

Punishing Bradley Manning for the Crimes of Others

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Bradley Manning, alleged U.S. Army whistleblower, is in two ways — one likely, the other certain — being punished for the crimes of others.

On Monday a crowd that I was part of staged [a protest](#) at Quantico, where Manning has been imprisoned for several months with no trial. At the last minute, the military denied us permission to hold a rally on the base, so we held it in the street blocking the entrance to the base. This visibly enraged at least one of the guards who attempted unsuccessfully to arrest a couple of us.

On Tuesday, for no stated reason whatsoever, Manning's jailers [put him](#) on suicide watch. This meant that he was isolated for 24 hours a day instead of 23, the glasses he needs to see were taken away, and other harsh conditions imposed. Two days later, for no stated reason whatsoever, Manning was taken off suicide watch again. It appears likely that he was punished in response to our protest. As a result, we're all going to crawl under our beds and hide, promising never to use the First Amendment again in our lives.

Just kidding! Instead, we're planning larger protests. And Manning's lawyer has, for his part, filed a complaint and threatened to sue over Manning's mistreatment. These colors don't run, as someone might say.

Perhaps it was a coincidence that the Marine Corpse (sic) momentarily believed Manning to be suicidal the day after a protest. And yet we know for certain that Manning is being punished for the crimes of others. When you witness a crime, you are obliged to report it. This is exactly what Manning has allegedly done, for a great many crimes. And it is all Manning has allegedly done.

Material released by Wikileaks and alleged to have originated with Manning has [revealed](#), among many other crimes, secret and illegal wars and missile strikes, support for a military coup, obstruction of justice, numerous war atrocities, complicity in torture, illegal spying, lawless imprisonment (now experienced by Manning himself as well), the granting of retroactive immunity to criminals, and bribery.

When the U.S. government screams that this information has endangered the innocent and then admits that it hasn't done any such thing and is really no big deal at all, don't be fooled. It is, in another sense, a very big deal. The reason the government says that informing the public is far more dangerous than informing foreign nations is the same reason that Manning allegedly chose to give the information to the public rather than enriching himself by selling it to another nation: majority rule is threatening to oligarchs. The reason Congressman Peter King says he'd rather see the United States bombed than U.S. citizens learn this information about their government's behavior is because the

behavior is serious indeed, deadly so.

Bradley Manning has, if the allegations are true, risked his life to shine a light on a government that has come to operate in almost complete secrecy. Manning has shown the courage and wisdom of some of the revolutionaries who got this country started. That he is being punished for it tells us something about what our government has become.

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