
WikiLeaks

WORKSHEET A

A few months ago most people probably knew very little about WikiLeaks or Julian Assange, but recently they have hardly been out of the news.

WikiLeaks (which, by the way, has no connection with the online encyclopedia Wikipedia or related websites) is a non-profit organization that Assange and a few others set up in late 2006 in order to leak secret information held by governments and other organizations. Its philosophy, roughly speaking, is that secrecy can allow governments and other powerful organizations to get away with practices that are unjust, and that they would be pressured to operate in a more ethical way if the public knew more about what they get up to.

WikiLeaks generally receives secret information either from computer hackers or from whistle-blowers working inside governments and companies. It does not have an official director, or indeed official employees, but Assange, a 39-year-old Australian, is seen as the driving force behind it.

The leak that made WikiLeaks front-page news came at the end of November last year, when it started releasing more than 250,000 confidential cables sent between the US State Department (foreign ministry) and US embassies around the world.

WikiLeaks passed the documents to some major European newspapers, which sifted through them and began publishing what they considered the most interesting parts. This included information and opinions from US diplomats regarding the governments of the countries they were working in, and the opinions of politicians in some countries (expressed in conversations with US diplomats) regarding other countries' governments.

It seems the source of this leak – and of secret military documents about the Iraq and Afghanistan wars that WikiLeaks gave to the media earlier in 2010 – might have been a 23-year-old US Army intelligence analyst who has been charged with passing on secret information and faces a military trial later this year.

Opinion on the recent leaks is divided. While many think WikiLeaks is enhancing democracy by increasing freedom of information, there are others – including many US government officials – who think the leaks are irresponsible and dangerous. They say secrecy is often vital in intergovernmental and diplomatic relations, as well as in military operations.

Assange is currently in Britain but faces possible extradition to Sweden to face criminal charges not related to WikiLeaks. His supporters fear the possibility of him being extradited to the USA, where he believes his part in the recent leaks could see him face extremely serious charges – perhaps even that of espionage.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Here are some simple definitions for words that appear in the text on Worksheet A. Find the words they refer to and fill in the gaps.

1. _____ (verb): to tell private or secret information to journalists or the public
2. _____ (noun): someone who uses a computer to connect to other people's computers secretly, and often illegally, so that they can find or change information
3. If you _____ (phrasal verb) information, documents, etc, you examine them carefully in order to find what you are looking for.
4. _____ (verb): to send someone accused of a crime back to the country where the crime was committed for a trial
5. If you _____ (verb) information or documents, you make them available.
6. To _____ (phrasal verb) something is to do something, especially something you shouldn't be doing.
7. _____ (noun): attempts to discover political, military or industrial secrets; spying
8. If you _____ (phrasal verb) something, you manage to do something bad without being punished or criticised for it.
9. _____ (noun): a group of officials who represent their government in a foreign country, or the building where those officials work
10. When we are giving information, we can say '_____ ' (phrase) if we want to indicate that the information is general and not exact.
11. _____ (noun): information collected about the secret plans and activities of a foreign government, enemy, etc
12. If _____ is _____ (phrase) about something, it means people disagree about it.
13. _____ - _____ (noun): someone who reports dishonest or illegal activities within an organization to someone outside that organization
14. If we say someone is the _____ (noun) behind an action or organization, we mean they provide much of the power or energy that makes the action take place, or the organization operate, in that way.
15. _____ (adjective): morally good

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 2

One word has been taken out of each line of the text: how many of the missing words can you remember and replace?

- (1) A few months ago most people probably knew very about WikiLeaks or Julian
- (2) Assange, but recently they have hardly been out of the.
- (3) WikiLeaks (which, by way, has no connection with the online encyclopedia
- (4) Wikipedia or related websites) is a -profit organization that Assange and a few
- (5) others set in late 2006 in order to leak secret information held by governments and
- (6) other organizations. Its philosophy, speaking, is that secrecy can allow
- (7) governments and other powerful organizations to get with practices that are unjust,
- (8) and that they would be pressured to operate in a more ethical way if public knew
- (9) more about what they get up.
- (10) WikiLeaks generally receives secret information either computer hackers or
- (11) from whistle-blowers working governments and companies. It does not have
- (12) an director, or indeed official employees, but Assange, a 39-year-old
- (13) Australian, is seen as the driving behind it.
- (14) The leak that made WikiLeaks -page news came at the end of November last
- (15) year, when it started releasing more than 250,000 confidential sent between the
- (16) US State Department (ministry) and US embassies around the world.
- (17) WikiLeaks passed the documents to some major European, which sifted through
- (18) them and began what they considered the most interesting parts. This included
- (19) information and opinions from US regarding the governments of the countries
- (20) they were working, and the opinions of politicians in some countries (expressed
- (21) in with US diplomats) regarding other countries' governments.
- (22) It seems the of this leak – and of secret military documents about the Iraq and
- (23) Afghanistan wars that WikiLeaks gave to the earlier in 2010 – might have
- (24) been a 23-year-old US Army intelligence analyst who has charged with passing
- (25) on secret information and faces a military later this year.
- (26) Opinion on the recent leaks is. While many think WikiLeaks is enhancing
- (27) democracy by increasing of information, there are others – including many US
- (28) government officials – who think the are irresponsible and dangerous. They say
- (29) secrecy is often vital in intergovernmental and diplomatic relations, well as in
- (30) operations.
- (31) Assange is currently in Britain faces possible extradition to Sweden to face
- (32) criminal charges not related to WikiLeaks. His supporters the possibility of him
- (33) being to the USA, where he believes his part in the recent leaks could see him
- (34) face extremely serious charges – perhaps even that of.