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## **Douglas A. Johnson: Policy on torture reveals U.S. ideals**

Douglas A. Johnson (Op-Ed)  
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The announcement by the Army that it will issue a new interrogation manual comes one year after journalists broke the story of abuses at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Officials say the new manual will explicitly outlaw forms of interrogation known to be used at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. This change is welcome, but falls short of what is needed to stop torture and abuse.

In the year since Abu Ghraib became a household name, newspapers and government reports have continued to disclose stories of inhumane treatment, torture and deaths. The revised manual will apply only to Army members, not all U.S. personnel, such as CIA interrogators. And it does not stop the illegal U.S. practice of sending detainees to countries that routinely use torture. If the United States is to spread freedom and democracy abroad, it must show the world it can do so while holding firm to our belief in the basic human right not to be tortured.

At the Center for Victims of Torture, we know what torture is and we know its impact. Nearly all the torture survivors we treat tell us that they would have said anything to stop the pain, regardless of its veracity. Torture is not a good way of getting the truth. Our clients are living testimony that torture will not be used only against the guilty. Indeed, once torture is invoked, it is increasingly relied on, and is used more often against the innocent than the guilty.

We are not the only ones to have learned these lessons. U.S. military interrogators stated clearly in the 1992 Army Field Manual on interrogations that torture is not an effective interrogation tool. Moreover, the manual says humane treatment yields better and more useful information.

We cannot win the battle against terror if we abandon our values and use the same tools of injustice and indignity that the terrorists do. We can win if we are smart and effective about the way we gather information.

We are told the new manual will tell military personnel how close to the line between legal and illegal behavior they can go without crossing it. What we need to know is whether the new manual embraces, as the 1992 manual clearly does, the deeply held American value of humane treatment. If it does, then President Bush should issue an executive order imposing these standards on all U.S. personnel everywhere in the world. Such an order should forbid sending detainees to other countries for interrogation, especially countries that practice torture. In addition, the president should establish an independent commission with the power to hold hearings and issue subpoenas so it can conduct a thorough investigation into all abuses.

After the Abu Ghraib abuses, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "Watch how we deal with this. Watch how America will do the right thing." The world is waiting. Let's show it America is ready to do the right thing.

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