

On the Meaning of Patriotism: Manning within his Rights to Give Secrets to Wikileaks

By [Sherwood Ross](#)

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As the U.S. is now an international aggressor, do Americans still owe it allegiance?

If a citizen releases information about *crimes* the U.S. commits, can he or she be legally punished? These questions arise in connection with the arrests of Australian Julian Assange and PFC Bradley Manning, a U.S. Army intelligence analyst believed to be the source of the secret government cables published by Assange's WikiLeaks Web site.

Thanks to the long arm of Uncle Sam, Assange is now being held under house arrest by its UK criminal co-conspirator in the Middle East wars and Manning now resides in the U.S. Marine Corps brig at Quantico, Va. Although not convicted of any crime, Manning for seven months allegedly has been subjected to solitary confinement, perhaps *the* most diabolical punishment ever devised by American wardens. Studies of U.S. prisoners subjected to it show they suffer mental deterioration and insanity. This harsh punishment prior to any trial betrays the face of the tyrant state.

Under ordinary circumstances, the release of information labeled "secret" violates U.S. law, as intelligence specialist Manning undoubtedly knew. But if the U.S. is an aggressor state, as Germany was when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, doesn't that change everything? America under President George W. Bush attacked two small nations that posed no threat to it. Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan told BBC the US-led invasion of Iraq was "illegal." He said it contravened the UN Charter as the attack lacked Security Council approval. MIT Professor Noam Chomsky in his book *"Imperial Ambitions,"* (Metropolitan), called the U.S. invasion of Iraq as "open an act of aggression as there has been in modern history, a major war crime." By ratifying the UN Charter the U.S. agreed to refrain "from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state..." And international law authority Francis Boyle of the University of Illinois, Champaign, called the invasion of Afghanistan "an illegal armed aggression that has created a humanitarian catastrophe" for its 22 millions. (*Destroying World Order*, Clarity Press.)

And as these invasions *are* criminal, why shouldn't pertinent information about them not be brought to light? Whenever has it been wrong to expose a criminal enterprise? Public-spirited citizens go to the police and FBI every day to report crimes. "Under international law," says Boyle, professor of that subject, "citizens have a basic human right to resist the commission of international crimes by their own government, especially aggression..." And this is what PFC Manning did. He resisted aggression by informing Americans of how their government breaks laws. The *Associated Press* reports Manning told an associate, "I want people to see the truth...because without information you cannot make informed decisions as a public." America's Founders believed that, too, and made a free press a cornerstone of

the new nation. Ann Medlock, Founder of the Giraffe Heroes Project, says, "In a perfect world, institutions would listen to their staffers when they point out errors, lapses of ethics, and outright chicanery within the organization. Then those holding power would correct those flaws. But...that hasn't been the reality. Again and again authorities just blast away at the truthsayers rather than addressing the problems." In a democratic society, wouldn't the Pentagon commend Boyle for calling to attention the murder of innocent civilians and reporters by a helicopter gunship?

Webster's (Random House) defines a patriot as one who "loves, supports, and defends his or her country and its interests." The word "defends" here is critical. The wars the U.S. is waging in the Middle East are not defensive but offensive, thus it is unpatriotic to support them. In its highest sense, patriotism means citizen *opposition* to a totalitarian regime, not support for it. Looking back, who do Germans today honor and revere as "patriots" during the Hitler years if not the students of the White Rose Society? Ask yourself if those students were guilty of treason for passing out leaflets that denounced Hitler's crimes? Hitler thought so and they were arrested, tortured and decapitated. Yet the students were only trying to reach their fellow Germans with truths Hitler tried to conceal. How different is PFC Manning's actions from theirs? PFC Manning appears to be within his rights as any whistle-blower to divulge information that exposes U.S. crimes.

Today, the American warfare state is a tyranny that operates 800 military bases abroad (in addition to 1,000 on its own soil) and spends more for war than the next 15 nations combined. It kidnaps people off the streets around the world and dispatches them to remote prisons where they are held incognito and tortured. It is the world's No. 1 Jailer, with tens of thousands imprisoned in the Middle East against whom no charges ever have been brought. It taps the telephones of UN officials and, as WikiLeaks disclosed, orders its diplomats to spy on their foreign counterparts. It leads the world in the sale of armaments to dictators. It violates anti-nuclear covenants and uses illegal irradiated ammunition on battlefields. It attacks small countries that have never attacked it and its CIA sows mayhem as it overthrows other countries (Iran and Chile are examples) by force and violence. President Obama's decision not to prosecute his predecessor for making illegal wars turns the Constitution into toilet paper.

Chalmers Johnson wrote in *"The Sorrows of Empire,"* (Metropolitan/Owl Books), "the growth of militarism, official secrecy, and a belief that the United States is no longer bound, as the Declaration of Independence so famously puts it, by "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind" is probably irreversible. A revolution would be required to bring the Pentagon back under democratic control, or to abolish the Central Intelligence Agency..." Johnson does not advocate revolution; he means an earth-shaking change needs to occur. As revolutions involve violence and proceed by force rather than reason, in point of fact, Americans who feel obliged to restore democracy here would be better off following Dr. King's example of exerting non-violent "soul force" to effect change. The American people have been led into wars based on lies, fictions, and secrets and should be grateful to Assange and Manning for revealing the truth of this misconduct. PFC Manning is no traitor but an American patriot. Like Julian Assange, he should be set free now.

Sherwood Ross, who formerly reported for major dailies and wire services, is director of the *Anti-War News Service*. To contribute to his service, or comment, contact him at sherwoodross10@gmail.com

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