

Egypt deployed agents to counter Iran

AFP, Washington

Egypt's spy master revealed his service recruited agents in Iraq and Syria to counter Iranian support for militants in his country, according to US diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks.

Omar Suleiman told US top military commander Admiral Michael Mullen in a 2009 meeting that Iran had tried to recruit Bedouins to smuggle weapons into Hamas-controlled Gaza and that Egyptian security had rounded up a cell of Lebanon's Iranian-backed Hezbollah.

"Iran must pay the price for its actions and not be allowed to interfere in regional affairs," the US Cairo embassy cable published this week, dated April 30, 2009, quoted Suleiman as telling Admiral Michael Mullen.

"If you want Egypt to cooperate with you on Iran, we will... It would take a big burden off our shoulders," Suleiman is quoted as saying in the cable.



A US captain silhouetted at the Bagram prison, north of Kabul, during a media tour on November 15 last year. Yesterday leaked American diplomatic cables revealed that Afghan President Karzai had ordered the release of numerous dangerous criminals and drug traffickers detained by US-led coalition forces. The latest cable strikes at the heart of Western fears that high-level corruption within the Afghan government and judiciary is undermining the nine-year war against the Taliban.

PHOTO: AFP

Leak sparks alarm over diplomacy

AP, Jerusalem

Is diplomacy in danger?

The torrent of condemnation heaped on WikiLeaks from around the globe did suggest a widespread sense -- among government officials, but also among the sometimes more jaded observer and analyst class -- that in releasing US diplomatic documents the group crossed a dangerous line.

The prime minister of Israel, a man hardly accustomed to representing global consensus, on Monday found himself in lockstep with most of his peers as he warned that statecraft itself was imperiled by a reality in which no secret is safe if it is written.

"It will be more difficult for talented American diplomats to put into cables and reports things they once would have," Benjamin Netanyahu said. Governments would more likely hoard information, he warned, restricting the circle of people in the know to minimize the chances of a leak.

It is a delicate message for elected leaders to make, of course, because it depends on the proposition that there is a limit to what the people should know, or at least when they should know it.

Netanyahu argued that the ability to communicate under a cloak of secrecy was critical to Israel's ability to reach a peace deal with Egypt in 1979. Had the Israeli public known that Prime Minister Menachem Begin was preparing to cede the entire Sinai desert, captured in 1967, the foment might have scuttled the emerging agreement, Netanyahu suggested.

Hillary should resign

Chavez insists

AFP, Caracas

Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez Monday called on US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to resign after the leak of embarrassingly candid US diplomatic correspondence by WikiLeaks.

"The empire stands naked... Mrs Clinton should resign," Chavez said in a speech, using his favourite description of the United States. "It's the least you can do: resign, along with those other delinquents working in the State Department."

Chavez zeroed in on a diplomatic cable with a request to the US embassy in Argentina for information on President Cristina Kirchner's "mental health." The message asked if she was taking medication for "nerves and stress."

"Somebody should study Mrs Clinton's mental stability," said Chavez.

WikiLeaks homes in on US bank

REUTERS, Washington

The founder of whistle-blower website WikiLeaks plans to release tens of thousands of internal documents from a major US bank early next year, Forbes Magazine reported yesterday.

Julian Assange declined in an interview with Forbes to identify the bank, but he said that he expected that the disclosures, which follow his group's release of US military and diplomatic documents, would lead to investigations.

"We have one related to a bank coming up, that's a megaleak. It's not as big a scale as the Iraq material, but it's either tens or hundreds of thousands of documents depending on how you define it," Assange said in the interview posted on the Forbes website.

He declined to identify the bank, describing it only as a major US bank that is still in existence.

Asked what he wanted to be the result of the disclosure, he replied: "I'm not sure. It will give a true and representative insight into how banks behave at the executive level in a way that will stimulate investigations and reforms, I presume."

He compared this release to emails that were

unveiled as a result of the collapse of disgraced energy company Enron Corp.

"This will be like that. Yes, there will be some flagrant violations, unethical practices that will be revealed, but it will also be all the supporting decision-making structures and the internal executive ethos... and that's tremendously valuable," Assange said.

