

By Libby A. Nelson

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When John Yoo, the former Bush administration lawyer best known for drafting memos authorizing the harsh treatment of terrorism suspects, resumed his post as a tenured professor at the University of California at Berkeley's law school, [protesters called for him to be fired](#) . When the University of Minnesota sought to hire as an adjunct Robert Delahunty, who co-wrote what were known as the "torture memos" with Yoo, students [circulated a petition and professors signed a letter asking the university to reconsider](#) .

So far, though, another legal official from the Bush administration involved in a controversial terror case has slipped into academe with little notice or comment -- at least on this side of the U.S.-Canada border.

The University of Georgia School of Law announced Tuesday that Larry Thompson, deputy attorney general of the U.S. from 2001 to 2003, will become a professor at the law school this fall. Thompson, who has previously been a guest speaker and visiting professor at the university, will specialize in corporate and business law. It is a field in which he has wide experience: he was formerly general counsel and senior vice president for governmental affairs at PepsiCo, and at the Justice Department he led the investigation into accounting fraud at Enron.

But another facet of Thompson's Justice Department tenure has [drawn attention in the Canadian news media](#) : his role in the detention and torture in Syria of Maher Arar, a Syrian-born Canadian citizen who was mistakenly believed to have ties to Al Qaeda.

Arar, a telecommunications engineer, was detained while changing planes at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport in 2002 on his way home to Canada from Tunisia, where he had been on vacation. His name was on a terrorism watch list barring him from entering the United States. He was held in New York for 13 days, then imprisoned for 10 months in Syria, where he says he was beaten and tortured.

The deportation to Syria was part of the Bush administration's policy of rendition, or sending terrorism suspects to other countries for interrogation, which the Obama administration has continued. As deputy attorney general, Thompson signed the order for Arar's rendition.

Arar was sent home to Canada in 2003, after Syrian officials concluded he had no connection to terrorism. A Canadian commission that investigated the case later issued a [scathing report](#) that blamed both the U.S. and Canada, saying that Arar had never posed a threat to national security. He was mistakenly placed on a "terrorist lookout" list because he was acquainted with a man under surveillance, including listing that man as his emergency contact on his lease, the commission found.

The case received ample coverage on both sides of the border, but is perhaps better known in Canada. Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized to Arar formally in 2007, and the Canadian government paid him \$10.5 million in compensation as well as reimbursing his legal fees. Amnesty International continues to seek an apology to Arar from Obama and Congress.

In a [statement](#) issued Wednesday, the Center for Constitutional Rights, which represented Arar, reacted with "profound concern" to Thompson's appointment at Georgia. "It would be shocking if the law school were aware of Mr. Thompson's role in this case and hired him nonetheless," said Maria LaHood, senior staff attorney and Arar's counsel. She called on the law school to investigate and reconsider its appointment.

The dean of the law school, Rebecca Hanner White, could not be reached for comment Thursday. In a release Tuesday, she said she was "thrilled" that Thompson, who previously taught there as a visiting professor, was joining the faculty. "To have someone with his experience and status on our faculty will benefit not only our students, but the law school and the university as a whole," White said.

Arar, now an adjunct at the School of Information Technology and Engineering in Ottawa, could not be reached for comment Thursday.