



September 22, 2015

The Honorable Ash Carter  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA), we are writing to express our deep concern about recent media reports alleging that Allied partners engaged in sexual abuse against children on U.S. military installations overseas, with the knowledge of U.S. military officers. We also are troubled by the impact on U.S. service members who may become aware of such abuse, particularly if they are not authorized to report or intervene to protect the child victims.

APA is a scientific and professional association, with more than 123,000 members and affiliates. Our primary mission includes the application of psychological knowledge from science and practice to address fundamental problems of human welfare. For decades, psychologists have played critical roles in documenting the harmful effects of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, as well as neglect, on children; preventing such maltreatment; and intervening clinically and systemically to address this serious and tragic problem locally, nationally, and globally. We are steadfast in our opposition to abuse and consider the welfare, protection, and treatment of children a priority of the highest order.

APA's organizational structure includes both a governing committee and a membership division focused on children, youth, and families. The latter includes a special section on child maltreatment. APA has expressed its support for the principles embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that all children must be protected from violence, sexual abuse, exploitation, and maltreatment. In 1999, APA adopted as policy the Resolution Opposing Child Sexual Abuse, which reaffirms our long-standing position that "sexual relations between children and adults are abusive, exploitive, reprehensible and properly punishable by law." Moreover, licensed psychologists are mandated by law to report even suspected child abuse, and this includes military psychologists who provide services here in the U.S. and at U.S. military installations overseas.

We request that the Defense Department investigate the allegations of sexual abuse by Allied partners at U.S. military installations overseas. We also ask that you offer clear guidance and support to military personnel to help ensure the safety of children in areas of conflict. We are available to offer assistance and guidance based on our psychological science and practice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry S. Anton".

Barry S. Anton, Ph.D., ABPP  
President

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Norman B. Anderson".

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

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