

CHAIN OF COMMAND: SOME VIOLATIONS OF MILITARY DISCIPLINE ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

The other day, Teddy Partridge noted a second instance of someone in the military—the previous one being the Commander-in-Chief—weighing in on Bradley Manning’s guilt.

Echoing his commander in chief in issuing statements that provide improper command influence in the trial of Bradley Manning, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey, stated unequivocally that Manning broke the law.

To review, here’s what Barack Obama said when asked about Bradley Manning in April 2011:

And if you’re in the military...
And I have to abide by certain
rules of classified information.
If I were to release material I
weren’t allowed to, I’d be
breaking the law.

We’re a nation of laws! We don’t
let individuals make their own
decisions about how the laws
operate. He broke the law.

It appears that President Obama’s
highest military officer agrees with
him:

The Joint Chiefs chairman also
was asked about Manning, the
alleged WikiLeaks contributor,
and whether Dempsey thought
Manning should be viewed as a

political prisoner, whistle-blower or traitor.

"We're a nation of laws. He did violate the law," Dempsey said.

Meanwhile, Staff Sergeant Robert Bales has not even been charged yet—his lawyer, John Henry Browne, says the military has neither forensics nor a confession incriminating him!—but Generals are sending Browne messages wishing him the best in his defense of Bales.

Browne added that he has received hundreds of emails, including from some generals and other military figures, who wished him luck in the case.

Don't get me wrong. I hope Browne does his best to give Bales a robust defense. And as I've noted repeatedly, I'm not at all convinced that the killings occurred as the military currently claims they did; if so I hope Browne proves that, too.

But I would be shocked if any generals wrote David Coombs, Bradley Manning's lawyer, to wish him luck in defending a tough, unpopular client. Yet both men—Manning and Bales—are alleged to have violated military discipline in ways that hurt our efforts.

Update: Fixed my misspelling of Bales' name.