

IF DOD'S GOT A PROBLEM WITH WIKILEAKED NAMES, THEY'VE GOT A PROBLEM W/NYT



Before the Wikileaks document dump this afternoon, DOD and Murdoch were out with claims that the impending dump would put 300 Iraqis at significant risk of reprisal. As Wikileaks noted via Twitter, the article falsely claimed that Wikileaks would reveal actual names.

Besides, if DOD has a problem with leaks, they likely have a problem with the NYT, not Wikileaks.

I discovered this by looking at both outlets' version of the same report, the July 31, 2009 report on the capture by Iranians of three American hikers.

Here's the NYT version of the report (at least as it appeared at around 8PM tonight); here's a PDF, or click on the image for a full image of the report. Here's the version included in Wikileaks' database (you probably need to sign up for a password to get it; to search for it, look for the document by time at 10:00 on 31 July 2009).

At first read, here's the information that is redacted in the Wiki version but which appears in the NYT version (please tell me if you see something I've missed):

- Indication—AMCIT—that the people kidnapped were American citizens
- Information that appears to

show injury/damage report: 0
INJ/DAM 2/1 07:112

- The location of the kidnapping (NYT redacts part of this, but leaves Sulaymaniyah/Halabjah unredacted)
- The identification of the captured people as 3 American citizens, where they were being taken (to the Iranian border)
- Three reports of the coordinates where the hikers were taken (see Updates at 1630, 1631, 1715)
- The acronym JPRC and the detail that the hikers had come to Iraq—though Wiki does reveal they intended to go rock climbing
- Acronyms describing who would set up checkpoints
- The name—“Meckfessel”—of the person who provides more info on the hikers—he was the fourth hiker (note, NYT puts this in quotes); but note that Wiki includes the following which NYT doesn’t include:

receive additional ___ from him and take him to a secure location for rotary transport to FOB Warrior.

- That the hikers were hiking the “Ahmad al Waha (variant

Waaha, Waah, etc.) Rock face outside of Sulaymaniyah (note, NYT does not close that quotation mark around Ahmad al Waha)

- That "Pathfinder" was en route to refuel at FOB Warrior and that they would "remain" on standby
- The bolded details in the update, "Colonel **Latif** of the **10th Pesh Murga** brigade reports **Iranians** detained 3X **AMCIT** for being too close to the border"
- The detail that "CJ3" was reporting that "President Barzani" was notified
- Reference to Pathfinder and F16s and the detail that the AWT was 5 minutes out
- Wiki then includes the following details from the pursuit that NYT redacted entirely:

UPDATE ___: Current situation

-2x ___ on station (controlled by / ___ CAV)

-1x Warrior Alpha: en route (___ by MND-___)

-CF have ___ manned and ___ unmanned ISR on station

-CF en route ___ HQ to link up with ___.

-1x AWT on standby at FOB warrior

-1x ___ team on standby at FOB Warrior

- The detail that OSINT was reporting that Iranians had reported picking up the Americans
- More references to Meckfessel being picked up and, ultimately, delivered to Baghdad
- MND-N's confirmation they will "C2" the recovery operations
- Wiki includes the following that NYT redacts entirely:

UPDATE 311815JUL09: ___ is at ___
 HQ-made link up with , ___ x CF
 personnel on site, ___ to a secure
 location, ___ digit grid when ___ is
 designated

- Details about taking Meckfessel to PB Andrea and from there, on a C12, to Baghdad
- That a Captain, as well as a Sergeant First Class, would escort Meckfessel to Baghdad
- Wiki includes these details that NYT leaves out:

UPDATE 311926JUL09: UH-___ are wheels
 down in PB , -___ launching ___

UPDATE ___: UH-___ are wheels up at PB
 ___ route ___ FOB Warrior

UPDATE 311952JUL09: fixed wing ___ at
 FOB Warrior

UPDATE 312000JUL09: UH-___ are on their
 final approach to FOB Warrior

- NYT notes the C12 would arrive at 2040
- More references to the C12 and Meckfessel, as well as the prepositions “to” Baghdad, as well as the times on several of the updates
- The bolded details in the update, “Escorts **will fly fixed** wing at **1100** hrs on **1 AUG09** to FOB Warrior”
- That IQATF would monitor for atmospheric
- All references to Iran and the Kurds in the S2 assessment
- The CCIR code, #5
- The closing date, which the NYT lists as “311418JUL09”

So in general, Wiki provides a few operational details NYT does not, but NYT provides names (at least of Meckfessel), provides indication of who was captured, and describes the involvement of the Kurds and Iranians. And, of course, NYT provides multiple details of location, which is critical to its Michael Gordon narrative about Iran.

Now aside from this general observation—that Wiki is redacting far more information than the NYT, at least in this area which serves a particular narrative the NYT wants to tell—I’ve got a few more observations.

First, the thing that got me looking really closely at these differences is the closing date, which (as I noted) NYT lists as 1418 on July 31, 2009 and which Wiki redacts entirely. At least on first glance, that appears to suggest that this report was closed before the

incident first began, which is recorded as 1600 on July 31, 2009. How could they close this report almost two hours before the hikers were supposed to have been captured in the first place? It has been suggested that the issue is one of time zones, but if that's true, then the report would have had to have been closed in a location at least 10 hours behind the time zone noted in the update, because the final update is dated as 0015 on August 1. That might allow for this report being closed in MT. But other than that, your guess is as good as mine.

And while we're talking about time, note that Wiki entered this in its database as being 10:00 on July 31, 2009—a full 8 hours before the report was supposed to have begun (I need to look at the other reports to see how the Wiki database time correlates with the report time).

Finally, the other thing this exercise reveals is the differing conventions that NYT and Wiki, at least, are using in redacting this information. To its credit, the NYT seems to be indicating not only each redaction, but how long the redaction is. But Wiki is using just 3 character underlines for all redactions, thereby obscuring even the parts of speech (note how the redaction of prepositions disguise some of the movements). And the more important redactions are probably operational details that show how the military treated these reports; Wiki is redacting so much that these lack real context. (Really, imagine reading this and trying to piece together that it was a widely reporting capture?) This exercise shows how much the redactions Wiki did limit the value of the document dump.

In any case, there's a whole lot more that these details—particularly taken together—show about the event; please use this post to discuss that. But in the meantime, what it does show is that if DOD has a problem with names revealed in this, it's not Wikileaks they should complain about.