

California Senate
Business Professions and Economic Development Committee
Hearing on the Ridley-Thomas Resolution on
Health Professionals Participation in Torture

January 14, 2008

Statement by Jean Maria Arrigo, Ph.D.

Good afternoon. My name is Jean Maria Arrigo. I am a social psychologist and independent scholar from Southern California. Since 1995 I have worked to give moral voice to intelligence professionals. In 2000, I organized an ethics seminar for former covert operators and philosophers;¹ in 2004, the International Intelligence Ethics Association; in 2005, a journal dialogue between intelligence professionals and peace psychologists;² in 2006, an ethics seminar for psychologists and senior interrogators. My oral histories of the moral development of intelligence professionals are archived at UC Berkeley³ and Stanford University.⁴

I speak to you today from the perspective of a dozen interrogators, counterintelligence officers, and covert operators. These include directors of training at the U.S. Army Intelligence School at Ft. Huachuca, Arizona, and Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) programs. In their view, the inaccessibility of the terrorist suspect under interrogation is usually due to the incompetence of untrained, poorly trained, inexperienced, unmentored, or unauthorized pseudo-interrogators. The current Administration has pursued the perennial hope, since the War of Algiers, that scientists will deliver the means of extracting intelligence.⁵

Professional interrogators who have worked with psychologists state there is no *valid* reason to insert psychologists into the interrogation process.⁶ *Invalid* reasons include legitimization of abusive techniques, use of psychoactive drugs, unethical research, and career opportunities for psychologists (as indicated by the American Psychological Association's vigorous lobbying for Department of Defense funding in the War on Terror).⁷

Advocates of psychologists' involvement in interrogations argue that psychologists serve to keep interrogations safe, legal, and ethical. My intelligence contacts scorn this claim. Routine participation of health professionals in state-sponsored torture interrogations has been documented worldwide.⁸ The argument would have to be made that U.S. health professionals are morally superior and exceptionally resistant to institutional, career, and situational pressures. This is demonstrably false.⁹

Here I want to present a realistic image of these pressures, through quotations from a conflicted officer (not a professional interrogator) who had been party to Middle East interrogations.

1. On selection of medical personnel for interrogation assistance:

[Content: The officer would review medical personnel files eliminate candidates with church or NGO memberships.]

2. On financial leverage against uncooperative medical personnel:

[Content: Most of the medical personnel used went through medical school on military scholarships. If they objected to interrogation assignments they could be brought up on (possibly irrelevant) charges in an internal trail and be forced to repay the military.]

3. On career leverage:

[Content: Medical personnel who criticize the US military may have their security clearances revoked and lose their chance for promotion.]

I also illustrate obstacles to successful human rights monitoring:

1. On use of untraceable torture techniques:

[Content: A drug used to test cardiac function in stress tests can be administered to detainees to convince them they are dying.]

2. On cover-up of unethical behavior:

[Content: To address concerns about abuse, we can say that interrogation plans have been approved as nonstressful. We like to terrorists to obtain information; on the same rationale we can lie to any group that attempts to interfere with our job.]

3. On obstruction of ethics investigations:

[Content: To deter investigations, no actual names of agents or medical professionals are used in interrogation reports, only code names or numbers.]

4. On use of low-profile substitutes:

[Content: If it becomes too risky to use physicians or physicians'

assistants, we can use combat medics and other paraprofessionals for expertise in interrogations.]

Intelligence contacts who worked with scientists and doctors consider them among the easiest people to manipulate, although different reasons are given:

- Doctors and scientists are very principled, hence very predictable. All you need is the right cover story.
- They fall in love with their projects and can't let go, so you only have to hook them at the beginning when the project looks clean.
- They tend to have big egos, which are easy levers for the manipulator.
- Unlike privates or corporals, the careers of these scientists and doctors mean everything to them; it almost never happens one puts up any resistance that could damage his career.

To assist in interrogations is to become a target of intelligence. Health professionals overall are no match for intelligence professionals in security operations—as they should not be, by training and temperament, but models of trustworthiness. When health professionals become involved in interrogations, U.S. soldiers distrust them and thereby lose their last recourse.

In closing, I add that I served on the 2005 task force of the American Psychological Association (APA) to formulate policy on psychologists' participation in interrogations. APA policy unfortunately permitted psychologists to participate in interrogations. Further APA resolutions against torture do not suffice, as my examples illustrate. Only the withdrawal of psychologists from interrogations suffices, which the last requirement of the Ridley-Thomas Resolution.

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End Notes

- ¹ Arrigo, J.M. (2005). "Military and Civilian Perspectives on the Ethics of Intelligence— Report on a Workshop at the Department of Philosophy Claremont Graduate University, September 29, 2000." In *Ethics and Intelligence: A Reader for the Professional*, Jan Goldman (ed). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.
- ² Arrigo, J.M. (2005). *A Dialogue between Peace Psychology and Military Ethics*. Edited with Richard Wagner. Special issue of *Peace and Conflict*, 11 (1).
- ³ Arrigo, J.M. (2004). *Oral History Series on Ethics of Intelligence and Weapons Development*. 17 oral histories and associated interview commentaries and documents deposited at the Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley (Finding aid available on-line: http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt296nc54n&doc.view=entire_text).
- ⁴ Arrigo, J.M. (2005). *Intelligence Ethics Collection*. Hoover Institution Archives, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA. (Not yet catalogued.)
- ⁵ Trinquier, R. (1964) *Modern warfare: A French view of counterinsurgency*. Praeger, New York. Pp. 21 & 23.
- ⁶ What interrogators do need from psychologists is selection of trainees for social and cognitive skills and screening for psychopathology, conducted at training centers not detention centers.
- ⁷ Science Policy Insider News (SPIN). (2004, October). Science Policy Staff meet with psychologists in counterintelligence. [Online periodical, <http://www.apa.org/ppo/spin/1004.html>].
- ⁸ Suedfeld, Peter (1990). Psychologists as victims, administrators, and designers of torture. In P. Suedfeld (Ed.), *Psychology and torture*, 101-115. New York: Hemisphere.
- ⁹ Miles, Steven H. (2005). *Oath betrayed: Military medicine and the war on terror*. New York: Random House.

Acknowledgments

Former counterintelligence operative David DeBatto advised on this testimony. (He is available for further consultation to others. For contact, write to me at jmarrigo@cox.net.)

Psychologists Brad Olson and Stephen Soldz gave editorial assistance.