AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

September 21, 2018

Tom McCaffery
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
1200 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1200

Dear Mr. McCaffery:

I am writing on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) in response to your recent letter regarding a provision of our APA national security policy. Your letter reaffirmed the concerns expressed in a 2016 letter by then Department of Defense (DoD) Acting Principal Deputy for Personnel and Readiness Brad Carson that our APA policy restricts psychologists from working at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility unless they are treating military personnel or working directly for the persons being detained or for an independent third party to protect human rights. That Council resolution policy, which dates back to a 2008 APA member petition, was re-evaluated last month by our governing Council of Representatives and was reaffirmed.

As you may know, in a conference call held at the request of Mr. Carson in December of 2015, our then APA President Nadine Kaslow, PhD, and several senior staff explained that APA Council resolutions are aspirational statements and are not enforceable, unlike the requirements of our APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (Ethics Code).

In closing, I would like to thank you for your words of support for our military psychologists and our professional association. We greatly appreciate the value that DoD and the Military Health System place on the roles and contributions of military psychologists, while recognizing that military psychologists strive to achieve the highest levels of professional competence. APA also extends a debt of gratitude to our military psychologists for their commitment to promoting the behavioral health and readiness of our military personnel and to supporting and assisting military families. In so doing, we also humbly acknowledge the personal sacrifices that many of our military psychology colleagues make that arise from extended deployments away from their families, as well as the risks to their safety and well-being while serving overseas.

Sincerely,

Jessica Henderson Daniel, PhD, ABPP

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President

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