

# Reducing over- classification act

[People](#), [Barack Obama](#)



The United States faces many problems in the current war with terrorist forces. The increase of casualties, the increase of fanatical Taliban and al Qaeda troops, the lack of Afghan National Army forces to help with the fighting, and the ever looming threat of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of insurgents. The Obama administration's new strategy includes efforts to increase the confidence of the local Afghan population by protecting it from insurgent violence and improving governance, security and economic development (Afghanistan, 672).

In order to implement these plans, the U. S. has deployed new troop — a total of 21, 000 additional soldiers to fight the insurgency in Afghanistan and train Afghan security forces. By the end of the year, the level of U. S. troops is expected to reach about 68, 000. Other troops are also being supplied by NATO countries and other allies, currently about 32, 000, though many are engaged in development and relief work and not combat operations (Afghanistan, 672). The top three NATO countries providing troops were the United King, Germany, and Canada, with many other smaller nations sending troops to contribute to war efforts.

One of the most noteworthy features of the new strategic plan is to avoid civilian casualties throughout the war; the number of civilian casualties has gone down tremendously over the years, decreasing over a thousand between 2008 and 2009 (Afghanistan, 673). Another important part of the plan is to help develop the Afghan government by increasing the number of agricultural specialists, educators, engineers, and lawyers in the area. Now that the Obama administration has issued a new plan that has been under

implementation for about two years, the topic of the administration announcing an exit plan has been under heavy debate.

According to Ilan Berman, Vice-President for Policy of the American Foreign Policy Council, the United States should not set a date of exit from the war on Afghanistan. Berman states that announcing an exit plan would prove that the United States' interest and investment in the stability of Afghanistan is temporary and limited (Afghanistan, 685). I am in agreement with the view of Ilan Berman. The United States should gradually decrease the presence of troops within the country, while still working on providing a stable government and economy in Afghanistan. The discussion of government secrecy has been of great discussion over the last two years. The question, "Does great openness threaten national security?", has been the topic at hand. The website WikiLeaks intensified the discussion with the release of thousands of classified government documents and military intelligence. Julian Assange, an Australian computer hacker, created the biggest United States security breach to ever hit the nation.

Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, worked alongside a group of associates across several countries in releasing thousands of government documents. It is believed that his source may have been United States army private, Bradley Manning, who had access to these classified government documents and databases. Assange has yet to be prosecuted for the leaking of government information but the most likely approach to prosecuting him would be under the Espionage Act of 1917.

The Act prohibits the "willful" disclosure of "information relating to the national defense. It has been interpreted to mean that the defendant must

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know the information will hurt national security and that disclosure violates the law (Government Secrecy, 127). The discussion of updating the Espionage Act of 1917 has been of discussion because of this leak as well as ones of a smaller magnitude. Abbe Lowell of the White-Collar Criminal Defense Group of McDermott Will & Emory is for the updating of the Espionage Act of 1917. According to Lowell, the document is not specific enough and as worded can be lead to the infringement of the first amendment.

Documents released by WikiLeaks include sensitive diplomatic cables and combat field reports from Iraq and Afghanistan. A few notable disclosures included the push by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia for the U. S. to strike against Iran, the suspected corruption in Afghan government, and the hacking of Google by the Chinese government (Government Secrecy, 129). Many of the documents were obtained from the government database, SPIRNet, which Manning had access to. The Secret Internet Protocol Router Network allows the United States military and government agencies to share information.

Over 500, 000 people have access to the network, from senior military and law-enforcement officials to low-level military analysts and government contractors. This release of information has fueled the already heated battle between advocates of government secrecy and those who oppose (Government Secrecy, 124). Advocates of an open-government argue that federal agencies withhold too much information from the public, discouraging the ability of citizens to keep check on the wrongdoing of the government.

According to supporters of government secrecy, sensitive information that could threaten the nation's welfare if released is too easily accessed due to modern technology. President Obama, on his first day of office, signed an executive order designed to reduce government secrecy and increase the transparency of information across federal agencies. Signed into law by Obama in October 2010, the Reducing Over-Classification Act directs the Department of Homeland Security and the intelligence community to standardize classification and declassification procedures and improve information sharing across the government. The National Declassification Center was also created in order to speed and coordinate the release of government information that no longer needs to be kept from public view. Although steps to disclosure government information to the public have been taken, secrecy opponents believe that President Obama needs to do more.