

By Glenn Greenwald

From [The Guardian](#) | Original Article



(FILES) PFC Bradley Manning is escorted by military police as he departs the courtroom at Fort Meade, Maryland in this April 25, 2012 file photo. Photograph: Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

The court-martial proceeding of [Bradley Manning](#) has, rather ironically, been [shrouded in extreme secrecy](#), often [exceeding even that which prevails at Guantanamo military commissions](#). This secrecy prompted the Center for Constitutional Rights to [commence formal legal action](#) on behalf of several journalists and activists, including myself, to compel greater transparency. One particularly oppressive rule governing the Manning trial has barred not only all video or audio recordings of the proceedings, but also any photographs being taken of Manning or even transcripts made of what is said in court. Combined with the prohibition on all press interviews with him, this extraordinary secrecy regime has meant that, in the two-and-a-half years since his arrest, the world has been prevented, literally, from hearing Manning's voice. That changes today.

The Freedom of the Press Foundation (FPF), the group I recently [helped found](#) and on [whose](#)

[board I sit](#)

, has received a full, unedited audio recording of the one-hour statement Manning made in court two weeks ago, and this morning has

[published that recording in full](#)

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Hear the full audio here or in excerpts below:

In that statement, Manning details at length what he did and, more important, the reasons he chose to do it. I'm personally unaware of who made the recording and am not aware of how it was made, but its authenticity has been verified. Last week, the superb independent journalist Alexa O'Brien, who has covered the proceedings [from start to finish](#), created the best transcript she could of Manning's statement, which was published, among other places,

[in the Guardian](#)

. But this audio recording provides the first opportunity to hear Manning, in his own voice, explain his actions; that, presumably, is why whoever recorded Manning's statement risked violating the court-martial rules to do so.

Earlier this morning, the FPF, along with the full audio, [published a statement of why it chose to publish this along with some brief analysis](#)

. I'm posting below some of the most significant excerpts of Manning's statement. The first excerpt is in the form of a 5-minute video produced by the documentarian and FPF Board Member Laura Poitras, highlighting Manning's explanation of how he reacted when he first saw the video of the Apache helicopter gunning down Reuters journalists in Baghdad and then those who showed up to rescue the wounded, including a van with children in it.

The US government and its military has carefully ensured that people hear *about* Manning from the government, but do not hear from Manning himself. It is way past time for Manning's voice to be heard:

Manning on the Apache helicopter video

In April, 2010, [WikiLeaks made major news](#) around the world when it published its "Collateral Murder" video, showing US soldiers in Baghdad [g](#)
[leefully celebrating](#)

as they gunned down civilians, including two Reuters journalists, and then showered their rescuers with bullets. Here, in Poitras' video, is Manning, in his own words, explaining his reaction when he first saw that video and the process that led him to leak it to the world:

Manning on the Iraq and Afghanistan War logs

In July, 2010, WikiLeaks began publishing tens of thousands of war logs detailing various episodes in both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Among other things, these documents revealed [15,000 Iraqi civilian deaths than had been uncounted](#), a [US policy expressly barring US troops](#) from investigating human rights abuses by the Iraqi forces they were training, [previously unknown civilian deaths in Afghanistan](#) at the hands of Nato, and [definitive proof that US government and military officials had knowingly lied](#) to the public about these wars. Here is Manning explaining his reaction when he first saw these documents and why he decided to leak them; listen on the player above.

During this time a blizzard bombarded the mid-atlantic, and I spent a significant period of time essentially stuck in my aunt's house in Maryland. I began to think about what I knew and the information I still had in my possession. For me, the SigActs represented the on the ground reality of both the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I felt that we were risking so much for people that seemed unwilling to cooperate with us, leading to frustration and anger on both sides. I began to become depressed with the situation that we found ourselves increasingly mired in year after year. The SigActs documented this in great detail and provide a context of what we were seeing on the ground.

"In attempting to conduct counter-terrorism or CT and counter-insurgency COIN operations we became obsessed with capturing and killing human targets on lists and not being suspicious of and avoiding cooperation with our Host Nation partners, and ignoring the second and third order effects of accomplishing short-term goals and missions. I believe that if the general public, especially the American public, had access to the information contained within the CIDNE-I and CIDNE-A tables this could spark a domestic debate on the role of the military and our foreign policy in general as [missed word] as it related to Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I also believed the detailed analysis of the data over a long period of time by different sectors of society might cause society to reevaluate the need or even the desire to even to engage in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations that ignore the complex dynamics of the people living in the effected environment everyday."

