

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/11/29/bradley-mannings-torture-in-solitary-confinement-is-subject-of-pre-trial-hearing/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | November 29, 2012



Update, 11/19/12: Bradley Manning took the stand late this afternoon. For live tweets of his testimony, follow [@kgosztola](#) and [@Edpilkington](#).

The psychiatrist who treated WikiLeaks suspect Bradley Manning while he was in custody in a Marinebrig at Quantico testified yesterday that Manning was held in extreme solitary confinement, in isolated and humiliating conditions, against his medical advice. As Ed Pilkington [reports in the Guardian](#) today:

Captain William Hctor told Mannings pre-trial hearing at Fort Meade that he grew frustrated and angry at the persistent refusal by marine officers to take on board his medical recommendations. The forensic psychiatrist said that he had never experienced such an unreceptive response from his military colleagues, not even when he treated terrorist suspects held at Guantanamo.

I had been a senior medical officer for 24 years at the time, and I had never experienced anything like this. It was clear to me they had made up their mind on a certain cause of action, and my recommendations had no impact, Hctor said.

The psychiatrist was testifying at Mannings court martial for allegedly being the source of the massive leak of hundreds of thousands of confidential US government documents to the whistleblower website WikiLeaks. The 24-year-old soldier, who worked as an intelligence analyst until his arrest in Iraq in May 2010, faces 22 counts and possible life in military custody.

Mannings defence lawyers are attempting to have the charges thrown out or any eventual sentence reduced by seeking to prove that the soldier was subjected to unlawful pre-trial punishment at Quantico. During the nine months he was in custody at the marine base in Virginia he was put on suicide watch and a prevention of injury order, or POI, that kept him in solitary confinement and exposed him to extreme conditions that were denounced by the UN and Amnesty International as a form of torture.

Shortly after he began treating Manning, following his arrival at Quantico in July 2010, Hctor did briefly recommended that the prisoner be placed on suicide watch. But he changed his recommendation within a week, and by late August was urging that Manning be returned to the general population. I was satisfied he no longer presented a risk, Hctor testified. He did not appear to be persistently depressed, he was not reporting suicidal thoughts, in general he was well behaved.

Hctor was asserting that Manning no longer needed to be held under harsh POI (prevention of injury) conditions. Under these conditions, Manning was held alone in a bare cell for at least 23 hours a day, barred him from all contact with other people but checked every five minutes by guards. Lights were kept on at night, and Manning slept on a suicide mattress without bedding and even had to ask for toilet paper when he needed it. (During one period, he also had even his underwear removed and was forced to stand naked for inspection.) Manning remained on POI throughout his stay at Quantico, despite Hctors orders.

According to the *Guardian*, The blanket denial of his expert opinion was unprecedented in his quarter century of practice, the psychiatrist said. Even when I did tours in Guantanamo and cared for detainees there my recommendations on suicidal behaviour were followed. Hctor said that the marine commanders should no longer pretend they were acting out of medical concern for the detainee. It wasn't good for Manning. I really didn't like them using a psychiatric standard when I thought it clinically inappropriate, Hctor said.

The best blow-by-blow reporting from this and other pre-trial hearings in the Manning case comes from Kevin Gosztola at FireDogLake,

who [yesterday reported](#) on the testimony of retired Colonel Daniel Choike, who served as the Quantico Marine Brig commander during the nine months that Manning was imprisoned there.

As Gosztola reports, at one point, Manning defense attorney David Coombs asked about a March 2011 incident where Manning said to an officer if he really wanted to kill himself he could with the elastic waistband of his underwear or with his flip-flops. That led officers to take away his underwear and flip-flops without consulting any mental health professionals. Coombs described in [the motion](#):

