# Bradley Manning to be transferred to Army prison in Kansas

**Naomi Spencer**
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Pentagon officials announced April 19 that Private Bradley Manning was being transferred to an Army prison facility at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas from the Quantico, Virginia Marine brig where he has been held in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day since July 2010. Manning has been subjected to nightly strip-downs, deprived of all personal items and the right to exercise, and many other cruel and degrading conditions.

The former Army intelligence analyst faces 34 charges of leaking classified documents to the whistleblower organization WikiLeaks, including voluminous evidence of US war crimes committed in Iraq and Afghanistan. His charges carry possible sentences of life in prison or the death penalty.

At a hastily convened press conference Tuesday night, Pentagon officials called Manning's transfer to the medium-security Leavenworth Joint Regional Correctional Facility "imminent," but did not disclose specifically when he was to be moved. Pentagon general counsel Jeh Johnson insisted the Pentagon had "been thinking about this for a while."

Manning's attorney, David E. Coombs, wrote on his blog Tuesday night that the defense first learned of the move by reading an Associated Press report, which quoted an anonymous government official. "The defense was not officially notified of PFC Manning's pending move until twenty minutes before the Pentagon's press briefing," Coombs commented.

Coombs stated he had recently received information related to a private meeting of Quantico military officials January 13 where it was decided that Manning would "remain in maximum custody and under prevention of injury watch indefinitely. … When challenged by a Brig psychiatrist present at the meeting that there was no mental health justification for the decision, the senior Quantico official issuing the order responded, 'We will do whatever we want to do.'" Coombs explained that in response to this revelation, the defense was in the process of filing a writ of habeas corpus seeking a court ruling that Manning's right to due process was being violated.

"Although the news of the move came as a surprise," Coombs wrote, "the timing did not." Indeed, the transfer occurs amidst mounting international outcry over the conditions in which Manning has been held, including frequent protests by Manning's supporters outside the Quantico base. Human rights organizations and legal experts have condemned the 23-year-old soldier's treatment as torture, and punishment intended to break his psychological and mental capacities before his court martial hearing.

Johnson denied that the move was related to protests over the soldier's treatment. "The fact that we have made a decision to transfer this particular pretrial [detainee] … should not be interpreted as a criticism of the place he was before … We remain satisfied that Private Manning's pretrial confinement at Quantico was in compliance with legal and regulatory standards in all respects," Johnson insisted. He added, "And we salute the military personnel there for the job they did in difficult circumstances."

The repeated claim that Manning's treatment is legal is an open flouting of the US Constitution by the Obama administration. On April 10, the *New York Review of Books* published an open letter to President Obama, signed by nearly 300 prominent legal scholars, condemning Manning's imprisonment as "degrading and inhumane conditions that are illegal and immoral." The letter, co-written by law professors Bruce Ackerman of Yale and Yochai Benkler of Harvard, states that the case represents a violation of both the

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Eighth Amendment of the Constitution prohibiting cruel and unusual treatment and the Fifth Amendment prohibition on punishment without trial.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other organizations have issued similar condemnations. On April 11, the United Nations special rapporteur on torture Juan Mendez issued an official reprimand against the Obama administration for refusing the human rights investigator unmonitored access to Manning. Mendez has been repeatedly stonewalled by US officials; Democratic Congressman Dennis Kucinich was similarly refused visitation at the Quantico brig.

Manning's treatment has aroused vast opposition from the American population. The Bradley Manning Support Network recently submitted a statement to Obama calling for an "end to PFC Manning's torturous conditions of imprisonment," which was signed by more than half a million people. Facing popular opposition in Britain, the British Foreign Office has sought to intervene on behalf of Manning's mother, who is Welsh, to affect a lightening of the terms of the soldier's confinement. On April 13, a German parliamentary committee similarly pressed the White House for moderation in the case.

During the press briefing, Army Undersecretary Joseph Westphal indicated that Manning was being moved to Leavenworth so that the US could continue to hold him without trial for an indeterminate, extended period. "This is the right decision at the right time," he commented. "We were looking at a situation where he would need an environment more conducive for a longer detention."

The Joint Regional Correctional Facility is a new Department of Defense prison, opened in October 2010, which holds pretrial and convicted US military prisoners. The facility is adjacent to another, the US Disciplinary Barracks, as part of a major military prison complex in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

At Leavenworth, Manning will continue to be held in solitary confinement, with only three hours per day for physical activity. The cell in which he will be confined is 80 square feet (only 8 square feet more than his current cell), of which "35 square feet is unencumbered, usable space," according to the prison's fact sheet. Prison officials have stated that Manning will have some limited interaction with other detainees in the cellblock where he will be held, and some limited access to television, phone, and mail.

The Bradley Manning Support Network attorney Kevin Zeese warned that the move would serve to further isolate the prisoner from his defense, family, and public supporters. "PFC Manning's transfer from Virginia to Kansas limits his access to his civilian attorney David Coombs of Rhode Island. It also severely limits visitation opportunities by his East Coast family and friends," Zeese said in a statement Tuesday.

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