# Lessons of Abu Ghraib: Understanding and Preventing Prisoner Abuse in Military Operations

*by Paul T. Bartone*

## Overview

The abuse of prisoners by U.S. Soldiers at Abu Ghraib had broad strategic consequences, leading many people around the world to question the legitimacy of U.S. goals and activities in Iraq. This paper draws on extensive unclassified reports from multiple investigations that followed Abu Ghraib, and applies key psychological as well as social-situational perspectives to develop a better grasp of the causative factors. From a psychological standpoint, most young adults are powerfully inclined to behave in accord with the social conventions and pressures around them. Especially in ambiguous circumstances, then, it is important that standards of behavior be clear and explicit throughout all phases of an operation and that leaders at all levels represent and reinforce those standards.

In April 2004, the world was shocked to see a series of photographs of U.S. military personnel abusing detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison facility in Iraq. Pictures showed prisoners hooded and connected to electrical wires, tied to leashes, stacked naked on the floor, and engaging in simulated sex acts. Some analysts believe that this event marked a turning point in the war, after which Iraqi and world opinion shifted substantially against the United States.[1] The revelations of prisoner abuse were followed by multiple investigations and reports, news stories, and criminal prosecutions. We need to understand how such moral and ethical failures can occur in order to prevent them from recurring. Such an understanding requires careful consideration of multiple factors, including individual psychological, social, and organizational ones. Once recognized and understood, these various factors can be addressed through training, leadership, and policies to prevent similar breakdowns in the future.

Ordinarily, military medical personnel in operational settings are focused on safeguarding the health and welfare of friendly forces, while also advising leaders on a range of health and morale issues that can affect troops. Behavioral scientists pay attention to such issues as preventing or reducing stress-related problems during and after deployments, maintaining unit morale and effectiveness, and assessing the impact of leader actions and policies on troop adjustment and performance. In wartime or conflict situations, the responsibility of military health care personnel to protect human physical and mental health also extends to enemy wounded, prisoners, retained personnel, detainees, and civilians. This is a professional, legal, and moral obligation that all U.S. military medical personnel accept when they enter service.[2]

Following the revelation of abuses at Abu Ghraib, there were allegations that some U.S. military medical personnel may have been complicit in prisoner abuse.[3] An official report by Major General George Fay called for further investigation on this issue, finding that medical records for detainees were not properly maintained and that some medical personnel failed to report abuses.[4] Partly in response to reports of abuses at Abu Ghraib, the American Psychological Association recently reaffirmed its stance against torture by passing a resolution that states psychologists will not participate in or condone "cruel, inhuman, or degrading" treatment of prisoners.[5]

As experts in human behavior, military behavioral scientists have a responsibility to apply their knowledge and expertise toward understanding and preventing ethical breakdowns and misconduct of the type seen at Abu Ghraib, where in 2003–2004 Iraqi prisoners suffered a range of abuses at the hands of their U.S. guards in addition to those documented by the infamous photographs. The importance of understanding and preventing prisoner abuse and related moral breakdowns is underscored by additional documented cases of prisoner abuse at U.S. facilities in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,[6] as well as by British soldiers in Iraq.[7] And while not the same as abuse of living persons, the desecration of human remains by German soldiers in Afghanistan in 2006 is another disturbing example of the human potential for cruel acts.[8] By carefully examining the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse case from a current social-psychological perspective, we

can gain a better understanding of how and why such behaviors occur, and also begin to specify what leaders and organizations can do to prevent such incidents in the future.

The following assessment draws upon public, unclassified, and declassified reports of official investigations as to what occurred and brings to bear recent research and theory from the domains of social and personality psychology. In particular, two investigations are noteworthy for their comprehensiveness, detail, and objectivity, and so serve as the primary resources for this analysis. The first of these was the investigation led by Major General Anthony Taguba, which extended from January through June 2004, and resulted in a 53-page report with 106 annexes.[9] The second, led by Major General Fay, was conducted from March through August of 2004, interviewed over 170 people, collected and analyzed over 9,000 documents, and generated a 143-page report.[10] Additional information and cross-validation of findings come primarily from reports of the investigations headed by James Schlesinger and Lieutenant General Anthony Jones.[11]

## Revelations of Prisoner Abuse

In January 2004, a U.S. Army military police (MP) sergeant working at Abu Ghraib reported abuse of prisoners to a Criminal Investigation Division (CID) investigator on the scene. The sergeant provided a note detailing his allegations and a compact disc containing digital photographs of prisoner abuse. This triggered the Taguba investigation, which produced a report originally classified secret that later was released to the media. The prisoner abuse story was first reported by the CBS news show *60 Minutes* in April 2004. Since then, hundreds of media accounts and several books have been published on the subject. In addition to the Taguba investigation, there have been 11 other major official U.S. Government investigations into prisoner abuse and alleged use of torture and coercive interrogation techniques at Abu Ghraib and other locations, including the U.S. prison facility at Guantanamo, Cuba. To date, 11 enlisted Soldiers have been formally tried and convicted, and several officers and leaders were relieved and/or demoted or received career-damaging reprimands.

