

6 Wikileaks Revelations Expose Corporate Abuse at Expense of People and Planet

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People around the [world](#) are [watching](#) as U.K. Judge Vanessa Baraitser hears arguments and [decides](#) whether or not to extradite Wikileaks Founder Julian Assange to the U.S.

While the Obama administration chose not to charge Assange, wary of the [precedent](#) it might set in criminalizing journalism, the Trump administration indicted him with 18 criminal [charges](#) that may [land](#) Assange in one of the U.S.'s most notorious prisons for [175 years](#).

Assange's Wikileaks has won [numerous](#) journalism awards and has never had to retract a single publication despite releasing more than 10 million documents exposing, among other things, U.S. war crimes. Former CIA Director Leon Panetta recently [indicated](#) that the [ongoing persecution](#) of Assange is meant to "send a message to others not to do the same thing."

As the world [debates](#) whether Assange is a [hero](#) or a [traitor](#), Children's Health Defense takes a step back to examine some of the things his organization has revealed for those fighting for health and environmental justice.

1. U.S. diplomatic efforts to overturn resistance to GMOs at the behest of Monsanto

Wikileaks published hundreds of diplomatic cables exhibiting attempts by the U.S. to quell opposition to genetically modified organisms or GMOs. As reported by [The Guardian](#), “the cables show U.S. diplomats working directly for GM companies such as Monsanto.”

In a 2007 [cable](#), Craig Stapleton, then U.S. Ambassador to France, advised the U.S. to prepare for economic war with countries unwilling to introduce Monsanto’s GM corn seeds. He recommended the U.S. “calibrate a target retaliation list that causes some pain across the E.U.”

[Another](#) dispatch, this one from 2009, demonstrated that the U.S. funded a GMO workshop in Mozambique that, according to the authors, helped advance biotech-friendly policies in the country.

In another [cable](#) from 2009, a U.S. diplomat stationed in Germany relayed intelligence on Bavarian political parties to several U.S. federal agencies and the U.S. Secretary of Defense, telling them which parties opposed Monsanto’s M810 corn seed and tactics that the U.S. could impose to resolve the opposition.

One [cable](#) from Hong Kong shows a State Department employee requesting \$92,000 in U.S. public funds for “media education kits” to combat a growing popular movement calling for the labeling of GMO foods in Hong Kong. The cable indicates a desire to “make it much more difficult for mandatory labelling advocates to prevail.” The State Department’s Anita Katial, who wrote the cable, also recalled a time when her office facilitated the sending of pro-biotech and bio-agriculture DVDs to every highschool in Hong Kong.

[According](#) to Food & Water Watch Executive Director Wenonah Hauter, the trove of cables “really gets down to twisting the arms of countries and working to undermine local democratic movements that may be opposed to biotech crops, and pressuring

foreign governments to also reduce the oversight of biotech crops.”

2. Multinational commodities trader dumping toxic waste in West Africa

In 2006, Trafigura, the [world's second largest oil trader](#), illegally discharged more than [500 tons](#) of highly toxic oil waste near the Port of Abidjan in the Ivory Coast. Some of the dump sites were [near](#) agriculture fields or water supplies, and the UN [estimates](#) that more than 100,000 people sought medical treatment due to the incident. Wikileaks [would later call](#) this incident “possibly the most culpable mass contamination incident since Bhopal.”

Trafigura's lawyer commissioned a confidential [study](#) that listed what the environmental and health impacts of the dumping incident would be after people living near the port started flooding hospitals.

The report [explained](#) that contact with the offloaded compounds could lead to eye damage, lung damage, skin burns, headaches, breathing difficulty, permanent skin ulceration, coma and death. The report also states that the chemical compounds would have a “severe and negative effect” on the environment.

5.1 The most severe symptoms are likely to be experienced by those living and working at or near the dump sites who may come into direct contact with the liquid slops residues and high concentrations of gas. For these people, the possible consequences are burns to the skin, eyes and lungs, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of consciousness and death.

