

Prosecutors attack Bradley Manning for being ‘anti-patriotic’

Matthew MacEgan
22 July 2013

Private Bradley Manning, who is being tried by a military court for allegedly leaking classified documents concerning the criminal nature of the United States military apparatus in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 12 years, was attacked in court last Friday as being anti-patriotic and anti-American.

The US military judge presiding over Manning’s court martial, Army Colonel Denise Lind, decided the previous day against dropping the most draconian charge sought by the prosecution, that of “aiding the enemy.”

Retired Specialist Jihreah Showman, who was Manning’s team leader prior to his deployment in Iraq, testified Friday that when she initially asked Manning why he joined the military, he responded, “To get an education.” She purportedly then tapped the American flag sewn onto her shoulder, and asked, “What does this mean to you?” According to her testimony, Manning replied, “Nothing.”

Showman explained that she had previously come to think that Manning was a “spy” after he had told her that before joining the military he had tried to remove personal information from the Internet in order to obtain a top-secret security clearance.

However, the credibility of Showman was called into question by defense attorney David Coombs upon cross examination, when he asked why she did not simply write Manning up for his disloyal comments. He also queried why no mention of this suspicion of Manning as a “spy” was ever documented. Her response was that she had verbally mentioned these facts to her superiors and that they had assured her that they would deal with his alleged comments.

Coombs also asked Showman if Manning had ever told her that “you can’t have blind loyalty to a flag,” or that “we have duty to all people from every country.”

Showman answered that she did not recall either statement.

Next, Coombs moved on to two sworn statements made by Showman during the period after Manning’s arrest, demonstrating that no mention of these alleged comments appeared in either of them. A later written statement did mention the comments, but only as an afterthought of little consequence to the main points of her report.

Coombs then called retired 1st Sergeant Paul Adkins, another supervisor of Manning’s at that time and the person to whom Showman insisted she made the verbal report, to ask whether Showman had indeed made any such mention of Manning’s nature as a spy. Adkins said that due to a memory loss following an injury he sustained in Iraq he could not remember if this report had been made. Adkins did suggest, however, that if Showman had reported this incident, it would necessarily have been documented. There is no such record in any report.

In fact, Showman went so far as to state that she had approached Adkins several times about Manning’s statements, yet Adkins does not recall speaking to Showman about Manning even one time prior to deployment in Iraq. Adkins also reported that he had never at any time heard Manning make any disloyal statements such as those described by Showman.

A document written in 2011 by Adkins was brought during cross-examination, which stated that he had informed Major Clausen, the officer in charge, about Manning’s comments, but that no disciplinary report was made due to the need for bodies on the deployment. According to this contradictory statement, Adkins felt that sufficient systems were in place in relation to Manning’s conduct.

Coombs then produced a conflicting statement sworn

earlier by Adkins concerning the investigation of Bradley Manning post-arrest, asking if he had included anything about anti-patriotic statements. His answer was “no,” and he reported that he would have included such allegations in his statements had he known of them.

Another of Showman’s superiors, Chief Warrant Officer 1 Balanek, was also brought into the rebuttal and testified that he had never heard any report of Manning’s alleged disloyal comments. He expressed the notion that such statements should have been taken very seriously and should have been reported in writing.

When cross-examining Showman, Coombs pointed to the personal animosity held against Manning by Showman due to his sexual preferences. Showman admitted to using antigay slurs to describe Manning prior to deployment.

Closing arguments in the court-martial will be heard this Thursday. Manning elected not to be tried in front of a military jury, so Judge Lind will decide his verdict, which carries a potential death penalty or life in prison. The judge will take several days to reach a verdict and the sentencing phase is scheduled to begin on July 31.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact