



Medical Association for Prevention of War

What has WikiLeaks revealed?

MAPW members highlight some of the significant revelations

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The material released by [WikiLeaks](http://wikileaks.ch/) is mind-boggling in its extent. Although we have seen only a small percentage so far, already it is difficult to adequately summarise even a small number of the thousands of revelations.

<http://wikileaks.ch/>

Here we offer a brief overview of some of the material – a starting point for an investigation into the areas that interest you.

Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

WikiLeaks has published over 390,000 secret field reports leaked from the US military detailing the many shocking realities of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Known as the 'Iraq war logs' and 'Afghan war logs,' the material covers both wars during the period 2004 to 2009.

Before publishing the material, WikiLeaks gave the *Guardian* (UK), the *New York Times* (US), and *Der Spiegel* (Germany) access to it, so these newspapers could verify the material's authenticity and assess its significance.

The websites of these three newspapers provide detailed coverage and analysis of the material.

Guardian: www.guardian.co.uk/media/wikileaks?INTCMP=SRCH

New York Times: www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/war-logs.html

Der Spiegel (in English):

Iraq war logs: www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,724026,00.html

Afghan war logs: www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,708314,00.html

Australia's involvement in Afghanistan

In December 2010, the big WikiLeaks revelation was of Kevin Rudd's true feelings, while prime minister, about the hopelessness of the war in Afghanistan, and how it "scares the hell" out of him. The revelations provided clear evidence that our prime minister was

knowingly putting young Australians in harm's way for cynical geopolitical reasons, rather than for any genuine commitment to 'world peace' or 'defeating terrorism.'

Perhaps this is nothing new: we do the emperor's bidding ... but the deceitful connivance and casual disregard for the lives of Australian soldiers is reprehensible and should be condemned.

US embassy cables

Released from 29 November 2010, this material includes over 250,000 leaked United States embassy cables from more than 250 US embassies and consulates around the world (including Australia).

The two Fairfax newspapers that broke the story of the leaked US embassy cables in Australia provide a webpage of relevant articles (including a selection of the actual cables).

The Age: www.theage.com.au/technology/wikileaks

Sydney Morning Herald: www.smh.com.au/technology/wikileaks

In commenting on the US cable leaks from an Australian perspective, Paul Barratt AO, former intelligence analyst and a former Secretary of the Department of Defence said, "There are many valid national security grounds for governments' withholding information from us, but they are not entitled to deceive us.... Perhaps the most serious case of deception relates to the prospects for the war in Afghanistan. The stock line from western governments is that they are optimistic, that things are going well, though perhaps not quite as well as we would like, that we are making progress. What we find from WikiLeaks is that the real assessment – no doubt shared by all our NATO allies – is quite different... This gap between the public statements and the government's real views is outrageous. The situation it suggests is that all western governments involved know the outlook in Afghanistan is very bleak, but none is prepared to confess this to its public... What the WikiLeaks cables are progressively revealing are patterns of behaviour on the part of our political leaders that involve very substantial breaches of trust. This is a matter of the highest importance." Read Mr Barratt's article covering what the leaked US embassy cables reveal about Australia's leaders, at:

<http://inside.org.au/what-the-wikileaks-cables-reveal-about-australias-leaders/>

For international coverage of the leaked US embassy cables, see:

Guardian: www.guardian.co.uk/media/wikileaks?INTCMP=SRCH

New York Times: www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/statesecrets.html

Der Spiegel: www.spiegel.de/international/topic/wikileaks_diplomatic_cables/

Australia's relationship with China

Malcolm Fraser provided [a thoughtful commentary](#) on the [revelation that Kim Beazley](#), in 2006 while he was opposition leader, pledged during a confidential conversation with the US ambassador that Australia would certainly join with the US in any war against China over Taiwan. Fraser explores the likely and disturbing outcome of such a war, without mentioning the possibility that nuclear weapons might be deployed under that scenario. Significantly, Fraser ends his piece by reiterating MAPW's consistent call that the support of both houses of parliament should be required before Australia becomes involved in any war.

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/politics/slavish-devotion-to-the-us-a-foreign-policy-folly-for-australia-20101213-18vec.html>

<http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/beazley-pledged-troops-to-help-us-in-a-war-with-china-20101207-18obt.html>

Mr Beazley's position becomes more significant in light of [a more recent cable which revealed that Kevin Rudd](#), while prime minister, advised the US to be prepared to deploy force against China if efforts to integrate China into the international community failed.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/kevin-rudds-plan-to-contain-beijing/story-fn59niix-1225966044004>

These are alarming revelations of the advice being provided to the US by our leaders. Had Mr Beazley, Mr Rudd, and those who advised them, carefully thought through the possible consequences of engaging militarily with China? What do they think would happen if the US and China actually went to war? Have they really failed to understand the devastating climate and famine impacts of even a limited nuclear exchange?

