



The civilian lawyer of Bradley Manning, the US soldier suspected of transferring hundreds of thousands of state secrets to WikiLeaks, is demanding that at least seven years be lopped off any sentence he might be given on grounds that he was improperly treated while in military custody.

The legal pleading by David Coombs, Manning's chief lawyer, was disclosed in a new motion to the military court that is hearing the soldier's court martial that he posted on his blog on Monday . The motion discloses in heavily redacted form some of the information the defence has gleaned in recent weeks about the way the soldier was treated while he was held for almost 10 months in solitary confinement at the military brig in Quantico marine base in Virginia in 2010/11.

Coombs argues that a stash of about 700 emails that have been disclosed to the defence reveal that military commanders in the brig completely ignored the professional advice of psychiatrists and other medical experts who had examined Manning and found him at no risk to himself and others. Instead, the commanders pressed ahead with harsh conditions that some critics, including the UN, define as torture.

On the back of the new information, Coombs has refined his demand to the military court in a reflection perhaps of his growing confidence in the evidence that he has amassed. He has repeated his call that in the light of Manning's alleged mistreatment at Quantico all 22 charges against him should be dropped, but he now adds that at very least the soldier should have 10 days lopped off any sentence for each of the 265 days he was held in harsh conditions at Quantico. That amounts to just over seven years.

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