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US declares Wikileaks off-limits to government researchers - December 07, 2010

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The US government is clamping down on scientists' ability to discuss and surf freely as part of its response to the release of classified cables by Wikileaks.

Today at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, moderators who run an environmental science discussion group called Coral-List have begun deleting any posts that make reference to Wikileaks documents. On Friday, at Fermilab in Chicago, access to Wikileaks was blocked by the IT department to "help prevent someone from inadvertently downloading a classified document to a machine on our network" The same day at NASA, employees were told not to use their computers to download information from Wikileaks.

Steven Aftergood of the Federation for American Scientists says the actions appear intended to respond to an Office of Management and Budget memo that reminds agencies that bringing classified information onto a non-classified system may breach agency regulations. But, he adds, many agencies are going further than they have to by blocking sites entirely. He says that doesn't make sense when much of the information is already freely available from newspapers such as The New York Times and The Guardian. "The government has locked itself into a contradictory position that threatens mission performance," – the idea that government employees should do the best job they can with the information they can obtain, he says.

Contrary to what US scientists may have understood from the government's behavior, it is not a crime for scientists to read classified information that has entered the public domain as long as they have no intent to damage national security by doing so, Aftergood says. But scientists at national labs are at risk of breaking workplace regulations if they load classified information onto their government computer.

Aftergood says that the classified cables on wikileaks are not primarily a scientific resource, but they do contain social and geographical data that is of interest to some researchers, he says. Those most likely to be affected by the bans are foreign policy researchers and analysts.

In his Secrecy newsletter Aftergood discusses blocks on Wikileaks at the Library of Congress and comments that researchers for the Congressional Research Service, which is part of the Library, may be left unable to compete with other analysts as a result of their inability to read information that everyone else can access.

Image: Wikileaks logo under creative commons



Posted by Eugenie Samuel Reich on December 07, 2010
Categories: [Policy](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(4\)](#) | [TrackBacks \(0\)](#)

COMMENTS

Washington is evil and stupid. Nominate Julian Paul Assange, Editor-in-Chief, WikiLeaks for the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize,

Thorbjørn Jagland
The Norwegian Nobel Institute
Norwegian Nobel Committee

Henrik Ibsens gate 51
NO-0255 Oslo
NORWAY

Posted by: [Uncle Al](#) | [December 7, 2010 07:52 PM](#)

You *do* realise that Julian Assange can be extradited from his cell in London to the USA... Don't you?

The Extradition Treaty compels the UK to hand over the suspect *on request*. No charges, no evidence, no hearing or appeal in an English court. Just a request.

The faster he gets to Sweden - in manacles or merely accompanied by his legal advisers - the safer he will be.

Posted by: Nile H | [December 7, 2010 08:22 PM](#)

Oh my God ! Is not that so similar to chinise censure ? That so criticised by states who proclaims they prop freedom of speech ?

I can't believe it !

And Yes, having Julian in a London jail sounds something disproportionated, and a way to serve his head on a silver salver to the USA.

I don't understand what is wrong with Julian, but now everybody knows what is wrong with USA... Thanks Wikileaks !

Posted by: Sergi | [December 7, 2010 08:36 PM](#)

From the still legal wikipedia:

"Scientific dissent from Lysenko's theories of environmentally acquired inheritance was formally outlawed in 1948, and for the next several years opponents were purged from held positions, and many imprisoned. Lysenko's work was officially discredited in the Soviet Union in 1964 ... Today much of Lysenko's agricultural experimentation and research is largely viewed as fraudulent ...

Lysenkoism is used colloquially to describe the manipulation or distortion of the scientific process as a way to reach a predetermined conclusion as dictated by an ideological bias, often related to social or political objective"

Posted by: Dani Ratcliff | [December 7, 2010 09:47 PM](#)

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