All of WikiLeaks Afghan War Logs inscribed on Bitcoin
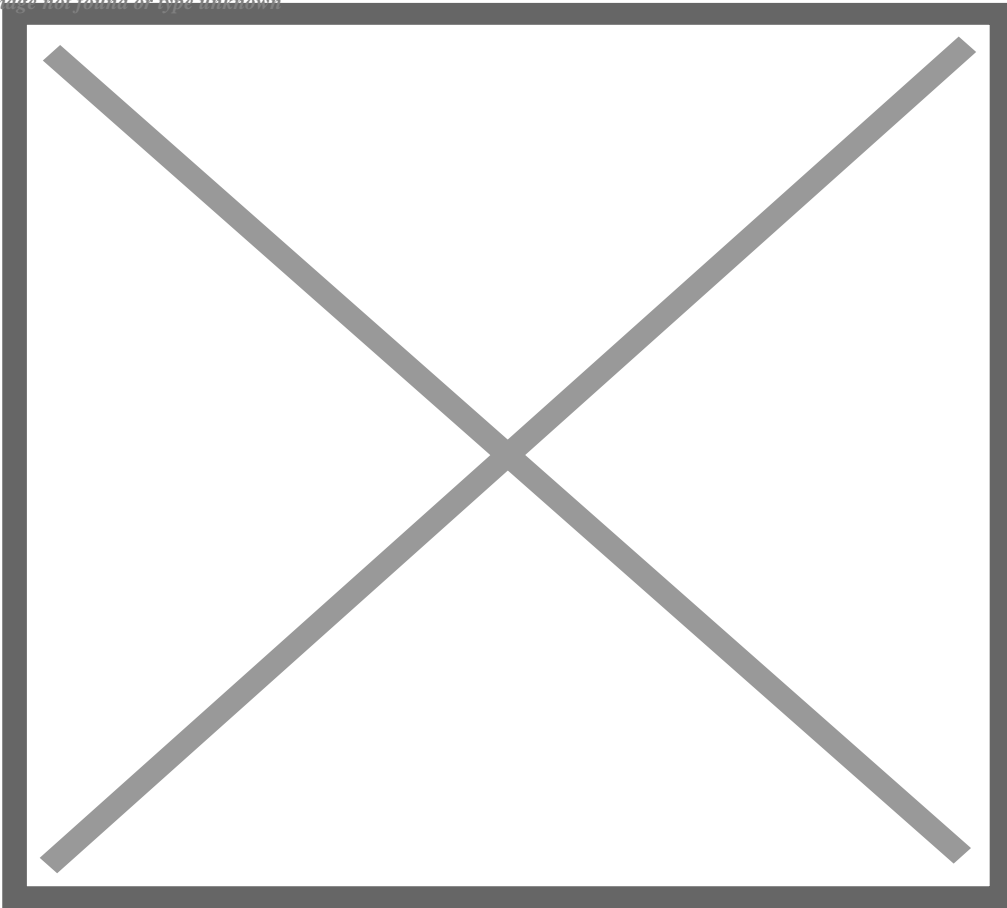

Julian Assange holds up a copy of the Guardian newspaper during a press conference in London on July 26, 2010.

London, October 12 (RHC)-- An unknown "Project Spartacus" has formed in an attempt to immortalize on bitcoin the thousands of Afghan War logs published by Julian Assange's WikiLeaks in 2010.

What's started with a mysterious inscription on October 7th may end up turning into the latest global protest in support of journalist and activist Julian Assange.

As revealed by Bitcoin Magazine, an unknown "Project Spartacus" has formed in an attempt to immortalize on bitcoin the classified information that the U.S. government has long alleged Julian Assange illegally provided to journalists in the infamous Afghan War Diary.

Following the inscription, an anonymous individual has contacted Bitcoin Magazine claiming responsibility for the project, which aims to inscribe the tens of thousands of logs from the Afghan War published by Julian Assange's WikiLeaks in July 2010 into the bitcoin blockchain.

