



WikiLeaks Publishes Pentagon “Detainee Policies”

In [a statement released to the press](#), Wikileaks has announced a new plan to publish over 100 classified documents relating to standard operating procedures (SOP) established by the Department of Defense pertaining to the treatment of detainees at military prisons. The [New York Daily News reports](#) that in the statement accompanying the latest document dump, “WikiLeaks criticized regulations it said had led to abuse and impunity.”



Wikileaks is calling the cache the “Detainee Policies,” and in the press release they claim the purpose of the publication of the documents is to aid human rights investigators in researching “policies of accountability” as set forth in the Defense Department directives included in the release.

The statement, attributed to Wikileaks founder and editor-in-chief Julian Assange, reads: “The ‘Detainee Policies’ show the anatomy of the beast that is post-9/11 detention, the carving out of a dark space where law and rights do not apply, where persons can be detained without a trace at the convenience of the U.S. Department of Defense.” And: “It shows the excesses of the early days of war against an unknown ‘enemy’ and how these policies matured and evolved” resulting in “the permanent state of exception that the United States now finds itself in, a decade later.”

The documents will be released over the course of a month and will focus primarily on rules governing three prisons maintained by the U.S. armed forces: Camp Bucca (near Umm Qasar, Iraq), Abu Ghraib (also in Iraq), and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

Among the information that will be released by Wikileaks is a 2005 document called “Policy on Assigning Detainee Internment Serial Numbers.” As described by Wikileaks, “This document is concerned with discreetly ‘disappearing’ detainees into the custody of other U.S. government agencies while keeping their names out of U.S. military central records — by systematically holding off from assigning a prisoner record number.” Although it isn’t explicit in the Wikileaks statement, this document seems to refer to the transfer of U.S. prisoners in and out of so-called “black site” prisons run by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, several civil liberties were effectively revoked purportedly as a response to the threat of terrorism. Due process — the right of an accused to face his accuser, know the charges placed against him, and to defend himself against those charges before an impartial judge — was among those abridged rights.

The CIA was appropriately criticized for the practice of kidnapping suspects and flying them to prisons known as “black sites.” “[Black sites](#)” is the name given to the officially unconfirmed network of secret prisons located throughout the world used by the CIA to imprison and interrogate individuals suspected of committing or conspiring to commit terrorist activities. These facilities are built outside of the jurisdiction of the U.S. government and thus are not subject to American laws against torture.

Persons accused by the U.S. government of being “enemy combatants” became subject to



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“extraordinary rendition” and — once located and captured — shipped off to one of the prisons for questioning, where the detainees were often reportedly subjected to inhumane tactics to illicit responses from them. President George W. Bush [admitted the existence of the secret prisons in 2006](#), the same year they were supposedly shuttered and all the inmates transferred to Guantanamo. After that, it was reported that the policy of maintaining the sites was abandoned in 2009.

Another document released is a 2001 outline of procedures for [“apprehending and returning escaped detainees”](#) from other U.S. military prisons in Europe.

There is also a 2004 [“SOP for Rules of Engagement at Camp Bucca.”](#) In that document, U.S. servicemen are instructed to only engage with civilians when necessary for self-defense. “You may engage persons who commit hostile acts or show hostile intent with the force necessary to counter the hostile act or demonstrated hostile intent and to protect U.S. Forces,” the directions instruct regarding the only appropriate interaction with civilians.

[A blog called “In These Times”](#) points out an apparent violation of this directive as evidenced by a previous Wikileaks disclosure:

To judge by a previous WikiLeaks release, that doctrine was not followed — the video released in 2010, [Collateral Murder](#), famously captures U.S. military opening fire on civilians they believed to be insurgents in the suburb of New Baghdad, [killing at least a dozen](#), including two Reuters staff, and injuring others.

As [we have chronicled](#), PFC Bradley Manning is the alleged source of the *Collateral Murder* video and he has been imprisoned for over 900 days awaiting trial on the merits of those and other charges.

As for Julian Assange, he has fared only slightly better. [As The New American recently reported](#), the 41-year-old Australian has been living since June in the Ecuadorian embassy in London. Assange’s legal status is still up in the air, precisely where it has been since August 16 when the government of Ecuador granted him asylum.

Britain responded by laying siege to the Ecuadorian embassy in London, threatening to storm the building and apprehend Assange. The British government dismissed Ecuador’s act to protect Assange, insisting that he remains a fugitive from justice.

In his latest attempt to expose previously classified military manuals to the light of internet publication, Assange hopes to “provide a more complete understanding of the instructions given to captors as well as the ‘rights’ afforded to detainees.”

These revelations are endowed with more than just historical significance given the current state of U.S. law, particularly the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The NDAA threatens to stick the label of “detainee” on any American suspected by the president of posing a threat to the security of the homeland. Specifically, the NDAA grants the president the power to order the military to apprehend and indefinitely detain any American citizen he considers a belligerent.

Accordingly, while the latest Wikileaks disclosures may deal with past issues of detainee treatment, similar principles might soon govern the way American citizens are handled in the future by their military guards.

Photo of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange



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