten days after this news was reported, a Tunisian market stall holder named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire, sparking local riots that spread and eventually triggered "Arab Spring" revolutions across the Middle East. Many of the protestors cited WikiLeaks revelations as conclusive evidence of long-suspected corruption.

A blogger at [The Arabist](#) suggested that the Cablegate leaks had particular impact in the Arab world, where media criticism of the US government was seldom tolerated despite widespread public cynicism. Pakistan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern nations were especially impacted by the cables, with neighbouring Iraq and Afghanistan among the most discussed topics.

The leaked cables lead to hundreds of stories around the world (well beyond the scope of this book) and an avalanche of diplomatic fallout which continued for many years. Even a decade later, old US cables were still being produced as evidence whenever cited events, facts and public figures became newsworthy. The cables were eventually merged into WikiLeaks' searchable "Plus D" [Public Library of US Diplomacy](#).

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48 hours after the first Cablegate publications, Interpol [issued](#) a warrant for Julian Assange's arrest due to "sex crimes". The timing of this shocking news, which bumped Cablegate stories off front

pages around the world, raised many eyebrows.

A day earlier, US Attorney General Eric Holder had declared an "active ongoing criminal investigation into WikiLeaks".

"Let me be clear. This is not sabre-rattling," he said, vowing to swiftly "close the gaps" in current US legislation.

Australia's Attorney General also [announced](#) an investigation into WikiLeaks. He said Australian Federal Police were looking at "potentially a number of criminal laws that could have been breached" by the Cablegate release.

"Australia will support any law enforcement action that may be taken. The United States will be the lead government in that respect".

A document from Edward Snowden later [revealed](#) that just months earlier, in August 2010, the Obama administration had urged Australia and other foreign allies to file criminal charges against Assange over the group's publication of the Afghanistan war logs".

"The appeal exemplifies the start of an international effort to focus the legal element of national power upon non-state actor Assange and the human network that supports WikiLeaks".

Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard absurdly [declared](#) that the leaking of classified documents by WikiLeaks was "illegal". But her "whole of government" investigation [closed](#) within two weeks after failing to find a single law that had been broken. Gillard still lamely insisted the leaks were "grossly irresponsible".

By contrast, her Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd [suggested](#) that lax US government security was the real problem. Former Australian security and intelligence officials later [admitted](#) that US Justice Department officials had told Australia they were "determined to get Assange, but also didn't want to make a martyr of him".

"We were all happy when he got caught up in a sexual imbroglio in Sweden," said one. "It was much better to have him facing sex crimes allegations than to argue about First Amendment freedoms in the US."

In Washington, Senator Joe Lieberman, the head of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, [said](#) disclosure of the US diplomatic cables was "nothing less than an attack on our national security". His rhetoric was typically extreme:

"Let there be no doubt: the individuals responsible are going to have blood on their hands."

Lieberman called on companies and organisations to immediately terminate their relationships with WikiLeaks.

"No responsible company - whether American or foreign - should assist WikiLeaks in its efforts to disseminate these stolen materials."

Tableau Software immediately [withdrew](#) the data visualisations that had been used to map the Iraq War Logs. More importantly, Amazon promptly refused to continue hosting WikiLeaks data on its EC2 web servers. Daniel Ellsberg was just one of many customers "[disgusted](#) by Amazon's cowardice and servility in abruptly".

"For the last several years, I've been spending over \$100 a month on new and used books from Amazon. That's over. I ask Amazon to terminate immediately my membership in Amazon Prime and my Amazon credit card and account, to delete my contact and credit information from their files and to send me no more notices."

In a pathetic attempt to appease angry customers, Amazon later [claimed](#) their action was not a response to Lieberman's call but simply enforcing their "terms and conditions" (never mind they had previously hosted the Afghan and Iraq War Logs).

On 3 December, visitors to [wikileaks.org](#) got an error page. The domain name had been shut down by the California-base provider, everydns.net, who (also rather pathetically) claimed their other customers were being negatively impacted by repeated denial-of-service attacks. WikiLeaks told visitors to go to the Swiss mirror wise [wikileaks.ch](#) instead.

Assange called these attacks on the WikiLeaks website an example of the "privatisation of state censorship".

"These attacks will not stop our mission, but should be setting off alarm bells about the rule of law in the United States."

The attacks, however, were not limited to the USA. After WikiLeaks [moved](#) some of its digital infrastructure from Amazon servers to a French Web hosting company called OVH, the French Industry Minister Eric Besson called for WikiLeaks to be banned from French servers. His call was [turned down](#) by a French judge. The High Court of Pakistan also [dismissed](#) an attempt to ban WikiLeaks.

China [blocked](#) Internet access to WikiLeaks material, with a Foreign Ministry spokesman saying that they did not wish to disturb relations with the USA. This came as the New York Times ran a [story](#) about a cable linking Chinese Communist Party chiefs with cyber-attacks on Google.

In Canada, Tom Flanagan, a former senior adviser to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, said on national television:

"I think Assange should be assassinated, actually. I think Obama should put out a contract and maybe use a drone or something."

Julian Assange said Flanagan and the others making such dangerous statements "should be charged

with incitement to commit murder."

Meanwhile, in little-noticed news, faraway Ecuador [offered](#) Assange residency with no questions asked. Deputy Foreign Minister Kintto Lucas invited the 39-year-old Australian to come to Ecuador "so he can freely present the information he possesses".

"We are ready to give him residence in Ecuador, with no problems and no conditions."

*

Global finance companies quickly followed the efforts by Amazon and Swiss bank PostFinance to shut down WikiLeaks. Bank of America, MasterCard and Visa closed down WikiLeaks accounts or suspended donations to the organisation. PayPal also froze 60,000 euros of WikiLeaks funds that had been donated via the German charity the Wau Holland Foundation. Within a week, WikiLeaks and Julian Assange [claimed](#) to have lost 100,000 euros in assets:

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Cablegate exposure is how it is throwing into relief the power dynamics between supposedly independent states like Switzerland, Sweden and Australia. WikiLeaks also has public bank accounts in Iceland (preferred) and Germany. Please help cover our expenditures while we fight to get our assets back.

Visa then [ordered](#) DataCell, a small Icelandic company that was helping WikiLeaks collect payments, to suspend all of its transactions. The CEO of DataCell promised to fight the order:

"Visa customers are contacting us in masses to confirm that they really donate and they are not happy about Visa rejecting them. It is obvious that Visa is under political pressure to close us down."

There was an immediate massive public backlash against this [borderline illegal](#) global banking blockade, which cost WikiLeaks an [estimated](#) \$250 million over the next three years.

By early December 2010, WikiLeaks already had over 340,000 followers on Twitter, while Facebook fans [reportedly](#) climbed from 375,000 to over half a million in just 24 hours. Within a week of the WikiLeaks.org website shutdown, over 500 new mirror sites had [appeared](#) around the world.

A group of #Anonymous hackers had united months earlier to create a project called [Operation Payback](#), which initially launched retaliation efforts against attacks on free torrents sites like The Pirate Bay. They now diverted their attention from pro-copyright and anti-piracy targets to launch "Operation Avenge Assange".

Hours after the PostFinance bank account of Julian Assange was frozen, the bank's website was knocked offline by "distributed denial of service" (DDoS) attacks. The next day, the hackers brought down the websites of EveryDNS and the Swedish Prosecution Authority. Then the websites of Visa and Mastercard, along with the website of Senator Joe Lieberman and Swedish lawyer Claes Borgström's legal firm. US Senator Sarah Palin was also targeted after she [said](#) Assange should be

"pursued with the same urgency we pursue al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders".

PayPal claimed that days of attacks on their website cost the company \$5.5 million; they eventually agreed to release the frozen Wau Holland Foundation funds but refused to reactivate the charity's account.

A New York Times article [reported](#) that the attacks "suggested that the loosely organized group called Anonymous might have come of age, evolving into one focused on more serious matters: in this case, the definition of Internet freedom."

The FBI later arrested 14 people, who became known as the "[Paypal 14](#)". At a 2013 court appearance, one of the defendants boldly stated:

"Anonymous is not for people to hide behind, it's an idea for people to fight behind."

WikiLeaks spokesman Kristinn Hraffnson was careful to distance his team from the hackers, but also welcomed the public show of support from like-minded groups who were outraged by constant corporate and government attacks on WikiLeaks. Julian Assange's lawyer Jennifer Robinson was obliged to deny claims that he had encouraged the DDoS attacks on behalf of WikiLeaks.

"He did not make any such instruction, and indeed he sees that as a deliberate attempt to conflate hacking organizations with WikiLeaks, which is not a hacking organization."

Similarly, while many #Anonymous groups expressed support for WikiLeaks, some "anons" maintained reservations about supporting Assange personally with the Swedish sex allegations still hanging over his head. Of course, the FBI was already [working hard](#) to infiltrate these hacker teams, divide opinions, and manipulate decision-making.

While all the above drama was unfolding, Julian Assange was staying at the London home of esteemed UK human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson and his Australian wife [Kathy Lette](#). Assange was deeply concerned by the constant death threats he was receiving from high profile public figures, but also carefully deliberating with his lawyers on how best to respond to Sweden's shocking new European Arrest Warrant.

On 5 December 2010 Assange's lawyers [revealed](#) that they had been watched by people parked outside their houses for the past week. Jennifer Robinson [told](#) ABC News they still hadn't even seen a copy of the arrest warrant.

"What we know is that an arrest warrant was issued about two weeks ago, communicated to the UK authorities, and it was sent back on the grounds that there was an administrative error. I am still trying to seek confirmation of what that was."

Despite writing to Europol, Interpol, and British authorities, none of the "various arrest warrants" were provided to them. Assange's lawyers said they were not provided with any evidence from

Sweden or even an allegation in English.

"It is highly irregular. In fact it's bizarre."

Robinson also noted that the US State Department was intentionally intimidating her by conflating client and lawyer names in correspondence:

The letter, which was released to the press, begins: "Dear Ms Robinson and Mr Assange. I am writing in response to your 26 November 2010 letter to US Ambassador Louis B Susman regarding your intention to again publish on your WikiLeaks site what you claim to be classified US government documents." Robinson said: "By eliding client and lawyer, that was a very inappropriate attempt to implicate me. That is really inappropriate to come from the State Department of all places; they understand very well the rules on attorney-client protocol."

Assange's lawyers were negotiating a date for him to appear before a court and negotiate bail. Publicly, they refused to even confirm that the WikiLeaks founder was still in Britain. But after media reported that he was "in hiding", Kristinn Hrafnsson explained: "he is not in hiding, the authorities here, the police know where he is." The Guardian reported that Assange was "seeking supporters to put up surety" and "expected to have to post bail of between £100,000 and £200,000".

Before heading to court, however, Julian Assange did a [live Q and A session](#) on the Guardian website, which almost collapsed due to the huge number of online visitors.

First question: did Assange want to return to Australia?

I am an Australian citizen and I miss my country a great deal. However, during the last weeks the Australian prime minister, Julia Gillard, and the attorney general, Robert McClelland, have made it clear that not only is my return impossible but that they are actively working to assist the United States government in its attacks on myself and our people. This brings into question what does it mean to be an Australian citizen - does that mean anything at all? Or are we all to be treated like [David Hicks](#) at the first possible opportunity merely so that Australian politicians and diplomats can be invited to the best US embassy cocktail parties.

Are you a journalist?

I coauthored my first nonfiction book by the time I was 25. I have been involved in nonfiction documentaries, newspapers, TV and internet since that time. However, it is not necessary to debate whether I am a journalist, or how our people mysteriously are alleged to cease to be journalists when

they start writing for our organisation. Although I still write, research and investigate my role is primarily that of a publisher and editor-in-chief who organises and directs other journalists.

Is the game that you are caught up in winnable?

The Cable Gate archive has been spread, along with significant material from the US and other countries to over 100,000 people in encrypted form. If something happens to us, the key parts will be released automatically. Further, the Cable Gate archives is in the hands of multiple news organisations. History will win. The world will be elevated to a better place. Will we survive? That depends on you.

Assange answered over a dozen other questions ranging from redactions and Chelsea Manning to future leaks and UFOs.

An updated European Arrest Warrant with "requested additional information" from Sweden was received by London police on the evening of 6 December 2010. The next day, Julian Assange attended the City of Westminster Magistrates Court, accompanied by lawyers and officials from the Australian High Commission.

Asked if he consented to be extradited to Sweden, Assange replied that he did not consent and would file an appeal.

Journalist John Pilger, filmmaker Ken Loach, and socialite Jemima Khan were among six people in court willing to offer surety. They all offered at least £20,000 each. An anonymous individual offered £60,000.

But there was "audible dismay" in the court when the judge refused bail. He claimed these were "serious allegations against someone who has comparatively weak community ties in this country and the means and ability to abscond". The judge also stated, for the benefit of anyone in doubt:

"This case is not about WikiLeaks."

Spontaneous applause erupted in the courtroom as Assange was lead away. He was remanded in custody and his passport was seized. He was then transported to Wandsworth Prison in south London and placed in solitary confinement.

*

On the same day that Julian Assange was jailed, 7 December 2010, US officials confirmed to the Australian embassy in Washington that the Justice Department was conducting an "active and vigorous inquiry into whether Julian Assange can be charged under US law, most likely the 1917 Espionage Act". They said: "the WikiLeaks case is unprecedented both in its scale and nature". Two weeks later the embassy advised Canberra that media reports of a secret WikiLeaks grand jury were "likely true". In spite of this, Australian government officials publicly pretended for over eight

years that Assange's extradition case was just about the Swedish sex allegations.

On the following day, 8 December 2010, the UK Independent [revealed](#) that informal discussions had already taken place between US and Swedish officials over the possibility of Assange being delivered into US custody. Anonymous diplomatic sources indicated that the USA had agreed not to reveal charges, prompting an extradition request, until "after legal proceedings are concluded in Sweden".

"Sources stressed that no extradition request would be submitted until and unless the US government laid charges against Mr Assange, and that attempts to take him to America would only take place after legal proceedings are concluded in Sweden."

One of the two prosecutors attached to the WikiLeaks Grand Jury was US attorney Neil McBride, who made a name for himself in the wake of the 2001 terror attacks by [demanding](#) extraterritorial applications of US criminal law.

"Criminals today aren't confined by borders and neither are we."

This approach aligned neatly with the dominant US Neoconservative view that, with the end of the Cold War, the USA was now the sole superpower and thus "[the American Century](#)" was just beginning. MacBride was nominated by President Obama to run the Eastern District jurisdiction, which is home to both the Pentagon and the CIA and handles most US "national security" cases, until he was forced to [resign](#) from his "dream job" in 2013. In addition to WikiLeaks, MacBride was involved in prosecuting National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden and the Megaupload file-sharing site's German founder Kim Dotcom.

Senator Joe Lieberman was also keen to expand existing laws. On 2 December 2010, he [announced](#) a plan to amend the 1917 Espionage Act in order "to go after WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange." John Ensign (who resigned 6 months later due to a sex scandal) was one of two Republican Senators who co-signed the bipartisan plan.

"Julian Assange and his cronies, in their effort to hinder our war efforts, are creating a hit list for our enemies by publishing the names of our human intelligence sources," said Ensign. "Our sources are bravely risking their lives when they stand up against the tyranny of al-Qaeda, the Taliban and murderous regimes, and I simply will not stand idly by as they become death targets because of Julian Assange. Let me be very clear, WikiLeaks is not a whistleblower website and Assange is not a journalist."

The argument that Assange was not a journalist was widely repeated in the media, implicitly suggesting that the Australian would not receive US First Amendment protections if he was charged under US law.

The CIA meanwhile [set up](#) a new "WikiLeaks Task Force", whose official acronym W.T.F. was met with much mirth by WikiLeaks supporters. And the Daily Beast reported that the Obama

administration was planning "a major reshuffling of diplomats, military officers, and intelligence operatives at US embassies around the world out of concern that WikiLeaks has made it impossible — if not dangerous — for many of the Americans to remain in their current posts".

Journalists who worked with WikiLeaks were also under growing pressure as stories continued appearing. The editors of El País wrote a strong [editorial](#) defending their decision to publish the cables:

The publication of the diplomatic cables has stirred international opinion and surprised some governments, who often adduce false arguments to downplay or discredit this news bomb. The security of individual sources has been assured by eliminating names and data that might endanger them, as the reader will have noticed. The media that have published the revelations have acted within the limits sketched out by the US Supreme Court in the Pentagon Papers case, opting for freedom of information and the citizen's right to know. As for the relevance of the information, the pages of this newspaper speak for themselves.

There is no historical precedent for this in term of scope, as it affects so many conflicts throughout the world. The revelations show a seamy side of the political world, about which we all had well-grounded suspicions, but no clear certainty. We are, in a sense, freer now than we were before, which is as much as journalism can hope to achieve.

Meanwhile, US Air Force staff and other US government employees were blocked from accessing the news websites of El País, the Guardian, the New York Times or other news organisations reporting on the WikiLeaks cables. The Wall Street Journal reported on 15 December 2010 that at least 25 sites were barred. Staff who attempted to access them received an on-screen message: "Access denied. Internet usage is logged and monitored."

Despite all these attacks, TIME magazine argued that WikiLeaks was [winning](#) the "asymmetric info war" and Assange's arrest was "a win, not a loss, for his organization". The more brutally the US government cracked down on WikiLeaks, the more public support the organisation achieved.

*

On 14 December 2010 Julian Assange's mother Christine gave Australian media a [written statement](#) from her son after visiting him in jail:

"My convictions are unfaltering. I remain true to the ideals I have expressed... This circumstance shall not shake them. If anything, this process has increased my determination that they are true and correct," he wrote.

Julian Assange was released from jail two days later after supporters posted a massive £200,000 bail. He addressed a huge gathering of supporters and flashbulb-popping journalists outside London's Royal Courts of Justice.

"Well, it's great to feel the fresh air of London again," he told the cheering crowd. "I have enough anger to last me 100 years, but I will channel that into my work... I don't have too many fears about being extradited to Sweden. There are much bigger concerns about being extradited to the United States... I hope to continue my work and continue protesting my innocence in this matter."

Assange [described](#) his conditions in jail as "solitary confinement in the bottom of a Victorian prison."

Despite granting bail, the UK High Court ruled that Assange would have to wear an electronic ankle tag, abide by a curfew from 10 pm to 8 am, and report daily to the local police station. His passport was not returned.

In granting bail [the judge] stipulated that two of Mr. Assange's closest WikiLeaks associates, Joseph Farrell and Sarah Harrison, were required to add financial guarantees to those from the prominent people who had vouched for Mr. Assange.

NOTE

Assange was now frequently photographed by the media in the company of [Sarah Harrison](#), who modestly [described herself](#) as "just a blonde girl" with "the most boring name ever". Harrison had joined WikiLeaks to help with the Afghan War Diaries after previously working as an investigative researcher for The Bureau of Investigative Journalism and the Centre for Investigative Journalism.

The WikiLeaks founder was effectively placed under house arrest at a 10-bedroom Norfolk mansion named Ellingham Hall, which was owned by Vaughan Smith, the founder of the Frontline Club for journalists.

The supposedly left-wing Guardian newspaper had a noticeably [odd take](#) on these court proceedings. Luke Harding and Sam Jones claimed that "it was the maverick British establishment that rode to the rescue of Julian Assange, offering to whisk him from dull confinement in Wandsworth jail to a large and comfy manor house".

For once, Assange was not the star at the afternoon bail hearing at Westminster magistrates' court... Instead the hero was Vaughan Smith, a former army officer, journalist adventurer and rightwing libertarian.

They said Assange could look forward to "pheasant dinners, port and brisk walks around the estate" but "according to friends, Assange shows little interest in food, and is invariably late for

meals."

By contrast, Vaughan Smith told the court Assange was "a very honourable person, hugely clever, self-deprecating and warm. Not the kind of things you read about."

*

Speaking to journalists outside Ellingham Hall the next day, Assange said the threat of onwards extradition to the United States "seems to be increasingly serious and increasingly likely."

Unbeknownst to Assange, two new prongs of attack were already underway. Firstly the US government was demanding the private Twitter account details of WikiLeaks insiders. And the Bank of America, which was rumoured to be the target of WikiLeaks' next big release, had contracted private security companies to go after the whistle-blowing site.

A day later, on 18 December 2010, US vice-president Joe Biden was asked about Assange on NBC's Meet the Press.

Asked if he saw Assange as closer to a hi-tech terrorist than the whistleblower who released the Pentagon papers in the 1970s, which disclosed the lie on which US involvement in Vietnam was based, Biden replied: "I would argue it is closer to being a hi-tech terrorist than the Pentagon papers".

On the previous day, Biden had said "I don't think there's any substantive damage" from the WikiLeaks publications. Now he walked that back:

"He's made it more difficult for us to conduct our business with our allies and our friends. For example, in my meetings – you know I meet with most of these world leaders – there is a desire now to meet with me alone, rather than have staff in the room. It makes things more cumbersome – so it has done damage."

Meanwhile a new Rap News [video](#) had dropped:

Is WikiLeaks really the greatest threat that we face?
Or is it the response we are seeing in defence of the state?
A response that is building and seeks
To turn back the clock on freedom of speech
And fundamental rights earned over a century.
This should ring alarm bells for all who know their history...
History books will be written about events this month:
The story they will tell is up to us.

*

Chapter Nine: Early 2011

Early 2011 saw the US government stepping up multiple attacks on WikiLeaks, despite continuing widespread public support for the brave whistle-blowing publishers. Meanwhile, former media partners were quickly turning into hostile critics.

At this stage, many observers (including [myself](#)) were beginning to wonder if Julian Assange might have [Aspergers Syndrome](#). He brushed away such suggestions as unimportant but was later [diagnosed](#) with the condition. People with Aspergers Syndrome are on the high-functioning end of the Autism Spectrum and often extremely intelligent. They are sometimes accused of lacking empathy when in fact they may just be lacking certain social skills, and they can often become obsessed with certain topics. Giveaway symptoms for Assange included his long, rambling, monotone speeches, his fearless approach to public criticism, and his frequent capacity to infuriate people around him with his single-minded determination.

Bank of America

On 30 November 2010, a day after the Cablegate release, shares in Bank of America [dived](#) by 3 percent as rumours spread that it would be the target of WikiLeaks' next big release.

On Monday, Julian Assange, founder of the WikiLeaks, said his group plans to release tens of thousands of internal documents from a major U.S. bank early next year, according to an interview posted online by Forbes Magazine.

Interviewed in Malaysia a year earlier, Assange had told [IDG News Service](#):

"At the moment, for example, we are sitting on 5GB from Bank of America, one of the executive's hard drives... Now how do we present that? It's a difficult problem. We could just dump it all into one giant Zip file, but we know for a fact that has limited impact. To have impact, it needs to be easy for people to dive in and search it and get something out of it."

In the same interview, Assange revealed how WikiLeaks had learned from lack of media coverage in previous leaks:

"It's counterintuitive," he said. "You'd think the bigger and more important the document is, the more likely it will be reported on but that's absolutely not true. It's about supply and demand. Zero supply equals high demand, it has value. As soon as we release the material, the supply goes to infinity, so the perceived value goes to zero."

He said WikiLeaks wanted to "get as much substantive information as possible into the historical record, keep it accessible, and provide incentives for people to turn it into something that will

achieve political reform."

The Cablegate release had done just that. But now, with a green light from Senator Joe Lieberman (see previous chapter), Bank of America executives were keen to take proactive action against WikiLeaks. They did not know that - thanks to "disgruntled former employees" - WikiLeaks was no longer even in possession of their hard drive data.

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Virginia-based law firm Hunton & Williams (H&W) had an unprofitable data intelligence project called Team Themis, which was close to being folded in early December 2010 when [suddenly](#) they got an "urgent request" from "a major US bank" that was "seeking help against WikiLeaks".

"I need a favor. I need five to six slides on Wikileaks — who they are, how they operate and how this group may help this bank. Please advise if you can help get me something ASAP. My call is at noon"

Team Themis included staff from Palantir Technologies, Berico Technologies, and HBGary Federal, whose CEO Aaron Barr rushed out a [PowerPoint presentation](#) that called for "disinformation", "cyber attacks" and a "media campaign" against WikiLeaks.

A former Navy Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) officer, Aaron Barr insisted that US civil rights lawyer and journalist Glenn Greenwald was a critical target:

"It is this level of support we need to attack. These are established professionals that have a liberal bent, but ultimately most of them if pushed will choose professional preservation over cause, such is the mentality of most business professionals. Without the support of people like Glenn WikiLeaks would fold."

In January 2011 a [New York Times article](#) confirmed that the Bank of America's "counterespionage work" against WikiLeaks entailed constant briefings for top executives and the hiring of "several top law firms".

But in February 2011 Aaron Barr went a step too far, [boasting](#) to the Financial Times that his firm HB Gary Federal was about to expose #Anonymous hackers. In retaliation, #Anonymous hacked into HB Gary's email accounts and published 50,000 of their emails online. They also [hacked](#) Barr's Twitter and other online accounts. Thus the secret Powerpoint slides of "Team Themis" (above) were publicly exposed. The emails also suggested that Team Themis had been set up at the request of the Chamber of Commerce to infiltrate ThinkProgress and other pro-Union groups.

As Glenn Greenwald [noted](#), based on the poor quality of their research and seemingly illegal proposals, Team Themis at first looked like "just some self-promoting, fly-by-night entities of little significance". But "the firms involved here are large, legitimate and serious, and do substantial amounts of work for both the U.S. Government and the nation's largest private corporations". HBGary claimed to have a cache of "zero-day exploits" - cyber attacks for which there is no existing remedy - and expertise in "computer network attack", "custom malware development" and

"persistent software implants."

And perhaps most disturbing of all, Hunton & Williams was recommended to Bank of America's General Counsel by the Justice Department — meaning the U.S. Government is aiding Bank of America in its defense against/attacks on WikiLeaks.

Greenwald said the episode highlighted "just how lawless and unrestrained is the unified axis of government and corporate power".

The firms the Bank has hired (such as Booz Allen) are suffused with the highest level former defense and intelligence officials, while these other outside firms (including Hunton & Williams and Palantir) are extremely well-connected to the U.S. Government. The U.S. Government's obsession with destroying WikiLeaks has been well-documented. And because the U.S. Government is free to break the law without any constraints, oversight or accountability, so, too, are its "private partners" able to act lawlessly...

It's impossible to imagine the DOJ ever, ever prosecuting a huge entity like Bank of America for doing something like waging war against WikiLeaks and its supporters. These massive corporations and the firms that serve them have no fear of law or government because they control each.

Bank of America issued a "carefully worded statement". H & W refused to comment. Palantir publicly apologized "to progressive organizations in general, and Mr. Greenwald in particular, for any involvement that we may have had in these matters". HBGary distanced themselves from Aaron Barr, who resigned, and HBGary Federal was folded.

NOTE

WikiLeaks supporters were still hoping to see the release of a Bank of America executive's hard drive; the loss of this data was only [confirmed](#) months later when negotiations with Domscheit-Berg broke down and the leaked data was destroyed.

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Twitter "Subpoenas"

While financial groups sought to cut off support for WikiLeaks, the US Department of Justice was still pursuing their own avenues of attack.

On 8 January 2011, Twitter [revealed](#) that the US Department of Justice had issued them with a court order, dated 14 December 2010 ([PDF](#)), for "all records" and "correspondence" relating to accounts "registered to or associated with WikiLeaks". Julian Assange and Bradley Manning were specifically named, along with Iceland MP Birgitta Jónsdóttir, Tor developer Jacob Appelbaum, and Dutch

hacker Rop Gonggrijp, who had helped work on the Collateral Murder video.

Twitter advised affected users that they had ten days to oppose the request for information about their accounts.

"I think I am being given a message, almost like someone breathing in a phone," [tweeted](#) Jónsdóttir. "USA government wants to know about all my tweets and more since November 1st 2009. Do they realize I am a member of parliament in Iceland?"

Glenn Greenwald was [shocked](#) by the broad scope of the information sought by the Justice Department.

It includes all mailing addresses and billing information known for the user, all connection records and session times, all IP addresses used to access Twitter, all known email accounts, as well as the "means and source of payment," including banking records and credit cards. It seeks all of that information for the period beginning November 1, 2009, through the present.

The New York Times [reported](#) that this was "the first public evidence" of Attorney General Eric Holder's criminal investigation, which they expected would be "fraught with legal and political difficulties". Gonggrijp [noted](#) that the affected users only found out about the order "because Twitter did the right thing and successfully fought for a second court order so they were able to tell us". Citing concerns for his young family, Gonggrijp later terminated his public support for WikiLeaks.

The DoJ court order, which was widely misreported as a "subpoena", caused [outrage](#) on Twitter, with WikiLeaks warning that 637,000 followers were now being targeted by the US government "under section 2.B" of the order (user names and "destination IP addresses" of anyone receiving communications from the named individuals). Enraged followers threatened a class action lawsuit against the US government. Others were intimidated into unfollowing @wikileaks, but within a week the account had a [net gain](#) of 12,000 followers (hello again Streisand Effect).

Iceland's Foreign Minister Oessur Skarphedinsson [told German media](#) it was not acceptable that US authorities had demanded such information. Iceland's Interior Minister described the Justice Department's efforts as "grave and odd":

"If we manage to make government transparent and give all of us some insight into what is happening in countries involved in warfare it can only be for the good."

In March 2011 a judge in the Eastern District of Virginia court [upheld](#) the Department of Justice's demand for Twitter data, despite complaints by Appelbaum, Gonggrijp and Jonsdottir that it violated constitutional protections for free speech. Twitter Guidelines now [state](#) that private

information about Twitter users will be released in response to "appropriate legal process such as a subpoena, court order [or] other valid legal process".

*

After some deliberation, Jacob Applebaum decided to push ahead with his planned return to the USA on 10 January, but organised for representatives from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to meet him at the airport. He then [posted](#) a long series of tweets about the constant harrassment he received when traveling through US airports.

The CBP agents in Seattle were nicer than ones in Newark. None of them implied I would be raped in prison for the rest of my life this time.

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Early media attacks

On 31 December 2010 Alternet [published](#) a list of eight "Smears and Misconceptions" that were already being regularly pushed by media organisations:

1. Fearmongering that WikiLeaks revelations will result in deaths.
2. Spreading the lie that WikiLeaks posted all the cables.
3. Falsely claiming that Assange has committed a crime regarding WikiLeaks.
4. Denying that WikiLeaks is a journalistic enterprise.
5. Denying a link between Ellsberg's Pentagon Papers and WikiLeaks, despite Ellsberg's support of the site.
6. Accusing Assange of profiting from WikiLeaks.
7. Calling Assange a terrorist.
8. Minimizing the significance of the cables.

There were also [easily dismissed](#) claims that WikiLeaks had acquired their files by hacking. Sadly, even WikiLeaks' trusted media partners were guilty of indulging these deliberate smears and outright lies, with British newspaper the Guardian quickly becoming the most hostile organisation.

The very idea of media partnerships had first been conceived when Julian Assange met with Guardian journalist Nick Davies [in a Brussels cafe](#). But on 17 December 2010, Davies published an article titled [Ten Days In Sweden](#), which provided lurid details of the Swedish sex allegations directly from the Swedish police file on the Assange case. Davies said the file, which would normally have remained secret to protect the privacy of all parties concerned, just "happened to make its way quite legitimately into the hands of somebody I have come across in the past". He refused to identify his source, who almost certainly committed a crime by leaking the file.

Guy Rundle later read the full police report in Swedish and [claimed](#) "Davies has fundamentally distorted the record" with key details omitted and "distortingly oversimplified translation".

And of all Nick Davies' omissions, perhaps the most significant was that of the final witness, who was questioned about text messages she exchanged with Sofia Wilén discussing seeking revenge on Assange, and getting money from newspapers ("it was just a joke").

In the first week of January 2011, Bianca Jagger (who had helped pay Julian Assange's bail) published a [rebuttal](#) of Nick Davies' [rebuttal](#) of her [rebuttal](#) of his original "Ten Days In Sweden" article. Davies, who acknowledged having fallen out with Assange months earlier, had rejected Jagger's claims that his one-sided article, peppered with lurid sexual details, amounted to "trial by newspapers".

Jagger dismissed Davies' ludicrous claim that he was defending his source just like WikiLeaks defended theirs, noting "there is a profound difference between exposing the deeds of powerful governments, corporations and the rich and throwing mud at those who released the information". She also made an important point which would have profound repercussions for years to come:

Assange cannot defend himself at this point; all he can do is refute these allegations in the broadest terms. Davies knows that Assange's lawyers will insist that he does not publicly engage in a rebuttal of the details in these allegations himself, when he is facing extradition and possible criminal charges. He is thoroughly disadvantaged by what Davies has done.

Davies eventually washed his hands of any responsibility for the article that bore his name:

The reality is that I didn't write the story which the Guardian published. The copy which I filed was completely re-written in the Guardian office, a commonplace event in a newsroom.

But the Guardian's animosity to Assange continued. On 3 January 2011 the Guardian published an article that accused WikiLeaks of endangering the life of Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the democratic opposition in Zimbabwe, by publishing a cable about him. The author James Richardson, a US Republican working for a "social media public affairs agency" (not disclosed to readers), argued that "WikiLeaks may have committed its own collateral murder."

"WikiLeaks ought to leave international relations to those who understand it – at least to those who understand the value of a life."

There was a major problem with this claim: it was the Guardian themselves who had selected the cable from the archive and chosen to [publish](#) it in early December. Nevertheless, the false claim was repeated in the Wall Street Journal, the Atlantic, Politico and other sites. It took over a week for the Guardian to publish a footnote:

But as Glenn Greenwald [noted](#), the article - which should have been deleted - was not fundamentally altered. The misleading headline remained, along with repeated false claims blaming WikiLeaks for publishing the cable.

This is the propaganda campaign - created by the U.S. Government and (as always) bolstered by the American media - which is being used to justify WikiLeaks' destruction (and, with it, the repression of some of the most promising avenues for transparency and investigative journalism we've seen in many years)... WikiLeaks didn't steal anything. They didn't break any laws. They did what newspapers do every day, what investigative journalism does at its core: expose secret, corrupt actions of those in power. And the attempt to criminalize WikiLeaks is thus nothing less than a full frontal assault on press and Internet freedoms.

Guardian deputy editor Ian Katz belatedly [explained](#) that Richardson was "a first-time contributor to our comment website" and neither he nor the US-based editor who posted the article were aware of the "somewhat complicated process" used to publish the cables (never mind the process had been widely [reported](#) weeks earlier). Katz said the article was posted on a bank holiday after Christmas when the Guardian's WikiLeaks editing team was not around. But the misleading article is [still online](#), more than ten years later. As is the Wall Street Journal's uncorrected [version](#).

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More Death Threats

On 11 January 2011 Julian Assange's routine case management hearing at Belmarsh Magistrates Court was swamped with media and supporters. The Guardian's [live-blog](#) of the event included continuing global fallout from the US cable publications and highlights from a 35-page [skeleton outline](#) of court arguments from Assange's lawyers.

There were valid security concerns around Assange's court appearance, especially following a recent mass shooting in Arizona where a US politician was shot. WikiLeaks published a [statement](#) condemning violent threats:

WikiLeaks staff and contributors have also been the target of unprecedented violent rhetoric by US prominent media personalities, including Sarah Palin, who urged the US administration to "Hunt down the WikiLeaks chief like the Taliban". Prominent US politician Mike Huckabee called for the execution of WikiLeaks spokesman Julian Assange on his Fox News program last November, and Fox News commentator Bob Beckel, referring to Assange, publicly called for people to "illegally shoot the son of a bitch." US radio personality Rush Limbaugh has called for pressure to "Give [Fox News President Roger] Ailes the order and [then] there is no Assange, I'll guarantee you, and there will be no fingerprints on it.", while the Washington Times columnist Jeffery T. Kuhner titled his column "Assassinate Assange" captioned with a picture Julian Assange overlayed

with a gun site, blood spatters, and "WANTED DEAD or ALIVE" with the alive crossed out.

John Hawkins of Townhall.com has stated "If Julian Assange is shot in the head tomorrow or if his car is blown up when he turns the key, what message do you think that would send about releasing sensitive American data?"

Christian Whiton in a Fox News opinion piece called for violence against WikiLeaks publishers and editors, saying the US should "designate WikiLeaks and its officers as enemy combatants, paving the way for non-judicial actions against them."

WikiLeaks spokesman Julian Assange said: "No organisation anywhere in the world is a more devoted advocate of free speech than Wikileaks but when senior politicians and attention seeking media commentators call for specific individuals or groups of people to be killed they should be charged with incitement — to murder. Those who call for an act of murder deserve as significant share of the guilt as those raising a gun to pull the trigger."

A website addresss, JulianAssangeMustDie.com, was traced to a rightwing US blogger (and deleted soon afterwards).

Meanwhile the economic threats from US officials continued to escalate. On 12 January 2011 WikiLeaks [responded](#) to Rep. Peter T. King's calls for a US embargo of WikiLeaks.

WikiLeaks today condemned calls from the chair of the House Committee on Homeland Security to "strangle the viability" of WikiLeaks by placing the publisher and its editor-in-chief, Julian Assange, on a US "enemies list" normally reserved for terrorists and dictators.

King specifically wanted to target Knopf, a New York publisher who had recently agreed to pay Assange for an autobiography. Assange said the book royalties would "keep Wikileaks afloat". An article in [the Atlantic](#) ridiculed the madness of such a McCarthyist blacklist: "you could conceivably break the law merely by buying his book, or contributing to a WikiLeaks defense fund".

WikiLeaks was under massive pressure but clearly not going down without a fight. In a 12 January [interview](#) with John Pilger, Assange again mentioned the existence of "insurance files":

"WikiLeaks is now mirrored on more than 2,000 websites... If something happens to me or to WikiLeaks, 'insurance' files will be released.... There are 504 US embassy cables on one broadcasting organisation and there are

cables on Murdoch and News Corp."

Was it a bluff? In years to come, WikiLeaks would repeatedly post such encrypted "insurance files" online. This lead to a lot of wild speculation about the contents, and much of that speculation eventually solidified into misguided belief. Uninformed critics still angrily disclaim how WikiLeaks "promised" to post something but never did.

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On 8 January 2011 WikiLeaks [launched](#) a new defense fund for Julian Assange, tweeting: "let us see Paypal try to close this one down too!" The following week saw more [global protests](#). A rally in Sydney, Australia [drew](#) around a thousand supporters. This followed another huge Sydney protest on 14 December 2010, with another one planned for 6 February 2011. WikiLeaks supporters around the world were energised, outraged, and working together to support their heroes.

In February 2011 Snorre Valen, a member of the Norwegian parliament, [nominated](#) WikiLeaks for the Nobel Peace Prize. The Sydney Peace Foundation also [announced](#) that it would award a rare gold medal to WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange for his "exceptional courage and initiative in pursuit of human rights". The Peace Medal, distinct from the foundation's annual Peace Prize, was previously only awarded to the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela, and Buddhist leader Daisaku Ikeda.

"Assange has championed people's right to know and has challenged the centuries-old tradition that governments are entitled to keep the public in a state of ignorance."

On 2 March 2011 a meeting was [organised](#) at Parliament House in Canberra, where Assange lawyers and prominent supporters addressed a group of Australian politicians and their staff. Those in attendance included future Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, a former lawyer and Chair of the Australian Republican Movement, who had successfully defended a former MI5 official's publication of the tell-all book [Spycatcher](#). Turnbull occasionally used the Assange case to score points against the ruling Rudd-Gillard Labour government, but he [never](#) challenged US treatment of WikiLeaks' Australian founder.

Meanwhile another senior Australian Liberal Party politician anonymously [boasted](#) that Julian Assange would be treated the same way as [Galileo](#), who was found guilty of heresy and spent his life under house arrest for proving that the earth revolves around the sun.

Manning Quantico Torture Protests

Public protests for Assange and WikiLeaks always featured prominent support for Chelsea (then still "Bradley") Manning, who had now been jailed under turturous conditions at the Quantico brig for over five months. On 24 January, two Manning supporters (including regular visitor David House) were [turned away](#) from the facility after they attempted to deliver a petition of support with 42,000 signatures. On the following day, NBC reported that US military officials had placed Manning on suicide watch.

The official said that after Manning had allegedly failed to follow orders

from his Marine guards, [Brig Commander James] Averhart declared Manning a "suicide risk." Manning was then placed on suicide watch, which meant he was confined to his cell, stripped of most of his clothing and deprived of his reading glasses — anything that Manning could use to harm himself.

Manning later claimed that the guards had created a scene by issuing conflicting demands such as "turn left, don't turn left". An investigation found that the Brig Commander had acted unlawfully, and he was replaced.

Manning was removed from suicide watch on January 21 but remained on POI (Prevention Of Injury) status, despite repeated calls from Army health professionals for this to be lifted. Manning's lawyers filed a [complaint](#) explaining exactly what this status entailed:

Like suicide risk, he is held in solitary confinement. For 23 hours per day, he will sit in his cell. The guards will check on him every five minutes by asking him if he is okay. PFC Manning will be required to respond in some affirmative manner. At night, if the guards cannot see him clearly, because he has a blanket over his head or is curled up towards the wall, they will wake him in order to ensure that he is okay. He will receive each of his meals in his cell. He will not be allowed to have a pillow or sheets. He will not be allowed to have any personal items in his cell. He will only be allowed to have one book or one magazine at any given time to read. The book or magazine will be taken away from him at the end of the day before he goes to sleep. He will be prevented from exercising in his cell. If he attempts to do push-ups, sit-ups, or any other form of exercise he will be forced to stop. He will receive one hour of exercise outside of his cell daily. The guards will take him to an empty room and allow him to walk. He will usually just walk in figure eights around the room until his hour is complete. When he goes to sleep, he will be required to strip down to his underwear and surrender his clothing to the guards.

On 24 January 2011, after blocking payments from Manning supporters for nearly a month, PayPal finally [backed down](#) and reinstated the account of Courage to Resist, a partner of the Bradley Manning Support Network. This followed a press release and a petition with over 10,000 signatures.

On the same day, Amnesty International [issued a call](#) for the USA to "alleviate the harsh pre-trial detention conditions of Bradley Manning." They [ignored](#) pleas to show similar support for Julian Assange.

We are unaware of any legal action having yet been taken against Julian Assange for releasing the documents. As such, Amnesty International is not

in a position to comment on any possible case against him specifically, as there are no charges to comment on.

Amnesty also refused to comment on the Swedish allegations, arguing only that "due process should be followed". Their strange lack of interest in the Assange case was to endure many years, with only very occasional and limited mentions.

On Sunday 13 March, P. J. Crowley, a spokesman for the Department of State, was [forced to resign](#) after he criticized Manning's inhumane treatment as "ridiculous and counterproductive and stupid." When President Obama was asked whether he agreed with Crowley, he said Pentagon officials had assured him that the conditions of Manning's 10 months in pretrial solitary confinement were "appropriate and are meeting our basic standards".

A few days later, Britain's foreign secretary William Hague was [asked](#) about Manning's alleged torture by Welsh MP Ann Clwyd, who compared it to the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) also issued a press release condemning the "cruel and unusual" treatment of Manning, whose status as a UK citizen was [confirmed](#) weeks later.

An "International Bradley Manning Support Day" was held on 20 March, with global protests in support of the alleged whistleblower. 80 year old Pentagon Papers whistle-blower Daniel Ellsberg was [arrested twice in two days](#) after refusing to move from protests outside the Quantico base.

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Stratfor

Stratfor is a Texas-based security information business that relies on close communication with US intelligence agencies. Many Stratfor staff are former CIA agents. In early 2011, Stratfor's Vice-President for Counterterrorism and Corporate Security was Fred Burton, a former Deputy Chief of the Department of State's counterterrorism division for the Diplomatic Security Service.

On 26 January 2011, Burton sent an email to Stratfor staff [revealing](#) that the US government now had "a sealed indictment on Assange". He asked staff to protect this information and not publish it.

Burton's email remained secret until February 2012, when Stratfor was hacked by #Anonymous and WikiLeaks [published the files](#).

Burton's hacked emails also stated: "Assange is going to make a nice bride in prison. Screw the terrorist. He'll be eating cat food forever." Like Palantir and HBGary's Aaron Barr, he recommended destroying WikiLeaks' financial base and infrastructure using "the same tools used to dismantle and track" terrorists.

"Find out what other disgruntled rogues inside the tent or outside [sic]. Pile on. Move him from country to country to face various charges for the next 25 years. But, seize everything he and his family own, to include every person linked to Wiki."

Despite this further evidence of a US indictment, media commentators and senior government

officials in Britain, Australia, and Sweden - many of whom must also have known about the sealed indictment - continued to pretend that Assange's fears of extradition to the USA were entirely baseless.

In August 2012, Reuters falsely [reported](#) that the USA had "no current case" against Assange and State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland dismissed his extradition concerns as "wild assertions".

"He is clearly trying to deflect attention away from the real issue," Nuland said.

In November 2013 the Washington Post went even further, falsely [reporting](#) that Assange was "not under sealed indictment" based on comments from anonymous US officials.

"We will treat this news with skepticism," said WikiLeaks spokesman Kristinn Hrafnsson. "Unfortunately, the U.S. government has a track record of being deceptive."

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Also on 26 January 2011, the New York Times' executive editor Bill Keller published a [ridiculously long](#) article about his dealings with WikiLeaks during the previous year. The article was one of several New York Times essays that were compiled into a rushed-out [book](#) to help the [cash-strapped](#) newspaper (propelled up by a \$250 million loan from Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim, with print revenue down 26%) boost profits from massive public interest.

Keller was intent on establishing his own narrative of events, thus insulating his newspaper from allegations of irresponsible reporting. He dismissed Assange as "thin-skinned... arrogant... elusive, manipulative and volatile (and ultimately openly hostile to The Times and The Guardian)." But he also provided qualified support for WikiLeaks in the face of US government threats:

But while I do not regard Assange as a partner, and I would hesitate to describe what WikiLeaks does as journalism, it is chilling to contemplate the possible government prosecution of WikiLeaks for making secrets public, let alone the passage of new laws to punish the dissemination of classified information, as some have advocated. Taking legal recourse against a government official who violates his trust by divulging secrets he is sworn to protect is one thing. But criminalizing the publication of such secrets by someone who has no official obligation seems to me to run up against the First Amendment and the best traditions of this country.

Five days later, 60 Minutes aired a lengthy [interview](#) with Assange where he claimed "our founding values are those of the U.S. revolution".

60 Mins: Someone in the Australian government said that, "Look, if you play

outside the rules you can't expect to be protected by the rules." And you played outside the rules. You've played outside the United States' rules.

Assange: No. We've actually played inside the rules. We didn't go out to get the material. We operated just like any U.S. publisher operates. We didn't play outside the rules. We played inside the rules.

60 Mins: There's a special set of rules in the United States for disclosing classified information. There is longstanding -

Assange: There's a special set of rules for soldiers. For members of the State Department, who are disclosing classified information. There's not a special set of rules for publishers to disclose classified information. There is the First Amendment. It covers the case. And there's been no precedent that I'm aware of in the past 50 years of prosecuting a publisher for espionage. It is just not done. Those are the rules. You do not do it.

Assange insisted that WikiLeaks's 2010 releases would in fact be "encouragement to every other publisher to publish fearlessly."

If we're talking about creating threats to small publishers to stop them publishing, the U.S. has lost its way. It has abrogated its founding traditions. It has thrown the First Amendment in the bin. Because publishers must be free to publish.

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Arab Spring

Meanwhile, the world was in turmoil. Tunisia's president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali [fled his country](#) in mid-January 2011 - despite winning 89% of the vote two years earlier - and became the first dictator to fall in a series of popular uprisings now called the [Arab Spring](#). The widespread protests were at least partly triggered by WikiLeaks' Cablegate publications, which provided hard proof of endemic corruption across the Middle East.

The final days of January saw huge protests in Egypt, with US-backed dictator Hosni Mubarak repeatedly shutting down the Internet to stem the flow of information. On 28 January WikiLeaks released a [first batch](#) of new Egyptian cables. On 29 January activists began [faxing](#) the WikiLeaks cables into Egypt to bypass the Internet blockade. Mubarak resigned less than two weeks later.

Critics accused Assange of trying to take full credit for these revolutions, although he did no such thing. On 30 January 2011 WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that Al Jazeera's new satellite TV network was also a critical factor:

Yes, we may have helped Tunisia, Egypt. But let us not forget the elephant in the room: Al Jazeera + sat dishes

The Arab Spring saw many online activists joining the #Anonymous global collective to bring down government websites in the Middle East with massive Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. Western analysts could hardly complain when such activists helped bring down authoritarian government sites overseas, but it was a different story for those who had targeted US and British websites in the previous year.

