



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on August 2, 2010

Defense Secretary Gates Mortified, Appalled by Wikileaks Exposure

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told ABC's Christiane Amanpour he was "mortified" and "appalled" by last month's Wikileaks disclosures of U.S. Afghanistan campaign secret documents on Sunday's This Week program. The Wikileaks documents consisted of some 90,000 secret documents related to the U.S. prosecution of the U.S. war in Afghanistan from 2004-2010, and Gates claimed "there was no sense of responsibility or accountability associated with it" and that "it puts our soldiers at risk because they can learn a lot — our adversaries can learn a lot about our techniques, tactics and procedures from the body of these leaked documents.



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen has just days earlier [claimed](#) Wikileaks may have "blood on its hands."

Wikileaks Spokesman Julian Assange fired back at Gates and Mullen's comments in a [statement he read on CNN](#):

We are disappointed in what was left out in Secretary Gates' comments. Secretary Gates spoke about hypothetical blood, but the grounds of Iraq and Afghanistan are covered with real blood. Secretary Gates has overseen the killings of thousands of children and adults in these two countries. Secretary Gates could have used his time — as other nations have done — to announce a broad inquiry into the these killings. He could have announced specific criminal investigations into the deaths we have exposed. He could have announced a panel to hear the heartfelt dissent of U.S. soldiers who know this war from the ground. He could have apologized to the Afghani people. But he did none of these things. He decided to treat these issues and the countries affected by them with contempt. Instead of explaining how he would address these issues, he decided to announce how he would suppress them. This behavior is unacceptable. We will not be suppressed. We will continue to expose abuses by this administration and others.

Gates also geared up the U.S. government attack on character of Wikileaks in the media. "My attitude on this is that there are two — two areas of culpability," he [told](#) Amanpour. "One is legal culpability. And that's up to the Justice Department and others. That's not my arena. But there's also a moral culpability. And that's where I think the verdict is guilty on Wikileaks." U.S. military-friendly media are already starting to publish stories with leading, anti-Wikileaks headlines.

The Tory London *Daily Telegraph* openly asked in a [July 31 headline](#): "Julian Assange: is 'Wikileaker' on a crusade or an ego trip?" The Swiss native Assange works for Wikileaks as a volunteer who takes no salary. The Swedish-based [Wikileaks website](#) is hosted by several European websites that operate



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internet hosting with little government interference and outside of U.S. government regulatory control.

One thing is certain: Wikileaks continues to drive the debate over the war in Afghanistan. All of Christiane Amanpour's [questions](#) for Gates in her maiden hosting of ABC's *This Week* stemmed from revelations of the Wikileaks documents, including the revelation that rebel forces may be using U.S. Stinger missiles to bring down U.S. helicopter gunships:

AMANPOUR: So let me ask you about a couple of things that came out. One is the possibility that the Taliban may have Stinger missiles. Do they, do you think?

GATES: I don't think so.

AMANPOUR: At all?

GATES: I don't think so.

Because Wikileaks operates outside of the United States, it remains relatively safe from U.S. Justice Department prosecutors and free to continue to expose government corruption around the world. And thanks to Wikileaks, the increasingly secretive U.S. government will hold fewer secrets from the American people. The only tragedy is that whistleblowing journalists have to leave the United States to practice a free press, the same kind of free press that the [First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution](#) explicitly and without exception guaranteed with the words "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press."

Photo: Defense Secretary Robert Gates at a Pentagon press briefing, July 29, 2010: AP Images

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