

I have taken some time to review some of the previously classified documents on the war in Afghanistan that were published by the WikiLeaks.org website. Before rushing to judgment about this very large, unauthorized disclosure of information, I wanted to review some of the documents myself to determine if indeed potential human sources of information had been compromised. After reviewing some of these documents, I have concluded that their release could indeed cause real harm to real people.

I have frequently taken the executive branch to task for over-classifying documents. There have been many episodes in our nation's history where the classification system has been used to hide improper acts or to shield policy-makers and bureaucrats from scrutiny or embarrassment. The Pentagon Papers episode is perhaps the most well publicized example of the executive branch seeking to keep information classified because it is embarrassing. That is not the case with the so-called "Afghan War Diary" of WikiLeaks.org.

Some of the documents I reviewed contained the names of real Afghan insurgents who turned themselves in to U.S. or Afghan government forces. Those same reports say these defectors were interrogated, and we may presume that after they are released from custody they and their families could be in danger of assassination by other insurgents. The government has a legitimate need to keep secret any sources and methods that are truly important for our nation's security. The individual or individuals responsible for the release of these unredacted documents should be prosecuted. A criminal investigation into this matter is underway.