Insight

Norm Coleman: Obama must move against Wikileaks now

DECEMBER 2, 2010

As a nation, we have not responded forcefully enough to the attacks by Wikileaks and its supporters against our national security.

Perhaps it was our belief that “transparency” was a service being provided with these leaks. Tragically, the only transparency achieved in this latest data dump is that which undermines the ability of our diplomats to do their jobs and endangers those who help keep us safe.

We know the terrorists will rifle through the new information to look for any advantage and use it against us down the road. But the damage to our diplomats has already been done. If we can’t demonstrate an ability to get serious about these leaks, our diplomats will find themselves shut out. Our allies need to know that they can trust us again.

President Obama and his administration’s senior appointees have slowly begun to express concerns, with Attorney General Eric Holder now saying he intends to pursue criminal prosecution of those responsible for these attacks.

This is not a domestic criminal act. Let there be no mistake: The Wikileaks are an act of terrorism.

And, those behind it – whether they are American citizens or foreign citizens – are committing acts of terrorism against our country, against our military and our allies.

Obama must immediately implement Executive Order 13224 and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) against Wikileaks, its founders and all funders of this organization.

E.O. 13224 authorizes the U.S. government to designate and block the assets of foreign individuals and entities that commit acts of terrorism, as well as those entities that provide

support, services, or assistance to terrorists and terrorist organizations and their subsidiaries.

The IEEPA similarly allows the U.S. government to apply economic sanctions, including asset blockage, to foreign individuals connected to any "unusual and extraordinary threat" that has been declared a national emergency.

Furthermore, Obama should consider whether Wikileaks and any of its founders and funders should be deemed Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) or be determined to have provided material support to FTOs.

FTO designations play a critical role in our fight against terrorism and are an effective means of curtailing support for terrorist activities and pressuring groups to get out of the terrorism business.

If Wikileaks doesn't fall into this category, lawmakers and the president should review our terrorism laws to ensure they reflect the grave danger posed by such sensitive leaks.

This isn't a bunch of whistleblowers trying to right a wrong. These are individuals with a stated commitment to the destruction of our nation's standing here and abroad.

While Bradley Manning, a U.S. Army soldier, is being looked at as a key player in providing access to classified U.S. documents, the founder of Wikileaks, Julian Assange, ought to be the primary target of our efforts. We need to take immediate steps to stop him in his tracks, and going after his assets is an appropriate first step.

We certainly ought to throw the book at Assange, and it's appropriate to bring charges against him under the Espionage Act and any other statute. But, waiting any longer while Assange and others who fund his efforts cause more harm to our nation is simply unacceptable when the president already has numerous tools at his disposal.

As sure as the terrorist who detonates a bomb, attacks a soldier or attempts other acts of violence and mayhem against our nation and allies, Wikileaks is bound and determined to destroy this nation's security by exposing our nation's most vital secrets and intelligence.

It's time to put an end to the efforts of those who claim higher motives in their effort to destroy our security.

And, the president shouldn't wait any longer for his lawyers to decide if attacks against the United States constitute a "clear and present danger."

We're past clear and present danger. It's now upon us. And, we must defend ourselves.

This originally appeared in *The Washington Examiner* on December 1, 2010.