## Broader Social-cultural Context

Following the early media reports and release of hundreds of photos and videos showing abuse, a public debate ensued as to whether this was a case of a few individuals behaving badly, or an expression of a more widespread problem. Senior administration officials tended to describe it as an isolated case. For example, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld characterized the Abu Ghraib abuses as the actions of "a few American service members."[12] Other accounts suggested the incidents were symptomatic of a broader corruption in the culture of

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the American military and Department of Defense (DOD).[13] The "Final Report of the Independent Panel to Review DoD Detention Operations" (also known as the Schlesinger report) confirmed that incidents of abuse at Abu Ghraib indeed were not isolated cases and that there were more documented cases of detainee abuse in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo.[14]

Despite some widespread, negative, systemic influences, the vast majority of American Servicemembers did not, and would not, participate in or condone abusive behaviors. Like most of the world, they were shocked and dismayed when the abuse of prisoners came to light. Cartoonist Mike Keefe captured this sentiment well shortly after the scandal broke. Keefe portrays the American Soldier carrying a large burden of stress, including extended combat tours, an unclear mission, insufficient forces and resources, and the additional pressure of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. For most Soldiers, the prison scandal was a significant added stressor, in that it was a shameful violation of the American democratic and humanitarian ideals they believed they were fighting for.[15]
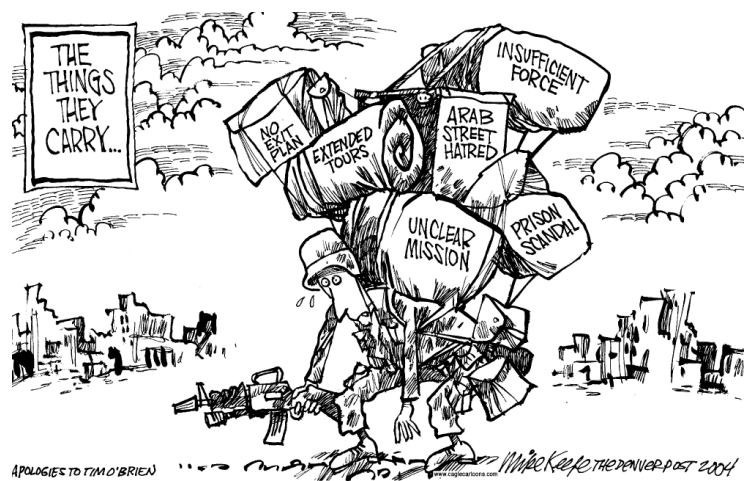


*By Mike Keefe,* The Denver Post *(used with permission)*

## Contributing Factors

Some commentaries on the Abu Ghraib abuses have put nearly exclusive importance on situational factors, such as those found in Philip Zimbardo's 1971 Stanford prison experiment, in which 24 male undergraduates were recruited to play the roles of guards and prisoners. Some guards quickly engaged in sadistic behavior, and most prisoners accepted humiliation. The intensity with which students adopted their assigned roles surprised the experimenters and led Zimbardo to stop the experiment before it was completed. Zimbardo attributed the extreme behaviors of the students to the force of the situation in which they were placed, rather than individual deviance.[16] Others have argued that Zimbardo underestimated the ability of individuals to alter situations and that persons are ultimately responsible for their own actions.[17] Although situational and contextual factors assuredly played a role, it is important also to take into account the influence of individual/personality factors on human behavior to fully under-

stand what happened at Abu Ghraib. It is also essential not to be satisfied with superficial or glib explanations regarding social influences, but to look more closely at the contextual factors bearing upon Abu Ghraib. Based on the detailed evidence contained in the Taguba and Fay reports, several conclusions can be drawn regarding what were the salient situational and individual factors.

