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Assange blasts US on Wikileaks anniversary

11/30/2012



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has vowed to keep exposing secret documents and defended his controversial website, two years after it published a massive trove of sensitive U.S. diplomatic cables.

Marking the anniversary of "cablegate", Assange alleged in a commentary published on Thursday that his self-styled anti-secrecy website had uncovered U.S. attempts to hide atrocities, coerce other governments and dominate the global economy.

"Since 2010, Western governments have tried to portray WikiLeaks as a terrorist organization, enabling a disproportionate response from both political figures and private institutions," he wrote in The Huffington Post.

"It is the case that WikiLeaks' publications can and have changed the world, but that change has clearly been for the better," he said, citing some of the once-secret U.S. State Department cables that his site disclosed. "Two years on, no claim of individual harm has been presented, and the examples (cables) above clearly show precisely who has blood on their hands."

By exposing details of the deaths of Iraqi civilians and the corruption of the Tunisian regime, WikiLeaks had helped force the U.S. military's withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 and had fuelled an uprising in Tunisia that spread across Arab countries, according to Assange.

Despite condemnation by the U.S. government, the Australian said his organization would not shy away from divulging more secret documents and would combat attempts to block supporters from making online financial contributions to WikiLeaks.

"We will continue our fight against the financial blockade, and we will continue to publish."

Assange's commentary appeared as the army private accused of leaking the U.S. documents to WikiLeaks, Bradley Manning, testified for the first time at a pre-trial hearing after two years in detention. Msn.co.nz

HIGHLIGHTS

Assange, 41, has been holed up inside Ecuador's embassy in London since June to avoid extradition to Sweden for questioning over rape and sexual assault allegations. Assange has denied any wrongdoing. The Guardian

British officials say Assange will be arrested if he sets foot outside the embassy. The building is under constant police surveillance. The Guardian

He fears if he is sent to Sweden he will be subject to subsequent extradition to the United States, where he could face imprisonment for his role in disseminating classified documents. Time

Assange is believed to be suffering from "a chronic lung condition." Ecuador's ambassador to Britain, Ana Alban, told an Ecuadorian TV network on a recent trip to Quito that Assange's condition "could lead to complications." Time

Alban said the Australian's health had been at risk because of a lack of sunlight and fresh air since he took refuge in Ecuador's London embassy since June. Radio Australia

But a statement posted on the London embassy's website on Thursday said: "In reference to reported comments of the ambassador Ana Alban, Julian Assange does not have an urgent medical condition." Radio Australia

On Tuesday Assange accused "hard-right" U.S. politicians of pressing European credit card firms to block more than \$50m in donations to WikiLeaks, and said that had forced the website to reduce the volume of documents it posted online.