

The Phony Nobility of Wikileaks

- ✘ There's a theme running through the latest WikiLeaks story which can be summed up in a single word: Hypocrisy.

It's a safe bet that Julian Assange, the brains behind WikiLeaks, sees himself as a noble idealist at war with a nation that hides its many bad deeds in files marked "secret."

By exposing America for what it is, or at least for what he thinks it is, Mr. Assange is a hero, or at least he thinks he is.

Except he isn't.

If Julian Assange really wants to be noble, idealistic and heroic – if he really wants to make the world a safer place – he would use his considerable talents to uncover the dark secrets hidden in places like Iran, China and Russia. I'll bet they have some really great secrets. But finding an accomplice to hack into their computers and stealing classified material would take real courage. Steal secrets from any of those countries and there's an excellent chance Mr. Assange would wake up dead one morning. Break into U.S. State Department files and the worst thing that happens is that your lawyer gets a letter from the attorney general's office saying play nice.

But what Julian Assange has managed to do, inadvertently to be sure, is blow up the concept of confidentiality. If you can break into U.S. secret files with impunity, than everything is fair game – including WikiLeaks itself.

Wouldn't you just love to know what Julian Assange and his band of merry men and women say and write in private? Do they worry that confidential informants might be killed because of

their leaks involving the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? Or do they think that the death of a few people working for the U.S. government is a small price to pay if it helps end two wars Mr. Assange doesn't believe should have been waged in the first place?

Ah, but those matters are confidential, don't you know. They're none of our business. They're private, not meant for outsiders. And WikiLeaks privacy must be respected.

Then there's the New York Times, which ran the WikiLeaks story on page one, which I would have also done since the documents were being published in four foreign newspapers and could easily be accessed on the WikiLeaks Website.

But consider this: Just one year ago, the New York Times environmental reporter, Andrew Revkin, refused to publish confidential emails from English academics calling into question some crucial research about global warming, a scandal that came to be known as climategate.

This was Mr. Revkin's statement of principle last year: "The documents appear to have been acquired illegally and contain all manner of private information and statements that were never intended for the public eye, so they won't be posted here" on his New York Times blog.

That was then. But after WikiLeaks, through an unnamed intermediary, gave the Times those state departments cables, the paper said their contents were not only available elsewhere but were in the public interest – and therefore should be published.

As Powerline, which first noted the Times' hypocrisy pointed out, "Without belaboring the pointy, let us note simply that the two statements are logically irreconcilable. Perhaps something other than principle and logic were at work then, or at work now."

That's a pretty safe assumption.