

Chelsea Manning facing indefinite solitary confinement

By George Gallanis
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Whistleblower Chelsea Manning may spend an indefinite amount of time in solitary confinement if convicted of new charges. Manning, who is currently serving a 35-year prison term for leaking roughly 700,000 classified and sensitive government documents to WikiLeaks, faces four separate charges. They are: (1) Disrespect, (2) Disorderly Conduct, (3) Prohibited Material, and (4) Medicine Misuse. Manning is scheduled for a hearing Tuesday, August 18.

The first two charges stem from an incident that occurred on July 2, 2015, during which Manning was eating dinner and allegedly swept food onto the ground. She was subsequently confronted by a correctional officer. According to the Formal Statement of Charges, sweeping food onto the ground is “conduct of such a nature as to affect peace and quiet of individuals, or who may thereby be disturbed or provoked to resentment.” For this, Manning received a charge of Disorderly Conduct.

The charge of Disrespect is from the subsequent confrontation between the correctional officer and Manning. The statement reads Manning had been “stating words to the effect of ‘you are accusing me, this interview is over and I want my lawyer’” after the correctional officer had tried to “explain what the inmate had done wrong.” The statement declares Manning’s response was conducted in a “contemptuous manner by being disrespectful to the cadre present,” and defines being disrespectful as “behavior that detracts from the respect due to authority and person of a facility staff member.”

The last two charges stem from an inspection by correctional officers of Manning’s prison cell, which occurred on July 9. Following the inspection, Manning was charged with having prohibited materials for the possession of certain books, magazines, and documents

that were ~~Chelsea Manning~~ confiscated. These were: “Vanity Fair issue with Caitlyn Jenner on the cover, Advocate, OUT Magazine, Cosmopolitan issue with an interview of Chelsea, Transgender Studies Quarterly, novel about trans issues ‘A Safe Girl to Love,’ book ‘Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy—The Many Faces of Anonymous,’ book ‘I Am Malala,’ 5 books by Robert Dorkin, legal documents including the Senate Torture Report, book: ‘Hidden Qualities that Make Us Influential.’”

Finally, there is the charge of Medicinal Misuse. Addressing Manning, the Formal Statement of Charges says, “On 09 July 2015, while under ASPI, your cell was inspected and a tube of anti-cavity toothpaste, MKIC, was found in your possession past its expiration date of 09 April 2015. You are in violation of ACC Policy Letter 16, using, possessing, handling or storing of medicine, except as authorized by the facility medical staff. Failure to take medicine as authorized by medical staff. (CAT III, IV).”

That such paltry charges could land Manning in solitary confinement indefinitely is a demonstration of the ever increasing repressive apparatus of the state. Manning, along with other persecuted whistleblowers Julian Assange and Edward Snowden, have found strong public support.

Of the three whistleblowers, Manning is the only one to be tried and convicted on American soil. Yet, even while in jail, Manning is still extremely popular. For instance, Manning’s Twitter account, which she operates from jail by way of dictating messages over the phone, has roughly 55,000 followers. Manning is also a writer for the *Guardian* newspaper. The continued interest in Manning and her active interaction with the public is an affront to the American ruling class’ attempt to persecute and contain her. Thus

they are deepening their attack.

ACLU attorney Chase Strangio wrote, “Given the materials that were confiscated, it is concerning that the military and Leavenworth might be taking action for the purpose of chilling Chelsea’s speech or even with the goal of silencing her altogether by placing her in solitary.”

Solitary confinement would effectively terminate any contact between Manning and the outside world, with her potentially spending 23 to 24 hours of her days in complete isolation, which would have severe deleterious effects on her overall health.

According to Soilitarywatch.com, such conditions may induce “a psychiatric disorder characterized by hypersensitivity to external stimuli, hallucinations, panic attacks, cognitive deficits, obsessive thinking, paranoia, and a litany of other physical and psychological problems. Psychological assessments of men in solitary at Pelican Bay indicated high rates of anxiety, nervousness, obsessive ruminations, anger, violent fantasies, nightmares, trouble sleeping, as well as dizziness, perspiring hands, and heart palpitations.”

As the WSWS wrote earlier this year, “The ferocious assault against whistleblowers and investigative journalists spearheaded by the Obama administration has gone into overdrive in recent years. Last year saw an ‘unprecedented rise’ in reports of retaliatory measures against whistleblowers emanating from the federal government, with a total of some 5,200 incidents, according to the US Office of Special Counsel.”

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