## Situational Factors

*Ambiguity in the Chain of Command.* The most notable example of ambiguity described in the Taguba report was the ongoing conflict between the commanders of the 800th MP Brigade (Brigadier General Janis Karpinski) and the 205th Military Intelligence (MI) Brigade (Colonel Thomas Pappas). Soldiers at the Abu Ghraib facility were unclear about who was in charge. Taguba references a fragmentation order dated November 19, 2003, placing the commander of the 205th MI Brigade in tactical control of all units at Abu Ghraib, including the MPs.[18] The commander of the MPs took a different view, believing that she had command authority over the 800th MP Brigade, and she outranked the MI brigade commander. Nevertheless, the MI brigade commander clearly had command authority and responsibility for his own brigade, and this is the organization that had primary responsibility for conducting interrogations. But as the Taguba investigation revealed, both MP and MI personnel in the Abu Ghraib facility were unclear about who was really in charge. Similar ambiguities existed throughout the chain of command. The Schlesinger report points to the same problem, describing the leadership structure as "a series of tangled command relationships."[19] This problem was exacerbated by the presence of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) teams who were, according to Schlesinger, "allowed to operate under different rules."[20] The activities of CIA teams contributed to not only reduced accountability and difficulty in tracking prisoners, but also increased confusion about who was in charge of prison and interrogation operations.

*Laissez-faire Leadership.* Leaders were mostly not visible or actively involved in mission activities and were not communicating standards, policies, and plans to Soldiers. For example, several Soldiers at Abu Ghraib, including the sergeant who first reported the abuses, have testified that the general officer in charge of the prison was rarely seen there.[21] The Taguba report indicates that key leaders, including the MP battalion commander and the MP brigade commander, "had very little contact" with Soldiers under their command at the Abu Ghraib facility.[22] This lack of leader involvement and visibility could have conveyed tacit approval of prisoner abuse. Numerous studies in the social and organizational psychology literature have documented the destructive effects of laissez-faire leadership on individuals and organizations.[23]

*Lack of Training.* The Taguba report indicates there was a lack of training and preparation throughout the 800th MP Brigade, particularly with respect to prisoner-handling procedures and techniques, including provisions of the Geneva Conventions. The poor training was at least in part related to the hasty manner in which this Reserve unit was mobilized and deployed to Iraq: "Soldiers were poorly prepared and untrained to conduct I/R [internment/resettlement] operations prior to deployment, at the mobilization site, upon arrival in theater, and throughout their mission."[24] The report also faults multiple leaders for failing to conduct needed training after deployment.[25]

*Poor Discipline.* Clear policies regarding wearing of the uniform and standards of behavior (including saluting) were not established or enforced.[26] The weak discipline was evident in multiple areas, including logs and journals. According to the Taguba report, "Operational journals at the various compounds and the 320th Battalion TOC [Tactical Operations Center] contained numerous unprofessional entries and flippant comments, which highlighted the lack of discipline within the unit. There was no indication that the journals were ever reviewed by anyone in their chain of command." This lack of discipline and attention to standards was also apparent in the frequent disregard of prisoner accountability checks and reporting.[27]

*Psychological Stressors.* Key leaders did not recognize or appreciate psychological stressors associated with the Operation *Iraqi Freedom* mission. The Taguba report found that "difference in culture, soldiers' quality of life, and the real presence of mortal danger over an extended time period, and the failure of commanders to recognize these pressures contributed to the perversive atmosphere that existed at Abu Ghraib . . . and throughout the 800th MP Brigade."[28] So Taguba points both to the direct impact of psychological stressors on Soldiers and the secondary effect from the failure of leaders to recognize and address these psychological stressors in any way. Previous research into psychological stressors during military operations has identified five key factors: ambiguity, isolation, powerlessness, boredom, and danger.[29] It appears all of these factors were at work for the Soldiers based at Abu Ghraib.

*Ambiguity*, in this case, includes uncertainty about who is the enemy and who is a friend. The presence of civilian contractors throughout the prison in various forms of dress added to this uncertainty.[30]

The sense of *isolation* was apparently extreme for those working at Abu Ghraib. According to the Fay report, there was "a general feeling by both MI and MP personnel that Abu Ghraib was the forgotten outpost, receiving little support from the Army."[31]

The feeling of *powerlessness* is somewhat paradoxical here. U.S. Soldiers working at Abu Ghraib had considerable control over prisoner treatment and conditions. But in the larger environment, they in fact had very little influence. For example, as identified in multiple investigations, the Abu Ghraib facility was severely under-resourced in personnel and equipment, and requests for additional support were routinely denied or ignored. Combat and operational units had priority for logistical support.[32] Also, several investigations have pointed to

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the presence of interrogators from other government agencies (OGAs), notably the CIA, as contributing to prisoner abuse.[33] These OGA individuals operated "under different practices and procedures which were absent any DoD visibility, control or oversight."[34] This not only added to the confusion about what were acceptable interrogation practices, but also likely contributed to a generalized sense of powerlessness for Soldiers working at Abu Ghraib.

