US Army charges accused WikiLeaks source Private Bradley Manning with capital offense

By Barry Grey

The United States late Monday notified Private First Class Bradley Manning, whom it suspects of being WikiLeaks' source for some of the classified military reports and embassy cables that it was filing an additional 22 charges against him.

The new charges in Manning's court martial process include “aiding the enemy,” a capital offense. A news release from the Army said the prosecution team has “notified the defendant the prosecution will not recommend the death penalty.” However, it is up to the commander overseeing the case to make the final decision about imposing the death penalty.

This means that Manning, who has already suffered through ten months of solitary confinement in a brig at the Marine base in Quantico, Virginia, now has 30 more days of execution hanging over his head. His alleged “crime” is facilitating the publication of documents and videos that expose war crimes committed by US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and some of the diplomatic correspondences carried out by the US government.

Manning, who was serving as an intelligence specialist in Iraq, was first charged in May with 12 counts of downloading without authorization a secret video of US attack helicopters shooting down civilians in Baghdad (posted last April by WikiLeaks) as well as military and diplomatic files, and sharing them.

The military has held him since then under abusive conditions, even though he has been convicted of no offense and has no history of violence. He is confined to his cell 23 hours a day, allowed out only one hour for exercise, not permitted to sleep during the day, and severely restricted in the use of his glasses and his access to reading materials. The International Myeloma Foundation, among other human rights groups, has denounced his treatment as “inhumane,” and the United Nations is investigating whether it constitutes torture.

“The aiding the enemy” charge is defined as “giving assistance to the enemy,” which is defined as “organizing opposition forces in time of war but also other hostile body that our forces may be opposing too, who are not a part of a formal or a band of renegades.” Under this definition the enemy could be civilian or military.

The charge does not necessarily name the alleged enemy. It could refer to anti-occupation insurgents in Afghanistan or Iraq, or to WikiLeaks, which Secretary of State Hillary Clinton once said was nothing more than “a carrier of untruth.” But Manning has not been accused of lying or making false statements.

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The Pentagon, in coordination with WikiLeaks, has withheld large portions of the documents that Manning is accused of sharing.

The initial 12 charges carried a possible prison sentence of 52 years. According to Manning’s defense attorney, Lt Col. Franklin Cooper, the 22 new charges were preferred by Manning’s commanding officer after he made his own judgment of Manning’s role in the WikiLeaks case.

Under the court martial procedure, a provisional hearing, known as an Article 32, is to be held in late May or early June, after which final charges are to be laid.

At that stage it will be known for certain whether growing longer: Friedrich Merz, CDU parliamentary faction leader and a leading light of the business wing, Roland Koch, the right-wing Housian, Minister President; Ole von Beust, the mayor of Hamburg; former Federal President Horst Köhler; and recently appointed President Christian Wulff. There will be all thrown in the towel in the last year or so.

The Merkel government, which came to power on restoring the budget and passing on the costs of the financial crisis to the working populace, is increasingly beset by crisis. The fundamental reason for this is the intensification of social tensions that in turn have consequences for those who vote for, and are members of, the Union parties.

The ruling elite has long since been looking for a politican with the necessary arrogance and ruthlessnes to impose its dictates. Guttenberg was being groomed to play this role and implement his ideas in the course of his planned reform of the German army—i.e., the transformation of the Bundeswehr into an international combat army—but do not believe that a media creation like Guttenberg is substantial enough to stand up to public opposition.

The resignation of Guttenberg is a severe blow for Chancellor Angela Merkel. For the last two years, the 59-year-old son of a gardener, who had been the most popular minister in her cabinet, having apparently survived a series of scandaals. His public image was a young man, I am ashamed, and not in just in secret.” The Bundestag President Norbert Lammert (CDU) described the affair and its repercussions as a "hail in the dark" that had damaged his own reputation. "Guttenberg's own thesis supervi- sor, the 76-year-old retired constitutional lawyer Peter Häberle, also spoke out after two weeks of silence. And I think that the doctoral thesis contained "unimaginable deficiencies" that were "serious and unacceptable."" His successor, Oliver Lepsis, was even blunter. He described Guttenberg as a fraud and called for his resignation.

If he did no cause any harm on his behaviors, then "our relationship between science and politics would be seriously damaged." He went on to warn of "damage of potentially unim- munizable violations.

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