



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on January 11, 2018

Trump Admin. Begins Paving the Way for WikiLeaks' Julian Assange to Go Free

The Trump administration has laid the groundwork for clearing the biggest obstacle keeping WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange (shown) from leaving the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. Assange has been in exile there since August 2012 and has feared leaving, since the U.S. government has considered him a criminal suspect for his role in publishing classified documents detailing sometimes criminal actions by U.S. federal departments and agents.



In a tweet last week, WikiLeaks pointed out that the U.S. government has “decided to close its eight year long grand jury proceedings against @WikiLeaks (expanded in 2017 to cover our series on the CIA).” The WikiLeaks [tweet](#) was a reference to a statement made by State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert during a press conference on January 2. Speaking about Iran, Nauert said, “We support a freedom of the press. When a nation clamps down on social media, we ask the question, ‘What are you afraid of?’ What are you afraid of? We support the people of Iran, and we support their voices being heard.”

After the press conference, the official Department of State Twitter account tweeted Nauert’s quote. WikiLeaks retweeted it and drew the inference that the message — while directed at the government of Iran — was applicable to a shift in the policy of the United States as a result of the election of Donald Trump and that that shift was the reason why the eight-year-long grand jury proceedings have been closed.

Even more promising to Assange’s plight is the fact that President Trump’s lawyers have [filed a motion](#) with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia arguing that Assange’s publication of the DNC and John Podesta e-mails was protected by the First Amendment even if the e-mails were stolen.

While that motion is specifically geared toward Assange’s publication of the DNC and Podesta e-mails, it recognizes WikiLeaks as a valid media organization protected by the First Amendment. WikiLeaks has not always been seen in that light by the powers-that-be in the U.S. government.

Assange and WikiLeaks first came to national (and international) attention in 2010 — four years after WikiLeaks was founded. What catapulted WikiLeaks onto the front pages of newspapers and websites around the world was the whistleblower organization’s exposé of the U.S. war in Iraq. That exposé included a trove of classified documents and other files leaked to WikiLeaks by Private Bradley Manning. Manning was working as an intelligence analyst and smuggled the files out by copying them to a CD marked “Lady Gaga.”

One of those files was a [classified video](#) recorded by the crew of an Apache helicopter that shows what WikiLeaks aptly described as “the indiscriminate slaying of over a dozen people in the Iraqi suburb of New Baghdad — including two Reuters news staff.” WikiLeaks ” (WARNING: The video is graphic and



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clearly shows the Apache firing on and killing innocent citizens. Viewer discretion is advised.)

Because of that publication and the infamous “[CableGate](#)” publication that followed shortly, Assange wound up on the wrong side of the U.S. government — with many (including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton) calling for his death. When — shortly after that — Assange was accused of rape ([those charges have since been dropped](#)), he fled to the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, saying that he believed that if he were arrested, he would be extradited to the United States and would be killed.

Subsequent releases by WikiLeaks have certainly not helped ingratiate Assange to the U.S. government. In the WikiLeaks tweet above, there is a reference to a “series on the CIA.” That series — known as Vault 7 — was an exposé of hacking tools developed by the CIA which this writer covered in several articles. Those articles can be found [\(1\) here](#), [\(2\) here](#), [\(3\) here](#), [\(4\) here](#), [\(5\) here](#), [\(6\) here](#), [\(7\) here](#), and [\(8\) here](#). Many of those hacking tools were designed to spy on citizens by turning their own devices into surveillance tools. The CIA — in a move that would have embarrassed the Keystone Kops — managed to “lose” those tools and set them loose in the wild for any hacker to download and use.

So, while the powers-that-be in the U.S. government may (at least under the previous administration) have seen Assange and WikiLeaks as enemies, there is little doubt that the service WikiLeaks has provided to the cause of liberty is invaluable.

Now, with Nauert’s statement about “freedom of the press,” the closing of the grand jury proceedings, and the motion filed by Trump’s lawyers, WikiLeaks has received something close to the imprimatur of the U.S. government as a legitimate media organization. By extension, Assange is likewise “redeemed.” All of that may add up to Assange being able to finally end his exile and leave the embassy a free man.

It is hard to say whether it plays any part in all of this, but late last year Assange made an offer of “absolute proof” that would dismantle the [Trump/Russia collusion narrative](#) so loved by the Left. As this writer [reported](#) at the time, Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) visited Assange and said that Assange was offering that proof in exchange for a pardon from President Trump. There was just one problem: Trump’s staff is keeping the deal from Trump, according to the congressman. From that report:

But on September 23, Trump — who [famously stated](#) “I love WikiLeaks” when he was on the campaign trail — told the press he has “never heard” of Assange’s offer to make a deal in exchange for the evidence that would dismantle the Trump/Russia fake news narrative. Rohrabacher says that the information is being kept from President Trump by his own staff. “I think that when he hears that there’s been an offer made, he will insist on knowing about it,” Rohrabacher said.

Whether Trump has finally gotten the details of that deal or simply decided to act on his own without that information, his administration has laid the groundwork for Assange to come in out of the cold. When that could happen is not known, but it can’t be soon enough. The idea that a journalist who has exposed the evils of the U.S. government would have to live in exile to protect his life is an idea that any freedom-loving American should find unsettling.

Photo of Julian Assange: AP Images



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