This feeling of powerlessness was further exacerbated by a sense of *danger*, with insurgent sniper and mortar fire regularly claiming victims. Frustration related to the generalized sense of powerlessness may have increased the potential for abuse in the one area where power could be exerted—over the prisoners.

*Boredom* includes the conventional meaning of a dull and repetitive daily existence, which was certainly a factor, but extends also to deeper questions about the importance or significance of the mission and one's role in it. Over a period of time, if Soldiers lose the conviction that their daily work is making an important contribution to a larger, positive mission, they can become alienated and detached from their surroundings, with a diminished sense of commitment to the unit and mission. This feeling of alienation or existential boredom also sets the stage for abuse, since the alienated person no longer cares much about basic values or consequences. Indeed, to the deeply alienated person, very little seems to matter.[35]

*Danger* encompasses the real physical dangers and threats often present in the deployed environment, threats that can result in serious illness, injury, or death. In Iraq, this includes sniper fire, suicide bombers, and improvised explosive devices, as well as the risk of accidents, disease, and exposure to toxic substances. This source of stress can be direct, representing threats to oneself, or indirect, representing threats to one's comrades. Exposure to severely injured or dead people also can be a severe stressor, adding to a sense of danger.

In addition to these five, another factor is *workload*, or operations tempo stress, reflecting long work hours, frequent and longer deployment cycles, and inadequate staffing that can result from limited resources and/or failure to replace individual losses over the course of a deployment. The Taguba report indicates that U.S. forces at the Abu Ghraib facility were "undermanned and under resourced" and that as a Reserve Component unit, the 800th MP Brigade had no system for replacing individuals who were lost for reasons such as medical problems or having completed the required term of Active duty service.[36]

The Schlesinger report also identifies the destructive effects of repeated deployments: "The Joint Staff failed to recognize the implications of the deteriorating manning levels in the 800th MP Brigade; the absence of combat equipment among detention elements of MP units operating in a combat zone, and the indications of deteriorating mission performance among military intelligence interrogators owing to the stress of repeated combat deployments."[37] Furthermore, the facility was generally overcrowded with prisoners for a number of reasons,

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including inefficient procedures for releasing prisoners determined to not present a threat.[38]

***Ambiguous Rules of Engagement, Standards of Conduct, Laws, Regulations, and Orders.*** For example, Soldiers were not clearly informed in many cases as to whether the Geneva Conventions applied. As became apparent in later investigations and reports, the administration defined prisoners as "unlawful enemy combatants," and there was a debate within the administration regarding whether the rules of the Geneva Conventions should apply.[39] Related to this was the question of what methods were permissible to use in interrogations. The Schlesinger report points to confused and unclear policies (even up to the Office of the Secretary of Defense) regarding what interrogation practices were authorized. For example, it is now known that in November 2002, the Secretary of Defense approved a list of previously outlawed harsh interrogation techniques for use at Guantanamo, in an action memorandum written by DOD General Counsel William J. Wright II.[40] Such interrogation techniques were used at Guantanamo and in other locations as well, including Abu Ghraib.[41] Many Soldiers and leaders were left confused as to what rules or standards should be applied. The Schlesinger report advises that well-documented policies and procedures are "imperative" in this area.[42]

***Pressure from Higher Command Levels.*** Several official investigative reports address this issue. For example, "With lives at stake, senior leaders expressed, forcibly at times, their needs for better intelligence. A number of visits by high-level officials to Abu Ghraib undoubtedly contributed to this perceived pressure."[43] In a PBS *Frontline* interview, Brigadier General Karpinski claimed that Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez in Iraq was on daily video teleconference calls with the Secretary of Defense in which Sanchez was routinely called to task for not having obtained more "actionable intelligence" to report.[44] The Schlesinger report also found that "pressures for additional intelligence" along with other factors led to "stronger interrogation techniques than were believed to be needed"[45] and that senior commanders in Iraq "failed to ensure proper staff oversight of detention and interrogation operations."[46] In the Fay investigation, several key leaders commented on the "intense pressure" they felt from higher headquarters to produce actionable intelligence.[47]

The above listing of contextual factors is not exhaustive. More items could be cited based upon findings in the various official investigations that are openly available. But these seven areas represent the core set of situational factors that contributed to the abuses at Abu Ghraib.

