

VJD

Session Three

Interviewee: Stephen Soldz

Location: Brookline, MA

Interviewer: Mary Marshall Clark

Date: May 24, 2012

Q: Okay. We're back on. We'll call it session three.

Soldz: So the question of research is part of the torture program. This is clearly one of the most secret parts of what's going on. We know very little about it. We have all kinds of hints, and I suspect that there has been much more than we know publicly. There certainly are hints that a number of detainees—when they've been released—have described systematic data collection. We got the al Qahtani log that Steven Miles points out. It's a log of what was done to him and his responses. It's not a log of any intelligence they obtained from him. It makes no sense except as a research record of what was being done. There is also a question of the CIA tapes and why they were actually taping. Are those the only tapes, or are there other tapes still extant somewhere?

God, I forget the name of the British detainee who went to the High Court decision that they had to release accounts of the British intelligence meeting, which included the systematic collection of data on sleep deprivation, for example, as another element suggesting there is a research program. So with the Physicians for Human Rights a couple of years ago, we wrote a report, "Experiments in Torture," which documented that within the CIA black sites there was what we considered to be a research program, which was in the form of systematic monitoring in its observation and monitoring of the enhanced interrogations, with details on exactly how much saline was in the water that was administered and how people responded. That the data from this program was used to modify the treatment, which we argued meets the official Department of

Health and Human Services definition of research, thereby adding sort of a secondary crime of illegal, unethical research to the torture itself, and to the illegal detention crimes that were already present there.

But there had been repeated reports of much more systematic research. One whole vein of research is on deception detection. Now [the] Jason Leopold and Jeff Kaye report—I believe it was both of them. I think it was both together but I'm not recalling for sure—that there had been a special-access program. These are like the most secret programs in the U.S. government, the kind which if I told you I'd have to kill you type of programs—on deception detection at Guantánamo—and that this program was started as early as November or December of 2001. As I think I mentioned elsewhere, Senator Inouye and his chief of staff psychologist, Patrick DeLeon, were briefed on the report in late November or early December of 2001. So there was a question about what was going on there. How that was planned so quickly. Guantánamo wasn't even open yet, and yet they had this whole program going.

So there's that. Now I've documented, in a chapter for a book called *The CIA on Campus*, that throughout the Bush years there was a program of federal interest in research on deception detection. It basically followed one person—a psychologist, Susan Brandon. Susan was at APA at the time of 9/11 as something like a research scientist. She helped to organize the APA's response to 9/11. I think she went through some private company into the White House. She was a deputy director for the social and behavioral sciences for the White House in, I think, 2003 to mid-2005—somewhere around there—and went to a couple of the Beltway bandit corporations. I think the Mitre Corporation, if I recall—

Q: Mitre, yes.

Soldz: —and the National Institute of Mental Health. Ended up with the Defense Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Center, and is currently director of research for all of President Obama's high-value detainee interrogation group. Everywhere she is, they come out with RFPs [request for proposals] on deception detection research. Now these are non-classified programs, but you have to remember that under MKULTRA—and other CIA and related things—the vast majority of the research was unclassified. What was classified was the purpose to which it was going to be put.

So you've got this thread of deception detection research—which was obviously a high priority, because one summer—I'm not one hundred percent sure I'm recalling this correctly. I think it was the summer of 2006—they managed to organize four conferences with senior researchers in the social and behavioral sciences within a couple of months. Now as one who's worked with a lot of federal agencies and things, they can't move that quickly unless it's really important and authorized at the top. Just the federal process of authorizing a conference is immense. I had a meeting with the Army in February, and they still haven't managed to reimburse me \$300 in expenses, through the bureaucracy. They're still at a loss as to how to get that \$300 authorized. They just asked me to fill out a multi-page form from Health and Human Services—which I refused to do—and then they decided that they don't need this form. So how they got four conferences in two months or so on this topic and got them accomplished and everything is quite striking.