On 28 January the FBI [announced](#) that it had executed over forty search warrants in response to DDoS attacks, while five people were [arrested](#) in the United Kingdom.

Anons reacted to these arrests by publishing an [open letter](#) to the UK government, ridiculing the harsh penalties - a maximum 10 years imprisonment and fines up to £5000 - for a crime that temporarily brought down websites but left no permanent damage.

The fact that thousands of people from all over the world felt the need to participate in these attacks on organisations targeting WikiLeaks and treating it as a public threat, rather than a common good, should be something that sets you thinking. You can easily arrest individuals, but you cannot arrest an ideology.

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The Guardian's "War On Secrecy" Book

By the start of February 2011, barely two thousand of the 250,000 leaked cables had been published. But like the New York Times (above) Guardian journalists David Leigh and Luke Harding were already rushing out a book: "Wikileaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy". An excerpt from the Preface by their boss Alan Rusbridger was [published](#) three days before the book's release, mostly complaining about the difficulties of working with WikiLeaks' unconventional founder. The Guardian EIC approvingly quoted Slate columnist Jack Shafer:

"Assange bedevils the journalists who work with him because he refuses to conform to any of the roles they expect him to play."

Rusbridger said it was "an interesting matter for speculation" whether US media attitudes would change if Assange was ever to be prosecuted. But it would be difficult to do that "without also putting five editors in the dock" and that would be "the media case of the century".

"It was astonishing to sit in London reading of reasonably mainstream American figures calling for the assassination of Assange for what he had unleashed. It was surprising to see the widespread reluctance among American journalists to support the general ideal and work of WikiLeaks. For some it simply boiled down to a reluctance to admit that Assange was a

journalist."

Nevertheless, and even though the Guardian was still publishing dozens of stories about the cables every week, Rusbridger made it clear that he had no further use for Assange:

"While Assange was certainly our main source for the documents, he was in no sense a conventional source – he was not the original source and certainly not a confidential one. Latterly, he was not even the only source... When, to Assange's fury, WikiLeaks itself sprang a leak, the irony of the situation was almost comic."

Rusbridger might not have thought it was so funny if he knew that his brother-in-law's book was also about to cause a far worse leak, with profound repercussions. One of the chapter headings in the book contained the passphrase to unlock the entire Cablegate archive. This was not a conventional password. Assange had personally written it down for Leigh, but even then he took an extra precaution (in cryptographic terms, an additional "salt"):

Assange wrote down on a scrap of paper:
[ACollectionOfHistorySince_1966_ToThe_PresentDay#](#)

"That's the password," he said. "But you have to add one extra word when you type it in. You have to put in the word 'Diplomatic' before the word 'History'. Can you remember that?"

As the book repeatedly shows, Assange was far from impressed by Leigh's technological expertise. Leigh could not even open a standard compressed file, and needed help to view the files even after the passphrase had unlocked them.

Leigh later complained that Assange told him the passphrase was only temporary. Assange vehemently denied this. It was in fact the secure server, which Leigh used to access the archive, that was temporary. A [Guardian statement](#) later made this clear:

"The embassy cables were shared with the Guardian through a secure server for a period of hours, after which the server was taken offline and all files removed, as was previously agreed by both parties."

Leigh himself even noted this in his book, as Kristinn Hrafnsson [pointed out](#).

For years to come, however, Guardian journalists would accuse Assange of sloppy security while insisting their colleagues did nothing wrong. Tellingly, Leigh and Harding only published the lengthy passphrase in their book because it was an illuminating example of the extreme lengths Assange took to guarantee security.

For the time being, at any rate, nobody was going public with concerns about the Cablegate passphrase being published, because the compressed archive files remained secret. But there were

plenty of other problems with the new Guardian book.

One of the book's most explosive claims regarded a July 2010 dinner at London's Moro restaurant, where journalists working on the Afghan War Diaries had gathered to discuss redactions. According to David Leigh, when discussion turned to protecting the names of the US military's Afghan informants, Julian Assange said: "They're informants, they deserve to die." Assange vigorously denied ever saying this, but the alleged quote was repeated for years to come as proof of his alleged "disregard for human lives".

That dinner was attended by Guardian journalists David Leigh and Declan Walsh, who [supported](#) Leigh's claim. But John Goetz, who also attended the dinner with his Der Spiegel colleague Marcel Rosenbach, [insisted](#) that Julian Assange had never said such a thing. Rosenbach could not remember Assange saying it, but could not be certain he never said it. The only other person at that dinner was Assange himself, who [declared](#):

This is just nonsense: I said some people held that view, but that we would edit the documents to preserve their essential content and not throw harm in people's way if we could avoid it... In actual fact, we had been burning the midnight oil on redactions from early on.

Who to believe? A clue comes from Australian journalist Mark Davis, who attended many of the Afghan War Diaries meetings as a privileged insider filming the documentary "[Inside WikiLeaks](#)". Davis later [ridiculed](#) Guardian claims that Assange had a "cavalier attitude" to innocent lives.

"If there was any cavalier attitude, it was the Guardian journalists. They had disdain for the impact of this material."

Davis said the Guardian journalists frequently engaged in "gallows humour" which Assange avoided. And the Guardian wanted to rush publication before redactions were finished, forcing Julian to work all night doing the job himself.

"Julian wanted to take the names out," Davis said. "He asked for the releases to be delayed." The request was rejected by the Guardian, "so Julian was left with the task of cleansing the documents. Julian removed 10,000 names by himself, not the Guardian."

Davis said the Guardian journalists did not care about redactions because they expected WikiLeaks to be blamed, not them or their media partners. He recalled a conversation between Nick Davies and David Leigh, when Assange was not present:

"It occurred to Nick Davies as they pulled up an article they were going to put in the newspaper — he said 'Well, we can't name this guy'. And then someone said 'Well he's going to be named on the website.' Davies said something to the effect of 'We'll really cop it then, if and when we are blamed for putting that name up.' And the words I remember very precisely

from David Leigh was - he gazed across the room at Davies and said: 'But we're not publishing it."

Mark Davis accused the Guardian and the New York Times of attempted "subterfuge... pushing Julian out to walk the plank". If WikiLeaks published the cables first, before media partners ran their stories, Assange would be legally to blame for any repurcussions. But their plan failed due to technical issues: when the first Afghan War Log stories were published, WikiLeaks was offline. Nevertheless, media partners' stories falsely stated that WikiLeaks had "published" the files, not them.

"WikiLeaks did not publish for two days," Davis said. The Guardian and the Times had "reported a lie. They set Julian up from the start."

Davis' testimony was [reinforced](#) by another Australian journalist, Iain Overton, who worked with Assange on the Iraq War Logs months later.

In a July 2011 article, Alan Rusbridger, who was on a [salary package](#) around £400,000 at the time, casually [remarked](#):

"Everyone knows how WikiLeaks ended..."

This was another common smear: WikiLeaks had lost staff, their submission system was broken, and they would never publish any major leaks again. But WikiLeaks was not quite dead yet.

Anti-Semitism Smears

The next major bombshell from the Guardian's new book was that Julian Assange was an anti-Semite, or at least worked closely with an allegedly "notorious anti-Semite" named Israel Shamir, who just happened to have been born Jewish, lost family members in the Nazi Holocaust, and trained with the Israeli Defence Force. This was the first of many bizarre anti-Assange allegations from new Guardian journalist James Ball, who had [covered](#) the Iraq War Logs stories for the Bureau of Investigative Journalism before [very briefly](#) joining WikiLeaks in November 2010.

Although Ball [joined](#) the Guardian in February 2011, the 31 January 2011 Guardian [article](#) promoting the Guardian book refers to him only as an anonymous "insider" who claimed that Israel Shamir had "demanded copies of cables about 'the Jews'".

James Ball re-hashed this claim under his own name in a November 2011 Guardian [article](#) where he stated:

Shamir aroused the suspicion of several WikiLeaks staffers – myself included – when he asked for access to all cable material concerning "the Jews", a request which was refused.

Shamir [responded](#) that it was Ball himself who had given him these cables.

You did it even twice: just before my departure you came to me on your own initiative and kindly handed me "a better file on Jews", twice as big as the previous one.

James Ball, who had also previously worked as a [researcher](#) for Heather Brooke (via whom the Guardian [supplied](#) the Cablegate archive to the New York Times), further stated:

Shamir has a years-long friendship with Assange, and was privy to the contents of tens of thousands of US diplomatic cables months before WikiLeaks made public the full cache.

Shamir's "years-long friendship with Assange" turned out to be at best a wild exaggeration. And if Shamir really had such access to the files, why would he have needed to ask anyone for them?

These "anti-Semite" claims, smearing Julian Assange and WikiLeaks by association with Shamir, were [repeated](#) and [repeated](#) again by Britain's Private Eye magazine, with a tired Julian Assange denying that he made anti-Semitic remarks about a "Jewish conspiracy" in frustrated phone calls with editor Ian Hislop.

Jennifer Lipman from the Jewish Chronicle, who "worked with Julian Assange in the past" and "never heard him express any antisemitic sentiments", [wanted](#) an explanation. She noted that that Julian Assange had also been called "an agent of Mossad because the WikiLeaks cables did not provide enough evidence of Israeli government wrongdoing". Even the non-profit [Index on Censorship](#), which had awarded Assange their new media prize in 2008, weighed in with questions.

WikiLeaks was eventually forced to issue a [lengthy response](#) which said in part:

Israel Shamir has never worked or volunteered for WikiLeaks, in any manner, whatsoever. He has never written for WikiLeaks or any associated organization, under any name and we have no plan that he do so. He is not an 'agent' of WikiLeaks. He has never been an employee of WikiLeaks and has never received monies from WikiLeaks or given monies to WikiLeaks or any related organization or individual. However, he has worked for the BBC, Haaretz, and many other reputable organizations.

It is false that Shamir is 'an Assange intimate'. He interviewed Assange (on behalf of Russian media), as have many journalists. He took a photo at that time and has only met with WikiLeaks staff (including Assange) twice. It is false that 'he was trusted with selecting the 250,000 US State Department cables for the Russian media' or that he has had access to such at any time.

Note

Shamir's son Johannes Wahlström also published Cablegate stories in Sweden. Complaints about WikiLeaks' connection to Shamir were first raised in Swedish media after he published a

September 2010 article suggesting the sex allegations against Assange could be a CIA "honeypot". These issues were first addressed by the Guardian in 17 December 2010 blog that falsely called Shamir "WikiLeaks's spokesperson and conduit in Russia". James Ball thought it was very odd that Shamir was introduced to WikiLeaks staff as "Adam" but he was widely reported to have used at least six names and the contact email address at the bottom of his September 2010 story was "adam@israelshamir.net".

WikiLeaks also noted that Shamir had been obliged, like all media partners, to sign a non-disclosure agreement before getting access to any files. And yet James Ball two months later criticised Assange for forcing staff to sign non-disclosure documents. Ball claimed that he "inadvertently" leaked a copy of his own non-disclosure agreement, which he had refused to sign, calling it "by orders of magnitude the most restrictive I have ever encountered". As usual with media critics, Assange was damned if he did and damned if he didn't. Without a hint of self-awareness, James Ball concluded that WikiLeaks, the world's leading transparency organisation, "needs to get out of the gagging game."

James Ball further reported that Israel Shamir had given unredacted US cables to the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, who then used that information to crack down on dissenters. Again there was no proof for this allegation, just a photo of Shamir outside the steps of the Belarus Presidential Administration Building in Minsk on the day elections were being held, 19 December 2010. Shamir wrote an article explaining why he was in his mother's home town of Minsk at the time, but nevertheless Julian Assange was falsely accused for years to come of endangering the lives of Belarussian dissidents.

It seems the new cables on Belarus were actually first published by "Russian Reporter", a magazine that was condemned by the Russia's state-owned Moscow Times, who also called Shamir a "notorious anti-Semite". Human rights group Charter 97 then published articles about the cables, criticizing the Lukashenko regime. Belarus police brought down their website, raided their offices, and arrested them. But nobody was harmed as a direct result of the cables being published, as even US government officials later admitted.

There were massive protests after Lukashenko claimed victory in the elections. Opposition leader Andrei Sannikov was just one of dozens imprisoned. But a year later, Sannikov's sister Irina, a spokesperson for the Free Belarus campaign, invited Julian Assange to host a Q & A session at the premiere screening of their film, "Europe's Last Dictator". It was then more clear than ever that Assange had been helping Belarussian dissidents in the background, not helping get them killed. Nevertheless Britain's New Statesman magazine complained that "to dignify Assange with a place on the podium at an event about Belarus is to mock the men and women who endure the brutality of Lukashenko". Obviously the author, a "freelancer from India" whose work had appeared in the Boston Globe, the Chicago Tribune, and the Los Angeles Times, knew more about Belarussia than the dissidents who had invited Assange to speak.

It's worth noting that the USA meddles a great deal in former Soviet bloc nations like Belarus. According to the New Statesman, Shamir expressed delight when US-backed agents were exposed. But as WikiLeaks cautioned:

We do not have editorial control over the hundreds of journalists and publications based on our materials and it would be wrong for us to seek to

do so. We do not approve or endorse the writings of the world's media. We disagree with many of the approaches taken in analyzing our material.

Of course, the great benefit of WikiLeaks releases is that readers can view the source material for themselves and draw their own conclusions. It is also worth noting that UK public support would be critical to Julian Assange in the years ahead, and the people most likely to support WikiLeaks in 2011 were anti-war, anti-Establishment, left wing types. But the UK's most "left wing" UK publications - the Guardian, New Statesman and Private Eye - were all quickly lining up to criticize the WikiLeaks founder. Right wing media organisations like the Telegraph or the Times gave Assange and WikiLeaks far less column space (almost all negative). By design or accident, the local audience most likely to support Assange was being actively discouraged from doing so.

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While this concocted "anti-Semitism" debate raged, Stephen Spielberg's DreamWorks studio had quietly [bought the rights](#) to both the Guardian's "WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy" and Domscheit-Berg's poor-selling book (now with an English version, still low sales). The [untrustworthy](#) movie that eventually resulted would predictably become a miserable [flop](#) ("the worst opening of the year so far for a movie opening in more than 1,500 theaters"). But Alan Rusbridger was gushing with excitement:

"It's Woodward and Bernstein meets Stieg Larsson meets Jason Bourne. Plus the odd moment of sheer farce and, in Julian Assange, a compelling character who goes beyond what any Hollywood scriptwriter would dare to invent."

And David Leigh, who had recklessly published the Cablegate passphrase, was recklessly [throwing around](#) accusations of recklessness. He said Assange was a "reckless amateur" journalist who was "being reckless and opportunistic" by "palling up with" Russia and "giving material to very unsuitable people. He complained that WikiLeaks staff "like to see themselves as having some God-like virtue which enables them to behave in some pretty reckless and unethical ways."

Leigh's co-author Luke Harding, who won Private Eye's 2007 [Plagiarist of the Year](#) award, was denied entry back into Moscow after [publishing](#) numerous stories about US cables critical of Russia. But years later Assange was being widely slandered as "a Putin puppet" with Luke Harding publishing [incriminating lies about Assange](#) in the Guardian and seemingly [fabricating](#) key conspiracy theories.

Former Guardian journalist Jonathan Cook [explained](#) that Leigh and Harding's "well-known animosity" towards Assange was "at least partly due to Assange refusing to let them write his official biography, a likely big moneymaker".

The hostility had intensified and grown mutual when Assange discovered that behind his back they were writing an unauthorised biography while working alongside him.

NOTE

To their credit, [Nick Davies](#) and [Alan Rusbridger](#) later opposed the USA's attempts to extradite Assange from Britain, although Rusbridger [admitted](#) he wasn't following the case closely. James Ball also [opposed](#) extradition while continuing his [pathetic](#) attacks on Assange. David Leigh, who [vigorously supported](#) extradition to Sweden, also [opposed](#) US extradition. Luke Harding, whose money-making book became [central](#) to the US extradition case, said [nothing](#).

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The Fall of Gaddaffi

After toppling leaders in Tunisia and Egypt, the Arab Spring protests spread into Algeria, Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Sudan and even Saudi Arabia. By March 2011 the world's focus was on oil-rich Libya, where eccentric leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi had been in power since 1969. In February alone WikiLeaks posted some 17 [tweets](#) mentioning Libya and released hundreds of US diplomatic cables about the North African nation.

One of the leaked cables [revealed](#) that Gaddafi, who claimed to be a pious Muslim, "relies heavily" on a "voluptuous blonde" Ukrainian nurse, who later sought asylum in Norway.

Gaddafi claimed that Libyan protesters were "drugged" and/or linked to al-Qaeda, swearing that he would die a martyr rather than leave Libya. After the Libyan army opened fire on protesters in the rebellious city of Benghazi, many senior officials resigned or joined rebel groups, prompting a six months-long civil war.

NATO forces imposed a no-fly zone over the country in March, following a UN Resolution in February. US President Obama claimed the USA was only [reluctantly](#) getting involved:

"Mindful of the risks and costs of military action, we are naturally reluctant to use force to solve the world's many challenges. But when our interests and values are at stake, we have a responsibility to act."

Leaked emails from Hillary Clinton, published by WikiLeaks in 2016, later showed the US Secretary of State was the principal architect of the US-lead invasion. Assange [branded](#) her "the butcher of Libya" and [claimed](#) she used the invasion as a basis for her failed 2016 Presidential campaign. Over 1,700 of Clinton's leaked emails mentioned Libya.

Assange critic Tom Watson instead blamed WikiLeaks for the invasion, describing it as [the first WikiLeaks War](#):

The smartest pro-transparency analysts have always realized that the revelations the U.S. cables represented would almost certainly lead to unforeseen consequences, if not armed conflict.

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was finally overthrown on 23 August 2011. He was killed on 20 October 2011 by rebels who found him hiding in a tunnel in his hometown of Sirte. When Hillary Clinton was told of Gaddafi's [brutally violent](#) death she [happily quipped](#):

"We came, we saw, he died."

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Chapter Ten: Mid 2011

5 April 2011 marked one year since the release of [Collateral Murder](#). WikiLeaks was now seeking new media partners.

On 12 April WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange appeared on Australia's primetime [7:30 Report](#). Host Leigh Sales suggested it must feel "unreal" to come from "sleeping rough on the streets of Melbourne" to global celebrity status.

"Well it does feel unreal," replied Assange, "because I've never slept rough on the streets of Melbourne."

Leigh persisted with the negative questions:

"As I said before you've developed a very high profile and not everybody likes you, to put it gently. Do you fear for your life?"

"I have to disagree with that actually."

"You think everybody does like you?"

"No, not everybody, but these sorts of statements are in fact mischievous. I mean, if we look at Australian opinion polls, actually WikiLeaks and myself have far greater popularity amongst the Australian population than sitting prime ministers have had in many years."

At a U.C. Berkeley debate on the same day, Julian Assange [traded barbs](#) via Skype with New York Times editor Bill Keller, who defended his decision to make Assange seem like an unhinged loser because it made his front page "bag lady" hit piece more readable.

"We weren't writing an academic report - it was a story. That was information the reporter brought to me, and it was used as color."

Assange noted that the Times had gone to extreme lengths to pretend there was no collaboration with WikiLeaks - even pressing for WikiLeaks to publish documents before it did - in case they were accused of violating the Espionage Act.

"That's why The New York Times is careful to say this was not a collaboration. What the Times is afraid of is that one man's collaboration is

another man's conspiracy."

A week later Britain's The Guardian was named UK Newspaper Of The Year for their work with WikiLeaks. Why didn't the New York Times also win a Pulitzer for their coverage? According to [WikiLeaks](#) they were "too timid to nominate".

The Atlantic [released](#) a study in the same week showing that over half of the New York Times daily issues in the past twelve months had relied on stories related to WikiLeaks:

It now seems routine for WikiLeaks to serve as a source when it comes to American diplomacy, especially regarding the Middle East...

By our count, on 54 days so far this year, the paper's reporters have relied on WikiLeaks documents as sources for their stories. Since April 25th is the 115th day of the year, that's nearly half of all their issues this year. And just to be clear, we didn't count stories that merely mentioned WikiLeaks or Julian Assange or Bradley Manning, only the ones that used documents from the site as a reporting source.

A Google Earth [visualisation](#) at the time showed how WikiLeaks mirror sites had spread across the globe.

A [new poll](#) also showed overwhelming public support for Assange and WikiLeaks around the world.

A 24-country poll found that most people believe WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange is not a criminal and should not be charged by the U.S. government for releasing thousands of secret U.S. documents. The poll by Ipsos found 79 percent of people were aware of WikiLeaks and two-thirds of those believed Assange should not be charged and three-quarters supported the group's bid to make public secret government or corporate documents.

U.S. respondents had a far more critical view, with 81 percent aware of WikiLeaks and 69 percent of those believing Assange should be charged and 61 percent opposing WikiLeaks' mission.

The countries found least likely to support legal action against Assange by the U.S. government were South Africa, Germany, Russia and Argentina, while the highest support was in the United States, South Korea, Britain, India and Indonesia.

Another poll [showed](#) that just 48% of US citizens were familiar with the latest WikiLeaks release, but 52% of those people agreed that "the release of the information was good and made the

government accountable". In addition, 73% of them "expressed a lack of confidence in governments' ability to prevent future data leaks". Nevertheless, 64% of all those surveyed wanted WikiLeaks shut down.

And in Sweden, a poll of 9,000 lawyers found nearly a third of them [agreed](#) with Julian Assange's criticisms of the Swedish legal system:

"We're of the opinion that remand in Sweden is used in a way that many other states governed by the rule of law would find unfamiliar... The system is built up so that, in principal, the suspect doesn't have any insight into the preliminary investigation."

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On 21 April 2011 a group of disillusioned Obama voters paid \$76,000 for tickets to a fundraiser where they cornered the President, [sang him a song](#), and then asked about the treatment of Chelsea Manning. While Manning still had not been given a trial, the US Commander-In-Chief was caught on video saying that Manning "broke the law". Obama also said "it wasn't the same thing" as what Daniel Ellsberg had done with the Pentagon Papers because the information "wasn't classified in the same way."

A White House spokesman later [denied](#) that Obama was "expressing a view as to the guilt or innocence of Pfc. Manning specifically". But clearly any chance of a fair trial had been prejudiced. Meanwhile both Manning and Assange were [racing up the charts](#) in TIME magazine's annual "most influential people" poll.

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On 25 April WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that they were taking a break from publishing. In fact, they were working with a new team of media partners, and seeking to scoop their old media partners with a big new release.

In December 2010 Reuters had [reported](#) that WikiLeaks had even more files from the USA's Guantánamo Bay prison.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, jailed in Britain this week, has told media contacts he has a large cache of U.S. government reports about inmates at the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba... "He's got the personal files of every prisoner in GITMO," said one person who was in contact with Assange earlier this year.

Who could that "one person" have been? How did they know about the files? And might they have been a little bit surprised later that day...?

Gitmo Files

On 25 April 2011 WikiLeaks released "[The Guantánamo Files](#)".

In thousands of pages of documents dating from 2002 to 2008 and never seen before by members of the public or the media, the cases of the majority of the prisoners held at Guantánamo — 765 out of 779 in total — are described in detail in memoranda from JTF-GTMO, the Joint Task Force at Guantánamo Bay, to US Southern Command in Miami, Florida.

These memoranda, known as Detainee Assessment Briefs (DABs), contain JTF-GTMO's recommendations about whether the prisoners in question should continue to be held, or should be released (transferred to their home governments, or to other governments). They consist of a wealth of important and previously undisclosed information, including health assessments, for example, and, in the cases of the majority of the 172 prisoners who are still held, photos (mostly for the first time ever).

They also include information on the first 201 prisoners released from the prison, between 2002 and 2004, which, unlike information on the rest of the prisoners (summaries of evidence and tribunal transcripts, released as the result of a lawsuit filed by media groups in 2006), has never been made public before. Most of these documents reveal accounts of incompetence familiar to those who have studied Guantánamo closely, with innocent men detained by mistake (or because the US was offering substantial bounties to its allies for al-Qaeda or Taliban suspects), and numerous insignificant Taliban conscripts from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Beyond these previously unknown cases, the documents also reveal stories of the 399 other prisoners released from September 2004 to the present day, and of the seven men who have died at the prison.

The Gitmo Files provided further compelling evidence that the US military's torture facility in Cuba had quickly degenerated into a cruel and pointless farce. Officials did not know why prisoners had been brought to them, or what to do with them. In 704 leaked documents [assessed](#) by the New York Times, the word "possibly" appeared 387 times, "unknown" 188 times and "deceptive" 85 times. The US Department of Defence had set up two committees at the prison who persistently argued with each other about how to classify prisoners and information. A handful of prisoners had turned informants under torture and were willing to say anything about other prisoners, leading to countless false accusations.

Some "high risk" prisoners had been released and quickly returned to terrorism, while there was no proof that many others were guilty of any crime at all. Some were only arrested because they wore a cheap old [Casio model](#) of watch which the US military claimed could be used as a timer for bombs. Many detainees were mentally unstable and prison conditions were only worsening their problems.

WikiLeaks's partner Andy Worthington [looked into](#) the 14 missing Gitmo Files and found at least two of the omissions were "overtly suspicious". One was an alleged bodyguard of Osama bin Laden who the USA had secretly allowed to go home to Morocco. Another was a self-described spy for the CIA in Kabul, and then in Guantánamo Bay, where he was treated like all the other prisoners but was never able to provide any useful information on them.

He said that his imprisonment at Bagram - where he was stripped, photographed naked and subjected to an anal probe - was the start of "the longest and most painful ordeal of his life," and that he "had no idea what he was getting into."

WikiLeaks warned readers to be careful about allegations contained in the files. Sadly that was not enough to stop the Guardian rushing out another totally misleading [front page story](#) the next day. David Leigh was one of four Guardian journalists who reported that a former Gitmo detainee was an Al-Qaida assassin who also worked for Britain's MI6 spy agency.

This prompted a [quick response](#) from Clive Stafford Smith, a lawyer for many Guantánamo detainees, who said the claims against his client were "based on ignorant gossip". The Guardian again simply added a link to their original story (above) rather than correcting their misleading text. Following his release from Guantánamo Bay, [Adil Hadi bin Hamlili](#) had been put on trial for terrorism in Algeria, but acquitted. Clive Stafford Smith said he was suffering from a psychotic disorder and other mental health problems as a result of his abuse in US custody.

The UK Telegraph was also [criticised](#) for creating a searchable database of prisoners which listed fifteen detainees who remained at the facility as "Terrorists" - even though they had not been given a fair trial. Despite these errors, UK media reports were generally more reliable than US accounts of the same Gitmo files. Glenn Greenwald compared the differing coverage and [noted](#) how US media organisations were reluctant to criticize their own government or military.

In sum, foreign newspapers highlight how these documents show U.S. actions to be so oppressive and unjust, while American newspapers downplayed that fact.

The impact of the release was somewhat deflated by public [arguments](#) about which media organisation had published them first. The Telegraph, which was working with WikiLeaks, posted the first story shortly before the New York Times and the Guardian, who nevertheless claimed an "exclusive" scoop.

WikiLeaks also [tweeted](#) that their "enemies" had given Gitmo Files to a right wing Swedish tabloid, Expressen, and thus "scuppered" the investigation by their partner Aftonbladet.

Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell denounced the publications but specifically blamed WikiLeaks for "illegally" obtaining the files (never mind the New York Times boasting that they published first and their source was not WikiLeaks):

"It is unfortunate that The New York Times and other news organizations have made the decision to publish numerous documents obtained illegally

by WikiLeaks concerning the Guantánamo detention facility. These documents contain classified information about current and former GTMO detainees, and we strongly condemn the leaking of this sensitive information."

US Department of Defense attorneys representing detainees at Guantánamo Bay received an [email](#) warning them not to use the newly released files in habeas corpus proceedings.

In faraway Australia, Deputy Opposition Leader Julie Bishop had a bizarrely [different take](#) on the latest releases.

Her conclusion:

Rather than diminishing the role of the United States, the publication of its diplomatic cables via WikiLeaks has reinforced the importance of US leadership in dealing with global challenges.

WikiLeaks [called](#) the future Australian Foreign Minister "a national embarrassment in pushing this fantasy". In fact the Australian government was again embarrassed by WikiLeaks: the Gitmo Files included two Australian citizens, David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib. Hicks' file was full of [basic errors and wild, unproven claims](#) used to justify his wrongful designation as a "worst of the worst" terrorist, while Habib's file [bolstered](#) his complaint that he had been tortured in Egypt with Australian government knowledge: he later agreed a secret out-of-court settlement with the government (rumoured to be over \$100,000 compensation) and a judge ordered his passport be returned.

Meanwhile the Australian parliament was [debating](#) new legislation that redefined the terms "foreign intelligence" and "foreign power" to include groups like WikiLeaks. It was just the start of an alarming [tranche](#) of new laws that steadily increased government surveillance powers at the cost of civil liberties.

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On 2 May 2011, Al Qaeda leader [Osama bin Laden](#) was shot and killed by US Navy SEALs inside a private residential compound in the town of Abbottabad, in Pakistan's mountainous northern region of Waziristan. His body was reportedly dumped at sea from a US military helicopter. US media celebrated his death with euphoric front pages.

Wikileaks [noted](#) that information suggesting Bin Laden's location had appeared in the Gitmo Files. The detainee assessment report for detainee [Abu al-Libi](#) stated that he moved his family to Abbottabad in mid-2003 after receiving a letter from Osama Bin Laden "requesting detainee take on the responsibility of collecting donations, organizing travel, and distributing funds to families in Pakistan."

Bin Laden's compound was just 1.3 kilometres from a Pakistan military training academy. WikiLeaks cables [showed](#) that the UK military had stationed Chinook helicopters at the Abbottabad base to help train Pakistan's special forces in the fight against extremism.

Pakistan leaders denied giving refuge to Bin Laden, pointing to [WikiLeaks cables](#) which showed they "repeatedly told the US that while they wanted to help find the terrorist, they didn't know where he was". US officials did not trust Pakistan government assurances, and apparently did not trust the information they extracted from Guantánamo Bay prisoners either. So what was the point of the [torture?](#)

Juice Rap News [ridiculed](#) the many conflicting media reports about the US military's capture and killing of Bin Laden. Four years later, veteran investigative journalist Sy Hersh investigated the USA's official history of the Bin Laden killing and found it remained [full of holes](#).

You can't spell "justice" without the "US"
And it's called justice because it's just US that's justified
In judging just cause, just wars and just evidence -
Just test this justice and get iced if you mess with us.

*

On the same day Bin Laden was killed, Russia Today published a wide-ranging [interview](#) with Julian Assange, who said Guantánamo Bay was set up to hide people and to "keep them outside of the law". He accused the US government of "people laundering":

"The Obama administration says that 48 of those people still in Guantánamo are completely innocent and they should be sent somewhere, and they are not being sent anywhere."

Asked about the continuing release of cables, Assange pointed out that the many shocking revelations from WikiLeaks were just the tip of a giant, hidden iceberg:

"We only released secret, classified, confidential material. We didn't have any top secret cables. The really embarrassing stuff, the really serious stuff wasn't in our collection to release. But it is still out there."

Asked about "cable cooking" - a common complaint from readers whereby media organisations over-redacted cables to protect businesses and others who deserved to be exposed - Assange was furious:

"The New York Times redacted a 62-page cable down to two paragraphs. And this is completely against the agreement that we originally set up with them on November 1, 2010. That agreement was that the only redactions that should take place are to protect people's lives. There should be no other redaction, not to protect reputation, not to protect The Guardian's profits, but only to protect lives."

"What happens in the West is that there is no border between state interest

and commercial interest. The edges of the state, as a result of privatization, are fuzzed and blurred out into the edges of companies. So, when you look at how The Guardian behaves, or how The New York Times behaves, it is part of that mesh of corporate and state interests seamlessly blurring into each other."

The 39-year-old Australian cited US social media giants as a prime example of this dangerous intermeshing of corporate and government functions:

Facebook in particular is the most appalling spying machine that has ever been invented. Here we have the world's most comprehensive database about people, their relationships, their names, their addresses, their locations and the communications with each other, their relatives, all sitting within the United States, all accessible to US intelligence. Facebook, Google, Yahoo – all these major US organizations have built-in interfaces for US intelligence. It's not a matter of serving a subpoena. They have an interface that they have developed for US intelligence to use... Everyone should understand that when they add their friends to Facebook, they are doing free work for United States intelligence agencies in building this database for them.

After discussing the roles of Sweden, Britain and the USA in his extradition case, the WikiLeaks founder was asked who he thought was his biggest enemy?

Our No. 1 enemy is ignorance. And I believe that is the No. 1 enemy for everyone – it's not understanding what actually is going on in the world. It's only when you start to understand that you can make effective decisions and effective plans. Now, the question is, who is promoting ignorance? Well, those organizations that try to keep things secret, and those organizations which distort true information to make it false or misrepresentative. In this latter category, it is bad media. It really is my opinion that media in general are so bad that we have to question whether the world wouldn't be better off without them altogether. They are so distortive to how the world actually is that the result is... we see wars, and we see corrupt governments continue on. One of the hopeful things that I've discovered is that nearly every war that has started in the past 50 years has been a result of media lies. The media could've stopped it if they had searched deep enough; if they hadn't reprinted government propaganda they could've stopped it. But what does that mean? Well, that means that basically populations don't like wars, and populations have to be fooled into wars. Populations don't willingly,

with open eyes, go into a war. So if we have a good media environment, then we also have a peaceful environment.

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A national election was held in Canada on 2 May 2011. Throughout April and May WikiLeaks released numerous US cables about Canada. Some voters reported receiving [robocalls](#) telling them it was illegal to read WikiLeaks information.

A topical issue was Canadian citizen Omar Khadr, who had been sent to Guantánamo Bay at the age of just fifteen, after being tortured at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, and spent ten years in US custody. WikiLeaks cables [showed](#) that the Canadian government decided not to seek Omar Khadr's repatriation at least partly because the graphic violence of his 2002 arrest and torture would lead to "knee-jerk anti-Americanism" and "paroxysms of moral outrage, a Canadian specialty". WikiLeaks Central [compiled](#) graphic (warning) evidence of his brutal arrest: finding his body face-down and immobile in a pile of rubble, US soldiers stood on top of him and fired two shots through his back.

[Khadr's Gitmo File](#) confirmed that in 2003 the US military still considered him a "high risk enemy combatant" who was "increasingly hostile to his interrogators". Khadr returned to Canada in 2012 and was later paid \$10.5 million [compensation](#) by the Canadian government. Analysis of WikiLeaks documents [proved](#) that at least fifteen juveniles had been brought to Guantánamo Bay.

"This is three more than the 12 the State Department acknowledged to the public after our earlier report on the subject, and seven more than the eight the State Department originally reported to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child."

Andy Worthington later [provided evidence](#) that the true number could have been up to 28 child detainees.

In May 2011 WikiLeaks began releasing US cables about Japan with media partner Asahi Shimbun. Japanese citizens had long been demanding the closure of a major US military base in Okinawa, but the USA was only prepared to relocate it to a nearby site. WikiLeaks cables [exposed](#) the public posturing of Japanese officials:

Japanese government officials were never committed to relocating the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma outside of Okinawa Prefecture.... But they also secretly said that, in the end, Japan would go along with the 2006 agreement if the United States rejected the proposed alternatives.

WikiLeaks cables showed that the USA [argued](#) they could not move their air base in Okinawa because of the ""military threat from China". Officials also [deliberately inflated](#) the costs of moving the base.

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Another nation taking a keen interest in WikiLeaks was the small South American nation of

Ecuador. Socialist President Rafael Correa was keen to know what US officials had been saying about Ecuador before and after he came to power in 2007 and [shut down](#) the US military base in Manta. Diplomat Fidel Narvaez made [first contact](#) with Julian Assange. Rather than demanding WikiLeaks withhold sensitive US cables, they insisted that everything should be published.

I personally approached him in 2011, because my government was interested in making public all the diplomatic cables on Ecuador. We were not looking for privileged access to the cables, but we did want them available in the public domain. To that end, in May 2011, Wikileaks released all those documents — and with no strings attached.

There were immediate repercussions:

When WikiLeaks cables brought to light one American ambassador's interference in Ecuadorian internal affairs, she was subsequently expelled. We also expelled several CIA agents, because they were interfering with our police forces.

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Meanwhile, Rupert Murdoch's Wall Street Journal paid WikiLeaks the ultimate compliment by [launching](#) their own copycat "secure" anonymous online dropbox named [SafeHouse](#) (spoiler: it was a ridiculous failure and no longer exists).

They warned that while anonymity was optional, contact information was "strongly encouraged". The terms and conditions included a disclaimer that the site "cannot ensure complete anonymity" of whistleblowers and recommends "cloaking" tools such as Tor. But security specialists who [tested](#) the site using Tor could not manage to upload documents. The WSJ terms and conditions also stated that the site owners "reserve the right to disclose any information about you to law enforcement authorities or to a requesting third party, without notice, in order to comply with any applicable laws and/or requests under legal process".

WikiLeaks [ridiculed](#) the idea that a corporate newspaper could launch such a site while simultaneously [demanding](#) the indictment of Julian Assange. They [pointed](#) to Assange's previous comments about mainstream journalists lacking the technical knowledge to protect online sources, and also lacking the courage to protect whistle-blowers.

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Media attacks kept coming. Even the USA's non-profit Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) took aim at WikiLeaks, with a Frontline documentary titled "WikiSecrets". The primetime TV show featured hostile quotes from figures like Daniel Domscheit-Berg, Adrian Lamo, David Leigh, and the New York Time's Bill Keller and Eric Schmitt.

Hours before the program went to air on 24 May 2011, WikiLeaks [released](#) a full transcript of the "behind the scenes interview tape between Julian Assange & PBS Frontline's Martin Smith". This was followed by "correspondence between PBS and WikiLeaks as to the ethics of this interview".

A source within PBS told us that Frontline would attempt to embroil Julian Assange and Bradley Manning in an espionage context. Frontline assured us this was not what the documentary would show and that the two men's stories would not be connected.

The show included a quote from Eric Schmitt speculating on a possible intermediary between Assange and Manning, with producers suggesting that person could be "a member of the Boston community... subpoenaed by the Grand Jury" (i.e. David House: see below). WikiLeaks Central noted that the documentary "overplayed Manning's homosexuality" and Assange didn't get ample time to speak: "the problem is that every time he was asked a question it was about a criticism, which forced him to be on the defensive." Sympathetic figures like Vaughan Smith, who were also interviewed for the sure, were edited out.

Greg Mitchell from The Nation later described the program as "nothing but re-hash" of news reports going back to June 2010:

"One of the only bits of new information in the much-ballyhooed PBS Frontline program on WikiLeaks, Assange and Bradley Manning which aired tonight was: the man who fingered Manning, Adrian Lamo, secluded in California, has a large goldfish in his apartment."

After the program finished, angry hackers defaced the PBS website, posting a fake story that dead rapper Tupac had been found alive and well in a small resort in New Zealand, living with another dead rapper, Biggie Smalls. Thousands liked the story on Facebook while Twitter users began eagerly speculating if it could be true. The hackers also posted a list of usernames and passwords for PBS I.T. admins and users, along with login details for local PBS television stations.

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On 2 June 2011 WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was awarded the prestigious Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism. The prize is awarded annually to a journalist whose work has "penetrated the established version of events and told and unpalatable truth that exposes establishment propaganda, or 'official drivel', as Martha Gellhorn called it."

Martha Gellhorn, who died in 1998 and was briefly married to Ernest Hemingway, spent sixty years covering US global conflicts.

The judges voted unanimously for Assange, claiming that he "represents that which journalists once prided themselves".

"WikiLeaks has been portrayed as a phenomenon of the hi-tech age, which it is. But it's much more. Its goal of justice through transparency is in the oldest and finest tradition of journalism.

"WikiLeaks has given the public more scoops than most journalists can

imagine: a truth-telling that has empowered people all over the world.

"As publisher and editor, Julian Assange represents that which journalists once prided themselves in – he's brave, determined, independent: a true agent of people not of power."

On the same day, New York Times editor Bill Keller resigned, claiming he wanted to become a full time writer. [Bill Keller](#) had been a leading supporter of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, who defended New York Times journalist Judy Miller's fake news stories about Iraq WMDs, and called arch Neocon Paul Wolfowitz a "sunshine warrior". A WikiLeaks tweet ridiculed his literary aspirations.

The very next day, Keller published an [article](#) titled "A Theory of Conspiracy Theories" in the New York Times, citing Assange as an example.

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On 15 June 2011, David House, the co-founder of the "Bradley Manning Support Network", appeared before the WikiLeaks Grand Jury in Alexandria, Virginia. House, who had previously been [harassed](#) by US government agents after visiting Manning three times at Quantico, invoked the Fifth Amendment and refused to testify. He later released a [statement](#) demanding the Department of Justice's cease their "politically motivated harassment".

The show trial that is now underway in Alexandria VA has the potential to set a dangerous precedent for regulating the media. Using Nixonian fear tactics that were honed during the Pentagon Papers investigation, the DoJ is attempting to dismantle a major media organization - WikiLeaks — and indict its editor, Julian Assange. The DoJ's ever-widening net has now come to encompass academics, students, and journalists in the Cambridge area.

House said the Obama administration was trying to force him and other individuals to testify against WikiLeaks in order to criminalise its publications. Supporters in the Greater Boston area were being [asked](#) "Do you or have you ever worked for WikiLeaks?" - a chilling reminder of the McCarthyist anti-Communist hysteria.

WikiLeaks [noted](#) that there were only two other federal Grand Juries active in the USA; one investigating the #Anonymous "hacktivist" group, the other targeting antiwar, labor and international solidarity activists. NPR's Carrie Johnson [said](#) the WikiLeaks Grand Jury was "part of a much broader campaign by the Obama administration to crack down on leakers".

"National security experts say they can't remember a time when the Justice Department has pursued so many criminal cases based on leaks of government secrets... Aside from the ongoing WikiLeaks investigation, federal prosecutors have brought criminal charges against four other people, including former State Department employee Stephen Kim; former CIA operative Jeffrey Sterling; one-time National Security Agency analyst

Thomas Drake, who is going to trial next month in Baltimore; and former FBI translator Shamai Leibowitz, who pleaded guilty and was sentenced to almost two years in prison."

LulzSec

The day after the Grand Jury questioned David House, a group of online activists [brought down the CIA's website](#). The #LulzSec group had already amassed 150,000 followers on Twitter after previously bringing down the US Senate, FBI affiliate Infraguard, numerous international Sony sites, US media company PBS (see above), Nintendo and several other video games companies.

In many of the attacks, including on Bethesda, the US Senate and pornography website pron.com, LulzSec also released sensitive data online such as the usernames and passwords of users. These lists even revealed that people with White House email addresses had signed up to watch porn.

Supporters revelled in the outspoken hacktivists' humourous and headline-grabbing protests. Nobody knew that the group's de-facto "leader" [Hector Monsegur](#) (aka "Sabu") had been arrested by the FBI a week earlier on 7 June 2011. With Monsegur now actively working as an FBI partner and informant, it was effectively the FBI who had just brought down the CIA's website. The FBI even provided its own servers to support the hacking.

LulzSec had first "declared war" on 4 June with a [pastebin statement](#) for Operation Anti-Security (#AntiSec) which sought help targeting "the government and whitehat security terrorists across the world":

Top priority is to steal and leak any classified government information, including email spools and documentation. Prime targets are banks and other high-ranking establishments. If they try to censor our progress, we will obliterate the censor with cannonfire anointed with lizard blood. It's now or never. Come aboard, we're expecting you...

Just three weeks later, on June 25th, LulzSec [declared](#) their 50 day "cruise" was ended and "it's time to say bon voyage".

Thank you for sailing with us. The breeze is fresh and the sun is setting, so now we head for the horizon.

Nevertheless, the attacks and threats continued. On 11 July, the day before the Assange case was due be heard at the Royal Courts of Justice, Sabu's FBI-controlled account warned:

ATTN: Tomorrow will be two of the biggest releases for Anonymous in the last 4 years. Everyone brace. This is literally explosive. #antisec

ATTN Intelligence community: Your contractors have failed you. Tomorrow is the beginning. #ANONYMOUS #ANTISEC

The Guardian, who a week earlier had published "leaked" LulzSec group IRC chat logs, quoted Anonymous hackers warning that 12 July would be "the biggest day in Anonymous's history". They said "several top-level members of Anonymous are eager to launch attacks based around Julian Assange's appeal hearing".

The collective is understood to be seeking to express anger over News International's phone hacking and at the threatened extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

WikiLeaks accused the Guardian of "spinning a story" to prejudice the judges. Rather than targeting UK police or courts on 12 July, Anonymous hacked into US agricultural giant Monsanto instead. A day earlier #AntiSec hackers had released 90,000 email accounts and passwords from US defense contractor Booz Allen Hamilton, who insisted that government and military information remained secure.

On 18 July LulzSec posted a story on Rupert Murdoch's "The Sun" website, declaring that the media mogul was dead. Murdoch was "said to have ingested a large quantity of palladium before stumbling into his famous topiary garden". The Sun's website was later redirected to the @LulzSec Twitter feed. This followed new revelations in the News Of The World phone-hacking scandal and the death of whistle-blower Sean Hoare.

Meanwhile the FBI and foreign police forces had been busy arresting anyone connected with the attacks. Many were just teenagers. Chicago activist Jeremy Hammond, who was also accused of involvement in the hacking of Stratfor, received a ten-year prison sentence; he was later summoned by the WikiLeaks Grand Jury, where he refused to testify. Hector Monsegur was rewarded for his collaboration with an early release from prison in May 2014.

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On 3 July 2011, Julian Assange celebrated his 40th birthday with a large gathering of friends and supporters at Ellingham Hall. The WikiLeaks Editor-In-Chief, who was still wearing an ankle bracelet that tracked his every movement, including his daily trips to the local police station, had now been under house arrest for over six months. By this time, US intelligence officials were secretly plotting to designate WikiLeaks as "a 'malicious foreign actor' for the purpose of targeting." This would allow them to target WikiLeaks and associates - including US citizens - with extensive electronic surveillance.

As a tongue-in-cheek publicity stunt, and in the hope of garnering more high profile supporters, Assange sent birthday invitations (complete with directions for private jets and helicopters) to Hollywood celebrities like Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. Former UK Ambassador Craig Murray, who became a close friend of Julian's, was not impressed:

"I hope when Assange's celebrity dies down, those helicopter riders will still support him. I doubt it."

In fact they never even responded. The party featured an auction of donations to raise funds for Assange's legal expenses, with personal bids establishing a reserve price before items went on Ebay. A week earlier, UK media had reported that a \$1.5 million deal for Assange's biography had fallen through, and WikiLeaks donations were being funneled into the Julian Assange Defense Fund.

A week later, Assange's lawyers launched a fresh appeal against his extradition at the High Court in London. At his first appeal to the Westminster Magistrates Court in February, the judge had dismissed claims that he would not get a fair trial in Sweden, and that the extradition attempt was politically motivated. When Assange again lost this expensive appeal to the High Court, after four months of deliberation, his last British legal resort would be an even more expensive appeal to the UK's Supreme Court.

Beyond that, his final avenue of appeal would be to the European courts, where his legal team remained optimistic; many supportive European MPs had already [condemned](#) Sweden's abuse of the "imperfect" European Arrest Warrant processes.

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Chapter Eleven: Late 2011

In early August 2011 former WikiLeaks staffer Daniel Domscheit-Berg [promoted](#) his doomed "OpenLeaks" whistleblower site with a lecture at a summer camp of the Chaos Computer Club (CCC), where he challenged members to crack the security of his new platform. Andy Müller-Maguhn - a CCC board member who had spent nearly one year secretly trying to mediate the return of WikiLeaks data "stolen" by Domscheit-Berg and others - was [furious](#) that Domscheit-Berg had "given the impression that OpenLeaks is being tested by our people and thus given a kind of CCC seal of approval".

"We do not allow ourselves to be captured. That was outrageous."

The five-person CCC board then expelled Domscheit-Berg for exploiting the "good reputation of the association" in order to promote a supposedly "[Open Source](#)" project which they said was "non-transparent". They questioned whether "potential whistleblowers who confide in OpenLeaks can and will be protected in the long term".

Days later, Domscheit-Berg - who had only recently [repeated](#) his [lie](#) that he "didn't take any documents from WikiLeaks" - told [Der Spiegel](#) that he had "destroyed more than 3,500 unpublished files". He said he had "shredded the files in the last few days to ensure that the sources are not endangered" because he believed Julian Assange could not guarantee safe handling of the material.

The deleted files reportedly included the US government's secret "No Fly List", a video of the US military's indiscriminate bombing of the town of Garani in Afghanistan, inside information from 20 right-wing extremist organizations, and the unpublished Bank of America files.

