



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on August 2, 2012

WikiLeaks' Syria Files: Embarrassing to West, Irrelevant in Syria

WikiLeaks' "Syria Files," 2.4 million e-mails purloined from anonymous Syrian government sources, seem destined to have a greater impact on the West than on Syria. The headlines thus far have left a black mark on the U.S.-based *Vogue* magazine as well as the New York City-based public relations firm Brown Lloyd James.



The PR firm had [suggested](#) to the Syrian government an "[open hands initiative](#)" approach to the protests already evident in May 2011, and asked that Syrian First Lady Asma al-Assad get involved in the public relations effort. Brown Lloyd James' contract reportedly resulted in the *Vogue* magazine [puff-piece](#) "A Rose in the Desert," a propaganda photo-shoot and profile that the magazine took off the Web after its propaganda purpose [became widely known](#).

Italian technology conglomerate Selex also found itself in the public opinion crosshairs. The Spanish newspaper *Publico* [reported](#) July 6 that "Italian Selex Communications and its partner Intracom Telecom Greco-Russian installed communications technology for military use" in Syria, especially the TETRA secure communications system that is now likely being used to organize against protesters. *Publico* also noted that the Italian computer conglomerate [helped refine the TETRA system for the Iranian government](#) as well.

When WikiLeaks began releasing its "Syria Files" July 3 (the organization is continuing to release the files in stages), the organization's spokesman [boasted](#) that "the Syria files shine a light on the inner workings of the Syrian government and economy, but they also reveal how the West and Western companies say one thing and do another."

The latter part of the above statement may be the greatest legacy of the "Syria Files," as Syria was not prepared to make maximum use of the WikiLeaks files. Unlike the highly wired and highly educated Tunisia, Syria is near the bottom of the Arabic world in Internet connectivity — "4,469,000 Internet users in Syria as of June 2011 for a 19.8% Internet penetration rate," according to [Wikipedia](#). Only Yemen and Iraq have a lower wired percentage of the population in the Arab world.

Unlike the WikiLeaks release in advance of the Tunisian revolution (which [did help spark that nation's revolution](#)), the July 3 release of the Syrian files was far too late to spark the Syrian revolt. By the time the documents were published, the Syrian protests had already been underway for a year. Indeed, the [military phase](#) of the revolution had already been underway for months.



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What is clear from the Syrian civil war is the heavy price of gun control laws in a nation. Only [three percent of Syrian citizens were authorized to possess firearms](#), mostly only members of the ruling Baathist Party and its friends. As a result, government forces have been able to [torture](#) protesters with impunity, and even to [kill them](#). In one video published by the London *Guardian* last year, a protester said he was [told](#) by government forces detaining him: “You can’t defend yourself. It’s too easy, we can kill you.” Another [asked](#) the English reporter: “People being faced by the army, by weapons, how do they resist?” Of course, where the opposition has gained access to weapons, it has engaged in [murder](#) as well.

Finally, the “Syria Files” reveal the close connection between the Assad regime’s Baath Party and the Syrian Communist Party. The Syrian Communist Party remains solidly behind the Assad regime, declaring in a June 2011 [e-mail](#) that “this attack on Syria, which takes multiple faces such as political pressure, military threats, economic sabotage, and hatching conspiracies to bring out radical transformations to change Syrian national face, including the overthrow of the current regime which based on the wide national alliance its primary aim to protect and strengthen national sovereignty.” The Communist Party [communique](#) said of the Assad regime: “Syria was and still forms the main obstacle in the Arabs against enslavement [under a] new great Middle East plan.” The Syrian Communist Party also condemned Islamic parties arising across the Middle East, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. “Turkey embraces reactionary groups that disguised by religion like Muslim Brotherhood, which share the ruling party in Turkey its thought and loyalty to imperialism,” the Syrian Communist Party Central Committee [ranted](#).



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