So it suggests a strong, high-level interest. Another little piece to put together with this is in the Jawad case we did find in his records that they used a device called a voice-stress analyzer on him, which is a so-called lie detector which, I believe, the DOD inspector general concluded was useless and didn't work. But the Defense Department spent a lot of money, in various contexts, and evidently Guantánamo was one of them. There have also been reports of the measurement of cortisol at Guantánamo—cortisol being a stress hormone.

So what does it all mean? We don't know. But the fear, one fear I have—and this may be fanciful, but I wouldn't rule it out—is the problem with torture, supposedly, that people under torture will say anything. Torture works, most people agree, if you have rapid feedback. So it worked in Argentina, where you torture someone, you go out and you arrest the people they named that night, and then you torture them. Also, if you don't care too much if you get a few false-positives—which they didn't, because the false positives were generally from the progressive circles and the people you'd want to do in anyway. So one of the fears is that enhanced interrogations may actually work if you had a way of going through the sieve, and seeing what was true and what wasn't true. Perhaps they were trying to accomplish that goal, trying to have a way of taking all this information and figuring out who was lying and who wasn't.

So that's one possibility. They're still clearly at it. Just recently the FBI issued this RFP for research. Now it's all above-board; individual projects are supposed to go through university IRBs [institutional review boards], but there's still always the question with this stuff, which is

always the problem in working with intelligence agencies—you have no sense of what the big picture is that it goes into. We should have learned that from MKULTRA. This is where if organizations like the APA—and in this case, not just the APA. The American Psychological Society, which deals with researchers, and, probably, organizations in other fields. At a minimum, if you're really concerned about this, you ought to be having workshops for people thinking about participating in intelligence research about pitfalls to avoid when you're dealing with these types of research. Is it ethical? How do you try to figure out where it fits into the big picture? How do you try to make sure you're not doing something that you wouldn't want to do if you knew the whole context? So, at a minimum, there ought to be a concerted effort to try to sensitize people to these dangers. Whereas, it seems to be the other way. Somebody who participated in some of the CIA/APA conferences said that she saw researchers basically salivating over ideas. Really over money—the potential for grant money. Researchers chase money, and basically they were willing to give any crap that they thought was fundable. So you have the researchers trying to exploit the intelligence community, in terms of basically giving them warmed-over, second-class ideas, because they think it'll be fundable, and the intelligence community trying to use the researchers in pursuit of their larger goals.

You also have, in various of these RFPs and conferences proposals, etc., there has been talk over and over again about building bridges. I forget the exact language they use, but building bridges between researchers and the intelligence community. The term they use is basically embedding researchers in intelligence agencies and embedding intelligence folks in universities. This is clearly happening. The APA has played a major part there. They're very proud of placing fellows each year in intelligence agencies, in the National Security Agency, and in the

Counterintelligence Field Activity, which was an agency that got closed down by Congress due to scandal and became the Defense Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Center [DCHC]. They regularly change the name to respond to scandal. So there is this whole current suggesting that something may be fishy—may be going on here.

Oh. One other little piece of information. In Afghanistan, at Bagram Air Base, there have been reports of this so-called black jail, which was very abusive. This was under Obama. It was reported in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and the BBC. All of whom interviewed former inmates. I forget who in the *Atlantic*. A reporter in the *Atlantic* reported that this was run by—there was some question about—different reports have had it run either by JSOC—Joint Special Operations Command—or by DCHC. So it's not clear. They seem to both be involved in some way. But reports are that, inside, it was more like a laboratory, with scientists in lab coats making all kinds of recordings and things. I've also had a report from someone in the intelligence community of a similar site in Iraq. This person says that the research is all ethical research and not at all torture research, but there are some questions about whether any research on detainees is ethical. At a minimum, any such research ought to be very publicly discussed and disclosed, and ought to be outside the supervision of it. The HIG—High Value Detainee Interrogation Group—has said that they're going to conduct research on detainees. They've asked human rights groups on how to do it ethically. Some of the groups have declined; others may have contributed and said okay. There are reports of some conflicts among human rights groups around this—whether to respond to this or not. The HIG's director of research, Susan Brandon, was the White House psychologist/official who observed the PENS Task Force. She then served at CIFA and DCHC, among other agencies.