"You could call it the ecosystem of corruption. But it's also all the regular decision making that turns a blind eye to and supports unethical practices: the oversight that's not done, the priorities of executives, how they think they're fulfilling their own self-interest," he said.

Assange also told the magazine that his group has material on many businesses and governments, including in Russia, and that it has some documents on pharmaceutical companies, which he did not identify.

More than 250,000 cables were obtained by the whistle-blower website and given to the New York Times and other media groups, which published stories on Sunday exposing the inner workings of US diplomacy, including candid and embarrassing assessments of world leaders.

YESTERDAY'S KEY LEAKS

The activist website WikiLeaks continued to publish a series of stolen US State Department cables yesterday, embarrassing Washington and riling foreign governments exposed in the documents.

CHINA LOSES PATIENCE WITH N KOREA

China is exasperated with North Korea and some in Beijing feel their erratic neighbour is losing strategic value and will one day reunite with South Korea.

Last year, the Chinese ambassador to Kazakhstan, Cheng Guoping, told a US envoy that Beijing regards North Korea's nuclear programme as "very troublesome."

The ambassador "said China hopes for peaceful reunification in the long-term, but he expects the two countries to remain separate in the short-term."

KUWAIT: 'DUMP TERROR SUSPECTS BACK IN AFGHANISTAN'

Kuwait's interior minister told a US ambassador his country did not want Kuwaiti terror suspects held in Guantanamo Bay to return.

The exchange between Sheikh Jaber Khaled al-Sabah and the US envoy to Kuwait, which took place in February last year.

"If they are rotten, they are rotten and the best thing to do is get rid of them," the minister said.

"You picked them up in Afghanistan: You should drop them off in Afghanistan, in the middle of the war zone."

SAUDI ARABIA: 'TAG TERROR SUSPECTS'

Saudi King Abdullah proposed implanting Guantanamo detainees with electronic chips to monitor their movements after their release.

"I've just thought of something," Abdullah blurted during a March 2009 meeting with White House counter-terrorism advisor John Brennan.



The king proposed the prisoners be implanted with electronic microchips so that after their release they can be tracked "with Bluetooth" technology.

EGYPT: 'FORGET DEMOCRACY IN IRAQ'

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak advised the United States in 2008 to "forget" about democracy in Iraq and allow a dictator to take over.

Mubarak made the comments during talks with visiting US congressmen to whom he also admitted that he was "terrified" by the possibility of a nuclear Iran.

Now that they had troops in mainly Shiite Iraq, American troops should not withdraw because that would only serve to strengthen Shiite Iran next door.

"You cannot leave," he said. "Strengthen the armed forces, relax your hold, and then you will have a coup. Then we will have a dictator, but a fair one."

"Forget democracy, the Iraqis by their nature are too tough."

KARZAI PARDONS DRUG SMUGGLERS

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has ordered the release of numerous dangerous criminals and drug traffickers detained by US-led coalition forces.

American officials repeatedly rebuked the president and Afghan attorney general Muhammad Ishaq Alko for authorising the release of detainees.

In an August 2009 cable, American officials said that since 2007, 150 of the 629 detainees transferred to Afghan custody had been released without trial.

PRINCE CHARLES GETS LESS RESPECT THAN QUEEN

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has ordered the release of numerous dangerous criminals and drug traffickers detained by US-led coalition forces.

Queen Elizabeth II, said Amitav Banerji, Commonwealth political affairs director.

According to a US political officer in London, in June 2009, Banerji said the 54-nation organisation wants to persuade Charles to play a greater role.

SOURCE: AFP

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Brown urged deal on US hacking case

AFP, London

Former prime minister Gordon Brown tried to strike a deal with Washington to allow a Briton accused of hacking into US military computers to serve any sentence in Britain, classified US diplomatic cables showed yesterday.

Gary McKinnon, 43, who suffers from a form of autism, could face life in prison if convicted by a US court of gaining access to 97 US Navy and Nasa computers in 2001 and 2002. He says he was looking for evidence of UFOs.

US diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks show that Brown suggested in an August 2009 meeting with the US ambassador to London, Louis Susman, that McKinnon plead guilty in return for serving any jail term in a British jail.

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