



WikiLeaks' Bradley Manning Wants to Live as a Woman, but Hormone Therapy in Prison is Unlikely

Bradley Manning wants to live as a woman named Chelsea and begin hormone treatment as soon as possible, the soldier said a day after being sentenced to 35 years in prison for giving government secrets to WikiLeaks. Manning announced the decision Thursday in a statement provided to NBC's "Today" show. "As I transition into this next phase of my life, I want everyone to know the real me. I am Chelsea Manning. I am a female. Given the way that I feel, and have felt since childhood, I want to begin hormone therapy as soon as possible," the statement read. The statement asked people to use the feminine pronoun when referring to Manning. It was signed Chelsea E. Manning. Manning received the stiffest punishment ever handed out in the U.S. for leaking information to the media. With good behavior and credit for more than three years of time served, Manning could be out in as little as seven years, the soldier's attorney David Coombs said. Coombs told "Today" he hoped officials at the military prison in Fort Leavenworth, Kan., will accommodate Manning's request for hormone treatment. If they don't, Coombs said he would do "everything in my power" to make it happen. The Army said it doesn't provide the treatment or sex-reassignment surgery. "All inmates are considered soldiers and are treated as such with access to mental health professionals, including a psychiatrist, psychologist, social workers and behavioral science noncommissioned officers," Army spokesman George Wright said. Many transgender people use cross-sex hormone treatments to alter their gender characteristics. Guidelines from the Endocrine Society endorse the therapy along with monitoring for potential health risks of long-term use. For instance, high doses of the female sex hormone estrogen given to someone born male promote breast development. Leavenworth is an all-male prison. Spokesman George Marcec said there had never been a case similar to Manning's, and the soldier would need to petition for a transfer to a federal prison to receive hormone treatment. As far as where Manning would be held, the prison staff has some leeway to separate her from the general population based on the security risk, Marcec said. Manning has spent more than two years at a minimum-to-medium-security facility for pretrial prisoners at Leavenworth, but after sentencing, Manning was to be moved to military's only maximum-security prison, which is also at Leavenworth. Greg Rinckey, a former Army prosecutor and now a lawyer in Albany, N.Y., said he doubted the military would voluntarily move Manning to a civilian prison, but that a transfer could be ordered by a judge. He said if Manning dressed as a woman, the soldier might have to be segregated from the general population. He also said the military was adamant about not providing hormone treatment. "You enlisted as a male, you're a male, you're going to be incarcerated as a male," he said. Manning's struggle with gender identity disorder — the sense of being a woman trapped in a man's body — was key at her court-martial. Retired Sgt. 1st Class Paul Adkins testified as a defense witness, saying in April 2010, just a month before Manning was arrested, the soldier emailed him a picture of himself in a blonde wig and lipstick with a letter titled, "My problem." "I don't know what to do anymore, and the only 'help' that seems to be available is severe punishment and/or getting rid of me," the email said. "All I do know, is that fear of getting caught has caused me to go to great lengths to consciously hide the

problem."Manning's attorney said the email was evidence the military knew of Manning's struggles, yet allowed him to stay in Iraq as an intelligence analyst and keep his security clearance.Meanwhile, Coombs and supporters said they will ask the Army to reduce Manning's sentence and they want President Obama to grant a pardon. The White House said the request would be considered "like any other application."However, a pardon seems unlikely. Manning's case was part of an unprecedented string of prosecutions brought by the U.S. government in a crackdown on security breaches. The Obama administration has charged seven people with leaking to the media; only three people were prosecuted under all previous presidents combined.The lawyer decried the government's pursuit of Manning for what the soldier said was only an effort to expose wrongdoing and prompt debate of government policies among the American public.The sentencing fired up the long-running debate over whether Manning was a whistleblower or a traitor for giving more than 700,000 classified military and diplomatic documents, plus battlefield footage, to the anti-secrecy website WikiLeaks. By volume alone, it was the biggest leak of classified material in U.S. history, bigger even than the Pentagon Papers a generation ago.Manning was found guilty last month of 20 crimes, including six violations of the Espionage Act, but was acquitted of the most serious charge, aiding the enemy, which carried a potential sentence of life in prison without parole.