

Australian Investigative Journalist Exposes Mainstream Media Betrayal of Assange

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At a Sydney “Politics in the Pub” meeting on Thursday night, award-winning Australian journalist Mark Davis revealed new first-hand information exposing the extent of the betrayal of Julian Assange by the Guardian and the New York Times, and refuting the lies both publications have used to smear the WikiLeaks founder.

Davis recounted his experiences documenting Assange’s life in the first half of 2010 for programs screened on the Australia’s Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). Using excerpts from the documentary “[Inside WikiLeaks](#),” the journalist explained that he was present when WikiLeaks worked closely with media partners, including the *Guardian* and the *New York Times*, in the publication of the Afghan War logs.

The documents, leaked by the courageous whistleblower Chelsea Manning, comprised 90,000 incident and intelligence reports from the US military, between January 2004 and December 2009. They documented at least 200 civilian deaths at the hands of US and allied forces that had previously been hidden from the public, along with clear evidence of war crimes, including the existence of a secret “black unit” within the US military, tasked with carrying out illegal assassinations.

Davis said the assertions by *Guardian* journalists that Assange exhibited a callous attitude towards US informants and others who may have been harmed by the publication of the document were “lies.”

David Leigh and Nick Davies, senior *Guardian* journalists, who worked closely with Assange in the publication of the logs, have repeatedly claimed that Assange was indifferent to the consequences of the publication.

Their statements have played a key role in the attempts by the corporate media to smear Assange, and dovetail with US government claims that the 2010 publications “aided the enemy.” In reality, the US and Australian militaries have been compelled to admit that release of the Afghan war logs did not result in a single individual coming to physical harm.

Davis explained that he was present in “the bunker,” a room established by the *Guardian* to prepare the publication of the documents.

“Nick Davies made the most recurring, repetitive statement that Julian had a cavalier attitude to life. It’s a complete lie. If there was any cavalier attitude, it was the Guardian journalists. They had disdain for the impact of this material.”

The *Guardian* journalists, Davis added, had frequently engaged in “gallows humour,” but that Assange had not.

Significantly, Davis explained that despite the vast technical resources of the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* (NYT), it was left to Assange to personally redact the names of informants and other individuals from the war logs, less than three days before scheduled publication. Davis said Assange was compelled to work through an entire night, during which he removed some 10,000 names from the documents.

“Julian wanted to take the names out,” Davis said. “He asked for the releases to be delayed.” The request was rejected by the *Guardian*, “so Julian was left with the task of cleansing the documents. Julian removed 10,000 names by himself, not the *Guardian*.”



Assange in the *Guardian* “bunker” alongside Nick Davies [Credit: Journeyman Pictures, “Inside WikiLeaks”]

Davis refuted the attempts by the *Guardian* and the *Times* to downplay their central role in the publication of the leaks. He stated that the relationship between the corporate reporters and Assange was not that between journalists and their source. Rather, both outlets were intimately involved in preparing the publication of the documents.

This included, Davis said, the *Guardian* assigning a technical division to prepare the entire set of logs in a publishable and searchable format on the WikiLeaks website.

Davis explained that even in 2010, the *Guardian* and the NYT had employed “subterfuge” to shield them from any legal repercussions over the publication. Despite the explosive contents of the leaks, they had both insisted that WikiLeaks should publish first.

This, Davis stated, would allow them to claim that they were not primary publishers of the material, but were merely reporting material that had been released by WikiLeaks. This was the equivalent of the publications “pushing Julian out to walk the plank,” he said. “Julian’s in jail now because of that subterfuge.”

Tellingly, Davis stated that this plan was disrupted as a result of technical issues on the WikiLeaks website.

The *Guardian* and the *Times* nevertheless ran their scheduled stories, reporting on WikiLeaks' supposed publication of the logs, despite the fact that they had not yet been placed on the WikiLeaks website. WikiLeaks published the documents two days after they had been reported by the corporate publications.

"WikiLeaks did not publish for two days," Davis said. The *Guardian* and the *Times* had "reported a lie. They set Julian up from the start."

Davis's claim potentially has significant legal implications. The espionage charges, under which the Trump administration is seeking to extradite Assange to the US and prosecute him, include among their offenses WikiLeaks' publication of the Afghan war logs.

Davis' timeline, however, indicates that the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* were in fact the initial and primary publishers of the material. These publications, which are pillars of the media and political establishment, are "in the frame" for the supposed offenses that the Trump administration is seeking to prosecute Assange for. As Davis bluntly declared,

"If Julian's in jail, they should be as well."

Mary Kostakidis, a well-known Australian journalist and former SBS news anchor, who also spoke at the Sydney event, later tweeted on the significance of Davis's revelation.

"Why aren't the *Guardian* & *NYT* enjoined in the prosecution? The former used their technical resources to enable WikiLeaks online release, & the *NYT* published 2 days before WikiLeaks were able to go live with the docs due to a technical glitch," she wrote.

In her address to "Politics in the Pub," Kostakidis had declared:

"Julian is being destroyed for revealing war crimes. We need to stand up for his human rights."

Kostakidis denounced successive Australian governments for refusing to take any action in defence of Assange, and condemned the establishment media for seeking to poison public opinion against him.

In response to a question from the audience about what could be done, Professor Stuart Rees, a prominent fighter for civil liberties, who chaired the meeting, concluded that it was necessary to build a "mass movement in the streets" demanding freedom for Assange. This, he said, was the only way in which Australian politicians would be compelled to uphold their obligations to Assange as an Australian citizen and journalist by preventing his extradition to the US and securing his complete liberty.

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Featured image: Mark Davis addressing Politics in the Pub meeting in Sydney (Source: WSWWS)

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