



US Universities selling bodies meant for "science" to US Navy for Israeli military training

Description

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US universities

Two US universities are selling dead bodies, which are meant for "scientific purposes", to the [US Navy](#) which uses them to train the Israeli military.

Back in 2025, student journalists [revealed](#) the links between bodies donated by the University of Southern California (USC) for scientific research and training provided to Israeli soldiers by the US military.

At the end of 2017, the US Navy filed a [notice of intent](#) to start purchasing cadavers from USC. The purpose was to use dead bodies in trauma surgery for the IOF.

The notice of intent states:

The Naval Medical Logistics Command (NMLC) intends to negotiate on a sole source basis (IAW FAR Part 13.106-1(b)(1)(i)). The proposed source is the University of Southern California (USC) Surgical Skills and Education Center, 2250 Alcazar St., Los Angeles, CA, 90033.

Based on a signed agreement between the U.S. Navy Surgeon General and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) Surgeon General, the Navy Expeditionary Medicine Training Institute (NEMTI) has been tasked to provide Fresh Tissue Dissection training courses for the IDF personnel registered at the Navy Trauma Training Center (NTTC).

After that notice, the Navy [paid USC](#) over \$860,000 for at least 89 "fresh cadaver bodies". Of these, it used 32 specifically to train the IOF at Los Angeles General Medical Center.

At least one contract was still ongoing in October 2025. This was for the Navy to purchase an additional \$225,000 worth of cadavers, at its discretion. This would bring the total that USC has earned in the last seven years to nearly \$1.1m.

In recent years, the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) has also helped USC deliver cadavers. Between 2024 and early 2026, UCSD [transferred](#) around 124 bodies to USC.

UCSD [denied](#) that the military was using its cadavers for training. It said that the term "military training" mischaracterises the course.

US universities "Training military surgeons"

Since October 2023, when Israel launched its full-scale genocide in Gaza, the Israeli military has been embedding more doctors on the front lines of Gaza.

Whilst there is not much publicly available information about the training, one [research paper](#) from 2020 described a four-day "trauma surgery skills course". The US [offered](#) the training to "forward surgical teams" in the military. These are units that operate close to the front lines.

During the training, the military [reanimated](#) the bodies using a method called perfusion.

According to *Al Jazeera*:

That process involves pumping fake blood through the body to make the cadavers as lifelike as possible, mimicking the active bleeding of wounded soldiers on the battlefield.

The paper details participants' training on simulated combat injuries, including gunshot wounds to the chest and legs, and blasts to the face and torso from improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The US Navy told *AJ+* that they simulated injuries using "surgical" techniques. In a statement, it said:

During this training, experienced Trauma Surgeons recreate complex injury patterns with surgical tools to deliver a high-fidelity, hyper-realistic training environment.

However, several trauma surgeons told *AJ+* that:

using perfused cadavers is typically for highly specialised training. It is not common across most surgical programmes.

Where's the consent?

Now, fresh reporting from AJ+ has revealed that those who donated their bodies may not have consented.

Donor documents did not indicate that the cadavers would be used for military training, either for the US or Israel.

Physicians are also [questioning](#) whether anyone would willingly sign up if they knew their body might be used by foreign militaries, or for procedures such as perfusion.

One example is [101-year-old Jeanette Volpin](#). When she died, she donated her body to USC's Anatomical Gift Program. However, the program did not inform her that it could use it to teach Israeli soldiers.

Previously, the L.A. County Office of Decedent Affairs had also [provided](#) cadavers to the US Navy for Israeli military training. Crucially, these cadavers were unclaimed bodies. This means individuals did not consent to anyone using their body for any reason after their death.

At least two people have [changed their minds](#) about donating their bodies after death since the original story broke. Wendy Smith told AJ+:

I don't want to support genocide and starvation, and I don't want to support Israeli policies even in the smallest way.

Just before AJ+ published its documentary last month, University of California Health – the network that UCSD Health is part of – [added new information](#) to its FAQ page. It has now acknowledged that it may share bodies with other institutions or use them to train military medical personnel.

However, neither of the two universities implicated had updated its FAQ page.

The US Navy has also issued a "notice of intent" to renew contracts for the programme with USC until at least 2029.

Feature image via [Quique Kierszenbaum/ Getty Images](#)

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