

# Chelsea Manning hospitalized, then returned to prison

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Army private Chelsea Manning, serving a 35-year prison sentence for exposing US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, was hospitalized Tuesday morning under circumstances that remain unclear and contested.

A CNN reporter and an unidentified Army spokesman said Manning had attempted suicide by hanging herself, but there has been no confirmation of this report by either official sources at Fort Leavenworth, where Manning is imprisoned, or by Manning's attorneys, who have been denied contact with her until Friday.

Nancy Hollander, lead attorney for Manning's defense team, expressed anger over the Army's handling of information on the prisoner's condition. "We're shocked and outraged that an official at Leavenworth contacted the press with private confidential medical information about Chelsea Manning, yet no one at the Army has given a shred of information to her legal team," Hollander said in a statement to the press.

The unnamed Army official who leaked the report of an attempted suicide is in violation of federal law, the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which prohibits the release of medical information about any individual without his or her informed consent.

Without confirmation from Manning herself, there is no reason to accept the reports of a suicide attempt, which frequently serve as a cover for abuse of prison inmates by their captors. This is of particular concern in regard to Manning, who, in addition to her status as a supposed "traitor"—i.e., courageous whistleblower—is also the highest-profile transgender prisoner in military custody.

Only a few days before her hospitalization, Manning wrote her regularly scheduled column for the *Guardian*

newspaper, in which she criticized the Pentagon's new policy of supposedly accepting transgendered soldiers, saying that it fell short in certain areas, both in its definition of transgender people and in its application to military prisoners like herself.

"I am deeply concerned that like so many policies, the impact of this change won't penetrate the prison walls," she wrote. "What does it mean that the military will recognize our gender, unless and until we are arrested, and then what? This core identity is then stripped away and our birth assigned sex is imposed on us?"

Army officials have refused to inform Manning's attorneys about her condition, merely canceling a scheduled phone call between Manning and her defense team set for Tuesday and barring any emergency phone contact until Friday. Hollander said, "We call on the Army to immediately connect Chelsea Manning to her lawyers and friends who care deeply about her well-being and are profoundly distressed by the complete lack of official communication about Chelsea's current situation."

Manning, 28, was convicted in 2013 on charges of supplying WikiLeaks more than 700,000 digital files, most of them internal reports on military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, which provided massive evidence of US war crimes in both countries. They included the notorious video of US helicopter gunships mowing down a group of Iraqi civilians, including two Reuters journalists, later released by WikiLeaks under the title "Collateral Murder."

In a particularly savage demonstration of capitalist justice, the conscientious soldier who sought to bring war crimes to the attention of the world was sentenced to 35 years in prison, while the architects of the war, responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of

people, have never been brought to justice.

There was a tragic irony to Manning's hospitalization on Tuesday, July 5, which came only one day before the release of the Chilcot report in Britain, which sheds light on the criminal conspiracy carried out by US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to launch a war of aggression against Iraq, in violation of international law.

Moreover, Manning was hospitalized only hours before FBI Director James Comey announced the conclusion of the year-long investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server for her government communications while secretary of state in the Obama administration from 2009 to 2013. Comey found that Clinton had compromised secret information, but since she did so for her own convenience--storing her email correspondence on her own server to better control access to it--rather than to expose US government secrets to the public, Clinton faces no criminal charges.

The contrast with the vindictive treatment of Chelsea Manning is striking and instructive. There truly is one law for members of the US ruling class like Clinton and another law for everyone else.



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