

**IV. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**Task Force to Explore the Ethical Aspects of Psychologists' Involvement and the Use of Psychology in National Security-Related Investigations: Request for Board Discretionary Funds**

**Issue**

The Board is asked to allocate \$12,500 from its 2005 discretionary fund to support one meeting of a task force to explore the ethical aspects of psychologists' involvement and the use of psychology in national security-related investigations.

**Background**

Recent events in the United States and around the world, most notably the terrorist attacks of September 11, and the Abu Ghraib prison and Guantanamo Bay detention center situations, have raised questions concerning the use of psychology and the role of psychologists in national security-related investigations and research. The ethical aspects of psychologists' work in these arenas are non-trivial and complex.

Article I of APA's Bylaws states that "the American Psychological Association shall... advance psychology as a science and profession and as a means of promoting health, education and human welfare...by the establishment and maintenance of the highest standards of professional ethics and conduct of the members of the Association."

The APA Code of Ethics, like many laws and regulations governing the practice of psychology, as well as the ethics codes of other major mental health organizations, have developed largely within specific contexts, that of traditional forms of therapy, academic research, and training programs. As a consequence, such texts may not provide as much guidance as ideal in addressing situations that involve values fundamental to the profession—confidentiality, safety, respect for autonomy, honesty, integrity—in contexts where national security and innocent lives are potentially at issue. This task force will examine the ethical dimensions of psychology's involvement and the use of psychology in national security-related investigations. The overarching purpose of the task force will be to examine whether our current Ethics Code adequately addresses such activities, whether the APA provides adequate ethical guidance to psychologists involved in these endeavors, and whether APA should develop policy to address the role of psychologists and psychology in investigations related to national security.

In examining these issues, the task force will address issues such as:

- What appropriate limits does the principle "Do no harm" place on psychologists' involvement in investigations related to national security?
- To the extent it can be determined, given the classified nature of many of these activities: What roles are psychologists asked to take in investigations related to national security?
- What are criteria to differentiate ethically appropriate from ethically inappropriate roles that psychologists may take?
- How is psychology likely to be used in investigations related to national security?
- What role does informed consent have in investigations related to national security?
- What does current research tell us about the efficacy and effectiveness of various investigative techniques?
- Would the efficacy and effectiveness of various investigative techniques, if demonstrated, affect our ethics?
- Has APA responded strongly enough to media accounts of activities that have occurred at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay?

### **Implementation Plan**

If approved, Ethics Office and Science Directorate staff will plan a meeting for the Task Force in 2005. Members of the Task Force will be appointed by President Ronald F. Levant, EdD.

### **Fiscal Implications**

Estimated cost for a 10 Member Task Force:

10 x \$500 (transportation) = \$5,000  
10 x \$250 (hotel/meals) x 3 = \$7,500  
Total = \$12,500

### **Main Motion**

- 1 That the Board of Directors allocates \$12,500 from its 2005 discretionary fund to support one
- 2 meeting in 2005 of a Task Force to Explore the Ethical Aspects of Psychologists' Involvement and
- 3 the Use of Psychology in National Security-Related Investigations.

### **Recommendation**

None.

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### **Exhibits**

None.

*Stephen Behnke, JD, PhD*  
*Ethics Office*

*Steven Breckler, PhD*  
*Science Directorate*

*Geoff Mumford, PhD*  
*Science Directorate*