It would seem wiser, and more aligned with Australia's national interest, for our government to promote positive peaceful relations with China, rather than encourage preparations for a deterioration in the relationship.

2009 defence white paper

China

In MAPW's detailed response to the Rudd government's 2009 defence white paper, [Vision 2030: An alternative approach to Australian security](#), we drew attention to the government's aggressive militaristic rhetoric towards China, highlighting the possibility

that the significant increase in military expenditure budgeted in the white paper could fuel a regional arms race – something more likely to undermine rather than stabilise relations in the region.

<http://www.mapw.org.au/files/downloads/Vision%202030%20web%20version.pdf>

Costings

[“The United States doubts Australia’s ability to pay for its biggest military build-up since World War II, with one of the nation’s most senior defence officials unable to explain how costings in the defence white paper were made.”](#) This observation by the US is only one of many serious shortcomings in the defence white paper. A more fundamental problem is the fact that major new military acquisitions were recommended in the first place, given that the paper itself says Australia faces no serious threat of attack. Australian resources would be far better spent implementing measures to promote genuine human security in our region and beyond, particularly on measures to reduce the impact of climate change. Major weapons acquisitions are an expensive and dangerous distraction from the real threats.

<http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/us-said-canberra-was-all-at-sea-over-defence-budget-20101213-18vhv.html>

Missile defence

‘[White paper coordinator] Mr Pezzullo...is reported as telling US officials the language in the white paper section on missile development had been carefully crafted to appeal to Labor’s Left “but in reality will allow the Government of Australia to continue its missile defence research and development cooperation with the United States.”’ [Canberra Times, 9 December 2010.](#)

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/missile-text-acts-as-decoy-for-labors-left/2021001.aspx>

Yet the defence white paper was clear in its statement (para 9.103) that “The Government is opposed to the development of a unilateral national missile defence system by any nation...”. So Mr Pezzullo’s reported comment to US officials is inconsistent with the reassurance given in the white paper that Australia will not support this destabilising development. Given this revelation, it is worth asking whose interests are being served by the white paper, Australia’s or the US’s, when Australians are apparently being deceived in this way.

North Korea

"Downer wanted North Korea on its knees," *Canberra Times*, 22 December 2010. ["Let the whole place go to shit. That's the best thing that could happen", former foreign minister Downer told the commander of US and United Nations forces in South Korea at a meeting in Canberra in 2005](http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/downers-advice-to-bush-on-n-korea-starve-them-20101221-194fx.html)
<http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/downers-advice-to-bush-on-n-korea-starve-them-20101221-194fx.html> .

If Mr Downer's comment has been reported correctly it shows a callous disregard for the welfare of the civilian population of North Korea. In addition, as foreign minister, one might have hoped he would have a more sophisticated approach to resolving regional tensions than letting a country "go to shit." With such irresponsible comments in private, it's hard to imagine a more enlightened foreign policy towards North Korea emerging from the same mouth.

Nuclear threats

Possible nuclear cooperation between North Korea and Burma

[The Australian has reported](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/wikileaks/burmas-nuclear-plans-exposed-by-wikileaks/story-fn775xjq-1225969238522) that the US cables reveal ongoing concern that Burmese authorities are developing a nuclear weapons capability in collaboration with North Korea.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/wikileaks/burmas-nuclear-plans-exposed-by-wikileaks/story-fn775xjq-1225969238522>

Possible nuclear conflict in the Middle East

On 13 December 2010, the *Age* reported that "Australian intelligence agencies fear that Israel may launch military strikes against Iran and Tehran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities could draw the US and Australia into a potential nuclear war in the Middle East."

"Australia's peak intelligence agency has also privately undercut the hardline stance towards Tehran of the US, Israeli and Australian governments, saying its nuclear program is intended to deter attack and it is a mistake to regard Iran as a rogue state."

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/nuclear-war-our-fear-of-iran-20101212-18u0q.html>

Enriched uranium 'gift' to Pakistan goes missing

[Another leak revealed](#) the incredibly fragile state of play between Pakistan and USA, showing the USA's unsuccessful attempts to retrieve a quantity of enriched uranium which had been a gift from the US to Pakistan for research under a 1960s program called Atoms for Peace. This revelation confirms a long-standing position of MAPW that the

civilian and military nuclear industries are inextricably intertwined. Providing the raw materials for nuclear weapons construction to other countries, no matter what the intention for doing so at the time, can and probably will lead to negative consequences, even generations later.

<http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/explosive-revelations-expose-us-limits-20101210-18sxn.html>

Spying on the UN

"..cable that revealed that Washington was running a spying campaign aimed at the secretary-general Ban Ki-moon and the rest of the UN leadership, as well as the permanent security council representatives.... looking for UN officials' passwords and credit card numbers, even DNA samples..." *Guardian Weekly*, 10-16 December 2010. See also New York Times article: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/29/world/29spy.html?_r=1 .

