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Defence Initiated
Ref: B 1369265

Australian Government
Department of Defence

MINISTERIAL SUBMISSION

To: Senator Faulkner

Timing: Urgent

Required by: 29 July 2010

Reason: To brief you on an issue of considerable media interest.

Copies to: CDF, Secretary, VCDP, CA, CN, CAF, CJOPS, DSD, DD:O, DIGO, DE/SEC S (Ops), DE/SEC S, FASIP, FASMSPA, HDL

LEAKING OF SENSITIVE ISAF INFORMATION - WIKILEAKS

Recommendation:

That you:

- i. note that sensitive International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) documents published on the 'Wikileaks' website appear to be mostly raw tactical-level incident reporting;
NOTED / ~~PLEASE DISCUSS~~
- ii. note that the immediate concerns of [REDACTED]
NOTED / ~~PLEASE DISCUSS~~
- iii. note that we have established a task force to investigate the content of the documents and their impact on Australian interests, but proper examination will take weeks;
NOTED / ~~PLEASE DISCUSS~~
- iv. note that an initial partial examination of the leaked documents by Defence has not revealed material that might directly endanger Australian forces; and
NOTED / ~~PLEASE DISCUSS~~
- v. agree to share this submission and talking points with the Opposition Defence Spokesman, Senator Johnston.
AGREED / ~~NOT AGREED~~

s33(a)(iii)

Key Points:

1. Sensitive ISAF documents have been published onto the online website 'Wikileaks'. Details from over 92,000 documents have been published. The website publisher claims to be holding an additional 15,000 more sensitive documents which it will release over coming weeks. The leaked documents appear to cover the period from January 2004 to December 2009.
2. The vast majority of the documents relate to the US and their operations in Afghanistan.
3. The leaking of these documents has drawn significant international media attention. When taken out of context, the aggregate effect of the documents is to paint a grim picture of operations in Afghanistan and of Pakistan's role in the region. Media attention to date has

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focused on US views of Pakistan's support to the insurgency, allegations of ISAF 'covering up' civilian casualties and lack of success in the battle against Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

s33(a)(iii)

4. The volume of leaked material published so far is very large. Defence has conducted an initial but far from thorough review of the published documents that has shown most documents to be tactical level operational reports. Reporting in today's *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* about an alleged 'police killing cover-up' demonstrate the need for us to review this material carefully in order to establish the facts of specific incidents and to relate these to our own reporting.
5. We have established a task force working to Deputy Secretary, Strategy to review the leaked documents in full to determine which documents might directly and adversely affect Australian interests, including the protection of forces currently deployed. We have also directed the task force to investigate any of the leaked documents from coalition partners [redacted] The documents will be searched for key words that refer to Australian forces, locations, and key interlocutors. A detailed examination will take some time, so our conclusions today are very preliminary and may change, possibly significantly, as further analysis is undertaken.
6. The potential for the leaked documents to adversely affect the safety of deployed forces, or operational security more broadly, is being assessed by the Defence task force. It appears unlikely at this stage that ADF or coalition forces will be directly endangered by the leaks. The information examined so far is tactical information that is now sufficiently aged that it poses minimal threat.
7. Our policy of transparency – providing maximum public reporting of incidents means it is unlikely incidents will be revealed that we have not already reported publicly, but as the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* reporting today shows, specific details of operational reporting may vary from what has been publicly released in the past, giving rise to inaccurate media claims about Australian reporting. The task force will correlate Wikileaks reports involving Australian forces with information we have previously publicly released.
8. We will provide updates on any significant findings on occurrence, and provide you with a submission once the task force completes its investigations. This will take some weeks.
9. Given the caretaker provisions currently in place, it is recommended you share this submission with the Opposition Defence Spokesman, Senator Johnston.

s33(a)(iii)

Sensitivity:

10. High. Although the aggregate effect of the documents is to paint a grim picture of operations in Afghanistan and of Pakistan's role in the region. This reporting could adversely affect public perceptions of the campaign and [redacted]

s33(a)(ii)
s33(a)(iii)

Resources:

11. No applicable for this submission.

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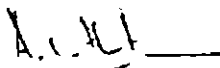

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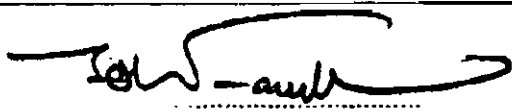
Consultation:

