



Contact:

POV: 212-989-7425; [communications@pov.org](mailto:communications@pov.org); Emergency contact: 646-729-4748  
Cynthia López, [clopez@pov.org](mailto:clopez@pov.org). POV online pressroom: [www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom)

## POV's "The Oath" Provides Rare Insight into Jihadist Thinking and U.S. Military Commissions, on Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2010, on PBS

Two Men Once Close to Osama bin Laden Face Very Different Fates in Laura Poitras' Award-winning Documentary

*A Co-Production of ITVS in Association with American Documentary/POV*

"Poitras' movie digs deep; it hints at the violently conflicting drives that an intelligent human being may be liable to." — David Denby, *The New Yorker*

### **MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET**

National Air

Date:

**The Oath** has its national broadcast premiere on Tuesday, Sept. 21, 2010, at 10 p.m. on the [POV \(Point of View\)](#) documentary series on PBS. (Check local listings.) **The Oath** will also stream in its entirety from Sept. 22 through Sept. 27, 2010 on the POV website, [www.pbs.org/pov/video](http://www.pbs.org/pov/video). Now in its 23rd year, POV is American television's longest-running independent documentary series and is the winner of a Special Emmy for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking and the International Documentary Association's IDA Award for Best Continuing Series.

The Film:

Filmed in Yemen and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, **The Oath** interweaves the stories of Abu Jandal, Osama bin Laden's former bodyguard, and Salim Hamdan, a prisoner at Guantanamo facing war crimes charges. Directed by Laura Poitras (**Flag Wars**, POV 2003; the Oscar®-nominated **My Country, My Country**, POV 2006), **The Oath** unfolds in a narrative structure filled with plot reversals and betrayals, leading ultimately to Osama bin Laden, 9/11, Guantanamo and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Viewers enter the story in a taxicab in Yemen. Here they meet Abu Jandal, the film's central protagonist, as he transports passengers through the chaotic streets of Yemen's capital city, Sana'a. Salim Hamdan is the film's "ghost" protagonist. He was arrested in Afghanistan shortly after 9/11 and taken to Guantanamo. His seven-years in Guantanamo are narrated through his prison letters.

Watch the trailer and learn more at [www.pbs.org/pov/oath/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/oath/).

In the News:

*Miami Herald*: "Full panel to decide bin Laden driver's appeal," by Carol Rosenberg, Sept. 3, 2010  
<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/09/03/1807280/full-pentagon-panel-to-decide.html>

"The Pentagon's war crimes appeals court announced without explanation Friday that the full U.S. Court of Military Commission Review, not a smaller panel, would review the conviction of Osama bin Laden's driver, now free and living in Yemen. Legal scholars generally consider an appeals court decision to go with "en banc" review to signal a case's importance.

“A military jury at Guantánamo convicted ex-driver Salim Hamdan, now 40, of providing material support for terrorism and acquitted him of conspiracy in August 2008. Prosecutors were stunned, however, when that same jury rejected their call for a 30-year sentence and ordered him to serve just 5 ½ more months.”

Associated Press: “US terror training in Yemen reflects wider program,” by Lolita C. Baldor, Sept. 8, 2010  
<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hTtPSutm6O9rmoSCW6ISAIN0u8hgD9I3SICO1>

“WASHINGTON — Seldom visible in the Yemeni mountains, the elite U.S. commandos training the Yemen’s military represent the Obama administration’s quest to fight terrorism without inflaming anti-American sentiment.”

AFP: “Qaeda claims Yemen attacks: US monitoring group,” Sept. 8, 2010  
[http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hdKJnBhLp2NL53S-t\\_H4evB20xQQ](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hdKJnBhLp2NL53S-t_H4evB20xQQ)

“SANAA — Al-Qaeda has said it carried out a series of attacks on security forces in Yemen, including deadly clashes in the restive south, a US-based group that monitors Islamist websites reported. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the jihadist network’s local affiliate, put out three statements saying that it was behind the violence, the SITE Intelligence Group said late on Tuesday.”

*The Washington Post*: “A speech from the Far Side: What our enemies heard,” by Marc Thiessen, Sept. 7, 2010

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/06/AR2010090601682.html>

“While the president made some obligatory references to our responsibilities in the war on terror, what our enemies heard were his declarations that America is withdrawing and refocusing on domestic priorities.”

