

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Statement on the Anniversary of the Directive on United States Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel Recovery Efforts

June 24, 2016

One year ago today, I reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of the United States to do everything in our power to bring home Americans held overseas and to help their families. Because we were determined to do better, we conducted a comprehensive review of our hostage policy with the help of courageous families and former hostages. I signed an Executive order to better organize Federal efforts around this mission and to improve how we work with and support the families of those held unjustly abroad.

Today, experts from across Government work together, side by side, at our Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell located at the FBI. They are focused on creating and implementing recovery strategies as well as providing increased support for families and loved ones. At the State Department, my Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, Jim O'Brien, works tirelessly with other nations to recover American citizens held abroad. And with guidance from my National Security Council staff, our Hostage Response Group—accountable to me—is ensuring that all the elements we put into place last year are working together as a team.

Thanks to these efforts, Americans held overseas have been brought home and reunited with their families this past year. I'm grateful to all the dedicated professionals across our Government whose relentless efforts have made these reunions possible. But I know our work will not be done until our fellow Americans who are held against their will, and whose families mark their calendars by the days since they've held their loved ones, are reunited.

We will not stop until we can bring our fellow citizens back to their families. That includes Austin Tice, a journalist who went to Syria determined to shed light on some of the world's most vulnerable people, and Caitlan Coleman, who was abducted with her husband in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. And we are committed to determining the whereabouts of Robert Levinson, a retired FBI agent who went missing in Iran over 9 years ago.

The families of Americans missing and those being held unjustly deserve to be whole again. Across our Government, people are working every day to bring their loved ones home. We will never stop, no matter how long it takes.

NOTE: The statement referred to Joshua Boyle, husband of Caitlan Coleman who was kidnapped shortly after arriving in Ghazni, Afghanistan, in October 2012..

Categories: Statements by the President : U.S. hostages abroad and personnel recovery efforts, anniversary of directive.

Names: Boyle, Joshua; Coleman, Caitlan; Levinson, Robert A.; O'Brien, James; Tice, Austin B.

Subjects: Defense and national security : Hostage recovery policy; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal; State, Department of : Hostage Affairs, Special Presidential Envoy for.

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