## Individual/Personality Factors

While contextual factors such as those above can have powerful effects on behavior, not all individuals respond alike to the same situational conditions. Even Stanley Milgram's[48] and Zimbardo's classic

experiments on obedience, conformity, and social influence found that while many people will comply with orders to inflict pain and abuse on others, not all will. Some individuals will resist social pressure and act in accord with their own values and convictions about what is right. This also explains why concepts such as Albert Bandura's "moral disengagement"[49] and Robert Lifton's "socialization to evil"[50] fall short as explanations for what happened at Abu Ghraib, although both have been cited as possible explanations.[51]

As the Taguba report points out, the majority of units and individuals, including leaders and Soldiers, did not succumb to the psychological stressors or any of the other contextual factors or command failings observed in the Abu Ghraib situation. Clearly, then, contextual factors alone are *not* enough to explain why some individuals engaged in and/or tolerated prisoner abuse. To understand how prisoner abuse occurred, one also has to consider the psychological-personality factors that can influence individual vulnerability, resilience, and performance under highly stressful conditions. Three theoretical perspectives merit particular consideration in this context.

*Big Five Personality Traits.*[52] Studies applying the Five Factor Model of personality have identified personality factors related to leadership potential and effectiveness in various groups, including military officers and cadets.[53] Evidence suggests that *conscientiousness*, *agreeableness*, *openness*, and *extraversion* all can contribute to more effective leadership in various groups and that *neuroticism* is negatively related to leadership.[54] Some studies also suggest that agreeableness is related to the transformational leadership style,[55] shown to predict greater leader effectiveness in various groups.[56]

More studies are needed to specify the Big Five personality factors and facets associated with better performance of both individual Soldiers and leaders in military operations. Resulting knowledge could lead to more refined selection and assignment strategies. For example, it may be that persons high in agreeableness (including trust and altruism) would make more compassionate and effective prison guards, less likely to engage in prisoner abuse. Agreeableness together with conscientiousness would also imply greater control over one's own emotions, including anger and frustration, certainly an important characteristic in many of the situations encountered by Soldiers in Iraq. Similarly, openness may also be an important personality dimension, contributing to greater awareness of and appreciation for other cultures and practices different from one's own.

While neuroticism does not necessarily indicate psychopathology, those high in neuroticism are nevertheless at greater risk for a range of psychiatric problems.[57] Considering the context of Abu Ghraib, three neuroticism facets in particular would seem to carry increased risk for the kind of misconduct and prisoner abuse seen under these conditions: N2–Angry Hostility (tendency to experience anger, frustration, and bitterness), N5–Impulsiveness (low tolerance for frustration,

inability to control urges), and N6–Vulnerability (tendency to become hopeless, passive, or panicky under emergency/stressful situations). Several official investigations in fact identified histories of misconduct and behavior problems in some of the worst perpetrators. For example, in an annex to the Taguba report, the psychiatrist suggests that "inadequate and immoral men and women may be drawn to fields such as corrections and interrogations, where they can be in absolute control over others."[58] This raises the question as to whether current selection procedures are adequate for identifying individuals who are unsuited for military service in the contemporary environment.

While there are certainly risks inherent in any program to screen military personnel for psychological problems,[59] considering the potential costs of failing to "select out" highly vulnerable or disturbed individuals from military service, current practices for establishing the psychological fitness of applicants for military service should perhaps be reexamined.[60] The issue of selection or screening extends also to civilian personnel who may be employed in operational areas. Multiple official investigations have implicated civilian contractors in the abuse of prisoners, both indirectly and directly, and the report by Lieutenant General Jones specifically points to a "failure to effectively screen, certify, and then integrate contractor interrogators/analysts/linguists."[61]

*Personality Hardiness.*[62] Hardiness is a personality style that includes a strong sense of commitment in life, belief in one's own ability to exercise control, and a perspective on change as challenging and fun. While most early studies focused on the peculiar ability of high-hardy persons to remain physically healthy despite major life stress, more recent work shows that hardiness also influences short- and long-term mental health adjustment to major stressors, including war-related stressors.[63] In addition, recent studies have suggested that leaders who themselves are high in hardiness help to generate a more positive social climate and increase cohesion within their units, which in principle would facilitate more healthy adaptation for all members of the unit.[64] Leaders may also foster more "hardy" and resilient responses to stressful conditions in their organizations by setting a positive example, providing meaningful tasks, and explaining the importance and significance of these tasks.[65]

*Psychological Development or "Maturity."* In addition to trait conceptions of personality, a developmental perspective may also shed light on how Soldiers in the Abu Ghraib situation could have tolerated and participated in prisoner abuse. Robert Kegan[66] has developed a comprehensive theory of psychological development that spans cognitive, moral, and social domains of experience, and describes how individuals construct their worldviews over a lifetime.

