**The Link between the American Psychological Association and Torture of U.S. Detainees**

***Prescription Privileges for Psychologists Tied to Campaign***

In October 2014, the publication of “Pay Any Price: Greed, Power and Endless War,” by *New York Times* reporter James Risen raised questions about the link between the psychological profession and the use of torture, or “enhanced interrogation,” on detainees in U.S. custody.

In response, the American Psychological Association (apa) announced in November 2014 that it had commissioned an independent review by Chicago attorney David Hoffman to determine whether it had colluded with or supported the government’s use of torture in the interrogation of prisoners. (Risen, NYT, 11-13-2014)

*The New York Times* published a story on April 30, 2015, on a report by human rights activists that states that the apa “collaborated” with the Bush Administration to bolster the legal and ethical justification for torture. A spokeswoman with the apa denied that the organization coordinated its efforts with the government.

On July 10, the 542-page Hoffman report was released and its findings were extensively discussed in *The New York Times*.

Some key findings regarding the apa-commissioned report:

* Key apa officials colluded with important Department of Defense (DoD) officials to ensure that apa issue loose ethical guidelines that would not constrain the DoD in any way when it came to the interrogation of prisoners.
* The apa also consulted with DoD officials in crafting its media strategy to ward off criticism of the role of psychologists in the interrogation of U.S.-held detainees.
* The apa’s motivation was to curry favor with the DoD, referred to as a “rich, powerful uncle.” The DoD is one of the largest employers of psychologists and provides millions in contracts for psychologists across the country. The DoD also created a prescription-privileges project for psychologists. Although panned by the General Accounting Office, the DoD prescription program has spurred state legislation to grant psychologists the right to prescribe.
* A key apa member who participated on the task force that devised the group’s ethics policy was married to a DoD psychologist who was the lead psychologist supporting interrogations operations at Guantanamo Bay.

For reference, the U.S. Senate report on the use of “enhanced interrogation” includes the following methods: sleep deprivation, slapping, slamming detainees against the wall, nudity, standing in stress positions for long periods of time, waterboarding, rectal feeding without a medical reason and verbal threats.