



The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE

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### **CVT Letter to APA Questions Effort to Return Military Psychologists to Guantanamo**

**ST. PAUL, Minn. & WASHINGTON** — In a letter yesterday to the Board of Directors and Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association (APA), the Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) expressed serious concern at the prospect of the organization authorizing the return of military psychologists to the Guantanamo Bay prison.

CVT's letter, authored by Curt Goering, executive director; Andrea Northwood, Ph.D., L.P., director of client services; and Scott Roehm, director of the Washington, D.C., office, was sent ahead of a planned board vote on Resolution 35B, which could reverse important reforms made in 2015 meant to provide a mechanism through which detainees could access ethical and independent care at Guantanamo notwithstanding the lasting consequences of some military psychologists' historical participation in torture and abuse:

Guantanamo is synonymous with torture, and always will be. Some government-affiliated psychologists were deeply complicit in designing and otherwise enabling horrendous abuses there. . . . [T]hese human rights abuses and ethical violations have produced lasting distrust between detainees and military psychologists. Even the best intentioned psychologists cannot work for DOD at Guantanamo and expect to escape this legacy, especially in the context of detainees' ongoing suffering associated with indefinite detention.

CVT further notes in the letter that

Many of the men who remain captive at Guantanamo are torture survivors. They are being held indefinitely by the government responsible (directly or indirectly) for their torture and in a setting replete with common triggers of PTSD symptoms. If the APA's objective is to facilitate humane treatment and improved mental health care for these men, it should push *exclusively* for meaningful access by independent psychologists—in furtherance of current APA policy.

Read the [full letter here](#).

In an [amicus brief](#) filed in January with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in support of the [joint habeas motion](#) filed by 11 of the remaining Guantanamo Bay detainees, CVT similarly called attention to the lack of trust between detainees and military mental health providers. The brief also discusses the medical costs associated with prolonged detention without charge or trial, and the plight of torture survivors trapped in a constant reminder of their trauma.

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*The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization headquartered in St. Paul, MN, with offices in Atlanta, GA, and Washington, D.C.; and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Visit [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org)*