WikiLeaks responded with two statements on WikiLeaks Central in less than twenty minutes. The first [statement by Julian Assange](#) was carefully worded to provide WikiLeaks sources with information but also avoid legal problems. It outlined multiple historic concerns about Daniel Domscheit-Berg, including his wife's high-profile contact with German government officials and a

rumour that "the girlfriend of a Berlin-based Israeli intelligence officer" had attended their wedding. Assange said he had "received a warning from a current Western intelligence officer that DDB has been in contact with the FBI, on more than one occasion, and that the information from this contact was 'helpful'." Assange had also "received intelligence from current Western intelligence officer, that Anke Domscheit Berg, personally, came into contact with the CIA" although he had no proof that either Daniel or Anke Domscheit-Berg were "complicit" in such contacts.

WikiLeaks does not record or retain source identifying information, however the claimed destruction of documents entrusted to WikiLeaks between January 2010 and August 2010 demands the revelation of inside information so sources can make their own risk assessments...

DDB secretly, and in clear violation of WikiLeaks internal security directives, recorded internal WikiLeaks encrypted "chat" conversations. He initially publicly denied having done so, but attempted to place many of these recordings into his ghostwritten book, most of which were rejected by his publishers' lawyers as violations of german privacy law. Others he secretly conveyed to hostile media, such as Wired magazine, which had been involved in the arrest and persecution of US intelligence analyst Bradley Manning.

His book, "Inside WikiLeaks", contains many proven malicious libels and breaches of WikiLeaks security policies. The book is promoted throughout U.S. military book stores, by the U.S. military.

After DDB's suspension in August 2010, he managed, through guile, to convince a German WikiLeaks system administrator, who was an old associate of DDB's, to obtain the keys and data for a large quantity of then pending WikiLeaks whistleblower disclosures.

The [second statement](#) further claimed that Daniel Domscheit-Berg had also taken "internal communications and over 3000 unpublished, private whistleblower communications to WikiLeaks" along with the "secure online submissions system, funds and internal documentation".

Mr. Domscheit-Berg has repeatedly attempted to blackmail WikiLeaks by threatening to make available, to forces that oppose WikiLeaks, these private communications and to which Mr. Domscheit-Berg is not a party. He has stated he will commit this action, should WikiLeaks move to charge him with sabotage or theft. Mr. Domscheit-Berg has refused to return the various materials he has stolen, saying he needs them, solely, to carry out this threat. Mr. Domscheit-Berg has already, secretly, and with malicious intent,

disclosed portions of the private communications content to other parties, to the harm of WikiLeaks.

WikiLeaks noted that their sources "have in some cases risked their lives or freedom" attempting to convey leaked information but "WikiLeaks does not collect or retain source identifying information, so fortunately, source identities for this material are not significantly at risk".

In order to provide an environment which would encourage Mr. Domscheit-Berg to return what he has stolen and not to use it for malicious purposes, we have made no further statements until today. This diplomatic silence has been difficult for us, and, is perhaps a warning lesson about secret diplomacy. While we have been silent in order to maximize the chances of regaining the material that was entrusted to us, Mr. Domscheit-Berg has issued dozens of legally harmful falsehoods...

We are making this public statement in a final attempt to make Mr. Domscheit-Berg return the data he has stolen, before he destroys it.

Sadly it was already too late. WikiLeaks said Domscheit-Berg had "sabotaged years of work, none of which was his own" and the cost of rebuilding would ultimately be borne by supporters, many of whom "fight to keep our operations afloat with contributions of twenty dollars a month or less".

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Clearly the loss of this leaked material was a huge calamity. But things quickly got even worse.

On 25 August 2011 German newspaper Der Freitag [reported](#) (English translation [here](#)) that they were in possession of a 1.73 Gb "cables.csv" archive of Cablegate files. Thanks to the Guardian's February 2010 book by David Leigh and Luke Harding, they also knew the decryption password to unlock it, although they could not confirm if this was the complete unredacted archive. Freitag noted that Julian Assange had contacted their editor Jakob Augstein a week earlier, warning him not to endanger lives.

WikiLeaks had also [telephoned](#) the White House to warn them of the impending release, saying Julian Assange wanted to speak to Hillary Clinton. But they struggled to get past junior officials.

"G'day Chad. This is Julian Assange. To try to make it clear: we don't have a problem, you have a problem. We are trying to help you solve your problem because we are indirectly connected to your problem."

NOTE

Assange later [compared](#) the episode to a scene from the movie "Doctor Strangelove", where Peter Sellers calls the White House to warn of an impending nuclear attack, only to be put on hold. To make matters even more bizarre, it was not a State Department official who eventually responded, but Liza Shields, the (ex-)partner of Google boss Eric Schmidt, who had visited

Assange in Norfolk months earlier. Assange said the idea that the Google chairman might be doing "back-channel diplomacy" for Washington was at that time "a novel thought".

Der Freitag reported that in late 2010, after Daniel Domscheit-Berg and others had departed WikiLeaks, a copy of the Cablegate archive was entrusted to CCC's Andy Müller-Maguhn, who had been secretly trying to mediate the return of "stolen" data. The encrypted "cables.csv" file was posted on a public BitTorrent download site soon afterwards. Der Freitag did not say who did this. Those in the know later cited "well-intentioned WikiLeaks supporters". Assange [told](#) the State Department that overbearing pressure from the US government was to blame.

"This is an example of when you push people into a corner, they stop behaving in a step-by-step methodical manner because of the threat that they are under.

In any case **somebody** had clearly told Der Freitag - who had a [business partnership](#) with the Guardian and were now working with Domscheit-Berg on the "test phase" of his new OpenLeaks project - where to find the archive.

Ominously, Der Freitag were not the only people who knew where to find the archive and how to open it. Word was spreading quickly. Der Spiegel [reported](#) that "in an effort to prove that Assange couldn't be trusted, people associated with the OpenLeaks project recently began talking about the hidden diplomatic cables". Assange later [wrote](#) that Domscheit-Berg "was cultivating business relationships with a variety of organizations and individuals by shopping around the location of the encrypted file, paired with the password's whereabouts in the book."

By 30 August former State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley was telling Associated Press that "any autocratic security service worth its salt" would probably already have the complete unredacted archive. Scottish journalist Nigel Parry was the first to [document the process](#) of discovery:

In the evening of August 30th, I started searching the various Wikileaks torrents online and that I'd downloaded, looking in directories for [an] encrypted file...

Note the word "downloaded": because the archive had been posted on a decentralised BitTorrent site, thousands of WikiLeaks supporters around the world would have already downloaded the full encrypted archive AND ALSO UPLOADED IT TO OTHERS without anyone ever realising they could open it with the help of the Guardian book. An anonymous Twitter account @Nin_99 had noticed that Der Spiegel said the archive was in a hidden sub-directory and pointed Parry to: '<http://193.198.207.6/wiki/file/xyz/>'

In the directory, date-stamped 9 June 2010, were 4 files, all encoded with Pretty Good Privacy (PGP) encoding, the files names with '*.[gpg](#)' suffixes.

I started at the bottom of the list, putting in the David Leigh password. It unzipped z.gpg into a file called z.7z. Opening that file and extracting it

using the Ez7z compression/decompression program, the file spat out a file called 'cables.csv', dated with a creation date of April 12, 2010 at 9:22PM.

It was a 1.61GB file but it had been reported in the German press to be 1.73GB. A closer look at my file system reporting showed the file size to be both 1.61 GB and 1,730,507,223 bytes. It was easy to see how the byte amount could be mistranslated as 1.73GB.

Parry e-mailed WikiLeaks, who released a statement within 20 minutes:

A Guardian journalist has, in a previously undetected act of gross negligence or malice, and in violation a signed security agreement with the Guardian's editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger, disclosed top secret decryption passwords to the entire, unredacted, WikiLeaks Cablegate archive. We have already spoken to the State Department and commenced pre-litigation action. We will issue a formal statement in due course.

Within an hour, @Nin_99 had uploaded the unredacted cables onto the Internet. Within two hours, the cables were also available at Cryptome.org. Curiously, however, none of those who first revealed and published the Cablegate archive were ever targeted or even questioned by the US government, who reserved their righteous fury for WikiLeaks alone. At the Assange extradition trial ten years later, John Young of Cryptome noted that nobody had ever asked him to take the files down from his site.

Facing a barrage of condemnation on Twitter, Guardian editor David Leigh totally denied any responsibility:

Shame to see time-wasting efforts to drag Guardian into #Assange-Domscheit-Berg row over #wikileaks leaks. No dog in that fight, folks

Deranged nonsense from Assange, attempting to deflect blame on to Guardian for his own chaotic mistakes. Sad to watch

On 31 August 2011 a widely-shared anonymous pastebin post that claimed to be "from Berlin" specifically [blamed](#) Domscheit-Berg - who just months later was [rated number 24](#) in the "Top 100 thinkers" of 2011 by Foreign Policy magazine - for revealing the archive's location:

Using this these two facts (pw+hidden file location), he then went around ingratiating himself with various players by handing them the entire Cablegate archive under the mutually deniable cover of "warning" them about the Leigh book. Enraged after being expelled from the CCC he "gave" the cables in this way to more and more people in exchange for alliances and positive spin culminating with the now infamous Freitag and

Information.dk articles and now the thing is fucking everywhere...

On 1 September 2011 WikiLeaks released a [full statement](#), noting that knowledge of the "Guardian disclosure" had "spread privately over several months but reached critical mass last week".

For the past month WikiLeaks has been in the unenviable position of not being able to comment on what has happened, since to do so would be to draw attention to the decryption passwords in the Guardian book. Now that the connection has been made public by others we can explain what happened and what we intend to do.

WikiLeaks has commenced pre-litigation action against the Guardian and an individual in Germany who was distributing the Guardian passwords for personal gain...

WikiLeaks advanced its regular publication schedule, to get as much of the material as possible into the hands of journalists and human rights lawyers who need it. WikiLeaks and its partners were scheduled to have published most of the Cablegate material by November 29, 2011 – one year since the first publication. Over the past week, we have published over 130,000 cables, mostly unclassified.

WikiLeaks confirmed that they had contacted the State Department in Washington on 25 August but said it took 36 hours to even get a response.

Cliff Johnson (a legal advisor at the Department of State) spoke to Julian Assange for 75 minutes, but the State Department decided not to meet in person to receive further information, which could not, at that stage, be safely transmitted over the telephone.

The Guardian also posted a rather bizarre [statement](#), claiming it was "nonsense to suggest the Guardian's WikiLeaks book has compromised security in any way."

"Our book about WikiLeaks was published last February. It contained a password, but no details of the location of the files, and we were told it was a temporary password which would expire and be deleted in a matter of hours. It was a meaningless piece of information to anyone except the person(s) who created the database.

"No concerns were expressed when the book was published and if anyone at WikiLeaks had thought this compromised security they have had seven

months to remove the files. That they didn't do so clearly shows the problem was not caused by the Guardian's book."

But of course the publication of the decryption password had self-evidently compromised security: as soon as the Guardian's rushed-out book was published it became impossible to somehow make Assange's elaborate passphrase secret again; it was not WikiLeaks who posted the archive on a torrents site, so they could neither remove nor edit it; and even if they could, the archive had quickly spread to countless users' computers around the world, who now only needed the Guardian's book to unlock it. As mentioned in [Chapter 9](#), Assange vehemently denied telling Leigh the password was temporary: it was the secure server which was temporary, as even the Guardian book itself stated. And as a cryptography expert [testified](#) years later, the encryption key could not be changed without re-encrypting the whole archive file. The Guardian's criticism was absurd.

WikiLeaks staff were now facing another urgent moral dilemma: as governments and other powerful entities around the world now had access to the full unredacted Cablegate archive, shouldn't all those whose names appeared in the US cables also have full access, so that they could read what was said about them and prepare for any possible repercussions? WikiLeaks decided to ask their Twitter followers to vote on whether they supported the publication of the unredacted cables. The response was an overwhelming "YES".

On 2 September 2011 WikiLeaks published the full archive of unredacted US diplomatic cables in searchable format. Critics had already been unfairly deriding Julian Assange as "[not a real journalist](#)" and claiming that WikiLeaks just "dumps" information online. Many of them must have been delighted with the latest turn of events.

As Glenn Greenwald [wrote](#) that same day, citing [several](#) violent [incidents](#) exposed by the cables:

"As usual, many of those running around righteously condemning WikiLeaks for the potential, prospective, unintentional harm to innocents caused by this leak will have nothing to say about these actual, deliberate acts of wanton slaughter by the U.S. The accidental release of these unredacted cables will receive far more attention and more outrage than the extreme, deliberate wrongdoing these cables expose. That's because many of those condemning WikiLeaks care nothing about harm to civilians as long as it's done by the U.S. government and military; indeed, such acts are endemic to the American wars they routinely cheer on. What they actually hate is transparency and exposure of wrongdoing by their government; "risk to civilians" is just the pretext for attacking those, such as WikiLeaks, who bring that about..."

"Once WikiLeaks realized what had happened, they notified the State Department, but faced a quandary: virtually every government's intelligence agencies would have had access to these documents as a result of these events, but the rest of the world — including journalists,

whistleblowers and activists identified in the documents — did not. At that point, WikiLeaks decided — quite reasonably — that the best and safest course was to release all the cables in full, so that not only the world's intelligence agencies but everyone had them, so that steps could be taken to protect the sources and so that the information in them was equally available."

The Guardian continued to ignore their pivotal role. An [editorial](#) on 2 September 2011 blamed Assange alone for the leak, saying the leaked archive "was not the original file accessed by the Guardian last year". It didn't even mention the password!

A handful of people knew of the existence of this republished file and, realising its potential for harm, they did not publish any clues as to how it might be accessed. WikiLeaks, by contrast, tried to blame others for the leak, hinted at how it could be accessed, and then finally decided to publish it all to the world in an unredacted form.

This was clearly unhinged nonsense. Desperate to avoid blame, the Guardian editors then claimed WikiLeaks had "dwindled to being the vehicle of one flawed individual – occasionally brilliant, but increasingly volatile and erratic."

There was no compelling need, even with the recent disclosures of the internal leak, for WikiLeaks to publish all the material in the form in which it did. Julian Assange took a clear decision this week: he must take the responsibility for that.

Assange later told [New Scientist](#) that WikiLeaks' usual editorial "harm minimisation" procedures became irrelevant after other websites published the full unredacted cables. He said the public needed a reliable source for the cables and WikiLeaks had become a "trusted brand" for such material. He also blamed the Guardian for exposing "our internal security mechanisms" by publishing the lengthy passphrase:

Even if the passphrase had expired – it hadn't in this case – the way it is put together, alongside knowledge of the use of an additional word, gives an attacker very strong clues as to how an organisation habitually structures its keys, passwords or passphrases.

NOTE 1

Goran Rudling [suggested](#) that David Leigh and his Guardian colleagues may have deliberately confused the terms "password" and "encryption key". This book has used the term "password" or "passphrase" above because it was widely quoted as such but it is important to understand the distinction: an encryption key is used to encrypt and decrypt a file, whereas a password just provides access. If you access an encrypted file but don't have the key, all you will see is random

characters (i.e. gibberish). Rudling also has an interesting [timeline](#) of Domscheit-Berg's involvement with WikiLeaks.

NOTE 2

In February 2012, Daniel Domscheit Berg was [re-admitted](#) to the Chaos Computer Club. Andy Müller-Maguhn, a CCC member since 1986 who was now considered "too close to Julian Assange", was not re-elected to the board. To his credit, however, when Domscheit-Berg was contacted by German police in 2017 and told that US authorities wished to talk to him about the WikiLeaks Grand Jury, he [reportedly](#) said was not interested in speaking to the FBI.

NOTE 3

On 22 December 2010 Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten [claimed](#) to have gotten hold of the full archive of US Embassy cables "without any clauses or bonds". Presumably these came via the Guardian or Heather Brooke (see [Chapter Seven](#)) although the source has never been revealed.

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In the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, governments around the world had been pushing ever more extreme "austerity" measures. This helped trigger the Arab Spring and other anti-government protests from Iceland to Iran. The Spanish [Indignados](#) or 15-M Movement, which started on 15 May 2011, partly inspired by anti-austerity protests in [Greece](#) a year earlier, in turn helped inspire the first Occupy Wall Street protest in New York on 17 September 2011.

On 8 October a huge [protest](#) was held in London's Trafalgar Square to mark ten years of war in Afghanistan. Speakers [included](#) Tony Benn, John Pilger and Jemima Khan. Julian Assange [told](#) the crowd of thousands that the media had to bear responsibility for starting wars, and many journalists were "war criminals":

Margaret Thatcher had it right; there is no society any more. What there is is a transnational security elite that is busy carving up the world using your tax money. To combat that elite we must not petition; we must take it over. We must form our own networks of strength and mutual value which can challenge those strengths and self-interested values of the warmongers...

When we understand that wars come about as a result of lies peddled to the British public and the American public and the publics all over Europe and other countries then who are the war criminals? It is not just leaders, it is not just soldiers, it is journalists; journalists are war criminals. And while one might think that that should lead us to a state of despair, that the reality that is constructed around us is constructed by liars, is constructed by people who are close to those that they are meant to be policing, it should lead us also to an optimistic understanding because if wars can be started by lies, truth can be started, peace can be started by truth.

So that is our task and it is your task. Go and get the truth, get into the

ballpark and get the ball and give it to us and we'll spread it all over the world."

A week later, on 15 October, Assange addressed another huge crowd at the [Occupy London](#) camp outside St Paul's Cathedral. As he arrived, accompanied by two bodyguards, Assange was physically seized by police for wearing a Guy Fawkes mask - a symbol of the #Anonymous movement - because a new UK law had outlawed the wearing of masks in public.

Assange then made a quick [speech](#) to nearby protesters where he confirmed he had been unmasked but not arrested, and acknowledged the support of #Anonymous hacktivists.

As we saw today, it is now impossible for people to move in an anonymous way... Sometimes it may be legitimate to deny that anonymity, but we should not accept it until Swiss bank accounts and offshore bank accounts are also denied their anonymity...

I ask that all of you demand that foreign bank accounts be opened up and made transparent, the same way that I today have been forced to be made transparent."

Assange later [addressed](#) the main protest from the steps of the Cathedral:

What is happening here today is a culmination of dreams that many people all over the world have worked towards from Cairo to London. What we face today is the systematised destruction of the rule of law. People are being laundered through Guantanamo Bay to evade the rule of law and money is being laundered through the Cayman Islands and London to evade the rule of law. This movement is not about the destruction of law, it is about the construction of law.

Assange also held an impromptu press conference where he [condemned](#) the banks who sought to censor WikiLeaks and "the rest of the quality press":

"Why is it that banks, even more than military and intelligence organisations, have attacked WikiLeaks? Because banks are all about secrecy... More than any other country, more than any other town, England and London is where money is hidden. Wherever corruption starts in the world, it ends in London."

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24 hours earlier, a search warrant was signed in Alexandria, Virginia, by US Magistrate Judge Theresa Carroll Buchanan, seeking information from Google on WikiLeaks supporters. Although its

existence was not revealed for two more years, the court order [confirmed](#) that the US Grand Jury investigation was extremely broad and "using subpoena powers rarely wielded against bloggers and journalists".

Smari McCarthy and Herbert Snorrason, two Icelandic freedom of information activists who have discussed their work assisting WikiLeaks publicly, were informed of the federal District Court order Tuesday evening in Reykjavik, via e-mail, weeks after the gag order preventing Google from revealing the subpoena was lifted on May 2.

Cables [released](#) under FOIA just weeks later showed that the Australian embassy in Washington had reported a year earlier that the US Grand Jury investigation of WikiLeaks was "unprecedented both in its scale and nature". And yet politicians in Australia, Britain, Sweden and the USA continued to pretend otherwise.

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On 2 November 2011 Julian Assange was advised that he had [lost](#) his High Court appeal against extradition to Sweden, with Lord Justice Thomas and Mr Justice Ouseley denying that it would violate his human rights. The judges also awarded £19,000 costs against Assange. British media reported that the WikiLeaks founder "could find himself in a Swedish jail by the end of the month."

The only recourse for Assange's lawyers was to lodge an appeal with the Supreme Court against the High Court's judgment. This meant even more expense, and even more delays. Assange made a short statement to journalists outside the court, ignoring their shouted questions.

"No doubt there will be many attempts made to try to spin these proceedings as they occurred today but they were merely technical. So please go to swedenversusassange.com [site now defunct:archived link] if you wish to know what is really going on in this case."

Frontline Club founder Vaughan Smith, a former Army officer and war correspondent, [bristled](#) at media hostility towards his long term house guest at Ellingham Hall:

I have seen a human side of him that hasn't been represented in the press. He is incredibly popular with my children, who see him as sort of an uncle figure. He's somebody who will listen to you, and he's somebody who will give you time and give you attention and help you... He's damn good company.

Smith also ridiculed media claims that the much-vaunted "age of WikiLeaks" was already over.

I think there are lots of bullies here. I think the British press have been bullying. I think the American government have been bullies. But it's wider than that... Julian is presented as some sort of slightly nutty proponent of

radical transparency. Actually, the truth is, he isn't anything of the sort.

I think it would be foolish to determine WikiLeaks is over. It's far too premature for that... I don't think we've seen the end of Assange.

*

On 6 November Jennifer Robinson and Julian Assange published an [article](#) in the Sydney Morning Herald criticizing Australia's "hate speech" laws. Many supporters were [flustered](#) by Assange's decision to defend Rupert Murdoch's rightwing News Limited columnist Andrew Bolt, who had previously called Assange a "patronising, supercilious racist git". Ironically, Bolt had just been convicted for publishing racial slurs.

Citing the USA's First Amendment, Robinson and Assange argued that the state should not be allowed to regulate what political speech is deemed acceptable.

In much of Europe and Australia, it is unlawful to deny that the Holocaust took place - this is "acceptable" censorship. But in Turkey it is a crime to assert that the Armenians were subjected to genocide. Imagine if Australia introduced a law prohibiting use of the word "genocide" in respect of the treatment of indigenous Australians? ...

Free speech must protect all speech, however offensive. Debates that offend the "ordinary" or "typical" Australian are precisely the debates we need. It is precisely when the majority shares a view that it needs to be challenged, because if it is wrong, then we are all imperiled.

Given that Assange was himself facing years in jail if extradited to the USA, his comments reflected deep personal convictions:

The law, whether civil or criminal, is a serious business. At its end is the deployment of armed police to imprison people or seize their assets by force. It should never be used to regulate disfavoured views.

*

On 17 November 2011 US President Barack Obama [addressed](#) the Australian Parliament and announced an increase in military co-operation, including a permanent rotational force of 2,500 US Marines at a new base outside Darwin. As part of his new "Pivot To Asia" policy Obama declared that the USA was "a Pacific power, and we are here to stay."

"Today I can stand before you and say with confidence that the alliance between the United States and Australia has never been stronger... So here, among close friends, I'd like to address the larger purpose of my visit to this

region - our efforts to advance security, prosperity and human dignity across the Asia Pacific..."

On the lawns outside Parliament House, hundreds of [protestors](#) chanted: "Assange and Manning! Let them go! The people have the right to know!" Julian Assange's mother Christine Assange addressed the crowd, [saying](#) "the Australian government has done nothing for Julian" and condemning the "star-stuck" attitude of Australian politicians. After thanking supporters and urging them to "continue fighting for my son" she told [media](#) that the USA should accept blame for the "lax security" which had lead to the release of their secret documents through WikiLeaks.

"The consensus of the Australian people I've spoken to is that the credibility loss at the moment - globally, for the US - is coming more from their reaction to WikiLeaks than the leaks themselves."

*

"The Walkleys" are the most prestigious awards in Australian journalism. On 27 November 2011 the Walkley Foundation [announced](#) that WikiLeaks had won the Walkley Award for "Most Outstanding Contribution to Journalism". Judges said Wikileaks applied new technology to "penetrate the inner workings of government to reveal an avalanche of inconvenient truths in a global publishing coup".

In his [acceptance speech](#) Assange said the work of WikiLeaks had created a lot of powerful enemies but also good friends: "it has brought out the best in people: courage, loyalty, compassion and strength".

We journalists are at our best when we share with activists and lawyers the goal of exposing illegality and wrong-doing — when we help hold others to account. This award is a sign of encouragement to our people and other people who labour under difficult conditions in this task.

Our lives have been threatened, attempts have been made to censor us, banks have attempted to shut off our financial lifeline. An unprecedented banking blockade has shown us that Visa, Mastercard, PayPal, the Bank of American and Western Union are mere instruments of Washington foreign policy. Censorship in this manner has been privatized.

Powerful enemies are testing the water to see how much they can get away with, seeing how they can abuse the system that they've integrated with to prevent scrutiny. Well, the answer is: they can get away with too much. I expected the hate-speech on Fox News, but not the calls by US Senators for the extra-judicial assassination of myself and my staff. Neither did I expect that the United States would aggressively undermine its own constitution to persecute me and my organisation. But I can understand the Washington

elites' reaction. Washington is waging a war against the truth. It was, after all, the truth about Washington and its friends that we revealed.

What I cannot understand is the craven behaviour of the Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard. It is embarrassing.

A year earlier, Assange reminded the crowded room full of journalists, Gillard had commissioned "an absurd, whole-of-government task force" and "falsely stated that WikiLeaks had acted illegally" - the Australian Federal Police "had to take the embarrassing role of correcting her". The Attorney General had decided not to cancel Assange's passport, "saying not that it was wrong, but that it was helpful for tracing my movements". And when Assange was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize, the Australian High Commission in London had refused to host the event.

The Australian government has refused to say whether it would block my extradition to the United States from Australia, but it has acknowledged that it has the political discretion to do so. The Gillard government has shown its true colours in relation to how it has handled US pressure on WikiLeaks...

As Australians we shall not despair; as long as we can speak out, as long as we can publish, and as long as the internet remains free, we will continue to fight back, armed with the truth.

Australian independent media site Crikey [noted](#) that WikiLeaks had "changed the way journalism is practised forever" and the question now was not so much "what is a journalist?" but "what is journalism?".

Defining journalism as more of a practice than an occupation also allows us to say that not everything done by people who call themselves journalists qualifies as journalism.

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Chapter Twelve: End 2011

The 2001 terrorist attacks on the USA supposedly "changed everything". A decade later, according to the [Electronic Frontier Fund](#), 2011 was "The Year Secrecy Jumped the Shark". US government censorship had reached absurd levels:

- The Department of Justice [refused](#) to declassify a key 2001 legal opinion that was used to justify the Bush administration's warrantless wiretapping program, even after that program was declared illegal.
- A 2011 [report](#) revealed that in 2010 - at least partly in response to the Manning leaks - the US government had classified 77 million documents, a 40% increase on 2009. A month later it was

revealed that over 4.2 million people held US security clearances. This was the first precise tally of clearances held by federal employees and contractors that had ever been produced.

- In February the US government told Air Force families, including their kids, it was illegal to read WikiLeaks. A month earlier, the Air Force had barred service members abroad from even reading the New York Times. In April, lawyers for Guantanamo detainees were also barred from reading the WikiLeaks Guantanamo files, even though the contents were widely reported.
- When the first US citizen ever to be killed by a US drone was reported dead in Yemen, President Obama refused to even say the words “drone” or “CIA”. Instead he said that Anwar al-Awlaki “was killed” and this “significant milestone” was “a tribute to our intelligence community.” The New York Times called it “the latest reflection of a growing phenomenon: information that is public but classified”. The US government then refused to release its legal justification for killing an US citizen abroad without a trial, despite announcing the killing in a press conference.
- The CIA refused to release any information from their global warming study center (established in 2009) claiming it would damage national security. The CIA also demanded former FBI agent Ali Soufan censor his book about CIA torture, even though the information was already widely reported elsewhere.
- President Barack Obama accepted an award for transparency - as part of the "Sunshine Week" festivities - behind closed doors.
- Peter Van Buren, who worked at the State Department for 23 years, had his security clearance revoked because he linked to a publicly available WikiLeaks document on his blog.

As we sat in a small, gray, windowless room, resplendent with a two-way mirror, multiple ceiling-mounted cameras, and iron rungs on the table to which handcuffs could be attached, the two DS agents stated that the inclusion of that link amounted to disclosing classified material. In other words, a link to a document posted by who-knows-who on a public website available at this moment to anyone in the world was the legal equivalent of me stealing a Top Secret report, hiding it under my coat, and passing it to a Chinese spy in a dark alley.

The US government was now spending over \$10 billion per year just to keep information secret. This ridiculous lack of transparency was the polar opposite of what WikiLeaks was striving to achieve. The beltway zeitgeist was captured by this Wall Street Journal headline:

But the pinnacle of absurdity was perhaps best revealed by the clever work of the American Civil Liberties Union:

The ACLU sued asking the State Department to declassify 23 cables out of the more than 250,000 released by WikiLeaks. After more than a year, the government withheld 12 in their entirety. You can see the other 11, heavily redacted, next to the unredacted copies on the ACLU website.

If you follow that link, you can see the exact sections of text that the US government most wanted to

redact from their cables. By refusing to declassify information that was already public - thanks to the Guardian and the Openleaks team - the US government had revealed exactly what information they were still most desperate to hide, even though it was already public.

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By the end of 2011 WikiLeaks had [over](#) 1,267,000 followers on Twitter and many more on Facebook. During the year, WikiLeaks had promoted several new initiatives that aimed to engage supporters, raise funds and boost public support.

The Friends of WikiLeaks initiative (hashtag #FoWL - hence the bird) aimed to link up supporters around the world with encrypted email accounts hosted by WikiLeaks, in the hope they would build local support networks, perhaps organise protests, and maybe even come up with their own new initiatives. There were plans to expand the platform to include encrypted chat, thus creating an alternative social media platform. In practice, however, delivery was slower than expected, many supporters were not sure what to do with their new #FoWL email address, and productive "real life" meet-ups were not too common, particularly for those in remote areas. Relentless public attacks on WikiLeaks no doubt also had a negative impact.

Earlier in the year, on 24 May 2011, WikiLeaks had posted a tweet (later deleted) announcing a new "WikiLeaks Forum" site. This was supposed to be an unofficial and independent online forum. It quickly became another nightmare. By this time, social media networks were already full of anti-WikiLeaks - and particularly anti-Assange - trolls. Some of them were unhinged lunatics encouraged by the constant media attacks on Assange, some were well-meaning activists who were just stupid, misguided or uninformed, but many had more sinister agendas.

The WikiLeaks Forum started out well, with lots of passionate supporters [Ed: including myself] becoming contributors and even administrators of various sections. But top-level administrators who kept their identities secret were soon bombarding members with questions about their support for Julian Assange: was it time for him to go? Wouldn't WikiLeaks be better off without him? Soon a new section was created that was openly hostile to Assange, leading many disillusioned admins [Ed: including myself] to quit the forum. Then new sections appeared that were dedicated to trolling and slandering the admins who had quit!

Within two years the forum pages had become a home for troll accounts and were openly peddling disinformation. When the identity of one of the original site administrators was [exposed](#) - German photographer Mark Goeder Tarant was seen filming protestors - he denied any involvement with the FBI and took legal action to keep his photo (below) suppressed. Supporters [claimed](#) he was also behind many other anti-Assange and anti-WikiLeaks sites and social media accounts.

But Mark was just one of two original administrators who reportedly set up the forum site. The other administrator, a teenager from Iceland, would cause WikiLeaks far worse problems - not only did he work for the FBI, they flew him around the world, put him up in hotels, and paid him cash for informing on Julian Assange and WikiLeaks staff and supporters.

"Siggi"

Sigurdur "Siggi" Thordarson was reportedly only 14 years old when got a job scrubbing information from the computers of a business in his native Iceland. After he started making copies of the data

and investigating it more closely, he realised the business was corrupt. He then leaked the information to a local newspaper and became a minor celebrity on the Nordic island nation, catching the attention of journalist Kristinn Hrafnsson, who [introduced](#) him to Julian Assange at an open lunch for the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative project in 2010.

Thordarson soon joined the local team of WikiLeaks volunteers, helping the staff working on the Collateral Murder video, despite objections from Birgitta Jónsdóttir:

"I warned Julian from day one, there's something not right about this guy."

After Jónsdóttir, Domscheit-Berg and others departed, leaving the organisation short of staff, Thordarson helped moderate the WikiLeaks IRC channel, manage an online shop, and set up the WikiLeaks Forum. Although Hrafnsson insisted that his role was limited, he soon caused trouble:

Around the fall of 2010, he took part in moderating the open chat forum. And then when one of the supporters approached him on that forum with the idea of raising money for WikiLeaks through online sales of t-shirts and coffee mugs and things of that nature, he was tasked to oversee the project, which resulted in him stealing or embezzling — whatever words you would use for it — around \$50,000, which was the proceeds from the sales.

At 3:33 am on 23 August 2011, after Hrafnsson had started pressuring Thordarson to explain what had happened to the money, the desperate "cherub-faced" 20-year-old sent a secret email to the local US Embassy, offering to become a snitch.

The very next day, according to numerous sources cited in [Assange's 2013 affidavit](#), six FBI agents and two US Department of Justice prosecutors flew by private jet to Iceland. They told Iceland's Interior Minister that their operation was related to the #LulzSec hacking investigation and a reported breach of the Icelandic Parliament's computer system. But officials in Iceland became suspicious when they noticed interrogation sessions with Thordarson were taking place in hotels around Reykjavik rather than at the US embassy. They concluded that the FBI was trying to use Thordarson as a bait to entrap Assange.

WikiLeaks was very popular in Iceland at the time, and this was not acceptable behaviour. The Icelandic Interior Minister immediately declared that the FBI operations were an illegal violation of Icelandic sovereignty. The US team was expelled from the country, taking Thordarson with them to Denmark for further questioning. Thordarson reportedly stayed at the Hilton hotel near Copenhagen and was later flown to the Marriott hotel in Arlington, Virginia, where he handed over "eight hard drives in total containing of about 1 terabyte of data".

The problem with this story is that everything from this point onwards is impossible to verify, because "Siggi" - a "pathological liar" who fabricated evidence, was repeatedly convicted of fraud, and was also repeatedly convicted of sexually abusing children - is the only source for revelations that shocked the public in 2013. These revelations became a key part of the US Department of Justice's "computer intrusion" or hacking charges against Julian Assange in 2020. But Thordarson then [retracted](#) his evidence in 2021. So the end result is that none of his statements can be considered credible, and none of the unverified "proof" he supplied can be considered credible

either.

At any rate, in 2013 Thordarson gave an [interview](#) to WIRED's Kevin Poulsen, the same editor who had previously misrepresented the Assange-Manning chatlogs, and whose multiple articles citing anonymous "former WikiLeaks insiders" were repeatedly denied by WikiLeaks. The WIRED interview was soon followed up with a [lengthy article](#) in Rolling Stone that went into even more detail about Thordarson's strange life and colourful claims. Then Slate's Ryan Gallagher published an [article](#) including a link to unverified and allegedly fabricated [chatlogs](#) between Thordarson and LulzSec leader Sabu. Given that both of them had by then co-operated extensively with the FBI, the chatlogs might as well have been dictated by FBI agents.

The unverified chatlogs and media stories above suggest that Assange was drunk on power, relied on hacking to keep WikiLeaks afloat, and even hacked his own friends and colleagues. But Thordarson's [retracted](#) lies told a different story:

- Assange never asked him to hack or access phone recordings of Iceland MPs.
- Assange did not help him attempt to decrypt a file stolen from an Iceland bank.
- Assange did not use unauthorized access, provided by a source, to access an Iceland government website that tracked police vehicles.

Thordarson admitted to personally hacking into the hard drives of WikiLeaks staff and misrepresenting himself as an official representative of WikiLeaks in order to get media to pay for lavish trips abroad. It's possible that if (as the chatlogs suggest) Thordarson also misrepresented his role in online chats and inflated Assange's involvement with the 2011 LulzSec hacks, the FBI agents controlling Sabu might have been even more determined to bring charges against the WikiLeaks founder. But even that is just speculation.

In 2013, Sigurdur Thordarson was convicted of sexual assault against a 17-year-old boy. In 2014, he was ordered to pay WikiLeaks 7 million ISK (roughly \$55,000) and sentenced to prison for 2 years for embezzlement and financial fraud. In 2015 he got [another three years](#) in prison for sexually assaulting nine boys on multiple occasions, including one boy 40 times. One of his alleged victims committed suicide. He was [arrested again](#) in Iceland for fraud in September 2021, soon after retracting his claims against Assange and despite being given immunity by the FBI in exchange for his earlier testimony. A psychiatrist who evaluated Siggi declared him fit to stand trial but in all likelihood a sociopath incapable of feeling remorse for his actions.

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The Spy Files

Following Thordarson's departure in November, WikiLeaks called a [press conference](#) for 1 December 2011, where they [said](#) they would announce "a new phase" for the organisation, including a new online submissions system. Unfortunately the long-delayed anonymous dropbox was still not quite ready - WikiLeaks blamed vulnerabilities in the SSL certificate system - but instead a roomful of invited journalists were presented with the organisation's latest release.

The [Spy Files](#) were released in conjunction with Privacy International. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIIJ) [explained](#) the importance of the documents:

These brochures and other marketing material... shine a light on this shadowy industry, which is worth \$5bn (£3.2bn) and is growing fast. These brochures are not readily available: instead, they are handed out to key contacts – often government agencies and police forces – at trade shows that are closed to the public and the press...

The documents have been collected from over 130 companies based in 25 countries from Brazil to Switzerland, and reveal an array of technologies so sophisticated, it often seems to have come out of a Hollywood film. But the 'Spy Files' and their contents are real. They add weight to the campaigners who claim these proliferating technology companies constitute a new, unregulated arms industry.

There were 287 documents from 160 digital surveillance firms in the initial release: some of them had been published elsewhere with little impact, some were publicly available to anyone who searched for them, but many were newly revealed secrets. WikiLeaks kept updating their Spy Files trove with new files over following years.

WikiLeaks partners for the original release included the Washington Post, the Hindu, Italy's L'Espresso and French news outlet OWNI, who revealed (for example) a manual by the French surveillance firm Amesys that included a screenshot of pseudonyms belonging to Libyan dissidents that Muammar Gaddafi wanted dead or jailed. Californian company Glimmerglass was offering "non-intrusive intercepts of any fiber asset" including submarine Internet cables. Another US company helped repressive regimes spy on targets and "see what they see, in real time" including "draft-only emails, attached files, pictures and videos".

The Spy Files release was covered by [Forbes](#), [WIRED](#), and other outlets but Guardian journalists showed [no interest](#) in the story. James Ball dismissed the release as "mainly brochures" (he later deleted all his tweets prior to 2012). A single article by TBIJ's Pratap Chatterjee was later [posted](#) in the Guardian's "Comment is Free" opinion section.

NOTE

Ten years later, the Guardian joined the [Pegasus Project](#) group of media outlets who exposed intrusive surveillance software from Israeli company NSO Group. Over a dozen Guardian articles were [devoted](#) to the project. NSO group was founded a year before WikiLeaks published the Spy Files.

The Guardian's Vendetta

By this stage the Guardian's extraordinary public vendetta against Assange had been in full swing for months. I compiled a [list](#) of hostile articles which was published on WikiLeaks Central:

- On 2 September 2011, the day after the full Cablegate archive was posted online, James Ball haughtily declared that this was "the last straw". He said WikiLeaks had "done the cause of internet freedom – and of whistleblowers – more harm than US government crackdowns ever

could" and activists named in the cables "should never have had to fear being exposed by a self-proclaimed human rights organisation". No mention that it was his Guardian colleagues and the OpenLeaks crew who had actually caused the exposure of the full archive, or that others revealed it before WikiLeaks.

- On 18 September Nick Cohen authored another Guardian smear piece titled "The Treachery of Julian Assange". He called the WikiLeaks boss "an active danger to the real seekers of truth" who was "aching to betray better and braver people than he could ever be". Cohen said Assange "published the documents in full because my colleagues on the Guardian inadvertently revealed a link to a site he was meant to have taken down". Um, what? He said "in China, as elsewhere, the chilling effect WikiLeaks has spread has caused critics of the communists to bite their tongues". Really? In Ethiopia, Cohen stated, "Assange has already claimed his first scalp" - but WikiLeaks had [already shown](#) three days earlier that the story he cited was not true. Cohen demanded "relentless pressure" on Assange's supporters and condemned the "anti-Americanism" of the wider transparency movement.
- On 26 September, despite the obvious conflict of interests, David Leigh was chosen to review Andrew O'Hagan's "unauthorised autobiography" of Assange, which Assange called a "novel" and even the author admitted had "a voice which was as invented as anything I'd ever produced in fiction." Leigh suggested that Assange suffered some sort of mental illness: "a truly threatened personality, in fear of being overwhelmed and extinguished... living in a fantasy world". He patronisingly suggested that critics who called Assange "preposterously grandiose and lashing out at imagined enemies" should perhaps try to be more kind.
- On 2 October Karin Olsson, the "Culture Editor" at Sweden's Expressen newspaper, was invited to write another substance-free Guardian smear piece titled "Julian Assange: from Hero to Zero". She called Assange "a paranoid chauvinist pig [who] cuts an increasingly pitiable figure". She quoted criticism of Assange as "a solitary and shabby libertarian who wants to tear down democratic societies" then said he should "give up his futile struggle against extradition and show a little respect to the Swedish justice system".
- On 8 November James Ball [took exception](#) to a new article in support of Assange by Israel Shamir, claiming Shamir's "influence over WikiLeaks and beyond is difficult to overestimate". Ball declared that "Assange's moves have driven the organisation to the brink."

The Guardian also falsely repeated for years that Assange was "facing charges" in Sweden (there were no charges: he was only wanted for questioning). These smears were widely reprinted in newspapers around the world, including former media partners. Readers comments were usually disgusted at the authors, but comments on Twitter from other journalists increasingly supported the anti-Assange narrative. A United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture later [declared](#) that years of such deeply personal and unsubstantiated media attacks on Assange amounted to a form of torture.

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Friends and Foes

By 7 December 2011 Julian Assange had spent a full year either in jail or under house arrest without charge. Two days earlier, a UK Parliamentary debate had agreed to demand urgent reform of the European Arrest Warrant system and the UK's extradition treaty with the USA. Here the

Australian's case had tapped into growing anti-European sentiment at Westminster; Tory MP Dominic Raab, who later headed Brexit negotiations, declared:

"Fast-track extradition in the EU is based on a leap of faith. It is based on an assumption that all European justice systems are of a decent standard. That assumption is a sham."

The UK High Court had also agreed that the Supreme Court should hear the Assange extradition case on 1-2 February 2012, before a full bench of seven judges, because the case was of significant public importance. And a new ally had arrived in London: appalled at the lack of Australian government support, Greens Senator Scott Ludlam had paid for his own flights and accommodation in order to meet Assange in person and build support for his freedom.

Ludlam had already [filed](#) Freedom of Information requests to find out if the Australian Government had offered the USA any assistance; he wanted letters, emails, file notes and records of phone conversations. He also wanted to meet with UK and European MPs to discuss the case. Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, a strong supporter of US expansionism, was [not interested](#).

Citing cables as evidence, Assange later [said](#) that Carl Bildt had been a US Embassy informant since 1973, when he was 24 years old, and had befriended President Bush's Senior Advisor Karl Rove when he lived in Washington. If Assange were extradited to Sweden, Bildt would be the official in charge of onward extradition to the USA.

Meanwhile in the USA, Texas congressman Ron Paul, a [strong supporter](#) of WikiLeaks whose libertarian policies were often applauded by Julian Assange, had become the Republican Party's leading Presidential candidate.

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Manning's Pre-Trial Hearing

Chelsea Manning's pre-trial military hearing began at 9:00 AM on Friday, 16 December 2011, the day before her 24th birthday. The hearing was held at Fort Meade in Maryland, the location of the National Security Agency (NSA) headquarters. It was Manning's first public appearance since being detained and tortured a year and a half earlier. Support rallies, protests and vigils were organised around the world.

Manning's defence lawyer David Coombs had asked for 48 witnesses, including President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Only two witnesses were approved.

"Two out of 48!" he exclaimed. "In a case in which the government has charged [Manning] with aiding the enemy, which carries the maximum sentence right now of death!"

Manning was facing a total of 34 counts, with this hearing set to decide which charges would be brought to a court-martial. Prosecutors revealed the secret 2010 chatlogs between Manning and "Nathaniel Frank" (see [Chapter Five](#)) and suggested this was proof that Julian Assange had worked

with Manning to hack into US classified systems. But they could not even prove beyond doubt that "Nathaniel Frank" was Assange. In response, Assange told media that WikiLeaks could not verify the chatlogs because they did not record chatlogs, and maintained two-way anonymity with sources.

Manning's defense counsel [moved](#) that the judge recuse himself because he had worked since 2002 as a prosecutor for the Justice Department, which now had a criminal investigation against Assange.

"If the Department of Justice got their way, they would get a plea in this case, and get my client to be named as one of the witnesses to go after Julian Assange and WikiLeaks."

Three unidentified men in suits appeared in the courtroom every day of the hearing: one was [revealed](#) to be a Department of Justice employee working on the Assange case.

Despite presenting a string of witnesses over the first five days, US prosecutors were unable to make the case that anyone, anywhere, had ever been harmed as a result of the leaks published by WikiLeaks. This was an important victory for the transparency organisation.

Prosecutors revealed that they were also investigating a page on the Wikileaks website called the "Most Wanted Leaks of 2009". They pointed to this as evidence that WikiLeaks was illegally soliciting classified US government information. Of course there was nothing illegal about such a list - which US prosecutors again [cited](#) in the Assange trial ten years later - especially because in 2009 WikiLeaks was still a "wiki". So this was a [publicly-generated](#) list developed by contributors! You can see an archived version [here](#).

WikiLeaks ridiculed this dangerously foolish line of attack by linking to a parody [article](#).

Assange claims the list of names is one-half of a master document with details on most of the earth's population, and originates from an eccentric recluse within the Arctic Circle....

"The document came to us on a frost-damaged parchment, it's hardly 'present day' technology", claimed Assange. "But whoever compiled it is a master of espionage. They know when you are sleeping, they know when you're awake. And they have some strong opinions about whether you've been good or bad, based on outmoded ideals and capitalist dogma."

On Christmas Day itself, WikiLeaks had a new idea to present: the WikiLeaks Party. It was a good idea. It generated a lot of optimistic discussion among supporters, and a few years of hard work. But ultimately it would lead to another major disappointment.

Meanwhile, WikiLeaks were not the only ones who had [noticed](#) how many US legal cases had been scheduled to run into Christmas. Manning supporters claimed the late December trial was designed to minimise public scrutiny and make it harder to gather for protests. Then, on New Years Eve,

President Obama very quietly [signed into law](#) the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which provides continued funding for the US Department of Defence.

A provision in the 2011 Act authorized, for the first time, the indefinite military detention of US citizens. Obama, who had threatened to boycott the bill, insisted that his own administration would never use these powers. The ACLU said Obama would "forever be known as the president who signed indefinite detention without charge or trial into law".

"The statute is particularly dangerous because it has no temporal or geographic limitations, and can be used by this and future presidents to militarily detain people captured far from any battlefield."

Reminding people that President Obama now claimed the right to assassinate suspected terrorists - including US citizens - without charge or trial, Ron Paul [explained](#) how the NDAA text "any associated forces" meant that everyone in the USA was now "a potential terrorist".

If you happen to visit a website, happen to attend a meeting... you can be accused of being a terrorist. And the Bill says you have no right to a lawyer.

A US district judge later [ruled](#) the provision unconstitutional because "it left intellectuals, activists, and journalists vulnerable to detention for exercising First Amendment rights". But the US Congress and Senate found tweaks to keep the extreme executive powers alive.

Meanwhile all the emails of all US soldiers had been placed under surveillance to prevent another WikiLeaks-style disclosure. And in response to the Arab Spring, DARPA - the guys who invented the Internet - were working on a \$42 million [Social Media in Strategic Communication](#) program. The goal was to track "purposeful or deceptive messaging and misinformation" in social networks and to pursue "counter messaging of detected adversary influence operations":

"Events of strategic as well as tactical importance to our Armed Forces are increasingly taking place in social media space. We must, therefore, be aware of these events as they are happening and be in a position to defend ourselves within that space against adverse outcomes".

O, brave new world?

*

By the first of January 2012, Chelsea Manning had been in a military jail for 588 days and was still awaiting trial. Julian Assange had been detained 391 days and still had not been charged. And WikiLeaks had been subject to an unlawful [banking blockade](#) for 394 days.

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Chapter Thirteen: Early 2012

In January 2012, Rolling Stone magazine published a lengthy and revealing interview with Julian Assange. Author Michael Hastings - whose book about the Afghan War, *The Operators*, lead to the resignation of "rock star" US General Stanley McChrystal - spent three days with Assange at Ellingham Hall. He compared the 40-year-old WikiLeaks founder to an "embattled rebel commander" whose protracted legal battles had left him "isolated, broke and vulnerable".