*The New Yorker*: “Parallel Lives” by David Denby, May 17, 2010

[http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2010/05/17/100517crici\\_cinema\\_denby](http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2010/05/17/100517crici_cinema_denby)

“For the past decade or so, we have suffered from an inability to comprehend, or even to imagine, the inner lives of the young men who wage jihad as members of Al Qaeda. Who are these men, so eager for asceticism, violence, and martyrdom?”

Filmmaker’s  
Statement:

“**The Oath** is the second documentary in a trilogy I am working on about America post 9/11,” says Director/Producer/Cinematographer Laura Poitras. “The first film, **My Country, My Country**, is about the U.S. occupation of Iraq told from the perspective of a Sunni doctor and his family. In many ways, **My Country, My Country**, and its depiction of the victims of this conflict, gave me permission to take on **The Oath**. The third film will look at domestic surveillance.

“In each film, my goal has been to understand the repercussions of 9/11 through the stories of people living this history. I’m also interested in creating primary documents — an on-the-ground record that can help us understand this history as time passes. I believe the world will be grappling with the tragedy of 9/11 and America’s reaction to the attack for generations to come.”

Filmmaker’s  
Bio:

**Laura Poitras (Director/Producer/Cinematographer)**

Laura Poitras was nominated for an Academy Award®, an Independent Spirit Award and an Emmy for **My Country, My Country** (POV 2006). She received a Peabody Award and was nominated for an Emmy and an Independent Spirit Award for **Flag Wars** (POV 2003), made with Linda Goode Bryant. Poitras is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Media Arts Fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation/Tribeca Film Institute. She has attended the Sundance Institute’s Documentary Edit and Story Lab as both a fellow and creative advisor. She is currently working on the third part of a trilogy

about America post-9/11. Before making documentaries, Poitras worked as a professional chef. She lives in New York City.

Credits: Director/Producer: Laura Poitras  
Executive Producer: David Menschel  
Co-producers: Jonathan Oppenheim, Nassar Arrabyee, Aliza Kaplan  
Cinematographers: Kirsten Johnson, Laura Poitras  
Editor: Jonathan Oppenheim  
Original Music: Osvaldo Golijov

POV Series Credits:

Executive Producer: Simon Kilmurry  
Executive Vice President: Cynthia López

Running Time: 86:46

2010 Festivals  
and Awards:

Excellence in Cinematography Award: Documentary, Sundance Film Festival  
Best Documentary, Edinburgh International Film Festival  
Special Jury Prize: International Feature, Hot Docs Documentary Film Festival  
Special Jury Prize, Full Frame Documentary Film Festival  
Grand Jury Best Documentary Award, Independent Film Festival Boston  
Grand Jury Award, Sarasota Film Festival  
True Vision Award, True/False Film Fest

(For a complete list, visit <http://www.theoathmovie.com/>)

POV Website: **The Oath** companion website, <http://www.pbs.org/pov/oath>, offers a streaming video trailer of the film; an extended interview with filmmaker Laura Poitras; a list of related websites, partner organizations and books; downloadable discussion and facilitator guides; classroom activities; a full update on all the characters in the film; and these special features:

- Background information on Al Qaeda, Guantanamo and Yemen;
- Additional video not included in the film;
- Downloadable audio conversation with David Brancaccio, the former host of NOW on PBS, Laura Poitras and Lt. Commander Brian Mizer;
- Reactions to the film; and
- Live chat with Laura Poitras on Wednesday, Sept. 22 at 2 PM ET.

Outreach: POV works with public television stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in **The Oath**. For a list of upcoming screenings and discussion events, go to: <http://www.pbs.org/pov/outreach>.

POV also works with nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow to develop a discussion guide with background information to help event organizers carry out discussions around the film's content. Cari Ladd has created the lesson plan. The materials are available free of charge at [www.pbs.org/pov/oath/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/oath/).

Pressroom: Visit POV's pressroom, [www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom), for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

POV: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 23rd season on PBS, the award-winning **POV** series is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today's best independent documentary filmmakers. Airing June through September, with primetime specials during the year, **POV** has brought more than 300 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *POV's Borders*. Since 1988, POV has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new

communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information is available at [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

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