October 2008 – Torturing Democracy, a major documentary film more than 18 months in the making, will air on public television stations around the country beginning October 10th (check local listings.)

The 90-minute film, from Emmy and DuPont award-winning producer Sherry Jones, relies on the documentary record to connect the dots in an investigation of interrogations of prisoners in U.S. custody that became “at a minimum, cruel and inhuman treatment and, at worst, torture,” in the words of the former general counsel of the United States Navy.

Bill Moyers has called Torturing Democracy “profoundly journalistic and profoundly affecting. This one will go into the record books for historians and teachers and others who look back to ask, ‘What did we do?’”

Up to date with the latest revelations, Torturing Democracy details how the government set aside the rule of law in its pursuit of harsh interrogations of suspected terrorists. It features in-depth interviews with numerous senior military and government officials.

Former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage describes - for the first time on-camera - being waterboarded during military training before he was sent to Vietnam. When producer Jones asked Mr. Armitage if he considered waterboarding to be torture, he answered, “Absolutely. No question.” He added: “There is no question in my mind - there’s no question in any reasonable human being, that this is torture. I’m ashamed that we’re even having this discussion.”

With exclusive interviews and little-known archival footage, the documentary traces how the secret U.S. military training program – “Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape” or SERE – became the basis for many of the harshest interrogation methods employed first by the CIA and subsequently by interrogators at Guantanamo
and in Iraq. The tactics designed to “inoculate” elite American troops mirror tactics used by “a totalitarian, evil nation with complete disregard for human rights and the Geneva Conventions,” according to Malcolm Nance, the former SERE master trainer for the U.S. Navy.

Among the film’s disclosures is a December 2002 document distributed at Guantanamo, “JTF GTMO ‘SERE’ Interrogation Standard Operating Procedure.” When the document, which had not been made public, was quoted to former Navy SERE trainer Nance, he reacted: “We have recreated our enemies’ methods in Guantanamo! It will hurt us for decades to come. Our people will all be subjected to these tactics because we have authorized them for the world now. How it got to Guantanamo is a crime.”

Also for the first time on television, the former chief Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army, Major General Thomas Romig, reveals the inside story of a Pentagon task force set up by the Secretary of Defense in early 2003. “He came in and gave us a pep talk. I thought it a little strange that we were getting a pep talk on something like this,” Romig says. After being presented with a list of interrogation tactics, some of which he described as torture, General Romig concludes that, “The commander in chief does not have the power to make that which is illegal under the law of war, legal.”

But the top military lawyers would not learn for more than a year that, in the end, they were deceived. Only in the aftermath of the revelations at Abu Ghraib would they discover that Secretary Rumsfeld had given the go-ahead a year earlier to use 24 harsh interrogation techniques that they had opposed.

“Uncovering the fierce struggles waged by these insiders was one of the surprising revelations during the months of work on Torturing Democracy,” producer Sherry Jones says. “They were unable to overcome formidable resistance from the most powerful figures in the Pentagon and the White House. All the more important that their stories be told.”

The documentary also details the experiences of prisoners in U.S. custody, including Shafiq Rasul (Detainee # 086), Moazzam Begg (Detainee #558), and Bisher al-Rawi (Detainee #906) in their own words. All were eventually released, with no charges filed against them and no reason given for their years in custody.

The documentary’s website, www.torturingdemocracy.org, is scheduled to launch Friday, October 10th. The comprehensive site, a collaboration with the National Security Archive at George Washington University, will feature the entire film available for streaming, a timeline of key events, extended interviews, and the memos, legal opinions and other documents highlighted in the film. The website will eventually host a searchable data base of all primary source documents related to detention and interrogation policies, many secured through litigation against the government.

