《美国泄密士兵布拉德利·曼宁面临136年监禁》

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In a split decision, US Army Pfc. Bradley Manning was acquitted Tuesday of aiding the enemy — the most serious charge he faced — but was convicted of espionage, theft and nearly every other count for giving secrets to WikiLeaks, a verdict that could see him spend the rest of his life in prison.

The judge, Army Col. Denise Lind, deliberated over three days before delivering a decision that denied the government a precedent that freedom of press advocates had warned could have broad implications for leak cases and investigative journalism about national security issues.

From the courtroom to world capitals, people struggled to absorb the meaning of a ruling that cleared the soldier of a charge of aiding the enemy, which would have carried a potential life sentence, but convicted him of 20 of 22 counts that, together, could also mean life behind bars.

Manning faces up to 136 years in prison if given maximum penalties in a sentencing hearing that starts Wednesday. It is expected to last most of August.

The 25-year-old soldier stood quietly at attention in his dress uniform as the verdict was delivered, flanked by his attorneys. He appeared not to react, though his attorney, David Coombs, smiled faintly when he heard "not guilty" on the aiding the enemy charge.

When the judge was done, Coombs put his hand on Manning's back and whispered something to him, bringing a slight smile to the soldier's face.

"We won the battle, now we need to go win the war," Coombs said later, outside the courtroom. "Today is a good day, but Bradley is by no means out of the fire."

Transparency advocates and legal experts had mixed opinions on the implications for the future of leak cases and investigative journalism in the Internet age.

The advocacy group Reporters Without Borders said the verdict was a chilling warning to whistleblowers, "against whom the Obama administration has been waging an unprecedented offensive," and threatens the future of investigative journalism because intimidated sources might fall quiet.

However, another advocate of less government secrecy, Steven Aftergood of the Federation of American Scientists, questioned whether the implications will be so dire, given the extraordinary nature of the Manning case.