

by US House of Representatives Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton

I am extremely concerned about the manner in which these documents were leaked and with the recklessness of WikiLeaks in posting them. Our nation's secrets are classified for a reason, and the release of classified documents could put our national security - and the lives of our men and women in combat - at serious risk.

These leaked documents, while troubling, appear to support what I was asserting for years: the war in Afghanistan was not going well, and we needed a real strategy for success. For nearly a decade under the previous administration, our brave war fighters were under-resourced and lacked the direction of a clear strategy. Under the new counterinsurgency strategy implemented earlier this year, we now have the pieces in place to turn things around. These leaked reports pre-date our new strategy in Afghanistan and should not be used as a measure of success or a determining factor in our continued mission there.

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Additionally, some of these documents implicate Pakistan in aiding the Taliban and fueling the insurgency in Afghanistan. It is critical that we not use outdated reports to paint a picture of the cooperation of Pakistan in our efforts in Afghanistan. Since these reports were issued,

Pakistan has significantly stepped up its fight against the Taliban, including efforts that led to the capture of the highest ranking member of the Taliban since the start of the war. The Pakistani military has also been in combat for more than a year against its country's own

Taliban, which is aligned with al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban attacking American forces and our NATO allies. While we still have concerns about Pakistan's efforts against the Afghan Taliban, there is no doubt that there have been significant improvements in its overall effort.

It could get worse. Military.com has reported that WikiLeaks said the release on Sunday "did not generally include top-secret organizations," and that it had "delayed the release of some

15,000 reports" as part of what it called "a harm minimization process demanded by our source," but said it would release the documents later, possibly with material redacted.

U.S. government agencies have been bracing for a deluge of thousands more classified documents since the leak of helicopter cockpit video of a 2007 firefight in Baghdad. That was blamed on a U.S. Army intelligence analyst, Spc. Bradley Manning, 22, of Potomac, Md. He was charged with releasing classified information earlier this month. Manning had bragged on line that he downloaded 260,000 classified U.S. cables and transmitted them to Wikileaks.org.

Yesterday's Guardian take on the story can be found at
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/25/afghanistan-taliban-missile-strike-chinook>