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# Wikileaks Is Suing the Guardian Over a Security Breach


The Guardian is accused of leaking a password that led to the release of secret cables

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Wikileaks is blaming the leak of over 250,000 secret US cables on a security breach caused by one-time cable publishing partner the *Guardian*. We originally reported that the newspaper Wikileaks was so angry with was the *New York Times*, but that's no longer the case. Wikileaks announced Wednesday evening they've "commenced pre-litigation action" against the paper for leaking a Wikileaks password

without their permission in a book by investigations reporter David Leigh that was published seven months ago. The original statement from Wikileaks said this:

A Guardian journalist has, in a previously undetected act of gross negligence or malice, and in violation of 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.

Wikileaks says, in an expanded statement, that David Leigh, "recklessly, and without gaining our approval, knowingly disclosed the decryption passwords in a book published by the Guardian." Wikileaks says they didn't pursue legal action sooner because they've, "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."

The leak of the cables, according to the *Guardian*, stems from a Twitter user who, "is believed to have found the information after acting on hints published in several media outlets and on the WikiLeaks Twitter feed, all of which cited a member of rival whistleblowing website OpenLeaks as the original source of the tipoffs."

The *Guardian* says the collection of cables was shared with them over a secure server for a few hours, but was then taken offline. The files were meant to be kept on computers not hooked up to the internet, an agreement Wikileaks says the *Guardian* admitted to breaking in a December meeting. The *Guardian* says a file with the entire collection of cables, "with the same password was republished later on

BitTorrent, a network typically used to distribute films and music. This file's contents were never publicised, nor was it linked online to WikiLeaks in any way."

Wikileaks says it severed ties with the *Guardian* in December after they found out they were plotting to publish the cables without Wikileaks' cooperation, and that they, "secretly passed the entire archive to Bill Keller of the *New York Times*, in September 2011, or before, knowingly destroying WikiLeaks plans to publish instead with the *Washington Post & McClatchy*." (Note: Wikileaks' editorial was published on August 31, 2011.)

A [link](#) with the uncensored passage of the book was [tweeted](#) from the official Wikileaks account:

[Leigh] 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:

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 people to theremember that?" "I can remember that." Leigh set off home, and successfully installed the PGP software. He typed in the lengthy password, and was gratified to be able to download a huge file from Assange's temporary website. Then he realized it was zipped up – compressed using a format called 7z which he had never heard of, and couldn't understand. He got back in his car and drove through the deserted London streets in the small hours, to Assange's headquarters in Southwick Mews. Assange smiled a little pityingly, and unzipped it for him.

The alteration of the password was given so no one could access the cables without Leigh's cooperation. In their statement, Wikileaks censored the password and changed all the characters to Xs.

The *Guardian* denied allegations that their actions caused a security breach in a statement:

"It's 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."

The Wikileaks Twitter account is now taking a vote over whether or not they're going to leak the uncensored 250,000 U.S. cables uncensored. The vote, determined by the hashtags WLvoteYes, or WLvoteNo, is reportedly tilting in favor of leaking the cables, by a margin of 100 to one.

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