

Amnesty unveils shock 'waterboarding' film

By Nigel Morris, Home Affairs Correspondent
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An American expert in torture techniques has denounced his government for allowing "waterboarding" to be practised against terror suspects, just as a graphic advertisement showing the brutal reality of the technique is unveiled to British cinema-goers.

Malcolm Nance, who trained hundreds of US servicemen and women to resist interrogation by putting them through "waterboarding" exercises, demanded an immediate end to the practice by all US personnel.

He said: "They seem to think it is worth throwing the honour of 220 years of American decency in war out of the window. Waterboarding is out-and-out torture, and I'm deeply ashamed President Bush has authorised its use and dragged the US's reputation into the mud."

Mr Bush faced criticism recently when he vetoed a Bill that would have outlawed such methods of "enhanced interrogation" – the White House refuses to describe it as torture.

Mr Nance said: "You have a purpose-built table with straps in a pattern so that people can be strapped and unstrapped quickly. The head is strapped down in such a way so they cannot resist the water. The head is elevated so the water goes down the oesophagus."

Amnesty International's new anti-waterboarding advert



"The water is poured very carefully over the nose – you keep a constant pour. You are drowning in water but you don't have the ability to hold your breath. You feel the water going in, you understand that water is filling your lungs."

Mr Nance, who is now an independent consultant, said the technique was also futile, as well as barbaric, as the prisoner would say anything to survive – regardless of its truth.

Amnesty International is leading the campaign to persuade the US to abandon the practice – a form of torture used as long ago as the Spanish Inquisition – and is stepping up its efforts with the release of a graphic and disturbing advertisement.

The broadcast begins with images of glistening clear liquid, suggesting it could be promoting a new brand of vodka or gin. But the camera pulls back to show water is being poured over the face of a desperate man strapped to a table.

Kate Allen, the UK director of Amnesty International, said: "Our film shows you what the CIA doesn't want you to see – the disgusting reality of half-drowning a person."

"For a few seconds, our film-makers did it for real. Even for those few seconds, it's horrifying to watch. The reality – in a secret prison with no one to stop it – is much, much worse."

The advertisement can be seen at www.unsubscribe-me.org from today and at 50 cinemas from next month onwards.