October 30, 2015 Paul Dietrich (@paulmd199)

Following Wikileaks' not very subtle <u>hints</u> that blimps have run away before, I decided to mine the Iraq and Afghanistan War logs provided by Chelsea (then Bradley) Manning and see what the fuss was about. (Only data provided in Manning's logs are included, other incidents, such as <u>this one</u> in Kabul, which killed five earlier this month, are not.)

The following table summarizes the 42 accidents involving blimps, aerostats, balloons, and JLENS, the names are used interchangeably in the logs. (A pedant will point out the differences between these things, but for the most part pedants were not writing the reports.) Their tethers snapped 33 times, primarily due to high winds (19 times), dust devils (4 times) and helicopters (4 times). There are two mentions of the cables striking power lines, and in at least three cases the Aerostat was last spotted drifting towards Iran, with no mention of equipment recovery.

The tethers have broken in winds as low as 20 knots, but have also withstood gusts of 120 knots. Winds insufficient to break the tether often caused other damage to the balloon. Dust devils had a tendency to force the aerostat to crash into the ground, its rapid ascent afterwords would snap the cable. Sometimes crews had fought to save the aerostat, realizing conditions were unfavorable, other times they discovered it was missing after the fact.

The basic point here is that the Aberdeen Aerostat's accident was not a freak. It had happened before, repeatedly. Statements that the odds of the tether breaking were "unlikely" were flat lies. Even the power outages caused by the wayward blimp were foreseeable.

