

Amazon's UK site selling WikiLeaks excerpts

December 9 2010, By DANA WOLLMAN , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Portions of the diplomatic cables contained in WikiLeaks are available for sale on Amazon's U.K. website, an odd twist after the company ousted the organization from its hosting service.

Excerpts from some of the 250,000 sensitive documents were contained in a Kindle e-book self-published by an author listed as Heinz Duthel. The book isn't available in the U.S.; people in the U.K. can buy it for 7.37 pounds (\$11.60).

WikiLeaks has embarrassed Washington in recent weeks for exposing a trove of sensitive diplomatic documents, some of which contain brutally frank assessments of foreign governments. The e-book, viewed by The Associated Press in London, consists of excerpts along with reports on reaction to the releases from media and government officials. It also has a list of the cables by originating embassy.

Amazon later added a disclaimer to that effect to the book's product page.

"This book contains commentary and analysis regarding recent WikiLeaks disclosures, not the original material disclosed via the WikiLeaks website," it reads.

The e-book does contain the original WikiLeaks material, but more in the form of excerpts than as entire cables. In some respects, the e-book isn't going much beyond what a blog or a news organization might publish.

The title is an electronic book available for Amazon's Kindle e-reader and the company's software for reading Kindle books on mobile phones and computers. Amazon allows authors to submit their own works and shares revenue with them.

WikiLeaks has been migrating around the world, using Internet companies in different countries to host the site. Last week, Amazon.com Inc. ousted WikiLeaks from its servers, citing a violation of its terms of service.

Other U.S. companies have also attempted to distance themselves from the leak. MasterCard Inc., Visa Inc. and PayPal have all made it impossible for people to donate money to the organization behind WikiLeaks. A Visa credit card was used by the AP to buy the Kindle e-book, underscoring the difficulties private companies have trying to stop the flow of information.

WikiLeaks' website, founded by Julian Assange, allows people to access the documents directly instead of forcing them to rely on newspapers and other media organizations to reprint excerpts.

Duthel, the book's listed author, also sells self-published books such as "Julian Assange. The Whistleblower. Traitor or Hero?" and "Secret and Intelligence Service Encyclopedia." Another is "Discovering Asian Women."

This isn't the first time Amazon has come under fire for selling a controversial book. Last month, Amazon was found to be selling a self-published guide that offered advice to pedophiles, raising questions about how - and if - it vets the self-published books it sells. The book later disappeared, but it wasn't clear whether Amazon or the author had pulled it.

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