

Wikileaks founder defends release of Afghan war files

July 26 2010



Australian founder of whistleblowing website, 'WikiLeaks', Julian Assange, speaks during a press conference in London. The founder of a website which published tens of thousands of leaked military files about the war in Afghanistan said Monday they showed that the "course of the war needs to change".

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Julian Assange of [Wikileaks](#) also used a press conference in London to state that "thousands" of [war](#) crimes may have been committed in Afghanistan.

"It is up to a court to decide clearly whether something is in the end a crime. That said, prima facie there does appear to be evidence of war

crimes in this material," he said.

He cited an example of a missile strike on a house which killed seven children.

When asked whether the leaks would have any bearing on planned international troop withdrawals in the next few years, he said: "I think it's too early to say yet.

"It's clear that it will shape understanding of what the past six years of war have been like and that the course of the war needs to change".

Asked what he hoped would come from the leaks, he added: "Hopefully a deep understanding and scrutiny of the war in [Afghanistan](#) and hopefully a change in policy about prosecution of the war and a deep consideration given... into how they want it to continue".

Wikileaks released the documents to three publications: The New York Times newspaper, Germany's Der Spiegel magazine and British newspaper The Guardian.

The most controversial allegations centre on claims that Pakistan, a key US ally, allows its spies to meet directly with the Taliban.

The leaks were strongly condemned by the White House, which said they could put lives at risk and threaten national security.

"We're familiar with groups whose abuse we expose attempting to criticise the messenger," Assange said. "We don't see any difference in the White House response to this case".

He also defended the sourcing and reliability of the documents.

"Just like any dealing with any source, you should exercise some common sense -- that doesn't mean that you should close your eyes," Assange said. "We have no reason to doubt the reliability of these documents".

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Citation: Wikileaks founder defends release of Afghan war files (2010, July 26) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-07-wikileaks-founder-defends-afghan-war.html>

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