12. HQJOC and IP Div were consulted in the preparation of this submission.

Attachment:

A. Talking Points - 'Wikileaks'

Approved by: A.G. HOUSTON ACM CDF 	Approved by: I J Watt Secretary 
25 Jul 10	25 Jul 10
Contact Officers Names: Peter Jennings, Deputy Secretary Strategy LTCOL Chris Andersen, MSC	Phone: 02 6265 2848 Phone: 02 6265 3395


JOHN FAULKNER
28 17 2010

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Public Affairs Talking Points

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Attachment A to
MINSUB B1369265

Defence Response to Wikileaks Afghanistan report
Correct as at 1645 27 Jul 10

Talking Points

- The information released by Wikileaks this week on Afghanistan operational reporting relates to over 92000 documents; this will take some time for Defence to review.
- An important part of this review will be determining whether there are force protection implications for our personnel deployed on operations. The release of this operational information, in its current form, is at best disappointing and at worst, possibly dangerous to our personnel.
- Defence will not comment publicly on details within the material released by Wikileaks until a full review has been completed.
- Defence expects that this review will take considerable time to complete given the large volume of information that must be considered.

Q&A – If asked

Does the release of this information by Wikileaks expose that the war in Afghanistan is going badly and that the Australian Government and Defence have repeatedly overstated progress and mislead the Australian people.

- No. The Australian Government and Defence have consistently maintained that the task in Afghanistan is extremely challenging and that success will only be achieved through patience, persistence and resolve.

Do the leaked reports provide the Taliban with information that will place ADF personnel in danger?

- Defence will not comment publicly on details within the material released by Wikileaks until a full review has been completed, however it is important to note that the information contained in the Wikileaks material is now dated and does not relate to current operations.

What knowledge did Australia have of US Special Operations and CIA operations in Afghanistan?

- Defence will not comment until a review the 92000 documents has been completed. Clearly that will take some time.

Public Affairs Talking Points

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What knowledge does Australia have of allegations about "police brutality, corruption petty and large, extortion and kidnapping" as reported by the New York Times?

- There are clearly international concerns, which Australia shares, about corruption in Afghanistan. The Australian Government supports moves to date by the Afghan Government to strengthen accountability and tackle corruption.

Does Australia agree with the New York Times finding that "the Taliban have used portable heat-seeking missiles against allied aircraft"?

- Defence's initial assessment is that the incidents reported do not conclusively demonstrate that heat seeking missiles have been used.

Do you accept the New York Times finding that "the military employs more and more drone aircraft to survey the battlefield and strike targets in Afghanistan, although their performance is less impressive than officially portrayed"?

- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles are a common feature in modern military forces. Defence will not comment in detail on their use in Afghanistan for security reasons.

Do you accept the New York Times claim, based on a December 2009 report about Uruzgan Province, that because the police are weak, tribal warlords operate above the law?

- Warlords are not unknown in Afghanistan's history, but Defence will not comment on the specific situation in Uruzgan because this clearly goes to the security of our people in the province.

The New York Times also reports on "Matiullah Khan, a warlord and an American-backed ally of President Karzal who was arguably Uruzgan's most powerful man". What contact has Australia had with Matiullah Khan?

- As part of ISAF efforts to help stabilise Afghanistan, Australian forces regularly engage with a range of local tribal and community leaders in Uruzgan in an inclusive and impartial way.
- Matiullah Khan is an influential figure in the Uruzgan community and Australian troops engage with him on an as appropriate basis.
- I will not comment on any specific allegations raised by the Wikileaks material until Defence has had the opportunity to assess it.

Clearance	Name	Appointment	DTG
Drafted by:	COL J. Squire	DDGPA-OPS	27 Jul 10
Cleared by:	COL S. Ryan	HQJOC DMSC IP DIV	

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	Mr Peter Jennings ACM Houston Dr Ian Watt	DEPSEC-S CDF SEC	
Approved for Public Release by: (DGPA or delegate)	COL J. Squire	DDGPA-OPS	27 Jul 10
Ministerial Action (to be completed by DGPA)	For Information	MA MINDEF	
Forwarded to / Cleared by: (Minister's office)			

Public Affairs Talking Points

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