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SEARCH

## Julian Assange, on Eve of Verdict: 'Bradley Manning Is a Hero'

The WikiLeaks founder also said Monday that Edward Snowden was never trying to go to Russia.

by [Matt Berman](#)

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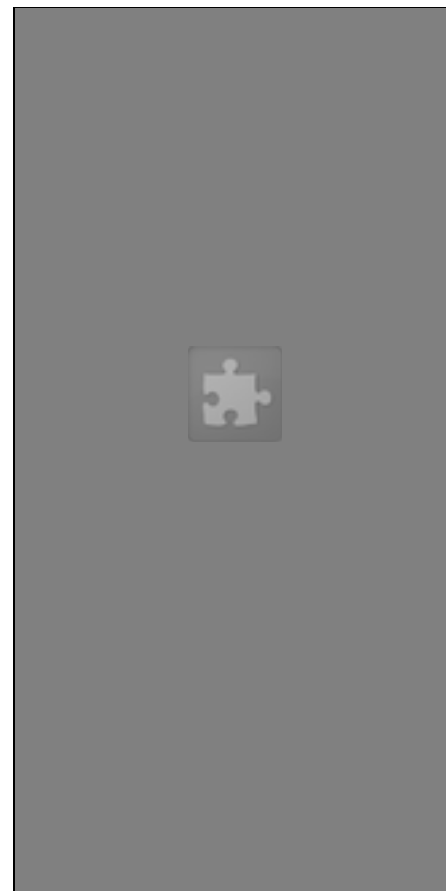
Julian Assange at the window of the Ecuadorean Embassy in central London in 2012. (AP Photo/Sang Tan)

From his confinement in Ecuador's London Embassy, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange came to the defense of Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden, the day before [a verdict came down](#) in the Manning case.

On Monday, a military judge [announced that a verdict](#) was expected Tuesday afternoon in Bradley Manning's trial. Manning was accused of aiding the enemy by leaking a heap of classified national security documents to WikiLeaks, although [he was acquitted](#) of that charge on Tuesday. Manning was also accused of federal espionage, theft, and computer fraud. Defense attorneys for Manning claim he did not expect that the information he leaked would wind up in enemy hands, but said rather that he is a whistleblower. Manning [still faces life in prison](#), with sentencing set to begin on Wednesday.

**(RELATED: [How the Manning Verdict Avoided a Serious Chill on Whistleblowing](#))**

"There's been no accusation in this entire case that any person has come to harm" based on information Manning gave to WikiLeaks, Assange told CNN's Jake Tapper. Contrary to the charges leveled against him by the U.S. government, Assange called Manning a "hero."



Manning [pleaded guilty](#) to 10 of the 22 charges against him in February, although none of them carried the highest penalties. But he still faces a 20-year prison sentence for those charges alone.

In the CNN interview, Assange also touched on the plight of National Security Agency leaker Snowden, who is still stuck in a Moscow airport, awaiting permission to enter Russia. But Snowden, Assange said, was never even trying to go to Russia:

Mr. Snowden tried to go to South America, and the State Department ... canceled his passport en route. So he was stranded in Russia.

Assange went on to say that the State Department is "marooning him, effectively, in Russia." It's not clear when Snowden will be able to actually get out of the airport, but last week his attorney [implied](#) that Snowden would like to stay in Russia for the foreseeable future, calling the country his "final destination, for now."

Assange himself didn't do Snowden too many favors in his search for asylum in South America. Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa shut down Snowden's asylum process in his country, [reportedly in part over concerns](#) that Assange was meddling too much.

In any event, with both Manning and Snowden at the center of the news, Assange is relevant again. Just in time for a [bid for Australia's Senate](#).

