



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on February 27, 2012

WikiLeaks Starts Massive E-mail Dump From Intelligence Firm Stratfor

The anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks announced on Monday it would be working with over two dozen media organizations around the world to publish millions of e-mails from the Austin, Texas-based private intelligence-gathering firm Stratfor. And scandal is already brewing. The documents reveal the inner workings of a company that offers controversial services to some of the world's top corporations and government agencies from around the globe, the organization said. Everything from Stratfor's sources to its information-gathering methods is expected to be made public.



The e-mails, which span from mid-2004 to last year, are set to be released in the coming months as part of WikiLeaks' "[Global Intelligence Files](#)" campaign. According to the official announcement, the documents expose Stratfor's "web of informers, pay-off structure, payment-laundering techniques and psychological methods."

The documents also offer details about the U.S. government's attacks against the anti-secrecy group, the statement said. And Stratfor's own efforts to "subvert" WikiLeaks — and to profit from the fear generated among governments and corporations by the prospect of potential leaks — are exposed as well. There are reportedly thousands of e-mails related to the whistleblowing organization and its founder.

"Here we have a private intelligence firm, relying on informants from the US government, foreign intelligence agencies with questionable reputations, and journalists," WikiLeaks chief Julian Assange [told](#) Reuters. "What is of grave concern is that the targets of this scrutiny are, among others, activist organizations fighting for a just cause."

According to WikiLeaks, the e-mails expose the "revolving door" that exists in the field of intelligence, too. "Government and diplomatic sources from around the world give Stratfor advance knowledge of global politics and events in exchange for money," the group said, citing the e-mails.

The documents also purportedly show how Stratfor's global networks of informants — government employees, embassy staff, and even journalists — are paid through Swiss banks and pre-paid credit cards. The company relies on a mix of covert and overt sources for information, WikiLeaks reported.

In its announcement of the latest campaign to shed light on the inner workings of secretive institutions, WikiLeaks quoted from what it said was a December 6, 2011, e-mail from Stratfor CEO George Friedman. The message to analyst Reva Bhalla reportedly explained how to exploit an Israeli intelligence asset who was providing information on the medical condition of Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez.

"[Y]ou have to take control of him. Control means financial, sexual or psychological control," Friedman



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was quoted as saying in the e-mail. "This is intended to start our conversation on your next phase."

Some documents cited by the organization reveal how Stratfor spied on activists at the behest of mega-corporations, WikiLeaks said. Also detailed in the e-mails was a secret scheme involving a top Goldman Sachs executive to use Stratfor's insider information to profit by trading certain financial instruments.

Other e-mails purportedly show that the company realized offering "cash bribes" for information was a risky endeavor, according to WikiLeaks. One document even mentioned that Stratfor was hiring legal counsel to ensure it did not run afoul of a U.S. statute that criminalizes the use of bribes overseas in business deals.

"We are retaining a law firm to create a policy for Stratfor on the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act," company boss Friedman reportedly wrote to employees last August. "I don't plan to do the perp walk and I don't want anyone here doing it either."

Media outlets working with WikiLeaks on the project have already started to release preliminary assessments of the documents. And more than a few analysts have concluded that the "global intelligence" outfit was amateurish, uninformed, and possibly even unethical.

"Notably, and contrary to the impression Stratfor tries to project, the emails reveal a corporation that has organizational issues, at times shockingly uninformed, and over-dependent on certain sources in manufacturing their predictions," [wrote](#) Yazan al-Saadi with the Lebanon-based *Al Akhbar*. The report also said, citing e-mails, that the firm was not as informed as it would like others to believe.

"Stratfor is an institution that is ideologically based on neo-conservative ideas of pragmatism. There is an underlying sense of delight for the global power projected by the United States," the *Al Akhbar* piece explained, noting that top officials within the "private CIA" firm are disciples of [notorious neocons](#) like Leo Strauss. "More pointedly, there is a total disconnect to actual realities and vast complexities of the regions and topics they cover."

Stratfor promptly denounced the leak in a statement and suggested files could have been manipulated. "Some of the emails may be forged or altered to include inaccuracies; some may be authentic," the company said Monday in a [press release](#). "We will not validate either. Nor will we explain the thinking that went into them."

It also emphasized that the e-mails were written casually and there was no expectation they would be seen by anyone other than the sender and recipient. "They should be read as such," the statement said, apologizing to subscribers for the breach but promising to continue publishing "geopolitical analysis" for clients.

While the precise origin of the leak remained somewhat uncertain, the company tacitly acknowledged that the e-mails were likely obtained by hackers who compromised Stratfor's systems late last year. "This is a deplorable, unfortunate — and illegal — breach of privacy," it said, calling the hackers "thieves." "As with last year's hack, the release of these emails is a direct attack on Stratfor. This is another attempt to silence and intimidate the company, and one we reject."

WikiLeaks did not explain how it obtained the files. But in a twitter message, [hackers](#) associated with "[Anonymous](#)" took credit for stealing the e-mails and supplying them to WikiLeaks. Last year, a batch of credit card and subscriber information obtained by hacking Stratfor was also published online.

The significance of the documents will become clear over the coming weeks as journalists and the public work to sift through the approximately five million e-mails, WikiLeaks said. Some documents



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have already been publicly released, including an e-mail chain dealing with Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt — a regular [Bilderberg meeting](#) attendee — and documents related to drug-money laundering through major U.S. banks.

WikiLeaks founder and chief Assange, an Australian, is currently [in the U.K. fighting](#) extradition to Sweden, where he is wanted for questioning in an [odd but supposedly unrelated](#) sex investigation. U.S. prosecutors are also reportedly seeking to indict him for violating the Espionage Act of 1917 as furious and fearful officials have taken to making [hysterical statements](#) about the supposed danger posed by leaks.

The alleged source of a massive leak of American diplomatic cables and war videos published by WikiLeaks, Army PFC Bradley Manning, is [currently being prosecuted](#) on over 20 charges including “aiding the enemy.” If convicted, he could face life in prison.

Late last year, WikiLeaks began releasing documents related to what it calls the “[mass surveillance industry](#).” Those files exposed mostly Western companies supplying espionage equipment — presumably to spy on and eliminate dissidents — to brutal regimes and mass murderers around the world.

Since it began its operations, WikiLeaks has exposed global corruption, lies, and treachery at the highest levels of business and government. In the process, however, it has led to unprecedented calls by officials for new restrictions on [free speech](#) and [online freedom](#).

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