



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on December 1, 2012

Bradley Manning Says He Considered Suicide in Solitary Confinement

Testifying on the harshness of his two and a half years of pretrial confinement, Army Pfc Bradley Manning, accused of leaking tens of thousands of classified documents to online news source WikiLeaks, acknowledged this week that he had tied a bed sheet into a noose when contemplating suicide during his imprisonment in Kuwait.



Manning was questioned about the noose during a pre-trial hearing in which the 24-year-old Army intelligence analyst testified of being held in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day in a six-by-eight-foot windowless cell, forced to sleep naked without bed sheets and kept on suicide watch in a Marine Corps brig in Quantico, Virginia, long after he said he had abandoned thoughts of suicide. On cross-examination, Army prosecutor Major Ashden Fein showed him a noose made of bed sheets and asked him if he had not fashioned a similar device during his Kuwait confinement. Manning said he did, and he acknowledged having had thoughts of taking his own life when he was processed as a “suicide risk” on his transfer to custody at Quantico, noting on his intake form that he was “always planning and never acting” on it.

Manning faces 22 federal espionage and breach of security charges stemming from the release to WikiLeaks of classified memos, Iraq and Afghanistan war logs, and Guantanamo prison records during the time he was stationed in Iraq as an intelligence analyst. The most controversial of the releases was a 2007 video showing a U.S. helicopter crew gunning down 11 men in Baghdad, including, it was later learned, a Reuters news photographer and his driver. The video appeared on the Internet under the heading, [“Collateral Murder.”](#)

The Pentagon exonerated the crew, saying the shooting occurred during an attack in which the camera equipment was mistaken for weapons.

The Associated Press [reported](#) that Manning’s lawyer, David Coombs, offered the court a plea bargain whereby Manning would plead guilty to eight of the 22 charges he faces and would have certain charges reduced to violations of military regulations rather than federal criminal statutes. Under the proposed agreement, the AP reported, Manning would be sentenced to 16, rather than 72 years in



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prison. The military judge, Army Colonel Denise Lind, accepted the offer Thursday and said she would consider the pleas at a hearing beginning December 10.

Manning [testified](#) on Thursday that he had begun to think about suicide in 2010 following his arrest in Baghdad and transfer to Kuwait where he was kept in isolation. He was transferred to the United States in July 2010 and placed in the brig at Quantico. Military officials claimed he was kept in isolation there because he was a maximum-security prisoner who was considered a danger to himself and other prisoners.

Manning testified he was awakened two or three times a night when he was on suicide watch. He said he told guards he could kill himself with his underwear if he wanted to, after which he was forced to sleep naked under a suicide smock for nearly two months. On one occasion, he said, he was forced to stand naked in front of his cell during morning attendance.

Conditions of Manning's confinement have been publicized by media critics of it, notably by Glenn Greenwald, a civil liberties attorney formerly writing for Salon.com and now a columnist with the British publication *The Guardian*. Both the conditions of his arrest and the nature of his revelations concerning abuses by both the U.S. military and Iraqi authorities have made the case a cause to rally around for human rights and antiwar activists.

Writing on [Consortiumnews.com](#) Friday, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern said that among the secrets revealed in the WikiLeaks documents was an order from the U.S. military command not to investigate torture of Iraqis by Iraqi prison guards. "Hundreds of the leaked war logs," McGovern wrote, "reflect the fertile imagination of the torturer faced with the entirely helpless victim — bound, gagged, blindfolded and isolated — who is whipped by men in uniforms using wire cables, metal rods, rubber hoses, wooden stakes, TV antennae, plastic water pipes, engine fan belts or chains." Other means of torture employed by Iraqis against their countrymen included hanging a prisoner by his wrists or ankles, rape or sexual molestation, and burning with hot cigarettes, acid, or boiling water.

"Manning was driven by a sense of morality to get the evidence to the American people and to the world," McGovern wrote, and has been made, by the conditions of his confinement during two and half years of imprisonment without a trial, "an example to anyone else tempted to tell hard truths."

Photo of Bradley Manning stepping out of a security vehicle while being escorted to courthouse: AP Images



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