Mishaps Involving Aerostats, Blimps and Balloons in Iraq and Afghanistan 2004-2009												Last seen heading		
Date Time	Country	Lat L	ong	Tether Snap	Wind	Highest Speed	Dust Devil	Helicopter	Other aircraft	Tension reading	Power lines	Recovered	toward Iran	URL
Apr 2, 2004	14:02 Iraq	33.81912231	42.4609603	9 Yes										https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2004/04/IRQ20040402n295.html
Apr 24, 2004	16:04 Iraq	33.26042175	43.6257858	3 No	yes							yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2004/04/IRQ20040424n322.html
Oct 10, 2004	12:12 Iraq	33.30189896	44.2609901	4 yes				yes				yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2004/10/IRQ20041010n945.html
Apr 5, 2005	00:12 Iraq	33.24424744	44.273281	1 yes					yes			yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2005/04/IRQ20050405n1658.html
May 17, 2005	19:07 Iraq	36.32824326	43.1761894	2 yes	yes							yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2005/05/IRQ20050517n1933.html
Jun 26, 2005	00:12 Iraq	36.29597855	43.1301689	1 no			yes					yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2005/06/IRQ20050626n1895.html
Sep 29, 2005	14:02 Iraq	33.30012894	44.2674484	3 no			yes					yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2005/09/IRQ20050929n2548.html
Nov 15, 2005	14:02 Iraq	34.9239502	43.3851585	4 yes				yes				yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2005/11/IRQ20051115n3056.html
Nov 30, 2005	19:07 Iraq	33.28944016	44.2911605	8 yes								yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2005/11/IRQ20051130n2941.html
Feb 9, 2006	06:06 Iraq	33.52857971	44.2531700		yes	50mph							yes	https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2006/02/IRQ20060209n3413.html
Apr 24, 2006	22:10 Iraq	30.41754913	47.6338310	12 yes									yes	https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2006/04/IRQ20060424n3907.html
May 2, 2006	13:01 Iraq	30.5152607	47.807075											https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2006/05/IRQ20060502n3981.html
May 2, 2006	14:02 Iraq	31.77952957	47.1438293	5 yes									yes	https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2006/05/IRQ20060502n3989.html
May 8, 2006	16:04 Iraq	33.55276871	44.2386093	l yes										https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2006/05/IRQ20060508n4020.html
Jun 8, 2006	15:03 Iraq	31.77741051	47.1089286	8 yes										https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2006/06/IRQ20060608n4249.html
Jun 14, 2006	00:12 Iraq	33.27035904	43.4225006	lyes	yes									https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2006/06/IRQ20060614n4315.html
Jul 25, 2006	14:02 Iraq	34.02640152	43.9298210	1 yes	yes	20kts								https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2006/07/IRQ20060725n4553.html
Feb 15, 2007	23:11 Iraq	32.31237411	44.8550987	2 no	yes							yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2007/02/IRQ20070215n7196.html
Mar 2, 2007	01:01 Iraq	32.31237411	44.8550987		yes	55.6kts				4000lbs				https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2007/03/IRQ20070302n6831.html
Apr 29, 2007	23:11 Iraq	30.54173851	47.6913566	6 yes										https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2007/04/IRQ20070429n7581.html
May 27, 2007	21:09 Iraq	33.55277634	44.2386093	l yes	yes	75kts						partial		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2007/05/IRQ20070527n8491.html
May 27, 2007	22:10 Iraq	33.28574753	44.5233688	4 no	yes	35kts						yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2007/05/IRQ20070527n8505.html
May 28, 2007	00:12 lraq	33.25583649	44.2761077	9no	yes	121kts						yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2007/05/IRQ20070528n8290.html
Oct 20, 2007	01:01 Iraq	34.23086166	43.8325691	2 yes								yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2007/10/IRQ20071020n9607.html
Dec 11, 2007	01:01 Iraq	33.27074051	44.261810					unconfirmed				yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2007/12/IRQ20071211n9974.html
Mar 13, 2008	05:05 Iraq	33.09328461	44.1112213	l yes	yes	60kts						yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2008/03/IRQ20080313n10547.html
Mar 13, 2008	10:10 Iraq	30.5556469	47.6729812		yes							yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2008/03/IRQ20080313n10599.html
Mar 22, 2008	15:03 Afghanistan	34.40658951	68.4037399	3 yes	yes							yes		https://wikileaks.org/afg/event/2008/03/AFG20080322n1238.html
Mar 30, 2008	23:11 Iraq	33.55336761	44.2411346		yes	47kts				1343lbs		yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2008/03/IRQ20080330n9862.html
Jun 2, 2008	16:04 Iraq	32.49991989	45.7709655		yes	25kts						yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2008/06/IRQ20080602n11147.html
Jun 12, 2008	12:12 Iraq	30.556633	47.6688423											https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2008/06/IRQ20080612n10907.html
Jun 13, 2008	13:01 Iraq	33.41645813	44.4342575				yes					yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2008/06/IRQ20080613n11135.html
Jul 18, 2008	13:01 Iraq	33.41681671	44.4339332									yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2008/07/IRQ20080718n11019.html
Jul 24, 2008	14:02 Iraq	33.21563339	44.3869438	2 yes			yes				yes	yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2008/07/IRQ20080724n11336.html
Aug 23, 2008	05:05 Iraq	33.38812637	44.5040588	4 yes	yes									https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2008/08/IRQ20080823n11500.html
Dec 21, 2008	20:08 Iraq	33.38319778	44.3573951									yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2008/12/IRQ20081221n12099.html
May 21, 2009	03:03 Iraq	33.38428116	44.5032768									yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2009/05/IRQ20090521n12459.html
Jun 17, 2009	21:09 Iraq	34.91993713	43.3977584		yes							partial		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2009/06/IRQ20090617n12295.html
Jun 21, 2009	21:09 Afghanistan	34.83185959	71.1219253					yes				yes		https://wikileaks.org/afg/event/2009/06/AFG20090621n1881.html
Jul 22, 2009	17:07 Afghanistan	32.06119537	64.8519973	8 yes	yes						yes			https://wikileaks.org/afg/event/2009/07/AFG20090722n2039.html
Oct 29, 2009	11:11 Iraq	30.47345734	47.8071365		yes	50kts						yes		https://wikileaks.org/irq/report/2009/10/IRQ20091029n12323.html
Nov 10, 2009	02:02 Afghanistan	31.4977417	65.4184188					yes						https://wikileaks.org/afg/event/2009/11/AFG20091110n2339.html
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