On 3 March 2011, PFC Manning was told to get out of bed for the morning DBS [Duty Brig Supervisor] inspection. PFC Manning was not given any of his clothing back before the morning inspection. PFC Manning walked towards the front of his cell with his suicide blanket covering his genitals. The Brig guard outside his cell told him that he was not permitted to cover himself with his blanket because that would mean that he would not be standing at parade rest. PFC Manning relinquished the blanket and stood completely naked at parade rest, which required him to stand with his hands behind his back and his legs spaced shoulder width apart. PFC Manning stood at parade rest for about three minutes until the DBS arrived. Once the DBS arrived, everyone was called to attention. The DBS and the other guards walked past PFC Mannings cell. The DBS looked at PFC Manning, paused for a moment, and then continued to the next detainees cell. After the DBS completed his inspection, PFC Manning was told to go sit on his bed. Several minutes later, PFC Manning was given his clothes and allowed to get dressed. PFC Manning was also required to stand naked at attention the next four days

In his commentary, Gosztola concludes that Choike did not find the March incident where Manning was stripped naked to be egregious. He continues:

And that is the key to understanding the officers, who have been in key positions of authority to ensure Mannings rights were not violated. From Col. Carl Coffman, the Special Court Martial Convening Authority, to Daniel Choike, the Quantico Brig commander, to Lt. Gen. George Flynn, the Quantico Base commander, none of these people in positions of authority were willing to take any steps to bring this travesty and farce to an end.

Staff Judge Advocate Lt. Col. Christopher Greer sent an email joking about Manning having his underwear taken from him: As Dr. Seuss would say, I can wear them in a box. I can wear them with a fox. I can wear them with socks. I can wear them in the day so I say. I cant wear them at night. My comments gave the staff a fright

This crude variation of *Green, Eggs and Ham* did not bother someone like Choike. None of what was going on, despite the fact that he admitted from the outset it was bad to have Manning imprisoned more than 90 days at Quantico, motivated him to take action.

All officers like Choike cared about was that as Flynn put it Quantico would not be left the holding the bag if something happened to Manning. And whatever they could do to limit media attention or get out in front of details on Mannings confinement appearing on Coombs blog would be done to make it seem there was nothing going on with Manning and there was no reason for any senior officials or members of the public to be concerned.

Manning himself is expected to testify about his experiences in the Quantico brig, possibly as soon as tomorrow.

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, *Blood in the Face*. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets [@solitarywatch](#).

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment system.

by [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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It break my heart to see so much cruelty done in NY state correctional facilities in the USA of America. We are suppose to be civilized, educated, a model for the rest of the world. Please stop this torture and abuse in our jails. We are now no different than anywhere in the world. Lets stop this madness, The correctional facilities are a world within a world, getting everyday more powerfull. Governor Cuomo

you have the power to stop this. They are railroading prisoners, beating them, framing them. Put camera in all jails like you have camera watching us taxpayers and voters out here. Use volunteers to report the filled in these facilities. I gladly volunteer. Silvy Ovalle

I am afraid that the idea most people have that mental wards are any better without close supervision is misguided. Many mental wards are hell holes where the staff gets away with just about every inhumane act possible.

Whether it is a senior citizen home a mental health ward or prison constant monitoring is required. Helpless people without proper protection will too often be abused and who believes the mentally ill, prisoners, or the feeble minded seniors?

Remember the Jack Nicholson movie One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest .

Or take this passage from Edward Bunkers memoir Education of A Felon.

Page 20-22:

Pacific Colony was primarily for the mentally retarded, but they took some ninety-day observation cases from the youth authorities. Its one locked ward was the most brutal place Ive ever been. Most of my time was spent in the dayroom sitting on the benches. We sat in silence with our arms folded. Any whispering and an attendant might knock you off to the floor. For entertainment, the attendants staged fights between patients.

One favored punishment was pulling the block. The block was a slab of concrete wrapped in layers of an old wool blanket. The blanket-wrapped block was pulled up and down the hall twelve hours a day.

The most brutal punishment was hanging someone by the hands. The miscreant wasn't actually lifted off the floor, but he had to stand on the balls of his feet or let the weight fall on his arms and wrists. After ten minutes it was torture. In fifteen the victim was usually screaming. The attendants preferred old fashioned beatings.

Bunker then goes on to explain in great detail the physical attack on him by staff members that nearly killed him.

The Jabber came in with the shivering energy of a badger. Without a word, he punched me in the face with both hands, short punches from someone accustomed to using his fists. He rocked on the balls of his feet, hands up, leering; Ill teach you to yell, you little scumbag.

I knew fighting back might get me killed.