Assange recently spoke to someone he calls a Western "intelligence source," and he asked the official about his fate. Will he ever be a free man again, allowed to return to his native Australia, to come and go as he pleases?

"He told me I was fucked," Assange says.

Assange explained how WikiLeaks had come to focus on Western states:

Initially we thought that our greatest role would be in China and some former Soviet states and in Africa. We did have early successes in Africa. I lived in Kenya in 2007, and we were able to source a document that exposed billions of dollars of corruption by the former president Daniel arap Moi and his cronies. The evidence ended up swinging the vote by 10 percent and changing the Kenyan election. But Moi's corruption didn't exist in Kenya alone. The money looted from Kenya was deposited into London banks, properties and businesses, into New York properties. There is no large-scale corruption in the developing world without Western corruption. That was an important lesson to me.

Another important lesson was that, very quickly, we started receiving information from what we presumed to be disaffected U.S. government employees about the actions of the U.S. military. The United States has historically been a relatively open society. But within the United States, there is a shadow state, and that is the U.S. military, which, as of September, held 4.3 million security clearances. That is equal to the population of New Zealand. That is a closed, totalitarian society that gathers and stores more information than any other society in the world.

When Hastings suggested that Assange was waging "a lifelong campaign against authority", he took exception.

Legitimate authority is important. All human systems require authority, but authority must be granted as a result of the informed consent of the

governed. Presently, the consent, if there is any, is not informed, and therefore it's not legitimate. To communicate knowledge, we must protect people's privacy – and so I have been, for 20 years, developing systems and policy and ideals to protect people's rights to communicate privately without government interference, without government surveillance. The right to communicate without government surveillance is important, because surveillance is another form of censorship. When people are frightened that what they are saying may be overheard by a power that has the ability to lock people up, then they adjust what they're saying. They start to self-censor.

He also rebuked the suggestion that he had "a massive ego".

I don't think I have a massive ego. I just am firm at saying no. No, we will not destroy everything we've already published. No, we will continue to publish what we have promised to publish. No, we will not stop dealing with U.S. military leaks. For some people, that comes across as a big ego, when it's just sticking to your ideals.

Assange said his confrontation with the Western national-security state – "it's not quite right to call it the U.S. national-security state, because it's a transnational phenomenon" – had brought out the best and worst in people.

In November, I told our people, perhaps to their surprise, that what we were doing was more significant than the life of any one of us. To that degree, the battles that we've had, the severity of the battles that we've had, is not something I have found to be difficult to deal with. Their severity is a reflection of the quality and importance of our work. That said, the betrayals are hard to take...

Assange said that many people who had "an involvement to some extent in our work" then overstated their contribution "to gain authority". Then, when WikiLeaks was not able or willing to continue the relationship, "they feel rejected".

What they lose through the lack of an ongoing relationship seems to be so incredibly valuable to them, so their desire to keep it, or their feeling of loss when they are not able to preserve the interaction, is so extreme that it drives them to do things you would not normally expect people to do.

Assange said his children had received death threats and numerous stalkers had turned up at the front door of his rural retreat - "three hours out of London by fast train, plus another 40 minutes in a car through country roads, and then through a long private driveway into the country house" -

including many "women who thought they were my fiancee" and a certain Captain Morgan, who sold his ship and came to help "the only organization on Earth worth working for."

I always thought that A-level celebrities and their complaints about the difficulties of being a celebrity were rather self-indulgent. I've subsequently changed my opinion. Brad Pitt doesn't have a superpower at his back. He just has some crazed fans and paparazzi. But now, having had all three, I must say, I'm not terribly impressed with the experience.

Assange said he had received a list of US government priorities "from an intelligence source" on the same day the Swedish sex allegations against him appeared. It said the US would find mounting a legal case against him very difficult, so therefore "I should be very cautious about extralegal means" such as "the planting of drugs, child pornography or being otherwise embroiled in disgraceful conduct". He said he didn't take the "politicized sex scandal" very seriously at first because "I thought that it would disappear immediately".

We hired someone in the U.K. to cope with the volume of media inquiries. He accepted at a very substantially reduced rate because we're activists, a cause célèbre. His largest clients were Virgin and Sony. After one week, it was clear that it was either us or them. His board, according to him, insisted that we be dropped, so we were. There have been about a dozen similar instances of pressure being applied to companies who we've been working with. When people say, "Why didn't Julian do this, why didn't Julian do that, why didn't WikiLeaks do this," in many cases we have actually tried. It's not so easy when you're fighting a superpower.

Assange said he was now "completely bankrupt" as a result of the Swedish extradition case, which he had so far had to finance himself.

I don't think that is right. Actually, I think the organization should pay for it. It is unquestionable that the case has been politicized as a result of my role in the organization.

Assange said he wanted to go back to doing his work and traveling the world but had no idea whether WikiLeaks would even survive:

This week, I think we'll make it. We'll see what happens next week.

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Friends & Foes

Assange's many supporters around the world were doing what they could to help.

Australian Senator Scott Ludlam sent an email to Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bild detailing [prejudicial public statements](#) made by Swedish officials and requesting their retraction "or at the very least cessation". Ludlam then accompanied WikiLeaks spokesman Jacob Applebaum back to Australia, where they both addressed a [packed house](#) at Melbourn's Trades Hall. The "War On The Internet" panel included Julian Assange's old friend Suellette Dreyfus and Crikey journalist Bernard Keane, plus a pre-recorded video message from Assange.

Ludlam later [complained](#) that his iPhone appeared to have been hacked by government officials, perhaps trying to obtain information on Appelbaum.

With help from supporters, Julian's mother Christine Assange - who also suffered years of bizarre problems with her phone, Internet and email - set up a [blog](#) and posted a [list](#) of imaginative protest actions for Australia Day January 26.

Senator Ludlam and Christine Assange appeared together weeks later at another panel in Sydney, "Don't Shoot the Messenger", chaired by popular TV news host Mary Kostakidis. They then continued to a Brisbane forum "The War on Wikileaks" in March.

In the USA, meanwhile, WikiLeaks' lawyer Jennifer Robinson was attending a film on slavery at the Sundance Film Festival when she happened to bump into US Attorney General Eric Holder. She asked him about his intention to prosecute Julian Assange.

"How do you think history will reflect upon your treatment of WikiLeaks and Assange?"

Holder's casual demeanour immediately changed when he realised Robinson was Assange's lawyer.

"The release of confidential information is a very serious matter, and we have to draw the line somewhere," he said.

Holder emphasized the damage the Cablegate leaks had caused to the USA and other countries, but refused to provide any details. Then he walked away. Robinson later [noted](#) that the US Attorney General who insisted on "drawing the line somewhere" had done nothing to prosecute CIA torture programs, instead jailing CIA whistle-blower [John Kiriakou](#).

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UK Supreme Court Appeal

On 2 February 2012 Julian Assange's final appeal against extradition to Sweden was heard at the UK Supreme Court in London. A huge crowd of protestors, police and media observers gathered outside the court for the two day hearing.

Assange's lawyers [argued](#) that the European Arrest Warrant system should be consistent across all countries involved, but in fact there were widely varying and inconsistent applications of law across the continent, and Sweden's use of the system was especially questionable. In particular, Assange's lawyers claimed that Swedish public prosecutor Marrianne Ny did not qualify as a

legitimate "judicial authority" who could personally issue a European Arrest Warrant without any Swedish judicial or court involvement.

Former Assange counsel Geoffrey Robertson QC wrote an [article](#) supporting this argument:

"The notion that a prosecutor is a 'judicial authority' is a contradiction in terms. ... Judges must, as their defining quality, be independent of government. Police and prosecutors employed and promoted by the state obviously cannot be perceived as impartial if they are permitted to decide issues on the liberty of individuals. They are expected to be zealous in working up evidence against a suspect, so they are the last people who can be trusted to weigh up impartially the evidence they themselves have drummed up. That is a matter for a court."

Ignoring criticism from legal experts in Sweden, [Claire Montgomery QC](#), who had previously helped Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet evade justice, and who later helped protect Prince Andrew from extradition to the USA, argued that the Swedish Judicial Authority was just following their normal procedures. The Guardian [reported](#) that this could be the last time Assange's case was heard in a British court.

The supreme court judges retired to consider their judgment, which will be reserved for what is expected to be several weeks. If they decide to uphold the high court ruling, Assange could be sent to Sweden for questioning within days.

Another key issue for the judges to consider was Britain's 2003 Extradition Act, which was introduced as part of the "war on terror" to facilitate the process of extraditing "persons of interest." Would Julian Assange be treated the same as a terrorist?

The Simpsons

In a totally unrelated twist, meanwhile, Geoffrey Robertson's wife Kathy Lette had been [approached](#) by Julian Assange and the producers of The Simpsons cartoon show. They wanted her to rewrite the dialogue for a scene in their 500th episode, where Assange made a cameo appearance. The plot involved the Simpsons being driven out of Springfield by angry citizens and ending up living in a place called The Outlands, where the WikiLeaks founder was their new neighbour.

"I guess they just wanted me to add a little Aussie irony to the script," said Lette. "Julian does not suffer from any irony deficiency... My best joke is when I get Marge to ask Julian for his recipe at a barbecue and he replies 'I never reveal my sauces'."

By this time WikiLeaks had already [revealed](#) that Julian Assange would soon be hosting a TV show

of his own. They were seeking regional licences for a series of ten half-hour episodes, set to launch in coming months.

"Through this series I will explore the possibilities for our future in conversations with those who are shaping it," wrote Assange. "Are we heading towards utopia, or dystopia and how we can set our paths? This is an exciting opportunity to discuss the vision of my guests in a new style of show that examines their philosophies and struggles in a deeper and clearer way than has been done before."

The GI Files

In the final week of February 2012, WikiLeaks began publishing more than five million emails from the Texas-headquartered "global intelligence" company Stratfor. As previously mentioned in [Chapter Nine](#), the most shocking revelation was an email from Fred Burton, Stratfor's Vice-President for Counterterrorism and Corporate Security, who claimed that the US Grand Jury had prepared a sealed indictment for Assange at least a year earlier.

"Not for Pub — We have a sealed indictment on Assange. Pls protect."

A WikiLeaks [statement](#) showed how comments from the ex-CIA staff at Stratfor were closely aligned with US government tactics, and how Burton boasted of his ability to get hold of confidential US government information:

Emails from Fred Burton reveal that the US Government employs the same counterterrorism strategy against Julian Assange and WikiLeaks as against Al Qaeda: "Take down the money. Go after his infrastructure. The tools we are using to nail and de-construct Wiki are the same tools used to dismantle and track aQ [Al Qaeda]. Thank Cheney & 43 [former US President George W. Bush]. Big Brother owns his liberal terrorist arse."

Ten days after the CIA reportedly assassinated Osama bin Laden, Burton writes in an email sent to Stratfor's "Secure" mailing list that he "can get access to the materials seized from the OBL [Osama bin Laden] safe house."

Burton states: "Ferreting out Julian Assange's confederates is also key. Find out what other disgruntled rogues inside the tent or outside [sic]. Pile on. Move him from country to country to face various charges for the next 25 years. But, seize everything he and his family own, to include every person linked to Wiki."

Burton, a former US State Department counterterrorism expert, suggested the US government

would pursue "conspiracy and political terrorism charges" and then "declassify the death of a source" and blame it on WikiLeaks. His preferred strategy was to "bankrupt the arsehole first... ruin his life. Give him 7-12 yrs for conspiracy."

There were over 4,000 Stratfor emails that mentioned WikiLeaks or Assange, including multiple mentions of a sealed indictment going back to as early as June 2010, after the release of the Collateral Murder video but prior to the Afghan War Diaries release. The emails also showed how Stratfor monitored and analysed the online activities of Bhopal activists for the US chemical giant Dow Chemical. They also [exposed](#) the revolving door of staff moving between US private intelligence companies and the United States government.

Emails between the founder and Karl Rove, a senior advisor to George Bush, are among those released to date. The cache also contains gossip between Stratfor staff, apparently originating from the 2008 presidential campaign of John McCain, that the senator was encouraged to take action against President Obama for alleged electoral fraud in two states. Coca-Cola also seemingly engage Stratfor for background research against Peta activists in Canada ahead of the Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010.

One of the largest #Anonymous accounts on Twitter, @AnonymousIRC, who had over a quarter of a million followers at the time, claimed to be the source of the hacked Stratfor emails. They later turned against Assange, presumably after their account was taken over by the FBI, and by December 2021 had only 663 followers.

The complete "global intelligence" files from Stratfor are still available on WikiLeaks.org as [The GI Files](#).

The World Tomorrow

The first episode of Julian Assange's "[The World Tomorrow](#)" TV show was broadcast on 17 April 2012. His first guest was Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Lebanon's Shia militant group Hezbollah, who had not spoken to the media for six years and had not done an English-language interview for over a decade. Even the Guardian's Luke Harding [conceded](#) that Assange had "scored a genuine coup".

Communicating via satellite link, both host and guest participate in the conversation from secret locations: Julian Assange from his temporary home in the English countryside, where he has been detained for 500 days without charge; Hassan Nasrallah, from a Lebanese Hezbollah stronghold, where he goes about his work under continual fear of assassination at the hands of state and non-state actors.

The show was produced by Quick Roll Productions, a company established by Julian Assange with the help of Dartmouth Films, who also released films from John Pilger. British company [Journeyman Pictures](#) handled the distribution while British-Tamil rap star [M.I.A.](#) composed the

theme song. Italian newspaper L'Espresso made the program available online in Italian. But Russia Today (RT) provided the bulk of the funding by purchasing the international broadcast rights in English, Arabic, Russian and Spanish. This of course lead to predictable criticism from Assange haters like Luke Harding:

The mystery is why Assange should agree to become a pawn in the Kremlin's global information war. Perhaps he needs the money. Assange's anti-American agenda, of course, fits neatly with the Kremlin's own.

WikiLeaks was more than prepared for the smears, promoting a #SmearAndEnjoy hashtag with a satirical list of ready-made smears and a [statement](#) from Assange:

In this document, I try to lend a helping hand to the overworked hacks in the anti-Assange 'smearsphere' by indulging in a pre-emptive bout of self-hating WikiLeaks-bashing... Most of the time, I despair at the lack of imagination and poor sense of humour evinced by journalists and public figures who should know better. I have decided to hold out an olive-branch to our overworked detractors, by writing higher quality smears for them. Now please don't take them all for yourself. One per "journalist".

Assange also did a 20 minute [interview](#) with Russia Today, making it clear that he had full editorial control of his program. He said his team had chosen RT because they had higher penetration into the USA than Al Jazeera and their coverage of WikiLeaks had been more positive than "hostile" organisations like the BBC.

We believe that all media organisations have an angle... RT is a voice of Russia, so it looks at things from a Russian agenda, the BBC is a voice of the British government, the Voice of America is a voice of the American government. And it is the clashing of these voices together that reveals the truth about the world as a whole.

He also explained what motivated him to create the show:

As someone who has given a lot of interviews before, and been on the receiving end of very aggressive interview styles, I found that I wasn't giving much away in interviews at all. Pretty quickly you learn to just give some pretty standard defensive responses so people don't take what you've said out of context.

"The World Tomorrow" gave globally important figures an opportunity to speak on their own terms but Assange was far from a pushover as a host. Reviewing the first episode, Glenn Greewald [said](#) that Assange had conducted an "aggressive, adversarial interview... something most American TV personalities would be loathe to do".

But not only that, Assange's questions were grounded in support for the Syrian opposition forces and were hostile to the Assad government: exactly the reverse of the Russian government's position, which has maintained steadfast support for Assad.

The second episode of the show put "intellectual superstar" Slavoj Žižek up against "unrepentant Zionist" David Horowitz, a hardline US conservative. Intellectual figures Noam Chomsky and Tariq Ali appeared later in the season. One episode discussed the "Occupy" movement while two shows were dedicated to the "Cypherpunks" and the fight for Internet freedom.

Interviewee Imran Khan, who went on to become Prime Minister of Pakistan in 2018, said people like him "would never have had a chance of coming into power" before WikiLeaks cables exposed "two faced politicians". Another guest, Anwar Ibrahim, was set to become Prime Minister of Malaysia in 2020, despite repeated periods of imprisonment, before his coalition collapsed.

Assange also interviewed the new Tunisian President, Moncef Marzouki, who had been jailed by former dictator Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali and spent years living in exile. Episode four included jailed Arab Spring activists Nabeel Rajab from Bahrain and Alaa Abd El-Fattah from Egypt; both men would spend many more months in prison as the political gains of the Arab Spring were wound back. Episode five featured former Guantanamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg, who was now Director of prisoner activist group Cageprisoners, and the group's Executive Director Asim Qureshi.

Assange regretted that he was not able to interview jailed dissidents like China's Ai Wei Wei, and said he had also tried to interview "the tops of power of some giant US corporations" via "indirect personal contact" but they said it was "politically just too dangerous".

But given what was about to happen to Assange, his most important guest must have been Rafael Correa, the President of Ecuador. Episode six went to air on 22 May, just weeks before Assange sought political asylum in Ecuador's London embassy. They discussed how Correa had [stared down](#) a violent 2010 coup attempt and how his attempts to limit corrupt media propaganda were being mis-characterized in the West as attacks on press freedom. Assange described how he had naively attended a Latin American media alliance - Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa (SIP) or Inter American Press Association (IAPA) - and was "horrified" by the blatant levels of [corruption](#). Correa noted how corrupt media in Latin America had frequently misreported the US State Department cables from WikiLeaks, and said he was trying to promote free public media as a way to balance corrupt corporate journalism. He argued that in Latin America today "media power was and is probably much greater than political power" because those who controlled the media also controlled politicians and judges:

Let's get out from our heads the poor brave journalists, angelical media trying to tell the truth and tyrants on the other side, dictators, autocrats, trying to avoid that. It's not true. It's the opposite. Governments who are trying to do something for the great majority of people, we are persecuted by journalists who believe that [they can] just insult people and engage in calumny. Please, the whole world should understand what is going on in Latin America. When I got to the government, there were seven national

television channels, there was no public service television - all of them private. Five of them belonged to bankers.

Assange noted that WikiLeaks had experienced similar problems with media partners trying to [misrepresent](#) the cables, even in defiance of legal agreements. He reminded Correa that WikiLeaks had originally partnered with two Ecuadorian media companies - El Universo and El Comercio - but then the Ecuadorian government said 'Please WikiLeaks, we want you to release all the cables about Ecuador, all of them'.

Why did you want us to release all the cables?

Because we have nothing to fear, we have nothing to hide.

Correa said WikiLeaks had actually strengthened his government. In the wake of the Cablegate publications, he expelled the US Ambassador, saying her arrogance was an insult to his nation. He said one of the driving forces behind the 2010 coup attempt was that his reforms included cutting off funding from the US embassy to Ecuadorean police.

As Evo Morales says, the only country that can be certain it's never going to have a coup d'état is the United States - because it doesn't have a US embassy!

Correa also joked about Ecuador shutting down the US military base in Manta, saying it would not have been a problem if US officials had just let Ecuador build a military base in the United States. Assange struggled to stop laughing while conducting the interview. The two men were off to a good start.

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Australia Abandons Assange

Australian lawyer Jennifer Robinson had long been calling for the Australian government to assist her Australian client Julian Assange, with little to show for her efforts. In a 40 minute meeting with Attorney General Nicola Roxon on 2 May 2012, according to [an email](#) later obtained under FOI laws, Robinson "outlined a list of issues on which she hoped the Australian Government would seek advice or assurances from the UK, US and Sweden".

Roxon said "she could not at this time commit to a particular course of action in respect of the list Robinson had provided" and "Australia had no legal grounds to act preemptively though there may be some things we can do diplomatically".

Assange later [noted](#) that the Attorney General was flanked by two other people in that meeting:

On her left her national security political adviser, on her right the departmental national security adviser. And the Attorney-General is responsible for the Australian intelligence services. Why are these two guys

there? What have they got to do with the Swedish sex allegation? Why are they there?

Opposition spokeswoman Julie Bishop said Australians were entitled to wonder why Assange was not being treated the same as other Australians facing problems overseas who received high level consular and diplomatic support. But when Bishop became Foreign Minister a year later, she continued promising meaningless secret "diplomatic efforts" for another five years.

Roxon sent a formal [letter](#) to Robinson stating that Australia would not seek to involve itself in any international exchanges about his future.

"Australia would not expect to be a party to any extradition discussions that may take place between the United States and the United Kingdom or the United States and Sweden, as extradition is a matter of bilateral law enforcement cooperation."

Julian Assange [said](#) this letter could only be described as "a declaration of abandonment".

"This is not even the usual mealy-mouthed weasel words that bureaucracies use."

Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr was also busy [wiping his hands](#) of Assange with acrobatic oratory tricks. He said consular officials were in contact with Assange's lawyers and the Australian government had made representations to ensure he would be treated fairly in Sweden.

"As far as I can tell there's been no Australian who's received more consular support in a comparable period than Mr Assange," said Carr.

In his memoirs, published years later, Bob Carr [admitted](#) that he had no idea if this claim was even true:

"Strictly speaking, I don't know whether this is the case. But it is a broad, healthy truth that I don't think anyone could disprove. I do it to needle his self-righteousness. Let him go to Sweden and face questioning for sexual assault and rape... Sure enough, my needling has an effect."

He also admitted that he was "fed up with complaints from [Assange's] family suggesting he hasn't been supported by Australia and the opposition spokesperson saying the same thing".

By this stage Julian's exhausted mother Christine - who posted a detailed [open letter](#) to the Australian people weeks earlier - was [way beyond disgusted](#):

"They're absolutely useless, all they do is book themselves seats to watch what's going on. US politicians are still calling for Julian to be killed and

they wouldn't even ask the American Government to tone it down."

Assange later [said](#) he had had no personal contact from anyone at the Australian High Commission in London since December 2010:

The last time U.S. consular officials met with my lawyers was back in the past December and they didn't provide anything at all. We were just handing over these demands to them. They have provided us with no legal advice ever. Whatever. The last time that I met with any persons from the Australian Embassy, any person claiming to be related to consular support, was when I was in prison in 2010. December 2010, locked in solitary confinement and they gave me a notepad.

So when Bob Carr says "consular support," what he means is the Foreign Minister's office coming to court and observing what's going on so that he can write a brief to the minister in order to best prepare the minister's press lines. None of that information comes back to us. And when we've tried to get hold of it, for example through the Freedom of Information Act or when the Sydney Morning Herald has tried to get hold of it, 95% of it is entirely blacked out, with FOIs being withheld in some cases for 18 months. Even though legally they should only be held for 40 days...

Look, I don't even have the rights of the defendant, because I haven't been charged. I don't have a right to see any evidence against me, see the detailed allegations against me, to counter these matters in a legal way, because I am not even a defendant. We have a basic notion in Australia that you are free to go about your life as an adult until the Government charges you with an offence. And then you must have your day in court, and it's the Government's responsibility to show, beyond a reasonable doubt, that you have done something wrong. But until at least being charged, let alone convicted, you are free to go about your life as a free citizen. For the last 540 days, I have been detained without charge.

Senator Scott Ludlam's efforts to seek Australian government support had also hit a [brick wall](#):

Senator BOB CARR: We have seen no evidence that such a sealed indictment exists.

Senator LUDLAM: Have you sought such evidence?

Senator BOB CARR: We have not sought evidence, but we have seen no evidence that it exists.

Senator LUDLAM: Well, of course you haven't.

When Julian Assange entered the Ecuadorian embassy, Bob Carr was in Libya [personally pleading](#) for the release of an imprisoned Australian lawyer, Melinda Taylor. She was set free just two weeks later.

NOTE

Taylor later became a strong supporter of Assange and worked on his case with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in 2016.

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UK Supreme Court Gets It Wrong

On 30 May 2012 Britain's Supreme Court [ruled](#) by five to two that Julian Assange's extradition appeal had failed. To avoid leaks, lawyers were not shown the judgments until 8.30 that morning. This was odd; draft judgments are normally circulated to counsel up to a week before delivery so that they can point out any minor errors such as mis-spelled names or incorrect dates.

Assange was not present in the Westminster courtroom (there was no legal requirement for him to be there) - his solicitor, Gareth Peirce, explained that he was stuck in traffic. A scene from the video documentary [RISK](#) shows him in a car with Sarah Harrison, on the phone to others, asking what was happening.

What was happening was quite unusual.

Lord Phillips explained that his fellow judges believed Swedish prosecutor Marrianne Ny qualified as a "judicial authority" and therefore her European Arrest Warrant was valid.

But then Assange's representative, Dinah Rose QC, addressed the court. She said nobody had even asked her about the key issue on which three of the five ruling judges claimed to have based their decision. This was all about Article 31.3 of the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which states that treaties can be interpreted bearing in mind the "subsequent practice" of their application.

One judge said this opportunity to "interpret" the meaning of European law was a "determinative" point. Another said he based his conclusion "principally" on this point. A third said it was "ultimately critical". And yet this critical point had not even been discussed in court.

As Joshua Rozenberg [explained](#), this was "very embarrassing for the Supreme Court":

The judges gave Rose two weeks to make written submissions on this point. "If she decides to do so", they said later, they would "then decide whether to re-open the appeal and accept further submissions (either verbally through

a further hearing, or on paper) on the matter."

In the end, the judges may decide that they were entitled to take the Vienna convention into account. In that event, they would presumably confirm the decision they delivered today. But given two weeks to prepare her case, Rose could well come up with other arguments. In the meantime, Assange can stay in the UK.

It was the first time the UK Supreme Court had been forced to re-open a case since the 1998 Pinochet extradition drama, in which prosecutor Clare Montgomery QC was also involved.

As John Pilger observed:

"This case moves in mysterious ways and we are about to move into another mysterious stage of this whole unnecessary process."

In fact, things were even more mysterious than Assange's legal team knew. In 2021 Stefania Maurizi provided [proof](#) that Swedish and UK authorities had been secretly plotting ways to extradite Julian Assange after the "expected" Supreme Court ruling and before he could file an appeal with the European Court of Human Rights.

The FOIA document reveals that on the 8th of December 2011, the Swedish member of Eurojust – the European Union's agency for criminal justice cooperation – contacted his British counterpart expressing optimism that the British Supreme Court in London would deliver a verdict in Sweden's favor. "It is my experience in similar situations from Eurojust it is important with a pick as close to the decision as possible to avoid conflicts with an expected appeal to the European Court of Human Rights. After the 10 days time frame there is no longer a possibility to have coercive measures against Mr A".

In other words, according to what the then Swedish member of Eurojust wrote in his emails to the British member, Sweden aimed to extradite Julian Assange before he could appeal to the European Court for protective measures.

In normal circumstances, if the Supreme Court had not stuffed things up, Assange would have had only 14 days to surrendered to UK authorities. Instead his lawyers filed a new 18-page [submission](#) nearly two weeks later, on 12 June 2012. The application included a request for the Supreme Court to correct their false statement that Assange "stands charged" in Sweden.

"It is notable that, following the hearing, the Court on three occasions wrote

to the parties seeking further written submissions on points which the Court was considering including in its judgment, but which had not been argued before it, including elements of the Parliamentary process, and the applicability of Pupino. The applicability and effect of Article 31(3)(b) of the VCLT was not raised even at that stage. It is of particular note that the issues upon which the parties were afforded the opportunity to make subsequent written submissions were ultimately determined against the Respondent. The Respondent thus was afforded an opportunity to make submissions upon new issues which were adverse to the Respondent's interest. By contrast, the Appellant was afforded no opportunity to make submissions upon the single issue, arising post-hearing, that was to be decided adversely to him, and determinatively so.

A Guardian [article](#) noted that if the UK Supreme Court upheld their ruling, Assange could still take his case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), "further delaying the extradition process for many months".

But by now Assange had totally lost faith in UK authorities. Weeks later he [told](#) Australia's ABC News:

"They tried to cancel the 14 days that I had here to apply to appeal the matter at the European Court of Human Rights".

It took the Supreme Court only two days to [turn down](#) Assange's last minute appeal. The Australian's final appeal to British justice had failed. Assange supporters claimed that British justice had, in fact, failed. The award-winning journalist, editor and publisher had only fourteen days to surrendered to UK authorities.

At 11 pm that night, UK government security contractors [arrived](#) at Assange's residence demanding to fit a new tagging device on his ankle, claiming the battery signal was low. The message was clear: we are watching you.

*

Run, Julian, Run

On 4 June 2012 Julian Assange vented his frustration in an Australia radio [interview](#):

For over 540 days, I've had an electronic manacle around my leg, being under house arrest, being forced to be in this country because of one reason: the Swedish Government will not come to this country and interview me. They will not interview me on the phone. It is perfectly within their legal entitlements – there are standing treaties to do this, called

the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty — and it is done, in other cases in Sweden. So the case has not progressed because I am suspicious of what is happening in Sweden and the Swedes will not provide us sure answers. The obvious thing to do — the Swedish Government was criticized in the high court — is simply to pick up the telephone and call me. Or if they want to do it in person, to meet me. Or if they want to do it on Swedish soil it can be at the Embassy. Or they can use standard treaty techniques like the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty. It makes you wonder what the hell is going on? And is this how a government operates, is operating, in good faith?

On 17 June 2012 WikiLeaks Central posted a [review](#) of a new book, "A Brief History of Swedish Sex":

Structured as a timeline, the volume vividly illustrates how a political coup by a group of radical feminists at the highest levels of government caused the free-love era of "Swedish sin" to give way to a wave of anti-sex and anti-male hysteria that vilified heterosexual sex and villainized men. It was into this morass that WikiLeaks leader Julian Assange waded when he had consensual sexual relations with Anna Ardin and Sofia Wilén—and then became the target of a Sweden-initiated international manhunt.

On 19 June Christine Assange [posted](#) a long list of tweets about the extradition process:

1. Australian PM Julia Gillard and Opposition leader Tony Abbot backed new Extradition Act Amendments making it easier for U.S.A to extradite Aussies. The Greens fought it.
2. For the FIRST TIME Aussies can be now be extradited for minor offences.
3. The protection of "political" motives has been weakened. If the charge is "terrorism" then "political" cannot apply to prevent extradition.
4. The U.S.A. recently expanded its definition of "terrorist" to include peaceful protesters - "Low level terrorism".
5. Under the new NDAA legislation, the U.S became a police state - citizens and foreigners can be arrested without warrant and indefinite detention applies.
6. In 1971 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled it legal to publish classified documents. Obama is now trying to label media who do so as terrorists.
7. Modifications to the act included changing "protection from death penalty" to "likelihood the death penalty would be carried out".
8. Note that the U.S.A is in the top 5 countries for killing its own citizens, and the only Western country in that top 5.
9. Even Minor Offences under the new Extradition Amendments are punished with up to 12 months imprisonment.
10. The UK/US Bilateral Treaty allows the U.S.A to extradite from the UK without any *prima facie* case (i.e. evidence).

11. The Swedish/US Bilateral Treaty gets around safeguards of normal extradition with a fast-track "Temporary Surrender" clause.
12. The US Grand Jury convenes in secret. There are 4 prosecutors, no defence, and no judge. It can issue indictments for Extradition with no proper legal process.
13. Sweden has not refused an Extradition request from the USA for over 20 years.
14. In 2001 Sweden gave two innocent Egyptian refugees to the CIA for rendition to Egypt, where they were tortured.
15. The Swedish Justice Minister who signed off on the CIA rendition torture flight was Thomas Bodström.
16. Thomas Bodström is now the business partner of Claes Borgström, the politician/lawyer of the two Swedish women in the Assange case.
17. The Australian Greens supported a motion by Senator Scott Ludlam to protect Julian from "Temporary Surrender" to the U.S.A via Sweden. Both Labor and the Coalition opposed it.

On the same day, as later shown in the movie [RISK](#), Julian Assange dyed his hair red, put on fake contact lenses and an ear-ring, disguised himself as a motorbike courier, said goodbye to his mother and drove into central London. He then entered the offices of the embassy of Ecuador at 3 Hans Crescent, just behind the famous Harrods department store, and [declared](#) that he was seeking political asylum.

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Chapter Fourteen: Late 2012

Assange In The Embassy

On 19 June 2012, Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño confirmed that Julian Assange was inside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London and had applied for political asylum. Assange [told](#) Ecuadorian officials that he had received a "factual statement of abandonment" from his own government, while top officials in Sweden had openly attacked him, and he was facing the death penalty in the USA. The government of Ecuador issued a [statement](#) saying they were considering the request "as a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration for Human Rights".

Ignoring Assange's legal right to seek asylum, Scotland Yard immediately declared that Assange was now subject to arrest for breaching his bail conditions. Supporters who had helped Assange post £200,000 bail [said](#) they were surprised but not disappointed by his decision to seek asylum. Prominent US supporters including Michael Moore, Oliver Stone and Noam Chomsky [sent](#) a letter of support. Crowds of local supporters began gathering daily on the street outside the embassy, including Ecuadorian citizens calling for their government to offer asylum.

Ecuador had previously offered asylum to Assange in November 2010, when the Vice Chancellor stated: "We are open to grant him Ecuadorian residency, without any kind of problem or any kind of conditions." But President Rafeal Correa had quickly [clarified](#) that this offer was not official. Correa now [insisted](#) that his government's decision on asylum would not be affected by pressure from other nations:

"If Assange's life is at risk, that is sufficient cause to approve his asylum," he said. "The death penalty exists in the United States for political crimes."

Correa said the Ecuadorian government would "examine what the allegations are in Sweden, how the judicial process is carried out, and if it is compatible with the humanist vision of justice that we have in Ecuador".

Ecuador's ambassador to the US [warned](#) that "giving asylum to Assange would be used as ammunition to attack the country." She said the recriminations "already have begun".

Two days after Assange entered the embassy, the Washington Post editorial board [wrote](#) that the US extradition concerns of Assange "the Australian hacker" were just a "fantasy" and President Correa, "a small-time South American autocrat", was seeking to become the world's "chief Yanqui-baiter and friend-to-rogues". They noted that Ecuador relied on the US dollar as its official currency and a third of Ecuadorian exports went to the United States thanks to "special trade preferences".

Those preferences come up for renewal by Congress early next year. If Mr. Correa seeks to appoint himself America's chief Latin American enemy and Julian Assange's protector between now and then, it's not hard to imagine the outcome.

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Assange's first interview from inside the embassy came on the same day, 21 June 2012, with Australia's [ABC News](#). Here's how host Fran Kelly introduced her radio segment:

The 40 year old Australian walked into the Embassy on Tuesday in a dramatic bid to avoid extradition to Sweden for questioning over sexual assault allegations.

Assange immediately took issue with this framing.

I don't know where you get that from. We've never said that's the case, and that's simply not the case. The issue is about a very serious matter in the United States and an announcement was made by the Swedes and the Swedish Government that I would be detained, without charge, in Sweden, immediately on extradition.

Assange said that being jailed immediately on arrival in Sweden would mean that his "ability to exercise an asylum right would be at an end" and his legal right to further appeal was already being blocked:

They tried to cancel the 14 days that I had here to apply to appeal the matter at the European Court of Human Rights... we had the surprise news that the

Crown Prosecution Service here suddenly objected to the 14 days we were meant to have to file an EU appeal and were asking for zero.

Kelly suggested that seeking asylum made Assange look more guilty; "it made you look like you're on the run, desperate to avoid questions about those sexual assault allegations".

Assange replied that the Swedish prosecutor, if she really wanted to make progress on the case, was perfectly welcome to come to the embassy:

"The Ecuadorians have said she could come to the Embassy, she could pick up the telephone, like she could've picked up the telephone for the past 18 months, if that's really what she is interested in."

Assange argued that the more interesting question was why he hadn't sought asylum in the Australian embassy instead. Kelly played back audio from Australian officials claiming they had not seen or heard any indication of US legal action against Assange.

"But they are taking legal action!" exclaimed a "clearly agitated" Assange. "There have been nine prosecutors working this case! The evidence is everywhere, they've been issuing subpoenas to our ISPs, to the people I've been meeting, etc. It's a matter of public record. They are taking legal action. They've taken action against Twitter! We've been fighting a legal case in the public record in relation to the Twitter subpoenas for over a year now..."

Assange said US and Australian officials were "just playing word games" because the US Department of Justice could not formally issue charges until the Grand Jury had finished its investigation. He said it was on the public record that the FBI's case file "now runs to 48,135 pages" and the US government was spending "vast amounts of resources":

"I mean, just today it was discovered that a contract put out by the Department of Justice for one to two million dollars to maintain the WikiLeaks computer systems that the Department of Justice is running - one to two million dollars contracted to MANTEC as a matter of public record, just discovered today."

Australian Government Complicity

Three days later, Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr continued playing word games on ABC's "[Insiders](#)" political TV show. He insisted the Swedish legal case was "wholly unrelated, wholly unrelated to anything to do with WikiLeaks or state secrets". He said he had only discussed Assange's situation twice with US officials but "I've received no hint that they've got a plan to extradite him to the US".

BARRIE CASSIDY: But he talks about this grand jury, the secret grand jury

proceedings. Can you be satisfied this is not happening?

BOB CARR: Barrie, **there's not the remotest evidence that that's the case.** There was one allegation that appeared somewhere of something called a sealed indictment. No US figure has confirmed that to us. I suppose you could argue that they wouldn't confirm it to us til the last moment.

This was of course complete nonsense. The Australian embassy in Washington had reported in 2010 that the US Grand Jury investigation of WikiLeaks was "unprecedented both in its scale and nature". Senator Ludlam later sent a [letter](#) to Bob Carr with copious evidence of the US Grand Jury and a sealed indictment.

BOB CARR: But I can say, what I've said to a senior US official: Assange is an Australian citizen, we've got an interest in this, have you got plans to extradite him? They haven't said they have plans to extradite him. **They haven't been able to rule out that one corner of the American administration might not be considering it**, but I would expect that the US would not want to touch this.

Note the use of double negatives and other evasive rhetorical tricks. Carr also mischaracterized Assange - a citizen falsely accused in global media of "double rape" - as a person of low morals, proclaiming that "releasing a whole batch of secret material without assessment and without justification raises profound moral questions... There's an amorality about what's been at work here." Never mind the morality of the war crimes and corruption WikiLeaks exposed.

Journalist Bernard Keane responded to Carr's evasive nonsense with a [list of questions](#) the Foreign Minister could ask his US friends, if he actually cared to so so:

- why is an Australian journalist the target of a US investigation simply for that journalism?
- why is the Obama Administration stopping and interrogating activists who have been in contact with Assange when they attempt to travel internationally?
- why is the Obama Administration orchestrating a financial blockade by major international financial intermediaries of WikiLeaks?
- why did the Vice-President describe Assange as a terrorist?
- why did the State Department, with no evidence, insist Assange is not entitled to protections under the First Amendment?

On 3 July 2012 Bob Carr again [haughtily insisted](#) that the USA clearly had no interest in Assange. Why? Because two years had now passed since the publication of the Afghan War Logs, and the USA still had not charged him. These foolish comments came just after Senator Dianne Feinstein, chairwoman of the US Senate intelligence oversight committee, repeated her calls for Assange to be prosecuted for espionage. At the same time, Carr's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) was blocking the release of documents that would show what the Australian government really knew about the US investigation of WikiLeaks.

With the benefit of hindsight, Carr's cavalier 2012 attitude raises serious questions about the value of Australia's alliance with the USA. If the Australian government really had no idea about the USA's sealed indictment - not to mention their secret deal to withhold charges till the Swedish case had finished - then why did they continue withholding evidence - demanded by numerous Freedom of Information requests - for years to come? The same pattern of denial continued under a long period of short-term, unpopular Australian Prime Ministers. By late 2021 these documents were still secret.

In 2019 Bob Carr joined calls for Assange not to be extradited to the USA, but still did not reveal what his department knew at the time.

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USA Interferes in Australian Politics

It is worth mentioning at this stage that in December 2010, Carr's predecessor as Australian Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd, initially blamed lax US security for the release of Cablegate:

"Mr Assange is not himself responsible for the unauthorised release of 250,000 documents from the US diplomatic communications network. The Americans are responsible for that."

Even former prime minister John Howard, who took Australia to war with the USA in Iraq and Afghanistan, [agreed](#) that Assange was only doing what any journalist in his situation would do. He argued that Assange's source(s) were to blame if any harm came as a result of the publications.

It is also worth mentioning that Kevin Rudd was Prime Minister of Australia from 2007 until June 2010, when Chelsea Manning had recently been arrested and WikiLeaks began publishing the Afghan War Logs. US diplomatic cables from Canberra [revealed](#) that US officials, who initially saw Rudd as "a safe pair of hands", had by then become fiercely critical of his leadership:

"Rudd... undoubtedly believes that with his intellect, his six years as a diplomat in the 1980s and his five years as shadow foreign minister, he has the background and the ability to direct Australia's foreign policy. His performance so far, however, demonstrates that he does not have the staff or the experience to do the job properly..."

US cables labelled Rudd a "control freak" while lavishing praise on his likely successor, Julia Gillard. US officials were particularly disturbed by the Chinese-speaking PM's engagement with Asian nations and his lack of enthusiasm for the war in Afghanistan. Rudd [said](#) there was "no common strategy for winning the war or winning the peace" and Afghanistan "scares the hell out of me".

The cables also [revealed](#) that Rudd's Labor Party colleague Senator Mark Arbib was one of several "protected" US information sources in Canberra and was in regular secret contact with the United States embassy (a sprawling compound just 230 metres from Parliament House). Arbib became "one of the architects of Kevin Rudd's removal as Prime Minister".

Polls [showed](#) that Kevin Rudd was a popular PM who was deposed by his own party as soon as his

public approval dipped below 50%. It was later [revealed](#) that Julia Gillard's staff were drafting her acceptance speech two weeks before she ousted Rudd as Australian PM. Australian Ambassador to the USA, Kim Beazley, was also briefing Hillary Clinton on the leadership change a fortnight before it happened.

Julian Gillard was an unpopular Prime Minister who called a party ballot to shore up her failing support ahead of the 2013 election. She lost the ballot to Kevin Rudd, who became Prime Minister again for three months, but he then lost the subsequent federal election to Tony Abbott (see below) and retired from politics. Gillard became a Senior Fellow at the US Brookings Institution thinktank and chairperson of the Clintons' Global Partnership for Education. She was a vocal supporter of Hillary Clinton's failed 2016 US Presidential Campaign, appearing on stage at rallies and writing articles in US media. As Prime Minister, Gillard established [routine donations](#) of millions of Australian taxpayer dollars to the Clinton Foundation.

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It was not just Australia's Labor Party government who was deliberately ignoring Assange's plight. In a July 2012 [radio interview](#), the leader of the opposition Liberal Party, Tony Abbott - who became Prime Minister in 2013 - expressed near-total disinterest in the Assange case. Abbott cemented his sycophancy to the United States weeks later by [claiming](#) that "few Australians would regard America as a foreign country". The only Australian political party that consistently supported Julian Assange were the Greens, who habitually won only around 10% of the vote at elections.

Christine Assange [declared](#) that she was sick of politicians ignoring the facts:

"This is the problem that I've got with this commentary all along, is that neither Gillard, Abbott, or the appointed henchmen Carr and Roxon are telling the people the facts. And there's [fact after fact after fact](#) that indicates that this is nothing more than a political persecution to silence the truth. And what does the Australian government do - all except the Greens - is aid and abet that political persecution."

Mrs Assange also admitted that the many months of pressure were taking a heavy toll on her.

"I live with terror. Absolute terror. Nightmares all night..."

"I wish he'd never done it, as a mother, to be frank. But as a citizen, I am so proud of him. I am so proud of WikiLeaks, and that courageous little team of half a dozen people."

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The Syria Files

3 July 2012 was Julian Assange's 41st birthday. Supporters sent online greetings via the hashtag [#JA41](#). WikiLeaks Central delivered a batch of birthday emails to the Ecuadorian embassy. A [scene](#)

from the movie "RISK" shows Assange inside the embassy, helping Sarah Harrison prepare to face the glare of media attention at the Frontline Club.

Two days later, Harrison announced that WikiLeaks had begun publishing the [Syria Files](#) - "more than two million emails from Syrian political figures, ministries and associated companies, dating from August 2006 to March 2012". Media partners included Lebanon's Al Akhbar newspaper, Egyptian daily Al-Masry Al-Youm, plus Italian, German, French and Spanish outlets. Journalists at the Frontline Club repeatedly asked about Mr Assange, but Harrison politely declined to answer their questions: WikiLeaks wanted the media's attention on their leaked documents.

The release included 2,434,899 emails from 680 domains, with 678,752 different email senders and 1,082,447 different recipients. There were 400,000 emails in Arabic and 68,000 emails in Russian. The data was more than 100 times the size of Cablegate. Thousands of emails were infected with viruses or trojans, so WikiLeaks built a new "general-purpose, multi-language political data-mining system".

Arab Spring protests had escalated into a civil war in Syria, with between 6,000 and 15,000 people killed in the previous 18 months. WikiLeaks said the Syria Files would shine a light on the inner workings of the Syrian government and economy, but also reveal the hypocrisy of Western governments and companies.

"The material is embarrassing to Syria," said Assange, "but it is also embarrassing to Syria's opponents. It helps us not merely to criticise one group or another, but to understand their interests, actions and thoughts. It is only through understanding this conflict that we can hope to resolve it."

The emails revealed that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his wife Asma had shown little interest in the Arab Spring protests, focussing instead on their palatial gardens, renovations, and the stationary needs of low-level employees. Asma al-Assad went on a £270,000 online shopping spree as the violence was escalating. Meanwhile an Italian conglomerate was supplying al-Assad with telecommunications equipment and engineers, and a US firm, Brown Lloyd James, was advising the Syrian government "on how to create the appearance it is pursuing reform while repressing the uprising". The company recommended a public relations campaign to "create a reform echo-chamber".

The Syria Files release was widely seen as proof that WikiLeaks would be able to continue functioning even though Assange was now trapped in the embassy. A group of #Anonymous teams [claimed](#) to be the source of the leak, and [continued](#) campaigning against censorship and human rights abuses in Syria for months to come.

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Breaking The Blockade

On 18 July 2012 WikiLeaks [announced](#) a new path through the global banking siege: French non-profit group FDNN (Fund for the Defense of Net Neutrality - Fonds de Défense de la Net Neutralité) had set up a Carte Bleue fund for WikiLeaks. WikiLeaks said VISA and MasterCard were contractually barred from directly cutting off merchants through the Carte Bleue system.

Nevertheless, Assange expected the new route for donations to be blocked soon, and urged supporters to donate quickly:

"We beat them in Iceland and, by God, we'll beat them in France as well. Let them shut it down. Let them demonstrate to the world once again their corrupt pandering to Washington. We're waiting. Our lawyers are waiting. The whole world is waiting. Do it."

Weeks later, WikiLeaks supporters were stunned to see a [new article](#) by former New York Times editor Bill Keller calling for an end to the banking blockade:

Even after Wikileaks's first victory against Visa in Iceland, I still must urge Visa, Mastercard, and American Express to take a similar stand against the use of financial embargos to prohibit supporters from contributing or subscribing to media organizations protected by the First Amendment and free speech laws.

The article turned out to be a clever hoax but it [fooled](#) a host of journalists - including Glenn Greenwald and the New York Time's own tech writer - before it was exposed. Even Bill Keller himself was [fooled](#) into tweeting a link to the fake article. WikiLeaks posted a [string of tweets](#) tracking reactions before finally admitting that they and their "great supporters" were responsible.

The usual critics were [not impressed](#) - even Greenwald grumbled about professional media ethics - but the witty protest action was clearly [justified](#).

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Ecuador Grants Asylum

By August 2012 Christine Assange was in Ecuador's capital Quito, where she first [met](#) with Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño and then President Rafael Correa. Mrs Assange said had not come to demand asylum for Julian but "to humbly ask, as his mother." Patiño said he was shocked by some of the facts that Mrs Assange revealed to him. Christine Assange thanked the government of Ecuador "for paying attention to the information I have given, which is more than my own government will do."

Ecuador's El Telegrafo newspaper reported Mrs Assange's claims that her phones were tapped, her 21-year-old grandson has had received death threats, her father was sick and might not be able to see Julian before he died, and the whole family was suffering symptoms of chronic stress. She briefly broke down in tears during a press conference.

Mr Patiño revealed that the Ecuadorian embassy in Sweden had asked the Swedish government to come to London to question Julian Assange, but their request was declined.

In an effort to maintain good relations with Britain, Ecuador had promised not to announce their decision on asylum before the London Olympic Games finished on Sunday 12 August 2012. Curiously, all major UK party leaders - Tory Prime Minister David Cameron, deputy Prime Minister

Nick Clegg of the Liberal Democrats, and leader of the opposition Ed Miliband of the Labour Party - [went overseas on holidays](#) immediately after the Olympics, leaving Foreign Secretary William Hague as Acting Prime Minister.

On Wednesday 15 August 2012, three days after the Closing Ceremony, Ecuador [revealed](#) that Britain had threatened to forcibly invade their sovereign Embassy in London and grab Julian Assange. A letter delivered by a British Embassy official in Quito stated:

"You need to be aware that there is a legal base in the UK, the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act 1987, that would allow us to take actions in order to arrest Mr Assange in the current premises of the Embassy... We need to reiterate that we consider the continued use of the diplomatic premises in this way incompatible with the Vienna Convention and unsustainable and we have made clear the serious implications that this has for our diplomatic relations."

Ecuadorian officials [stated](#) that they were "deeply shocked" by this blatant disregard for the Vienna Convention, calling on the British government to help find a peaceful resolution to the situation. Instead, a UK Foreign Office spokeswoman doubled down on the threat of violence:

"We have an obligation to extradite Mr Assange and it is only right that we give Ecuador the full picture."

Crowds of WikiLeaks supporters immediately flocked to the Ecuadorian embassy and maintained a vigil through the night. UK Territorial Support Group police were posted inside the building's front door, on the steps, and in vans outside. By midnight, according to a WikiLeaks [statement](#), "the embassy had been surrounded by police, in a menacing show of force". Assange later said he could hear "teams of police swarming up inside the building through its internal fire escape".

On the next day, 16 August 2012, after two months of investigation, Ecuador's Foreign Minister gave a lengthy press conference where he explained why his government was granting political asylum to the WikiLeaks Editor-in-Chief. Citing international legal treaties, he said Assange was the victim of political persecution and deserved the status of political refugee because his life was at grave risk. He said Sweden has refused to come question Assange in the embassy or provide guarantees of no onward extradition to the USA, while the USA itself had provided no further information. Ecuador's decision was backed by the Union of South American Nations countries (Unasur) and the Bolivarian regional group [ALBA](#). Numerous world leaders quickly voiced their support.

Assange thanked the Ecuadorean people, President Rafael Correa, and his government:

"It was not Britain or my home country, Australia, that stood up to protect me from persecution, but a courageous, independent Latin American nation. While today is a historic victory, our struggles have just begun. The unprecedented US investigation against WikiLeaks must be stopped."

Assange also urged people to remember Chelsea Manning, who had by then been detained without trial for over 800 days.

William Hague immediately [declared](#) that safe passage from the embassy to an airport would not be permitted.

"We will not allow Mr Assange safe passage out of the United Kingdom, nor is there any legal basis for us to do so. The United Kingdom does not recognise the principle of diplomatic asylum."

Sweden summoned Ecuador's ambassador to Stockholm, saying the granting of asylum to Assange was "unacceptable". WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that Assange would appeal to the International Court of Justice if he was not allowed to travel to Ecuador. The US-backed Organisation of American States (OAS) [voted](#) to hold an urgent meeting in Washington, even though the USA voted against it - OAS states didn't want to discuss the granting of asylum, but the unprecedented threat to invade diplomatic missions. Australia's useless Foreign Minister Bob Carr said his government would not be making "representations one way or the other."

So what stopped the British government just invading the embassy? The Foreign Office (FCO) declared that their only legal obligation was to give Ecuador seven days notice of the intrusion.

Former British Ambassador Craig Murray, who had previously sheltered dissidents inside the British embassy in Uzbekistan, [blogged](#) that he had received "private confirmation from within the FCO that the UK government has indeed decided – after immense pressure from the Obama administration – to enter the Ecuadorean Embassy and seize Julian Assange". He said William Hague was "supporting the move against the concerted advice of his own officials" while Justice Minister Kenneth Clarke "has been opposing the move against the advice of his".

"I gather the decision to act has been taken in Number 10," wrote Murray.
"There appears to have been no input of any kind from the Liberal Democrats."

At that time, UK Prime Minister David Cameron was in a minority government with the Liberal Democrat party, whose opposition to the idea became critically important. British police "cannot just go barging into the embassy", declared the Liberal Democrat peer Lord Carlile.

PM Cameron conducted the first major reshuffle of his coalition government just days later, on 4 September 2012, moving Kenneth Clarke from Justice Secretary to "Minister without Portfolio".

Craig Murray later [explained](#) the politics in more detail:

"Most Liberal Democrat MPs are happy to endorse the notion that Assange should be returned to Sweden to face sexual accusations. However even the repeatedly humiliated Lib Dem MPs would revolt at the idea that Assange should be sent to face life imprisonment in solitary confinement in the United States for the work of WikiLeaks. That is why the United States has

held off requesting extradition from the United Kingdom, to avoid the trouble this would cause Cameron. I am not speculating, there have been direct very senior diplomatic exchanges on this point between Washington and London."

This was a critically important point that was totally ignored by media coverage. Assange critics regularly claimed that he could just as easily be extradited to the USA from Britain as from Sweden, so therefore his efforts to avoid extradition to Sweden were deeply suspect. But in fact Sweden had a fast-track extradition deal with the USA, they had extradited CIA targets who were tortured, and they openly admitted that Assange would immediately be jailed upon arrival.

When Britain's New Statesman magazine published false claims about extradition to Sweden, Glenn Greenwald [called them out](#):

This is the paramount issue because it shows that it is not Assange and Ecuadorean officials – but rather the Swedish and British governments – who are preventing the sex assault allegations from being fairly and legally resolved as they should be.

As Greenwald had previously [noted](#), any Swedish-US transactions concerning Assange would be conducted beyond public scrutiny:

Ironically, even the US State Department condemned Sweden's "restrictive conditions for prisoners held in pretrial custody", including severe restrictions on their communications with the outside world.

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Three days after Ecuador granted him asylum, exactly two months since he had entered the embassy, and despite the obvious dangers, Julian Assange [addressed](#) a huge crowd from the balcony of the Ecuadorian embassy.

He [thanked](#) supporters for gathering on the street at night after UK police had begun to storm the diplomatic post:

"On Wednesday night, after a threat was sent to this embassy, the police descended on this building. You came out in the middle of the night to watch over it, and you brought the world's eyes with you. Inside this embassy, in the dark, I could hear teams of police swarming up inside the building through its internal fire escape. But I knew there would be witnesses, and that is because of you.

"If the UK did not throw away the Vienna Conventions the other night, it is because the world was watching. And the world was watching because you

were watching."

Assange called for the US government to "renounce its witch hunt" against WikiLeaks.

"There must be no more foolish talk about prosecuting any media organisation, be it Wikileaks or the New York Times. The US war on whistleblowers must end."

He expressed his solidarity with the cases of Chelsea Manning and Russian activists Pussy Riot, who had recently been jailed for denouncing President Vladimir Putin in a Moscow cathedral.

"As WikiLeaks stands under threat, so does the freedom of expression and the health of all of our societies... There is unity in the oppression. There must be absolute unity and determination in the response."

Assange did not mention the Swedish allegations - what could he say? - preferring to focus on the more critical issue of US extradition. But of course this left him open to attack from the usual media critics.

A Guardian editorial [insisted](#) that "Miss A and Miss W are at the heart of this story" and there was "no serious evidence that Washington plans to start [extradition] proceedings". The editorial, which was closed to comments, claimed there were only about 100 people at the event (supporters estimated up to 300) and bizarrely blamed Assange for the fact that Swedish prosecutors still had not contacted him.

"This champion of radical transparency hasn't helped Swedish prosecutors with their inquiries."

Guardian journalist Luke Harding, who had been sent to live-tweet Assange's speech, [ridiculed](#) him as "the balcony Bolívar of Knightsbridge" and repeated that the Swedish allegations were "separate from any theoretical attempt to indict him in the US".

WSWS [suggested](#) the Guardian staff should read an article by Assange's US attorney Michael Ratner, titled "Julian Assange is right to fear US prosecution", which they themselves had [published](#) just weeks earlier.

UK media attacks were not limited to the Guardian, however - other outlets followed the same script:

The Sun complained that Assange's speech was "long on egotistical claptrap, but oddly failed to mention what this extradition case is actually about — the rape of one woman and sexual molestation of another."

The Independent editorialised that Assange "is all but incarcerated in the Ecuadorean embassy not because he is a fighter for freedom but because he

is wanted in Sweden over wholly unrelated allegations of sexual assault.”

Britain’s Foreign Office responded to Assange’s speech with a thinly veiled threat, posting a website story about the danger of falling from balconies.

Four days after Assange’s balcony speech, British advocacy group “Women Against Rape” [published](#) an article that demolished the dominant media narrative.

For decades we have campaigned to get rapists caught, charged and convicted. But the pursuit of Assange is political...

Justice for an accused rapist does not deny justice for his accusers. But in this case justice is being denied both to accusers and accused. The judicial process has been corrupted...

The authorities care so little about violence against women that they manipulate rape allegations at will, usually to increase their powers, this time to facilitate Assange’s extradition or even rendition to the US.

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CIA Interferes in Ecuador Politics

Another key issue at this time was that Ecuador was due to hold elections in February 2013 and Washington insiders fully expected President Correa to be defeated. Media reports at the time [claimed](#) that CIA drug money was being deployed to help destabilize Correa’s government. The story was of course ignored by Western media but it was not just idle speculation.

In February 2012, Italian police had opened the Ecuadorean government’s diplomatic mail on arrival in Rome and found nearly 90 pounds (40 kilos) of cocaine. Ecuador’s Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño said the diplomatic mail had been inspected by police dogs before leaving Ecuador, and had travelled to Italy through a “third country”. Chilean journalist Patricio Mery [claimed](#) the drugs were placed inside Ecuador’s diplomatic mail by people connected with the Chilean embassy in Quito.

“This was a scene created to damage the image of Ecuador. I saw the diplomatic seals and they were Chilean, so Ecuador could not re-examine the mail as it was from a third country. The plan was that the mail should leave with a Chilean seal but arrive in Italy with Ecuadorean seals.

Mery said the CIA was running an Iran-Contra style drug operation, trafficking “about 200 kilos of cocaine per month” from Bolivia through Chile in order to fund anti-Correa operations. In January 2013 one of Mery’s sources, a former detective who spent 16 years with Chile’s PDI (Policia de Investigaciones), followed Assange’s example by seeking refuge in the Embassy of Ecuador in the Chilean capital Santiago, claiming he had received multiple death threats, had been followed by

Chilean government agents, and his life was in grave danger.

Chile's President at the time, Sebastián Piñera, was the son of a former ambassador to the USA. His brother was a former minister of US-backed Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

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Craig Murray blogged that the [CIA was seeking to swamp Correa](#). He said the USA had been shocked by Hugo Chavez's recent return to power in Venezuela and did not want to make the same mistake in Ecuador:

"I learn that the US budget, using mostly Pentagon funds, devoted to influencing the Ecuadorean election has, since the Venezuelan result, been almost tripled to US \$87 million. This will find its way into opposition campaign coffers and be used to fund, bribe or blackmail media and officials..."

"My US source however is adamant that the Obama administration will not actually use the funds to incite another military coup attempt against Correa. That has apparently been ruled out. Assange being expelled into the arms of the CIA by a newly installed military dictatorship might be a difficult sell even for our appalling mainstream media."

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On 26 September 2012 Julian Assange made an [address](#) via satellite to a United Nations forum in New York. He called on the USA to cease its persecution of WikiLeaks and Chelsea Manning, and condemned US President Barak Obama for failing to back up his "audacious" rhetoric with real action. He challenged Obama's recent assertion, for example, that the "United States supported the forces of change" in the Arab Spring:

"Tunisian history did not begin in December 2010. And Mohammed Bouazizi did not set himself on fire so that Barack Obama could be reelected."

Assange also [revealed](#) new documents, published on the WikiLeaks website, which showed the US government was now officially referring to WikiLeaks as the "enemy" with their alleged "victims" being labelled "society".

Assange said these documents, released under FOIA laws, had been shown to Ecuadorian officials while they were determining if his case warranted the granting of asylum.

We had those documents for some months and of course were very concerned about them, but it was necessary to conduct, because of the sensitivities of some of the people involved in that investigation, to prevent

their release until more recently.

The documents came from a US Air Force investigation of one of their cyber systems analysts, who while based in Britain had allegedly expressed support for WikiLeaks and attended pro-Assange demonstrations in London. The analyst's access to classified information had been suspended but no charges were laid.

As Fairfax journalist Philip Dorling [noted](#), US military personnel who contacted WikiLeaks or even WikiLeaks supporters were now at risk of being charged with "communicating with the enemy", a military crime that carries a maximum sentence of death. Glenn Greenwald [suggested](#) two possible interpretations: either Assange and WikiLeaks were now being classified as "the enemy" (just like Al Qaeda or ISIS terrorists) or else any new leaks of US classified information were now being characterized as "aiding the enemy" (on the basis that terrorists would thereby get access to it).

If someone can be charged with "aiding" or "communicating with the enemy" by virtue of leaking to WikiLeaks, then why wouldn't that same crime be committed by someone leaking classified information to any outlet: the New York Times, the Guardian, ABC News or anyone else? In other words, does this theory not inevitably and necessarily make all leaking of all classified information - whether to WikiLeaks or any media outlet - a capital offense: treason or a related crime?

Detainee Policies

On 25 October 2012, WikiLeaks began publishing more than 100 classified or restricted files from the US Department of Defense (DoD) covering the rules and procedures for detainees in US military custody. [The Detainee Policies](#) included Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for US detention camps in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, interrogation manuals and Fragmentary Orders (FRAGOs), plus general DoD policies relating to Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay and European US Army Prison facilities. The new files expanded on WikiLeaks' previous releases from Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, allowing readers to see how rules had evolved over time. Julian Assange [asked](#):

"How is it that WikiLeaks has now published three years of Guantanamo Bay operating procedures, but the rest of the world's press combined has published none?"

*

Cypherpunks Book

In November 2012 Assange published a book, "[Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet](#)", which [expanded on](#) his previous TV show discussions with Jacob Appelbaum, Andy Müller-Maguhn and Jérémie Zimmermann. In a typically hostile Guardian [interview](#) (laced with the usual smears about publishing unredacted names and working for Russian state media) Assange patiently explained that cryptography was now "the essential building block of independence for

organisations on the Internet, just like armies are the essential building blocks of states".

"There is no other way for our intellectual life to gain proper independence from the security guards of the world, the people who control physical reality."

In a separate Guardian Op-Ed, Assange [discussed](#) his own role in making cryptography available to individuals fighting state tyranny:

"It has been forgotten how subversive this was. Cryptography was then the exclusive property of states, for use in their various wars. By writing our own software and disseminating it far and wide we liberated cryptography, democratised it and spread it through the frontiers of the new internet."

Assange said the "new great game" was not a war for oil pipelines but the war for information pipelines: "the control over fibre-optic cable paths that spread undersea and overland". He noted how many of these pipelines flowed through the USA, and how many smaller governments were trying to maintain control of their sovereignty by purchasing cryptography devices that were made in the USA (complete with NSA backdoors). Assange said this was a huge problem for Latin American states like Ecuador, but China was also doing similar things in Africa.

Justice for Khaled El-Masri

On 13 December 2012 the European Court of Human Rights made an important finding that was based on evidence including six cables released by WikiLeaks. The court in Strasbourg found that the CIA's abduction, rendition and torture of Khaled El-Masri, a Lebanese-born German citizen, "was established beyond reasonable doubt" and awarded him compensation.

El-Masri had been detained by Macedonian authorities while on holiday in Skopje in 2003, simply because his name was similar to a known terrorist. The CIA then secretly smuggled him out of Macedonia to a "black site" north of Kabul called the "Salt Pit". He was routinely interrogated, tortured and even sodomized for four months, then went on a hunger strike to protest his innocence. When US authorities finally examined his German passport and realised their mistake, they dumped him at night on a deserted roadside in Albania, with no apology and no money to get home.

El-Masri spent years trying to sue the CIA, with help from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), but in 2007 the United States Supreme Court refused to hear his case. The European court [ruling](#) marked the first time that the CIA's treatment of detainees was legally declared as torture.

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Six Months In The Embassy

On 20 December 2012 Julian Assange again made a [speech](#) from the balcony of the Ecuadorian Embassy, where he had now been living for exactly six months. Assange again thanked supporters,

the government and people of Ecuador, and journalists who "continue publishing the truth in the face of persecution, prosecution and threat".

While my freedom is limited, I am still able to communicate this Christmas, unlike the 232 journalists who are in jail tonight. Unlike Godfried Svartholm in Sweden tonight, unlike Jeremy Hammond in New York tonight, unlike Nabeel Rajab in Bahrain tonight, unlike Bradley Manning, who turned 25 this week...

Assange said WikiLeaks had "well over a million documents to release" in the year ahead, and the documents would "affect every country in the world". He declared that WikiLeaks had finally defeated the global financial blockade and contributions to WikiLeaks were now tax deductible across the European Union and the United States. He encouraged supporters to "learn how the world works" and "challenge the statements, actions and intentions of those who seek to control us".

Our buildings can only be as tall as their bricks are strong. And our civilization is only as strong as its ideas are true.

When our buildings are erected by the corrupt, when their cement is cut with dirt, when pristine steel is replaced by scrap, our buildings are not safe to live in.

And when our media is corrupt, when our academics are timid, when our history is filled with half truths and lies, our civilization will never be just. It will never reach the sky.

Our societies are intellectual shanty towns. Our beliefs about the world and each other have been created by same system that has lied us into repeated wars that have killed millions.

You can't build a skyscraper out of plasticine. And you can't build a just civilization out of ignorance and lies.

We have to educate each other. We have to celebrate those who reveal the truth and denounce those who poison our ability to comprehend the world we live in.

The quality of our discourse is the limit of our civilization.

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Meanwhile, in Hawaii, a young man calling himself "Cincinnatus" was beginning to get frustrated. On 1 December 2012 he had sent an email to journalist Glenn Greenwald, asking him to install PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) software so they could communicate safely. He had some very important information to share, but Greenwald was ignoring his request. So he sent another email with step-by-step PGP installation instructions. He was still waiting for Greenwald to get back to him.

[Cincinnatus](#) was a figure in Roman history who allegedly left his home in the fields, at the request of his fellow citizens, to acquire nearly God-like powers over the Roman state. After quickly resolving the crisis in Rome, Cincinnatus relinquished his powers and returned to his farm. Edward Snowden also had some God-like powers available to him. But when he left his home five months later, he would not be returning for a long time.

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NOTE

Full disclosure: several WikiLeaks Central links in this chapter were authored by me, Gary Lord aka [@Jaraparilla](#). WikiLeaks Central was (is?) an unofficial supporters site that has collated news about WikiLeaks since 2010. I am very proud of [all the articles](#) I was able to publish on that site, and I am thankful they are still publicly available, unlike many of the archived mainstream media links in this book.

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Chapter Fifteen: Early 2013

Death of Aaron Swartz

On 11 January 2013 Aaron Swartz, a prolific Internet activist, committed suicide by hanging himself in his Brooklyn apartment. He was only 26 years old.

Swartz had made significant contributions to a long list of enduring online projects including RSS, Markdown, Creative Commons and Reddit. He was the author of the [Guerilla Manifesto](#), which called for anyone with access to valuable information to liberate it and make it available free online to everyone, rather than leaving businesses and academic organizations to profit by restricting access to wealthy subscribers.

There is no justice in following unjust laws. It's time to come into the light and, in the grand tradition of civil disobedience, declare our opposition to this private theft of public culture.

We need to take information, wherever it is stored, make our copies and share them with the world. We need to take stuff that's out of copyright and add it to the archive. We need to buy secret databases and put them on the Web. We need to download scientific journals and upload them to file sharing networks. We need to fight for Guerilla Open Access.

With enough of us, around the world, we'll not just send a strong message opposing the privatization of knowledge — we'll make it a thing of the past. Will you join us?

In January 2011 Swartz was arrested after he used a guest password, issued to him by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), to download hundreds of academic journal articles from the [JSTOR](#) system. Video evidence [showed](#) Swartz accessing an MIT network computer in an unlocked closet and transferring data to a hard drive. He was initially charged with breaking and entering, even though the closet was open, and then unauthorized access to a computer network, even though he had a guest login. Further charges kept coming.

Swartz quickly found himself embroiled in a highly politicized legal case that escalated to absurd levels, with federal prosecutors adding multiple new felony charges and demanding he face up to [50 years in prison and \\$1 million in fines](#).

JSTOR only showed up because it was subpoenaed and if anyone's the "victim" here, it would be JSTOR. MIT has remained silent on the whole issue. So, either someone's got a deeper interest in this case than they're willing to admit publicly, or the feds found someone with enough "hacking" activity under their belt that they feel comfortable turning the defendant into an "example."

Following his death, Aaron's parents issued a [statement](#) praising his achievements and condemning those whose persecution and lack of support drove him to his death:

Aaron's commitment to social justice was profound, and defined his life. He was instrumental to the defeat of an Internet censorship bill; he fought for a more democratic, open, and accountable political system; and he helped to create, build, and preserve a dizzying range of scholarly projects that extended the scope and accessibility of human knowledge. He used his prodigious skills as a programmer and technologist not to enrich himself but to make the Internet and the world a fairer, better place. His deeply humane writing touched minds and hearts across generations and continents. He earned the friendship of thousands and the respect and support of millions more.

Aaron's death is not simply a personal tragedy. It is the product of a criminal justice system rife with intimidation and prosecutorial overreach. Decisions made by officials in the Massachusetts U.S. Attorney's office and at MIT contributed to his death. The US Attorney's office pursued an exceptionally harsh array of charges, carrying potentially over 30 years in prison, to punish an alleged crime that had no victims. Meanwhile, unlike JSTOR, MIT

refused to stand up for Aaron and its own community's most cherished principles.

At Swartz's funeral, his father flatly [stated](#) that his son "was killed by the government". Over 250,000 people signed a White House [petition](#) demanding that the prosecutor in his case should be fired.

On 19 January 2013 WikiLeaks decided - due to "an investigation into the Secret Service's involvement with Aaron Swartz" - to [reveal](#) that Swartz had helped WikiLeaks, had been in communication with Julian Assange, and "we have strong reasons to believe, but cannot prove, that Aaron Swartz was a WikiLeaks source." Swartz had also filed FOIA requests for information on Bradley Manning, leading to [speculation](#) that his prosecution had only escalated to such absurd heights because the WikiLeaks Grand Jury had become involved.

The MIT campus is located between Cambridge and downtown Boston, where Chelsea Manning used to meet her former boyfriend, and where she first met David House, an MIT researcher who was subpoenaed by the WikiLeaks Grand Jury in June 2011 (see [Chapter Ten](#)).

In December of 2010, while his downloads of academic papers from JSTOR was proceeding and the government was separately investigating Manning and Wikileaks, Swartz filed a series of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests seeking documentation of Manning's treatment while in custody. One of these requests, which was for a tape of a jailhouse conversation between House and Manning, required Swartz to obtain and provide a privacy waiver from House, which he did.

Obviously WikiLeaks prosecutors would have been hugely interested in such connections, and newspaper articles often quoted anonymous US officials speculating about Assange or Manning getting "support" from others in the Cambridge-Boston area.

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"We Steal Secrets"

In late January 2013 a new movie, "We Steal Secrets: The WikiLeaks Story", premiered at the Sundance film festival in California. WikiLeaks staff had refused to participate in the movie, claiming that even the name was biased.

The film's executive producer, socialite Jemima Khan (later reverting to her wealthy family surname Jemima [Goldsmit](#)h), who had helped post bail money for Assange in 2010, had by then become heavily influenced by his many critics. She [argued](#) that the title was actually a (mis)quote from former CIA director Michael Hayden, who had told producer Alex Gibney that the USA was in the business of "stealing secrets" from other nations. She thought it was ironic that "Manning may be put to death by his own government for doing the very thing to which Hayden so candidly admits." But it was NOT the same thing at all, and Assange was not having a bar of it. He asked why the film wasn't instead called "We Steal Secrets: The CIA Story"?

The timing of the hostile film's late May opening, just ten days before Manning's 12-week trial finally began, was also deeply suspiscious. Even if people did not go see the film, they would still see the words "WikiLeaks" and "We Steal Secrets" plastered all over newspapers, television and the Internet, just as Manning was being accused of "stealing" US government secrets to which she had authorised access.

WikiLeaks got hold of an early version of the film script and posted an [annotated transcript](#) online, with details of the many errors, lies, and smears evident in the film, including the old Guardian claim that Assange had not cared about redacting names to protect informants.

The film implies – erroneously and when evidence is to the contrary – that Assange may be guilty of "conspiring" with Bradley Manning. This [is] not only factually incorrect, but also buys into the current US government position that journalists and publishers can be prosecuted as co-conspirators with their alleged sources or with whistleblowers who communicate information to them. This is a dangerous proposition for all journalists and media organisations — not just WikiLeaks.

Producer Alex Gibney responded by posting his own "[annotated annotated transcript](#)" in an attempt to subdue mounting public criticism. He did an interview with [Hollywood Reporter](#) who quoted the erroneous Washington Post article claiming that "federal prosecutors have not filed a sealed indictment against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange". The film itself ignored the "rumours" of a sealed incitement, with Associate Producer Javier Botero dismissing it as just "one boastful line in a 2011 leaked email from an ex-government official; no other evidence has ever come out." The film's clear narrative was that Assange was avoiding justice by refusing to go to Sweden.

The film was commissioned by Universal for \$2 million but grossed just \$166,243 on its initial release, playing in less than 24 theaters. Box Office Mojo [estimated](#) total revenue by 2016 at just \$457,517, a loss of around \$1.5 million.

Early reviews were [scathing](#). Journalist Chris Hedges [called](#) the film "agitprop for the security and surveillance state." Robert Manne [said](#) it was a "superficially impressive but ultimately myopic". Even the [Guardian](#) [gave](#) it only three out of five stars. Former [Guardian](#) journalist Jonathan Cook [condemned](#) Gibney for deliberately wasting the opportunity to create a better film about "whistleblowers in the age of the surveillance super-state":

The Swedish allegations are viewed only in so far as they question Assange's moral character. No serious effort is made to highlight the enormous resources the US security state has been marshalling to shape public opinion, most notably through the media. The hate campaign against Assange, and the Swedish affair's role in stoking it, are ignored.

Gibney [dismissed](#) all such criticism and remained vocally hostile to WikiLeaks for years to come:

"Objectivity is dead. There's no such thing as objectivity. When you're

making a film, a film can't be objective."

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"The Fifth Estate"

On 23 January 2013 Julian Assange was invited to speak via video link to Oxford University students at the presentation of the 2012 Sam Adams Award to [Professor Thomas Fingar](#). About fifty students [demonstrated](#) outside the building, claiming that Oxford Union members were now "rape apologists" and Assange "needs to face the justice process."

Assange told the Oxford audience that WikiLeaks had also obtained a copy of the script for the \$28 million "Fifth Estate" movie, which was being produced by Stephen Spielberg's Dreamworks studio, based on misleading books by Daniel Domscheit-Berg, David Leigh and Luke Harding (see [Chapter Seven](#)).

"It is a mass propaganda attack against WikiLeaks the organisation," Assange said. "But it is not just an attack against us - it is an attack against Iran. It fans the flames to start a war with Iran."

The opening scene was set inside a fake Iranian military complex with nuclear warning signs, even though US intelligence agencies had confirmed Iran didn't have a nuclear weapons program. Assange noted that the evening's award winner, Tom Fingar, had overseen the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran, which concluded with "high confidence" that Iran had halted its nuclear weapon work in 2003. That NIE was approved by all 16 US intelligence agencies and had been revalidated every year since by the USA's Director of National Intelligence.

"They tried to frame Iran as having an active nuclear weapons program," Assange [said](#). "Then they try to frame WikiLeaks as the reason why that's not known to the public now."

The Oxford Union later refused to release the recorded video of Assange's speech, claiming copyright concerns about Collateral Murder footage. After WikiLeaks supporters protested, Oxford Union uploaded the [video](#), but only after replacing the Collateral Murder footage with the Union's logo.

Birgitta Jónsdóttir, who was portrayed by an actor in the film, later said the film's original title "The Man Who Sold the World" had been changed and the opening scene had been cut. She [urged](#) WikiLeaks to be more "constructive". WikiLeaks [accused](#) her of selling out.

"The Fifth Estate" premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2013 and was first released in US theaters on October 18, 2013. It was the biggest box office [flop of the year](#), grossing only \$6 million, leaving Dreamworks with a loss of around \$22 million. Critics slammed it but Alan Rusbridger, who was reverentially portrayed in the film, [praised](#) lead star Benedict Cumberbatch's "stunning" portrayal of Assange:

"The voice and the slightly jerky, stiff, awkward demeanour are just right."

Interestingly, UK Prime Minister David Cameron made the very same observation when - in another bizarre twist - he was shown an early preview of the movie. Assange's closest friends [said](#) the portrayal was totally wrong, laughing out loud at the error-ridden distortions of the script, and dismissing the movie as "complete bullshit".

It was later revealed that Cumberbatch had secretly been in email [communication](#) with Assange during the making of the film, and tried to get improvements to the script. While he declined Assange's advice to drop out of the movie, he [said](#) the WikiLeaks founder was "a true force to be reckoned with", and had achieved the realization of a great ideal.

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Mediastan

Meanwhile Julian Assange (being "constructive") had helped produce a more realistic WikiLeaks movie: [Mediastan](#) follows a team of WikiLeaks staff traveling through Central Asia in 2011, searching for local media partners who are willing to publish politically sensitive Cablegate material.

In MEDIASTAN, an undercover team of journalists drives across the central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and into US occupied Afghanistan, before continuing its journey into the west; regrouping in Julian Assange's kitchen, ambushing the editor of the Guardian, and obtaining candid footage of the New York Times editor and its publisher Arthur Sulzberger speaking about Obama.

The film examines how media censorship and self-censorship vary around the world. It was released for free and [deliberately timed](#) to offer an alternative to Spielberg's Hollywood competition. Ironically, the global publicity for "The Fifth Estate" helped boost interest in "Mediastan", which by certain metrics appeared to be far more popular.

Meanwhile, two other movies were still in the works. Film-maker Laura Poitras had been given inside access to the WikiLeaks team since 2010, and was hoping to release her movie "RISK" soon. But in early 2013 she was contacted by Edward Snowden, who had given up trying to get Glenn Greenwald to install PGP software. Ironically, she then contacted Greenwald to ask for his assistance, and he quickly realised that her source was the "Cincinnatus" guy he had been fobbing off for months. It soon became obvious that Poitras would need to make yet another movie.

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WikiLeaks Party

On 12 December 2012 Julian Assange announced the formation of the WikiLeaks Party and [confirmed](#) that he would run as a candidate for the Australian Senate at the 2013 Australian federal

election. His father John Shipton had already spent many months discussing this move with lawyers, planning how to formally establish the new political party, and quietly building a network of dedicated WikiLeaks supporters to help. The party was formally registered on 2 July 2013 with over 1,300 fee-paying members.

The new party was met with much popular enthusiasm and global media interest. Election monitors confirmed that Assange would be eligible to run as a candidate, even though he was detained in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, and despite his on-going legal problems with Sweden. Others [suggested](#) that he could face a legal challenge if he did win a seat, as seemed quite possible. Supporters outside Australia discussed setting up their own versions of the party to help advocate for the WikiLeaks ideals of transparency and open government, which were the new party's policy cornerstones.

The WikiLeaks Party helped boost media interest, giving Julian Assange an opportunity to do [interviews](#) and publish [articles](#) about Australia's lack of sovereignty and his own lack of government support. But Assange was also busy dealing with many other urgent issues in 2013 (for example, Sarah Harrison had to fly out of Australia in early June to help Edward Snowden). As the election loomed closer, the WikiLeaks founder's failure to communicate closely with members of his own party's National Council gradually lead to "simmering tensions" within the party.

The Australian Senate uses a complex [preferential](#) voting system, where voters can either nominate all candidates in order of preference, or just vote for a single candidate, which then allows that party's previously declared list of preferences to dictate where that vote goes next (assuming the chosen candidate does not win outright victory). This has lead to some very odd and confusing [back-room deals](#) between political parties, particularly "micro" parties seeking to exploit the system for their own benefit.

When it came time for the WikiLeaks Party to declare their own list of preferences, a major schism quickly became apparent. On the one hand, John Shipton and other party leaders wanted to make cynical deals with unpalatable far right parties in order to maximize their chances of success. But most of the party's senior National Council members wanted to either support like-minded parties, such as the Greens or the Pirate Party, or avoid making preference deals altogether. When party leaders simply ignored the National Council (contravening their own party rules) and submitted their own list of preferences to the Electoral Commission, National Council members including Dan Matthews [resigned in protest](#) and supporters around Australia vented their outrage:

Over the next few hours, social media exploded with outrage — in my view, much of it justified. Supporters melted away. Our base evaporated. The view within the party that preferencing the far Right would not lead to any mass outrage, but that average punters couldn't care less about preferences, was comprehensively demolished by the course of events.

Members resigned en masse. Volunteers and Volunteer coordinators were heartbroken and could not bring themselves to work for the cause to which they had previously devoted themselves selflessly.

In Western Australia, the WikiLeaks Party had preferenced the Nationals ahead of the Greens'

Senator Ludlam, who barely managed to hold his seat after a botched recount. In New South Wales, preferences went to the militant Shooters & Fishers Party and the far right Australia First Party.

Party leaders first ignored the outrage, venting their anger on National Council members instead, then claimed an unspecified "administrative error" was to blame for the debacle. Julian Assange did some angry TV and radio interviews that were widely described as "trainwrecks", [claiming](#) that he was "not a politician" and his party was "not a vehicle for the Greens". It was already too late. The widespread public perception was that the WikiLeaks Party had set itself up as a champion of lofty ideals but then embraced gutter politics at the first opportunity. The party had also set itself up with a laudable democratic structure, which the executive team had simply ignored when it became inconvenient. Clearly, Julian Assange was NOT a politician.

The 2013 Australian federal election took place on 7 September 2013. After six years of frequently chaotic Labor Party government, Tony Abbott's Liberal-National Party Coalition won a [landslide victory](#). The WikiLeaks Party won just 0.66 per cent of the national vote and no WikiLeaks Party candidates were elected. Meanwhile, thanks to preference deals, the Christian right Family First Party (with 1.1 percent of first preferences), the Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party (0.51%), and even the Australian Sports Party (0.02%) all managed to win a Senate seat. An historic opportunity for significant change had been squandered.

Full Disclosure: I was invited to become a candidate for the WikiLeaks Party, and was involved in fundraising and organisational work until the preferences debacle. The day after the election, I [called](#) for a proper inquiry. Weeks later, the WikiLeaks Party [announced](#) a sham "independent review". In March 2014 I posted my own [WikiLeaks Party Review](#).

Despite the election debacle, remaining WikiLeaks Party members hoped to continue with their adventure. Somehow this ended up with John Shipton and other senior party members visiting Syria in December 2013, where they were [invited](#) to meet with President Bashar al-Assad. Shipton said the "peace and reconciliation" trip aimed to show "solidarity" with the Syrian people.

Again, WikiLeaks supporters and critics alike were [outraged](#). Journalist Antony Loewenstein, a vocal WikiLeaks supporter, said the party delegation was "being used as a prop by a regime that has undeniably killed tens of thousands or more civilians." The Australian government condemned the visit. WikiLeaks was forced to [clarify](#) that they neither knew about nor condoned the visit.

The WikiLeaks Party again sought to win a Senate seat in the re-run April 2014 West Australian election, but their lead candidate [withdrew](#) for "unforeseen personal reasons" just an hour before the official close of nominations. The WikiLeaks Party was deregistered by the Australian Electoral Commission on 23 July 2015.

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PlusD Kissinger Cables

In 7 April 2013, WikiLeaks [announced](#) the release of "Special Project K", a.k.a the Kissinger Cables. These 1.7 million United States diplomatic cables, dating from 1973 to 1976, were already publicly available at the US National Archives but WikiLeaks released them in searchable format, making research far easier. The US government had increasingly been reclassifying, redacting or [censoring](#) the files, so WikiLeaks also preserved them for history.

WikiLeaks also merged the Kissinger cables with their previous Cablegate archive (which was only one fifth of the size) to create the WikiLeaks Public Library of US Diplomacy ([PlusD](#)), which now boasted 2 million records.

"The collection covers US involvements in, and diplomatic or intelligence reporting on, every country on Earth," said Julian Assange. "It is the single most significant body of geopolitical material ever published."

While the new cables were already in the public domain, media partners managed to find some interesting new stories. For example, the Vatican had dismissed reports of massacres committed by Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet as "propaganda". And Henry Kissinger's State Department had doubted that Margaret Thatcher would ever become British Prime Minister because her "immaculate grooming" and "imperious manner" would not appeal to the UK working class. The cables also included Kissinger's infamous [quote](#):

"The illegal we do immediately; the unconstitutional takes a little longer."

*

Finally, A Financial Win

On 24 April 2013 WikiLeaks [announced](#) a major victory in their Banking Blockade battle. Iceland's Supreme Court had upheld an earlier court decision that Valitor (formerly VISA Iceland) had unlawfully terminated its contract with WikiLeaks' donations processor DataCell.

If the gateway to WikiLeaks donations is not re-opened within 15 days Visa's Valitor will be fined 800,000 ISK (\$6,830) per day.

Julian Assange declared it "a victory for free speech" and "a victory against the rise of economic censorship to crack down against journalists and publishers."

"And we send out a warning to the other companies involved in this blockade: you're next."

Wikileaks and DataCell had [launched](#) their joint case against Valitor in June 2012 but a final settlement was not ultimately [agreed](#) until 2019. Iceland's Grapevine news site reported that Valitor had [agreed](#) to "pay the amount previously confirmed by Reykjavík District Court: 1.2 billion ISK, to both DataCell and Sunshine Press Productions, Wikileaks' publishing company." 1.2 billion Icelandic Kroner was equal to about \$10.2 million US dollars, a sizeable win.

At the time, it was still not possible to donate directly to WikiLeaks via credit card. But in December 2012, Assange had worked with press freedom advocates including Daniel Ellsberg, US actor John Cusack, and Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) founder John Perry Barlow, to [set up](#) the Freedom of the Press Foundation, which was now collecting tax-deductible donations for WikiLeaks and other groups.

Meanwhile London taxpayers were [paying](#) over \$15,000 per day for round the clock police surveillance of the Ecuadorian embassy. By June 2013 the total cost of police surveillance, not including constant covert surveillance, had already exceeded £4 million. Future UK PM Boris Johnson, who was then the Mayor of London, said it was "absolutely ridiculous, that money should be spent on frontline policing... It's completely wasted."

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Anakata

Gottfrid Svartholm Warg (alias "Anakata") is a co-founder of the hugely successful Pirate Bay file-sharing site, and a co-owner of the Internet service provider PRQ, which originally hosted the Pirate Bay servers in Sweden.

In May 2006, 65 police officers raided the Pirate Bay offices in Stockholm, confiscated servers and forced the site to go down for three days. The raid was motivated by political pressure from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) who declared it a success. But three days later the site was back online with twice as many users. Meanwhile the Swedish police website was forced offline for days in a row.

In January 2008, Pirate Bay operators Fredrik Neij, Gottfrid Svartholm, Peter Sunde and Carl Lundström were charged with "promoting other people's infringements of copyright laws." In April 2009, they were found guilty of "assisting in making copyright content available" but appealed the decision. In October 2009, a Swedish court banned Svartholm from operating the Pirate Bay site, even though he was no longer living in Sweden and the Pirate Bay was no longer based there.

Svartholm was arrested in Cambodia on 30 August 2012 at the request of the Swedish government. His trial began on Monday 20 May 2013 in Stockholm. A day before the trial, WikiLeaks [released](#) prosecution and prison documents related to his case. The material was publicly available but Swedish authorities were refusing to provide it in digital format and photocopying such a volume of paper would cost around £350.

WikiLeaks also noted that Svartholm Warg had worked with them for the 2010 release of Collateral Murder:

All those who feature on the Collateral Murder video credits have been subsequently harassed in one way or another, including by having their personal information subpoenaed by the US Department of Justice, and through harassment and intimidation by the FBI, who have attempted to turn WikiLeaks associates into informers. This includes, but is not limited to, Jeremie Zimmermann, Kristinn Hrafnsson, Rop Gonggrip, Birgitta Jónsdóttir, and Smari McCarthy.

In September 2013 Svartholm was deported from Cambodia to Sweden where he was jailed. He was then extradited to Denmark and held in jail for other alleged offences. He was eventually released in September 2015. Pirate Bay co-founders Neij and Sunde were also released in 2015 after serving shortened sentences. In 2016, rival site KickassTorrents was shut down by the US government,

which meant The Pirate Bay was again the world's most popular BitTorrent website.

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Trial of Chelsea Manning

The long awaited trial of Chelsea Manning finally began on 3 June 2013, more than three years after she was first arrested, and 986 days longer than the legal maximum. The trial was scheduled to run for 12 to 16 weeks.

Protests were held [around the world](#). On 1 June over 2,000 protesters [gathered](#) outside the military courtroom in Fort Meade, Maryland. Speakers included Pentagon Papers whistle-blower Daniel Ellsberg (below), former political prisoner-turned-human rights advocate Sarah Shourd, LGBT activist and US Army LT Dan Choi, and retired US Army Col. Ann Wright. The Bradley Manning Support Network, which was responsible for 100% of PFC Manning's legal fees, had by then contributed over \$1.25 million dollars in defense costs.

In a lengthy [statement](#), Julian Assange said it was fair to call the process a "show trial" because pretrial hearings had inflicted "pre-emptive bans on every defense argument that had any chance of success".

Bradley Manning may not give evidence as to his stated intent (exposing war crimes and their context), nor may he present any witness or document that shows that no harm resulted from his actions. .. To convict Bradley Manning, it will be necessary for the US government to conceal crucial parts of his trial. Key portions of the trial are to be conducted in secrecy: 24 prosecution witnesses will give secret testimony in closed session, permitting the judge to claim that secret evidence justifies her decision. But closed justice is no justice at all.

In the end it is not Bradley Manning who is on trial. The trial of Bradley Manning ended long ago. The defendant now, and for the next 12 weeks, is the United States and the collapse of its institutions. The runaway military, the deferent courts, the hand-maiden press, and the rotten institutions of government. They sit in the docks. We are called to serve as jurists, during this, their lowest hour. We must not turn away.

Manning had already pleaded guilty to 10 of the 22 charges, but prosecutors were seeking a court martial on the remaining charges. Manning was convicted on July 30, on 17 of the 22 charges in their entirety, including 5 counts of espionage and theft, and amended versions of 4 other charges. Interestingly, she was acquitted of the key charge of "aiding the enemy", which carried a potential death penalty, even though documents showed US officials were now referring to WikiLeaks as "the enemy". US prosecutors at her trial conceded that there was no proof that the information supplied to WikiLeaks by Manning had ever caused harm to anyone.

On 21 August 2013, Chelsea Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison.

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Chapter Sixteen: Late 2013

Edward Snowden

"I could watch drones in real time as they surveilled the people they might kill. You could watch entire villages and see what everyone was doing. I watched NSA tracking people's Internet activities as they typed. I became aware of just how invasive US surveillance capabilities had become. I realized the true breadth of this system. And almost nobody knew it was happening."

On 9 June 2013 the face of Edward Snowden appeared on TV screens and newspapers around the world. His 12 minute [interview](#) with Guardian journalists Glenn Greenwald and Ewen MacAskill, filmed by Laura Poitras, had been recorded over several days in a Hong Kong hotel room. He spoke carefully, but with evident confidence and conviction.

"Uh, my name is Ed Snowden. I'm, uh, 29 years old. I work for Booz Allen Hamilton as an Infrastructure Analyst for NSA, uh, in Hawaii."

In the previous four days, Greenwald, MacAskill and the Washington Post's Barton Gellman had shocked the world with explosive revelations about the US intelligence community's extraordinary powers of surveillance. Systems already exposed included PRISM, which gave the NSA direct access to data held by Google, Facebook, Apple and other US internet giants, plus the Boundless Informant program, a big data analysis and visualization tool which let the NSA record and analyse where information was coming from. President Obama had quickly defended the intrusive NSA programs, claiming "the right balance" had been struck between security and privacy. He said US citizens had to make a choice:

"You can't have 100% security, and also then have 100% privacy and zero inconvenience."

Now Snowden was coming forward as the source of these stories, explaining that his conscience would not let him continue working for the NSA while their powers grew exponentially year by year, without any public scrutiny. Like Chelsea Manning, he said his aim was to reveal the truth and trigger a public debate about "the world we want to live in".

"Any analyst at any time can target anyone, any selector, anywhere," he explained. "Not all analysts have the ability to target everything. But I, sitting at my desk, certainly had the authorities to wiretap anyone, from

you, or your accountant, to a federal judge, to even the President, if I had a personal email."

Snowden said he was prepared for whatever might happen to him, noting that the CIA had "an office just up the road here in Hong Kong", but "I have no intention of hiding who I am because I know I have done nothing wrong". He said he was revealing himself so that the media's attention would be on the documents he revealed, rather than the search for an unknown whistle-blower. But of course the world's media - not to mention intelligence agents - were now desperate to get hold of him ASAP.

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The next day, Snowden said goodbye to Poitras and the Guardian journalists, knowing that any further contact with them could reveal his location and jeopardize his life.

"I was being tailed," Poitras told [Vogue magazine](#). "The risks became very great."

Snowden checked out of his hotel and moved into Hong Kong's crowded tenements, where - with a little help from a Canadian human rights lawyer - he was sheltered by a group of [asylum seekers](#).

The Hong Kong government quickly made it clear they did not want to damage relations with the USA by allowing Snowden to stay. This is where WikiLeaks stepped in.

Sarah Harrison was "on WikiLeaks business" in Melbourne, Australia - presumably helping with the WikiLeaks Party - when Julian Assange asked her to urgently fly to Hong Kong, a city she knew well because her two sisters [lived](#) there. Harrison quickly packed her bags, leaving half her luggage behind as she expected to return soon.

For the next thirteen days, Harrison and Assange tried to obtain diplomatic protection for Snowden, meeting with lawyers in Hong Kong and working trusted connections within the Ecuadorian government. WikiLeaks booked more than a dozen different flights for Harrison and Snowden.

"We also got Snowden to buy a ticket to India on his own credit card," Harrison says. "We were working very hard to lay as many false trails as possible. I just kept hoping the tickets would be OK'd".

Harrison didn't actually meet Snowden until the morning of Sunday 24 June, when he climbed into a car with her and headed to the airport. They both dressed casually, hoping to look like a young couple on vacation, and barely spoke until their Aeroflot flight to Moscow was in the air. Then Snowden turned to Harrison and smiled:

"I didn't expect that WikiLeaks was going to send a ninja to get me out."

The USA had hurriedly [filed multiple charges](#) against Snowden and were demanding his immediate arrest. But Hong Kong officials said the US documents seeking his detention did not "fully comply"

with their legal requirements. After confirming that Snowden had left the country, they explained that US officials wrote Snowden's middle name as "James" instead of "Joseph". Then they angrily demanded that US officials clarify Snowden's recent claims that the NSA was spying on Hong Kong and mainland China.

The WikiLeaks "ninja" still had a lot of work to do. Arriving safely in transit at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport on 23 June 2013, Snowden and Harrison tried to check-in for their onward flight to Latin America, only to discover that Snowden's passport had been cancelled.

By now journalists were swarming all over the airport. Media were reporting that Snowden would be flying to Havana, Cuba. At least one journalist booked a seat on Snowden's expected flight, only to find it empty. Snowden - and Harrison - had disappeared.

The next day, both US President Obama and US Secretary of State John Kerry urged Russia to hand over the "fugitive from justice". But Russia's foreign minister insisted that Snowden had never even crossed the border into Russia. This was technically true: Harrison and Snowden, who did not have a Russian visa, were trapped in the airport's "In Transit" zone.

Russian President Vladimir Putin eventually admitted that Snowden was at Sheremetyevo airport but he said the NSA whistle-blower was free to leave Russia at any time and would not be extradited to the USA.

Obama immediately toned down his rhetoric, telling a press conference in Senegal that he didn't want to be "wheeling and dealing and trading" just to "get a guy extradited."

"I'm not going to be scrambling jets to get a 29-year-old hacker," the US President said.

Snowden, of course, was not a criminal hacker, and he had celebrated his 30th birthday just before leaving Hong Kong. In a statement marking his first year in the embassy, Julian Assange said President Obama was far more deserving of the label "traitor" than Snowden ever would be:

"Who was it who promised a generation "hope" and "change", only to betray those promises with dismal misery and stagnation? Who took an oath to defend the US constitution, only to feed the invisible beast of secret law devouring it alive from the inside out?

