



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS  
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*

## **ACP Supports Proposed Amendments to the Department of Defense Authorization Bill**

September 21, 2005

Dear Senator McCain,

I am writing on behalf of the 119,000 members of the American College of Physicians (ACP), the nation's largest medical specialty society, to express our support for the amendments you offered to the Department of Defense Authorization Bill on July 25, 2005. The College concurs with the importance of establishing and upholding clear policies to prevent the inhumane treatment of prisoners and detainees held by the United States. Our [\*Ethics Manual, Fifth Edition\*](#) and position paper "[The Role of the Physician and the Medical Profession in the Prevention of International Torture and in the Treatment of Its Survivors](#)" require physicians to speak out against torture, condemn interrogation techniques that inflict physical or psychological harm as a means of obtaining information, and endorse the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

The available evidence suggests that the vast majority of those serving in the United States military overseas are committed to the humane treatment of prisoners and detainees. Medical ethics place an even greater responsibility on military physicians to provide those held in U.S. custody with the best possible medical care and to speak out against abuse. However, our military men and women rely on receiving adequate training on what actions are permissible or impermissible under U.S. law and treaty obligations. Abuses can occur in an environment of confusion over applicable policy and law on humane treatment of prisoners and detainees.

The amendments you propose address our specific concerns in that they provide a general prohibition of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of persons under custody or control of the U.S. Government and they restrict interrogation of prisoners and detainees to techniques authorized in the section on Intelligence Interrogation in the U.S. Army Field Manual. Codifying Department of Defense guidance on the humane treatment of prisoners into law will make future abuses less likely by eliminating confusion over relevant statutes, policies or directives. The amendments clearly affirm the United States' historic commitment to human rights and to the humane treatment of those held under U.S. control and they are consistent with both the letter and spirit of the laws and treaties of the United States and the policies of the ACP. For these reasons, the ACP is strongly supportive of the amendments.

Sincerely,

C. Anderson Hedberg, MD, FACP  
President