Torturing Democracy was produced by Washington Media Associates in association with the National Security Archive. It was written and produced by Sherry Jones. Peter Coyote is the narrator. Carey Murphy is the co-producer. It was edited by Penny Trams and Foster Wiley.
Interviewees:

Richard Armitage
Deputy Secretary of State
(2001-05)

Lt. Colonel Stuart Couch
Senior Prosecutor
Office of Military Commissions
(2003-06)

Dr. Michael Gelles
Chief Psychologist
Naval Criminal Investigative Service
(1991-2006)

Colonel Steven Kleinman
Senior Intelligence Officer
U.S. Air Force
(1985-2008)

Martin Lederman
Legal Adviser, Department of Justice
(1994-2002)

Colonel Brittain Mallow
Commander
Criminal Investigation Task Force
(2002-05)

George Brent Mickum IV
Attorney, Spriggs & Hollingsworth LLC

Alberto Mora
General Counsel, U.S. Navy
(2001-06)

Malcolm Nance
Chief of Training
U.S. Navy SERE
Major General Thomas Romig
Judge Advocate General, U.S. Army
(2001-05)

Richard Shiffrin
Deputy General Counsel, Intelligence
Department of Defense

Clive Stafford Smith
Director, Reprieve
Legal Rights NGO

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson
Chief of Staff to Secretary of State
(2002-05)

Former Detainees:

Bisher Al-Rawi
Detainee #906

Moazzam Begg
Detainee #558

Shafiq Rasul
Detainee #086
SHERRY JONES
PRODUCER

Sherry Jones is an award-winning producer with dozens of television documentaries to her credit. Based in Washington, D.C. she heads Washington Media Associates, an independent production company.

Jones’ films have won eight Emmy Awards, three duPont-Columbia Awards for Excellence in Broadcast Journalism, three George Foster Peabody Awards for significant and meritorious achievement in broadcasting, two Robert F. Kennedy awards for outstanding coverage of the problems of the disadvantaged, three Edward R. Murrow awards from the Overseas Press Club of America, and two consecutive Silver Baton awards from the American Bar Association.

In addition to a 28-year collaboration with Bill Moyers, she has produced more than 20 films for the PBS documentary series, FRONTLINE. She has also produced dozens of other programs for PBS - including the Emmy-winning "Watergate Plus 30: Shadow of History;” six documentaries based in the former Soviet Union - including the award-winning FRONTLINE special, "Return of the Czar;” and three specials for ABC News, including “Peter Jennings Reporting: The Missiles of October,” the story of the Cuban missile crisis from the points of view of all three countries involved; “Hiroshima: Why the Bomb Was Dropped,” broadcast on the 50th anniversary of Hiroshima; and, in June 2004, “Peter Jennings Reporting: Guantanamo.” That film, which was broadcast on the eve of the historic Supreme Court decision in Rasul v. Bush, was the first long-form television investigation into the Bush Administration's detention and interrogation policies. Since then, Jones has stayed on the story.

In September, 2004, she produced "9/11: For the Record," a NOW with Bill Moyers special. Newsday named it one of the “Ten Best TV Programs of 2004,” commenting, “Of all the programs marking the anniversary of the attacks, ‘9/11: For the Record’ is the must see – a sobering, heartbreaking hour.” Jones also produced “Dead Wrong: Inside an Intelligence Meltdown,” an examination of pre-Iraqi War intelligence - which first aired in August, 2005, as a special edition of CNN Presents.

Her most recent production was “Moyers on America: Capitol Crimes,” a 90-minute expose of the Jack Abramoff/Tom Delay scandals, broadcast in October, 2006, on PBS. The Rocky Mountain News wrote that the program “plays out like a best-selling novel dealing with the seamy side of politics.” “The Moyers program on Jack Abramoff last night,” a viewer wrote to the PBS ombudsman, “was the best piece of television journalism I've seen in years.”

Sherry Jones is a Fellow of the National Security Archive, and has been honored as a “Woman of Vision” by Women in Film and Video. She holds a Masters degree in Journalism from Northwestern University, and is a member of the Medill School of Journalism's Hall of Fame.