"Who is it that promised to preside over The Most Transparent Administration in history, only to crush whistleblower after whistleblower with the boot heel of espionage charges?

"Who combined in his executive the powers of judge, jury and executioner, and claimed the jurisdiction of the entire earth on which to exercise those powers? Who arrogates the power to spy on the entire earth - every single one of us - and when he is caught red handed, explains to us that "we're

going to have to make a choice".

Assange praised Snowden's courage, saying "the mark of international distinction and service to humanity is no longer the Nobel Peace Prize, but an espionage indictment from the US Department of Justice".

Meanwhile the USA was putting immense pressure on countries around the world.

Ecuador initially appeared ready to give Snowden asylum, especially after [discovering](#) a bugging device in their London embassy. But President Correa back-tracked after Spanish media [leaked](#) documents including a safe conduct pass for Snowden, dated 22 June 2013, which bore the name (but not the signature) of Ecuador's London consul, Fidel Narvaez, who was a strong supporter of Assange. Ecuador's ambassador to the USA told a colleague that someone should talk to Assange, because "from outside, he appears to be running the show." This was embarrassing for President Correa, who had already cancelled a key US trade pact and slyly [offered](#) the USA a \$23m donation for human rights training.

Correa said US Vice President Joe Biden had personally and very politely [asked](#) him not to give asylum to Snowden, but Ecuador would not make such a decision unless Snowden turned up on their soil:

"The moment that he arrives, if he arrives, the first thing is we'll ask the opinion of the United States, as we did in the Assange case with England," Correa said. "But the decision is ours to make."

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On 1 July 2013 Edward Snowden published a [statement](#) on the WikiLeaks website.

"One week ago I left Hong Kong after it became clear that my freedom and safety were under threat for revealing the truth. My continued liberty has been owed to the efforts of friends new and old, family, and others who I have never met and probably never will. I trusted them with my life and they returned that trust with a faith in me for which I will always be thankful."

Snowden condemned Obama for promising no "wheeling and dealing" but then asking Joe Biden and others to exert pressure on states where asylum was being requested.

The Obama administration has now adopted the strategy of using citizenship as a weapon. Although I am convicted of nothing, it has unilaterally revoked my passport, leaving me a stateless person. Without any judicial order, the administration now seeks to stop me exercising a basic right. A right that belongs to everybody. The right to seek asylum.

In the end the Obama administration is not afraid of whistleblowers like me, Bradley Manning or Thomas Drake. We are stateless, imprisoned, or powerless. No, the Obama administration is afraid of you. It is afraid of an informed, angry public demanding the constitutional government it was promised — and it should be.

A day earlier, Sarah Harrison had personally [delivered](#) a number of requests for asylum to an official at the Russian consulate in Sheremetyevo Airport. The countries petitioned included Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, China, Cuba, Finland, France, Germany India, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Poland, Russia, Spain, Switzerland and Venezuela. Previous requests had been submitted to Ecuador and Iceland (where the CEO of DataCell had [offered](#) to fly Snowden in a private jet).

Vladimir Putin immediately [rejected](#) Snowden's appeal:

"If he wants to go somewhere and someone will take him, go ahead. If he wants to stay here, there is one condition – he must stop his work aimed at bringing harm to our American partners, as strange as that sounds coming from my mouth."

"Considering that he considers himself a human rights activist and a fighter for human rights, he probably doesn't plan to stop this work, so he should choose a host country and head there. When this will happen I, unfortunately, do not know."

These harsh comments, which lead to Snowden withdrawing his Russian asylum application a day later, came despite many Russian MPs calling for Snowden to stay, with some even offering to nominate him for a Nobel peace prize. Putin, a former KGB intelligence officer, also denied that Snowden was a Russian spy, as many critics in the US media were claiming.

"Mr Snowden is not our agent, never was and isn't today. Our special services have never worked with him and are not working with him."

Snowden later claimed that he had been approached by Russian agents in the airport but turned them away. Sarah Harrison [noted](#) that it wasn't possible to broker a deal on asylum because Snowden had already handed over all his files to Western journalists.

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In early July 2013, Moscow hosted a major [summit](#) of gas exporting countries, with numerous world leaders in attendance. On the last day of the summit, Bolivian president Evo Morales [said](#) his country was keen to "shield the denounced" and would likely consider Snowden's asylum request favourably. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, also in Moscow, insisted that Snowden should be given a "humanitarian medal".

"This young man of 29 was brave enough to say that we need to protect the world from the American imperial elite, so who should protect him? All of mankind, people all over the world must protect him."

The next day, after flying uninterrupted over Poland and the Czech Republic on the way home to Bolivia, the Presidential airplane of Evo Morales was forced to land unexpectedly in Vienna, the Austrian capital. France, Spain, Portugal and Italy had all suddenly denied access to their airspace. Austrian officials insisted on searching the plane, which remained grounded for 14 hours. Bolivian officials [accused](#) the United States of trying to "kidnap" President Morales, just because they thought Edward Snowden was on board the plane (he was not). The White House declined to comment.

"We have no doubt that it was an order from the White House," said Bolivia's ambassador to the United Nations. "By no means should a diplomatic plane with the president be diverted from its route and forced to land in another country."

A host of Latin American nations [filed complaints](#) with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who himself had come under fire for [blaming Snowden for leaking the NSA files](#).

Two years later, Julian Assange [revealed](#) that WikiLeaks had inadvertently played a part in the grounding of Morales' plane. He said WikiLeaks staff, while trying to help Snowden get out of Moscow, had "managed to get some intelligence on the US government thinking of the different types of jets and that they were concerned that the presidential jets might be difficult for them, from a legal perspective".

"In fact, from a legal perspective, they are flying embassies. They're protected under the Vienna Convention. And no one has a right to go into the presidential jet."

Assange said this caused the WikiLeaks team to start thinking about getting Snowden out of Moscow on one of the Presidential jets that were in town for the oil summit. WikiLeaks was using the word "Bolivia" as a codename for the real country where they hoped to send Snowden, even when talking "on open lines to lawyers in the United States".

"We had engaged in a number of these distraction operations in the asylum maneuver from Hong Kong, for example, booking him on flights to India through Beijing and other forms of distraction, like Iceland, for example. We didn't think this was anything more than just distracting.

"But the U.S. picked up a statement, a supportive statement made in Moscow by President Evo Morales, and appears to have picked up our codeword for the actual operation, and put two and two together and made 22..."

Assange said the downing of Morales' jet revealed "the true nature of the relationship between Western Europe and the United States".

"Just a phone call from U.S. intelligence was enough to close the airspace to a booked presidential flight, which has immunity. And they got it wrong. They spent all that political capital in demanding this urgent favor to close the airspace, which was humiliating to those Western European countries, and they got it wrong."

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Meanwhile, week after week of major media revelations from Snowden's files were changing how the world understood government surveillance. Journalists used to ridicule Julian Assange's protective security measures - like putting a cover over a laptop camera - as "paranoid". But now they learned that Edward Snowden, an experienced NSA professional, had lined the door of his Hong Kong hotel room with pillows and put a large red hood over his head and laptop when entering passwords. It is beyond the scope of this book to examine all Snowden's [revelations](#), but the whole world was suddenly looking at their emails, phones, laptops - and the US intelligence agencies - in a whole new light.

World leaders were not the only ones coming under pressure from Washington. On 5 July the editors of the Washington Post - whose own journalist Bart Gellman had published front page scoops based on the files given to him by Laura Poitras - wrote a bizarre [editorial](#) titled "Plugging the leaks in the Edward Snowden case". After helping expose PRISM and other intrusive NSA surveillance programs, the paper now said it was necessary to prevent Snowden from leaking information that "harms efforts to fight terrorism and conduct legitimate intelligence operations."

NOTE

This was sheer humiliation from a newspaper that had helped break the Watergate scandal, but was now in dire financial straits. A month later, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos [bought](#) the Washington Post for \$250 million in "an out-of-the-blue deal". In the same week, the New York Times sold the Boston Globe for \$70 million, after buying it for \$1.1 billion in 1993. Later, Bezos [signed](#) a \$600 million deal with the CIA to host all their information on Amazon Cloud servers.

In London, meanwhile, the Guardian had published scoops revealing that GCHQ (Britain's Government Communications Headquarters) also had access to PRISM, had intercepted foreign politicians' communications at the 2009 G20 summit, could tap into to the global network of Internet cables, and was sharing information with the NSA. The British government then threatened the UK Guardian with legal action, which could have forced them to stop publishing further Snowden revelations or even shut down the newspaper.

"We can do this nicely or we can go to law," [said](#) an emissary from the Prime Minister. "A lot of people in government think you should be closed down."

The Guardian backed down and made a deal. On 20 July, GCHQ officers watched on as Guardian editors with angle grinders and electric drills [destroyed](#) the hard drives in their London office that had contained the Snowden files. Bizarrely, the Guardian's US office - and others - still had copies of

the files. Two weeks later the [Guardian](#) reported that GCHQ had received at least £100m from the US government in exchange for "access to and influence over" Britain's intelligence gathering programmes.

In January 2014 the head of GCHQ [resigned](#). Iain Lobban had also been called before the Commons committee, the first time a head of GCHQ had given evidence in public. The Foreign Office insisted his resignation had nothing to do with the Snowden revelations.

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Journalists at Moscow airport had by now spent weeks desperately hoping for a glimpse of Snowden.

"I've spent up to eighteen hours a day beyond passport control and security looking for Snowden," complained one ABC News employee after just a week. "There is an irrational fear, even late at night, that the moment I call it quits he'll come strolling down the hall."

Sarah Harrison later [explained](#) how she and Snowden had managed to hide from the media for 39 days. She said the Moscow airport officials were "very kind", partly because this was "the most exciting thing that had happened to them in a long time."

"The transit area is enclosed but they were able to find us a room, not the most pleasant of rooms - it didn't have a window or anything - but it did allow us to shut the door and stay in there with very little outgoings."

They did their laundry in a small sink, watched movies on their laptops, and survived on airport food. Harrison managed to occasionally move around the airport with some simple disguises - "For girls, it's a bit easier to fit in" - but mostly stayed with Snowden to provide a form of 24/7 protection, knowing WikiLeaks could reach a huge global audience very quickly if needed.

"If anything untoward happened to him, I was there as a witness. We would have made sure that the world knew."

Assange [said](#) he had advised Edward Snowden that he would be safest in Russia, but Snowden "didn't want to be accused of being some kind of Russian spy... he didn't want that kind of propaganda attack to distract from the revelations, even though it would place him at some increased risk".

After the downing of the Bolivian President's plane, however, and even though a handful of angry Latin American governments had stepped forward to offer asylum, "at a legal level, in terms of asylum law, it was very clear that there could not be a fair process". Any attempt by Snowden to leave Russia now would put his life at risk. If he was on a plane, it could be shot down.

"And at a political level," said Assange, "the Russian government had to react. And it couldn't react by handing him over. It would look weak and

unprincipled. It only had one other card it could play, which is to accept his asylum."

On 1 August 2013, with help from a prominent Russian lawyer, Edward Snowden and Sarah Harrison finally left the transit zone of Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport and officially entered Russia. WikiLeaks issued a [statement](#) explaining that Snowden's certificate of temporary asylum afforded him "the right to live in and travel around Russia, where he can now plan his next steps in safety".

WikiLeaks noted that President Barack Obama "while elected on a platform promising to protect whistleblowers, has now prosecuted more national security whistleblowers than all other presidents in United States history combined". They also noted US efforts to block asylum were a violation of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2312 (1967): "the grant of asylum... is a peaceful and humanitarian act and... as such, it cannot be regarded as unfriendly by any other State."

In the end, of all the countries in the world, it was only Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua who "stood strong and granted Mr Snowden asylum".

At a meeting with lawyers and human rights organisations on the 12th July, Mr Snowden announced that he accepted Venezuela's asylum offer, although ultimately US interference has, at least for the time being, prevented its practical acceptance.

Harrison and Snowden left the airport in a taxi and headed to a "secure, confidential place." Sarah Harrison stayed with Ed Snowden for another three months before flying to Berlin at the end of 2013. She [said](#) her lawyers had advised her not to return home to Britain, where she could be detained under sweeping new antiterrorism laws. Edward Snowden praised the woman who had helped save him from life in a US supermax prison - or worse.

"Sarah refuses to allow intimidation to shape her decisions," he said. "If you forced her to choose between disowning her principles or being burned at the stake, I think she'd hand you a match'."

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In early August 2013, in response to mounting public anger, President Obama announced changes to US surveillance programs, which he claimed to have been planning for a long time. He insisted that Edward Snowden did not deserve any credit:

"I don't think Mr. Snowden was a patriot. As I said in my opening remarks, I called for a thorough review of our surveillance operations before Mr. Snowden made these leaks. My preference – and I think the American people's preference – would have been for a lawful, orderly examination of these laws; a thoughtful, fact-based debate that would then lead us to a

better place, because I never made claims that all the surveillance technologies ... somehow didn't require, potentially, some additional reforms. That's exactly what I called for."

In response, Bart Gellman [said](#) Snowden "has accomplished far more than anyone in his position could have reasonably hoped to have accomplished."

"He told me that his greatest fear was that he would come out and do this and the whole story would be... roiling around for a day and it would be gone," Gellman said. "But it's at the top of the agenda now for two months."

*

Death of Michael Hastings

On 19 June 2013 WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that they were deeply saddened to hear of the sudden [death](#) of journalist Michael Hastings, who had spent three days with Julian Assange for a front page Rolling Stone [interview](#) in early 2012 (see [Chapter Thirteen](#)).

Hastings died in a ball of flames when his C250 Mercedes hit a tree in Los Angeles' Hancock Park neighborhood around 4:30 am on Tuesday 18 June. The ejected motor reportedly came to rest 50 meters away from the burning chassis. Video from a nearby intersection showed the car racing straight through a red light at high speed. A witness claimed she saw flames and sparks coming out from under the car before the crash.

The next day, WikiLeaks [revealed](#) that Hastings had been in touch with their lawyer Jennifer Robinson and he believed the FBI was investigating him.

In an usual step, swamped with angry phone calls, the FBI publicly [denied](#) they were investigating Hastings.

"At no time was journalist Michael Hastings under investigation by the FBI," agency spokeswoman Laura Eimiller said.

In response to an FOI request, however, the FBI soon [admitted](#) that they had collected information on Hastings:

"Whether or not his name surfaced during another investigation, or his name is in our files for some reason, that's another question."

Public suspicion over the tragic death was not unjustified, particularly as the Snowden revelations were still front page news. Hastings' [last article for Buzzfeed](#) had explored Obama's "war on journalism", including recent efforts to [subpoena](#) the phone records of twenty Associated Press (AP) reporters. In a [Young Turks interview](#), Hastings angrily stated that President Obama had declared war on the press and journalists should respond by saying "we declare war on you". He said journalists "have been way too easy going with these guys" and should refuse to keep co-operating

with government officials.

It was soon [revealed](#) that Hastings had also sent an email to his Buzzfeed colleagues the day before he died, warning that federal authorities were interviewing his friends and he needed to go "off the rada[r]" for a bit.

A neighbor [told](#) the Los Angeles Weekly that Hastings had been scared to get into his own car just hours before he died, and had begged her to let him borrow her Volvo. She turned him down, saying her car had mechanical problems.

Online forums began speculating that the US intelligence services may have murdered Hastings by hacking into his car's onboard computer and forcing it to drive at full throttle till he crashed. In 2017 the WikiLeaks Vault7 release [confirmed](#) that such dangerous CIA software tools did indeed exist.

Nevertheless, Michael Hastings' family were quick to hose down such "conspiracy theories". They revealed that Hastings had suffered a "manic episode" fifteen years earlier, where drugs and alcohol were involved, and they believed he was experiencing a similar episode when he died. In a Rolling Stone [interview](#) on 5 November 2013, Hastings' elder brother Jonathan explained that he had flown down from New York a day before Michael died, hoping to get him into a rehab clinic.

"I'd thought that I had at least convinced Mike to just stay in his apartment and chill out for the next few days, but he snuck out on me when I was sleeping. He crashed his car before anyone could do anything to help him."

Jonathan Hastings said his family had "no real complaints" about the LA police or the [coroner's report](#), which "didn't tell us anything we didn't already know or strongly suspect." The report said Michael Hastings had been proscribed "medical marijuana" to help deal with PTSD since his war reporting years; after using marijuana the night before he died, he had "passed out" around 1 am, at which stage his brother had gone to stay with a neighbour. The report said Michael Hastings was also "believed" to be using the hallucinogenic drug DMT:

"Toxicology shows a small amount of amphetamine in the blood, consistent with possible intake of methamphetamine many hours before death, unlikely to have produced an intoxicative effect at the time of the accident. Marijuana was present in the blood, but mostly in the form of its metabolite, indicating intake hours earlier. All other drugs were negative".

Nevertheless, Jonathan Hastings said he ruled out foul play "entirely".

"I might have been suspicious if I hadn't been with him the day before he died. After all, he definitely was investigating and writing about a lot of sensitive subjects. But based on being with him and talking to people who were worried about him in the weeks leading up to his death, and being around him when he had had similar problems when he was younger, I was

pretty much convinced that he wasn't in danger from any outside agency."

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Global Trade Agreements

The Trans-Pacific Partnership ([TPP](#)) was a proposed global trade agreement that enshrined many deeply unpopular aspects of globalisation, including threats to environmental regulations, developing countries, and internet freedom. The TPP was a major part of a huge raft of global trade deals including the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Trade in Service Agreement (TiSA).

In late 2012, when massive global protests appeared incapable of stopping the secretive deals, Just Foreign Policy [proposed](#) a novel approach:

"Just Foreign Policy is issuing a reward if WikiLeaks publishes the TPP negotiating text. Instead of getting one rich person to put up the money, we're "crowdsourcing" the reward."

Just Foreign Policy said it was a great way for people to show support for WikiLeaks while also expressing public opposition to the TPP. By late 2013, supporters had [pledged](#) around \$75,000.

WikiLeaks never managed to publish the full contents of the TPP, but on 13 November 2013 - just days before a decisive TPP Chief Negotiators Summit in Salt Lake City - WikiLeaks [released](#) the current draft text of the highly controversial Intellectual Property Rights Chapter, which had critical implications for global Internet freedom. The draft chapter [showed](#) that Australia and the USA were isolated in negotiations:

"Australia, an important US ally, lined up with the US 64 times, considerably more than the next highest, Peru (54), Singapore (51)."

"Throughout the text it is clear that on the contentious issues, Australia's position is closely aligned with the US. Australia and the US are the only two countries to object to a proposal to limit Internet service providers' liability in relation to copyright infringement, a proposal supported by the remaining countries (minus Japan which does not express its position)."

Analysis by EFF [said](#) the leaked text confirmed "long-standing suspicions about the harm the agreement could do to users' rights and a free and open Internet".

"From locking in excessive copyright term limits to further entrenching failed policies that give legal teeth to Digital Rights Management (DRM) tools, the TPP text we've seen today reflects a terrible but unsurprising truth: an agreement negotiated in near-total secrecy, including corporations but excluding the public, comes out as an anti-user wish list of industry-

friendly policies."

On 15 January 2014, WikiLeaks [released](#) the secret draft text of the TPP's Environment Chapter and the corresponding Chairs' Report. Julian Assange said the environmental chapter was clearly just "a toothless public relations exercise with no enforcement mechanism."

"When compared against other TPP chapters, the Environment Chapter is noteworthy for its absence of mandated clauses or meaningful enforcement measures. The dispute settlement mechanisms it creates are cooperative instead of binding; there are no required penalties and no proposed criminal sanctions. With the exception of fisheries, trade in 'environmental' goods and the disputed inclusion of other multilateral agreements, the Chapter appears to function as a public relations exercise."

On 16 June 2014 WikiLeaks [released](#) the Financial Services Annex of the secret Trade in Services Agreement (TISA), which covered 50 countries and nearly 70% of world trade in services. The draft had been classified to keep it secret not just during negotiations but for five years after it entered into force.

"Despite the failures in financial regulation evident during the 2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis and calls for improvement of relevant regulatory structures², proponents of TISA aim to further deregulate global financial services markets. The draft Financial Services Annex sets rules which would assist the expansion of financial multi-nationals – mainly headquartered in New York, London, Paris and Frankfurt – into other nations by preventing regulatory barriers. The leaked draft also shows that the US is particularly keen on boosting cross-border data flow, which would allow uninhibited exchange of personal and financial data."

On 16 October 2014, just days before "decisive" TPP meetings in Canberra and Sydney, WikiLeaks [released](#) an updated version of the TPP Intellectual Property Rights chapter. The update showed little change to controversial and damaging areas like digital rights, but also "significant industry-favouring additions within the areas of pharmaceuticals and patents". Bracketed sections showed there was still huge internal disagreement and negotiations on key areas appeared to have stalled. Julian Assange said the TPP was clearly "too damaging to be brought into force" and "should stop now".

Further public protests were again brushed away as negotiations continued until early 2016, when the TPP trade agreement was formally signed by leaders from Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and the United States. Months later, however, newly elected US president Donald Trump withdrew the USA from the deal, fulfilling an election promise. This meant the TPP could not be ratified and did not enter into force. The remaining countries signed a new trade agreement, the [Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership](#), on 30 December 2018.

UK Press Pressure

On 28 November 2013 London Mayor Boris Johnson delivered a lecture in honour of Margaret Thatcher, where he repeated the 1980's Wall Street mantra that "greed is good". In his closing statements, the future Prime Minister [stated](#), to laughter and loud applause:

"By 2050... some things will still be the same... Julian Assange will still be holed up in the Ecuadorian Embassy, wasting police time & resources, but one thing will have changed forever, and that is the myth of British decline."

On the same day, British Prime Minister David Cameron [warned](#) journalists that "if they don't demonstrate some social responsibility it will be very difficult for government to stand back and not to act".

"I don't want to have to use injunctions or D-notices or the other tougher measures. I think it's much better to appeal to newspapers' sense of social responsibility."

Days later, the editor-in-chief of the Guardian, Alan Rusbridger, appeared before the Home Affairs Select Committee, where he was forced to [defend](#) the publishing of Snowden stories, which MPs labelled "woefully irresponsible".

Rusbridger revealed that in every case bar one he had consulted the DA Notice pre-publication censorship committee before publishing. Nevertheless, he was accused of "putting lives at risk" by sending unredacted Snowden documents overseas to the New York Times. Rusbridger responded that he had told the UK Cabinet Secretary he was doing this in July and the government had not complained. Cressida Dick, the Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, insisted that the alleged communication of agents' names abroad was a potential breach of section 58(a) of the Terrorism Act.

In August 2013, David Miranda, the partner of journalist Glenn Greenwald, had been [detained](#) for nine hours at London's Heathrow Airport and questioned under anti-terrorism laws. Miranda was en route from Berlin to his home in Rio De Janeiro, carrying encrypted material from the Snowden files, which was seized. Greenwald had angrily [responded](#) that he would "write much more aggressively than before." He resigned from the Guardian two months later to help set up a new, supposedly more aggressive, news organisation called "[The Intercept](#)". Now Cressida Dick told the Commons committee that police still had not been able to decrypt the files taken from Miranda, but the investigation might yet result in charges.

Labour MP Keith Vaz, who was born in Yemen, [asked](#) Rusbridger: "Do you love this country?" Somewhat taken aback, the Guardian EIC insisted that he and his staff were "patriots".

Asked by Conservative MP Michael Ellis whether he had broken the Terrorism Act, Rusbridger replied that he was not a lawyer so could not answer the question. He said the paper had "made very selective judgments" about what to publish:

"We have published I think 26 documents so far out of the 58,000 we've seen... There is stuff in there about Iraq and Afghanistan – we're not even going to look at it".

This might have been what saved the Guardian from further government attacks. To WikiLeaks, of course, such an admission was like a [red rag](#) to a bull.

Edward Snowden later explained that he never intended for his entire archive to be published; he left it at the discretion of Glenn Greenwald and other trusted journalists to decide what to publish. WikiLeaks [tweeted](#) that the limited release to date was "a result of pressure, self-censorship, control issues".

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30c3

In the final week of 2013, the 30th Chaos Computer Club Congress was held in Berlin.

"This year we found ourselves waking up from a bad dream, to a reality that was even worse," [said](#) Tim Pritlove, one of the organizers. "We have woken to a reality that can no longer be ignored."

Glenn Greenwald delivered a one hour [speech](#) via satellite on the opening night, praising Snowden's courage and warning that the surveillance state "by its very existence, breeds conformity".

Two days later Jacob Applebaum took the stage and [introduced](#) a "surprise guest". Sarah Harrison received a rapturous standing ovation from thousand of attendees. She humbly noted that WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange was now spending his fourth Christmas detained without charge.

Assange joined the stage via Skype and was [knocked offline](#) a minute later. He rejoined the discussion to [encourage](#) system administrators and other "high-tech workers" to organize against national surveillance programs. He said the NSA and CIA were now keen to recruit from this new generation of skilled online workers, who should consider joining such organisations: "go in there, get the ball and bring it out."

"This is the last free generation," warned Assange. "The coming together of the systems of governments, the new information apartheid across the world, the linking together, is such that none of us will be able to escape it in just a decade. Our identities will be coupled to it, the information sharing such that none of us will be able to escape it. We are all becoming part of the state, whether we like it or not, so our only hope is to determine what sort of state it is that we are going to become part of."

Assange said that if people did not recognise what was happening and speak up then "we are the

group that will be crushed." Then he was knocked off line again.

NOTE

US agents had spied on Assange and others connected to WikiLeaks at the Chaos Computer Club Congress back in 2009. In September 2013 Assange [filed charges](#) in Germany after an ex-Marine gave witness testimony at the Manning trial. Assange's [affidavit](#) detailed evidence of years of hostile US surveillance, including while he was in Sweden and the 2009 episode in Germany.

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Chapter Seventeen: 2014

After all the drama and excitement of the Manning and Snowden releases, 2014 was a rather more [subdued](#) year for the WikiLeaks team - but still a very busy and challenging one!

Courage Foundation

Sarah Harrison, now [exiled](#) in Germany, became acting director of the Courage Foundation, a UK trust to support whistleblowers. Originally co-founded by Julian Assange in 2013 as the "Journalistic Source Protection Defence Fund", Courage quickly [raised](#) nearly \$125,000 for their first beneficiary, Edward Snowden.

At the June 2014 [launch](#) in Berlin, Gavin MacFadyen, a Courage Trustee and Director of the Centre for Investigative Journalism, explained their mission:

The Trustees started Courage because it is imperative for free speech and an open independent press to support whistleblowers, particularly those who risk their lives and freedom to bring critical information to the public. At the time Courage started there were no international organisations providing the support Edward Snowden needed to remain free and none organising support for whistleblowers to come. Knowing the central role whistleblowers have played in the major ground-breaking disclosures of our time, it is clear that without freedom and protection for truthtellers, there is no freedom or protection for journalists. And none for the public. Courage has never been more needed and essential to a free press.

The shock of the Snowden revelations continued to rock world affairs. In February 2014 documents from Edward Snowden [exposed](#) NSA and GCHQ surveillance of WikiLeaks, its staff, and its "human support network". Julian Assange had been placed on a "manhunting" target list and attempts had been made to classify WikiLeaks as a "malicious foreign actor". Assange released a [statement](#) in response, condemning the NSA's "reckless and unlawful behavior" and calling on President Obama to appoint a Special Prosecutor to investigate the NSA's "criminal activity" against the media.

News that the NSA planned these operations at the level of its Office of the

General Counsel is especially troubling. No less concerning are revelations that the US government deployed "elements of state power" to pressure European nations into abusing their own legal systems; and that the British spy agency GCHQ is engaged in extensive hostile monitoring of a popular publisher's website and its readers.

The NSA and its UK accomplices show no respect for the rule of law.

Another Snowden document [revealed](#) that the Bahamas and one other un-named foreign nation were the subject of the most extreme NSA surveillance, with nearly all domestic and international phone calls recorded and stored. By this time, Glenn Greenwald was working at [The Intercept](#), which he [co-founded](#) in February 2014 with funding from eBay billionaire Pierre Omidyar. At the request of the US government, both the Washington Post and The Intercept had redacted the name of the second nation, which was referred to as "country X". In May 2014, after heated online [arguments](#) about censorship with Greenwald and others at The Intercept, WikiLeaks [revealed](#) the name of the country:

We do not believe it is the place of media to "aid and abet" a state in escaping detection and prosecution for a serious crime against a population. Consequently WikiLeaks cannot be complicit in the censorship of victim state X. The country in question is Afghanistan.

The Intercept had initially declined to name the country due to "credible concerns that doing so could lead to increased violence." But WikiLeaks argued that Afghans had a right to know what was happening, given that any loose talk in a phone conversation could trigger an immediate drone strike. Greenwald said the NSA had "aggressively urged" The Intercept not to reveal four other countries which The Washington Post had redacted, but he had not. He later [thanked](#) WikiLeaks for being "out there pushing everyone - including us - to the direction of more transparency".

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Releases And More Releases

Meanwhile WikiLeaks documents from Cablegate and other releases were also having an enduring impact around the world. And new releases kept coming. Including prisoner releases...

On 29 January 2014 Roshan Jamal Khan, an Indian national jailed by Spain for six years, was [granted](#) his freedom. Khan and ten Pakistani men were [convicted](#) in 2009 of "belonging to a terrorist group" that planned to bomb the Barcelona Metro in an operation called '[Operation Cantata](#)'. But WikiLeaks cables supported the defence's claim that a key protected witness 'F1' was actually an undercover agent working for a third country - the US Ambassador himself had said so.

In February 2014, when Russia invaded the Crimean Peninsula and subsequently annexed it from Ukraine, WikiLeaks cables [provided](#) critical context and US perspective.

In March 2014 a Human Rights Watch report on surveillance in Ethiopia [cited](#) multiple WikiLeaks

cables and Spy Files as evidence. WikiLeaks [released](#) a fourth tranche of Spy Files on 15 September 2014, prompting activists in Bahrain to [file](#) a criminal complaint against Gamma International, the UK manufacturer of FinFisher spyware.

On 24 April 2014 WikiLeaks [released](#) the Carter Cables - 367,174 US diplomatic cables and associated records from the first year of President Jimmy Carter's administration - which expanded the WikiLeaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (PlusD) to 2,325,961 documents. The new cables provided fresh information on still-influential figures like President Carter (a WikiLeaks [supporter](#)) and Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt, plus key events like the US invention of the neutron bomb and Anwar El Sadat's visit to Israel.

Also in April 2014:

- the Iraq War Logs helped activists compile a 250-page dossier and [refer](#) alleged UK war crimes to the International Criminal Court.
- WikiLeaks [released](#) draft guidelines for new EU policies on free speech, which were supposed to have been revealed to the public months earlier.
- the United States fell to 14 places to position 46 on Reporters Without Borders' [World Press Freedom Index](#), largely due to their persecution of WikiLeaks, Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden, and other whistleblowers and journalists.

In May 2014, a US Department of Justice (DoJ) [document](#) confirmed the FBI and DoJ "multi-subject investigation" into WikiLeaks was ongoing. The DoJ requested that records in the investigation remain secret as they may "cause articulable harm" to the ongoing investigation and "pending future prosecution". Journalist Kevin Gosztola [noted](#) that this could well signal a future prosecution of Julian Assange:

Government attorneys in this lawsuit have now confirmed twice that the criminal investigation into the unauthorized disclosure of information that was published on WikiLeaks' website is not over. The government has feared revealing any information would jeopardize "civilian criminal/national security investigation(s)" that are apparently "multi-subject" and "active and ongoing."

Later in May 2014, a high profile US soldier accused of desertion in Afghanistan, [Bowe Bergdahl](#), was released as part of a prisoner swap for five Taliban leaders in Guantanamo Bay. A document from the Afghan War Logs [detailed](#) the 2009 capture of Bergdahl, while the Guantanamo Files profiled the five Taliban leaders, plus [four other](#) Guantanamo Bay detainees who were released that year.

In June 2014, Chelsea Manning - now fighting for the right to gender dysphoria treatment while imprisoned, after legally changing her name from Bradley Manning - [published](#) a New York Times Op-Ed titled "The Fog Machine of War". She complained that "the concerns that motivated me have not been resolved" because "the current limits on press freedom and excessive government secrecy make it impossible for Americans to grasp fully what is happening in the wars we finance".

"We intelligence analysts, and the officers to whom we reported, had access to a comprehensive overview of the war that few others had. How could top-level decision makers say that the American public, or even Congress, supported the conflict when they didn't have half the story? ... In all of Iraq, which contained 31 million people and 117,000 United States troops, no more than a dozen American journalists were covering military operations."

In July 2014, WikiLeaks [released](#) an unprecedented Australian super-injunction gag order concerning a multi-million dollar corruption case which explicitly named current and past heads of state from Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, along with their relatives and other senior officials. Australia's Reserve Bank was heavily involved in a [bribery scandal](#), along with two private companies they had contracted to print money. As usual, "national security" was being cited to "prevent damage to Australia's international relations".

Julian Assange said the concept of "national security" should not be allowed to serve as "a blanket phrase to cover up serious corruption allegations involving government officials".

"With this order, the worst in living memory, the Australian government is not just gagging the Australian press, it is blindfolding the Australian public. This is not simply a question of the Australian government failing to give this international corruption case the public scrutiny it is due. Foreign Minister Julie Bishop must explain why she is threatening every Australian with imprisonment in an attempt to cover up an embarrassing corruption scandal involving the Australian government."

Indonesia's President also [condemned](#) the gag order and called for a transparent investigation. Australia's Reserve Bank subsidiaries Securrency and Note Printing Australia were later [fined](#) \$21 million over bribe offers.

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Swedish Prosecutor Under Pressure

On June 15 2014, marking the second year of Julian Assange's stay in the Ecuadorian embassy, fifty-nine human rights and legal organizations [urged](#) the United Nations to remedy Sweden's violation of his fundamental human rights. The groups submitted two reports — one in English and one in Spanish — highlighting repeated procedural rights violations. A third report, signed by 33 union, human rights, media and civil society organizations, petitioned the Human Rights Commission in Geneva to intervene to free Assange.

"The methods employed by the prosecutor in Mr. Assange's case are a clear violation of his fundamental human rights, yet they remain beyond the reach of judicial review."

Earlier in 2014 a retired Swedish prosecutor had [published](#) an op-ed for Sweden's daily Svenska Dagbladet newspaper asking for the Assange case to be closed. The Swedish Court of Appeals criticized the prosecution for its failure to find alternatives to progress the investigation, adding to criticism of the prosecution from European MP [Eva Joly](#), Swedish MP [Staffan Danielsson](#), Human Rights Watch executive director [Kenneth Roth](#), and [Reporters Without Borders](#).

Despite all this and [more](#), on 16 July 2014, a Stockholm judge upheld the arrest warrant against Julian Assange, who appealed the decision and lost again.

Nevertheless, impatience with the Swedish prosecutor Marianne Ny continued to grow. In November 2014 John Pilger [noted](#) that the Swedish press, "once implacably hostile to Assange", was now publishing headlines such as: "Go to London, for God's sake."

"Why won't she? More to the point, why won't she allow the Swedish court access to hundreds of SMS messages that the police extracted from the phone of one of the two women involved in the misconduct allegations? Why won't she hand them over to Assange's Swedish lawyers? She says she is not legally required to do so until a formal charge is laid and she has questioned him. Then, why doesn't she question him?"

Of course nobody then knew that the UK Crown Prosecutors had [secretly told](#) Marianne Ny not to come to London, and not to "get cold feet" and close the case. Ny again told the CPS in October 2013 that she was under pressure to "lift the detention order ... and to withdraw the European arrest warrant." They advised her to "wait and see". Weeks later, in November 2013, Keir Starmer stepped down after five years as Director of Public Prosecutions and head of the Crown Prosecution Service. He was later knighted for his services and went on to depose Jeremy Corbyn (an Assange [supporter](#)) as leader of the UK Labour Party.

By the end of 2014, there was a significant change in tone from the British government, whose 24/7 surveillance of Julian Assange had now [reached](#) £8 million. Britain's Deputy Foreign Minister, Hugo Swire, told Parliament on 28 October that he would "actively welcome" the Swedish prosecutor in London and "we would do absolutely everything to facilitate that". Swedish law's five year statute of limitations on Anna Ardin's sex allegations was due to expire in 2015 (Sofia Wilen's allegations had a ten year expiry date). The lack of progress on these alleged "rape" cases was becoming rather embarrassing for all officials involved.

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BitCoin

By this time, a majority of WikiLeaks funding was coming through online cryptocurrency. Their early adoption of Bitcoin was seen as a major [catalyst](#) for its global expansion. They would have adopted Bitcoin even earlier if not for the [concerns](#) of the BTC inventor "Satoshi Nakamoto", who was afraid that early adoption would surpass the rate of development.

On 5 December 2010, a user on the BitcoinTalk forum encouraged WikiLeaks to start using Bitcoins and see what happened. "Basically, bring it on," he said. Satoshi [replied](#):

"No, don't 'bring it on'. The project needs to grow gradually so the software can be strengthened along the way. I make this appeal to WikiLeaks not to try to use Bitcoin. Bitcoin is a small beta community in its infancy. You would not stand to get more than pocket change, and the heat you would bring would likely destroy us at this stage."

Satoshi disappeared after making his last few [posts](#) on the forum a week later:

"It would have been nice to get this attention in any other context. WikiLeaks has kicked the hornet's nest, and the swarm is headed towards us."

WikiLeaks did not adopt Bitcoin until June 2011. It quickly became an essential part of their success story. In 2022 WikiLeaks supporters [raised](#) over \$50 million in cryptocurrency donations from around the world.

By early 2013 WikiLeaks' official [Blockchain.info address](#) had received 3,855 BTC from over 2,200 transactions. In June 2013, WikiLeaks raised 7.18 BTC to support Edward Snowden. In December 2013 alone WikiLeaks received 56 BTC (then worth USD\$46,444.68). Aside from helping keep staff paid and servers online, this was an important reminder that despite all the hostility from media and politicians, WikiLeaks and Assange remained hugely popular with the global crypto community.

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Assange Meets Google

In September 2014 Julian Assange released a new book, "[When Google Met WikiLeaks](#)", with an extensive [excerpt](#) posted free online.

The book stemmed from an afternoon visit to Ellingham Hall in June 2011, when Julian Assange had agreed to a requested meeting with Eric Schmidt, the executive chairman of Google, and Jared Cohen, the director of Google Ideas. They wanted to interview Assange for their own upcoming book, "The New Digital Age". Also present at the meeting were Lisa Shields, then Schmidt's [latest](#) sex partner but [later](#) vice president of the Council on Foreign Relations, and Scott Malcomson, the communications director for Google's International Crisis Group.

Assange said he agreed to the meeting at his rural Norfolk abode because Google was "a very influential company, if not the most influential company insofar as how the world is developing" and he "wanted to influence Schmidt to create a better Google." He was evidently not very successful in that goal, but the meeting had encouraged him to think more deeply about Google, and investigate their activities in depth. Especially after he phoned the State Department in August 2011 and got a response from Lisa Shields rather than a US government official.

In February 2012, when WikiLeaks published emails from the Texas-based private intelligence firm Stratfor, Assange got even more surprises about Google, particularly "Ideas" man Jared Cohen:

Cohen's directorate appeared to cross over from public relations and "corporate responsibility" work into active corporate intervention in foreign affairs at a level that is normally reserved for states. Jared Cohen could be wryly named Google's "director of regime change."

An email from Fred Burton, Stratfor's vice president for intelligence and a former State Department official, stated:

"Google is getting WH [White House] and State Dept support and air cover. In reality they are doing things the CIA cannot do ... [Cohen] is going to get himself kidnapped or killed. Might be the best thing to happen to expose Google's covert role in foaming up-risings, to be blunt. The US Gov't can then disavow knowledge and Google is left holding the shit-bag."

As Assange later [wrote](#) in a New York Times Op-Ed:

At their core, companies like Google and Facebook are in the same business as the U.S. government's National Security Agency. They collect a vast amount of information about people, store it, integrate it and use it to predict individual and group behavior, which they then sell to advertisers and others. This similarity made them natural partners for the NSA, and that's why they were approached to be part of PRISM, the secret Internet surveillance program.

Unlike intelligence agencies, which eavesdrop on international telecommunications lines, the commercial surveillance complex lures billions of human beings with the promise of "free services." Their business model is the industrial destruction of privacy. And yet even the more strident critics of NSA surveillance do not appear to be calling for an end to Google and Facebook.

Or as Assange [told](#) Vogue: "when the product is free, you are the product."

Assange wrote that on a personal level, Schmidt and Cohen were perfectly likable people who "genuinely believe in the civilizing power of enlightened multinational corporations" but their mission to help a supposedly "benevolent superpower" re-shape the world was dangerously wrong.

"They will tell you that open-mindedness is a virtue, but all perspectives that challenge the exceptionalist drive at the heart of American foreign policy will remain invisible to them. This is the impenetrable banality of "don't be evil." They believe that they are doing good. And that is a

problem".

Google had [complied](#) with a US federal warrant to turn over the emails and metadata of three WikiLeaks staff members - Sarah Harrison, Joseph Farrell and Kristinn Hrafnss - on 5 April 2012. Apparently Eric Schmidt and his lovely friends had forgotten to mention that on their visit. Michael Ratner, the US lawyer for WikiLeaks and Assange, [said](#) that "essentially everything associated with the accounts of these three journalists" was seized by the US government, including all metadata and even deleted emails.

"The warrants acted like a huge vacuum cleaner," he said. "It's shocking that the US would do that to a journalist organization and to journalists working in that organization."

After WikiLeaks issued a [statement](#) condemning Google's involvement, Google lawyers [insisted](#) that they had fought back against the US government gag orders and sought to have legal warrants unsealed. They claimed that the intransigence of US prosecutors had hardened after public embarrassment over the 2010-11 Twitter subpoenas of WikiLeaks insiders.

"The U.S. attorney's office thought the notice and the resulting publicity was a disaster for them... They were very upset... They went through the roof... The U.S. attorney's office is like: 'Hell no — we'll fight you forever.' "

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Supporters & Stuff

On 1st November 2014 WikiLeaks released a [statement](#) welcoming a US court decision not to jail thirteen of those involved in the anti-PayPal protests of 2010. The defendants were ordered to each pay \$5,600 in "restitution". WikiLeaks posted a link to the Wau Holland Foundation, which was raising money to help with these costs.

Later in November over 70 actors, musicians, and intellectuals signed a [statement](#) in support of WikiLeaks and whistleblowers. Actor Viggo Mortensen said:

"As Albert Camus once put it, governments, by definition, do not have consciences; they have policies and nothing more. Therefore, it is up to all of us as free-thinking citizens to demand truly transparent democracy and high, unbiased moral standards from those who govern us."

The announcement coincided with the expanded theatrical release of Laura Poitras' documentary film "[CitizenFour](#)", which tracked Edward Snowden's incredible journey from US whistleblower to exile in Russia, and went on to win an Oscar for Best Documentary Feature in 2015.

On 17 December Julian Assange released a [statement](#) in support of Barrett Brown, a WikiLeaks supporter who had been arrested in 2012 after allegedly threatening an FBI agent online.

Brown had tweeted "illegally shoot the son of a bitch" which prosecutors claimed was incitement to murder. But in fact he was quoting Fox news host Bob Beck, who had made the remark about Julian Assange:

"Dead men can't leak stuff ... illegally shoot the son of a bitch".

Assange asked why the FBI had arrested Barrett Brown two days later, but never took any action against Bob Beckel or numerous other senior figures who publicly [called](#) for his assassination.

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In December 2014 WikiLeaks [published](#) a CIA internal review of their "High Value Target" (HVT) assassination programme. Following the CIA's release of the report, which examined the pros and cons of killing "insurgent" leaders in assassination plots, US drone strike killings had risen to an all-time high. WikiLeaks also [published](#) two classified CIA documents (from a previously undisclosed CIA office) which detailed how to maintain cover while travelling through airports using false ID – "including during operations to infiltrate the European Union and the Schengen passport control system". WikiLeaks said this was just the start of a series of CIA revelations that would continue in the new year.

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Chapter Eighteen: 2015

Double Standards

In early 2015, Australian government officials helped secure the release of Peter Greste, an Australian journalist who had been jailed in Egypt since December 2013. Greste and two other journalists from Al Jazeera - Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed - were [convicted](#) for supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, which the new Egyptian government had labeled a terrorist group. US Secretary of State John Kerry slammed the jail sentences as "chilling and draconian".

Australian Foreign Minister Julia Bishop later [revealed](#) that Greste's release was secured after "a very concerted campaign of advocacy" which involved high-level diplomatic contacts with the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and countries in the Middle East.

Journalists around the world had also [joined](#) forces to [support](#) Greste and his Al Jazeera colleagues, with #FreeGreste and #FreeAJstaff hashtags morphing to #JournalismIsNotACrime as Australian newsrooms were [raided](#) by police.

After his [release](#), Greste [said](#):

"I don't think, frankly, I would be here now if it weren't for the absolutely extraordinary social media campaign."

There were no such shows of government and media support for [multi-award-winning](#) Australian journalist Julian Assange, a card-carrying [member](#) of Australia's journalist union since 2007.

In fact, Peter Greste himself penned a 2019 article for the Sydney Morning Herald where he [declared](#) that "Julian Assange is not a journalist, and WikiLeaks is not a news organisation". Greste, now a founding director of the loftily-named "Alliance for Journalists' Freedom", repeated the same old media smears that WikiLeaks simply "dumped" information online, putting lives at risk. Many prominent Australian journalists publicly supported his article.

To illustrate his point, Greste pointed to a huge 2016 leak dubbed the "Panama Papers". He applauded how the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) had handled over 11 million leaked documents from Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca.

The ICIJ did not simply publish and be damned. Instead, it compiled a team of journalists from 107 news organisations across 80 countries, who then spent more than a year going through that vast trove. They carefully dug out evidence that confirmed corruption, tax evasion and the evasion of international sanctions by some of the world's most powerful business and political elites.

This was in fact the very same thing that WikiLeaks had been doing with various media partners for years. In fact, WikiLeaks had pioneered Big Data journalism and ICIJ was simply following their lead. So what was the real difference here?

The sheer size of the Panama Papers full archive - a whopping 2.6 terabytes of data, or approximately 2,660 GB - dwarfed the 1.7 GB WikiLeaks Cablegate release. Edward Snowden rightly [called](#) it the "biggest leak in the history of data journalism". But very [little](#) of the Panama Papers data was ever released, much of that was heavily redacted, and selected portions were [sold for profit](#) without any public scrutiny. When WikiLeaks launched a Twitter [poll](#) asking whether the full Panama Papers archive should be made available online, 95% of the 92,986 respondents said "YES, make them searchable"!

The initial burst of public excitement soon gave way to frustration and accusations that the ICIJ team was selectively protecting certain individuals or nations while exposing others for political reasons.

Russian media [noted](#) that the ICIJ, based in Washington DC, was funded by the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Endowment think tank, the Rockefellers and George Soros. President Obama [admitted](#) that while no US leaders were mentioned in the Panama Papers, "folks in America are taking advantage of the same stuff". He said the problem was not that people were breaking the law, but that the laws were "poorly designed". Kristin Hrafsson wryly [suggested](#) that the released information "seems to be skewed away from American interests".

"We're not WikiLeaks," ICIJ Director Gerard Ryle told WIRED magazine.
"We're trying to show that journalism can be done responsibly."

Countless anguished "What Even IS Journalism?" articles had been published since WikiLeaks dragged the failing media industry into the 21st Century. Assange was not only a journalist but a damn sight better journalist than any of his media critics. He was also an editor and a publisher. He had as much right as anyone to press freedom protections, yet his own supposed colleagues were

ganging up to strip him of those protections. Why?

As his good friend John Pilger [explained](#):

Journalism students might well study this period to understand that the most ubiquitous source of "fake news" is from within a media self-ordained with a false respectability and an extension of the authority and power it claims to challenge but courts and protects.

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While journalists and officials were free to spread smears, lies, and even death threats against Assange in the media, governments were also working to crack down on free speech, repeatedly citing the danger of "fake news" on social media in particular. In January 2015, the British government [announced](#) the establishment of a new military unit, with 2,000 members, to be called the [77th Brigade](#):

The British military is to form a new specialist force in “non-lethal” forms of psychological warfare using social media such as Twitter and Facebook to tackle the “asymmetric battlefields” of the 21st century.

The unit aimed to "respond to the ever changing character of modern conflict" by "shaping behavior through the use of dynamic narratives." In other words, propaganda. A British Army reservist working with the 77th Brigade was later [revealed](#) to be also working as a Twitter editor with control of Middle East content.

