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Why does US keep silent about its ally receiving money from a state ‘sponsoring terrorism’?

THE almost 400,000 classified US documents which WikiLeaks has just published on the Internet is meant to tell the real history of US military involvement in Iraq between 2004 and 2009. The whistle-blower organization did the same for Afghanistan in July when it leaked more than 92,000 classified American documents relating to the war there.

Unlike the latest leak, the Afghanistan one made waves, although the revelations were of much the same nature: The main theme in both was the suffering of civilians as a result of the US-led war, criminality and corruption within the two governments concerned and the US turning a blind eye to what was going on.

The Afghanistan leaks also reported Iranian involvement in Afghanistan although little attention was paid to this at the time. Three months on, there is now evidence of that, although what that evidence actually means is hard to ascertain. This week, President Hamid Karzai admitted that his chief of staff had received “bags of money” from Iran but, countering allegations in the New York Times that he received millions of dollars every month from the Iranians, he also insisted that this was purely aid “to help the president’s office” and that the donations were above board.

That Iran would want to make friends with Afghanistan is obvious enough, With the West trying to isolate it and encircle it, it needs all the friends it can get. Moreover, it is

Iran's interests that there be both stability and a friendly strong central government in Afghanistan. It is its neighbor. The last thing it needs is an unfriendly government there.

Why aid would be stashed as cash in bags, however, is another matter. It is anything but the normal method of state-to-state aid and inevitably raises suspicions of murkier dealings. Karzai's explanations do nothing to dampen them.

However, regardless of the amount involved or what it is for, there is an even more intriguing aspect to the story. It is the American reaction. Washington clearly knows what is going on: WikiLeaks' disclosures in July show that it keeps a very close eye on what Iran does in Afghanistan. It cannot be happy that a government which the US has installed and 94,000 American soldiers are supporting at vast expense to the US taxpayer is on the payroll of its archenemy. Yet it says nothing.

The reaction would be very different if there were reports that Hamas leader Khaled Mishaal or Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah had been sent bags stuffed with Iranian cash. The airwaves in the US would be screaming about terror funding and proof of Iran's evil intentions.

In the case of Karzai, the reason the US government says nothing is because there is not much it can do. It certainly does not want to alienate him by publicly criticizing the donations. To do so would also be to invite intense condemnation from the American media that would ask why American soldiers were dying in a far-off country that is taking money from a government deeply hostile to the US. So it turns a blind eye.

Turning a blind eye has, as the Iraq and Afghanistan WikiLeaks revelations show, become an all too regular US policy in both places. It may be politically expedient, but it is not something the American public will appreciate.