



Manning Sentenced to 35 Years in Prison

By Brendan McGarry Army Pfc. Bradley Manning, who was found guilty of passing classified intelligence to the website WikiLeaks, was sentenced to serve 35 years in prison and will be dishonorably discharged from the military. The 25-year-old soldier was sentenced Wednesday by Army Col. Denise Lind at Fort Meade, Md. Manning admitted to leaking hundreds of thousands of battlefield reports and diplomatic cables while serving as an intelligence analyst in Iraq in 2010. He apologized earlier this month and his defense blamed the actions in part on his struggles with a gender-identify disorder and traumatic upbringing. Manning is required to serve a third of the sentence before he is eligible for parole, according to military legal experts. The three and a half years he served awaiting trial will be included in time served. Therefore, he may be eligible for parole in less than 10 years. Manning faced as many as 90 years in prison after being convicted last month of multiple crimes, including violating the 1917 Espionage Act. The prosecution asked that he serve at least 60 years. The judge decided to add a decade to the 25-year term the defense requested. "That's completely appropriate," Lisa Windsor, a Washington, D.C.-based attorney at the law firm Tully Rinckey Pllc in Albany, N.Y., and a retired Army colonel who worked in the Judge Advocate General's Corps, said of the sentence. "This was kind of a so-called victimless crime ... but I think as far as protecting national security, this sentence fits the bill." Manning's sentencing came after a 12-week trial and protracted legal battle. He was arrested for leaking information to the website WikiLeaks, a website founded by Julian Assange. Manning was hailed as a whistleblower by supporters that include the American Civil Liberties Union, a liberal advocacy group based in New York; Daniel Ellsberg, the former Rand Corp. analyst who in 1971 leaked the Pentagon Papers in protest against the Vietnam War; and numerous Hollywood celebrities who participated in a video released this year, titled "I am Bradley Manning." Sterling DeRamus, also an attorney at Tully Rinckey and a retired Navy Reserve captain, expected Manning would be sentenced to between 20 and 40 years rather than 60 years because the judge acquitted him of the most serious charge of aiding the enemy, which carried a potential life sentence. "They dodged a pretty big bullet," he said today in a telephone interview. "It's a fair sentence that's going to be upheld." At the same time, the judge made clear that this type of behavior is unacceptable, DeRamus said. "He's going to serve a long time in jail and it is going to send a message to people to not to leak information without authorization and to be very circumspect in their dealing with the press," he said. Manning will have additional opportunities to appeal the decision. Maj. Gen. Jeffery Buchanan, commander of the Military District of Washington, will review the verdict and sentence. If he approves a sentence that includes a bad-conduct discharge, a dishonorable discharge or confinement for a year or more, the Army Court of Criminal Appeals will automatically review the case. Additional appeals can also be made to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, the military's highest court, and even the U.S. Supreme Court. DeRamus said any appeal would be a "long shot" for the defense. "I certainly don't see any blatant errors that the judge has committed that would cause either the Army Court of Criminal Appeals or the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces to question what she has done," he said. "It's going to be viewed as a fair sentence."