Also in January 2015, the BBC [announced](#) a 3-part TV sitcom, based on Assange's travails, co-written by a comedian who had repeatedly called for the WikiLeaks founder's death.

The author dismissed his tweets as jokes and deleted them, but the rhetoric was on a par with repeated [death threats](#) in the US media, which were certainly not jokes. The BBC [ignored](#) complaints about the show.

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Health Problems

On 2 March 2015, in a Swiss TV [interview](#), Julian Assange briefly mentioned the difficulty he was experiencing getting medical and dental care inside the embassy.

“They say their insurance doesn’t cover Ecuador if they’re British doctors,” he shrugged.

Assange was reluctant to complain, not wanting to give his enemies the satisfaction of knowing he was in pain, but in fact his conditions in the embassy were already taking a serious toll on his health. And it only got [worse](#) in years to come.

In May 2015, Assange managed to get a dentist to come and examine a broken tooth. The dentist [said](#) he required either root canal treatment or an extraction, neither of which could be safely performed inside the embassy.

In August 2015, a doctor visited the embassy after Assange complained that his right shoulder was causing sharp pain. The doctor [recommended](#) an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan, which also could not be done in the embassy.

In October 2015, Britain [turned down](#) Ecuador's request for Assange to temporarily leave the embassy to get an MRI scan. Ecuador's Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino explained that they had only requested a "special safe passage permission that would last just a few hours".

"The reply we have had from Britain is that he can leave whenever he likes for any medical care he might need but the European arrest warrant for Assange is still valid. In other words, he can leave - and we will put him in jail."

On 2 December 2015 the same doctor returned to the embassy and said Assange's shoulder pain had now "worsened considerably". He said Assange was experiencing "constant pain at rest, which is exacerbated by all movements of the shoulder joint."

In 2016 WikiLeaks [released](#) the medical reports from the dentist and doctor above, along with a twenty-seven page [psycho-social and medical assessment](#) from 10 November 2015, which was "by far the most detailed insight into the circumstances of his life inside the Embassy."

The report stated that Mr Assange was understandably reticent to disclose either physical or personal matters related to his mental health in case they were used against him, so it was necessary to also rely on evidence from his close contacts. It said Assange's day to day existence in the embassy was "one of isolation, profound sleep disturbance and sensory deprivation; as well as hypervigilance due to the police operation." In many ways his conditions were worse than prison.

Mr Assange needs - at the bare minimum - access to fresh air, sunlight and exercise space on a daily basis. Mr Assange has been living under very restrictive conditions for over forty months. The unusual circumstances place Mr. Assange in a precarious situation. The effects of the situation on Mr. Assange's health and well-being are serious and the risks will most certainly escalate with the potential to becoming life threatening if current conditions persist.

*

Sweden Backs Down

On 13 March 2015, after mounting public criticism (see previous chapter), Swedish Prosecutor Marianne Ny changed her mind about interrogating Julian Assange in London, and finally [asked](#) to come and question him in the embassy. Assange's lawyers began lengthy discussions with Swedish

prosecutors, Ecuadorian officials, and the British government in order to agree precisely when, where, and how the questioning would occur. By late August 2015 they still had not come to an agreement, so the five year statute of limitations on Anna Ardin's allegations [expired](#).

UK Foreign Minister Hugo Swire [blamed](#) Ecuador and Assange for preventing the proper course of justice, even though it was British Crown Prosecutors who had [told](#) Ny not to come and question Assange five years earlier.

Ny did not ultimately enter the embassy to discuss Sofia Wilen's remaining allegations of "lesser degree rape", which had a ten year statute of limitations, until 14 November 2016.

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Sony Leaks

On 16 April 2015, WikiLeaks [released](#) The Sony Archives: 30,287 documents from Sony Pictures Entertainment (SPE) and 173,132 emails "to and from more than 2,200 SPE email addresses". The data was originally leaked in November 2014 by hackers, widely believed to be a North Korean front or sympathizers, in protest against a Sony movie, *The Interview*, which [mocked](#) the North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un.

"It depicted, in graphic detail, Kim's head being blown apart by a guided missile fired by fed-up North Korean 'elites' who had come over to the U.S. side after their conversations with the fake American journalists, played by Rogen and his sidekick James Franco."

The data was originally dumped on free torrents sites but the MS Exchange server formatting made the contents difficult to read, and the torrents were removed after threats from the Obama White House. WikiLeaks posted the documents and emails in an easy-to-search database.

"This archive shows the inner workings of an influential multinational corporation," Julian Assange said. "It is newsworthy and at the centre of a geo-political conflict. It belongs in the public domain. WikiLeaks will ensure it stays there."

The leaked data revealed that SPE, a US subsidiary of the Japanese multinational corporation Sony, had direct ties to the White House and the US military-industrial complex, providing opportunities for Sony to influence laws and policies in exchange for [propaganda](#) and [silence](#). There were plenty of cozy deals between SPE and the US Democratic Party, as well as SPE and the warmongering RAND Corporation (SPE CEO Michael Lynton was on RAND's board of trustees).

Leaked emails [revealed](#) the Sony CEO having an "intimate dinner" with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, plus discussion of how Sony cameras were being [used](#) on the guidance systems of Israeli missiles. Sony executives also discussed WikiLeaks' publication of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) IP Chapter and the New Zealand extradition case against Megaupload founder Kim DotCom, as part of SPE's "war on piracy".

A Sony Pictures executive was [fired](#) in the wake of the leaks, after an argument about an upcoming Steve Jobs film was published, and the Hollywood's "[Project Goliath](#)" campaign against Google was exposed in detail. There was also lots of juicy celebrity gossip: actresses receiving lower fees than their male co-stars; producers and executives insulting celebrities (Leonardo DiCaprio was labeled "despicable" after he turned down a role); and a legal agreement ensuring Spiderman's movie character could never be black or gay.

An additional 276,394 new Sony documents were [released](#) in June 2015. WikiLeaks [claimed](#) the latest files included "legal entanglements including an investigation for bribery".

The fallout from the Sony leaks continued for years to come, providing valuable new [insight](#) into President Donald Trump's on-off relationship with the North Korean leader, and [insider opinions](#) on producer Harvey Weinstein, whose multiple rape convictions sparked the [#MeToo](#) movement.

*

Trident Nukes

On the evening of 17 May 2015, WikiLeaks [published](#) a 17 page report from a UK Navy whistleblower, William McNeilly, which documented his extensive concerns about the safety of Britain's Trident nuclear submarines. A modified version of the report had been posted earlier in the day by the Scottish Sunday Herald, but WikiLeaks [detailed](#) a comprehensive list of differences between the original report and the media version.

"Please make sure this information is released. I don't want to be in prison without anyone knowing the truth... We are so close to a nuclear disaster it is shocking, and yet everybody is accepting the risk to the public."

The original report had been [posted online](#) nearly two weeks earlier but it had received little attention. McNeilly handed himself over to Scottish police the next day and was remanded in custody at his military base. Curiously, the Ministry of Defence decided not to prosecute him under the Official Secrets Act, which would have resulted in an embarrassing public trial. Instead, they [dismissed](#) the allegations as "anecdotal" rather than secret. McNeilly was [dishonourably discharged](#) a month later.

"When I joined the Royal Navy, I had no idea that I was going to work with nuclear weapons. When I found out, I was happy. I used to think they were an essential tool in maintaining peace, by deterring war. It wasn't until I saw the major safety and security issues that I realised the system is more of a threat than a deterrent."

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The Saudi Cables

On 19 June 2015 - exactly three years since Julian Assange entered the Ecuadorian Embassy -

WikiLeaks began releasing [The Saudi Cables](#): over 500,000 cables and other documents from the Saudi Foreign Ministry and various Saudi embassies around the world, including "Top Secret" reports from the Ministry of Interior and General Intelligence Services. Julian Assange [said](#) the Saudi Cables "lift the lid on a increasingly erratic and secretive dictatorship that has not only celebrated its 100th beheading this year, but which has also become a menace to its neighbours and itself."

The Saudi Cables provide key insights into the Kingdom's operations and how it has managed its alliances and consolidated its position as a regional Middle East superpower, including through bribing and co-opting key individuals and institutions. The cables also illustrate the highly centralised bureaucratic structure of the Kingdom, where even the most minute issues are addressed by the most senior officials.

WikiLeaks had managed to convert hundreds of thousands of pages of scanned images of Arabic text into a searchable database, which they declared "a major journalistic research effort". Files were searchable in Arabic and English, with around 70,000 documents included in the initial release. By now, WikiLeaks had learned that releasing huge troves of data in smaller batches was the best way to ensure ongoing media interest. They hinted that the source of their files might be a group called the Yemeni Cyber Army, who were reported to have hacked the Saudi Foreign Ministry in May 2015.

One cable [revealed](#) that Saudi officials were linked to the Haqqani network, a jihadist Afghan group. Another cable revealed a [memo](#) from Hillary Clinton admitting that "donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide." Another cable [showed](#) that the Saudis were spending millions of dollars to promote their fundamentalist Wahhabi brand of Sunni Islam religion in India.

Another deeply embarrassing cable showed that in November 2013, British and Saudi diplomats had agreed to support each other's election to the UN Human Rights Council, despite the Saudi government's horrendous record on human rights. Both countries were subsequently elected to the 47-member council. UK PM David Cameron [responded](#) by claiming the Saudis had helped stop a terrorist attack in Britain and he was opposed to the death penalty, but his attempts to brush off this "squalid" deal were described as "[excruciating](#)".

Other Saudi cables showed [concerns](#) that Syria's President Assad would create an Alawite state and drive Sunnis from Homs & Rastan, plus [threats](#) to destroy the Syrian state.

In November 2015, after publishing over 122,000 Saudi documents, WikiLeaks [noted](#) that the Kingdom had just executed their 100th prisoner that year, and yet there was no coverage of this in Arab media. They released an [article](#) explaining how the Saudis were "buying silence" to control regional media.

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Espionnage Élysée

On 23 June 2015 - just five days after they began rolling out the Saudi Cables - WikiLeaks began [publishing](#) a collection of files from the US National Security Agency (NSA) that exposed ten years of US espionage on successive French governments. The release was titled "Espionnage Élysée" after the official residence of the French President, the Élysée Palace.

The files showed that France, a US ally, was being routinely targeted by US intelligence agencies, just like the German government (as revealed by Edward Snowden's leaks). Additional files - even more explosive - were published a week later. While most material released by WikiLeaks was only rated "Classified" or "Secret", this material included "TOP SECRET" files.

To help promote the release, WikiLeaks provided a packaged list of [highlights](#) for lazy journalists, including links, dates, classification details, and brief descriptions:

- EU and French diplomats who strongly criticize U.S. trade policies and call TPP treaty a confrontation against China.
- High-ranking French official complaining about President Sarkozy's inflammatory and inaccurate statements on WTO that no-one in government backs
- French ministerial agenda for planned G7 and G20 meeting intercepted
- French economy in dire straits according to intercepted communications between French Finance Minister and French Senator
- Spying on French Ambassador who contemplated exposing U.S. misuse of UN Oil-for-food program in Iraq
- NSA Eavesdrops as Hollande Tries End Run Around Merkel on Greek Eurozone Exit
- US Intercepts of France Complaining About US Intercepts of France
- US Spying On Chirac Discussing UN Appointments
- US Spying on Sarkozy Talking Tough on Israel-Palestine
- US Eavesdrops as Sarkozy Plots French Leadership on Financial Crisis

"The United States has been conducting economic espionage against France for more than a decade," said Julian Assange. "Not only has it spied on the French Finance Minister, it has ordered the interception of every French company contract or negotiation valued at more than \$200 million. That covers not only all of France's major companies, from BNP Paribas, AXA and Credit Agricole to Peugeot and Renault, Total and Orange, but it also affects the major French farming associations. \$200 million is roughly 3,000 French jobs. Hundreds of such contracts are signed every year. The United States not only uses the results of this spying itself, but swaps these intercepts with the United Kingdom. Do French citizens deserve to know that their country is being taken to the cleaners by the spies of supposedly allied countries? Mais oui!"

On 3 July 2015 Julian Assange published an [article](#) in France's "Le Monde" newspaper, asking President François Holland to grant him asylum:

"For the simple fact of having published information of public interest that anonymous sources transmitted to WikiLeaks, I am personally prosecuted for espionage, conspiracy to spy, theft, or compromise of property of the United States government, violation of the law on computer fraud, and general conspiracy, risking life imprisonment or worse. The United States has since expanded its investigation to include my alleged assistance to Mr Snowden in preserving his life and obtaining asylum; and it is, according to several journalistic sources, already doing the same with regard to the publication of [Espionnage Élysée] concerning the tapping which affected you, Mr President..."

"My life is in danger today, Mr President, and my integrity, both physical and psychological, is, with each passing day, a little more threatened."

Although the plea for asylum was supported by prominent French voices, including soccer legend Eric Cantona and economist Thomas Piketty, President Hollande quickly [turned it down](#):

"France cannot act on his request. The situation of Mr Assange does not present an immediate danger. He is also the subject of a European arrest warrant..."

Hollande is remembered as the most [unpopular](#) president of the French Fifth Republic, with an approval rating of just 4% before he quit politics in 2017.

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Premature Obituaries

The French President may not have been moved into action by the latest WikiLeaks release, but WIRED magazine was certainly [impressed](#).

For the past five years, uninformed media insiders had repeatedly dismissed WikiLeaks as a one-off success story, peaking with the Manning leaks, that was already finished. Kristinn Hrafnsson gave the WIRED team a reality check:

"You're assuming we went away," he said. "It has been a natural phenomenon since 2010 to proclaim that WikiLeaks is dead. The news of our death has been greatly exaggerated."

Hrafnsson explained that WikiLeaks had "scaled down" after three years "without significant funds" but had now significantly strengthened their infrastructure:

"Our ability to process huge databases has grown, we've expanded our network of media alliances. We are in a much stronger position in many ways than we were five years ago. Of course we depend on the materials that whistleblowers and sources want to contribute to our website for publication. But we're ready to take off."

*

More NSA Leaks

During July 2015, WikiLeaks published a steady stream of additional NSA leaks, prompting some observers to wonder if these might be files from the Snowden archive that the Guardian and Washington Post had declined to publish. Or had Snowden's courage inspired other NSA insiders to take action?

On 4 July 2015 WikiLeaks [published](#) documents which [showed](#) that the NSA was spying on 29 government phone numbers in Brazil. The targets included President Dilma Rousseff, her assistants and advisors, plus the head of Brazil's Central Bank, the Foreign Minister, and Brazilian ambassadors to Germany, France, the EU, the US and Geneva. WikiLeaks accused the USA of waging "an economic espionage campaign"

The release was particularly embarrassing because Rousseff had just visited US President Obama, not realising that even the phone in her Presidential jet was bugged. Julian Assange argued that President Rousseff could not assure Brazilian companies that their US counterparts would not have an unfair advantage unless she could "really guarantee the spying has stopped".

Rousseff was impeached for corruption and removed from office the following year.

*

On 20 July WikiLeaks published evidence of further NSA spying on Germany's government, including Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (who became President of Germany in 2017) and his senior staff. The WikiLeaks [release](#) included a list of 56 bugged German government phone numbers, about half of them still in use by German Chancellor Angela Merkel's close contacts. German magazine Der Spiegel announced that it had also been bugged for years and filed a complaint.

One intercept followed a meeting between the German Foreign Minister and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on 29 November 2005, when clandestine CIA "rendition flights" were in the media spotlight. It showed that Steinmeier deliberately avoided asking hard questions, and Rice was delighted not to hear them. Julian Assange said the evidence proved that the NSA had been helping the CIA kidnap and torture people "with the tacit complicity of European governments".

"In 2005 German Foreign Minister Steinmeier was thrilled that his tactic of asking Condoleezza Rice no hard questions about CIA renditions had worked. The US said nothing that would require him to do anything. And

how do we know about it? Because the National Security Agency was gloating to the US senior executive about intercepting this cowardly display. Nobody comes out of this looking good."

Whereas Snowden had revealed NSA spying on Merkel, WikiLeaks [showed](#) that her predecessors Gerhard Schröder and Helmut Kohl were also targeted by decades of NSA spying. Germany's Attorney General, who had already dropped an investigation into the tapping of Merkel's phone, announced that these new reports would also be investigated. Merkel herself avoided public commentary but her political opponents demanded action. The Chairman of the German Greens accused the government of running a cover up instead of a serious investigation.

"Mrs. Merkel must now find clear words for Obama," said the chairman of Germany's Social Democrats Party (SDP). "It can't go on like this."

An alliance including the Greens and SDP defeated Merkel's Christian Conservative alliance in 2021.

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On 31 July WikiLeaks [released](#) a list of 35 NSA targets in Japan, including the Japanese cabinet and major Japanese companies, along with "intercepts relating to US-Japan relations, trade negotiations and sensitive climate change strategy".

The list indicates that NSA spying on Japanese conglomerates, government officials, ministries and senior advisers extends back at least as far as the first administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, which lasted from September 2006 until September 2007. The telephone interception target list includes the switchboard for the Japanese Cabinet Office; the executive secretary to the Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga; a line described as "Government VIP Line"; numerous officials within the Japanese Central Bank, including Governor Haruhiko Kuroda; the home phone number of at least one Central Bank official; numerous numbers within the Japanese Finance Ministry; the Japanese Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry Yoichi Miyazawa; the Natural Gas Division of Mitsubishi; and the Petroleum Division of Mitsui.

Today's publication also contains NSA reports from intercepts of senior Japanese government officials. Four of the reports are classified TOP SECRET. One of the reports is marked "REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL", meaning it has been formally authorised to be released to the United States' "Five Eyes" intelligence partners: Australia, Canada, Great Britain and New Zealand.

Sarah Harrison, described as "WikiLeaks Investigations Editor", asked whether Japan's current

industry and climate change proposals might be more effective if their communications had been better protected. Julian Assange pointed out that the documents revealed that the USA was spying on Japanese leaders even while they discussed what they should and should not reveal to their US counterparts.

"The lesson for Japan is this: do not expect a global surveillance superpower to act with honour or respect. There is only one rule: there are no rules."

US officials initially [stated](#) that they did not think the new revelations would cause a problem, but work was [suspended](#) at the huge US naval base in Okinawa after locals protested. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe [spoke](#) to US Vice President Joe Biden, demanding an investigation. President Obama then called Abe to [apologize](#) for "causing trouble".

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CIA Director Gets Hacked

On 22 October 2015 WikiLeaks [began releasing](#) emails and other documents from CIA Director John Brennan (above). The files included a 47-page security clearance application from 2008, when Brennan rejoined the CIA after 25 years in private business, plus a letter about the use of "harsh interrogation techniques" on terrorism suspects, and personal information of more than a dozen top US intelligence officials. The leaked documents also [showed](#) that the CIA had considered Brennan's private company "The Analysis Corp" to be deeply incompetent and misleading.

The New York Post [reported](#) that the emails and attachments had been hacked by a teenager who was working with a group called Crackas With Attitude (CWA). He said he was motivated by opposition to US foreign policy and he had been repeatedly prank-calling the CIA Director for months, once reciting Brennan's Social Security number to him.

"He waited a tiny bit and hung up," the hacker said.

The hacker later [explained](#) to WIRED how he and two others got access to Brennan's AOL email account after tricking his phone company into handing over personal details. Like Hillary Clinton, Brennan had been using his unsecured personal email account for work-related issues.

When he realised that he had been hacked, Brennan repeatedly tried to re-set his password, only for the hackers to hijack the account again. And again. And again. Finally they phoned him again over VoIP:

"Hey... its CWA."

"What do you want?"

"2 trillion dollars hahhaa, just joking."

"How much do you really want?"

"We just want Palestine to be free and for you to stop killing innocent people."

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The Met Pulls Out

Since entering the Ecuadorian embassy in London, Julian Assange had repeatedly stated that he wanted to walk out a free man, vindicated by the law, and he was not seeking to escape into a life on the run. Supporters had speculated about wild rescue operations via helicopters, jet-packs, or treks through London sewer tunnels, but Assange preferred to keep working from inside the embassy for as long as necessary.

On 12 October 2015 the London Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) [announced](#) the end of their three-year long, 24-hour guard outside the embassy. The total cost of the operation, which began in June 2012, was estimated to be over £12 million. A police statement said it was "no longer proportionate to commit officers to a permanent presence".

"The MPS will not discuss what form its continuing operation will take or the resourcing implications surrounding it. Whilst no tactics guarantee success in the event of Julian Assange leaving the embassy, the MPS will deploy a number of overt and covert tactics to arrest him."

Kristinn Hrafnsson said the reduced police presence "does not fundamentally change the situation" and suggested that it could be just a political tactic to transfer the public costs of a uniformed police presence to a more secretive covert operation. He noted that the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD), which had been investigating the Assange case in conjunction with the UK and Swedish governments for many months, was expected to reveal their findings soon. He expected them to find in favour of the WikiLeaks founder.

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Chapter Nineteen: Early 2016

Hillary Clinton's Emails

2016 was supposed to be a big year for Hillary Clinton. The US Secretary of State was widely expected to be elected President on the 8th of November. But things started [badly](#)...

Like CIA Director John Brennan (see previous chapter) Hillary Clinton had been caught out using private email accounts and even private email servers rather than secure US government email technology. In response to numerous Freedom of Information [requests](#), the State Department began [releasing](#) Clinton's work-related mails, in batches of thousands, with over 1,300 of them classified — some at a level higher than Top Secret. Clinton's personal email server was seized by the FBI, who began investigating her for potential mishandling of classified information.

While Hillary Clinton's failure to follow security protocols sparked [outrage](#) - at 68 years old, she reportedly clung to her old Blackberry device because she lacked the technical skill to adopt new habits - the contents of many emails were also [scandalous](#) in themselves.

Among the revelations: emails showing that Clinton had been personally [tracking](#) the Assange extradition hearings; had [discussed](#) how to spin WikiLeaks revelations; and had even talked to [China](#) about WikiLeaks.

On 16 March 2016 WikiLeaks [published](#) a searchable archive containing all 50,547 pages of the Clinton emails and attached documents - dated from 30 June 2010 to 12 August 2014 - which had so far been released by the State Department. There would be more to come later in the year.

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UNWGAD Decision

On 5 February 2016, after many months of investigation, with input from government officials from Sweden, Ecuador and Britain, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) finally [declared](#) that Julian Assange had been arbitrarily detained since his arrest on 7 December 2010. They ruled that his detention "should be brought to an end and that Mr. Assange should be afforded the right to compensation".

The Working Group was comprised of legal experts from several countries. Its decisions were [described](#) as "legally-binding to the extent that they are based on binding international human rights law, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."

"The binding nature of its opinions derives from the collaboration by States in the procedure, the adversarial nature of its findings and also by the authority given to the WGAD by the UN Human Rights Council. The Opinions of the WGAD are also considered as authoritative by prominent international and regional judicial institutions, including the European Court of Human Rights."

A delighted Julian Assange made a statement to supporters from the Ecuadorian embassy's balcony, waving a copy of the UN report, and [declared](#) it a "sweet" victory that "cannot be denied".

"It is a victory of historical importance for me, my family, my children, and for the independence of the UN system."

The UK government responded immediately, claiming the UN group's ruling was not binding:

"This changes nothing. We completely reject any claim that Julian Assange is a victim of arbitrary detention. The UK has already made clear to the UN that we will formally contest the working group's opinion."

UK Prime Minister David Cameron [called](#) the UN decision "ridiculous" while the Foreign Secretary

called it "flawed in law". The Home Office insisted that Assange's human rights had "been protected throughout the process and will continue to be protected if and when he is extradited to Sweden." This claim was somewhat damaged by the fact that Cameron's Conservative Party had won another term at the 2015 general election while [pledging to scrap](#) the UK Human Rights Act. They said this would remove the European Court of Human Rights' "leverage" over Britain's Supreme Court. British citizens would still be entitled to appeal to the Strasbourg-based court - but Assange was not a British citizen.

Sweden also ignored the UN ruling and [turned down](#) a request from Assange's lawyers to drop the case. Australia's Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, said she had read the report and was "seeking legal advice". The advice quickly [arrived](#) from within her own department: Australia should "not seek to 'resolve' Mr Assange's case" because "we have full confidence in the UK and Swedish judicial system.'

The Guardian newspaper ran not just [one](#) but [two](#) stories on the same day condemning the UN decision. The Telegraph [claimed](#) that the Working Group had "embarrassed the United Nations". Four days later, a UK poll [found](#) that two in three Britons did not believe Assange was being arbitrarily detained. The British public were increasingly negative towards Assange, with his net favourability falling from minus 11 in 2013 to minus 26 in 2016. Kristinn Hrafnsson observed that UK public opinion was clearly being shaped by media attacks on Assange and UN officials.

"The opinion is not surprising when the UK government calls the UN's finding "ridiculous" and the press almost unanimously attacks it. The Guardian rejected it editorially on Friday morning, even before the UN arguments in the case where announced. What is surprising is that the determination to deprive Mr Assange of justice runs so deep, that parties are willing to undermine and attempt to destroy, the credibility of UN mechanisms, instrumental in the international battle for human rights."

When Britain formally [applied](#) for a review of the UN group's ruling in March, Assange's lawyer Melinda Taylor noted the inconsistency of their responses:

"The fact that they have submitted this request for reconsideration undermines their previous assertion that they weren't in any way bound to comply with its opinion."

Taylor [said](#) that Britain and Sweden risked becoming "rogue nations" by defying a UN human rights ruling.

"You can't just support the United Nations when it says what you want it to say. Laws have to be universal and they have to be applied universally. If the UK and Sweden are serious about the UN being impartial and effective, they can't allow these double standards to be propagated."

Professor Mads Andenas, a former chair of the UN working group, [warned](#) that Britain was setting

a dangerous precedent by defying the ruling, and UK politicians were "weakening the authority of the UN body for short-term opportunistic gain".

"I fear that these politicians have weakened the international community's possibility to protect some of the most vulnerable victims of human rights violations. Their words have circulated among the states responsible for the worst human rights violations. The words of these UK politicians will cost life and human suffering.

An open letter condemning Sweden and the UK for "setting a dangerous precedent" and undermining the U.N. human rights system was [published](#) by a group of five hundred high profile Assange supporters. Signatories included journalists John Pilger and Glenn Greenwald, dissident Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, Indian writer Arundhati Roy, human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell, former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, Irish peace activist Mairead Maguire, film director Ken Loach, musician Brian Eno, author Naomi Klein, Professor Noam Chomsky, several Nobel Prize winners and numerous human rights organisations.

Following the UK's requested review, with no new evidence provided, the UN working group maintained their decision that Assange was being arbitrarily detained, and that he should be immediately released and compensated. Britain continued to ignore the ruling.

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Love Finds A Way

Inside the Ecuadorian embassy, meanwhile, the mood was upbeat. As one of Assange's lawyers later [stated](#): "it just seemed like a matter of time before Julian was free".

That lawyer was Stella Moris (born Sara Gonzalez Devant, pictured above) and by now she was in a serious long-term - but extremely secret - relationship with Julian Assange. Wary of being spied on, the couple used furniture and blankets to build tents for privacy inside the embassy.

"We actually started a family before things got frightening – we decided to when Julian had just won his case at the UN that said he was arbitrarily detained ... There were no US charges at the time.

"We decided to start a family, and then things just got really, really frightening, to the extent that I feared for Julian's life, I feared for my own safety, and that hasn't changed."

The pair got engaged in 2017. They attempted to get married inside the Ecuadorian embassy but "the relationship with the Ecuadorian government deteriorated and it wasn't really viable at the time".

Two children were conceived while Assange was still trapped inside the embassy - Gabriel was born in 2017 and Max in 2019. The couple finally got married inside Belmarsh prison on 23 March

2022.

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Asylum Becomes Risk

Following the Oscar-winning success of her 2013 Snowden movie "Citizenfour", Laura Poitras had returned to her original project; a fly-on-the-wall documentary about the struggles of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. Poitras had been given extraordinary access to the WikiLeaks team since 2011, and had filmed many key moments including Assange's phone call to Hillary Clinton and his motorbike ride to the Ecuadorian embassy. Her new project was originally titled "Asylum" and the [plan](#) was to screen it as thirteen short episodes.

But then something happened; Poitras became romantically involved with WikiLeaks insider Jacob Appelbaum while living in Germany, and they had an unpleasant split-up. As she was editing the final version of her project back home in New York, Poitras became increasingly involved in the narrative, talking about her own confused feelings rather than maintaining an objective focus on her subjects' unfolding drama.

The WikiLeaks team, who had been excited by early previews, were surprised and disappointed when the final cut prioritised Poitras' own emotional journey above the shocking attacks on Assange and WikiLeaks' historic efforts to promote transparency. Key scenes suggested Assange had a bad attitude towards women, which only played into his critics' hands.

The movie "RISK", first released in May 2016, was a flop. According to [RottenTomatoes](#), the film made only \$197,000 at the box office, a long way from the \$3 million earned by Citizenfour, with an audience rating of only 52%. Even the Guardian [criticized](#) the movie's "lack of objectivity".

In fact the final film, streamed by Showtime in 2017, was so different from the first cut that it prompted a team of four concerned WikiLeaks lawyers (all women) to write a [Newsweek article](#) claiming that it "places our clients in legal jeopardy". They said Poitras had "reneged on written agreements with WikiLeaks that explicitly forbid her from editing the footage in the United States" where US authorities could seize the material.

"Poitras has also violated her unambiguous promise to the subjects of the film that they would have an opportunity to review the film in advance and request changes, and that they could decline to appear if they or their lawyers felt that the movie put them at risk..."

"Prior to its initial U.S. release, seven of the participants submitted non-consent forms to the producers advising Poitras and her team that they did not want to appear in the film. Regardless, Poitras went ahead and released it."

The lawyers said that Poitras had "marginalized and demeaned a number of women who work for WikiLeaks" and instead focussed on "women taking instructions and throwing off adoring looks." Sarah Harrison, who played a critical role in Citizenfour, was now "depicted as little more than a

minion."

*

Meanwhile, following Poitras' departure from Berlin, Jacob Applebaum found himself [embroiled](#) in a growing sex scandal. The longtime activist and Tor developer was accused of numerous historical sexual demeanours by a variety of women, and forced to [defend](#) himself:

"These unsubstantiated and unfounded attacks have become so aggressive that I feel it's necessary to set the record straight ... I want to be clear: the accusations of criminal sexual misconduct against me are entirely false."

Applebaum, who was openly queer and admitted to enjoying kinky sex, was never charged with any crime, and at least one woman who was named as a rape victim denied the claim. Nevertheless, numerous organisations rushed to disassociate themselves from him, prompting a group of female associates to write a [letter of support](#). In June 2016 the apartment building where Applebaum lived was defaced with graffiti. Having already been harassed repeatedly by US authorities, and named in legal threats against WikiLeaks, Applebaum felt forced to terminate his public activism.

*

Death of Michael Ratner

On 11 May 2016 Michael Ratner, Julian Assange's chief attorney in the USA, died at the age of 72. Assange [praised](#) him as "a personal friend and adviser" who had taken on many intimidating cases for WikiLeaks, but was also a role model to many others around the world. A [Guardian obituary](#) noted that Ratner had "galvanised 500 US lawyers of various political persuasions to challenge the legality" of Guantanamo Bay detentions.

During his career, Ratner sued three US presidents: Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and George W Bush, and passionately argued for the impeachment of the latter for warrantless surveillance, torture, misleading Congress about the Iraq war, and violating the constitution's separation of powers.

The Center for Constitutional Rights, a not-for-profit legal advocacy organization where Ratner worked for 45 years, [said](#) Ratner's passion was "not just for the law but for the struggle for justice and peace."

Assange observed that Ratner was not bound by the US Exceptionalism that limited so many other US lawyers:

"He was genuinely concerned about people in Guatemala, about me, as an Australian, about people who face similar problems in Palestine, about people who have been extradited from the United Kingdom. And he was able to work with these other groups and other lawyers across jurisdictions, because they perceived that his genuine human concern for them was not

simply about grabbing some prize that he could take back to the United States and exploit within his own, if you like, New York constituency."

*

Ding-Dong!

On 12 June 2016, in a British TV interview, Julian Assange [revealed](#) that WikiLeaks was preparing to publish even more Hillary Clinton emails.

"We have upcoming leaks in relation to Hillary Clinton," said Assange. "We have emails pending publication, that is correct."

Two days later, on 14 June, the Washington Post [reported](#) that Russian hackers had stolen DNC research on Donald Trump, as well as DNC chats and emails. The Post quoted Shawn Henry, former executive assistant director of the FBI's Criminal, Cyber, Response and Services Branch, who was now president of CrowdStrike, a cyber security firm that had been chosen by the DNC to examine the breach.

Some of the hackers had access to the DNC network for about a year, but all were expelled over the past weekend in a major computer clean-up campaign, the committee officials and experts said.

The Post reported that DNC leaders were first "tipped to the hack in late April".

"When we discovered the intrusion, we treated this like the serious incident it is and reached out to CrowdStrike immediately," said Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), the DNC chairwoman.

Crowdstrike's co-founder and chief technology officer, Russian-born Dmitri Alperovitch, claimed there were two groups of hackers, "both working for the Russian government"; one team they dubbed "Cozy Bear" was monitoring DNC emails and chat, while the other they called "Fancy Bear" was targeting the DNC's opposition research. Alperovitch claimed that these teams had been targeting US government sites for years.

The next day, 15 June, a hacker named Guccifer 2.0 denied the Russian government connection and [claimed sole responsibility](#) for the hack. To prove himself, he posted a DNC report on Donald Trump and other DNC documents in a blog post. He then stated:

"The main part of the papers, thousands of files and mails, I gave to Wikileaks. They will publish them soon."

On 20 June, Guccifer 2.0 [opened](#) a Twitter account. He continued to post DNC files online, and continued claiming to be in communication with WikiLeaks.

The original [Guccifer](#) was a Romanian hacker named Marcel Lazar Lehel who had hacked the emails of President George W. Bush in 2013 and also [claimed](#) to have hacked Hillary Clinton's private email server: "It was easy," he said. "Easy for me, easy for everybody". The new Guccifer 2.0 also claimed to be Romanian but [appeared](#) to be relying on Google Translate.

It is important to note that the appearance of Guccifer 2.0 and all these claims about Russian hacking came at least two days AFTER Julian Assange revealed that WikiLeaks had more Clinton emails to publish. Furthermore, the key evidence of Russian hacking was provided by Crowdstrike, who were closely linked to the FBI. Crowdstrike was [largely funded](#) by Google Capital, and their executive team [included](#) Steve Chabinsky, a former deputy assistant director of the FBI's Cyber Division. Crowdstrike's claims of Russian hacking were initially met with some informed skepticism.

"I'm confused by how public they've been," [said](#) Jason Healey, a cybersecurity researcher who used to work in the White House. "Normally this happens and an organization clams up about it."

In a December 2017 appearance before the House Intelligence Committee, CrowdStrike President Shawn Henry [admitted under oath](#) that CrowdStrike had no concrete evidence that Russian hackers stole emails from the Democratic National Committee's server.

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Five Years In The Embassy

On 19 June 2016, Assange began his 5th year inside the Ecuadorian embassy, which he [compared](#) to life on a space station. His 4m x 4.6m room was divided into an offic and a living area, with a shower, micowave, treadmill and sunlamp. By now his family had also brought him some permanent company - a kitten, which soon got its own Twitter account: [@EmbassyCat](#).

Assange's latest anniversary in the embassy triggered another wave of global protest [rallies](#), featuring celebrities including Patti Smith, Brian Eno, PJ Harvey, Noam Chomsky, Yanis Varoufakis, Ai Weiwei, Vivienne Westwood, and Ken Loach.

US film-maker Michael Moore, who said he was shocked by what he had learned when he recently visited Assange, promised to keep speaking up - but then went silent. Similarly pop star Lady Gaga, whose long, wierd [interview](#) with Assange was one of the most painful segments in the "RISK" movie, never spoke about him again. But other celebrities, such as British rapper M.I.A, TV star Pamela Anderson, and Pink Floyd founder Roger Waters, refused to be silenced.

Supporters gathered again outside the embassy to celebrate the anniversary of Ecuador granting asylum, and again on Julian's 45th birthday in early July.

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Turkish AKP Leaks

There was a violent coup d'état attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016, with over 300 people killed as an

armed forces faction unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Following the coup attempt, Erdoğan [cracked down](#) on his perceived political enemies, with tens of thousands arrested or fired from their jobs, including judges, teachers and journalists.

Four days after the failed coup, on 19 July 2016, WikiLeaks [released](#) 294,548 emails from Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development party (AKP). A second batch of 113,362 AKP emails was released on 5 August 2016.

The material was obtained a week before the attempted coup. However, WikiLeaks has moved forward its publication schedule in response to the government's post-coup purges. We have verified the material and the source, who is not connected, in any way, to the elements behind the attempted coup, or to a rival political party or state.

The WikiLeaks website came under a sustained 24 hour attack before the Turkish government blocked access to the site. The leak itself was embarrassing for Erdoğan, but the contents of the emails - which dated from 2010 to July 6, 2016 - were not highly damaging. As WikiLeaks noted, the emails were associated with a domain that was "mostly used for dealing with the world, as opposed to the most sensitive internal matters".

There was a twist in the tail of this release. A hacker named Phineas Fisher [claimed](#) to have obtained the emails while working with others inside Turkey, one of whom sent a batch of emails to WikiLeaks. Fisher said the hackers still had access to the Turkish government network until it was shut down following the WikiLeaks release. Another UK-based hacker then [reportedly](#) dumped another batch of data, which included databases of personal information, and a security expert named Michael Best (later known as Emma Best) tweeted a link to this data online. WikiLeaks retweeted Best's link, then deleted it as soon as they realised that it exposed personal data. Best then [apologised](#) for the mistake.

Although nobody was harmed as a result, this incident was then used as another excuse for mainstream media to [blame](#) WikiLeaks for putting Turkish lives in danger. Australian journalist Caitlin Johnstone later compiled a [list](#) of 31 such widely repeated attacks, debunking every one of them.

*

Murder of Seth Rich

At around 4:20 am on 20 July 2016, in the Bloomingdale neighborhood of Washington DC, a 27-year-old DNC employee named Seth Rich was shot twice in the back while walking home to his nearby apartment from a local bar. He died in hospital around 90 minutes later.

Washington police claimed Rich was most likely the victim of a botched robbery, but nothing was actually stolen from him. His face and body had bruises, indicating a violent scuffle. Although there were CCTV cameras all over the neighbourhood (an amateur sleuth counted 23 cameras between Seth Rich's house and the bar where he had been drinking) police said they could only find a brief video of two assailants' legs.

Initial reports [claimed](#) the FBI was not involved in the case, but they later [admitted](#) to possessing Seth Rich's phone and laptop and even released some [files](#).

In early August 2016 Julian Assange told Dutch TV:

"Whistleblowers go to significant efforts to get us material, often very significant risks. There's a 27-year-old that works for the DNC who was shot in the back, murdered, just two weeks ago, for unknown reasons as he was walking down the street in Washington."

Was he saying that Seth Rich was a WikiLeaks source?

"I am suggesting that our sources take risks and they become concerned to see things occurring like that."

WikiLeaks [offered](#) a \$20,000 reward to help find Seth Rich's killer(s).

In 2019 online entrepreneur Kim Dotcom, a strong WikiLeaks supporter, [told](#) Consortium News how he had helped put Seth Rich (who used the name "panda" online) in contact with WikiLeaks:

"I was approached by a young gentleman over Twitter with the Twitter handle Panda-something and he told me that he's working with the Democrat Party and he was fed up with what was happening in the US and he would be interested to talk with me. And then I took that straight into an encrypted channel where we chatted about what's going on and we had a few back and forth and he told me that he had information that would be quite shocking if it was made public. He believed that there was massive corruption going on within the DNC. He was very concerned about voter fraud... So I said look, this was all very interesting, but I was in the middle of my case and I was involved in this massive fight against the US so I did not want to be the recipient of any of that information. So I put him in touch with someone that I know in the data security space that is very knowledgeable and has worked with WikiLeaks in the past and I simply established the contact between that person and this person. And everything that happened after that is what we know know as the DNC leaks / hack."

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Chapter Twenty: Late 2016

The second half of 2016 saw WikiLeaks's fame and influence escalate to unprecedented levels.

Attacks also mounted as powerful networks of influence sought any means possible to discredit the organisation and destroy Julian Assange.

From late July through till 8th November, the day of the US election, WikiLeaks continued releasing batches of leaked emails from Hillary Clinton and her senior Democrat colleagues, who continued to insist - with no public proof - that their emails had been hacked by Russia and given to WikiLeaks.

These leaked emails appeared to come from two sources. WikiLeaks called the initial release of about 20,000 emails the "DNC Leaks", saying it was "part one of our new Hillary Leaks series". The second set of emails came from the account of John Podesta, the chairman of Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign, and were called the "Podesta Emails".

By now the WikiLeaks team had learned that media organisations rushed to pick up major stories from huge archive releases, but then quickly dismissed the remaining stories as "old news". By releasing these new emails in smaller batches, WikiLeaks ensured that every important story got maximum media coverage, which was part of the organisation's commitment to whistle-blowers.

The relentless drip of new emails created a nightmare scenario for Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. Clinton campaign spokesman Glen Caplin angrily complained:

"By dribbling these out every day WikiLeaks is proving they are nothing but a propaganda arm of the Kremlin with a political agenda doing Putin's dirty work to help elect Donald Trump."

Russian President Vladimir Putin denied involvement and said Russia was being unfairly blamed. Under massive pressure from the Democrats, plus Western media and intelligence agencies, Julian Assange took the unprecedented step of denying that Russia was WikiLeaks' source. Nobody has ever been able to prove him wrong.

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DNC Leaks

On 22 July 2016, WikiLeaks began [releasing](#) 44,053 emails and 17,761 attachments from seven key figures at the top of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), the governing body of the US Democratic Party, whose annual convention was held just three days later. A second batch was [released](#) on 7 November, the day before the US election. The leaked emails were dated from January 2015 to 25 May 2016.

The leaked emails showed how the Democratic Party had improperly colluded to help Hillary Clinton win the Democratic primary over her more popular rival Senator Bernie Sanders. One email from former DNC head Debbie Wasserman Schultz flatly [stated](#) that Bernie Sanders "isn't going to be president." Another dismissed Bernie Sanders' campaign manager as a "damn liar" and "particularly scummy." Wasserman Schultz was forced to resign, along with several other party officials.

The leaked emails also showed how liberal media figures had [colluded](#) with pro-Clinton DNC

officials to ensure that Clinton received inside information and optimal coverage. One journalist mentioned repeatedly in the emails was CNN's Jake Tapper, who responded with a statement saying the emails came from "a hack into the DNC". This became a common response: as long as WikiLeaks refused to betray their source(s), it was easy to accuse them of hacking, or at least benefitting from a hack. The Democrats also refused to confirm or deny the authenticity of the emails, leading some to falsely claim they were not authentic.

When asked if the DNC Leaks indicated that he preferred Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton, Julian Assange replied that it was like "a choice between Cholera and Gonorrhea". For months to come, he was forced to repeat that WikiLeaks could only publish what material they received. If anyone had dirt on Donald Trump, he asked them to submit it. But he also pointed out that Clinton had constantly attacked WikiLeaks and even suggested killing him with a drone.

According to [The New York Times](#), the DNC Leaks revealed "in rarely seen detail the elaborate, ingratiating and often bluntly transactional exchanges necessary to harvest hundreds of millions of dollars from the party's wealthy donor class".

"The emails capture a world where seating charts are arranged with dollar totals in mind, where a White House celebration of gay pride is a thinly disguised occasion for rewarding wealthy donors, and where physical proximity to the president is the most precious of currencies."

The Observer declared the DNC Leaks "the perfect end to a Democratic primary that undermined democracy at every possible opportunity."

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Swedish Questioning

On 20 June 2016 Ecuador revealed that the Swedish authorities had finally made an official request to come and interview Julian Assange in the embassy. They would have traveled to London six years earlier but British Crown Prosecutors secretly told them not to come.

Following extensive negotiations between lawyers and government officials, Sweden's deputy chief prosecutor, Ingrid Isgren, eventually arrived at the embassy on Monday 14 November, with an Ecuadorean state attorney also present, to question Assange about his contact with Sofia Wilén. He was not questioned about Anna Ardin's allegations because the Swedish prosecutors had already let the five year statute of limitations expire on her lesser case.

Assange's lawyer, Per Samuelsson, was reportedly left standing outside the embassy because Swedish prosecutor Marianne Ny had left him off the official list of invitees. Assange went ahead with the questioning anyway.

"We have requested this interview repeatedly since 2010," said Samuelsson. "Julian Assange has always wanted to tell his version to the Swedish police. He wants a chance to clear his name. We hope the investigation will be closed then."

Ecuador's prosecutor, Galo Chiriboga, later said that Ecuadorean officials would send the official transcript of Assange's evidence to Swedish authorities "in mid-December".

Meanwhile, following the the UN working group's findings against Sweden in [February](#), Assange's lawyers had also filed an appeal to a Swedish court, arguing that the country must comply with the UN decisions. But on 16 September the Swedish court [upheld](#) the arrest warrant for Julian Assange. This was the eighth time the European Arrest Warrant had been tested in a Swedish court, and every one of the rulings had gone against Assange.

On 7 December 2016 Julian Assange publicly [released](#) the full statement he had given to Swedish prosecutors, declaring that he was "entirely innocent" and the evidence showed only "consensual sex between adults". Assange said he had been subjected to "six years of unlawful, politicised detention without charge".

"I want people to know the truth about how abusive this process has been... In the past the prosecution has fed partial information to tabloids that politically oppose me. It is better that my statement, which I am happy with, and which makes it obvious to all that I am innocent, sees the light in full."

Elisabeth Massi Fritz, the lawyer for Sofia Wilén and also the [family lawyer](#) of then Swedish Prime Minister Reinfeldt, said the release of the statement was "unfortunate".

"The only thing I can say is that Assange has low credibility, which we will prove when we prosecute. I expect the prosecutor to issue charges. I also expect Assange to stop violating my client in the media. She has suffered more than enough for six years."

Sweden eventually [closed](#) the Assange case, for the third time, without ever pressing any charges or advancing the case beyond the "preliminary investigation" stage, in May 2017.

*

Podesta Emails

On 7 October 2016 WikiLeaks began releasing emails from John Podesta, the chairman of Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign. Assange later [said](#) that Podesta had fallen for a simple phishing scam that revealed his Gmail password, which was [allegedly](#) "password". Podesta's emails revealed similarly sloppy security passwords for other accounts: his iCloud and Twitter accounts were also subsequently compromised. US intelligence officials later [blamed](#) Russian "Fancy Bear" hackers for the phishing scam but Assange said "this is something a 14-year-old kid could have hacked".

One Podesta [email](#) showed CNN's Donna Brazile giving Hillary Clinton (but not Bernie Sanders) advance notice of TV debate questions. Brazile, who took over as DNC head when Wasserman Shultz resigned, initially denied doing this, but in 2017 she [admitted](#) "sending those emails was a mistake I will forever regret".

Donna Brazile also [admitted](#) that Clinton's campaign manager Robby Mook had made a secret deal which specified that "in exchange for raising money and investing in the DNC, Hillary would control the party's finances, strategy, and all the money raised". This included giving Clinton's team control over "staffing, budgeting, data, analytics, and mailings." As she [told](#) Bernie Sanders, he never had a chance.

CNN's Chris Cuomo ridiculously [warned](#) TV viewers not to read the leaked emails for themselves:

"Also interesting is, remember, it's **illegal** to possess these stolen documents. It's different for the media. So everything you learn about this, you're learning from us."

Glenn Thrush, Politico's "Chief Political Correspondent", was another journalist [exposed](#) (in his own words) as a corrupt "hack".

One Podesta email included an 80 page attachment with text from Hillary Clinton's private fund-raising speeches to Wall Street executives. The transcripts showed that her "public position" was often at odds with her "private position". Clinton [told](#) bankers she had "great relations" with Wall Street and "the jury is still out" on whether financial reforms were required after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis.

"What happened, how did it happen, how do we prevent it from happening? You guys help us figure it out... You are the smartest people."

In another speech Clinton talked about doing a global "apology tour" after the 2010 Cablegate leaks, where some foreign leaders were described as "vain, egotistical, power hungry, corrupt. And we knew they were. This was not fiction."

"I had grown men cry," Clinton said. "I mean, literally. 'I am a friend of America, and you say these things about me?'"

Perhaps the biggest surprise in the Podesta emails was an old strategy document which showed that the Clinton Democrats had deliberately chosen Donald Trump as one of three so-called [pied piper](#) candidates that they wanted to win the Republican Party nomination. They detailed how the DNC and the media should promote these preferred candidates.

