



May 7, 2018

The Honorable Richard Burr, Chair
The Honorable Mark Warner, Vice Chair
U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

cc: All U.S. Senators

Dear Senator,

I write to you to ask you to oppose the nomination of Gina Haspel to be CIA Director. Her role in the CIA's torture program disqualifies her from leading the agency. The NCC is a founding member of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and has long been on record in opposition to the use of torture.

Not only are we deeply troubled by Ms. Haspel involvement in the CIA's torture program, we are concerned with the lack of transparency displayed by the agency as evidenced by its unwillingness to share adequate information regarding Ms. Haspel's involvement in the destruction of CIA videotapes documenting the agency's use of torture.

What little we do know about Ms. Haspel's record excludes her, in our judgment, from being CIA Director. We know that Ms. Haspel supervised the torture of Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri at the CIA black site in Thailand. While we don't know the full list of techniques used on Mr. al-Nashiri while she supervised his interrogation, we do know that he was waterboarded multiple times and likely faced other forms of torture. Before considering her nomination, the Senate Intelligence Committee should ensure that the full record of Ms. Haspel's role supervising torture is made public.

One declassified memo, written by Deputy CIA Director Michael Morrel, is purported to exonerate her for her role in the destruction of the tapes. The memo also suggests that the CIA's leadership "failed" Haspel and her then-boss Jose Rodriguez, because "beyond the Acting General Counsel discussing the issue with White House Counsel" (who told the agency not to destroy the tapes), "there is no record of any effort on the part of the Agency leadership to engage White House policymakers." This memo suggests that despite the CIA General Counsel, the White House Counsel, and at least one Member of Congress weighing in against destroying the tapes, Ms. Haspel and her boss Mr. Rodriguez were nevertheless right to do so.

According to the Morell memo, Mr. Rodriguez believed that destroying the tapes was justified. He said that “the publication of the tapes would damage the domestic and international standing of the CIA.” He also stated that “the worldwide reaction to the leak of the photos of the actions of US military personnel at Iraq’s Abu Ghraib prison” “cemented his view that the tapes represented a threat to his officers and the Agency.”

By confirming Gina Haspel, someone who is known to the world as having supervised torture, to a Cabinet-level position, the U.S. Senate will do exactly what Mr. Rodriguez feared – it will damage the domestic and international standing of the CIA, the Senate, and indeed our country itself. Confirming Haspel will be widely understood as a message that the U.S. accepts torture and it will be used by tyrants and dictators to justify both torture and a legion of other human rights abuses.

The National Council of Churches has for years called for the whole record of torture in the post-9/11 period to be made fully known. Ms. Haspel’s nomination signals a return to the darkest, most immoral policies our nation has supported. I pray that you and your colleagues will consider the deep cost of promoting someone who supervised torture to be CIA Director and will ultimately choose to oppose this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James E. Wank". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the top that extends across the width of the name.

President and General Secretary
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA