

Pentagon Warns American Psychological Association - Help Us Torture, Or the U.S. Will be Attacked

By [Andrew Emett](#)

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Caught colluding with the Pentagon and endorsing the CIA's torture program, the American Psychological Association (APA) sent a letter to the Defense Department last year refusing to continue participation in national security interrogations. Instead of accepting the association's new policy, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) recently responded with a veiled threat furtively blaming the APA's nonparticipation in enhanced interrogations for any future attacks against U.S. citizens.

Following the tragic events of 9/11, the Justice Department constructed a series of legal memos authorizing the Bush administration's use of torture against enemy combatants. In 2002 and 2003, Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo authored the [torture memos](#), which were signed by Assistant Attorney General Jay Bybee. The Authorization for Use of Military Force, the Military Commissions Act of 2006, and [Executive Order 13440](#) became legal justifications for the utilization of enhanced interrogation techniques and a total disregard for the Geneva Conventions.

Under pseudonyms within the heavily redacted Senate Committee's [Executive Summary](#) on CIA interrogation, two retired Air Force psychologists, Dr. Bruce Jessen and Dr. James Mitchell, received contracts to develop the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques. They decided to reverse-engineer the Air Force's Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) counter-interrogation training by inflicting both physical and psychological torture upon detainees. According to the report, they personally participated in waterboarding and interrogating prisoners.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was waterboarded at least 183 times at CIA black sites in Poland and Romania while providing no actionable intelligence or useful information to his interrogators. In November 2002, CIA officer Matthew Zirbel left black site detainee Gul Rahman beaten and half-naked from the waist down in an unheated cell overnight. Rahman ended up freezing to death in his cell. In a case of mistaken identity, German citizen Khalid El-Masri was abducted by the Macedonian police and handed over to the CIA. After months of beatings and forced rectal suppositories, El-Masri was released without charges.

Arrested in Pakistan on April 10, 2002, Binyam Mohamed was transported to a CIA black site where he was beaten, burned, and suffered cuts along his torso and penis with a [scalpel](#). The US eventually dropped all charges against Mohamed and released him. Between June 19 and 20, 2003, CIA contractor David Passaro beat an Afghan suspect named Abdul Wali to death with a [metal flashlight](#) during an enhanced interrogation. At the Abu Ghraib prison in

2003, Manadel al-Jamadi died in a shower room under [CIA interrogation](#) with his arms tied behind his back. Former Specialist Charles Graner Jr. notoriously posed over al-Jamadi's corpse for a photo before being charged with torturing his prisoners. CIA interrogator Mark Swanner was not charged with al-Jamadi's death.

Kidnapped by CIA agents in Milan on February 17, 2003, an Egyptian cleric named Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr lost hearing in one ear after months of beatings and electric shocks. On November 4, 2009, an Italian judge convicted *in absentia* 22 suspected or known [CIA agents](#), an Air Force colonel, and two Italian secret agents of kidnapping Nasr.

According to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, harsh interrogation techniques are not effective means of acquiring intelligence. Under duress, prisoners will say anything they believe the interrogator wants to hear in order to end the torment. Although the CIA claims information acquired through enhanced interrogation has saved lives and led to the death of Osama bin Laden, the Committee discovered these claims are patently false.

Instead of being held accountable for devising and utilizing the CIA's torture program, Mitchell and Jessen received \$81 million prior to their contract's termination in 2009. Former CIA case officer John Kiriakou was sentenced to 30 months in prison after revealing the torture program during an interview with ABC News. Kiriakou was charged with violating the Intelligence Identities Protection Act of 1982 by giving Deuce Martinez's business card to *New York Times* reporter Scott Shane. Martinez had been a CIA interrogator working for [Mitchell Jessen and Associates](#).

In July 2015, a [report](#) found that two former APA presidents had been colluding with the CIA while convincing the board to endorse Mitchell and Jessen's unorthodox therapy sessions. After concluding that sleep deprivation did not classify as torture, former APA president Joseph Matarazzo later held a small ownership stake in Mitchell Jessen and Associates.

On October 28, 2015, APA President Barry Anton and former APA CEO Norman Anderson wrote a [letter](#) to Defense Secretary Ashton Carter informing the Pentagon of its new policy prohibiting supervision, assistance, or presence in any national security interrogations, including CIA torture and interrogations of Guantanamo detainees. Instead of respecting the APA's decision to avoid further ethical conflicts, Brad Carson, the acting principal deputy secretary of defense for personnel and readiness, responded this month accusing the APA of hindering the recruitment and retention of qualified psychologists required by the U.S. Armed Forces.

"The context of future conflicts — whether a traditional international armed conflict like World War II or the Korean War, a defense of the homeland against international terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or something entirely unpredictable — is today unknown," Carson warned. "A code governing psychologists' ethics in future national security roles needs to fit all such contexts. We respectfully suggest that a blanket prohibition on participation by psychologists in national security interrogations does not."

Due to the fact that Mitchell and Jessen provided no actionable intelligence by devising and conducting enhanced interrogations, the only reason the Pentagon needs the APA to reconsider its policy change is because the DoD can no longer commit torture under current U.S. law. By contracting out to psychologists, the DoD would be able to resume the CIA's torture program at the behest of a future president without interference from the Justice

Department.

Andrew Emett is a Los Angeles-based reporter exposing political and corporate corruption. His interests include national security, corporate abuse, and holding government officials accountable. Andrew's work has appeared on Raw Story, Alternet, Activist Post, and many other sites. You can follow him on Twitter [@AndrewEmett](#) and on Facebook at [Andrew Emett](#).

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