

Statement of

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to appear before you today. My testimony will address my July 2002 communications with the Chief of Staff of the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (JPRA) relating to interrogations and resistance training techniques, my July 24, 2002 memorandum "Psychological Effects of Resistance Training," and the role of Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) psychologists, and the use of physical and psychological pressures in resistance training for U.S. soldiers.

First, I want to provide some personal background information. I received my Bachelor's of Science degree from The Ohio State University and my Masters and Ph.D. degrees in clinical psychology from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. I joined the Air Force in 1995. I went through residency training in psychology at Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. I then served as a clinical psychologist in Air Force Behavioral Health clinics at Lackland Air Force Base and at Onizuka Air Station. In those positions, I provided a wide range of basic psychological services. I then served as the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) Psychologist for the United States Air Force Survival School at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington from 4 February 1999 to 28 July 2002. There I was the Commander's representative for all psychological aspects of training. My primary purpose was to safeguard the integrity of training by providing risk management oversight of training activities, and to conduct research to address questions of training effectiveness and training risk. I separated

from active duty service at the grade of Major in 2002 to accept a civilian position with the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (JPRA). I serve currently as the SERE Research Psychologist for the JPRA where I have been assigned since 29 July 2002. In that capacity, my job is to conduct research, operational release handling of recovered, returned, and repatriated US personnel, recommend policies in these areas, and provide expert knowledge in human decision-making, behavioral adaptation, learning in stressful environments, learned helplessness, and learning to enhance human resiliency. I also Chair an international research panel on Survival Psychology through the Human Resources and Performance Group (HUM) of The Technical Cooperation Program (TTCP) which includes fellow survival psychologists from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This panel was recognized by each of those countries with a team achievement award for creating and demonstrating the effectiveness of a selection program for Resistance Training instructors which served to select appropriate people to become instructors and thereby mitigate training risks.

Mr. Chairman, with regards to my July 2002 communications with then Lt Col Dan Baumgartner, the then Chief of Staff of JPRA, my recollection is that Lt Col Baumgartner called me directly, probably on the same day that I generated my 24 July 2002 memorandum that I referenced earlier. He indicated that he was getting asked “from above” about the psychological effects of resistance training. I had no idea who was asking Lt Col Baumgartner “from above” and did not ask him to clarify who was asking. I recall reminding Lt Col Baumgartner in general terms about program evaluation data I’d presented in May of 2002 at the SERE Psychology Conference. These data, which were collected on Air Force survival students at different points of time during training, indicated that training significantly improves students confidence in their ability to adhere to the Code of Conduct.

Then, I recall LtCol Baumgartner asking me if I thought training was harmful to students. This question and my responses to it formed the basis of my 24 July 2002 memorandum to Lt Col Baumgartner, which is the best record of the conversation that we had. In general terms, I indicated that a very small percentage of students (4.3%) had adverse psychological reactions to our training, but we (the survival psychology staff) were able to re-motivate almost all of those having adverse reactions (96.8%) to complete training. Thus, less than .2% of the roughly 14,000 students were unable to complete training due to psychological problems which arose during training. The exact numbers I cited in the memorandum were retrieved from the annual risk reports we kept. In order to ensure that our program was safe and effective, I also told Lt Col Baumgartner that students received three debriefings during training, two of which were conducted by the Psychology Services staff, and that the other was a detailed, thorough operational debriefing. These debriefings normalized the students' performance and reactions during training, and reinforced the training objectives to increase their skill and confidence. As an additional point on this question, I indicated that very few complaints were made following training. These indicators combined led me to conclude that long-term negative effects of training are likely minimal. I did caveat, however, that we did not routinely survey students in the years following training to confirm this conclusion.