In Kegan's theory, which is supported by multiple studies, most young adults define themselves largely based upon input from the people and organizations/programs/policies surrounding them. Kegan calls this the "third-order of consciousness," or Stage 3. At Stage 3, peo-

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ple tend to conform to the norms of the group and bow to social pressure. Kegan's model implies that most Soldiers, like other young adults, are functioning at the Stage 3 developmental level, making them rather more susceptible to group influences, for good or ill. In fact, recent studies on Army officers and cadets suggest that this developmental framework applies very closely within the military.[67] In a 4-year longitudinal study of psychological development at West Point, most cadets were found to be at or in transition to Stage 3, and there was fairly low incidence of Stage 4 (autonomous) functioning, the level at which one recognizes the legitimacy and worth of different approaches to understanding the world.[68] A similar study found the same pattern among civilian college students.[69] Thus, it appears that most young adults are functioning at a Stage 3 (conformist) psychological level, at least in the American cultural context. In Kegan's developmental framework, it would be difficult or impossible for Stage 3 people to independently appreciate and respect cultural differences, since they are in a sense blinded by their own limited perspectives.

## Implications

While contextual and individual factors were discussed as distinct categories above, they are not purely separate, and in most circumstances these influence factors will overlap and interact with each other to determine behavior. Consideration of both classes of influencing factors leads to several broad conclusions and recommendations for preventing prisoner abuse and similar kinds of breakdowns. One conclusion is that military leaders at all levels have a profound responsibility to establish a unit social climate and conditions that support positive and ethical behaviors and interpretations of experience, as well as to quickly and effectively address any negative or unethical practices. Furthermore, as military operations and circumstances become increasingly ambiguous, confused, and unstructured, there is an even greater need for individual military leaders who possess a mature sense of self, a broad perspective, and a strong "moral compass." Especially in circumstances where the normal rules or standards do not seem to apply, or where shared values come into conflict (for example, loyalty versus honesty), the "rules" must come from inside the self, not outside. Another way of saying this is that what the people around us are doing is not always a reliable guide to acceptable or correct behavior.

Kegan's conception of psychological maturity and how people make sense of their worlds suggests that individuals operating at a Stage 3 level would have great difficulty behaving in ways that run counter to the dominant trends within their immediate social group or surroundings. This is true because the entire self-concept of the Stage 3 person is based upon conforming to perceived social expectations. Evidence from several studies[70] now indicates that over half of adults are functioning at no higher than a Stage 3 level. This could help to explain how human rights violations and prisoner abuse can persist and spread under certain social conditions.

Considering that most young military personnel are likely functioning at only a Stage 3 (conformist) level, leaders have an even greater responsibility to assure that external conditions and standards (including subordinate leadership levels) will reinforce appropriate perspectives and behaviors. For example, Taguba's recommendation that all U.S. MP units prominently display the rules and standards for prisoner treatment, including the Geneva Conventions, is an excellent one in this regard.[71] This kind of external reinforcement of values is something that most young adults need, based upon their level of development. Similarly, a key function of training programs for Stage 3 persons is to provide reminders and external reinforcement regarding what is correct and acceptable behavior.

For leaders, training and skills development is also important. But a developmental perspective such as Kegan's reminds us that more fundamental processes are involved in human development and growth. Training programs alone are not likely to generate the kinds of mature, confident, autonomous, self-controlled, and morally strong individuals we seek as military leaders. How to go about developing such leaders is a major challenge that needs to be addressed. At the same time, psychological research points to personality traits of high potential value to both Soldiers and leaders in stressful conditions, most notably hardiness and conscientiousness.[72] The question of how to develop or increase these tendencies is also an important one that merits further research.

On international missions, leaders must likewise assure that the agreed-upon standards and rules of engagement are effectively communicated (with translation as needed) across all contingents. Before such communication can occur, there must, of course, be some clear understanding and agreement by all participating nations/contingents as to the basic rules of engagement and standards of behavior, as well as the lines of authority. Leaders at all levels must also agree as to how any rule violations or misconduct will be handled.

The abuse of Iraqi prisoners that occurred at Abu Ghraib represents a sad case of individual and organizational failure. To understand such a failure requires consideration of individual, social, and organizational factors, including the critical influence of leaders. Preventing future Abu Ghraibs likewise calls for attention to all of these levels.

At the organizational level, preventive steps should include careful attention to screening and selection of personnel at entry, allocating the needed time and resources to thoroughly train Soldiers prior to deployment, and investing more heavily in leader development research and development programs. Leaders also need to be highly visible and sufficiently numerous in the deployed environment, backed up by clear and well-understood policies and procedures, and with unambiguous lines of authority and responsibility. Perhaps most importantly, leaders at every level must be able to establish and maintain a strong moral and ethical climate, through personal example

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as well as by reinforcing checks and standards. All of this will take resources—it is true. But the costs of prevention must be weighed against the much greater human, economic, and political costs of future possible Abu Ghraibs.