They could get away with anything. Id seen brutalities that would never happen in reform school, or even a prison for that matter. This was a hospital. We were patients being cared for.

The Jabber left after that. I pulled the cot away from the wall and began to straighten the blankets.

My door opened again. The Jabber stood there, behind him were a big redheaded attendant and a patient.

This time I punched first. The redheaded attendant got an arm around my neck from the rear and pulled me back.

As the redheaded choked me, the patient goon lifted my feet off the ground. Someone got on the bed and jumped down on my stomach. Someone else smashed a fist into my face six or seven times.

When they left I could barely breathe.

At midnight, when the shift changed, my door opened again and two graveyard-shift attendants came in. The smell of liquor was on his breath. I managed to rise. He knocked me down and kicked me. In his drunken rage he might have kicked me to death if the other attendant had not finally restrained him: Knock it off Fields. Youll kill him. Hes just a kid.

After I was certified as sane they returned me to reform school.

<http://californiawatch.org/broken-shield>

This link gives you access to several such articles.

Unfortunately abuse by those in control is common even with the most unfortunate among us,

Watch this video:

In Jennifers Room

November 29, 2012 | Carrie Ching and Ryan Gabrielson

In August 2006, caregivers at the Sonoma Developmental Center found dark blue bruises shaped like handprints covering the breasts of a patient named Jennifer. She accused a staff member of molestation, court records show. Jennifers injuries appeared to be evidence of sexual abuse, indicating that someone had violently grabbed her.

The Office of Protective Services opened an investigation. But detectives took no action because the case relied heavily on the word of a woman with severe intellectual disabilities. A few months later, court records show, officials at the center had indisputable evidence that a crime had occurred.

<http://californiawatch.org/node/18695>

Also:

Police ignored, mishandled sex assaults reported by disabled

Read more here:

http://californiawatch.org/public-safety/police-ignored-mishandled-sex-assaults-reported-disabled-18683#molestation?utm_source=CIR&utm_medium=social_media&utm_campaign=twitter

http://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article_id=40741

I was reading the above article only yesterday at the doctors office. Excerpt:

the Stanford Prison Experiment remains among the most notable and notorious research projects ever carried out at the University. For six days, half the study's participants endured cruel and dehumanizing abuse at the hands of their peers. At various times, they were taunted, stripped naked, deprived of sleep and forced to use plastic buckets as toilets. Some of them rebelled violently; others became hysterical or withdrew into despair. As the situation descended into chaos, the researchers stood by and watched until one of their colleagues finally spoke out.

The public's fascination with the SPE and its implications, the notion, as Zimbardo says, that these ordinary college students could do such terrible things when caught in that situation brought Zimbardo international renown. It also provoked criticism from other researchers, who questioned the ethics of subjecting student volunteers to such extreme emotional trauma. The study had been approved by Stanford's Human Subjects Research Committee, and Zimbardo says that neither they nor we could have imagined that the guards would treat the prisoners so inhumanely.

And as Judge Philip Brimmer has declared referring to Silversteins of 28 years of continual solitary confinement continuing at the U.S. Penitentiary Administrative Maximum, or ADX, along with all the humiliation and abuse one experiences therein are not atypically extreme.

I was only 13 when two counselors in the CYA made our unit stand nude with our arms out at our sides until most if not all of us could no longer hold up our arms. Still we were not released at this point but made to remain standing at attention for several more hours until the weaker guys started to wobble and faint. Only after several had fallen were we finally allowed to go to our bunks for what remained of the night.

In this article you write:

In his commentary, Gosztola concludes that Choike did not find the March incident where Manning was stripped naked to be egregious.

No Mannings experience is not atypically extreme or egregious in the eyes of those in control but then what does this say about the system?

This attitude, mentality and refusal to do what is proper is universal in our federal and public prison systems. These clusters of anti-prisoner individuals refuse to adhere to the rules of engagement as they exist and make up their own rules. Confusing? Not if you have worked or been in solitary confinement units. It's a whole different world rarely put in ink and on paper as it actually exists. Speaking out is taboo and working to do the right thing is instantly criticised and ignored as this article demonstrates clearly. The captain has my respect for trying to do his job.

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