Trump, meanwhile, was [constantly](#) urging his followers to read the latest WikiLeaks revelations. "I love WikiLeaks!" he [shouted](#) to huge crowds at his rallies.

On 12 October Trump posted a tweet complaining about a perceived lack of media coverage for the latest Podesta emails.

Media attention was still largely focused on the "[Access Hollywood](#)" tape that the Washington Post had [released](#) five days earlier. In a secretly taped conversation from 2005, Donald Trump was seen and heard boasting about his sexual exploits.

"When you're a star they let you do it," Trump says in the recording. "You

can do anything... grab them by the pussy... I did try and fuck her, she was married."

Some observers speculated that this secret tape was one of the reasons why the Clinton campaign had wanted to promote Trump as a "pied piper" candidate. Democrats complained that the latest batch of Podesta emails had been leaked just hours after the Access Hollywood, and blamed WikiLeaks for deliberately trying to protect Trump. But Italian journalist Stefania Maurizi, a longtime WikiLeaks media partner, confirmed that the timing of the WikiLeaks release had been planned days in advance.

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Ecuador Cuts Off Internet

On 17 October 2016 the government of Ecuador [shut down](#) Julian Assange's Internet access. They claimed it had nothing to do with US politics.

In a statement, Ecuador's leftist government said WikiLeaks' decision to publish documents impacting the U.S. election campaign was entirely its own responsibility, and the South American country did not cede to pressure from other nations.

The move came just days after WikiLeaks released Clinton's Wall Street speeches, but the US State Department also [denied](#) any role in restricting Assange's internet access.

President Rafael Correa, who had granted asylum to Assange in 2012, was now facing huge pressure from US-backed opposition and media in the run-up to Ecuador's 2017 election. After nearly ten years in power, despite significantly reducing poverty, raising the minimum wage and increasing the standard of living in Ecuador, his popularity was dropping.

Correa had already stated that he did not agree with everything WikiLeaks did, and usually left statements about Assange to his Vice President and other officials. Nevertheless, corporate media in Ecuador constantly used the Assange case as an excuse to attack Correa, echoing US media lies about collusion with Russia. Western media also [sought](#) to portray Correa as an enemy of press freedom. Assange was a major political distraction and Correa did not want to make him a key domestic election issue.

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Death Of Gavin MacFadyen

On October 22, Gavin MacFadyen, a hugely respected journalist and documentary film-maker, a world leader of press freedom and whistle-blower protection, and a close friend and supporter of Julian Assange, died in London at the age of 76.

MacFadyen was a WikiLeaks director who co-founded the Center for Investigative Journalism and set up the Julian Assange Legal Defense committee along with journalist John Pilger. The FBI

had been keeping a file on MacFadyen, a committed civil rights activist, since at least 1963 and still refused to release their information after his death, citing "an ongoing investigation" and "national security".

Julian Assange requested permission to temporarily leave his asylum inside the Ecuadorian embassy in order to attend MacFadyen's funeral. Swedish Prosecutor Marianne Ny turned down the request and used the opportunity to issue another press release instead. Julian Assange condemned her callous response:

I am heart-broken that this official has rejected my request to attend Gavin's funeral. Her rejection is consistent with the corrupt and frankly wicked manner in which she has exercised her "discretion" over me, as the UN also ruled earlier this year. I am deeply shocked that this official would use my request for compassion as an opportunity for publicity by issuing a press release boasting of her rejection about this deeply personal matter. This callous official has shown no consideration for my grief or that of Gavin's family.

*

Russiavape

In early October 2016 the US Department of Homeland Security and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence posted a joint statement, claiming they were "confident" that the Russian government had "directed" the hacking of the Clinton/DNC emails. But they were still unable to prove that WikiLeaks was in any way linked to the alleged Russian hacking.

On 3 November Julian Assange took the extraordinary step of flatly denying that Russia was the source of the DNCLeaks and PodestaEmails. He made the statement in an exclusive interview with John Pilger, whose company Dartmouth Films broadcast it on [Russia Today](#).

"The Clinton camp has been able to project a neo-McCarthyist hysteria that Russia is responsible for everything. Hillary Clinton has stated multiple times, falsely, that 17 US intelligence agencies had assessed that Russia was the source of our publications. That's false – we can say that the Russian government is not the source."

Assange took personal aim at Hillary Clinton and referred to constant rumours about her health:

"Hillary Clinton is just one person. I actually feel quite sorry for Hillary Clinton as a person, because I see someone who is eaten alive by their ambitions, tormented literally to the point where they become sick – for example faint – as a result of going on, and going with their ambitions. But she represents a whole network of people, and a whole network of

relationships with particular states."

In early December the Washington Post [cited](#) a secret CIA report, claiming US intelligence agencies had "identified individuals with connections to the Russian government who provided WikiLeaks with thousands of hacked emails." There was still no public evidence to prove this claim.

A few days later, former UK Ambassador Craig Murray clearly stated that he personally knew that Russia was not the source of either the DNC Leaks or Podesta Emails. How did he know? Because he had [personally received](#) the leaked data from an intermediary during a "clandestine hand-off in a wooded area" while attending the Sam Adams Award in Washington D.C.

Murray said the leakers' motivation was "disgust at the corruption of the Clinton Foundation" and the "tilting of the primary election playing field against Bernie Sanders".

"The source had legal access to the information. The documents came from inside leaks, not hacks. Regardless of whether the Russians hacked into the DNC, the documents WikiLeaks published did not come from that."

Meanwhile the Clinton campaign had developed a far more extensive and sophisticated smear campaign against Trump. In June 2016, the Clinton campaign and the DNC paid a private intelligence company, Fusion GPS, to compile a [dossier](#) of information linking Donald Trump with Russia. The dossier was written by Christopher Steele, a former head of the Russia Desk at MI6, and it was full of salacious lies. Details were first [published](#) just a week before the US election.

It is beyond the scope of this book to provide a full account of the neo-McCarthyist "Russiagate" frenzy that eventually triggered the [Mueller investigation](#), the FBI's Operation [Crossfire Hurricane](#) and numerous other investigations and revelations, but WikiLeaks was constantly dragged into the mud-slinging. WikiLeaks dismissed the constant smears as "[Russiavape](#)".

Months after the US election, Assange was still [insisting](#) that Russia was not WikiLeaks' source. He told Sean Hannity he was still "1,000% confident" that the source was not Russia.

"We can say, we have said, repeatedly that over the last two months that our source is not the Russian government and it is not a state party," Assange said.

In 2019, a group of former US intelligence agents provided [compelling evidence](#) that the emails had in fact come from a leak, not a hack. Their detailed analysis of email metadata [proved](#) that the emails had most likely been transferred to a thumb drive by a DNC insider.

US Election

WikiLeaks kept publishing batches of leaked emails right up to 8 November, the day of the US election.

On the eve of the election, Assange issued an important [statement](#) defending WikiLeaks' decision to publish the emails.

Publishing is what we do. To withhold the publication of such information until after the election would have been to favour one of the candidates above the public's right to know.... WikiLeaks remains committed to publishing information that informs the public, even if many, especially those in power, would prefer not to see it. WikiLeaks must publish. It must publish and be damned.

Donald Trump's election victory sent shockwaves around the world. The Guardian [called](#) it "one of the most improbable political victories in modern US history" which "set the world on a journey into the political unknown".

Wisconsin and Michigan, two states hit hard by a decline in manufacturing jobs and lost by Hillary Clinton to Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primary, were led by Trump as the race headed for an early morning cliffhanger.

At 2.30am, the Associated Press projected Trump had won Wisconsin and called the overall race for Trump, who passed the 270 electoral college votes he needed to secure the presidency...

Exit polling by CNN suggested 88% of voters had made up their minds more than a week ago, before last-minute FBI inquiries into Clinton's emails temporarily raised fears of a late Trump surge.

The pro-Clinton US media was stunned by the result. Newsweek was forced to [recall](#) 125,000 copies of its souvenir "Madam President" magazine.

When later asked if WikiLeaks had changed the outcome of the election, Assange [replied](#):

"Who knows, it's impossible to tell. But if it did, the accusation is that the true statements of Hillary Clinton and her campaign manager, John Podesta, and the DNC head Debbie Wasserman Schultz, their true statements is what changed the election."

He [said](#) a Clinton election win would have been "a consolidation of power in the existing ruling class of the United States" whereas Trump's victory could bring "change for the worse and change for the better".

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Carry On WikiLeaks

With Assange still offline, WikiLeaks staff carried on working. Three days after the election they did a [Reddit AMA](#) responding to questions including rumours that Julian was dead.

A week later Sarah Harrison wrote a New York Times Op-ed [Why The World Needs WikiLeaks](#), condemning the mounting attacks on Julian Assange and vowing that WikiLeaks would continue publishing:

There is a desperate need for our work. The world is connected by largely unaccountable networks of power that span industries and countries, political parties, corporations and institutions. WikiLeaks shines a light on these by revealing not just individual incidents, but information about entire structures of power...

Harrison noted that WikiLeaks had "vetted, indexed and published over 3,000 documents per day" over the last decade and their searchable archive now stored over 10 million documents,

Wikileaks will continue publishing, enforcing transparency where secrecy is the norm. While threats against our editor are mounting, Mr Assange is not alone and his ideas continue to inspire us and people all around the world.

On 25 November WikiLeaks released [the Yemen Files](#), showing evidence of the US arming, training and funding Yemeni forces. Three days later they [released](#) over half a million US diplomatic cables from the year 1979, which Assange called "year zero" of the modern era. The cables discussed the Iranian revolution, the siege of Mecca, the election of Thatcher, the assassination of British Shadow Secretary for Northern Ireland Airey Neave, the IRA's Warrenpoint bombing, the Three Mile Island nuclear incident, the SALT II treaty, coups in El Salvador & Grenada, the Ecuadorian election, and much more.

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Celebrity Interactions

As WikiLeaks' global stature grew throughout 2016, Julian Assange was able to broker more engagements with influential celebrities, some more helpful than others.

Michael Moore, director of the Oscar-winning documentary "Fahrenheit 9/11", held a [meeting](#) with Assange inside the Ecuadorian embassy in June, 2016 and then made a strong statement of support, promising further help. But Moore's support soon swung to [criticism](#) as election polls swung in Donald Trump's favour. He said Assange and WikiLeaks were now "essentially anarchists [who] want to blow up the system" and Donald Trump was their "human Molotov cocktail".

Baywatch star Pamela Anderson - introduced by Vivienne Westwood - became a long-time supporter of Julian Assange and a regular embassy visitor, often bringing food and gifts. This soon sparked rumours of a romance which neither of them were in a rush to deny (the rumours helped divert attention from Assange's increasingly pregnant lawyer Stella Moris). As an example of how insane media coverage had become by October 2016, when Anderson took Assange a vegan sandwich it [prompted](#) rumours that she had poisoned him on behalf of the Clinton campaign, supposedly forcing WikiLeaks to issue a "dead man's switch" [tweet](#) just hours later.

When former Klu Klux Klan boss David Duke [expressed](#) support for Assange, the WikiLeaks founder was labeled a bigot and a racist by association. US right wing TV host Sean Hannity repeatedly [invited](#) Assange onto his show to discuss the latest email releases and even offered to let Assange host a show. Assange continued to insist that he was neither pro-Republican nor pro-Democrat, but only wanted to help voters make more informed decisions.

Hollywood actor John Cusack, Yoko Ono and her son Sean Lennon also visited. Perhaps these growing celebrity interactions helped induce Donald Trump's oldest son, Donald Trump Junior, to [respond](#) to a private Twitter message from WikiLeaks on September 20, 2016:

“A PAC run anti-Trump site putintrump.org is about to launch,” WikiLeaks wrote. “The PAC is a recycled pro-Iraq war PAC. We have guessed the password. It is ‘putintrump.’ See ‘About’ for who is behind it. Any comments?”

12 hours later Trump Jnr. responded: “Off the record I don’t know who that is, but I’ll ask around.”

WikiLeaks convinced Trump Jnr to share information with his followers, and later urged the Trump campaign to reject the results of the 2016 election if Hillary Clinton won. Following the election, WikiLeaks also urged Trump Jnr to suggest President Trump advise Australia to appoint Julian Assange as ambassador to the USA.

Another celebrity riding on the WikiLeaks bandwagon was Roger Stone, a longtime Republican operative and friend of Donald Trump, who claimed in August 2016 that he had been in communication with Assange over an “October surprise” to foil Clinton. Stone repeatedly claimed to have personally met Julian Assange, then repeatedly denied ever meeting him. WikiLeaks publicly [dismissed](#) Stone’s lies and privately cautioned him to stop making false claims.

Stone continued to [insist](#) he had a "back channel" source who was a “mutual friend” of Assange. He later identified this source as Randy Credico, a New York radio host who supported Assange but never had any insider knowledge of upcoming WikiLeaks releases.

When Credico was later subpoenaed to testify against Stone, Stone threatened to destroy him and take away his support dog. Roger Stone was eventually sentenced to 40 months in prison for lying, witness tampering and obstruction of justice. Donald Trump gave Roger Stone a [pardon](#) in December 2020, just weeks before he departed the White House.

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Chapter Twenty One: 2017-19

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Seth Rich Redux

On the day after the 2016 US election, Ellen Ratner, the sister of deceased WikiLeaks lawyer Michael Ratner, appeared on US television and [revealed](#) that she had spent three hours talking with Julian

Assange just a few days earlier.

"He said the leaks were not from the Russians. They were from an internal source from the Hillary campaign or from someone who knew Hillary, an enemy. He does not think they're from Russians. Russia got credit for something WikiLeaks should have got credit for."

Ratner was more or less [reiterating](#) what Craig Murray had previously [stated](#). At any rate, on 17 December 2016, a Dallas businessman named Ed Butowsky contacted the family of Seth Rich and told them that he had a message for them from Julian Assange. He said he had received the message via a mutual friend, Ellen Ratner, who denied ever giving him such a message. The message, Butowsky said, was that Seth Rich had been a WikiLeaks source for the DNC leaks.

This visit triggered a series of events that lead to years of complex legal battles. According to Butowsky's [lawsuit](#), Seth Rich's father Joel initially said that he already knew **both** his sons, Seth and Aaron, were involved in the leaks:

During that conversation, Mr. Rich told Mr. Butowsky that he already knew that his sons were involved in the DNC email leak, but he and his wife just wanted to know who murdered Seth. Mr. Rich said he was reluctant to go public with Seth's and Aaron's role in leaking the emails because "we don't want anyone to think our sons were responsible for getting Trump elected."

Butowsky offered to provide the Rich family with a private detective to help them find out who killed their son. The Rich family had previously received pro bono public relations assistance from a right-wing [fraudster](#) named Jack Burkman, but [distanced](#) themselves from him after he claimed that Seth had been killed by Russians who were covering up evidence of their DNC hacking. Butowsky hired Rod Wheeler, a former homicide detective with the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington DC, who were nominally in charge of the murder investigation. Both Butowsky and Wheeler had links to FOX News.

On 16 May 2017 FOX News published [an explosive story](#) about an anonymous US federal investigator who claimed to have reviewed an FBI forensic report detailing the contents of Seth Rich's computer, including emails between Seth Rich and WikiLeaks. It quoted ex-detective Rod Wheeler saying:

"My investigation up to this point shows there was some degree of email exchange between Seth Rich and WikiLeaks. I do believe that the answers to who murdered Seth Rich sits on his computer on a shelf at the DC police or FBI headquarters."

The story provoked a huge uproar, with politicians and journalists alike condemning it. ABC News [reported](#) that "FBI and other law enforcement officials" were dismissing the story as "a conspiracy theory":

According to officials with knowledge of the matter, the FBI is not investigating the unsolved murder of Seth Rich last year in what agents have determined was “a possible attempted robbery” gone wrong. Asked about the possible connection between Rich and WikiLeaks, one official told ABC News that “the only place I’ve seen that is through the conspiracy theories online.”

FOX News retracted their story a week later and [apologised](#). After multiple [complaints](#) from CNN journalist Oliver Darcy, the author Malia Zimmerman also deleted her tweets about the story. The Washington Times also [retracted](#) an article, written by retired US Navy admiral James Lyons, who [claimed](#) that it was “well known in the intelligence circles” that both Seth and Aaron Rich had “downloaded” the thousands of emails taken from the DNC in 2016 and that WikiLeaks had paid them for the data.

The family of Seth Rich sent Rod Wheeler a cease and desist letter. Wheeler responded by [suing](#) FOX News for mis-quoting him (he later dropped the case).

By now the Rich family was being represented by a "family spokesman" named [Brad Bauman](#), who was [described](#) as "a PR consultant who had kicked around Democratic politics for years". Bauman [told](#) the media:

“So much of the conspiracy theory has been dependent on the allegation of federal investigators being involved, and the fact that the FBI has not and never had been involved with this investigation is critical to understanding just how false these conspiracy theories are.”

This was simply not true. The FBI was most [certainly](#) involved. At that time, however, journalists just didn’t have the [evidence](#) to prove it.

Ed Butowsky’s court filings noted how the Rich family’s behaviour had “changed suddenly” once Brad Bauman got involved:

1. Under coercion from Mr. Bauman and the lawyer Defendants named in this lawsuit, Joel Rich stopped speaking with Mr. Butowsky and the Rich family started attacking Mr. Butowsky publicly (albeit not by name). Prior to the time of Mr. Bauman’s involvement, the Rich family acknowledged to friends and relatives that Seth and Aaron were involved in the DNC email leak, but then they suddenly changed their story. On information and belief, Mr. Butowsky alleges that Joel, Mary, and Aaron Rich were told that Aaron could be charged with felony computer crimes if they did not cooperate with their new handlers, i.e., Mr. Bauman and the lawyer Defendants.

Kim Dotcom [agreed](#) that the Rich family’s behaviour change was “very suspicious”:

So to me it was very suspicious how they have dealt with anyone who was trying to shed some light on this and you read between the lines and you see how they react to things. And also their relationships, the fact that this guy Baumann gets involved, who is really a PR person for the DNC, and now runs the whole communications strategy and defends and basically stifles any kind of conversation about this topic. The fact that the family allowed that guy to get involved when there was some, you know, at the very least, if I was the parent of Seth Rich, I would be saying, well, I mean this whole robbery story just doesn't add up.

Meanwhile Sy Hersh, the Pulitzer-winning journalist who exposed the 1968 My Lai massacre in Vietnam, was also investigating the Seth Rich murder and broader claims of Russian interference in the 2016 US election. Hersh had been communicating with Ed Butowsky since a mutual friend put them in touch in late January 2017. Hersh [told](#) Butowsky that he had also seen a secret FBI report that identified Seth Rich as a WikiLeaks source.

"I have someone on the inside who will go and read a file for me and I know this person is unbelievably accurate and careful. He's a very high-level guy, he'll do a favor."

Hersh said the FBI report showed that Seth Rich was seeking money for the emails, which he had stored in an online Dropbox, and that he had shared the Dropbox location with others "so if anything happens to me it's not going to solve your problem".

Unfortunately, Butowsky was secretly recording his conversations with Hersh. In August 2017 an audio file of this conversation was published online. This forced Hersh to abandon the story because his sources were now in danger.

In late 2018 the NSA sent a FOI [response](#) to Butowsky's lawyer Ty Clevenger, saying they had identified 15 documents (32 pages) that matched his request for information about Seth Rich, but they were all marked SECRET or TOP SECRET - which meant than none would be released. It seemed strange that documents about a supposedly routine DC murder investigation would be marked TOP SECRET - perhaps they were part of the WikiLeaks/Assange investigations and only peripherally mentioned Seth Rich? Who knew.

By now Butowsky was frustrated. He said he felt he was just an unlucky chump who had tried to help out the Rich family and ended up in a convoluted mess. He said he had spent over \$800,000 on lawsuits. But he also had some suspiciously close connections to the Trump White House team. In 2020, when Trump lost power, Butowsky began [dropping](#) his lawsuits and publicly [retracting](#) his claims about the Seth Rich case.

A lawyer for Butowsky told Rolling Stone that Butowsky had "decided to re-prioritize his life" and "does not wish to discuss the litigation any further." The lawyer, Ty Clevenger, said Butowsky's views about Seth Rich and the

2016 election had not changed. And Clevenger himself went on to dispute Rolling Stone's reporting on the case, claiming "the FBI has been hiding evidence from Seth Rich's laptop, just like the FBI was hiding evidence from Hunter Biden's laptop. I wouldn't be surprised if the evidence was kept in the same room."

Ty Clevenger continued lodging Freedom of Information (FOI) requests with the FBI on behalf of another Texan businessman, Brian Huddleston. The FBI continued denying that they had any information about Seth Rich. But then a series of emails between FBI agents Peter Strzok and Lisa Page - titled "Seth Rich" and dated just a month after his murder - turned up in response to another FBI FOI request from Judicial Watch. This proved that the FBI had taken an interest in the murder, and had been withholding information from Clevenger.

Finally, in April 2021, nearly five years since Seth Rich's death, the FBI produced 68 pages of documents from the DNC staffer's laptop.

A judge ordered the FBI to release even more FOI data on Seth Rich, but in October 2022 the FBI asked a court to overturn this decision. They claimed they would need a whopping sixty six years to produce such data!

NOTE

At the time of writing (early 2023), the FBI is still using semantic games to delay releasing further information. The FBI has "images" (exact copies) of the contents of both Seth Rich's personal laptop and his work computer. They are arguing that they do not need to release the requested information because they do not have the actual machines in their possession. Ty Clevenger says the distinction between physical evidence and "digital evidence" is being used as an excuse to keep information off the FBI index systems:

"The FBI can say anything is digital evidence and they don't enter it into their index systems and nobody ever knows about it, or nobody ever finds it."

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CIA's Vault 7

On 14 February 2017 Julian Assange began publicly using his own Twitter account, @JulianAssange (first set up in 2010 and later changed to @DefendAssange by his legal team). His first tweet ridiculed the suspiciously common rumour - prompted by Ecuador temporarily cutting off his Internet access - that he was dead.

By this time the CIA had lost control of their "crown jewels" - a highly sophisticated set of cyber weapons which they used to hack others and launch cyber attacks. US intelligence officials later said they had been investigating the leak since 2016. WikiLeaks was now preparing to publish these complex CIA tools, which they labeled "Vault 7". Assange reportedly wanted to cut a secret deal with the US government.

Assange made clear through the lawyer that he would never compromise his sources, or stop publishing information, but was willing to consider concessions like redactions.

According to articles published by [The Hill](#) in 2018, Assange's team contacted a former Clinton Justice Department official, Adam Waldman, who visited Assange in London three times while negotiating a deal via the US Justice Department's counterintelligence section chief David Laufman.

Laufman described what the government might want to achieve, and Waldman laid the groundwork for a deal to give Assange limited immunity and a one-time "safe passage" to leave the London embassy and talk with U.S. officials...

As the negotiations warmed, Assange unleashed his first leak on March 7, 2017, with about 8,000 pages of documents on the CIA's cyber weapons. It did not deter the talks, however, since U.S. officials were more concerned about what he might release next.

The first batch of Vault 7 documents were titled "Year Zero". WikiLeaks posted an encrypted archive online and only revealed the password a week later, on 7 March 2017.

WikiLeaks did not name the source, but said that the files had been circulating among "former US government hackers and contractors in an unauthorized manner, one of whom has provided WikiLeaks with portions of the archive." WikiLeaks said the source "wishes to initiate a public debate about the security, creation, use, proliferation and democratic control of cyberweapons" since these tools raise questions that "urgently need to be debated in public, including whether the CIA's hacking capabilities exceed its mandated powers and the problem of public oversight of the agency."

Meanwhile, Assange's secret discussions with the US government continued:

"Dear David, I relayed our conversations to Assange and he had a generally positive view of it," Waldman wrote Laufman in mid-March.

The shuttle diplomacy soon resulted in an informal offer — known in government parlance as a "Queen for a Day" proffer — in which Assange identified what he wanted and what he might give.

Assange was prepared to negotiate redactions and also help the CIA explore why their Vault 7 files were not fully secured. He was also prepared to discuss the 2016 DNC Leaks and provide evidence to support his claim that Russia was not WikiLeaks's source.

But then FBI Director James Comey personally stepped in and abruptly [killed](#) the deal. Comey had been notified by Democrat Senator Mark Warner, vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence

Committee.

Soon, the rare opportunity to engage Assange in a dialogue over redactions, a more responsible way to release information, and how the infamous DNC hacks occurred was lost — likely forever.

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On 13 April 2017, in his first public remarks as Trump's new CIA director, Mike Pompeo angrily focused on WikiLeaks, [labeling](#) them "a non-state hostile intelligence service often abetted by state actors like Russia". The language suggested a new legal designation whereby Assange and WikiLeaks staff were now on a par with US enemy nations like Iran or North Korea. He called Assange a "narcissist", a "fraud" and a "coward".

"We have to recognize that we can no longer allow Assange and his colleagues the latitude to use free speech values against us. To give them the space to crush us with misappropriated secrets is a perversion of what our great Constitution stands for. It ends now."

Like Donald Trump, Mike Pompeo had publicly celebrated WikiLeaks while they were releasing Hillary Clinton's emails.

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WikiLeaks continued releasing Vault 7 information in 24 stages, with a new CIA tool documented and explained every week or so, until early September 2017. A month later they released "Vault 8" which was the source code and development logs for "Hive", one of the CIA's malware tools. Other source code was not released: WikiLeaks wanted people to see what the CIA had secretly been doing, but did not want to give other malicious actors the tools to copy them.

With attention-grabbing names like "AngelFire" and "Butal Kangaroo", the CIA tools had a long list of capabilities including malware, viruses, weaponised "zero day" exploits and remote control systems for phones, cars, smart TVs, web browsers and operating systems. These tools gave the CIA astonishing opportunities to perform electronic surveillance and cyber warfare. They could even make it look like other state actors (e.g. Russia or China) were the real authors of CIA cyber attacks.

While technical experts were shocked by the sophistication of the Vault 7 tools, WikiLeaks' explanations of highly complex software were not so easy for the general public to digest. Mainstream media interest was muted.

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In July 2022 former CIA software engineer [Joshua Schulte](#) was convicted of leaking the Vault 7 documents to WikiLeaks. His prosecution was a farce, with court testimony revealing a totally dysfunctional work environment at the CIA's supposedly elite hacking team; immature co-workers were constantly playing pranks, shooting toy guns at each other, stealing from each others cubicles, loudly squabbling and even making death threats. It was an environment where top secret data could easily go missing. A CIA report later found multiple security failures that could have lead to

the Vault 7 leak.

The first Schulte jury was hung, with the judge declaring a mistrial. The US government - who also prosecuted Schulte with copyright infringement and child pornography charges - demanded a retrial. Despite being held in solitary confinement for months, Schulte represented himself at his second trial, which he lost. He has always maintained his innocence.

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CIA Assassination Plans

In the wake of the first 2017 Vault 7 publications and Pompeo's angry rant, senior Trump administration officials began plotting to kidnap or even assassinate Julian Assange. As a team of Yahoo News journalists later [revealed](#):

Some senior officials inside the CIA and the Trump administration even discussed killing Assange, going so far as to request "sketches" or "options" for how to assassinate him. Discussions over kidnapping or killing Assange occurred "at the highest levels" of the Trump administration, said a former senior counterintelligence official. "There seemed to be no boundaries."

The CIA plans also included "extensive spying on WikiLeaks associates, sowing discord among the group's members, and stealing their electronic devices". Officials wanted to legally redefine WikiLeaks and supporters like Glenn Greenwald as "information brokers" in order to remove First Amendment protections and give a green light to increased surveillance efforts. There were even [discussions](#) about poisoning Assange.

Pompeo and other top agency leaders "were completely detached from reality because they were so embarrassed about Vault 7," said a former Trump national security official. "They were seeing blood."

Later in 2017, when Ecuadorian officials privately [discussed](#) the possibility of officially designating Julian Assange as an Ecuadorian diplomat and transferring him to their Russian embassy, the CIA rushed out plans to block his departure:

Those included potential gun battles with Kremlin operatives on the streets of London, crashing a car into a Russian diplomatic vehicle transporting Assange and then grabbing him, and shooting out the tires of a Russian plane carrying Assange before it could take off for Moscow. (U.S. officials asked their British counterparts to do the shooting if gunfire was required, and the British agreed, according to a former senior administration official.)

Spies were placed in streets and buildings all around the Ecuadorian embassy in London. One former senior official called the level of overkill "beyond comical".

“It got to the point where every human being in a three-block radius was working for one of the intelligence services — whether they were street sweepers or police officers or security guards.”

Sources later told [El País](#) that the proposed move to Russia was eventually rejected by Assange on the basis that he considered it to be “a defeat” that would fuel conspiracy theories. Another source told the [Greyzone](#) that the US ambassador to Ecuador had told authorities in Quito that he knew about the plan, and warned them against executing it.

The source also told The Grayzone that when one of the Ecuadorian officials involved in conceiving the strategy to free Assange from the embassy returned to Quito, his official government vehicle was stopped on a road by masked gunmen on a motorcycle who robbed him of his laptop. The computer contained detailed information about the plan to legally allow Assange to leave the embassy.

But how did the CIA and US officials even know what Ecuadorian officials were secretly discussing with Julian Assange within the diplomatic confines of the Ecuadorian embassy?

Unfortunately, the head of security at the embassy was by now reporting to the CIA.

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UC Global

Shortly after Julian Assange sought asylum in 2012, President Correa appointed a Spanish security firm named Undercover Global S.L. (UC Global) to manage security at Ecuador’s London embassy. A few years later, after attending a security fair in Las Vegas, David Morales, a co-founder of UC Global, told his staff that he had turned to the “dark side” and the company was now “playing in the first division”.

US billionaire Sheldon Adelson, owner of the Las Vegas Sands casino and a close friend of Donald Trump, gave UC Global a contract to manage security on his \$70 million yacht. This contract appears to have been a covert method of channeling funds for more sinister activities (Morales was arrested in late 2019: a Spanish court is still hearing his case).

In early March 2017, when Assange was still negotiating the Vault 7 release, Morales travelled to the USA and stayed in Alexandria, Virginia, close to the CIA headquarters in Langley. According to the [Greyzone](#), Morales was liaising with Adelson’s top bodyguard, an Israeli-American named Zohar Lahav, and Brian Nagel, a former associate director of the US Secret Service who was now the director of global security for Las Vegas Sands.

Spying inside the embassy soon caused serious problems in the outside world. Pamela Anderson discovered that her phone and email accounts were compromised after UC Global staff saw her writing them on a piece of paper inside the embassy. Italian journalist Stefania Maurizi was shocked when embassy security guards - for the first time - asked her to surrender her bag and

everything inside it. She later discovered that phone calls, emails, and texts from her editors were failing to go through.

“No one could explain this disruption. I wonder if it had anything to do with these espionage activities. To this day I cannot say.”

UC Global staff even spied on a US Congressman, Dana Rohrabacher, who [claimed](#) he was visiting Assange as an official emissary of President Trump. WikiLeaks lawyers, who were present at the August 2017 meeting, said Rohrabacher offered Assange a presidential pardon in return for proof that Russia did not hack the DNC server. Rohrabacher later insisted that his visit was just a personal “fact-finding mission”.

In December 2017, as *El País* [reported](#), Morales "ordered workers to change the surveillance cameras in the embassy and replace them with others that could capture audio".

From that moment on, they recorded and monitored conversations between the WikiLeaks founder and his lawyers, as well as all of his visitors.

Under Morales's express orders, the security team photographed the passports of all of Assange's visitors, took apart their cellphones, downloaded content from their iPads, took notes and put together reports on each meeting...

The recordings from the cameras installed in the embassy were extracted from the hard drive every 15 days, along with other recordings from microphones placed in fire extinguishers, and delivered personally to Morales at the headquarters of UC Global, located in Jerez de la Frontera in the south of Spain. They were always original recordings, not copies.

Morales also asked his technicians to install an external streaming access point "so that all of the recordings could be accessed instantly by the United States" and also to install stickers that prevented windows from vibrating, "to make it easier for the CIA to record conversations with their laser microphones". The UC Global boss began traveling to the USA at least once a month, allegedly handing over recorded materials to people he only referred to as "the Americans." IP addresses from some of Morales' emails [show](#) they were sent from "The Venetian", Adelson's top hotel resort in Las Vegas.

UC Global staff became increasingly concerned about the legality of the tasks they were expected to perform. They were being asked to spy on and conceal evidence from their own clients, the same Ecuadorian officials who paid UC Global to keep their embassy secure. At one stage security staff were even asked to fetch a baby's diaper from the rubbish because "the Americans" wanted to analyze the DNA and see if Assange was the father. At this stage a UC Global employee secretly [warned](#) Stella Moris (later Stella Assange) not to bring Julian's baby to the embassy anymore.

“They wanted to prove that it was his child in a bid to harm him. There

were talks with three Madrid labs to see how the parental connection could be proved. One of them said that DNA cannot be extracted from feces. There was an attempt to take the baby's pacifier [dummy]."

On 20 December 2017 Rommy Vallejo, then head of Ecuador's secret intelligence agency SENAIN, visited Julian Assange to discuss plans to whisk the WikiLeaks founder out of the embassy on Christmas Day. UC Global was technically contracted to SENAIN, whose budget paid their wages. But even so, the UC Global team opened Vallejo's phones, took his mobile codes, and immediately alerted their "American friends".

On December 21, the day after Assange's meeting with the SENAIN chief, US prosecutors [secretly filed charges](#) against Assange in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia.

US officials wanted to have their charges ready so that Assange could be jailed by British police as soon as he stepped outside the embassy.

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Treachery In Ecuador

Bowing to years of concerted opposition that saw his polls steadily dropping, Rafael Correa had decided not to run for President in 2017. His ruling Alianza País party narrowly won a run-off election on 2 April, but it was Correa's former Vice President, Lenin Moreno, who now became President of Ecuador.

Moreno's single term in power quickly proved to be a nightmare for the people of Ecuador and for Julian Assange in particular.

Lenin Boltaire Moreno Garcés, who was confined to a wheelchair after a shooting incident in 1988, had previously focused on advocacy for people with disabilities and had even been nominated for a Nobel Prize. He had written popular books about the importance of humour in overcoming life's hardships. But within months of becoming President, he jailed his own Vice President and began overturning his own party's major policies. Former government ministers including ex-President Correa were soon forced to either seek exile abroad or go to jail.

Moreno [replaced](#) judges at will. Street crime escalated and prisoners rioted as Ecuador's economy steadily declined. In October 2019, when Moreno tried to abolish government fuel subsidies and impose harsh austerity measures, it triggered a wave of massive protests that left eight people dead and over 1,300 injured. The government was forced to temporarily relocate from the capital Quito to Guayaquil.

By the time the Covid19 pandemic hit in early 2020, Ecuador was already an economic disaster. Families dumped infected corpses in the streets until the government began distributing cardboard coffins. By the end of the year, the country of just 14 million had recorded over 200,000 cases and 14,000 deaths. Vaccinations were slow to arrive and government estimates of Covid19 fatalities were reportedly only 13% of the harsh reality. Moreno's popularity dropped to a record low 5%,

with less than 3% of citizens believing anything he said.

Meanwhile, relations with the United States flourished. In June 2018, US Vice President Mike Pence travelled to Quito for a meeting with President Moreno, who agreed to purchase US weapons, helicopters, and other equipment, and to increase military co-operation on training and intelligence sharing. A White House statement [said](#) that Pence "raised the issue of Mr Assange with President Moreno. It was a constructive conversation. They agreed to remain in close coordination on the potential next steps going forward."

Moreno also withdrew Ecuador from the ALBA trading bloc of socialist Latin American nations (even though it was head-quartered in Quito), withdrew his diplomats from Caracas and formally recognised the US puppet Juan Guido as President of Venezuela. He even allowed US military planes to use Ecuador's military airstrip on the Galápagos Islands, triggering further protests.

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More Guardian Lies

One of President Moreno's first overseas visitors in May 2017 was Paul Manafort, the former campaign chief of President Donald Trump. According to the New York Times, Manafort unsuccessfully attempted to [negotiate](#) an agreement for Ecuador to hand over Assange. Months later, Manafort was [indicted](#) on multiple charges resulting from his consulting work for Ukraine's former pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych (overthrown with US support in 2014). He spent over a year in prison before President Trump pardoned him in late 2020.

In November 2018 the Guardian newspaper falsely [reported](#) that Julian Assange had met Paul Manafort inside the embassy at least three times - "in 2013, 2015 and in spring 2016" - and even suggested that Manafort might have been a source for the 2016 DNC Leaks. Although Manafort's name was never entered into the embassy visitor logs, the Guardian's sources seemed to have extremely vivid memories:

Manafort's 2016 visit to Assange lasted about 40 minutes, one source said, adding that the American was casually dressed when he exited the embassy, wearing sandy-coloured chinos, a cardigan and a light-coloured shirt...

The previously unreported Manafort-Assange connection is likely to be of interest to Mueller, who has been investigating possible contacts between WikiLeaks and associates of Trump including the political lobbyist Roger Stone and Donald Trump Jr.

This article by Luke Harding and Dan Colluys was absolute, total rubbish. Paul Manafort never once visited the embassy. WikiLeaks immediately offered to bet the Guardian a million dollars - and Julian Assange's head! - if they could prove otherwise. Years later, the story still remains online, unretracted, with no apology from Guardian editors.

The same Guardian propaganda team, collaborating with anti-Correa journalists in Ecuador, had previously published an embarrassingly ridiculous [series of articles](#) about Assange's life in the

embassy. The May 2018 "Operation Hotel" articles - again based on leaks and gossip from UC Global staff and Moreno government officials - criticized Rafael Correa's government for spending over \$5 million to protect Julian Assange while the Australian was allegedly being visited by "hackers" and "Russian-affiliated" guests.

Correa's government had asked UC Global to install spy equipment to protect its embassy and staff as well as Assange. But the Guardian articles insinuated that the invasive surveillance had some other sinister motive. Of course there was no mention of the even more sophisticated and intrusive equipment that was installed to help UC Global's "American friends".

The Guardian claimed that Julian Assange had compromised the embassy's network security:

In 2014, the company hired to film Assange's visitors was warning the Ecuadorian government that he was "intercepting and gathering information from the embassy and the people who worked there".

In fact it was the UC Global staff themselves who were "intercepting and gathering information from the embassy and the people who worked there" - and sending their information to the CIA! WikiLeaks called the Guardian assertions "an anonymous libel aligned with the current UK-US government onslaught against Mr Assange".

The Hotel Ecuador stories also repeatedly tried to frame Assange as a Russian agent:

It is these visitor logs that will interest Mueller. He is reportedly close to indicting Russian hackers allegedly behind the raid on the Democrats' electronic servers and seems to view WikiLeaks as an integral part of the Kremlin's multifaceted espionage operation. The FBI has interviewed at least one source close to Operation Guest, it is understood.

In fact Robert Mueller's Russiagate investigation was never able to prove any connection between Russia and WikiLeaks. His report stated that "with respect to WikiLeaks and Assange, this Office determined the admissible evidence to be insufficient on both the agreement and knowledge prongs." He never even tried to interview anyone from WikiLeaks.

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Assange Under Pressure

By March 2018, Julian Assange's personal Twitter account was discussing a wide range of political issues. He hotly contested the UK government's official version of the Salisbury novichok poisonings, and staunchly supported the protest rights of pro-independence activists in Catalonia. He was also digging into the identities of mysterious Russiagate figures like Joseph Mifsud. But after posting a tweet criticising the Spanish government's violent response to the Catalan protests, Assange once again found his Internet access cut off by Ecuador.

Moreno's officials also banned visitors and phone calls, effectively shutting off access to the outside world. President Moreno said Assange was "in breach of the terms of his asylum", even though such

"terms" had never existed (and do not exist under international asylum laws). Assange responded by [suing](#) Ecuador for "violating his fundamental rights."

WikiLeaks [repeatedly denied](#) that Assange had ever signed a "gag order" or made any agreement to refrain from political commentary as a condition of his refuge in the embassy.

For a few months Assange's asylum remained secure, largely thanks to the personal support of Ecuador's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maria Fernanda Espinosa. It was her idea to grant Assange Ecuadorian citizenship in 2017 (Moreno later revoked it). But after Espinosa moved jobs in June 2018 to become the president of the UN General Assembly, Assange's life inside the embassy quickly became intolerable.

According to former Ecuadorian embassy staffer [Fidel Narvaez](#), Moreno's new embassy staff isolated Assange and "tried to break him down, so that he would leave the embassy of his own accord".

"When the isolation started arousing international condemnation, they tried to impose the so-called "protocol," which was an outrageous prison regime of putting banana peels all over the floor to provoke him and get an excuse to kick him out. That was one of the strategies. Another was to defame him in order to justify his expulsion, and to approach the British and the Americans in order to hand Julian over."

Moreno, who repeatedly called Assange "a stone in my shoe", [told](#) journalists that the Australian's expulsion from the embassy was being actively discussed with UK and US officials. He [said](#) he had received written assurance from Britain that Assange would not be extradited to a country where his life would be in danger.

"Let's not forget the conditions of his asylum prevent him from speaking about politics or intervening in the politics of other countries. That's why we cut his communication."

Assange's communications were [partially restored](#) in October 2018, but harsh new rules were imposed: Assange was only allowed to use the embassy wifi for his personal computer and phone; visits had to be approved three days in advance; and he was barred from activities which could be "considered as political or interfering with the internal affairs of other states". They even threatened to take away his cat, which was soon given to Assange family members for safe-keeping.

Most disturbingly, a memo seen by the Guardian openly discussed the possibility of British police being invited inside the embassy:

According to the memo, the embassy "reserved the right to authorise security personnel to seize equipment" or ask the British authorities to enter the embassy and do so. Any attempt to bring such equipment into the embassy would be reported as a "security breach and reported to the

competent British authorities."

When Assange's appeal against these restrictions was dismissed by a Spanish court, he escalated his case to the US-dominated Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. They also found against him (in March 2019).

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End Game

In February 2019, hundreds of private emails, photos and text messages from Lenin Moreno and his wife were [leaked](#) to a site called INApapers.org. Ecuadorian citizens struggling under government austerity measures were shocked to see pictures of their President's lavish family holidays in Europe, particularly one photo of Moreno lying in bed while apparently eating lobster for breakfast.

The INA Papers showed [evidence](#) that Moreno had been secretly channeling funds into off-shore Panama bank accounts via a shell company, INA Investment Corporation, which was named after his three daughters (whose names all ended in "ina"). Meanwhile the New York Times had reported that Moreno was using Assange as a bargaining chip in negotiations for a \$4.2 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Moreno tried to divert public attention from the INA Papers scandal by blaming WikiLeaks for the leak, even though the documents were [not](#) published by WikiLeaks. Moreno said that Assange had again "violated the conditions of his asylum" and that he would "take a decision" on him "in the short term". WikiLeaks said that the Ecuadorian government was just seeking "a false pretext to end the asylum and protection of Julian Assange."

On 5 April 2019, WikiLeaks tweeted that Assange's expulsion could happen within hours. Supporters raced to the embassy and began keeping a 24/7 vigil. Russian media group Ruptly set up a live video stream which was carefully monitored by supporters all round the world.

On 6 April Julian Assange received a visit from Vaughan Smith, who said his friend was in good health but had visibly lost weight and the atmosphere inside the embassy was "oppressive".

"Inside there are two cameras virtually in every room. You're talking about a very monitored life with no real escape for you. It's a tough place to be, but he's a tough guy."

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On 10 April Kristinn Hrafnsson [revealed](#) that WikiLeaks and Assange had been the targets of a €3 million blackmail attempt. The extortionists appeared to have some 90 thousand compromised documents including legal, medical, and personal information about Assange, along with images and video from inside the embassy. The case was being investigated by Spanish authorities, as three Spanish nationals were involved.

WikiLeaks lawyers [believed](#) the case to be a conspiracy involving Ecuadorian officials and

Promsecurity, an Ecuadorean company which Lenin Moreno had put in charge of embassy surveillance in May 2018 (replacing UC Global). This attempted blackmail lead circuitously to the arrest of UC Global boss David Morales, with two separate Spanish court cases [digging](#) for the truth. Assange had long complained that he was being spied on in the embassy but even at this late stage he had no idea how sophisticated, intrusive and all-encompassing the surveillance had been.

Hrafnsson said Assange had been "living in a Truman Show situation" ever since Lenín Moreno came to power and the WikiLeaks founder would probably already be in jail if supporters had not rushed to help.

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Expulsion

Early on 11 April 2019, WikiLeaks warned that President Moreno was due to receive a report on Assange's conformity with the embassy's self-created "protocol", which was being used as an excuse to evict the WikiLeaks Editor-In-Chief.

WikiLeaks also tweeted that the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and the UN Special Rapporteur on Privacy were expected to visit the embassy in two weeks's time. These high profile visits may have been hastily arranged in a desperate attempt to forestall the inevitable. Moreno's victory lap was already booked into his schedule.

By now there were cops with [machine guns](#) outside the embassy. Supporters had exposed undercover officers parked in the side streets overnight, or peering out from nearby windows, just waiting for the signal to pounce. A meticulously choreographed multi-faceted drama was all set to play out.

First the Ecuadorian government formally terminated Assange's asylum, based on his supposed failure to respect their ridiculous "protocol". Then Ecuador's Ambassador to the UK invited the Metropolitan Police into the embassy. Julian Assange shouted "This is unlawful, I am not leaving." He was forcibly dragged out by five officers who bundled him into a waiting van. He was carrying a copy of Gore Vidal's "History of the National Security State" and shouted to the nearby crowd of gathered police, journalists and supporters: "the UK has no sovereignty" and "the UK must resist this attempt by the Trump administration..."

Assange was taken to a central London police station before a hearing at Westminster Magistrates' Court a few hours later. District Judge Michael Snow [said](#) Assange's behaviour was "that of a narcissist who cannot get beyond his own selfish interest". Assange was declared guilty of breaching the terms of his bail and later sentenced to the maximum 50 weeks in prison.

Meanwhile the US government [charged](#) Assange with conspiring to "knowingly access a computer without authorisation" in order to obtain secret information whose release "could be used to the injury of the United States and the advantage of any foreign nation". The charge carried a maximum jail sentence of 5 years but was soon followed by 16 other charges carrying a maximum 175 years in jail.

Sir Alan Duncan, the UK Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, [watched](#) a live-feed of Assange's arrest from the Operations Room at the top of the Foreign Office building. After Assange

had been transferred to London's maximum security Belmarsh Prison, and jailed alongside hardened murderers and convicted terrorists, Duncan held a drinks party in his office for the "Operation Pelican" team that had overseen his expulsion from the embassy.

"I gave them each a signed photo which we took in the Ops Room on the day, with a caption saying 'Julian Assange's Special Brexit Team 11th April 2019'", he later wrote in his memoirs.

Assange's lawyer Jennifer Robinson visited Assange in the police cells, where he sent a message of thanks to supporters and [said](#):

"I told you so."

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Reaction

This was the first time in history a government had ever allowed foreign police to enter its sovereign territory to arrest one of its citizens. British media greeted news of the arrest with delight.

Ecuador's President Lenin Moreno [told](#) reporters that Assange was a "spoiled brat" who did not have the right to "hack private phones". Ecuador also jailed a Swedish computer programmer, [Ola Bini](#), who lived in Quito and was a friend of Julian Assange's, accusing him too of hacking.

The Executive Board of the IMF rapidly [approved](#) a loan package of \$4.2 billion to the government of Lenin Moreno for what it called a "more dynamic, sustainable, and inclusive economy for the benefit of all Ecuadorians."

The agreement coincided with layoffs of over 10,000 public sector workers, in addition to the ongoing policy of slashing in public and social spending, a decrease in the level of minimum wage and the removal of secure work protections that marked the sharp neoliberal turn of the Ecuadorian government under Moreno.

Rafael Correa accused his successor of "a crime humanity will never forget". He described Moreno as "the greatest traitor in Ecuadorian and Latin American history".

When asked about the arrest, US President Donald Trump, who had [reportedly](#) mentioned WikiLeaks 164 times in the final month of the 2016 election, [said](#):

"I know nothing about WikiLeaks. It's not my thing."

British Prime Minister Theresa May thanked Ecuador's President Moreno and told the House of Commons: "This goes to show that in the UK, no one is above the law."

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison [said](#) Assange was "not going to be given any special treatment". Foreign Minister Marise Payne said he would continue to receive "the usual consular support".

Swedish lawyer Elisabeth Massi Fritz submitted a request to the Swedish prosecutor's office to resume the preliminary investigation.

"We are going to do everything we possibly can to get the Swedish police investigation reopened so that Assange can be extradited to Sweden and prosecuted for rape... No rape victim should have to wait nine years to see justice be served."

The investigation went nowhere and was finally [dropped](#) for the last time in November 2019.

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