So it's not clear. It's just a co-opting of the human rights groups. Are they really concerned, to be above-board? It is, at least in minimum, very concerning. I know I talked in February, at my meeting with the Army—there was someone from—was it the National Academy of Sciences or the National Research Council? I'm not sure which one. We talked about Susan Brandon and the HIG research. She was talking about how wonderful it was, and I raised my concerns. I said, "If they want any credibility, it's got to be done publicly, through transparency, or we will never accept it." She said she would take the message back. That's all I know about that.

The point is that there are just so many little reports now. The fear is we're going to find out someday that there was a whole MKULTRA program going on, of some type. Maybe, maybe not. But there have been repeated reports of drugs being used at Guantánamo and possible research on drug use there—again, unverified. Many detainees report being given drugs against their will, so we don't know what the whole mess is there. A former guard confirmed extensive research went on there, including cortisol stress assays.

Q: So has there been, as far as you know, any pushback in terms of lawyers' groups looking at this particular issue?

Soldz: No. The sense I have is that because the evidence is very circumstantial, almost no one is interested. Basically, you need the smoking gun first. It's very hard. I find it very frustrating. I meet with human rights groups and I say this is very worrying, and I don't seem to get a response. I just feel like there are probably so many issues on their burner that, since they don't

know what to do it—I don't think they're actually totally uninterested. I just think that it's short of some good investigator getting—

Q: —taking this on.

Soldz: —and getting somewhere with it. I know investigators have taken it on and not gotten—the implication is that this is one of the biggest secrets in the U.S. government. So far, it seems to have been successfully hidden. But there have to be a lot of people who were involved, probably in the hundreds. So one would hope that someone will speak someday.

Q: Talk a little bit about Seligman and what you know about him.

Soldz: Marty Seligman. Well, let's put it this way. There's enough, again, suggestive information there. It was revealed in Jane Mayer's book, *The Dark Side*, that Seligman had lectured to the Navy SERE school—I forget where in California, one of the "San" places, San Diego, probably—in probably March of 2002, which raised questions about why the founder of learned helplessness was lecturing at the SERE school at just the time that the torture program was being developed. Oh, and that this was arranged by Kirk Hubbard at the CIA, one of the psychologists who was one of those involved in developing the enhanced interrogation program, who later went to work for Mitchell Jessen Associates. So when this was revealed, Scott Horton went further in his blog and basically said that Seligman had been involved in the development of the enhanced interrogation program. I quoted Horton's piece on my blog. Seligman denied this. He said he didn't know anything about it. He said—and this was very disingenuous, an interesting

comment—he said, "I was told that we couldn't discuss the relevance to interrogation because I didn't have the requisite security clearance." So, oh, you're told that it is relevant to interrogation but you can't discuss that. But it didn't ring any bells? Even if not then, maybe a little bit later, when you found out that the U.S. was torturing people, that the CIA was torturing people, it didn't ring any bells? Later, when you found out that the SERE program was the basis of the torture program, it didn't ring any bells? It never occurred to you that the fact that they couldn't discuss—? So it was very bizarre.

Also, to be frank, Seligman's statement clearly read like it was written by an attorney, and it looked like it was the same attorney who wrote the statement that Mitchell and Jessen gave in response to Katherine Eban's article, in which they abhorred torture. And also the statement that Joe Matarazzo gave when it was revealed that he was on the board of Mitchell Jessen Associates, where he "abhorred torture." And Seligman, too, abhors torture. However, none of them ever referred to any actions of the U.S. government. They never referred to the enhanced interrogation program. They never said what torture meant. They never expressed any disquiet with any actions of the U.S. government.

