

:
[WikiLeaks a learning experience](#)

CANDIA DAMES
NG News Editor
candia@nasguard.com

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Former Prime Minister Perry Christie says public officials should view the WikiLeaks cables as a learning experience and added that the release of the diplomatic documents have allowed Bahamians to see more clearly the actions of their leaders.

“This kind of exposure that we’re getting now is more to give Bahamians an understanding that these things happened and perhaps at the end of the process those of us who are in public life clearly will be more disciplined in any discussions we have (with U.S. Embassy officials) moving forward, “ said Christie in a recent interview with The Nassau Guardian.

He added, “I think as a result of what we have seen, the entire world will

learn from the experience of the leaks.

“That is very obvious because one cannot take anything for granted.

“When someone sits with you as prime minister, a communication is made to Washington based on what an ambassador says was his experience with a prime minister, who is me, and there is no third party to certify the truth of that.

“And so you ask me, did I say it and I said it is not the kind of thing I would say to an ambassador.”

Christie in that respect was referring specifically to a comment attributed to him in the cables, that he did not appoint former Minister of Trade and Industry Leslie Miller to his cabinet because of his qualifications, but to keep an eye on him.

He denied making the comment and suggested that something he said may have been taken out of context.

“Leslie Miller and I enjoy an incredibly strong relationship today,” Christie added.

In the cables, U.S. Embassy officials are overwhelmingly critical of Christie and his style of leadership.

After he called elections in 2007, an Embassy official wrote, “The timing of the elections is typical of Christie’s style of governance — uncertain, waiting until the last possible moment, with action forced by outside events rather than strategic planning.”

Comparing current Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham and Christie, the official wrote: “Ingraham is known from his time as prime minister as a decisive leader who accomplished much while suppressing dissension. His critics claim he rode roughshod over opponents.

“Christie has a well-deserved reputation as a waffling, indecisive leader, who procrastinates and often fails to act altogether while awaiting an elusive consensus in his Cabinet.”

Christie told The Guardian he is disappointed as a public official that the Embassy officials “seem to have taken on the FNM propaganda on me, I mean even to minute details”.

“They seem to mirror what has been said,” he said.

In another cable that was written in 2003 after Ingraham had a meeting with a U.S. Embassy official, the then former prime minister was quoted as saying Christie has always been weak and indecisive and lacks vision, but is a good man.

Ingraham, according to the cable, also described the Christie Cabinet as a “collection of incompetents.”

Christie told The Guardian that he was not surprised that Ingraham expressed such strong views about him.

“I have strong views about him,” the opposition leader added. “I don’t know whether I would have said it to anyone.”

Christie brushed aside repeated suggestions in the cables that he did not have a firm grip on his cabinet.

“Anyone who sat around that table would know that I was in charge of my cabinet, and that whether it’s foreign affairs or any other subject, that I would have been very assiduous in understanding all of the issues,” he said.

“The one thing though that I think was very clear to me is that I had the opportunity to meet with the president of the United States of America

(George W. Bush) on a number of occasions, one very formal visit with two other leaders in the region.

“And I used that opportunity to impress upon him all of the principles of the relationship between the United States and the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, so that there was no misunderstanding.”

Christie said he also made it clear to then U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice when she visited The Bahamas that it is important for The Bahamas to have a relationship with Cuba.

“I made it very clear that when it came to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas and its relationship with Cuba and other countries in the region we were in the region and it was a matter of necessity that we understood what was taking place in the region, including Cuba, and that it ought to be for the benefit of the Americans that they would have a friend like the Bahamas sitting in places like Cuba and Haiti and being able to represent the fact that we enjoy relationships that are very strong historically and will continue to be so,” he said.

Christie said he does not think the cables will hurt him politically.

“At the end of the day you try as a public figure to get people to know you, to know who you are, what you’re like and your integrity,” he said.

“And so, when Prime Minister Ingraham, for example, who spent near 20 years of his life in a direct partnership with me, trusting his future and his family’s future with me, I know he knows me.

“I know he knows my integrity. I know he knows the degree of my responsibility and so when he mischaracterizes me, it is all politics. He is very adept at it and oftentimes I chide myself for not being able to match him in kind in being able to do it, but you know I can’t be Hubert Ingraham.”

Christie also responded to comments attributed to Mount Tabor Baptist Church Bishop Neil Ellis.

Referring to Ellis' alleged comment to an embassy official that he (Christie) was not a "true man of God", Christie responded with a chuckle, "Well, he might be right."

"The bishop has an assignment and the bishop understands people," he added.

"He knows my heart. We've been close enough for him to know that. He knows the respect I have for him and I would expect him to be honest in his deliberations.

"If he doesn't have a clear understanding of my commitment to the Lord and Christianity and how I manifest it...I think he's very safe in what he said about me — not being a true man of God.

"And I assume a true man of God are people like him."

Another cable suggested that Christie did not have a grip on foreign affairs matters while he was prime minister and deferred to Fred Mitchell, who served as foreign affairs minister in his administration. In that 2006 cable, Christie responded to then U.S. Ambassador John Rood's concerns over The Bahamas' voting record in the United Nations and limited multilateral cooperation with the U.S. at the U.N.

"In response to the ambassador's concerns, Christie distanced himself from Mitchell's handling of Bahamian policy, saying 'foreign policy is driven by Fred and Ministry of Foreign Affairs without involvement of my office'," the cable said.

Asked to respond to this, Christie explained to The Guardian that as a prime minister he did not micromanage.

“That is what a prime minister like me would have tried to do with ambassadors to stop them from coming directly to the Office of Prime Minister unless it was a matter of great import and to channel whatever they do through the foreign minister,” he said.

“Fred Mitchell was an incredibly adept foreign minister and was recognized in this region as that. Whatever one wants to say, he was very, very good at performing the obligations of his office and therefore I had great confidence in Fred Mitchell being able to receive information from the Americans, interpret that information and pass it on to me and to colleagues.

“And to that extent I was trying to create a culture that foreign affairs was sufficiently important that you didn’t have to have a prime minister trying to wield the power [over] the office of the foreign minister.” Christie said Mitchell communicated with the Office of the Prime Minister practically every day, and still communicates with him often as shadow minister of foreign affairs.