**Geneva Convention**

**What international treaties govern torture?**

The United States is a signatory to the [Geneva Conventions.](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/91.htm) Geneva Convention III, adopted Aug. 12, 1949, prohibits mistreatment of prisoners of war, and Geneva Convention IV, also adopted Aug. 12, 1949, protects civilian populations in times of war.

In 1994, the U.S. also adopted the [U.N. Convention against Torture](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/h_cat39.htm), which defines torture as "any act by which severe pain, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted" to gain information, extract a confession, or as punishment. In addition, it requires state signatories to prevent acts of "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment which do not amount to torture."

**What do the Geneva Conventions say about the treatment of prisoners of war?**

It states that prisoners of war must be "treated humanely," and acts such as "violence to life and person," "mutilation, cruel treatment," and "outrages upon personal dignity" are prohibited at all times. (Article 3) They are not to be held in close confinement unless they are being disciplined or it is necessary for their safety; the detaining power is also required to protect prisoners of war from the dangers of the war. (Articles 21 and 23) If they are interrogated, POWs are only required to disclose their name, rank, date of birth, and serial number. (Article 17)

The conventions stipulate that POWs should be housed in barracks similar to those of their soldier captors, and they should be provided adequate clothing and food, along with the means to prepare their own food. (Articles 25-28) They are also permitted to send and receive mail and elect representatives to communicate with other organizations such as the detaining authority or the International Red Cross.

**What interrogation tactics are authorized in the U.S. Army Field Manual?**

The [most recent version](https://atiam.train.army.mil/soldierPortal/atia/adlsc/view/public/6999-1/FM/34-52/FM34-52.HTM) of Field Manual 34-52, Intelligence Interrogation was published in September 1992. Its guidelines cover battlefield capture and screening logistics and the third chapter details the planning, approach, questioning, and termination phases of an interrogation. According to the FM 34-52, the interrogator's goal during the approach phase is to establish rapport with the detainee, which can be done via 17 different methods, including:

* "Emotional": taking advantage of a source's strong feelings;
* "Fear-up": exploiting a source's fears, real or imagined;
* "Pride and ego": flattering a source or attacking his pride, both to serve the purpose of putting him in a frame of mind to reveal information;
* "Futility": using facts to prove to the source that his or her current situation is hopeless.

These methods each have several sub-categories, such as "fear-up (harsh)" or "ego-down," and are recommended to be used in combination with each other for the best effect.

However, the use of force, mental torture, threats, insults, or exposure to unpleasant and inhumane treatment of any kind is prohibited by law and is neither authorized nor condoned by the U.S. government. And the manual states, "The psychological techniques and principles in this manual should neither be confused with, nor construed to be synonymous with, unauthorized techniques such as brainwashing, physical or mental torture, or any other form of mental coercion to include drugs that may induce lasting and permanent mental alteration and damage." For reference, the Manual includes excerpts from the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, and under "Interrogator Capabilities and Limitations," it states that the Convention sets "definite limits on measures which can be taken to induce an EPW [Enemy Prisoner of War] to cooperate."

Source

"The Geneva Conventions of 1949." *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) - Home*. Web. 17 Nov. 2009. <http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/genevaconventions>.