So Seligman, however, in his statement he let out something new that Mayer hadn't known, which was that Mitchell and Jessen had been at his SERE lecture. That was the first time we got contact between Mitchell and Jessen. I actually got this from Seligman, asking me to post it on my blog, which I did. Maybe it was my unconscious, but it wasn't intentional—I left out his last line, where he says how he hates torture. He wrote back and asked me to put that line in.

[Laughter]

Q: The torture/non-torture debate.

Soldz: It was interesting, because I certainly didn't do it deliberately.

Then it was revealed—some months later, Scott Shane in the *New York Times* revealed that there had been a meeting in January of 2002 at Seligman's home, in his den—as people tell me—beneath the larger than life-size portrait of Martin Seligman, aka God, or something like that. Everyone says he's an extraordinarily narcissistic and self-centered guy. Kirk Hubbard was there. James Mitchell was there. I've got the attendance list for that. I believe someone from Mossad was there. One or two people from Mossad. I forget who else. James Mitchell raved about Seligman's work to him, there, according to Scott Shane. Then Gregory Block, in his book, reports a third meeting between Seligman and Mitchell, I believe in the spring of 2003. So the very fact that each of these meetings was dragged out of Seligman one at a time, also, to my mind, suggests that he has something to hide. Otherwise, if you really were shocked that you had been a meeting with Mitchell and Jessen, why wouldn't you say? Why wouldn't you mention the other ones and get it all out?

There are reports—my sources tell me that Seligman has a long-time CIA connection that isn't publicly verified, but people with deep intelligence connections tell me that. The same sources tell me that their intelligence connections tell them that the intelligence agencies control the APA, as well, and have for a long time. Again, third-hand. I can't do anything with it.

Another thing—Seligman was originally famous for this learned helplessness program, this concept of learned helplessness, that these dogs were given shocks and unable to escape, would become helpless, and essentially manic-depressive. It was used as a model for depression. When their harnesses were released and they were able to escape, they no longer tried. Now it has become clear that this is the basis of the enhanced interrogation program. We suspected it, initially, but when the torture memos came out, they had pages and pages, and explicitly state that the CIA—"You have told us that the program is based on the concept of learned helplessness." Also of interest here—in the CIA IG report, it also refers to how the CIA got independent experts in psychopathology to say that the enhanced interrogation techniques are not harmful, which makes you wonder if either Seligman or Matarazzo may be referred to here. Two psychologists reputed to have close CIA connections.

So then two other pieces here—the BSCT instructions in 2006 and 2008 have required competencies for the BSCTs. One of them is a competency in learned helplessness. This is kind of odd, because it's on a list of things like—cognition and emotion is one competency. Another is social psychology or something, and the third is learned helplessness. It's as if learned helplessness is one of the major areas of psychology. It also suggests that learned helplessness was being used as the basis of the DOD torture program, and the BSCTs were expected to help in this.

Then we come to another question that has been raised indirectly. The Army has this Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program—CSF—which is a \$140 million program in which all soldiers are supposed to be trained in increased resilience skills, based on positive psychology.

Now Marty Seligman's group at the University of Pennsylvania was given a \$31 million no-bid contract to develop this. The statement justifying a no-bid contract, by Brigadier General—I believe it is, [U.S. Army Brigadier General] Rhonda Cornum, states that the Penn Resiliency Program [PRP] is a well-validated program, which is the only one based on trainer-trainers. There's just nothing else the military can use. Now the research evidence for the PRP program—which is an interesting program. I was interested in it when I saw the first research. But it turns out that the meta-analysis, which combines all the studies, basically raises serious questions about whether it works. The meta-analysis says that it's weak. It's not clear that it works for anyone but those already at high risk for psycho-pathology. In other words, not as a general prevention technique, like the Army is using it. The long-term outcomes are not good, despite the fact that in an early study there had been some nice outcomes. But, evidently, these studies haven't been replicated, so it's not at all clear. This was mainly done with middle school students. So the relevance of a program mainly done with middle school students to soldiers—it's just not at all clear to anybody except for Rhonda Cornum. The rationale for a no-bid contract was two-page, little handwritten things—actually, I'm not sure if it was handwritten. That's my recollection, but that may not be right. But for \$31 million to be given out as a no-bid contract! There were two brief pages of documentation of claims. There is no real documentation. You would think you would need to submit much more documentation under Army/Pentagon rules.

