

Notes from Mr. Hoffman's August 2015 Comments to Council

David Hoffman's address to the APA Council lasted about 45 minutes and included a good deal of introductory remarks. He remarked that it was "really unusual for the APA Board to ask for a review and commit to making it public regardless of the result." He also emphasized that in order to understand the report accurately you need to read the entire report and not just the summary. Finally he noted that he is not responsible for the media headlines which generally equate to something like 'psychologists collude with government to support torture'.

He then addressed Council questions which had been provided to him in advance. Ones that seemed notable or interesting follow:

Q: Was there collusion to support torture?

A: No. There was collusion to not place stricter restrictions on psychologists than the DOD was placing on itself."

Q: Why did you use words like "collusion" which have a sinister connotation?

A: We prefer *collaboration*, *coordination*, but we were asked specifically if there was *collusion*. "Behind the scenes communication" would have been a more accurate description.

Q: How can you [speak with certainty] about staff's intentions? How can you say their intention was to curry favor versus just doing the job they were hired to do?

A: The report does not address the issue of wrongdoing versus lobbying. It describes relationships with the DOD. It is not an anti-military report. It is about how one comes to an ethical position in a dependent or independent way. APA's independence was subordinated in favor of [DOD's judgments].

Q: Did you find any evidence of psychologists participating in torture or enhanced interrogations post PENS?

A: The report is not about this topic. We did not investigate that, nor would we have been able to do that.

Q: What can we learn from the report?

A:

1. Focus on human rights when weighted against influence of government.
2. Conflicts of interest should be examined with default rules to avoid clear conflicts of interest.
3. APA ethics investigations currently are quite limited.
4. Civility among psychologists: Divergent points of view should not be chilled, no personal attacks [against someone who has a divergent point of view].

Q: Any other comments?

A: Psychologists might be among the best suited to be watch officers [safety monitors] during interrogations. The problem is when also asking psychologist to make interrogations effective. There is an inherent conflict of interest between the two.