

Editorial

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Pfc. Bradley Manning, who has been imprisoned for nine months on charges of handing government files to WikiLeaks, has not even been tried let alone convicted. Yet the military has been treating him abusively, in a way that conjures creepy memories of how the Bush administration used to treat terror suspects. Inexplicably, it appears to have President Obama's support to do so.

Private Manning is in solitary confinement at the Marine Corps brig in Quantico, Va. For one hour a day, he is allowed to walk around a room in shackles. He is [forced to remove all his clothes](#) every night. And every morning he is required to stand outside his cell, naked, until he passes inspection and is given his clothes back.

Military officials say, without explanation, that these precautions are necessary to prevent Private Manning from injuring himself. They have put him on "prevention of injury" watch, yet his lawyers say there is no indication that he is suicidal and the military has not placed him on a suicide watch. (He apparently made a sarcastic comment about suicide.)

Forced nudity is a classic humiliation technique. During the early years of the Bush administration's war on terror, C.I.A. interrogators regularly stripped prisoners to break down barriers of resistance, increase compliance and extract information. [One C.I.A. report](#) from 2004 said that nudity, along with sleep deprivation and dietary manipulation, was used to create a mind-set in which the prisoner "learns to perceive and value his personal welfare, comfort and immediate needs more than the information he is protecting."

Private Manning is not an enemy combatant, and there is no indication that the military is trying to extract information from him. Many military and government officials remain furious at the huge dump of classified materials to WikiLeaks. But if this treatment is someone's way of expressing that emotion, it would be useful to revisit the presumption of innocence and the

Constitutional protection against cruel and unusual punishment.

Philip Crowley, a State Department spokesman, committed the classic mistake of a Washington mouthpiece by telling the truth about Private Manning to a small group (including a blogger): that the military's treatment of Private Manning was "ridiculous and counterproductive and stupid." [He resigned](#) on Sunday.

Far more troubling is why President Obama, who has forcefully denounced prisoner abuse, is condoning this treatment. Last week, [at a news conference](#), he said the Pentagon had assured him that the terms of the private's confinement "are appropriate and are meeting our basic standards." He said he could not go into details, but details are precisely what is needed to explain and correct an abuse that should never have begun.