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Place your bets everyone. In one corner stands James Risen, the distinguished *New York Times* investigative reporter with two Pulitzer Prizes under his belt. In the opposite corner stands the Board of the American Psychological Association, ever ready to protect APA's reputation from assault.

What brings these two into the ring is Risen's new bestseller [Pay Any Price: Greed, Power, and Endless War](#). Relying on never-before-disclosed emails involving senior officials from the APA and the CIA, Risen makes the case that the two organizations secretly colluded to craft the APA's [ethics](#) policies for psychologists, policies that provided support and cover for the Bush Administration's "enhanced interrogation" torture program.

In a [response](#) to the book's publication last week, the APA Board accused Risen of "innuendo and one-sided reporting" but offered no defense against his actual [claims and evidence](#).

The APA instead resorted to a feeble three-punch combination of misdirection (deeming as "absurd" the notion that any financial interests were at stake); Orwellian language tricks (describing secret meetings where the participants and topics were never publicly revealed as "invitation-only"); and self-righteousness (emphasizing "APA's long-standing efforts to safeguard against the use of torture"). Flailing jabs like these are unlikely to prove effective; in a recent [interview](#)

Risen accurately described them as a "non-denial denial."

Eventually the APA leadership's habitual duck-and-slip strategy will also falter. They can't indefinitely elude the blunt force of an email trail revealing that the CIA played a central role in developing and selecting members for the APA's Presidential Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security (PENS). Most of those [task force members](#) worked for the

military or

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agencies, and several were in chains of command where detainee abuses were reported to have taken place. Not surprisingly, the

[PENS report](#)

asserted that psychologists play a valuable role in keeping detention and interrogation operations “safe, legal, ethical, and effective.”

In responding to *Pay Any Price*, the APA Board simply lacks a convincing counterpunch: for example, evidence that the Association has been resolute in pursuing ethics complaints filed against members alleged to have participated in torture or abuse. Indeed after seven years of delay, this past winter the APA’s Ethics Office formally closed the

[most thoroughly documented case](#)

to date – without even bringing the complaint to the full Ethics Committee for review and adjudication.

This fight is not over, but the American Psychological Association may have finally met its match. Whatever the outcome, everyone should be hoping that the truth wins out.