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For Immediate Release

The American Legion blasts Manning commutation

WASHINGTON (January 17, 2017) – The leader of the nation’s largest veterans organization criticized President Obama’s decision today to commute the sentence of an ex-soldier convicted of violating the U.S. Espionage Act along with many other charges.

Chelsea Manning served in the U.S. Army as Pvt. Bradley Manning before being arrested and sentenced to 35 years at Fort Leavenworth for leaking a classified video to the website WikiLeaks.

“Anybody who has ever served in the U.S. military understands the seriousness of protecting classified material,” said National Commander Charles E. Schmidt of The American Legion. “Private Manning put American lives at risk. Manning was convicted of 20 out of 22 charges. Releasing this prisoner sends precisely the wrong message to all Americans who are entrusted to keep our national secrets secret.”

Schmidt, a retired Air Force officer and Vietnam War veteran, also expressed “serious concern” over the pardon of Gen. James Cartwright, who pled guilty in October to one charge of making false statements to federal investigators after he was accused of leaking top secret information.

“General Cartwright had a long and distinguished career but would he have been treated the same if he were a sergeant?” Schmidt asked. “These inexplicable moves do nothing to discourage future offenders from violating their oaths to protect America’s national security. The American Legion is hoping that President Obama is not considering more commutations and pardons of this nature before he leaves office on Friday.”

With a current membership of 2.2 million wartime veterans, The American Legion, www.legion.org, was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 13,000 posts across the nation.

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