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August 5, 2010

# U.S. Tells WikiLeaks to Return Afghan War Logs

By **ERIC SCHMITT**

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon demanded on Thursday that [WikiLeaks](#) “do the right thing” and remove from its Web site tens of thousands of classified documents about the war in Afghanistan, and return to the military thousands of others that it had not yet made public.

Geoff Morrell, the Pentagon press secretary, said the Web site’s [disclosure last week of a six-year archive of some 77,000 documents](#) gave the [Taliban](#) and other militant groups insights into American military tactics and techniques, showed how the United States protects its troops in war zones and revealed the names of Afghan informants and how the military cultivates them.

Most of Mr. Morrell’s briefing focused on the information WikiLeaks had already made public. But Pentagon officials are especially concerned about 15,000 additional documents that WikiLeaks has withheld so far to remove identifying information.

“Public disclosure of additional Defense Department classified information can only make the damage worse,” Mr. Morrell told reporters at the Pentagon. “We are asking them to do the right thing. We hope they will honor our demands and comply with our demands.”

Mr. Morrell’s appeal is the Obama administration’s latest response to the disclosure, which has set off a criminal inquiry by the Army and the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#), prompted a sweeping Pentagon review of the documents to hunt for any information damaging to troop safety and national security, and increased pressure on [President Obama](#) to defend his war strategy.

Mr. Morrell said the Pentagon had formed a team of 80 analysts from the military and the F.B.I. who are working around the clock to [vet the documents for damaging information](#). So far the team, which is expected to increase to about 125 people in the coming days, has conducted about 400 “key word” searches through the 77,000 disclosed documents.

When those searches turn up information, Mr. Morrell said, it is set aside for further analysis. After this initial review is completed, the Pentagon will conduct a separate “page by page, word by word” review of each and every document, he said.

When the teams find information “of concern,” the Pentagon notifies the foreign government involved, he said. If the information identifies Afghans who provided information to allied troops or otherwise associate with the troops, the military notifies its headquarters in Kabul, which in turn is taking undisclosed steps to safeguard those people.

“I can’t say we’ve seen any direct impacts here yet,” an American officer in eastern Afghanistan said this week of the disclosure. “On the other hand, this is pure gold if you know how to read them and what you’re looking for. Without confirming or denying anything posted, it amounts to our playbook for the past several years. If we had similar insight into insurgent operations, we could use it to great effect.”

Mr. Morrell acknowledged that given WikiLeaks’ past history of disclosing confidential information, he did not have high hopes that the organization would comply with the Defense Department’s demand.

Mr. Morrell said that if asking WikiLeaks respectfully did not work, the Pentagon would resort to other steps, which he did not describe. “We will figure out what other alternatives we have to compel them to do the right thing,” he said.

When asked why the Pentagon waited until now to ask WikiLeaks to return the undisclosed documents and remove the posted information from its Web site, Mr. Morrell said senior officials had been deliberating about what steps to take.

“The only acceptable course is for WikiLeaks to take steps immediately to return all versions of all of these documents to the U.S. government and permanently delete them from its Web site, computers and records,” he said.

Neither Julian Assange, an Australian computer specialist who founded WikiLeaks, nor a spokesman for the Web site replied to e-mail messages on Thursday requesting comment on the Pentagon demand.

The New York Times, the British newspaper The Guardian and the German magazine Der Spiegel, after being given early access by WikiLeaks, published excerpts but excluded those that identified individuals or compromised operations. The Times also agreed to forward a request by the administration urging WikiLeaks not to post online any documents that would put informants in jeopardy.

Last week, WikiLeaks posted an enormous, 1.4-gigabyte file on a file-sharing network and on the Web page where it published the Afghan war logs. The file is encrypted and entitled “insurance file.” Cryptome, another Web site that posts government documents, said it was making a copy of the encrypted file and speculated that it might contain other confidential documents, “pre-positioned for public release” via a password that would be made public in the event that WikiLeaks was taken down.

The military has charged an intelligence analyst, Pfc. [Bradley Manning](#), with downloading large amounts of classified information from a computer at a base in Iraq and sending it to WikiLeaks, which operates from servers scattered across multiple countries and solicits “classified, censored or otherwise restricted material of political, diplomatic or ethical significance.”

Military officials have said that Army investigators [also consider Private Manning](#) a “person of interest” in the investigation into the Web site’s most recent disclosures.

*Charlie Savage contributed reporting.*