So the suggestion has been made, implicitly by Mark Benjamin, that this might have been payback for help with the enhanced interrogation program. At this point it is unproven, but I would say that there is enough suggestive evidence and concerning evidence that Seligman was involved with the CIA torture program. As I say, every bit had to be dragged out of him, rather

than him coming forward. He expressed concern about the CIA's program, but it took two years of public criticism before he finally discovered that he had some concerns about what the CIA did. I wouldn't be surprised if Mitchell doesn't like the CIA program anymore.

Now one other striking feature of this is when the Seligman issue first came up, after Jane Mayer's book, and Scott Horton and I published on our blogs, within under twenty-four hours the APA issued a press release with a categorical denial that Seligman had anything to do with the torture program. They cited no evidence other than, "Seligman has told us he wasn't involved, so he couldn't have been." It was just a classic—what do you think? Do you think if he was, he's going to tell you? [Laughs] Anyhow, it suggests that the APA was covering something up. Why would they rush to something that they couldn't possibly know, because if he was involved he wouldn't tell you, and if he wasn't involved, he would say he wasn't. Of which they had no evidence. Instead of calling for these issues to be investigated, they categorically denied them when there was no way they could possibly know they were false. They could possibly know they were true. There are a number of reports that I've received from senior psychologists—close to APA leadership—that APA leadership was not at all surprised when people had CIA connections. When Joe Matarazzo's CIA connections were discussed in front of Ray Fowler, the CEO, he didn't blink an eye, raise a question, or anything. This suggests that this was well-known within the CIA, that some of these top people within APA—that some of these top people were CIA-connected.

One piece, which I can only say—which I can't go into this, at least not—

Q: Do you want me to turn it off?

Soldz: Either that, or you can put it in for long-term. It's up to you. But I can't—

Q: Okay. What I'm going to do in this case—I just want to say it on the recording—because we are vulnerable to subpoena—what I'm going to do, actually, is make a copy of this whole thing, send it to you before we have it transcribed, then you can decide if you want it transcribed. If you don't want it transcribed, then I'll take it out.

Soldz: Leave it off for now. I guess turn it off.

[INTERRUPTION]

I'm not sure there's much more to tell. Seligman has a rather odd role as the founder of positive psychology, since, as he would probably admit, he's a pretty unpleasant character. He doesn't seem very positive. Whatever.

Q: Thank you.

I wanted to ask you—unless you want to say something else on the research front—did I read in that same article that you or someone was calling for health professionals to have a TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission]?

Soldz: Yes. I've been calling for that for years.

Q: Can you talk about that? It's so interesting to me, as an oral historian—the use of narrative.

Soldz: We've been trying for years—accountability. Trudy Bond has filed ethics complaints. Steven Reisner filed one with the State Licensing Board, with the APA. Nothing has gotten anywhere. It's pretty clear now that that avenue is dead, and we know that the government is not going to do anything. If the architects of the torture program have gotten off scot-free, everyone else is going to, as well. The Durham investigation is now closed. We had some hopes for that.

[INTERRUPTION]

So I've had this idea that, at a minimum, if we could get enough of the profession and human rights groups to at least get what's in the public record—get one account in the public record—it would at least be something. Besides which, the other part of it is that we desperately need an independent investigation of the APA. The APA has been complicit in torture, we believe. You can't just go on—and the same people are there. So the profession desperately needs some mechanism to get fresh air, and come to terms with what's been done. Obviously, what happened after MKULTRA didn't protect us from future CIA collusion. If we don't do something, we'll repeat it next time. In fact, it's probably still going on.

