



2.5 million people had access to the classified information released by Wikileaks. That's not a very good secret, but Bradley Manning now faces life in prison or the death penalty for releasing it. Here are some of the possible reasons they didn't want the rest of us in the know.

I

The government knew that most Guantanamo prisoners were either innocent or just low-level operatives. The U.S. also pressured Spanish courts to drop investigations of torture at Gitmo. Shoddy CIA evidence collection at Guantanamo has cost millions and bred anti-American sentiment abroad. The Guantanamo Files describe how detainees were captured based on highly subjective evidence. How quickly they were released was heavily dependent on their country of origin (1). According to a U.S. diplomatic cable written on April 17, 2009, the Association for the Dignity of Spanish Prisoners requested that the National Court indict six former U.S. officials for creating a legal framework that allegedly permitted torture against five Spanish prisoners. However, "Senator Mel Martinez... met Acting FM [Foreign Minister] Angel Lossada... on April 15. Martinez... underscored that the prosecutions would not be understood or accepted in the U.S. and would have an enormous impact on the bilateral relationship" (2).



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At t t p b

Gen. Tommy Franks famously told reporters in 2002, "We don't do body counts." Yet the Iraq War Logs and Afghan War Diary reveal that the military does track casualties. In most cases the military did not conduct a thorough investigation into Afghani civilian deaths. Instead, they offered victims' families up to US\$2400. The Iraq War Logs, which span the period from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2009, show 109,000 total deaths. Of those, a staggering 66,081 – two-thirds – were civilians – 15,000 of whom were not acknowledged or reported anywhere previously (3). In a leaked cable from the U.S. delegation to NATO, it is stated that, "Norway's ambassador emphasized the need to avoid a public debate about the reporting of the number of [Afghani] civilians killed," and the cable went on to state that "U.N. employees themselves in Kabul doubt the method [of tracking casualties] that is used" (4).



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The U.S. government had documented Tunisian government human rights violations against its own people, but continued providing aid to Tunisia on the basis of being an ally in the war against "terrorism." About Tunisia, the U.S. Ambassador wrote, "Tunisia is a police state, with little freedom of expression or association, and serious human rights problems." Nevertheless, he recommended the U.S. continued funding Tunisia's military (5).



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The U.S. Military violated the U.N. Convention Against Torture by turning prisoners over to the new Iraqi Security Forces, an organization which, according to the State Department's own reports, has frequently perpetrated prisoner torture.

The Convention, which was ratified by the U.S. in 1994, forbids signatories from transferring a detainee to other countries "where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture." The Iraq War Logs describe thousands of reports of prisoner torture filed against the Iraqi Security Forces, hundreds of which include medical evidence. Methods of torture described include prisoners whipped with heavy cables across the feet, hung from ceiling hooks, having holes bored into their legs with electric drills, urinated upon, and sexually assaulted. A military order issued in 2004 directed U.S. troops not to investigate these allegations (6).

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U.S. taxpayer dollars helped support child trafficking when government contractor DynCorp threw a party for Afghan security recruits featuring boys purchased from pimps for entertainment. "Bacha bazi," or "boy play," is a practice in which young boys are dressed up in women's clothing, forced to dance for powerful men, and then sold for sex to the highest bidder. DynCorp was linked to child sex trafficking charges before this incident occurred (8.)



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The U.S. State Department endorsed an occasion when the Yemeni government lied to its people about U.S. participation in air strikes in December 2009 that resulted in civilian casualties. "We'll continue saying the bombs are ours, not yours," Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh told General David Petraeus in January, 2010. Saleh also said, "mistakes had been made" in the earlier strikes, lamented the use of U.S. cruise missiles that were "not very accurate," and welcomed the use of precision-guided bombs instead. Yemen's prime minister also joked about how his president had "lied" to the parliament about the strikes (7).

F I t .

A A t, t t ?