Manning on what caused him to question the Iraq War

In his chats with the government informant who turned him in, Manning - who had been promised confidentiality by the informant who claimed to be a journalist and a pastor - described what first made him disillusioned about the Iraq war in which he was serving. Specifically, he described how he had discovered that many of the Iraqis whom he was helping to detain were not insurgents at all, but simply critics of the Malaki government. But when Manning alerted his superiors to this fact, he was dismissed away, and realized then that using the formal whistleblowing channels would result in nothing other than his own punishment. Here is Manning elaborating on those events and explaining why this led him to leak to WikiLeaks; listen on the player above.

On 27 February 2010, a report was received from a subordinate battalion. The report described an event in which the Federal Police or FP detained 15 individuals for printing anti-Iraqi literature. On 2 March 2010, I received instructions from an S3 section officer in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division Tactical Operation Center or TOC to investigate the matter, and figure out who these quote "bad guys" unquote were and how significant this event was for the Federal Police.

"Over the course of my research I found that none of the individuals had previous ties to anti-Iraqi actions or suspected terrorist militia groups. A few hours later, I received several reports from the scene – from this subordinate battalion. They were accidentally sent to an officer on a different team on the S2 section and she forwarded them to me.

"These photos included picture of the individuals, pallets of unprinted paper and seized copies of the final printed material or the printed document; and a high resolution photo of the printed material itself. I printed up one copy of a high resolution photo – I laminated it for ease of use and transfer. I then walked to the TOC and delivered the laminated copy to our category two interpreter.

"She reviewed the information and about a half and hour later delivered a rough written transcript in English to the S2 section. I read the transcript and followed up with her, asking her for her take on the content. She said it was easy for her to transcribe verbatim, since I blew up the photograph and laminated it. She said the general nature of the document was benign. The document, as I had sensed as well, was merely a scholarly critique of the then current Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

"It detailed corruption within the cabinet of al-Maliki's government and the financial impact of his corruption on the Iraqi people. After discovering this discrepancy between the Federal Police's report and the interpreter's transcript, I forwarded this discovery to the top OIC and the battle NCOIC. The top OIC and the overhearing battle captain informed me that they didn't need or want to know this information anymore. They told me to quote 'drop it' unquote and to just assist them and the Federal Police in finding out, where more of these print shops creating quote "anti-Iraqi literature" unquote.

"I couldn't believe what I heard and I returned to the T-SCIF and complained to the other analysts and my section NCOIC about what happened. Some were sympathetic, but no one wanted to do anything about it.

"I am the type of person who likes to know how things work. And, as an analyst, this means I always want to figure out the truth. Unlike other analysts in my section or other sections within the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, I was not satisfied with just scratching the surface and producing canned or cookie cutter assessments. I wanted to know why something was the way it was, and what we could do to correct or mitigate a situation.

"I knew that if I continued to assist the Baghdad Federal Police in identifying the political opponents of Prime Minister al-Maliki, those people would be arrested and in the custody of the Special Unit of the Baghdad Federal Police and very likely tortured and not seen again for a very long time – if ever.

"Instead of assisting the Special Unit of the Baghdad Federal Police, I decided to take the information and expose it to the [WikiLeaks organization], in the hope that before the upcoming 7 March 2010 election, they could generate some immediate press on the issue and prevent this unit of the Federal Police from continuing to crack down in political opponents of al-Maliki."

Manning on the diplomatic cables

Here is Manning explaining his first reaction to reading various US diplomatic cables, and what led him to read more and eventually release them; listen on the player above.

I read more of the diplomatic cables published on the Department of State Net Centric Diplomacy. With my insatiable curiosity and interest in geopolitics I became fascinated with them. I read not only the cables on Iraq, but also about countries and events that I found interesting.

"The more I read, the more I was fascinated with the way that we dealt with other nations and organizations. I also began to think the documented backdoor deals and seemingly criminal activity that didn't seem characteristic of the de facto leader of the free world."

Manning on the due diligence he performed over the cables

To impugn Manning's conduct, it is often claimed - by people who cannot possibly know this - that he failed to assess the diplomatic cables he was releasing and simply handed them over without having any idea what was in them. Here is Manning explaining the detailed process he undertook to determine their contents and ensure that they would not result in serious harm to innocent individuals; listen on the player above.

Up to this point, during the deployment, I had issues I struggled with and difficulty at work. Of the documents release, the cables were the only one I was not absolutely certain couldn't harm the United States. I conducted research on the cables published on the Net Centric Diplomacy, as well as how Department of State cables worked in general.

"In particular, I wanted to know how each cable was published on SIRPnet via the Net Centric Diplomacy. As part of my open source research, I found a document published by the Department of State on its official website.

