

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, December 3, 2010 10:23 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: FW: Diplomats ignored spying requests, former officials say (LA Times)

FYI

From: Crowley, Phillip J
Sent: Friday, December 03, 2010 10:05 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Cc: Klevorick, Caitlin B
Subject: FW: Diplomats ignored spying requests, former officials say (LA Times)

You were looking for an electronic version of this. We spent some time talking with Ken yesterday on background.

PJ

From: Thompson, Nicole A [mailto:ThompsonNA@state.gov]
Sent: Friday, December 03, 2010 10:03 AM
To: Crowley, Phillip J; PA PRS_Issues; PA PO Group
Subject: Diplomats ignored spying requests, former officials say (LA Times)

Diplomats ignored spying requests, former officials say (LA Times)

Nov 3, 2010

WASHINGTON—U.S. diplomats have largely ignored guidance from Washington urging them to collect personal and technical information about their foreign counterparts that could be used for spying, former senior State Department officials say.

The guidance, first disclosed Sunday in secret cables released by the WikiLeaks web site, asked State Department officers based abroad to gather foreign diplomats' credit card, mobile phone and frequent flier numbers, as well as information on their Internet identities and telecommunications systems. The National Security Agency routinely uses such information to track movements of subjects and eavesdrop on their communications.

Cables containing the guidance were sent in 2008 and 2009, and the revelations have provoked controversy. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, whose organization was among the targets, said this week, "I do not believe that anybody would be happy when somebody knows that he or she is under watch by somebody."

Obama Administration officials have denied that diplomats engaged in espionage, but they have not disputed the authenticity of the cables, which sought the information as part of a "National Humint Collection Directive." Humint" is an abbreviation for "human intelligence."

Former diplomats, however, say the guidance was treated the way satellite offices the world over often treat missives from headquarters deemed misguided: It was rarely if ever followed.

"No one ever reads the HUMINT tasking reporting," said a former diplomat who did not want to speak for attribution about a sensitive matter. "Probably if an adult pair of eyes had looked at it, they'd say, 'wait a minute, we're not going to get anyone's frequent flier number—give me a break.'"

The guidance was written by the CIA, the former official said, but was sent under Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's name because the CIA and other agencies cannot directly task State Department embassy personnel.

Two senior U.S. officials confirmed this account, but would not do so on the record because the Obama Administration does not want to respond to individual leaked cables.

Diplomats frequently pass information to colleagues in the intelligence community, said veteran envoy Christopher Hill, who was U.S. Ambassador to Iraq from early 2009 until August. But Hill said he never heard of anyone gathering the kinds of technical data spelled out in the WikiLeaks cables.

"The relationship a US diplomat might have with a foreign contact is a very sensitive one, which no one would want to jeopardize by the sort of data fishing described in WikiLeaks," Hill said.

The State Department has publicly acknowledged collecting information for U.S. intelligence agencies. Last year, Philip Goldberg, who heads the Department's intelligence bureau, said in written answers for his Senate confirmation that State "cooperates with all elements of the HUMINT enterprise...to ensure that Foreign Service posts and reporting officers know what the HUMINT collection requirements are..."

Goldberg did not respond to an interview request. Briefing reporters this week, State Department spokesman P. J. Crowley called the human intelligence directives a "wish list" prepared "outside the Department of State." While CIA officers frequently work under cover as State Department diplomats, actual foreign service officers don't want to be perceived as spies, said Greg Thielmann, who served as a senior staffer on the Senate intelligence committee after a 25-year stint as a foreign service officer.

"We relied on relations based on trust and discretion for our reporting," he said, "so it just was not in our interest to be snooping around people's desks, reading things upside down, and eliciting that kind of personal data."

The most detailed intelligence collection instructions came in a cable asking U.S. diplomats posted all over the world to gather information on United Nations officials. The cable sought "biometric data," which can mean fingerprints, and also the "current technical specifications" of telecommunications infrastructure "used by top officials and their support staffs."

Spying directed at the UN is not without precedent. In 2004, a British member of parliament revealed that U.S. and British officials had access to transcripts of conversations by then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Zalmay Khalilzad, who was the most recent U.S. Ambassador to the UN under the Bush Administration, said he never received that sort of intelligence collection tasking.

"The collection of this sort of sensitive information is an appropriate responsibility of the intelligence community," not diplomats, he said.