Spying on one of the world's most important international institutions, arguably the most important, demonstrates a disturbing readiness on the part of the US to abuse its position of leadership in the world for its own self-interest.

The Indonesian military and West Papua

"The United States fears Indonesian government neglect, rampant corruption and human rights abuses are stoking unrest in its troubled province of West Papua." *Canberra Times*, 23 December 2010 (also [online at the Sydney Morning Herald](#)). If this is so, it seems illogical that the US would cave in to Indonesian demands to lift its ban on US cooperation with the Indonesian army's Kopassus unit, a unit that is widely accused of grave human rights violations in West Papua and elsewhere. But according to [diplomatic cables published by the Sydney Morning Herald](#) from WikiLeaks, the lifting of the US ban on training with Kopassus was made a condition of Obama's recent visit to Jakarta.

<http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/indonesian-army-linked-to-drugs-20101222-195kx.html>

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/editorial/cooperation-at-a-price-20101219-191uj.html>

These cables confirm what NGOs have been telling their governments and the media for years – that it is the Indonesian military (the TNI) that is one of the main problems in West Papua.

Given recent reports of the torture of West Papuans by the TNI plus the information from these cables about the activities of the TNI, it is time for the Australian government to

re-think its ties with the TNI and to send a fact-finding mission to West Papua to investigate the human rights situation.

Playing politics with asylum seekers and refugees

An [article in the Sydney Morning Herald](#), says the leaked US embassy cables reveal that the US was sharply critical of former prime minister Kevin Rudd's handling of the asylum seeker issue. The US embassy also accused both Labor and the Coalition of playing partisan politics with the issue.

<http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/us-slams-political-games-on-refugees-20101215-18y9s.html>

"According to one cable obtained by WikiLeaks...an unnamed 'key Liberal party strategist' told American diplomats...that the issue of asylum seekers was 'fantastic' for the Coalition and 'the more boats that come the better'..." *Canberra Times*, 16 December 2010. It is not news to Australians that the fate of desperate people has been used for political gain, on both sides of politics, but this reported statement plumbs new depths of callousness.

Unquestioning support for Israel

"Israel happy with Rudd, Gillard.....Israeli ambassador Yuval Rotem was greatly pleased with Mr Rudd's 'very supportive' attitude towards Israel's position in the Middle East peace processMr Rotem was also very pleased with.....present Prime Minister Julia Gillard," *Canberra Times*, 13 December 2010:

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/israel-happy-with-rudd-gillard/2023596.aspx> .

These comments serve as a reminder of the Australian government's apparent blind support for Israeli actions and its abject failure to uphold basic human rights, such as those that were flagrantly violated during Israel's attacks on Gaza in 2008-09 and Israel's actions before and since.

The oft-mentioned 'Middle East peace process' does not exist. Serious action to undertake such a process would begin with demands that Israel cease its building of Israeli settlements on occupied territory. A balanced approach on the part of the Australian government could do much to promote justice for the people of Gaza, and peace for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Senator Mark Arbib

According to a [Sydney Morning Herald report](#) "Federal Labor minister and right-wing powerbroker Mark Arbib is one of the US embassy's valued confidential contacts, providing inside information and commentary on the workings of the government and the ALP."

<http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/yank-in-the-ranks-20101208-18pwi.html>

This revelation, like many WikiLeaks has provided, has not received the attention it warrants. It amounts to confirmation that an Australian government minister is abusing his position and aiding a foreign government. The fact that Senator Arbib has not been dismissed for such a serious abuse of power perhaps indicates how 'normal' it has become for Australian interests to be ignored in favour of those of the US.

Pressure on Armenia over arms trading with Iran

A December 2008 letter from then US deputy secretary of state, John Negroponte, to the Armenian president, Serzh Sargsyan, concerned an arms shipment to Iran via Armenia. In it, Negroponte warns of sanctions up to and including a discontinuation of US aid to ArmeniaSargsyan is forced to back down. Reported in *Guardian Weekly*, 3 December 2010.

While a reduction of arms shipments everywhere would be a good thing, US pressure of this sort is hypocrisy writ large, especially when one considers the enormous scale of US weapons exports, and the number of repressive regimes that have been propped up militarily by the US government.

Concluding remarks

The underlying message from the WikiLeaks revelations is the critical importance of continuing to build a strong and diverse civil society: a solid network of conscientious individuals and organisations that endeavours to drive political policy – foreign, military and security – in a safer direction.

WikiLeaks is contributing to the power of the people – both by enhancing our understanding of *realpolitik* and by exposing the dishonesty and outright danger created by unchecked political machinations (amply evidenced by recent outrageous calls for the murder of Julian Assange by some prominent people in American political and media circles).

WikiLeaks may be an impure and relatively undifferentiated information service, which certainly has some negative capability, but in a world of media monopolisation, embedded journalists and lobby-driven democracy, it is proving to be an important ally to civil society.

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Comments welcome, to mapw@mapw.org.au

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