These logs created a big upheaval in U.S. media at time they were published, and elicited strong reactions from the country's government. Notably, the content of the logs not only differed from what had been presented in mainstream media but also offered troubling insights into what actually happened in Afghanistan. At times, the logs raised questions about the conduct of some U.S. military operations.

The publication of the war logs, which was coordinated with The Guardian, The New York Times, and others, caused a spur inside the government. The first indictment brought against Assange focused on an alleged conspiracy between him and Chelsea Manning to crack an account on a computer in her military base. Per the charges, the "primary purpose of the conspiracy was to facilitate Manning's acquisition and transmission of classified information."

However, as reported by The Intercept, it later became clear that the alleged hacking not only didn't happen, but it also couldn't have happened. New testimony, reported by investigative news site Shadowproof, also showed that Manning already had authorized access to, and the ability to exfiltrate, all of the documents that she was accused of leaking — without receiving any technical help from WikiLeaks.

In truth, the indictment describes the kinds of activities conducted by many news organizations and journalists every day, including obtaining and publishing true information of public interest, communication between a publisher and a source, and using encryption tools.

It seems this backdrop is the context through which Project Spartacus attempts to take a foothold in the bitcoin ecosystem. The project leverages the Ordinals protocol, a metaprotocol for bitcoin that lets anyone add arbitrary data to the original cryptocurrency's blokchain. Given the properties of bitcoin and its decentralized network of nodes, once data is added to its blockchain it can never be removed or altered.

Such properties are seemingly great for the use case of combating censorship of information. Under this light, it seems Project Spartacus aims to take a stand towards freedom of information and knowledge, making it impossible for anyone to mess with the data that Assange risked his life to make public. The journalist currently faces potential extradition to the U.S., despite being an Australian citizen and not having committed alleged offenses on U.S. soil. The outcome of the extradition process remains uncertain, and concerns continue to grow regarding his future and whether he will ever regain his freedom.

Project Spartacus's website provides a public interface through which any person can "inscribe" — Ordinals jargon for adding data to bitcoin — a war log. There seem to be no fees associated with this action apart from network fees, a necessary component to any transaction submitted to the bitcoin network. The page also features a "donate" button, which opens up a panel through which users can optionally send bitcoin to Assange's cause. Donations are said to go towards supporting the following organizations: Freedom of the Press Foundation, The Information Rights Project and Reporters Without Borders.

A huge rectangular button appears on the main page, reading "Publish War Log." Upon clicking, the process of inscribing a war log is triggered. The user is given the option to choose how many logs to inscribe, with a maximum of 300 war logs per transaction. The user can then select the transaction fee, based on which a total amount for payment is calculated. Upon hitting "continue," the user then is presumably redirected for payment.

Commonly seen as a monetary network, bitcoin can also serve as a decentralized and unstoppable publishing technology thanks to the Ordinals protocol. Created last year by bitcoin developer Casey Rodarmor, Ordinals aims to make it easy for anyone to add data to bitcoin — be it text, image, video, HTML or Markdown.

The development saw a parabolic surge in activity within a short few months. The amount of inscriptions added to bitcoin in the first 200 days following the launch of Ordinals was greater than the number of Ethereum NFTs created in the same 200-day period after nonfungible tokens went live on ETH.

This rise in popularity caused a big fee spike on the bitcoin blockchain, leading some users to complain about the perceived "uselessness" of adding arbitrary data to what should arguably be a monetary network. Since bitcoin is ruled by rules, not rulers, and Ordinals transactions abide by the protocol's rules, the activity was able to continue and thrive for months, leading to a plethora of applications and new developments being built on the original cryptocurrency.

Project Spartacus takes a spin on Ordinals' popular use case of doing NFTs on the mother chain to seemingly focus on complete data finality on a decentralized chain of information, which is run by tens of thousands of nodes in hundreds of different jurisdictions around the world.

In this sense, Ordinals may very well be the ultimate publishing tool that many in the world have been looking for to fight information censorship and tampering.

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