

# The Effectiveness of Army Field Manual Interrogation Approaches for Educing Information and Building Rapport

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In 2016, the U.S. Congress mandated that federal intelligence interrogators adhere to the methods of the U.S. Army Field Manual FM 2–22.3 (AFM) and that the manual be revised based upon empirically based evaluations of the interrogation methods' effectiveness with interviewees motivated to withhold information. In the present study, 120 participants took part in a testing situation in which half were induced to cheat. All participants were then accused of cheating and interrogated with either (a) a combination of AFM interrogation approaches that focused on the potential benefits of cooperation with the interviewer (cooperation-focused condition), or (b) a combination of AFM approaches that focused on the potential risks of withholding information (withholding-focused condition). Participants who cheated on the test were significantly more likely to admit their wrongdoing and to provide additional relevant information when interrogated with the withholding-focused approaches than when questioned with the cooperation-focused approaches. The “we know all” AFM approach was especially effective for eliciting truthful admission-related details. Participants reported high rapport with the interrogator in both the cooperation-focused and withholding-focused conditions. These findings indicate that the we-know-all approach can be effective for maintaining rapport and eliciting accurate information in brief interrogations.

## **Public Significance Statement**

Interrogation is a crucial means for obtaining intelligence to protect national security. Some federal government interrogators are required to limit their interrogation approaches to those listed in the Army Field Manual. This study examines the effectiveness of some of these approaches to contribute to the identification and development of evidence-based interrogation strategies.

**Keywords:** intelligence interrogation, intelligence sources, we know all, decision making, cooperation

Effective counterterrorism efforts are essential to protecting national security in the United States and other countries. Because some intelligence collection methods, such as signals intelligence (e.g., electronic surveillance) and espionage, can be challenging to

implement with terrorist groups (Aid, 2003), counterterrorism efforts typically rely heavily on human intelligence collection through the interrogation of individuals (“sources”) suspected of facilitating or having knowledge of terrorist activities (Pearce, 2009). The U.S. Congress recently mandated (National Defense Authorization Act, 2016) that federal intelligence interrogators adhere to the methods described in the U.S. Army Field Manual FM 2–22.3 (AFM; Department of the Army, 2006) and that the AFM be updated by 2019.

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## **AFM Interrogation Approaches**

The AFM lists 18 “approaches” or strategies approved for use by U.S. interrogators (Department of the Army, 2006). The following paragraphs briefly describe the approaches that have been empirically examined either in the present or earlier research.

First, the AFM lists two *general approaches*. In the *direct approach*, the interrogator engages in straightforward, direct questioning of the source without attempting to influence cooperation. In the *incentive approach*, the interrogator identifies and offers incentives likely to motivate the source’s cooperation. The direct and incentive approaches are “general” in the sense that they play