

AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

June 21, 2010

The Honorable Jeh Charles Johnson
General Counsel
U.S. Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

Dear Mr. Johnson:

We are writing as follow up to our December 14, 2009, meeting that focused on the policies of the American Psychological Association (APA) related to the involvement of psychologists in national security investigations. At that time, we presented you with a set of APA policies that prohibit torture and other abusive interrogation techniques, as well as a petition resolution policy recently adopted by a vote of our membership. That policy prohibits psychologists from working in detention settings that violate the U.S. Constitution or international law, such as the Geneva Conventions and the U.N. Convention Against Torture, unless they are providing health care to military personnel, working directly for the detainee, or working on behalf of a human rights organization. Apart from these roles, psychologists are prohibited from working in unlawful detention settings.

As you will recall, we also informed you that APA was considering amending standards of our Ethics Code that address conflicts that may arise among professional ethics, legal authority, and organizational demands. The proposed amendments, which were adopted by the APA Council of Representatives and went into effect on June 1, remove any uncertainty regarding the relationship between psychology ethics and human rights. The revised Ethics Code (see enclosed) now explicitly states that there is no defense or justification under the Code for a human rights violation. The relevant ethical standards are 1.02 (Conflicts between Ethics and Law, Regulations, or Other Governing Legal Authority) and 1.03 (Conflicts between Ethics and Organizational Demands).

We appreciate the interest that you have expressed to be kept fully informed about APA policy related to the treatment of detainees. Once again, we emphasize APA's position that it is not permissible for psychologists to have any involvement in abusive interrogations or to work in unlawful detention settings that violate the U.S. Constitution or international law, with the specific exceptions indicated above. Furthermore, the amended APA Ethics Code makes clear that there is no defense under the Code for violating a detainee's human rights. It is our strong expectation that APA members in the military abide by these policies.

750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242
(202) 336-5500
(202) 336-6123 TDD

Web: www.apa.org

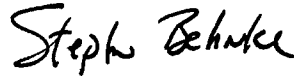


Please feel free to contact either of us at (202) 336-6080 if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ellen Garrison", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ellen G. Garrison, Ph.D.
Senior Policy Advisor

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Steph Behnke", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen H. Behnke, J.D., Ph.D.
Director, Ethics Office

Enclosure