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Sarah Palin: hunt WikiLeaks founder like al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders

The founder of WikiLeaks should be hunted down just like al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders, according to Sarah Palin.

By: Martin Beckford

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Julian Assange was branded “an anti-American operative with blood on his hands” by the prominent Republican, who asked why he has not yet been caught by the authorities.

She accused the Obama administration of “incompetence” and a “strange lack of urgency” in not stopping the release of 250,000 leaked diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks, given that it had already published sensitive information about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The former Governor of Alaska and vice-presidential nominee suggested that “cyber tools” should be used to shut down the whistle-blowing website permanently. It has twice been the subject of targeted attacks by hackers to bring it offline this week.

Mr Assange, a 39 year-old Australian former computer hacker who set up WikiLeaks in 2006, has kept out of public view since the release of the first leaked American diplomatic cables on Sunday. He has denied he has blood on his hands. Mr Assange is the subject of an international arrest warrant over allegations of rape in Sweden.

Writing on her Facebook page on Monday, Mrs Palin questioned why the US authorities were not looking for him in the same way that it had hunted suspected terrorists.

“The latest round of publications of leaked classified U.S. documents through the shady organization called Wikileaks raises serious questions about the Obama administration’s incompetent handling of this whole fiasco.

“First and foremost, what steps were taken to stop Wikileaks director Julian Assange from distributing this highly sensitive classified material especially after he had already published material not once but twice in the previous months?

“He is an anti-American operative with blood on his hands. His past posting of classified documents revealed the identity of more than 100 Afghan sources to the Taliban. Why was he not pursued with the same urgency we pursue al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders?”

She went on: “What if any diplomatic pressure was brought to bear on NATO, EU, and other allies to disrupt Wikileaks’ technical infrastructure? Did we use all the cyber tools at our disposal to permanently dismantle Wikileaks? Were individuals working for Wikileaks on these document leaks investigated? Shouldn’t they at least have had their financial assets frozen just as we do to individuals who provide material support for terrorist organizations?”

Mrs Palin, who is tipped to run for President in 2012, also said that “serious questions” had to be asked about how the “highly sensitive” memos from diplomats and intelligence officers could have been uploaded onto a computer memory stick and given to WikiLeaks from a supposedly secure US defence department network known as SiproNet. The prime suspect is Bradley Manning, a young private in the US Army who is now being held ahead of a court-martial.

Mrs Palin asked why the White House had not issued orders to tighten security back in July, when WikiLeaks released thousands of classified military documents on Afghanistan.

“What explains this strange lack of urgency on their part?”

Mrs Palin concluded: “We are at war. American soldiers are in Afghanistan fighting to protect our freedoms. They are serious about keeping America safe. It would be great if they could count on their government being equally serious about that vital task.”

Rick Santorum, another prominent conservative, agreed with her, saying: “We haven't gone after this guy, we haven't tried to prosecute him, we haven't gotten our allies to go out and lock this guy up and bring him up on terrorism charges.”

The Obama administration has said that it “deeply regrets” the leaking of the embarrassing cables that have disclosed exactly what American diplomats think of foreign leaders and promised to take “aggressive steps” against those who “stole” them.