As recently as [2016](#), residents were complaining about the smell of the waste, headaches, breathing problems and skin problems.

Wikileaks published the classified report in 2009, the first time the public could see the company's true negligence.

3. Gates Foundation sees environmental activists as a threat

In 2008, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation hired an intelligence firm called Stratfor to put together a “[threat assessment report](#)” and determine current and future threats to the foundation.

Stratfor’s report saw environmental activists, indigenous farming groups, and peasant political parties in Asia and South America, as “potential threats” to the foundation.

“Threats to the foundation are likely to be directly related to the public association between the foundation and a controversial issue such as GMOs, animal testing, clinical trials and reproductive rights,” the report reads.

Stating that the primary threat to the foundation’s agriculture program comes from its work promoting GMOs, the report notes the rise of anti-GMO campaigning in developing countries, including a “staunch opposition to GMOs in India.” It even names specific activists, such as the U.S.-based anti-GMO campaigner [Jeffrey Smith](#).

The report also mentions the work of large organizations like Greenpeace and PETA as well as alternative media outlets like the Center for Public Integrity, Mother Jones, AlterNet and the LA Times, which had just published a [series accusing](#) the foundation of “reap[ing] vast financial gains from investments in companies that contribute to the human suffering in health, housing and social welfare.”

Wikileaks published the threat assessment as part of its release of more than 5 million Stratfor emails in 2012.

4. Pharma intel and espionage operation

In 1996, Pfizer, one of the world’s largest pharmaceutical companies, conducted clinical trials in Nigeria for an antibiotic called Trovan. The results were devastating, as

Nigerian officials [reported](#) more than 50 children died in the experiment and dozens became disabled.

In 2006, a Nigerian government panel concluded that Pfizer violated international law and [called](#) the experiment “an illegal trial of an unregistered drug.” In 2007, Nigerian state and federal authorities [sued](#) Pfizer for \$7 billion, alleging the company did not have proper consent from the children’s parents.

A 2009 U.S. diplomatic cable published by Wikileaks [revealed](#) that while the case was in federal court, Pfizer had [hired](#) a private intelligence firm to get blackmail on Nigerian Attorney General Michael Aondoakaa.

According to the [cable](#), “Pfizer’s investigators were passing this information to local media,” who published articles on the attorney general’s “alleged” corruption. “Aondoakaa’s cronies were pressuring him to drop the suit for fear of further negative articles,” it reads.

A few months after the negative articles, the Nigerian ministry of justice signed a [settlement](#) with Pfizer.

5. U.S. is a climate bully

Cables [disclosed](#) by Wikileaks in 2010 present the U.S. using what The Guardian called “[spying, threats and promises of aid](#)” to get international support for the 2009 Copenhagen Accord – an industry-friendly international climate deal with non-binding agreements to lower emissions. (Climate activist Naomi Klein [described](#), at the time, the accord as “nothing more than a grubby pact between the world’s biggest emitters”.)

The State Department sent a secret cable to foreign embassies seeking human intelligence, or “dirt,” on UN diplomats regarding climate policy. [And, as reported by Democracy Now!](#), the cables also indicated that the U.S. cut funding to Bolivia and Ecuador after both governments opposed the accord.

Bill McKibben, founder of the climate organization 350.org, said the cables exposed that “the U.S. was both bullying and buying countries into endorsing their do-little position on climate.”

6. International organizations consulting with Big Pharma

In 2009, Wikileaks [revealed](#) documents that the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA) gave its members a report by the UN’s World Health Organization(WHO)’s Expert Working Group on research and development financing.

[IFPMA](#) members include pharmaceutical giants [like](#) Bayer, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Novartis, Pfizer and Sanofi, and the organization represents these entities when dealing with the UN. What makes the Wikileaks document dump significant is that the working group gave IFPMA access to these documents months before their scheduled public release, suggesting that the UN’s health expert group was more accountable to the pharmaceutical industry than to its own member states.

“The compilation of documents shows the influence of ‘Big Pharma’ on the policy making decisions of the WHO,” Wikileaks commented when publishing the files.