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Dozens of former senior U.S. military leaders pressed senators to block Gina Haspel from becoming the next CIA director, citing allegations that she oversaw torture in interrogation programs overseas.

Haspel, currently deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, faces the Senate Intelligence Committee for her confirmation hearing May 9 as lobbying by her supporters -- including the usually secretive CIA -- and her detractors is intensifying.

On Monday a group of 109 retired generals and admirals sent a joint [letter](#) to senators expressing "profound concern" over Haspel's nomination. They urged a full declassification of Haspel's involvement in the CIA's rendition, detention and interrogation program from her time at the agency after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

The confirmation fight is reviving unresolved disputes over "enhanced interrogation" techniques such as waterboarding, which have since been banned.

"We are deeply troubled by the prospect of someone who appears to have been intimately involved in torture being elevated to one of the most important positions of leadership in the intelligence community," they wrote. "Should you find that she played any role in carrying out, supervising, or directing the torture or abuse of people in U.S. custody, or the destruction of evidence relating to these activities, we urge you to reject her nomination."

**Declassified Memo**

The letter came the same day that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is scheduled to vote on current CIA Director Mike Pompeo's nomination as secretary of state. And it follows stepped-up its efforts by the CIA to boost Haspel's nomination.

The agency on Friday declassified a 2011 memo by then-Deputy Director Michael Morell on his decision not to discipline Haspel for her role in destroying tapes of detainee interrogations that critics called torture. In 2002, Haspel oversaw a CIA prison in Thailand, where the New York Times [reported](#) that an al-Qaeda suspect, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, was waterboarded three times.

[Read the CIA memo on Haspel's role in destroying interrogation tapes](#)

In the memo, Morell, who was following up on an investigation by a special prosecutor, found fault with Haspel's former boss at the time, Director of the National Clandestine Service Jose Rodriguez. He said a memo drafted by Haspel calling for the destruction of interrogation tapes -- an act carried out in 2005 -- was ordered by Rodriguez and that she believed Rodriguez would seek permissions from then-CIA Director Porter Goss to carry out the memo. Some portions of the memo were blacked out.

### **'Wrong Message'**

That hasn't satisfied critics of the 61-year-old Haspel, who would be the first woman to lead the CIA if approved by the Senate.

General Charles C. Krulak, former commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, led the effort in organizing the letter against Haspel's nomination. He said confirming Haspel would "send the wrong message" to U.S. allies and enemies.

"Our group does not dispute Ms. Haspel's competence and experience as a CIA operative," Krulak told reporters on a conference call coordinated with the group Human Rights First. "But when the moment came to make the hard choice, the right choice, the choice that required more courage and strength of character, Ms. Haspel failed."

Other signatories included retired Rear Admiral John D. Hutson, former judge advocate general of the Navy, and retired Brigadier General David Irvine, a former Army strategic intelligence officer.

Senator Dianne Feinstein of California, the intelligence committee's top Democrat, said in a statement Friday that "it's completely unacceptable for the CIA to declassify only material that's favorable" to Haspel, "while at the same time stonewalling our efforts to declassify all documents related her involvement in the torture program."

Feinstein said she and fellow Democratic senators Ron Wyden of Oregon and Martin Heinrich of New Mexico have asked for declassification of relevant documents, with at least five requests for more information, though they've received no material.

"Senators and the public need to know more about her record," Feinstein said.