

January 9, 2007

Editor  
*The Washington Monthly*

Regarding "Collective Unconscionable" (*Washington Monthly*, January/February 2007), a few relevant facts that Mr. Levine chose not to include in his reporting are:

- The American Psychological Association's (APA) position on torture is clear and unequivocal. Any direct or indirect participation in any act of torture or other forms of cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment by psychologists is strictly prohibited. No exceptions! Such acts as waterboarding, sexual humiliation, stress positions and exploitation of phobias are clear violations of APA's no torture/no abuse policy.
- The principle of "Do no harm" provides the foundation for the Association's resolutions against torture dating back to the mid 1980s. In 1985, APA issued a joint resolution against torture with the American Psychiatric Association. Subsequent resolutions prohibiting any psychologist's involvement in torture have also been adopted by the Association in 1986, 2005 and 2006.
- The Association's position is rooted in our belief that having psychologists consult with interrogation teams makes an important contribution toward keeping interrogations safe and ethical. Our members have a responsibility to intervene to stop acts of abuse wherever they occur and to report such incidents to the appropriate authorities.
- APA has established procedures in place to investigate and adjudicate possible ethical violations by its members. Any allegations that a member has violated APA's strict prohibition against engaging in torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment will be investigated and, if the evidence warrants, adjudicated.
- Furthermore, the Association is well aware that tremendous situational pressures often exist when psychologists work in national security settings. Ethical interrogations are based on building a relationship and forming rapport with the person being questioned, whereas abusive techniques are both unethical and ineffective. APA has chosen to stay engaged in the process of working to define and enforce ethical interrogations because we believe that it is the best way to prevent unethical behavior. We know that our members have had a positive effect. For example, one member of the APA Presidential Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security intervened to stop abusive detainee treatment at Guantanamo. Another was sent to prevent future abuse at Abu Ghraib when abuse was uncovered there.

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