## Notes

[1] Phillip Carter, "The Road to Abu Ghraib: The Biggest Scandal of the Bush Administration Began at the Top," *Washington Monthly* (November 2004).

[2] The Armed Forces adhere to all relevant international laws, including all four of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. See Army Regulation 190–8, *Enemy Prisoners of War, Retained Personnel, Civilian Internees and Other Detainees* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Departments of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, October 1997).

[3] Steven H. Miles, "Abu Ghraib: Its Legacy for Military Medicine," *The Lancet* 364 (August 2004), 725–729.

[4] George R. Fay, *AR 15–6 Investigation of the Abu Ghraib Detention Facility and the 205th Military Intelligence Brigade* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, August 2004), 47, 80–81, 115, 130, 136, available at <www.defenselink.mil/news/Aug2004/d20040825fay.pdf>.

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[9] Anthony M. Taguba, AR 15–6 *Investigation of the 800th Military Police Brigade* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, June 2004) available at <www.dod.gov/pubs/foi/detainees/taguba/>.

[10] Fay.

[11] Anthony R. Jones, *AR 15–6 Investigation of the Abu Ghraib Prison and the 205th Military Intelligence Brigade* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, August 2004), available at <www.defenselink.mil/news/Aug2004/d20040825fay.pdf>.

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[13] "A Corrupted Culture," editorial, May 20, 2004, A28, available at <www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A41341-2004May19.html>.

[14] Morris.

[15] Paul T. Bartone, "The need for positive meaning in military operations: Reflections on Abu Ghraib," *Military Psychology* 17 (2005), 315–324.

[16] Philip G. Zimbardo, "Power Turns Good Soldiers into 'Bad Apples,'" *The Boston Globe*, May 9, 2004, available at <www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2004/05/09/power_turns_good_soldiers_into_bad_apples/>.

[17] See, for example, William Saletan, "Situationist Ethics: The Stanford Prison Experiment Doesn't Explain Abu Ghraib," *Slate*, May 12, 2004, available at <www.slate.com/id/2100419/>.

[18] Taguba, 38.

[19] Independent Panel to Review DOD Detention Operations, 17.

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[21] Wil S. Hylton,"Prisoner of Conscience," *GQ*, September 2006, available at <men.style.com/gq/features/landing?id=content_4785>.

[22] Taguba.

[23] See, for example, Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio, *Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).

[24] Taguba, 24.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 41.

[27] Ibid., 24.

[28] Ibid., 43.

[29] Paul T. Bartone, Amy Adler, and Mark A. Vaitkus, "Dimensions of psychological stress in peacekeeping operations," *Military Medicine* 163 (1998), 587–593.

[30] Taguba.

[31] Fay, 45.

[32] Jones, 23.

[33] Ibid., 22.

[34] Fay, 118.

[35] Suzanne C. Kobasa and Salvatore R. Maddi, "Existential Personality Theory," in *Current Personality Theory*, ed. R. Corsini (Itasca, IL: Peacock Publishers, 1977).

[36] Taguba, 38.

[37] Fay, 50.

[38] Taguba, 25.

[39] Taguba, 4. This debate was also documented in several news accounts, including the October 2005 PBS *Frontline* program, "The Torture Question," available at <www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/torture/>.

[40] DOD, "Memorandum on Counter-Resistance Techniques," November 27, 2002, available at <http://fl1.findlaw.com/news.findlaw.com/hdocs/docs/dod/gcrums-1127120202mem.pdf>.

[41] Independent Panel to Review DOD Detention Operations, 15.

[42] Ibid., 91.

[43] Ibid., 65.

[44] *Frontline*, "The Torture Question."

[45] Independent Panel to Review DOD Detention Operations, 8.

[46] Ibid., 15.

[47] Fay, 111, 112.

[48] Stanley Milgram's classic experiment on obedience found that when instructed to do so by an authority figure, most people would inflict what seem to be painful electrical shocks to another person. In Milgram's experiment, the electric shocks were only simulated, but the research subjects who were controlling the shock-delivery device believed that the experience was real. See Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1983).

