

September 17, 2015

Dear Presidential Candidate,

We are a nonpartisan group of former national security, law enforcement, intelligence, and interrogation professionals who served in the U.S. military, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, Drug Enforcement Administration, Defense Intelligence Agency, Army Criminal Investigation Command, and Naval Criminal Investigative Service. We have decades of experience interrogating detainees, including high-level al Qaeda members and other terrorism suspects. As a candidate to be the next President and Commander in Chief, you have a responsibility to ensure that the United States adheres to effective, lawful, and humane standards for interrogation. We urge you to publicly and unequivocally reject the use of torture and cruel treatment.

Torture is not only illegal and immoral; it is counterproductive. It tends to produce unreliable information because it degrades a detainee's ability to recall and transmit information, undermines trust in the interrogator, and often prompts a detainee to relay false information that he believes the interrogator wants to hear. It also increases the risk that our troops will be tortured, hinders cooperation with allies, alienates populations whose support the United States needs in the struggle against terrorism, and provides a propaganda tool for extremists who wish to do us harm. It is a hard truth, but we note that a large proportion of the fighters who opposed the U.S. in Iraq did so expressly as a result of the U.S. use of “enhanced interrogation,” which the entire world recognizes as, quite simply, torture.

The interrogation procedures we endorse adhere to international human rights standards, and they employ cutting-edge behavioral science on what enables people to recall and report critical information accurately. We ourselves have used these rapport-based methods to secure timely, important, and actionable intelligence that allowed us to disrupt terrorists’ plots and save American lives. Moreover, these methods reassure allies while undermining the false narrative of extremist groups that seek to portray America as an oppressor.

Congress has affirmed our approach to interrogation with the overwhelming bipartisan passage of the 2005 Detainee Treatment Act and the McCain-Feinstein Amendment to the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act. The McCain-Feinstein Amendment—which was supported by 78 Senators, including the chairs and ranking members of the intelligence, armed services, homeland security, foreign affairs, and judiciary committees—extends key protections of the Detainee Treatment Act by codifying the Army Field Manual on Interrogations as the government-wide approach to national security interrogations. It also mandates a review and update of interrogation approaches to ensure that they are based on the most up-to-date, reliable science.

The most effective interrogation practices are those that respect American ideals. Accordingly, we urge you to denounce torture and cruel treatment of detainees and to support the bi-partisan McCain-Feinstein amendment.

Signed,

Frank Anderson – CIA (Ret.)
Jennifer Bryson – Formerly DIA
Tony Camerino – USAF (Ret.)
Donald Canestraro – DEA (Ret.)
Glenn Carle – CIA (Ret.)
Barry Eisler – Formerly CIA
Eric Fair – Formerly U.S. Army
Mark Fallon – NCIS (Ret.)
Michael German – Formerly FBI
Charlton Howard – NCIS (Ret.)
Brigadier General David Irvine – U.S. Army (Ret.)
Timothy James – NCIS (Ret.)
Colonel Steven Kleinman – USAF (Ret.)

Marcus Lewis – Formerly U.S. Army
Colonel Brittain Mallow – U.S Army (Ret.)
Mike Marks – NCIS (Ret.)
Robert McFadden – NCIS (Ret.)
Charles Mink – Formerly U.S. Army
Joe Navarro – FBI (Ret.)
Torin Nelson – Formerly U.S. Army
Carissa Pastuch – Formerly U.S. Army
Erik Phillips – Formerly U.S. Army
William Quinn – Formerly U.S. Army
Oliver “Buck” Revell – FBI (Ret.)
Ken Robinson – U.S. Army (Ret.)
Michael Rolince – FBI (Ret.)