So this TRC idea I have—I can't say I can get a lot of enthusiasm for it. I did lobby the people—was it the Constitution Foundation? Is that what it is? Century [Foundation]? There's a group

having hearings on the interrogation program in D.C. They've got a bi-partisan panel and stuff, investigating. I forget—in New York it's got funding for this. I can't remember the name of—

Q: I'll figure it out.

Soldz: What?

Q: I'll try to figure it out.

Soldz: I know Mort [Morton H.] Halperin of OSI [Open Society Institute] is someone involved. I did lobby them to include the psychologists. Now I've had contact with their investigator, and I spoke to her for a few hours and gave her a bunch of documents. But, on the other hand, their report is going to be about one hundred eighty pages, with appendices, for everything. So how much it's going to say about the psychologists is questionable. But, I tried, at least, to get it not ignored. I know I proposed it. There was a meeting at OSI of a group, mainly physicians, sponsored by their IMAP, Institute for Medicine as a Profession, that Len Rubenstein helped organize, to which I was invited once. I wasn't invited back. Steven Reisner has been back. I think they really didn't want the psychologists there. It was embarrassing. I was the only person they invited the first time for who they wouldn't pay my travel costs. I'm in this huge OSI building, obviously money running around, and they wouldn't pay my sixty bucks for my bus fare—it was really insulting. I think that might have been why I wasn't invited back. Maybe they felt like one psychologist was enough. That two would pollute their air. I don't know.

But anyway, Steven's been going. Nothing's going to happen with the Truth Commission idea. Len didn't like it. He thought we couldn't get enough press, enough attention for it. I just think it's better than nothing. I just don't have great hopes for other mechanisms. I still support that idea, but unless we can get some more major support from somebody, it's not going to happen. So I don't know. I am just terrified that the professions in the country—just like the country's basically going to go on and pretend this didn't happen, the profession even more so. And even if someday we get a certain level of reckoning, maybe thirty years down the road we get some apology—some president apologizes, and we get a little congressional report—it won't cover the psychologists in any great detail. One reason it won't is because of Senator Inouye—because he was instrumental in all of this—behind the BSCT program. He's a Democrat, so they'll protect him. We've been told by congressional sources that they understand about Inouye, but they're not going to undercut one of their senior people. It's a real problem. And DeLeon, who was central there. Since the BSCTs were largely funded out of Inouye's office, and he also had the special supervisory role on intelligence budgets at crucial times, I don't have great faith that we'll be able to get through that in Congress. It's a problem.

So I don't know. Most of the profession—even those who know something bad happened, it's just not a priority.

Q: I don't want to wear you out too much. You tell me when you're done.

Soldz: Don't you have any other questions or areas?

Q: I just wondered if you could talk a little bit about Bradley Manning, just to get that on the record.

Soldz: Okay. Well, our involvement is peripheral. I suspect we may have had a bit of a role. One of my regrets, under the can't-do-everything—I really wished a psychologist would focus more attention on exposing psychological torture, and countering the public misunderstandings of it, and trying to get a sense of how awful this is. But I've been so involved in the sort of tactical issues around the U.S. torture program; I just have not gotten there. I've tried to get some human rights groups involved. It's just not anyone's priority. I'm trying to get Physicians for Human Rights to focus more attention in that realm.

So when the Manning case came, in Psychologists for Social Responsibility there's a lot of sympathy for Manning and WikiLeaks. As I said, I had some peripheral involvement in WikiLeaks in the early days. Maybe I should get that in here.

Q: Yes, please do.

