

WHAT HAPPENED TO BRADLEY MANNING IN JANUARY

I wanted to put a few details about what happened to Bradley Manning in January together.

The other day Manning's lawyer, David Coombs, revealed he had been about to file a habeas petition when DOD suddenly decided to move Manning to Fort Leavenworth (where he arrived last night). At issue was a meeting that occurred on January 13:

The defense recently received reliable reports of a private meeting held on 13 January 2011, involving high-level Quantico officials where it was ordered that PFC Manning would remain in maximum custody and under prevention of injury watch indefinitely. The order to keep PFC Manning under these unduly harsh conditions was issued by a senior Quantico official who stated he would not risk anything happening "on his watch." 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."

That meeting happened just five days before the guards harassed Manning and Brig Commander James Averhart decided to play god with him, according to the chronology laid out in Manning's Article 138 complaint. Here's how Manning described the guards' petty bullying.

On that date, I was pulled out of my cell for my one hour of recreation call. When the guards came to my cell, I noticed a change in their usual demeanor. Instead of being calm and respectful, they seemed agitated and

confrontational. Also, instead of the usual two to three guards, there were four guards. Almost immediately, the guards started harassing me. The first guard told me to "turn left." When I complied, the second guard yelled "don't turn left." When I attempted to comply with the demands of the second guard, I was told by the first, "I said turn left." I responded "yes, Corporal" to the first guard. At this point, the third guard chimed in by telling me that "in the Marines we reply with „aye" and not „yes."" He then asked me if I understood. I made the mistake of replying "yes, Sergeant." At this point the fourth guard yelled, "you mean „aye," Sergeant."

After Manning returned to his cell from recreation, Averhart came to his cell, declared he was, for all practical purposes, Manning's God. Then, he ordered Manning be stripped and put on suicide watch.

About 30 minutes later, the PCF Commander, CW04 James Averhart, came to my cell. He asked me what had happened during my recreation call. As I tried to explain to him what had occurred, CW04 Averhart stopped me and said "I am the commander" and that "no one could tell him what to do." He also said that he was, for all practical purposes, "God." I responded by saying "you still have to follow Brig procedures." I also said "everyone has a boss that they have to answer to." As soon as I said this, CW04 Averhart ordered that I be placed in Suicide Risk Status.

Admittedly, once I heard that I would be placed under Suicide Risk, I became upset. Out of frustration, I placed my hands to my head and clenched my hair with my fingers. I did yell "why are you doing this to me?" I also yelled "why am

I being punished?" and "I have done nothing wrong." I then asked CW04 Averhart "what have I done to deserve this type of treatment?"

CW04 Averhart did not answer any of my questions. He instructed the guards to enter my cell and take all my clothing. At first I tried to reason with CW04 Averhart by telling him that I had been a model detainee and by asking him to just tell me what he wanted me to do and that I would do it. However, I gave up trying to reason with him once the guards entered my cell and ordered me to strip. Instead, I lowered my head and starting taking off my clothes.

And these events—the meeting on January 13 and the abuse of Manning on January 18—took place between two interesting observations from military psychiatrists. Whereas most of the 16 entries recording Brig Psychiatric personnel recommending Manning be removed from Prevention of Injury (POI) take a standard form, two entries take a different form. First, the January 6 entry noted that on December 23 Brig Psychiatrist Captain Hocter recommended Manning be removed from POI "from a psychiatric standpoint."

SND was evaluated by Capt Hocter on 23 December 2010, and although further mental evaluation was deemed necessary, SND was recommended to be removed from POI classification from a psychiatric standpoint.

On January 14, the day after the meeting described by Coombs, there's another standard entry.

SND was evaluated by the Brig Psychiatrist on 14 January 2010 and recommended to be removed from POI.

But then on January 28, there's another irregular entry.

SND was evaluated by Col Malone on 21 January 2011 and, although further mental evaluation was deemed necessary, SND was recommended to be removed from POI classification from a psychiatric standpoint.

With the caveat "from a psychiatric standpoint," both Hocter, in December, and Malone, in January, seem to be emphasizing that the POI decision had nothing to do with Manning's psychological health.

The Article 138 complaint doesn't explain who Colonel Malone is, though it's notable he outranks Hocter, suggesting Hocter brought in a superior to conduct an evaluation of Manning after repeatedly recommending that Manning be removed from POI. And note, we know that Manning was removed from the suicide watch Averhart placed him under on the 18th on the 21st, suggesting Malone's judgment may have been instrumental to getting him removed from suicide watch. (Though it's interesting that Malone's recommendation pertained to POI, not suicide watch.)

And that last report—the January 28 observation recording Malone's judgment—is the last that Manning's defense team had received by the time he wrote his complaint on March 10. Given that they received the January 28 one on February 4—that is, given that it took just a week to give them reports in the past—one wonders why they didn't receive the reports subsequently.

So it seems that Hocter was already concerned about the fact Manning remained on POI for no good psychiatric reason back in December. Shortly thereafter, a psychiatrist and a top Quantico official had a conflict over Manning's treatment. The official said, "we'll do whatever we want." And just days later, the guards subject Manning to some abusive bullying, giving

Averhart the excuse to put him on suicide watch and take his clothes. At which point it appears a more senior psychiatrist may have gotten involved.

Now, Coombs says his habeas petition—his threat to expose more about this sequence—is what convinced DOD to move Manning so quickly. Given how the January 13 meeting seems to lead right into Manning's forced nudity on January 18, I can see why DOD might want to avoid more details becoming public.