

AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

June 21, 2010

The Honorable Leon Panetta
Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, DC 20505

Dear Director Panetta:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA), I am writing to inform you of recent amendments to standards of our APA Ethics Code that relate to the involvement of psychologists in national security investigations. These particular standards set forth the means to 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).

As you will recall, my earlier June 4, 2009, letter informed you about APA policies that prohibit psychologists from engaging in torture or other abusive interrogation techniques. The letter also included specific reference to the February 2009 adoption of a petition resolution policy that 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.

We urge you to steadfastly maintain your commitment to protecting the human rights and welfare of detainees in U.S. custody. 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 intelligence community abide by these policies.

Sincerely,

Norman B. Anderson, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

Enclosure

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