Soldz: So Julian Assange sent me the Guantánamo Standard Operating Procedures, when they were just being released, I guess. I don't know if it was the day before or if they'd been released yet or not. This was very early. It was the first big coup in WikiLeaks. He was frustrated at how they didn't get that much response. He was trying various things to try to get the press to pay attention, so for a bit he would have groups of reporters—and I was included in several of these—who would be given advance notice of two weeks or so of a certain document to give

people time to do background research. He reasoned that one of the reasons if something gets leaked it doesn't get much reporting is everyone's afraid that someone else will scoop it. They'll put time into doing the background work, and someone else will publish first, and then their story won't get published, so he figured if everyone gets it at the same time, then at least no one is scooping anyone. So he tried that, with limited success. There was a Fallujah document—I don't remember the details—that confirmed many of our fears about what had gone on. It was an Army report on Fallujah. I know I wrote about that because I'd followed Fallujah very intensively. But he also got a hold of the counterinsurgency manuals for the Special Forces, and that got no reporting. I didn't have the time. It was several hundred pages and it was going to take a lot of work to really understand it because you can't just read it. You have to look at other stuff, figure out what's new, to learn how to understand the military terminology—it takes a lot of work to understand military language. To make sure you are understanding a document correctly is a major undertaking.

So at one point he was thinking of starting a WikiLeaks journal. He asked me if I would edit it. I said, "I can't. I'm not a good editor. I just don't enjoy that kind of work. I'm not a fast reader; I'm a slow reader." I said I would be on the editorial board, but I couldn't be the editor. So that was one thing he was trying. The thing that's interesting, historically, what I saw from the inside is he was trying many different mechanisms to get attention for the documents WikiLeaks was releasing, and they weren't working. So at least in the early days he wasn't making himself the center of it. It wasn't about getting attention for him. I think he wandered into that, and I think it was very damaging in some ways, making him the story. But he didn't start out there. I saw no

sign in the early days that it was about ego. So that's the part that's worth getting on the record there.

I feel bad. I was intending on writing an article on how to use the WikiLeaks documents. As he pointed out, people write dozens of articles on the same stupid thing—criticizing Obama's escalation in Afghanistan. Everyone will write the same basic article. I know a number of my colleagues do this, and I find it very frustrating—with nothing new to say but they each want to get published. Here is this trove of material that, if you spent a little time working on it, you could have something totally original to say, and important, because no one else was writing about and analyzing it. Because these were the secrets—like the counterinsurgency manuals. No one has ever gone over them that I've seen. That's just what I wanted to say there.

So, Bradley Manning. Some were sympathetic to him. Some supported him. But we were all aghast at the treatment, when he was subjected to solitary and nakedness for two weeks and solitary for about six months. Three of us in Psychologists for Social Responsibility decided to write a statement—which became two because one of the group wanted to do what we thought would be a six-month academic study of the literature. We were, “No,” we needed a statement out this weekend, which is a very different style. So, he backed out. Trudy Bond and I wrote explicitly taking our position as psychologists on the use of solitary confinement, and how disturbing that was. But we also had a unique—at that point—tactical angle, which is that there had been open letters and things, and petitions, but they'd all been aimed at the Quantico commander. We wrote the first one that was aimed at Secretary of Defense Gates. Again, we were saying, “Secretary Gates, you're responsible.” I think we were the first ones to really “up”

it, to get it beyond Quantico. I said, "I won't write it to the Quantico guy," because, obviously, he's not the one who's making decisions here. And if he is, there's a gross failure of command.

So I think that may have been a slight factor in challenging his conditions of confinement. In changing some of the focus, it got a fair amount of press attention. Then a second one, especially related to the nakedness—when that came out a couple months later—which we also then upped it by CCing the president. We wrote a second one to Gates, CCing the president. So it may have played some role. I have to say, there were lots of other people involved at that point. It was right around the time—I forget that senior State Department official [P.J. Crowley] talking at MIT, said how stupid the policy was, and allowed it to go public, when asked he said, "Is this all on the record?" He thought a moment and said yes. In other words, he made the conscious decision to sacrifice his career.