The U.S. Military attempted to thwart the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) by neglecting to release the video (now titled as Collateral Murder) depicting the killing of two Reuters reporters and ten other people. On July 12, 2007, U.S. soldiers manning an Apache helicopter shot and killed 12 individuals in Baghdad, Iraq. Two were Reuters reporters and two were civilians who stopped their van to help the wounded. Reuters news staff were shown the video two weeks after the incident, and then told that if they wanted to receive a copy of the video and other materials, they would have to make a FOIA request. Although Reuters filed the request shortly thereafter, it remained unfulfilled (9).



C t D p



The U.S. Government offered handouts to third-world countries in order to buy signatories for the adopted version of the Copenhagen Climate Accords, which holds the U.S. to lower standards than every other industrialized nation, including India, China and South Africa. U.S. diplomatic cables show the U.S. offered aid unrelated to climate issues to individual countries, persuading developing countries to break with regional bargaining groups and agree to the Accord (10).

H h t b

Leaked U.S. cables contain information about human rights abuses around the world, including many cases in which corrupt governments were trying to hide the truth from their own people. In specific cases, American- and British-based international corporations were implicated. These violations are well-documented and include countries the U.S. has publicly supported, including Tunisia, Columbia, Eritrea, India, Pakistan, Si Lanka, Botswana, Egypt, and Papua New Guinea.

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U.S. officials put strong, continued pressure on Germany not to pursue charges against CIA officers involved in the extraordinary rendition of a German citizen.

In January 2007, a German court issued arrest warrants for 13 CIA agents related to their rendition of a German citizen of Lebanese descent to Afghanistan, where he was tortured. The case against the agents was later dropped. Diplomatic cables written in the interim period shed some light on the reasons why. According to one German Justice Ministry (BMJ) official addressing concerns from the U.S. Ambassador, international arrest warrants could only be issued once the ministry had evaluated their legal soundness and "foreign policy implications" on a case-by-case basis. Another BMJ official assured the embassy that the cases would not be "handled as routine" and that any investigation would require a green light from Berlin (11).



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ENDNOTES:

(1) Scott Shane and Benjamin Weiser, "The Guantanamo Files: Judging Detainees' Risk, Often With Flawed Evidence," New York Times, April 24, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/25/world/guantanamo-files-flawed-evidence-for-assessing-risk.html>

(2) "US embassy cables: Don't pursue Guantánamo criminal case, says Spanish attorney general," guardian.co.uk, December 1, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/202776>.

(3) "Iraq War Logs Reveal 15,000 Previously Unlisted Civilian Deaths," guardian.co.uk, October 22, 2010,

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/22/true-civilian-body-count-iraq>

(4) Aled-Dilwyn Fisher, "Norway joined NATO in suppressing reports of civilian Afghan deaths," uruknet.info, February 21, 2011, <http://www.uruknet.info/?new=75223>.

(5) "US embassy cables: Tunisia - a US foreign policy conundrum," guardian.co.uk, December 7, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/217138>.

(6) Alex Spillius, "Wikileaks: Iraq War Logs show US ignored torture allegations," Telegraph, October 22, 2010. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/>

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(7) "Cable reveals US behind airstrike that killed 21 children in Yemen," The Raw Story, December 2, 2010, <http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2010/12/02/cable-reveals-airstrike-killed-21-children-yemen>.

(8) "Foreign contractors hired Afghan 'dancing boys', WikiLeaks cable reveals," guardian.co.uk, December 2, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/02/foreign-contractors-hired-dancing-boys>.

(9) Steven Clarke and Joseph Bamat, "Leaked video shows US military killing of civilians, Reuters staff," France 24, July 27, 2010, <http://>

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(10) "WikiLeaks cables reveal how US manipulated climate accord," guardian.co.uk, December 3, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/dec/03/wikileaks-us-manipulated-climate-accord>

(11) Matthias Gebauer and John Goetz, "The CIA's El-Masri Abduction: Cables Show Germany Caved to Pressure from Washington," Der Spiegel, December 9, 2010, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,733860,00.html>