[49] According to Albert Bandura, *moral disengagement* happens when people adjust or "restructure" their thinking in ways that allow them to commit inhumane acts without a sense of moral self-sanction (or guilt). These cognitive shifts are always socially influenced for Bandura, and include *moral justification*, or redefining harmful acts as justified in the service of some larger good; *euphemistic labeling*, or using sanitizing terms to make immoral acts seem less bad; *displacement of responsibility*, or shifting the responsibility for an act to someone else, often someone in a position of authority; and *diffusion of responsibility*, as when a group of people share in the decisions and actions leading to harm. See Albert Bandura et al., "Mechanisms of moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71 (1996), 364–374; and also Albert Bandura, "Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3 (1999), 193–209.

[50] In his 1986 book, Robert J. Lifton describes how doctors working in Nazi concentration camps came under considerable social pressure, often from more senior doctors in the camps, to adapt to and participate in inhumane practices. He points to many of the same processes described by Bandura as "moral disengagement." See Robert J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

[51] For example, see Independent Panel to Review DOD Detention Operations, appendix G: "Psychological Stresses."

[52] Paul T. Costa, Jr., and Robert R. McCrae, "Personality disorders and the five-factor model of personality," *Journal of Personality Disorders* 4 (1990), 362–371.

[53] Paul T. Bartone, Scott A. Snook, and Trueman Tremble, "Cognitive and personality predictors of leader performance in West Point cadets," *Military Psychology* 14 (2002), 321–338. See also Luke McCormack and David Mellor, "The role of personality in leadership: An application of the five-factor model in the Australian military," *Military Psychology* 14 (2002), 179–197; Timothy A. Judge and Joyce E. Bono, "Five-factor model of personality and transformational leadership," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 85 (2000), 751–765.

[54] Timothy A. Judge et al., "Personality and Leadership: A Qualitative and Quantitative Review," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 87 (2002), 765–780.

[55] Judge and Bono.

[56] Bass and Avolio.

[57] Paul T. Costa and Robert R. McCrae, *NEO PI–R Professional Manual* (Odessa, FL: PAR, 1992).

[58] Taguba, annex A, "Psychological Assessment."

[59] Roberto J. Rona, Kenneth C. Hyams, and Simon Wessely, "Screening for Psychological Illness in Military Personnel," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 293 (2006), 1257–1260.

[60] Francois Lescreve, "Reaching Psychological Readiness: First Things First," paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Applied Military Psychology Seminar, Washington, DC, May 2005.

[61] Jones, 6.

[62] Suzanne C. Kobasa, "Stressful life events, personality and health: An inquiry into hardiness," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37 (1979), 1–11; Salvatore R. Maddi and Suzanne C. Kobasa, *The Hardy Executive* (Homewood, IL: Dow Jones-Irwin, 1984); Suzanne C. Ouellette, "Inquiries into hardiness," in *Handbook of Stress: Theoretical and Clinical Aspects*, 2d ed., ed. Leo Goldberger and Shlomo Breznitz (New York: Free Press, 1993), 77–100.

[63] Paul T. Bartone, "Hardiness Protects Against War-Related Stress in Army Reserve Forces," *Consulting Psychology Journal* 51 (1999), 72–82; Paul T. Bartone, "Stress in the Military Setting," in *Military Psychology: An Introduction*, ed. C. Cronin (Needham Heights, MA: Simon and Schuster, 1998); Mark Waysman, Joseph Schwarzald, and Zahava Solomon, "Hardiness: An Examination of Its Relationship with Positive and Negative Long Term Changes Following Trauma," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 14 (2001), 531–548.

[64] Paul T. Bartone et al., "Factors Influencing Small Unit Cohesion In Norwegian Navy Officer Cadets," *Military Psychology* 14 (2002), 1–22.

[65] Paul T. Bartone, "Resilience under Military Operational Stress: Can Leaders Influence Hardiness?" *Military Psychology* 18 (2006), 131–148.

[66] Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[67] George B. Forsythe et al., "Making Sense of Officership: Developing a Professional Identity for 21st Century Army Officers," in *The Future of the Army Profession*, ed. Don Snider and Lloyd Matthews (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 357–378.

[68] Paul T. Bartone et al., "Psychosocial Development and Leader Performance of Military Officer Cadets," *Leadership Quarterly* 18 (2007), 490–504.

[69] Phillip Lewis et al., "Identity Development During the College Years: Findings from the West Point Longitudinal Study," *Journal of College Student Development* 46 (2005), 357–373.

[70] McCormack and Mellor.

[71] Taguba.

[72] For example, see McCormack and Mellor. See also Paul T. Bartone, "Hardiness as a Resiliency Factor for United States Forces in the Gulf War," in *Posttraumatic Stress Intervention: Challenges, Issues, and Perspectives*, ed. John M. Violanti, Douglas Paton, and Christine Dunning (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 2000), 115–133.