So there were a lot of people, and this is becoming a big international issue. Reporters were starting to ask White House—I think we played a little role. So David Coombs, Manning's attorney, contacted me a few months ago, and he wanted to—he's intending to file a motion, originally supposed to have been filed in May, claiming that PFC [Private First Class] Manning was subjected to illegal pretrial punishment and, therefore, the charges should be dropped. This solitary confinement was unjustified. It was, therefore, illegal pretrial punishment. He originally asked if I would write a declaration to that effect, and I explored with him would he rather come from me as an individual, or Psychologists for Social Responsibility? We agreed upon the latter—which was slightly complicated in PsySR because things are all supposed to be approved by the steering committee, which just doesn't work when you're dealing with things like

attorneys. Because every time I've ever done it with attorneys, we end up coming up with the final draft at the final hour. So, basically, I need to get pre-approval—which, fortunately, people gave me. But I insist on that. I can't play it the other way—I can't deal with freaking out about are we going to make a deadline. I can't stand that.

So we wrote a statement, meeting his deadline of May 1, but, unfortunately, it seems to have been delayed until August. So it's sitting there. Exactly how it will come out still needs to be figured.

Q: Fascinating.

Soldz: Now one of our colleagues wants to use the information in it because she says it's the best statement on the harm of solitary confinement—she's very active in the anti-solitary confinement campaign in California. The problem is that the statement's not public. Coombs says if we do another version—but we haven't had the energy yet to do another version. Trudy and I wrote this. It's sitting there. It's one of many things that should get done—to make another version that takes the information, but puts it out of the Manning context, so that the—

Q: For the general public, can you just boil down, in a safe paragraph, what it does do? That extensive kind of isolation?

Soldz: Well, isolation can be quite horrific. We're social animals. We live in a context of people, of relationships, and being isolated from that quickly causes psychological pain and frequently

disorganization. Frequently leading to the level of psychopathology, and in some cases—and not an insignificant number of cases—serious psychopathology. This can happen rapidly, within a matter of days. Some researchers—Craig Haney, who's one of the lead researchers on this, argues that there's not a single case in the literature where people who have been subjected to solitary for two weeks have not suffered serious psychological suffering from it. People obviously differ. Some are more resilient than others, so many recover to some degree, or to a fair degree. Some never recover. Then in some cases—in the Manning case—you've got the added thing of the forced nakedness for two weeks, which was designed to humiliate. You had the sensory deprivation, so not only isolation but he was denied books, and other ways of distracting himself—which is quite common, that this is combined, essentially, with forms of sensory deprivation.

Sensory deprivation was developed by the CIA as part of the MKULTRA program, and shown to rapidly lead to psychological disorganization. People lose their bearings. They start hallucinating in many cases. They become intensely anxious. They can start talking to themselves. One of the very sad things is that in prisons it's often used with mentally-ill prisoners because they can't handle them. But it exacerbates the mental illness. Therefore, they can't be released because they're more disturbed than you began with.

In the Bradley Manning case—well, it's hard to tell what the claims were. There were reports in the press that he was suicidal, but the argument we make is that this is the last thing you'd want to do to someone who's suicidal—to put them in isolation. If you want to get someone to commit suicide, you might do it. But it's not going to help them to recover from being suicidal, to be

isolated. It's only going to exacerbate depression and anxiety, and increase the chances of suicide, increase suicidal symptoms.


So there's this perverse logic. If you want to lock someone up forever you put them in isolation, drive them crazy, and then you've got an excuse that they're behaving so erratically that they can't be released. It made no sense. You also have the question of—he was interviewed many times, I think, by military psychiatrists, during that time. Now supposedly they did not go along with saying that he was suicidal and needed to be in isolation. On the other hand, they didn't report this as abuse either. There were questions about whether this was ethical malpractice, because guidelines and military regulations require abuse to be reported—for doctors to report abuse. I believe there was a psychologist who was involved in helping keep him in isolation.

So that's the basic argument. We've got extensive research and the vast majority—there are a few exceptions of research claims that solitary is harmful. That research finding the opposite seems to be flawed. Namely, that research that shows that solitary was not harmful—the people in it had already been subjected to severe solitary before the study started.

Q: They were so far down they couldn't go any lower.

Soldz: Possibly, but we don't know. You can't rule that out.

Q: Thank you. Thank you for everything.



Soldz: Sure.

[END OF SESSION]