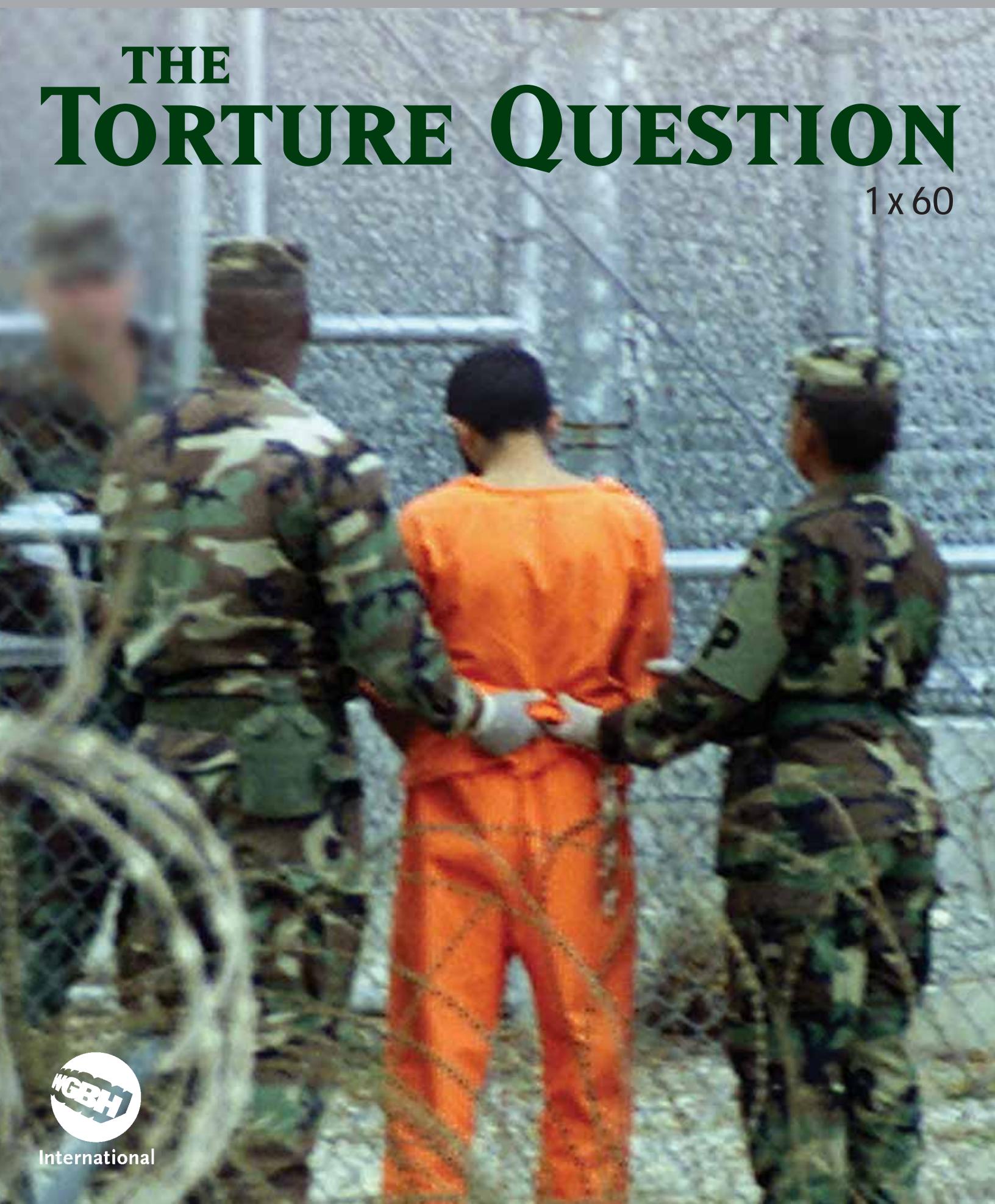




THE TORTURE QUESTION

1x60



International

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In mid-August, a FRONTLINE documentary crew made the perilous journey to the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Entering the 280-acre compound in the middle of the night, escorted by helicopters and a convoy of armed Humvees, the crew was following 50 detainees fresh from the battlefield. As they were ordered to kneel in formation on the concrete floor, one detainee nervously asked the FRONTLINE cameraman, "Is this Abu Ghraib?" The answer brought a shudder.

Abu Ghraib has always been a terrifying place to Iraqis—Saddam Hussein used it as his primary torture chamber—but in 2004, when graphic photographs of American soldiers abusing prisoners surfaced, Abu Ghraib took on deeper meaning.

"The details of what happened in those cellblocks between the American soldiers and Iraqi detainees are well known," says producer/director Michael Kirk, "but how and why it happened is what took us into the heart of Abu Ghraib that night."

In *The Torture Question*, FRONTLINE traces the history of how decisions made in Washington in the immediate aftermath of September 11 led to a robust interrogation policy that laid the groundwork for prisoner abuse in Afghanistan; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and Iraq.

The Torture Question traces the aggressive development of the administration's interrogation policy in the aftermath of 9/11, where the push for "actionable intelligence" led to authorization for interrogators to strip detainees, degrade prisoners with sexual humiliation techniques and use dogs for intimidation.

Former White House legal advisers and the Department of Justice—author of many of the administration's boldest proposals—agreed to talk to FRONTLINE. "There was a powerful set of shared assumptions we had in the wake of 9/11, and one of the most powerful was the assumption that we would never be forgiven if we failed to do something that was within the power of our government lawfully to protect the public from a further attack," says Associate White House Counsel Bradford Berenson.

The legal framework developed by administration lawyers like Berenson, Alberto Gonzales and John Yoo provided the impetus for unprecedented rules for interrogating detainees, rules authorized by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—rules officials insist never condoned torture.

FRONTLINE follows the implementation of the Rumsfeld rules from the battlefields of Afghanistan to the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay, where eventually the FBI began to document a trail of abuses by interrogators.

05.08.009

FRONTLINE

CREDITS

Executive Producer: David Fanning
Producer, Director, and Writer: Michael Kirk
A FRONTLINE co-production with the Kirk Documentary Group for WGBH/Boston.

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