"The document provided guidance on caption markings for individual cables and handling instructions for their distribution. I quickly learned the caption markings clearly detailed the sensitivity of the Department of State cables. For example, NODIS or No Distribution was used for messages at the highest sensitivity and were only distributed to the authorized recipients.

"The SIPDIS or SIPRnet distribution caption was applied only to recording of other information messages that were deemed appropriate for a release for a wide number of individuals. According to the Department of State guidance for a cable to have the SIPDIS caption, it could not include other captions that were intended to limit distribution.

"The SIPDIS caption was only for information that could only be shared with anyone with access to SIPRnet. I was aware that thousands of military personnel, DoD, Department of State, and other civilian agencies had easy access to the tables. The fact that the SIPDIS caption was only for wide distribution made sense to me, given that the vast majority of the Net Centric Diplomacy Cables were not classified.

"The more I read the cables, the more I came to the conclusion that this was the type of information that should become public. I once read and used a quote on open diplomacy written after the First World War and how the world would be a better place if states would avoid making secret pacts and deals with and against each other.

"I thought these cables were a prime example of a need for a more open diplomacy. Given all of the Department of State cables that I read, the fact that most of the cables were unclassified, and that all the cables have a SIPDIS caption.

"I believe that the public release of these cables would not damage the United States, however, I did believe that the cables might be embarrassing, since they represented very honest opinions and statements behind the backs of other nations and organizations."

Manning on contacting other media outlets

Here is Manning describing how he first contacted traditional news outlets about what he found; listen on the player above.

At my aunt's house I debated what I should do with the SigActs – in particular whether I should hold on to them – or expose them through a press agency. At this point I decided that it made sense to try to expose the SigAct tables to an American newspaper. I first called my local news paper, The Washington Post, and spoke with a woman saying that she was a reporter. I asked her if the Washington Post would be interested in receiving information that would have enormous value to the American public.

"Although we spoke for about five minutes concerning the general nature of what I possessed, I do not believe she took me seriously. She informed me that the Washington Post would possibly be interested, but that such decisions were made only after seeing the information I was referring to and after consideration by senior editors.

"I then decided to contact [missed word] the most popular newspaper, The New York Times. I called the public editor number on The New York Times website. The phone rang and was answered by a machine. I went through the menu to the section for news tips. I was routed to an answering machine. I left a message stating I had access to information about Iraq and Afghanistan that I believed was very important. However, despite leaving my Skype phone number and personal email address, I never received a reply from The New York Times.

"I also briefly considered dropping into the office for the Political Commentary blog, Politico, however the weather conditions during my leave hampered my efforts to travel. After these failed efforts I had ultimately decided to submit the materials to the WLO. I was not sure if the WLO would actually publish these SigAct tables - or even if they would publish at all. I was concerned that they might not be noticed by the American media. However, based upon what I read about the WLO through my research described above, this seemed to be the best medium for publishing this information to the world within my reach."

Yesterday, former New York Times Executive Editor Bill Keller [published a column](#) which, while partially praising Manning's leaks, insinuated that the claims Manning made in his in-court statement about his motives and actions may be unreliable because they are not found in the logs of the chats in which he engaged with the government informant. That is factually false. As both [Nathan Fuller](#) and [Greg Mitchell](#)

conclusively documented yesterday, Manning's descriptions match perfectly what he said in those chats when he thought nobody would ever hear what he was saying. That's what makes Manning's statements about his motives and thought process so reliable: they not only are consistent with his actions, but with everything he said when he thought he was speaking in private.

Whatever else is true, Bradley Manning is responsible for the most significant and valuable leaks since Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers. It is a cause for celebration that the US government's efforts to silence his voice, literally, have now been thwarted. Now, people can and should hear directly from Manning himself and make their own assessment. Whoever made this illicit recording (as well as the FPF in publishing it) acted in the best spirit of Manning himself: defying corrupt, unjust and self-protecting government secrecy rules in order to inform the world about vital matters.

UPDATE

Extreme amounts of traffic has taken down the FPF site at times today and may be causing problems with the embedded players I've posted. Things appear to have stabilized now, but if you're having problems listening to them here (or seeing them), just wait a bit and they should be working shortly.

In the meantime, the prior generation's greatest whistleblower, Daniel Ellsberg (who is also an FPF board member), today hails this generation's greatest, Bradley Manning, in [an Op-Ed at the Huffington Post](#). Writes Ellsberg: "After listening to this recording and reading his testimony, I believe Bradley Manning is the personification of the word whistleblower." He also makes clear how similar is Manning's treatment to the treatment to which Ellsberg was subjected. I can't encourage you strongly enough to read what he has to say.