

12-17-2011

## Newsroom: Coombs Defends Accused 'WikiLeaker'

Roger Williams University School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: [https://docs.rwu.edu/law\\_archives\\_life](https://docs.rwu.edu/law_archives_life)

---

### Recommended Citation

Roger Williams University School of Law, "Newsroom: Coombs Defends Accused 'WikiLeaker'" (2011). *Life of the Law School (1993- )*. 232.

[https://docs.rwu.edu/law\\_archives\\_life/232](https://docs.rwu.edu/law_archives_life/232)

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives & Law School History at DOCS@RWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Life of the Law School (1993- ) by an authorized administrator of DOCS@RWU. For more information, please contact [mwu@rwu.edu](mailto:mwu@rwu.edu).

# Newsroom

## Coombs Defends Accused 'WikiLeaker'

Attorney David Coombs, who taught at RWU Law as an adjunct professor, is in Fort Meade, Md., defending the accused 'WikiLeaker', Army Private Bradley Manning.

**From National Public Radio's Weekend Edition Saturday:** "[Soldier's Hearing Weighs Harm From Wikileaks](#)" by Carrie Johnson

*Military prosecutors say Army Pvt. Bradley Manning downloaded troves of secret documents from a computer station in Baghdad and passed them to Wikileaks. If investigators recommend that Manning face court martial, it could land him in prison for the rest of his life. NPR's Carrie Johnson reports.*



**December 17, 2011:** SCOTT SIMON, HOST: Army

Private Bradley Manning turns 24 years old today. Hundreds of his supporters say they'll rally outside Fort Meade, Maryland, where a military officer is hearing evidence that Private Manning leaked hundreds of thousands of war logs and diplomatic cables to the website WikiLeaks. If investigators recommend Manning face court-martial, it could land him in prison for the rest of his life. NPR's justice correspondent Carrie Johnson spent some time in the courtroom and brings us this report.

CARRIE JOHNSON, BYLINE: At a shade over five feet tall, in black framed Army glasses and a green camouflage uniform, Bradley Manning may have been the least imposing person in the courtroom at Fort Meade. And yet four military prosecutors are starting to present evidence that the young Army private is to blame for one of the biggest leaks in recent history. They say Manning, disillusioned by his service, downloaded troves of secret documents from a computer station in Baghdad and passed them to WikiLeaks.



Most of the court action so far has focused less on Bradley Manning and more on the process itself. **Manning's hardnosed civilian lawyer, David Coombs [an RWU Adjunct Professor in 2009 and 2010]**, challenged the impartiality of the Army lawyer leading the hearing.

**Coombs said** because the investigator, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Almanza, worked at the Justice Department in his civilian life, he just couldn't be fair to Manning. He added that the Justice Department has poured lots of resources into trying to build a criminal case against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. In fact, **Coombs argued**, the Justice Department still might take over from the Army in prosecuting Manning's case.

But Almanza, with support from the military prosecutors, refused to step aside. He says his work at the Justice Department has nothing to do with classified information or national security. What really seemed to be bothering Manning's lawyer was a series of rulings by the hearing officer.

Almanza has denied the defense access to secret government reports that focused on whether the leak had done any harm. **Coombs** looked back to a few dozen people sitting in the courtroom and cried out: This case rises and falls on whether or not information is classified and whether its release caused harm. But Almanza, the hearing officer, pointedly interrupted to ask who the defense lawyer was addressing. Point being, his target audience clearly wasn't the man who will decide if Bradley Manning will face court martial.

The hearing continued in stops and starts, with long breaks while one side or another wrote up court papers or considered legal issues. And if that pace continues, the proceeding could run right up until Christmas.

Carrie Johnson, NPR News, Washington.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

SIMON: This is NPR News.

Copyright © 2011 National Public Radio. For full story, click [here](#).

[<http://www.npr.org/2011/12/17/143886794/soldiers-hearing-weighs-harm-from-wikileaks>]