

Guardian journalist negligently disclosed Cablegate passwords

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WIKILEAKS EDITORIAL

A Guardian journalist has negligently disclosed top secret WikiLeaks' decryption passwords to hundreds of thousands of unredacted unpublished US diplomatic cables.

Knowledge of the Guardian disclosure has spread privately over several months but reached critical mass last week. The unpublished WikiLeaks' material includes over 100,000 classified unredacted cables that were being analyzed, in parts, by over 50 media and human rights organizations from around the world.

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.

Over the past nine months, WikiLeaks has been releasing US diplomatic cables according to a carefully laid out plan to stimulate profound changes. A number of human rights groups, including Amnesty International, believe that the co-ordinated release of the cables contributed to triggering the Arab Spring. By forming partnerships with over 90 other media and human rights organizations WikiLeaks has been laying the ground for positive political change all over the world.

WikiLeaks then publishes, simultaneously with its partners, the underlying cables together with the politically explosive revelations. This way publications that are too frightened to publish the cables have the proof they need, and the public can check to make sure the claims are accurate.

Over time WikiLeaks has been building up, and publishing, the complete Cablegate "library"--the most significant political document ever published. The mammoth task of reading and lightly redacting what amounts to 3,000 volumes or 284 million words of global political history is shared by WikiLeaks and its partners. That careful work has been compromised as a result of the recklessness of the Guardian.

Revolutions and reforms are in danger of being lost as the unpublished cables spread to intelligence contractors and governments before the public. The Arab Spring would not have started in the manner it did if the Tunisian government of Ben Ali had copies of those WikiLeaks releases which helped to take down his government. Similarly, it is possible that the torturing Egyptian internal security chief, Suleiman--Washington's proposed replacement for Mubarak--would now be the acting ruler of Egypt, had he acquired copies of the cables that exposed his methods prior to their publication.

Indeed, it is one of the indelible stains on Hillary Clinton that she personally set course to forewarn dozens of corrupt leaders, including Hosni Mubarak, about some of the most powerful details of WikiLeaks' revelations to come.

Every day that the corrupt leadership of a country or organization knows of a pending WikiLeaks disclosure is a day spent planning how to crush revolution and reform.

Guardian investigations editor, David Leigh, recklessly, and without gaining our approval, knowingly disclosed the decryption passwords in a book published by the Guardian. Leigh states the book was rushed forward to be written in three weeks--the rights were then sold to Hollywood.

The following extract is from the Guardian book:

syndicated through Channel 4 (UK) and al Jazeera English and Arabic] “We could refuse, and simply go ahead with publication as planned. If you want us to do something for you, then you’ve got to do something for us as well.” He asked Assange to stop procrastinating, and hand over the biggest trove of all: the cables. Assange said, “I could give you half of them, covering the first 50% of the period.”

Leigh refused. All or nothing, he said. “What happens if you end up in an orange jump-suit en route to Guantánamo before you can release the full files?” **In return he would give Assange a promise to keep the cables secure**, and not to publish them until the time came. Assange had always been vague about timing: he generally indicated, however, that October would be a suitable date. He believed the US army’s charges against the imprisoned soldier Bradley Manning would have crystallised by then, and publication could not make his fate any worse. He also said, echoing Leigh’s gallows humour: “I’m going to need to be safe in Cuba first!” Eventually, Assange capitulated. Late at night, after a two-hour debate, he started the process on one of his little netbooks that would enable Leigh to download the entire tranche of cables. The Guardian journalist had to set up the PGP encryption system on his laptop at home across the other side of London. Then he could feed in a password. Assange wrote down on a scrap of paper:

[WikiLeaks: we have replaced the password with Xs]
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

“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 ‘XXXXXXX’ before the word ‘XXXXXX’ [WikiLeaks: so if the paper were seized, the password would not work without Leigh's co-operation] Can you remember that?” “I can remember that.” Leigh set off home, and successfully installed the PGP software.}

The Guardian disclosure is a violation of the confidentiality agreement between WikiLeaks and Alan Rusbridger, editor-in-chief of the Guardian, signed July 30, 2010. David Leigh is also Alan Rusbridger's brother in law, which has caused other Guardian journalists to claim that David