Finally, as indicated in my 24 July 2002 memorandum, Lt Col Baumgartner asked me if I'd ever seen the waterboard used, and what I thought of it. I told him that I had seen it used while observing Navy training the previous year, and that I would never recommend using it in training. He asked me why and if I thought it was physically dangerous. I responded that I didn't see anyone getting physically injured when I observed it, and as stated in my memorandum, the Navy was applying it to medically screened trainees with medical personnel

immediately available to monitor and intervene if necessary. However, that wasn't the point, as psychologically the waterboard produced capitulation and compliance with instructor demands 100% of the time. During debriefings following training, students who had experienced the waterboard expressed extreme avoidance attitudes such as a likelihood to further comply with any demands made of them if brought near the waterboard again. I told Lt Col Baumgartner that waterboarding was completely inconsistent with the stress inoculation paradigm of training that we used, and was more indicative of a practice that produces learned helplessness – a training result we tried strenuously to avoid. The final area I recall Lt Col Baumgartner asking me about were my thoughts on using the waterboard against the enemy. I asked responded by asking, “wouldn't that be illegal?” He replied that some people were asking from above about the utility of using this technique against the enemy for the same reasons I wouldn't use it in training. I replied that I wouldn't go down that path because, aside from being illegal, it was a completely different arena that we in the Survival School didn't know anything about. When we concluded the talk, Lt Col Baumgartner asked if I would write him a memo reflecting what we'd just discussed regarding the psychological effects of training so he could include it with other materials he was sending up. He also asked if I would comment on both the physical and psychological effects of the waterboard. I replied that I would, and drafted the memo.

Mr. Chairman, with regards to the role of SERE psychologists, as I mentioned earlier, the intent is to provide expert knowledge and research to advise the Commander in order to prevent in-role behavioral drift or role creep within the training, prevent moral disengagement of staff while providing training, and maintain the effectiveness of training within a stress inoculation-based approach. These aims are accomplished through: psychologically screening instructors; training instructors and out-of-role supervisors on indicators of behavioral drift and moral

disengagement, and associated preventative actions; immediately conducting incident reviews following any adverse training events; and advising on administrative or re-training actions when indicated.

Mr. Chairman, physical and psychological pressures are used in resistance training for several reasons. Historically, coercive pressures have been used against US soldiers in numerous captivity situations. Including simulated physical and psychological stresses to our training adds more realism and effectiveness to the training. Additionally, in the realm of the training science world, simulated physical and psychological stresses would be recognized during the task analysis as some of the conditions under which the resistance skills must be applied. The overall goal is to instill good habits in trainees and the ability to think clearly and solve problems during repeated exposure to stressful situations to ensure that performance does not degrade under stress.

In SERE resistance training, physical and psychological pressures consist of contact with a student, as well as use of threats and ploys that are designed to test the students' resistance. The pressures are designed to cause some physical and emotional discomfort. These pressures are definitely not designed to cause injury or anything other than minor, temporary irritation. All pressures are reviewed by medical and psychological staff before they are used to ensure that a good margin of physical and psychological safety exists when they are used, and to limit their use on personnel with pre-existing medical and psychological concerns. Additionally, when physical pressures are used, the use is continuously monitored by multiple levels of out of role school personnel to ensure that the pressures are used within established limits. The psychological purpose of physical and psychological pressures at the Air Force Survival School

was always to enhance student decision-making, resistance, confidence, resiliency, and stress inoculation, and not to break the will of the students or to teach them helplessness.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, let me emphasize again that the purpose of our training of U.S. military personnel is to increase their level of confidence that they can survive captivity and interrogation situations, comply with the Code of Conduct, and return with the least amount of physical and psychological damage. Our basic concept for this training is that if a service member has met the types of interrogation conditions even once before, they will begin to be familiar with them and thus more able to cope with an otherwise extremely stressful and confusing situation. Although there are many sacrifices and harrowing circumstances that our soldiers, marines, sailors, and airmen are called to task to face, I can think of none more amazing and confusing than being held captive by your enemy. I believe we have a moral obligation to provide our personnel this training. Through our training, we prepare our nation's best for the worst, so that if they fall into the hands of the enemy, they can see that situation through the lens of an experience that they've already dealt with successfully— providing them with hope and courage to survive and return with honor.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.